Psychiatric Disorder: Lessons for the Division of Labor in Bio-Medicine

Or why there should be more jobs for philosophers

Kelly Roe, WIP March 3, 2009

Introduction

STIPULATION / ASSUMPTION OF THE DSM

- Psychiatry is an applied science of mental disorder

- Its aim is to discover the causes and nature of mental disorder and apply effective treatments

Introduction

- In the 1960's there was a serious critique of psychiatry by gay rights activists in particular

- Anti-psychiatrists maintained there was little more to mental disorder than our judging certain people to violate certain kinds of (yet to be specified) social and / or moral norms.

The Grounding Project

- In response theorists have attempted to show psychiatry to be grounded in the non-normative biological sciences (the naturalization or grounding project).

The Grounding Project
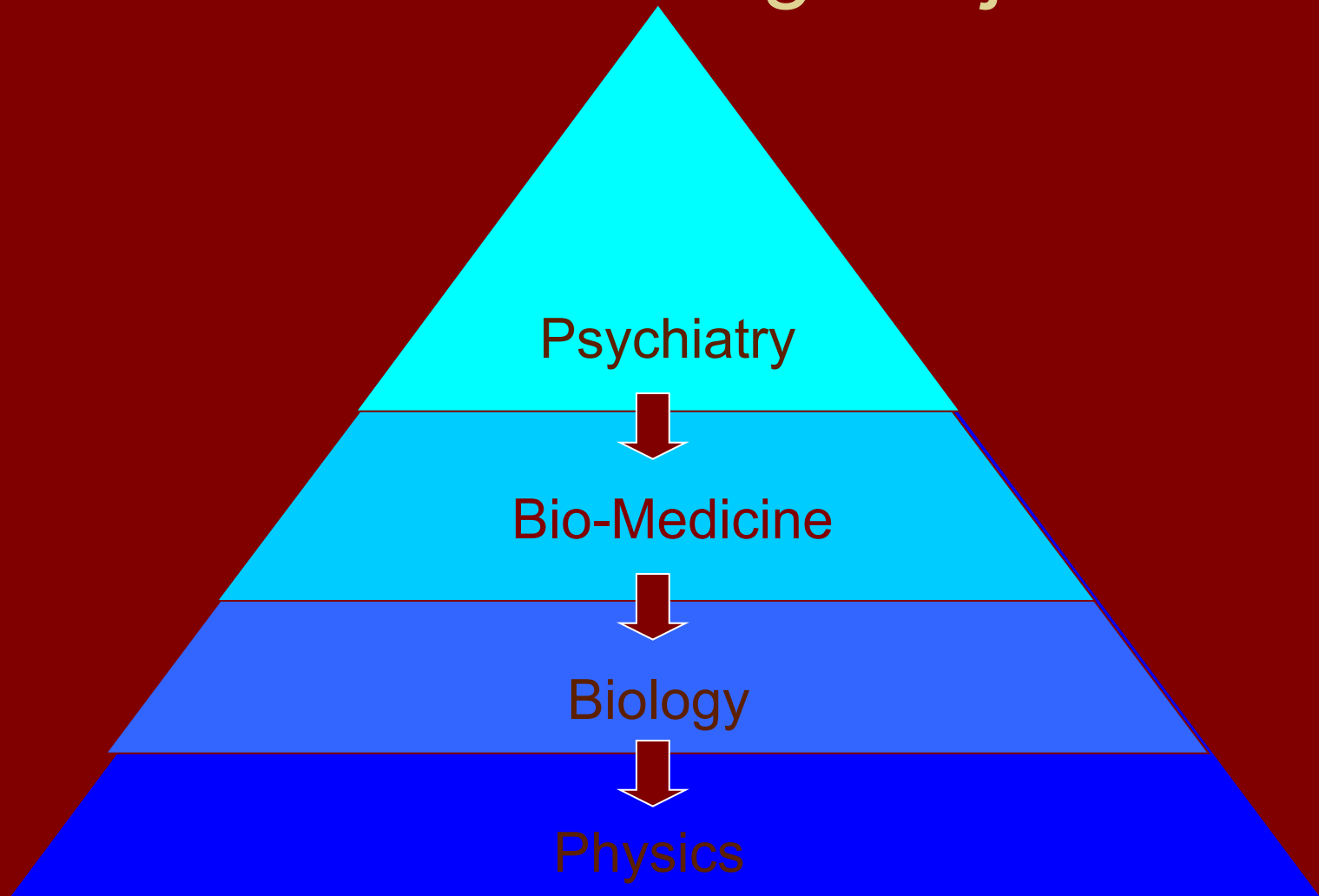
The Division of Labor

- William James hope of helping psychology better become a science by getting clearer on the division of labor between the metaphysical (philosophical) issues and the psychological (scientific) issues

- I similarly have a hope that I can help psychiatry become better regarded as a science by getting clearer on the division of labor between the conceptual and normative (philosophical) issues and the role of scientific discovery

- In particular I think that rather than being a poorer second cousin of the bio-medical sciences psychiatry has much to show us about the nature of bio-medicine more generally

Some Intuitions

INTUITIVE JUDGEMENT OF CASES

- Intuitions about paradigmatic symptoms
  - Delusion, hallucination, depression, mania
- Intuitions about paradigmatic conditions
  - Depression, bi-polar, schizophrenia

THEORETICAL INTUITIONS

- There is something wrong with people who are mentally disordered

Some Intuitions

NORMATIVE INTUITIONS

- People who have a mental disorder would be better off if they didn't have a mental disorder (defeasible rights and duties for treatment)

SCIENTIFIC INTUITIONS

- Science will tell us the nature of what is wrong with them
  - EMPIRICAL FINDINGS
    - Science has told us x

