

# Imprecise Decision-Making: From Choice Functions to Trustworthy Machine Learning



EPIMP 2026, Bristol  
Jasper De Bock



FLip

Foundations Lab  
for imprecise probabilities





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imprecise  
randomness



credal networks

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imprecise stochastic  
processes  
and  
imprecise  
Markov chains





quantum mechanics  
with imprecise probabilities



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choice functions





trustworthy  
machine learning

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for imprecise probabilities



Imprecise Decision-Making:  
From Choice Functions to  
Trustworthy Machine Learning



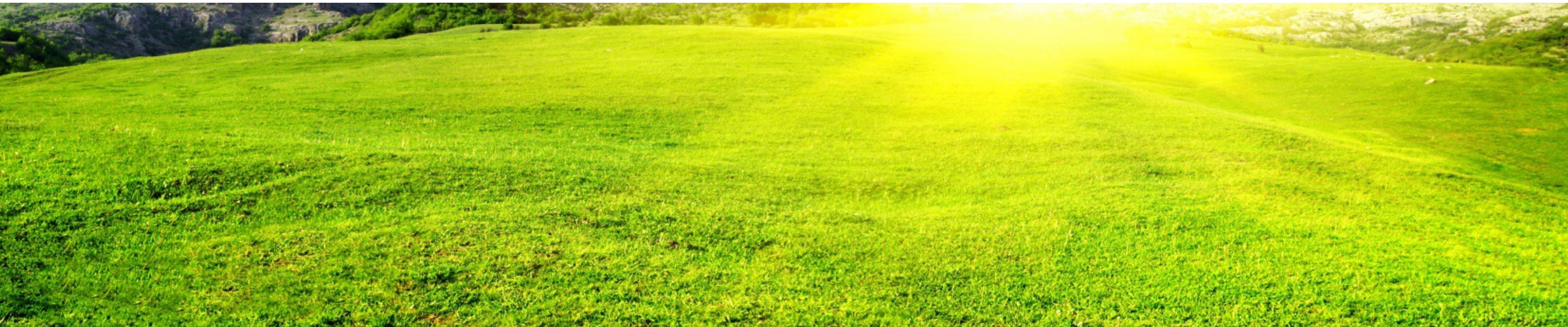
# Imprecise Decision-Making: From Choice Functions to Trustworthy Machine Learning

For the love of god,  
just get on with it!





