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Right Hand, Left Hand: The Origins of Asymmetry in Brains, Bodies, Atoms and Cultures

I. C. McManus

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Winner of the Aventis Science Book Prize. 'A scientific detective story, a brilliant cross between Edgar Allan Poe and Gray's anatomy' J G Ballard, New Stateman Books of the Year - Why are most people right-handed? Do left-handers behave differently from right-handers? - Why is the heart on the left-hand side of the body? - Why is each side of the human brain so different? - Why do the British drive on the left? Why do European languages go from left to right, while Arabic ones read the other way? - Why do clocks go clockwise? - What is the relationship between handedness and speech disorders, such as stuttering? RIGHT HAND, LEFT HAND uses sources as diverse as the paintings of Rembrandt and the sculpture of Michelangelo, the behaviour of Canadian cichlid fish and the story of early cartography. Modern cognitive science, the history of the Wimbledon tennis championship and the biographies of great musicians are also used to explain the vast repertoire of 'left-right' symbolism that permeates our everyday lives.

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