



**The Mind's I**

# An Argument for Free Will via Moral Responsibility

1. If humans do not have free will, then we cannot justifiably hold each other morally responsible for our morally wrong actions.
2. But we do justifiably hold each other morally responsible for our morally wrong actions.
3. Therefore, it must be the case that we **do** have free will.

**The notion of moral responsibility is complicated and a discussion of it requires comprehension of core issues in the field of ethics...**

A related issue is the **puzzle of prosociality**, which is a persistent topic of inquiry in the behavioral and social sciences...



**“Humans invest time and effort in helping the needy within their community and make frequent anonymous donations to charities.**

**They come to each other’s aid in natural disasters. They respond to appeals to sacrifice themselves for their nation in wartime. And, they put their lives at risk by aiding complete strangers in emergency situations.**

**The tendency to benefit others—not closely related—at the expense of oneself, which we refer to here as altruism or prosocial behavior, is one of the major puzzles in the behavioral sciences” (Van Vugt and Van Lange 2006: 237-8).**



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# Storytime!



The genus *homo* has been around for about 2 million years.

During that time there has been various species of *homo* (e.g. *homo habilis*, *homo erectus*, *homo neanderthalensis*, etc.) which have overlapped in their existences.

They are all now extinct save one: Sapiens.

See Harari 2015, chapter 1.


NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

"I would recommend this book to anyone interested in a fun, engaging look at early human history. . . .

You'll have a hard time putting it down."

—BILL GATES

Yuval Noah Harari

  
**Sapiens**

A Brief  
History of  
Humankind

*Homo sapiens* emerged between 300,000 to 200,000 years ago.

By 150,000 years ago, Sapiens had already populated Eastern Africa.

About 100,000 years ago, some Sapiens migrated north but were beaten back by Neanderthals.





**This has led some researchers to believe that the neural structure of those Sapiens (circa 150,000 years ago) wasn't quite like ours yet.**

**70,000 years ago they migrated again and this time beat out the Neanderthals.**

**It was this period, from about 70,000-30,000 years ago, that constitutes the cognitive revolution.**

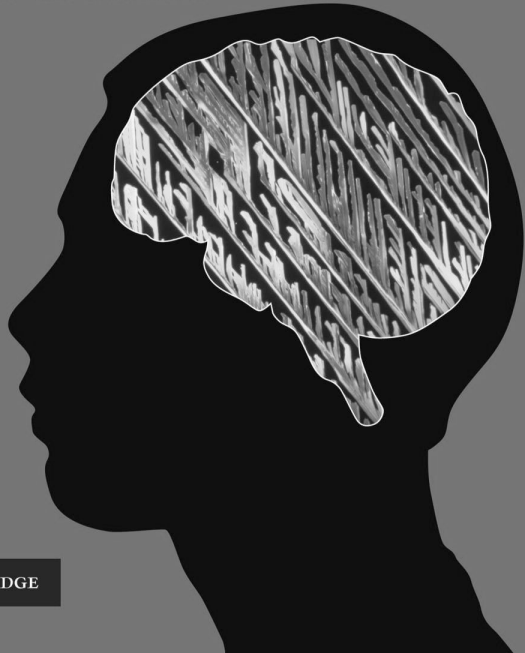


The advanced language skills that were **somehow** acquired during this period allowed Sapiens to build robust social groups, via the use of social constructs, and dominate their environment, to the detriment of other *homo* species (see Harari 2014, chapter 2).



THE  
Dopaminergic Mind  
in Human Evolution  
and History

FRED H. PREVIC



CAMBRIDGE

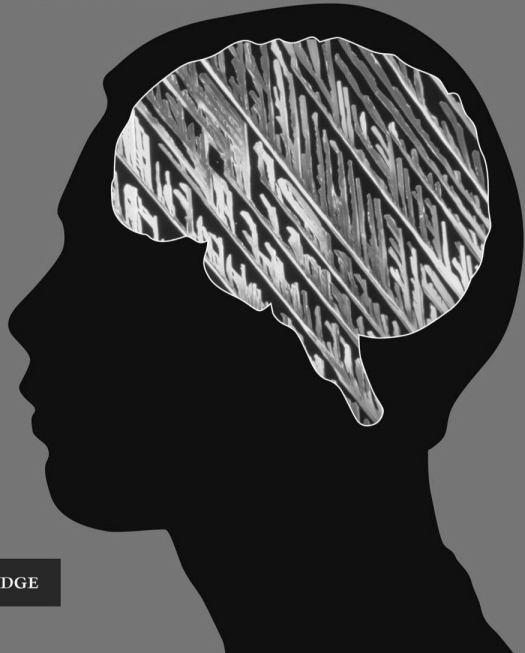
What brought about the cognitive revolution is disputed.

In fact, some argue that it doesn't strictly-speaking exist.

What is indisputable, though, is that between 15,000 to 12,000 years ago (the so-called Neolithic), Sapiens' capacity for **collective action** increased dramatically again.

THE  
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CAMBRIDGE

Relatedly, Hawks (et al. 2007) calculates that over the last 40,000 years our species has evolved at a rate 100 times as fast as the previous evolution.



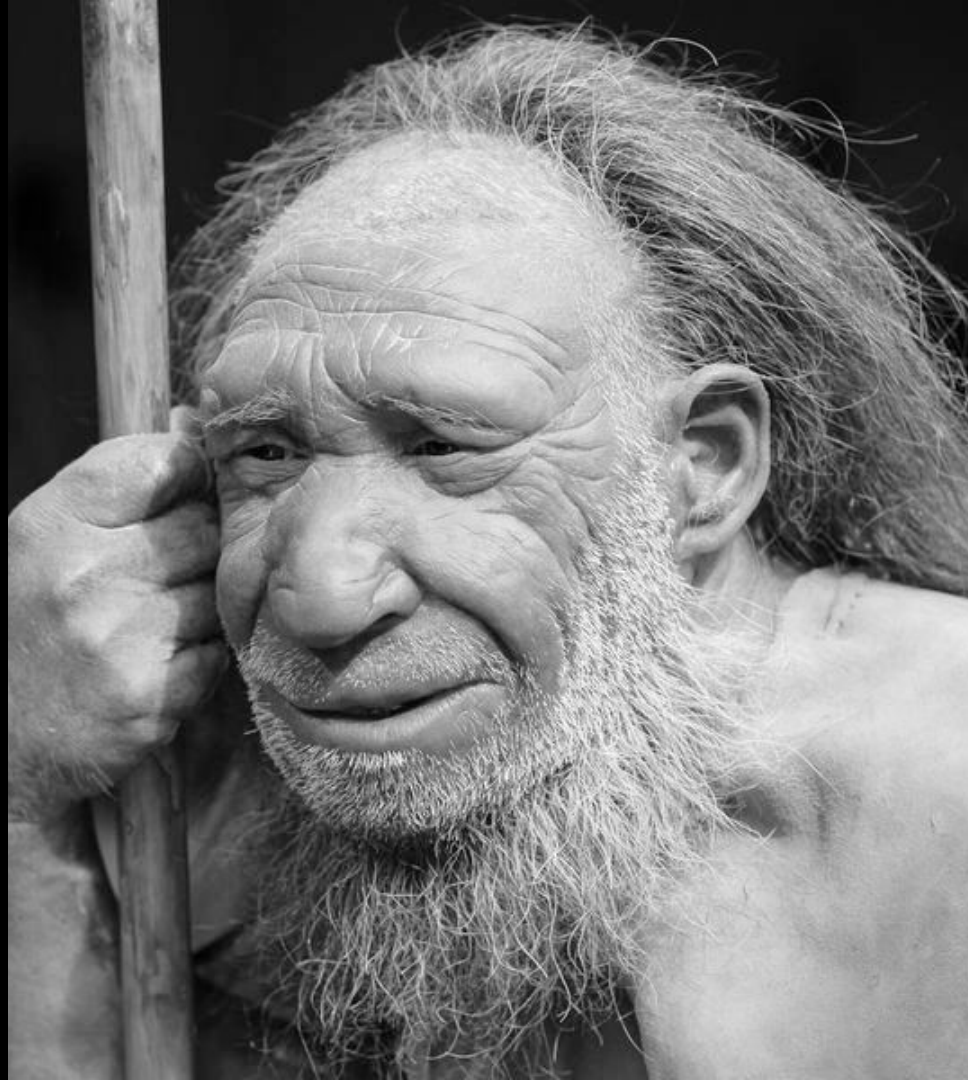
Ian Tattersall (2008) dedicates a chapter to the migrations of *Homo sapiens* out of Africa and to their encounters with other hominids.



THE WORLD FROM  
BEGINNINGS TO 4000 BCE

IAN TATTERSALL

**“So what, exactly, happened when the clearly language-bearing Cro-Magnons entered the domain of the presumptively non-language-bearing Neanderthals some 40,000 years ago?”**



