



A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness: From Impostor Poodles to Purple Numbers

By V. S. Ramachandran

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A brilliant, wryly humorous, brief tour of the human mind built on first hand experience with patients and a dazzling research career. This long awaited new book by V.S. Ramachandran is akin to the bestselling works about patients by Oliver Sacks. What is body image? Why do we blush? What is art? What is free will? What is self? Until recently, these questions were the province of philosophy, but studies of the brain are now producing explanations based on research anyone can see for themselves in PET scans and MRI images. Neuroscientists such as V.S. Ramachandran are now unlocking the key to what many have considered the metaphysics of our consciousness. This knowledge of the brain has progressed so rapidly few have yet recognized it for what it is. It will change how we think of human beings, even our very notion of understanding. This is a revolution, already underway that will have impact on all our lives. But until this book, topics such as art, creativity and love have received very little attention from neurology and new findings have not been offered in an approachable way. Dr. Ramachandran presents new theories and experiments that illuminate the biggest questions we can ask. Picking up where the great earlier thinkers like Freud, and Darwin began, V.S. Ramachandran and his colleagues are forging a whole new science. Walk through a final frontier of human knowledge with the perfect, eloquent, expert guide on this unique brief tour.

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- Sales Rank: #399435 in Books
- Published on: 2004-07-23
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.54" h x .82" w x 5.68" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 208 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

What does an amputee who still feels a phantom limb have in common with an avant-garde artist, or a schizophrenic who claims to be controlled by alien implants, or an autistic child who can draw a hyper-realistic horse? According to neuroscientist Ramachandran (coauthor, *Phantoms in the Brain*), named by *Newsweek* one of the 100 people to watch in the 21st century, the answer lies deep in the physical structures of the brain, and his new book offers a thought-provoking survey of his area of research. Through examples, anecdotes and conjecture, Ramachandran aims "to make neuroscience... more accessible to a broad audience." In this he succeeds admirably, explaining how the roots of both psychological disorders and aesthetic accomplishment can be located in the various regions of the brain and the connections (or lack thereof) between them. The text is engaging and readable, feeling as though Ramachandran had sat down for an afternoon to explain his research over tea (no surprise, as the book grew out of the author's 2003 BBC Reith lectures). Though the topic of neuroscience might initially seem daunting, readers who enjoy science popularization in the vein of Oliver Sacks, Richard Dawkins (both of whom enthusiastically blurb this book) and Stephen Jay Gould will find much to appreciate here.

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From Scientific American

Patient X declares that his mother is an impostor. The diagnosis? Freud might say the patient has a troubled Oedipus complex. But the same patient thinks his poodle is a fraud, too. Ramachandran offers a more rigorous neurological explanation in *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness*. Examining the cause for patient X's behavior is just one stop on the writer's journey through the neural pathways of the brain. As the tour guide, Ramachandran, a neuroscientist at the University of California at San Diego, leads readers through a collection of his experiments and theories, championing the idea that charting the brain on a neurological level will provide us with a robust understanding of everything from politics to love. Case studies of patients with obscure syndromes help the author solve the brain-mind puzzle piece by piece. In the case of patient X, communication between regions responsible for visual recognition and the production of emotional responses has been impaired. Because the patient recognizes his mother's face but feels no corresponding emotion, he deduces that she is simply a look-alike. Parts of the book are fascinating and accessible, especially Ramachandran's work with phantom limbs and synesthesia—in which patients seem to transpose the processing of senses, such as sensing the note "middle C" as the color green. Ramachandran presents a convincing argument relating the syndrome to the enhancement of an ability we all possess: drawing connections between objects and events. In a noticeable departure from the empirical explanations of the early sections, Ramachandran later explores possible psychological underpinnings for the evolution of human language and a universal definition of art. The final chapter, an abstract, philosophical foray into free will and the human sense of self, is even more speculative. At times a captivating presentation of facts and anecdotes and at other times an assortment of theories, the book is more of a tour of Ramachandran's opinions and experiences than the concise introduction one expects from the title. In the end, the book succeeds in delivering an entertaining and thought-provoking look at how and why we should think about thought.

Lisa DeKeukelaere

Review

"V. S. Ramachandran is one of our most gifted physicians and expositors, and in this new book he

illuminates everything he touches—whether it is phantom limbs and how they can be ‘cured’; or how the brain can generate illusions and delusions; or synesthesia and its relation to metaphor, creativity and art; or the ultimate questions of how brain relates to mind. *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness* belongs to that rare category of scientific book, one as accessible as it is deep.”—**Oliver Sacks, M.D., bestselling author of *Gratitude and On the Move***

“Packed with ideas that are bold, irreverent, original, and ingenious. A breath of fresh air.”—**David Hubel, Nobel Laureate, Harvard University**

“An extraordinary book by a remarkable scientist!... the modern Paul Broca.”—**Eric R. Kandel, M.D., Nobel Laureate, Columbia University**

"An engaging book featuring a remarkable degree of insight, originality, and erudition."—*Neurology Today*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Melissa Conner:

Book is to be different for every single grade. Book for children till adult are different content. As you may know that book is very important usually. The book *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness: From Impostor Poodles to Purple Numbers* has been making you to know about other knowledge and of course you can take more information. It is extremely advantages for you. The publication *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness: From Impostor Poodles to Purple Numbers* is not only giving you considerably more new information but also to become your friend when you feel bored. You can spend your spend time to read your reserve. Try to make relationship while using book *A Brief Tour of Human Consciousness: From Impostor Poodles to Purple Numbers*. You never truly feel lose out for everything in case you read some books.

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