

Antagonism within the homeopathic mind

by Charles Wansbrough



Charles Wansbrough studied dentistry before moving into the alternative field. He has been involved in esoteric/developmental homeopathy and edited the journal *Prometheus Unbound*, which introduced the phenomenon of meditative proving. He has spent the past ten years investigating a technology which measures the accuracy of a homeopathic prescription by reading photon emission.

Antagonism, a condition defined as 'being in conflict', is now so ubiquitous it appears to be an accepted state of mind in our present culture which never has any 'time off'. A survey by the US information technology research firm Basex in 2006 found that interruptions take up over two hours of the average working day, and that even work-related interruptions disrupt our flow of ideas, and as a result cost the US economy an estimated \$588 billion a year. This sum works out at roughly 6.5 times as much as the estimated cost of back pain, according to a 2004 study from Duke University in Durham, North Carolina (Motluk, 2006).

Psychiatrist G. Wilson, at the Institute of Psychiatry in London, found that being bombarded with emails and phone calls has a greater effect on IQ than smoking marijuana (2005). His colleagues report that in recent years patients complain that they are distracted, forgetful, disorganised and impulsive – and that they can't get anything done. For many of them, however, the symptoms mysteriously disappear when they are on holiday.

Antagonism has now become a worldwide phenomenon, and so the familiar rubric merits examination from a neurobiological as well as a homeopathic perspective. The latest version of computer software *Reference Works* (3.4) has 41 remedies listed under 'Antagonism with herself':

acon., *agri.*, *ambr.*, *ANAC.*, *ANH.*, *ant-t.*, *aur.*, *AUR-M-N.*, *AUR-S.*, *bar-c.*, *bar-m.*, *cann-i.*, *cann-s.*, *caps.*, *clad-r.*, *crot-c.*, *dendro-p.*, *elaps.*, *ferr-ar.*, *IRID.*, *KALI-C.*, *LAC-C.*, *lac-h.*, *lach.*, *LIM-B-C.*, *lyss.*, *mobil-ph.*, *naja.*, *op.*, *PARO-I.*, *prun-c.*, *rck-w-b.*, *SEP.*, *sil.*, *TAOSC.*, *thuj.*, *URAN.*, *vacu.*, *verb.*, *wh-ch-b.*

We know that these remedy pictures are differentiated by behavioural nuance, and describe varying states of consciousness, but I would suggest that on further examination of the patient, the antagonism being experienced may arise out of an internal conflict between the left and right

hemispheres of the brain. In support of this suggestion I will briefly refer to some of the research that underpins our common understanding of the capabilities of the left and right brain.

The two hemispheres

The human brain is a marriage of two minds. Each twin hemisphere is a physical mirror image of the other. If one hemisphere is lost early in life, the other may take over and fulfil the functions of both. The two are bound together by a band of fibres, called the corpus callosum, which acts as an information highway and maintains a continuous, intimate

The left hemisphere controls the right side of the body, and the right hemisphere controls the left side of the body.



dialogue between them, resulting in a single stream of consciousness. Separate these hemispheres, however, and the differences between them become apparent. Each half of a mature brain has its own strengths and weaknesses, its own way of processing information and its own special skills.

It is possible that the two hemispheres exist in two distinct realms of consciousness: two individuals, effectively, in one skull. The left hemisphere controls the right side of the body, and the right hemisphere controls the left side of the body, and most sensory input to the brain crosses from the incoming side to the opposite hemisphere for processing.

It is also clear that the right and left sides are not equal, we only need to examine the abilities of our two hands to see the asymmetry of function. In right-handers it is almost always the case that the hemisphere that controls the dominant hand is also the hemisphere that controls speech. In 95% of right-handers, the left side of the brain is dominant for language, and those parts of the brain concerned with language are predominantly found in the left hemisphere in most people, including 60-70% of left-handers (McManus, 2003).

The most fascinating problem is why language, which represents the pinnacle of human evolution, should only be represented in one sphere when most other functions are bilaterally represented. Even though under certain rare circumstances the right hemisphere can actually develop speech, most of the time those areas in the right which mirror the left seem to play no observable role in the brain. Even more peculiar is the fact that removal of these sites in the right hemisphere does not cause much damage to the individual as a whole.

