

THE EVOLUTION OF HUMAN MORALITY

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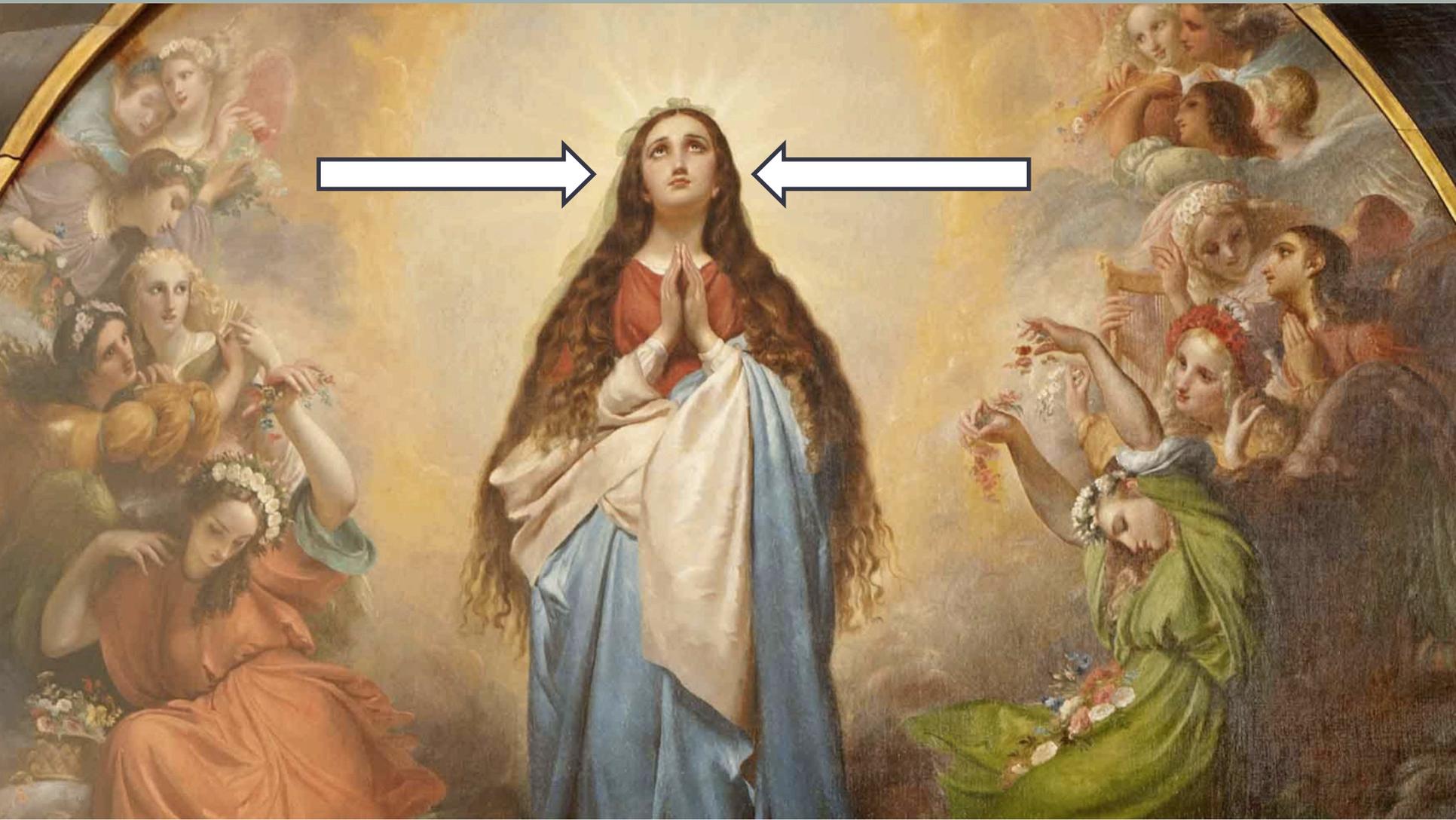
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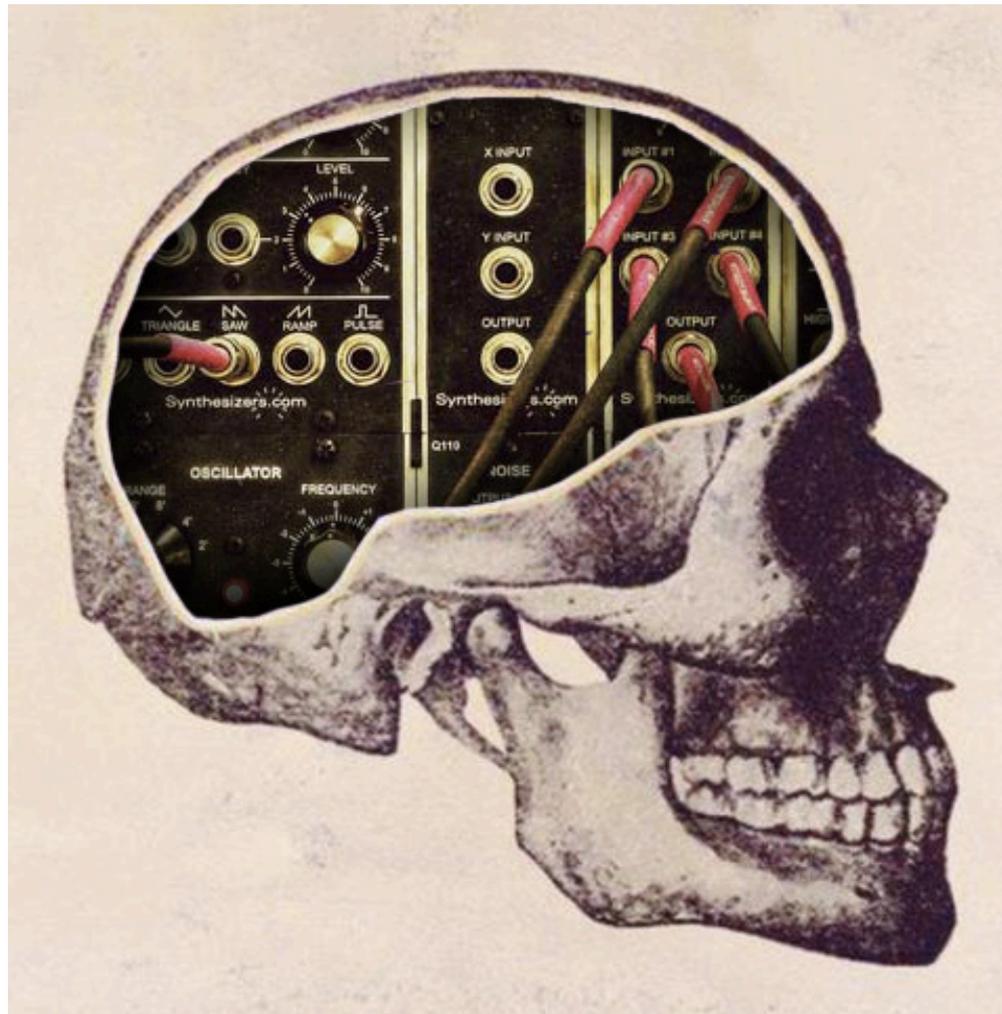
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“Through her ear the word entered and dwelt secretly in the womb”



