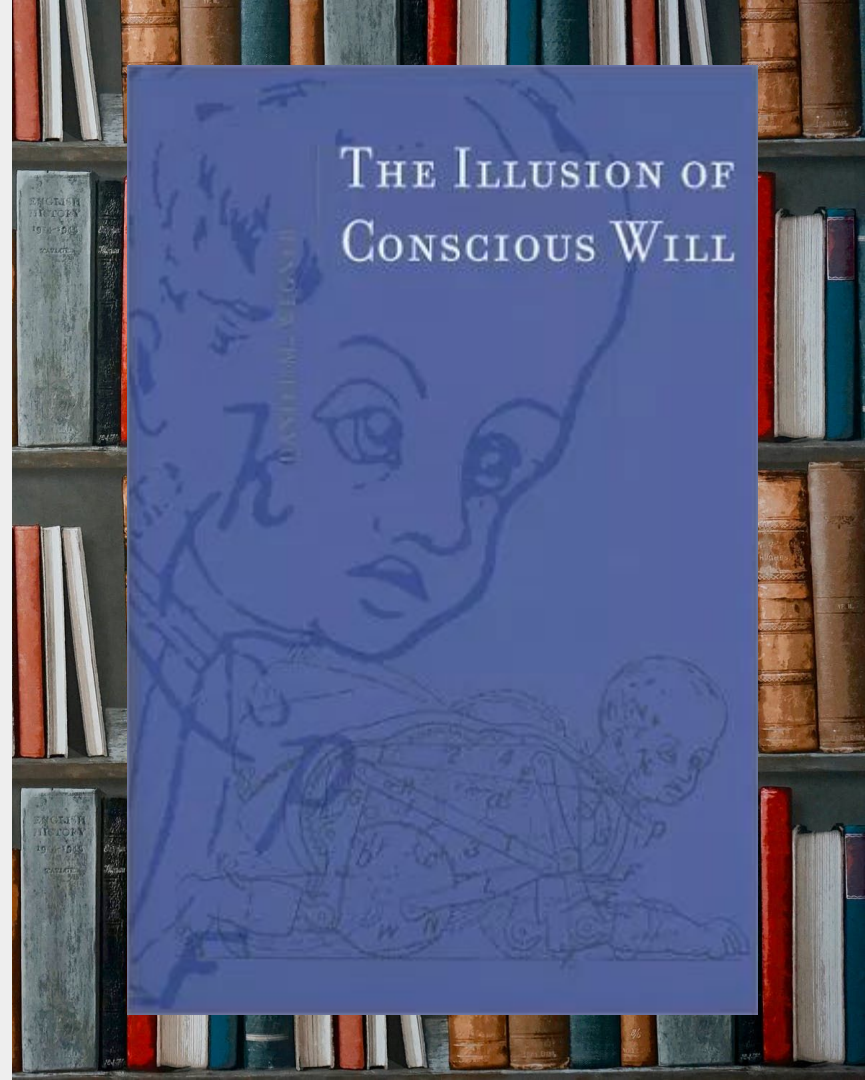




The Person and the Situation

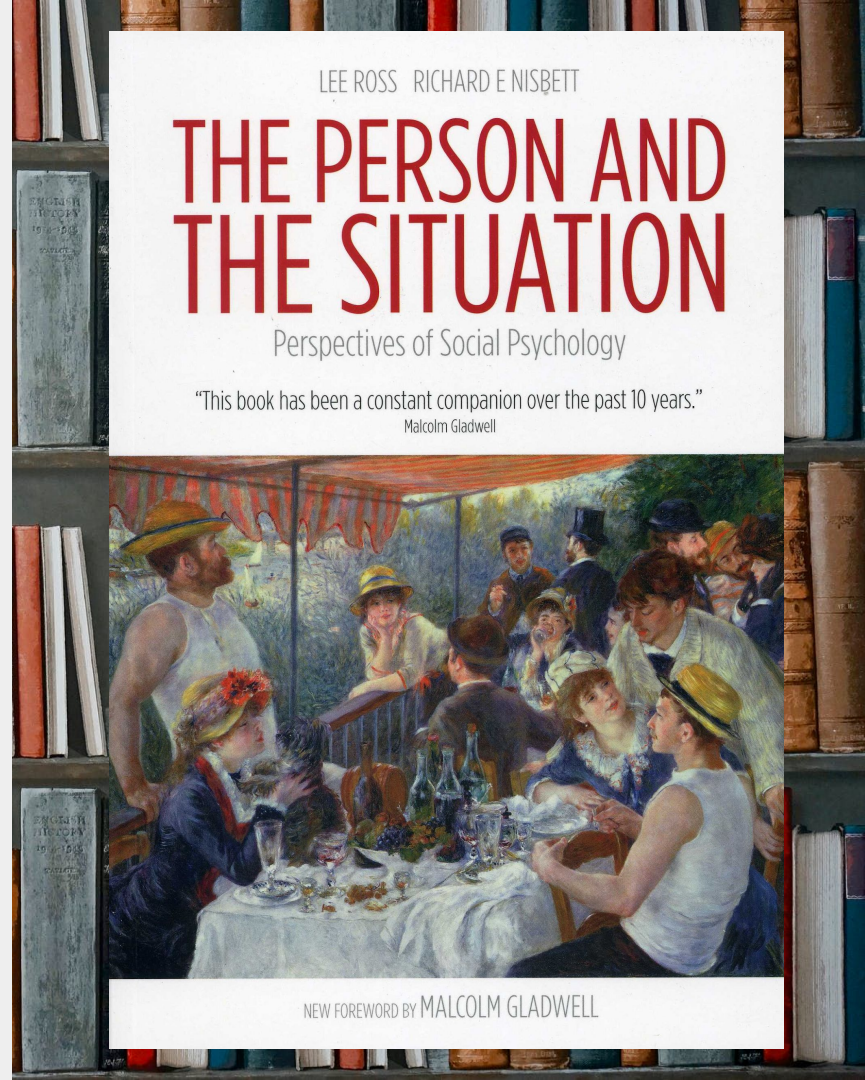
There's also skepticism about free will coming from the mind sciences...

For example, psychologist Daniel Wegner (2002) was convinced free will is an illusion...



In their classic text on social psychology, Lee Ross and Richard Nisbett