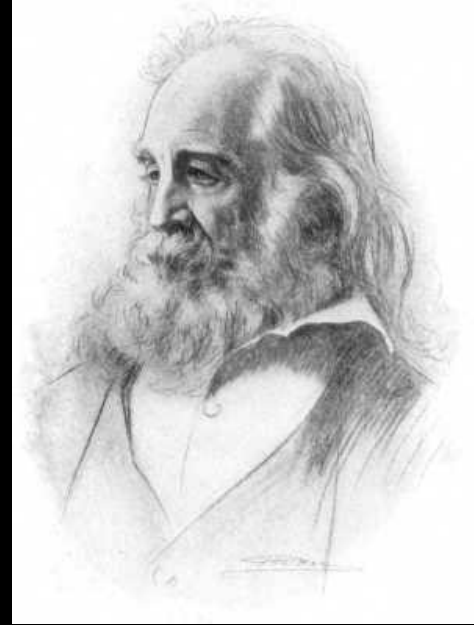


^(else)
Why everyone is a hypocrite
^
Evolution and the Modular Mind

Robert Kurzban



Do I contradict myself?

*Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)*

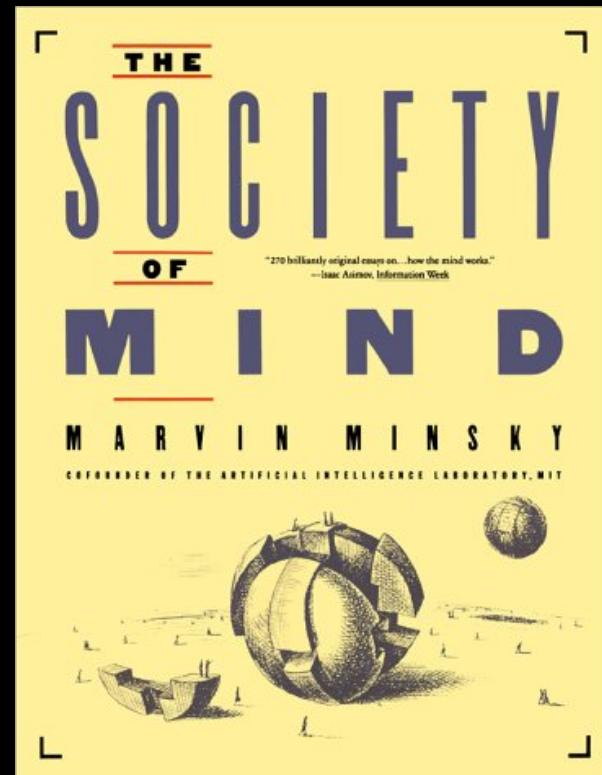
-- Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*

