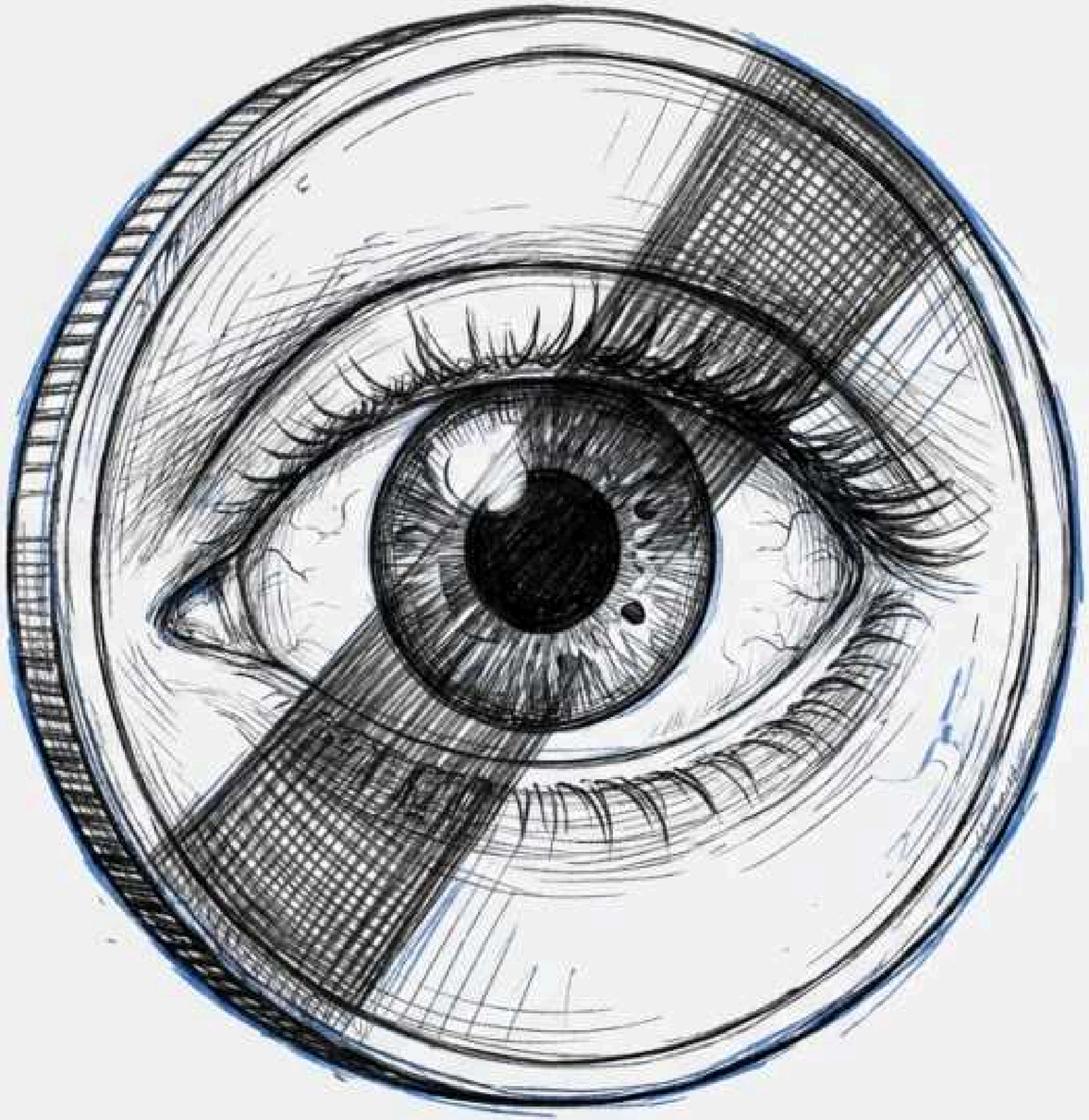


Reality: Outcome = f(physics)

Perception: Outcome = f(choice)