Evolutionary psychology and mental adaptations



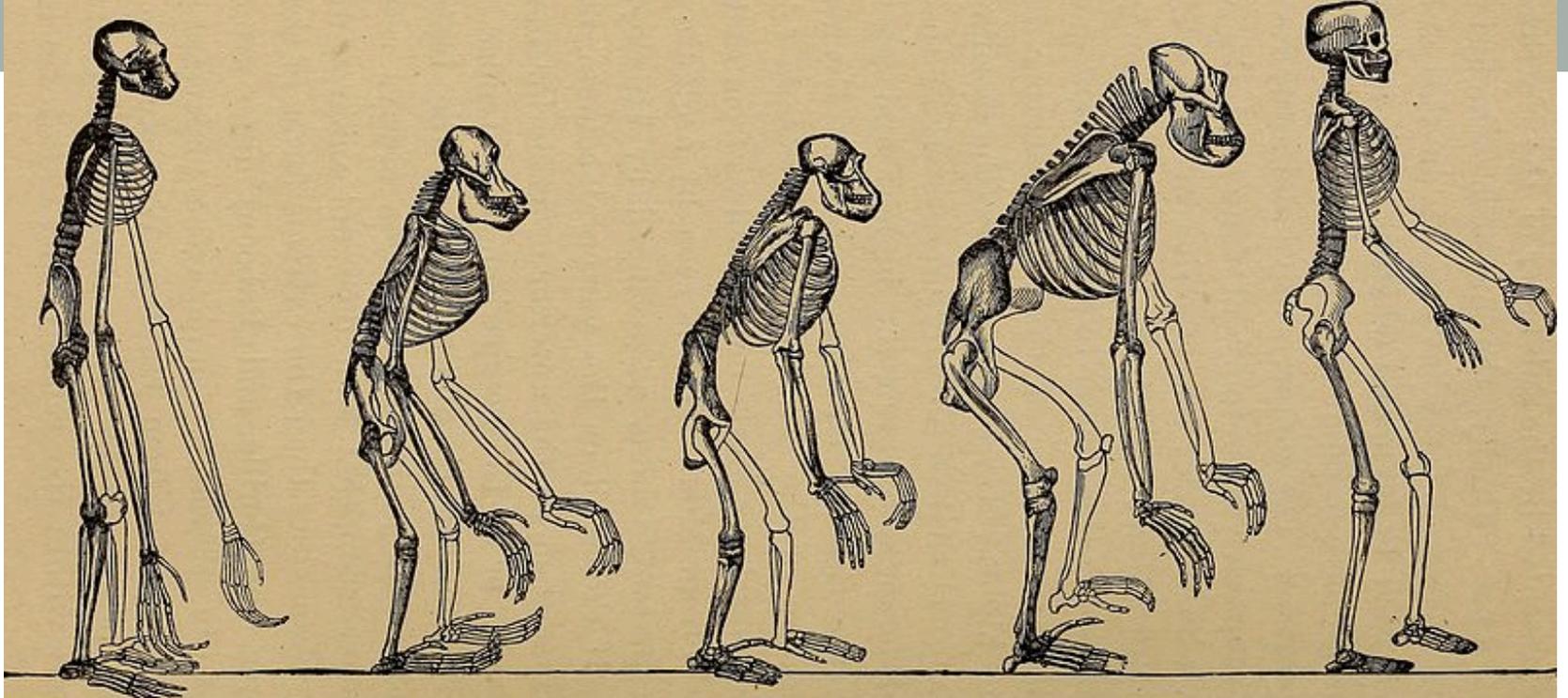


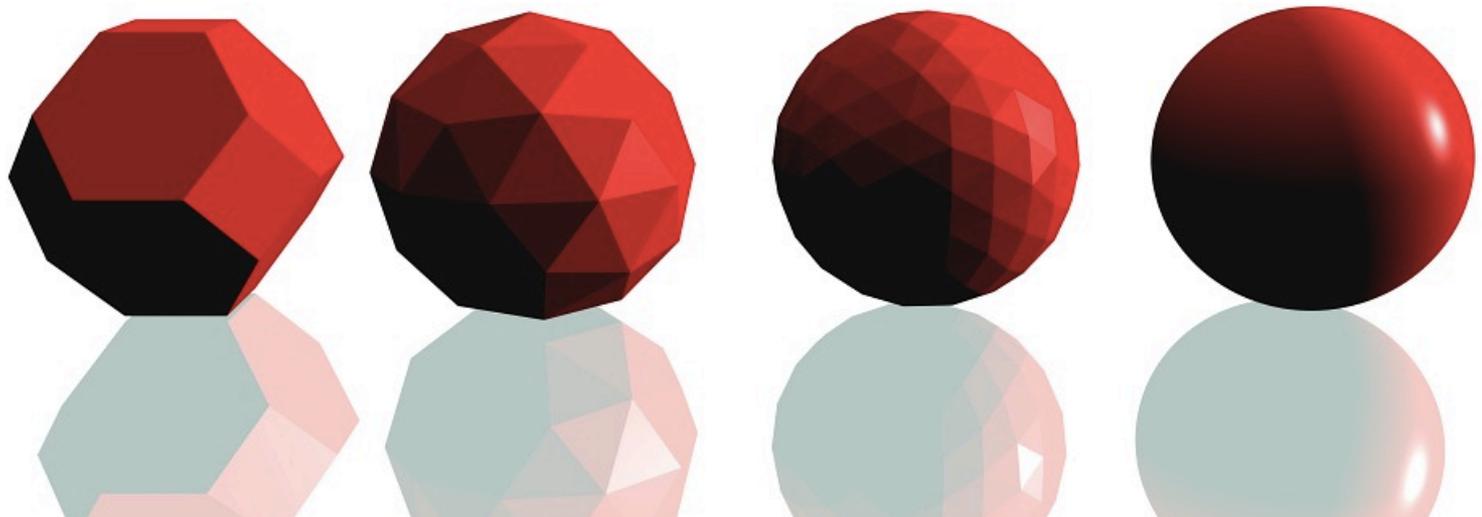
FIG. 204.
(Cf. p. 181.)
Gibbon.

FIG. 205.
(Plate XIV. Fig. 3.)
Orang-outang.

FIG. 206.
(Plate XIV. Fig. 1.)
Chimpanzee.

