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

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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**

Source: https://iai.tv/home/speakers/iain-mcgilchrist

***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

Iain McGilchrist

http://iainmcgilchrist.com/

©BBC News

Literary scholar

Fellow, All Soul's, Oxford (c1975–2004)

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

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The Master and His Emissary

Images from: RSA Animate, YouTube, 2011

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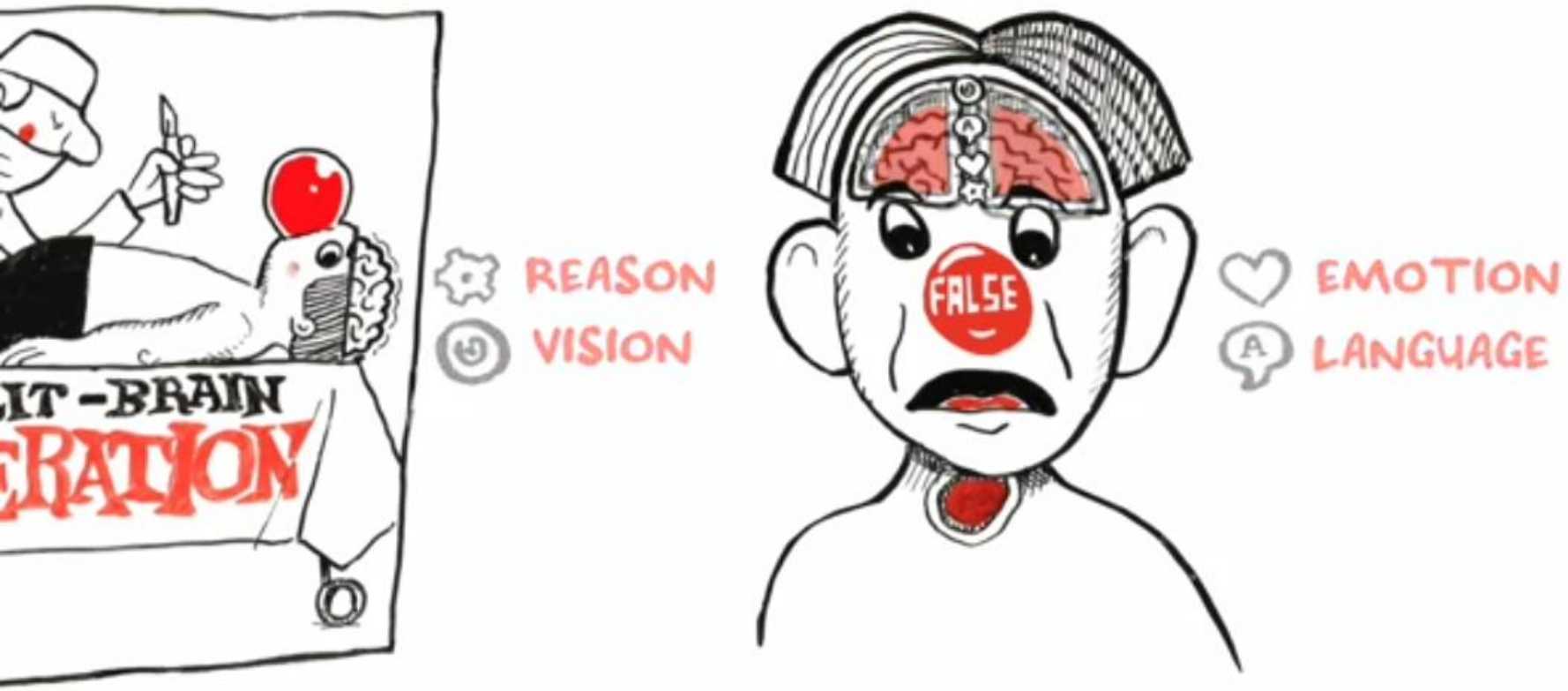

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OI SQUIRE, I'VE GOT A LOAD OF INFORMATION NEEDED THE OTHER SIDE
CORPUS CALLOSUM
KEEP THINGS APART
PREPARE THE BODY FOR ACTION, FLOOD THE ANTERIOR PITUITARY NOW!
HALT! ONLY FIGHT OR FLIGHT INFO UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE... THERE'S AN EMERGENCY
AND THE PLOT THICKENS
WHEN YOU REALISE THAT ONE OF THE MAIN, IF NOT THE MAIN FUNCTION OF THE CORPUS CALLOSUM IS TO INHIBIT THE OTHER HEMISPHERE

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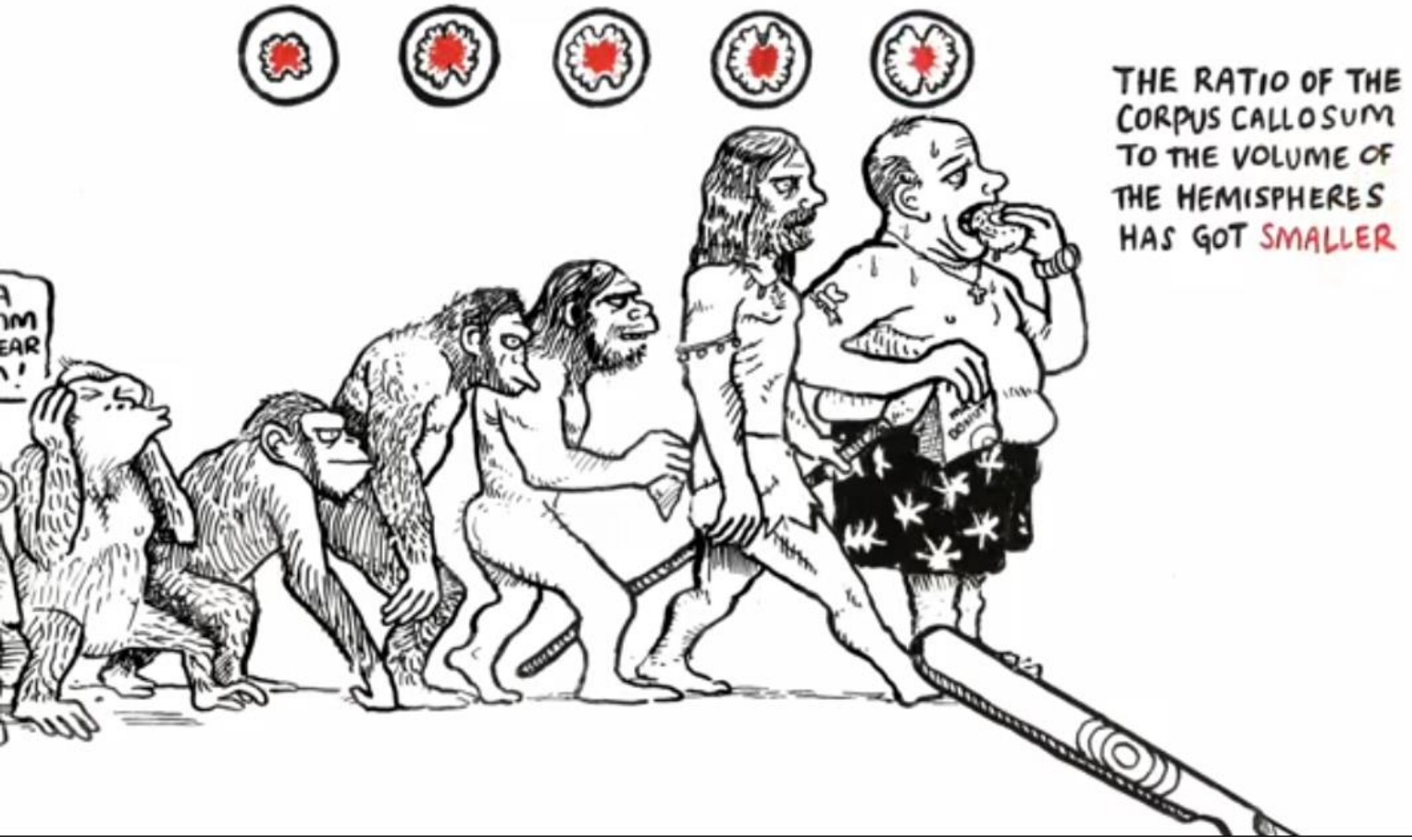
THE RATIO OF THE CORPUS CALLOSUM TO THE VOLUME OF THE HEMISPHERES HAS GOT SMALLER

