

Using the IntelliJ Debugger

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Apologies

Sorry if you are **already** using a debugger

Aim of this briefing is to convince you to switch !

Even if you are already using a debugger,
you might still learn something new !

What is the aim of debugging ?

Code can frequently become a VERY complex beast
We often don't FULLY understand what it is doing !
Subtle run-time behaviour can cause strange results

Problem is that code usually runs as a 'black box'
(We can't actually SEE what is going on inside)
We really need to gain some kind of transparency...

```
System.out.println("Value of counter is:" + counter);
```

Problems with PrintIns

Most programmers start out using printf or println
Provides basic but workable approach to debugging

You have to decide **which** variable to print out
Then add some temporary code to print it out
Maybe even a loop to iterate (if it is an array)

If you chose to print out the wrong variable
(or just want to switch to another variable)
You have to go through the whole process again

Not forgetting to delete all the println afterwards !

HOWEVER

For PROFESSIONAL level programming

We need to use PROFESSIONAL development tools

Debuggers

Debuggers are like MRI scanners with freeze-frame !
We can pause execution and see EVERYTHING inside

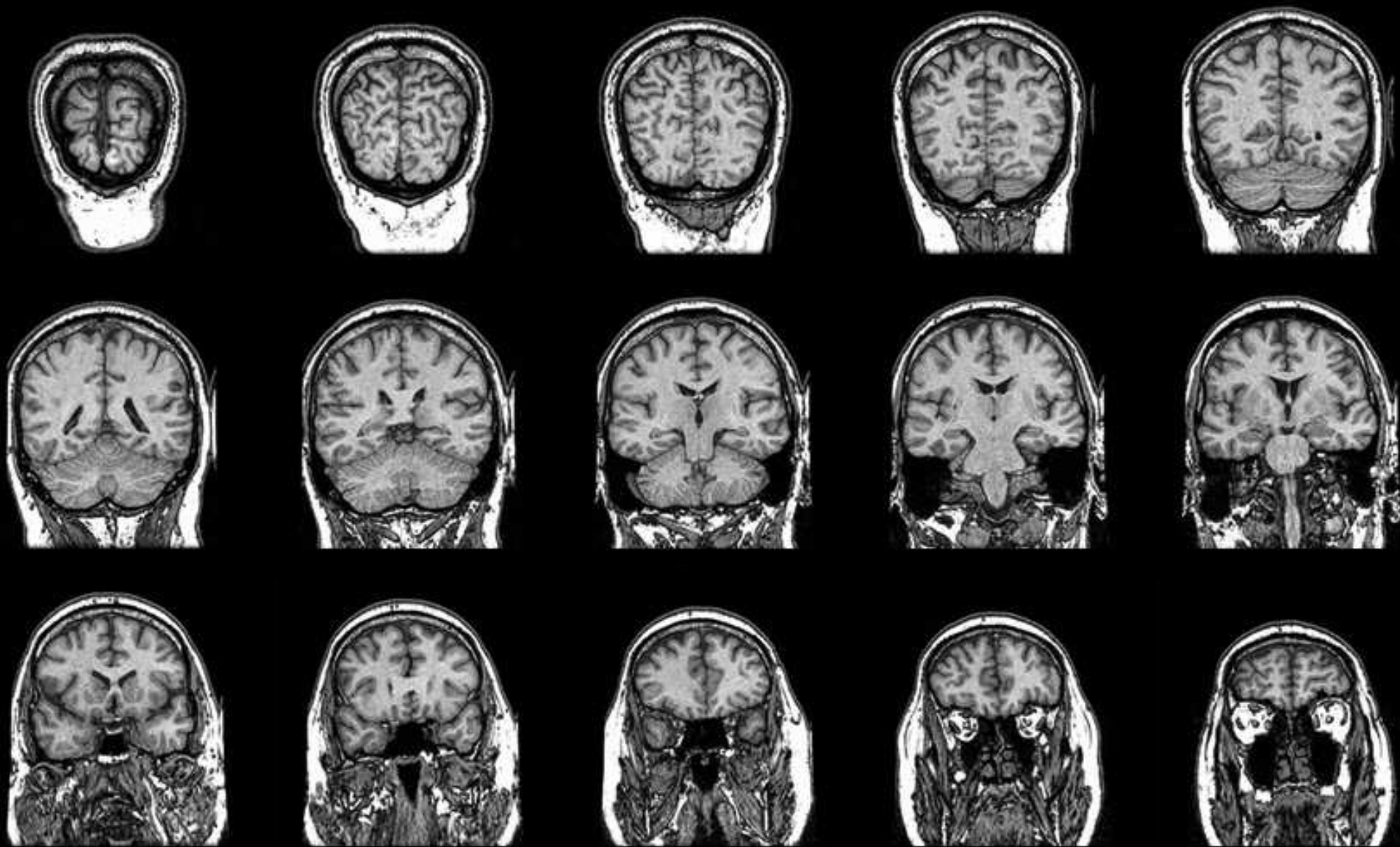
Look at content of ALL variables

CHANGE that content manually

Pause/resume execution

Step through execution...

...line by line



Demonstration

We have some code to calculate the first 10 primes

Number can't be EXACTLY divided by any whole number...
except for 1 and itself (obviously !)

The problem is, this code doesn't work properly :o(
The code just loops forever and prints out nothing

Let's take a look at the "Primes" project in IntelliJ
Then use IntelliJ's debugger to find the problem !

DON'T shout out if you see any faults in the code !
IntelliJ

Switching over

Using printf/println probably feels safe and familiar
Problem is that its tempting to continue using it...
Long after it has become inefficient & ineffective

The learning overhead of switching to a debugger
Often discourages people from making use of them

However the time invested will reap greater rewards
Think about your longer-term career development !

Medical Metaphor Revisited

If a debugger is a bit like an MRI scanner...

Then using println is a bit like:

hitting different body parts with a little hammer

MRI is more complex to operate

But a lot more powerful !

(once you get the hang of it)

Why wait until now to introduce the concepts ?

TBH some are still getting to grips with the hammer ;o)