

TEST II

A. Carruthers: “The Illusion of Conscious Will”

1. What does the expression “Free Will” refers to?
2. In which way does the concept of free will connect to the concept of moral responsibility?
3. Is it possible, in your opinion, to distinguish between “freedom of will” and “freedom of action”? Why?
4. What does Carruthers think of the arguments proposed by Wegner in his “The Illusion of Conscious Will”?
5. In what sense (according to Carruthers) conscious will is an illusion?
6. What are the main differences, according to Carruthers, between conscious thoughts and unconscious thoughts?
7. What does the expression “mind-reading” refer to?
8. What is the difference, according to Carruthers, between “mind-reading” and “meta-cognition”?

TRUE/FALSE

Answer “TRUE” or “FALSE” to the following statements:

9. The majority of the philosophers try to defend our free will from various sorts of determinism (physical/causal; biological; psychological; theological; etc.).
10. Libet conducted experiments designed to determine the nature of human emotions.
11. Benjamin Libet’s experiments aimed to defend the concept of free will.
12. Wegner collects data in order to support the following idea: that human actions are ever initiated by their own conscious willings is an illusion.
13. Carruthers think that sometimes we are right in thinking that we consciously cause our actions.
14. In general, philosophers claim that if we do not consciously cause our actions, then we are not morally responsible for our actions
15. Carruthers think that we are authoritative about our conscious thoughts, but not about the others’ thoughts.
16. According to Carruthers, a conscious thought is a mental event of which we are immediately and non-interpretationally aware.
17. A subject’s immediate self-attribution of a thought would not require self-interpretation.
18. “To confabulate” means “to make up stories about the desire, thoughts and motivations of the others”.

SUMMARIZING

Read the following passage, and summarize it.

“This patterning in the confabulation data suggests that people are engaging in self-interpretation in all cases. And this suggestion is confirmed when we turn to look at perfectly ordinary cases where neither of the above conditions holds, but where the mind-reading system is denied access to some of the crucial data needed to construct an explanation. These occur in people who have undergone commissurotomy (separating the two halves of the brain), whenever data are presented to the right-brain alone (such as a card saying, ‘Walk!’) in such a way as to cause behavior (getting up and walking). In such cases the mind-reading system (which is located in the left-brain) will confabulate an explanation (such as, ‘I was going to the fridge for a drink’) with all the seeming-obviousness of any self-attributed thought or decision. At the very least it follows that the mind-reading system itself has no knowledge of when it does or doesn’t have access to the agent’s thoughts and intentions. And the most plausible explanation is that it actually has no such access.”

B. Ramachandran: “Believing is seeing”

1. What is the syndrome called “blindsight”? Make an example of a study.
2. What are the most important philosophical problems triggered by the cases of blindsight?
3. What is “neglect”?
4. Was Ramachandran successful in “curing” neglect?
5. What is mirror agnosia?
6. What is anosognosia
7. What makes anosognosia interesting to philosophers?