

# Cooperation or conflict? An model of ethical choice in care

The 10th International Conference for Education in Ethics  
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# The ethical choice

I'm interested in

- Denial of care
- Conditioned care

Especially concerning  
challenging behaviour





# World's oldest debate on care ethics

> 400 BC.

Plato describes a discussion  
between Socrates and Adeimantos

- Socrates believed that nobody does wrong on purpose. We all do right if we can





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> 400 BC

Plato describes a discussion  
between Socrates and Adeimantos

- Socrates believed that nobody does wrong on purpose. We all do right if we can
- Adeimantos believed that we act egoistic by nature. We only act socially acceptable when we gain from it





# World's oldest debate on care ethics

> 400 BC.

Plato describes that  
both believe that this  
only applies to adults  
Children are savages  
that must be tamed





# World's oldest debate on care ethics

- 360 BC

Aristotle thought that children are immature adults who need nurturing and support in order to grow into good adults





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He compares children to plants: Mostly water and nutrition is enough





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Aristotle thought that children are immature adults who need nurturing and support in order to grow into good adults

He compares children to plants: Mostly water and nutrition is enough

But some plants need support in order to grow strong





# World's oldest debate on care ethics

- 360 BC

They placed the debaters in  
two camps





# World's oldest debate on care ethics

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They placed the debaters in two camps

- Those who aim at obedience through taming



# World's oldest debate on care ethics

- 360 BC

They placed the debaters in two camps

- Those who aim at obedience through taming
- Those who aim at autonomy through support





# World's oldest debate on care ethics

- 360 BC

It comes down to beliefs

- Do we believe that the person is doing it on purpose and needs taming?
- Or is doing his or her best and needs support?





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- 2016

Michael Tomasello describes humans as the cooperating animal





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Cooperation makes us survive

One factor is morality)

- We take care of the weak (ethics)





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Michael Tomasello describes humans as the cooperating animal

Cooperation makes us survive

One factor is morality)

- We take care of the weak (ethics)
- We make sure all members of the group behave (moralising)



