

question of exploitation would not have arisen. Although there have been attempts to improve this situation, none have been entirely satisfactory. The 1994 Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) went some way to tackle the patents problem, and various differential pricing and public/private schemes have been explored. However, as pointed out by Pogge, much more imaginative solutions are needed to solve this problem, a process that will require more collaboration within the pharmaceutical industry and its better interaction with the governments of rich and poor countries.

A vital issue that is not discussed in this book is the importance of the way in which research in developing countries is organised. At worst, this may simply amount to a short visit by scientists or pharmaceutical companies directed entirely to their own ends

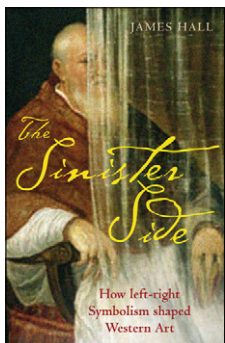
and without much thought about the risks and benefits of the research for the local community. There are several examples of projects of this kind, particularly involving companies that wished to obtain particular crops for genetic manipulation or DNA from populations with unusually high frequencies of particular diseases for drug development. Such approaches, which have received the emotive label "biopiracy", are unacceptable. A much more humane way forward is the establishment of partnerships between developed and developing countries which, if sustained, can lead to vital capacity building as well as productive research of value to both parties.

There are already examples of the effectiveness of North/South partnerships, the concept of which has been approved by WHO and other international agencies and funding bodies. In the long term, this is surely

the best approach to evolving a more rational basis for defining the ethical issues involved in research in the developing countries. Provided they are long-sustained and genuine partnerships, the mutual trust and understanding that follows provides an environment in which these complex problems can be solved in the light of the widely differing social and religious backgrounds of individual societies.

It is clear from these essays that the mores of western bioethics are often inadequate or ill-defined to meet the research needs of developing countries; without closer long-term interaction of this kind, leading to mutual understanding between rich and poor countries, it will be difficult to make further progress in this critically important field.

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The Sinister Side:
How Left-Right Symbolism
Shaped Western Art
James Hall. Oxford University
Press, 2008. Pp 489. £16.99.
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In brief

Book Left-right symbolism

One of the last photographs of Gandhi before he was assassinated is by Henri Cartier-Bresson. The seated Mahatma is seen from behind, the right side of his body is in shadow, the left in bright sunshine. He holds his left palm up, fingers splayed. Would this image be as memorable if it showed his right hand? Perhaps not. Certainly not, the art critic and historian James Hall maintains in *The Sinister Side*, in which he goes to great lengths to show how western art has persuaded us to interpret the body's left and right sides differently.

Hall discusses Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam*, in which God extends his right hand towards the left hand of Adam. In Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, she smiles on the left side, but not the right, and also turns to her left. In Velázquez's *Christ on the Cross*, Christ's head falls to his

right; in Christian art generally the saved are always to Christ's right. In Picasso's Blue Period *La Vie*, the young man of genius wards off his lover by gesturing with his left hand at a woman cradling a child.

Such left-right complexity has been neglected in recent academic mapping of the body. Chris McManus's *Right Hand, Left Hand* (2002), is an exception, to which Hall pays frank tribute. His own book in a sense aims to do for art what McManus did for science and society. But he thinks that McManus goes too far in asserting that in all continents, periods, and cultures, "always it is right that is good and left that is bad". Hall comments: "One aim of my book is to show the variety of left-right distinctions in western culture, and how these are far from being universally hostile to the left."

Titian's two versions of *Portrait of Cardinal Archinto* are particularly fascinating. One is conventional; the other renders ghostly the left side of the cardinal's body with a vertical curtain, diaphanous and rippling. It is as if Archinto's "sinister" side is being repudiated, and only his "spiritual" right side is left intact, says Hall. Fair enough, but can one compare the pulling across of the curtain—apparently with the cardinal's right hand—to the left-to-right movement in making the sign of the Cross?

For all its evident erudition, unpretentious prose, and thought-provoking ideas, *The Sinister Side* is in parts fanciful and confused. I recommend keeping a small mirror to hand when studying the many helpful illustrations.

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