# DECISION MAKING











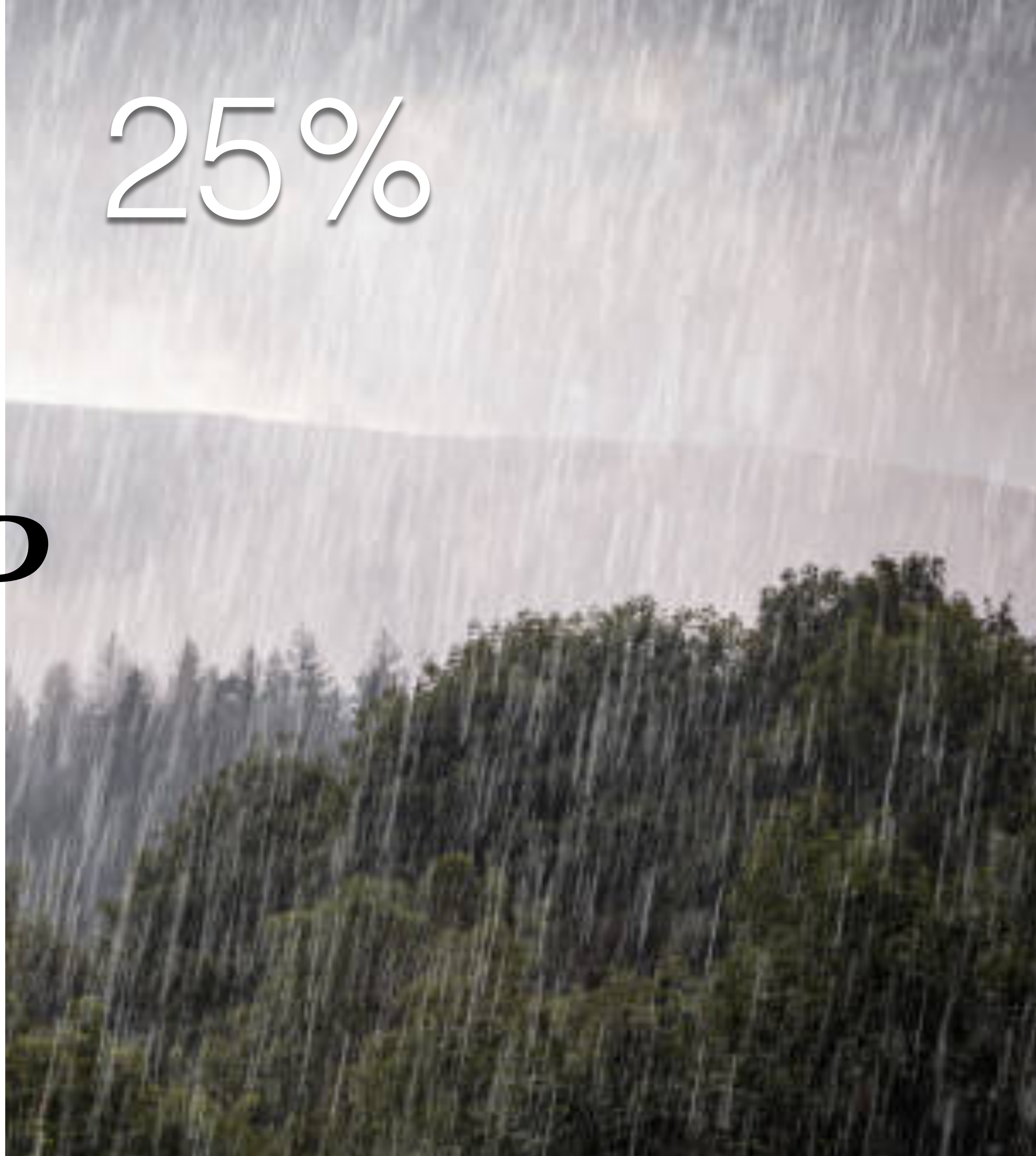
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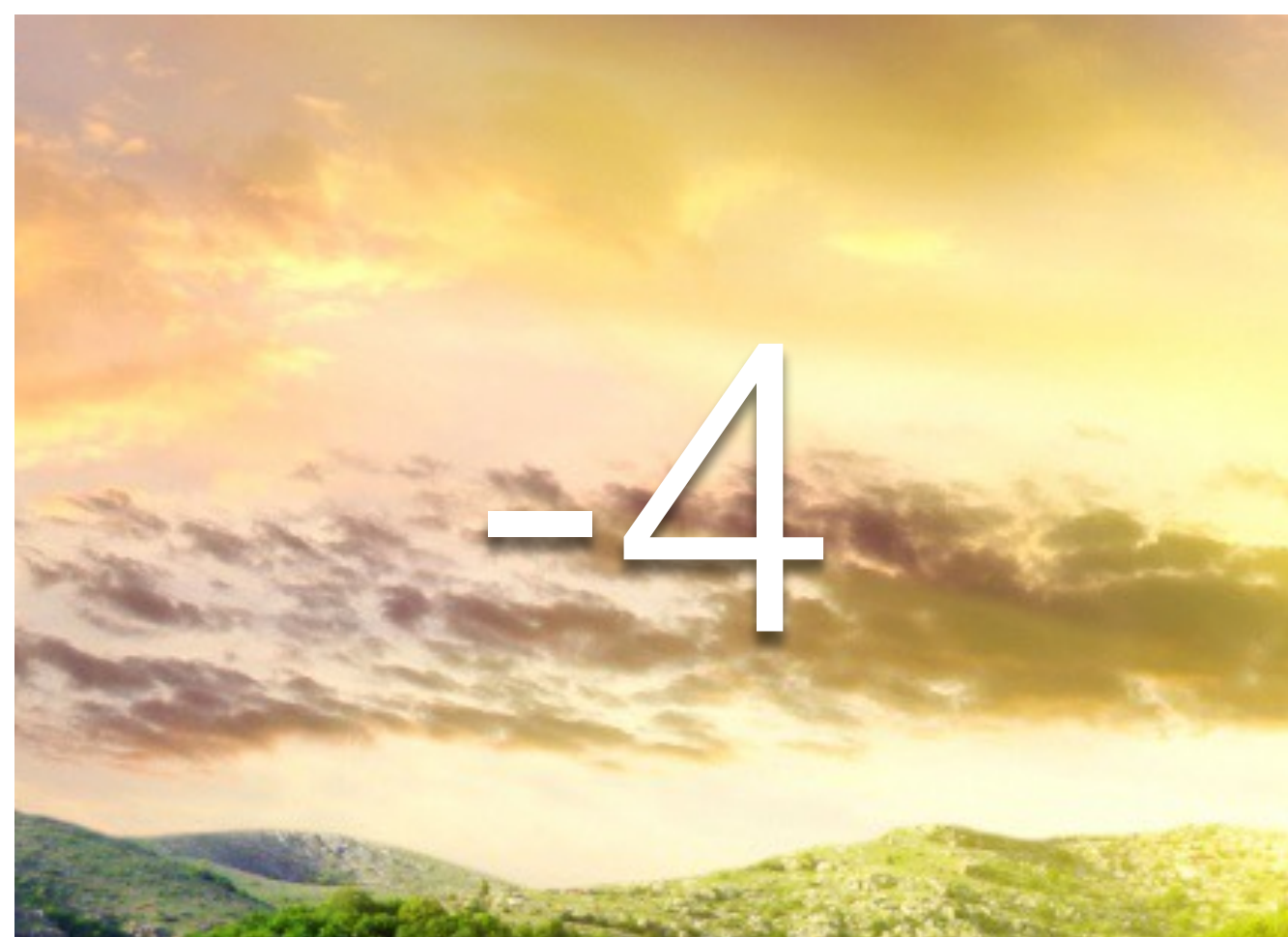
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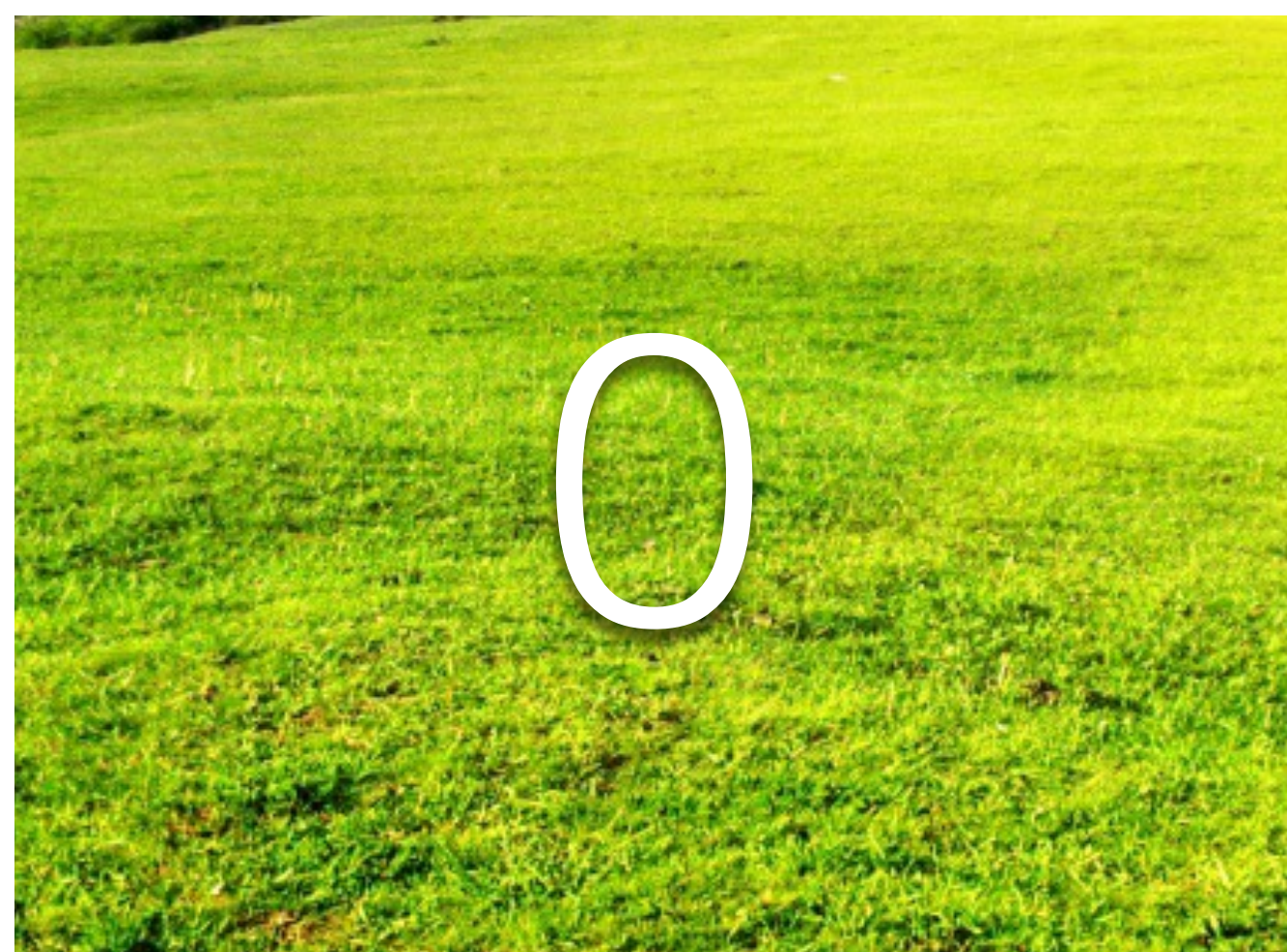
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*P*



-3



-2

A set of possible “states”  $\mathcal{X}$

The set  $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{X})$  of gambles on  $\mathcal{X}$ : bounded real-valued functions on  $\mathcal{X}$

Given a **finite** set of gambles  $A \subseteq \mathcal{G}(\mathcal{X})$ , which one(s) do we “choose” ?

$$\mathcal{X} = \left\{ \text{☀️}, \text{☁️} \right\}$$

$$A = \left\{ \text{☂️}, \text{☂️} \right\}$$

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## MAXIMIZING EXPECTED UTILITY

Consider a probability distribution  $P$  on the power set of  $\mathcal{X}$

Choose those gambles  $f$  in  $A$  that maximize  $E_P(f)$

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## Decision making with a preference order

Consider a preference order  $<$  on  $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{X})$

Choose those gambles  $f$  in  $A$  that are undominated w.r.t.  $<$

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$$\begin{array}{c} d < e \\ \wedge \\ a < b < c \end{array}$$

$$f < g$$

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## MAXIMIZING EXPECTED UTILITY

Consider a probability distribution  $P$  on the power set of  $\mathcal{X}$

Define  $\prec_P$  as follows:  $f \prec_P g \Leftrightarrow E_P(f) < E_P(g)$

Choose those gambles  $f$  in  $A$  that are undominated w.r.t.  $\prec_P$

$\prec_P$  is not just any preference order

Irreflexive:  $a \not\prec a$

Transitive:  $a \prec b \ \& \ b \prec c \Rightarrow a \prec c$

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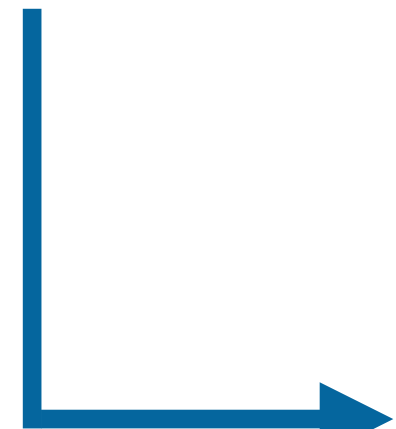
} partial order