FIG. 207.
(Plate XIV. Fig. 2.)
Gorilla.

FIG. 208.
(Plate XIV. Fig. 4.)
Man.



Evolved Morality- Kin Selection



a



b



c



d



e





Krupp,
Debruine and
Jones
Cooperation
and conflict in
light of kin
recognition
systems



"A tribe including many members who, from possessing in high degree the spirit of patriotism, fidelity, obedience, courage, and sympathy, were always ready to aid one another, and to sacrifice themselves for the common good, would be victorious over most other tribes, and this would be natural selection."

-- Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 1871

Evolved Morality- Reciprocal altruism



Evolved Morality- Sexual selection



Moral emotions

- **Other condemning:**
anger and disgust
- **Other praising:**
gratitude and awe
- **Other suffering**
empathy and compassion
- **Self-conscious**
guilt and shame

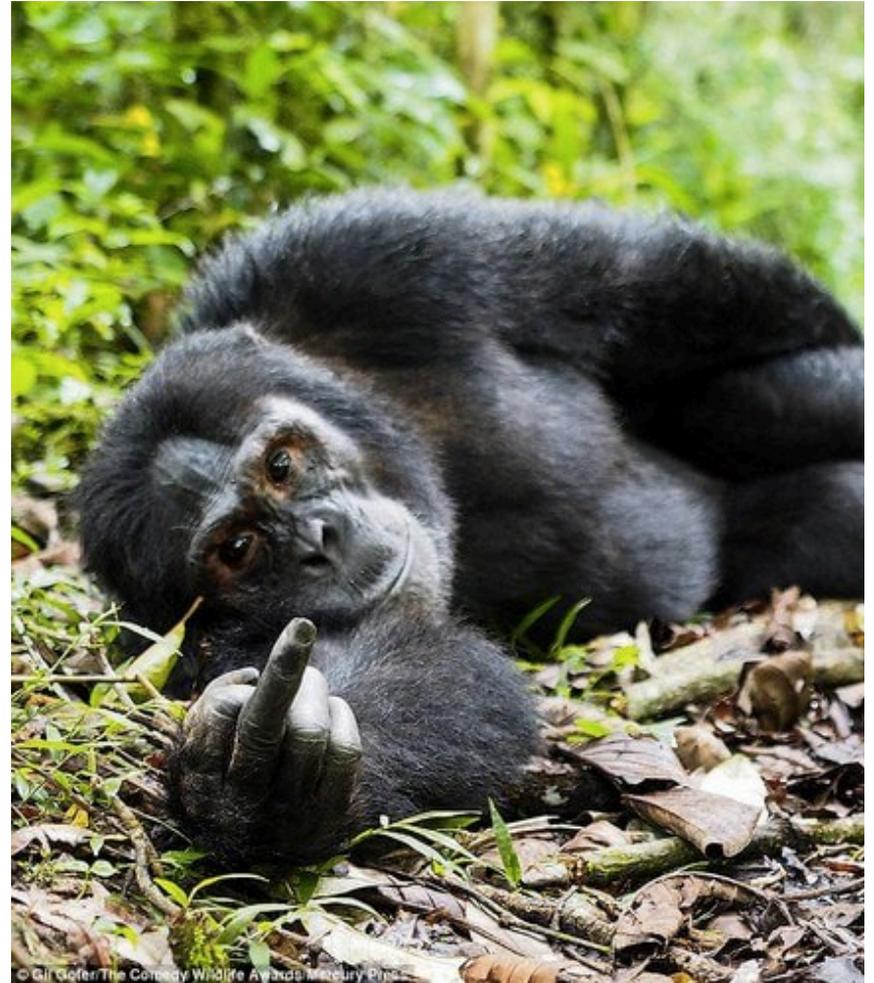
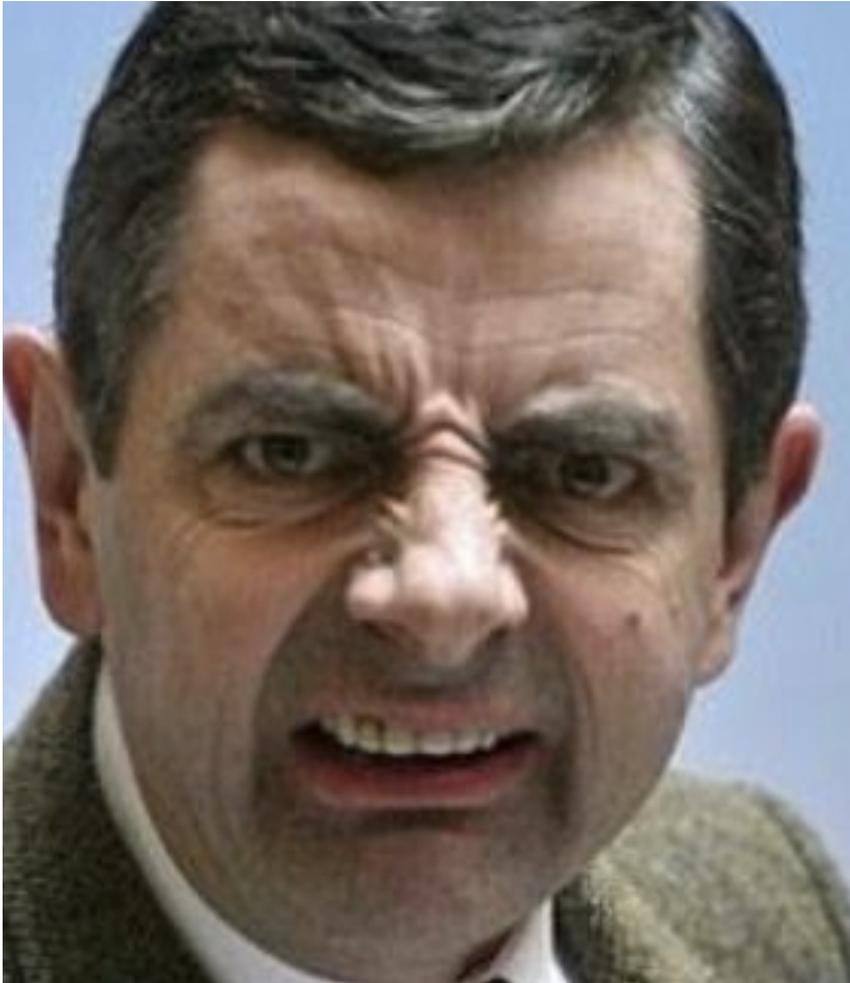




Disgust



Only human adults have disgust



Would you wear Hitler's sweater?



VS



Moral dumbfounding

A woman is cleaning out her closet and she finds an old British flag. She doesn't want the flag anymore, so she cuts it up into pieces and uses the rags to clean her bathroom.



The “wisdom” of repugnance?



