

A vertical light streak on a black background, transitioning from a bright yellow center to a red outer edge, resembling a light flare or a stylized beam of light.

The Labyrinth

★ Addendum:

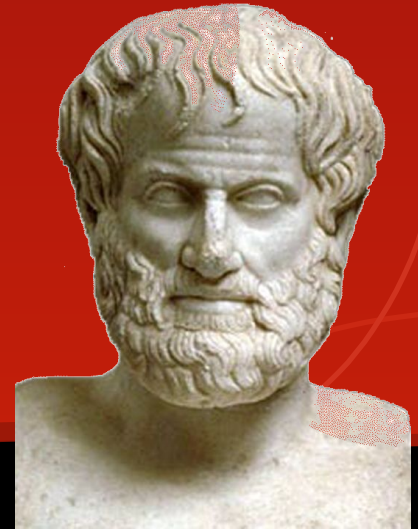
Question: How should I live?

✦ Education

“The roots of education are bitter,
but the fruit is sweet.”



~Aristotle

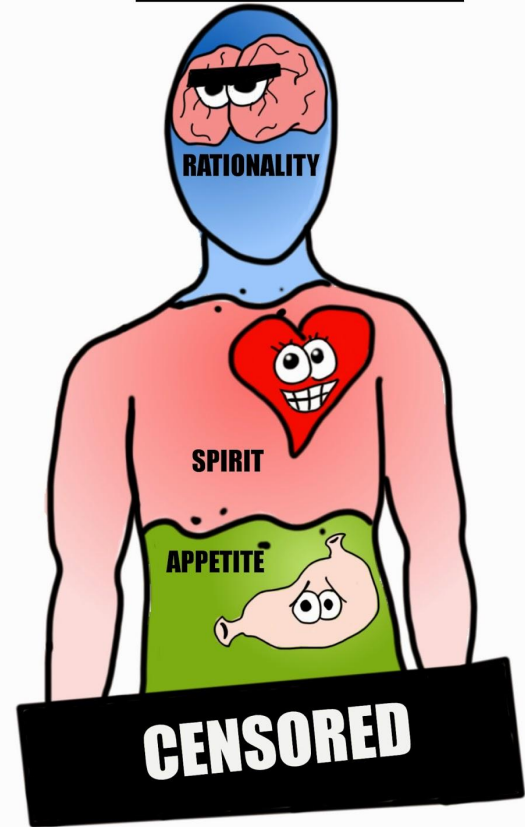


★ Balance

According to Plato, the human soul consists of three parts: the reason, the will and the desire.

One is only happy when all three parts of the soul are in balance.

3 PART SOUL



✦ Be Positive

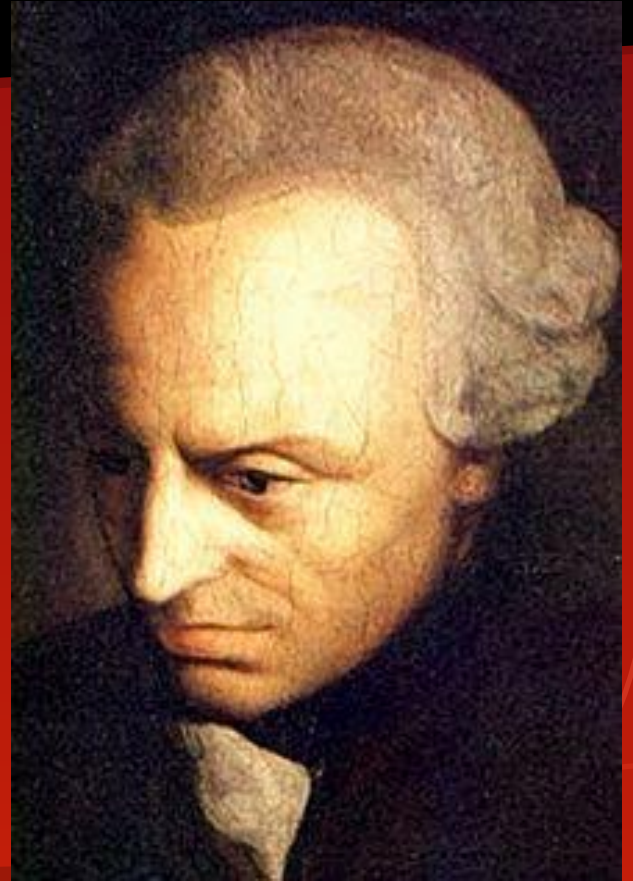
“You, yourself, as much as anybody in the entire universe, deserve your love and affection.”

~the founding Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama

✦ Virtue

“Morality is not the doctrine of how we may make ourselves happy, but how we make ourselves worthy of happiness.”

~Immanuel Kant



★ Higher Pleasures

John Stuart Mill is associated with hedonism, the view that pleasure is the ultimate good.

But Mill didn't believe in just physical pleasure.

He also believed we should pursue higher pleasures...

★ Justice and Freedom

If something seems unfair,
say something.

“Injustice anywhere is a
threat to justice
everywhere.”

~Martin Luther King, Jr.



★ Career

“My advice to you is get married:
if you find a good spouse you'll be happy;
if not, you'll become a philosopher.”

~Socrates

✦ One more...

“Don’t just go through the motions...
Go out there and really kick some butt.”

~RCG

Does God exist?

Do we have free will?

Do we have souls?

Do we only act from self-interest?

Kant or the Utilitarians?

Is morality relative?

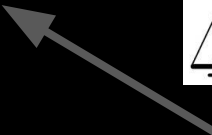
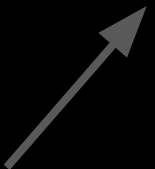
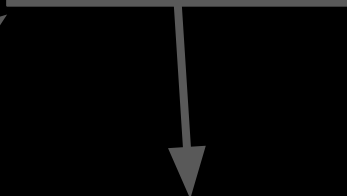
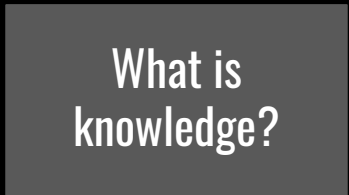
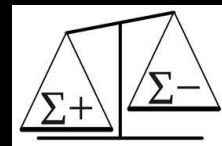
What is knowledge?

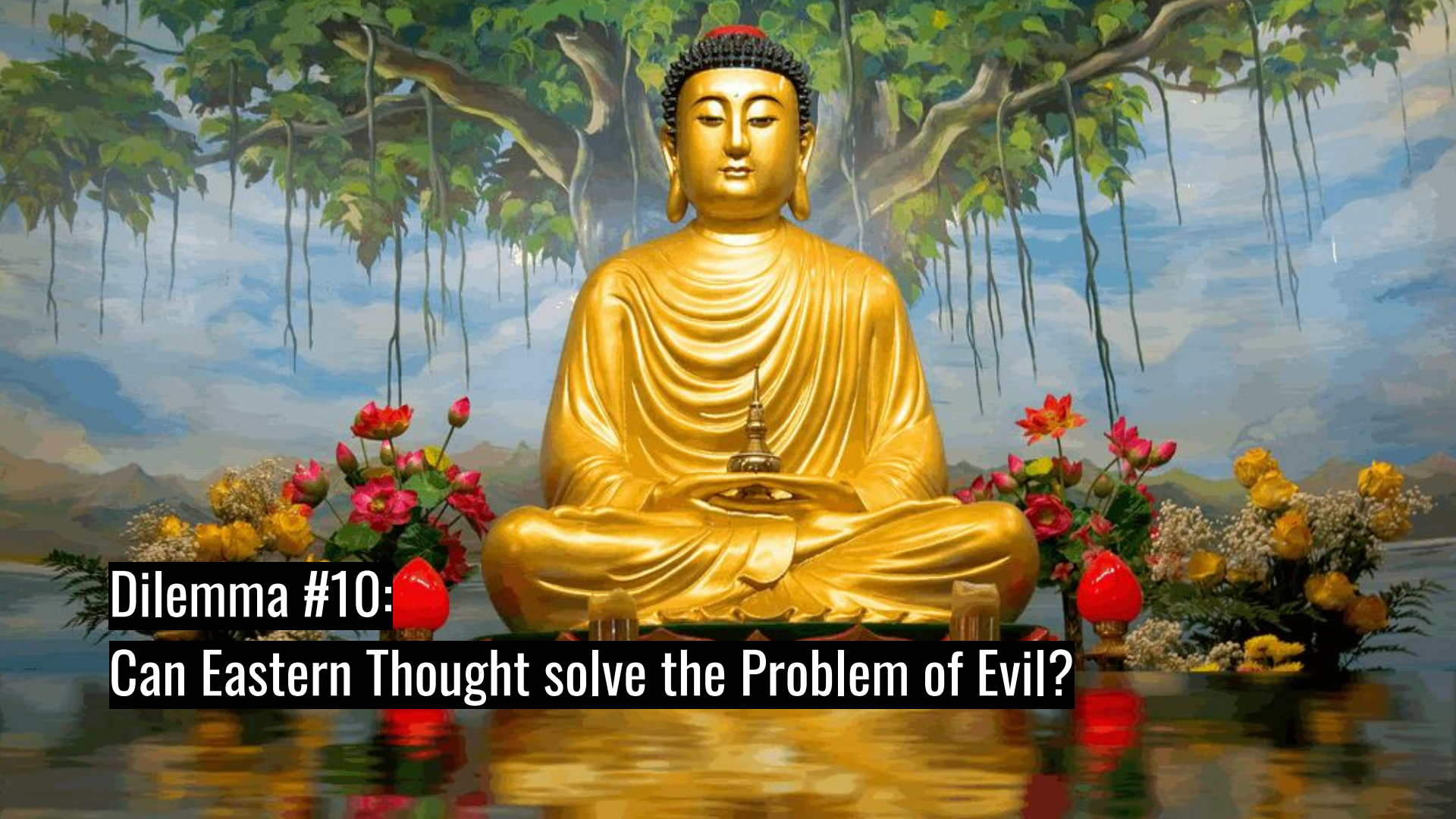
Empiricism Or Rationalism?

Possible Solutions:

1. Free Will
2. Morality
3. Eastern Philosophy

POE



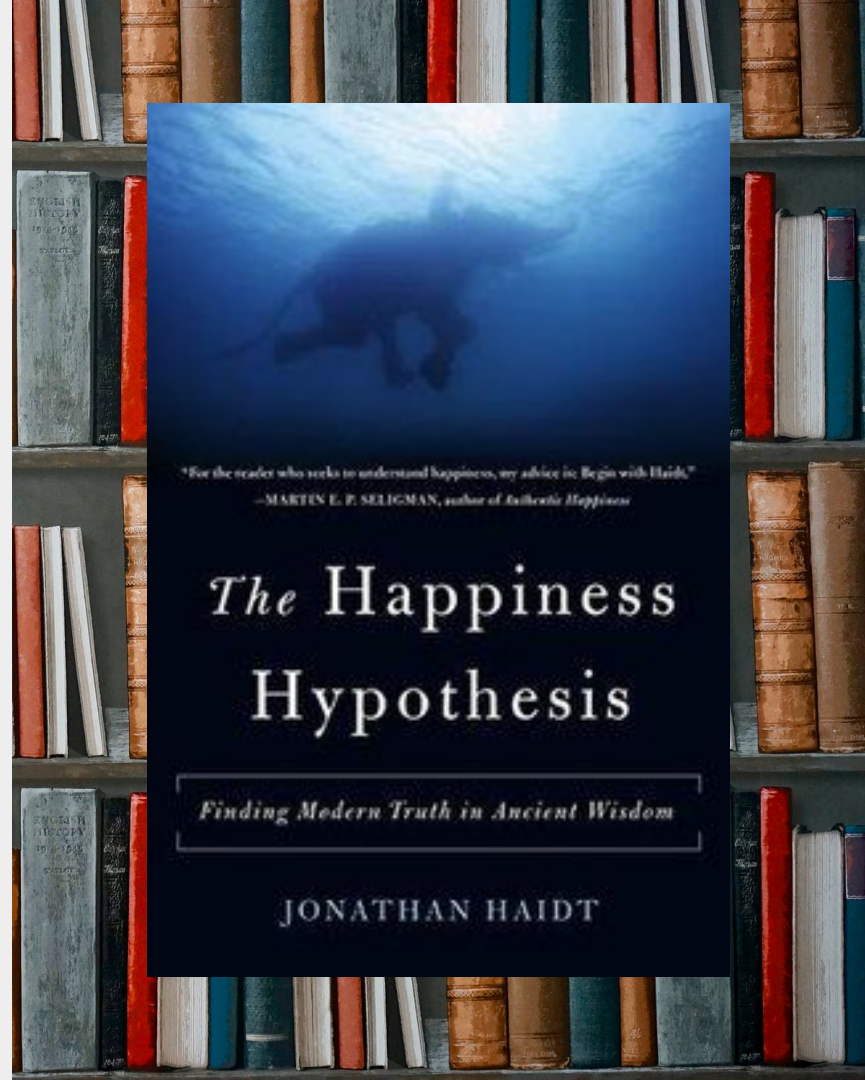


Dilemma #10:

Can Eastern Thought solve the Problem of Evil?

In his 2006 *The Happiness Hypothesis*, Jonathan Haidt surveys the various hypotheses on how to achieve happiness passed down to us by the ancients and puts them through an empirical filter to see which ones are true.

In chapter 5, he discusses Buddhism and the Eightfold Path.



Using the New Positive
Psychology to Realize Your
Potential for Lasting
Fulfillment

Authentic Happiness

**“At last, psychology
gets serious about glee,
fun, and happiness.
Martin Seligman
has given us a gift.”**
—Daniel Goleman, author
of *Emotional Intelligence*

Martin E. P. Seligman, Ph.D.

Bestselling author of *Learned Optimism*

According to Seligman (2004):

$$H = S + C + V$$

The level of happiness that you actually experience (H) is determined by your biological setpoint (S) plus the conditions of your life (C) plus the voluntary activities (V) you do.

“[W]e have to give Buddha and Epictetus for V, because Buddha prescribed the Eightfold Noble Path, including meditation and mindfulness, and Epictetus urged methods of thought to cultivate indifference (*apathia*) to externals...”





“So to test the wisdom of the sages’ properly we must examine this hypothesis... if there are many conditions C that matter and if there are a variety of voluntary activities beyond those aimed at non-attachment, then the happiness hypothesis of Buddha and Epictetus is wrong and people would be poorly advised simply to look within” (Haidt 2006: 90-91).