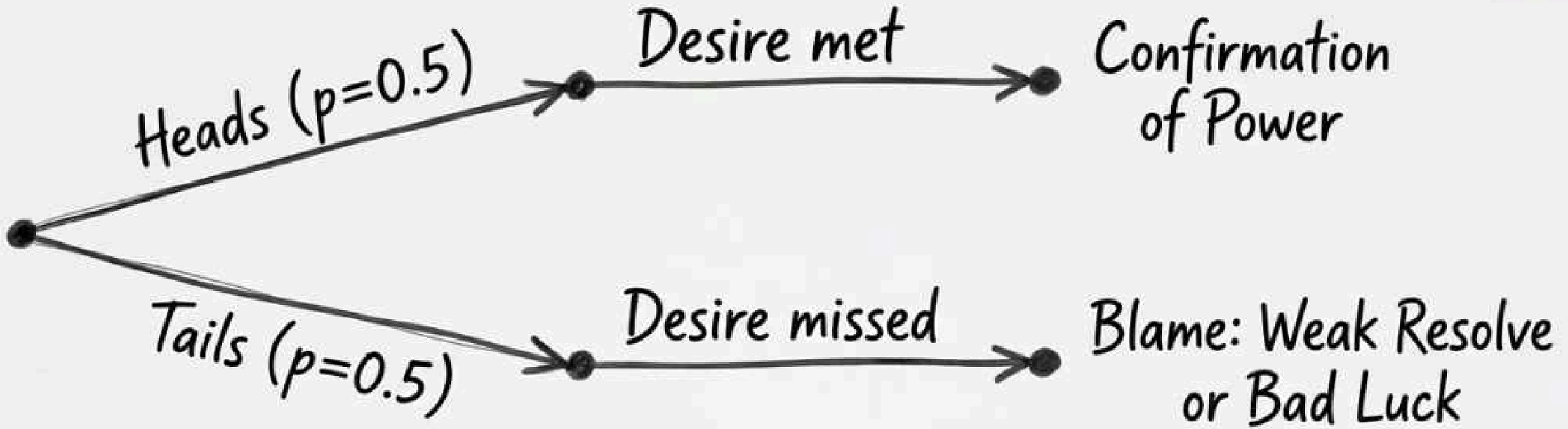
The Illusion of Choice

Core Insight

If a penny were conscious—knowing it was a coin and aware of its landings—it would conclude it was making choices.

The Blind Spot

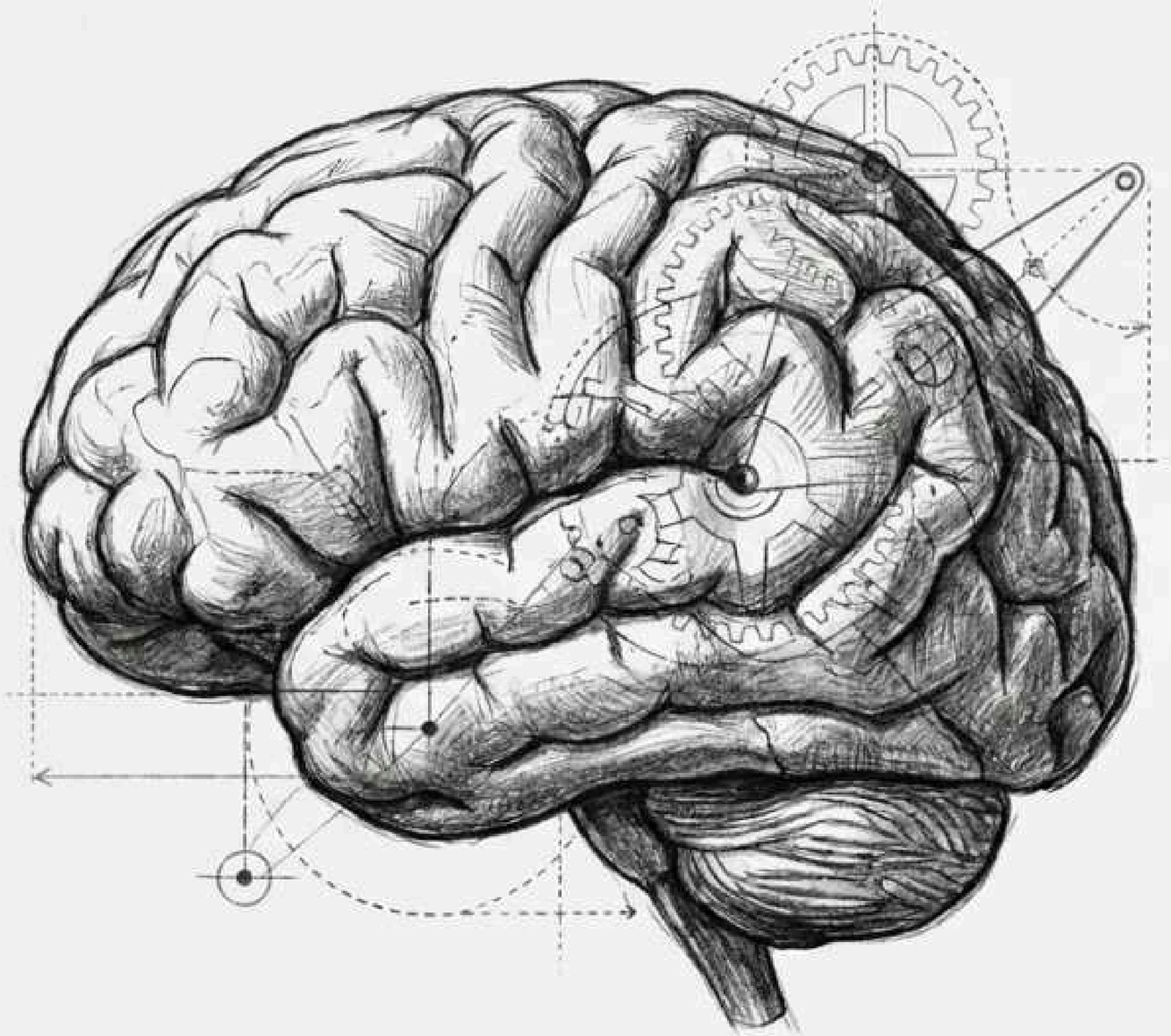
The feeling of freedom arises simply because the penny cannot see the external physical forces that are actually deciding the toss.



