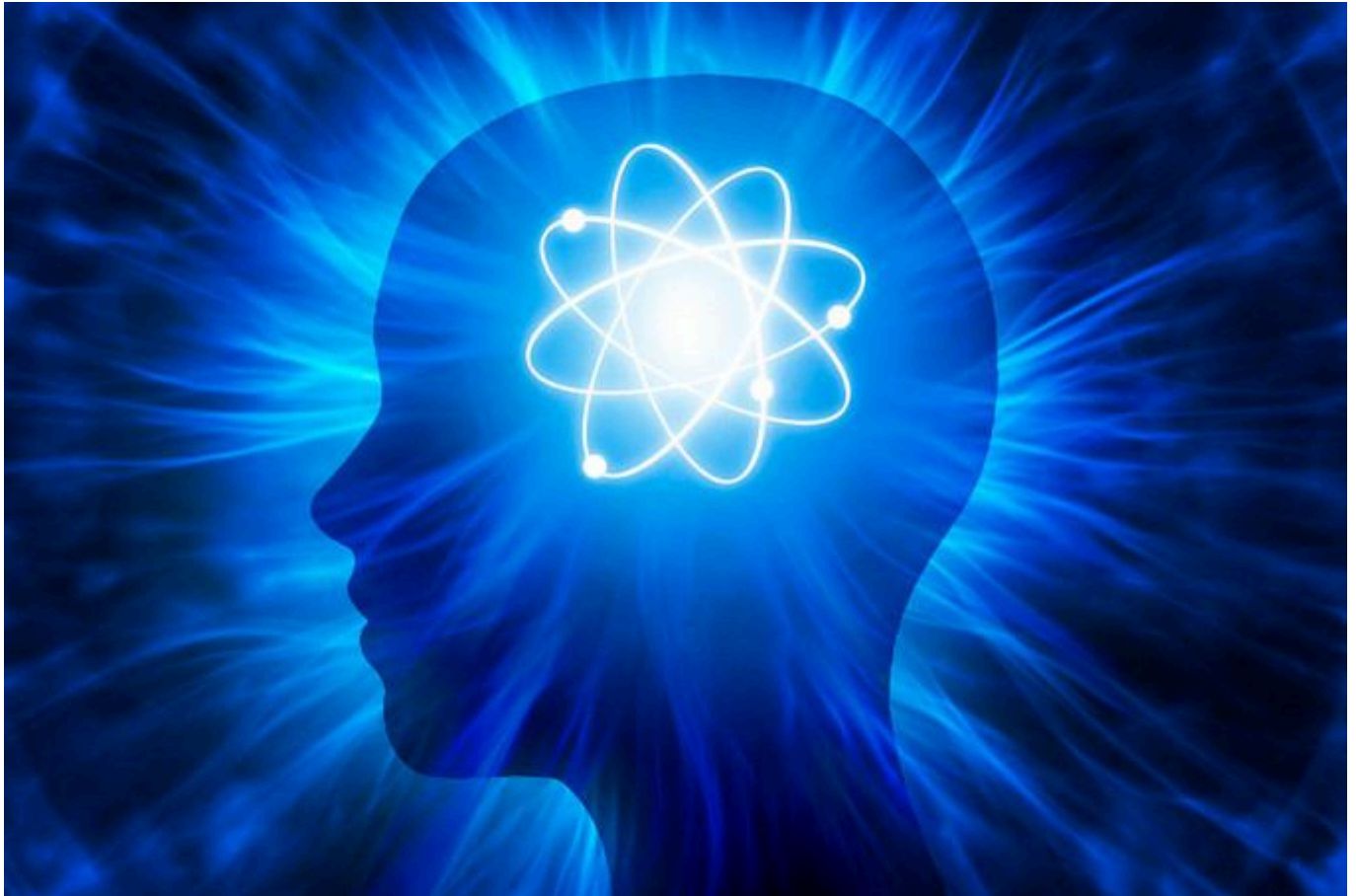


# 7 Powerful Books That Will Unleash The Hidden Potential Of Your Mind



By [Gary Z McGee](#) | [The Mind Unleashed](#)

*“A mind needs books as a sword needs a whetstone, if it is to keep its edge.” ~George R.R. Martin*

There it is your mind –all leashed-up, bored, bookless, and chasing its own tail in the corner. It’s time to unleash it. It’s time to toss it back into the shocking waters of wonder and awe. It’s time to distract it from the all too familiar tail (or tale, to wit), and give it a juicy carrot to chase around instead. Seven juicy carrots, to be exact.