It turns out that there are various conditions (C) and voluntary actions (V) that do go beyond non-attachment which do add to the total level of happiness H, e.g., steering clear of constant traffic noise, less stressful commutes, avoiding situations that make you feel a lack of control, etc. (*ibid.*, see especially chapter 5).






“The life of... calm non-striving, advocated by Buddha, [is] designed to avoid passion and a life without passion is not a human life.

Yes, attachments bring pain. But they also bring our greatest joys” (Haidt 2006: 105).




DILEMMA #9

Can a computer be conscious?



“I don’t think artificial intelligence will be achieved until philosophical progress is made in understanding what *consciousness* is.



We couldn’t make artificial life without the concept of a *replicator*, and we don’t have the equivalent concept yet for *consciousness*.



You can’t program what you can’t specify” (Physicist David Deutsch, quoted in Holt 2012: 127).



Does God exist?

Do we have free will?

Do we have souls?

Do we only act from self-interest?

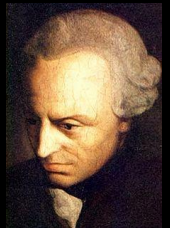
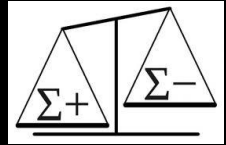
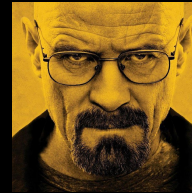
Kant or the Utilitarians?

Is morality relative?

What is knowledge?

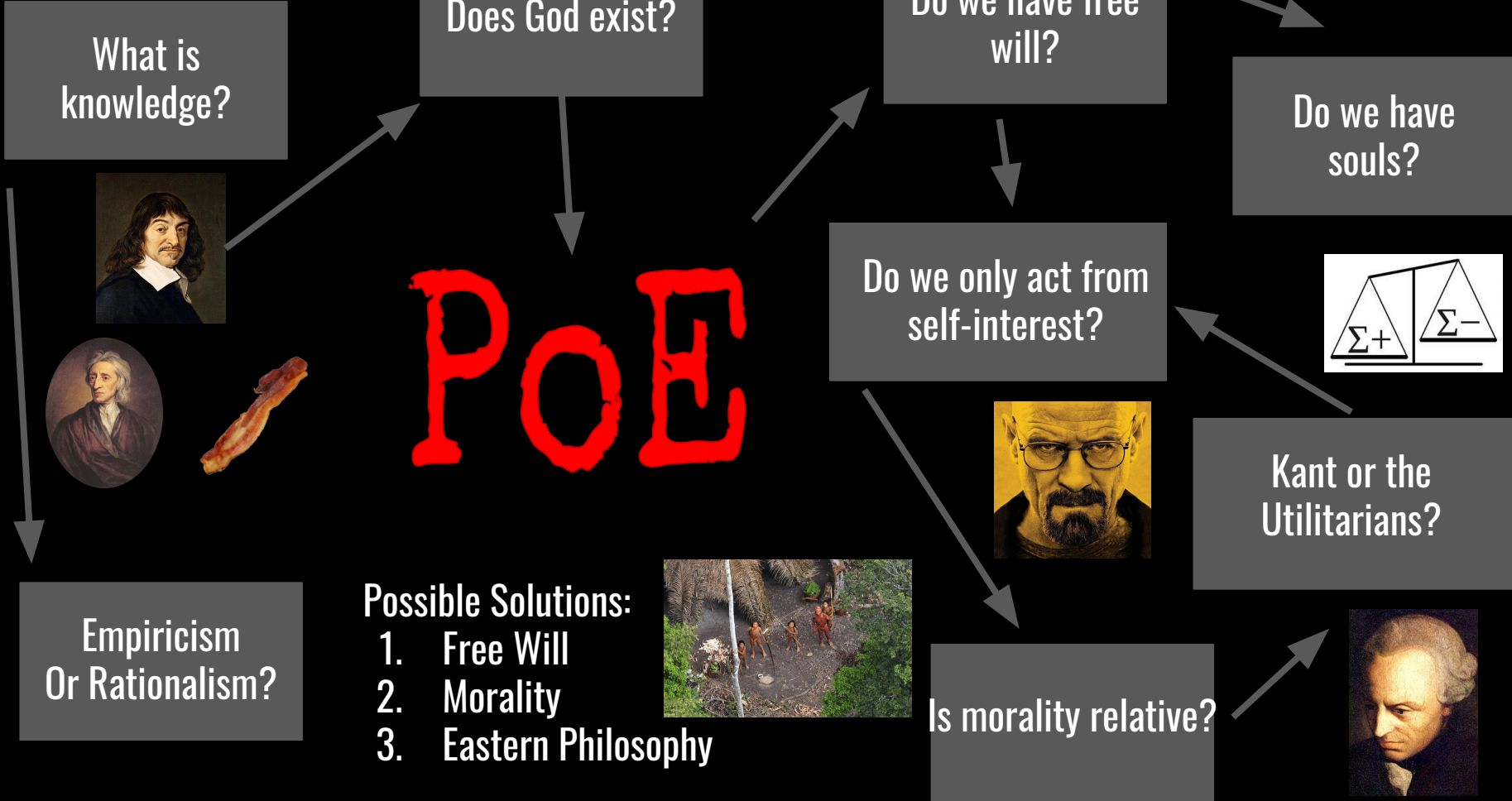
Empiricism Or Rationalism?

POE



Possible Solutions:

1. Free Will
2. Morality
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Only about a quarter of professional philosophers surveyed by Bourget and Chalmers ([2013](#)) still believe in dualism, and these are, with few exceptions, all theists who also believe in Libertarian free will (see Table 6).

As mentioned in the Side Bar in [The Person and the Situation](#) lesson, this might be **motivated reasoning**, or a conclusion in search for premises.

Does God exist?

Do we have free will?

What is knowledge?

Do we only act from self-interest?

Kant or the Utilitarians?

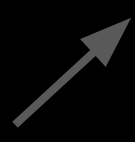
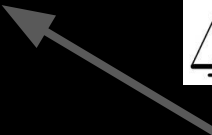
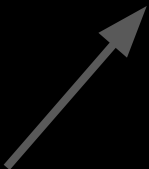
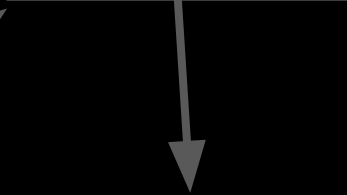
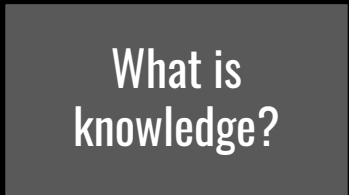
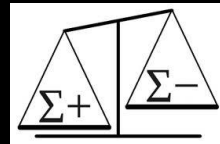
Is morality relative?

Empiricism Or Rationalism?

Possible Solutions:

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POE



Joshua Greene (2001) has used fMRI scanning to isolate the parts of the brain that are used for making Utilitarian- and Kantian-type judgments.

He argues that he has “debunked” the theories, arguing instead that although neither is strictly-speaking true, we are better off being consequentialists.

‘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

“Alistair McIntyre argued in *After Virtue* that the Enlightenment project of creating a universal context free morality was doomed from the beginning. Cultures that have shared values in rich traditions invariably generate a framework in which people can value and evaluate each other. One can easily talk about the virtues of a priest, a soldier, a mother, or a merchant in the context of 4th century BCE Athens. Strip away all identity and context, however, and there is little to grab on to. How much can you say about the virtues of a generalized *homo sapiens* floating in space with no particular sex, age, occupation, or culture? The modern requirement that ethics ignore particularity is what gave us our weaker morality: applicable everywhere but encompassing nowhere” (see Haidt 2006, chapter 8).

Does God exist?

Do we have free will?

What is knowledge?

Do we only act from self-interest?

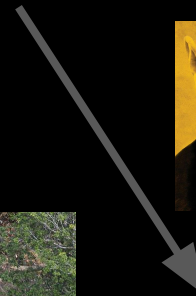
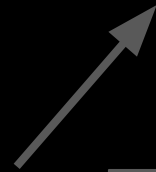
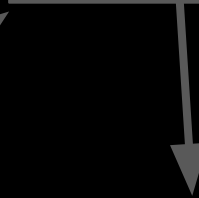
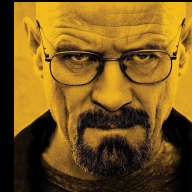
Empiricism Or Rationalism?

Is morality relative?

POE

Possible Solutions:

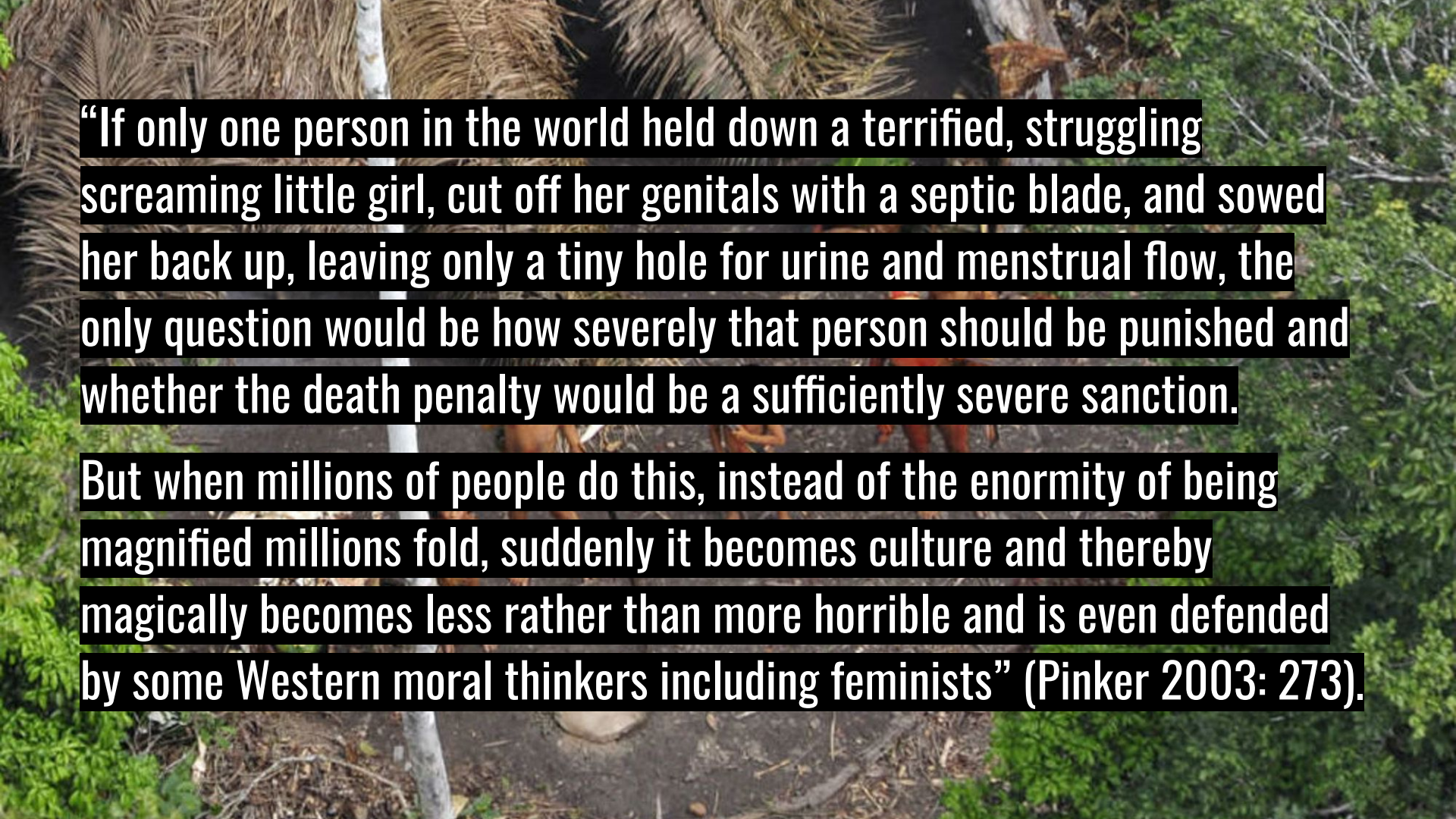
1. Free Will
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Note:

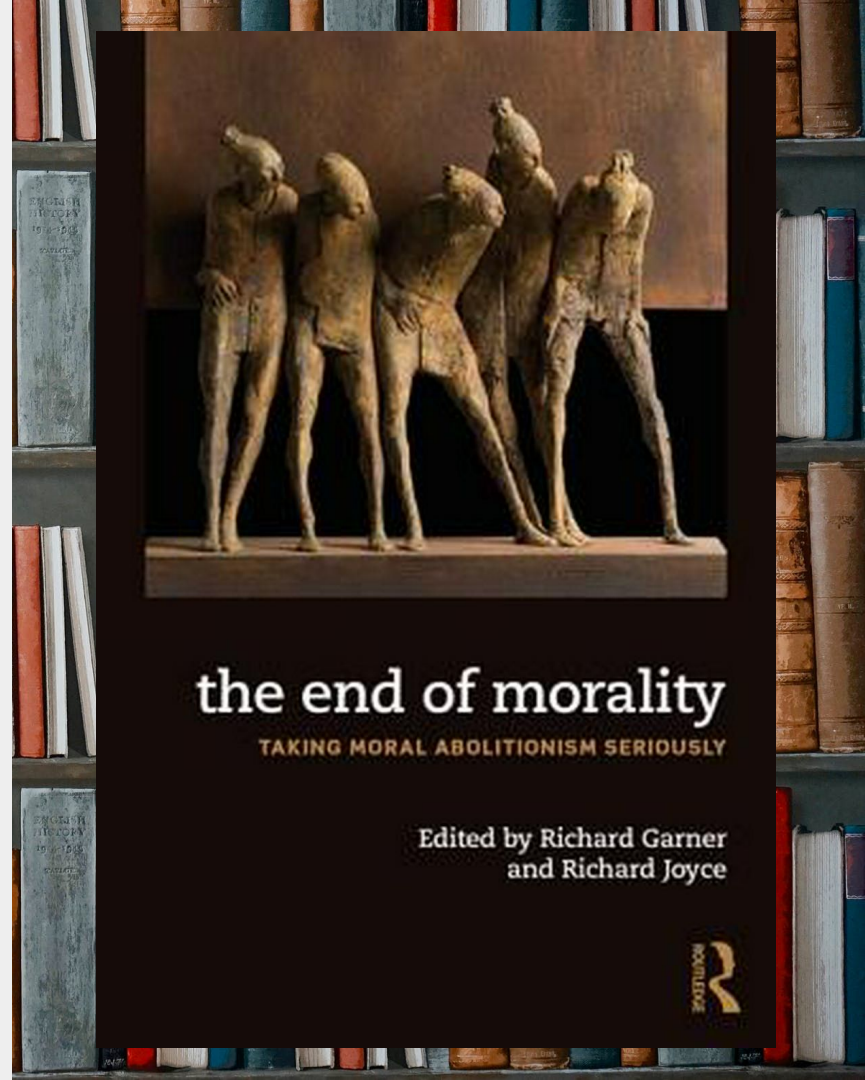
Moral relativists might take the judgments to be true **if they are true in relation to some salient moral framework, as opposed to something like moral fictionalism, e.g., Hobbes.**

The background of the image shows a close-up of a thatched roof made of dried palm fronds or similar natural materials. The roof is brown and textured. To the right and bottom, there is lush green foliage, including leaves and branches, suggesting a tropical or rural setting. The lighting is natural, and the overall scene is slightly out of focus, emphasizing the text overlay.

