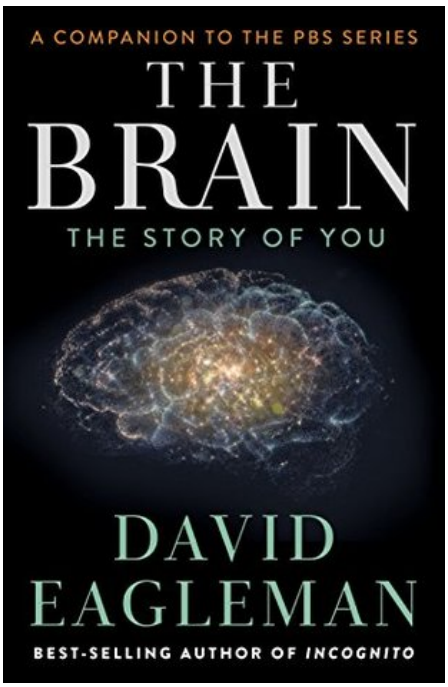

The Brain: The Story of You

David Eagleman

The Brain: The Story of You

David Eagleman

The Brain: The Story of You David Eagleman
Locked in the silence and darkness of your skull, your brain fashions the rich narratives of your reality and your identity. Join renowned neuroscientist David Eagleman for a journey into the questions at the mysterious heart of our existence. What is reality? Who are “you”? How do you make decisions? Why does your brain need other people? How is technology poised to change what it means to be human? In the course of his investigations, Eagleman guides us through the world of extreme sports, criminal justice, facial expressions, genocide, brain surgery, gut feelings, robotics, and the search for immortality. Strap in for a whistle-stop tour into the inner cosmos. In the infinitely dense tangle of billions of brain cells and their trillions of connections, something emerges that you might not have expected to see in there: you.

This is the story of how your life shapes your brain, and how your brain shapes your life.

(A companion to the six-part PBS series. Color illustrations throughout.)

From the Hardcover edition.

The Brain: The Story of You Details

Date	:	Published October 6th 2015 by Pantheon (first published October 2015)
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Author	:	David Eagleman
Format	:	Kindle Edition 224 pages
Genre	:	Nonfiction, Science, Psychology, Biology, Neuroscience

From Reader Review The Brain: The Story of You for online ebook

The Serendipity Aegis ~ ?Misericordia? ?????? ✺✲❤❣ says

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Brian Gordon says

As a preface I have a PhD in cognitive neuroscience and study how the brain works as my job. Seeing

positive reviews I thought this would be an interest book to read. After starting this book the first thing I have to say is, "wow." Not as in "wow that booked blew me away" but more "wow, I guess once you have media connections you can publish any piece of trash."

I understand the need to write a book for a lay audience, I really do. The unfortunate part is that much of what Eagleman presents in the book is just simply wrong and not supported by any real science. Early in the "book" he talks about how memories are stored as function connections between neurons. He alludes that the reason our memories are not entirely accurate is that the neurons have a limited number of connections and have to be adaptable. This is pure speculative fiction. Sure, this could be the truth, but there is no actual research that says this. It is unknown how memories are stored in the brain or why they are so labile. To present this interpretation as a FACT is not responsible.

In another section he is going over how the brain creates sensation. He goes on a near ramble that borders on saying that reality doesn't exist, it is just a construct of our brain. He states that in the "real" world, sound doesn't exist, taste doesn't exist, etc. Well fine, yes all of these are labels of how we experience the world. However light photos still exist, chemical odors, exist, sound waves compress air molecules. We aren't living in the freaking Matrix where reality is an illusion. I couldn't take it. I stopped reading the book and took it back to the library. I would have society a better service if I had burnt the book instead and paid a fine.

I understand that this is a companion to the TV series. I would just appreciate if the book (and the TV show, I haven't seen it) actually gets the science correct. The brain and consciousness are amazing. There are plenty of topics and insights that are quite interesting without sensationalism and speculative fiction.

Charlene says

Good introduction to the brain for people with no knowledge of science or neuroscience. I was hoping for something a little more in depth.

Amina says

"The strange computational material in our skulls is the perceptual machinery by which we navigate the world, the stuff from which decisions arise, the material from which imagination is forged. Our dreams and our waking lives emerge from its billions of zapping cells"

A fun, entertaining and enlightening book, in which, David Eagleman introduces us to the fast growing brain science, exploring some of the brain wonders and sometimes it seems even like science fiction what that mysterious jelly mass can do..

