

## ON DICHOTOMANIA

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The tendency to perceive and conceptualize reality in terms of dichotomous classes has long been recognized as a particular cognitive style. In fact, many very unfortunate chapters in the history of mankind seem to spring from the "black/white thinking" of certain individuals or groups. One can easily think of examples of human disaster that have been based on a compartmentalization of reality into good/bad, right/wrong, patriot/subversive, Christian/heathen, Jew/Gentile, man/woman, friend/foe, us/them, and me/you. As anchor points for the opposite ends of a continuum, such labels obviously contribute to our ability to conceptualize and describe reality as we perceive it; as all-or-none dichotomous categories, they can become extremely pathological.

Recently it appears that the tendency to perceive and conceptualize reality in terms of dichotomous categories, which I have chosen to call "dichotomania," is on the increase.

Because of the potentially deleterious effects of this phenomenon outlined above, I regard this trend as an ominous one and have therefore devoted a substantial amount of energy to research in this area. In addition to informal survey data and clinical observation, I have begun to develop new scales and scoring procedures for the MMPI, TAT, Rorschach and WAIS to aid in identifying individuals suffering from this disorder. Preliminary and unpublished results of this research effort indicate that there are a substantial number of individuals so afflicted, and in fact many more than one would have expected from a casual observation of the population at large.

The more subtle and refined psychometric techniques show an incidence of alarming proportions. (In fact some people who I had previously regarded as valued colleagues, who volunteered to be subjects in the pilot studies to develop these new psychometrics, turned out to be afflicted to a degree that I never would have guessed even after years of professional and social association with them.) Perhaps even more alarming are the longitudinal data that give almost no indication of spontaneous remission, and in fact show that the syndrome only grows worse over time in those who manifest it.

Our next thrust in the ongoing research effort will involve attempts to identify the neurophysiological substrates of this syndrome. With recent major advances in technology in this area, as well as the extensive research now available on the "bicameral" mind, I feel that it will not take long to achieve a breakthrough in a reliable neurophysiological procedure to identify persons suffering from dichotomania. Given the crucial significance of this work for the well-being (and perhaps even the survival) of mankind, I will be devoting all of my time and energy to this effort. In the meantime, I thank my lucky stars that I am not one of them.