Intuitions and the Division of Labor

CONCEPTUAL INTUITIONS

Judgment of Cases
Something is Wrong

NORMATIVE INTUITIONS

They would be better off if what was wrong would be put right

SCIENTIFIC INTUITIONS

Science will tell us what is wrong and the most effective way of fixing it
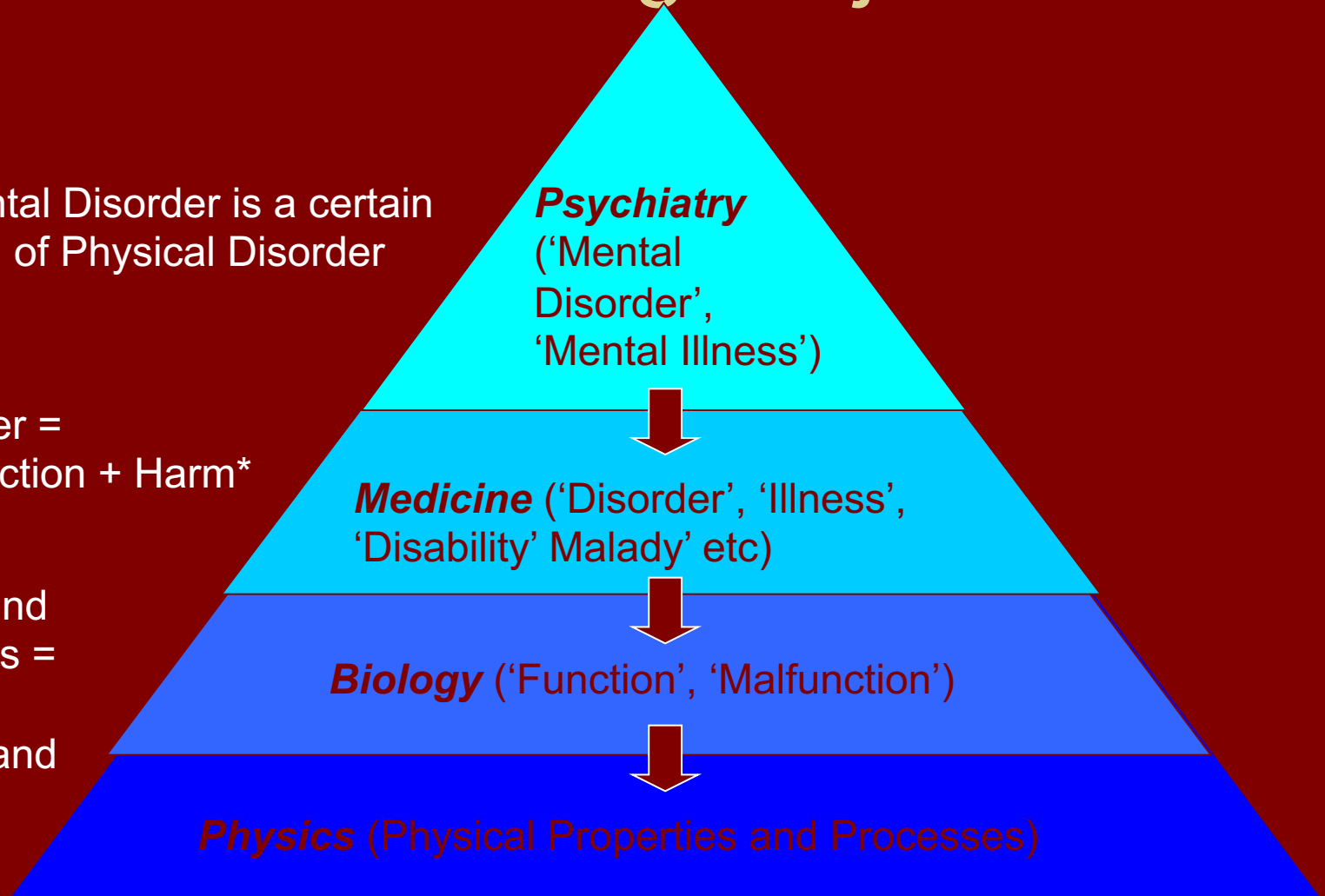
A Two-Stage View

- P1) It is a-priori that mental disorder is the result of an inner **dysfunction** that results in **harm** to the individual and / or to society (our judgment of cases tracks this)

- P2) It is a-priori that science will discover the relevant process for fixing the functions and **dysfunctions**

- P3) Science has told us that functions and **dysfunctions** are fixed by evolution by natural selection

- C) Therefore mental disorders are evolutionary **dysfunctions** within the person that result in harm to the individual and / or to society

The Grounding Project

Mental Disorder is a certain kind of Physical Disorder

Disorder = Dysfunction + Harm*

Functions and Malfunctions = Physical Properties and Processes

Psychiatry ('Mental Disorder', 'Mental Illness')

Medicine ('Disorder', 'Illness', 'Disability' Malady' etc)

Biology ('Function', 'Malfunction')

Physics (Physical Properties and Processes)