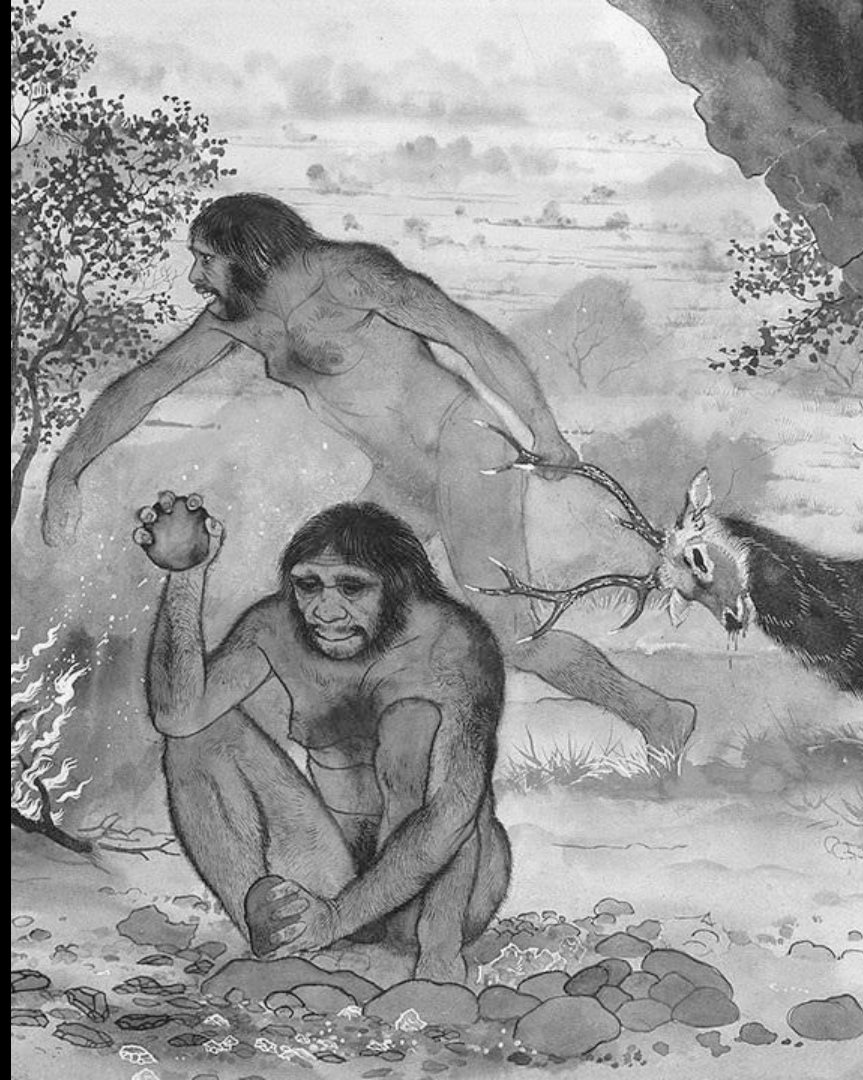


**“There may have been instances of what one might delicately call ‘Pleistocene hanky-panky’ during the fairly short period when the two species shared the European subcontinent; but it is highly improbable that there was any significant, large-scale integration of the two gene pools...**

“[So in general] there are two major possibilities...

Two hominids sharing the same landscape would almost certainly have found themselves in competition...

If this was the case, the disappearance of the Neanderthals would suggest that they were simply outcompeted by *Homo sapiens*...

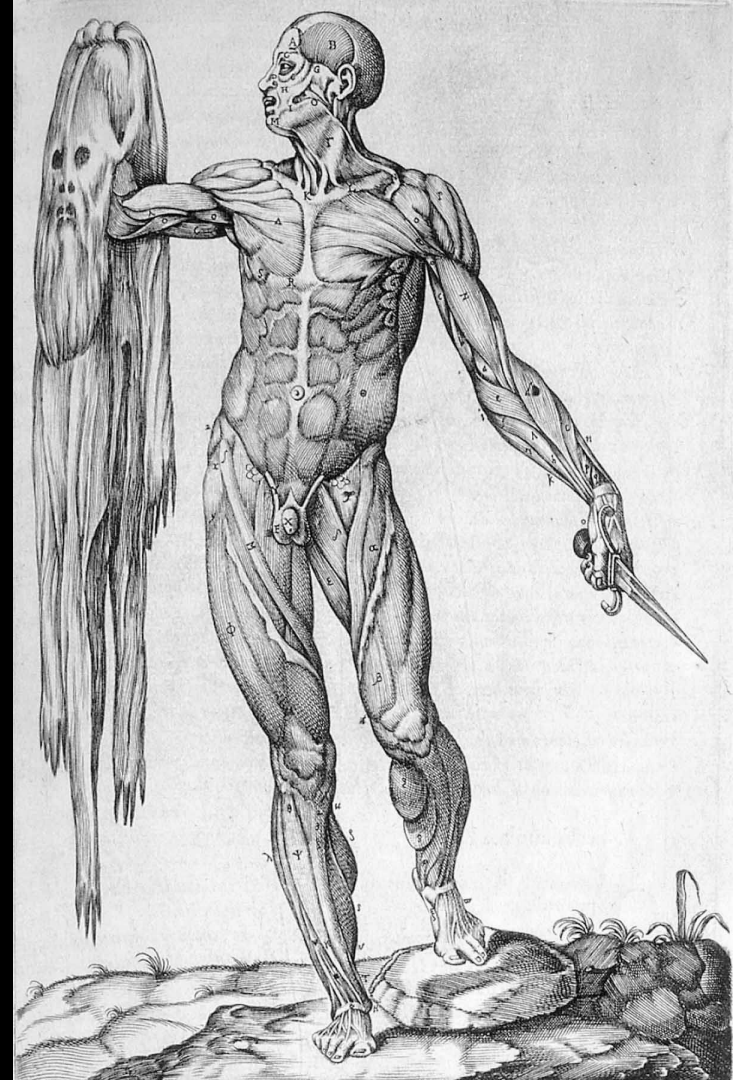




**“[Alternatively] the recorded history of *Homo sapiens* has not in general been one of benevolent treatment of residents by invaders...**

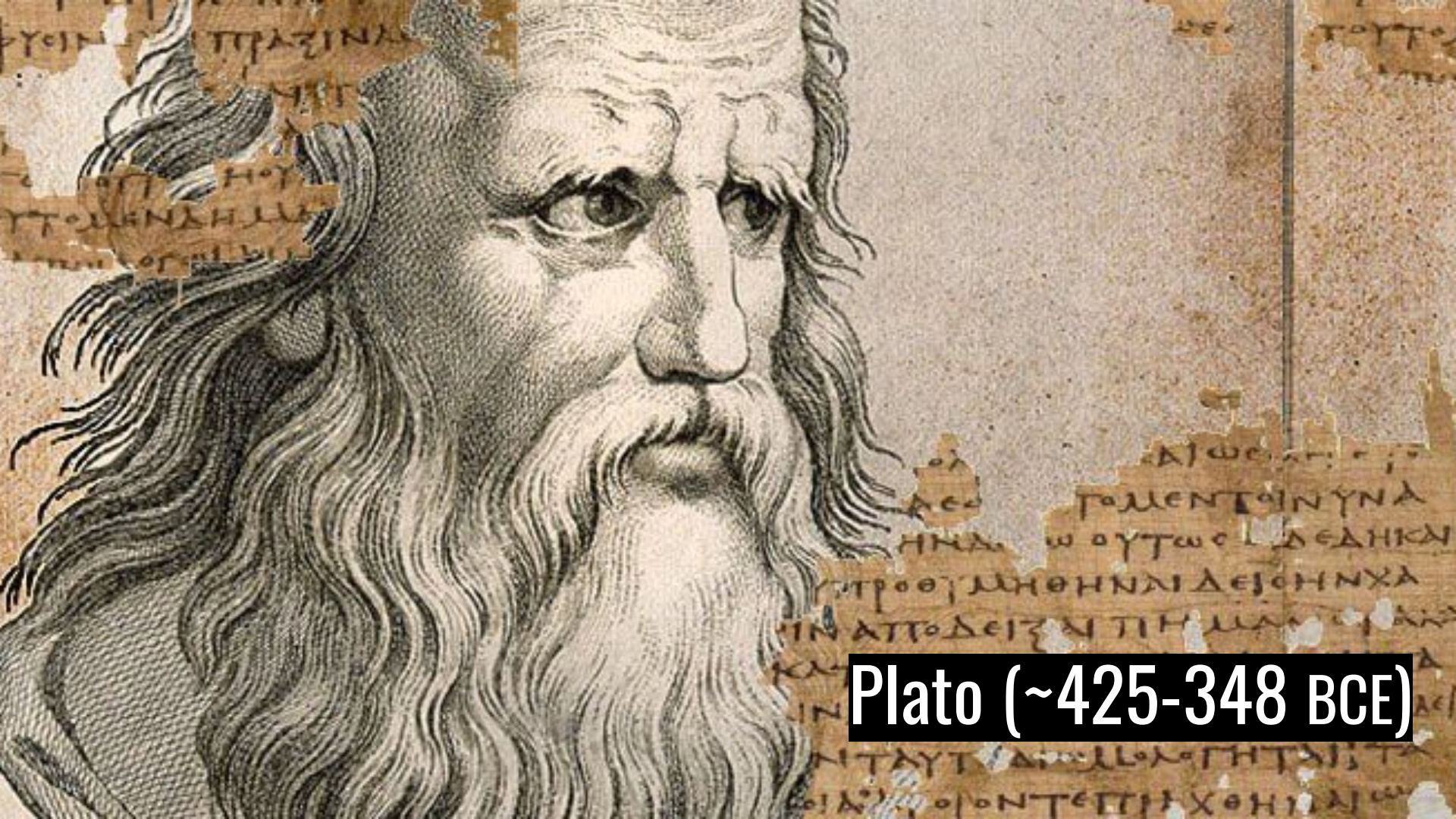
**And fossil datings suggest that something similar was happening at about the same time to *Homo erectus* in eastern Asia—as presumably it was to hominids in various other parts of the world...**

Many species of hominids “most likely met [their] end at the hands of *Homo sapiens*” (Tattersall 2008: 104-6).



