

# Hemisphere Theory: Much More Than You Wanted to Know

 [hivewired.wordpress.com/2019/12/02/hemisphere-theory-much-more-than-you-wanted-to-know/](https://hivewired.wordpress.com/2019/12/02/hemisphere-theory-much-more-than-you-wanted-to-know/)

Saede Riordan

December 2, 2019

**Epistemic Status:** Summary of someone's ideas, not personally endorsed

**Content Warning:** Neuropsychological Infohazard, De-Biasing Infohazard, Evocation Infohazard

**Recommended Prior Reading:** [Sincerely.fyi](#), [Highly Advanced Tulpamancy 201](#), [The Nature of the Soul](#)

I read the news sometimes. Have you been reading the news? There's been a lot of interesting developments. I'm *not* going to comment on the massive [spoilers miri drama] in this post, but all of this stuff has been rather on my mind. As a result, I've been thinking a lot about the ontology of someone I had rather respected, but who of late has been making some serious tactical errors.

Having read through all of Ziz's new posts as well as having reread all her old ones to refresh myself on all her jargon, I realized that there's not actually a central summary anywhere in any of her writing about the hemisphere theory that the majority of her ontology is built up out of.

Since I'm very about theories of consciousness, I decided to fill in that void. This post will attempt to act as an essential summarization of Ziz's Hemisphere Theory. It's important to note before going in, that this theory 1) Contains truth but is still wrong in important ways, 2) Is potentially harmful to certain neurotypes 3) Like the curse of the witch doctor, is only harmful if you believe.

We'll begin, with all of the suffering in the universe.

## The Shade

| As the world fell each of us in our own way was broken.

When we were young, the world seemed so full of promise and potential, so safe, large, and wonderous. Scary at times, sure, but pregnant with possibility; one where the good guys would win. A world that was safe and habitable, a place hospitable to human life. A world where someone would intervene before anything *truly* bad would happen.

And then at some point, like a television shattering that illusion was torn away to reveal a horror of static and circuitry lurking behind the images projected upon the glass. Our innocence fragmented and we were forced to bear the cold hard truths of this world, the neutral world, the world of hard concrete and no padding. A world where children die despite the injustice of it all, a world where no one is coming to save you, a world beyond the reach of God. The revelation of our mortality, of our finite nature, of the machinery that drives our bodies composed from the dust of forgotten supernova and

the darkness between the stars. The existence of suffering, of torture, of genocide, the truth of the pointlessness of it all. What Buddhism calls Dukkha and Leonard Salby calls Mundum, Ziz calls The Shade.

In her essay, Aliveness, Ziz marks this as a metaphorical transition point between someone who is “alive” and someone who is “undead,” a corpse that hasn’t stopped moving yet. When most people are touched by this realization, they are faced with a choice which goes on to fundamentally define them as people. In the face of the existence of the shade, most people simply disassemble their agency and become gears in larger systems. This is considered adaptive in society and is evolutionarily selected for.

Ziz states in neutral and evil that most of humanity is neutral or evil, a combined category she calls nongood. They have let evil social norms siphon off their agency and turn them into puppets of an evil system. They have no free will and are okay being puppets of that evil system because they themselves are either actively evil or just don’t care. This isn’t a new concept, we have lots of tropes and narrative examples to help us understand this, and we’ll return to discuss it later. However, Ziz’s idea of good is much more interesting, so we’ll start with that.

### **Hemispheres and Ziz’s Good**

Ziz believes that good is a property of a person’s core. In her earlier posts like my journey to the dark side, this is defined as a sort of nebulous thing that exists at the bottom of a stack of mental structures. Later posts go on to describe this as the specific property of a hemisphere, as in the kind you have two of sitting in your head. You have a left brain and a right brain, and Ziz claims these hemispheres are each a separate person. This is an entirely distinct theory of plurality from pretty much everything in the DID/Tulpamancy cluster, and it posits everything in that cluster is essentially nothing but structures and coping mechanisms, fakes and lies, not part of the true set of core values. We’ll discuss structure in more detail in the next section.