So, store that leash, open up your mind, curl up with your

best friend, and dive right on into the following mind-unleashing books. But keep the light on. As Groucho Marx wittily opined, *“Outside of a dog, a book is man’s best friend. Inside of a dog, it’s too dark to read.”*

## **1.) *“The Beginning of Infinity”* by David Deutsche**

*“We never know any data before interpreting it through theories. All observations are, as Popper put it, theory-laden, and hence fallible, as all our theories are.” ~David Deutsche*

From epistemology and quantum fungibility to environmental ethics and societal evolution, David Deutsche takes us on a thought-provoking journey into answering a single question: Is there a limit to what can be understood? He comes at a mind-expanding answer of *“no”* by diving deep into the expanding waters of epistemology and ontology. He profoundly claims that our understanding of anything is always at the *“beginning of infinity”* and there will always be an infinite amount more left for us to understand. Basically surmising that, with accurate and adaptable knowledge, anything is possible unless it is prohibited by the laws of physics.

Highly rational and integrating, *The beginning of Infinity* launches us into higher thinking on the path toward better and better explanations. He takes us from parochial, outdated ways of thinking to the concept of universality and updated ways of thinking about the universe as a thing to be progressively evolved into using ever-expanding technologies. Thus bridging the gap from man to overman. As he made clear, *“There is only one way of thinking that is capable of making progress, or of surviving in the long run, and that is the way of seeking good explanations through creativity and criticism.”*

## **2.) “Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience” by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi**

*“Most enjoyable activities are not natural; they demand an effort that initially one is reluctant to make. But once the interaction starts to provide feedback to the person’s skills, it usually begins to be intrinsically rewarding.” ~Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi*

Thanks to Csikszentmihalyi, the idea of the “flow state” has become a vital aspect of our cultural awakening. The optimal experience is gained through deep discipline in a particular field/art/sport that provides an intrinsic reward, challenge, and feedback, thus integrating confidence, concentration, control, adaptability, and connectivity. Time stops or slows down. Insecurities disappear. We stop caring about what others think of us. A creative unfolding of something larger manifests. Everything flows effortlessly in interconnected unison with us as its interdependent spearhead. In short: we stop thinking and just do.

By simply asking the question, “When are people most happy?” Csikszentmihalyi, through time-tested research, pinpoints flow states as the answer. Athletes call it “being in the zone,” mystics have described it as “ecstasy,” and artists term it “rapture.” Unleashing optimal experience is about doing what we love as a pathway toward greater meaning, happiness, and a self of higher complexity. By doing what we love in challenging ways, we leverage optimal experience into our lives. This book powerfully explains the psychology of this vital process.

## **3.) “Phi: A Voyage from the Brain to the Soul” by Giulio Tononi**

*“Murky thoughts, like murky waters, can serve two purposes only: to hide what lies beneath, which is our ignorance, or to make the shallow seem deep” ~Giulio Tononi*

*Phi* takes the reader on a mind-altering journey through the nature of consciousness. It interweaves science, art, and the imagination with golden ratios, Fibonacci sequences, and fractal cosmology. The reader has the joy of perceiving the world through such masters as Galileo, Alan Turing, Darwin, and Francis Crick, among others. From neuroscience to pseudoscience, from deep introspection to mindful meditation, Tononi elucidates on how consciousness is an evolving, ever-deepening awareness of ourselves as finite, spiritual beings in an infinite universe.

We learn how consciousness is an integrated information and how the power of that integration requires the utmost responsibility and credulity. It teaches how the brain is the seat of our perceptions, and is a creative force par excellence, and can even create new shapes and new qualia. It teaches how, by growing consciousness, the universe comes more and more into being and synthesizes the one and the many, the ego and the eco, the individual and the interdependence of all things into a unified force of Nature.

#### **4.) “The Art of Fear” by Kristen Ulmer**

*““Everything is fine” is actually a copout, a stuck place, an obstruction to the exploration of who and what you are expanding into higher and further, not to mention the evolution of humanity.” ~Kristen Ulmer*

The Art of Fear is about curiously embracing fear rather than conquering or repressing it. It’s about rebuilding our understanding of fear from the ground up. It’s about realizing that Fear is only one of 10,000 employees at You Incorporated, and how they all need a voice. But Fear most of all, lest all voices become repressed shadows. The key to fear, she explains, is being curious about it, thereby harnessing its power rather than conquering it. Between courage and curiosity is everything we need to be fearless.