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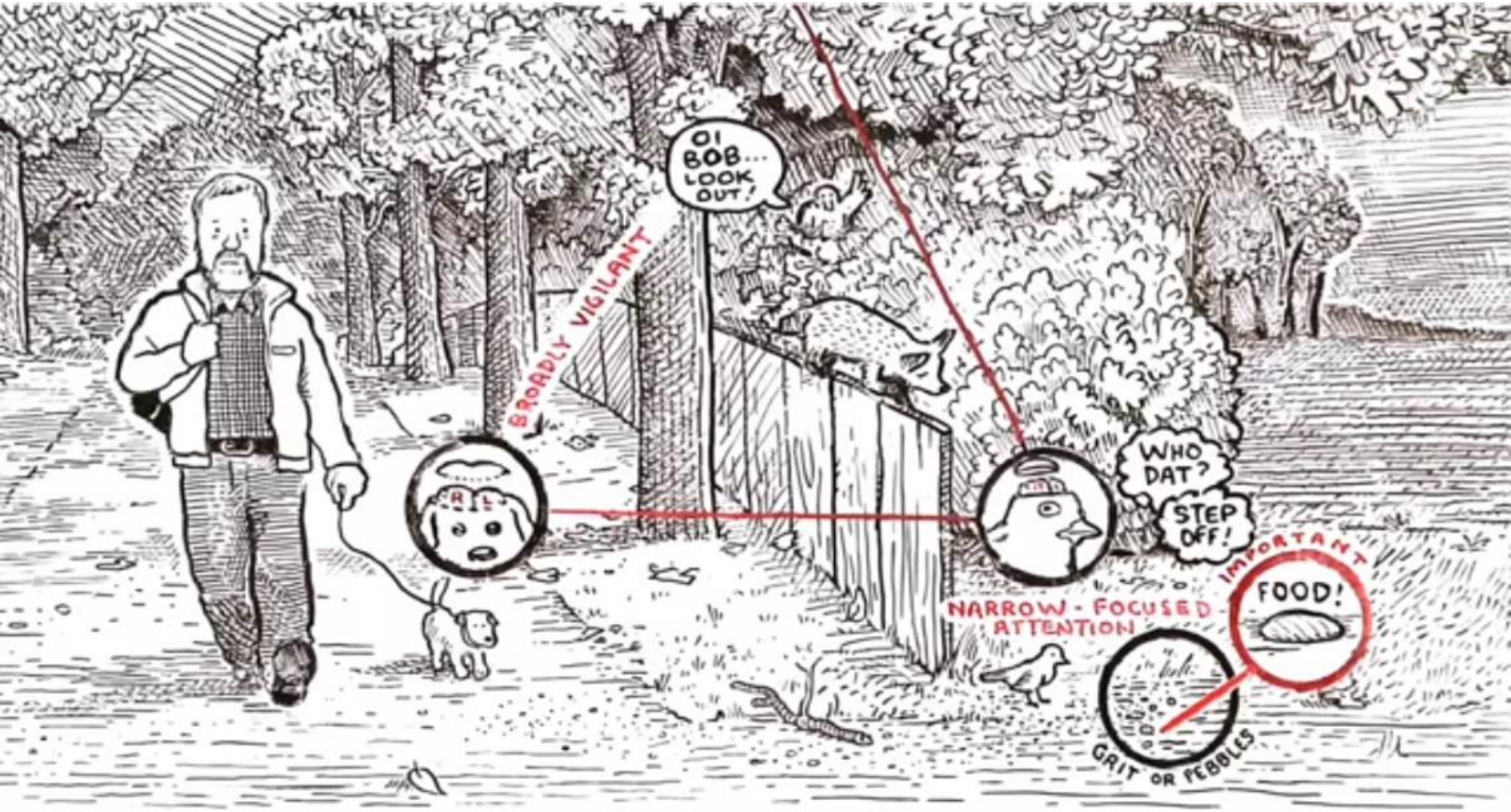
OI BOB... LOOK OUT!
BROADLY VIGILANT
WHO DAT?
STEP OFF!
NARROW - FOCUSED ATTENTION
IMPORTANT
FOOD!
GRIT OR PEBBLES