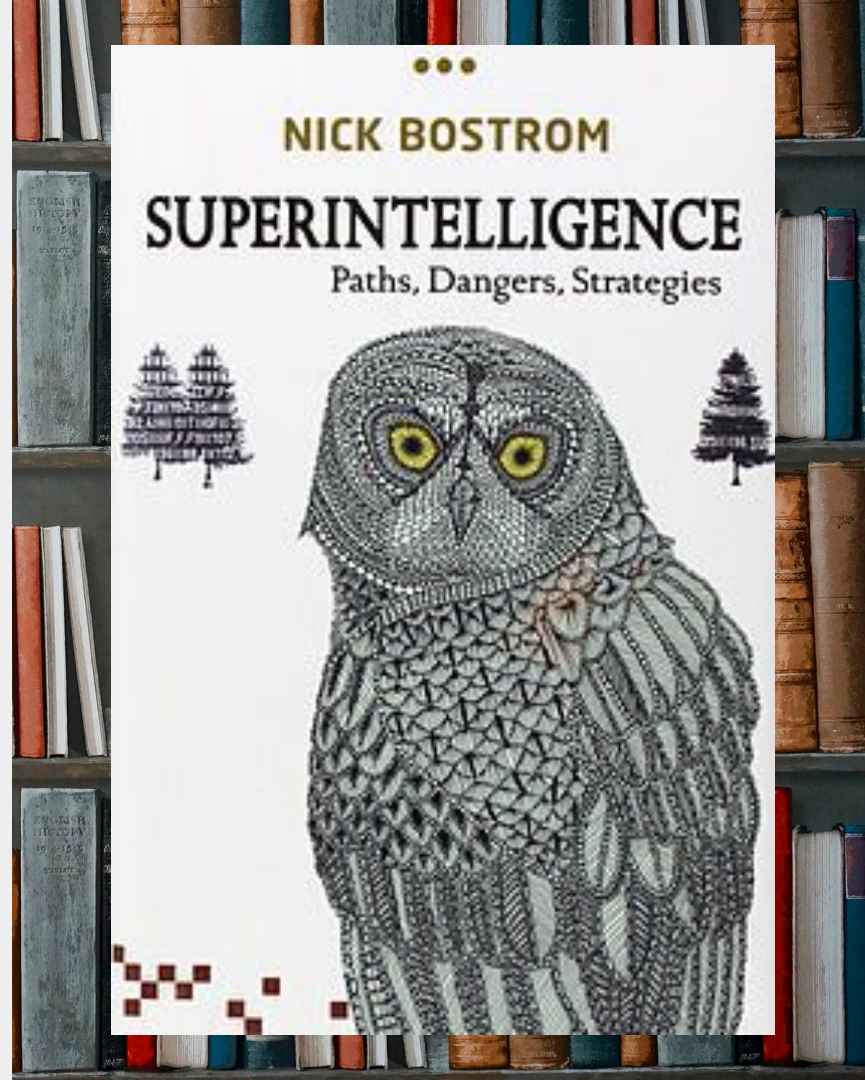
“If only one person in the world held down a terrified, struggling screaming little girl, cut off her genitals with a septic blade, and sowed her back up, leaving only a tiny hole for urine and menstrual flow, the only question would be how severely that person should be punished and whether the death penalty would be a sufficiently severe sanction.

But when millions of people do this, instead of the enormity of being magnified millions fold, suddenly it becomes culture and thereby magically becomes less rather than more horrible and is even defended by some Western moral thinkers including feminists” (Pinker 2003: 273).

Some moral error theorists (e.g., in Garner and Joyce 2019) are arguing that the whole idea of moral values (whether they be relativist or absolutist) are **no longer tenable or even useful.**



Nick Bostrom argues that since there is no ethical theory (or meta-ethical position) that holds a majority position ([Bourget and Chalmers 2013](#)), that means that most philosophers subscribe to an ethical theory that is false (see [Bostrom 2014: 257](#)).



Does God exist?

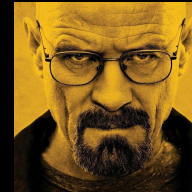
Do we have free will?

What is knowledge?

Do we only act from self-interest?



POE



Empiricism
Or Rationalism?

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Collins (1992: 9) makes the case that if people acted in a purely rational basis, they would never have gotten together to form society.

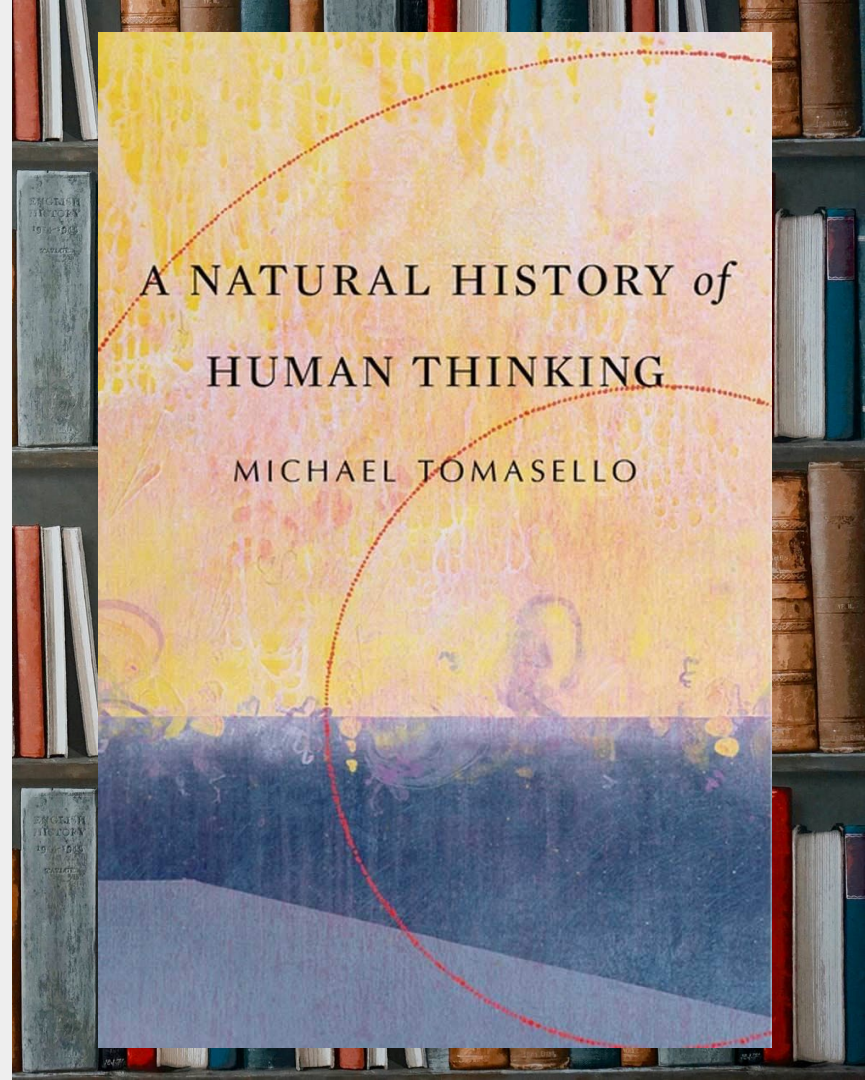
Randall Collins

Sociological Insight

An Introduction
to Non-Obvious
Sociology

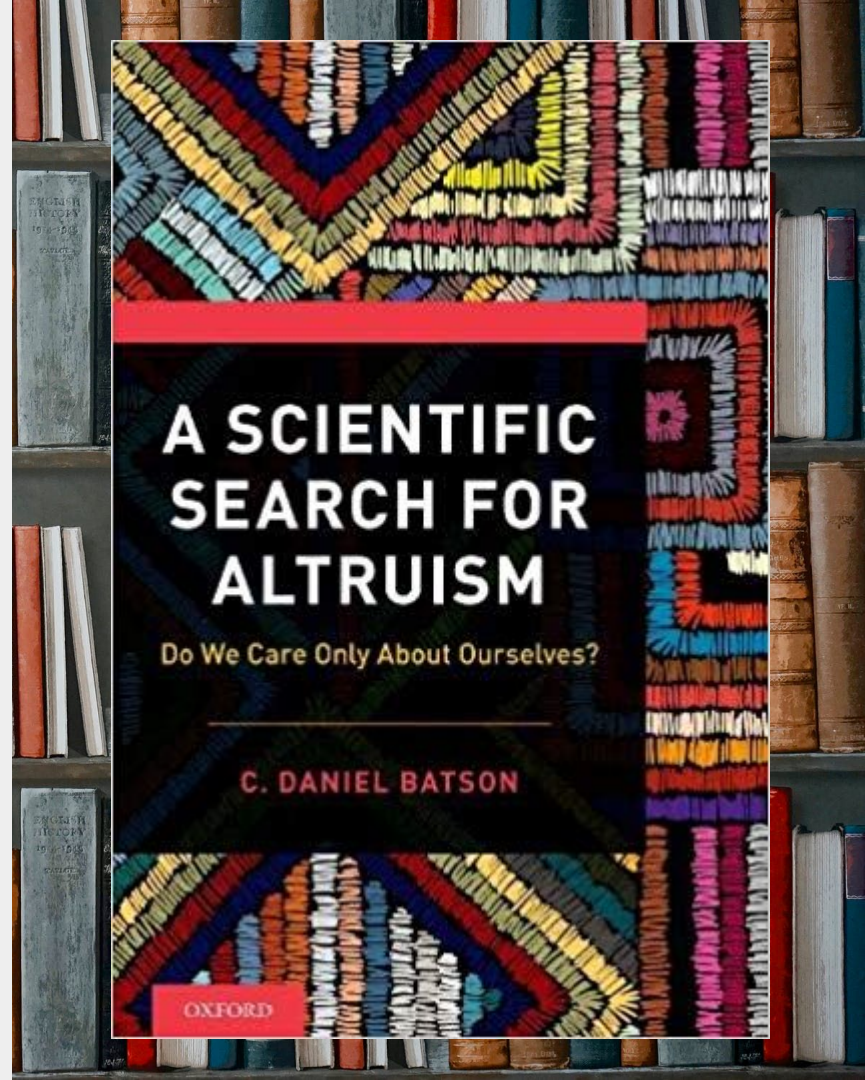
Second Edition

Tomasello (2014) makes the case that if we were purely driven only by self-interest then the human language faculty could not have evolved the way that it did.



Lastly, Batson spent several decades testing subjects for altruistic and egoistic motivation.

The result:
The view that we are purely driven from self-interest is false.
See Batson (2018).



Does God exist?

Do we have free will?

What is knowledge?



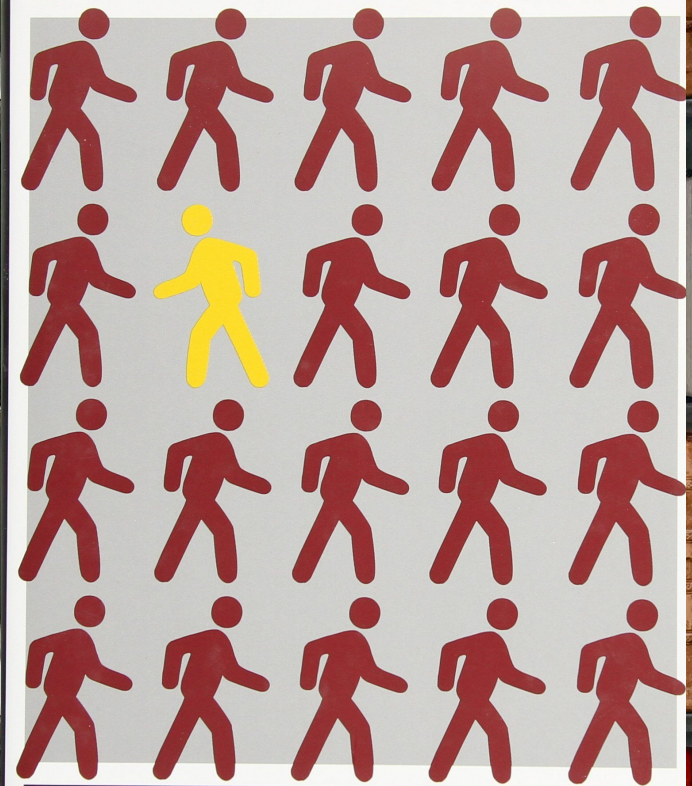
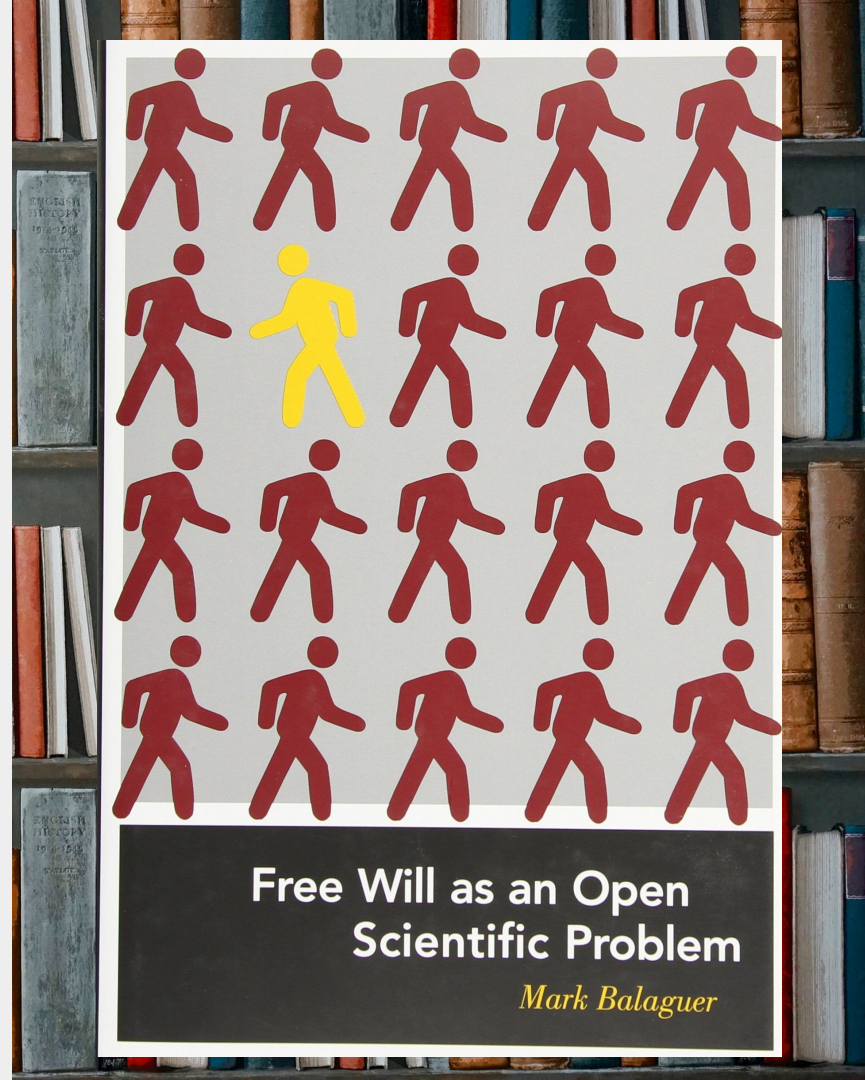
POE

