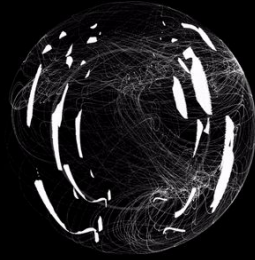
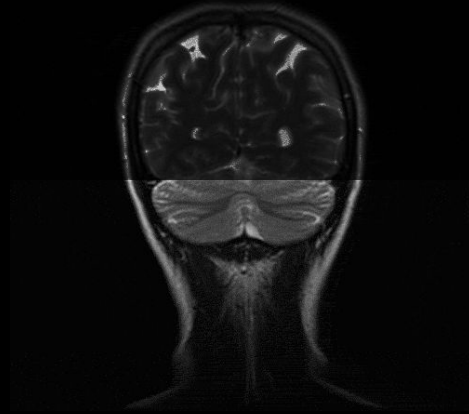
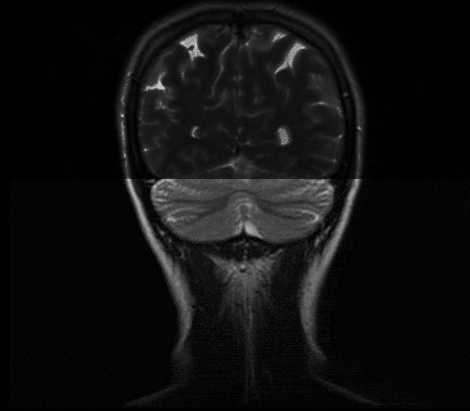




# The Trolley (Pt. II)









## Empirical Claims of Utilitarianism

- ❑ The only thing that humans intrinsically value is pleasure/happiness (hedonism).



## The Open Question

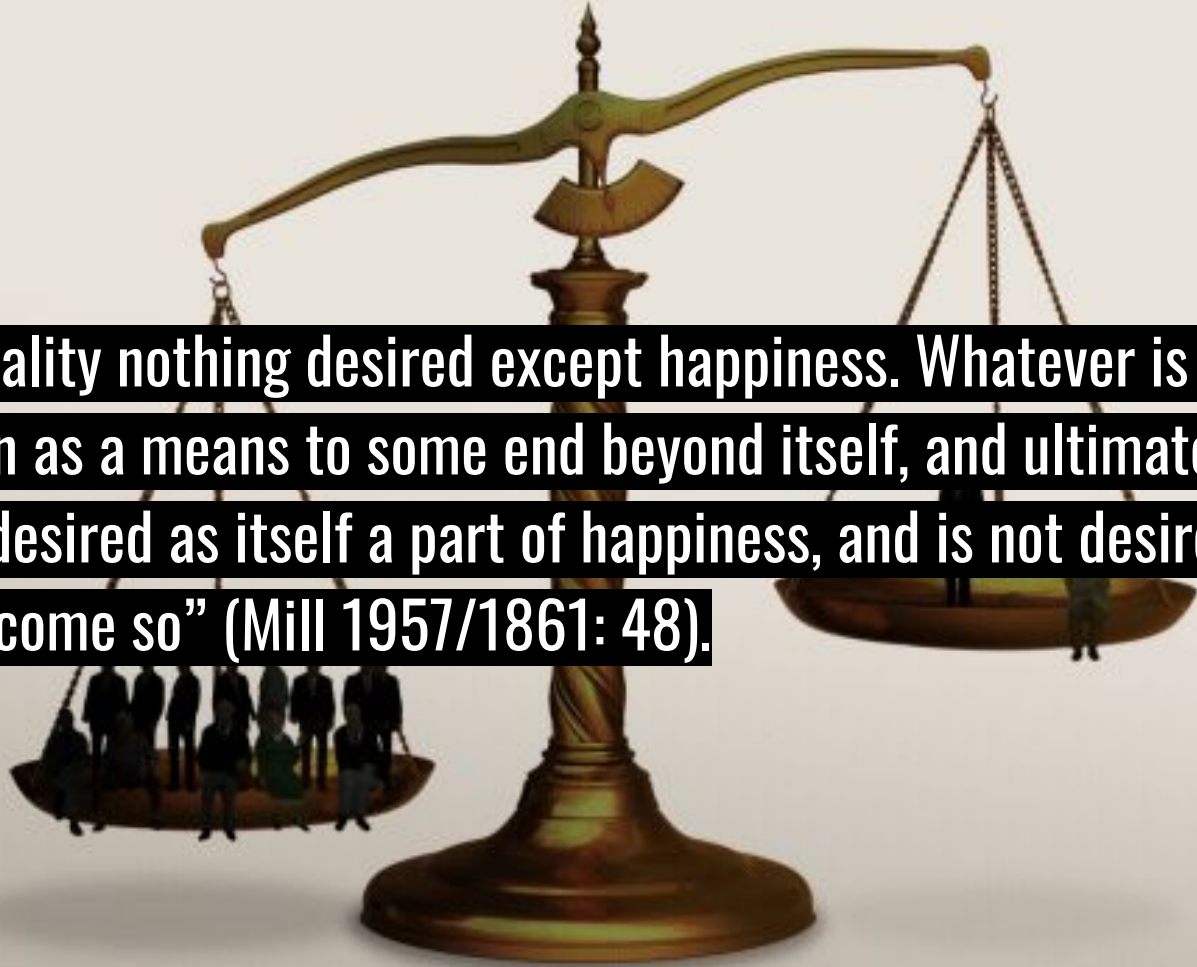
If “good” just means “pleasure”,  
then we can express it like an identity claim.

Eg,

**BACHELOR = UNMARRIED MALE**

**GOOD = PLEASURE**

But it doesn't seem like asking “Is a bachelor an unmarried male?” is  
the same as “Is good the same as pleasure?”



