

Utilitarianism II

1. Objectives
2. Administrivia
3. Utilitarianism II
4. Argument Outline: Discussion

Objectives:

By the end of this lecture you should be able to:

1. Evaluate the attractiveness of Utilitarianism
2. Evaluate criticisms of Utilitarianism

1. Argument outline due June 10th

Anything Else? Anyone?



What are optimific outcomes?



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

Whichever policy is **optimific** (i.e., such as to yield the greatest balance of benefits over drawbacks) is the one that morality requires.

- Text, p. 120

”

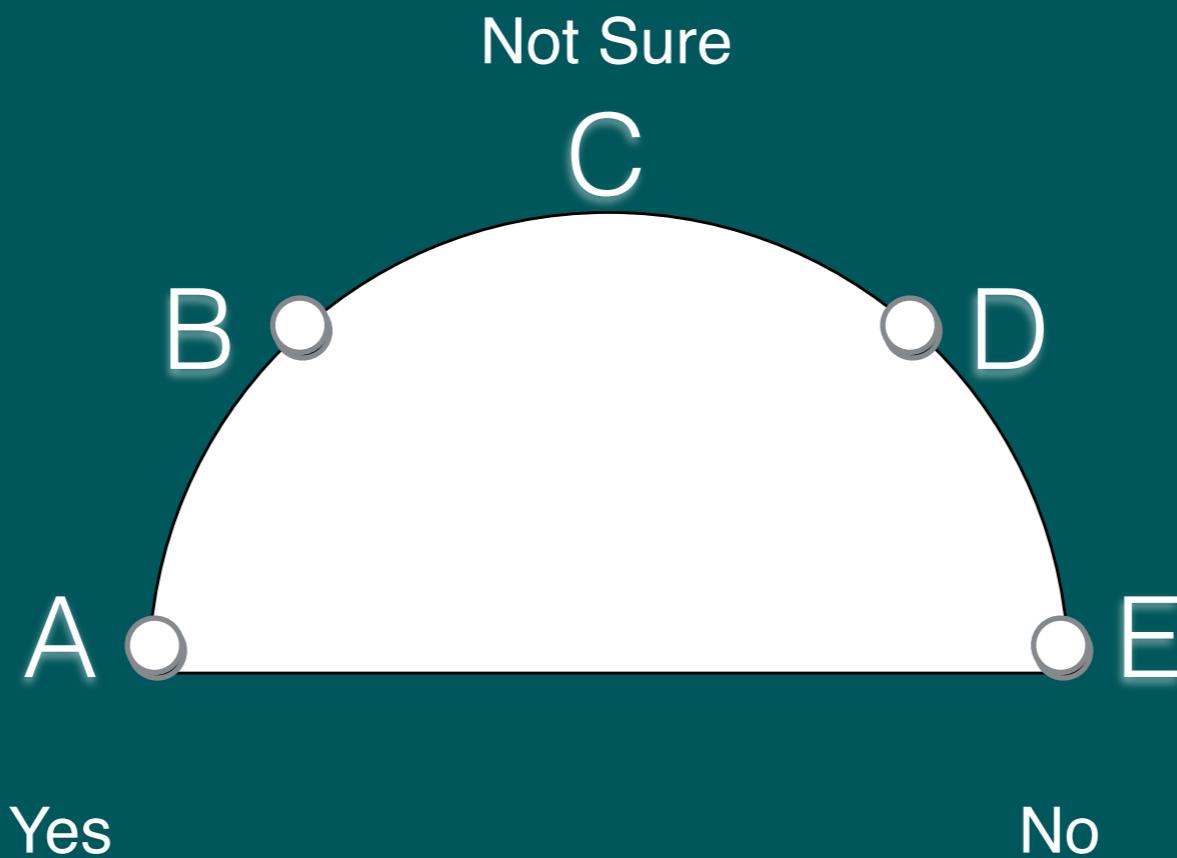
Is it the greatest good for the greatest number of people?

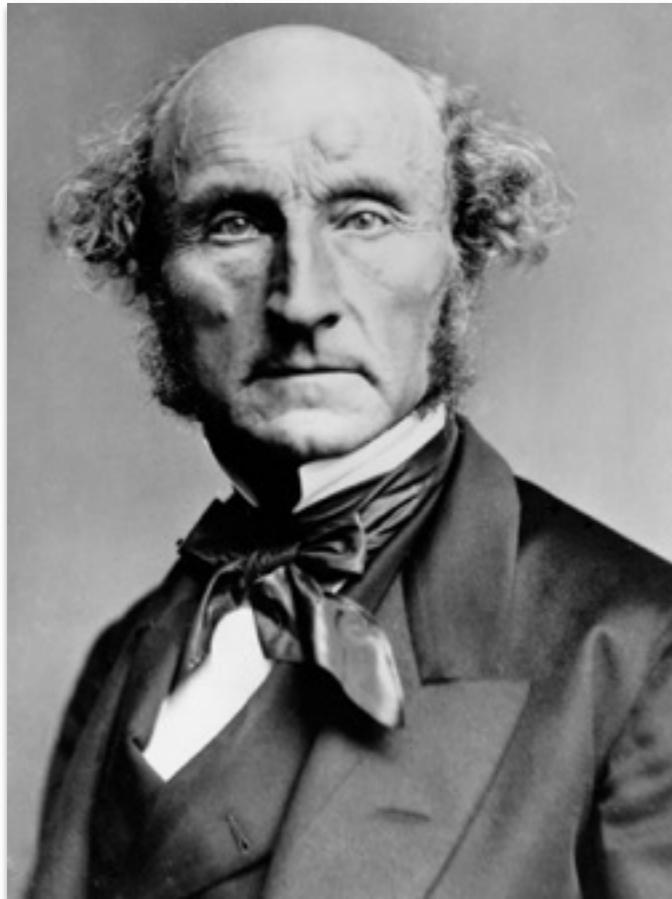


Poll

Question

Is it the greatest good for the greatest number of people?