The Division of Labor

Judgment of Cases

Something is Wrong

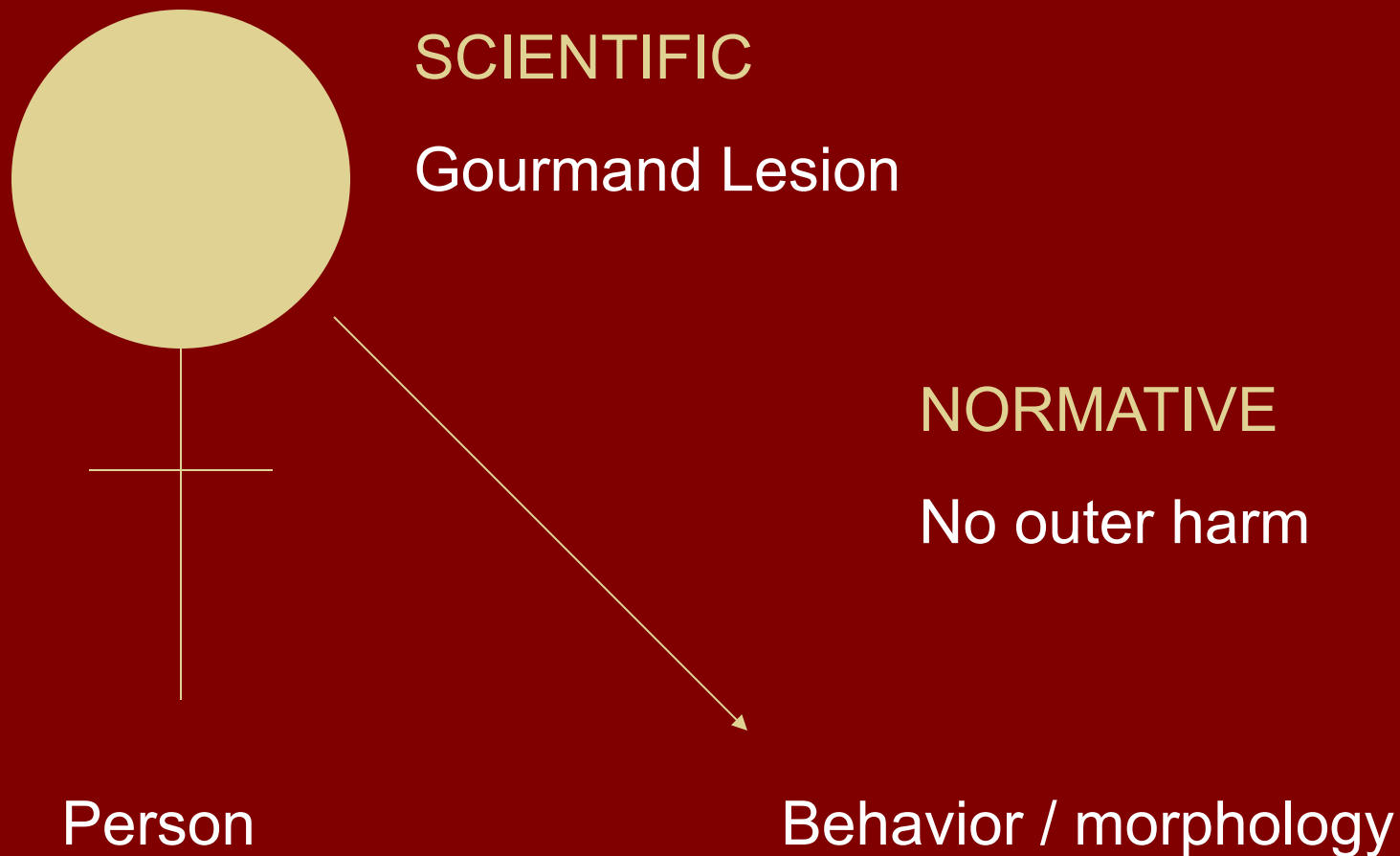NORMATIVE INTUITIONS   SCIENTIFIC INTUITIONS

Whether their behavior results in **harm** to the individual and / or society

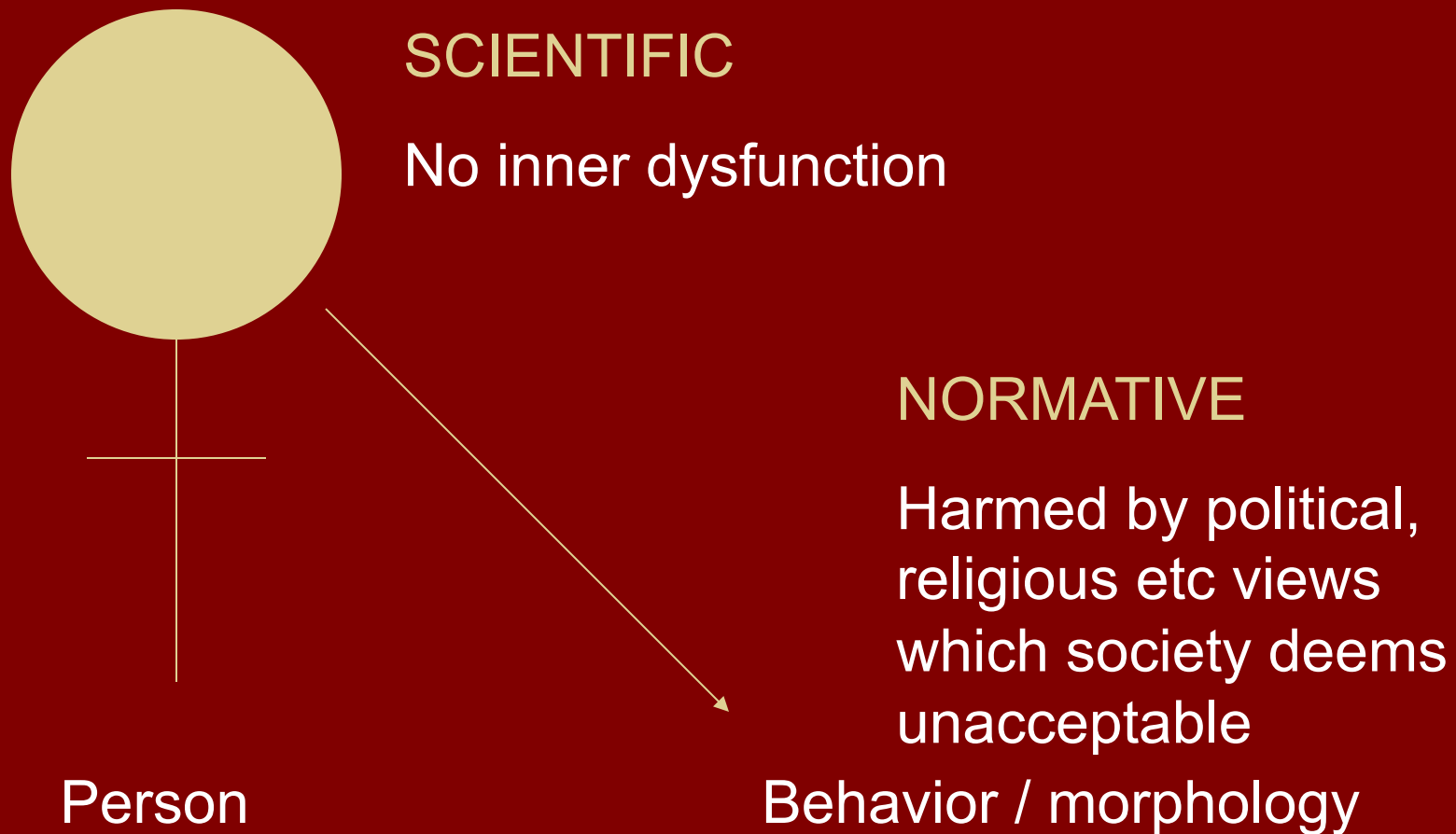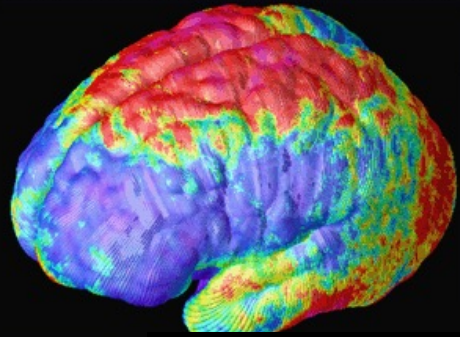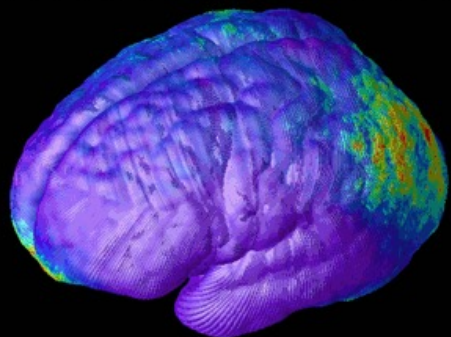Whether their behavior is caused by an inner **dysfunction**