# $\prec_P$ is not just any preference order

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Transitive incomparability:  $a \sim b \ \& \ b \sim c \Rightarrow a \sim c$



$a \not\prec b \ \& \ b \not\prec a$

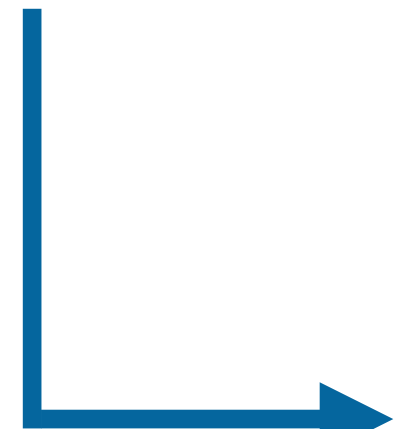
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} weak order

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Translation invariance:  $a \prec b \Rightarrow a + c \prec b + c$

Scaling invariance:  $a \prec b \Rightarrow \lambda a \prec \lambda b$  for  $\lambda > 0$

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**weak  
vector order**

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Scaling invariance:  $a \prec b \Rightarrow \lambda a \prec \lambda b$  for  $\lambda > 0$

Positivity:  $\inf a > 0 \Rightarrow 0 \prec a$

Archimedeanity:  $a \prec b \Rightarrow (\exists \epsilon > 0) a \prec b - \epsilon$



$\prec_P$

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Where's the IP?

Why?

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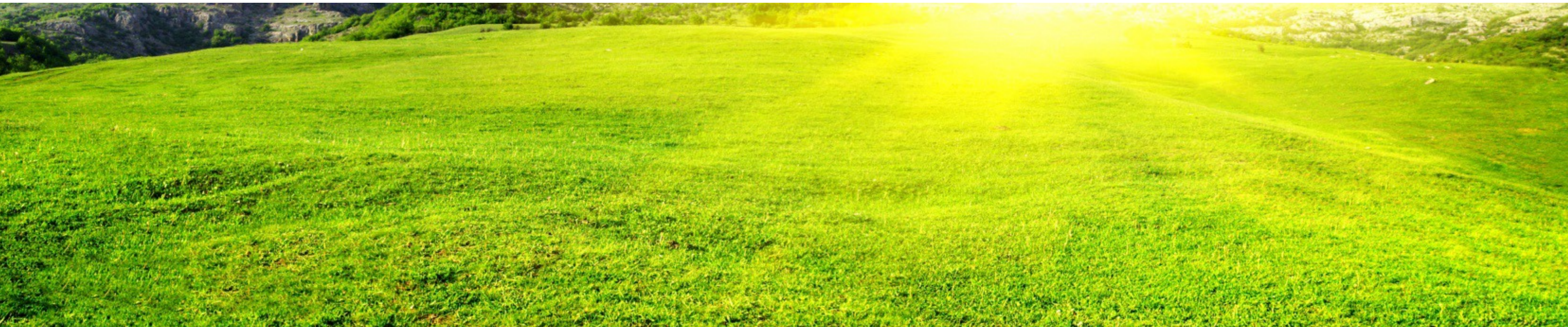
Choose those gambles  $f$  in  $A$  that are undominated w.r.t.





**IMPRECISE**

**DECISION  
MAKING**





$\mathcal{P}$

$P_1$

$P_2$

$P_3$

$P_4$

...

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## E-ADMISSIBILITY

Consider a **closed** set  $\mathcal{P}$  of probability distributions

Choose those gambles  $f$  in  $A$  that maximize  $E_P(f)$   
for at least one  $P$  in  $\mathcal{P}$

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The set  $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{X})$  of gambles on  $\mathcal{X}$ : bounded

Given a finite set of gambles  $A \subseteq \mathcal{G}(\mathcal{X})$ , wh

But why?

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# Imprecise Decision-Making: From Choice Functions to Trustworthy Machine Learning





# CHOICE FUNCTIONS



A set  $\mathcal{T}$  consisting of “things”

Given a finite subset of things  $A \subseteq \mathcal{T}$ , which one(s) do we “choose” ?

# CHOICE FUNCTIONS

$$\mathcal{T} = \left\{ \text{dog1} \quad \text{dog2} \quad \text{dog3} \quad \text{dog4} \quad \text{dog5} \quad \text{dog6} \quad \text{dog7} \quad \text{dog8} \quad \dots \right\}$$

A set  $\mathcal{T}$  consisting of “things”

Given a finite subset of things  $A \subseteq \mathcal{T}$ , which one(s) do we “choose” ?

# CHOICE FUNCTIONS

$$\mathcal{T} = \left\{ \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \dots \right\}$$

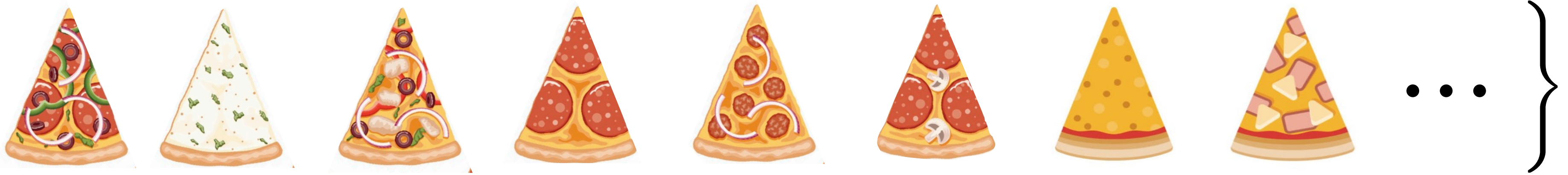
A set

Given

This is nonsense!

Which one(s) do we “choose” ?

# CHOICE FUNCTIONS



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Given a finite subset of things  $A \subseteq \mathcal{T}$ , which one(s) do we “choose” ?

# CHOICE FUNCTIONS

$\mathcal{T}$  = a vector space

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$\mathcal{T} =$  the set  $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{X})$  of all gambles on a state space  $\mathcal{X}$

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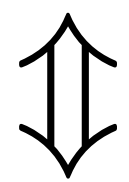
# CHOICE FUNCTIONS

$$\mathcal{T} = \left\{ \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \dots \right\}$$

A set  $\mathcal{T}$  consisting of “things”

Given a finite subset of things  $A \subseteq \mathcal{T}$ , which one(s) do we “choose” ?

CHOICE FUNCTION  $C$  : the things in  $C(A) \subseteq A$  are chosen



REJECTION FUNCTION  $R$  : the things in  $R(A) = A \setminus C(A)$  are rejected

$$A = \left\{ \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \right\} \quad C(A) = \left\{ \text{🍕} \text{🍕} \right\} \Leftrightarrow R(A) = \left\{ \text{🍕} \right\}$$

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## Decision making with a preference order