Probability = The remnants of God's cosmology.

Headline: The Post-Hoc Narrative

Key Takeaway: Choice is an emergent sensation, not a mechanical reality. The parable demonstrates how a profound sense of agency arises without any actual choosing taking place.



The Dilemma of the Organic Machine

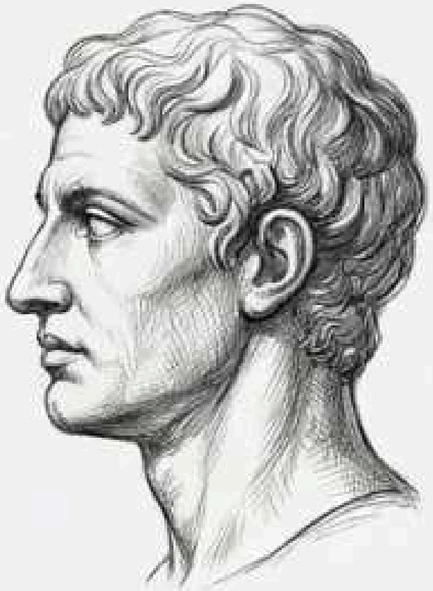
Belief A	Belief B
Humans choose freely.	Every specific cause has a specific effect.

The brain is an organic machine subject to the same physical rules as the rest of the universe. Applied to everyday decisions, Belief A and Belief B cannot logically coexist.

Are Humans Just Pennies?



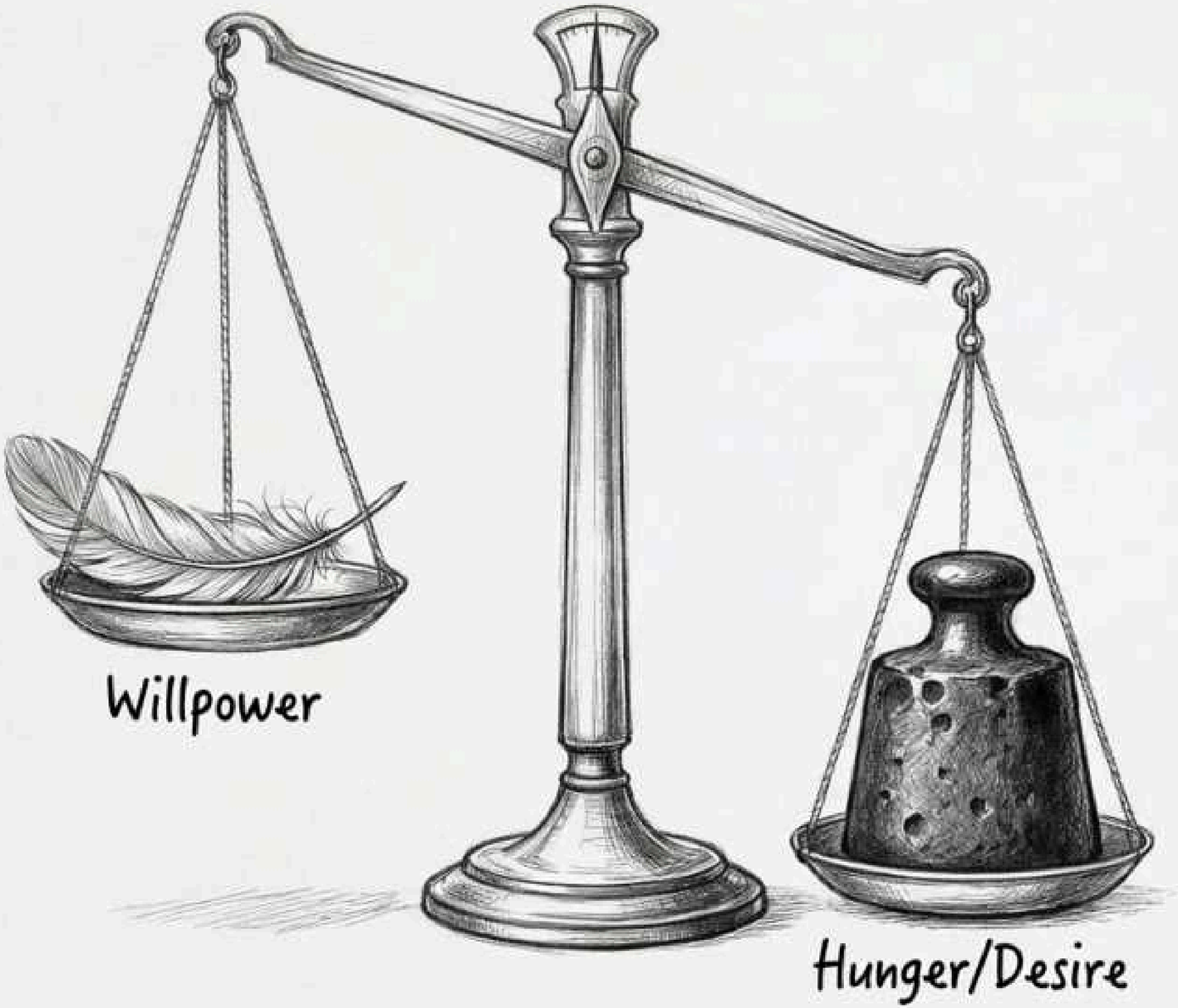
- Purely random outcomes.
- Acts without reasons.