Psychology's Basic Question

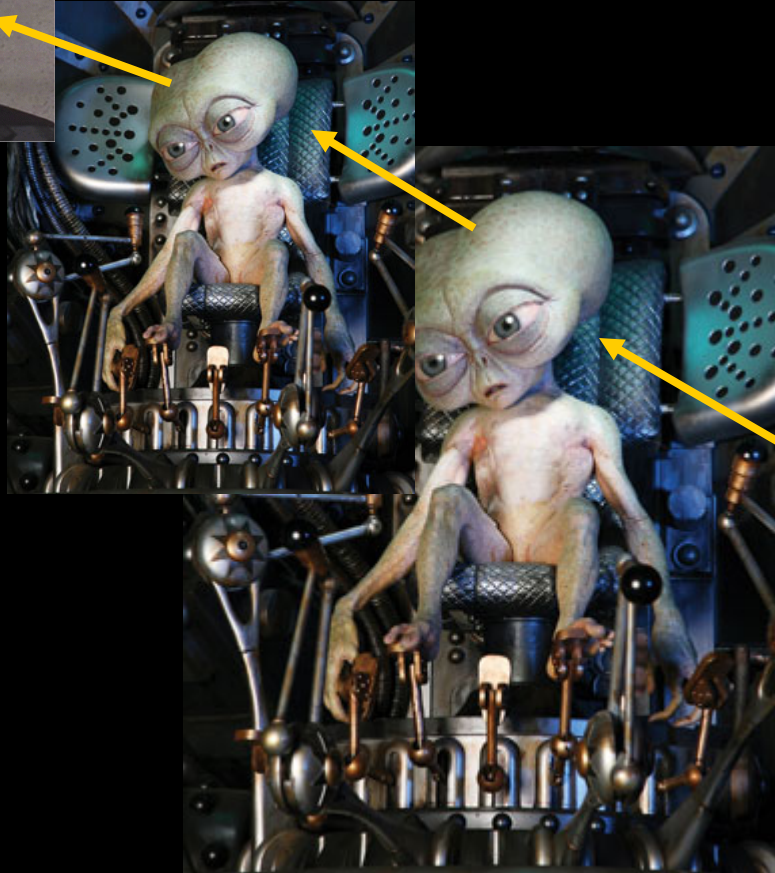


*How can intelligence
emerge from
nonintelligence?*

– Marvin Minsky, 1985



One answer...



The answer:

Contains multitudes



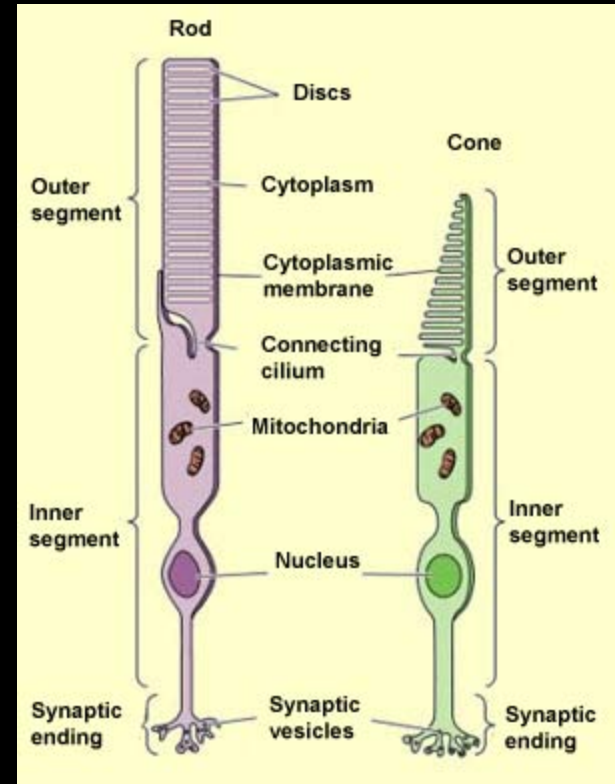
An information-
processing device
with many
specialized
applications.

Another
information-
processing
device with
many
specialized
~~applications~~
adaptations