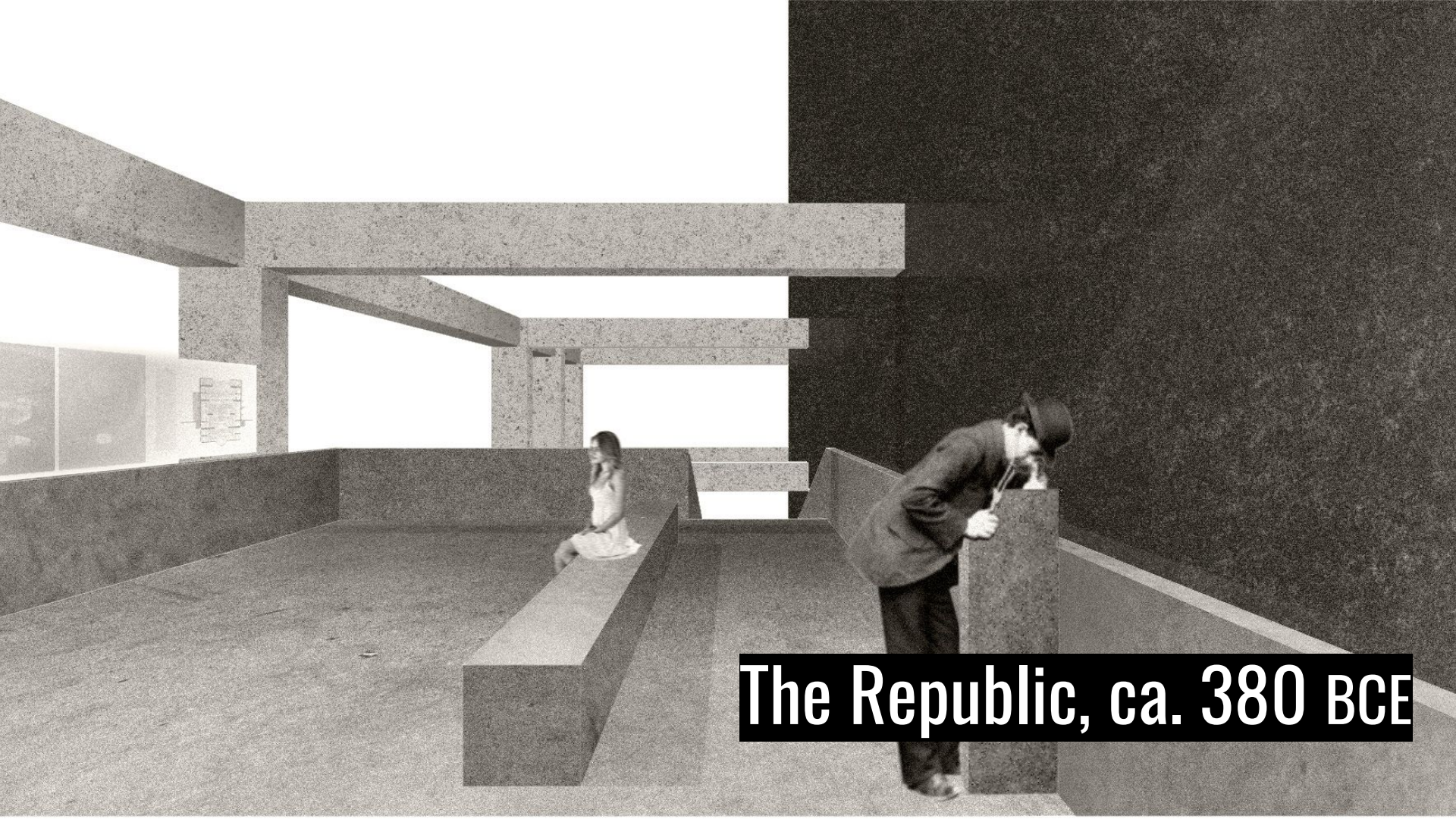
**The puzzle of human prosociality has  
preoccupied thinkers going back to the origins  
of Western Philosophy...**



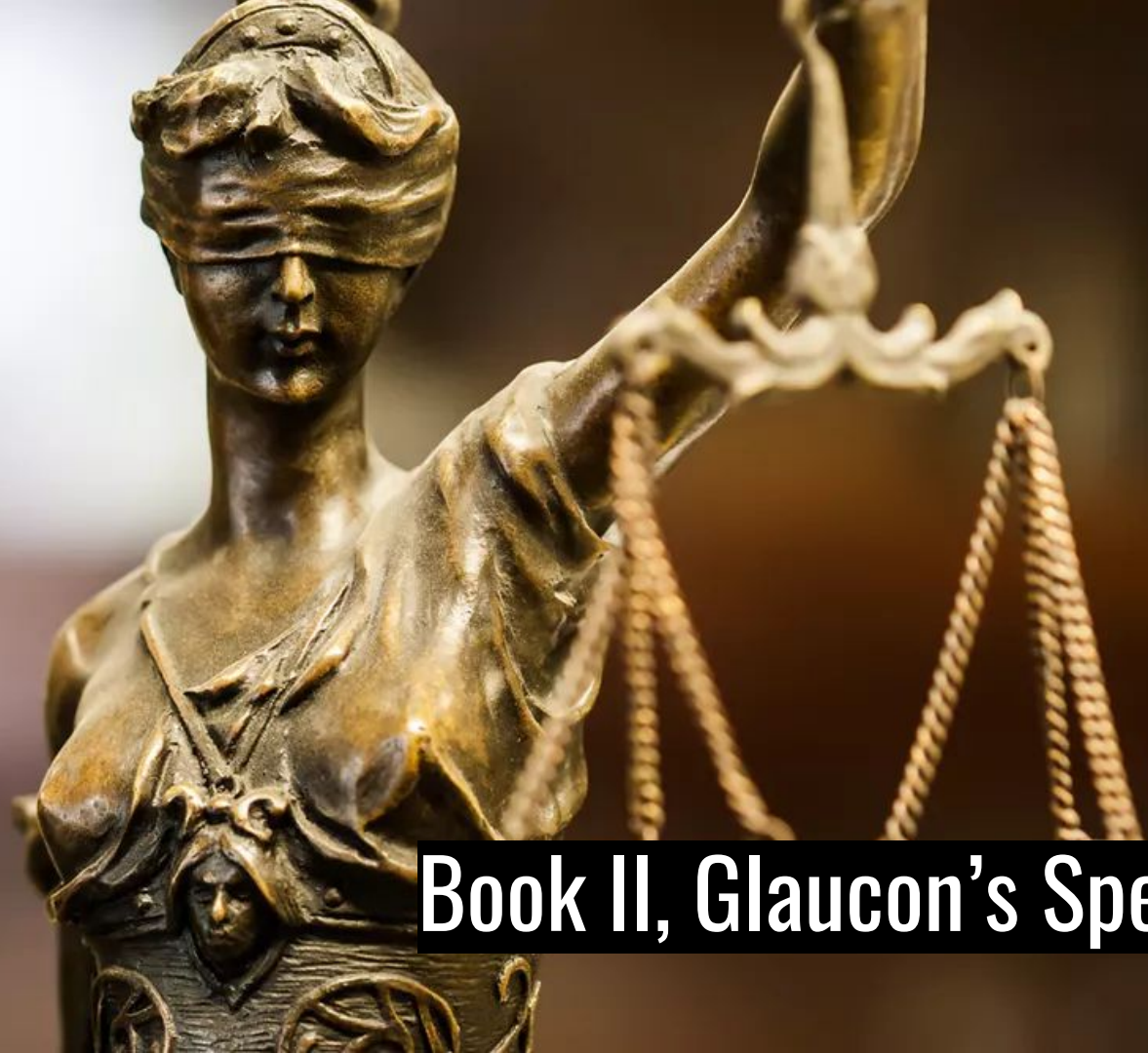


**Plato (~425-348 BCE)**





**The Republic, ca. 380 BCE**



**Book II, Glaucon's Speech**





**The Healthy City**





**The City of Pigs**

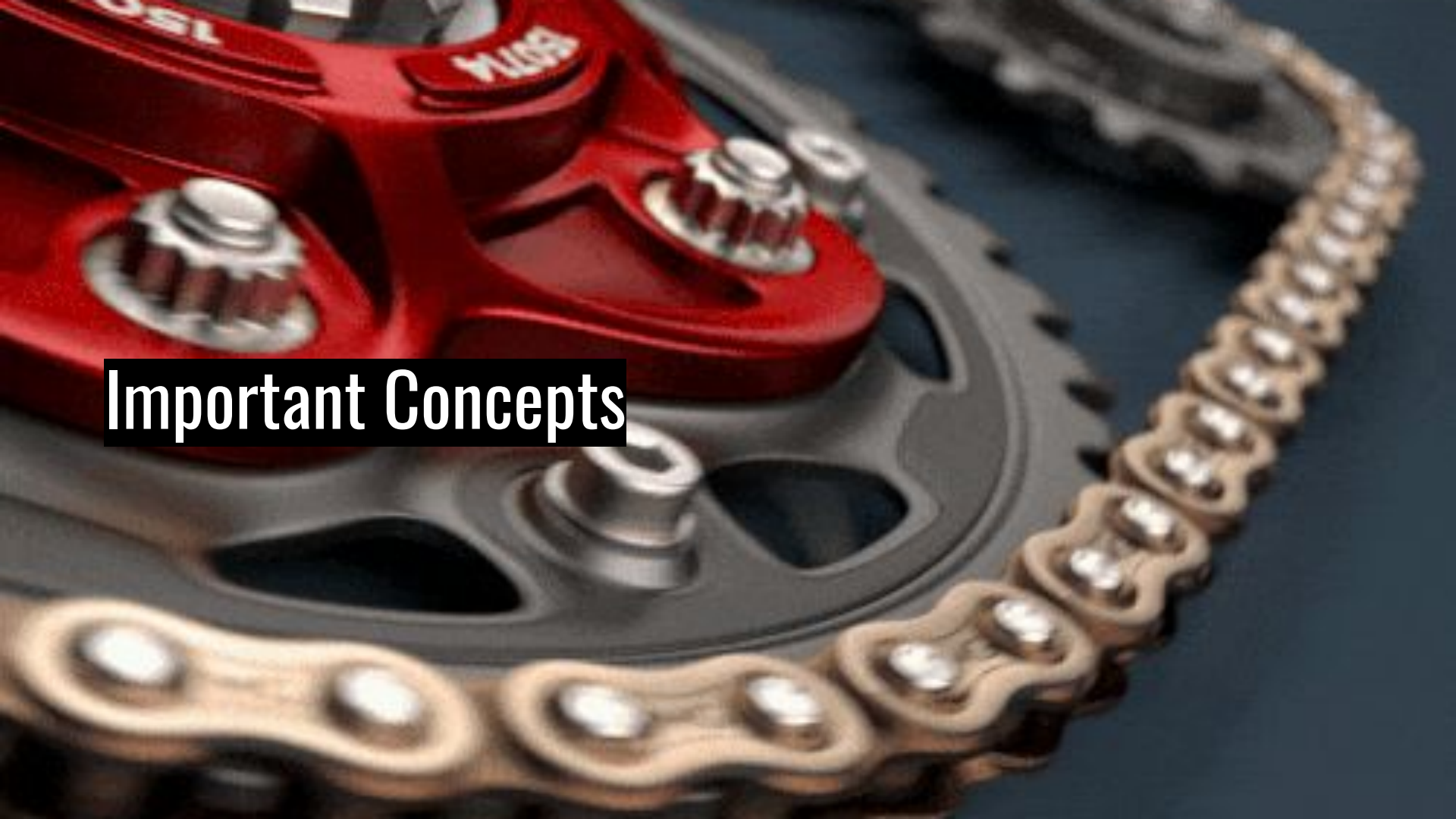




# The Fevered City





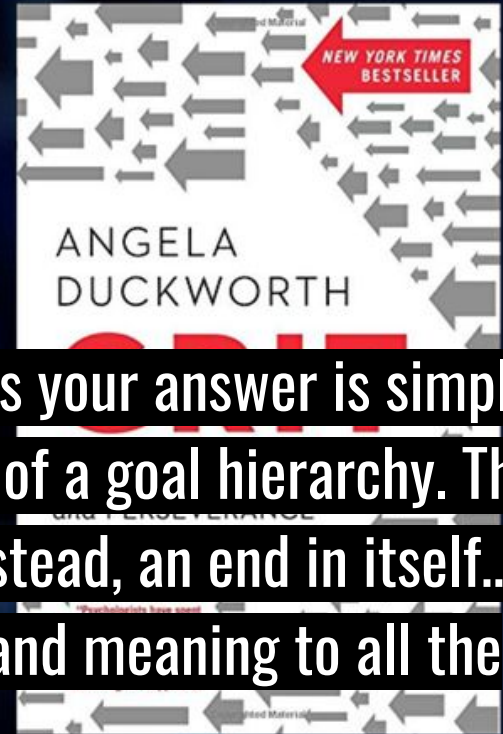


**Important Concepts**

How do you know which are your intrinsic goods?

