Propositions

I. There are substantial individual differences in the propensity to be (dis)honest and these differences depend on how we weigh concerns for our moral self-concept against the anticipation of the reward for the immoral act (Chapter 2 & 3).

II. Cognitive control does not enable honesty or dishonesty per se, but depends on our moral default, our propensity for (dis)honesty. It enables cheating for the honestly inclined whereas it promotes honesty for cheaters (Chapter 2 & 3).

III. Functional connectivity of the brain at rest can be used to predict a person's propensity for (dis)honesty in the absence of any temptation to cheat (Chapter 5).

IV. Individual differences in prosocial behavior are driven by variations in the degree to which self-control and theory of mind processes are engaged during decision-making, such that the extent to which these processes are engaged is indicative of either selfish or prosocial motivations (Chapter 6).

V. To fully comprehend the neural underpinnings of moral decisions it is essential to develop task paradigms that allow to investigate trial-by-trial behavior in the scanner, in order to be able to investigate what happens in the brain of generally honest participants when they decide to override their moral default to cheat or, conversely, when a cheater decides to be honest (this dissertation).

VI. Any problem immersed in empathy becomes soluble (Baron-Cohen, 2013) and individual differences in prosocial behavior are driven not so much by the capacity but by the propensity for empathy (Keysers & Gazzola, 2014). Thus, to promote prosocial behavior, not only fostering cognitive control capacities but also increasing the propensity to empathize is necessary.

VII. Due to its immense complexity, the brain will not be understood through words alone (Lindsay, 2021). It will require the use of mathematics that forces a model to be precise, self-consistent and complete and allows its full implications to be worked out (Abbott, 2008).

VIII. The next frontier in the study of moral decision making will be to use neuroimaging in combination with computational models to probe the brain for unifying underlying mechanisms. Such models enable to accurately investigate to what extent moral decisions differ across different moral domains (Graham et al., 2011), such as Harm/Care, Fairness/Honesty, Ingroup/Loyalty, Authority/Respect and Purity/Sanctity.

IX. Authentic happiness derives from raising the bar for yourself, not rating yourself against others (Seligman, 2002). We should therefore focus on setting the right goals, rather than engaging in comparison.

X. Such are the differences among human beings in their sources of pleasure, their susceptibilities of pain, and the operation on them of different physical and moral agencies, that unless there is a corresponding diversity in their modes of life, they neither obtain their fair share of happiness, nor grow up to the mental, moral, and aesthetic stature of which their nature is capable (Mill, 1859). Therefore, diversity should be fostered to enable people's full moral and mental development and promote happiness and creativity.

XI. Ein Tritt in den Hintern hat einen Vorteil: Du machst einen Schrit nach vorne. (Old Southern German saying).
Translation: A kick up the backside has one advantage: You make a step forward.