



Ethics and Society

POLI 27

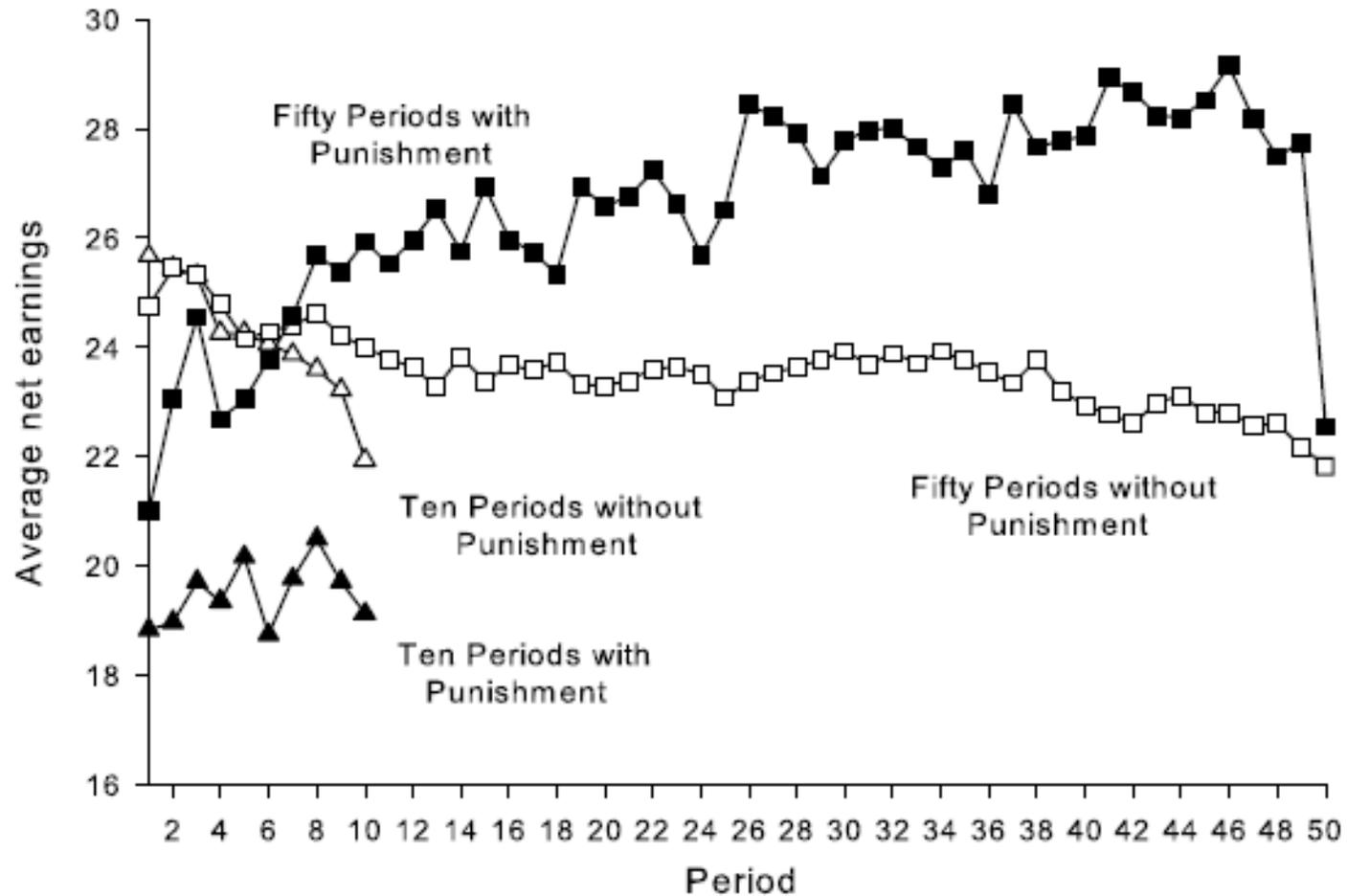
Review of Bowles and Gintis

- ▶ Why does cooperation occur even when cooperators seem to get nothing out of it?
 - ▶ We like cooperating, and we value behaving ethically for its own sake.
- ▶ Why would humans be like this?
 - ▶ Environmental pressures (cooperative foraging), intergroup competition.
 - ▶ This led to social preferences in favor of cooperation.
- ▶ But how did early humans control the impulse to exploit cooperation?
 - ▶ By devising ways to protect altruistic members, and by internalizing cooperation norms.
- ▶ What made this possible?
 - ▶ Developmental plasticity: we form general norms and social institutions that foster cooperation, we track violations of norms and we mobilize coalitions to punish violators.

Review of Bowles and Gintis

- ▶ But the mere desire to cooperate sometimes isn't enough: the structure of the situation itself can make cooperation harder.
 - ▶ Tragedy of the commons, prisoner's dilemma
- ▶ Humans are able to use social institutions and third-party enforcement ("strong reciprocity") to transform the choice situation from one where there is a dominant strategy to defect from cooperation into one where cooperation makes sense.
 - ▶ This is accomplished by changing the payoffs, making defection more costly and cooperation less so.
- ▶ We have an intrinsic motivation to punish those who defect from cooperation, but no equivalent motive to contribute altruistically.
 - ▶ Sometimes this motivation to punish gets out of control ("antisocial punishment"), indicating that there's no group norm in favor of sanctioning noncooperators.
 - ▶ Purely symbolic punishment is effective; third parties will change their behavior if they observe it.

Bowles and Gintis - A Cooperative Species (selections)



Bowles and Gintis - A Cooperative Species (selections)

- ▶ “[T]he social preferences that become salient in a population depend critically on the manner in which a people’s institutions and livelihood frame social interactions and shape the process of social learning.”
 - ▶ Aumann: correlated equilibrium
 - ▶ “Among the Au and Gnau people in Papua New Guinea, ultimatum game offers of more than half the pie were common, Moreover, while even splits were commonly accepted, both higher and lower offers were rejected with about equal frequency. This behavior struck the economists on our team as odd, to say the least. But to the anthropologists it was not surprising in light of the widespread practice of competitive gift giving as a means of establishing status and subordinacy...”
- ▶ Social institutions serve as cues for appropriate behavior.
 - ▶ “[S]ocial structure affects behavior in ways other than those captured by the money payoffs of the game, in this case by suggesting appropriate behavior (the exchange game) or identifying some individuals as “deserving” (the test manipulation).”

