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Towards applying the work of Iain McGilchrist and Guy Claxton to the analysis of arts-based experiences

Mary Ann Kernan

Centre for English/School of Arts and Social Sciences

maryann.kernan.1@city.ac.uk
1. Iain McGilchrist: A (Very) Brief Introduction
2. Guy Claxton: Some additional insights
3. The research challenge
4. Towards a framework for analysing arts-based experiences
The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World (Yale, UP, 2011)

Against Criticism (Faber, 1982)

Intelligence in the Flesh: Why your mind needs your body much more than it thinks (Yale, 2015)

Source: https://www.amazon.co.uk/Guy-Claxton/e/B001HOI19K
Against Criticism (McGilchrist, 1982)

- A study of Heraclitus, Johnson, Sterne, Wordsworth, Faust

  ‘Understanding is not achieved by analytic description. In the end, a leap of imagination will always be required.’ (p.26)

  ‘… art appeals to the whole physical frame, to our physical sense of ourselves.’ (p.26)
**Against Criticism** (McGilchrist, 1982)

‘**Imagination** does not just add. It **combines**.’ (eg the features of a face) (p.32)

‘A work of **art is organic. So is the human being.** When the two come together, the **organic whole** of the one… reacts with the **organic whole of the other** – not just the intellect or the emotions.’ (p.35)

‘… fusion of inner and outer, of body and soul, of kernel and shell, is the **very nature of art**: something not merely created, but itself created, healing and making whole.’ (p.232)
Psychiatrist
Consultant Psychiatrist, Bethlem Royal and Maudsley NHS Trust, London Clinical Director, Acute Mental Health Services
The Master and His Emissary
Images from: RSA Animate, YouTube, 2011
O1 Squire, I've got a load of information needed the other side.

Corpus Callosum
Keep things apart

Halt! Only fight or flight info until further notice... there's an emergency and the plot thickens.

Prepare the body for action, flood the anterior pituitary now!

When you realise that one of the main, if not the main function of the corpus callosum is to inhibit the other hemisphere.
THE RATIO OF THE CORPUS CALLOSUM TO THE VOLUME OF THE HEMISPHERES HAS GOT SMALLER
PEOPLE WHO LOSE THEIR RIGHT HEMISPHERES HAVE A PATHOLOGICAL NARROWING OF THE WINDOW OF ATTENTION.

SO EXTREME CAN THIS PHENOMENON BE THAT THE SUFFERER MAY FAIL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXISTENCE OF THE LEFT HALF OF THE BODY.
The right hemisphere by contrast yields a world of individual, changing, evolving, interconnected, implicit, incarnate, living beings in the context of the lived world.
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Why did the chicken cross the hemispheres?

Denotative language

Abstraction yields clarity

Decontextualised

General in nature

Fixed

Isolated

Static

Lifeless

R

L

Get it?

To be more understood as a cliché

Chicken

Clue
Their distinct roles also give rise to **empathy**
15th/16th CENTURY IN EUROPE
...and it leads to resentment, unhappiness and an explosion of mental illness.

We live in a world which is paradoxical: we pursue happiness.
WE PRIORITISE THE VIRTUAL OVER THE REAL

HEY TRON GUY
LOOK A SUNSET
WITH ALTOCUMULUS
CLOU... OOH TRON
LET ME WATCH!

YES, TRON
MY FRIEND,
THE ORIGINAL
IN 1080I HD
SCANNED IN
ALTERNATE
LINES OF 590
EACH

WE KNOW YOU
ARE IN THERE
WE CAN DETECT
YOUR SIGNAL...
YOU HAVEN'T
FILLED OUT YOUR
TV LICENCE FORM
CORRECTLY

BUREAUCRACY FLOURISHES

THE TECHNICAL BECOMES IMPORTANT

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
Art ‘to see afresh’ replaced by art ‘to shock’

Dissociation: indifference towards / fear of others

Rise of psychosis / autism / anorexia / ‘the loner’

Modernist art/Cubism

Totalitarianism
Suppression of creative artists/writers, eg under Stalin

Erosion of pity, eg in Facism
‘Devitalisation’ / boredom
Woman in an Armchair
Drum & bass music (rhythm, lack of surprise) = left-brain music
Harmony + melody = right-brain music

Summer Mix | Melodic Deep House
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mMgHsufmjEA

Compare with:
John Taverner: The Lamb
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-mSmEfLmZc
or Song for Athene
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMrxJfvSnn8
Hall of Mirrors

We just get reflected back into more of what we know about what we know about what we know.

Never in the field of human history has so much been said by so many to say so little.

Tickets

In

Undercut

© The RSA 2011
HALL OF MIRRORS

WE JUST GET REFLECTED BACK INTO MORE OF WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT WHAT WE KNOW

NEVER IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN HISTORY HAS SO MUCH BEEN USED BY SO MANY TO SAY SO LITTLE

Nobody could be more passionate than myself about

Language & Reason

It’s just I’m even more passionate about the right hemisphere

Neglect! I should say! We’ve been here since the Renya Salecl animate!

We neglect careful use of language

Not so much as a drop of tea or a bun to tide us over!

Neglect!

Nobody could be more passionate in an age in which we neglect reason.
But has forgotten the gift
The intuitive mind is a sacred gift...

...and the rational mind is a faithful servant

Good Sherlock
Have a nice juicy bonus

We have created a society that honours the servant
‘What ultimately unites the three realms of escape from the left hemisphere’s world which it has attacked in our time – the body, the spirit, and art – is that they are all vehicles of love.’ (p.445)

‘… the flow of narrative… images the right hemisphere’s continuous appreciation of time’ + ‘understanding of the meaning of human action…’ (p.414)
Claxton and embodied intelligence

- ‘the mind… is the body’ (p.25)
- ‘The body isn’t a thing, it’s an event.’ (p.36)
- ‘our bodies literally reverberate with each other’ (p.8)
- ‘practical, embodied intelligence is the deepest, oldest, most fundamental and most important intelligence’ (p.9)
- Our bodily systems = CADS: ‘Complex Adaptive Dynamic Systems’ (p.52):
  ‘from the CADS perspective, the human body is not a noun, it’s a verb’ (p.54)

(Claxton, 2015)
Claxton: How can we teach embodied intelligence? (pp.242–63)

- Biofeedback
- Meditation – especially mindfulness
- Focusing (to increase physical awareness)
- Exercise and movement

(Claxton, 2015)
Claxton: What might that world be like? (pp.264–92)

- Embodied lifestyle
- Education
- Medicine
- ‘Real-world intelligence’ / ‘learning agility’
- ‘A New Materialism’, rebalancing of respect for ‘making’
  - MIT course ‘How To Make (Almost) Anything’
  - Stanford course for engineers in bicycle or model aeroplane building (p.282)

(Claxton, 2015)
Group performances

© MICL students, 2013
Artefact Show

© MICL students, 2012
Some conclusions…

- Our arts-based research framework must consider:
  - **Context**: holistic / shared / physical challenges + opportunities?
  - Level of **commitment** to the arts-based learning (+ ethics)
  - **Combined methodologies**, eg
    - *Ethnographic/observational*: Watch/record participants’ body language + doing/making: aliveness / excitement / touching?
    - **Reflection**: Your own and the participants’
    - **Physical measures** (eg well-being/health data, HRV/blood pressure, speed of reactions, skin reactivity, brain scans?)
    - **Language analysis methods**: use of metaphor, self-narration, emotive words? What do they **love**?

A call to action?
Some references for Arts in Management research