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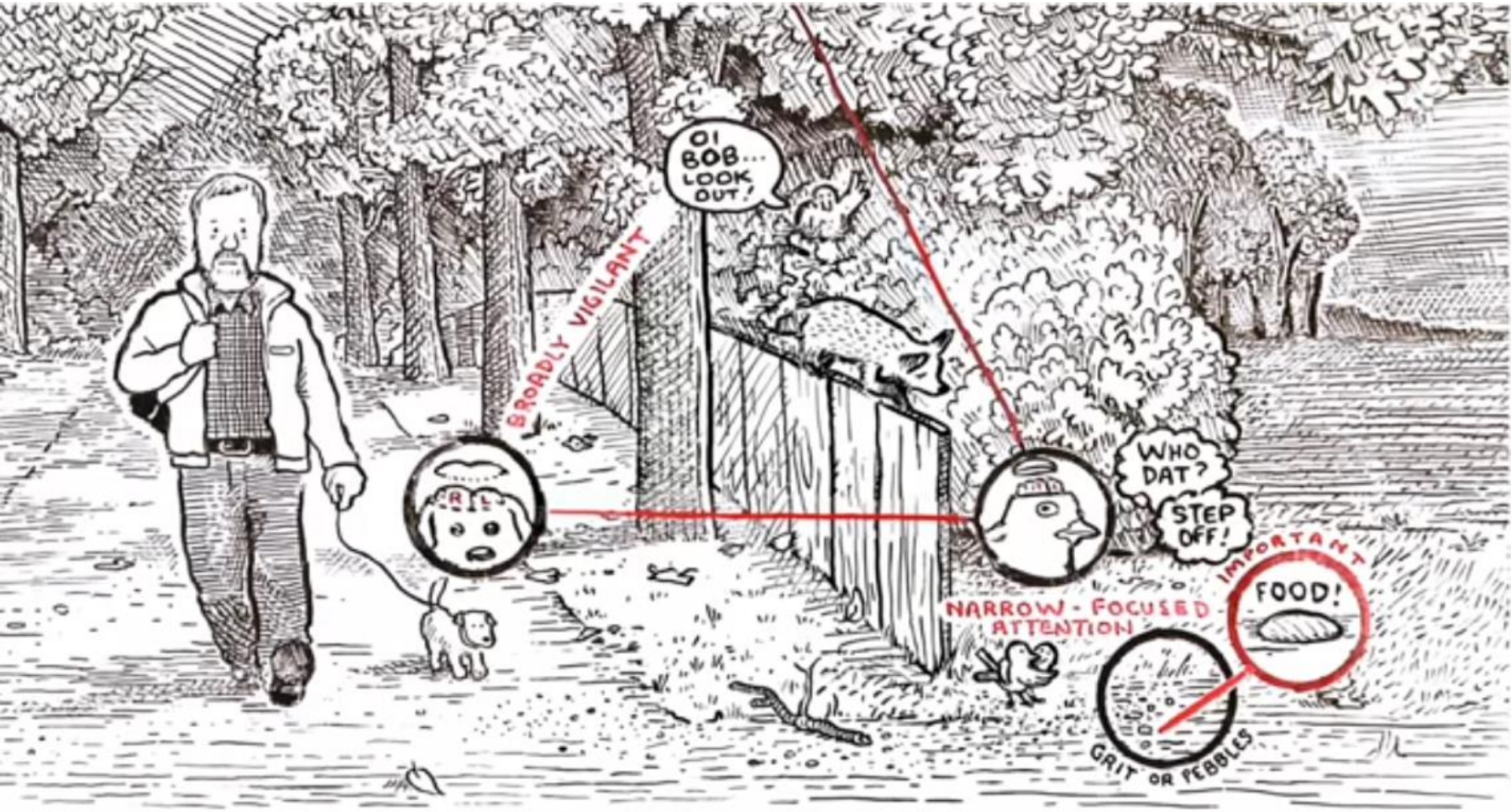
BROADLY VIGILANT
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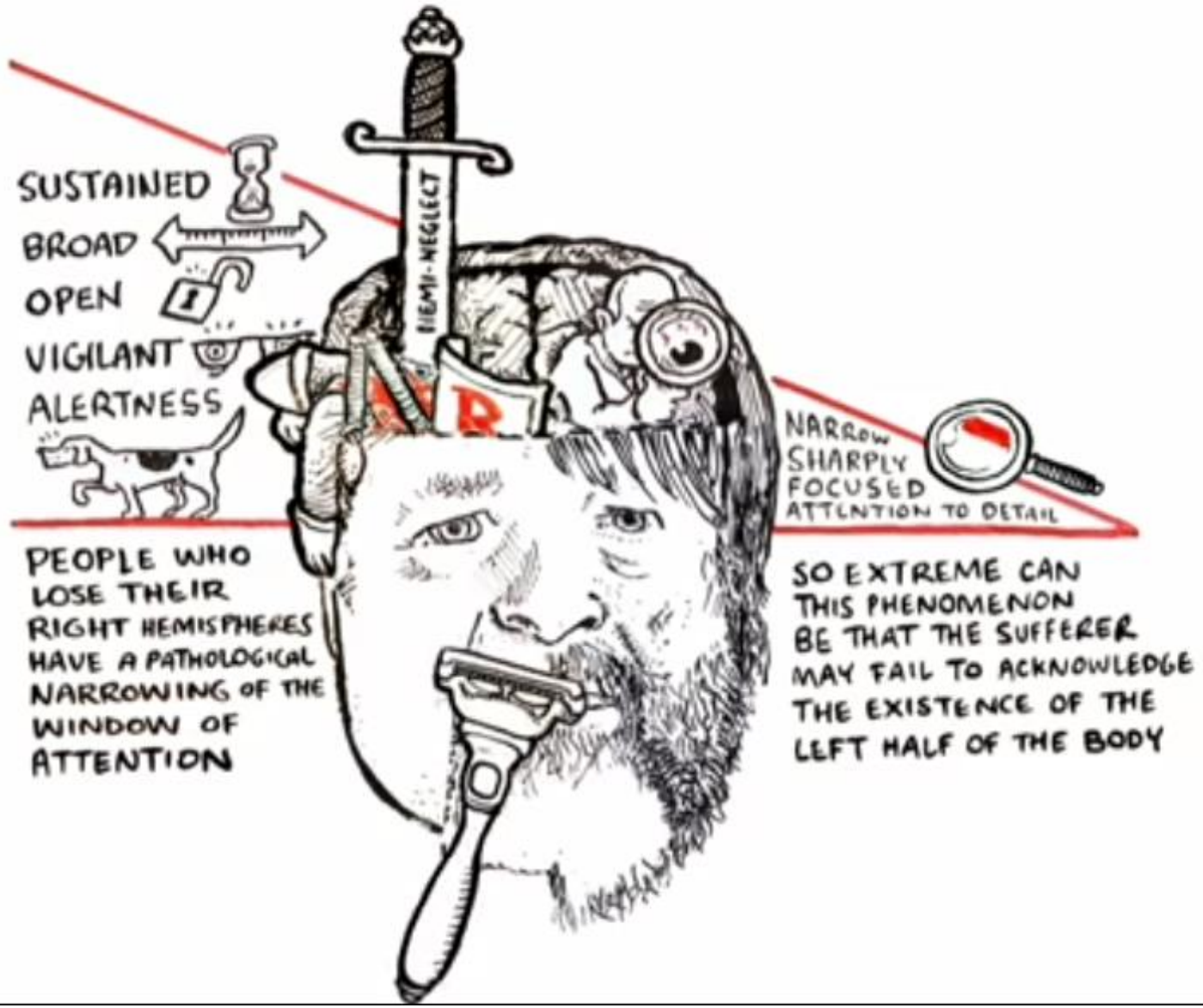
SUSTAINED
BROAD
OPEN
VIGILANT
ALERTNESS
HEMI-NEGLECT
NARROW
SHARPLY
FOCUSED
ATTENTION TO DETAIL
PEOPLE WHO LOSE THEIR RIGHT HEMISPHERES HAVE A PATHOLOGICAL NARROWING OF THE WINDOW OF ATTENTION
SO EXTREME CAN THIS PHENOMENON BE THAT THE SUFFERER MAY FAIL TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXISTENCE OF THE LEFT HALF OF THE BODY

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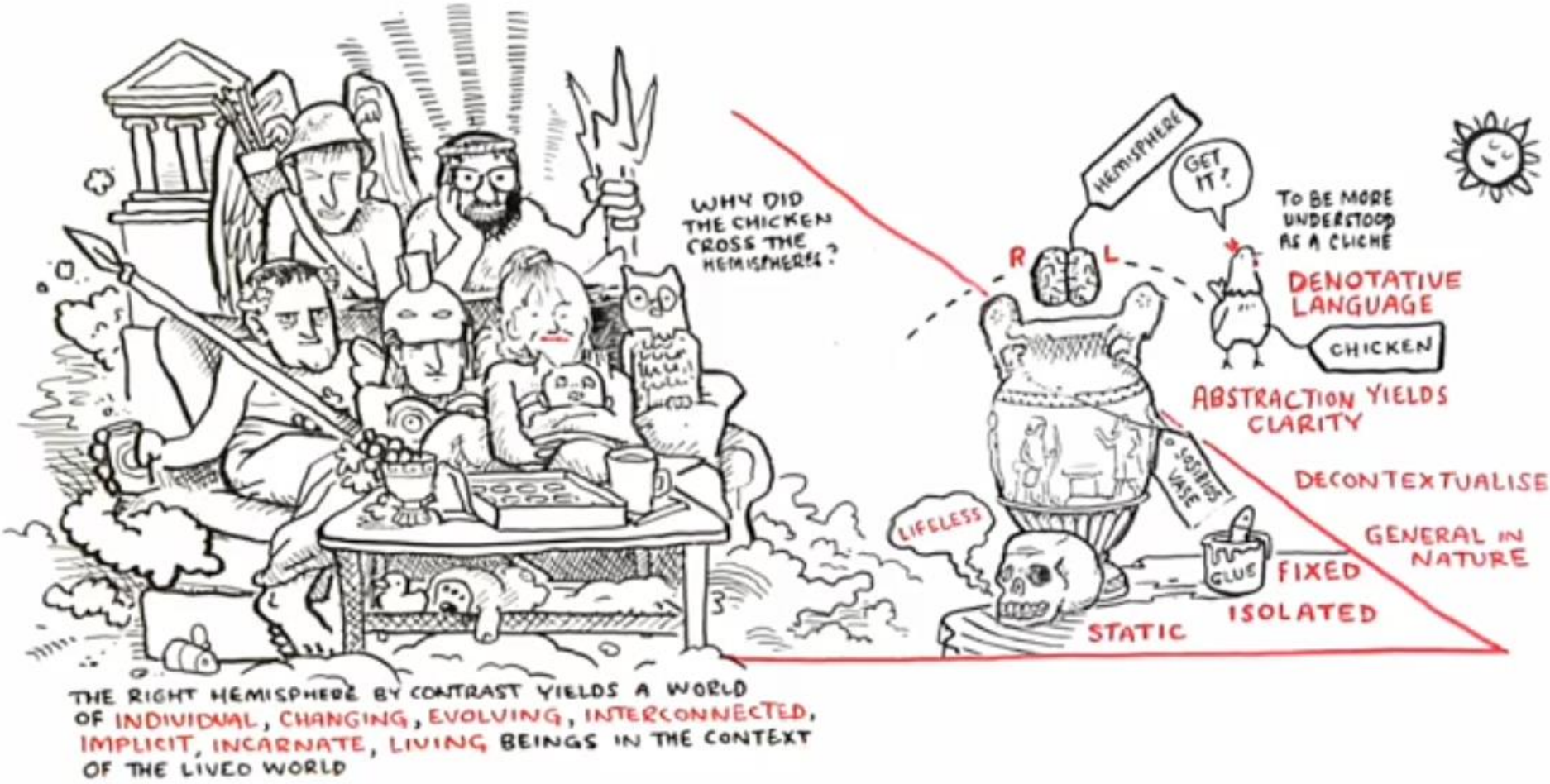
WHY DID THE CHICKEN CROSS THE HEMISPHERES?
HEMISPHERE
GET IT?
TO BE MORE UNDERSTOOD AS A CLICHE
R
L
DENOTATIVE LANGUAGE
CHICKEN
ABSTRACTION YIELDS CLARITY
DECONTEXTUALISED
GENERAL IN NATURE
FIXED
ISOLATED
STATIC
LIFELESS
GLUE
THE RIGHT HEMISPHERE BY CONTRAST YIELDS A WORLD OF INDIVIDUAL, CHANGING, EVOLVING, INTERCONNECTED, IMPLICIT, INCARNATE, LIVING BEINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LIVED WORLD