Ask yourself why you do things?

“If in the course of asking yourself these *why* questions your answer is simply ‘Just because’, then you know you’ve gotten to the top of a goal hierarchy. The top-level goal is not a means to any other end. It is, instead, an end in itself... This top level goal (is) a compass that gives direction and meaning to all the goals below it” (Duckworth 2007: 63).







An **intrinsic good** is the type of thing that is good for its own sake, e.g.,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

An **extrinsic good** is the type of thing that is good because of what it brings  
you, e.g., \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

Some goods are both desired for their own sake and desired for their  
consequences.

**Hedonism** is the view that pleasure/enjoyment/happiness is the **ONLY** intrinsic good.

**Psychological egoism** (PE) is the view that humans are driven purely by self-interest.

Hedonism + psychological egoism yields multiple views. One is...  
**Ethical Egoism** (EE) is the view that an act is right if and only if it is in the best interest of the agent doing the act.

Question:  
Is  $EE$  true?

# Argument for Ethical Egoism

1. If the only way humans are able to behave is out of self-interest, then that should be our moral standard.
2. All human actions are done purely out of self-interest, even when we think we are behaving selflessly (psychological egoism).
3. Therefore, our moral standard should be that all humans should behave purely out of self-interest.

In short, if all we can do is behave in a self-interested way, that's all we should do...

It seems to account for many of our behaviors. For one, often people in ways that are blatantly self-interested.

Sometimes, however, people cooperate and behave altruistically, or for the benefit of others.

Egoists claim their view can also account for this sort of behavior because it's possible people behave this way only to:

- get the benefits of working cooperatively, or
- enjoy moral praise (from themselves and others), or
- just avoid feeling guilt.





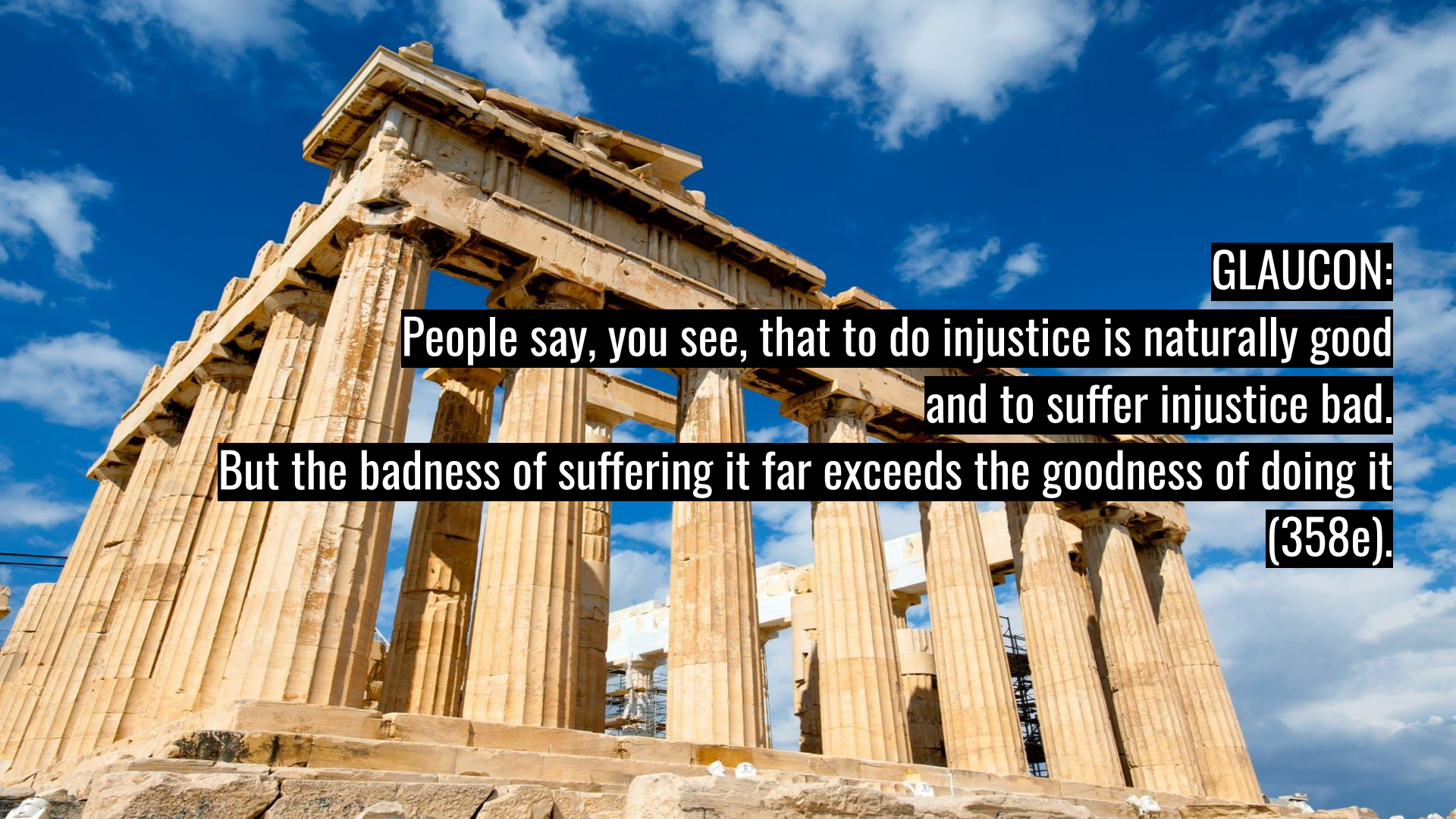




*"A man  
always has two  
reasons for what he  
does—  
a good one,  
and the real one."  
-J. P. Morgan*

**Another related theory is...**

**Social Contract Theory** (SCT) is the name given to a family of views that state that the norms of justice arise from agreements between individuals.

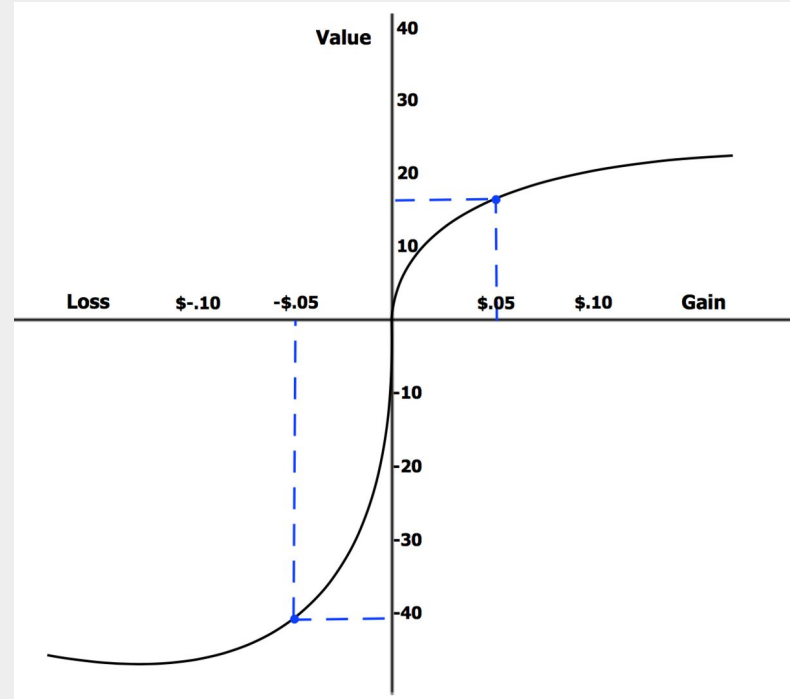
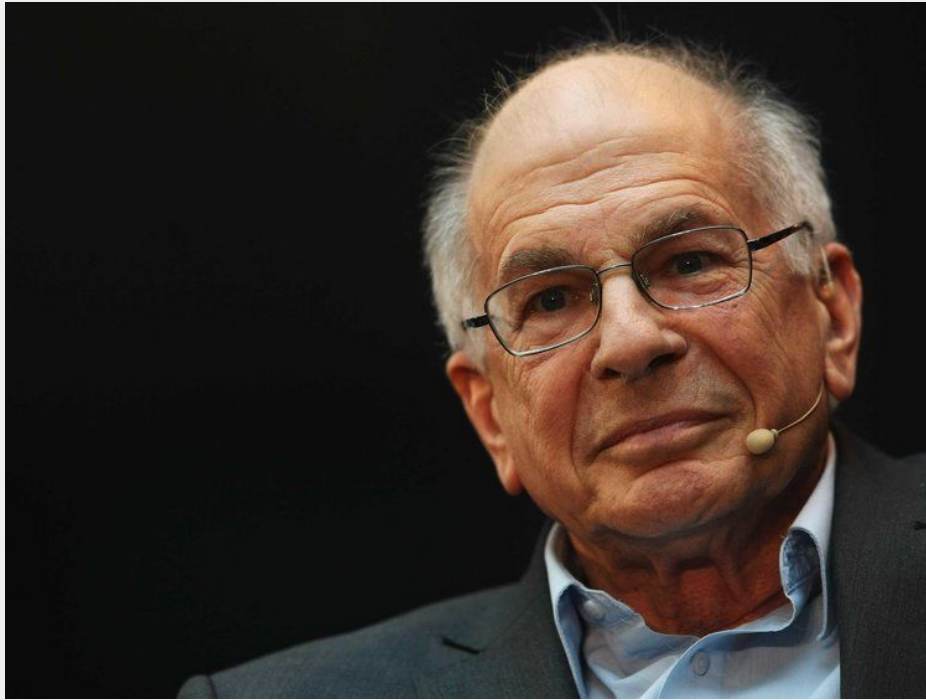


**GLAUCON:**

**People say, you see, that to do injustice is naturally good  
and to suffer injustice bad.**

**But the badness of suffering it far exceeds the goodness of doing it  
(358e).**





Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1991). Loss aversion in riskless choice: A reference-dependent model. *The quarterly journal of economics*, 106 (4), 1039-1061.