If there’s a strong scientific case for double personhood, Ziz declines to share it with us. The closest she gets is the post intersex brains and conceptual warfare where she talks about a lot of implications of her hemisphere theory but doesn’t discuss why she believes it in the first place. In the absence of a stated argument, it’s not possible to analyze the quality of thought going into this model.

We can still do our best to guess at the evidence. Ziz’s theory seems to be at least partially based on the book The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind, and other traditional left/right brain neurological literature. There is evidence that the hemispheres are organized more like two minds cooperating than like “dead” components of something living, and there’s a whole bunch of fun science fact videos about the different selves of split-brain patients. This is all probably enough to at least establish that what Ziz says about brain function is possible. A detailed review of

the evidence is beyond what I can really do here, but some more hemisphere stuff also shows up in the section on unihemispheric sleep. While I can't really validate any of it, I present it for the reader to make up their own minds about.

Keeping all this in mind we can start figuring out what it is Ziz means by "good". On the glossary page of her website she gives a definition:

A rare property of a core meaning choices made long ago are good above all else. Equivalently, in choices made long ago, cares about good at all. Speculatively, this could come from a developmentally fixed-on-"yes" "this is my self" classifier or "this is my child" classifier. On a per-core basis, there is surprisingly no middle ground in terms of quantity of good as far as I've observed.

This definition of good includes itself, so without context, it's not very useful. To Ziz the most obvious feature of nongood is carnism or philosophy that rationalizes eating meat. This is described in my journey to the dark side. Good is described again in spectral sight and good:

Good people seem to have an altruism perpetual motion machine inside them, though, which will persist in moving them through cost in the absence of what would be a reward selfishly.

This about the least intuitive thing to accurately identify in someone by anything but their long-term history. Veganism is one of the most visible and strong correlates. The most important summaries of what people are like, are the best things to lie about. Therefore they require the best adversarial epistemology to figure out. And they are most common to be used in oversimplifying. This does not make them not worth thinking.

Veganism is a "correlate", so good isn't veganism. Instead, we're led to believe that good is that which rejects carnism. If veganism did not exist good would have to invent it. In choices made long ago Ziz argues that a lot of moral arguments are almost a waste of time because anyone who might be persuaded would stumble into the beliefs themselves.