Modules

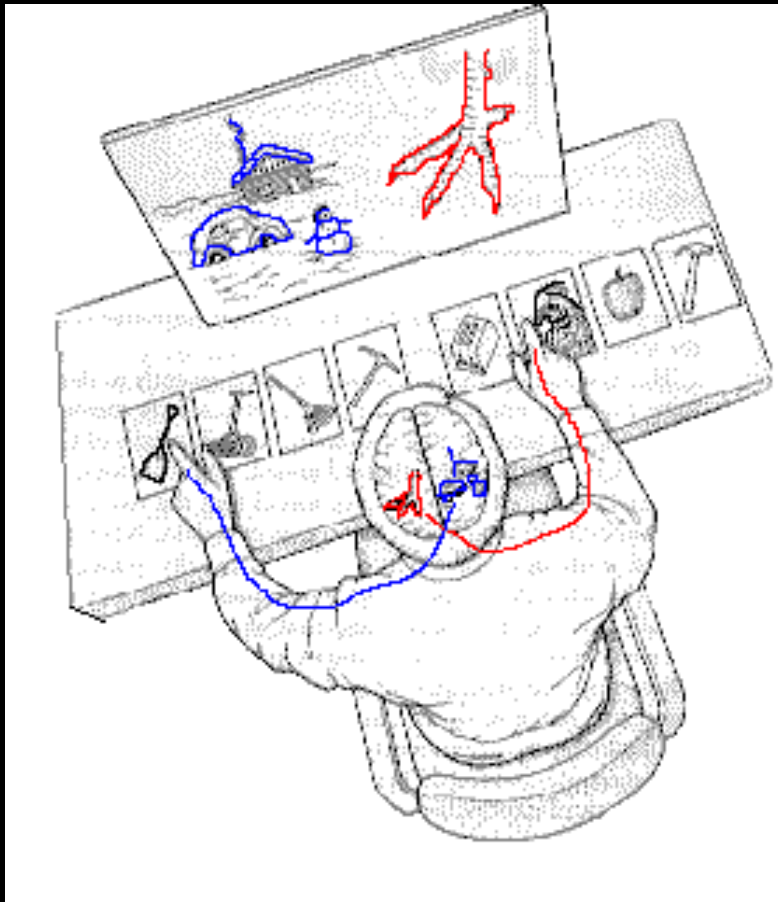
A module with a
(narrow) function.



Photoreceptors

How does Modularity Explain Hypocrisy?

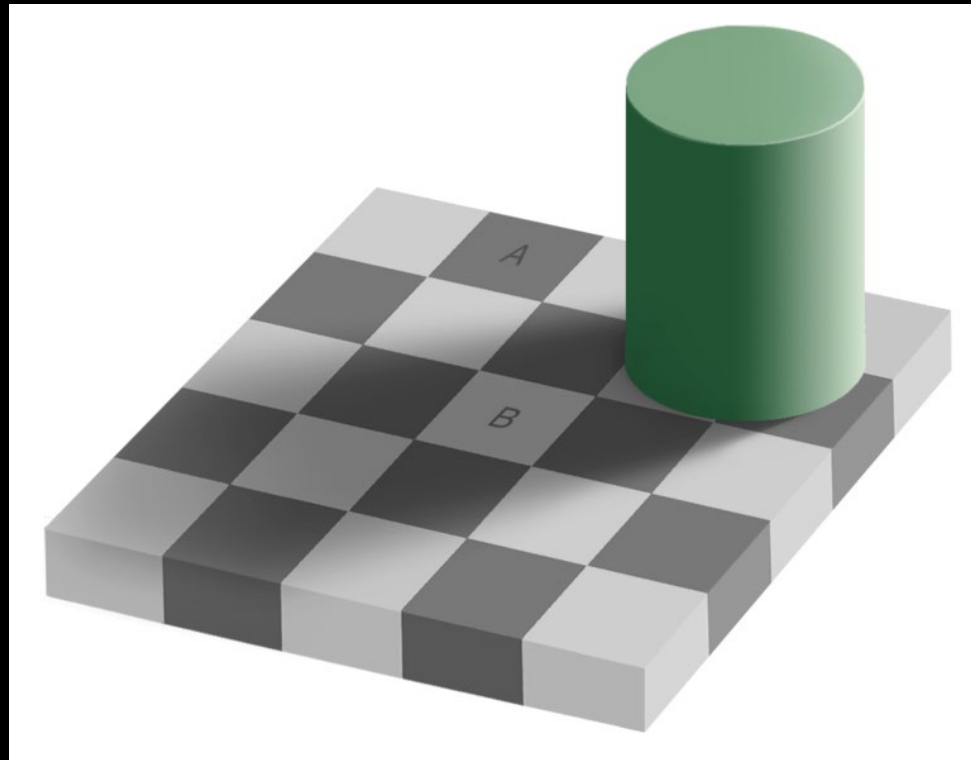
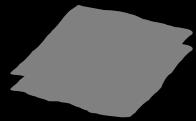
Point 1: Split brains can contain mutually inconsistent representations



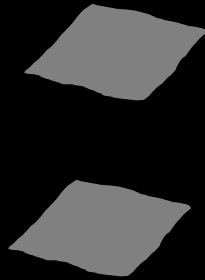
Question: What did “the patient” see?

