

“The Tell Tale Brain” by V. S. Ramachandran

<http://www.amazon.com/Tell-Tale-Brain-Neuroscientists-Quest-Makes/dp/0393077829>

Reviews of “The Tell Tale Brain” (and look who some of the reviewers are!)

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

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Ramachandran has written an astonishing book. His humanity, humor and scientific genius inform every passage. *The Tell-Tale Brain* is a veritable *Voyage of the Beagle* through the terrain of brain science and psychology. (Nicholas Humphrey, author of *Seeing Red*)

A masterpiece. The best of its kind and beautifully crafted. Alluring story telling, building to a penetrating understanding of what it is to be uniquely human. Ramachandran is the foremost pioneer—the Galileo—of neurocognition. (Allan Snyder, FRS, Director of the Centre for the Mind)

No one is better than V. S. Ramachandran at combining minute, careful observation with ingenious experiments and bold, adventurous theorizing. *The Tell-Tale Brain* is Ramachandran at his best, a profoundly intriguing and compelling guide to the intricacies of the human brain. (Oliver Sacks, author of *The Mind's Eye*)

Ramachandran is the modern wizard of neuroscience. In *The Tell-Tale Brain*, we see the genius at work, tackling extraordinary cases, many of which mark turning points in neuroscientific knowledge. We see him hypothesizing, experimenting, failing, having epiphanies, experimenting, succeeding. In this utterly entertaining account, we see how these fascinating cases fit together, and how he uses them to explain, from a Darwinian point of view, how our brains, though evolved from those of other animals, become neurologically distinct and fundamentally human. (Norman Doidge, M.D., author of *The Brain That Changes Itself*).