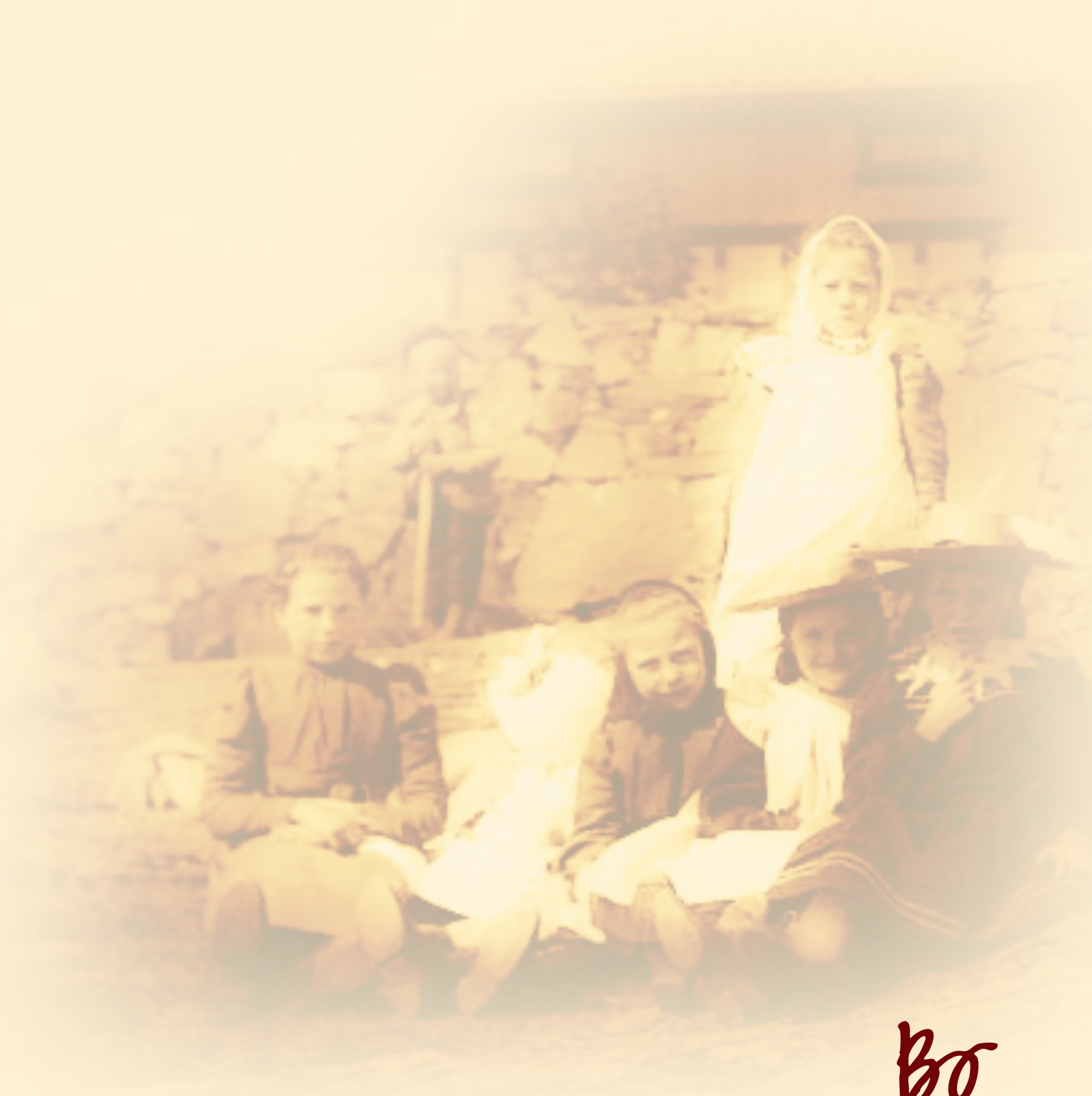


# Study

Grounded theory

10 expert interviews

Research question: What is the process of moving from Adeimantos to Socrates?