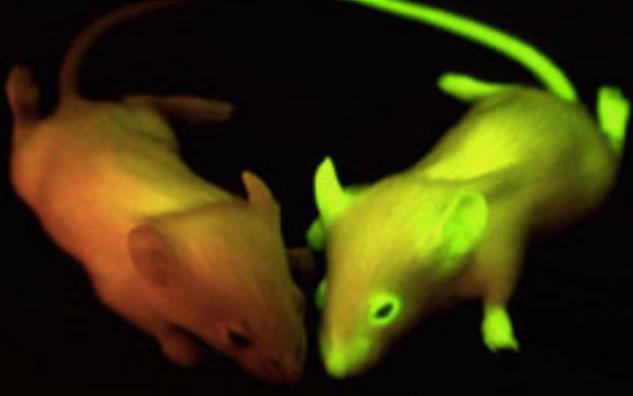
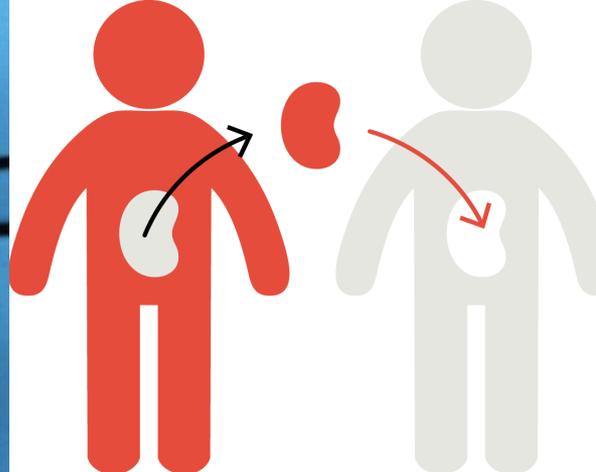
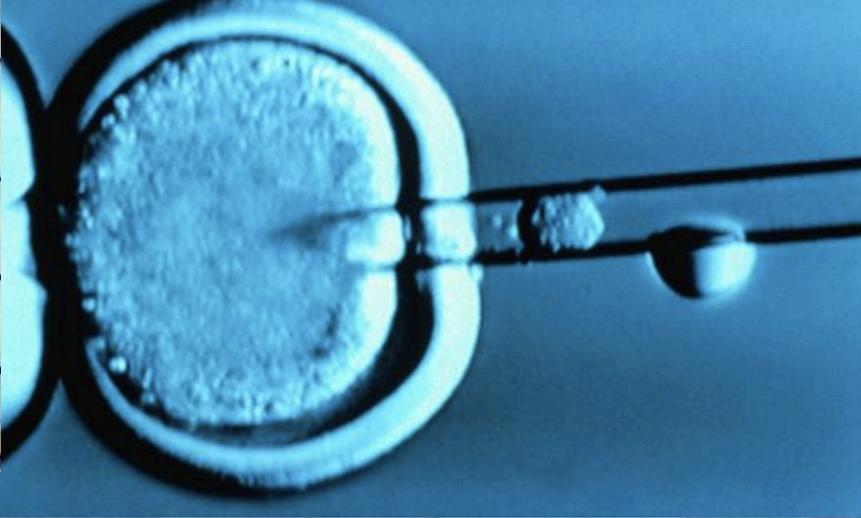
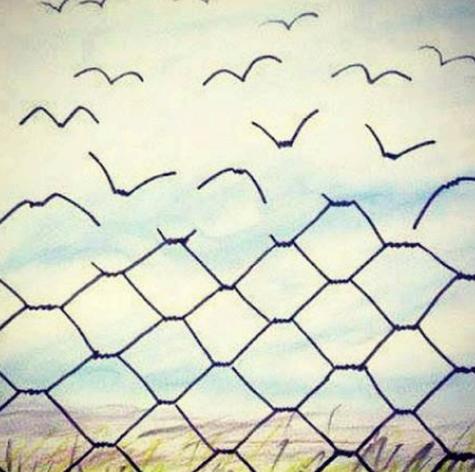
Leon Kass

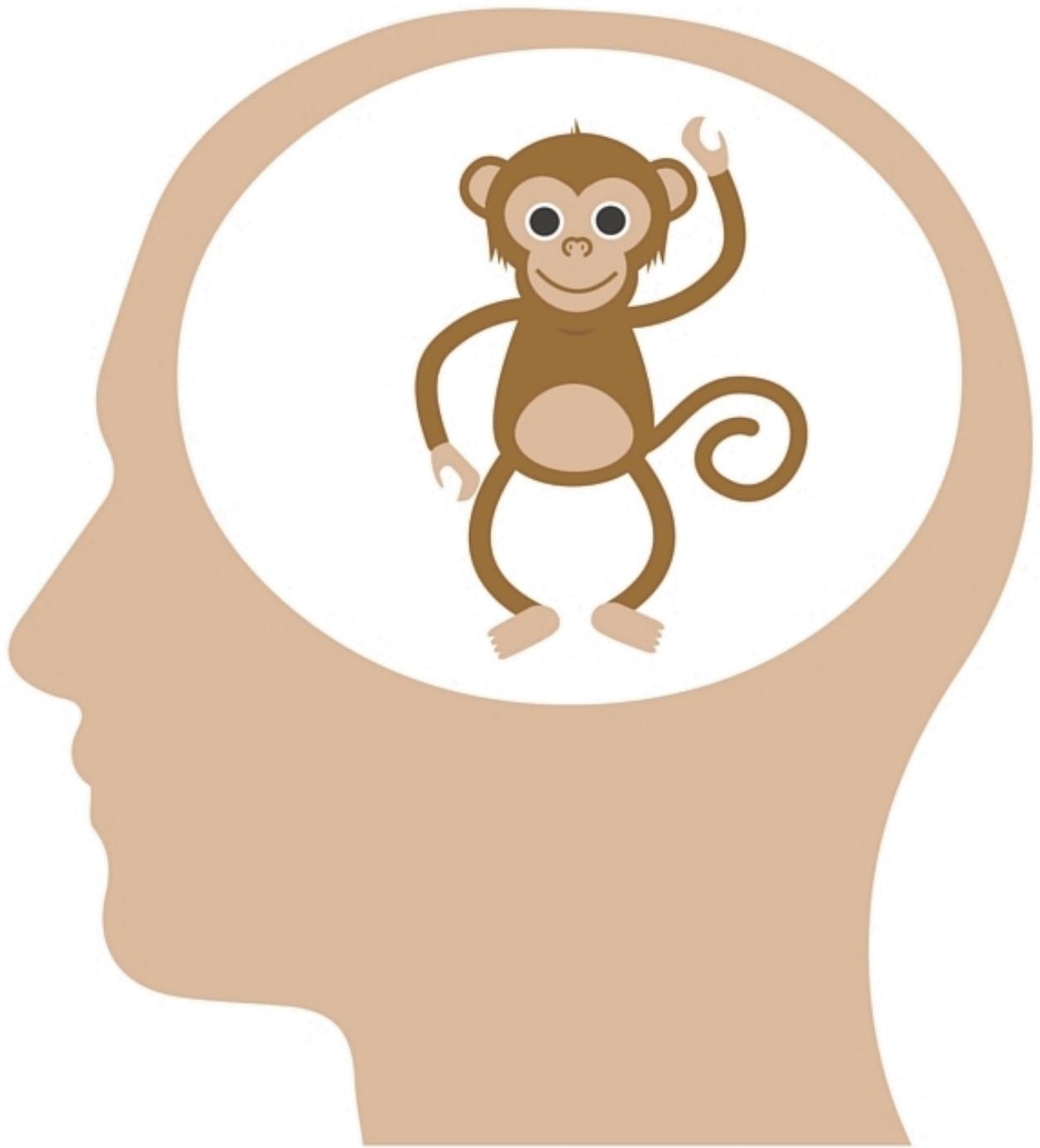
“In this age in which everything is held to be permissible so long as it is freely done, and in which our bodies are regarded as mere instruments of our autonomous rational will, repugnance may be the only voice left that speaks up to defend the core of our humanity. Shallow are the souls that have forgotten how to shudder.”

