

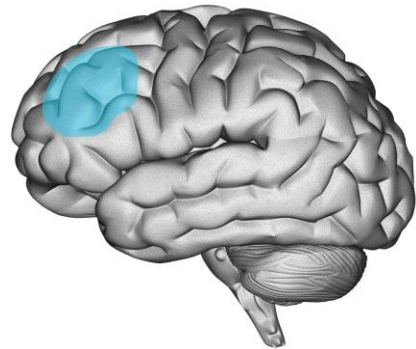
The Brain with David Eagleman
Episode 2: WHAT MAKES ME?



1) The sculptor Michelangelo described “finding” the statue of David in the block of marble. In what sense is this similar to the process of brain development?

2) The philosopher René Descartes assumed that an immaterial soul exists separately from the brain, and therefore that the mental you is totally separate from the physical you. The idea of an immaterial soul is easy to imagine—but why is it difficult to reconcile with neuroscientific evidence? What are examples from this episode—or from cases you’ve witnessed in your own life—that might dissuade you that the physical and mental are separate?

3) Because of changes in brain areas required for abstract reasoning and the control of urges, adolescence is a time of steep cognitive change. As one example, the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, important for controlling impulses, is among the most belated regions to mature—it doesn’t reach its adult state until the early twenties. Observations like these should not let teens ‘off the hook’ for any illegal behavior—but how do these facts influence the way the legal system deals with juveniles? How should they?



4) When you go to sleep, your body seems to shut down. So it's a natural assumption that your brain does as well. What's wrong with this assumption?

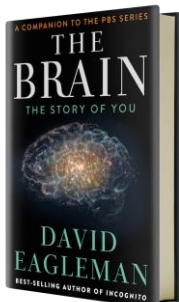
5) If your 7-year-old self walked into the room, do you suppose you'd have more in common with him/her, or instead with your colleagues? What would you speak about? How long would the conversation last?

6) Name a time when your memory of an event differed from someone else's, or from physical evidence like a video. How does the study of memory influence the use of eyewitness testimony in courtrooms? How should it?

7) After learning about the nuns in the Religious Orders Study, what would you recommend to retirees you know?



Bonus question: What is the hidden allusion in this episode to Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*? If you know the answer, tweet it to me (@davideagleman) for a shout-out.



More depth on the issues in this episode can be found in the companion book, [*The Brain: The Story of You*](#)