

“The Tell-Tale Brain”

V.S. Ramachandran, a professor of Neuroscience and psychology at University of California San Diego, weaves tales inspired by true events in his career as a neuroscientist into what we read today as ‘The Tell-Tale Brain’.

Talking about a few peculiar cases he mentions in the book, there is an amputee who can still feel an itch in the place where his amputated hand was supposed to be, a man who develops Capgras syndrome after an accident and thinks his wife is an imposter, cases of synesthesia wherein senses are commingled and Cotard’s wherein the patient truly believes he is dead (they all seem like movie stories but trust me, they aren’t).

Dr. Ramachandran’s main thesis was on the much controversial mirror neurons. Here, he describes unique cells that allow a creature to observe its fellows and perform the same action. This is something that he believes helped in evolution by bringing self-awareness and empathy and may also have been responsible for the development of autism.

Here is an excerpt from the book that may stir your curiosity to learn more about this amazing organ– the human brain:

“As heady as our progress has been, we need to stay completely honest with ourselves and acknowledge that we have only discovered a tiny fraction of what there is to know about the human brain. But the modest amount that we have discovered makes for a story more exciting than any

Sherlock Holmes novel. I feel certain that as progress continues through the coming decades, the conceptual twists and technological turns we are in for are going to be at least as mind bending, at least as intuition shaking, and as simultaneously humbling and exalting to the human spirit as the

conceptual revolutions that upended classical physics a century ago.”

The writing is simple, and is beautifully crafted, targeting both medical and non-medical audiences. This book helped me ask questions that seemed bizarre, understand that not every answer is in my medicine textbook and acknowledged the importance of research in the ever-growing branch of medicine.