J.S. Mill (1806-1873)

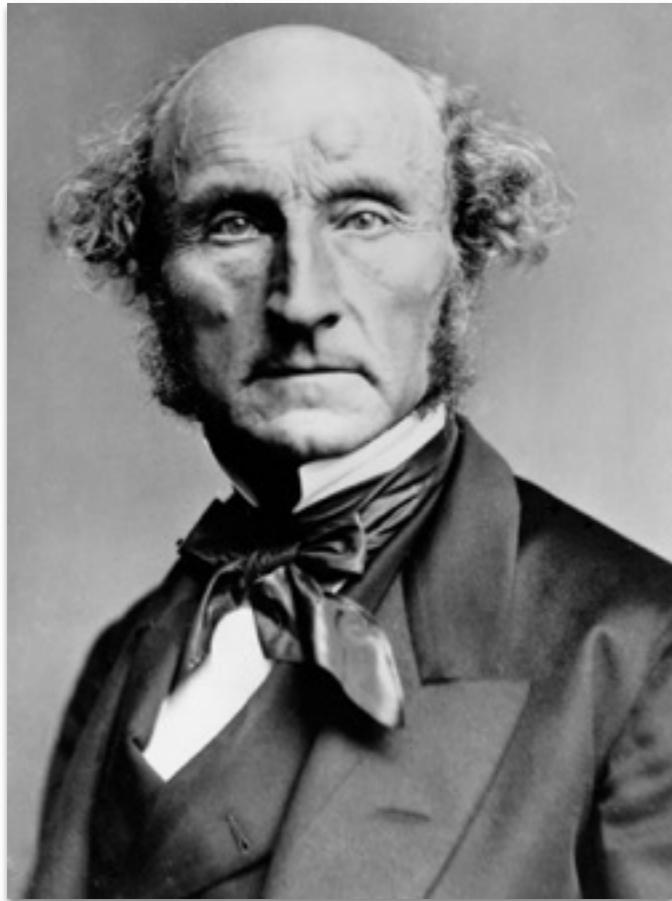
“

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.

- J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch 2.

”

“



J.S. Mill (1806-1873)

...for that standard is not the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether;

- J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch 2.

”

What is the difference between Act and Rule utilitarianism?

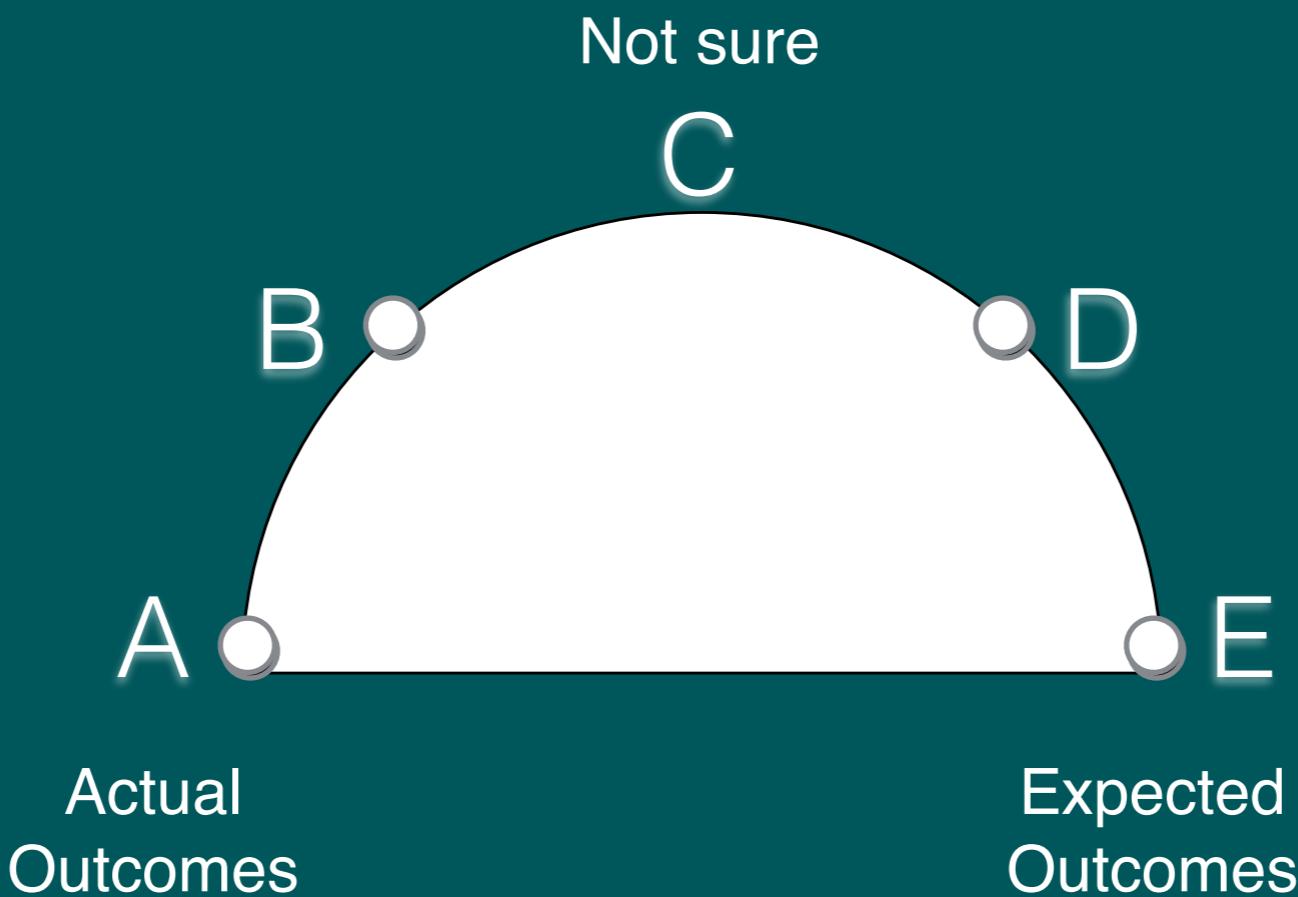
Is utilitarianism concerned with actual or expected outcomes?



Poll

Question

Is utilitarianism concerned with actual or expected outcomes?



1. It is impartial



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

[Utilitarianism] tells us that the welfare of each person is equally morally valuable. Whether rich or poor, white or black, male or female, religious or not, your well-being is just as important as anyone else's.

- Text, p. 126

”



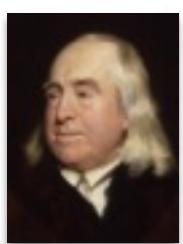
Russ Shafer-Landau

“

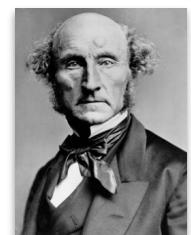
Everyone's well-being counts,
and everyone's well-being
counts equally.