argue that we reliably underestimate the power of the situation we're in to determine our actions.

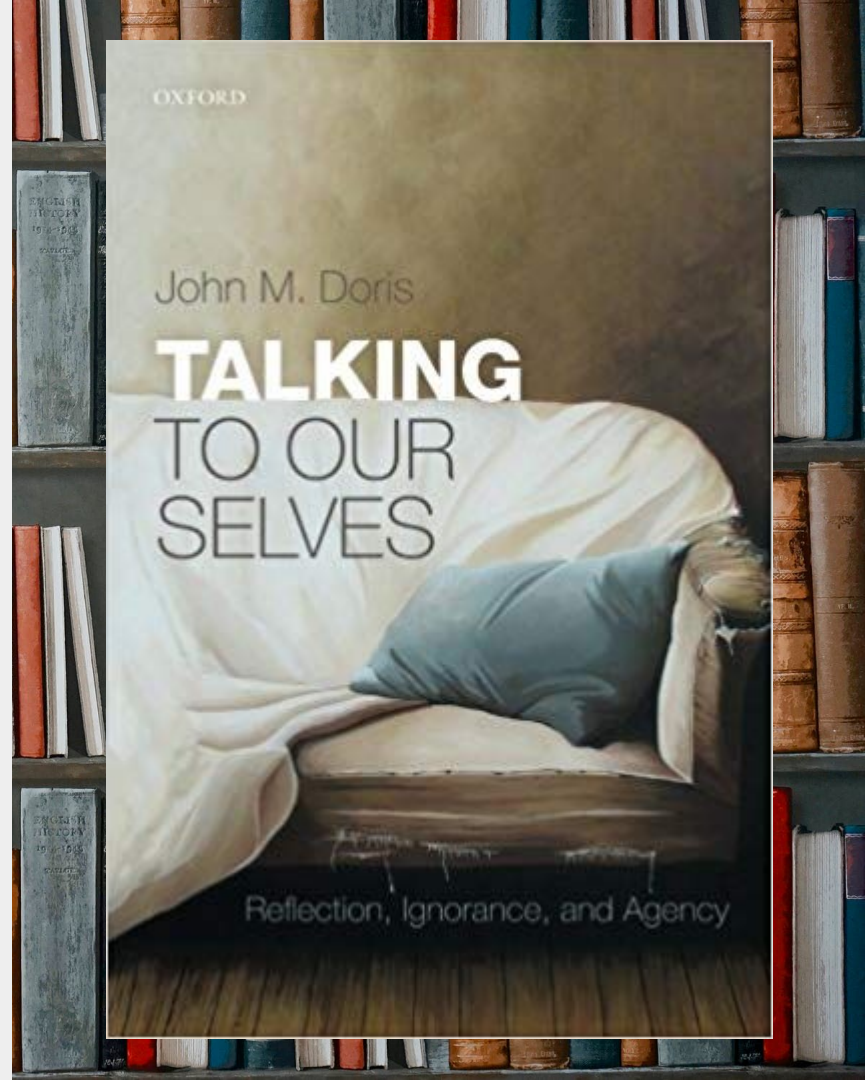
In other words, we presume that our actions flow out of our robust character traits (e.g., friendliness, honesty, etc.), but, in reality, they are more often than not determined by our social environment.