Amir Tesla says

This book takes you to limbo. The materials, hypotheses and theories provided leaves you wondering and wondering.

Could you imagine hearing through your tongue or seeing with your ears? This sentence wasn't a hypothesis

or theory, it was fact being already performed on real humans.

Now could you imagine capturing the map of your brain, transferring it to other body or even a computer. Namely, do you think your conscious mind could ever exist on a computer? Well it's true in theory and is being already worked on.

How about expanding our sensory inputs? Being able to constantly feeling the data related to stock market? This is a near-fact too.

And since consciousness is the product of collaboration of billions of parts of our brain and body in the right way and direction, do you think the earth or universe could have a consciousness of it's own?

The science community is working on bringing the dead back to life. Seriously...

Britta Böhler says

For those who read books about the brain, Eagleman's book might be a bit too 'basic', only scratching the surface of neuroscience. But if you are looking for a well written & accessible introduction into 'the workings of the brain', this is definitely a great book to start with.

Gökhan ?ans says

Beatifully writing.
Çok güzel.

Pamela says

Eagleman is quite an entertaining and passionate educator/writer/neuroscientist. His book The Brain: The Story of You is a fun and informative cursory exploration into the 'science' of who we are as intelligent, social, complex, and conscientious beings - well, most of anyway. I guess you could say, in a cheeky pun sort of way, it's a user-friendly synopsis of our synapses.

"Although the neuroscience is new, the institution has a long history. The ancient Greeks suggested that we should think of our lives like chariots. We are Charioteers trying to hold two horses. The white horse of reason and the black horse of passion. Each horse pulls off-center in opposite directions. Your job is to keep control of both horses, navigating down the middle of the road."

My favorite topics, those I found most fascinating, and relevant, dealt with the processing of information in relation to reality, social dependency, child development, and aging. And too, I appreciated his inclusion of noteworthy experiments (past and present) relating to all things brain-spectacular. However, in order to keep it relatively simple, Eagleman merely skims the surface without going into any debatable depth.

"With seven billion brains wandering the planet (and trillions of animal brains) there's no single version of

reality. Each brain carries its own truth."

Unfortunately though, it's quite evident based on what IS and IS NOT addressed/discussed/explored within the text, that Eagleman strongly believes in evolution - and ONLY evolution. He completely omits any notions of a 'soul' or a Supreme Being - let alone, an Almighty God. Which I find so very, very sad.

THREE *** Enlightening and Entertaining, Discretionary Cautioned *** STARS

Nelson Zagalo says

"O Cosmos do Nosso Interior", assim se poderia chamar "The Brain: The Story of You" (2015), porque assume proximidade com a série "Cosmos", desde logo por surgir como série (6 episódios), seguindo-se como livro, e ainda por contar com um cientista que, à semelhança de Carl Sagan, é também um brilhante comunicador. Não fosse tudo isto suficiente, acaba por ser ainda mais relevante o facto de se dedicar a dissecar um mundo de factos e conhecimentos que nos permite ganhar noção daquilo que somos, mas agora a partir do nosso interior, da matéria orgânica que permite a criação de vida conceptual.

"In a cubic centimeter of brain tissue there are as many connections as stars in the Milky Way Galaxy. Our thoughts, our hopes, and our dreams are contained in these three pounds of wet biological material."

Assumido este figurino percebe-se que "The Brain: The Story of You" não é um livro académico no seu sentido formal mas um livro de comunicação de ciência. Ou seja, não é expectável que David Eagleman entre no detalhe, que vá além do state-of-the-art, mas antes e tal como Sagan, seja capaz de apresentar as melhores metáforas para a compreensão do modo como o nosso cérebro, e nós, funciona.

Neste sentido, talvez seja a escolha da metáfora computacional a maior crítica que tenho ao livro, embora Eagleman apresente várias outras metáforas, como a dos "flocos de neve", e se redima no final. É verdade que em termos de comunicação é a melhor abordagem, já que é o sistema complexo mais próximo das pessoas, e mais presente na atualidade, mas por vezes sinto-o demasiado preso à metáfora, incapaz de se desligar e ir além. No final quando se lança na explicação dos possíveis futuros que no esperam, então Eagleman assume que todo este posicionamento é apenas uma hipótese, a chamada "computational hypothesis of the brain". Assumindo que como tal pode simplesmente falhar no momento em que depois de desenvolvida a primeira simulação do cérebro, o objeto do projeto europeu "Human Brain Project", se perceba a impossibilidade de criar a simulação de uma mente sem a presença de um corpo orgânico.