**“There is in reality nothing desired except happiness. Whatever is desired otherwise than as a means to some end beyond itself, and ultimately to happiness, is desired as itself a part of happiness, and is not desired for itself until it has become so” (Mill 1957/1861: 48).**

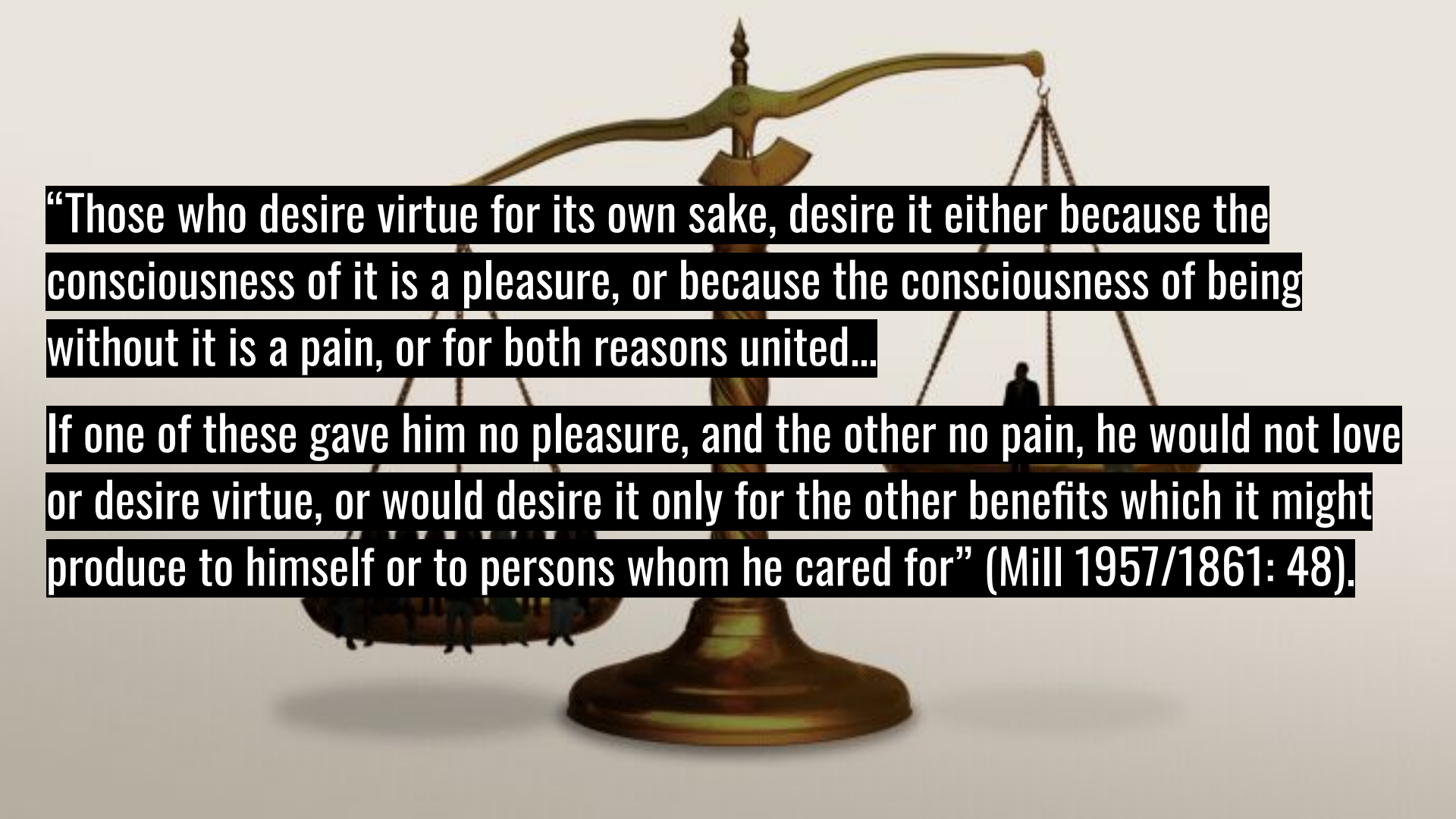
**In other words...**

**Just ask people what they want.**

**If you keep pressing them, they'll  
ultimately settle on happiness.**





A golden scale of justice is centered in the background. The scale is slightly tilted to the right. In the background, behind the scale, there is a small silhouette of a person standing. The text is overlaid on the image in white with a black background.

**“Those who desire virtue for its own sake, desire it either because the consciousness of it is a pleasure, or because the consciousness of being without it is a pain, or for both reasons united...**

**If one of these gave him no pleasure, and the other no pain, he would not love or desire virtue, or would desire it only for the other benefits which it might produce to himself or to persons whom he cared for” (Mill 1957/1861: 48).**

