



Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain

By Antonio Damasio

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Self Comes to Mind: Constructing the Conscious Brain By Antonio Damasio

A leading neuroscientist explores with authority, with imagination, and with unparalleled mastery how the brain constructs the mind and how the brain makes that mind conscious.

Antonio Damasio has spent the past thirty years researching and revealing how the brain works. Here, in his most ambitious and stunning work yet, he rejects the long-standing idea that consciousness is somehow separate from the body, and presents compelling new scientific evidence that posits an evolutionary perspective. His view entails a radical change in the way the history of the conscious mind is viewed and told, suggesting that the brain's development of a human self is a challenge to nature's indifference. This development helps to open the way for the appearance of culture, perhaps one of our most defining characteristics as thinking and self-aware beings.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

As he has done previously, USC neuroscientist Damasio (*Descartes' Error*) explores the process that leads to consciousness. And as he has also done previously, he alternates between some exquisite passages that represent the best popular science has to offer and some technical verbiage that few will be able to follow. He draws meaningful distinctions among points on the continuum from brain to mind, consciousness to self, constantly attempting to understand the evolutionary reasons why each arose and attempting to tie each to an underlying physical reality. Damasio goes to great lengths to explain that many species, such as social insects, have minds, but humans are distinguished by the "autobiographical self," which adds flexibility and creativity, and has led to the development of culture, a "radical novelty" in natural history. Damasio ends with a speculative chapter on the evolutionary process by which mind developed and then gave rise to self. In the Pleistocene, he suggests, humans developed emotive responses to shapes and sounds that helped lead to the development of the arts. Readers fascinated from both a philosophical and scientific perspective with the question of the relationships among brain, mind, and self will be rewarded for making the effort to follow Damasio's arguments. (Nov.) (c)

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Review

"*Self Comes to Mind* is a Big Idea book penned by a luminous thinker. . . . [A] beautifully sprawling and marvelous work." —*The Dallas Morning News*

"Will give pleasure to anyone interested in original thinking about the brain. . . . Breathtakingly original." —*Financial Times*

"Damasio introduces some novel ideas. . . . Intriguing." —*New Scientist*

"Adventurous, courageous, and intelligent. Antonio Damasio is one of the leading workers in the field of consciousness research. . . . I have great admiration for this book and its author." —John Searle, *The New York Review of Books*

"Damasio's most ambitious work yet. . . . A lucid and important work." —*Wired.com*

"A very interesting book . . . cogent, painstaking, imaginative, knowledgeable, honest, and persuasive . . . Damasio's quest is both thorough and comprehensive." —*New York Journal of Books*

"Damasio's continental European training sensitizes him to the reductionist traps that ensnare so many of his colleagues. His is the only one of the many consciousness books weighing down my shelves that feels it necessary to mention Freud's . . . use of the term unconscious." —*The Guardian* (Book of the Week)

"A delight. You will embark on an intellectual journey well worth the effort." —*The Wilson Quarterly*

"Readers of [Damasio's] earlier books will encounter again the clarity and the richness of a scientific theory nourished by the practice of the neurologist." —*L'Humanité* (France)

“Some scientific heavyweights have dared approach consciousness. Among them, Antonio Damasio has the immense advantage of a dual knowledge of the human brain, as scientist and clinician. In *Self Comes to Mind* he gives us a fascinating window of this interface between the brain and the world, which is grounded in our own body.” —*Le Figaro* (France)

“The marvel of reading Damasio’s book is to be convinced one can follow the brain at work as it makes the private reality that is the deepest self.” —V. S. Naipaul, Nobel laureate and author of *A Bend in the River*

“Damasio makes a grand transition from higher- brain views of emotions to deeply evolutionary, lower- brain contributions to emotional, sensory, and homeostatic experiences. He affirms that the roots of consciousness are affective and shared by our fellow animals. Damasio’s creative vision leads relentlessly toward a natural understanding of the very font of being.” —Jaak Panksepp, author of *Affective Neuroscience* and Baily Endowed Chair for Animal Well- Being Science, Washington State University

“I was totally captivated by *Self Comes to Mind*. Damasio presents his seminal discoveries in the field of neuroscience in the broader contexts of evolutionary biology and cultural development. This trailblazing book gives us a new way of thinking about ourselves, our history, and the importance of culture in shaping our common future.” —Yo-Yo Ma

About the Author

Antonio Damasio is University Professor, David Dornsife Professor of Neuroscience, Psychology, and Neurology, and director of the Brain and Creativity Institute at the University of Southern California. Damasio’s other books include *Descartes’ Error*; *The Feeling of What Happens*; and *Looking for Spinoza*. He has received the Honda Prize, the Prince of Asturias Award for Technical and Scientific Research, and, shared with his wife Hanna, the Pessoa, Signoret, and Cozzarelli prizes. Damasio is a fellow of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, and the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. He lives in Los Angeles.

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