Se apresento esta crítica é por ser cada vez mais evidente esta distanciação, que apesar de ir sendo reconhecida e discutida continua sendo enunciada e defendida sem a devida reflexão. Este problema aconteceu antes, quando defendemos o cérebro como sistemas maquínicos de rodas dentadas, depois como sistema elétrico, ou ainda como sistema comunicacional do tipo do telégrafo. O cérebro, à semelhança do cosmos, é complexo, imensamente difícil de compreender, de abarcar o todo através da limitação da nossa compreensão, e por isso necessitamos constantemente de recorrer a metáforas para baixar o nível de complexidade e assim podermos conceber, ainda que abstractamente, os seus objetos, elementos, forças, no fundo a sua base funcional.

Assumida a crítica, que não pretende retirar força ao livro, nem ao trabalho de Eagleman, quero deixar alguns dos pontos altos do livro que valem a pena, apesar de não serem novos, estão muito bem apresentados e suportados, e valem por si só a leitura do livro. Falo dos pontos sobre a Ilusão e a Socialidade do Eu. No

primeiro Eagleman assume o posicionamento que já vem de Platão, mas é bastante mais incisivo, direto, suportado com muita investigação empírica, conseguindo-nos demover do nosso conforto. No segundo ponto dá conta daquilo que faz de nós seres humanos, assumindo a base da construção do cérebro, do Eu, na relação com os outros, afirmando mesmo que não existe um Eu sem um Outro.

A Ilusão do Cérebro
“How does the biological wetware of the brain give rise to our experience: the sight of emerald green, the taste of cinnamon, the smell of wet soil? What if I told you that the world around you, with its rich colors, textures, sounds, and scents is an illusion, a show put on for you by your brain? If you could perceive reality as it really is, you would be shocked by its colorless, odorless, tasteless silence. Outside your brain, there is just energy and matter. Over millions of years of evolution the human brain has become adept at turning this energy and matter into a rich sensory experience of being in the world. How?”
“Your brain serves up a narrative – and each of us believes whatever narrative it tells. Whether you’re falling for a visual illusion, or believing the dream you happen to be trapped in, or experiencing letters in color, or accepting a delusion as true during an episode of schizophrenia, we each accept our realities however our brains script them. Despite the feeling that we’re directly experiencing the world out there, our reality is ultimately built in the dark, in a foreign language of electrochemical signals. The activity churning across vast neural networks gets turned into your story of this, your private experience of the world”

A Dor Social
“In the early weeks and months of solitary confinement you’re reduced to an animal like state. I mean, you are an animal in a cage, and the majority of your hours are spent pacing. And the animal-like state eventually transforms into a more plant-like state: your mind starts to slow down and your thoughts become repetitive. Your brain turns on itself and becomes the source of your worst pain and your worst torture. I’d relive every moment of my life, and eventually you run out of memories. You’ve told them all to yourself so many times. And it doesn’t take that long.” Palavras de Sarah Shourd, presa no Irão em 2009, colocada em prisão solitária, com a excepção de dois períodos de 30 minutos diários, durante 410 dias.

M. says

Bu kitap Dü?üncenin Kökeni - Beynimiz Nas?l Çal???r?, ve Cennetin Ejderleri kitaplar?yla birlikte okunmal? diye dü?ünüyorum. Daha önceden kitapta bahsi geçen **The Brain** isimli belgeseli de izlemi?tim. Okumak ?imdiye nasip oldu.

Kitab?n, yukar?da bahsi geçen "Dü?üncenin Kökeni" kitab?nda ele?tirdi?i **"Nöron merkezli nöroloji"** alg?s?na uygun olarak yaz?ld???n? söyleyebiliriz. E?er Dü?üncenin Kökeni'nin yazar? yan?lm?yorsa, bu tip çal??malar son yirmi y?ld?r *"modas? geçmi?"* olarak tan?mlan?yorlar.