Bowles and Gintis - A Cooperative Species (selections)

- ▶ Behavior is conditioned on group membership.
 - ▶ Klee vs. Kandinsky
 - ▶ Flemish and Walloons
- ▶ “[S]uccessful collective action among homogeneous ethnic communities . . . is attributable to the existence of norms and institutions that facilitate the sanctioning of non contributors.”
- ▶ “people think that cooperating is the right thing to do and enjoy doing it, and that they dislike unfair treatment and enjoy punishing those who violate norms of fairness.”

Looking Forward

- ▶ Today, we're going to discuss **moral intuitions** and the role they play in grounding our ethical theories.
- ▶ The **midterm essay** will go live on Thursday morning, and you'll have until Wednesday 8/18 at 11:59pm to complete it.
- ▶ Next week, we'll study what happens in cases of **too much or too little morality**.
- ▶ Then we'll look at **political ideologies**, and how they relate to the ethical theories we've been discussing. We'll also study the problem of **government** more broadly.
 - ▶ This will require us to discuss **norms** (legal, social and moral), and how **norm change** works.
- ▶ We'll finish the course with two **case studies** of ethics *in* society: one on **effective altruism**, and another on **toleration**.
- ▶ The **final essay** will go live on 8/28, and you'll have until Friday 9/3 at 11:59pm to complete it.

Reading for Wednesday 8/11

- ▶ Jonathan Haidt - Five Moral Foundations (selections)
- ▶ David Pizarro and Paul Bloom - The Intelligence of the Moral Intuitions
- ▶ Peter Railton - The Ethical Dog and its Rational Tale (selections)
- ▶ Haidt - A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment (optional)

Jonathan Haidt - A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment

- ▶ Background: Although philosophers have held that reasoning plays a role in emotions, “psychologists, however, freed themselves from the worship of reason in the late 19th century, when they abandoned the armchair and went into the laboratory” (3).
- ▶ Cognitive developmentalism (Kohlberg 1969): affect counts, but reason decides.
 - ▶ “...the moral force in personality is cognitive. Affective forces are involved in moral decisions, but affect is neither moral nor immoral...moral reasoning is the conscious process of using ordinary moral language”.
- ▶ Social interactionism (Nucci and Turiel 1978): pure consequentialism.
 - ▶ “In the social-interactionist model, people are said to think about the consequences of an action before determining whether the action is a moral violation.”
 - ▶ “Rules prohibiting moral violations are judged, even by young children, to be universally applicable and unalterable. Actions that involve no injustice, harm, or rights violations are treated as violations of social conventions.”

Jonathan Haidt - A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment

- ▶ Haidt doesn't question whether moral reasoning occurs, but seeks to show that it plays no causal role in moral judgment (5).
 - ▶ Finding: affective reactions are better predictors of moral judgments than claims about harm.
 - ▶ Finding: subjects often seem "morally dumbfounded," in that they can't find supporting reasons for their initial judgment (condemnation), but nevertheless adhere to it.
- ▶ Social intuitionism (Haidt 2001): "moral judgment is caused by quick moral intuitions, and is followed (when needed) by slow, ex-post facto moral reasoning" (5).
 - ▶ Moral intuition: "the sudden appearance in consciousness of a moral judgment, including an affective valence (good-bad, like dislike), without any conscious awareness of having gone through steps of search, weighing evidence, or inferring a conclusion" (6).
 - ▶ Note that moral intuitions and moral reasoning are both forms of cognition.

Jonathan Haidt - A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment

- ▶ Four reasons to doubt the causal importance of reason (reasons for doubting reason...)
- ▶ **Dual-process cognition:** affective evaluation and automatic judgment compete with reason. The intuitive process is the “default” process. “It is primarily when intuitions conflict, or when the social situation demands thorough examination of all facets of a scenario that the reasoning process is called upon (10)”.
- ▶ **Motivated reasoning:** our social relationships and our desire to protect ourselves from cognitive dissonance can lead us to make inaccurate judgments.
- ▶ **Post-hoc justification:** we invent plausible theories for why we made a judgment, and these theories are mainly intended to persuade others (sometimes also ourselves).
- ▶ **Problem of action:** moral action covaries with moral emotion more than with moral reasoning.

Jonathan Haidt - A Social Intuitionist

Approach to Moral Judgment

- ▶ **Intuitive judgment:** “moral judgments appear in consciousness automatically and effortlessly as the result of moral intuitions.”
- ▶ **Post-hoc reasoning:** “moral reasoning is an effortful process, engaged in after a moral judgment is made, in which a person searches for arguments that will support an already-made judgment.”
- ▶ **Reasoned persuasion:** “moral reasoning is produced and sent forth verbally in order to justify one’s already-made moral judgment to others.”
- ▶ **Social persuasion:** “the mere fact that friends, allies, and acquaintances have made a moral judgment exerts a direct influence on others, even if no reasoned persuasion is used.”
- ▶ **Reasoned judgment:** “People may at times reason their way to a judgment by sheer force of logic, overriding their initial intuition. In such cases reasoning truly is causal, and cannot be said to be the “slave of the passions.” However such reasoning is hypothesized to be rare.”
- ▶ **Private reflection:** In the course of thinking about a situation a person may spontaneously activate a new intuition that contradicts the initial intuitive judgment (especially via role-taking).

