MORAL REASONING *on the* BRAIN

Josh May | Philosophy

Thesis: The neurobiological evidence (combined with philosophical analysis) illuminates and strengthens the empirical case for **moral rationalism** (= moral judgments are essentially dependent on reasoning, not emotions conceived as distinct from inference).

Step 1: Domain-General Reasoning

Moral brain as a distributed **fronto-temporal network**

(Moll et al. 2005; Greene 2009; May et al. 2021)

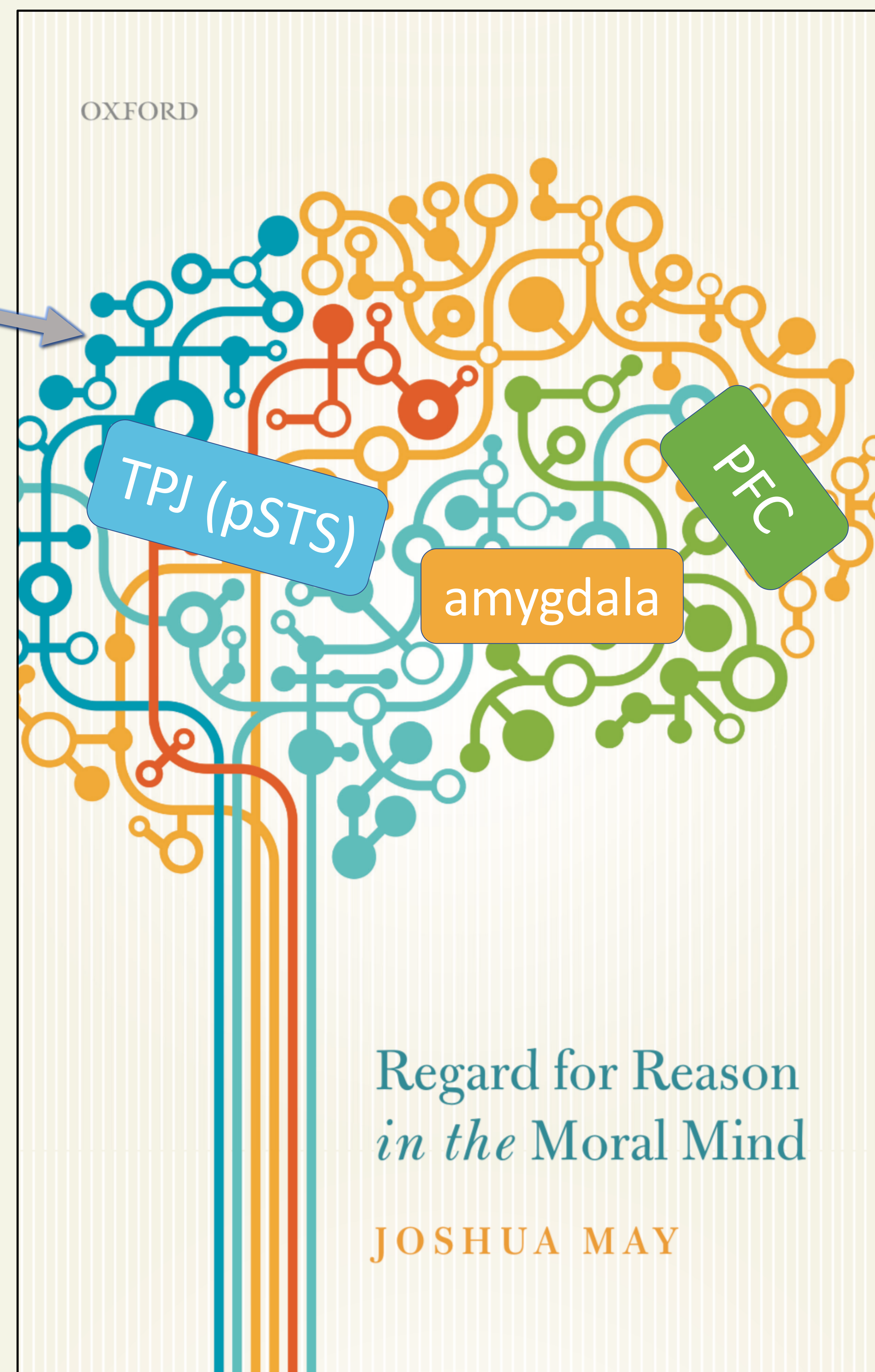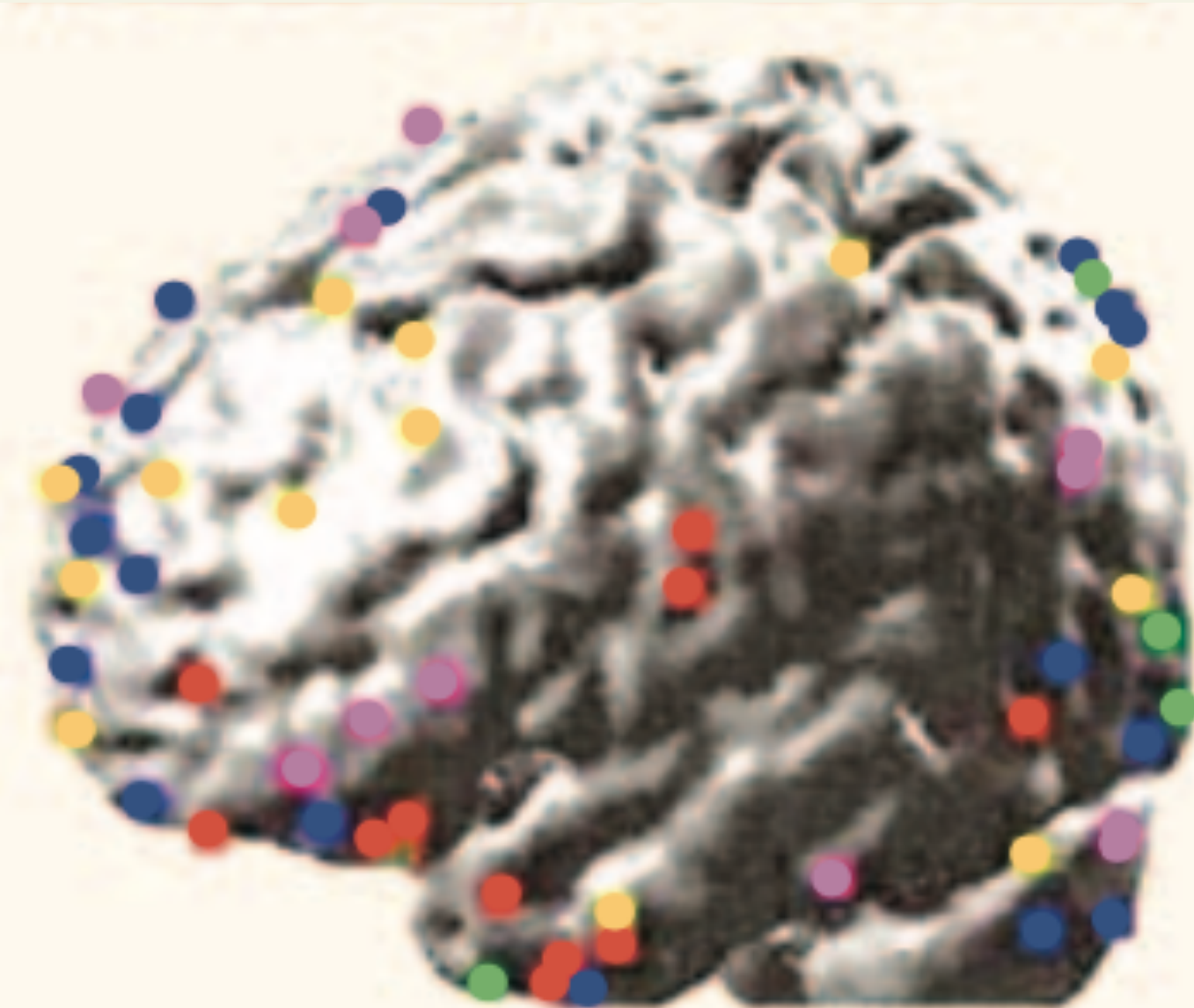Areas involved in sophisticated domain-general inference about:

Agent's mental states (e.g. intent)
(Young & Saxe 2008; Decety & Cacioppo 2012)

Value/disvalue of the action
(Damasio 1994; Shenhav & Greene 2014)

Calculate outcomes & integrate info
(Greene 2009; Shenhav & Greene 2014)

Contrast emotions:

- Happiness
- Sadness
- Disgust
- Fear
- Anger

OXFORD

TPJ (pSTS)

amygdala

PFC

Regard for Reason *in the* Moral Mind

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Step 2: Reason/Emotion Entanglement

Affect is essential for *all* reasoning.
(Woodward 2016)

- **Psychopathy & "Acquired Sociopathy"**
  (e.g. Blair 2007; Damasio 1994)

Entanglement is good for rationalism. (May 2018)

- Morality isn't like **beauty** (*special in requiring emotions*).

- Rather just like other forms of cognition such as **math or language** (*domain-general reasoning capacity*).