Science and Norms

SCIENTIFIC

Does the person have an inner dysfunction?

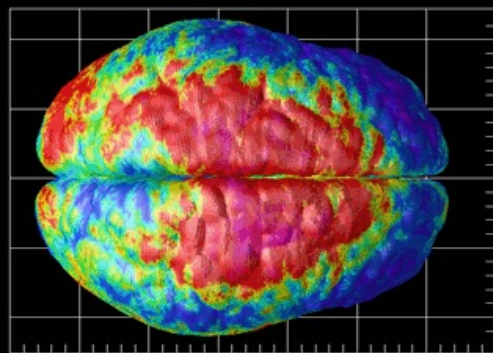**NORMATIVE**

Does the behavior result in harm to the person and / or society?

Person

Behavior

1. Inner Dysfunction No Harm

SCIENTIFIC

Gourmand Lesion

NORMATIVE

No outer harm

Person

Behavior / morphology

2. Harm No Inner Dysfunction

SCIENTIFIC

No inner dysfunction

NORMATIVE

Harmed by political, religious etc views which society deems unacceptable

Person

Behavior / morphology
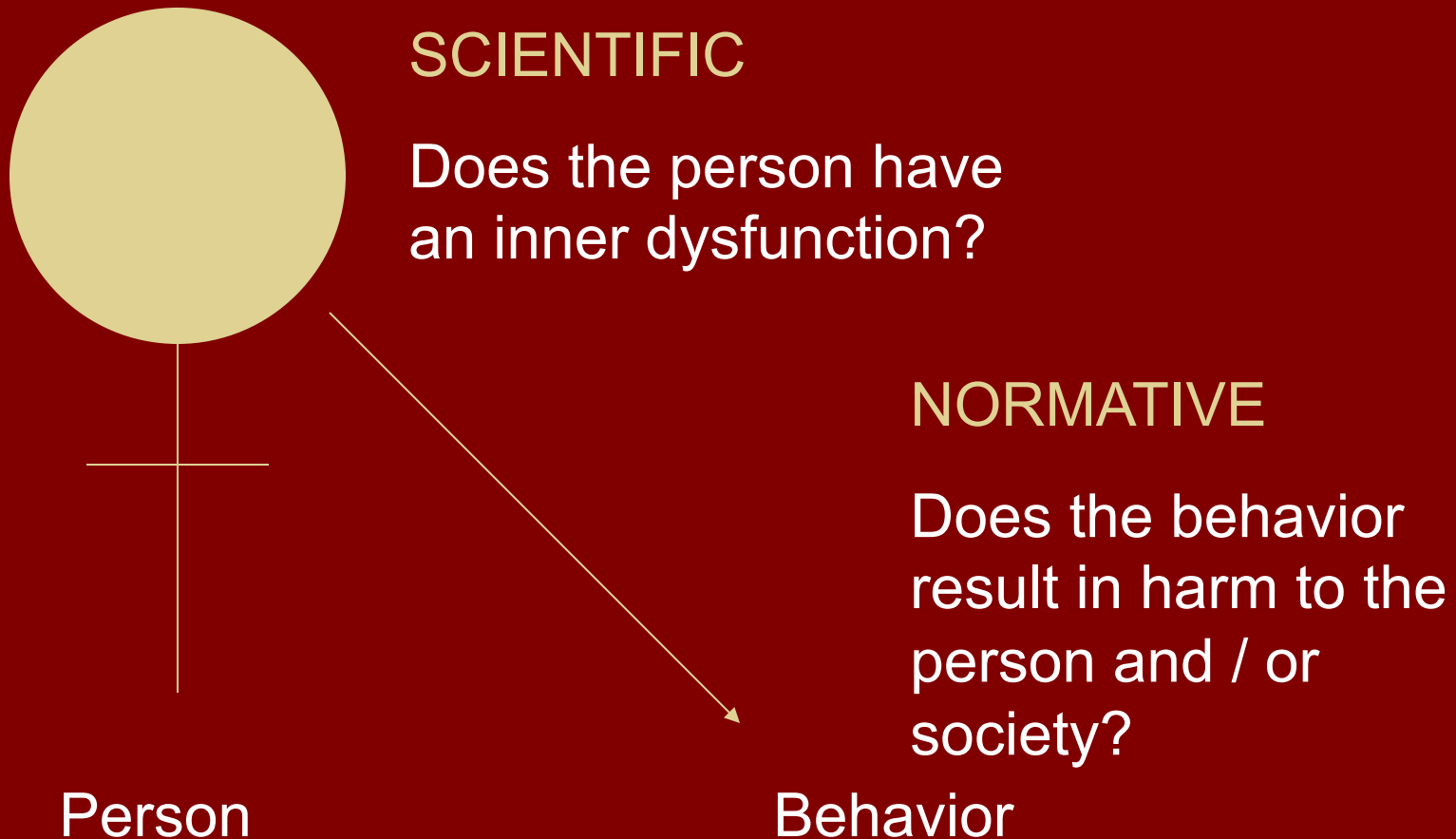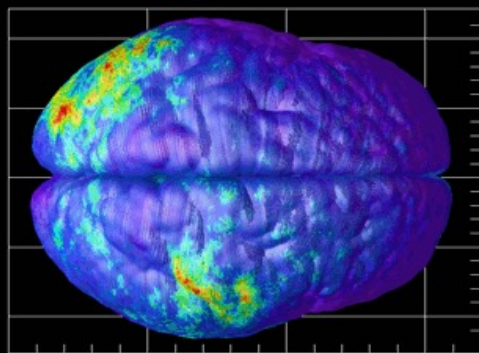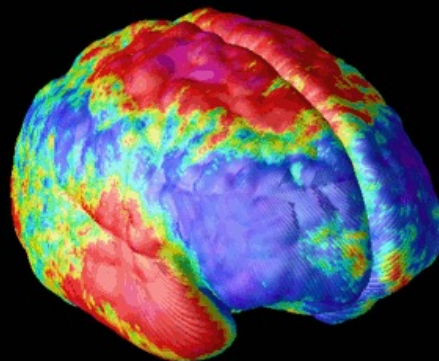