- Text, p. 126

”



Jeremy Bentham
(1748-1832)



J.S. Mill
(1806-1873)



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

According to utilitarians, we develop a truly moral outlook only when we broaden our concerns so that we are not focused just on ourselves, or on our friends, family, or fellow citizens.

- Text, p. 127

”



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

The moral point of view is nothing less than an impartial concern for everyone whose well-being may be affected by our actions.

- Text, p. 127

”

1. It is impartial
2. It is able to justify conventional moral wisdom



Poll

Question

One of these things is not like the others

- A Slavery
- B Rape
- C Humiliating the defenceless
- D Killing innocent people
- E Keeping promises



- Slavery
- Rape
- Humiliating the defenceless
- Killing innocent people



- Helping the poor
- Keeping promises
- Telling the truth
- Bravely facing danger



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

Utilitarianism can also explain our shared views about virtues and vices. According to utilitarianism, a character trait is a virtue just because it tends to cause us to act in highly beneficial ways.

- Text, p. 127

”



- Greed
- Malice
- Ingratitude



- Compassion
- Kindness
- Benevolence

1. It is impartial
2. It is able to justify conventional moral wisdom
3. It allows for moral flexibility





Russ Shafer-Landau

“

For Utilitarians, no moral rule (other than the principle of utility) is absolute. It is morally okay to violate any rule...if doing so will raise overall well-being.

- Text, p. 129

”

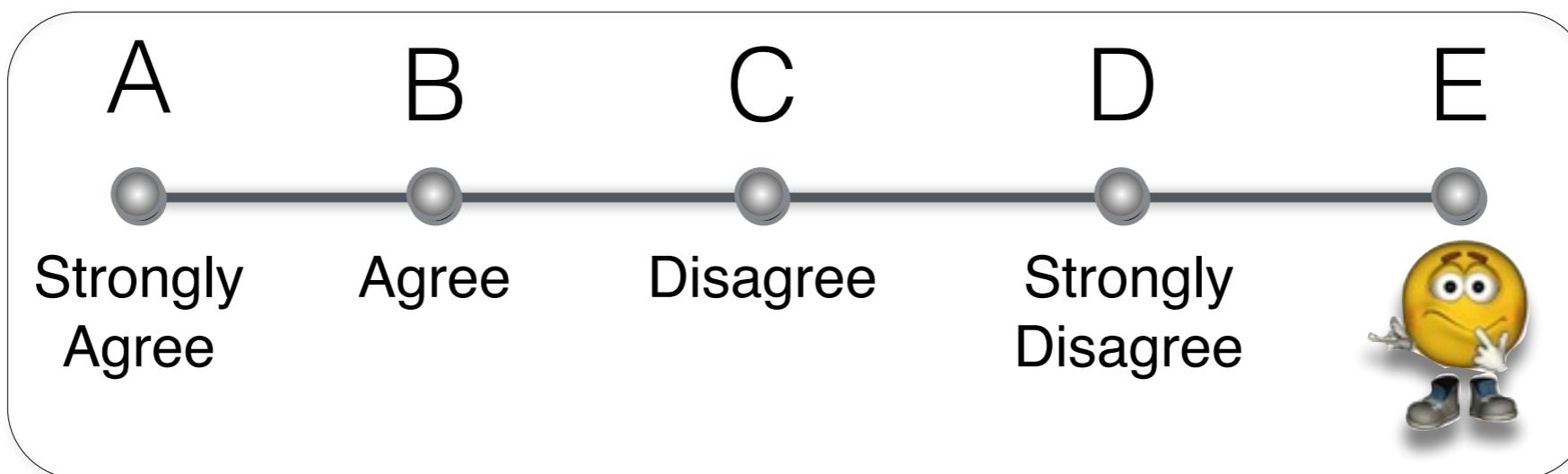
1. It is impartial
2. It is able to justify conventional moral wisdom
3. It allows for moral flexibility
4. It allows for an expansive moral community



