

Phantoms in the brain: Probing the mysteries of the human mind.

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Ramachandran, V.S. and S. Blakeslee

Phantoms in the Brain: Probing the Mysteries of the Human Mind

New York: William Morrow, 1998

Publisher's Presentation

Neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran is internationally renowned for uncovering answers to the deep and quirky questions of human nature that few scientists have dared to address. His bold insights about the brain are matched only by the stunning simplicity of his experiments -- using such low-tech tools as cotton swabs, glasses of water and dime-store mirrors. In *Phantoms in the Brain*, Dr. Ramachandran recounts how his work with patients who have bizarre neurological disorders has shed new light on the deep architecture of the brain, and what these findings tell us about who we are, how we construct our body image, why we laugh or become depressed, why we may believe in God, how we make decisions, deceive ourselves and dream, perhaps even why we're so clever at philosophy, music and art. Some of his most notable cases:

- A woman paralyzed on the left side of her body who believes she is lifting a tray of drinks with both hands offers a unique opportunity to test Freud's theory of denial.
- A woman who hallucinates cartoon characters illustrates how, in a sense, we are all hallucinating, all the time.

Dr. Ramachandran's inspired medical detective work pushes the boundaries of medicine's last great frontier -- the human mind -- yielding new and provocative insights into the "big questions" about consciousness and the self.

Synopsis

In the tradition of the works of Oliver Sacks, this fascinating journey into the deep architecture of the mind introduces readers to a range of patients suffering from strange neurological afflictions, explains how Dr. Ramachandran's evaluations reveal what actually occurs in the brain, and explores what these findings reveal about dreams, laughter, memory, depression, body image, and language. Photos & illustrations.

In *Phantoms in the Brain*, Dr. Ramachandran recounts how his work with patients who have bizarre neurological disorders has shed new light on the deep architecture of the brain, and what these findings tell us about who we are; how we construct our body image; why we laugh or become depressed; why we may believe in God; how we make decisions, deceive ourselves and dream; perhaps even why we're so clever at philosophy, music and art.

About the Authors

V. S. Ramachandran, M.D., Ph.D., is professor and director of the Center for Brain and Cognition, University of California, San Diego, and is adjunct professor at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, La Jolla, California. One of the world's foremost brain researchers, he has received many scientific honors, including a gold medal from the Australian National University and a fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford. He gave the "Decade of the Brain" lecture at the Silver Jubilee meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, and his work has been featured in major media. He lives with his family in Del Mar, California.

Sandra Blakeslee is an award-winning science writer for *The New York Times*. For the last ten years, her reporting specialty has been neuroscience. She is the coauthor, with Judith Wallerstein, Ph.D., of two books: the national bestseller *Second Chances* and *The Good Marriage*. She lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

From Dr. Francis Crick

"This is a splendid book. Ramachandran shows all too clearly how little we really know about ourselves. The patients he describes are fascinating, and his experiments on them are both simple and ingenious. The style is lively and informative, and enlivened by unexpected touches of humor. Through it all shines Rama's good sense, his hard-headedness and his humanity. If you are at all interested in how your brain works, this is a book you must read."

--Dr. Francis Crick Distinguished Research Professor, The Salk Institute Nobel Laureate

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