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Some (e.g., Balaguer 2012) think this is an open question.



Free Will as an Open
Scientific Problem

Mark Balaguer

Others, like Michael Gazzaniga, think that the 17th century concept of free will doesn't survive the findings of the mind sciences; he thinks we have, at best, a very mitigated free will (see Gazzaniga 2012).

'GAZZANIGA IS ONE OF THE MOST BRILLIANT EXPERIMENTAL
NEUROSCIENTISTS IN THE WORLD.' TOM WOLFE

WHO'S IN CHARGE?



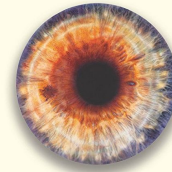
FREE WILL AND THE
SCIENCE OF THE BRAIN

MICHAEL S. GAZZANIGA

Some thinkers that agree with Gazzaniga (2012) think that to continue to think we are as free as Descartes thought we were is not only unscientific but even politically dangerous (see Harari 2018, chapter 3; see also [this interview](#)).

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING
AUTHOR OF **SAPIENS**

Yuval Noah Harari



21 Lessons
for the
21st Century

Does God exist?

What is knowledge?



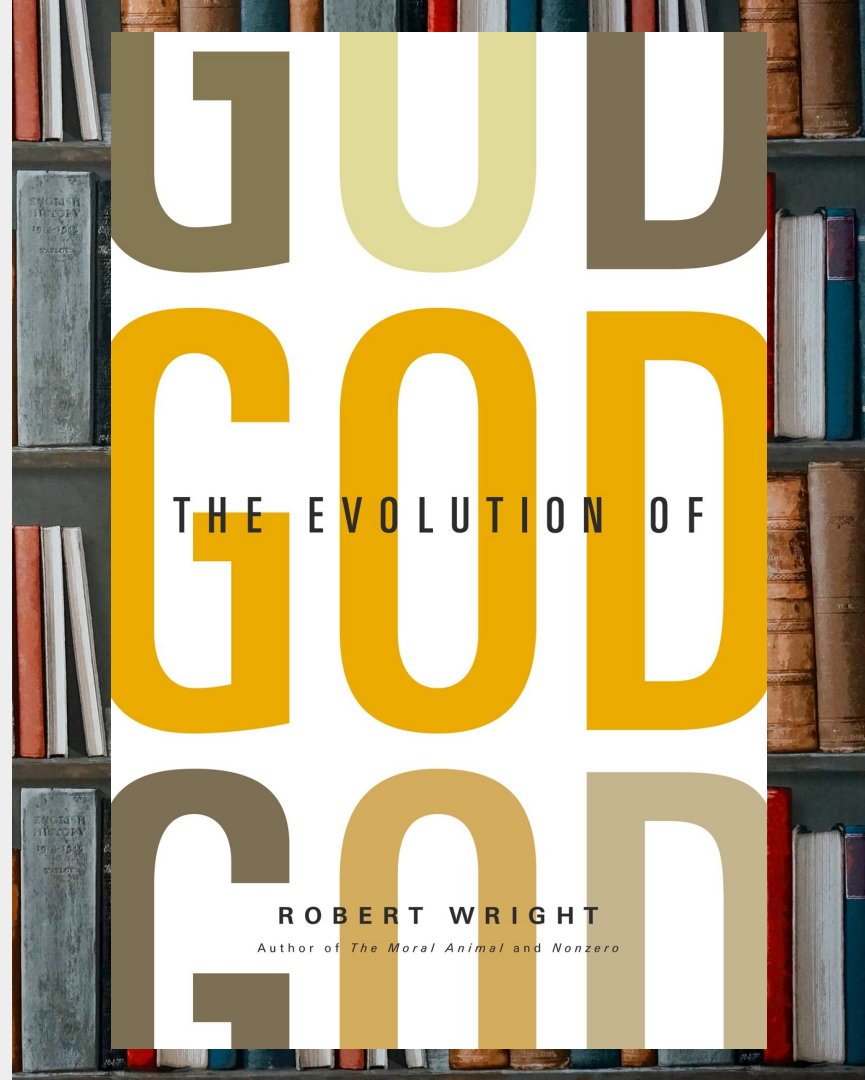
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Empiricism
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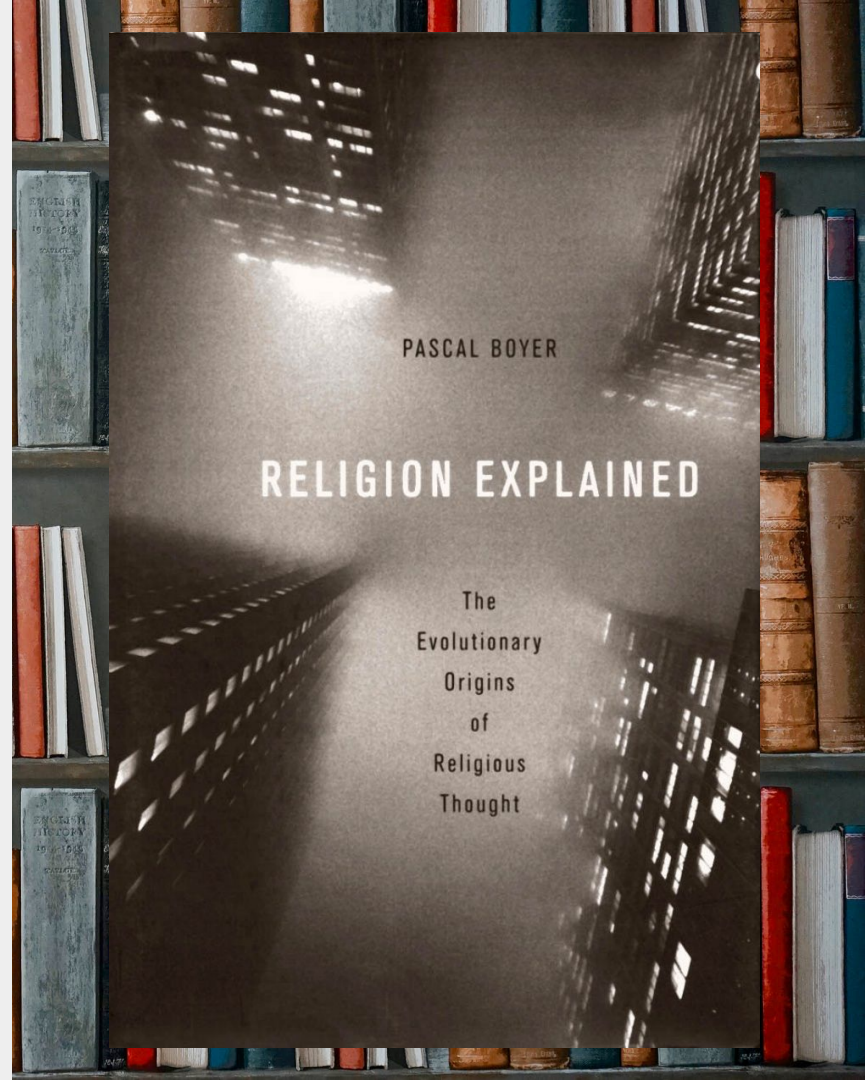
Possible Solutions:

- ~~1. Free Will~~
- ~~2. Morality~~
- ~~3. Eastern Philosophy~~

Robert Wright (2009) reconstructs how the idea of a god was born and slowly evolved into the notion of an all-powerful single god through a reconstruction of the historical events that caused it.



Pascal Boyer (2007) argues that **religious belief is a byproduct of several of our basic cognitive modules**, like our **agency-detection module** (our capacity to project personhood) and our **personal-file system** (our ability to keep track of different individuals in our lives).



Our *personal-file* module (along with some other modules), leads to the belief in ghosts, since our personal file for a relative or friend is still active even after they've died (Boyer 2007: 314).



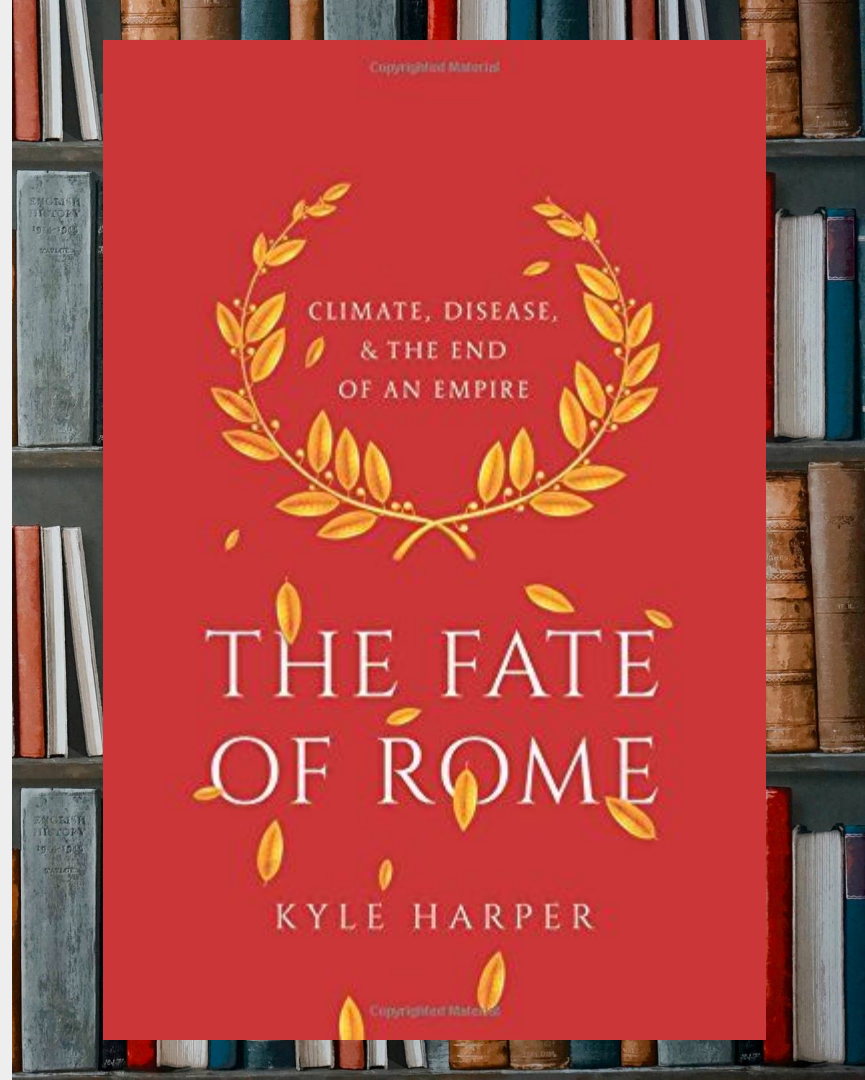


Our *agency-detection* module might be overactive and so we misattribute agency to nature and/or the universe itself (Boyer 2007: 150-176).