**GLAUCON:**

**Hence, those who have done and suffered injustice and who have tasted both—the ones who lack the power to do it and avoid suffering it—decide that it is profitable to come to an agreement with each other neither to do injustice nor to suffer it. As a result, they begin to make laws and covenants; and what the law commands, they call lawful and just.**

**(359a).**





**GLAUCON:**

**That, they say, is the origin and very being of justice.**

**It is in between the best and the worst.**

**The best is to do injustice without paying the penalty;**

**the worst is to suffer it without being able to take revenge.**

**Justice is in the middle between these two extremes.**

**People love it, not because it is a good thing,**

**but because they are too weak to do injustice with impunity**

**(359a).**





**Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), *The Leviathan*, 1651**



**F** HD

“Hereby it is manifest that, during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war, and such a war as is of every man against every man.”



“In such condition there is no place for industry,  
because the fruit thereof is uncertain,  
and consequently no culture of the earth,  
no navigation nor use of the commodities that may  
be imported by sea,  
no commodious building,  
no instruments of moving and removing such  
things as require much force,  
no knowledge of the face of the earth. . .”





“No account of time,  
no arts,  
no letters,  
no society,  
and,  
which is worst of all,  
continual fear and danger of violent death. . .”





“And the life of man  
solitary, poor, nasty,  
brutish, and short.”



Hobbes, assuming that **psychological egoism** is true, agrees with Glaucon that all prosocial behavior is merely a state of affairs we submit to purely out of self-interest.

**Morality is a convenient fiction.**



In short, we submit to an authority and give it a monopoly on legitimate violence because the alternative, the **state of nature** where everyone is at war with each other, is substantially worse.



*Food for thought...*



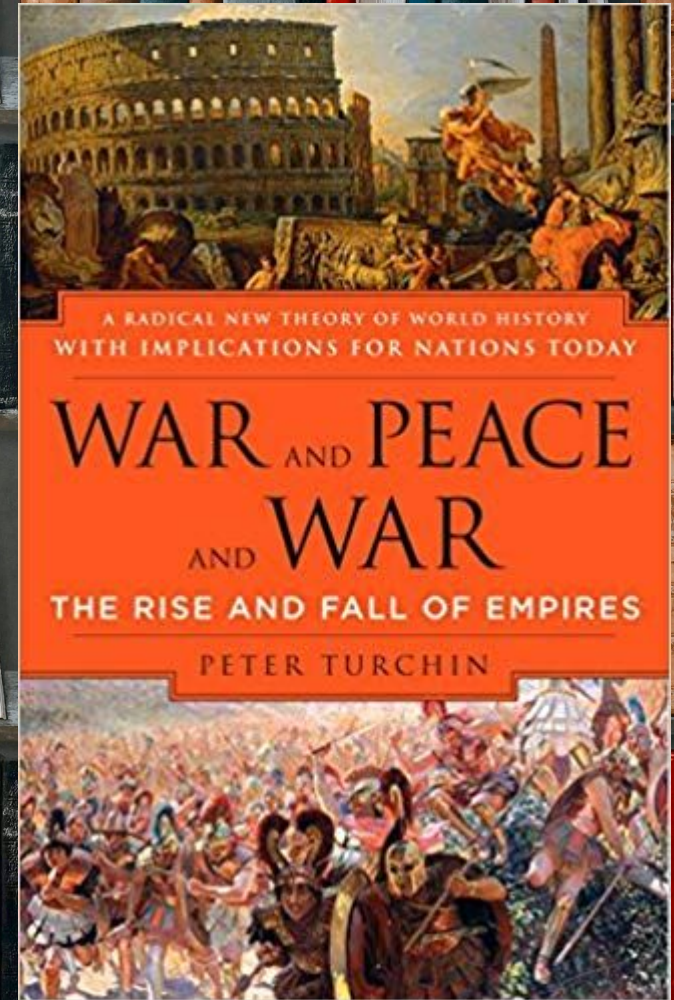
**It appears that EE and Hobbes' SCT seem to go in and out of fashion...**



In his landmark work, *War and Peace and War*, Peter Turchin argues that **conflict** is the driving force of imperiogenesis (the formation of empires) and all its accompanying benefits (and drawbacks).

This is because a particular type of conflict gives rise to social **solidarity**, which leads to **collective action** and robust state formation.

His view is in opposition to psychological egoism, but he acknowledges that egoism has been pervasive throughout history.





**“The capacity to sacrifice self-interest for the sake of common good is the necessary condition for cooperation. Without it, concerted collective action is impossible...” (Turchin 2007: 108).**

