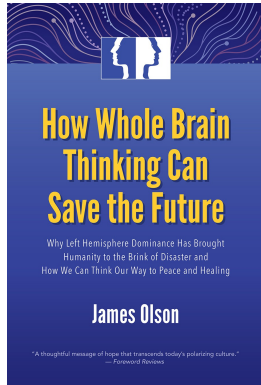


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## How Whole Brain Thinking Can Save the Future

**James Olson**

A practical inquiry into the operating systems of the left and right brain hemispheres and their surprising influence over lifestyle, politics, business, religion, and sexual orientation

**Winner of the 2017 Montaigne Medal, presented to the most thought-provoking books, works that illuminate, progress, or redirect thought.**

### The Split-Brain's Remarkable Effect on Consciousness and Culture

In 1981 a Nobel Prize was awarded for Roger Sperry's discovery that each brain hemisphere was independently conscious and exhibited contrasting functions. The public became fascinated, and popular ideas about the left- and right-brain-dominant personality types entered the parlance. Yet, this important discussion eventually tapered off after inconclusive results produced error and controversy.

Captivated by the brain's complexity and supported by improved technologies, researchers turned to narrower concerns, focusing on the brain's various parts—its so-called “modules.” But in light of the extreme polarization we are experiencing in our culture, many of today's scientists and thinkers are returning once again to consider the split-brain phenomenon, and one result is a bold new synthesis proposed by integral philosopher James Olson, in his book *How Whole Brain Thinking Can Save the Future: Why Left Hemisphere Dominance Has Brought Humanity to the Brink of Disaster and How We Can Think Our Way to Peace and Healing* (Origin Press, January 2017). The author's previous book on philosophy and neuroscience was the winner of numerous national awards, including the ForeWord Reviews 2011 Philosophy Book of the Year.

Rather than explore *what* the hemispheres do (language, math, etc.), Olson looks at *how* they do things—the mind's management process. Working as a holistic and interdisciplinary science reporter, he pursues a special focus on understanding the functional character of the two hemispheres—particularly the focus of their attention (the perspective they confer on us) and the nature of their default (typical) response. Keeping in mind their natural unity as a complementary team, he looks at how each uniquely affects our behavior—including the consequences when their views fail to harmonize.

### Characteristics of Olson's holistic brain/mind/consciousness model include:

- Each hemisphere houses an operating system to coordinate its actions. Each is capable of either managing the brain as a whole or acting in a supportive role.
- As a result of three types of genetic dominance—complete, incomplete, and codominance—four types of brain operating systems are produced.
- Recognizing that information inflows into the brain are separate from information outflows, Olson posits that the brain's information input and output are independently subject to genetic dominance, permitting one of the four systems to manage information input and one of the four to manage output, creating 16 different genetically-determined operating-system combinations.
- Olson's model explains masculine-tending straight women, gay men, and lesbians, as well as

feminine-tending straight men, gay men, and lesbians—and more.

## Does your brain manage you—or do you manage your brain?

If we are to better understand and manage our lifestyle, our culture, its politics, and our relationship with the opposite sex, rather than let the brain's inherited/default tendencies manage us, it is vital that we manage it. Olson shows that this is possible, through what he calls "conscious creative mind management"—cognitive control of our perspective by consciously directing our attention to obtain the viewpoint we inherently lack. To be effective managers we need answers to questions such as these:

- How do the two hemispheres differ in terms of their viewpoint and the focus of their attention? How do their default responses differ?
- How does brain lateralization affect our polarized political discourse?
- How can we facilitate greater harmony between our brain's operating systems, and thus begin to heal ourselves, our cultural divisions, and our planet?

Olson's treatment of the subject is integrative and pragmatic. After developing a rich conceptual toolbox in the first half of the book, Olson then turns to more practical and often provocative matters in the second half—covering the drug war, the military-industrial-congressional complex, and religious leadership—even abortion.

As he investigates the effects of the brain's operating systems on personal and cultural relationships, Olson highlights the often-tragic distortions that can result from the simple lack of harmony between the hemispheres, and explains how to minimize them.

## A Path Out of Polarization

Perhaps the book's most immediately useful treatment of contemporary life—besides an improved understanding of self and the opposite sex—lies in the way *How Whole Brain Thinking Can Save the Future* addresses the social polarization that is tearing so many cultures apart. If politicians and pundits employed a whole-brain perspective, Olson shows, this would allow them to see the complementary nature of the two seemingly disparate sides and ultimately find a way to achieve unity.

In the final analysis, Olson's discourse shows that the product of the harmonization of the two hemispheres is *peace*—in all domains—and reminds us that we have the freedom to adjust our perception and our creativity by consciously shifting our attention as the occasion demands. In addition to Eric Hoffer's prestigious Montaigne Medal, book awards include a Silver Nautilus award in the Science, Cosmology and Expanded Consciousness category, an IPPY for Philosophy/Mental Health, and *Foreword Review's* 2017 Body, Mind, Spirit Book of the Year.



**About the Author:** James Olson is an integral philosopher whose studies have included religion, art, psychology, neuroscience, and systems management. He has attended the University of Vienna; Oklahoma University, where he received a Bachelor of Business Administration; and the Kansas City Art Institute. Following the unifying guidelines of philosophy and drawing on his broad education, Olson has made it his mission to help bring the planet's masculine (dualistic left-brain) and feminine (holistic right-brain) energies into greater harmony, through his advocacy of whole-brain thinking. Olson's first book, *The Whole-Brain Path to Peace* earned several national book awards, including *Foreword Reviews* 2011 Philosophy Book of the Year. [TheWholeBrainPath.com](http://TheWholeBrainPath.com)

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