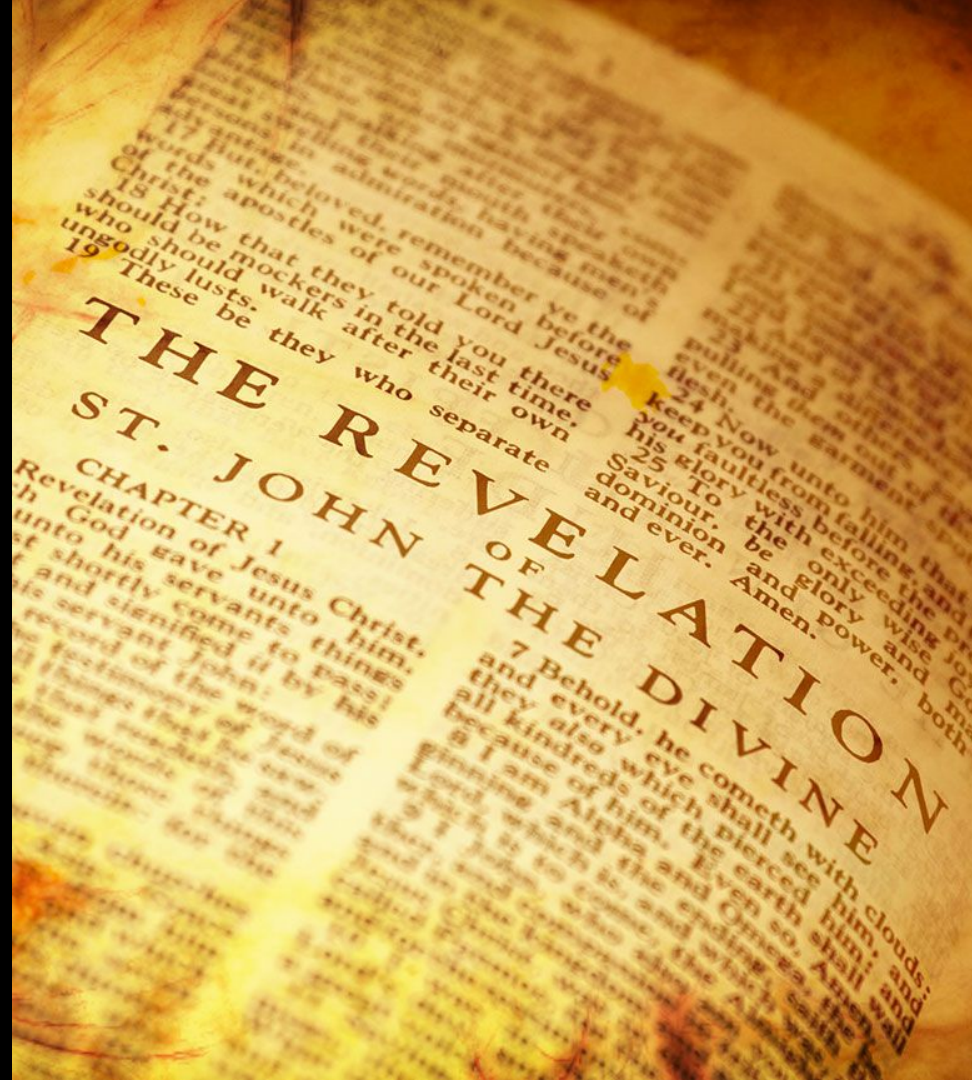


Some theorists believe that the success of some religions is more accidental.

For example, Harper (2017, Ch. 8) discusses the role that epidemic disease played in the rise of Christianity and Islam.



He reminds us that, although this is forgotten today, these are eschatological (apocalyptic) religions.





In the midst of a plague, like the Antonine plague (165-180 CE), it seemed like the end of times. This added credibility to the early Christians' religious claims.

Moreover, basic care (e.g. feeding and cleaning) made it more likely that an infected person would survive.



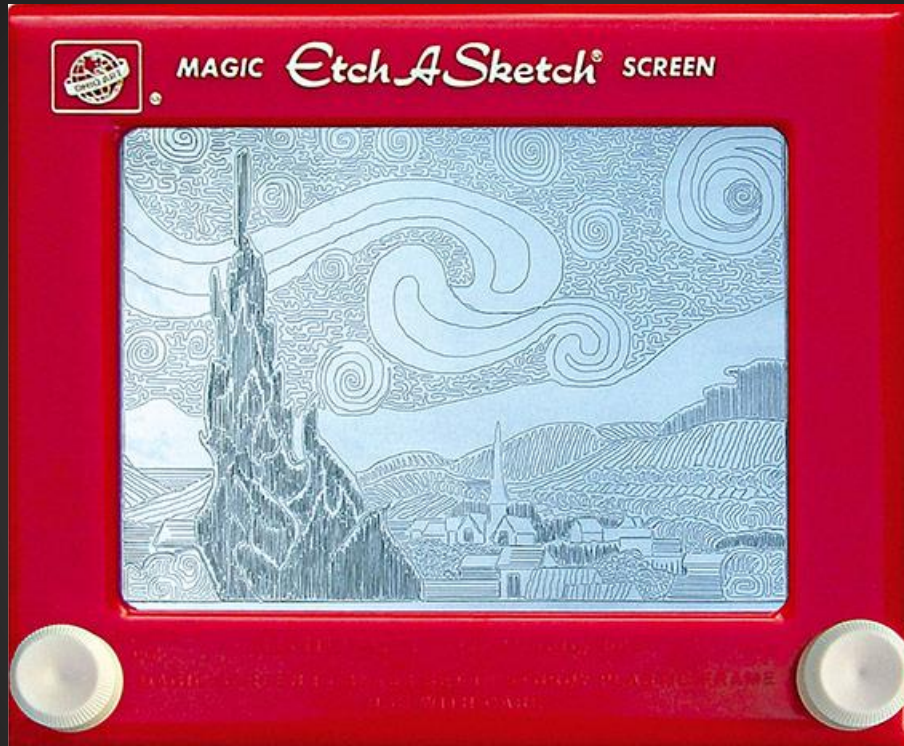


This is, of course, exactly what Christian ethics prescribes that we do of others. So people would flock to the churches for this reason.

What is
knowledge?



Empiricism
Or Rationalism?

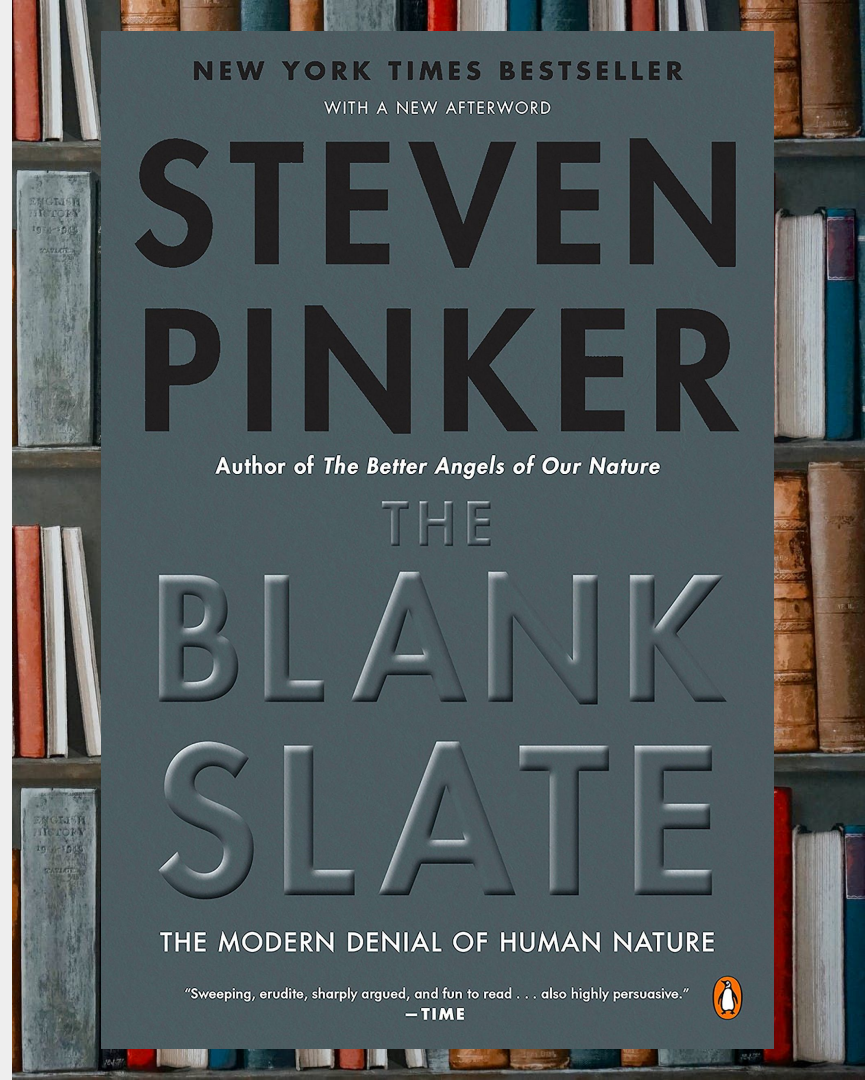


The Blank Slate

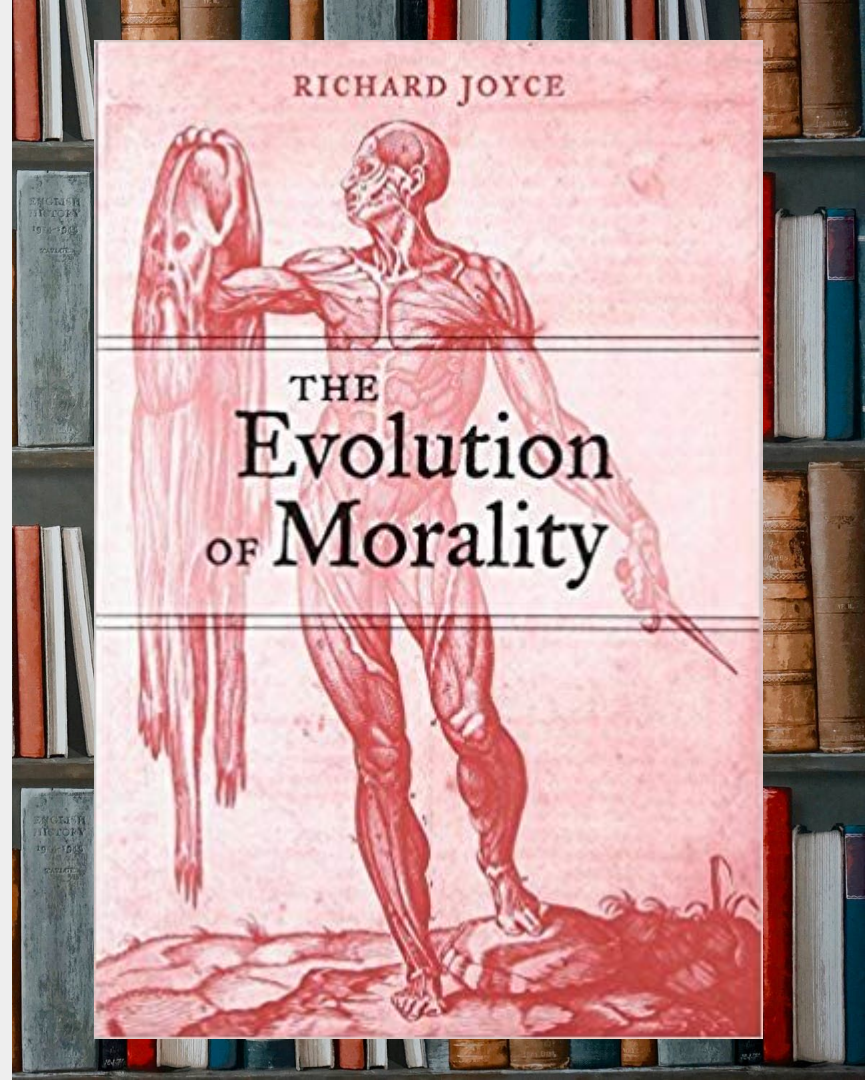
With regards to Locke...

In his 2003 *The Blank Slate*, Steven Pinker dispels the commonly held view that we are born with a **blank slate**.

We, in fact, have several mental mechanisms built into us by **evolution**, such as a language acquisition device and an intuitive physics (see Pinker 2003: 220-9).



Some thinkers (e.g., Richard Joyce 2007) argue that we have an **innate morality module** that was programmed into us so that we can coordinate our behavior with each other, inform each other about who's a good, say, foraging partner, and form more cohesive groups through shared norms and practices.





Food for thought...

**Famously, David Hume
(pictured right) thought that
Locke's preferred type of
reasoning, induction, was
unjustified.**

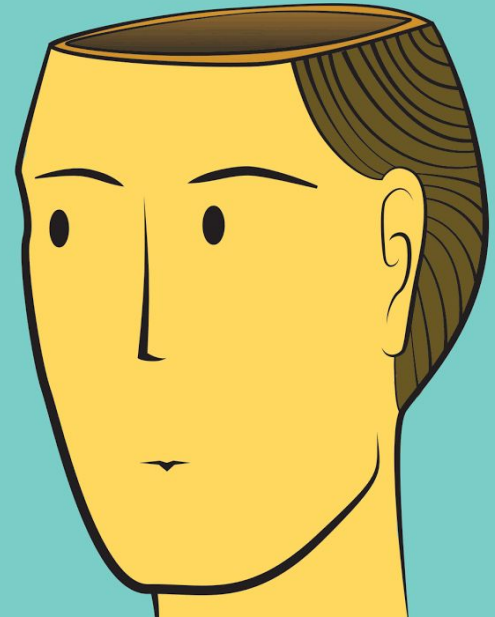
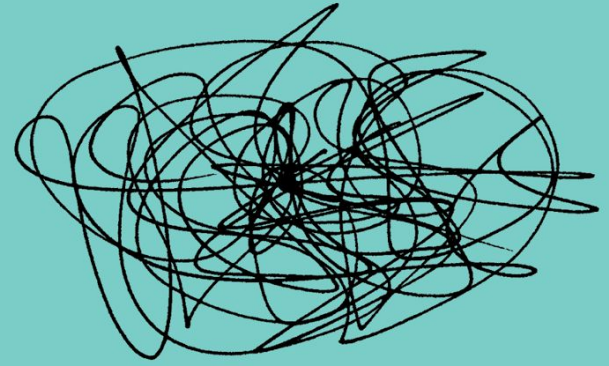


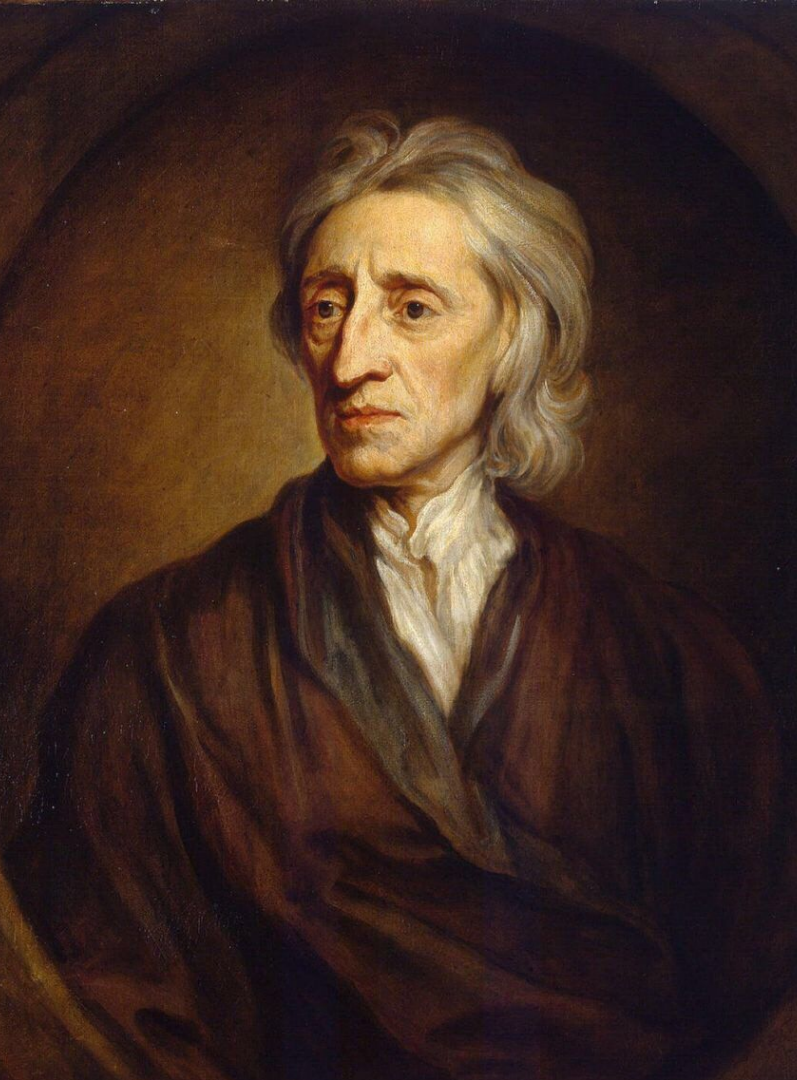


The basic idea behind induction is that what has happened in the past will likely happen again.