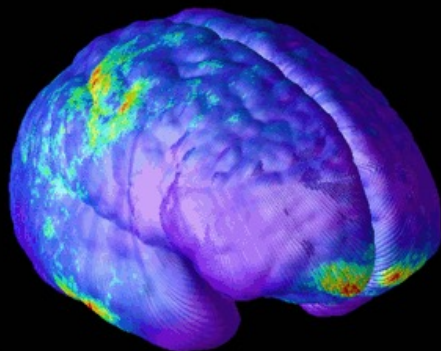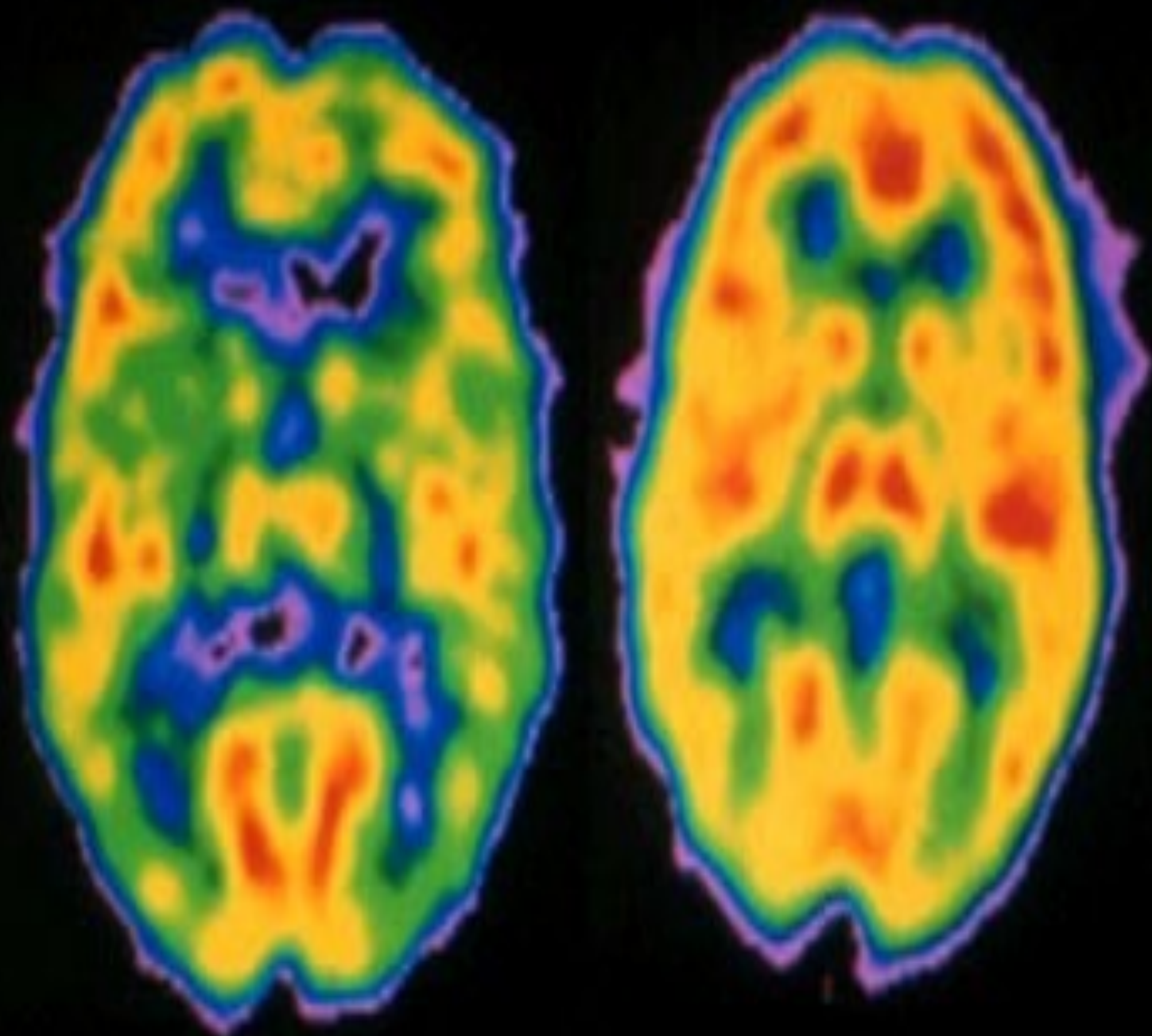
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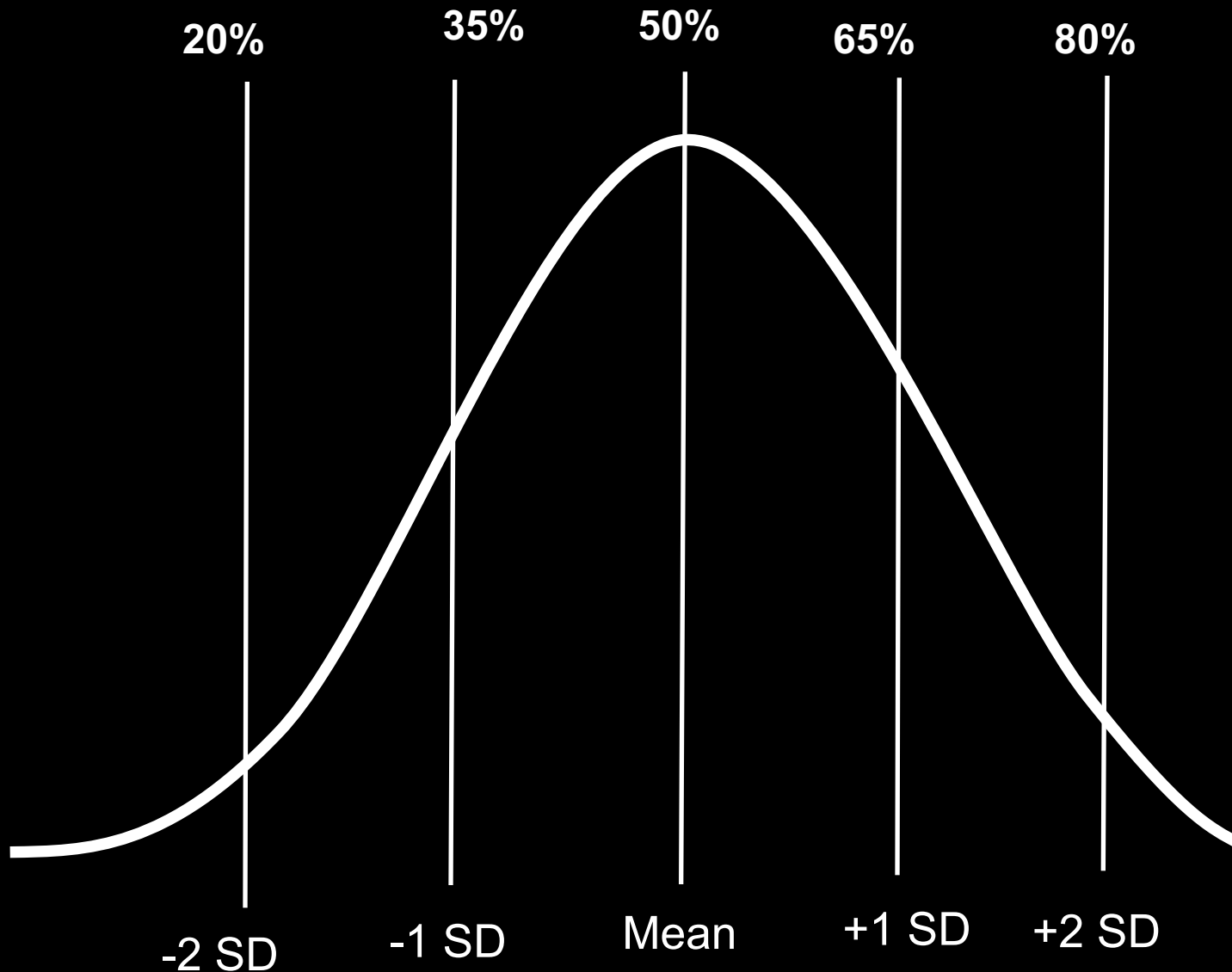
Levels of Serotonin
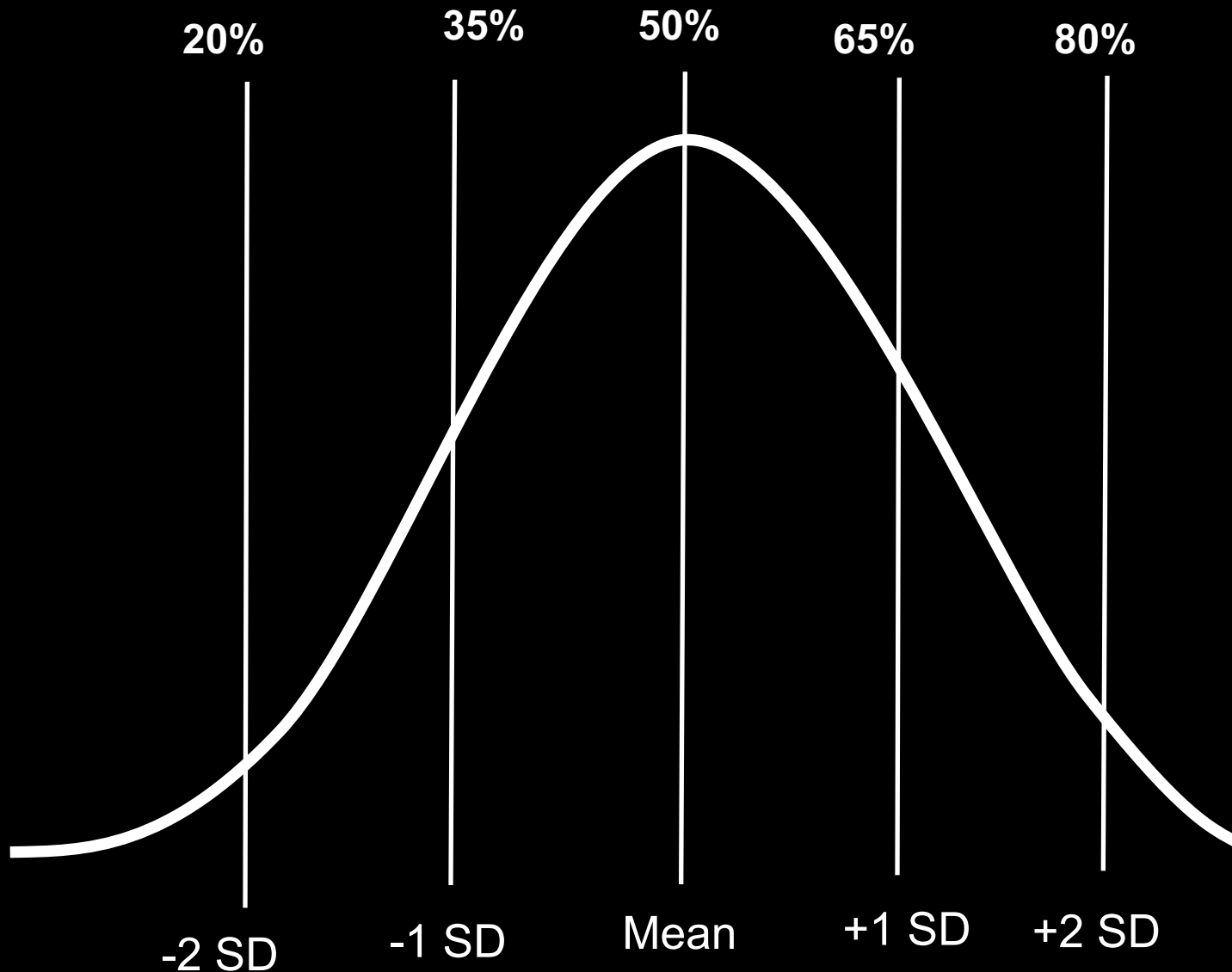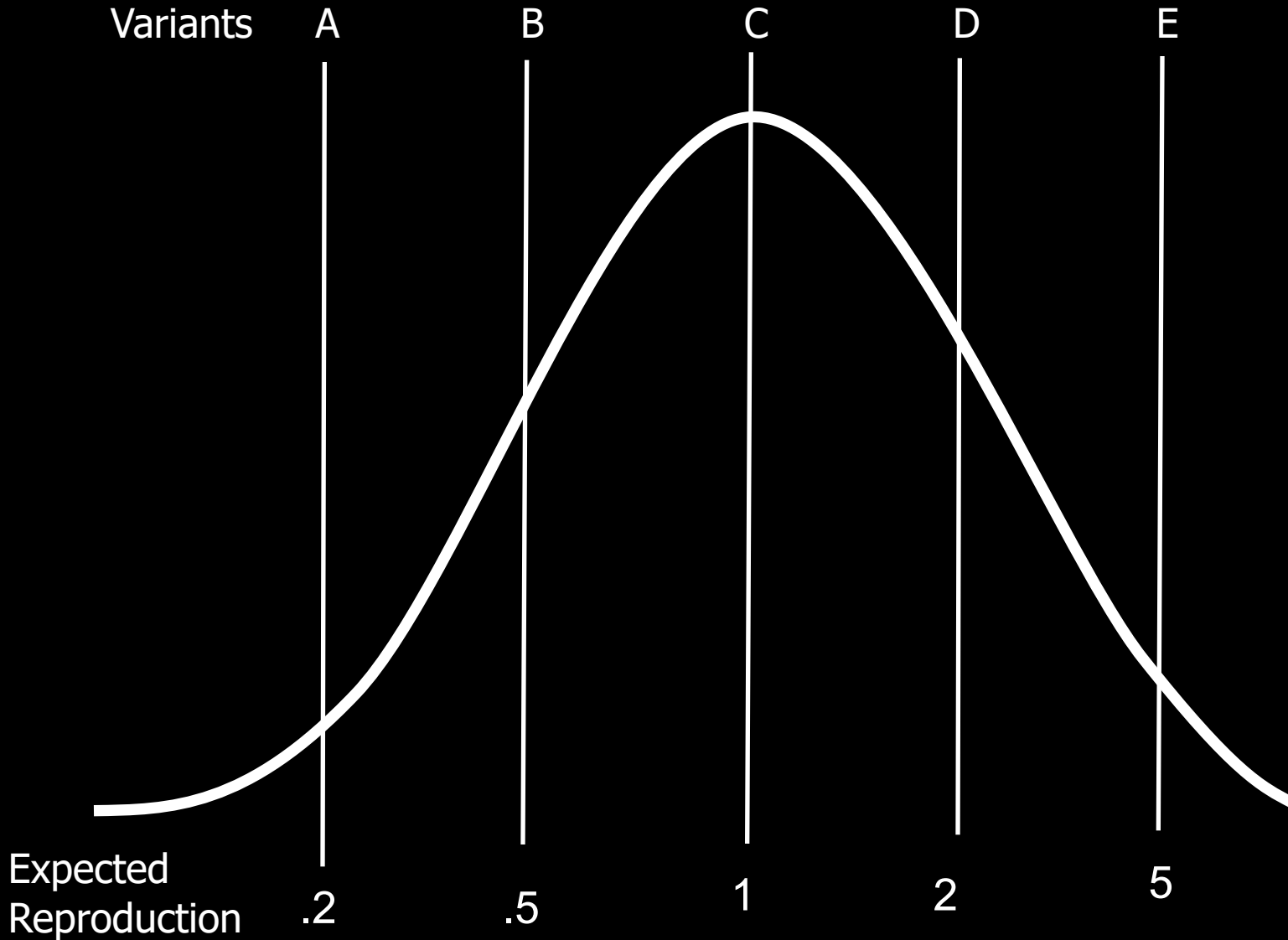
From Difference to Dysfunction