Important Concepts

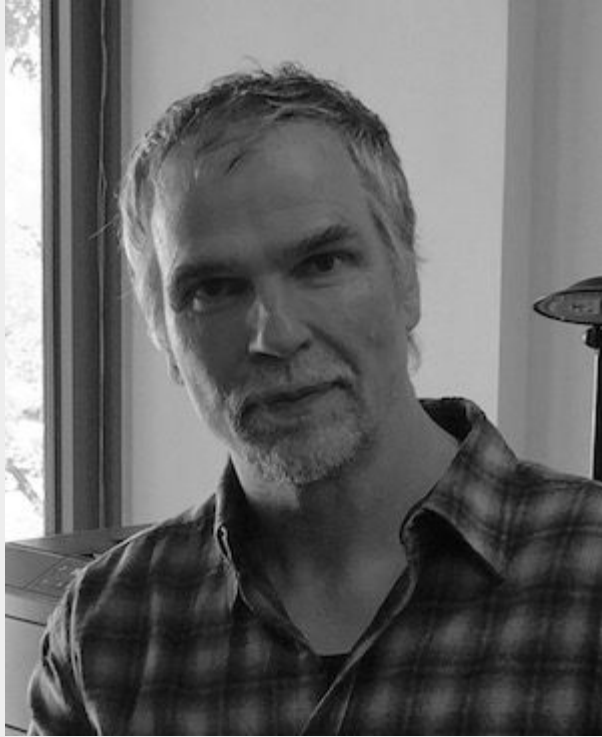
Doris (2015) expands upon the implications of the latest data from the mind sciences on the question of free will.



Exercises of Agency

A behavior is an **exercise of agency** when the actor is *self-directed* while performing it.

Self-directed behaviors are sourced in features of the self, such as desires, values or beliefs, as opposed to features of the environment that are external to the self, such as political regimes and natural disasters.



**“Whenever the causes of your behavior would not be recognized by you as the reason for your behavior,
in those cases it is unjustified to attribute agency (i.e., free will) to yourself” (Doris 2015: 48).**



Food for thought...

Our behaviors can be primed for, such as when subjects temporarily move more slowly after unscrambling some sentences with keywords in them ([Bargh, Chen and Burrows 1996](#))...





...or when subjects perform better in “Trivial Pursuit” if asked to think about professors for a moment ([Dijksterhuis and Knippenberg 1998](#)).

In a classic study, subjects were told to listen to radio editorials.

One group was instructed to move their head up and down (to check for audio quality), ie the nod group; another group was told to move their head side to side, ie the shake group.

The nodding group was more likely to be approving of the editorial, while the group that was shaking their head was more likely to be disapproving of it

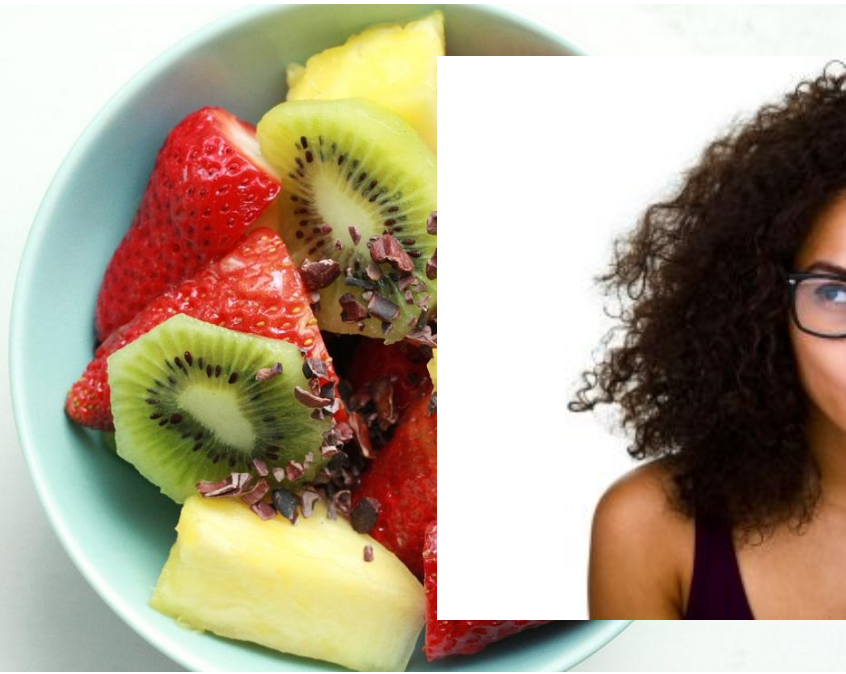
[\(Wells and Petty 1980\).](#)





