

Who are we?

**Prof. Ari Ofengenden**

**Near Easter and Judaic Studies, Brandeis University, US**

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

# STEVEN PINKER HOW THE MIND WORKS

AUTHOR OF *THE LANGUAGE INSTINCT*

with a new afterword

"A model of scientific writing, erudite, witty, and clear."  
—NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS



"Joseph LeDoux is a superb guide to that ultimate frontier in understanding our emotional life, the brain."  
—DANIEL GOLEMAN, author of *EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE*

# THE EMOTIONAL BRAIN

The MYSTERIOUS UNDERPINNINGS OF EMOTIONAL LIFE

JOSEPH LEDOUX

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION



# PREDICTABLY IRRATIONAL

"Sly and lucid. . . Revolutionary." —New York Times Book Review

The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions

DAN ARIELY

AUTHOR OF *THE UPSIDE OF IRRATIONALITY*

THINKING, FAST AND SLOW



DANIEL KAHNEMAN

WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE IN ECONOMICS

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

# FREAKONOMICS

A ROGUE ECONOMIST EXPLORES THE HIDDEN SIDE OF EVERYTHING

"Genius . . . has you gasping in amazement."  
—The Wall Street Journal



WITH NEW MATERIAL, INCLUDING AN AUTHOR Q&A

STEVEN D. LEVITT & STEPHEN J. DUBNER

# THE MORAL ANIMAL

WHY WE ARE THE WAY WE ARE: THE NEW SCIENCE OF EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY



ROBERT WRIGHT

"FIREBLY INTELLIGENT, BEAUTIFULLY WRITTEN AND ENGROSSINGLY ORIGINAL. . . A FEAST OF GREAT THINKING AND WRITING ABOUT THE MOST PROFOUND ISSUES THERE ARE."  
—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW

Copyrighted Material  
"A masterpiece . . . a landmark work brimming with originality and insight that also happens to be wickedly fun to read."  
—DANIEL GILBERT, professor of psychology, Harvard University, author of the international bestseller *Stumbling on Happiness*



# MORAL TRIBES



Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them



JOSHUA GREENE

Copyrighted Material

"A landmark contribution to humanity's understanding of itself."  
—The New York Times Book Review

# THE RIGHTEOUS MIND

WHY GOOD PEOPLE ARE DIVIDED BY POLITICS AND RELIGION



JONATHAN HAIDT

Copyrighted Material  
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

# BEHAVE

THE BIOLOGY OF HUMANS AT OUR BEST AND WORST



ROBERT M. SAPOLSKY

"It's no exaggeration to say that *Behave* is one of the best nonfiction books I've ever read."  
—David P. Barash, *The Wall Street Journal*

Copyrighted Material  
"Self Comes to Mind is a Big Idea book penned by a luminous thinker. . . [A] beautifully sprawling and marvelous work."  
—THE BALLAS MORNING NEWS

# ANTONIO DAMASIO SELF COMES TO MIND

CONSTRUCTING THE CONSCIOUS BRAIN



Copyrighted Material

PROBLEM 5:

- A. 50% chance to win a three- week tour of South America.
- B. A one-week tour of week tour of South America with certainty.

PROBLEM 6:

- C: 5% chance to win a three- week tour of South America.
- D: 10% chance to win a one week tour of South America.