Answer: There’s no such thing as “the patient”

Point 2: *Your* brain can contain mutually inconsistent representations



Point 2: *Your* brain can contain
mutually inconsistent representations

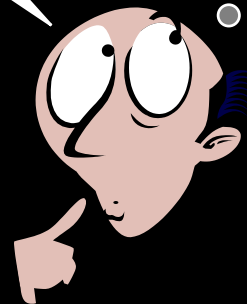


Point 3: Some modules guide choice. Other models (try to) explain



I choose the
one on the
right
*because...*I
like the color.

Choose the
right-most
one.



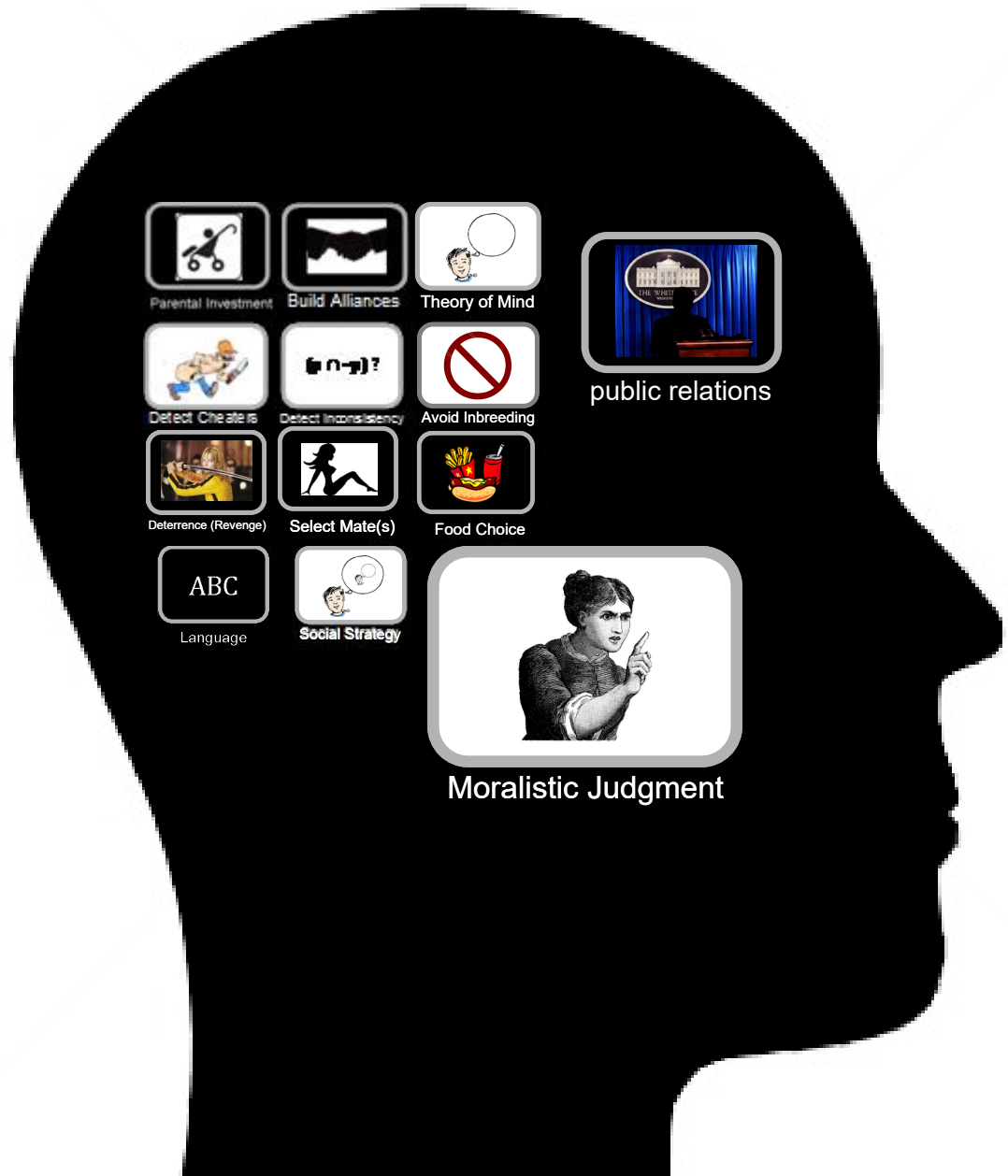
Stuff going on in
your brain.