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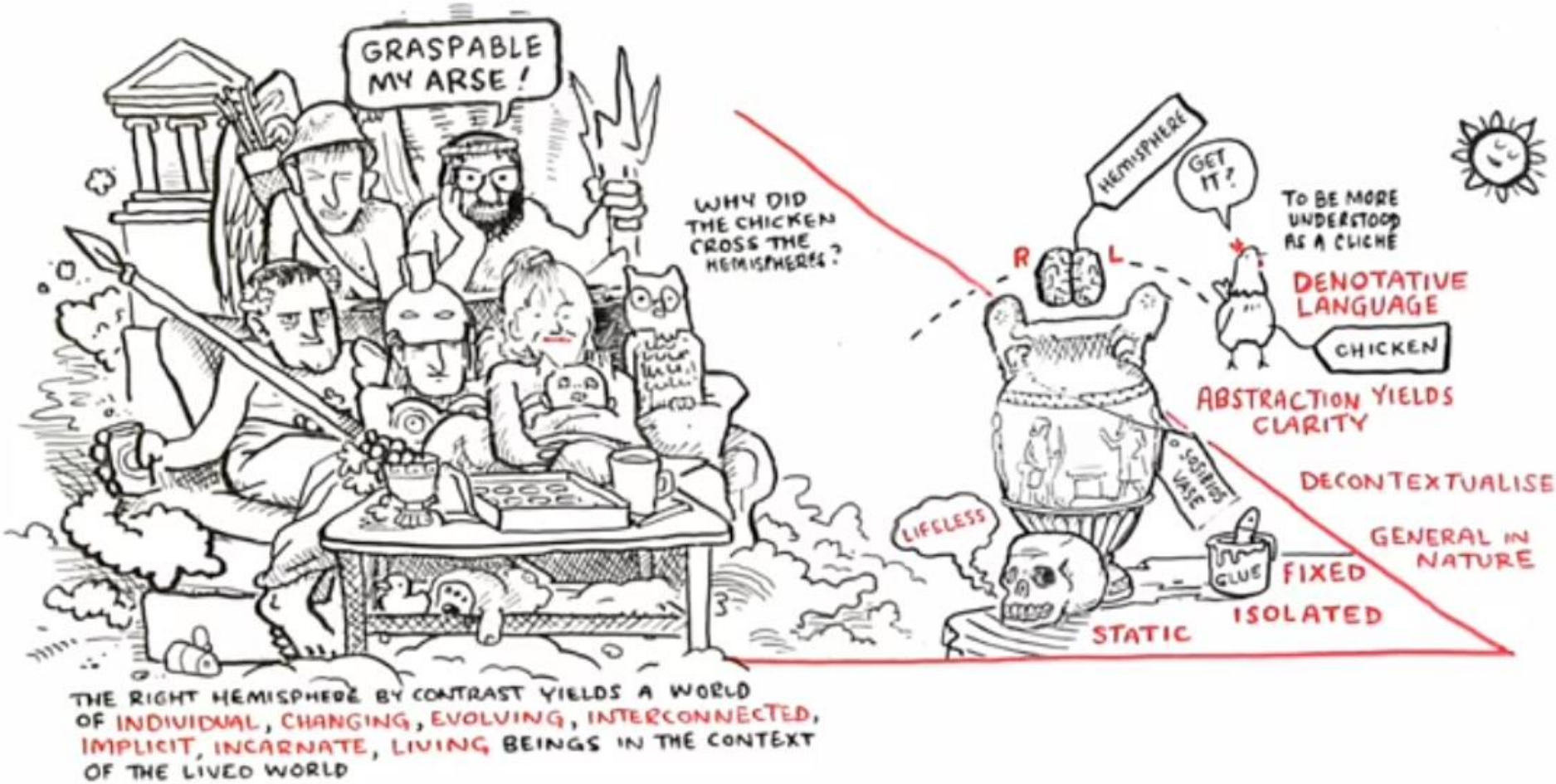
GRASPABLE MY ARSE!
WHY DID THE CHICKEN CROSS THE HEMISPHERES?
HEMISPHERE
GET IT?
TO BE MORE UNDERSTOOD AS A CLICHÉ
R
L
DENOTATIVE LANGUAGE
CHICKEN
ABSTRACTION YIELDS CLARITY
DECONTEXTUALISED
GENERAL IN NATURE
FIXED
ISOLATED
STATIC
LIFELESS
GLUE
THE RIGHT HEMISPHERE BY CONTRAST YIELDS A WORLD OF INDIVIDUAL, CHANGING, EVOLVING, INTERCONNECTED, IMPLICIT, INCARNATE, LIVING BEINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LIVED WORLD

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Their distinct roles also give rise to *empathy*