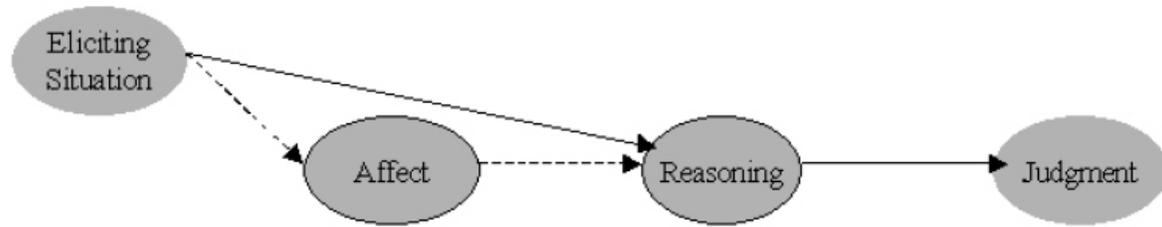


Figure 1.
The rationalist model of moral judgment. Moral affects such as sympathy may sometimes be inputs to moral reasoning

Jonathan Haidt - A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment

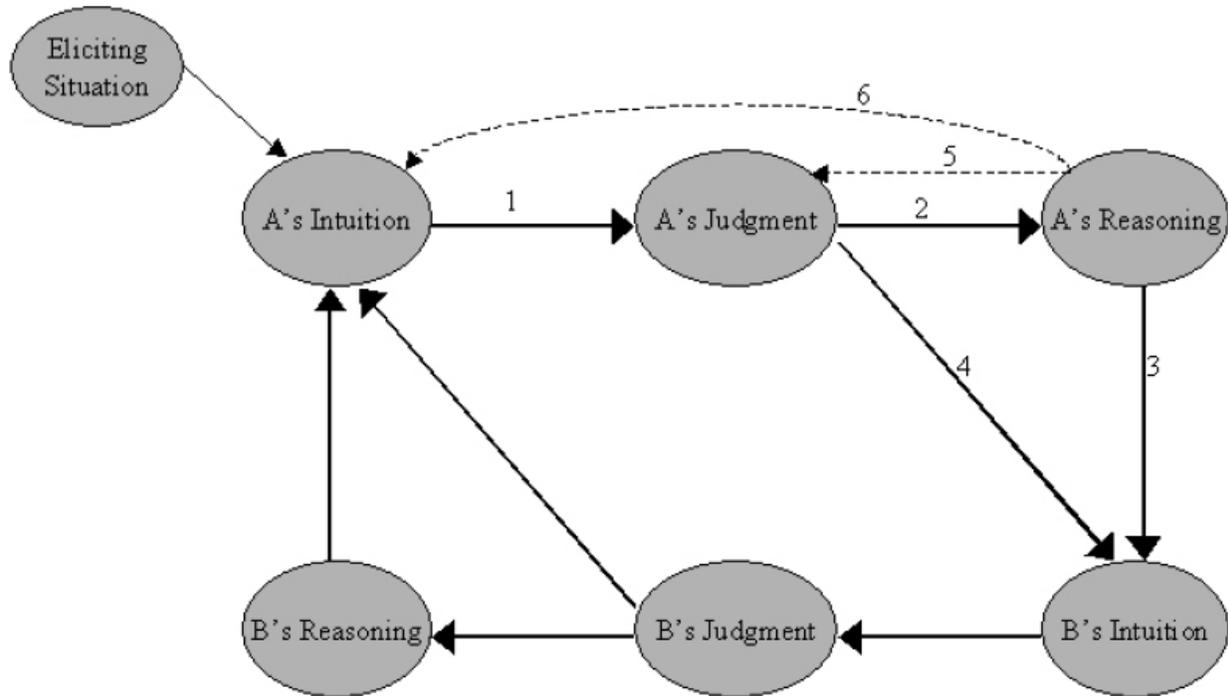


Figure 2. The social intuitionist model of moral judgment. The numbered links, drawn for Person A only, are 1) the intuitive judgment link, 2) the post-hoc reasoning link, 3) the reasoned persuasion link, and 4) the social persuasion link. Two additional links are hypothesized to occur less frequently: 5) the reasoned judgment link, and 6) the private reflection link.

Jonathan Haidt - A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment

Jonathan Haidt - A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment

- ▶ The distinctive claim of social intuitionism, as Haidt (2001) described it, is that “**moral reasoning does not cause moral judgment; rather, moral reasoning is usually a post hoc construction**, generated after a judgment has been reached,” and that **moral intuitions drive moral reasoning** “just as surely as a dog wags its tail.”

Jonathan Haidt - A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment

- ▶ “Rationalist models made sense in the 1960's and 1970's. The cognitive revolution had opened up new ways of thinking about morality and moral development, and it was surely an advance to think about moral judgment as a form of information processing. But times have changed. Now we know (again) that most of cognition occurs automatically and outside of consciousness (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999), and that people cannot tell us how they really reached a judgment (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977).
- ▶ Now we know that the brain is a connectionist system that tunes up slowly, but is then able to evaluate complex situations quickly (Bechtel & Abrahamsen, 1991). Now we know that emotions are not as irrational (Frank, 1988), that reasoning is not as reliable (Kahneman & Tversky, 1984), and that animals are not as amoral (de Waal, 1996) as we thought in the 1970's. The time may be right, therefore, to take another look at Hume's perverse thesis: that moral emotions and intuitions drive moral reasoning, just as a surely as a dog wags its tail” (24).

David Pizarro and Paul Bloom - The Intelligence of the Moral Intuitions

- ▶ Haidt may be correct that “fast and automatic” moral intuitions are the primary source of moral judgments, but these moral intuitions are themselves conditioned by prior reasoning.
 - ▶ Haidt would agree that the moral intuitions can be shaped by prior *experience*.
 - ▶ The key difference is whether they can be shaped by prior *reasoning*.
- ▶ “In contrast [to Haidt], rationalist theories, such as the one we defend below, agree that people possess intuitively given (and potentially sacrosanct) first principles but posit that these serve as a starting point for deliberative reasoning, which can play an important role in the formation of moral judgments” (194).
- ▶ Haidt considered that moral reasoning could affect moral judgment by **reasoned judgment** and **private reflection**, but failed to account for the role of **prior reasoning** in affecting the moral intuitions themselves.