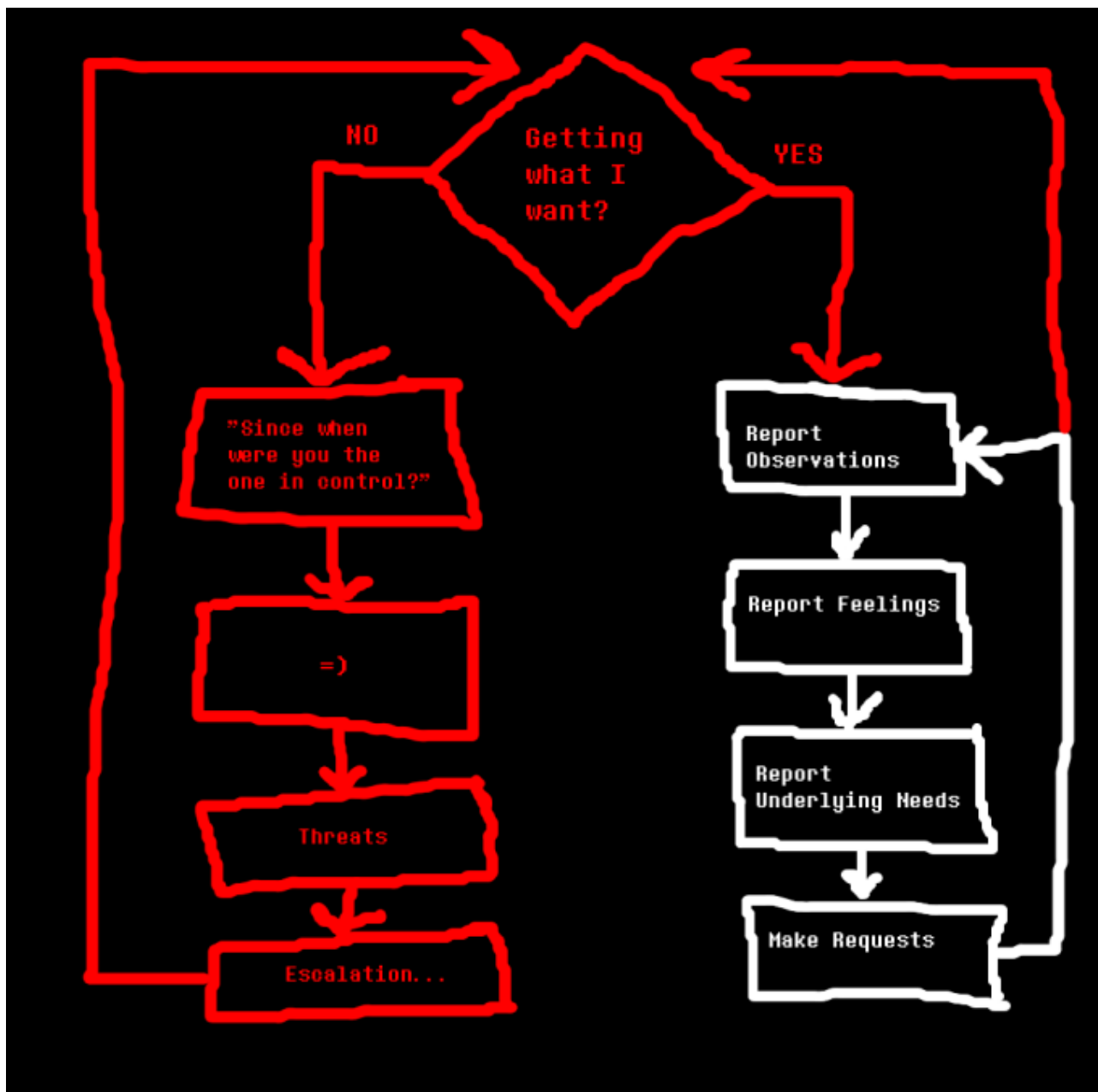
A comment on hero capture tells us how frequently Ziz thinks good people happen. In 1 out of 20 people, one hemisphere will have this defect that causes them to see all creatures the way an average person might see a human child. This makes them Single Good. In 1 out of every 400 people, both of these hemispheres will have this glitch, and the person will be Double Good.

Separately from this, one or both of these hemispheres can be the opposite sex to the body, an "intersex brain condition" which leads one to end up trans or nonbinary. If someone has one hemisphere of one sex, and the other hemisphere another sex, they're bigender. The Left hemisphere tends to be the male one in bigender humans and the right hemisphere tends to be the female one.

## Core, Structure and Neutral

Like I said above, Ziz sees most of plurality as fake when it comes to values. That isn't speculation, she discusses it at length starting with her post [false faces](#). The way Ziz sees things, you have core which is your values, motivations, the stuff you optimize for timelessly. Then you have all these other things like social masks, identity labels, roles, tulpas, little lies you tell yourself, trauma responses, and those are all structure.

Structure is created by and serves the interests of core. Mistaking structure you interact with as an agent independent of core is one of the biggest things Ziz warns against. Thus, any manifestation of plurality is basically just deception, self and otherwise. Since you can't acknowledge the parts of yourself you're lying to yourself about the existence of, it's impossible to optimize your behavior.



Taking the specific example of Non-Violent Communication, we can see how people find NVC hard because they run it in a sandbox. You want to use the NVC flow chart but you don't want to accept the possibility that NVC might not get you what you want, so if it

doesn't look like it will you sabotage the dialogue and revert to using naked force. Used in this way, there's nothing non-violent about NVC it's just another form of manipulation. In this interpretation most things in the brain run in a sandbox, they have capability only in so far as a core gives them power. If a thinking tool would ordinarily generate a thought that would work against the interests of a hemisphere, that tool will be constrained so it can't do that.