Stuff "you" know
about...

Moral
dumbfounding:

Is it wrong for a
scientist to
produce a clone
of a human
body, even it
has no brain or
consciousness?



Point 4: Modules Have Functions

We can explain the (social) mind by explaining the functions of the (social) modules of the mind.

The Functions of Social Modules

- Modules are designed to “play games” with *other people’s modules*.

*Point 5: Ignorance can be
strategically useful*



(Note: ignorance is not *always* useful)



*Point 6: Some modules are designed
to reflect the advantage of
ignorance*

Will Bailey (*The West Wing*) “I do my best work when I’m the least informed person in the room.”

- People have “press secretary” modules, designed to interface with the social world.

Stuff going on in
your brain.

Information in this
modular system
“leaks” into the
(social) world.

**Note: This is NOT
your “self”**



On Being Wrong

- 94% [of college instructors] rate themselves as above average teachers, and 68% rank themselves in the top quarter of teaching performances

On Being Wrong

2 groups of people asked to rate their driving skills.

1 group of people were controls.

1 group consisted of people who had been in accidents severe enough to put them in the hospital, including from accidents in which the driver “hit fixed objects”

Result: No difference between groups

On Being Wrong

1,000 soccer fans asked to predict winner of the game.

1% predicted their team would lose

A second group of subjects asked the same question, but “to answer objectively.”

2% predicted their team would lose

Why?

- One idea: we are wrong because we like to feel good about ourselves.
- Another idea: we are wrong because errors can be useful. That is, we are “strategically wrong.”

Point 7: Modules are **not** designed to make you happy.



An ostrich saving itself from the unpleasant terror associated with seeing an approaching lion.

Note: Low reproductive success.

Point 7: Modules are **not** designed to make you happy.

How important is the motive to attain self-esteem:

“there have been at least 15,000 studies [on self-esteem]...the largest body of research on a single topic in the history of all of the social sciences”

Result: self-esteem is “not a major predictor or cause of almost anything”

Scheff & Fearon, 2004

Point 7: Modules are **not** designed to make you happy.

Overly positive representations can confer advantages, often (but not only) through persuasion.

There are advantages to being “strategically wrong.”

Self-fulfilling Prophecy



*The desire for a certain kind of truth here
brings about that special truth's existence...*

– William James

Because humans are social, being ignorant
and wrong can produce benefits.

Strategic Error & Persuasion

- It's useful to be valuable.
- Value depends on traits, abilities, prospects...
- Others infer your properties from your "beliefs"
- Being wrong about one's traits and one's future can be an advantage...

Strategic Error & Persuasion

- Errors in more serious domains:
- In Holland, people with over 500 sex partners in the past 6 months rated their chance of becoming infected with HIV as no different from a randomly selected other.

Strategic Error & Persuasion

- Interestingly, there is a delightful recursive property:

People say that they are less susceptible to these sorts of biases than the average person...

Strategic Error in Politics (aka regular Propaganda)

New York Times quotes
Qaddafi saying that
there are “no
demonstrations at all
in the streets”



Strategic Error in Science (psychological propaganda)

Academics who misunderstand others' arguments can publish critiques of rivals' views that can persuade observers that these rivals are wrong.

Strategically Wrong?