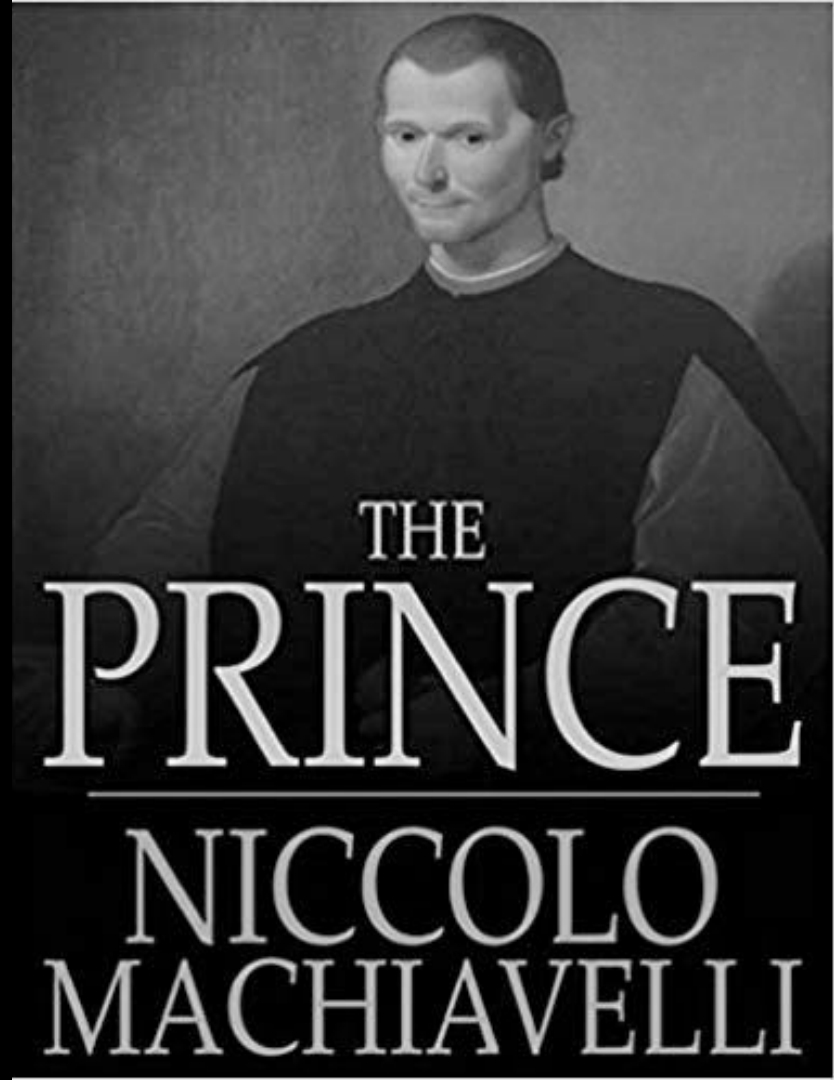


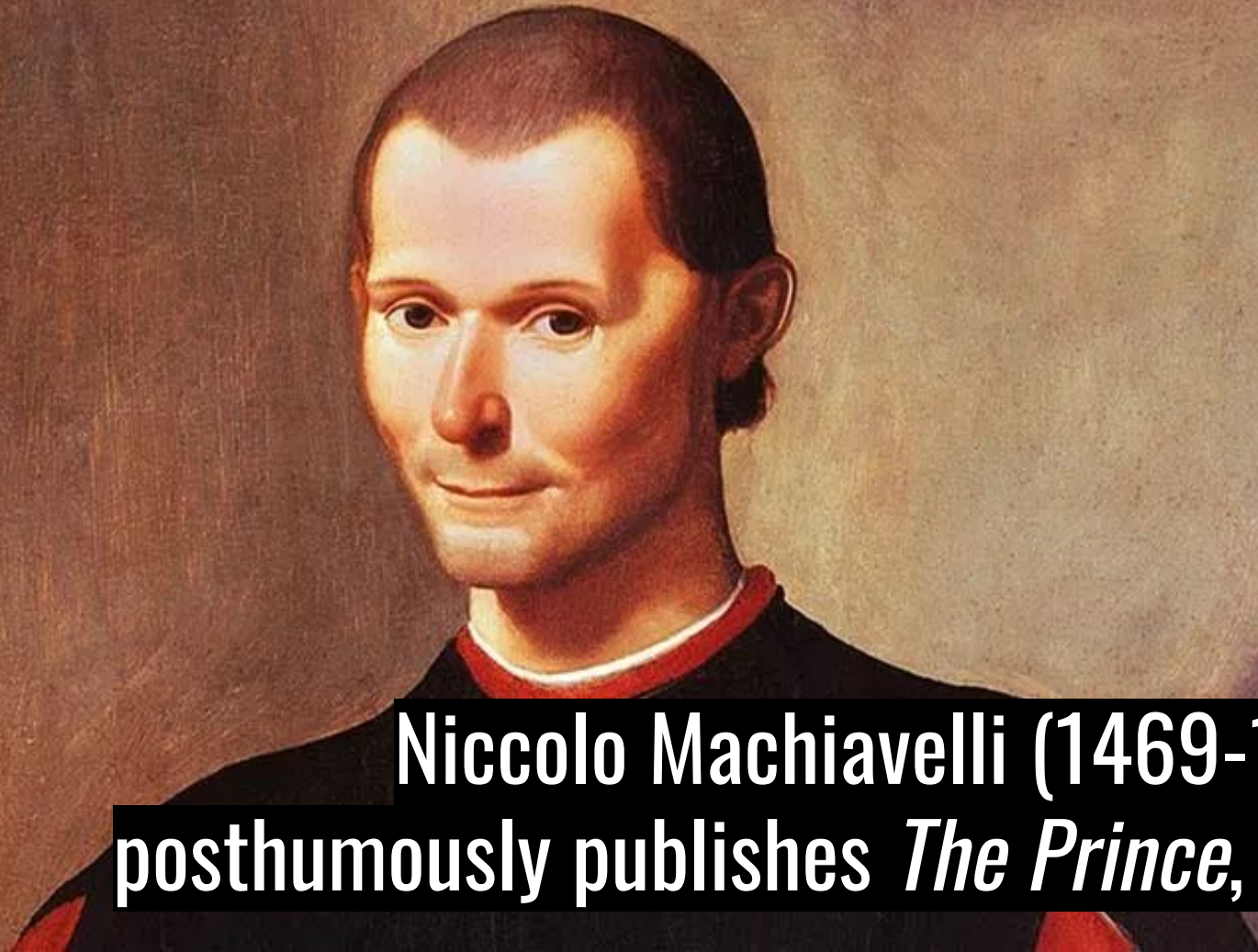


**“To ancient and medieval thinkers such as Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and, above all, Ibn Khaldun, it was obvious that it was cooperation that provided the basis of social life...”**

“By the end of the twentieth century, the ‘rational-choice theory,’ which postulated that people behave in entirely self-interested manner, became the dominant paradigm in the social sciences.

Any theories that invoked cooperation as moving force of history were ridiculed as unscientific” (*ibid.*).



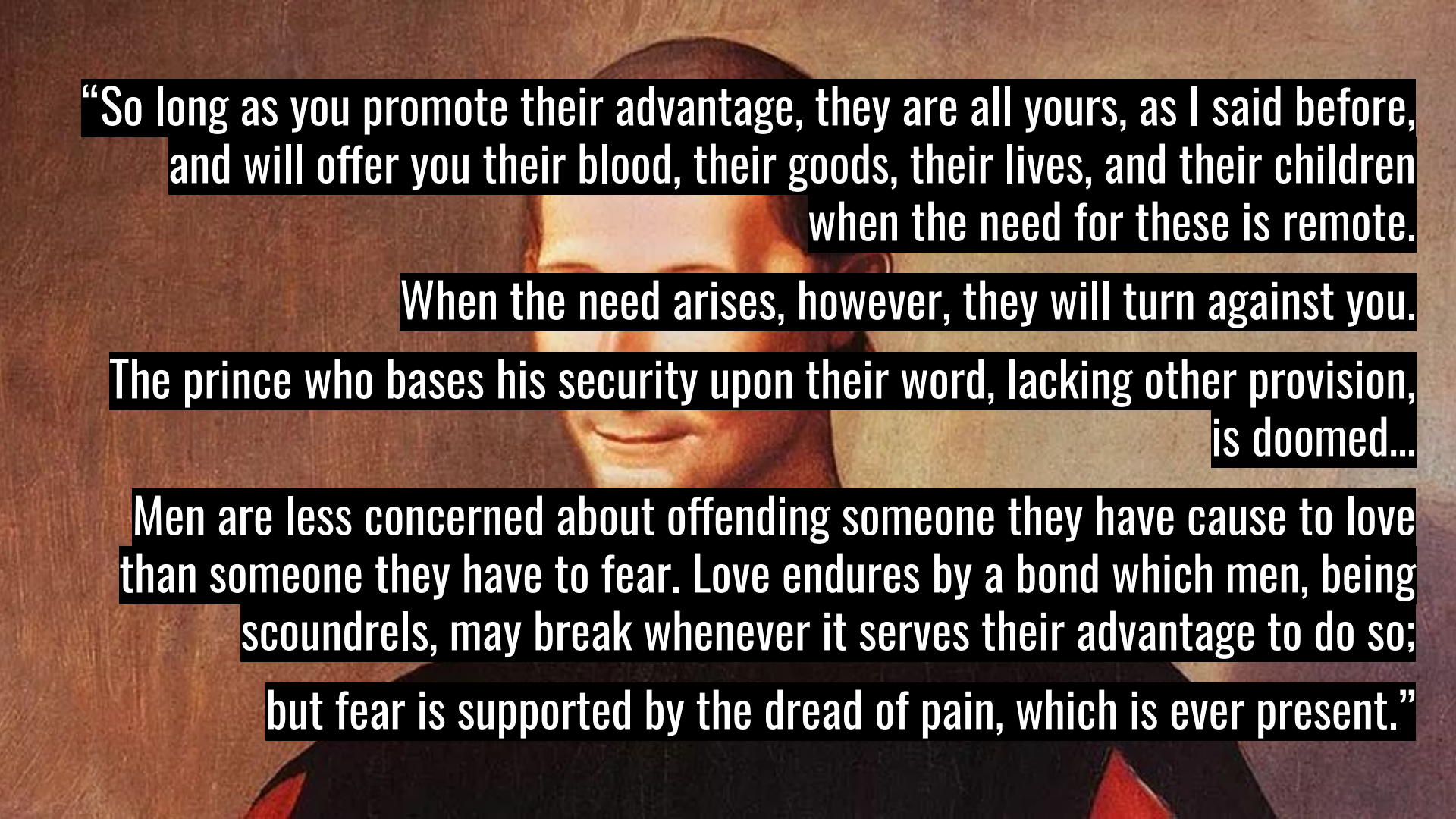


**Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527)**  
posthumously publishes *The Prince*, 1532



# LITTLE NICKY



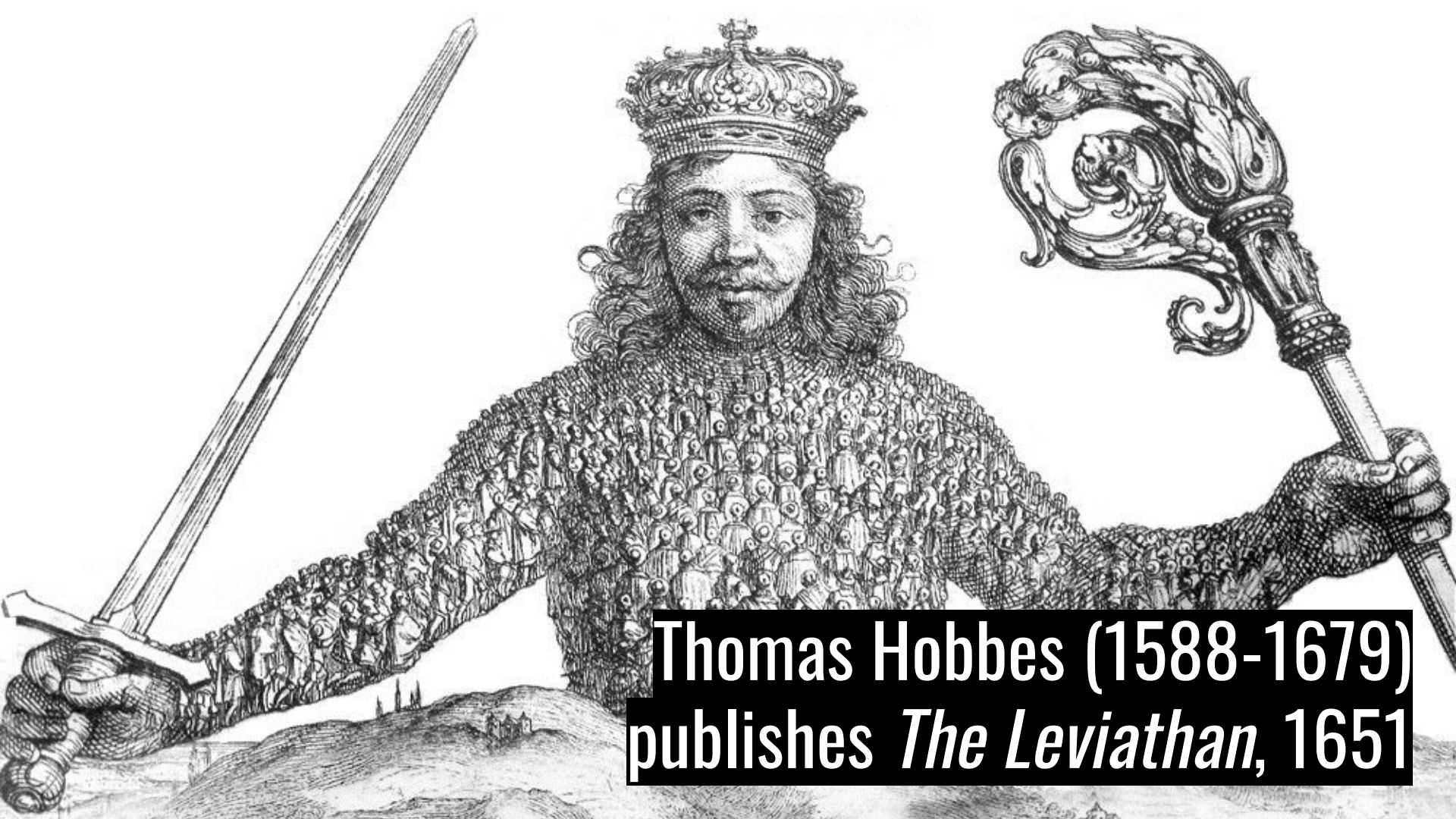


**“So long as you promote their advantage, they are all yours, as I said before, and will offer you their blood, their goods, their lives, and their children when the need for these is remote.**