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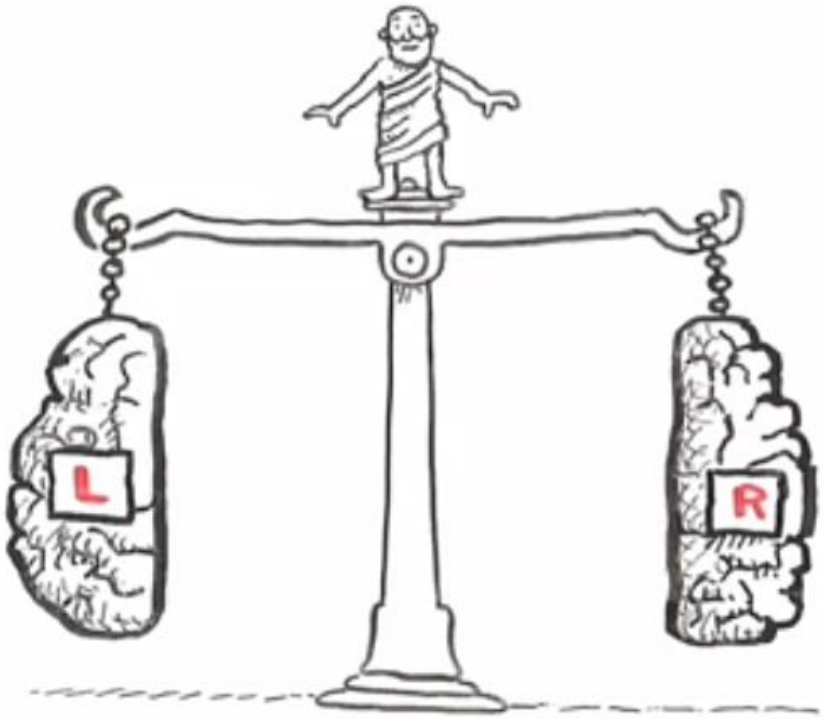

6th CENTURY B.C. AUGUSTAN ERA

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15th/16th CENTURY IN EUROPE

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15th/16th CENTURY IN EUROPE

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...AND IT LEADS TO
RESENTMENT
UNHAPPINESS
AND AN
EXPLOSION
OF
MENTAL
ILLNESS
WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHICH IS PARADOXICAL
WE PURSUE HAPPINESS

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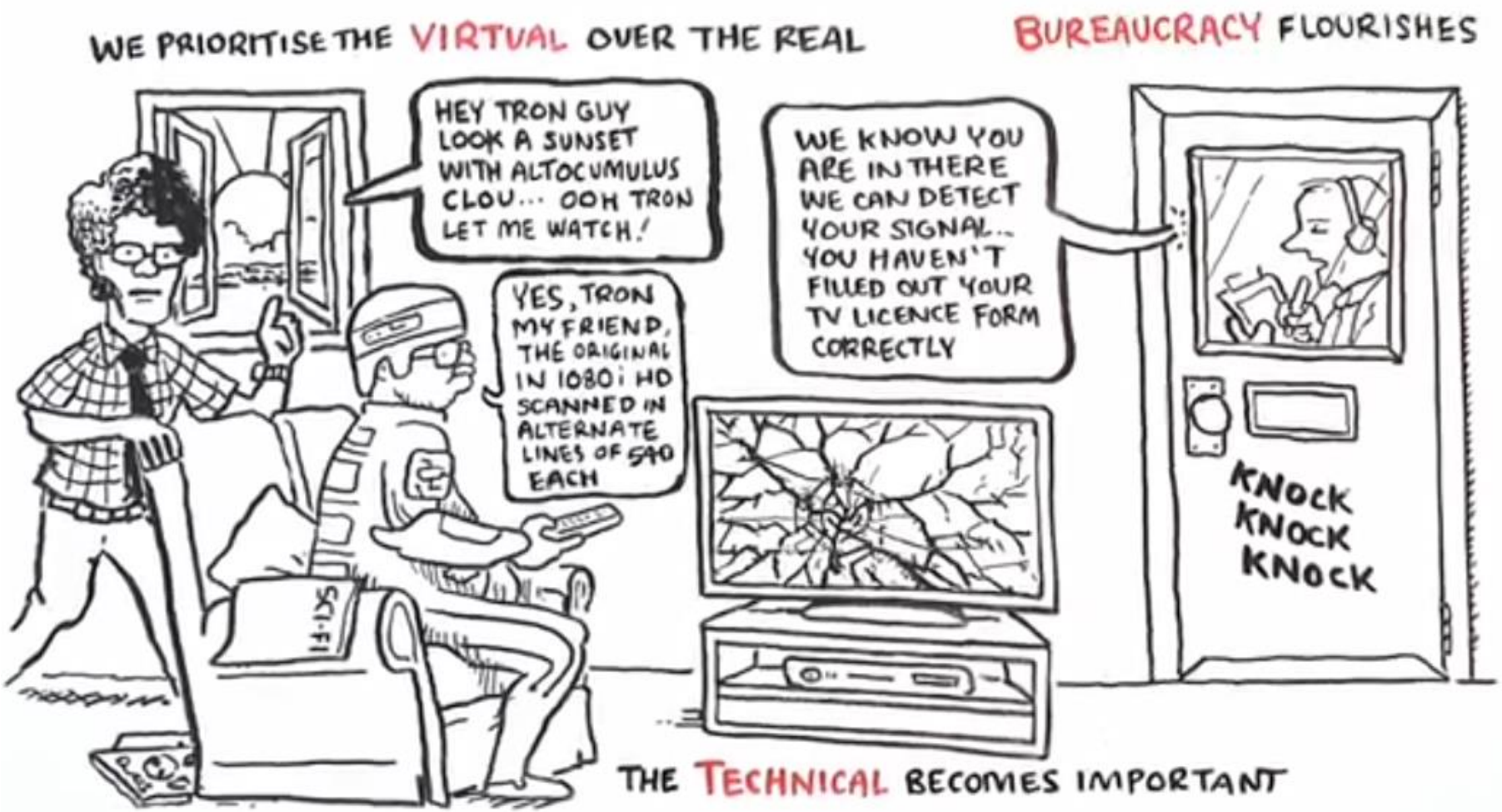
WE PRIORITISE THE VIRTUAL OVER THE REAL
BUREAUCRACY FLOURISHES
HEY TRON GUY LOOK A SUNSET WITH ALTOCUMULUS CLOU... OOH TRON LET ME WATCH!
YES, TRON MY FRIEND, THE ORIGINAL IN 1080i HD SCANNED IN ALTERNATE LINES OF 540 EACH
WE KNOW YOU ARE IN THERE WE CAN DETECT YOUR SIGNAL.. YOU HAVEN'T FILLED OUT YOUR TV LICENCE FORM CORRECTLY
KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
SCI-FI
THE TECHNICAL BECOMES IMPORTANT

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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

Totaliterianism

Suppression of creative artists/writers, eg under Stalin

EROSION OF PITY, EG IN FACISM

‘Devitalisation’ / boredom

Woman in an Armchair

Pablo Picasso (1932) Woman in an Armchair [Painting] © Picasso Estate. Downloaded from http://www.pablopicasso.org/woman-in-red-armchair.jsp (9 May 2017).

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
TICKETS
IN
LIMITED EDITION
WARHOL
BANKSY
WAY OUT
Campbell's
TOMATO SOUP