**In other words...**

**If they disagree, they're simply mistaken.**



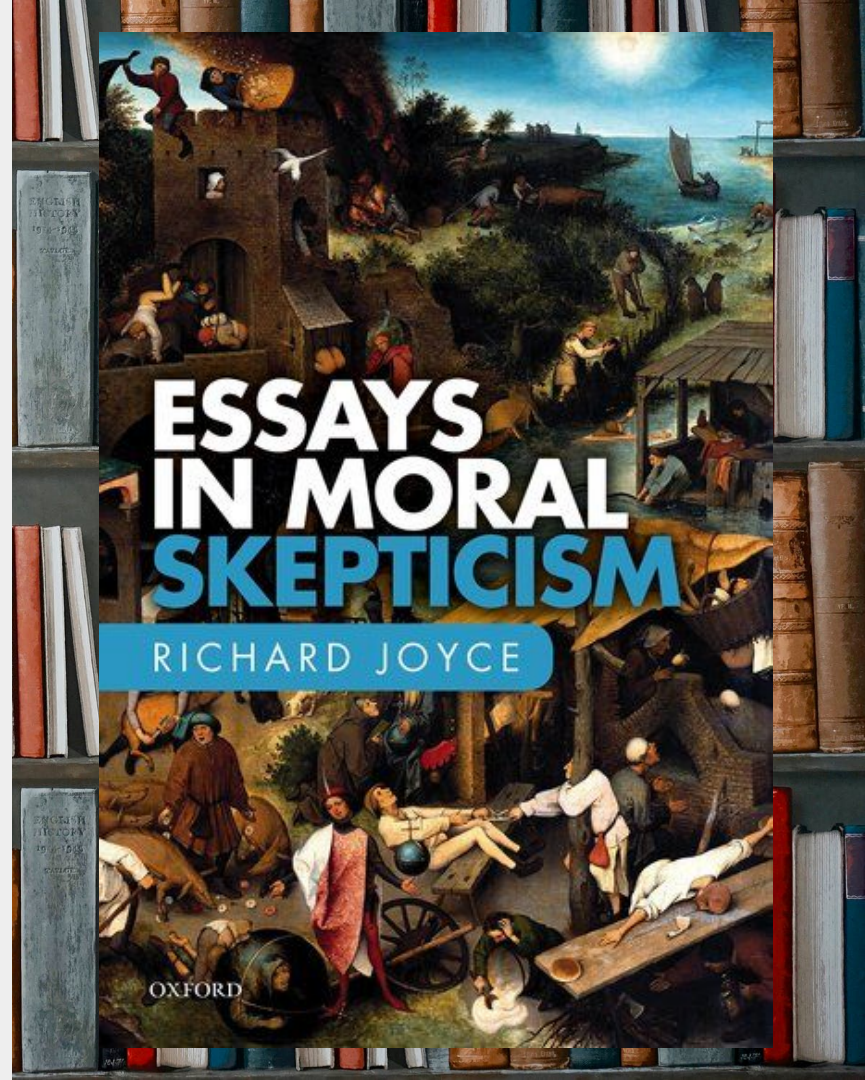
**“Thus, the Utilitarian conclusion, carefully stated, would seem to be this; that the opinion that secrecy may render an action right which would not otherwise be so should itself be kept comparatively secret... And thus a Utilitarian may reasonably desire, on Utilitarian principles, that some of his conclusions should be rejected by mankind generally; or even that the vulgar should keep aloof from his system as a whole, in so far as the inevitable indefiniteness and complexity of its calculations render it likely to lead to bad results in their hands.”**

**~Henry Sidgwick, *Methods of Ethics*, 490**

Even moral skeptics are unimpressed by moral naturalism...

“When faced with a moral naturalist who proposes to identify moral properties with some kind of innocuous naturalistic property—the maximization of happiness, say—the error theorist [moral skeptic] will likely object that this property lacks the ‘normative oomph’ that permeates our moral discourse.

Why, it might be asked, should we care about the maximization of happiness anymore than the maximization of some other mental state, such as surprise?” (Joyce 2016: 6-7).



# Obviously...

Utilitarianism includes various other tenets:

- consequentialism (an intuitive truth, they claim)
- empiricism (to discover which actions do in fact produce the most utility)
- collectivism (as opposed to egoism)

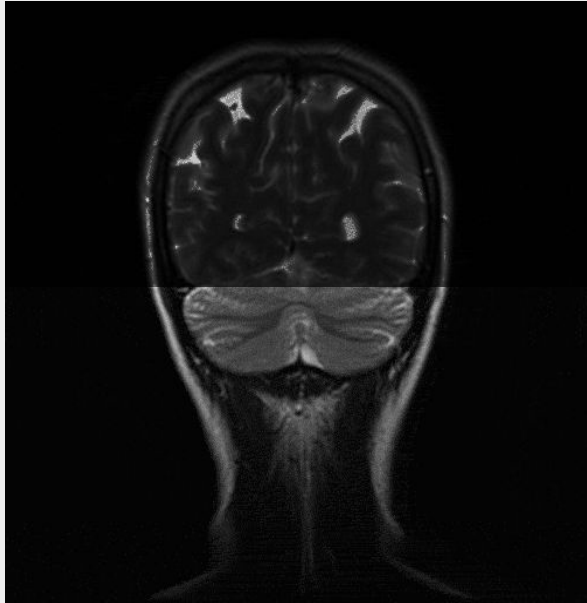
But these are non-empirical claims.





## Empirical Claims of Utilitarianism

- ❑ The only thing that humans intrinsically value is pleasure/happiness (hedonism).



## Empirical Claims of Kantianism

**X** Reason has the capacity to help us arrive at objective moral truth.

Note: Kant had several empirical problems (on account of the state of science during the time period in which he wrote) that have been banished to [Appendix A](#).



EMPIRICAL

DATA

TIME



In his bestselling *Stumbling on Happiness*, Daniel Gilbert (2007) reviews the literature in social psychology that shows that we reliably make **affective forecasting errors**, i.e., incorrect predictions about how we will feel in the future (see also [Wilson and Gilbert 2003](#)).

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

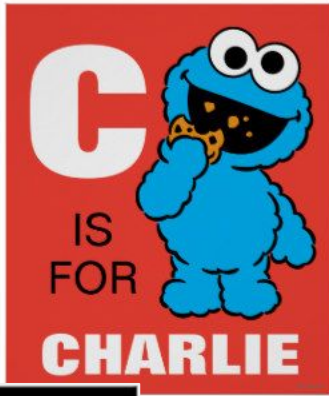
# *Stumbling on* **HAPPINESS**

"If you have even the slightest curiosity about the human condition, you ought to read it. Trust me."

—MALCOLM GLADWELL, AUTHOR OF *BLINK*



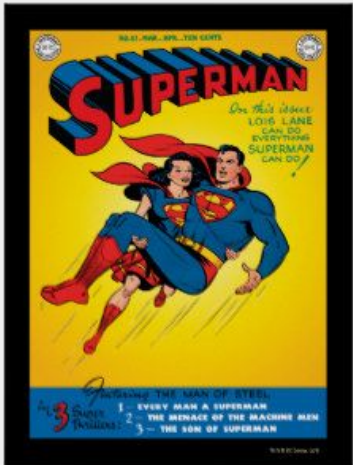
**DANIEL GILBERT**



In one famous study, subjects were put into two groups. Both groups were asked to rate two posters and were gifted the one they liked most.

One group, however, was asked to give *reasons* for their preferences, while the other group didn't have to.

Contacted 3 weeks later, those who gave reasons for their preference were less satisfied than those who didn't ([Wilson et al. 1993](#)).



## We also...

- consistently **overestimate** how happy we'll be on our birthdays ([Wilson et al. 1989](#)).
- consistently **underestimate** how happy we'll be on Mondays (Stone et al. 2012).
- expect dramatic events to negatively affect us much longer than they actually do (Wilson & Gilbert 2003), such as when female subjects overestimate the negative affective impact of hostile sexism and underestimate the negative impact of more subtle sexism ([Bosson 2010](#)).

