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## Study left with right result

**Tim Radford**  
Thursday June 26, 2003  
[The Guardian](#)

Chris McManus, a psychologist at University College London, won the £10,000 Aventus science book prize yesterday for his book *Left hand, Right Hand*.

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It was Prof McManus's second international prize in a year - in 2002 he won an Ig Nobel award for medicine for a scientific study entitled *Scrotal Asymmetry in Man and in Ancient Sculpture*. His study of asymmetry in the universe - a world dominated by left-handed molecules and right-handed people - was described as a "wonderful picture of hard science and big questions".

Prof McManus had been second favourite to take the award behind the US psychologist Steven Pinker, author of *The Blank Slate*, a new look at the nature-nurture debate about the making of the human mind.

Prof McManus's book, published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, explores the phenomenon of left and right through chemistry, biology and psychology, drawing on imagery in art and sculpture and human foible.

He relates, for instance, how drill instructors in the imperial Russian army became so exasperated at the inability of their peasant recruits to tell left from right that they tied wisps of hay to the left legs, and lumps of straw to the right, and shouted "straw, hay, straw, hay, straw" as they marched.

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