David Pizarro and Paul Bloom - The Intelligence of the Moral Intuitions

- ▶ “**Prior reasoning** can determine the sorts of output that emerge from these intuitive systems. This can happen through **shifts in cognitive appraisal**, as well as through **conscious decisions as to what situations to expose oneself to**. In both of these regards, prior controlled processes partially determine which fast, unconscious, and automatic intuitions emerge” (194).
 - ▶ “One of the most effective ways to change one’s intuitive moral responses, then, is to change one’s thoughts or appraisals about an issue.”
 - ▶ Reflection can train the moral intuitions (compare Mengzi).
 - ▶ “One way that individuals may exert distal control over automatic reactions is through selective exposure to environments that “educate” the moral intuitions.”
 - ▶ Marshmallow experiment (Mischel and Ebbesen 1970).

David Pizarro and Paul Bloom - The Intelligence of the Moral Intuitions

- ▶ “[T]hese processes pose a challenge to Haidt’s (2001) more general conclusions about the irrelevance of deliberative reasoning, as they raise the possibility that deliberative reasoning can affect moral judgment, albeit in an indirect fashion.”
- ▶ “Haidt (2001) was likely correct that we do have quick and automatic responses to certain situations—killing babies, sex with chickens, and so on—and although these responses can be modified and overridden by conscious deliberation, they need not be. But most moral cognition is not about such simple cases; in the real world, moral reasoning is essential.”

David Pizarro and Paul Bloom - The Intelligence of the Moral Intuitions

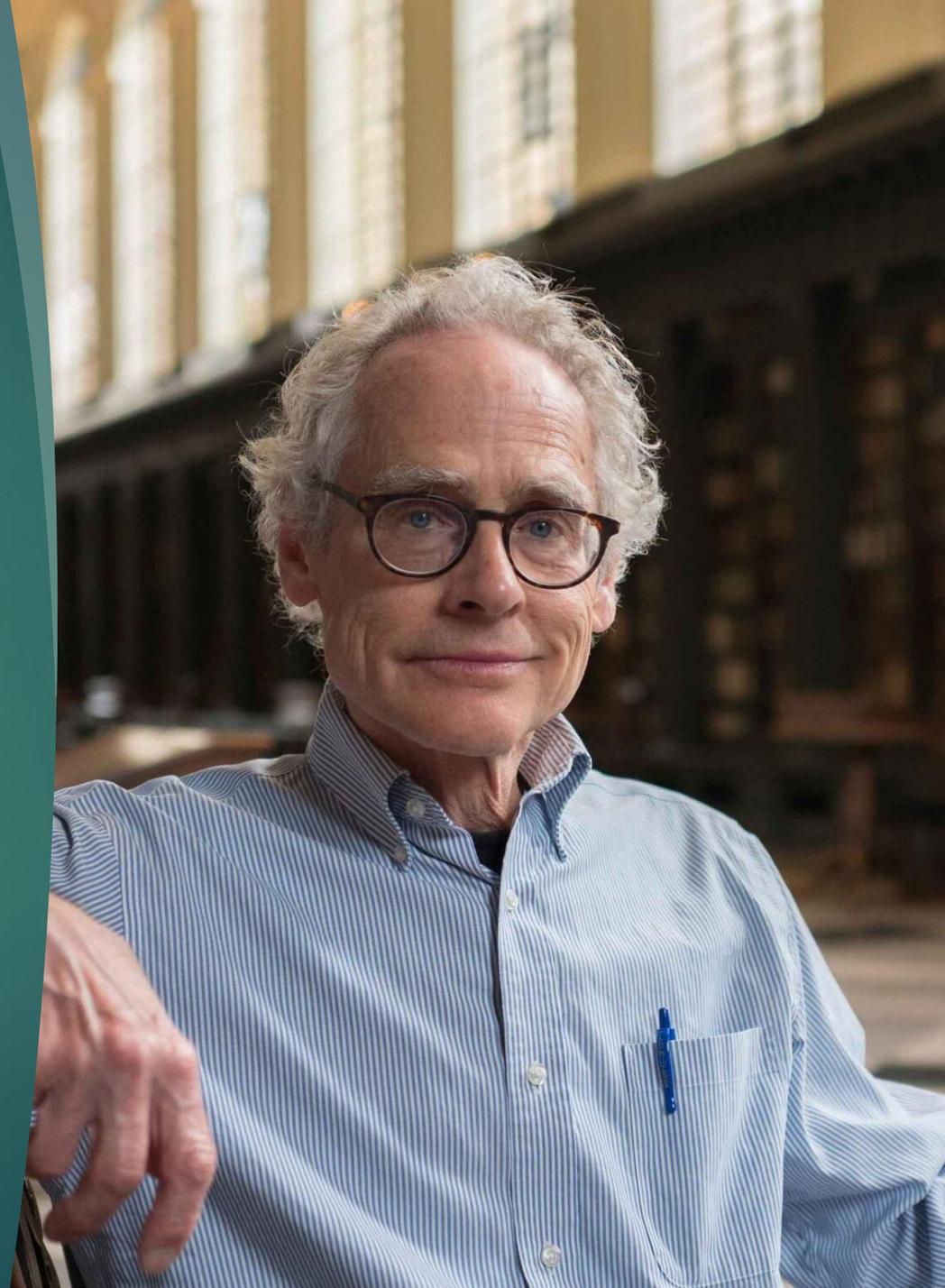
- ▶ "All of this is fully consistent with Haidt's (2001) repeated claim that deliberative reasoning is statistically a rare occurrence, that "most of our behaviors and judgments are in fact made automatically" (p. 819). Once a person has thought about, for instance, the morality of stem cell research, all subsequent responses to this issue might be fast and automatic, independent of any conscious reasoning. It is therefore possible that deliberative moral judgments are less frequent and occupy less of our time than nondeliberative ones. However, frequency and duration are poor cues to the importance of an event."