Poll

Claim

Humans are fundamentally different from animals



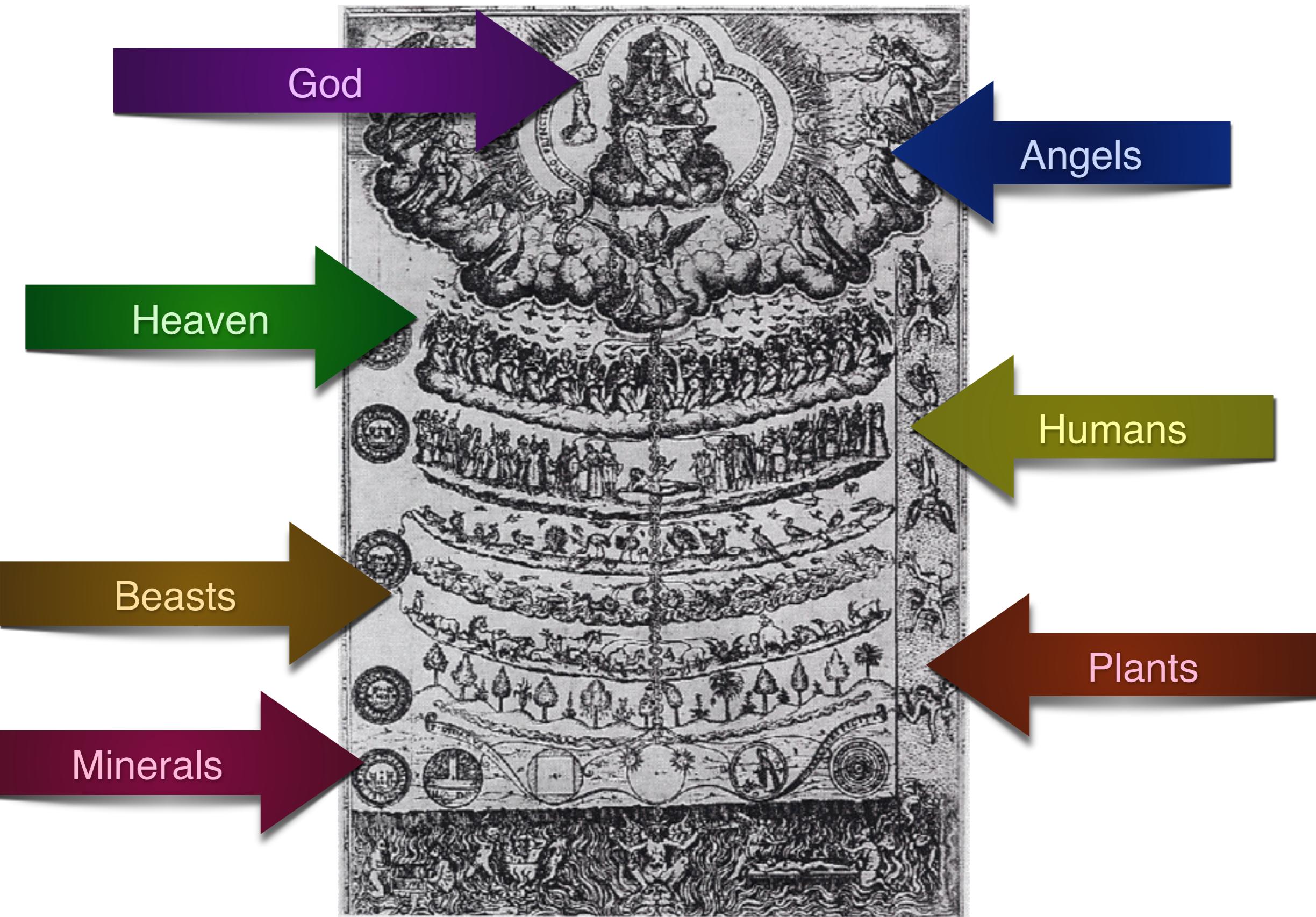


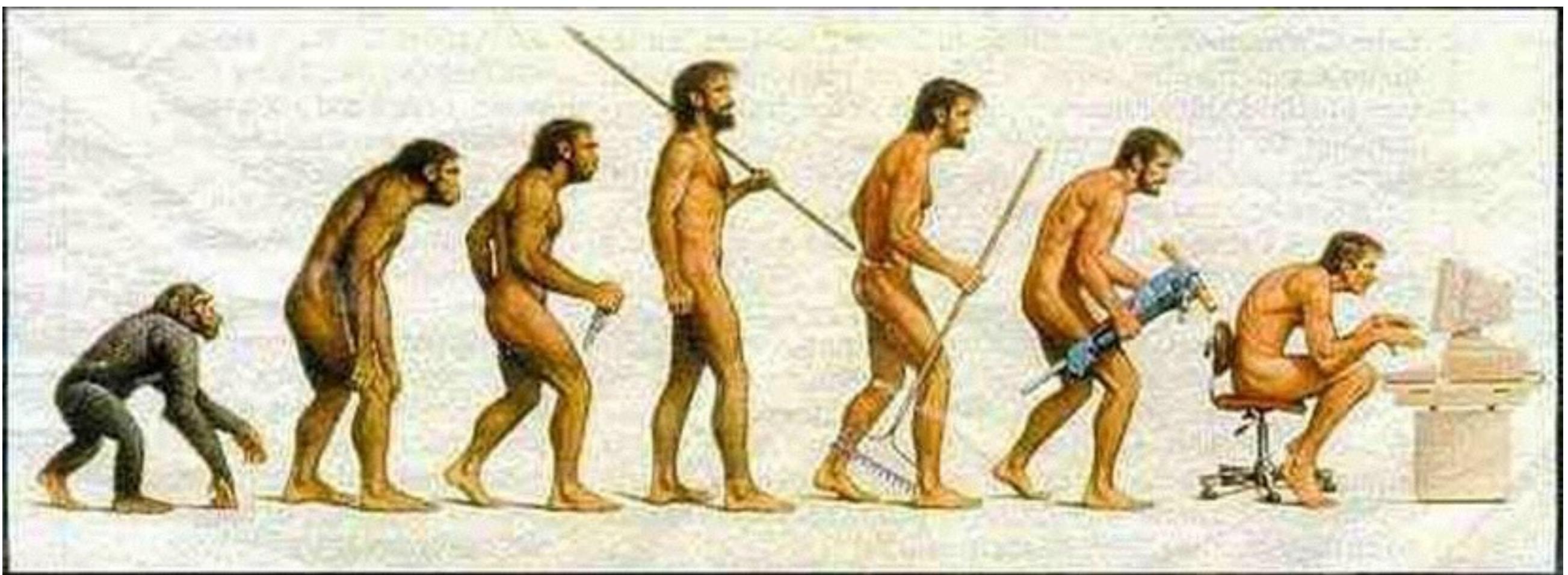
Poll

Fill in the blank:

The difference between humans and animals is a difference in _____.