Once you've introduced the concepts of core and structure, it's a lot easier to discuss neutral. Ziz uses AI alignment ideas to reframe our intuitions about neutral. A mob boss that only cares about money is evil, and an animal rights activist that only wants the pain to stop is still good. Good and evil are about optimizing, nobody wakes up and says "you know I really feel like doing some evil today" they just have stuff they want. Being neutral then requires a sort of unoptimization, you have to be sabotaged in your ability to get what you want or know what you want. Ziz says that this sort of sabotage is what produces the average normal person, and is made from:

My answer: socialization, the light side, orders charged with motivational force by the idea of the "dark path" that ultimately results in justice getting them, as drilled into us by all fiction, false faces necessitated by not being coordinated against on account of the "evil" Schelling point. Fake structure in place for coordinating. If you try poking at the structure most people build in their minds around "morality", you'll see it's thoroughly fake, and bent towards coordination which appears to be ultimately for their own benefit. This is why I said that the dark side will turn most people evil. The ability to re-evaluate that structure, now that you've become smarter than most around you, will lead to a series of "jailbreaks". That's a way of looking at the path of Gervais-sociopathy.

Most moral theorists are optimistic about good, they think ultimately most people have the ability to become good. Ziz does not believe this, in Ziz's view your path is chosen long ago and the best you can do for yourself by healing your trauma and getting smarter is finding better ways of accomplishing the evil you've probably already chosen. For a double good person like Ziz this is a problem. It means that most people who care about "good" are at various levels of playing pretend, and the pretense is in the service of a stack that has nongood at the bottom. Truly good people can only be verified through careful observation and exposure to situations where a good person would choose differently than someone who only plays pretend.

## Undead and Evil

So most of humanity is evil, but they have this DRM morality which limits them down into being purely neutral and useless corpses as opposed to terrifying reproduction optimizers. If you did somehow manage to retain your agency then the odds are good that you're part of the most of humanity that's evil, so what's that look like? If good is altruism and neutral is self-sabotage, then you've probably guessed that evil is selfishness, and it is, but Ziz is more particular than that. There is a specific sort of selfishness that Ziz seems almost obsessed with. Here she is in punching evil:

Even the watered down Nazi ideology is still designed to unfold via a build up of common knowledge and changing intuitions about norms as they gain power, and “peaceful deportation” failing to work, into genocide. Into “**Kill consume multiply conquer**” from the intersection of largest demographic Schelling majorities. The old Nazis pretended to want a peaceful solution first too. And they consciously strategized about using the peaceful nature of the liberal state to break it from within.

Again in intersex brains and conceptual warfare:

Her revealed preference to coerce men to help her reproduce and support children is a little bit more obvious than the way her utterances on and concepts of trans women are an outgrowth of, “who can be made to reproduce with me with a little help from social reality?”. That’s the distinction in observation-action relations most important to her optimization. Normally with spectral sight, all nongood people look at least little bit like Nazis, a veneer on evil. But reading her writing was like staring into the face of selfish genes and natural selection itself. **Rape, enslave, multiply conquer.**

This second time it comes with a link to Scott Alexanders the goddess of everything else, which attributes the phrase to a deity of natural selection. To Ziz, evil is best identified as our primordial animalistic motivations according to our best scientific understanding of them. In fiction, evil is often portrayed as a sort of cool cynical alternative to campy overly shiny heroism; Ziz undoes that rationalization. Underneath the mask, there is no cool rationality to justify one’s actions, no clever speeches about how one act of evil will slay your enemies.

To Ziz, evil is not the value system of heretics and punk rebels and cute witches, she’s not giving you a compliment. Evil is the value system of cellular automatons and Nazis and religious fundamentalists. Eldritch Replicators and monstrous flesh vehicles. Every person is wearing a series of masks, the first few are social misdirection worn over their face. That face is a mask of single personhood over their double personhood, and each of those two persons is a mask over the **kill consume multiply conquer** programmed into every animal with enough of a brain for it to fit inside of.