Martha Nussbaum & Paul Bloom

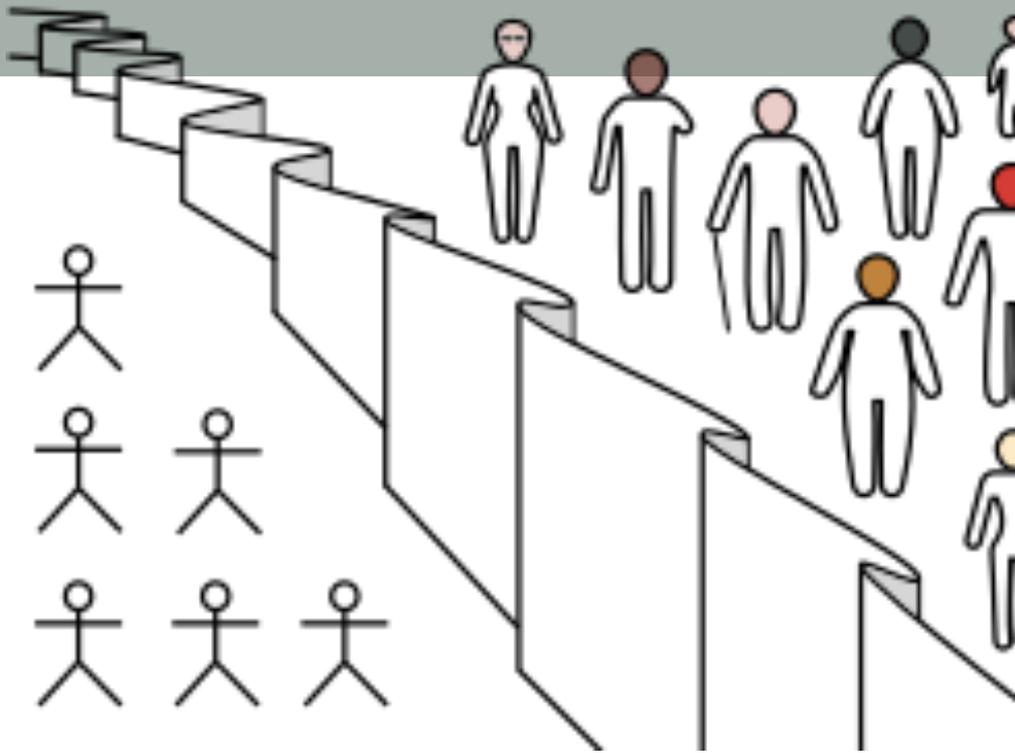
“Does disgust, then, contain a wisdom that steers law in the right direction? Surely the moral progress of society can be measured by the degree to which it separates disgust from danger and indignation, basing laws and social rules on substantive harm, rather than on the symbolic relationship an object bears to our anxieties.”

The irrationality of disgust suggests it is unreliable as a source of moral insight. There may be good arguments against gay marriage, partial-birth abortions and human cloning, but the fact that some people find such acts to be disgusting should carry no weight





Harsanyi's veil of ignorance



Morality is about being impartial

Assume you didn't know who you were going to be in a society and you had an equal chance to be anyone. How would you structure society?

You would try to maximize the welfare of everyone- because you could be anyone

Sentientist ethics

Why **LOVE** one but **EAT** the other?



Number of Animals Used and Killed



Yearly in the United States



Money Donated to Animal Charities



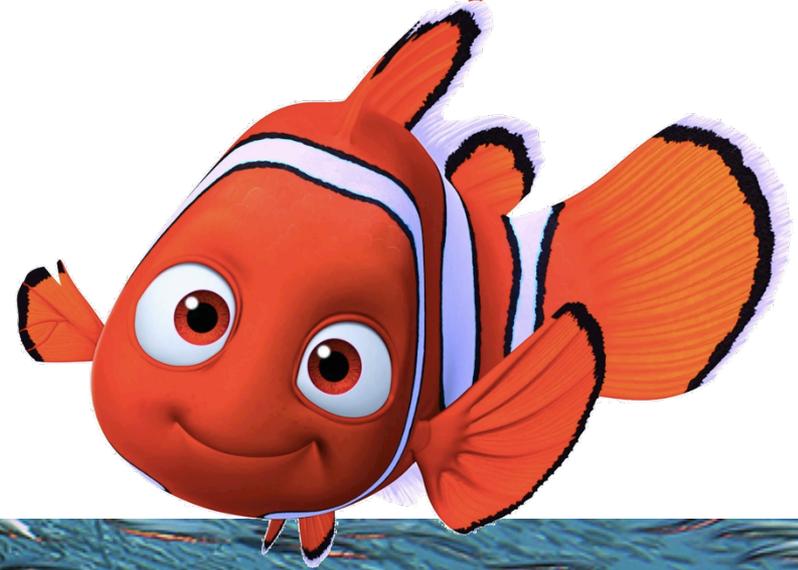
Yearly in the United States



Failures of empathy- Scope insensitivity

“A single death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic”

-Stalin





The expanding circle

“As man gradually advanced in intellectual power...his sympathies became more tender and widely diffused, so as to extend to men of all races, to the imbecile, the maimed, and – and finally to the lower animals – so will the standard of morality rise higher and higher”