- A Kind
- B Degree
- C No idea what A and B mean







Poll

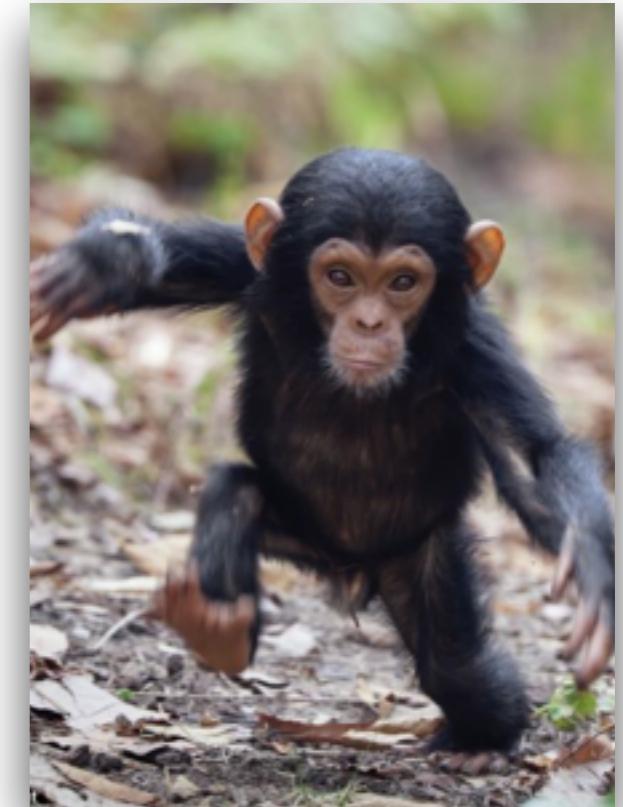
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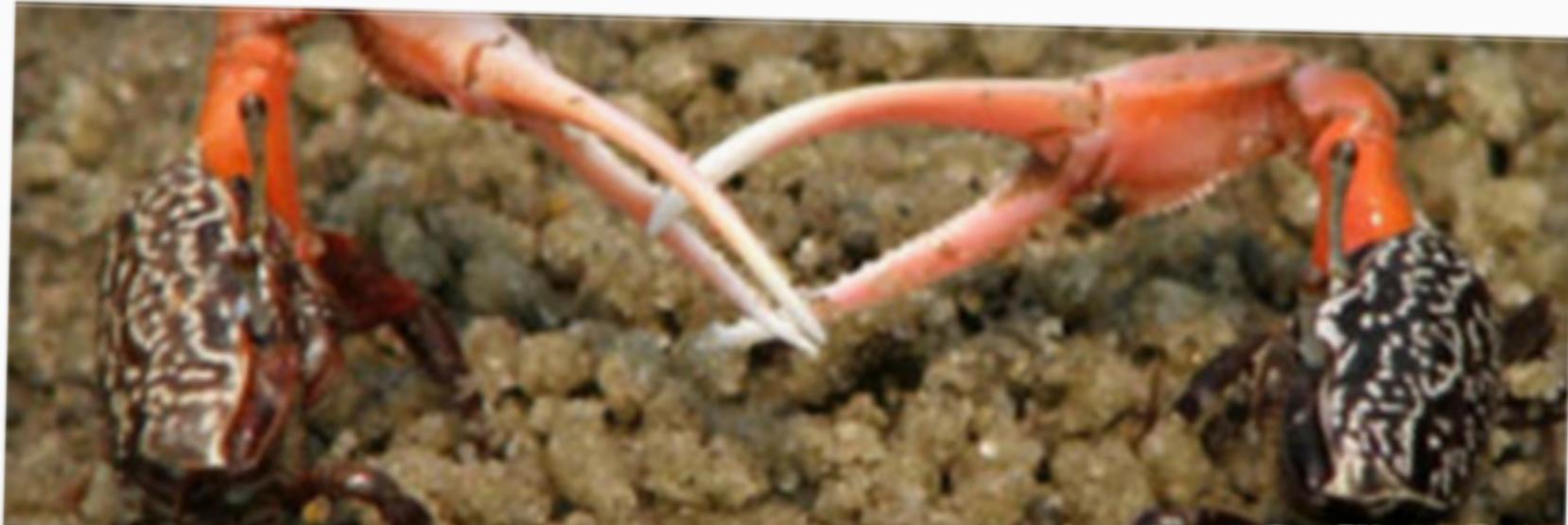


What's the difference?
Emotions?
Rational thought?
Self-awareness?
Trade?
Tool use?



By CBSNEWS / AP / November 4, 2009, 6:55 AM

Study: Crabs Trade Favors for Sex



Researchers from The Australian National University in Canberra found that male fiddler crabs will happily defend a female neighbor against intruders - partly because the females will dole out sex in return.

In this November 2008 photo provided by The Australian National University, two male fiddler crabs fight on a beach on Inhaca Island, Mozambique. / AP/AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY





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Givology
give to learn, learn to give



abc NEWS.com

Elephants Recognize Cooperation

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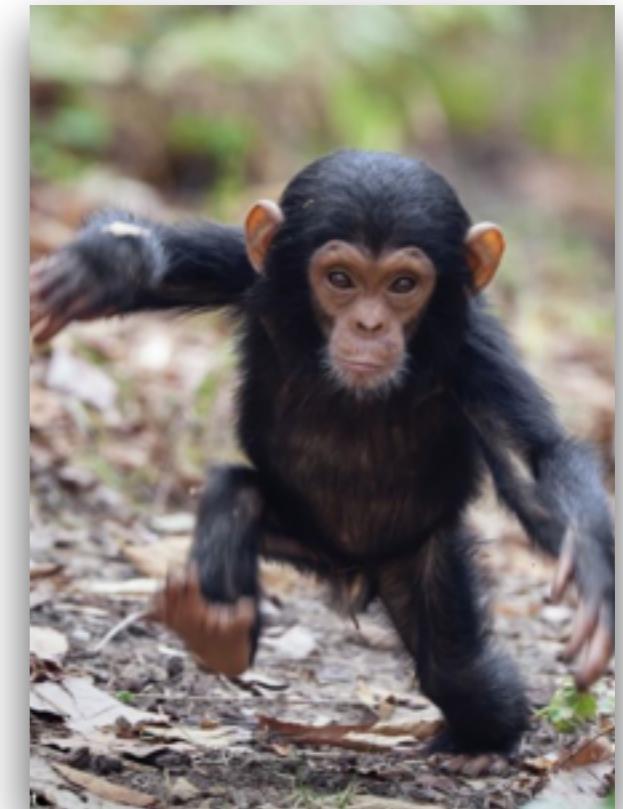
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Expansive Moral Community



What's the difference?
Emotions?
Rational thought?
Self-awareness?
Trade?
Tool use?



Who deserves our moral consideration?



In the Western tradition, it starts with wealthy adult white males

Who gets to be in the “in” group?



Poll

Question

When were women recognised as persons in Canada?

- A 1867
- B 1917
- C 1929
- D 1945
- E 1982



FIVE ALBERTA WOMEN

Through whose efforts women's right to be appointed to the Senate has been determined. Left to right: Mrs. R. W. McClung, Mrs. L. C. McKinney, Mrs. O. C. Edwards (portrait by W. H. Frost), Magistrate Emily Murphy, and the Honourable Louise McKinney.

Now That We Are Persons

By Nellie L. McClung

ON THE morning of October 19th, 1929, the women of Canada received a shock when they read their papers at breakfast. They read on the first page in bold black type that the Lands of the Privy Council had declared them to be Persons.

