

I am a human being and my individual autonomy depends on my being connected to other living beings, especially humans – in other words, my BEING needs my BELONGING. In Blog 1 I described this as Interdependence. The sense that we BELONG to Nature (the natural world) – and are not separate from it – is fundamental for our wellbeing.

The aspects of mind that are most important for our human-to-human connectedness are all generated by right-brain attention. The attitude that is more concerned with ‘we and us’ than with ‘me’ as a separate individual enables the powerful connecting emotions of empathy, compassion and love. Our most positive social behaviour is generated by the right side of our brain, partly because the implicit Knowledge on which it is based is not available to our left hemisphere.

I reported one example of a left-hemisphere stroke in Blog 5, but every episode of damage to the brain is different, of course. There are different degrees of paralysis, for example, occurring on the opposite side of the body from where the brain is damaged. But speaking generally, we know that the consequences of damage to our right brain (from a stroke or a lesion) are vastly different from what happens after left-brain damage. At first they may be less obvious (than loss of speech, for example), but they are more far-reaching and serious, because it is the brain’s natural leader that has been affected in this case.

The sense of knowing one’s own body, which is an important part of our Knowledge, is severely impaired. The unchecked left hemisphere refuses to consider anything that doesn’t seem to ‘add up,’ so the left side paralysis may be completely denied – a patient might say: ‘this left arm you asked me to move works perfectly well, thank you . . . oh, that’s not my arm you’re touching, that must be somebody else’s.’ Other more complicated tests of logic and reasoning show that the lack of right-brain input often produces an absurd lack of comprehension, even though the ‘facts’ as they are known to that person appear to ‘add up.’

The emotions generated by right-brain attention promote intimacy and caring – affection, tenderness, a feeling that what affects one of us also affects us all – because there is a broader awareness rather than a narrowing of mind. After severe right brain damage, those vital ‘connecting emotions’ are crippled, while the distinctly left-brain emotions of anger and disgust are amplified.

In short, our connectedness – and therefore the quality of our BELONGING – depends very heavily on our right-brain attention. I will say more about this, but for the moment, I’m suggesting that we keep a lookout for signs that a left-brain bias is interfering with crucial inter-personal relationships. We can always step up our efforts to strengthen connectedness.

I suggest there are three levels of connectedness that are at risk because of the narrowing of mind that is limiting our Intelligence. These are (1) the local community strength that thrives on unselfish social interaction, (2) our relationship with Nature – the natural environment of other living beings that is ‘our world,’ and (3) our sense of something greater than ourselves that we might call ‘sacred,’ with which we also have a higher-level (spiritual) connection.

Although I am drawing attention to the problems, I don’t want to dwell on those – I want to **appreciate** the hopeful opportunities that our special qualities of humanness offer to each one of us, because these point towards the best possible quality of life for our future.