

The Experience Machine

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Synopsis

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For as long as we've studied the mind, we've believed that information flowing from our senses determines what our mind perceives. But as our understanding of neuroscience and psychology has advanced in the last few decades, a provocative and hugely powerful new view has flipped this assumption on its head. The brain is not a passive receiver, but an ever-active predictor.

At the forefront of this cognitive revolution is widely acclaimed philosopher and cognitive scientist Andy Clark, who has synthesized his ground-breaking work on the predictive brain to explore its fascinating mechanics and implications. Among the most stunning of these is the realization that experience itself, because it is guided by prior expectation, is a kind of controlled hallucination. This even applies to our bodies, as the way we experience pain and medical symptoms is shaped by our expectations. From the most mundane experiences to the most sublime, it is our predictions that sculpt our experience.

A landmark study of cognitive science, *The Experience Machine* lays out the extraordinary explanatory power of the predictive brain for our lives, mental health and society.

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