In two recent studies, researchers found that deeper voices gave political candidates an advantage over those with relatively higher-pitched voices (unless they are running against a woman).

Consider the Fruit or Cake Experiment.





1000/s f1.4 ▶ |

+2..1..0..1..2-

ISO:100



$(x) \supset Cx$
 $(Nx \& Hx)$
 $(x) \& Lx$

$(Px \& \sim Lx \supset Gx)$
 $(Px \supset \sim Kx)$
 $(Px \supset Kx \supset S)$
 $(Px \supset \sim Kx \supset Gx)$

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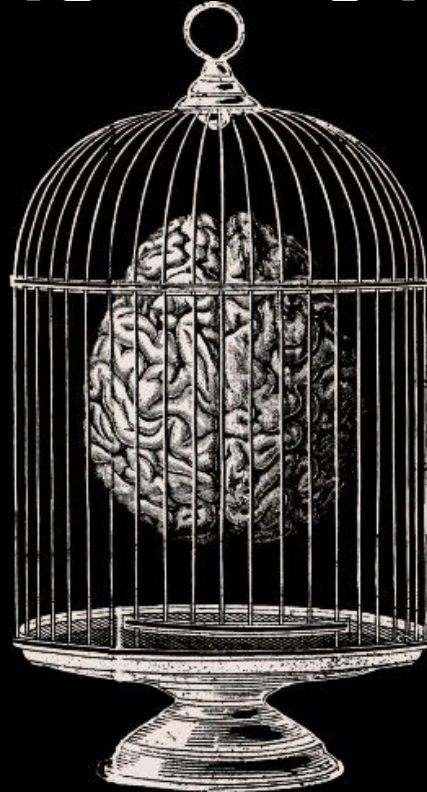




Displaying eye images has been associated with:

- Increased generosity in a “dictator game” where people decide how much money they will share with another person ([Haley and Fessler 2005](#));
- Increased donations to a shared pot in a “public goods game” ([Burnham and Hare 2007](#));
- Decreased littering in a self-service cafeteria, where patrons bus their own tables ([Ernest-Jones et al. 2011](#))

COGNITIVE BIAS OF THE DAY



CHOICE-BLINDNESS REFERS TO THE PHENOMENON IN WHICH PEOPLE ARE BLIND TO THEIR OWN CHOICES AND PREFERENCES.



Worldwide



SUBJECTS WERE GIVEN A SURVEY ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL AND MORAL POSITIONS ON SOCIAL ISSUES.

WHEN THE SURVEY WAS COMPLETED, THE SUBJECTS RETURNED THE CLIPBOARDS.

BEFORE CONCLUDING THE EXPERIMENT, THE EXPERIMENTERS THEN RETURNED THE CLIPBOARD TO THE SUBJECTS AND ASKED THEM TO EXPLAIN A FEW OF THEIR VIEWS.



THE SURPRISING FINDING WAS THAT SUBJECTS GAVE EXPLANATIONS FOR THEIR CHOICES *EVEN THOUGH THEIR CHOICES HAD BEEN CHANGED.*

THE RESEARCHERS, USING A TRICK QUESTIONNAIRE, ALTERED THE RESPONSES OF THE SUBJECTS.

MOST OF THEM DIDN'T NOTICE, AND HAPPILY WENT ON TO DEFEND THEIR NON-CHOICES (HALL ET AL. 2012).



OBJECTION

The majority of these findings can be safely ignored since there are problematic statistical techniques being used, i.e., [RepliGate](#).



“There’s some trouble in psychology. But that doesn’t mean we’re better off trusting ‘common sense’ than we are trusting the best available systematic study.