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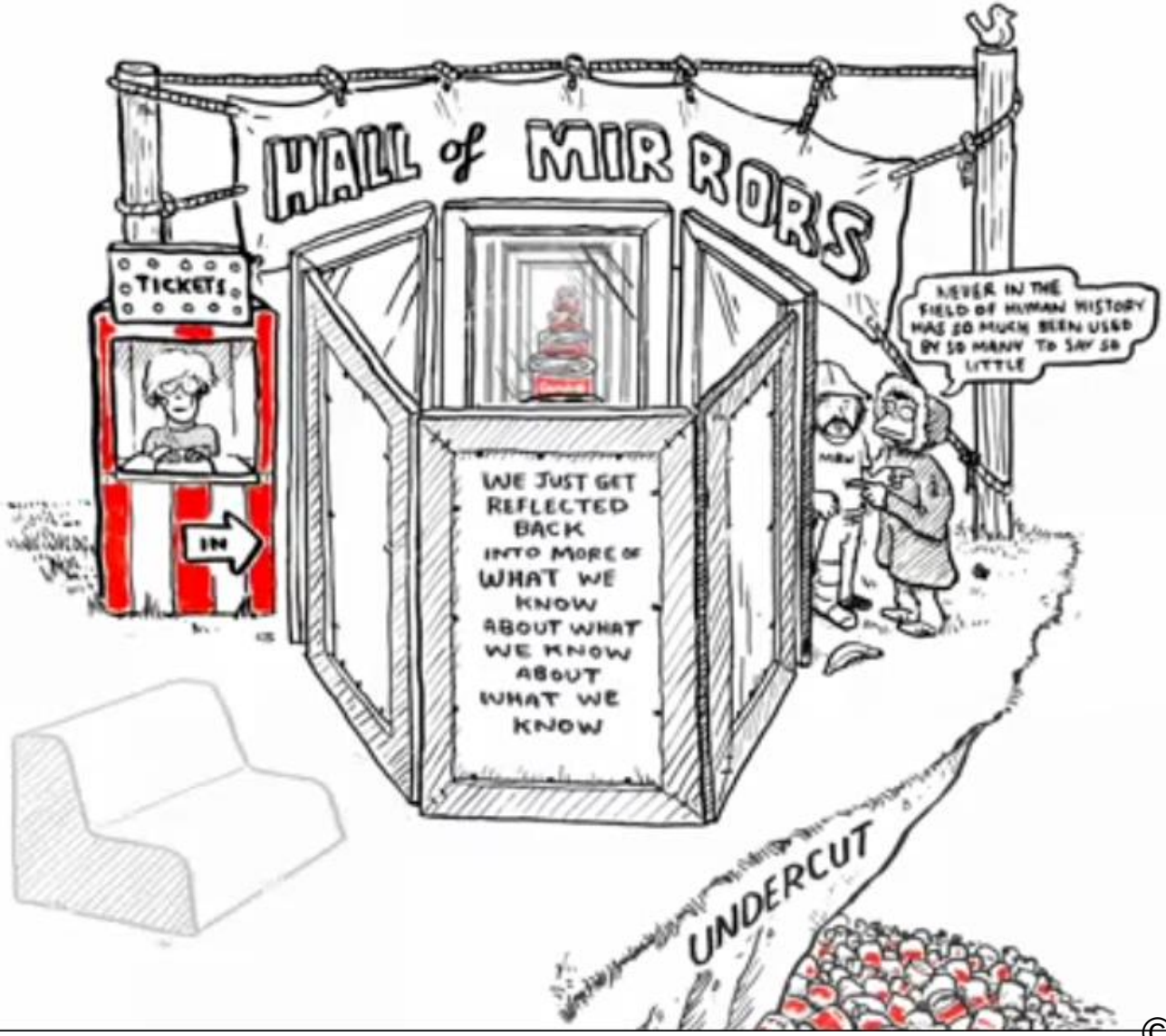
HALL of MIRRORS
TICKETS
IN
WE JUST GET REFLECTED BACK INTO MORE OF WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT WHAT WE KNOW
NEVER IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN HISTORY HAS SO MUCH BEEN USED BY SO MANY TO SAY SO LITTLE
UNDERCUT

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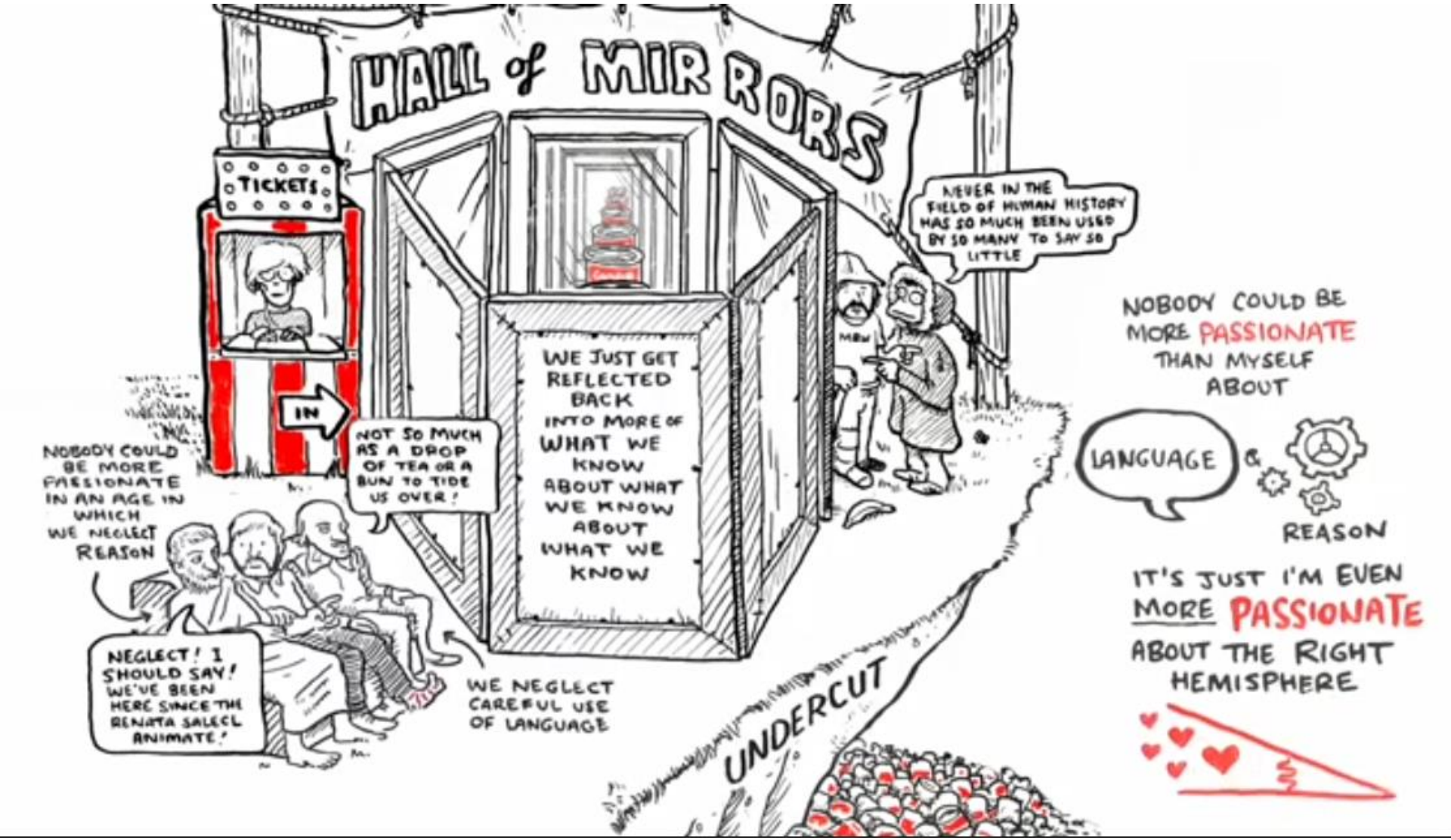
HALL of MIRRORS
TICKETS
IN
NOT SO MUCH AS A DROP OF TEA OR A BUN TO TIDE US OVER!
WE JUST GET REFLECTED BACK INTO MORE OF WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT WHAT WE KNOW
NEVER IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN HISTORY HAS SO MUCH BEEN USED BY SO MANY TO SAY SO LITTLE
NOBODY COULD BE MORE PASSIONATE IN AN AGE IN WHICH WE NEGLECT REASON
NEGLECT! I SHOULD SAY! WE'VE BEEN HERE SINCE THE RENATA SALECL ANIMATE!
WE NEGLECT CAREFUL USE OF LANGUAGE
UNDERCUT
NOBODY COULD BE MORE PASSIONATE THAN MYSELF ABOUT
LANGUAGE
&
REASON
IT'S JUST I'M EVEN MORE PASSIONATE ABOUT THE RIGHT HEMISPHERE