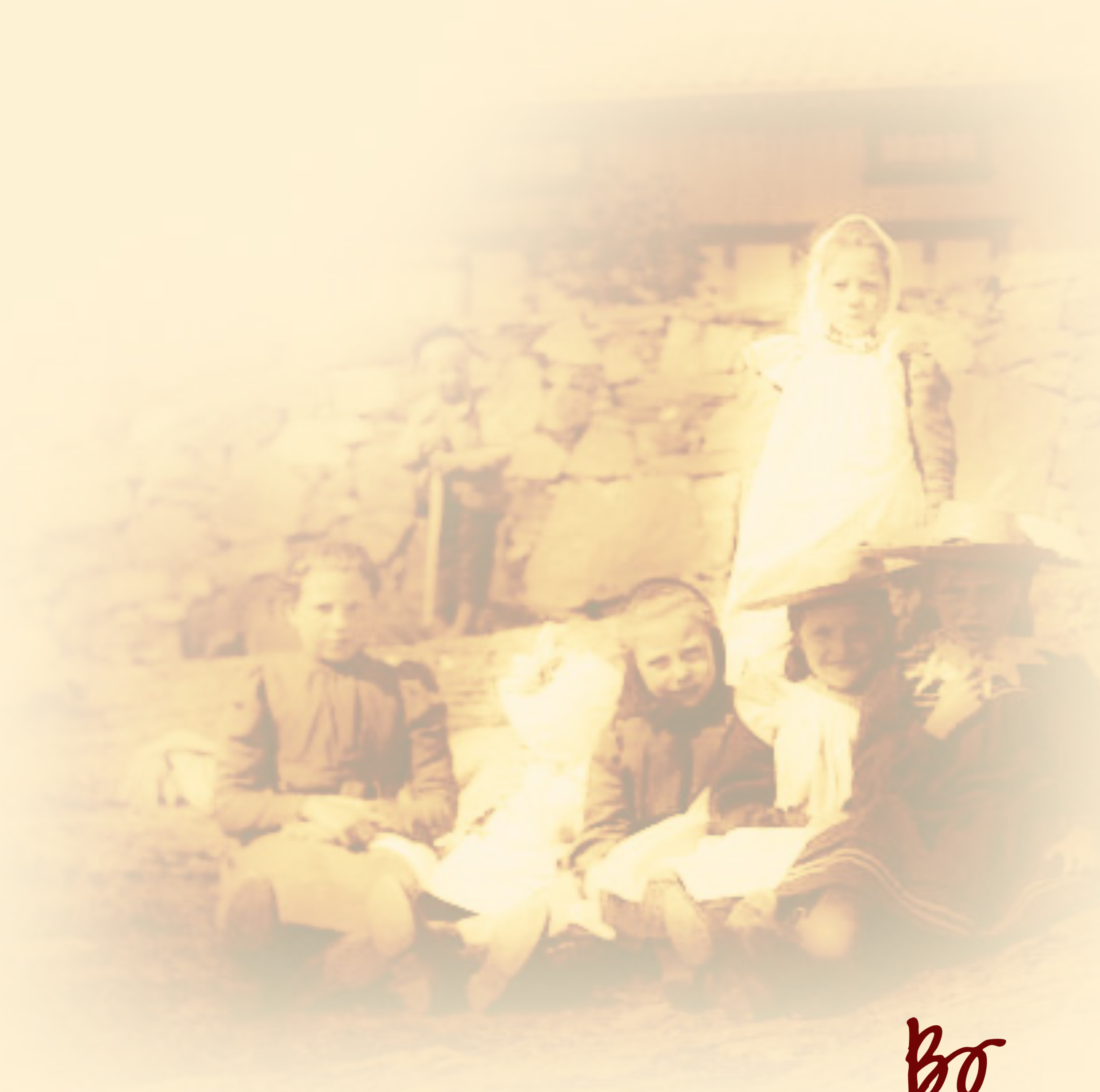




# Study

## Themes

- Responsibility belief
- Curiosity
- Empathy
- Sympathy
- Acceptance
- Flexibility
- Adaptation





# World's oldest debate on care ethics

- 2022

If we believe that the person is weak or vulnerable





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We think that the  
person is doing his  
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If we believe that the person is weak or vulnerable