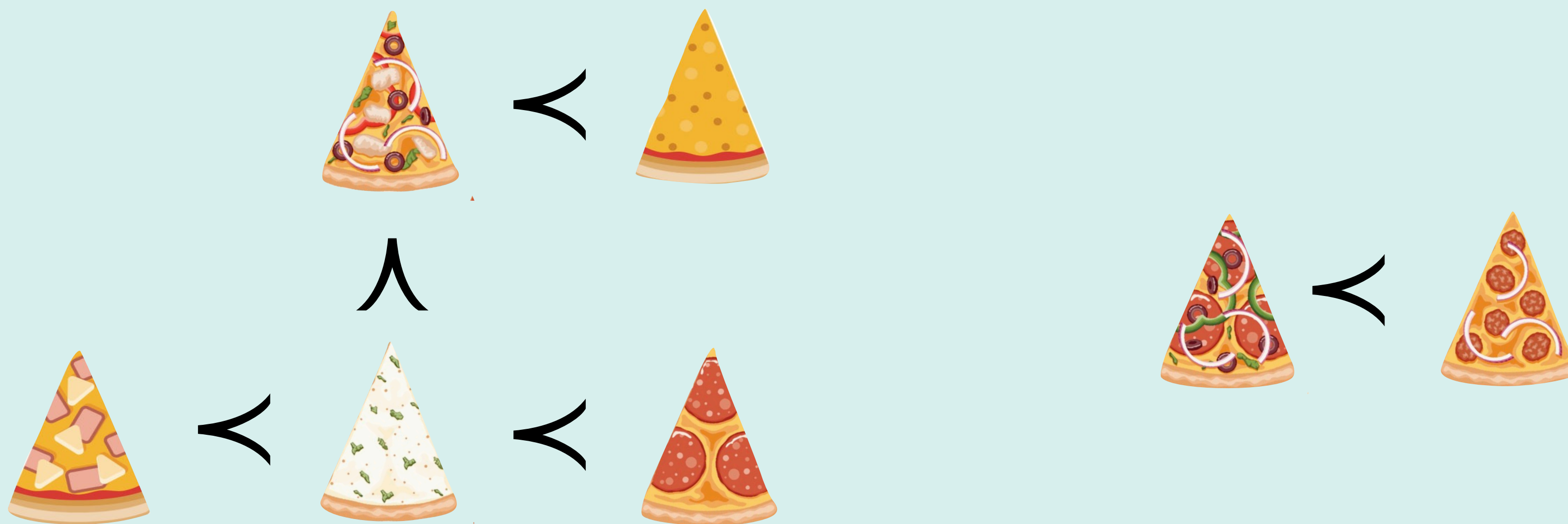
Consider a preference order  $<$  on  $\mathcal{T}$

Choose those things  $a$  in  $A$  that are undominated w.r.t.  $<$

$$C_{<}(A) = \{a \in A : (\forall b \in A) a \not\prec b\}$$

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Given a finite subset of things  $A \subseteq \mathcal{T}$ , which one(s) do we “choose” ?

## Decision making with a set of preference orders

Consider a set  $\mathcal{O}$  of preference orders on  $\mathcal{T}$

Choose those things  $a$  in  $A$  that are chosen by at least one  $< \in \mathcal{O}$

$$C_{\mathcal{O}}(A) = \bigcup_{< \in \mathcal{O}} C_{<}(A) = \{a \in A : (\exists < \in \mathcal{O}) (\forall b \in A) a \not\prec b\}$$

A set

Given

Isn't this the same  
talk as in 2021?

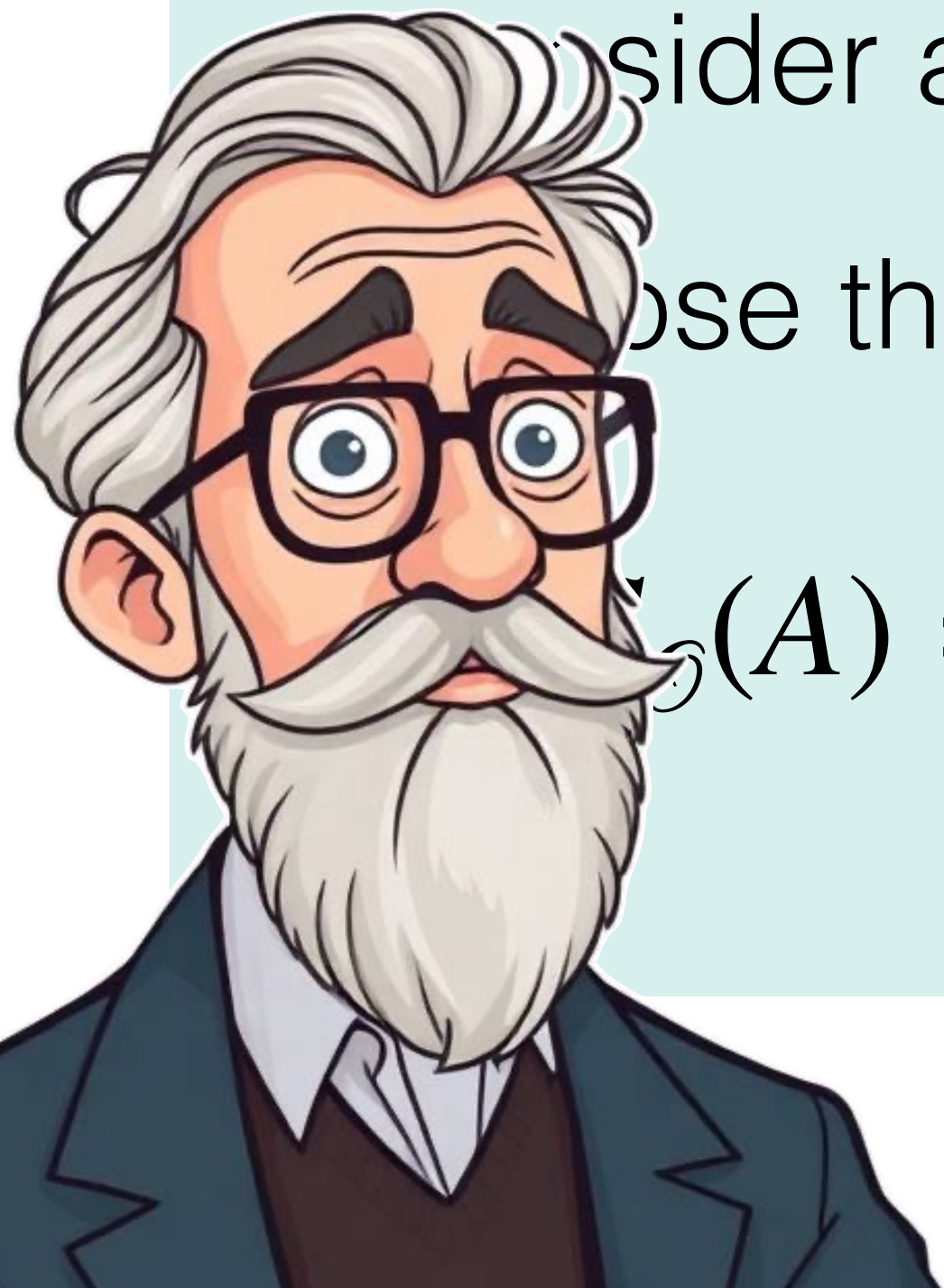
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Axioms for  $C/R$

NE  $C(A) \neq \emptyset$

(non-emptiness)

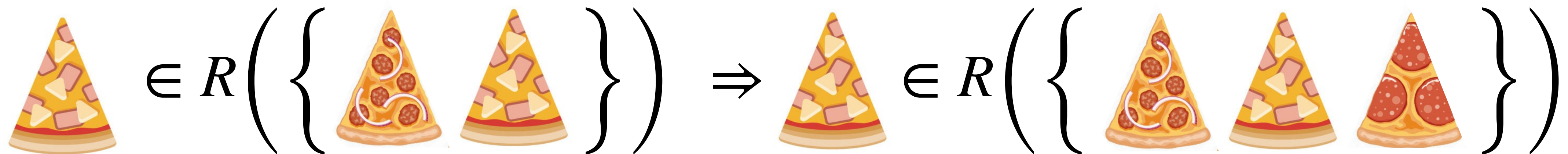
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(indep. of irrelevant alternatives)



