

The Hidden Brain: How Our Unconscious Minds Elect Presidents, Control Markets, Wage Wars, and Save Our Lives

By Shankar Vedantam

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The hidden brain is the voice in our ear when we make the most important decisions in our lives—but we're never aware of it. The hidden brain decides whom we fall in love with and whom we hate. It tells us to vote for the white candidate and convict the dark-skinned defendant, to hire the thin woman but pay her less than the man doing the same job. It can direct us to safety when disaster strikes and move us to extraordinary acts of altruism. But it can also be manipulated to turn an ordinary person into a suicide terrorist or a group of bystanders into a mob.

In a series of compulsively readable narratives, Shankar Vedantam journeys through the latest discoveries in neuroscience, psychology, and behavioral science to uncover the darkest corner of our minds and its decisive impact on the choices we make as individuals and as a society. Filled with fascinating characters, dramatic storytelling, and cutting-edge science, this is an engrossing exploration of the secrets our brains keep from us—and how they are revealed.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Washington Post science journalist Vedantam theorizes that there's a hidden world in our heads filled with unconscious biases, often small, hidden errors in thinking that manipulate our attitudes and actions without our knowing it. Autonomy is a myth, he says, because knowledge and rational intention are not responsible for our choices. This thesis is not news—since Freud, psychologists have taken the unconscious into account—but Vedanta argues that if we are influenced sometimes, then why not all the time, whether we're launching a romance or a genocide. This is a frightening leap in logic. In anecdotal, journalistic prose, we learn that, through bias, rape victims can misidentify their attacker; people are more honest even with just a subtle indication that they are being watched; polite behavior has to do with the frontotemporal lobes rather than with how one was raised; and that we can be unconsciously racist and sexist. Though drawing on the latest psychological research, Vedantam's conclusions are either trite or unconvincing. (Jan. 19)

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From [Booklist](#)

A Washington Post science writer, Vedantam explores the findings of social psychologists about unconscious bias. Recounting people's stories, he grips attention immediately. Introducing a rape victim whose mistake in identifying her assailant was revealed by DNA evidence that exonerated him, Vedantam establishes his theme of how people get things wrong (in the crime-and-punishment category, he adds death-penalty cases involving possible misidentification) or behave seemingly irrationally. After each individual story, the author repairs to relevant psychological studies. To Vedantam, the studies reveal that subtle biases unconsciously coexist alongside people's conscious convictions that they are free of prejudice. He cites examples such as Senator George Allen, whose racial remark ended his career; the electorate's perception of candidate Barack Obama; and the sexual discrimination case of Lilly Ledbetter. Branching into other arenas, such as crowd behavior during crisis situations and the minds of suicide bombers, Vedantam highlights a mental battle of which, he wants his readers to learn, they are largely unaware. This work has strong appeal for the psychology audience. --Gilbert Taylor

Review

"In **The Hidden Brain**, one of America's best science journalists describes how our unconscious minds influence everything from criminal trials to charitable giving, from suicide bombers to presidential elections. **The Hidden Brain** is a smart and engaging exploration of the science behind the headlines—and of the little man behind the screen. Don't miss it."—Daniel Gilbert, author of *Stumbling on Happiness*

"Shankar Vedantam brings his critical eye to a question that has haunted scientists and writers for centuries: Does the unconscious matter, and if so, how? With a light touch, the book takes us through the complicated landscape of research on psychology and human behavior. We come away not only understanding how we act, but Vedantam moves past mainstream economic reasoning to shed light on the relationships we create with each other. The book addresses the madness and beauty of our struggles to create a moral and just world." —Sudhir Venkatesh, author of *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets*

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

David Hernandez:

Now a day individuals who Living in the era wherever everything reachable by match the internet and the resources in it can be true or not require people to be aware of each information they get. How individuals to be smart in receiving any information nowadays? Of course the reply is reading a book. Reading through a book can help folks out of this uncertainty Information especially this The Hidden Brain: How Our Unconscious Minds Elect Presidents, Control Markets, Wage Wars, and Save Our Lives book as this book offers you rich information and knowledge. Of course the knowledge in this book hundred % guarantees there is no doubt in it you may already know.

Joseph Griego:

The feeling that you get from The Hidden Brain: How Our Unconscious Minds Elect Presidents, Control Markets, Wage Wars, and Save Our Lives could be the more deep you looking the information that hide inside the words the more you get interested in reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to be aware of but The Hidden Brain: How Our Unconscious Minds Elect Presidents, Control Markets, Wage Wars, and Save Our Lives giving you thrill feeling of reading. The writer conveys their point in certain way that can be understood simply by anyone who read the item because the author of this e-book is well-known enough. That book also makes your own vocabulary increase well. It is therefore easy to understand then can go to you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having this specific The Hidden Brain: How Our Unconscious Minds Elect Presidents, Control Markets, Wage Wars, and Save Our Lives instantly.

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Curt Hall:

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