



average ability students. With the “left brain-right brain” model we would expect the gifted students to rely more exclusively on left-hemisphere activation. Similarly, in another study, two groups were pre-identified on screening measures for creativity. The “left brain—right brain” hypothesis would suggest that more highly creative individuals would activate more strongly in the right hemisphere. However, those identified as highly creative showed significantly higher bilateral activation of the brain than did the less creative individuals. Finally, a study of the resting state MRI scans of 1011 subjects, ages 7-29, showed no statistically significant hemispheric preferences, i.e. lateralization of brain functioning. The conclusion of the last study was: “Lateralization of brain connections appears to be a local rather than global property of brain networks, and our data are not consistent with a whole-brain phenotype of greater ‘left-brained’ or greater ‘right-brained’ network strength across individuals.”

While both hemispheres are capable of functioning autonomously when an artificial separation or disruption of hemispheric communication occurs, this is not how they function in most people. Remember, Sperry’s research was conducted with subjects for whom their neuronal networks and connectivity was severely disrupted. As one author, Carl Zimmer, puts it: “No matter how lateralized the brain can get, though, the two sides still work together. The pop psychology notion of a left brain and a right brain doesn’t capture their intimate working relationship. The left hemisphere specializes in picking out the sounds that form words and working out the syntax of the words, for example, but it does not have a monopoly on language processing. The right hemisphere is actually more sensitive to the emotional features of language, tuning in to the slow rhythms of speech that carry intonation and stress.”

So my appeal is this: let’s let the left brain—right brain metaphor die. The metaphor is based on old and outdated science which does not reflect the current state of understanding of brain functioning in the neurosciences. Yet, this is the position I operated out of myself until several years ago when I began to listen to recent lectures on neuroscience. Yes, the split-brain model has a certain intrinsic attractiveness but it isn’t accurate. The current state of the art in the neurosciences is actually more “Jungian” than Sperry’s work. Current studies clearly show the brain functions in a pattern of bilateral complementation whereby we are capable of being most relationally and creatively present when the preferences of the right hemisphere are augmented by the differentiated verbal capacities of the left hemisphere. Similarly, the differentiated capacities for language and abstract reasoning of the left brain are enhanced by the creativity and nuanced feeling of the right hemisphere. By associating some analytic interventions with right brain relational presence and others, such as interpretation, with the left brain, we are reinforcing an unnecessary and undesirable split within our analytic activity and our own psyches. I believe our goal, as analysts and analytic therapists, should be the integration of these functions and activities. A relational presence without a capacity to reflect on that presence is potentially just as empty as an interpretation made without relational and creative connection. Clearly, relying on outmoded labels, such as “left brain” or “right brain” to define ourselves and our activities in any area of life can result in a restriction of the expression and unfolding of our psyches—the process which C.G Jung has referred to as individuation ■