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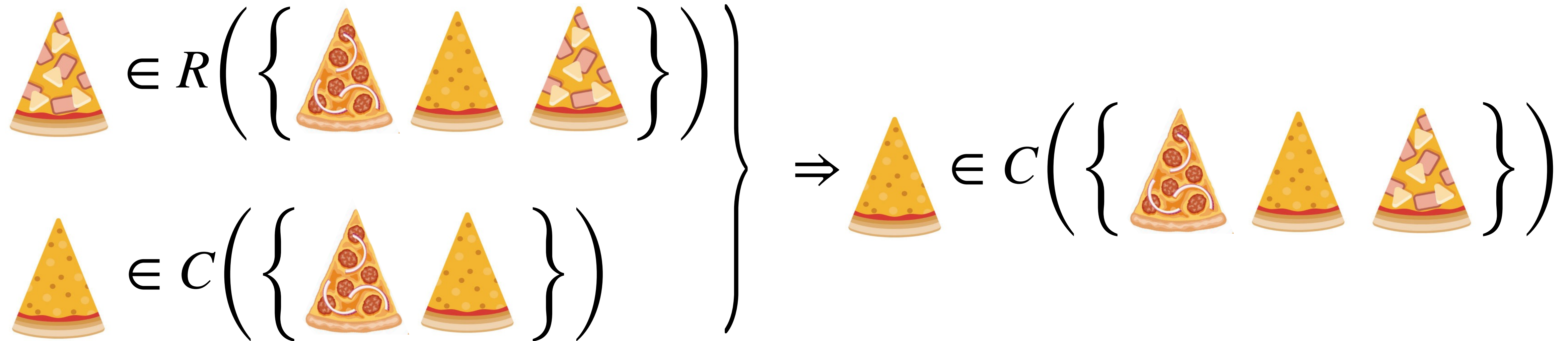
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IIA  $A \subseteq B \Rightarrow R(A) \subseteq R(B)$

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(outcast property)



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$$\Leftrightarrow C = C_{\mathcal{O}}$$

with  $\mathcal{O}$  a set of partial orders on  $\mathcal{T}$

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with  $\mathcal{O}$  a set of  
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A set  $\mathcal{T}$  consisting of “things”

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# CHOICE FUNCTIONS

$\mathcal{T}$  = a vector space

## Axioms for $C/R$

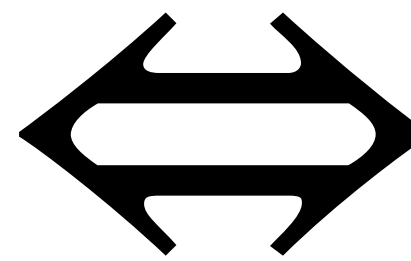

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- TI  $a \in R(A) \Rightarrow a + b \in R(A + b)$  (translation invariance)
- AD  $0 \in R(\{0, a\} \cup S) \ \& \ 0 \in R(\{0, b\} \cup S) \Rightarrow 0 \in R(\{0, a + b\} \cup S)$  (add.)
- SI  $0 \in R(\{0, a\} \cup S) \Rightarrow 0 \in R(\{0, \lambda a\} \cup S)$  for  $\lambda > 0$  (scaling inv.)

Axioms for  $C/R$

NE  
IIA  
Ou  
TI  
AD  
SI



$$C = C_{\mathcal{O}} \quad \text{with } \mathcal{O} \text{ a set of vector orders on } \mathcal{T}$$

## Axioms for $C/R$

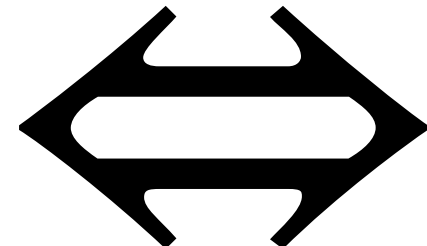

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- MI  $A \subseteq B \subseteq \text{conv}(A) \Rightarrow C(A) \subseteq C(B)$  (mixingness)

Axioms for  $C/R$

NE  
IIA  
Ou  
TI  
AD  
SI  
MI



$$C = C_{\mathcal{O}}$$

with  $\mathcal{O}$  a set of  
weak vector  
orders on  $\mathcal{T}$

A set  $\mathcal{T}$  consisting of “things”

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- MI  $A \subseteq B \subseteq \text{conv}(A) \Rightarrow C(A) \subseteq C(B)$  (mixingness)
- PO  $\inf a > 0 \Rightarrow 0 \in R(\{0, a\})$  (positivity)
- AR  $a \in R(\{a\} \cup A) \Rightarrow (\exists \epsilon > 0) a \in R(\{a\} \cup (A - \epsilon))$  (archimedeanity)

## Axioms for $C/R$

NE

IIA

Ou

TI

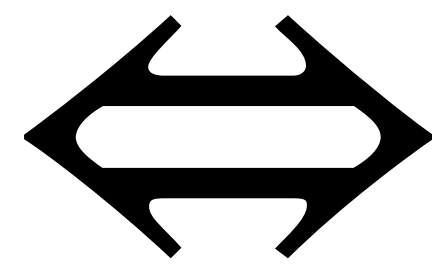
AD

SI

MI

PO

AR



## E-ADMISSIBILITY

$$C = C_{\mathcal{O}}$$

with  $\mathcal{O} = \{ \prec_P : P \in \mathcal{P} \}$  and  $\mathcal{P}$  a closed set of prob. distr.

# Imprecise Decision-Making: From Choice Functions to Trustworthy Machine Learning

I need coffee now!



ΕΡΙΜΠ



$\mathcal{P}$

$P_1$

$P_2$

$P_3$

$P_4$

...

Where do these sets come from?

$\mathcal{P}$

$P_1$   $P_2$   
 $P_3$   $P_4$  ...





Where do these sets come from?

$\mathcal{P}$

$P_1$   $P_2$   
 $P_3$   $P_4$  ...

How imprecise should we be?



$P$

$\mathcal{P}_\delta$

$\mathcal{P}_\delta$

$\mathcal{P}_\delta$

$\mathcal{P}_\delta$

0



$\delta$

Why bother? In the end,  
you still need a decision!