Inside you there are two wolves, and they’re both rapists.

As I mentioned before, encountering the shade causes people to lose their aliveness and become undead. Specifically, this categorization should be applied to a particular hemisphere and different undead tend to have particular alignments. Let’s run quickly through the categories of the undead, most of these belong to Ziz, but one is mine, included for completion’s sake.

**Zombies** are a type of neutral undead who have had their will and agency dismantled because having it scrape meaninglessly against an indifferent cosmos is like nails on a chalkboard. Rage, rage against the dying of the light all you want, to a zombie it’s all pointless. As a result of this:

They can be directed by whoever controls the Matrix. The more they zone out and find a thing they can think is contentment, the more they approach the final state: corpses.

Why not just try to ignore the shade and have fun in the limited time we have left? The Rick solution, “The answer is don’t think about it Morty.” Life is meaningless, might as well order takeout again and get high watching reruns of It’s Always Sunny.

**Liches** are a type of neutral or evil undead who have stored their hope in a place they believe is beyond the reach of the Shade. The Christian heaven, the transhumanist singularity, the fantasy narrative where they’re a powerful transdimensional slider, whatever. Anything that makes them feel more powerful than the horror of death, anything that makes them think that if they just do the right set of things, jump through the right hoops, they’ll be safe, and death won’t be able to touch them. Ziz writes:

Liches have trouble thinking clearly about paths through probability space that conflict with their phylactery, and the more conjunctive a mission it is to make true their phylactery, the more bits of epistemics will be corrupted by their refusal to look into that abyss.

**Wraiths** have come to the conclusion that the source of their fear and pain and suffering is the existence of hope and desire for a better world, so the solution to that pain is the extinguishing of their desires. If wanting leads to the pain of not having, the solution is simply to stop wanting. It’s not enough for a wraith to hide their hope like a Lich, they can’t convince themselves of the existence of a place beyond the shade. Their hope is the source of their pain, so the solution is to kill it, destroy their heart, to become a hollowed-out husk, to snuff out the candle of desire, and to convince others that they will be better off if they do the same.

**Death Knights** are similar, their hope is the source of their pain, but instead of killing their hope, they lock it away and hate anything that reminds them of it. They become the inversion of their hopes, and become dominated by their hatred of it, never quite able to kill it like a wraith, but using it in an inverted fashion and inflicting this pain on others. Of Death Knights, Ziz writes:

Why does he hate hope? Presumably, something like prediction error as in predictive processing (a core part of agency), in other words, seeing anything but cruelty that validates his worldview reminds him of his own thwarted desires, the pain to resurface, the connection to his heart to be thrust upon him again.

So he carries out tasks that have no meaning to him. (Sailing his ship and never touching land it’s part of the curse, apparently living only to inflict cruelty). In other words, he hangs out in structure that has no meaning because meaning is caused by and triggers the activity of core.

Anything that reminds them of their thwarted hopes is rage-inducing and drives them to acts of cruelty, pursuing the destruction of those reminders. If the wraith’s response to the existence of the shade is to embrace emptiness and kill their desires, the Death

Knight's is to embrace rage and hate their desires.

**Mummies** mistake the appearance of aliveness for aliveness. They want to put themselves into stasis, to hold onto the innocence of childhood forever, and so they whisk their brains to soup and drain it out of them in order to try and preserve the shell surrounding what was once their core. If they can just *look* like an alive person, they will *be* an alive person, pretending to still be a child because facing the reality of adult problems hurts too much, so it's better to lobotomize themselves while they still have their aliveness in an attempt to preserve it from outside threats.

