



Psychology Q1

What is self-deceit?

Recommended Readings

Historical Sources

1. Jean-Paul Sartre's "Being and Nothingness" (1943) - Contains Sartre's influential concept of "bad faith" (mauvaise foi), a form of self-deception where one denies one's freedom and responsibility, providing a foundational existentialist perspective on self-deception.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche's "Beyond Good and Evil" (1886) - Explores how we create convenient fictions about ourselves and the world, with his famous quote: "I have done that, says my memory. I cannot have done that, says my pride, and remains inexorable. Eventually—memory yields."
3. John Locke's "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" (1689) - Explores how the mind forms ideas and beliefs, with relevant discussions on how we may mislead ourselves through improper association of ideas and motivated reasoning.
4. Immanuel Kant's "Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View" (1798) - Contains a section on self-deception where Kant distinguishes between lying to oneself and self-deception as a more complex phenomenon.
5. Sigmund Freud's "The Ego and the Id" (1923) - Introduces key psychoanalytic concepts like repression and rationalization that help explain how self-deception operates unconsciously.

Contemporary Philosophical Sources

1. Alfred Mele's "Self-Deception Unmasked" (2001) - A comprehensive philosophical analysis of self-deception that addresses the "paradox of self-deception" (how can one both know and not know something?).
2. Robert Trivers' "The Folly of Fools: The Logic of Deceit and Self-Deception in Human Life" (2011) - An evolutionary biologist's account of why self-deception might have evolved as an adaptation.
3. Herbert Fingarette's "Self-Deception" (1969/2000) - A classic philosophical analysis that views self-deception as a failure to "spell out" certain aspects of one's engagements in the world.
4. Annette Barnes' "Seeing Through Self-Deception" (1997) - Approaches self-deception as a failure to attend properly to available evidence rather than as a paradoxical simultaneous knowing and not knowing.



John Locke Global Essay Prize 2025 Prompts Breakdown

Psychology Category - Recommended Readings

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5. Martha Nussbaum's "Upheavals of Thought" (2001) - While primarily about emotions, contains relevant insights on how emotions can both reveal truths and participate in self-deception.

Psychology and Cognitive Science Resources

1. Daniel Kahneman's "Thinking, Fast and Slow" (2011) - Details cognitive biases and heuristics that facilitate self-deception, particularly confirmation bias and the availability heuristic.
2. Timothy Wilson's "Strangers to Ourselves" (2002) - Explores how much of our mental life occurs outside conscious awareness, helping explain how we can deceive ourselves.
3. Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson's "Mistakes Were Made (But Not by Me)" (2007) - Accessible account of cognitive dissonance theory and how it leads to self-justification and self-deception.
4. Ziva Kunda's research on "Motivated Reasoning" (1990) - Scientific studies showing how our desired conclusions influence how we evaluate evidence.
5. Jonathan Haidt's "The Righteous Mind" (2012) - Explores moral intuitions and post-hoc rationalizations, showing how we often decide first and justify later.

Neuroscience and Evolutionary Psychology

1. V.S. Ramachandran's work on anosognosia - Studies of patients with right hemisphere damage who deny their paralysis, offering insights into the neural mechanisms that may underlie self-deception.
2. Michael Gazzaniga's "The Mind's Past" (1998) - Research on split-brain patients reveals how the brain creates narratives to explain behaviors, even when those narratives are demonstrably false.
3. Robert Kurzban's "Why Everyone (Else) Is a Hypocrite" (2010) - Uses a modular view of the mind to explain self-deception as different mental modules operating with different information.
4. William von Hippel and Robert Trivers' "The Evolution and Psychology of Self-Deception" (2011) - Scholarly article examining the evolutionary advantages of self-deception.

Literary and Cultural Perspectives

1. Henrik Ibsen's "The Wild Duck" (1884) - Play centered on the theme of the "life lie" or vital illusion that people need to maintain happiness.
2. Milan Kundera's "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" (1984) - Novel exploring self-deception in personal relationships and political contexts.
3. Dostoevsky's "Notes from Underground" (1864) - Portrays a narrator who constantly lies to himself while claiming extreme self-awareness.