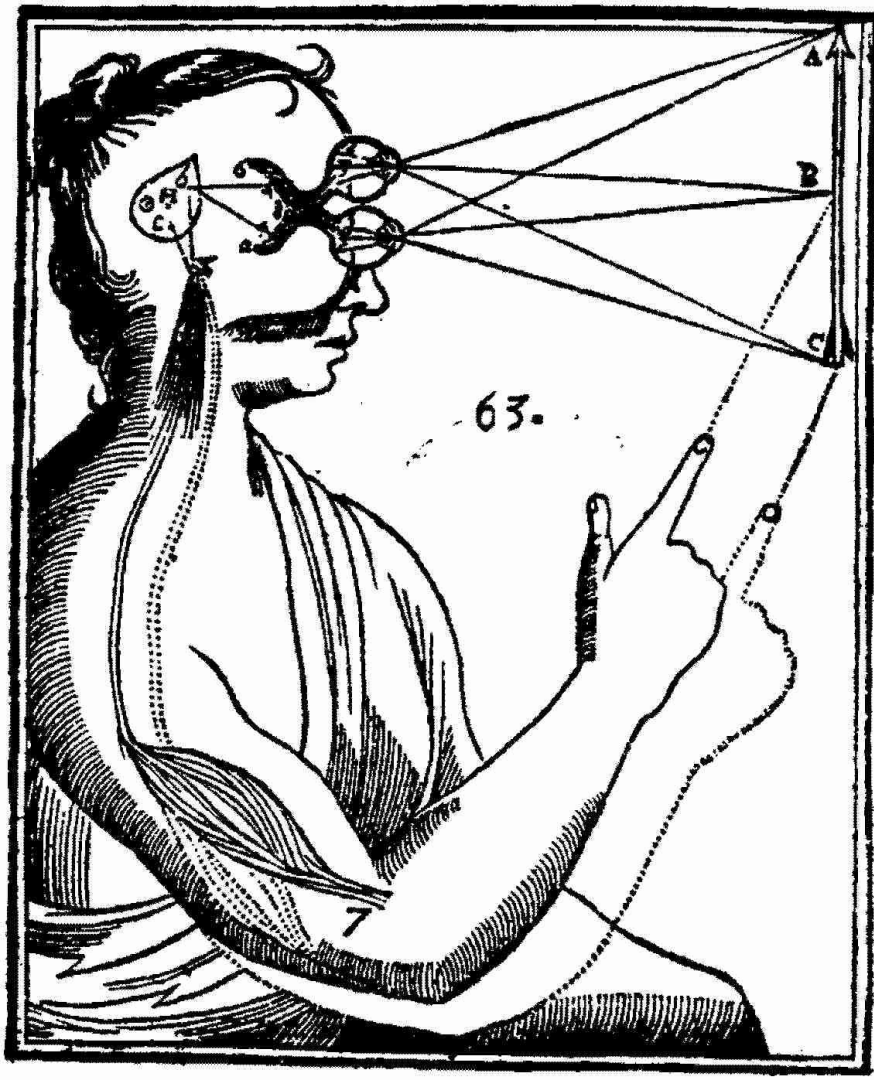
For example, if copper dissolved in nitric acid today, then it will likely do the same against tomorrow.

But you only believe *that*
because **in the past** what
happened in the past
happened again.

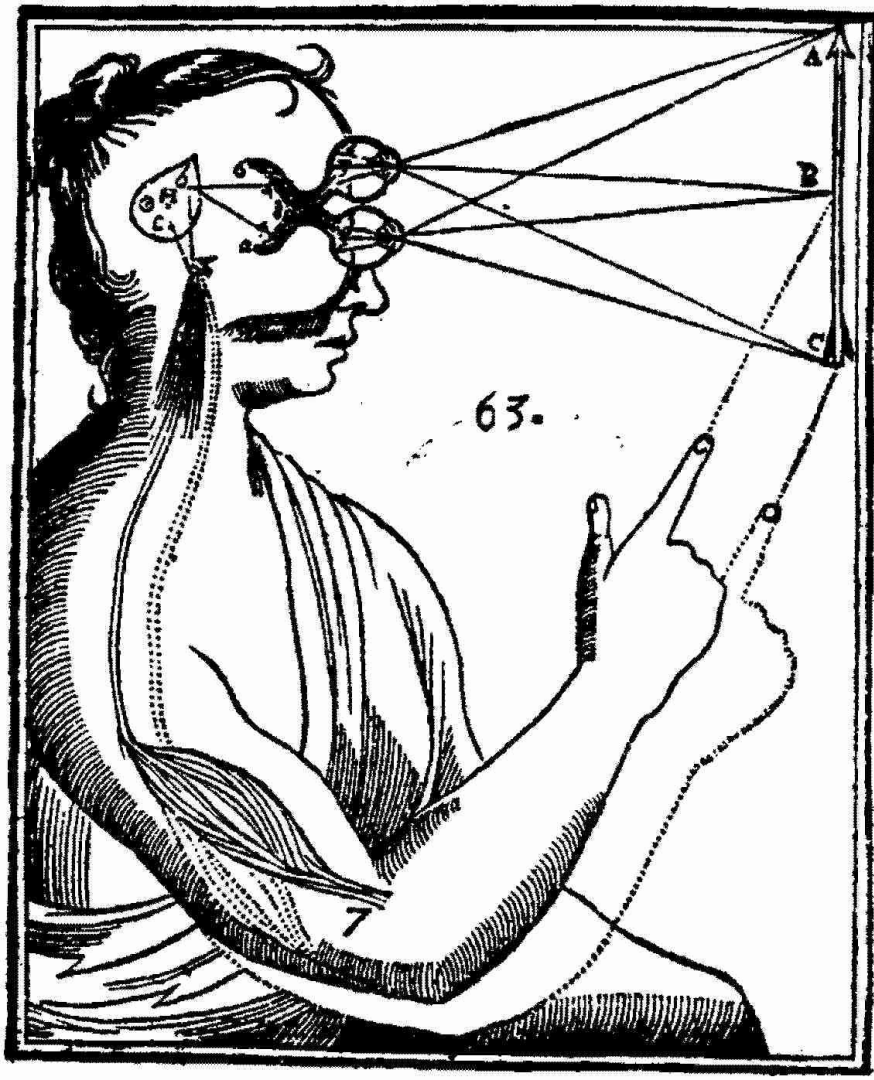




In other words, the only justification for induction is more induction, which is **fallacious circular reasoning.**



It's even the case that Locke's views on how we represent the world are most likely **false.**



Locke believed that our sense impressions of the outside world very likely actually resemble the world itself; we can be reasonably sure that the world is somewhat close to the way our senses interpret it.



Kant famously disagreed with him, saying (among other things) that we can never know the world as it really is with our senses alone but that we must use **reason**.



Also of note, Kant argued that time and space do not exist independently of human sensibility.



**THE CASE
AGAINST REALITY**

**why evolution hid the
truth from our eyes**

DONALD HOFFMAN

**Kant was right and Locke was
wrong...
Your senses do not at all represent
reality as it is; they only track
what is fitness-enhancing
(Hoffman 2019).**

THE ORDER
OF
TIME

CARLO
ROVELLI

New York Times–bestselling author of

Seven Brief Lessons on Physics

Moreover, the future of physics is one in which **spacetime is not a feature of the fundamental equations of physics** (Rovelli 2018).

S | D E B A R



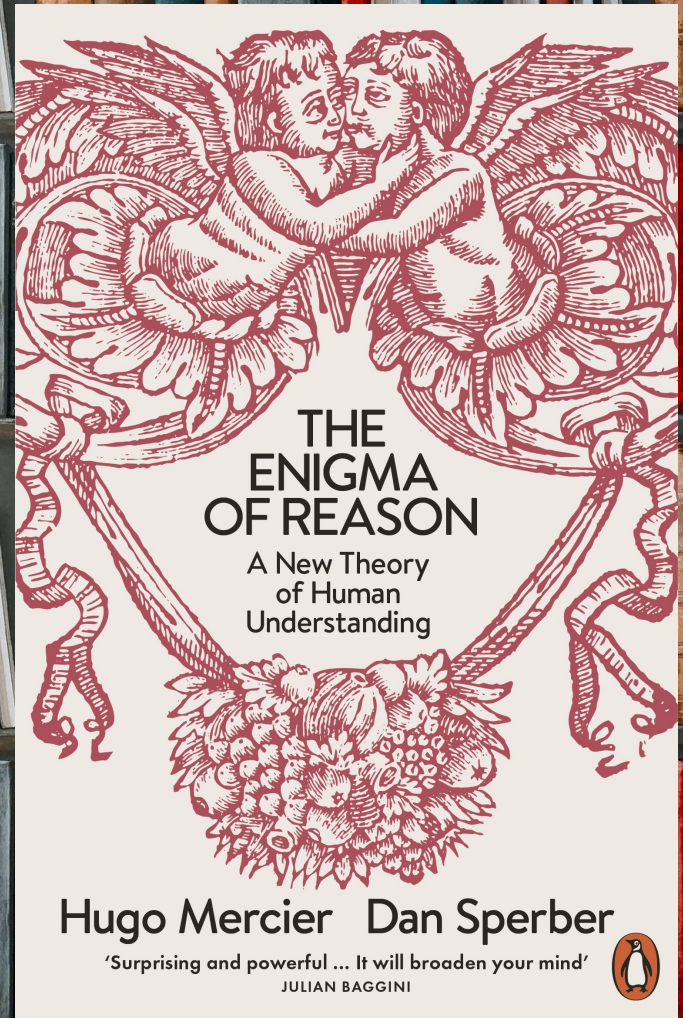
Hume didn't even believe we understood **causation** accurately.

For Hume, **causation** is just a constant conjunction of a cause and an effect; he claimed we never actually witness causation and that it is just a habit of the mind.

With regards to Descartes and the rationalists...

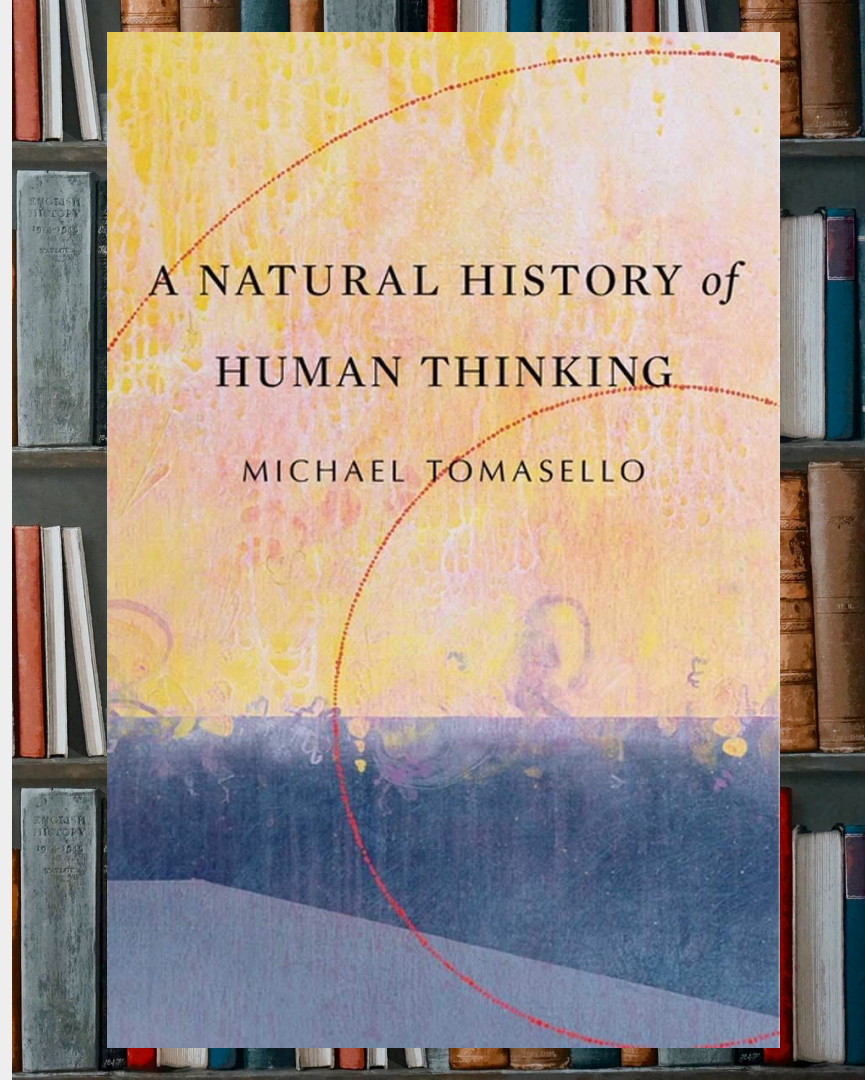
According to some theorists, e.g., Mercier and Sperber 2017, it appears that the evolutionary origin of our capacity to reason has a social origin: it helped us to win arguments.