**When the need arises, however, they will turn against you.**

**The prince who bases his security upon their word, lacking other provision, is doomed...**

**Men are less concerned about offending someone they have cause to love than someone they have to fear. Love endures by a bond which men, being scoundrels, may break whenever it serves their advantage to do so; but fear is supported by the dread of pain, which is ever present.”**



**Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)**  
publishes *The Leviathan*, 1651





**Book II of *The Republic*, Glaucon's Speech, ca. 380 BCE**



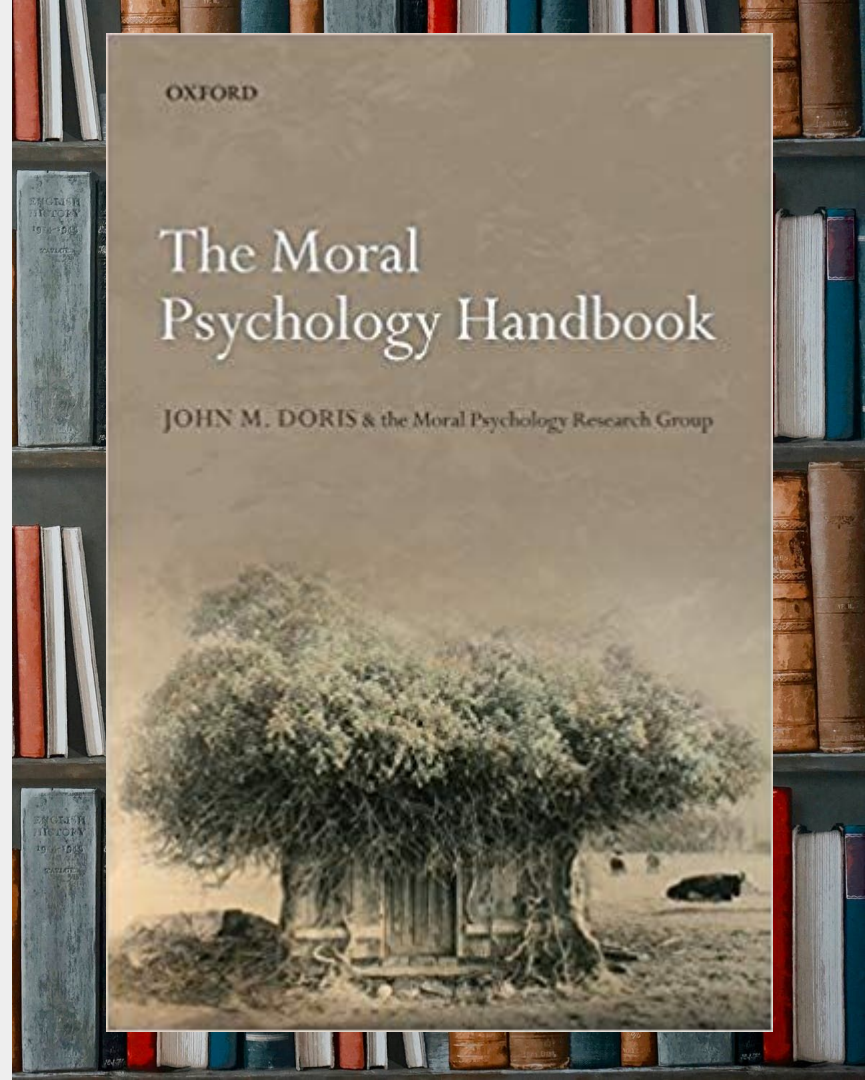
**Question:**

**How should the question of psychological egoism be resolved?**

According to Stich (et al. 2010; in Doris 2010, ch. 5) the question of *psychological egoism* is simply the question of whether *altruism* (acting for the benefit of others) exists or not, and that is ultimately an **empirical question**.

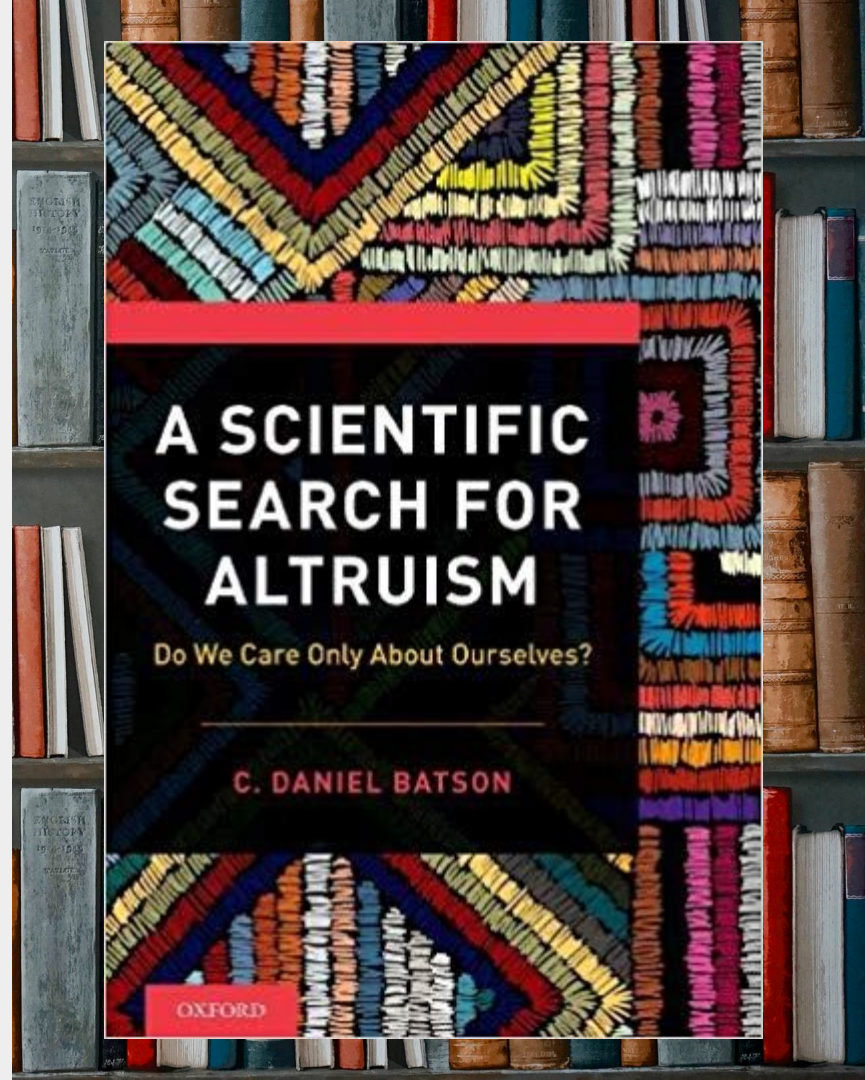
In other words, it must be resolved through systematic observation from an empirical discipline.

In particular, this is an issue for social psychology...



This is precisely what Daniel Batson has been doing his entire career...

The first step is to define *egoism* and *altruism* such that they are amenable to empirical examination.



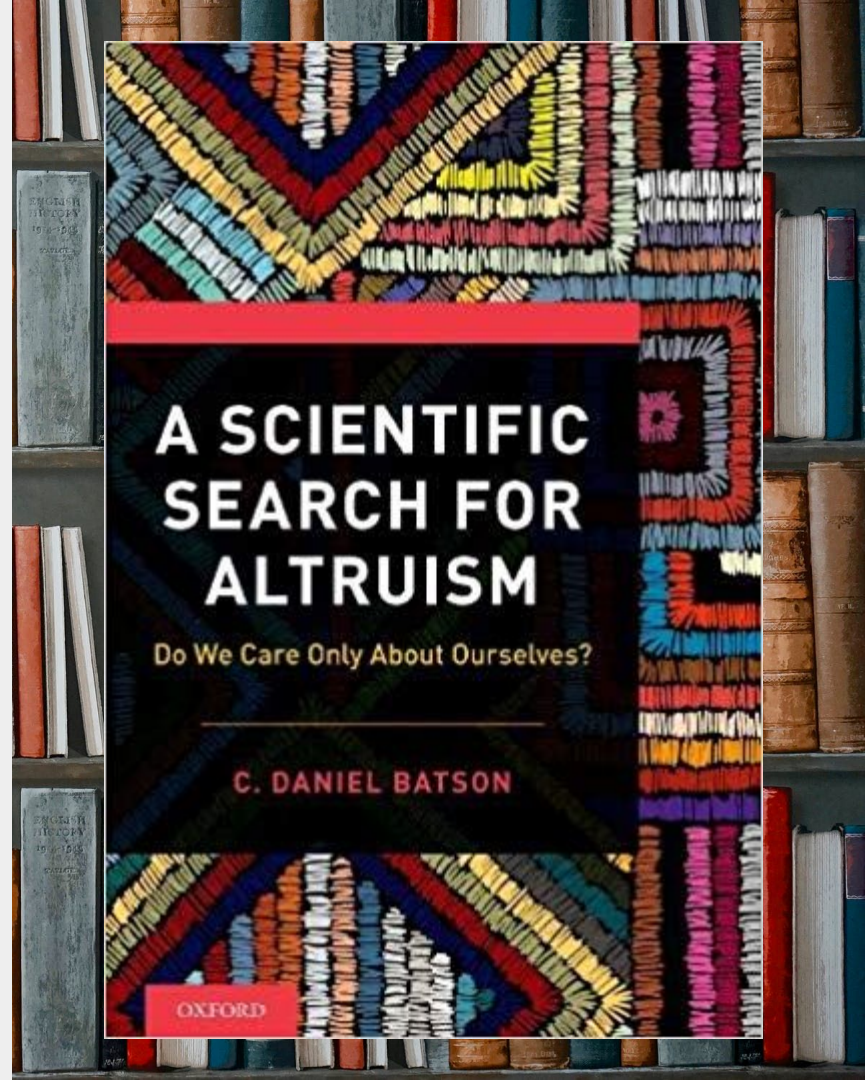


He defines each term thus:

**Altruism** is a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's welfare.

**Egoism** is a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing our own welfare.

See Batson (2019: 22).