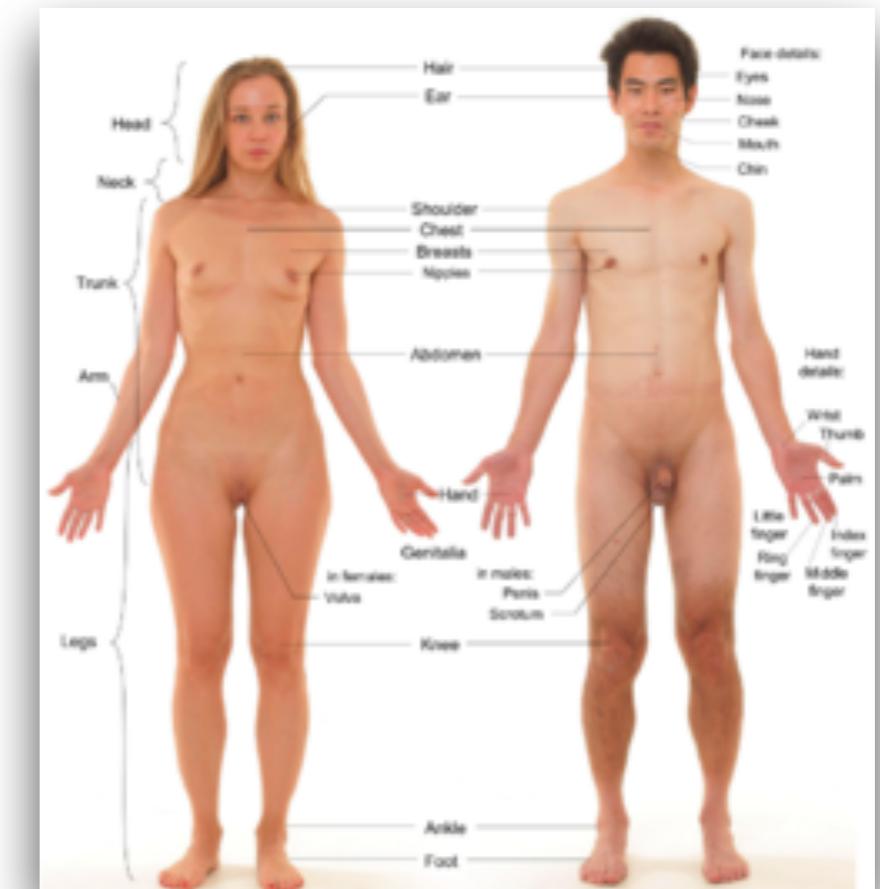
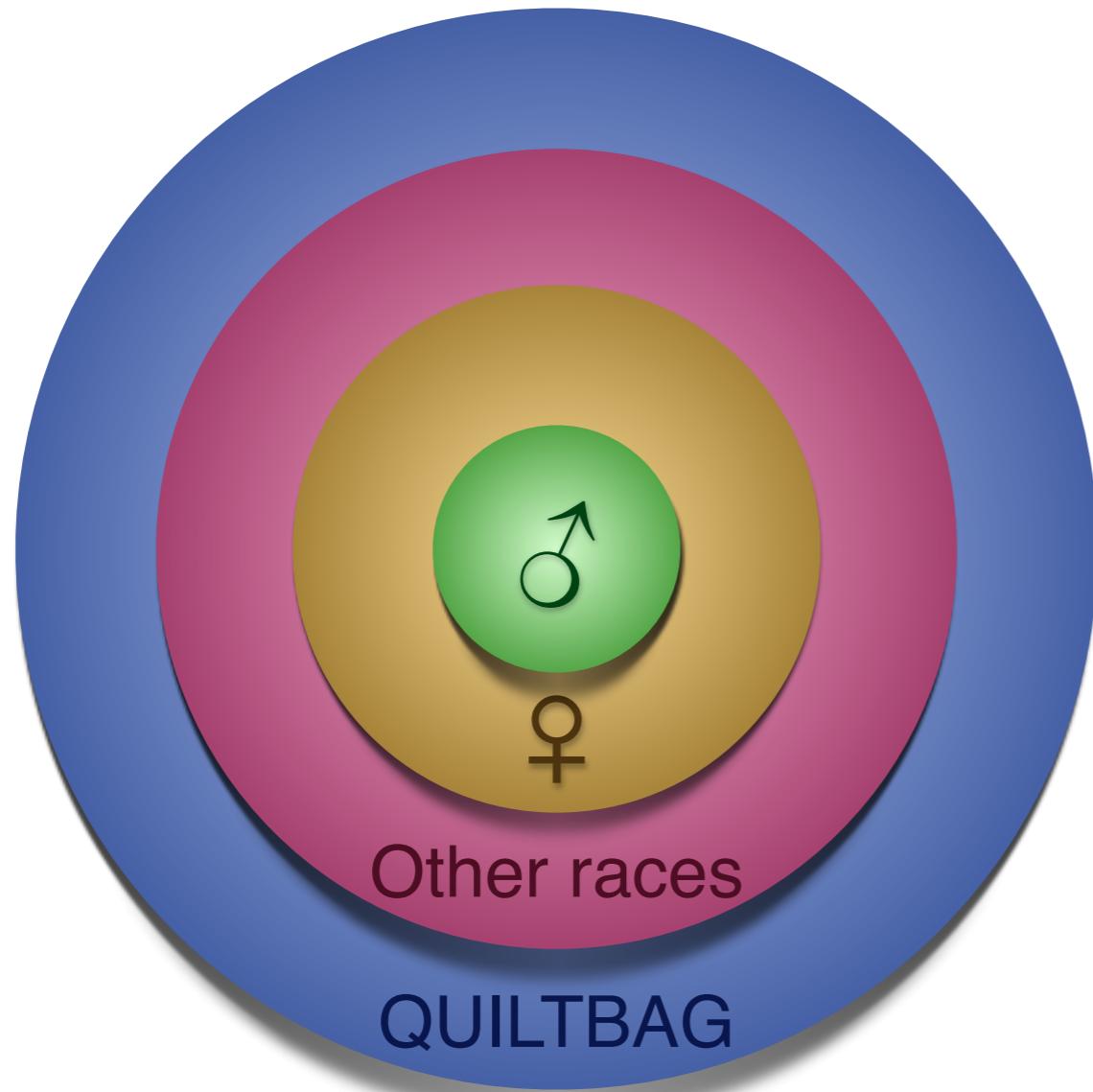
swept like morning mists at sunrise. Prejudice dies hard, as well we know, and when belief runs back to antiquity, a ruling of even the Privy Council cannot dislodge it.