- Our intuitions about whether a difference constitutes a dysfunction seems to vary according to whether we think their behavior results in harm (in some yet to be specified sense)

- Wakefield maintains that science has discovered that evolution by natural selection is the relevant process for fixing functions and dysfunctions

- It is unclear why

Function

- Aristotelian (Megone)
  - Relative to the good of the kind

- Bio-Statistical (Boorse)
  - Relative to the statistical mean

- Evolutionary (Wakefield)
  - Relative to evolutionary fitness (survival and reproduction)

- Systemic (Murphy)
  - Relative to a previously specified output of a larger system

Translating Function Talk

- 'The function of the heart is to pump blood'

- ARIST.*f* - *'*pumping blood is the good for hearts'

- STAT.*f* - 'pumping blood is what statistically average hearts do'

- EVO.*f* - 'pumping blood is what past tokens did that resulted in presently existing tokens'

- SYST.*f* - 'pumping blood is what hearts contribute to the circulatory system'

Translating Function Talk

- They all share a common structure of providing some standard where we can read off functions and dysfunctions from how much or how little something approximates the standard

- Any of these (aside from the Aristotelian notion) seem perfectly respectable from the point of view of the grounding project

- Biology can make use of whichever it likes and we can translate 'function' talk into talk of purely causal properties and processes

The Problem

- The problem comes when we appeal to these notions to justify intervening on the individual

- Why should any of these notions be relevant for whether or not we are justified in intervening on individuals who are harmed?

