

Quotes from “**A Mind So Rare: *The Evolution of Human Consciousness***” (2001) By
Merlin Donald (Prof of Psych, Queen’s University)

[The author] proposes that the human mind is a hybrid product, interweaving a super-complex form of matter (the brain) with an invisible symbolic web (culture) to form a “distributed” cognitive network.

- a) Our brains coevolved with culture and are specifically adapted for living in culture...
- b) ... humans link with a vast and diverse cultural matrix in early infancy and profit from the rich storehouses of knowledge and skill that have accumulated in our cultural memory over many millennia.
- c) We are what we are because of enculturation, plain and simple.
- d) Enculturation dominates human cognitive development.
- e) Our most powerful cultural storage devise in language itself . . . However, language is far from the whole story. We store cultural information in many other ways, in customs, institutions, and material objects, among other things.
- f) Our cultural storehouses far exceed what any brain could possibly copy or remember, and no single brain can totally comprehend every aspect of a symbolic cultural environment, let alone generate one.

DISCUSS:

1. Enculturation—the norm; necessary for normal human development
2. Deculturation—not the norm; traumatic
3. Acculturation—stressful; traumatic when involuntary
4. Deprivation and “brain damage”