- Responds to a complex set of variables (v).
- Reasons, memories, values, and goals.

The Compatibilist Argument:

"Responsiveness to reasons is the exact definition of freedom. The penny lacks reasons entirely, which may be the critical feature that makes human decision-making fundamentally different."



The Weight of Desire

The Thought Experiment:
If starving, could a physically fit person resist eating through sheer resolve?

The Reality:
Hunger, not a magical internal force, dictates the outcome.

Core Axiom:
Behavior ultimately follows follows the strength of desire rather than an independent, isolated power of 'will."

The Calculus of Urges

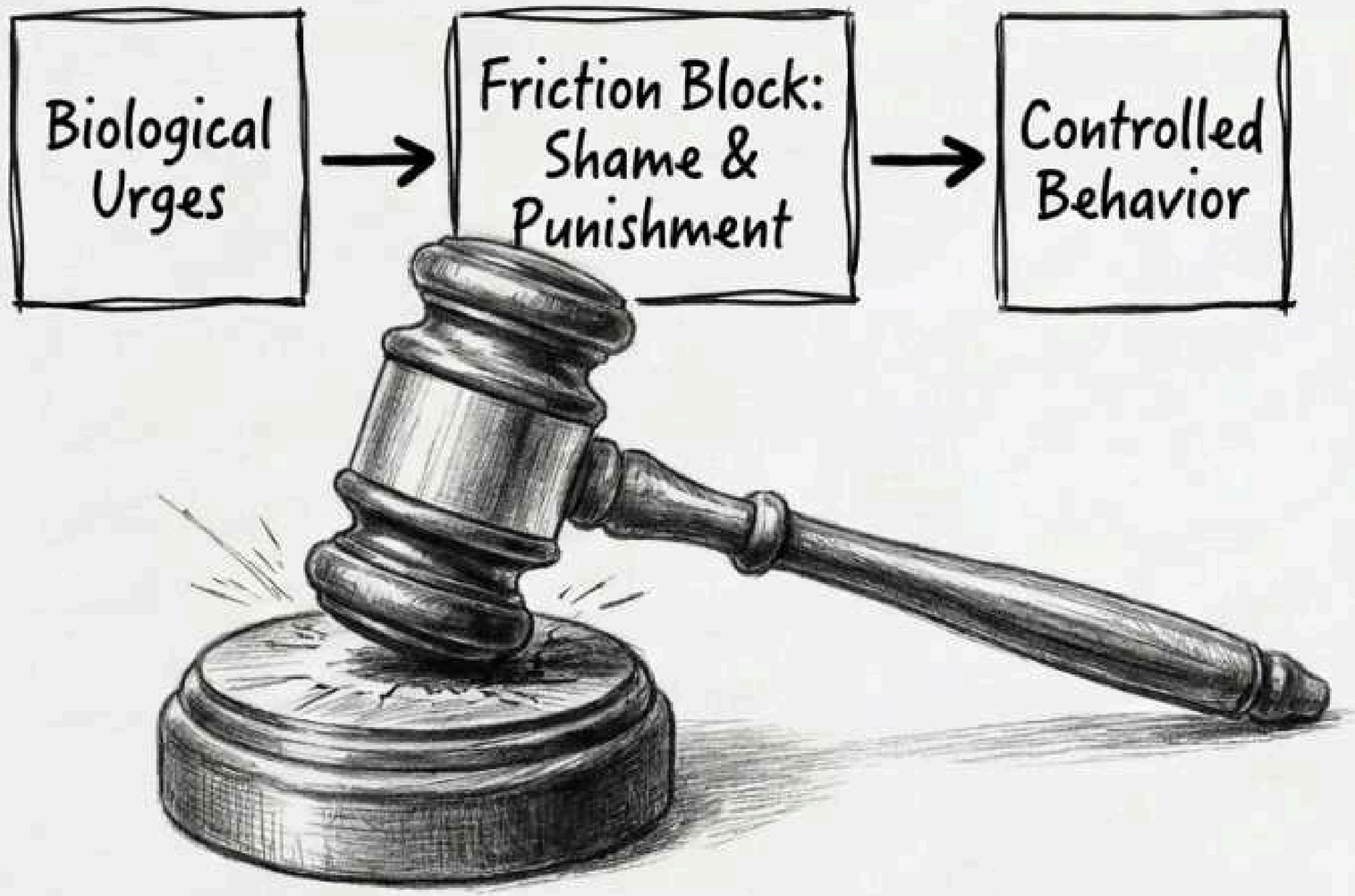
The Rule: "The highest urge always wins" (Adams, 2001, p. 94).