**We think that the  
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**We try to figure  
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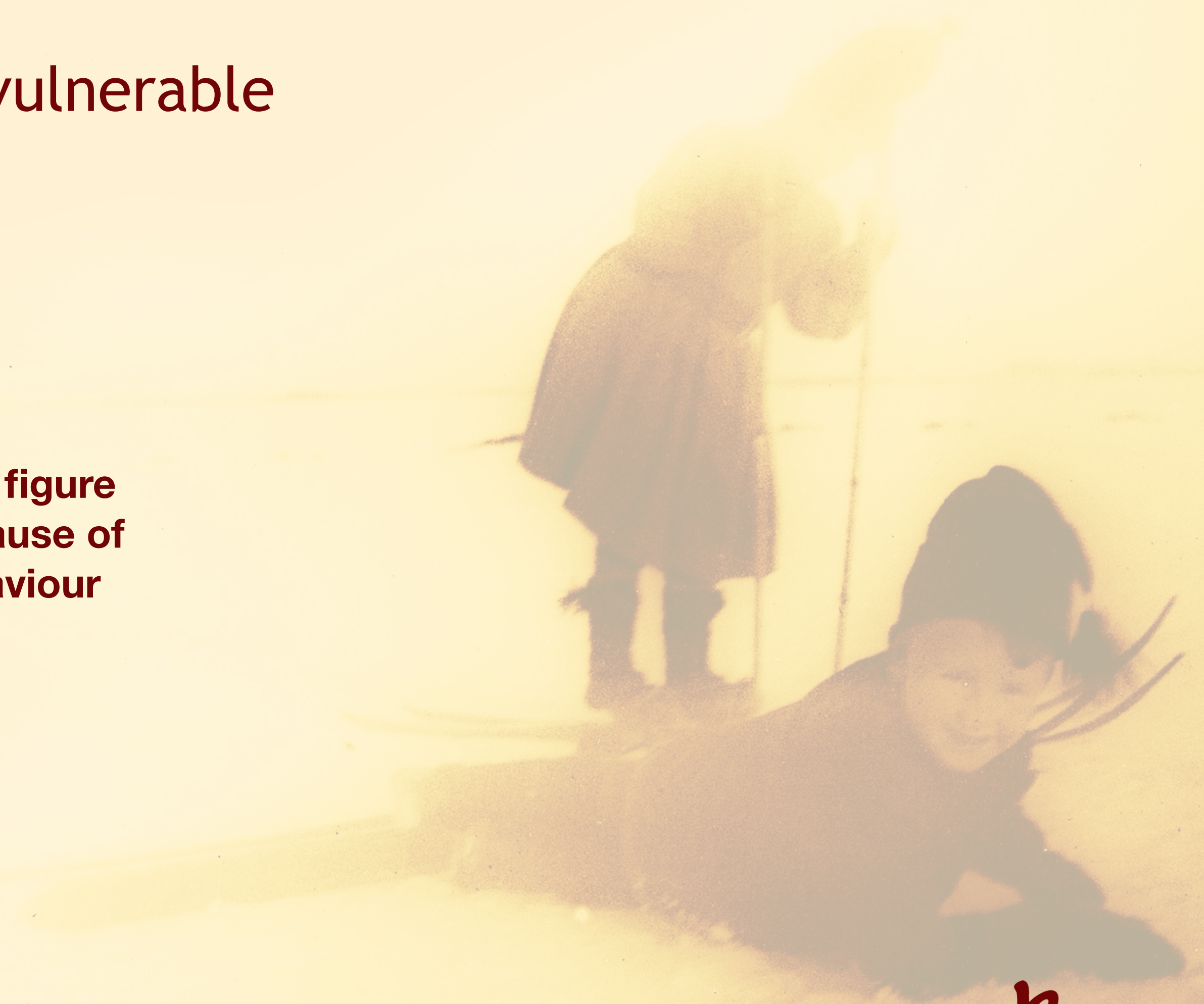
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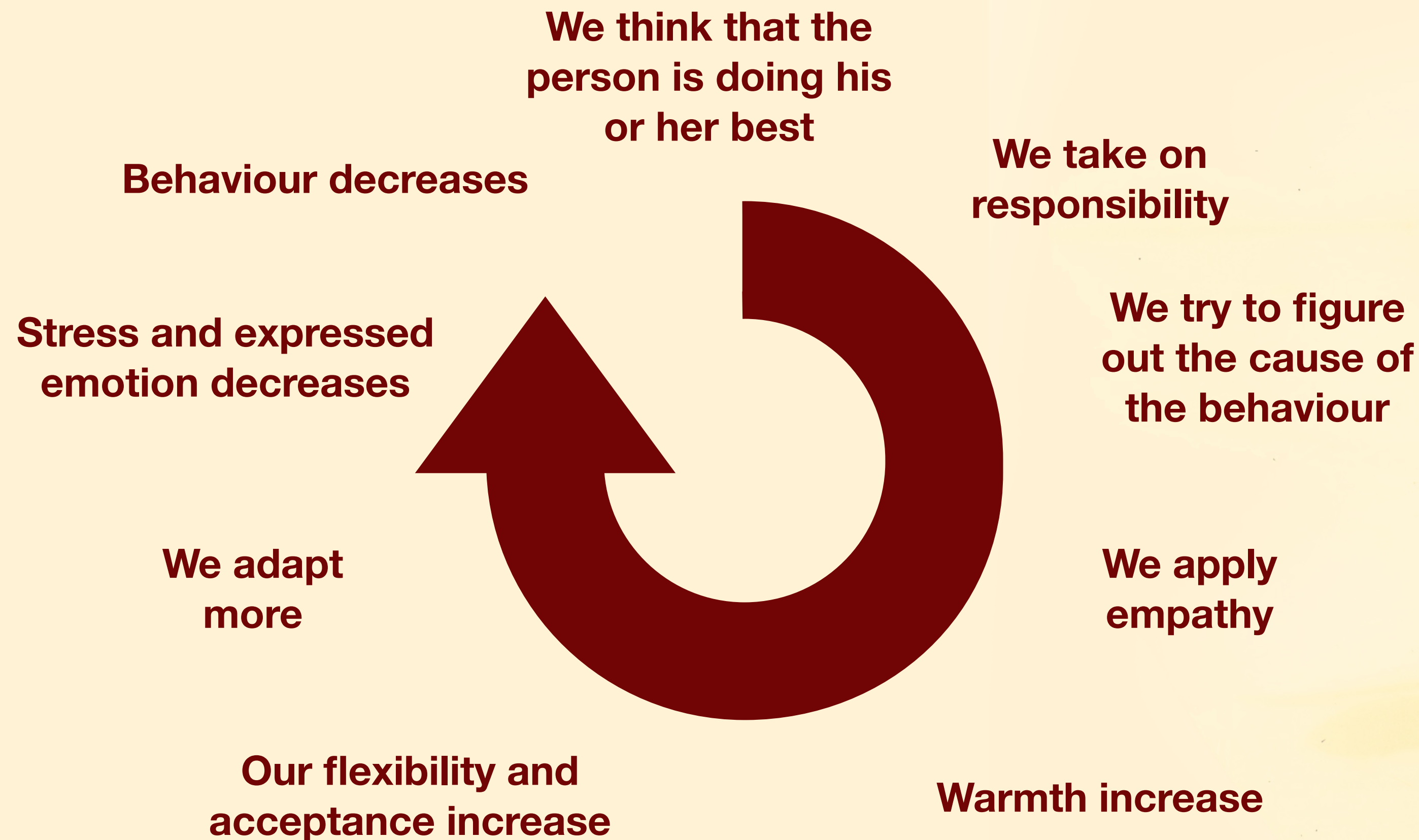