Split-brain operations

What happens when the right and left hemispheres of your brain can no longer communicate? What happens when the corpus callosum, that information highway allowing both hemispheres to communicate, is sectioned as, for example, when a split-brain operation is performed? In the 18th century, the corpus callosum was considered the site of the soul (Maurice Pfitzner), but by the early 20th century it was assigned

General left-right brain attributes

Hemisphere	Left	Right
Thinking	Abstract, linear, analytic	Concrete, holistic
Cognitive style	Rational, logical	Intuitive, artistic
Language	Rich vocabulary, good grammar and syntax; prose	No grammar, syntax; prosody, poor vocabulary metaphoric, verse
Executive capacity	Introspection, will, initiative, sense of self, focus on trees	Low sense of self, low initiative, focus on forest
Specialised functions	Reading, writing, arithmetic, sensory-motor skills; inhibits parapsychological phenomena (psi)	Intuition, music, rich dream imagery, good face and gestalt recognition, open to psi
Time experience	Sequentially ordered, measured	'Lived' time, primitive time sense
Spatial orientation	Relatively poor	Superior, also for shapes, wire figures
Psychoanalytic aspects	Secondary process, ego functions, consciousness; super-ego	Primary process, dream-work, free association, hallucinations

the less important role of preventing the cerebral hemispheres from collapsing onto each other.

A revolution in our understanding came about when the split-brain operation was pioneered by Roger Sperry, who won the Nobel Prize for medicine in 1981 for his work. This was performed as a last surgical resort to reduce transmission of the abnormal electrical discharges that resulted in severe epilepsy. The study of these patients by R. Sperry, M. Gazzaniga, and other collaborators has contributed greatly to our knowledge about the way the hemispheres communicate with each other (Sperry, 2005). Ironically, after the operation, patients appeared to be completely intact and unchanged when observed by family and friends. It was only after specific tests were administered that the symptoms of disconnection emerged.

Split-brain experiments

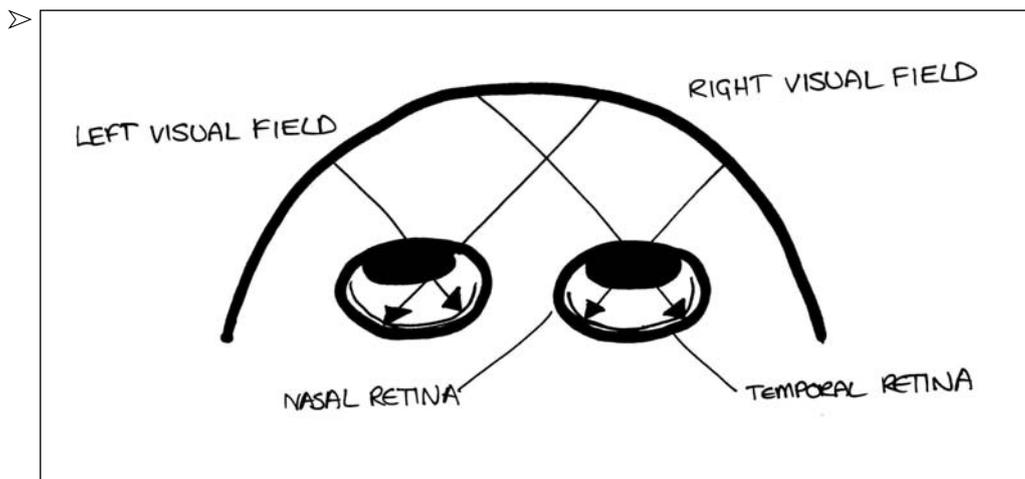
Each hemisphere is still able to learn after the split-brain operation but has no idea what the other hemisphere has experienced or learned. Experiments showed that the left and right hemispheres specialise in different tasks. The left side of the brain normally specialises in taking care of the analytical and verbal tasks. The left side produces more grammatical speech than the right side, while the right half takes care of the space perception tasks and music, for example.

The right hemisphere is involved when you are making a map or giving directions on how to get somewhere. The right hemisphere can only produce rudimentary words and phrases, but contributes emotional context to language. Without the help from the right hemisphere, you would be able to read the word 'pig' for instance, but you would not be able to imagine what it is. From these initial studies a vast literature has evolved on the difference between the right and left hemispheres and their particular strengths and weaknesses, which can be accessed via the internet. Here is an example (Ehrenwald, 1984):

General left-right brain attributes

This particular division of function is now common knowledge, but what is not so well known is how the right/left division is internally managed so as to produce a seamless state of unity. The question which intrigued the neuroscientists was whether the two hemispheres

The human brain is a marriage of two minds



were equivalent to two minds and how one state of seamless consciousness arose from the dichotomy and functional asymmetry between the two hemispheres.