Most people *expect* to regret foolish actions more so than foolish inactions (Kahneman & Tversky 1982), yet people are more likely to *actually* regret things that they *didn't* do rather than things they did (Gilovich & Medvec 1995).





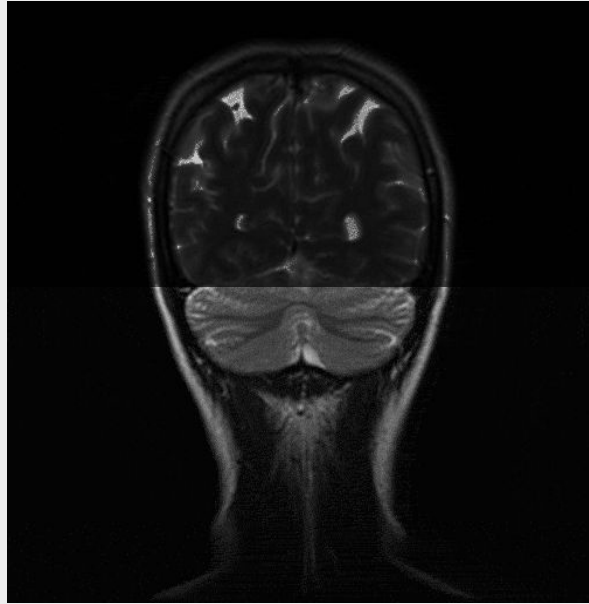
**Although parents often report that their biggest joy in life is their children, having children, on average, leads to a deterioration of relationship quality (Doss 2009) and relationship quality is the greatest predictor of overall life satisfaction (Diener 1999).**

It is also the case that gym goers were more likely to rate the unpleasantness of the hunger and thirst associated with being lost during a hike as **high** if they were surveyed **towards the end of their workout**, as opposed to at the beginning of it ([Loewenstein 2005](#)).





**In general, humans confuse how they feel right now for how they feel about life in general (Schwarz & Clore 2003).**



This **appears** to look bad for  
Kantianism.

It appears that when we  
prospect (i.e., when we think or  
**reason** about the future) we  
reliably make mistakes about  
how we will feel).

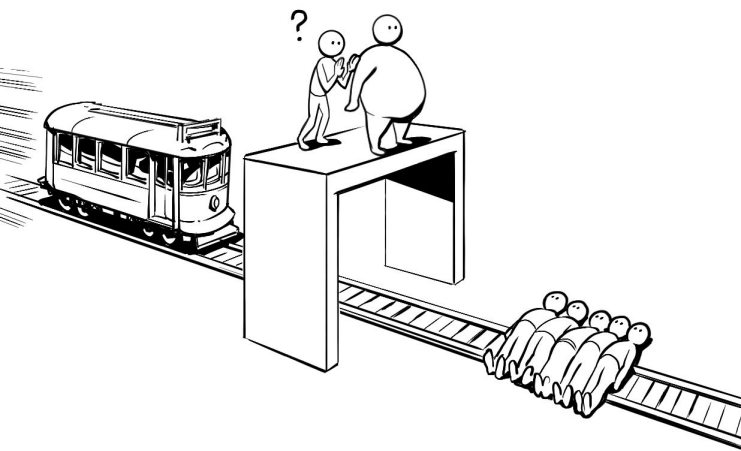
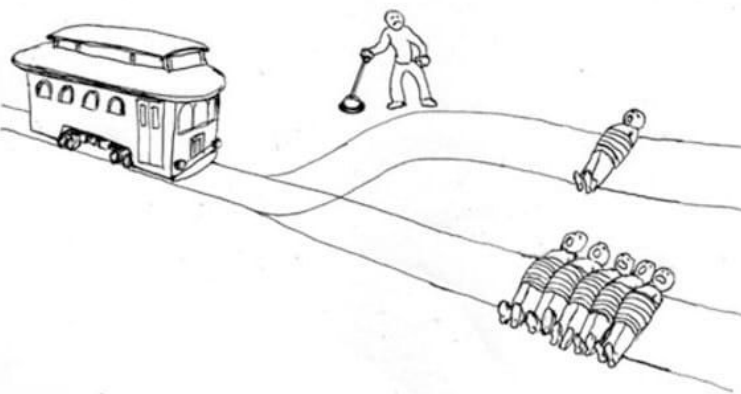




This does not, however, disprove **hedonism.**

This data only shows that we make mistakes about what will make us happy, **not** that we don't want happiness.





When we last covered the trolley dilemma, we were left with the question of whether it is **inconsistent** to pull the lever in the sidetrack example but *not* push the fat man over in the footbridge example.



St. Thomas Aquinas

According to the **doctrine of double effect**, first expressed by St. Thomas Aquinas, it's ok to pull the lever in the first case (even though it will cause the death of another) because you intend the good effect (saving the five) and not the bad one (causing the death of the one).