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- 2022

If we believe that the person is weak or vulnerable



Unconditioned care



# Dopamine modulates egalitarian behavior in humans

Ignacio Sáez, Lusha Zhu, Eric Set, Andrew Kayser, Ming Hsu

*Current Biology 25 (7), 912-919, 2015*

Egalitarian motives form a powerful force in promoting prosocial behavior and enabling large-scale cooperation in the human species [1]. At the neural level, there is substantial,



# The role of D4 receptor gene exon III polymorphisms in shaping human altruism and prosocial behavior

Yushi Jiang, Soo Hong Chew, Richard Paul Ebstein

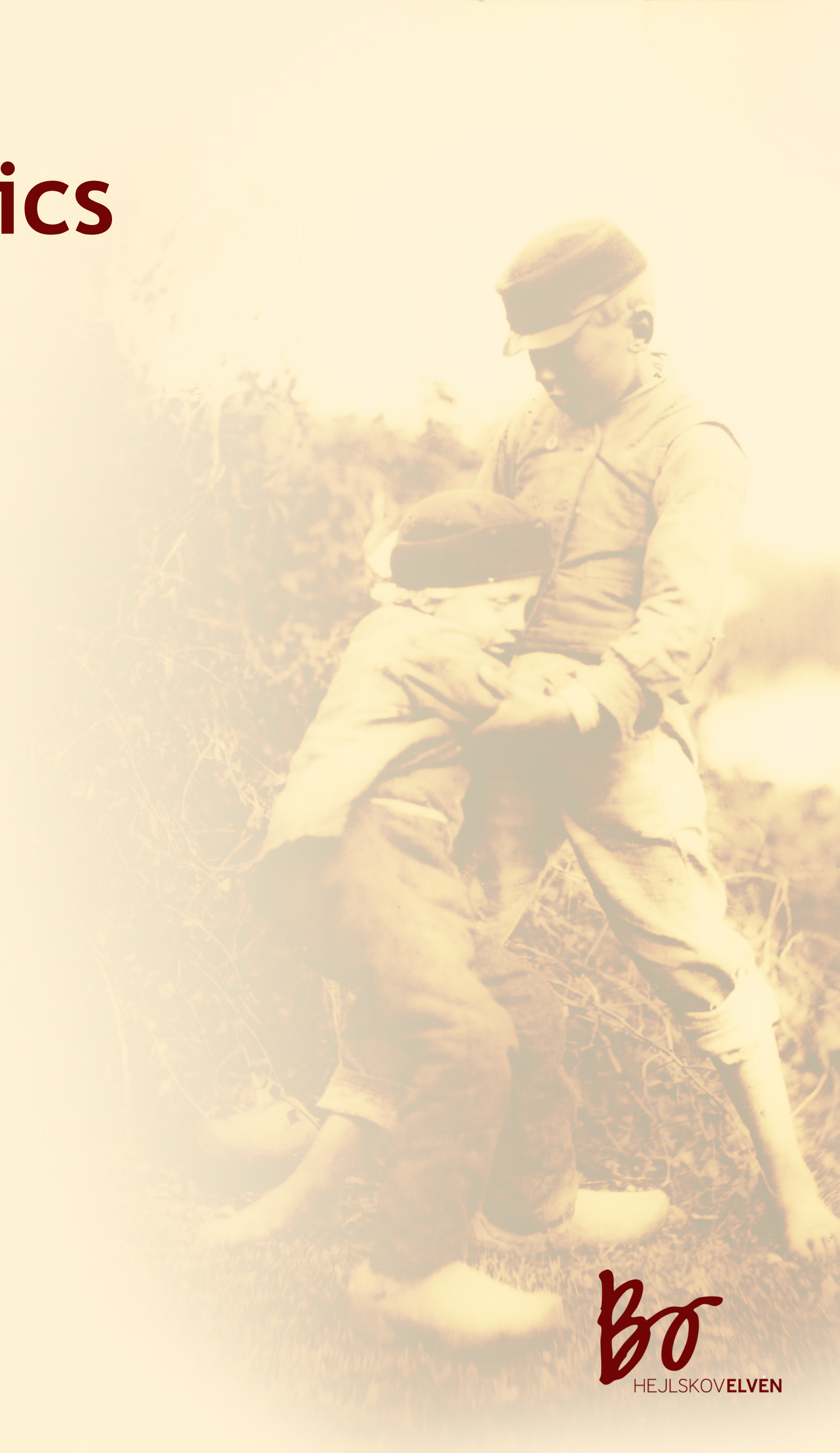
*Frontiers in human neuroscience 7, 195, 2013*