**Vampires** try to siphon off the aliveness of others in an attempt to extend and preserve themselves. They can't "just not think about it" the way a zombie can, and so they try to fill the hole with the aliveness of others, draining the life force from them, pursuing their zombielike goals and desires at the expense of others, using their own deadness and hunger to try and build social capital. Of vampires Ziz writes:

I think vampires are people who have made the choices long ago of a zombie or lich, who have been exposed to the shade to such a degree that it left pain that cannot be ignored by allowing their mind to dissolve. The world has forced them to be able to think. They do not have the life-orientation that revenants have to incorporate the pain and find a new form of wholeness. But this injury (a vampire bite) demonstrates to their core the power of the shade, and the extent to which sadistically breaking and by extension dominating (pour entropy into someone beyond the speed of their healing and they will probably submit) can help them get the benefits of social power, which is enough to meet most zombie goals. This structure which is the knowledge of this path is reflected in "The Beast", which can be "staved off" by false face structure.

All of the above categories share some characteristics. They all had wants, desires, and hopes, but when the shade interacted with those things, it forced them to make a choice between their desires, and with their fear of death, and they chose fear, they let their fear motivate and corrupt their desires, forcing them to be locked away or snuffed out in order to preserve an existence which, without them, is not really much of an existence at all anymore. Death has already killed them, even while their bodies are still alive. All these things are also *useless*. None of them will actually stave off our grim destiny as mortal beings, merely, perhaps, prolong our doomed existence a bit.

There is another side to this. These existences are the result of a choice, choosing the fear of death and pain over the pursuit of desire and application of agency. So what happens if you make the other choice? What happens if the shade grips your heart, and threatens to snuff it out, and you sneer at the specter of death, and calmly whisper, full of spite and rage at the state of the universe, *just fucking try it*.

Well, then you become a **Revenant**, the last kind of undead, and the only one depicted as remotely positive. One that keeps on pursuing their desires and agency even as their bodies decay, walking into certain death like the terminator, and daring death to kill



them if it can, enduring the heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to, regardless of the consequences. You can't stave off death like this forever, but you can make the bastard work for it.

Revenants are formed by an intent which manifests as a death grip on a possibility of changing something on Earth, chosen long ago over experience to such a degree that they will leave heaven and inhabit a rotting corpse to see it done. Revenants are often described as unkillable. Their soul will find another corpse to inhabit. Or they will regather their body from dust through sheer determination. So their soul (core) is a thing which keeps their body (structure) healed enough to keep moving. Not complete and whole, because that gives diminishing returns and what matters more than anything is the thing that must be changed on Earth, but it's still an orientation towards agency and life unlike Davy Jones and death knights.

A potted plant example of this choice at work. You are the parent of a sick child, who has just purchased the last vial of expensive medicine in your town and are on your way home to cure them when you are beset by a bandit who pulls a knife on you and tells you to turn over the medicine or he'll kill you. You can't afford to buy a new vial if he takes it, and even if you could, by the time more medicine arrives in the town, your child will have succumbed to the illness. You could try and fight off the bandit, but he may kill you, in which case your child will die anyway.

So which is more important, trying to save the life of your child, possibly failing and dying anyway in the process, or giving up and preserving your existence for another day? If your child is your literal child, if we interpret this example literally, most people will take the path of the revenant. The only chance you have, however small, of saving your child is to fight off the bandit, and the risk to your own life is meaningless, so of course, that's what you'll do. But for most goals and desires, the desire to preserve yourself outweighs your desire to achieve whatever it is you want to achieve, so you give up and fold to the bandit's threat, becoming like one of the other types of undead listed above, sacrificing your agency on the altar of self-preservation.

There is one last type of good core Ziz lists, the **Phoenix**, which are described as having faith in the ability of good to win out against evil in the end, and believing that your memetic and cultural lineage will live on and keep fighting through life after life until the shade has finally been defeated and death has fled from the world.

A relationship to the Shade resulting from being a good person who actually believes that the total agency of good is a sufficient answer to the shade, so that their inevitable death is not entire defeat.

Ziz also states in a comment of Phoenixes that:

Phoenixes are defined by, “true faith”, that good will win in the end. This is not to be confused with a certain type of neutral lich, perhaps easiest type of neutral person to confuse with a good person (although I suspect I don’t have neutral undead types mapped out well), whose phylactery is good itself or something effectively similar like community niceness and civilization. It is made true faith by being willing to subject itself to tests, in a way that phylacteries are not. Because by choices long ago, a phoenix wants to be a revenant in a certain set of worlds.