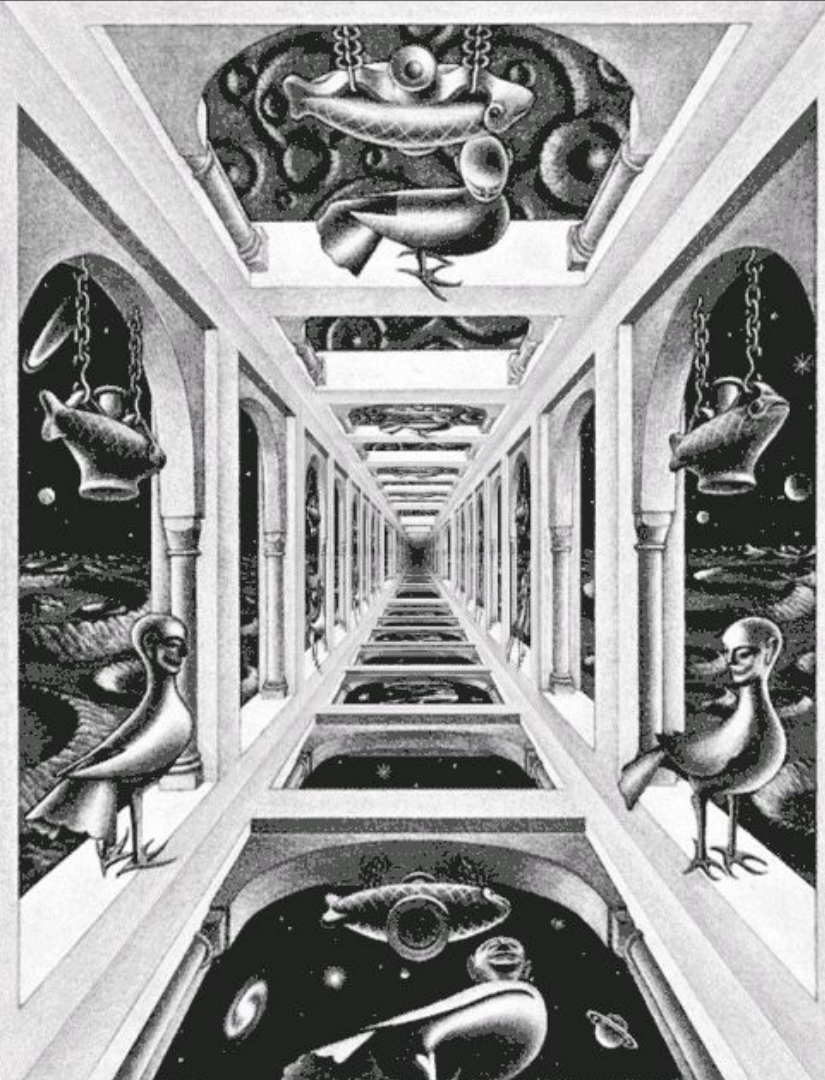
This leads unaided reason to (usually) simply confirm our pre-existing beliefs, i.e., confirmation bias.



There are other theories about the function of our capacity to reason, but most of these theories also stress the social function of reason, not the intellectual function of reason (see also Tomasello 2018).

In short, reason doesn't do what the rationalists thought it did.





“But history shows that logic launched from introspection alone lacks thrusts, can travel only so far, and usually heads in the wrong direction. Much of the history of modern Philosophy, from Descartes and Kant forward, consists of failed models of the brain. The shortcoming is not the fault of the philosophers, who have doggedly pushed their methods to the limit, but a straightforward consequence of the biological evolution of the brain. All that has been learned empirically about evolution in general and mental process in particular suggests that the brain is a machine assembled not to understand itself but to survive” (Wilson 1999, Ch. 6).

S | D E B A R

**In the 19th century, this split into two camps
happened again...**



In the 19th century “the ideal personage of the scientist was taking shape, and only then was Philosophy, for its part, forced to split into two camps.

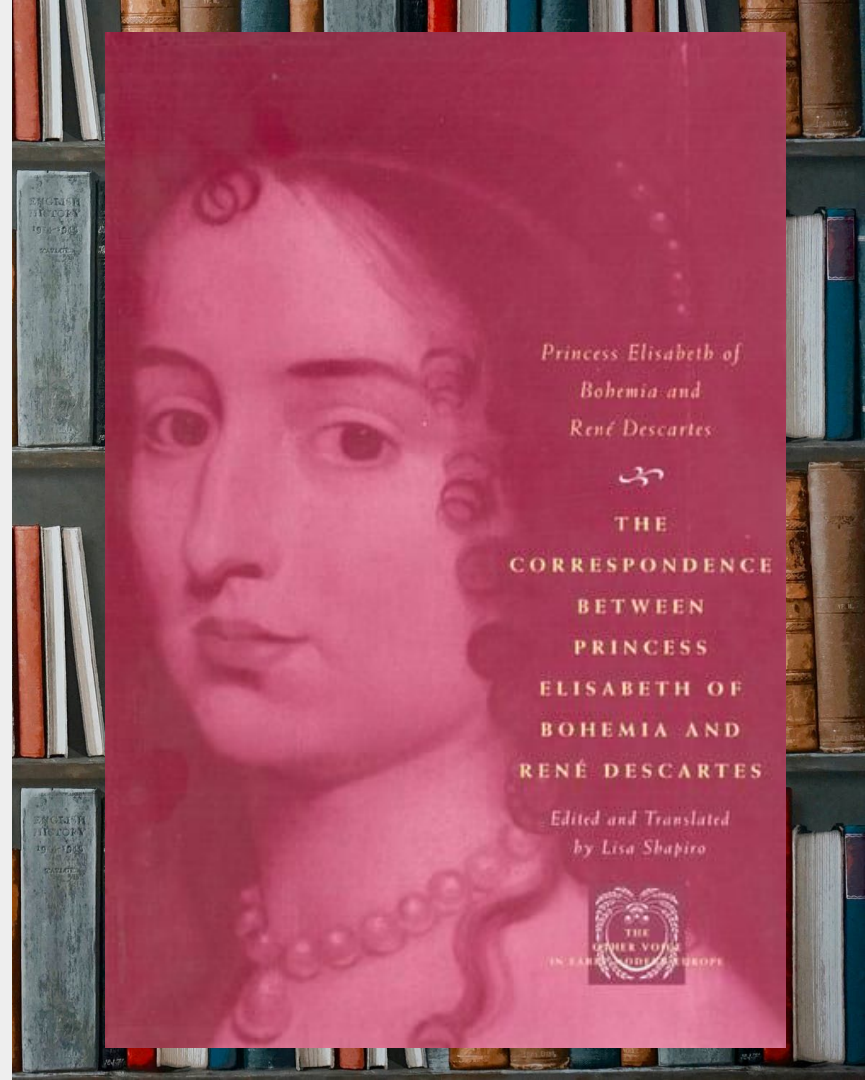
There were those who found this new figure of the scientist impressive and longed to share in his new cultural caché.

Others, by contrast, found his purview, that of building upon, improving upon, and channeling the forces of the natural world, ‘hacking through nature’s thorns to kiss awake new powers,’ in James Merrill’s words, inadequate for the central task of Philosophy as it had been understood by one prominent strain of thinkers since antiquity: that of understanding ourselves, our interiority, and the gap between what we experience in our inner lives and what the natural world will permit to be actualized or known” (Smith 2019).

What is
knowledge?



Even in his own lifetime, Descartes' views were challenged, as was the case in correspondence with Princess Elisabeth (see Descartes 2007).



“A number of philosophers have observed that there is no noncircular way to determine that the natural desire for truth is satisfiable, or to put the claim in the preferred idiom, there is no noncircular way to tell that our belief-forming faculties are reliable as a whole.

Richard Foley (2001) links the phenomenon of epistemic circularity with the lack of answers to the radical skeptic and the failure of the project of [Descartes’] strong foundationalism” (Zagzebski 2015: 39; interpolation is mine).

“A book of the first importance, a truly revolutionary work.”

—The New Yorker



PLAGUES AND PEOPLES

William H. McNeill

Again, even in Descartes' lifetime, his approach to education and knowledge, an approach which goes back all the way to Plato, was under question.

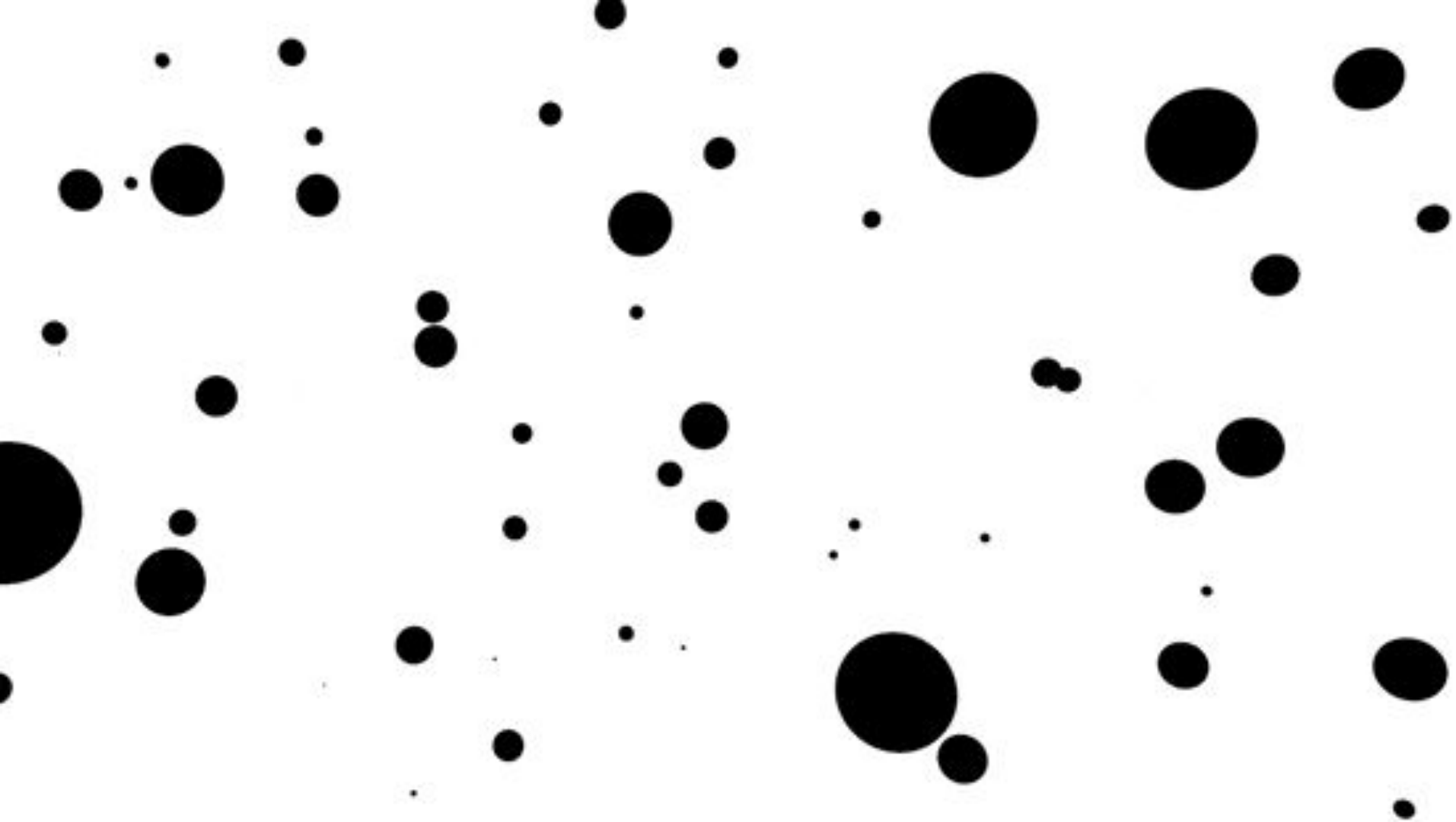
McNeill (1976: 245) reminds us that disease was among the many factors that led to the questioning of the ancient philosophical traditions.



Coherentism

Coherentism is the view that:

- a. Our beliefs are like a web that coheres (or fits) together, and
- b. Our beliefs are justified if they cohere with the rest of our web of beliefs.

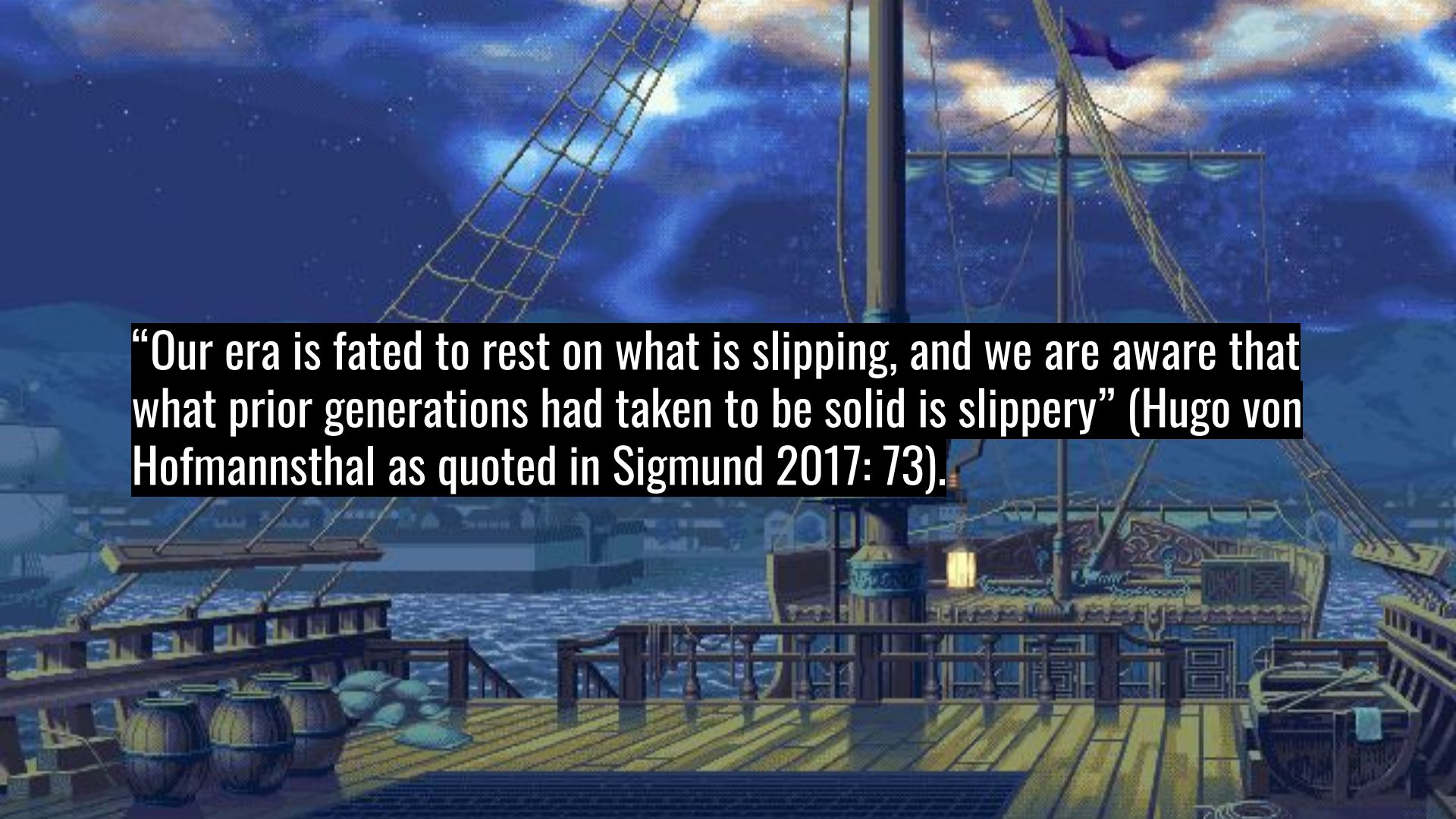




“There is a long tradition in epistemology which would reject out of hand any proposal that makes epistemological questions dependent on empirical findings or technological developments.