David Pizarro and Paul Bloom - The Intelligence of the Moral Intuitions

- ▶ “Wright (1994) was only partially correct that “our ethereal intuitions about what’s right and what’s wrong are weapons designed for daily, hand-to-hand combat among individuals.” This is true for the initial, adapted moral sense. However, as humans, **we can modify our intuitions so that they move us in directions that actually oppose our material interests**, as when we choose not to favor our own group over another or when we give up resources to help starving children thousands of miles away” (194).

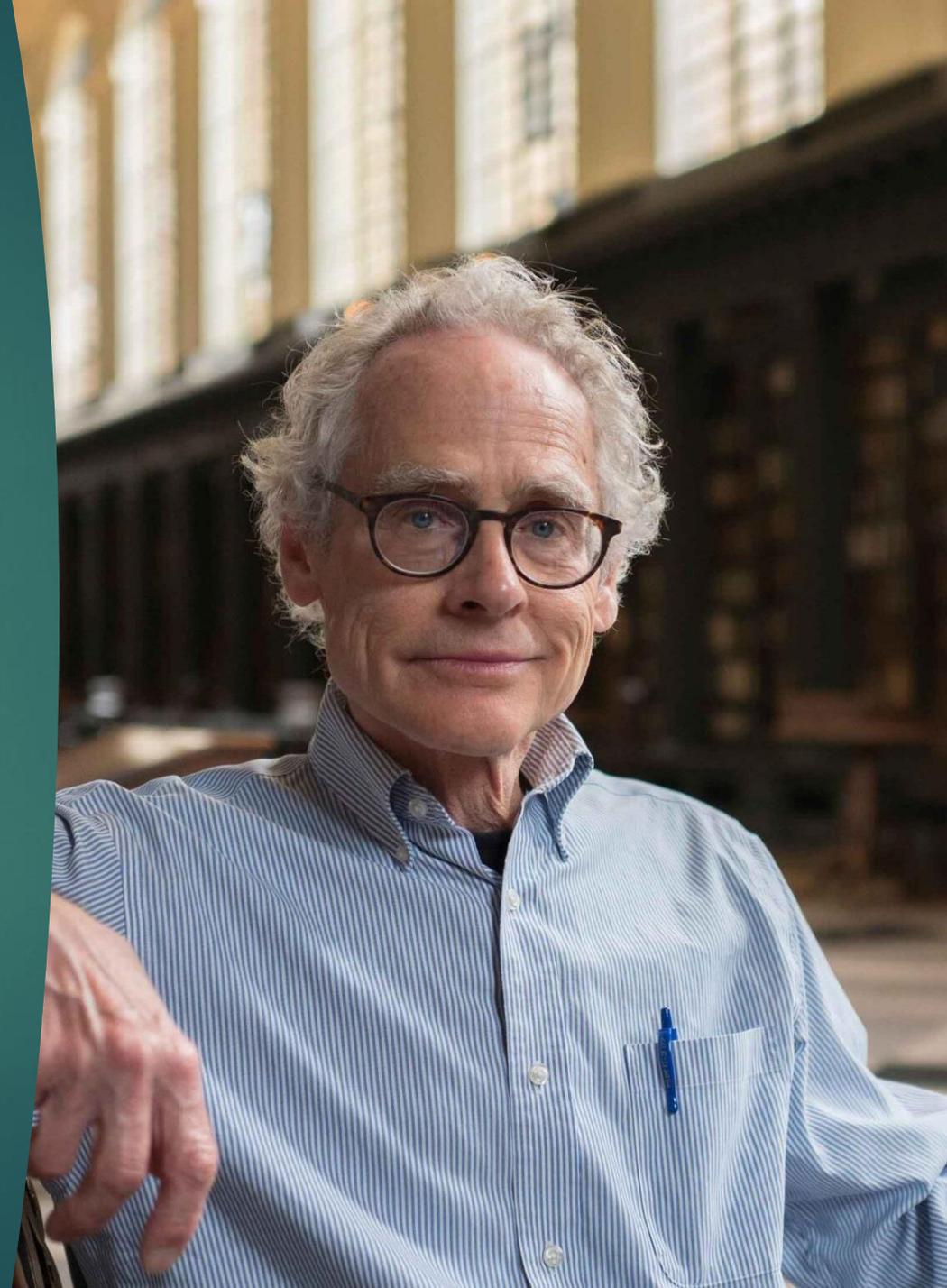
Peter Railton - The Ethical Dog and its Rational Tale (selections)

- ▶ “the great philosophers of the past bequeathed us the notion of “intuition” from awareness that deliberative, concept based knowledge presupposes nondeliberative, nonconceptual ways of knowing” (814).
- ▶ “While it is customary among philosophers to speak of intuitive judgments, intuitions often—perhaps paradigmatically—appear in the first instance as a “sense” or “feeling.” This “sense” can then shape judgment, though it is a familiar feature of everyday intuitions that they can be substantially independent of what we would explicitly endorse or affirm” (815).