$$Action = max(u_1, u_2, u_3 \ldots u_n)$$

competing urges

Redefining Willpower:
Individuals who appear to possess strong willpower may simply possess weaker urges to resist.

Conclusion:
Willpower is not a biological force; it is a narrative story we invent and apply after the fact to explain why the strongest urge won.



The Utility of Punishment

The Paradox:
If willpower is an illusion, should we empty the prisons?

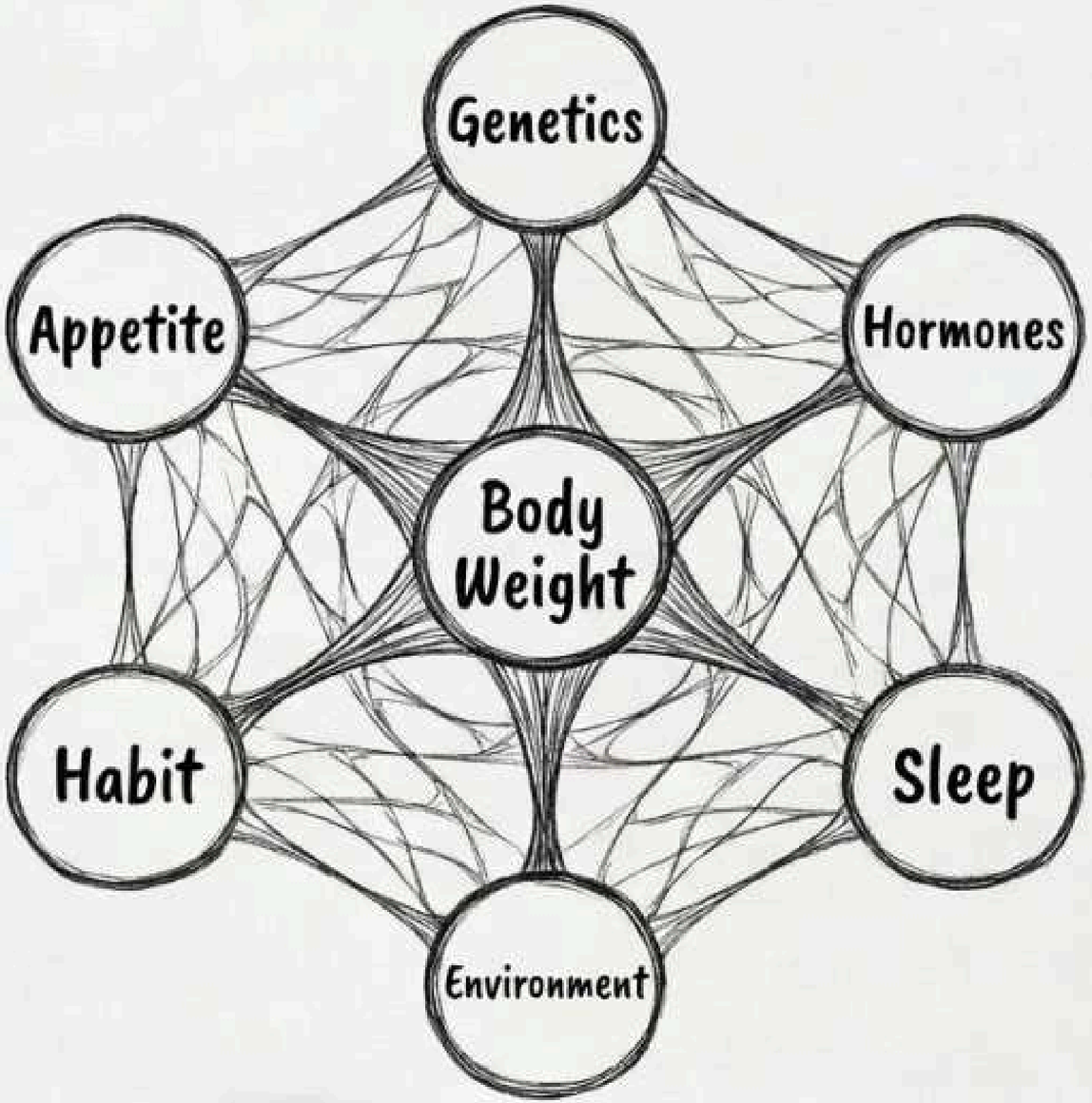
The Answer:
No. Blame is a useful fiction.