Split consciousness

In order to establish whether the two hemispheres are truly separate, M. Gazziniga (*The Split Brain Revisited*, 1998), carried out some

fascinating experiments with a unique split brain patient, PS, who had greater than usual linguistic capabilities in his right hemisphere. PS's right hemisphere was able to express itself by arranging scrabble letters with his left hand in response to questions. This was an unusual situation since normally the right hemisphere is non-verbal and unable to communicate.

The visual field.

A question was asked of each hemisphere separately and the results were compared. This was done by presenting words in the left visual field (right hemisphere) and the right visual field (left hemisphere). The way the eyes are connected up to the hemispheres is found to be contralaterally; more information about this can easily be accessed via various websites, such as <http://www.washington.edu>.

The results showed that PS's right hemisphere could evaluate questions and give different answers from those of the left hemisphere. Sometimes the answers given by the right and left side were similar and sometimes they were discordant. PS appeared to be in a better mood on the days when the opinions and values of the left hemisphere and right hemisphere overlapped.

These experiments, with this unique patient, established that each of PS's hemispheres had a separate sense of self, and each

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possessed its own system for subjectively evaluating current events, planning for further events, setting response priorities, and generating personal responses.

As a result we should consider the practical and theoretical implications of the fact that a double consciousness mechanism might exist.

The idea that consciousness is dependent on language is not new and assumes that the brain events we experience as conscious are the events processed by the language system of the brain. To test this hypothesis, PS was shown pairs of visual stimuli presented simultaneously to each side of a fixation point located on a projection screen. The picture falling into each visual field was thus processed by the sphere receiving input from that side of the fixation point.

- PS was asked to use his hands to point to pictures that were related to what he had seen flashed on the screen. He chose from among several placed in front of him.
- He did this well. His right hand pointed to a picture related to the one that had been flashed in his right visual field (i.e. to the left sphere) and vice versa.
- But of interest was how PS interpreted these double responses.
- When a snow scene was presented to the right side and a chicken claw was presented to the left, PS quickly and dutifully responded correctly by choosing a picture of a chicken from a series of four cards with his right hand and a picture of a shovel from a series of four cards with his left hand.
- PS was then asked, 'What did you see?' To which he responded, 'I saw a claw and I picked the chicken and you have to clean out the chicken shed with a shovel.'
- The left sphere could easily and accurately identify why it had picked the answer, but then without batting an eye it would incorporate the right sphere's response into the framework.
- While we knew exactly why the right sphere had made its choice the left sphere could merely guess.
- Yet the left did not offer its suggestion in a guessing vein but rather as a statement of

fact as to why the card had been picked.
(<http://physics.weber.edu>.)

The implications for consciousness

Such experiments have led neuroscientist M. Gazzaniga (*The Mind's Past*, 1998) to suggest that the major task of our 'verbal self' is to construct a reality based on our actual behaviour. Although our 'verbal self' may not be privy to the origin of all our actions, it appears to examine what the person is actually doing and then interpret 'reality' from that knowledge. He believes that the human brain is organised in terms of many functional modules, rather like a society with many subsidiary groups. Monitoring all this vast amount of information is a module in the left brain he calls 'the interpreter' (Ibid). The interpreter considers all the outputs as soon as they are made and immediately constructs a hypothesis as to why particular actions occurred. What we experience is the output of this interpreter. We do not experience events as they happen but experience events for their meaningful relationship to us. It appears that the role of the interpreter is to generate a hypothesis as to why particular actions occurred and in doing this it synthesises a single 'I' from a multitude of memories.

In other words, the role or module he calls the 'interpreter', is similar to a 'spin doctor' who, in order to convince others of his credentials, has to convince himself of just how good, honest, and wonderful he is when facing reality. It creates an effective self-image that endlessly weaves a narrative best suited to itself. If asked about a trait that is ambiguous most people will interpret the question to suit their own idiosyncratic strengths (Dunning et al, 2002). Before entering into a discussion of the homeopathic implications, one further intriguing experiment must be discussed to further explore the effective harmony between the two hemispheres.

The split Freud and psychotherapy

David Galin (1974) believes that split-brain operations provide a neurological validation for Freud's notion of an unconscious mind. He points out that the right side mode of thought is similar to Freud's

description of the unconscious and he notes a parallel between functioning of the isolated right sphere and mental processes that are repressed, unconscious and unable to control behaviour directly. David Galin believes that normally the two spheres operate in an integrated fashion but at certain times they may be blocked from communicating with each other, and that as a result a situation similar to that

We should consider the practical and theoretical implications of the fact that a double consciousness mechanism might exist

found in split brain patients may occur in normal individuals.