**“By these definitions, altruism  
and egoism have much in  
common:**

**Each refers to a goal-directed  
motive.**

**Each is concerned with the  
ultimate goal of that motive...**





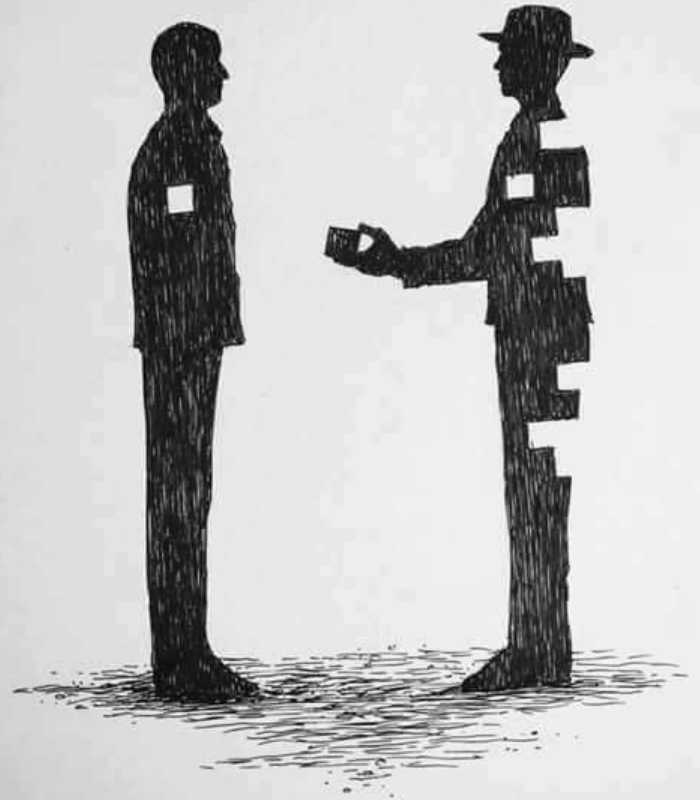
**“And for each, the ultimate goal is to increase someone’s welfare. These common features highlight the crucial difference:**

**Whose welfare is the ultimate goal?**

**Is it the other person’s or my own?”**

**(ibid., 23).**

**“If we’re to determine whether the motivation [to perform some action] was altruistic or egoistic, we need to know whether benefit to the person in need was (a) an ultimate goal, with benefit to the helper being an unintended consequence (altruism); or...**





**“(b) an instrumental goal on the way to the ultimate goal of benefit to the helper (egoism)” (ibid., 26).**





**“But if helping benefits both the person in need and the helper, how can we know which is the ultimate behavior?”**

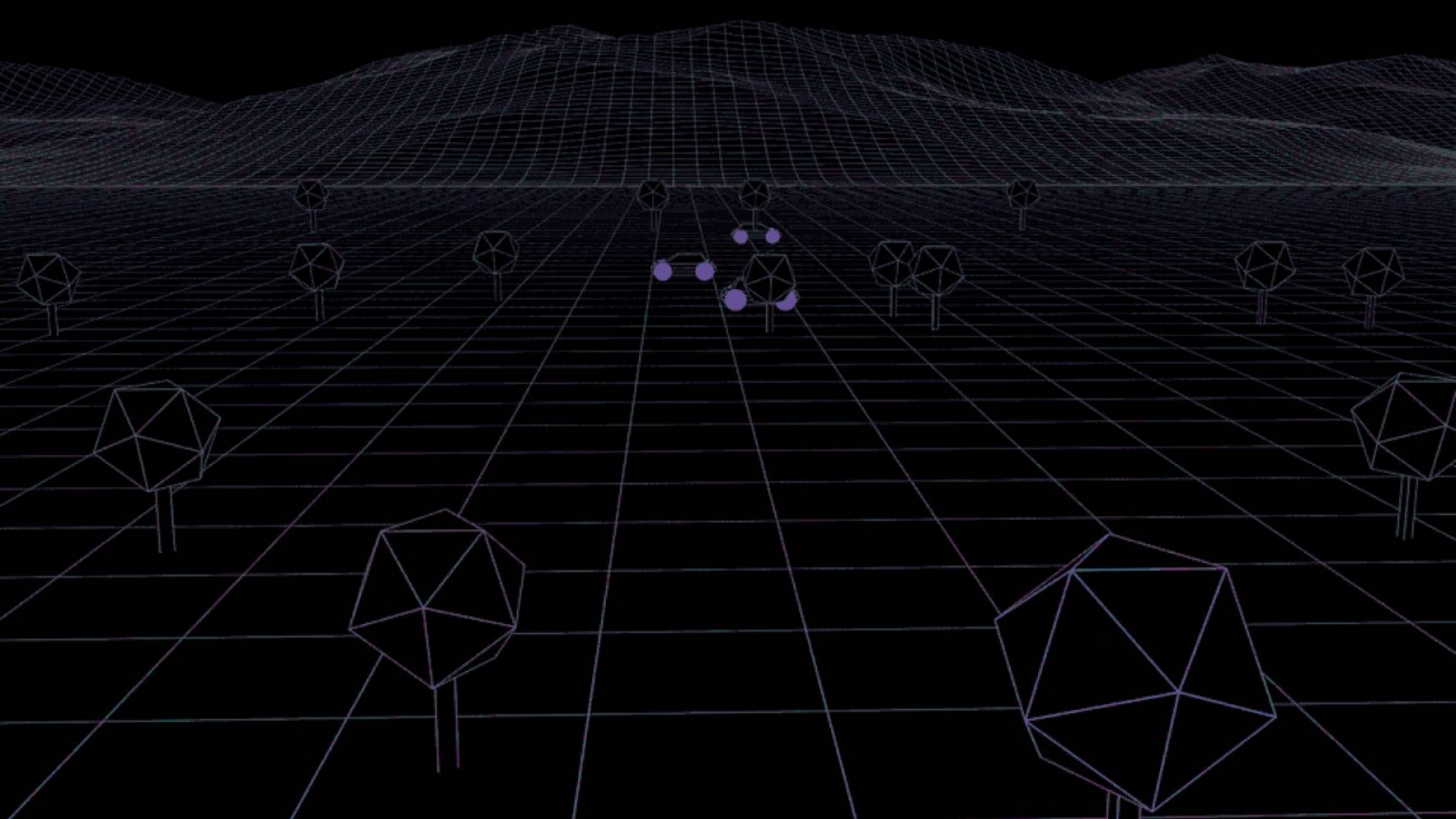
**More generally, if two goals are reached by the same behavior, how can we know which goal is ultimate?”**

**This puzzle has led many scientists to give up on the question of the existence of altruistic motivation, concluding that it can’t be answered empirically...” (Batson 2019: 26).**

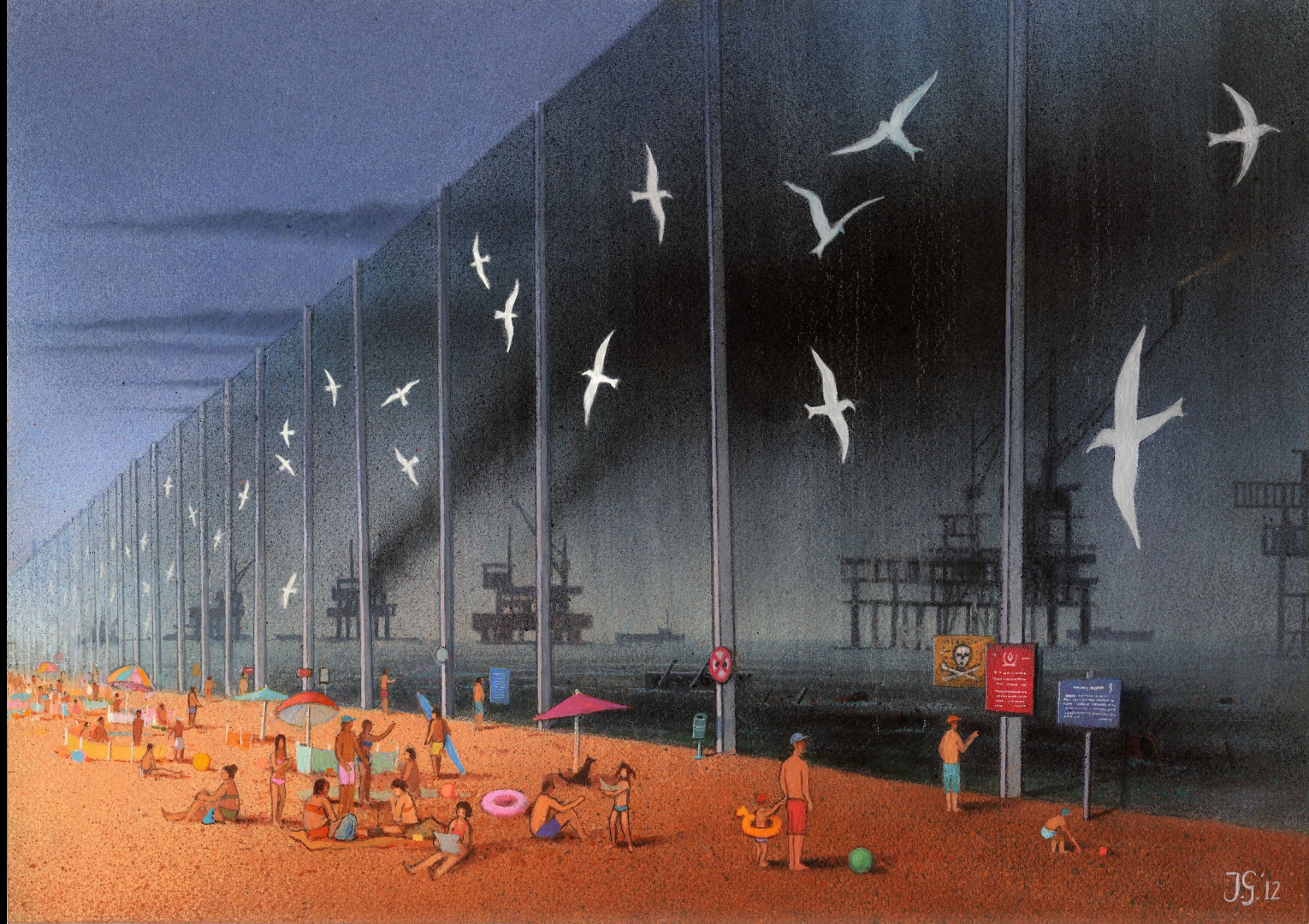
# PHIL 103: Ethics and Society



**Many people intuitively see the truth of egoism  
in society...**











P. Knapik 2010