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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
HALL of MIRRORS
TICKETS

© The RSA 2011

Beauty ‘**in any living thing**’ (p.445)

‘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)

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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)

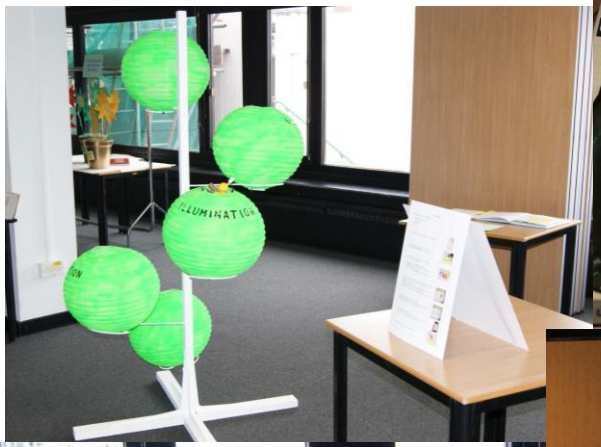
Claxton: What might that world be like?
(pp.264–92)

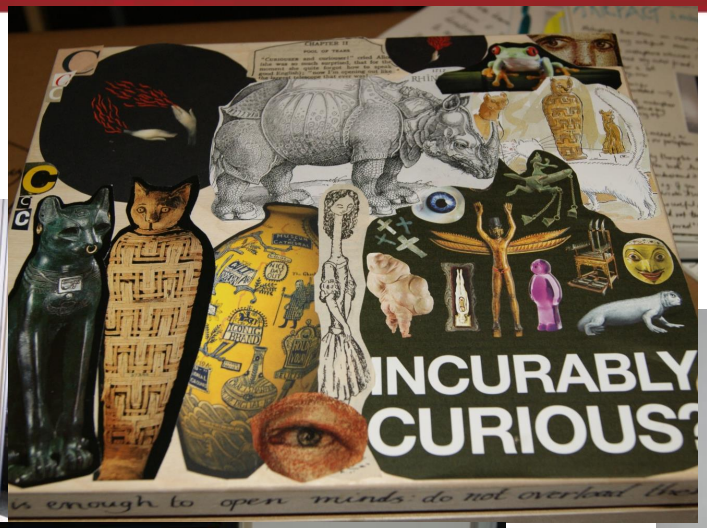
- **Embodied lifestyle**
- **Education**
- **Medicine**
- **‘Real-world intelligence’** / ‘learning agility’
- **‘A New Materialism’**, rebalancing of respect for **‘making’** eg

  MIT course ‘How To Make (Almost) Anything’

  Stanford course for engineers in bicycle or model aeroplane building (p.282)

(Claxton, 2015)





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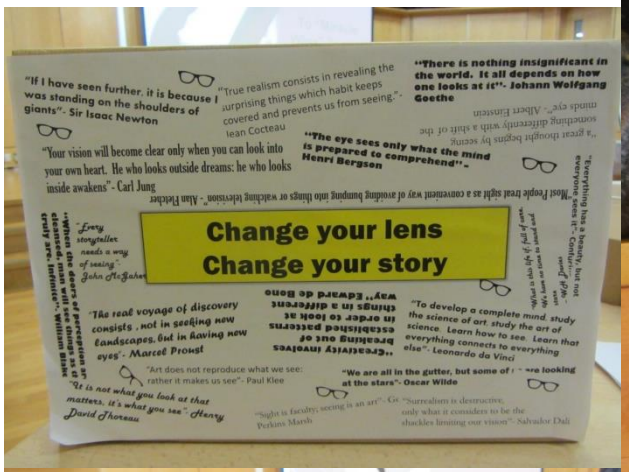
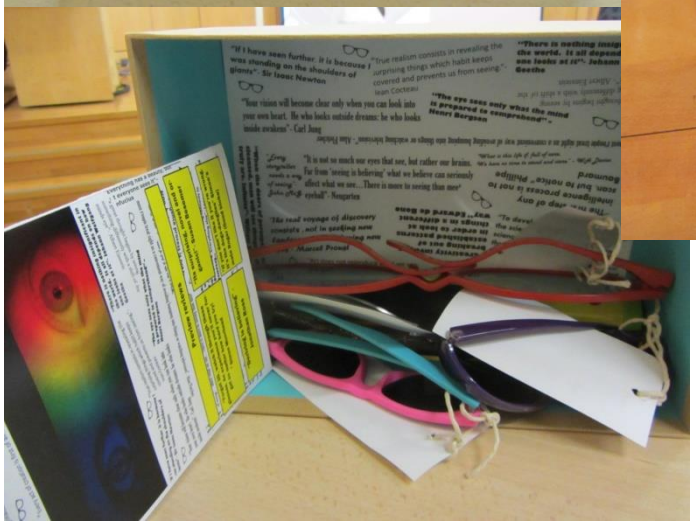
Group performances





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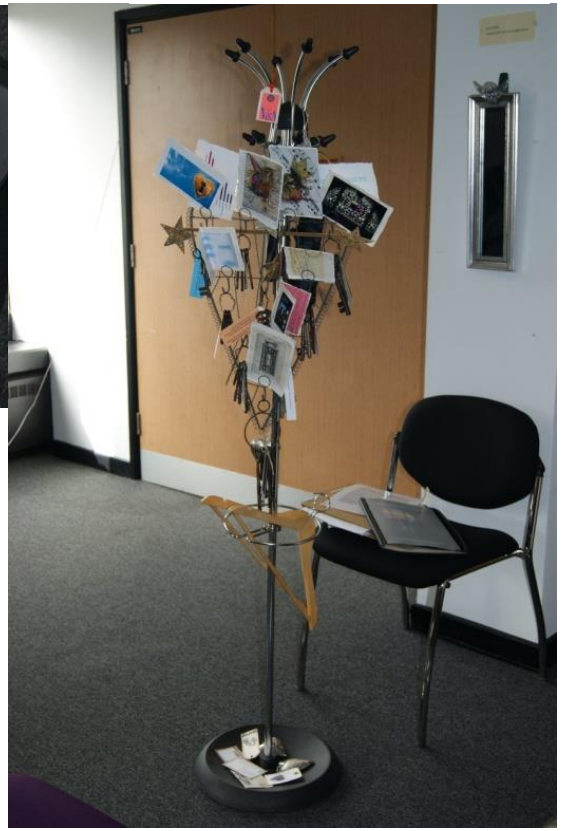
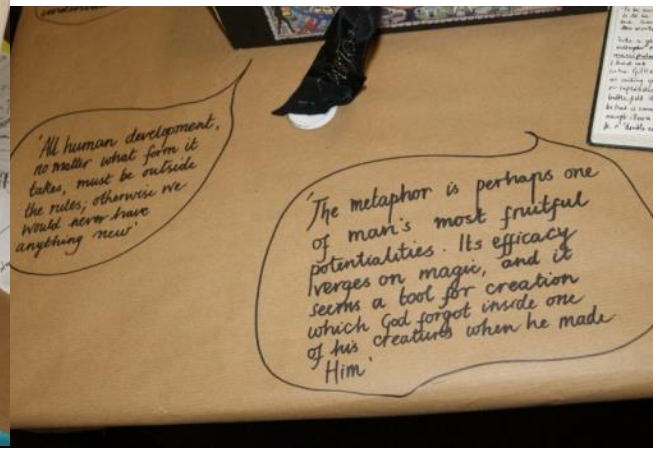
Artefact Show