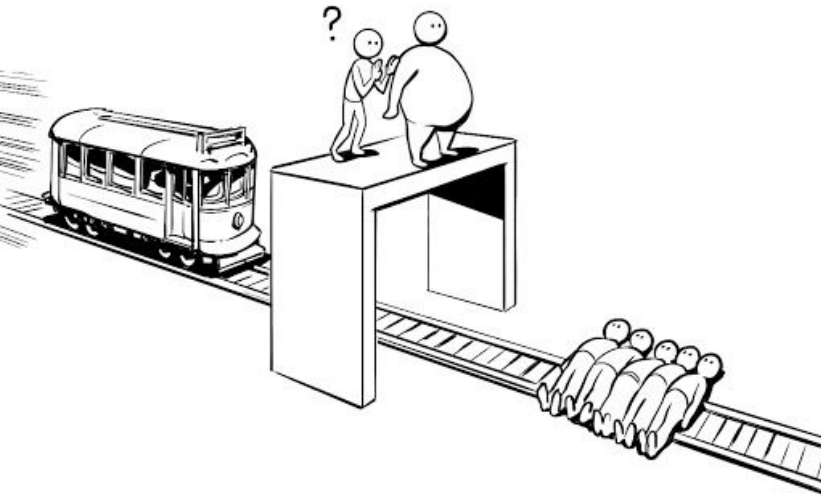


St. Thomas Aquinas

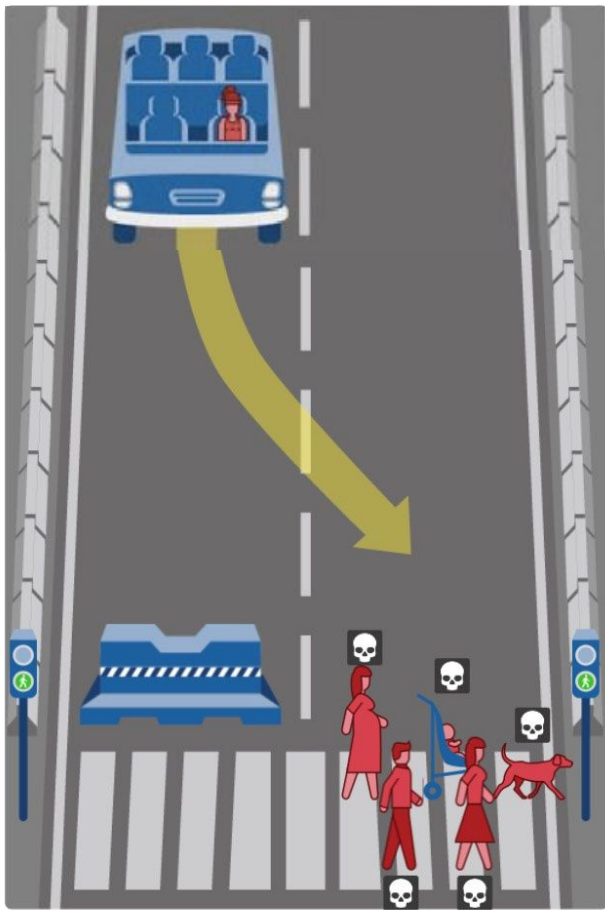
It's not ok to push the fat man over in the second case since your intention is **to use the man as a means for the end of stopping the trolley,** which is obviously bad.



*Food for thought...*



Where as some see Trolley problems as purely academic hypotheticals, this dilemma has recently arisen in a real-world scenario: **autonomous vehicles.**



Show Description

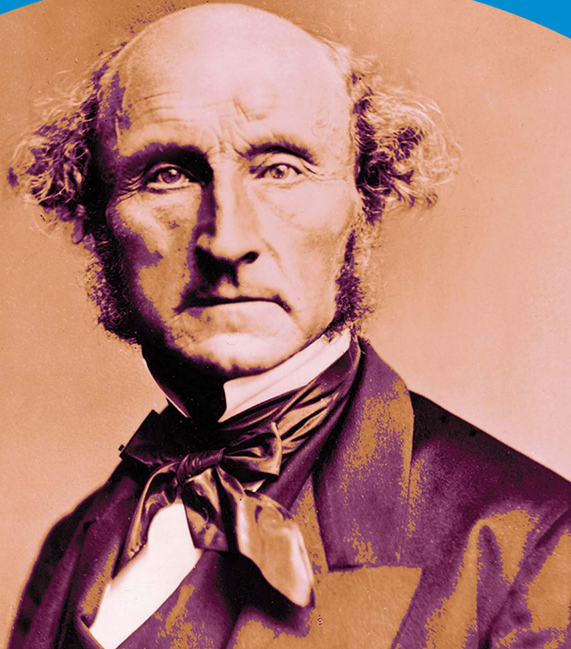
Imagine a scenario where the brakes of an autonomous vehicle are malfunctioning and the vehicle can either kill five bystanders or run into a barricade thereby killing the passenger.



John Stuart Mill

# UTILITARIANISM

DOVER THRIFT EDITIONS



Utilitarian-type thinking would lead people to **opting for the single death**, as opposed to the five...



...but would **you** buy a car  
programmed that way?

**Case Study #19839**  
**Trolleyology**

# The Trolley Dilemma



Question:

Why do people think that causing the death of one is ok in the **Switch case**, but not in the **Footbridge case**?

Joshua Greene has made a career of studying this dilemma using the tools of neuroscience.

His book *Moral Tribes* summarizes his findings.

'A landmark in our understanding of morality and the moral sense' **Steven Pinker**