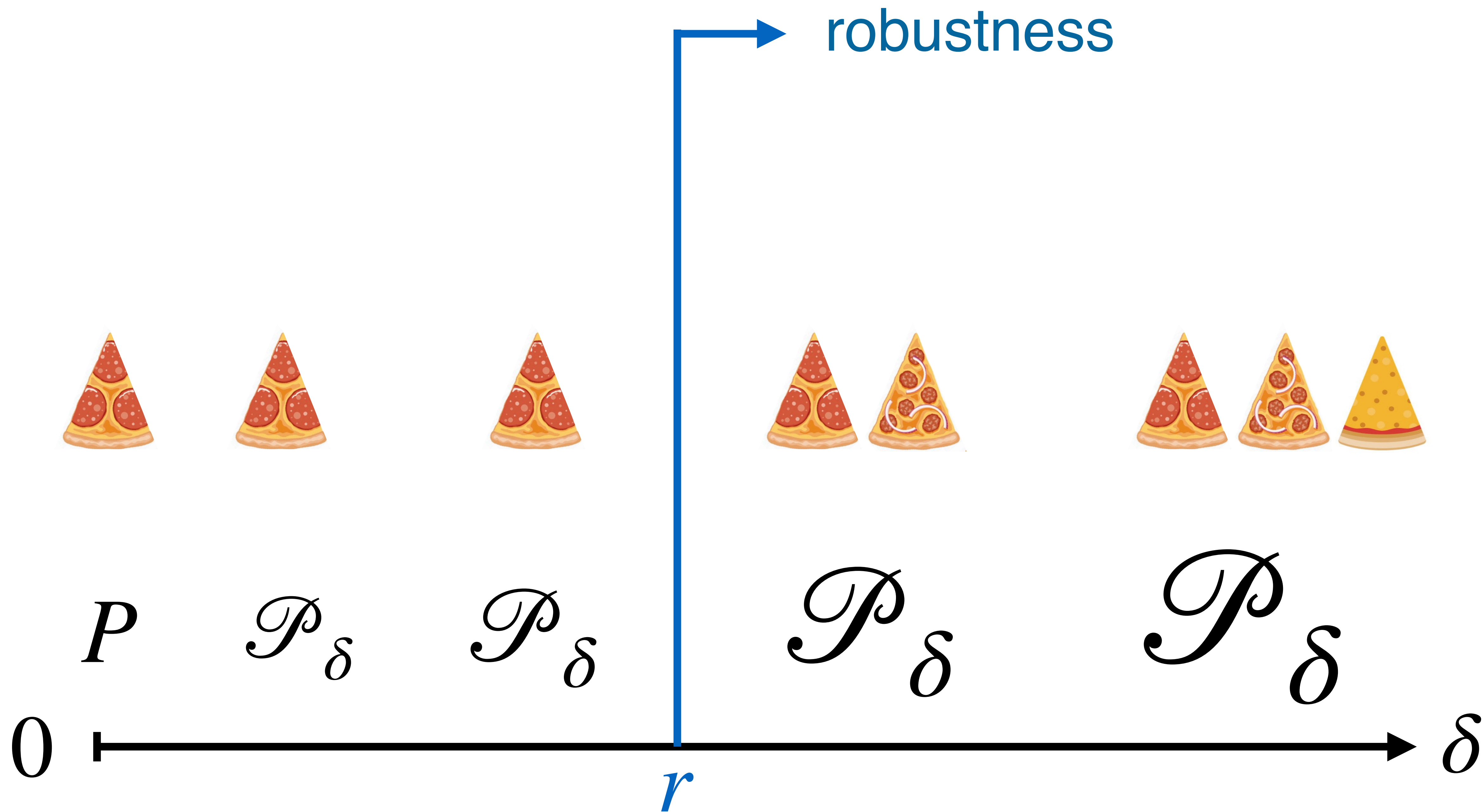
$\mathcal{P}_\delta$

$\mathcal{P}_\delta$

$\mathcal{P}_\delta$

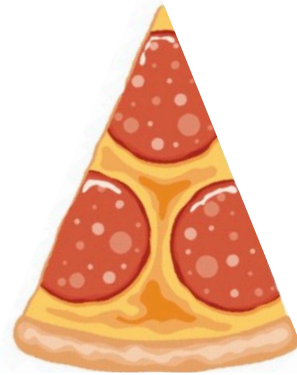
$\mathcal{P}_\delta$

$\delta$



robustness

identical for maximality  
and E-admissibility!



$P$

$\mathcal{P}_\delta$

$\mathcal{P}_\delta$

$\mathcal{P}_\delta$

$\mathcal{P}_\delta$

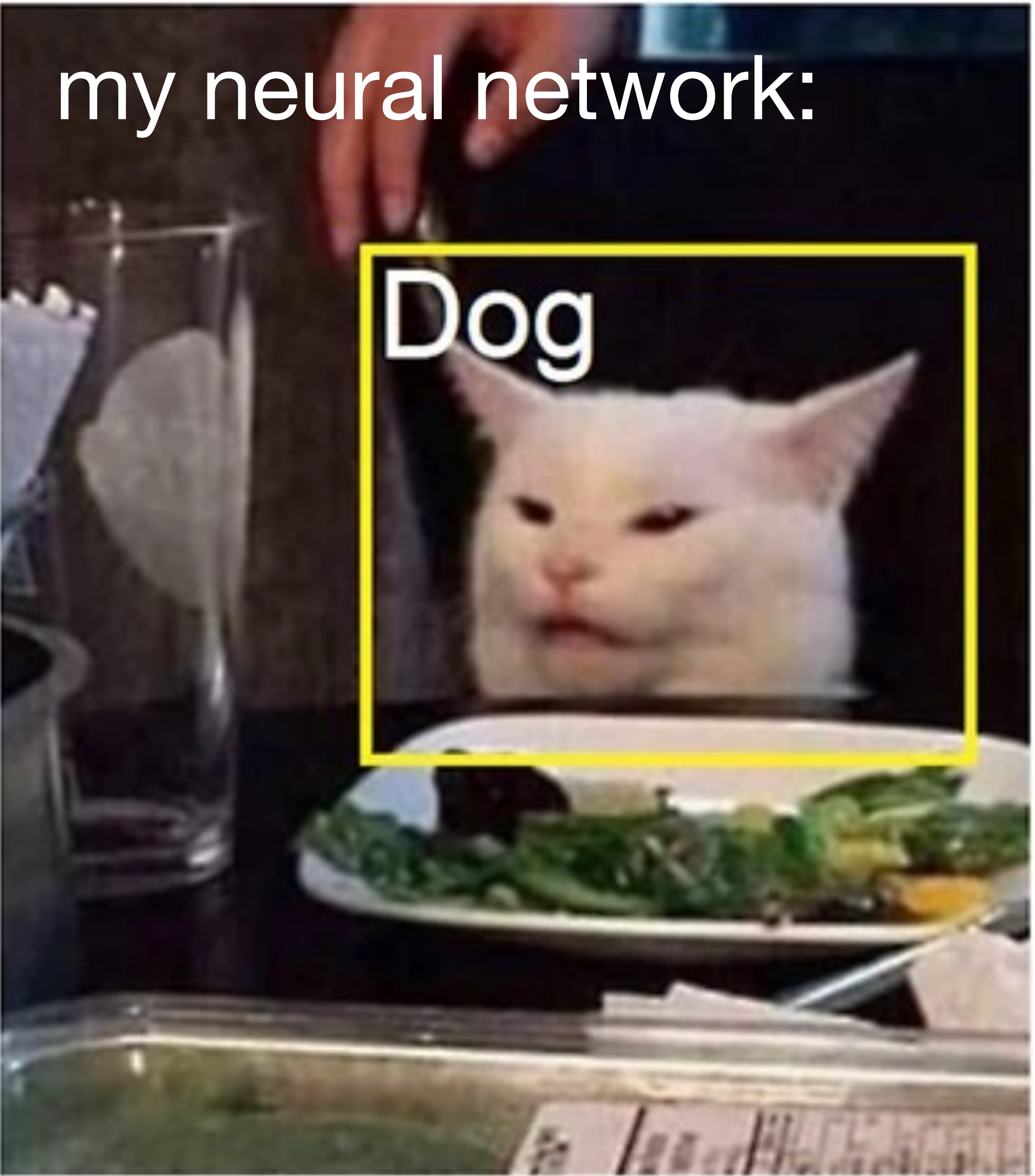
0

$r$

$\delta$



media saying AI will  
take over the world



my neural network:

Dog

# CLASSIFICATION

features  $x$

FEATURES

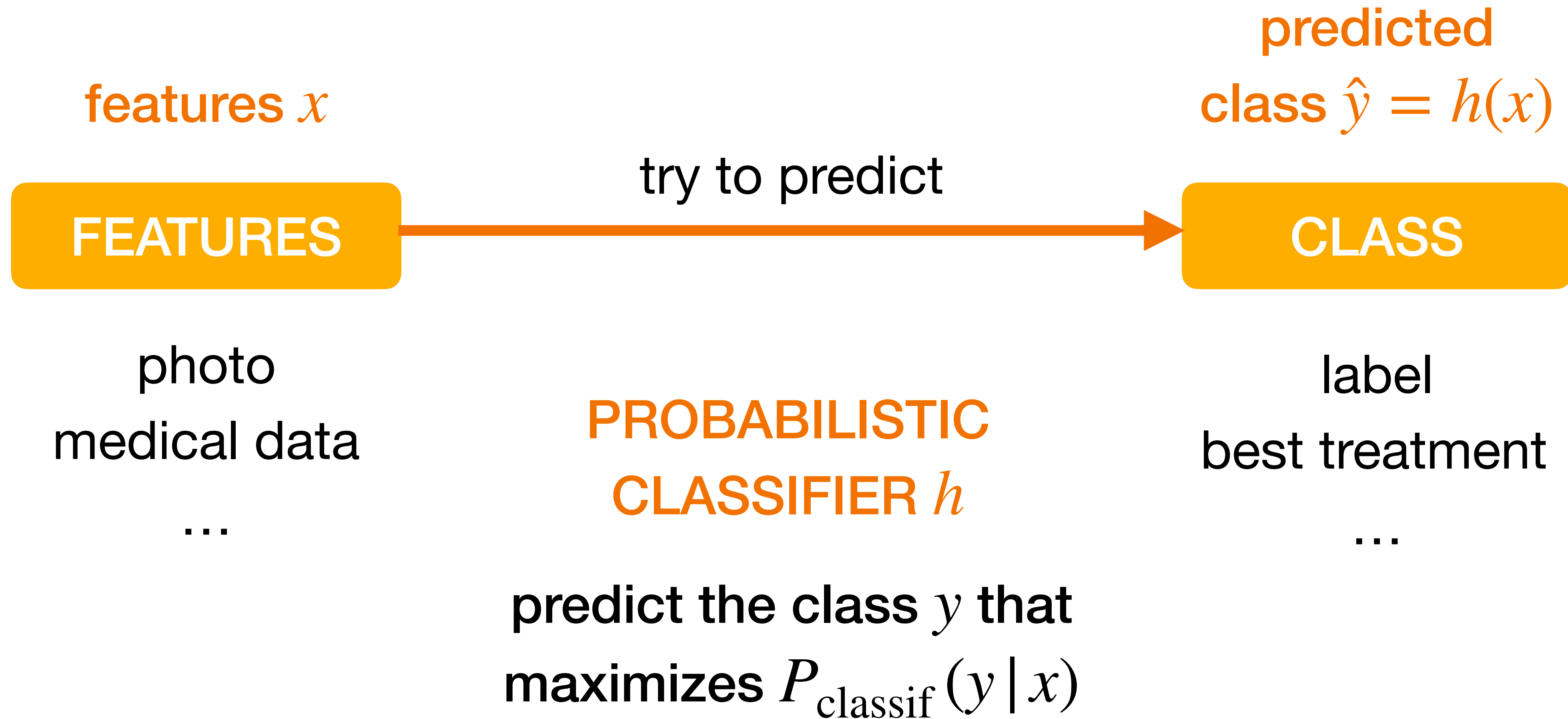
photo  
medical data

...

# CLASSIFICATION

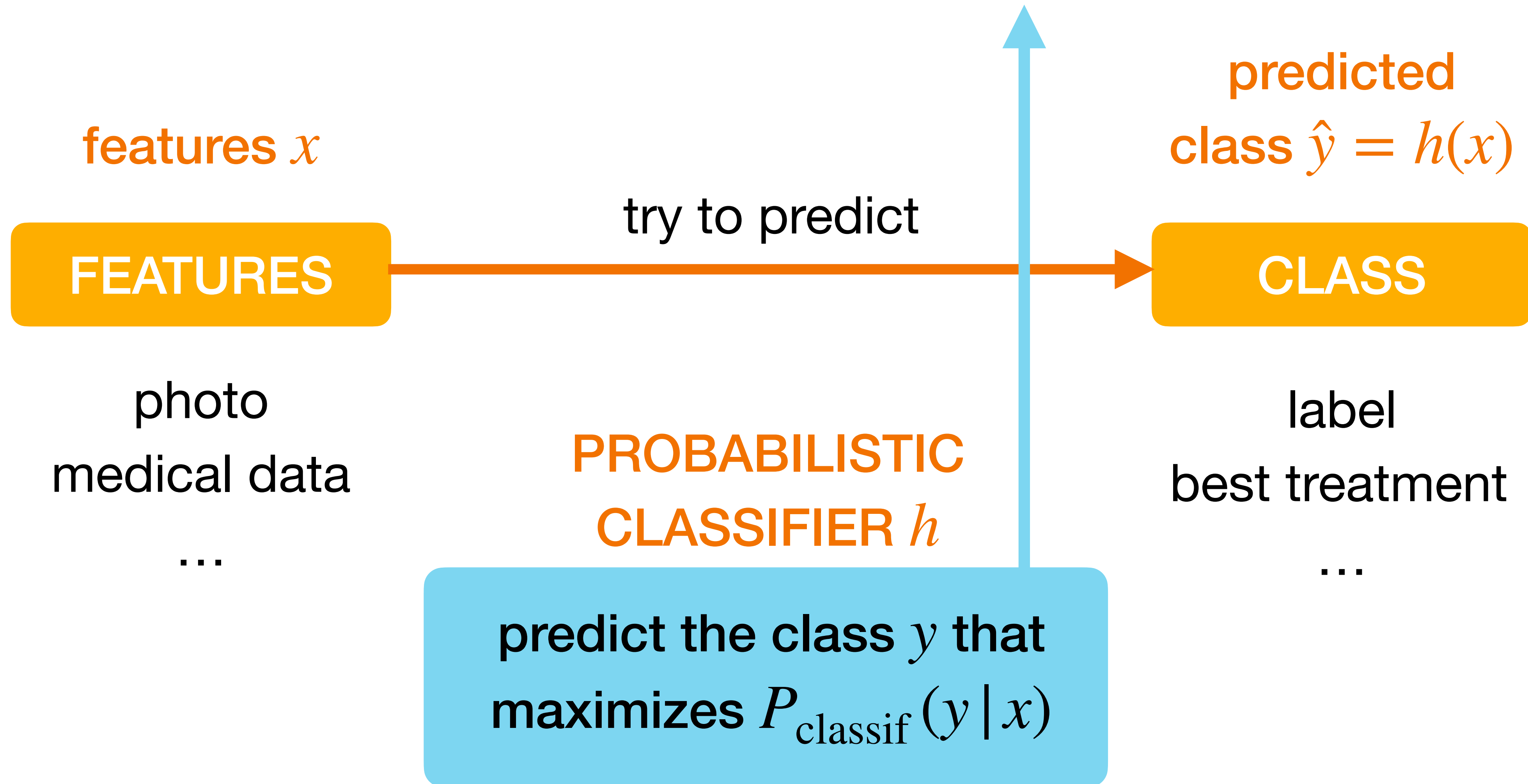


# CLASSIFICATION



# CLASSIFICATION

special case of MAXIMIZING EXPECTED UTILITY





media saying AI will take over the world



my neural network:

Dog

Perhaps imprecise probabilities can help?