- Charles Darwin

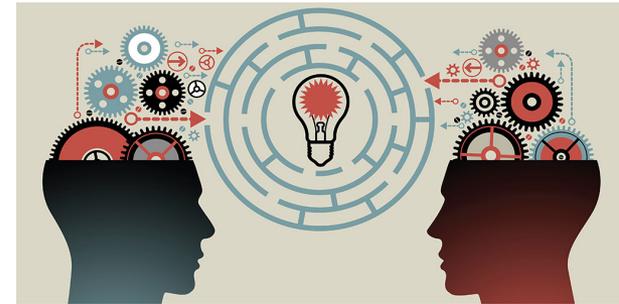




Effective Altruism

A new social movement to do good, better

- Increase well-being for all sentient beings (people, animals, future beings)
- Use critical thinking, evidence, and open debate to find interventions that are effective and scalable
- “Cause prioritization”: focus on problems and ‘causes’ that are global, tractable, and neglected



Main EA causes

- Reduce global poverty
- Prevent and cure neglected tropical diseases
- Reduce animal suffering (veganism, lab meat)
- Reduce global existential risks (AI, bioweapons)

GiveDirectly

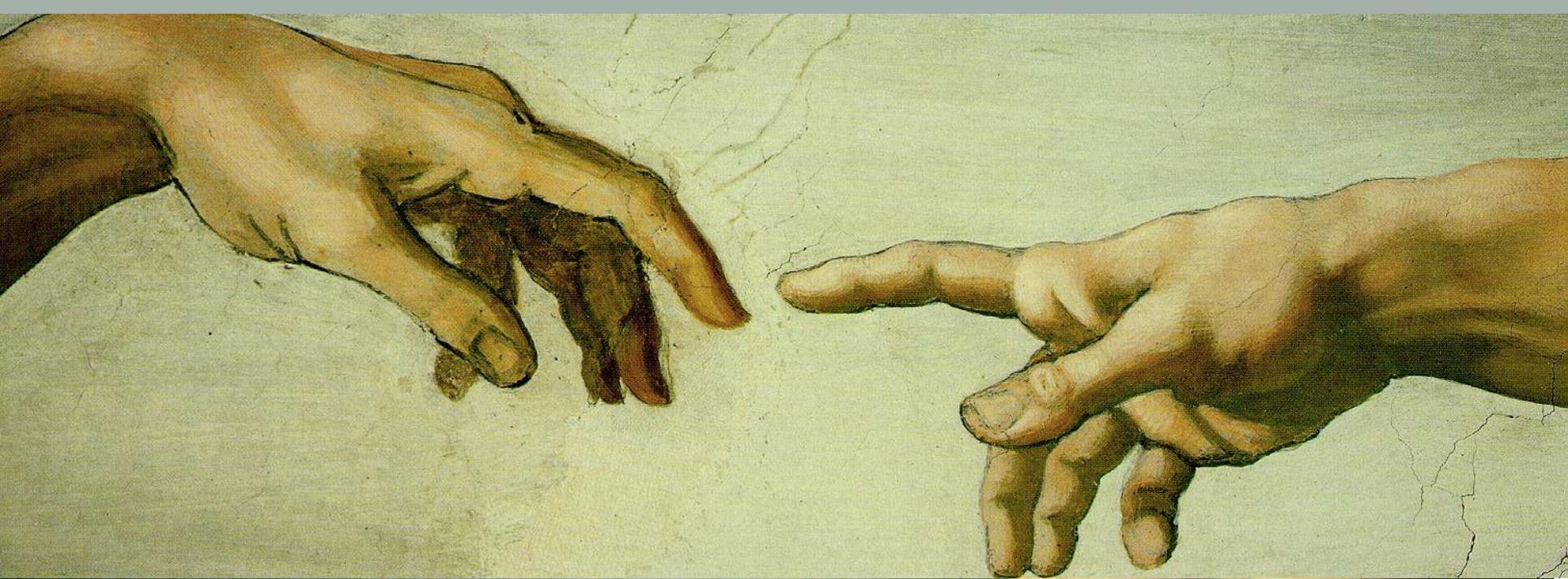


The expanding circle and intelligence



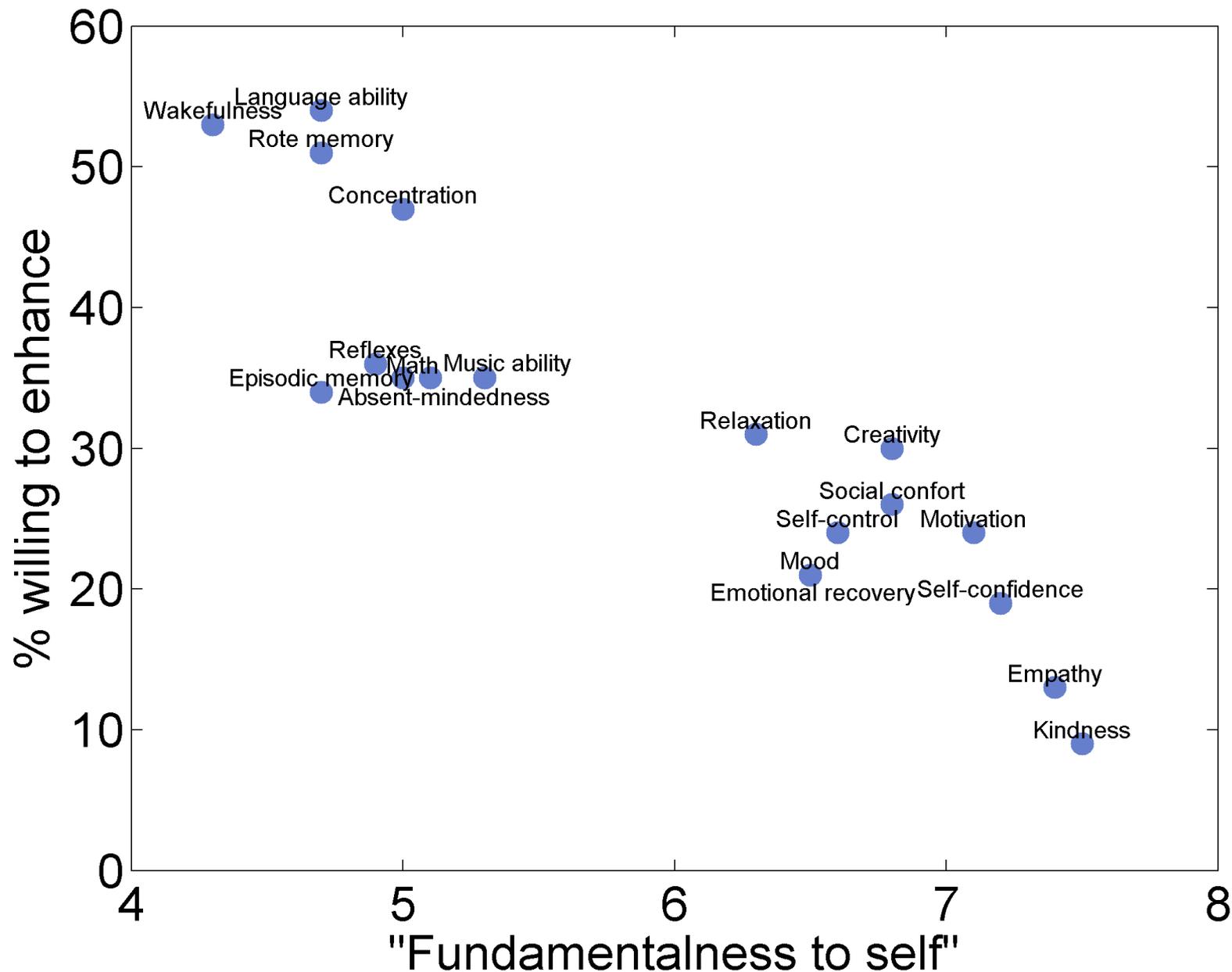
The “Moral Flynn Effect”

