The Case of Alain

It was 1971 when Alain started going to elementary school. He was a bright boy and a very talkative person. His progress at school was great, except when it came to reading. His teacher had a hard time with Alain because he read from right to left. Alain used his right hand to write. The educator failed to recognize that the use of the right hand does not necessarily indicate that he is right-handed, as Alain may be a left-handed child who had been retrained to use his right hand. She failed to consider that no six-year-old intentionally reads from right to left. Since the vast majority of people believe that left-handedness is simply the hand that a person prefers to use and nothing more, the teacher's knowledge that Alain was a retrained left-hander probably would not have been helpful.

The teacher felt helpless; she thought that more reading practice would make things better. She asked Alain's dad to help his son practice reading at home. At home Alain was required to remove his underwear and grasp the doorframe while his father opened the swinging door of the living room at home. Consider a 140-cm, 25-kg boy standing almost naked and clutching the doorframe. The open reading textbook was on the easel in front of him. He had to read. Alain read from right to left. The father of the boy stood behind him and struck the nearly naked boy with the belt. Until the child transitioned from reading left to right, the "reading practice" persisted.

Left-handedness is generally perceived as a mere habit that pertains solely to the use of one's hand, and it is not associated with any additional characteristics. However, the reality is that left-handed individuals are distinguished by a distinct perception of space and, as a result, a distinct sense of spatial orientation. Since cognitive processes are based on experiences related to spatial perception, left-handers exhibit markedly different thought processes.

There is a lack of generalization and no explanation or interpretation that unifies the characteristics of left-handers' spatial orientation with the features of their thought processes and knowledge acquisition. However, many individuals have already described these differences, and we are gaining an increasingly nuanced picture. Various detailed accounts have emerged.

Six years later, I taught math to Alain. Although he was intelligent and gifted, there were manifest indications of behavioral and mental issues by that time.

Whether left-handed children have been retrained to use their right hand, let me briefly outline the challenges they face.

Personal identity and handedness are inextricably linked. When children who are left-handed are made to use their right hand, it causes a conflict in their identity. Overall, it is a matter of conflicting identities. This cognitive dissonance can impede development and result in frustration as individuals attempt to adjust to a mode of functioning that appears unnatural.

When left-handed people have to use their right hand, they may feel inadequate because they may have trouble with tasks that come naturally to their right-handed peers. he sensation of being compelled to adapt can induce feelings of isolation. People who are left-handed might

feel misinterpreted by classmates and teachers who don't understand the difficulties they encounter.

In the book, I go into great detail about what happens when people don't accept people who are left-handed and when kids are taught to use their right hand instead.