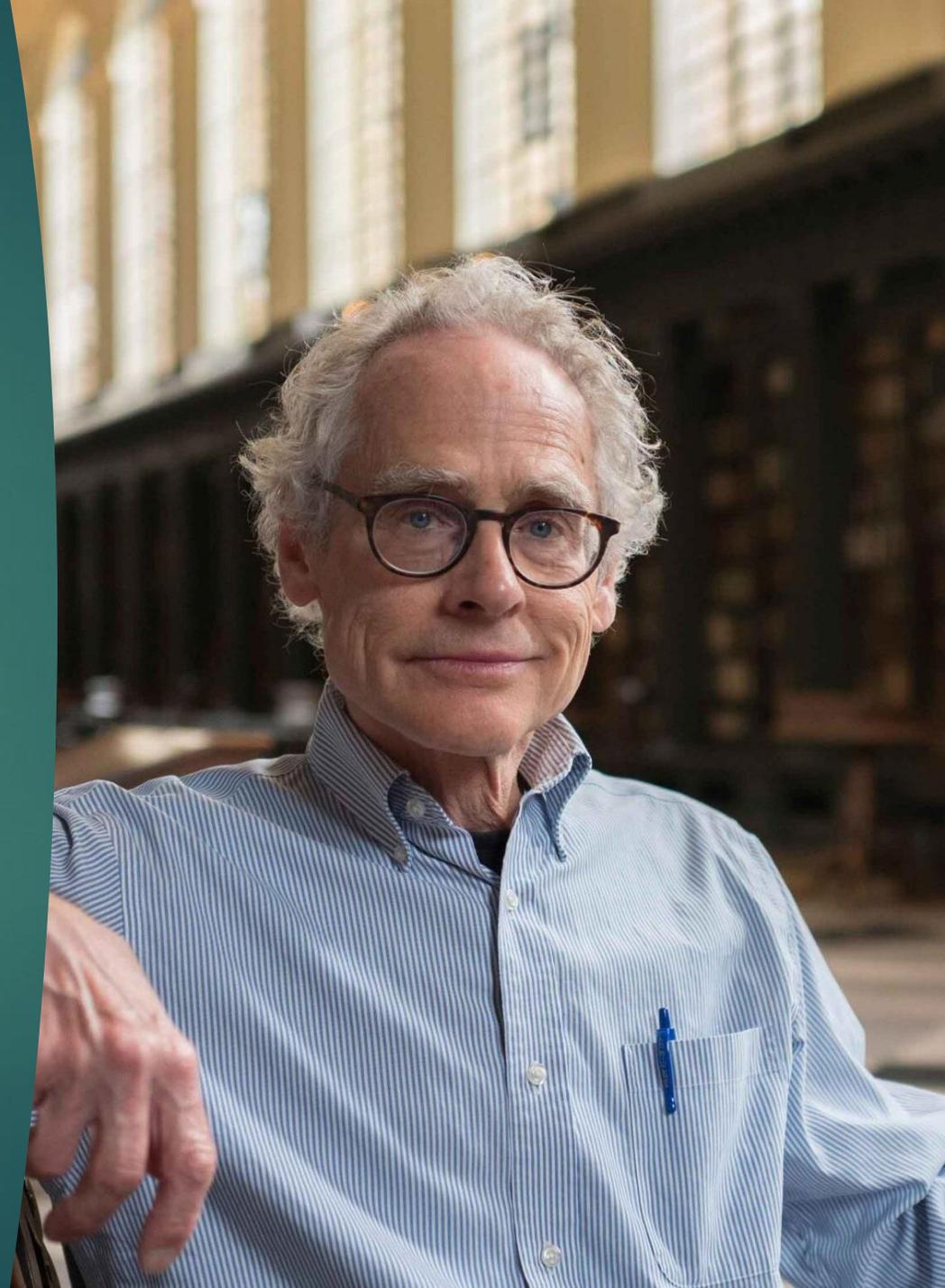
Peter Railton - The Ethical Dog and its Rational Tale (selections)

- ▶ “[W]e often find ourselves with a spontaneous “sense” that some thought, action, state of affairs, individual, or object is right or wrong, good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate, familiar or alien, credible or dubious, promising or hopeless, reasonable or excessive, true or false, and so on, which does not require explicit, effortful reasoning or judgment, and can arise nonvoluntarily and unbidden.”
- ▶ “Moreover, it can persist in the face of contrary conscious judgment, while still remaining in some degree compelling or motivating and thus such that we are reluctant to give it up or ignore it, even though we cannot articulate a satisfactory explanation or justification for it” (815).



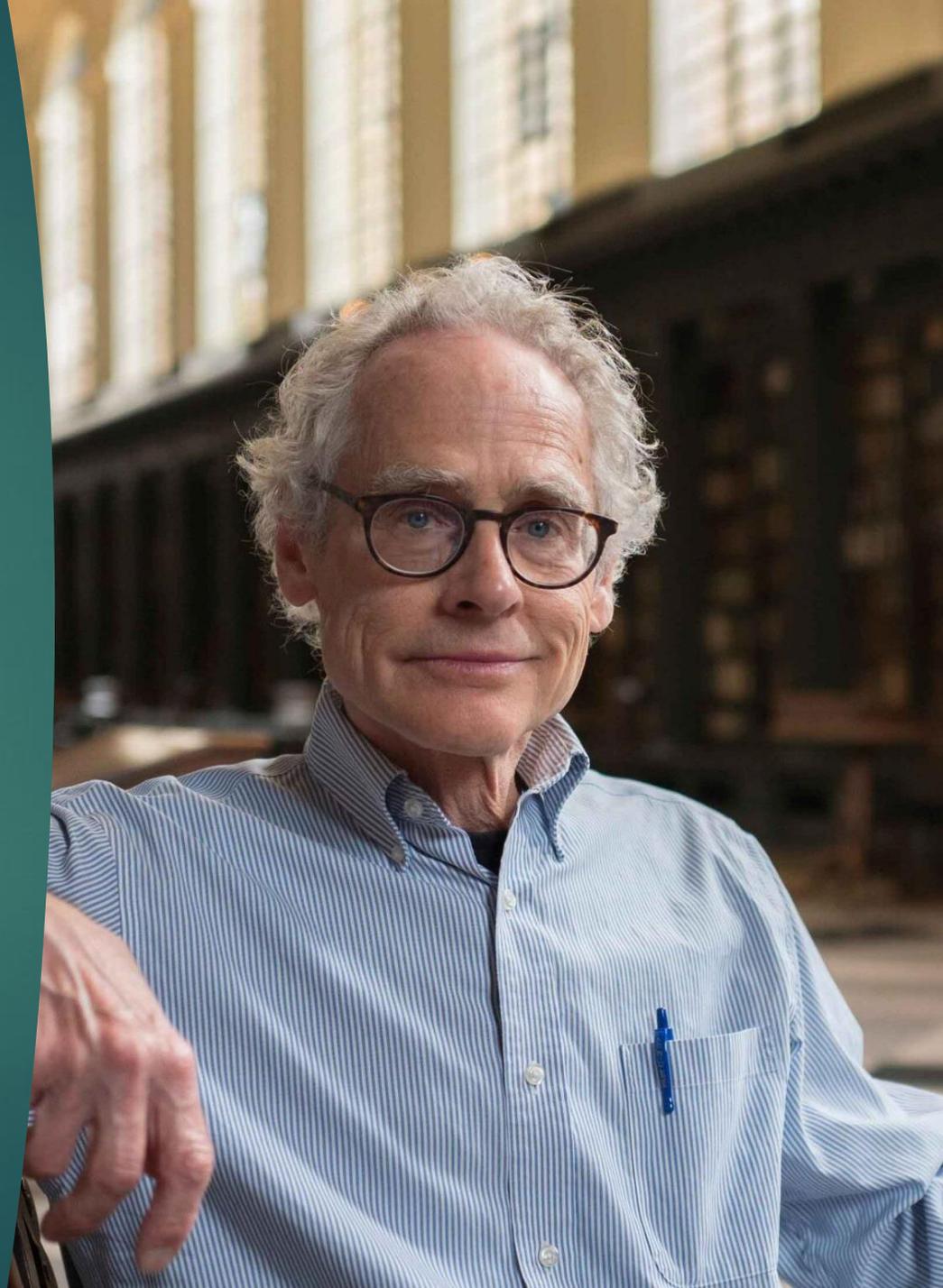
Peter Railton - The Ethical Dog and its Rational Tale (selections)