Increased intelligence has led to better abstract reasoning, self-control, numeracy, literacy and perspective taking necessary for improved morality

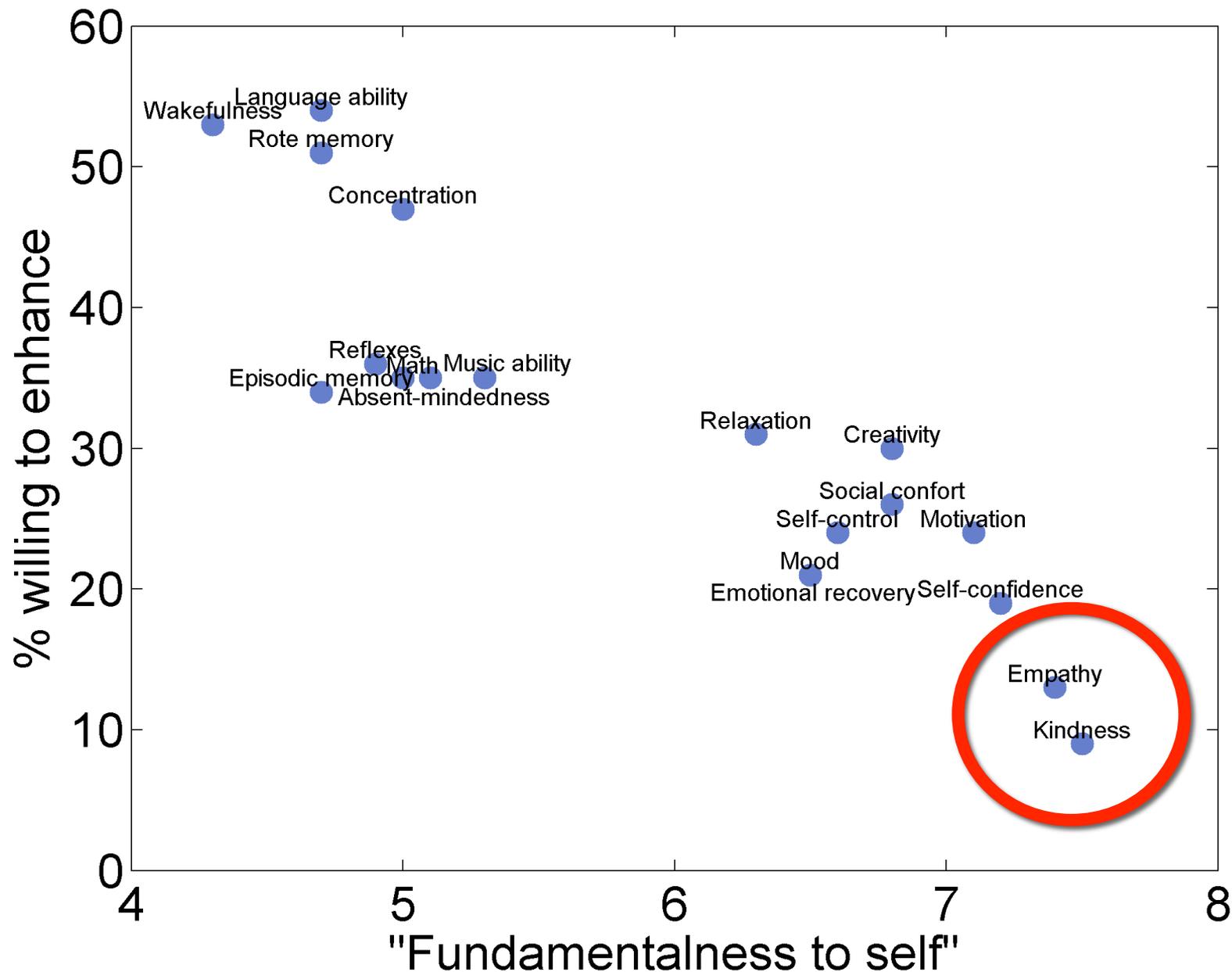


Moral Enhancement

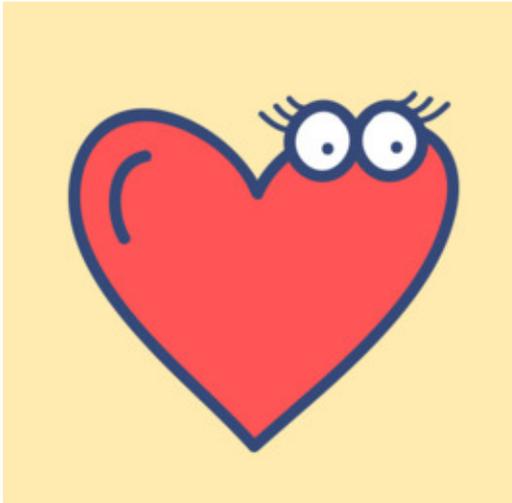
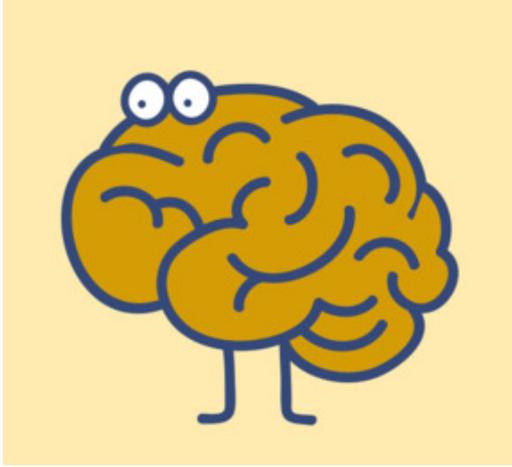




Jason Riis, Joseph P. Simmons, Geoffrey P. Goodwin, Preferences for enhancement pharmaceuticals: the reluctance to enhance fundamental traits, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35, 495-508, 2008



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Thank you for listening!