But that is a tradition which I, in the company of a growing number of philosophers, take to be sterile and moribund.

Another, younger tradition in epistemology, tracing to James and Dewey, finds nothing untoward in the suggestion that **epistemology is inseparable from science and technology**” (Stich 1990: 28).



“Our era is fated to rest on what is slipping, and we are aware that what prior generations had taken to be solid is slippery” (Hugo von Hofmannsthal as quoted in Sigmund 2017: 73).



“If one looked all the way to the bottom, one can observe that the whole edifice is floating midair” (ibid.).

Question:
What's the point?

Pinker (2015) argues over the course of over 800 pages that, given the available empirical evidence, the rate of intra-human violence has decreased.

Among the reasons for this are:

- the rise of strong states that enforce laws,
- the rise in literacy concurrent with the proliferation of novels (and other technologies) that allow you to empathize with others,
- the gradual improvement in manners/cleanliness in people,
- and the rights revolutions.

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

**STEVEN
PINKER**

*Author of *The Blank Slate* and *The Stuff of Thought**

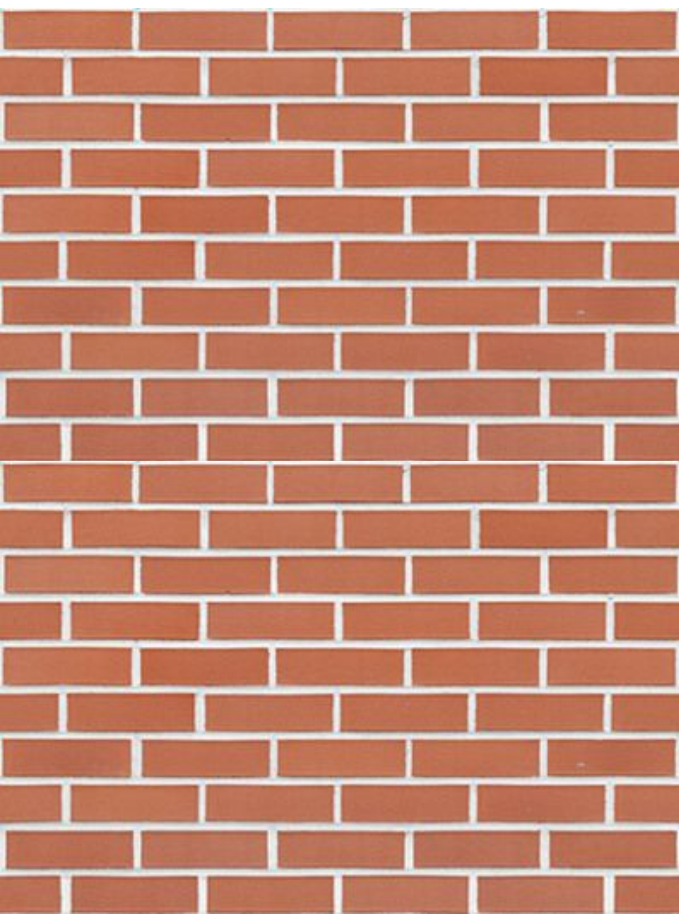
THE
**BETTER
ANGELS**
OF OUR
NATURE

WHY VIOLENCE HAS DECLINED

"A supremely important book . . . [A] masterly achievement."
—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW 

“I am prepared to take this line of explanation a step further. The reason so many violent institutions succumbed within so short a span of time was that the arguments that slew them belonged to a coherent philosophy that emerged during the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment.

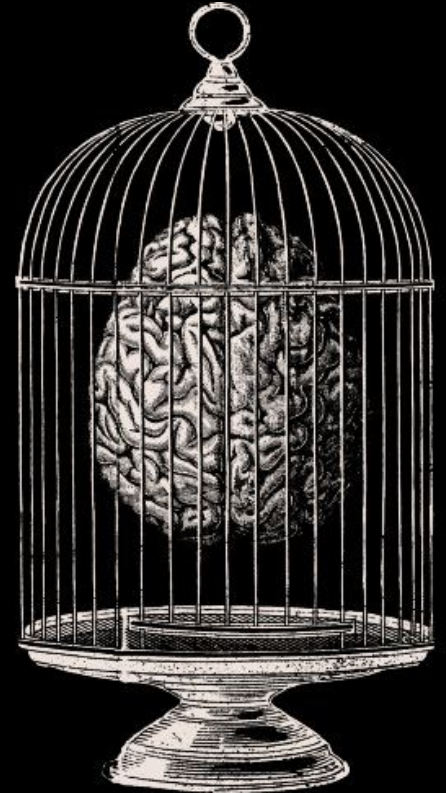
The ideas of thinkers like **Hobbes**, **Spinoza**, **Descartes**, **Locke**, **David Hume**, **Mary Astell**, **Kant**, **Beccaria**, **Smith**, **Mary Wollstonecraft**, **Madison**, **Jefferson**, **Hamilton**, and **John Stuart Mill** coalesced into a worldview that we can call **Enlightenment Humanism**. It is also sometimes called **Classical Liberalism**” (Pinker 2012: ; emphasis added).



Your thoughts,
like those of brilliant men and
women before you,
are **bound** by your historical
context.

Innovation is possible,
but it requires work.

Lots of it.





Intellectual and Social Progress requires (in no particular order):

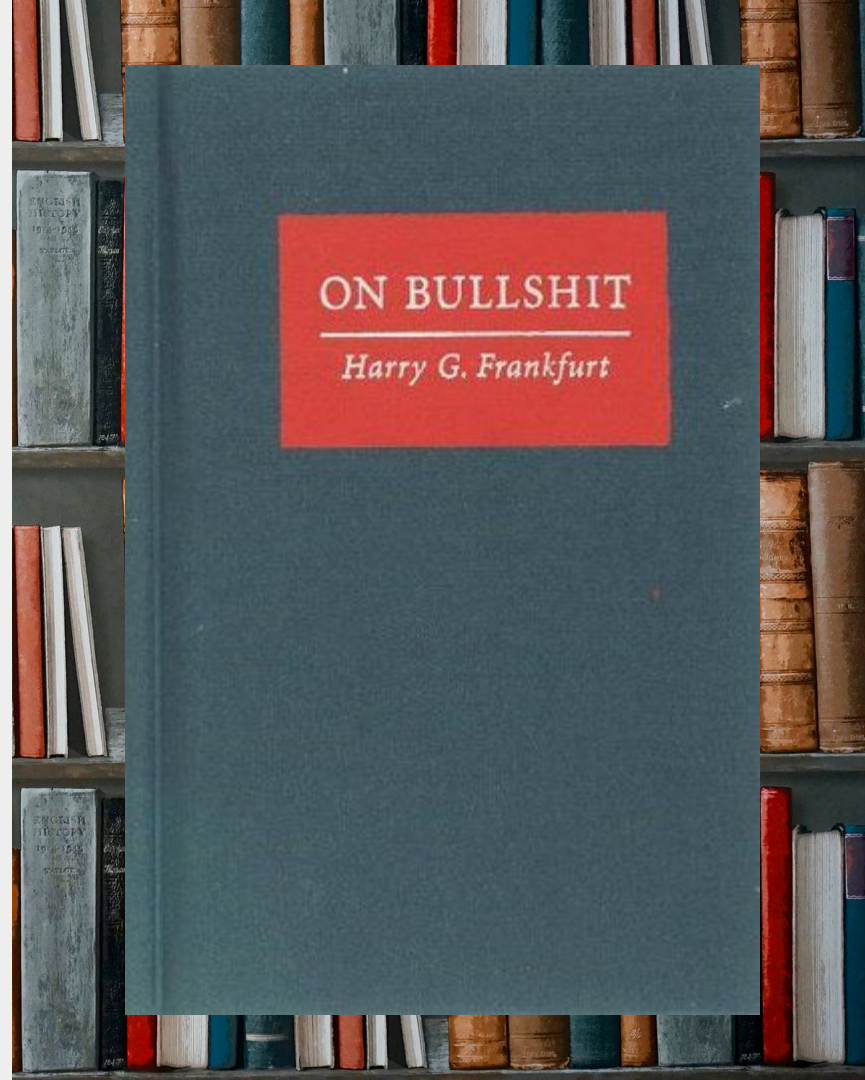
- **Technologies by which we can share ideas and take the perspectives of others (e.g., novels, internet, etc.)**
 - **Chains of personal contacts which fosters intellectual creativity**
 - **Intellectual rivalries**
 - **Emotional energy and ideas you are willing to fight for**
 - **Movement away from superstition and towards empirical (testable) hypotheses**
 - **(Apparently) improvements in the field of mathematics**
- See also Collins (2009: 379-81).**

**Final Bit of Advice:
Beware of bullshit.**

Harry Frankfurt argues that *bullshit* (a comment made to persuade, regardless of the truth) has been on the rise for the last several decades (Frankfurt 2005).

How do you know a bullshitter?

“The liar cares about the truth and attempts to hide it; the bullshitter doesn't care if what they say is true or false, but rather only cares whether or not their listener is persuaded” (ibid., 61).

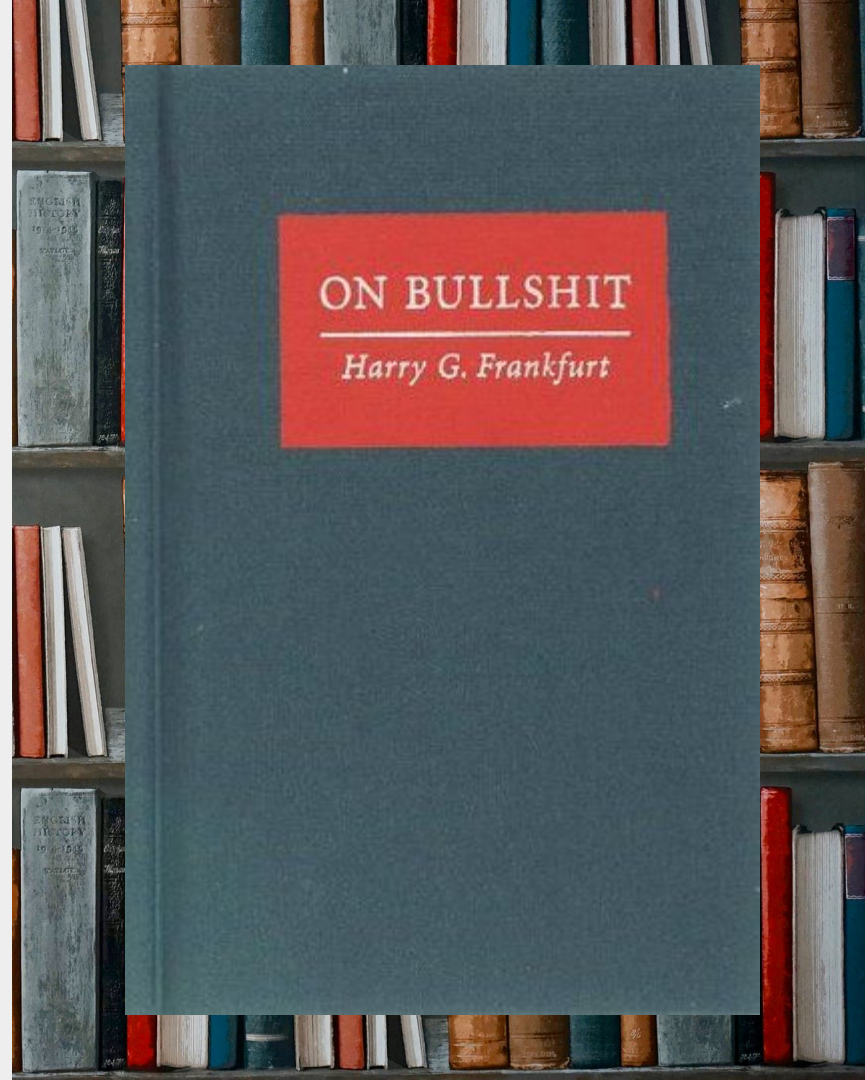


In a paper titled “[Deeper into Bullshit](#)”, the Oxford philosopher G. A. Cohen charges that Frankfurt overlooked a whole category of bullshit:

the kind that appears in academic works.

There **is** bullshit in academy, and it arises from indifference to meaning.

Cohen argues that some thinkers write in ways that are not only unclear but also **unclarifiable**. Bullshit is the obscure that cannot be rendered unobscure.



But be careful:

Not all things that are false or obscure (or unhelpful) are bullshit.

It is important to consider intellectual works in their historical context, paying special attention to the prevalent scientific and religious worldviews of the time.

FIN