- ▶ Why are we willing to attribute epistemic authority to these intuitions?
 - ▶ Often, they play a pivotal role in important judgments.
- ▶ “Linguistic intuitions behave very much like everyday intuitions of our observational sense.”
- ▶ “Let us call the generative linguists’ picture of grammatical intuitions as [sic] surface manifestations of an underlying structure of rules and information a tacit-competency-based model of intuition” (817).



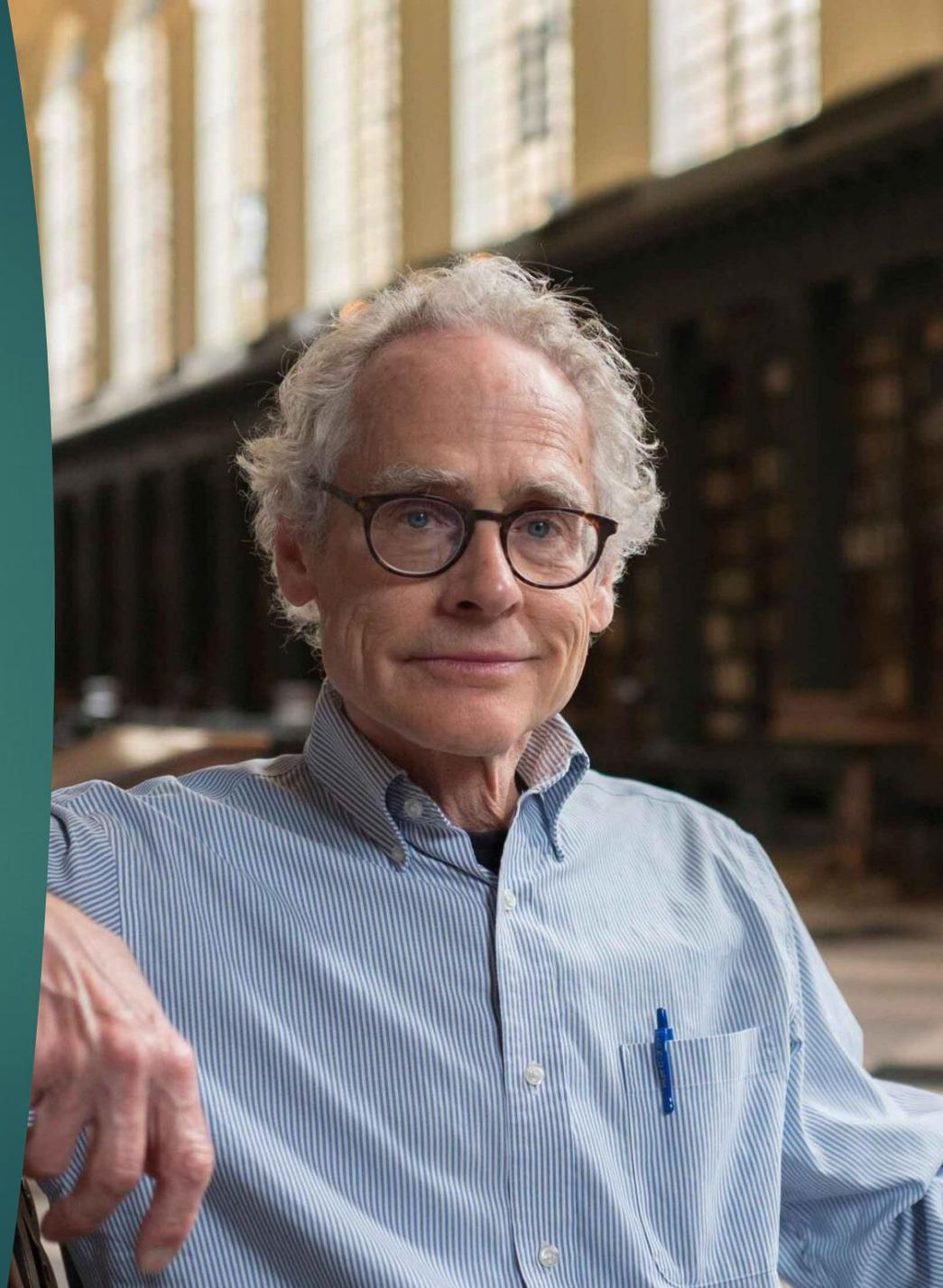
Peter Railton - The Ethical Dog and its Rational Tale (selections)

- ▶ “[W]hat is borrowed from the linguistic model is not a template but a picture: open-ended capacities to respond fluently and adeptly to situational or expressive demands cannot be the result of a fixed repertoire of trained responses, so that some essentially generalizable capacities and information structures must be at work...
- ▶ ...and since an individual with these abilities typically can articulate only a fraction of these generalizable capacities or information structures, they must take the form of a tacit competence, which can be manifest spontaneously in thought and action” (817).