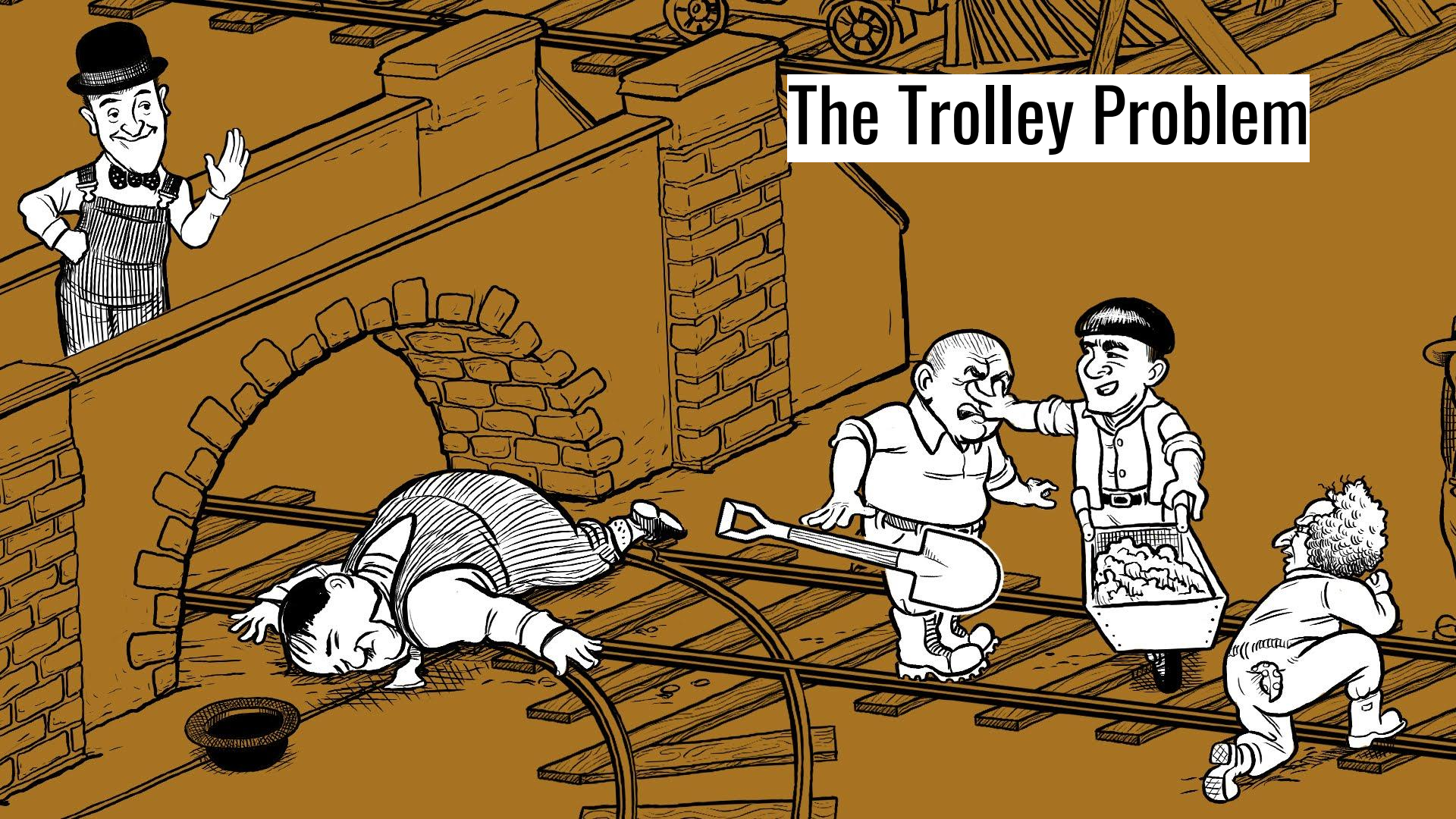
# MORAL TRIBES

EMOTION, REASON, AND  
THE GAP BETWEEN US AND THEM

JOSHUA GREENE



# The Trolley Problem

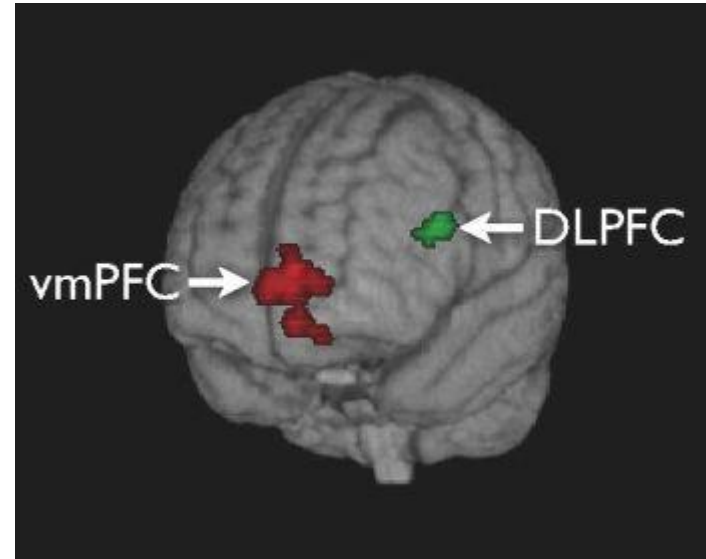




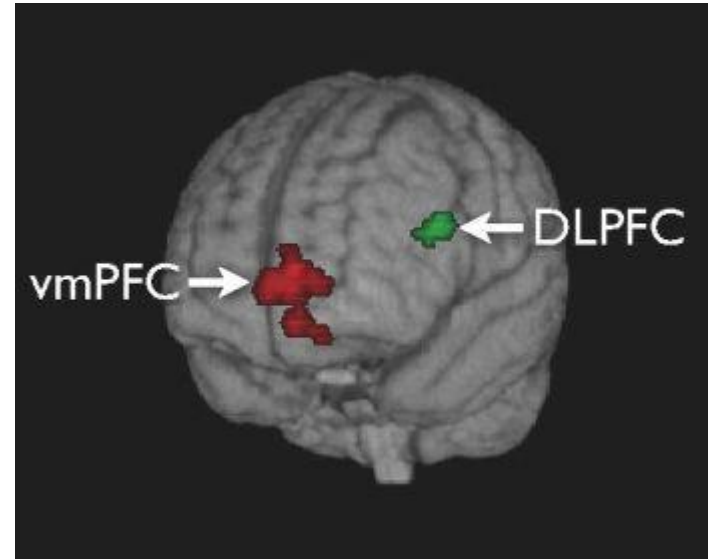


**The Crying Baby Dilemma**

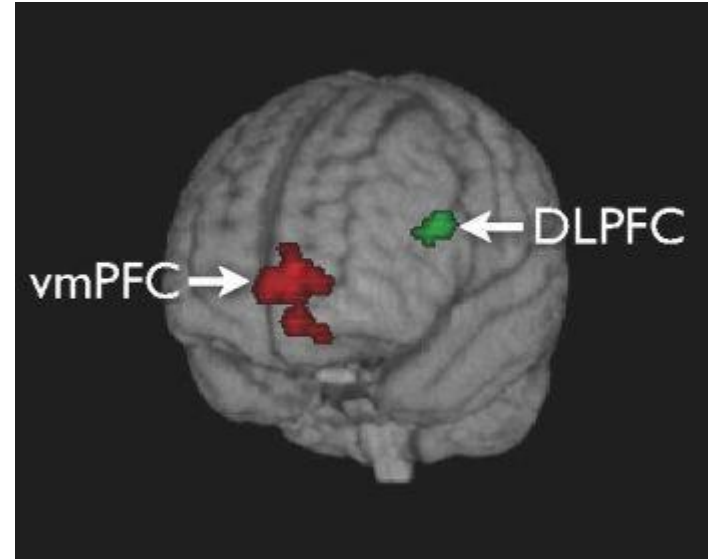
Kantian-type judgments (“Don’t kill the baby!”) showed greater activation of the ventromedial prefrontal cortex (vmPFC), while Utilitarian-type judgments (“The greater good!”) showed greater activation of the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (dlPFC).



