



Down Brain Collage

In week one of LARFP we were treated to David Abram's seminal essay The Air Aware. In this he examines the state in our culture of consciousness science and finds, like Larry Dossey and many others before him, "even among researchers in the burgeoning field of "consciousness studies" there exists no basic agreement as to just what "consciousness," "awareness," or even "mind" actually *is*." Abram concludes, "mind is not at all a human possession, but is rather a property of the earthly biosphere — a property in which we, along with the other animals and the plants, all participate..."

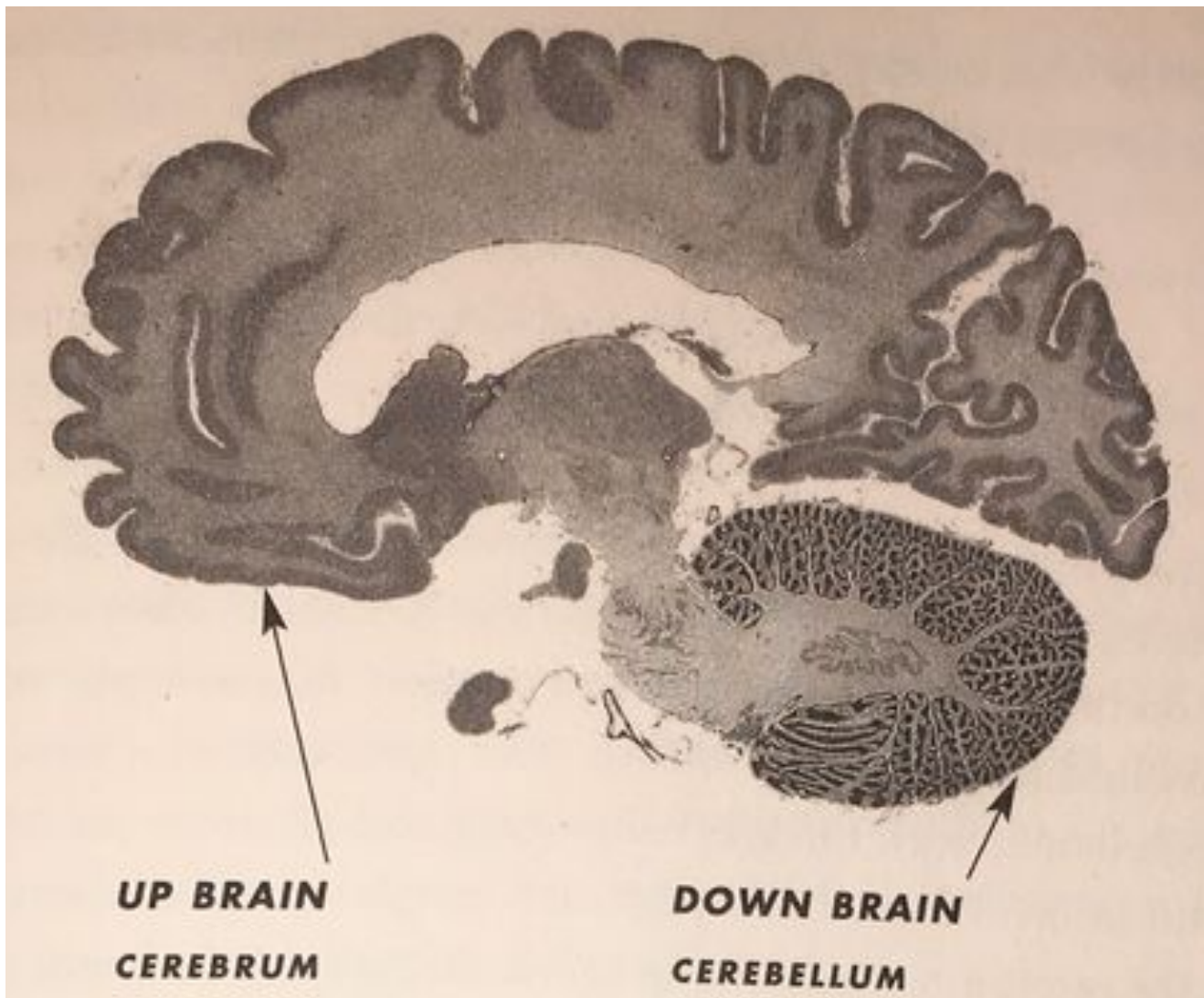
Yet, the human brain (which we erroneously call our "mind") has a lot to do with how mind manifests. It sure *feels* like our mind or at least that part of ourselves which does not rot. How to engage brain as ally in experiencing mind via writing a poem? I trust that Charles Olson, Denise Levertov, Robert Duncan, Joanne Kyger, Michael McClure, Eileen Myles, Brenda Hillman, Wanda Coleman and others who've articulated, practiced & advocated spontaneous composition methods knew this brain/consciousness dichotomy & had the experience of bridging that gap in their own writing practices. Some found answers in Asian wisdom traditions. Kyger & McClure practiced meditation & Buddhist cosmology found its way into their poems. One concept from Taoism has similarities to the Projective/Organic approach. Wu-Wei is described as a "non-striving mindset." How to put yourself into a state of Wu-Wei? Walking. From the same author as the essay on Wu-Wei comes this nugget:

One day in 2009... I bumped into my friend Maria... Maria is a poet... I began telling her about all the research I was doing on the daily habits of creative people and how... physical activity was a key to creating 'superfluidity' (no friction or viscosity) of thought... Maria looked at me and said, "I ride the elliptical trainer for at least 40 minutes every day. Whenever I start moving my arms and legs back and forth, poetry starts to



pour out of me.” As Maria moved her arms and legs back and forth to emulate riding the elliptical, suddenly, I realized that her bipedal motion was engaging all four hemispheres of both the cerebrum and cerebellum. And that the connectivity between ALL FOUR brain hemispheres might be optimizing brain function and lead to fluid intelligence.

And did you see the amazing graph on that page:



UP BRAIN**CEREBRUM**

Big brain
Primate platform
Thinking (psychology)
Cerebral
Thinking and deciding
Rational
Intellectual
Free will
Human
Declarative memory
MapQuest directions
Conscious memory
Strategic
Voluntary movement
Lyrics
Volition
Autobiographical self
Modern
Superego
Reality
Tip of the iceberg
Knowing
Ethics/values
Sportsmanlike
Top-down processing

DOWN BRAIN**CEREBELLUM**

Little brain
Reptilian platform
Non-thinking (behavioral)
Cerebellar
Doing and feeling
Emotional
Intuitive
Impulsive
Animal
Implicit muscle memory
Autopilot
Unconscious memory
Athletic
Proprioception
Music
Habit
Core self
Primitive
Id
Dream
Under the surface iceberg
Knowing without knowing
Cravings/urges
Survival of the fittest
Bottom-up processing



WRITING EXERCISE:

- 1) Go on a walk. You have to plan to go out for at least twenty minutes. If you have issues with walking, have someone push you in a wheelchair in silence for at least 20 minutes. You should walk at least that. Go with the intention that you'll get potent images for a poem.
- 2) Take photographs with your cellphone, or make notes in your pocket journal about what you see. What kind of sky? What kind of clouds? Who is out there? What color are things? Slow down to notice dew drops on blades of grass, or Kingfisher sitting on a chain link fence, or falling maple leaves. Maybe you can even find a colorful leaf on your walk. Ask for permission and, of granted, take it. (It could go into your ground altar.) Any encounters with the natural world should be noted, along with your associations of the encounter. They do not have to all be "positive." Feel free to engage your shadow self, your wole self.
- 3) Return to your writing desk. From the three articles referenced in this document find lines that appeal to you. (Extra points for scientific jargon, which adds weirdness to your poem.) Cut & paste the lines into a Word doc or type them in. Have them ready when you write.
- 4) If you are not experienced with using collage in composing poetry, there is this [Berrigan Sonnet College](#) exercise which may help.
- 5) Take one of the images from your walk by looking at your photos or your pocket journal notes. You may already know which one it is before looking. Start writing a poem with that line. As always, hyper-specificity helps you reflect on what happened and what IS happening in a way that can mark it forever and thus begin to enter the mythic realm. What DAY are you composing, for instance? Time? What phase is the moon in as you write? What are other astrological specifics. This



website will give you the chart of the astrological moment. One could start with these facts if you were composing right now:

Monday, October 16, 2023, 9:03am. Sun in 23° 2' Libra, Moon in 15° 15' Scorpio, Mercury in 20° 30' Libra, Venus in 6° 49' Virgo, Mars in 3° 2' Scorpio, Jupiter in 12° 48' Taurus (r), Saturn in 0° 48' Pisces (r), Uranus in 22° 9' Taurus (r), Neptune in 25° 33' Pisces (r), Pluto in 27° 53' Capricorn.

Once you've set the scene, add phrases from the essays, alternating with images from your walk and the associations they reveal in you in concrete images/sensations. As this is a DOWN BRAIN exercise, you could add in touches from the "Down Brain" side of the chart. Don't take too long. This should be intuitive and remember, you do not have to show anyone the poem you write. It should be fun, liberating even. You could do it as a prose poem, or as a field poem that avoids the lawnmower poetry-style lineation. Do you notice similarities between Wu-Wei and Projective Verse? Is this too Wu-Wu for you? Your little brain may disagree.

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9:25am
16-OCT-2023
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