There’s good, bad, and indifferent in psychology, just as in all of science, and the existence of the bad and indifferent shouldn’t dissuade us from figuring out what the good is.

Doubtless, numbers of scientific findings should be discarded, but if *all* scientific findings were cast aside, we’d have a lot bigger problems than working out the right account of agency” (Doris 2015: 48).

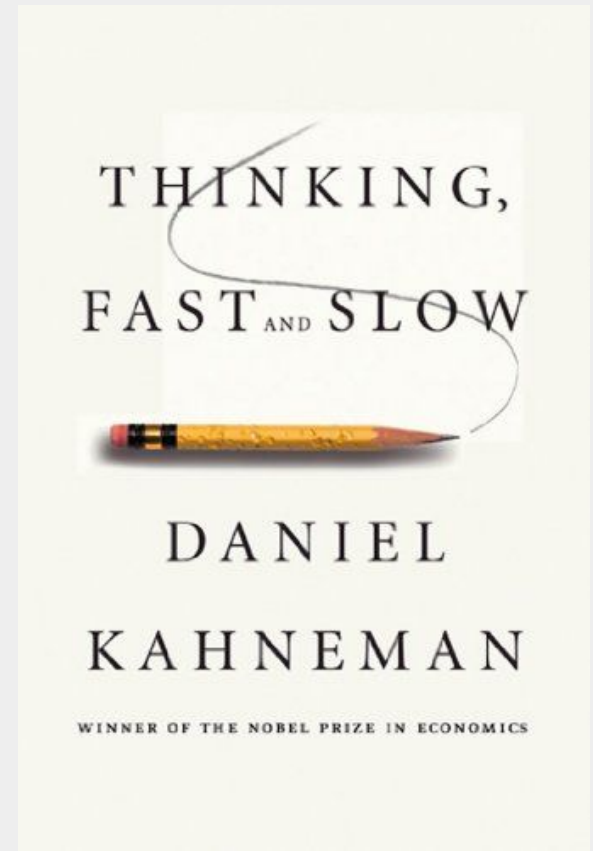
Other more contemporary philosophers see their field as continuous with the **natural sciences**, dealing with science's most abstract problems.

These are usually cross-trained (in a science) or work with scientists.



Note: Doris relies on Dual-Process Theory...

“Approaches that can be characterized as dual process have been proposed for almost everything psychologists study: attention ([Schneider and Shiffrin 1977](#)), learning (Reber 1993), memory ([Roediger 1990](#)), perception ([Norman 2002](#)), reasoning ([Evans 2003](#)), decision-making ([Kahneman and Frederick 2002](#)), person interpretation ([Gilbert et al. 1988](#)) delay of gratification ([Metcalfe and Mischel 1999](#)), psychopathology ([Beevers 2005](#)), and moral judgment ([Cushman et al. 2010](#))” (Doris 2015: 50).



Some might wonder why not opt for compatibilism...

Here are three reasons why compatibilism isn't a good option, given the goal of this course: escaping skepticism.

#1



Although compatibilism goes back to the Greek Stoics, the view was made very famous by 18th century Scottish philosopher David Hume...

RECALL

According to compatibilism (and Hume) what it means to say that you did something of your own free will is that your desires **caused** your actions, independent of whether or not your desires were determined by external factors.

#2



Compatibilists might be ok with saying that roborats have free will.