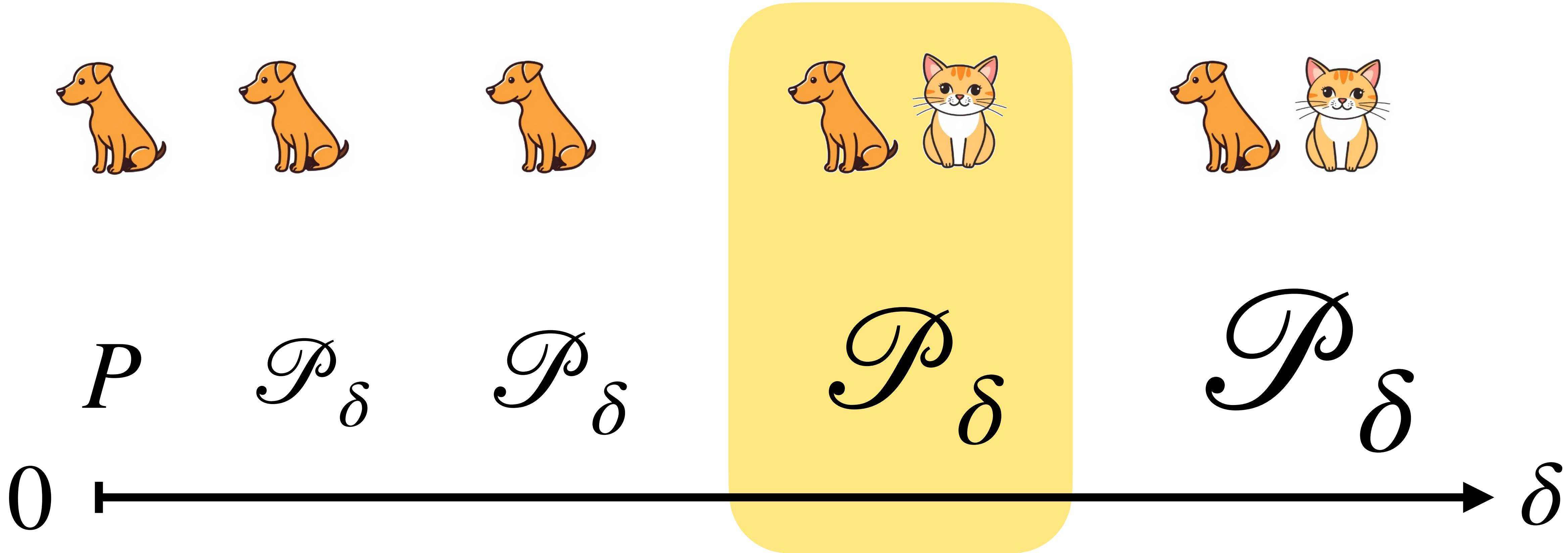


saying AI will  
er the world

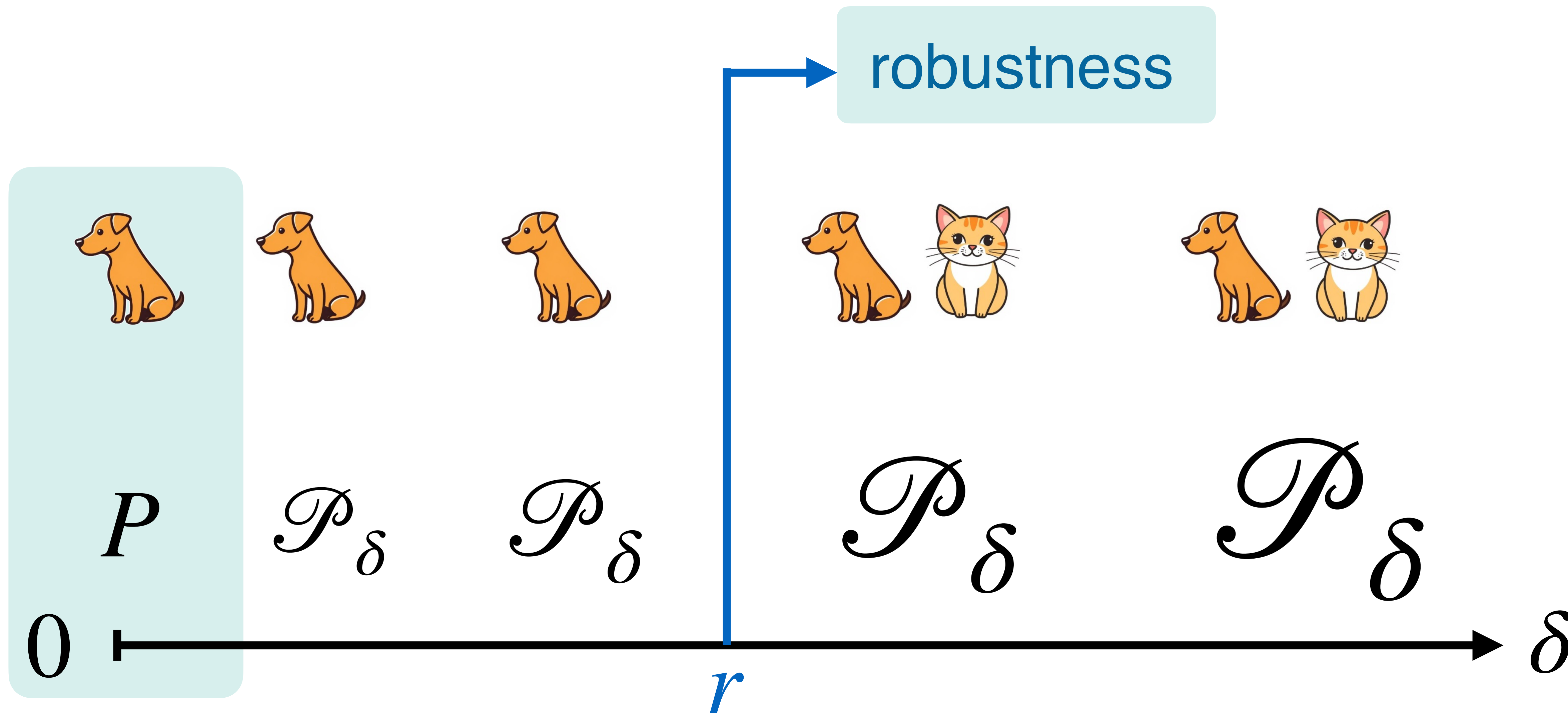
my neural network:



# CREDAL CLASSIFICATION



# ROBUSTNESS QUANTIFICATION



my neural network:

Does this actually work?

Dog

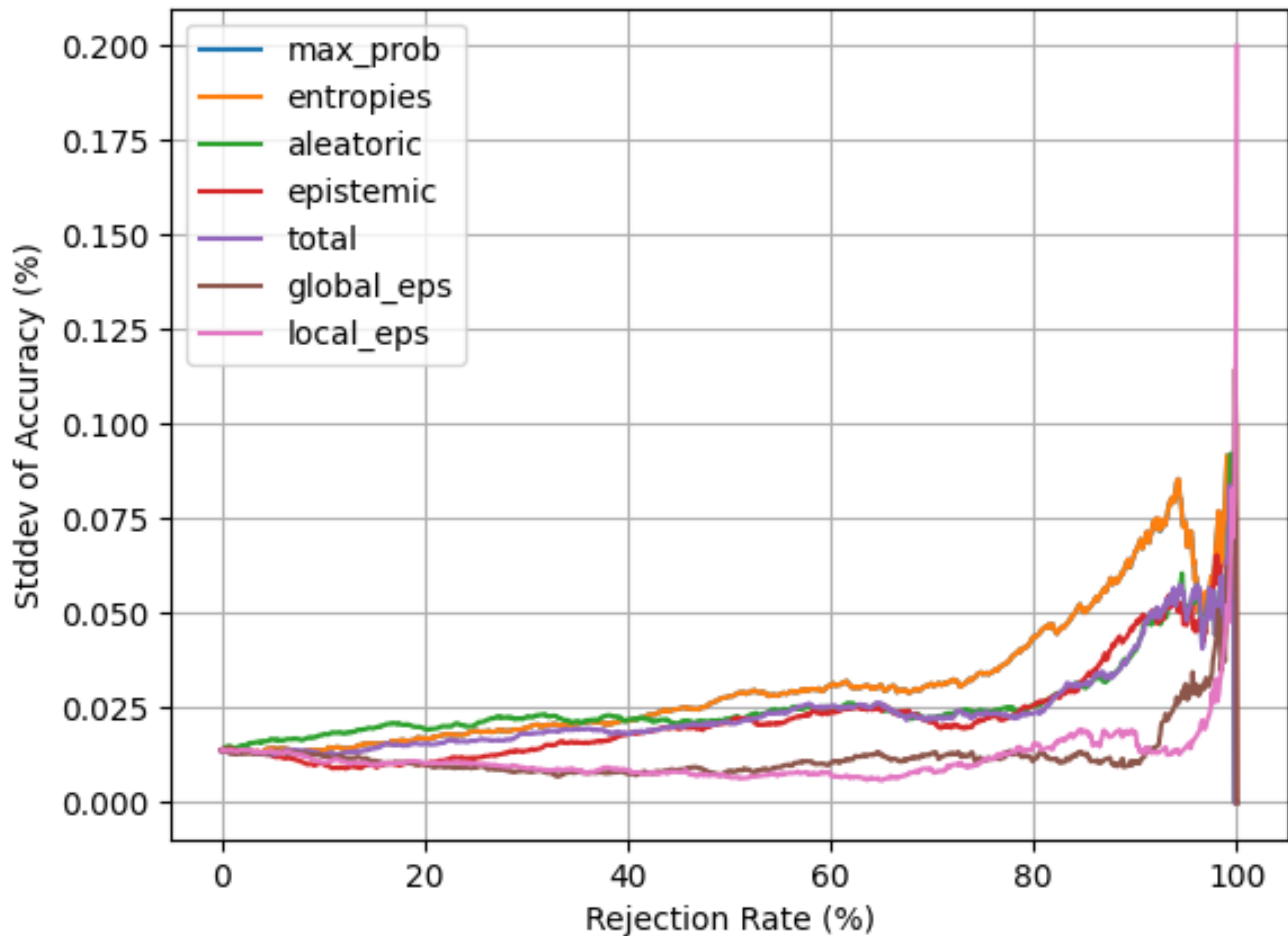


...a saying AI will  
...over the world





Stddev of accuracy-rejection curve



Stddev of accuracy-rejection curve

That's enough! Time's up!