Kitab?n öyle çok dikkat çekici, ak?lda kal?c?; etkileyici diyebilece?im bir yönü oldu?unu söyleyemem. Bu kitaba merak salanlar?n bunun yerine öncelikle Cennetin Ejderleri'ni okumalar?n? sal?k veririm.

Mark says

I didn't learn a single new thing about the brain in this book -- but that's not a criticism.

It simply means I've been reading a lot of brain books in recent years (and writing articles about the research), so I was eager to see how one of my favorite neuroscientists, David Eagleman, did on this companion book to his PBS series.

He did quite well, thank you. He covered gracefully and without numbing detail the waterfront of much recent research -- how the brain consists of competing networks, how scientists still aren't sure where our sense of consciousness comes from, how much of our mental activity goes on in the background, how our free will may be activated before we're consciously aware of it, and many other topics. The only chapter I had any qualms about was the final one, which speculated on whether there would come a day when we either could be cryonically preserved and brought back to life, or whether our brain's software could be uploaded to a device, allowing us to live on in another form.

This area is so highly speculative that there is almost no research that sheds light on it, but I can understand how the producers of the program thought this would be a good hook for people who wonder about the Singularity.

At any rate, if you know anyone who doesn't have much familiarity with the latest neuroscience, I can't think of a much better intro than this one.

Book says

The Brain: The Story of You by David Eagleman

“The Brain" is an excellent companion piece to the six-part PBS series of the same title. Neuroscientist and best-selling author David Eagleman, educates and fascinates the general public with a wonderful popular-science examination of our brains. This captivating 224-page book includes the following six chapters: 1. Who am I?, 2. What is reality?, 3. Who’s in control?,4. How do I decide?, 5. Do I need you?, and 6. Who will we be?.

Positives:
1. Popular science at its best. Accessible, enlightening and fun to read.
2. The fascinating topic of neuroscience in the masterful hands of David Eagleman.
3. Full of colorful illustrations that complement the excellent narrative.
4. Eagleman’s writing style is easy on the “brain”. His goal is to educate the general public and he succeeds.
5. Full of interesting facts spruced throughout the book. “As many as two million new connections, or synapses, are formed every second in an infant’s brain. By age two, a child has over one hundred trillion synapses, double the number an adult has.”
6. A good description of the teen’s brain. “Beyond social awkwardness and emotional hypersensitivity, the teen brain is set up to take risks.”
7. Goes over some of the keys components of the brain. “The scientists were particularly interested in a small area of the brain called the hippocampus – vital for memory, and, in particular, spatial memory.”
8. Includes interesting stories. The story of Charles Whitman is quite enlightening with major repercussions on a society that values evidence.
9. Describes how memories are formed. “Our past is not a faithful record. Instead it’s a reconstruction, and sometimes it can border on mythology. When we review our life memories, we should do so with the awareness that not all the details are accurate.”
10. Describes some of the tools of a neuroscientist. “One way to measure that is with electroencephalography

(EEG), which captures a summary of billions of neurons firing by picking up weak electrical signals on the outside of the skull."
11. Considers important philosophical questions. Does the idea of an immaterial soul reconcile with neuroscientific evidence? Find out.
12. Describes reality. "One way to measure that is with electroencephalography (EEG), which captures a summary of billions of neurons firing by picking up weak electrical signals on the outside of the skull." "Everything you experience – every sight, sound, smell – rather than being a direct experience, is an electrochemical rendition in a dark theater." "The slice of reality that we can see is limited by our biology."
13. Describes consciousness. "…the conscious you is only the smallest part of the activity of your brain. Your actions, your beliefs and your biases are all driven by networks in your brain to which you have no conscious access." "I think of consciousness as the CEO of a large sprawling corporation, with many thousands of subdivisions and departments all collaborating and interacting and competing in different ways."
14. Describes how the brain decides. "It's easy to think about the brain commanding the body from on high – but in fact the brain is in constant feedback with the body."
15. An interesting look at willpower. "…willpower isn't something that we just exercise – it's something we deplete."
16. A look at social neuroscience. "Our social skills are deeply rooted in our neural circuitry – and understanding this circuitry is the basis of a young field of study called social neuroscience."
17. A fascinating look at Syndrome E and its repercussions. "Syndrome E is characterized by a diminished emotional reactivity, which allows repetitive acts of violence." "Genocide is only possible when dehumanization happens on a massive scale, and the perfect tool for this job is propaganda."
18. A look at the future of neuroscience. "The secret to understanding our success – and our future opportunity – is the brain's tremendous ability to adjust, known as brain plasticity."
19. Can consciousness be uploaded? Find out.
20. A helpful glossary of terms.

