**Ian McGilchrist on the divided BRAIN**

We have brains to make “connections” but the brain itself is profoundly divided and asymmetrical.

**Corpus callosum** inhibits working of the other hemisphere but interconnects them, at the same time!

              What's the meaning behind this?

the hems are different anatomically, neuropsych., physiol. & chemically

**The brain not only mediates but SHAPES OUR EXPERIENCE (which Freud suspected).**

**BRAIN is not an indiscriminate mass of neurons - its structure matters!**

**Individual differences among hemispheric preference and laterality exist**

**but typical cerebral organization has greater than 95% currency.**

Both hems deal with images and words, with reasoning and expressing thoughts but... go about it differently;

Both hems see" things but the left hem. sees in pieces while the right hem in context.

Each hem creates MEANING but goes about it differently, which leads to alternative, opposing perspectives on the world.

**Left hem.** contains **semantic** language regions where words are processed serially

       while pictures are taken in all at once.

Only the **right hem** understands METAPHORs.

Only the **right hem**is attuned to what's NEW.

**In sum, the fundamental difference between the hems lies in the type of attention they give to the world!**

             This attention actually alters the world that we thus recreate!

             The hems oppose each other and need to be kept apart > **brain structure.**

**How are attention and focus created?**

**Left** hemisphere pays attention to what already known

**Right** hemisphere is vigilant of the unpredictable

makes connections by providing sustained and broad attention

            “Manipulating” the world entails interacting with it

**Enhanced frontal lobe/neocortex** function: it inhibits response/ makes us stand back from the immediacy of the experience

to read the others’ mind, be empathetic & make a bond.

This ability of self-distancing is profoundly creative

enhancing frontal lobe demanded independence of the hems

Over time... growth of self-consciousness at the expense of cooperation between the hems > fragmented, decontextualized world

Balance of power shifted to the left, i.e., to the part-world created by the left hem., which alters our true existence.

**What does it mean to “understand”?**

**Left hem.** “grasps” stuff and understands ideas

knows and is precise

provides A SIMPLIFIED VERSION OF REALITY

**Right hem.** is on the lookout for the new beyond what we expect and understands what’s **implicit** such as in metaphors, body language and face expression

**Left hem.** depends on denotative language (vs. connotation) and abstraction > clarity, power to manipulate things that are known, fixed, static & explicit, i.e., provides perfection but hides emptiness

**Right hem.** > individual, changing, interconnected, implicit, in context but never perfectly known

**i.e, Knowledge of parts (L) vs. wisdom of the whole (R)**

BUT even rationality is grounded in a leap of intuition, and the endpoint of  rationality is to understand its limits

**Imagining and reasoning, i.e. the essence of using language** need both hem.

Does our cultural world, values and priorities encourage one over the other? Could it have longterm consequences?

Is it important which models and metaphors we bring to bear on our reality?

Why has one particular model of the world come to dominate us although we don't notice how pervasive?

Are we aware of immersing ourselves in one kind of meaning making at the expense of the other?

Things change according to the stance we take on them, the type of attention we pay.

**How do we think today?**

prioritizing the virtual over the real

            subsuming HOW in WHAT (the manner is secondary- overshadowed by gains)

            thinking technically and bureaucratically yields a fragmented picture

            losing our uniqueness

because **left hem**. is convincing& vocal, and cuts out what doesn’t fit

“We are trapped in the left hem. wall of mirrors”

… and need to return to what we know, which is what right hem. is about

**Intuitive mind is a master, rational mind its emissary.**

**Nietzsche's parable of a wise spiritual master and its emissaries (who may grow into ambitious regional bureaucrats who lack WISDOM)**