Philosophy of Law:
The threat of punishment and social shame serve as heavy counter-urges. Punishment is justified by its utilitarian effect on regulating future behavior, not by a cosmic sense of inherent desert.

The Anatomy of Appetite

The Limitation:
The starving person example is an extreme that mixes a fair point with an overstatement.

The Nuance: Ordinary choices about food are not entirely beyond control. Humans possess the capacity to alter habits through structural planning and support. Quick judgments of others remain flawed due to the unseen variables.



Modern Echoes

Sam Harris
(2012, Free Will)

"Free will is a pure illusion."

Hard Determinism ⟶ Compatibilism

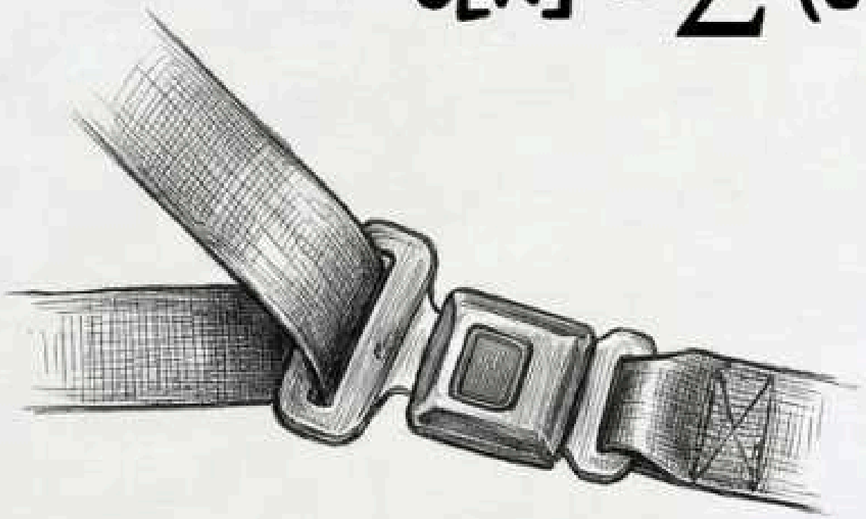
Robert Sapolsky
(2023, Determined)

"Biology and circumstance explain every choice; we must fundamentally rethink blame."

Daniel Dennett
(2003, Freedom Evolves)

"We have the freedom 'worth wanting.' Willpower names real skills (looking ahead, weighing reasons), not magic."

$$E[X] = \sum (\text{Outcome} \times \text{Probability})$$



High Probability of Survival



Defying Probability

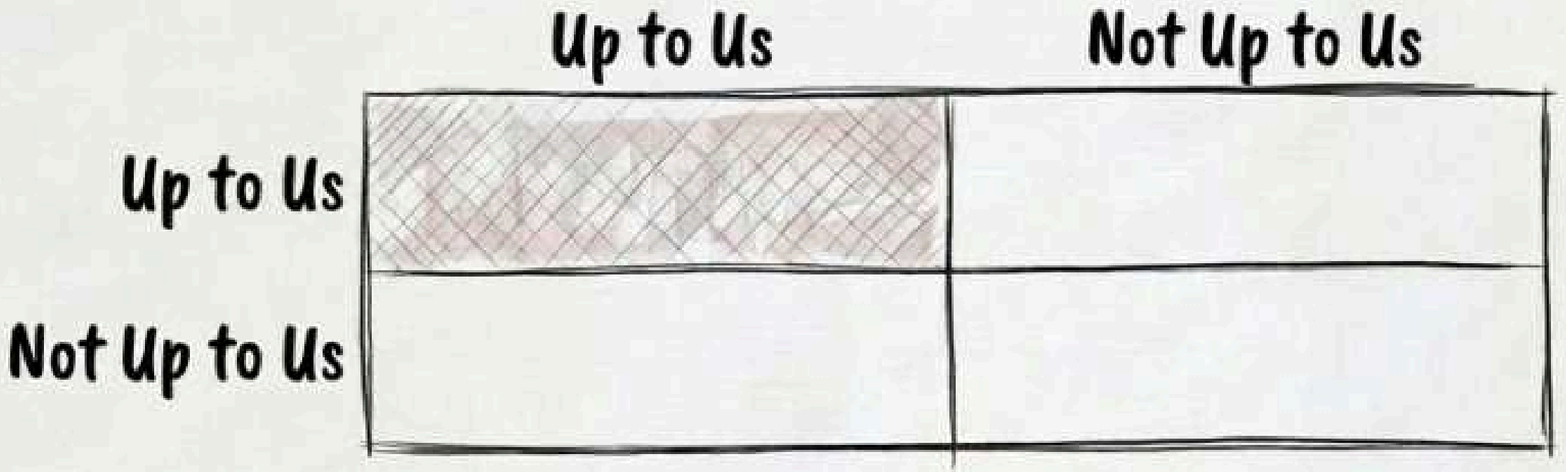
How to Live: Obey the Odds

The Directive: If probability is what remains of God's will, the moral imperative is to obey probability.