The vmPFC is associated with **emotional processing**, literally modulating the activity of the evolutionarily older parts of the brain so that they can “communicate” with the newer parts (see Pinker 2012: 578–9).



This leads us to conclude that Kantian-type judgments are (surprisingly) largely emotional in nature.



S | D E B A R

**Question:**

**What function does our dlPFC have?**

The dlPFC calculates:  
Reward magnitude  
Reward probability  
Expected value



**Case Study #98712**  
**The 2006**  
**Valdesolo/DeSteno**  
**Studies**

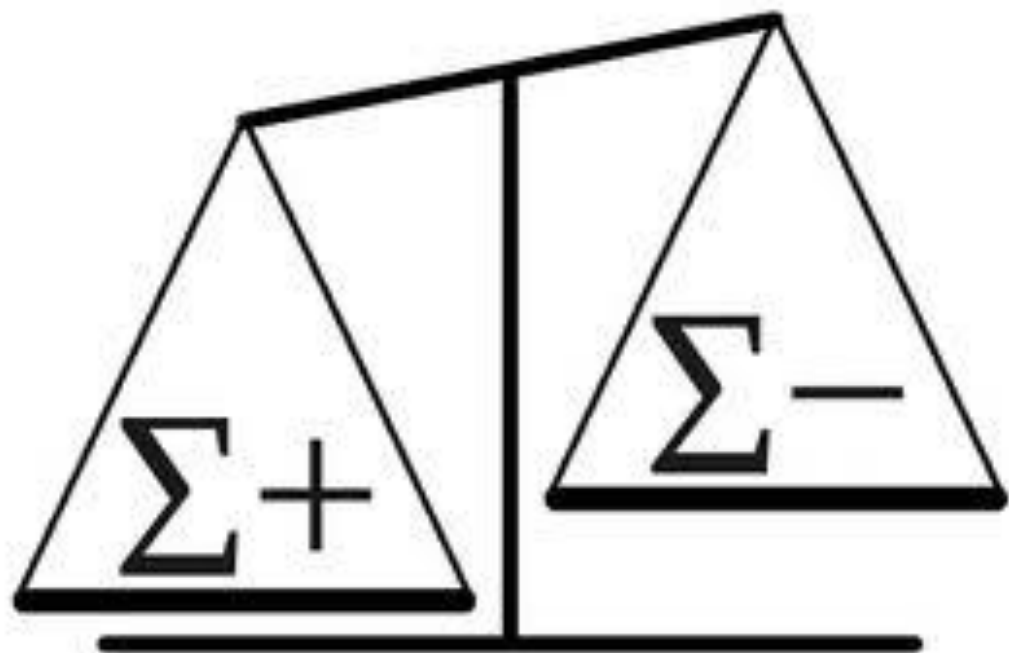
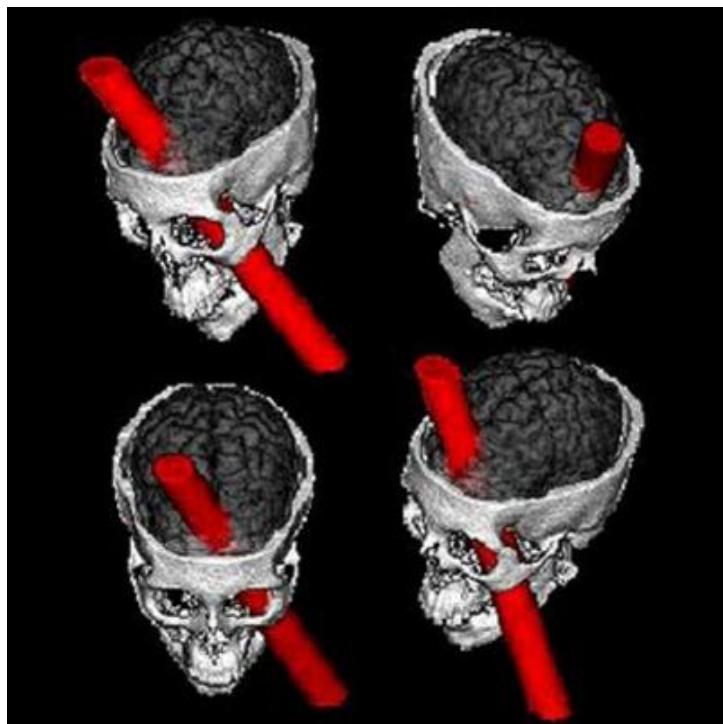


The logo for Saturday Night Live, featuring the words "SATURDAY", "NIGHT", and "LIVE" stacked vertically in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The background is a dark, blurred cityscape at night with lights from buildings and streets.

# SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE

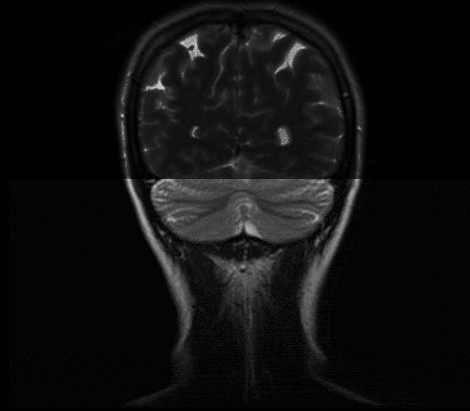
If there is an emotionally positive stimulus prior to moral judgment, the judgment is more likely to be Utilitarian.

**Case Study #45749**  
**VMPFC Lesion Studies**



And of course, there is a correlation between psychopathy and emotional processing regions of the brain that are **not** functioning normally (Blair 2007).







## Empirical Claims of Utilitarianism



The only thing that humans intrinsically value is pleasure/happiness (hedonism).

