



The Tell-Tale Brain: A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human

By V. S. Ramachandran

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"A profound intriguing and compelling guide to the intricacies of the human brain." —Oliver Sacks

In this landmark work, V. S. Ramachandran investigates strange, unforgettable cases—from patients who believe they are dead to sufferers of phantom limb syndrome. With a storyteller's eye for compelling case studies and a researcher's flair for new approaches to age-old questions, Ramachandran tackles the most exciting and controversial topics in brain science, including language, creativity, and consciousness.

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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Ramachandran (A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness), director of the Center for Brain and Cognition at UCSD, explores why humans, who are "anatomically, neurologically and genetically, physiologically apes," are not "merely" apes. While animals can communicate with sound and gesture, and chimpanzees can even use words to express immediate needs, humans have developed the ability to speak in structurally complex sentences, and often speak in metaphor. Ramachandran speculates that, as we can map another's actions and intuit their thoughts, we also map our own sensory apparatus, perceiving our surroundings—and perceiving ourselves perceiving our surroundings. We imagine the future and speculate about the past and seek to understand our place in the universe, laying the foundation for our sense of free will; we not only envisage future actions, but are aware of their potential consequences and the responsibility for our choices. Richard Dawkins has called Ramachandran "the Marco Polo of neuroscience," and with good reason. He offers a fascinating explanation of cutting-edge-neurological research that deepens our understanding of the relationship between the perceptions of the mind and the workings of the brain. (Jan.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review The twentieth was the century of physics, with the grand unified theory its quest and goal. The twenty-first is shaping up as the century of neuroscience, with its quest and goal the reaffirmation of human exceptionalism. Boldly asserting, right off the bat, that Homo sapiens is "no mere ape," Ramachandran tells us why the day of neuroscience has dawned. The discovery of mirror neurons (see Marco Iacoboni's exciting *Mirroring People*, 2008) has made a real science out of psychology, for it gives the study of consciousness and the host of mental states contingent on it something physical to theorize about and experiment with. A physician (like Oliver Sacks, a neurologist) as well as a researcher, Ramachandran uses his neurology patients' predicaments to inspire inquiries into how we see and know, the origins of language, the mental basis of civilization, how we conceive of and assess art, and how the self is constructed. Always careful to point out when he is speculating rather than announcing research findings, he is also prompt to emphasize why his speculations, or theories, are not just of the armchair variety but can be put to the test because of what neuroscience has already discovered about the active structures of the human brain. --Ray Olson

Review

"Ramachandran produces an exhilarating and at times funny text that invites discussion and experimentation." ---Kirkus

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