Actionable Axiom: Education, hard work, love, and responsible parenthood mathematically improve the odds of good outcomes (helping the "reassembly of God").

Karma Defined: Karma governs the average outcome over time, not every individual isolated case.

$$\text{Stress} = \underbrace{\mu}_{\text{Doing}} \times \underbrace{(\Delta \text{ Action})}_{\text{Should be Doing}}$$



The Physics of Stress

The Definition: Stress is the kinetic friction generated between what you are currently doing and what you know you should be doing.

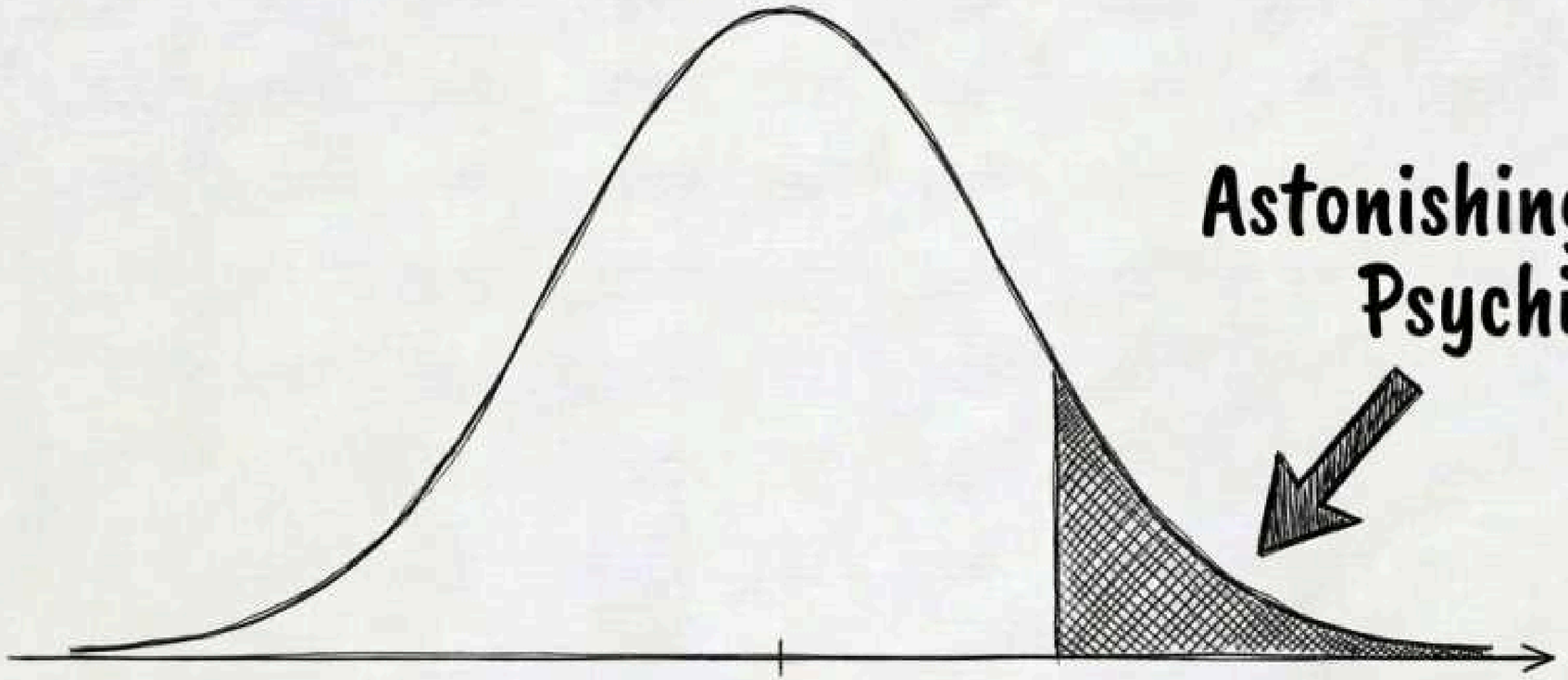
The Stoic Divide: Echoes the Handbook of Epictetus (1st/2nd century). Accept what lies outside your control; act virtuously within the domain of what does.



$$\lim_{t \to \infty} (\text{Possibilities}) = \text{Replication}$$

Life, Death, and Replicas

- The Math of Eternity: Over endless time, chance dictates that an exact copy of you will emerge.
- The Identity Puzzle: Every cell in the human body is replaced over time, making us already a replica of our past selves.
- Context: Connects the ancient Ship of Theseus to Derek Parfit (Reasons and Persons, 1984)—identity matters far less than human ego supposes.