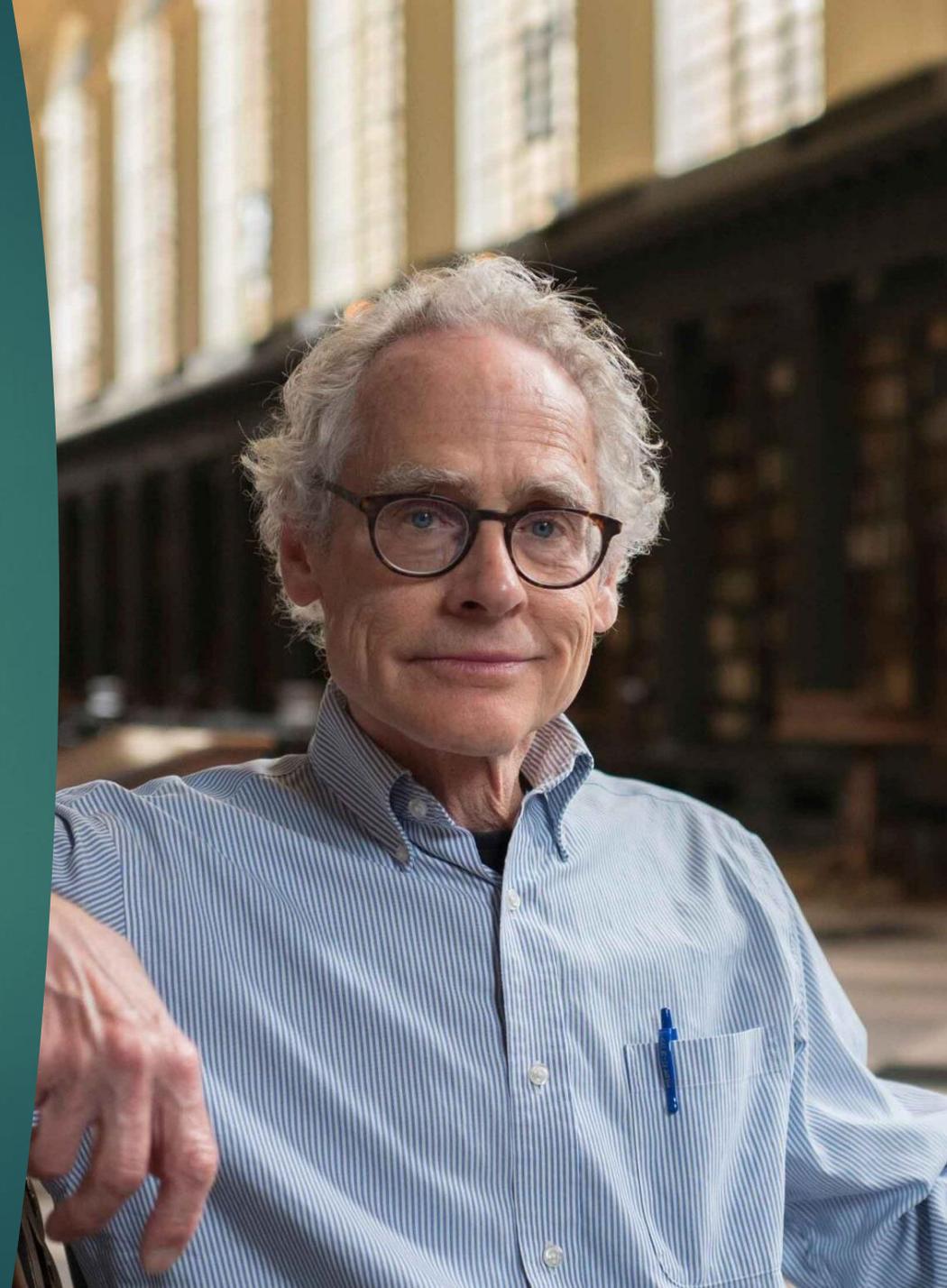
Peter Railton - The Ethical Dog and its Rational Tale (selections)

- ▶ “[T]he predominant tendency in much current research on moral judgment has been to understand the affective system as “automatic,” “point-and shoot,” “button pushing,” and heuristic based, with “little understanding of logic and statistics” and responses that take the form of “simple likes and dislikes.”
- ▶ “Seen this way, affective reactions would be poor candidates for the status of tacit practical intelligence or knowledge, even if they are often useful as “shortcut” stand-ins for such knowledge and understanding.”



Peter Railton - The Ethical Dog and its Rational Tale (selections)

- ▶ “I have been arguing for a different conception of the affective system, as a system designed to inform thought and action in flexible, experience-based, statistically sophisticated, and representationally complex ways—grounding us in, and attuning us to, reality.”
- ▶ When we seek advice from others, “I suspect that we seek out people who strike us as having well-developed implicit social and emotional competencies in virtue of which they are better attuned to the evaluative landscape of concerns, values, risks, and potentialities inherent in the actual, messy situations we face” (859).



Foundation:	Care/ harm	Fairness/ cheating	Loyalty/ betrayal	Authority/ subversion	Sanctity/ degradation
Adaptive challenge	Protect and care for children	Reap benefits of two-way partnerships	Form cohesive coalitions	Forge beneficial relationships within hierarchies	Avoid communicable diseases
Original triggers	Suffering, distress, or neediness expressed by one's child	Cheating, cooperation, deception	Threat or challenge to group	Signs of high and low rank	Waste products, diseased people
Current triggers	Baby seals, cute cartoon characters	Marital fidelity, broken vending machines	Sports teams, nations	Bosses, respected professionals	Immigration, deviant sexuality
Character-istic emotions	Compassion for victim; anger at perpetrator	anger, gratitude, guilt	Group pride, rage at traitors	Respect, fear	Disgust
Relevant virtues	Caring, kindness	Fairness, justice, trustworthiness	Loyalty, patriotism, self-sacrifice	Obedience, deference	Temperance, chastity, piety, cleanliness

Jonathan Haidt – Five Moral Foundations