From Difference to Dysfunction

- In practice we start with our intuition that a person is harmed by their behavior then look for a difference maker within them

- Once we have found it we label it a `dysfunction'

- To then appeal to `dysfunction' in answer to why we are justified in intervening on the individual is circular

From Dysfunction to Prescription

- Other times in practice scientists discover a difference that they call a `dysfunction' and advocate treatment for the condition

- There is a slippage in scientific usage between non-normative (scientifically respectable) notions of dysfunction and prescriptive or normative notions of dysfunction

- The relationship seems more intimate than the two-stage view would have led us to suppose

Relationship Between Science and Norms

- Role for science in finding out the causes, the nature, and the most effective ways of altering the phenomena.

- This is in common to all the sciences (whether the explanandum are functions or dysfunctions or neither)

- Role for normative theory in finding out when the person would be better off for behavioral change or when the person should receive intervention
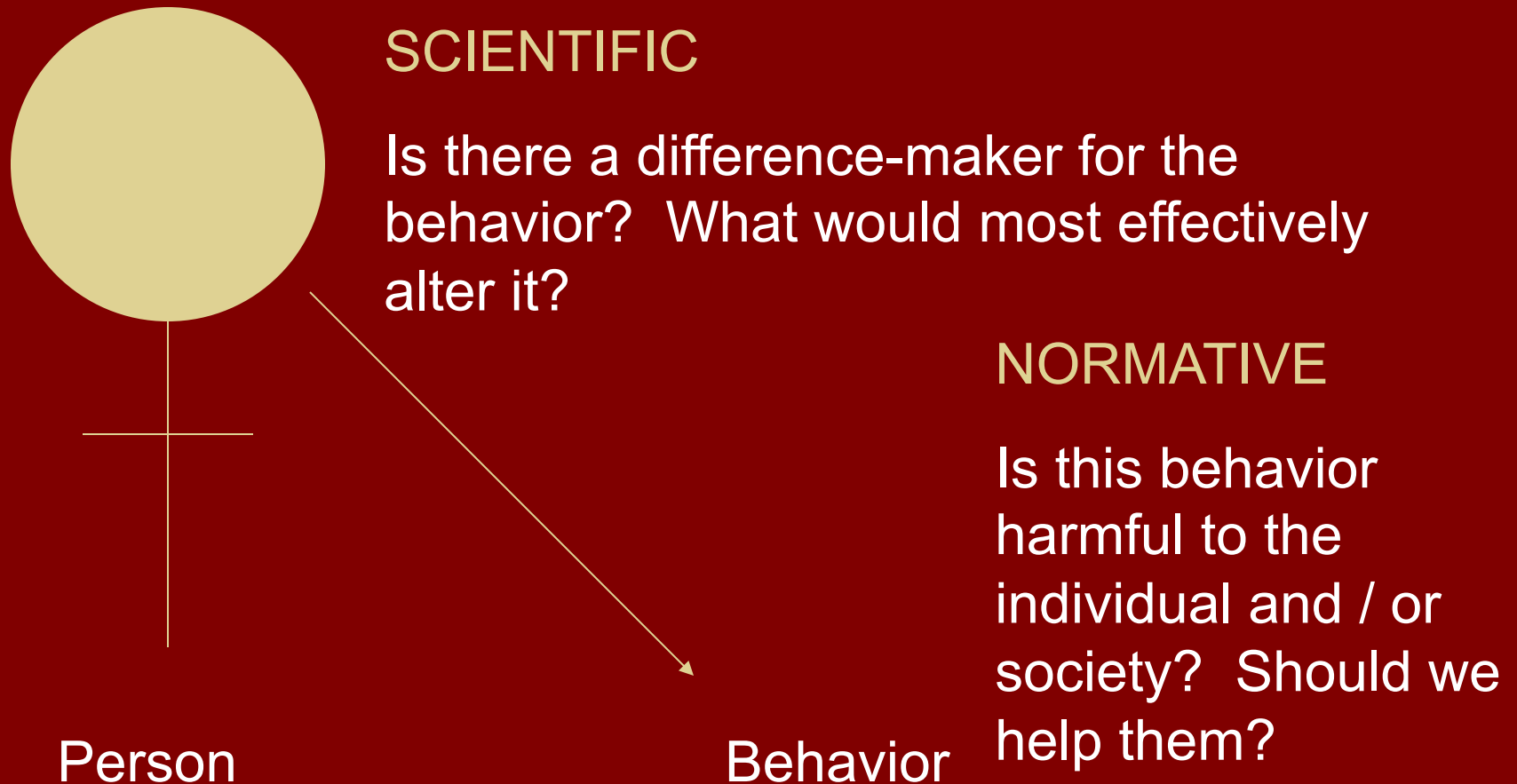
Relationship Between Science and Norms

- We need to be careful of thinking that science discovers what is 'wrong' where 'wrong' features in our normative theorizing about 'better' or 'worse' or 'duties' and 'rights'

Why Should Deviation from Any of These Justify Intervention?

- **Aristotelian**
  - the good of the kind

- **Bio-Statistical**
  - the statistical mean

- **Evolutionary**
  - evolutionary fitness (survival and reproduction)

- **Systemic**
  - a previously specified output of a larger system

Relationship Between Science and Norms

SCIENTIFIC

Is there a difference-maker for the behavior? What would most effectively alter it?

NORMATIVE

Is this behavior harmful to the individual and / or society? Should we help them?

Person   Behavior

The Moral:

- We need to stop looking to science to tell us whether a person has a disorder or not

- The issue seems to depend on our normative notion of 'harm' for whether intervention on the individual is or is not justified

- Hardly surprising given that bio-medicine is an *applied* science

Distinctions

1. Distinction between the presence and absence of bio-medical disorder

2. The Distinction between mental and non-mental disorder

3. The Distinction between different types or kinds of mental disorder

Not Bio-Medically Disordered

Bio-Medically Disordered

Mentally Disordered

4. Sub-Types