On July 2, 1866, Alfred Russel Wallace wrote to Darwin that he had been “so repeatedly struck by the utter inability of numbers of intelligent persons to see clearly or at all, the self acting & necessary effects of *Nat Selection*...”

Strategic Error & WEEH

Suppose someone were writing a critique of the ideas here, and suggested that “tradeoffs” was “a concept not in Kurzban’s lexicon”

This might persuade (potential) readers that the book were of limited value (a goal a rival might have)

the background it finds itself in? Well, maybe. But in evolution, there are always trade-offs. A dynamic color scheme comes with costs, and the



“not in Kurzban’s lexicon”

The function of brains is to

trade-offs

resources can be used for hearing

tasks. Trade-offs are a big part of

at full strength is enormously en

path dependencies (i.e., histo

critters, including humans, s

This reflects a trade-off—wh

diverted, and the immune sy

tasks are solved most efficiently by unimodal maps.⁷⁶ There are always engi-
neering trade-offs, and each form trades off one set of functions for another.

So, the brain, with all of its patient and impatient modules, somehow
has to make many trade-offs. The impatient module that “likes cake” (i.e., is

do with trade-offs.⁸⁰

to trade off hearing with other things that o

trade-off depends on many factors, but one

how different kinds of systems are

use of inherent trade-offs. I quote

the social world. If I’m in trouble, and the social world is supportive, it
tics at stake. Functions can be more or less specialized, and the trade-offs

Pain, then, is a mechanism involved in a trade-off.]

and so human physiology makes various trade-offs.⁸¹

Point 8: Some Modules are Moralistic

- Some modules are designed to constrain others' behavior.