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Denial of care  
Conditioned care



Science 27;305(5688):1254-1258

## The Neural Basis of Altruistic Punishment

Dominique J.-F. de Quervain,<sup>1\*†</sup> Urs Fischbacher,<sup>2\*</sup>  
Valerie Treyer,<sup>3</sup> Melanie Schellhammer,<sup>2</sup> Ulrich Schnyder,<sup>4</sup>  
Alfred Buck,<sup>3</sup> Ernst Fehr<sup>2,5†</sup>

Many people voluntarily incur costs to punish violations of social norms. Evolutionary models and empirical evidence indicate that such altruistic punishment has been a decisive force in the evolution of human cooperation. We used  $H_2^{15}O$  positron emission tomography to examine the neural basis for altruistic punishment of defectors in an economic exchange. Subjects could punish defection either symbolically or effectively. Symbolic punishment did not reduce the defector's economic payoff, whereas effective punishment did reduce the payoff. We scanned the subjects' brains while they learned about the defector's abuse of trust and determined the punishment. Effective punishment, as compared with symbolic punishment, activated the dorsal striatum, which has been implicated in the processing of rewards that accrue as a result of goal-directed actions. Moreover, subjects with stronger activations in the dorsal striatum were willing to incur greater costs in order to punish. Our findings support the hypothesis that people derive satisfaction from punishing norm violations and that the activation in the dorsal striatum reflects the anticipated satisfaction from punishing defectors.

violations are not punished, and they seem to feel relief and satisfaction if justice is established. Many languages even have proverbs indicating such feelings, for example, "Revenge is sweet."

**A design to study the punishment of defectors.** We examined the hypothesis that people derive satisfaction from the punishment of norm violations by combining an economic experiment involving real monetary payoffs with positron emission tomography (PET). Our hypothesis predicts that altruistic punishment is associated with the activation of brain areas related to reward processing. Single-neuron recording in nonhuman primates (9–11) and neuroimaging studies with humans using money as a reward medium (12–16) reliably indicate that the striatum is a key part of reward-related neural circuits. Moreover, if altruistic punishment occurs because the punisher anticipates deriving satisfaction from punishing, we should observe activation predominantly in those reward-related brain areas that are associated with goal-directed behavior. Single-neuron recording in nonhuman primates (17–19) provides



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## Supervisors

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Professor Kate Thomson, Birmingham City University

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