Women have been creatures of contradiction, accu-

laying, the Senior Wranglers among the wives in our full attire with the words:

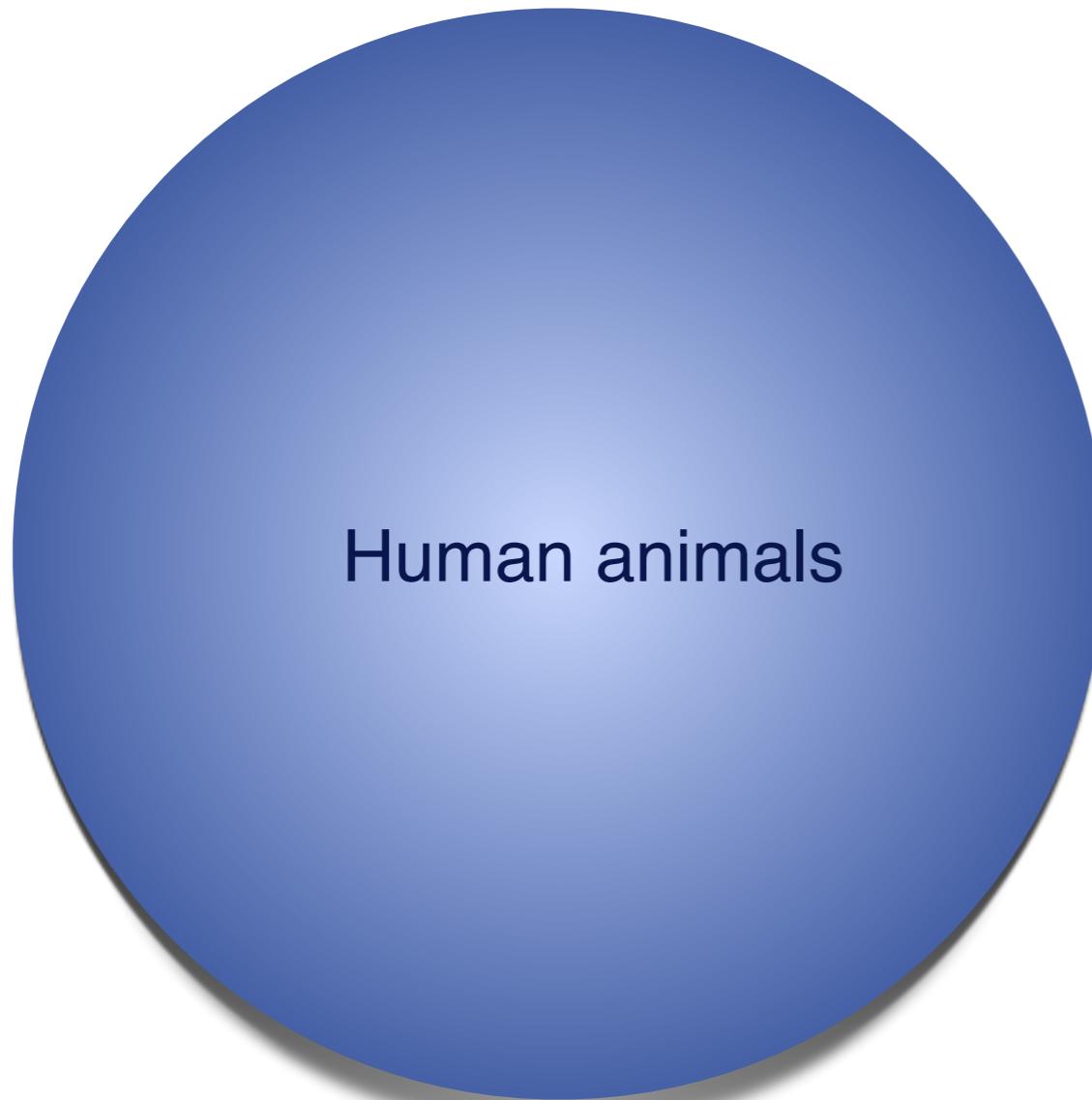
"See now that we die as our mothers did
In the bridal bed by our Menin's side."

Who deserves our moral consideration?



Who gets to be in the “in” group?

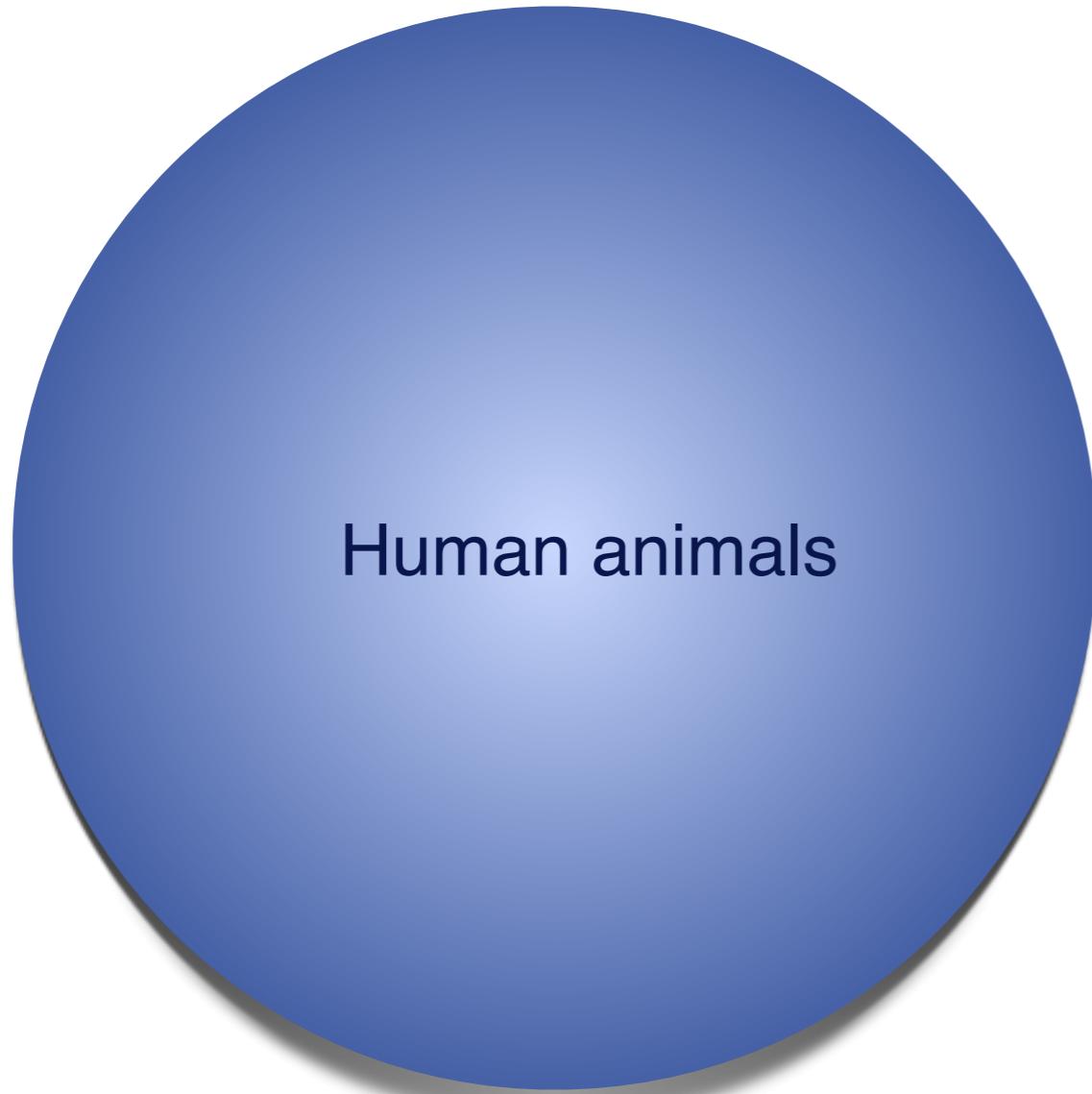
Who deserves our moral consideration?