Another psychiatrist, Fredric Schiffer at Harvard, takes this interpretation even further in his book *Of Two Minds* (1998) in which he proceeds to treat patients psychotherapeutically by switching between both hemispheres. He believes that each brain hemisphere possesses its own thoughts and feelings and, in most people, the halves co-exist in peace. However, if one side becomes more troubled than the other, due to stress or childhood trauma, the resulting friction causes mental conflict. 'There can be as many different types of relationships between the two minds as there are between two people,' he states.

His clinical observations of this two-mind theory can be clearly demonstrated in brain-intact patients when they wear a special pair of goggles he has created. They consist of two pairs of goggles, one set blocks all vision

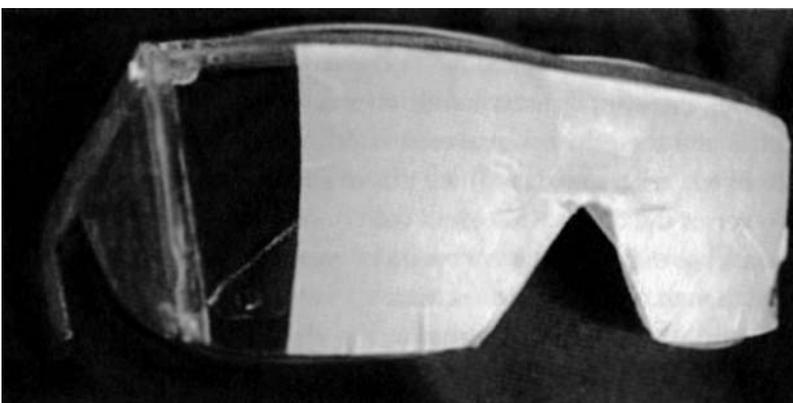
▷ except to the far right of the visual field, and the other blocks all vision except to the far left visual field. Looking out of the far left or right exclusively, appears to stimulate the opposite side of the brain only. For example, those who suffer the effects of past trauma often feel more stress when looking at the extreme right side. When they switch to viewing the extreme left side, they feel more in control almost immediately. The fact that stimulating two different sides of the brain can produce opposite results leads Schiffer to theorise that, ‘We may have two minds, or distinct parts of our personality. When they are similar, our personality is harmonious and we feel a sense of mental well-being. When the two sides are in conflict, we feel confused, stressed, anxious, depressed.’ (Ibid.)

The homeopathic implications

F. Schiffer believes that individuals have two distinct parts to their

difference between both hemispheres. It becomes apparent, for example, that some patients feel a vast difference when shifting between hemispheres: one side feels calm and collected, the other side might feel confused and very stressed. I think it is an interesting phenomenon that can be useful clinically; such demonstrable inter-hemispheric conflict in the patient can be matched to a remedy picture as each state of consciousness is represented by a pattern of behaviour, and determines the degree of hemispheric conflict displayed.

Lac caninum and *Anacardium* states, both in the rubric ‘Antagonism with herself’, demonstrate what can happen when that intimate dialogue of seamless unity has broken down, and the conflict between both hemispheres is overwhelming. The clinical picture and degree of conflict is, however, different in both remedies. *Lac caninum* can be summed up in one poignant



A photograph of taped experimental goggles allowing vision out of the right visual field only.

personality, each associated with one brain hemisphere. ‘One part tends to see the world through a distorted perspective and is often disturbed by past trauma. The other part of the personality is often mature and more grounded in reality.’ Just as he uses psychotherapy to educate the troubled side and bring it into harmony, we should be able to do the same using homeopathy.

Experiments on myself and patients using these goggles have led to some interesting insights in relation to the diverse states of consciousness of those 41 remedies in the rubric ‘Antagonism with herself’. We cannot measure the hemispheric conflict quantitatively, but the use of the goggles allows us to discern the degree of qualitative

metaphor: ‘This is a dog’s life, I am worthless’. The main theme revolves around dominance and they can fly into a rage but if someone else is even stronger, they submit and this is when the conflict arises. The contempt for themselves, and associated feelings of dirtiness, demonstrates an internal conflict that is bound to be inter-hemispheric in essence. The eruption and rage followed by a floating sensation, together with a possible history of abuse, is most likely manifested as a result of these conflicts. In one case where a patient needed *Lac caninum*, the difference between the hemispheres was apparent when the patient used the goggles.