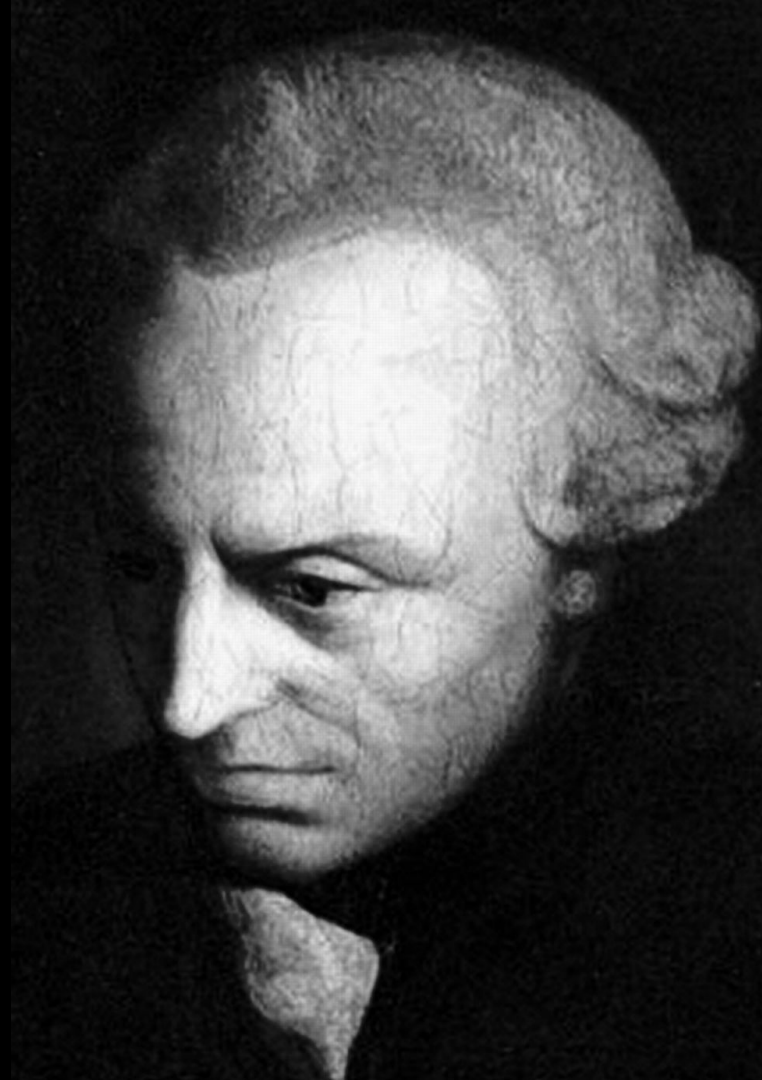
#3

“Human beings obviously *have* Hume-style [compatibilist] free will. This isn’t even controversial. After all, Hume-style free will is just the ability to act on your desires. Anyone who’s ever eaten a cookie because she wanted one *knows* that we have *this* kind of free will” (Balaguer 2014: 50-2).

Balaguer argues that the metaphysically interesting question is whether or not we *also* have Libertarian-style free will.



“The eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant called Humean compatibilism ‘petty word jugglery’ and a ‘wretched subterfuge’ ...





“And the nineteenth-century American philosopher William James said this:

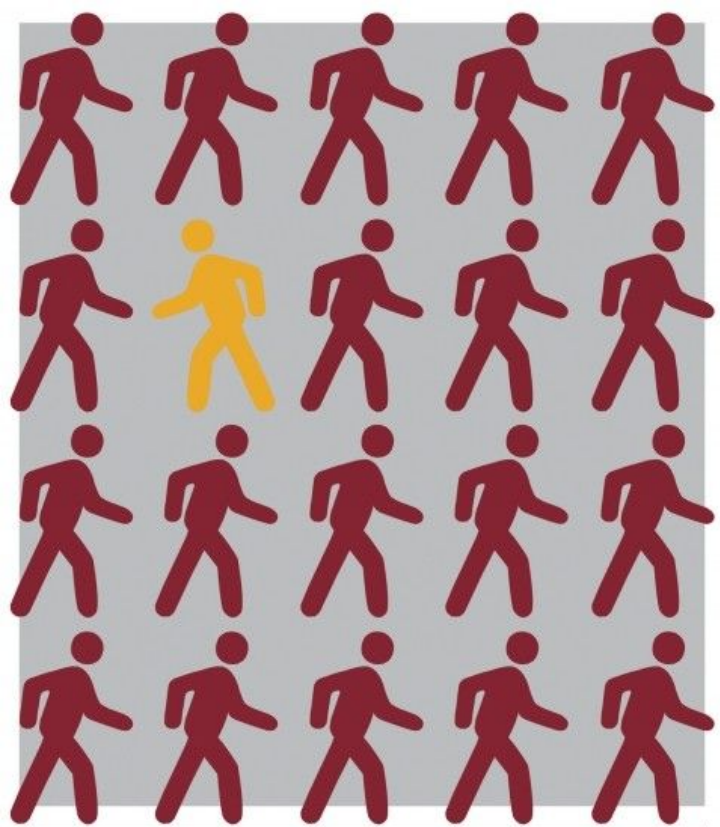
[Compatibilism is a quagmire of evasion under which the real issue of fact has been entirely smothered...

No matter what the [compatibilist] means by [‘free will’]... there is a problem, and issue of fact and not of words...

“These are strong words. But notice that Kant and James are *not* saying that compatibilism is *false*.

They’re saying it’s *irrelevant*. They’re saying that compatibilists are just playing around with words and evading the real issue....





