

PSYCHIATRY

"Southpaws" Are Made

People learn left-handedness instead of inheriting it and should be taught to use their right hand. Three causes of left-handedness are suggested.

➤ YOU ARE RIGHT- or left-handed because you learned to be, not because you were born that way and inherited it. Children in our right-handed civilization should be taught to be right-handed.

This revolutionary new theory, that "southpaws" are made, not born, is put forward by Dr. Abram Blau, assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at the New York University College of Medicine and chief psychiatrist at the New York University Clinic.

The newborn infant, according to the new theory, is bilateral with no developed handedness and laterality. This state of no-handedness is typical of animals and primitive peoples. Theoretically, the human baby has a 50-50 chance of becoming either right- or left-handed.

But in humans, Dr. Blau explains, "preference for the right side is a cultural and social convention.

"As soon as we are born, society steps in and commands: 'Thou shalt use thy right hand and not thy left hand!'"

In "The Master Hand," a study of sidedness published by the American Orthopsychiatric Association, Dr. Blau lists three reasons why there are left-handed people in our right-handed so-

ciety.

One cause of sinistrality, or left-sidedness, may be either physical or mental deficiency, Dr. Blau says. Loss of the right hand or arm or some physical defect may force a person to become left-handed. Mental deficiency may hamper a person from normal learning of dexterity, or right-sidedness.

"Low-grade mental defectives," Dr. Blau explains, "are not ambidextrous but ambilateral; they have little dexterity on either side."

"Faulty education" is suggested as a second cause for left-handedness. According to the new theory, the left-handed parents are frequently imitated by their children, who learn to be left-handed, too. This accounts for many cases of seeming inheritance of left-handedness, Dr. Blau believes.

Another type of left-handed education stems from the idea that it is dangerous to change apparently left-handed children to use of their right hand.

He believes the third and most common cause of left-handedness is "emotional negativism." This is simply an active emotional contrariness in early childhood.

Science News Letter, April 5, 1947

PHYSICS

Preventing Air Eddies

➤ HOW AIR EDDIES in aviation wind tunnels are eliminated by fine screens, and the development of the method, are revealed in a new report of the National Bureau of Standards.

These eddies, usually referred to as turbulence, create air movements unlike those encountered by a plane traveling through still air. The use of the screens makes turbulence level so low that motion through the air is actually simulated. The use of screens is a development of the National Bureau of Standards in active cooperation with the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics.

As far as known, the Bureau states, the first observation of a damping effect of a screen on turbulence was made in 1934 in the old Bureau 4½-foot wind

tunnel. A little later, it was observed at NACA laboratories at Langley Field, Virginia, that the steadiness of the air flow through a smoke tunnel was improved by the use of a cloth over the tunnel entrance. However, the usefulness of damping screens was not realized until 1938, when measurements were made by the Bureau showing the amount of turbulence reduction. A year later, the Bureau undertook a systematic investigation with the cooperation and financial assistance of the NACA.

Wind tunnels are devices to produce artificial wind for the testing of scale models of planes or of plane parts. Smoothness and uniformity of air movement in the tunnel are essentials. The swirling is due to the fact that the air

in the tunnel must move over or around such solid objects as walls, guide vanes and propellers.

The most highly developed use of screens to eliminate turbulence is probably in the Moffett Field, California, tunnel completed by the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics in 1946. This tunnel has a large spherical bulge in which are stretched eight fine-mesh wire screens spaced nine inches apart, each one over 60 feet in diameter. The bulge is just ahead of the test section. The screens effectively eliminate nearly all swirling or turbulence in the air stream.

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