Who gets to be in the “in” group?

What's the criterion for inclusion?

Who deserves our moral consideration?



Who gets to be in the “in” group?

Any attempt to include all human animals but exclude non-human animals is arbitrary!

What's the criterion for inclusion?

- P1 If it is immoral to kill, eat, and experiment on marginal human beings, then it is immoral to treat non-human animals this way.
- P2 It is always wrong to kill, eat, and experiment on marginal human beings.
- C Therefore it is wrong to kill, eat, and experiment on animals.

Measurement Problem

1. Add up the benefits
2. Add up the harms
3. Determine the balance
4. Choose the action with
the greatest balance of
happiness



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

In order to add up all of the good produced by an action, I would need some way to measure it.

- Text, p. 138

”



Russ Shafer-Landau

“

Well-being would have to come in quantities, so that I could measure the amount of one person's welfare, measure another's, and another's, and add them all together.

- Text, p. 138

”



J.S. Mill (1806-1873)

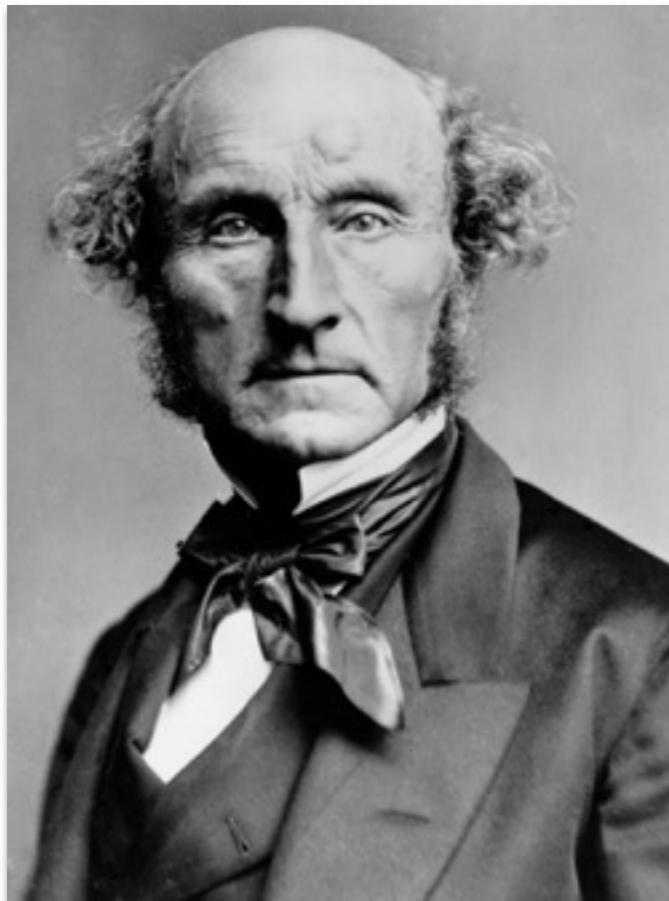
“

It is a misapprehension of the utilitarian mode of thought, to conceive it as implying that people should fix their minds upon so wide a generality as the world, or society at large.

- J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch 2.

”

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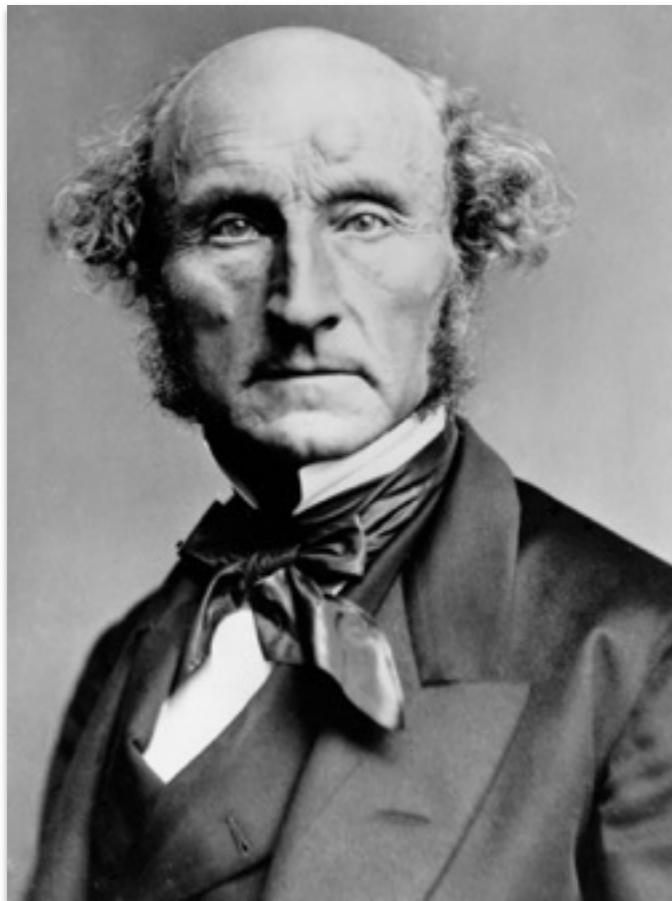
J.S. Mill (1806-1873)

The great majority of good actions are intended not for the benefit of the world, but for that of individuals, of which the good of the world is made up;

- J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch 2.

99

“



J.S. Mill (1806-1873)

...and the thoughts of the most virtuous man need not on these occasions travel beyond the particular persons concerned, except so far as is necessary to assure himself that in benefiting them he is not violating the...the legitimate...expectations of any one else.

- J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch 2.

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