Free Will as an Open
Scientific Problem

Mark Balaguer

“And that’s exactly what I’m saying”
(Balaguer 2014: 53-4).

In short, when we use the notion of FREE WILL as a solution to the problem of evil, we are using in the libertarian sense, not the compatibilist one.

The question of whether or not we have libertarian free will is the important one..

Moreover, if we are to be skeptical of free will, then moral responsibility may be an untenable notion that we will have to abandon...

Neuroendocrinologist Robert Sapolsky (2017, ch. 16) argues that we have, at best, **mitigated** free will.

Further, since our traditional notion of moral responsibility has been severely undercut by recent data from the mind sciences, the criminal justice system must be completely overhauled and reformed.

BEHAVE

THE BIOLOGY
of HUMANS *at* OUR
BEST *and* WORST



ROBERT M.
SAPOLSKY



“Writing under the provocative heading ‘Do pedophiles deserve sympathy?’ James Cantor of the University of Toronto reviewed the neurobiology of pedophilia.

For example, it runs in families in ways suggesting genes play a role. Pedophiles have atypically high rates of brain injuries during childhood. There’s evidence of endocrine abnormalities during fetal life.

Does this raise the possibility that a neurobiological die is cast, that some people are destined to be this way?

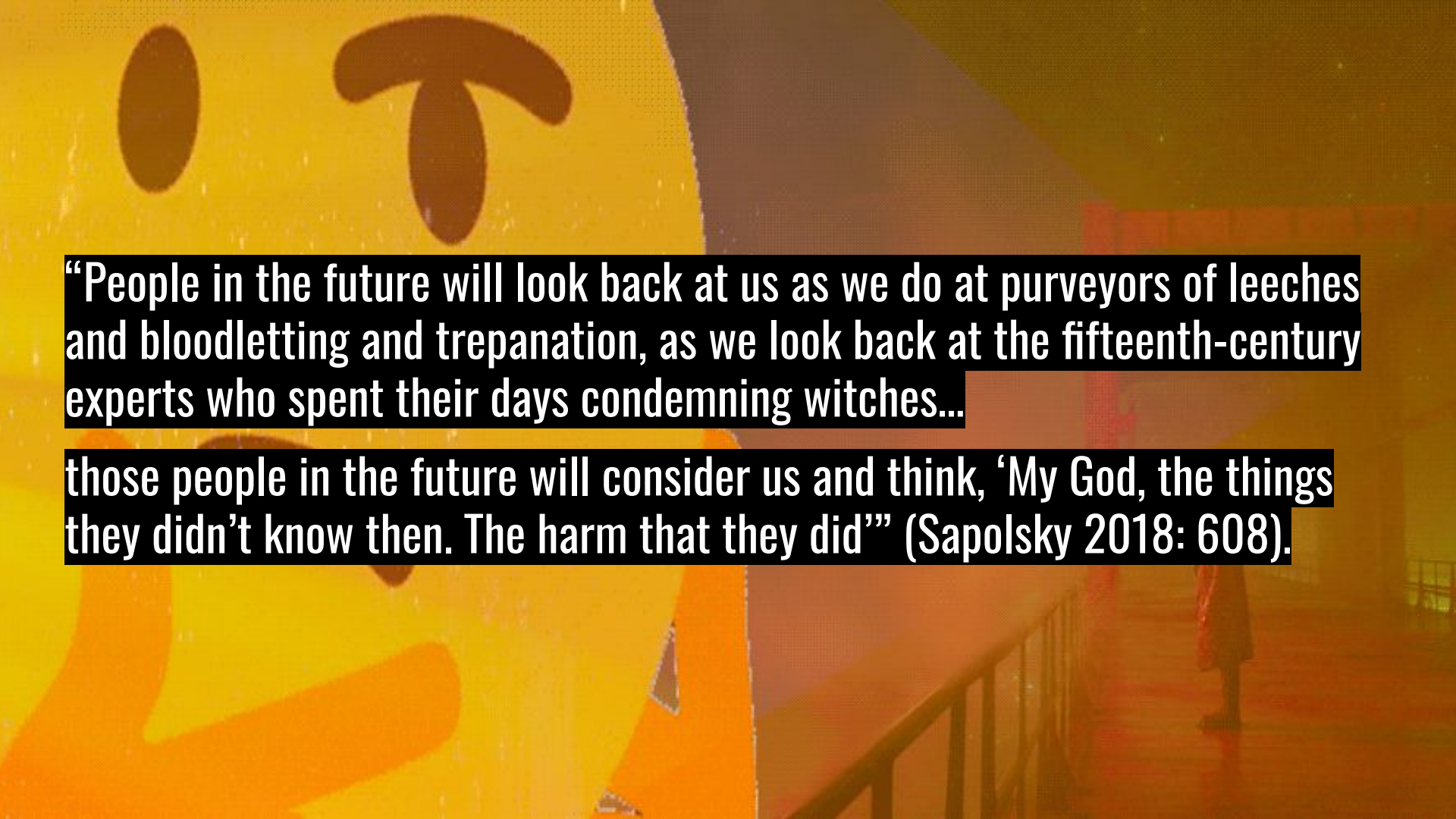
Precisely. Cantor concludes, ‘One cannot choose to not be a pedophile’” (Sapolsky 2018: 597).