Anacardium also has a clear aetiology of abuse and conflict which often emerges when the

case is taken. This conflict arises when an individual is not allowed to think or do anything on their own. So his/her behaviour fluctuates: they can be angelic and excellent at work, until this no longer serves their purpose, at which point they switch into a state of tremendous overconfidence with contempt for others, becoming very hard and cruel. This extreme fluctuation between states arises from extreme hemispheric conflict shifting back and forth between the verbal self that rationalises his situation and is good, sensitive and caring, and the other side, which stores the abuse and erupts at certain times into the revengeful furious inhuman aspect of himself.

Lyssin represents another variation of inter-hemispheric conflict in which the patient feels tormented and injured by the person they depend on. They react with rage, then repent quickly because of this unhealthy dependence on that individual. They have a delusion that they are a dog that growls and barks like an animal but remains subservient until attacked too often, at which point the dog becomes violent and moves into a rage.

Naja represents another variation in the internal conflict between hemispheres arising from a sense of morality and responsibility on the one hand, and the feeling of having been wronged and neglected on the other.

Anhalonium and *Cannabis* are in that rubric for a different reason. The hemispheric conflict arises not between the two sides, but because the intimate dialogue that brings about that unity we call consciousness is confused. The confusion gives rise to confabulation and excessive states caused, I suspect, because there is a breaking down of boundaries that maintain the mind in a stable unity. We see the same confusion in the states of mind induced by these substances when taken as recreational drugs, and in the remedy provings. So the fracture is not between two hemispheres, but rather a loss of function of these two distinct hemispheres, as all boundaries dissolve.

Summary

I could add to the list of variations in the remedies that arise from inter-hemispheric conflict, but I wish instead to make a number

of points in this article:

- Clinically, a patient's inter-hemispheric conflict can be examined qualitatively through the use of 'Schiffer's goggles', a simple and intriguing arrangement that can be purchased or made with little cost.
- The experiments done on split brain patients and further research by neuroscientists, allows us to consider some of our remedies in the light of this apparent hemispheric conflict which shapes our everyday personalities.

After investigating the vast literature on hemispheric differences, I asked myself:

- 1 What happens in cases where the hemispheric conflict is so antagonistic that the individual switches between states every other day or week?
- 2 If the antagonism is excessive, will a remedy only bring relief in one hemisphere, and could it cause the trauma to take refuge in the other hemisphere as a result?

I can think of cases where the remedy *Lac caninum* has worked brilliantly and the clinical picture was extremely clear, and although the conflict was obvious the case resolved perfectly once a dose was given. However, what if the trauma (parental or abusive) had actually created such a deep fracture in the mind that the patient would be forced to move back and forth between changing states as the hemispheres seek relief from conflict?

Will the brain be forced to accommodate the changing nature of the conflict, like a computer having to be updated with a new operating system? Sometimes it is possible to completely update the computer with a new operating system, but in other cases the hardware, or in this case the 'wetware' of the brain may need to be changed too radically to upgrade itself at one complete session and may have to be upgraded in a number of sessions.

The radical conflict between the two hemispheres may have to be accommodated over a period of time, since the perpetual changes may be too radical to be accomplished all at once. Changing remedy pictures may over time treat the shifting patterns that ensue, as the conflict between different hemispheres lessens and the

conflict eventually dies away as a healthy understanding reasserts itself.

There is also a further consideration from this neurological perspective. What happens if the conflict is so overwhelming that the mind changes from one pattern to another over a period of days, how do we treat this particular problem? Do we take two different cases and give two different remedies on alternate days? This is a pattern I have seen in people who are hypersensitive.

Consider some of our remedies in the light of this apparent hemispheric conflict

Homeopaths ask themselves, 'What is happening when the indicated remedy does not work?' One suggestion is to view this from a neurological perspective. In certain very rational individuals does their 'verbal self' (the left hemisphere) construct such a clear argument against the possibility of homeopathy that the remedy is effectively antidoted? Is their worldview so sceptical that homeopathy will not work under any circumstances?

My interest in discussing this neurological perspective was to widen the debate in 'classical' homeopathy about the prescribing of a single remedy only. In case of severe trauma, where I suspect the hemispheres have created different approaches to dealing with life, the individual flips back and forth between different states. In these cases I would continue to treat the different states with the appropriate remedies until the patient feels centred. The knowledge that inter-hemispheric conflicts can arise

continually in everyday life should give us pause for thought and encourage us to consider new ways of diagnosing and treating the states of consciousness that arise from such traumas.

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