Ulmer's personal journey with fear eventually led her to study with Zen masters, from which she learned a mindfulness tool called "Shift" which shifts our perspective of fear from ignorant repression to proactive curiosity, thus aligning it authentically with our true nature. The basic tenet is this: Instead of repressing fear, empower it, by being curious and questioning rather than judgmental and accusing. Honor it with deep respect so it doesn't operate covertly in twisted ways beneath the surface.

## **5.) "Endgame: The Problem of Civilization" by Derrick Jensen**

*"Premise One: Civilization is not and can never be sustainable. This is especially true for industrial civilization." ~Derrick Jensen*

Endgame will take everything you think you know about being a social being in a seemingly functional society and turn it on its head. Definitely not for the typical statist, nor the faithful law-abiding citizen. Endgame is about the imperative need to immediately dismantle the unhealthy civilization that surrounds us. Endgame is a scathing, raging critique against the unhealthy, unsustainable, and ecologically unsound man-machine that is our modern culture.

Breaking the book down into a series of simple but increasingly provocative premises, Jensen takes us on a mind-bending and convincing ride into the unhealthy belly of the violent, ecocidal beast that is modern-day civilization. His basic premise is simple: Industrial civilization is unsustainable. It's not a question of "if" but a question of "when" it's going to fail.

He argues that the longer it takes civilization to fall, the worse the tragedy will be. In that light, there are two things we should be doing: Bringing about the fall sooner rather than later and preparing to survive it. His attitude is caustic and

cavalier, but all the better for the shock value it provides. This book really flattens the box we're all so desperately trying to think outside of. A complimentary (and perhaps less aggressive) read is *Beyond Civilization* by Daniel Quinn.

## **6.) *Trickster Makes this World: Mischief, Myth, and Art* by Lewis Hyde**

*"Better to operate with detachment, then; better to have a way but infuse it with a little humor; best, to have no way at all but to have instead the wit constantly to make one's way anew from the materials at hand." ~Lewis Hyde*

*Trickster Makes This World* is a mythological cornerstone for Sacred Clowns and practicing trickster-gods the world over, digging into the guts of the primordial importance of sacred play and rowdy behavior. Hyde explores how trickster figures represent the *"disruptive imagination"* that inverts, rearranges, and overturns conventional wisdom. From Raven to Coyote, Monkey to Crow, Hermes to Loki, Eshu to Legba, Hyde reveals connections between mythological tricksters that form a hidden network that connects cultural divides.

The best part about this book is its ability to show how mythology becomes reality. *"Trickster consciousness"* is a vital component of human imagination. It reveals that we are the gods of renewal and rebirth if we choose to be. We are the creators of mischief and mayhem. We are the trickster gods in training. Trickster is us, and we are Trickster. We are the ultimate boundary-crossers. No manmade rules or laws can contain us unless we let them. Even cosmic rules and laws can hardly contain us. Trickster makes this world by tearing the old world down through high humor, moral ambiguity, foolishness, and strategic transgression and then dances in the ashes of its destruction. But it is precisely from the dancing, the kicking up of dust and ash, where brave new worlds emerge.

## **7.) "Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them" by Joshua Greene**

*"We need a kind of thinking that enables groups with conflicting moralities to live together and prosper. In other words, we need a metamorality. We need a moral system that resolves disagreements among groups with different moral ideals, just as ordinary first-order morality resolves disagreements among individuals with different selfish interests." ~Joshua Greene*

Moral Tribes is hands-on moral psychology and a refreshing new take on utilitarianism. Greene wraps game theory, evolutionary biology, and neuroscience into a nice digestible package to bolster his theory of cognition, which builds elegantly into a theory of moral psychology. A sweeping synthesis of neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy, Moral Tribes opens a can of psychosocial worms that takes the concept of morality to the next level, revealing how we are exceptionally well-adept at solving the dilemma between "Me" and "Us," through the concept of the "tribe," but how we are ridiculously less-adept at solving the meta-dilemma between "Us" and "Them."

Greene's concept of metamorality squares this psychosocial circle by counterintuitively applying utilitarianism to our base, knee-jerk reaction to morality (evolved morality) by becoming aware of our apathy in order to become more empathetic. By reinforcing humanity instead of nationalism, and worldly patriotism instead of patriotic nationalism, we turn the tables on both xenophobia and apathy and we become more compassionate and empathetic toward others. When we celebrate diversity instead of trying to cram the square peg of colonialism into the round hole of cultural affiliation, we turn the tables on the monkey-mind's one-dimensional moral tribalism and we usher in Joshua Greene's multi-dimensional metamorality.