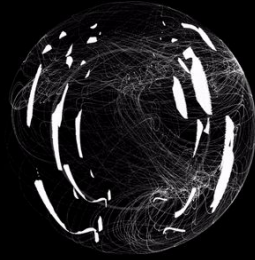
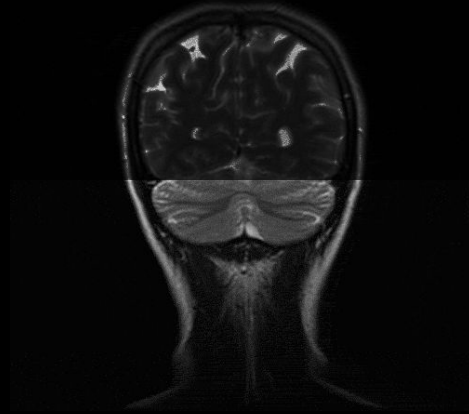


## Empirical Claims of DCT

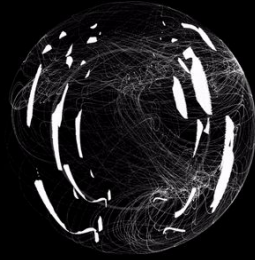
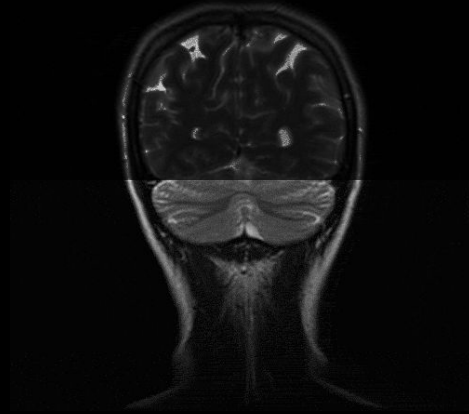
- ✗ After revelation, human societies increased in complexity as religious devotion to God spread (the Big Gods hypothesis).
- ☑ Watched people are well-behaved people (social monitoring hypothesis)

## Ontological Claim of DCT (theist version)

❓ God exists



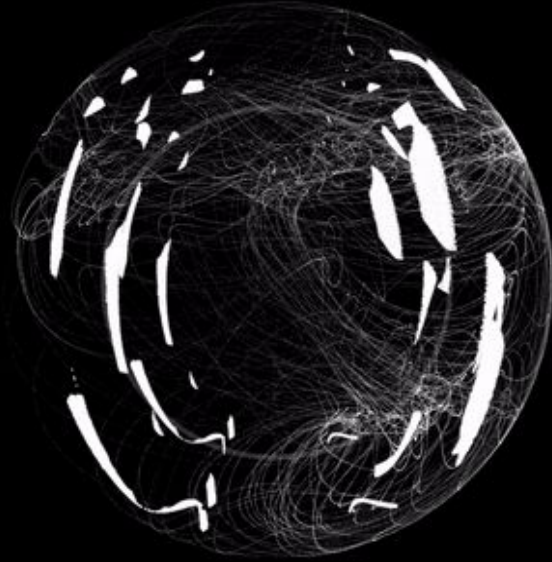




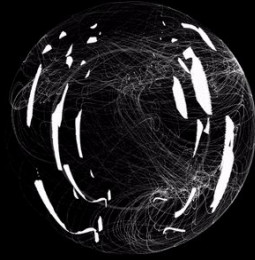
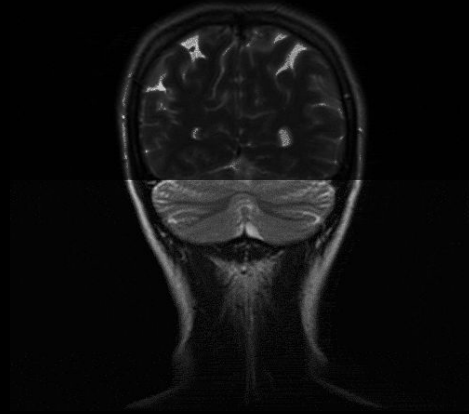


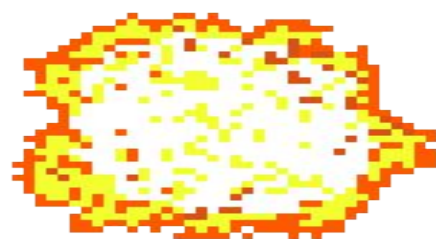
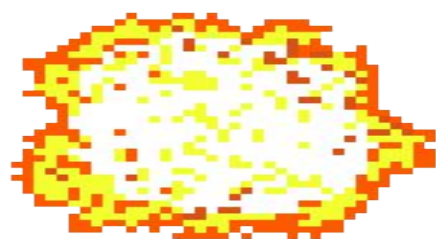
“We have here the beginnings of a debunking explanation of moral realism...

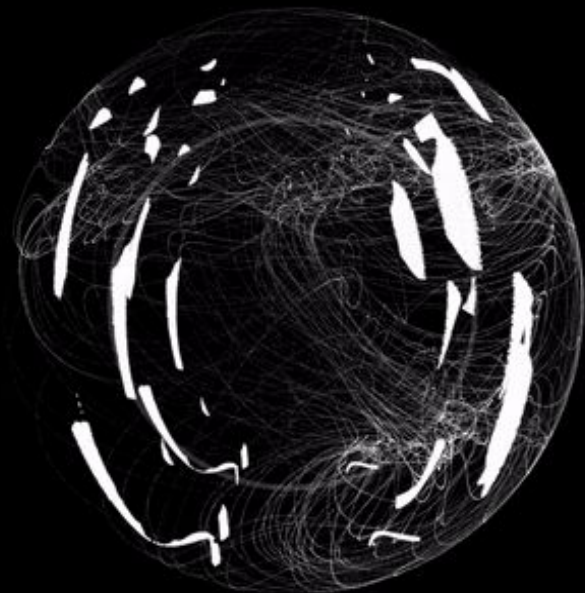
Therefore, we can understand our inclination towards moral realism not as an insight into the nature of moral truth, but as a **by-product** of the efficient cognitive processes we use to make moral decisions” (Greene 2003: 849).



**Moral Skepticism**







**To be continued...**