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GIVING
what we can

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Effective Altruism

- Pledge to give 10% of income
- Support charities that actually save the most lives per dollar
- Go vegan, or stop eating chickens, or chicken, eggs and fish
- Keep learning, arguing, and updating beliefs about the most effective causes and interventions

GIVING
what we can

Take the pledge.



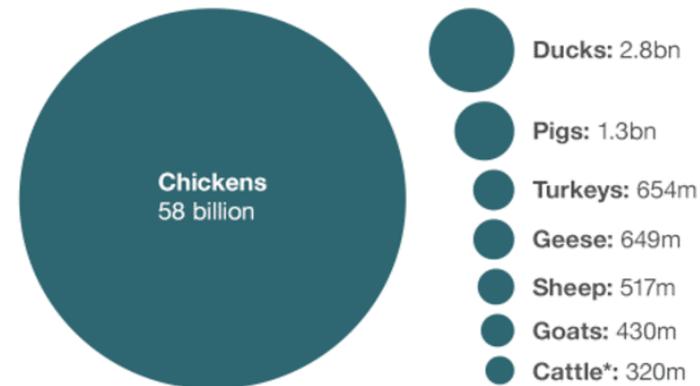
GiveWell

REAL CHANGE FOR YOUR DOLLAR



ANIMAL CHARITY
EVALUATORS™

Animals slaughtered worldwide for meat each year



Includes buffalo*

Source: Friends of the Earth Europe, Heinrich Böll Foundation

Catastrophic and existential risk

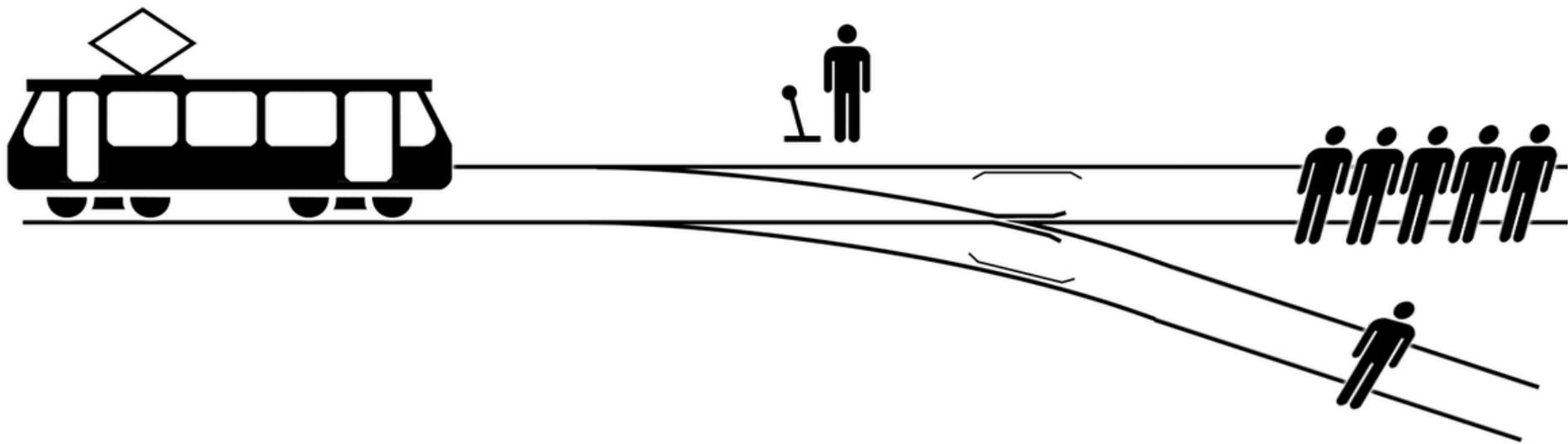
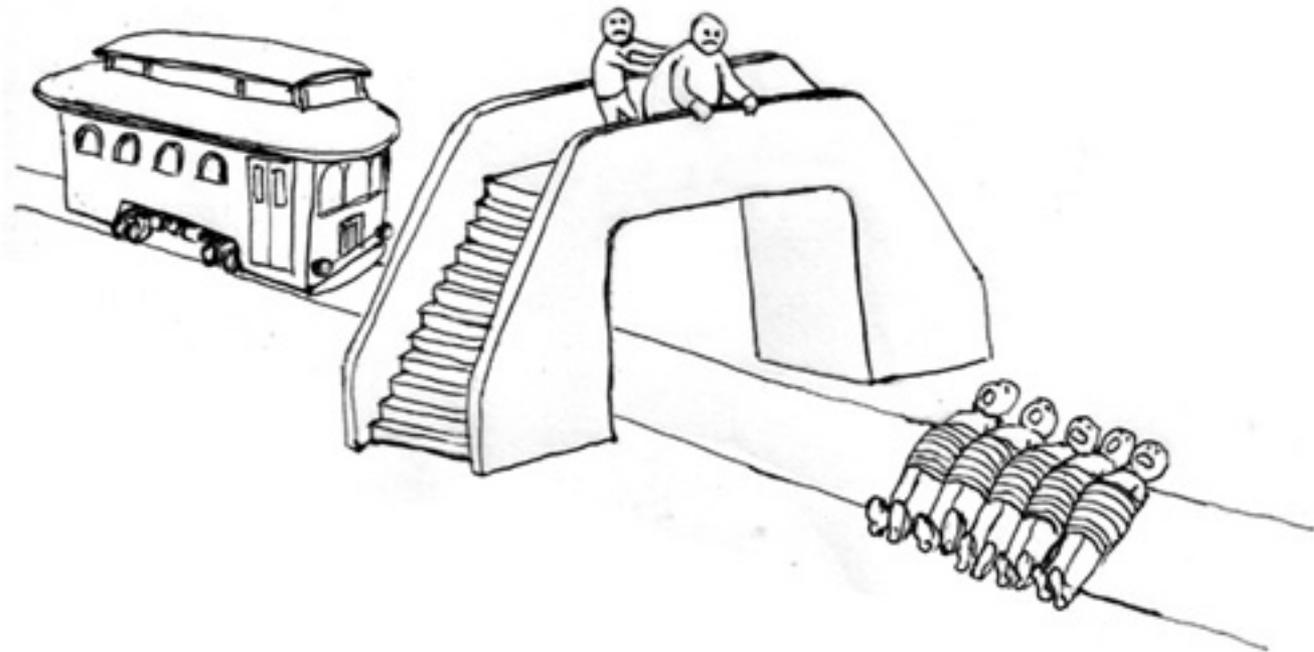




Astronomical Waste

“Even with the most conservative estimate, assuming a biological implementation of all persons, the potential for over ten trillion potential human beings is lost for every second of postponement of colonization of our supercluster”

Counterintuitively- safe technological development could save more lives than have ever existed



Sexual selection for moral virtue