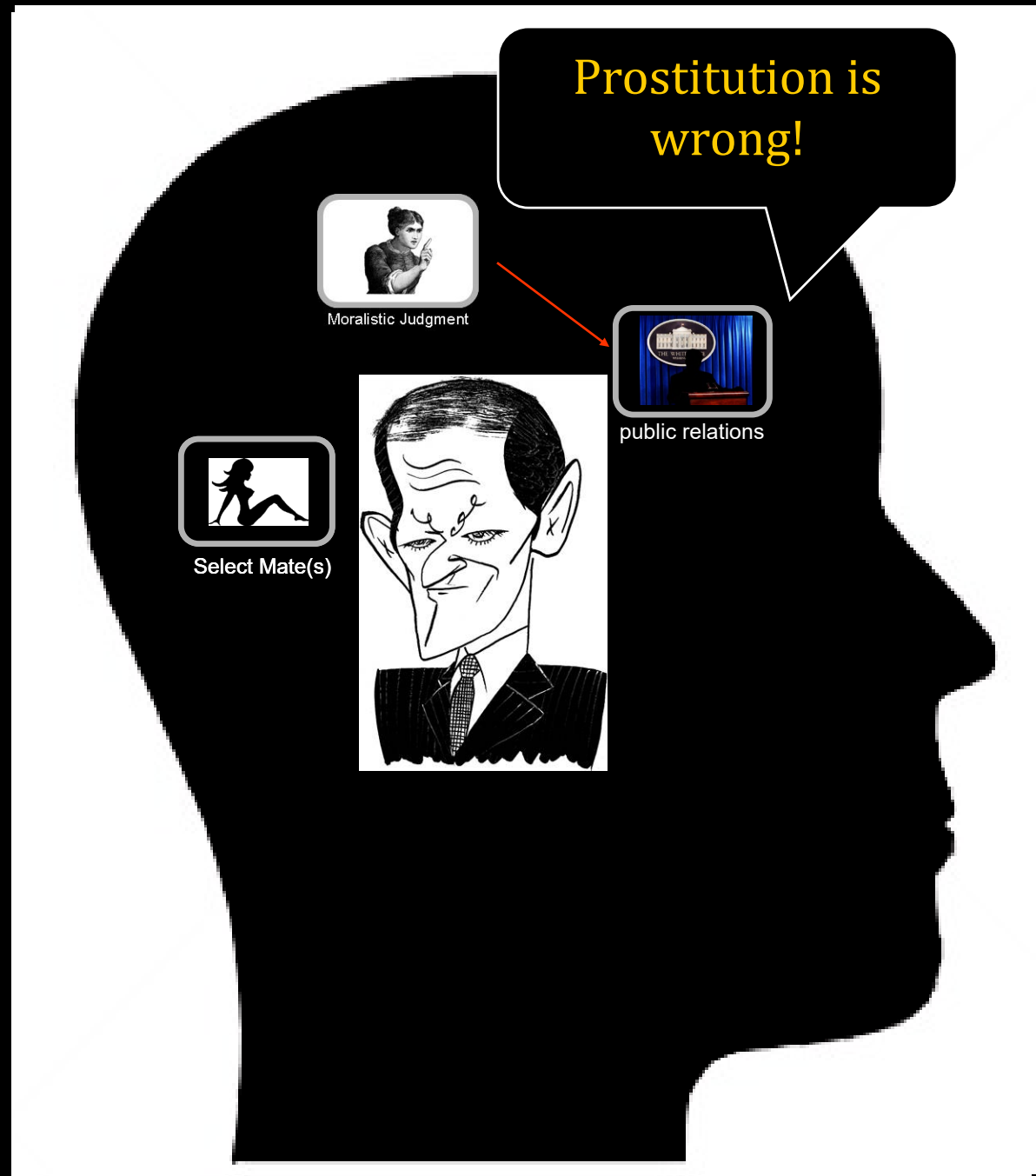


Moralistic Judgment

Point 9: Moralistic modules cause *condemnation of X*, while other modules *cause doing X*, leading to hypocrisy.

Moralistic modules
cause **public
condemnation.**

Other modules
cause behavior...



DR. SCOTT
DESJARLAIS

U.S. CONGRESS

HOME

SCOTT'S STORY

ISSUES

TAKE ACTION

*Join Dr. DesJarlais
effort to preserve
our values and*

promises made to our current seniors 55 and older.

Abortion – All life should be cherished and protected. We are pro-life.

2nd Amendment – The right to bear arms is a constitutionally protected we will fight to make sure those rights are not eroded.

Dr. DesJarlais (R-TN 4th) (phone call with his pregnant mistress):

You told me you'd have an abortion, and now we're too far along without one. If we need to go to Atlanta, or whatever, to get this solved and get it over with so we can get on with our lives, then let's do it. (Washington Post, 10 Oct 12)

FAIL

HANG UP AND
DRIVE

Guns Don't Kill People
Drivers With Cellphones Do

Point 10:

You contradict yourself.

You are large.

You contain multitudes.

But, while detecting *others'* hypocrisy helps, recognizing *your own* hypocrisy risks leaking it.

This is why you think that everyone^(else) is a hypocrite.
^



“Self-Deception”



Garrison Keillor

“Self-Deception” I think I’m a great teacher
because I want to feel good about myself.

Problem

The function of a module is *never* to make
another module feel good.

Also, it’s empirically false

Strategic Error & WEEH

Suppose someone were writing a critique of the ideas here, and suggested that “tradeoffs” was “a concept not in Kurzban’s lexicon”

If true, that would be a serious indictment, because modularity requires thinking about tradeoffs.

Strategic Morality

- Some (economic) rules simultaneously help some and hurt others.
 - Tariffs.
 - Digital rights management.
- Some moral rules also have these two different effects.
 - Drug laws
 - Abortion laws.
- Bart's cartoon about piracy and stealing a

Strategic Morality

- Bart's cartoon about piracy and stealing a car after it's still there?
- Morality as strategic advantage...
- Never met a poor libertarian...
- Maybe just generally some moral rules give some people advantages?
 - castes?

Strategic Morality

- Some (economic) rules simultaneously help some and hurt others.
 - Tariffs.
- Some moral rules also have these two different effects.
 - Certain property rights
 - Drugs (!)