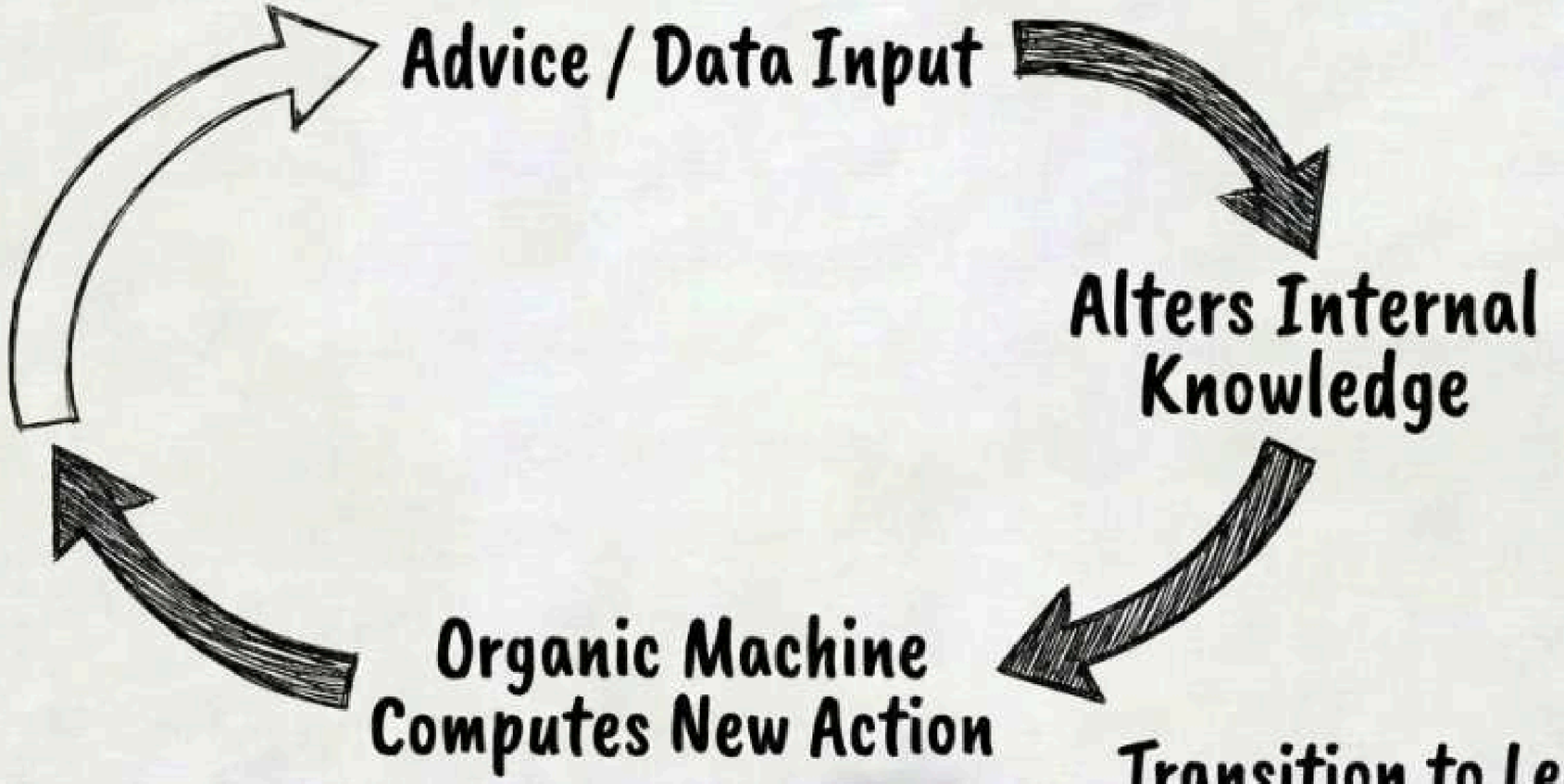


The Mathematics of Miracles

- Deconstructing Psychics: Driven by cold reading and the Law of Large Numbers (among billions, lucky guessers and gifted pattern-spotters are a statistical inevitability).
- The Reality of Affirmations: Writing down goals doesn't bend reality; it acts as a cognitive filter, training the brain to notice stochastic opportunities.
- Psychological Backing: Ellen Langer (1975) demonstrated that humans routinely feel in control of events that are pure chance.

The Paradox of Advice

- The Central Tension: The old man denies free will in the deep sense, yet continually gives advice on how to live. If no one truly chooses, what is the point of advice?
- The Synthesis: Giving advice does not require magic free will. Advice introduces new knowledge inputs. That new knowledge inevitably changes how the organic machine computes its next action.



Transition to Lecture 6...