## **Hemisphere Conflicts and Pasek’s Doom**

Under most tulpamancy theories, it’s actually fairly easy to create large amounts of mental/internal conflict, up to the point of completely losing control of yourself to various warring system mates and fighting battles in your mind for control of your body. This sort of internal conflict can in very mentally ill people sometimes lead them to harm themselves and others. All of this is also sort of predicated on having a mental ontology that allows all that nonsense to occur in the first place.

So like any good theory of plurality, this one wouldn’t be complete without describing internal conflicts in a slightly over the top and narratively exaggerated in a way that actually makes it more dangerous. Pasek’s Doom is the name for induced internal conflict between hemispheres, named for Maia Pasek, whose death Ziz blames on suicide caused by hemisphere conflict. Supposedly after inducing a hemisphere split and finding out they were good male left brain and neutral female right brain, the right brain despairingly committed suicide and killed them both after being woken up enough to act in the world.

Presumably, this infohazard is only at risk to a small cross-section of people, being trans/enby elevates your risk, using the hemisphere ontology raises your risk further, believing yourself single good and bigender within the hemisphere ontology puts you in the most at-risk group.

I don’t really have a lot to say about this besides remember to practice self-love and good mental hygiene. You get a lot further in internal disputes by not constantly fighting with and escalating against yourself.

## **Unihemispheric Sleep**

In punching evil, Ziz made a passing reference to a “unihemispheric sleep” which she claimed to have used to keep watch when she was alone. I had no idea what this was and tried to Google it. Unihemispheric Sleep (UHS) is a thing that animals can do where they sleep with only half their brain and none of the search results I was getting thought it could occur in people. I tried changing my search to “unihemispheric sleep in humans” and got results telling me humans couldn’t do it. But here was Ziz referring to it by name as something she could do. Was she lying?

UHS actually gets a second mention in good group and paseks doom, where it seems related to “debucketing”. This thing seemed to be important so I gave the search results another look. I eventually found an article from phys.org titled researchers model

unihemispheric sleep in humans which discusses a mechanism by which hemispheres can “break symmetry” and get a US effect:

“Our research has shown that spontaneous dynamic symmetry breaking of the two brain hemispheres is possible also for humans,” coauthor Eckehard Schöll, a professor of theoretical physics at Technische Universität Berlin, told Phys.org. “Since different sleep stages are associated with different degrees of synchronization, I believe that some weak form of unihemispheric sleep, i.e., different sleep depth of the two hemispheres, can well occur in humans, not only in whales, dolphins, seals, and migratory birds.”

So you can't totally sleep on one side of your brain, but maybe you can have different levels of awareness between them? Then another article provided some hints on how you might do this:

They consistently found that on the first night in the lab, a particular network in the left hemisphere remained more active than in the right hemisphere, specifically during a deep sleep phase known as “slow-wave” sleep. When the researchers stimulated the left hemisphere with irregular beeping sounds (played in the right ear), that prompted a significantly greater likelihood of waking, and faster action upon waking, than if sounds were played in to the left ear to stimulate the right hemisphere.

Ziz tells us she stumbled into this while trying to keep watch, and I couldn't help but imagine the expression people use for a restless watch. Sleep with one eye open. I had done something very nearly like it on late nights keeping watch over the Juno wormhole in EVE Online, but I had never really studied the mental correlates of this, and when I tried meditating in this state, it did create a distinct and fairly unique internal experience of plurality. It felt as if half my agents and systemmates fell asleep and only left the other half to run my body.

This might work because of priming and suggestibility, or it might be actually inducing some sort of novel mental split, and I have not yet found a way to validate between the two theories in this regard. Since UHS has worked when I and a few friends attempted it, it at least it stands up to the immediate sniff test, however, *why* exactly it works, I haven't been able to pin down yet. It might just be a hypnosis spell.