Negatives:
1. As expected, a book this succinct will leave some interesting neuroscientific topics on the table. The topic of free will gets shortchanged.
2. A book intended for the general public and a companion piece no less, will lack depth.
3. The eBook edition has some glitches, as an example, extra blank pages inserted.
4. Endnotes included but no formal bibliography.

In summary, this book exemplifies my love for science. Eagleman is a master of his craft and a skilled writer. He covers complex topics on the neuroscience with ease and provides the general public with an appetizer of knowledge. Neuroscience is a fascinating field in it is infancy and Eagleman successfully whets the public's interest. I highly recommend it!

Further recommendations: "Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain" by the same author, "How to Create a Mind" and "The Singularity is Near" by Ray Kurzwell, "Who's in Charge?" by Michael S. Gazzaniga, "The Human Brain Book" by Rita Carter, "The Tell-Tale Brain" by V.S. Ramachandran, "Hallucinations" and "The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat" by Oliver Sacks, "A Whole New Mind" by Daniel H. Pink, "In Search of Memory" by Eric R. Kandel, "Self Comes to Mind" by Antonio Damasio, and "The Mind" edited by John Brockman.

Nicole Anne says

The cover of this book is beautiful - and the pages are that thick, heavy sort that just scream quality. Yet what was written on them I found to be a little lacking. Eagleman clearly has a lot of passion for neurobiology and psychology, and references quite a few of his own experiments and what he learned from it. The passages on artificial intelligence were interesting and thought provoking, and the parts on empathy and the need for social interaction were not bad either. It touched quite a surprising amount on philosophy, and not as much on the neurobiology as I was expecting in a book called The Brain.

The main feature that kept me from really enjoying this book was the lack of depth. It bounces around from topic to topic using one or two anecdotes of studies done (mostly ones I learned of in my first year psychology classes) to prove his brief point before brushing the surface of the next issue. It felt rushed in that sense and caused me to not really buy in to what he was saying - not that I don't believe him, but I wanted more information to better understand.

I wanted to know at least a simplified version of the biology that goes into sensory augmentation, syndrome E, levels of consciousness of coma patients, etc. There were many interesting concepts introduced but the lack of exploration into any of them made me feel shortchanged. It's hard to completely buy into the fact that the world has "no colour, there's also no sound . . . Reality is also odorless" outside of our minds because until our mind converts this incoming information (whether it's wavelengths to colour, vibrations to sound, etc) it is just data floating out in a the void of the world. It's a big statement to throw out there and hard to really wrap your head around and agree with without further proof of theory.

Statements like that, as well as his definition of consciousness ("When you're awake you have consciousness, and when you're in deep sleep you don't.") are overly simplistic and not the kind of thing I'm looking for in a $40 book. I understand that there is no assumption of pre-existing knowledge, but that doesn't mean that anyone picking up the book is not eager to learn and does not have the capacity to understand a concept of consciousness more difficult than the one provided.

Our brains are truly amazing, though. Their ability to transform all of this incoming information, make sense of it, and react to our surroundings so quickly it is not even a conscious thought is astounding. The fact that the brain has no direct link to the outer world and relies heavily on this incoming information, is something that Eagleman does not let us forget, thus reminding us every several pages that all of this is happening "sealed within the dark, silent chamber of your skull", " inside the sealed auditorium of the cranium", "is ultimately built in the dark, in a foreign language of electrochemical signals", etc. Reminding us that it is all of the neurons working in concert that allows these great biological feats to be achieved. This got old pretty quickly and felt like a go-to for wrapping up a concept.

Overall, the writing was well done, and maybe I was just looking for something more than this book was offering. I would recommend if you're looking for a headline-type look at the brain without working too much about the details. If you're looking for something thought provoking with evidence backing the theories presented and a response to opposing ideas, then this really isn't quite it. Either way the repetition of certain phrases comes through loud and clear and is for you to decide whether you think that will bother you.

Misba Misba says

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Sara Walker says

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