



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

By Chris McManus

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A labor of love and enthusiasm as well as deep scientific knowledge, *Right Hand, Left Hand* takes the reader on a trip through history, around the world, and into the cosmos, to explore the place of handedness in nature and culture. Chris McManus considers evidence from anthropology, particle physics, the history of medicine, and the notebooks of Leonardo to answer questions like: Why are most people right-handed? Are left-handed people cognitively different from right-handers? Why is the heart almost always on the left side of the body? Why does European writing go from left to right, while Arabic and Hebrew go from right to left? Why do tornadoes spin counter-clockwise in the northern hemisphere and clockwise in the southern hemisphere? And how do we know that Jack the Ripper was left-handed?

McManus reminds readers that distinctions between right and left have been profoundly meaningful--imbued with moral and religious meaning--in societies throughout history, and suggests that our preoccupation with laterality may originate in our asymmetric bodies, which emerged from 550 million years of asymmetric vertebrate evolution, and may even be linked to the asymmetric structure of matter. With speculations embedded in science, *Right Hand, Left Hand* offers entertainment and new insight to scientists and general readers alike.

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- Sales Rank: #875930 in Books
- Published on: 2004-10-25
- Released on: 2004-08-09
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 1.06" w x 6.13" l, 1.39 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 432 pages



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Patricia McGuire:

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Patsy Phan:

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Denise Wentzel:

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