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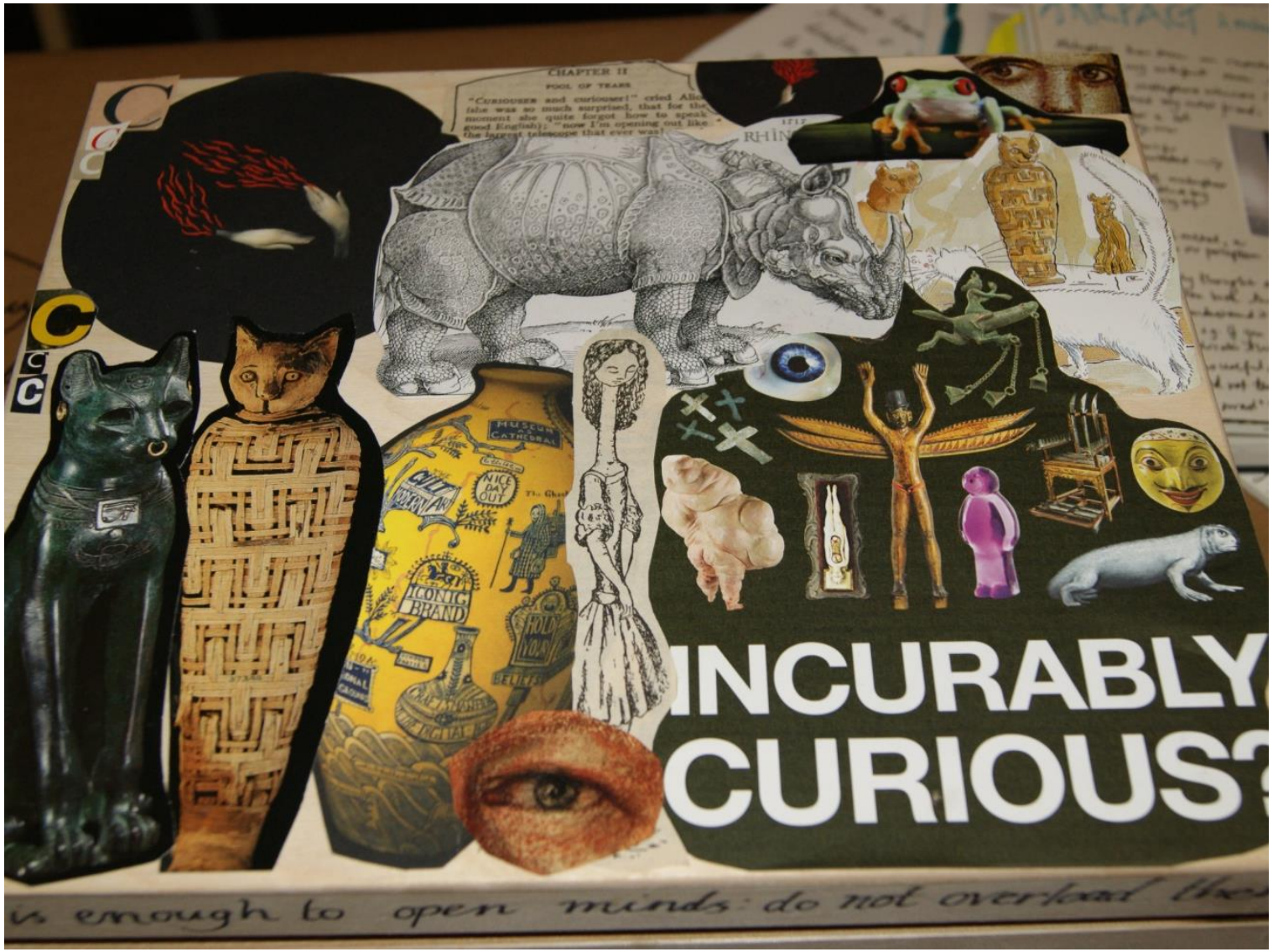
Some conclusions…

- **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?



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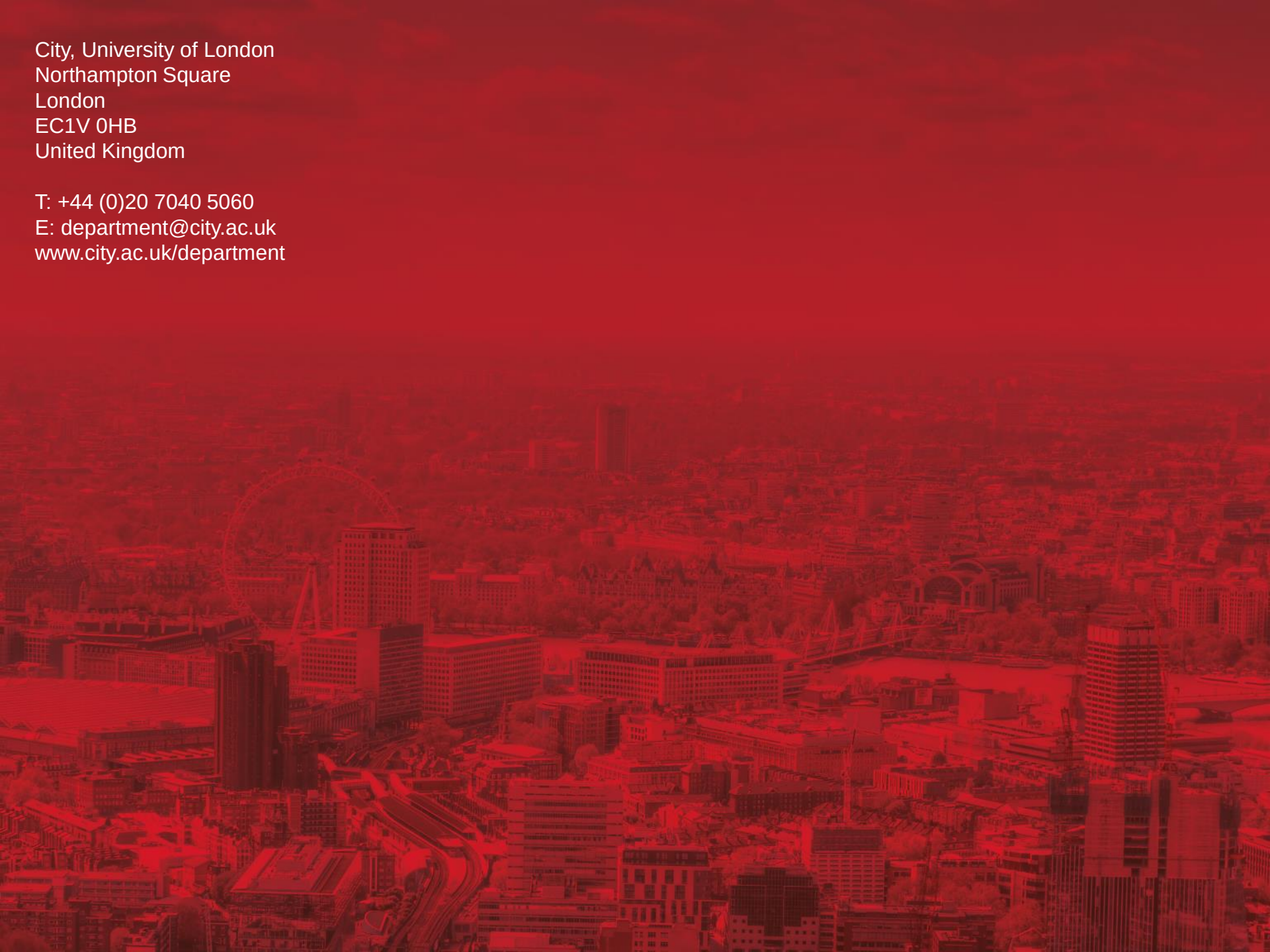
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