“Brave and correct...

Here are just a few the things we’ve seen in this book that can influence [one’s capacity for self-direction]:

Blood glucose levels; the socioeconomic status of your family of birth; a concussive head injury; sleep quality and quantity; prenatal environment; stress and glucocorticoid levels; whether you’re in pain; if you have Parkinson’s disease and which medication you’ve been prescribed; perinatal hypoxia; your dopamine D4 receptor gene variant; if you have had a stroke in your frontal cortex; if you suffered childhood abuse; how much of a cognitive load you’ve borne in the last few minutes; your MAO-A gene variant; if you’re infected with a particular parasite...” (Sapolsky 2018: 597-8).



“People in the future will look back at us as we do at purveyors of leeches and bloodletting and trepanation, as we look back at the fifteenth-century experts who spent their days condemning witches...

those people in the future will consider us and think, ‘My God, the things they didn’t know then. The harm that they did’” (Sapolsky 2018: 608).



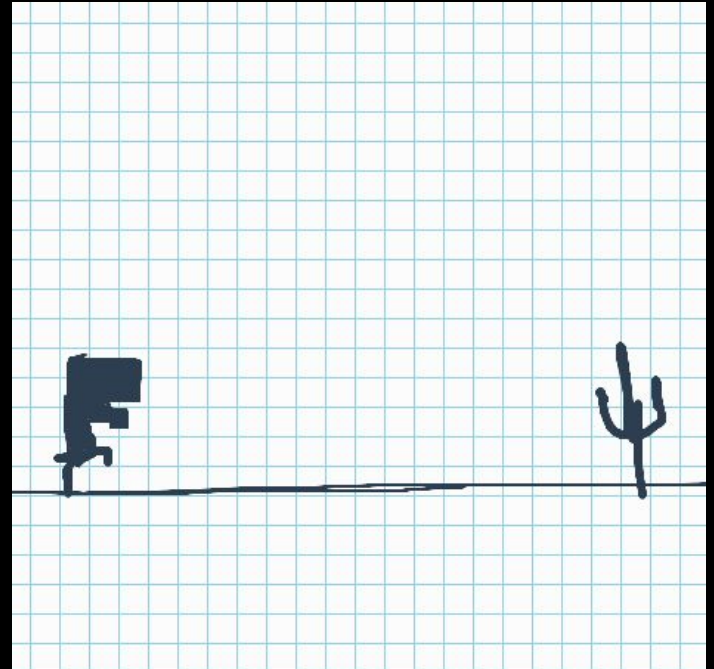
S | D E B A R

It is true that...

60% of professional philosophers are compatibilists according to a recent survey (see [Bourget and Chalmers 2014](#)).



INFORMAL FALLACY OF THE DAY



Argumentum Ad Populum

This is a fallacy in which an arguer lends support to his/her conclusion by claiming that a majority of people endorse the same conclusion.



Standard Form(?)

1. Most of the world agrees with me.
2. Therefore, I am right.

It is true that...

60% of professional philosophers are compatibilists according to a recent survey (see [Bouloger and Chalmers 2014](#)).

IRRELEVANT



And yet...



That same survey showed that belief in Libertarian free will and belief in God was one of the top ten highest correlations (see Table 6).



**Could it be the case that some philosophers only believe in Libertarian free will because they need it to escape the Problem of Evil?
Given what we just learned about the mind, could this motivated reasoning?**

It is true that...

73% of professional philosophers are atheists and that most of the theists specialize in Philosophy of Religion (see [Bourget and Chalmers 2014](#), section 3.3).

In fact, the combination of theism and specializing in Philosophy of Religion is the highest correlation between a particular view and specializing in a particular field (see Table 10).



END
S | D E B A R