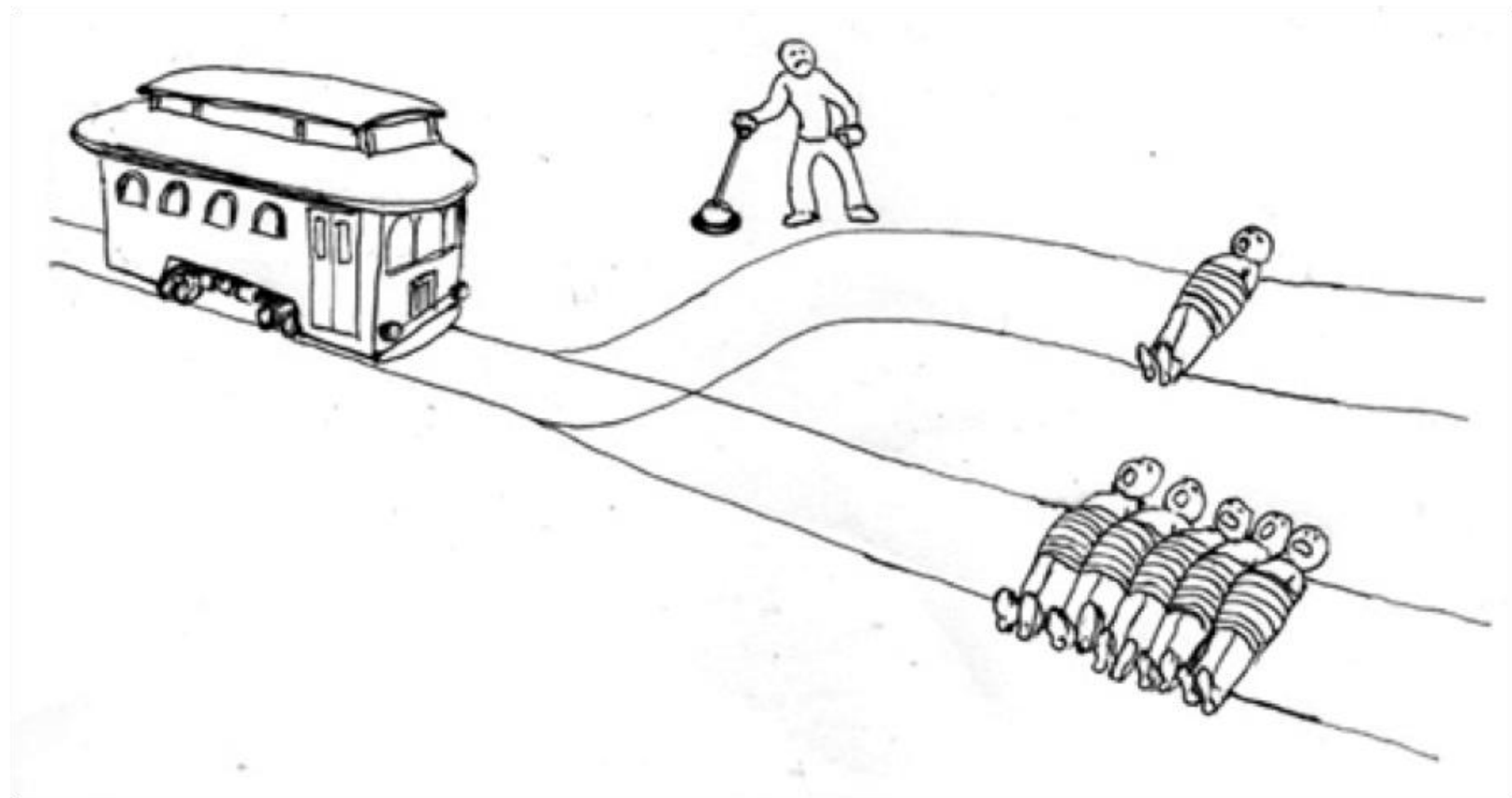
Choose between

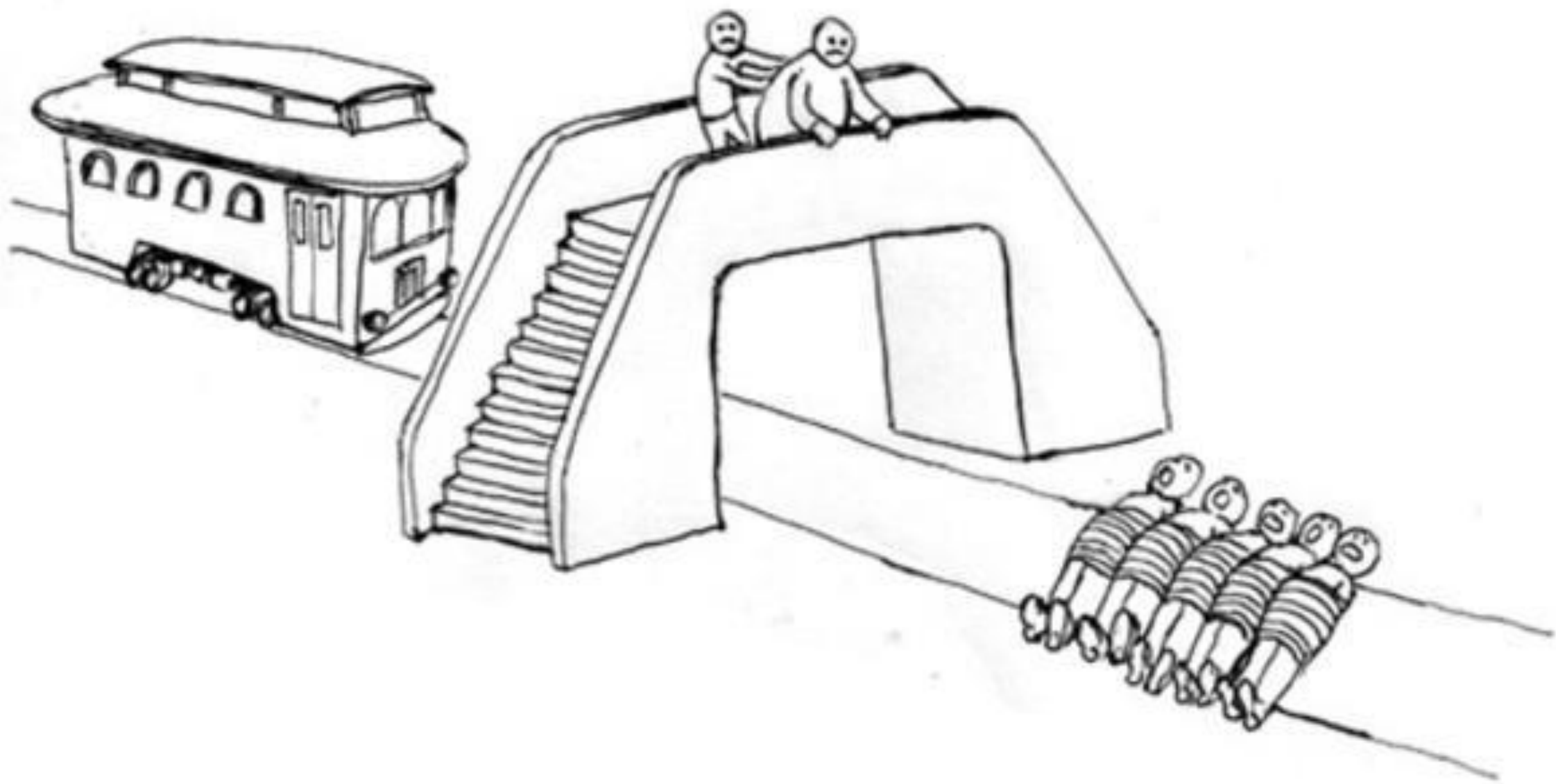
C: 2,500 with probability .33

D: 2,400 with probability .34

or

(4,000,.20), or (3,000,.25).



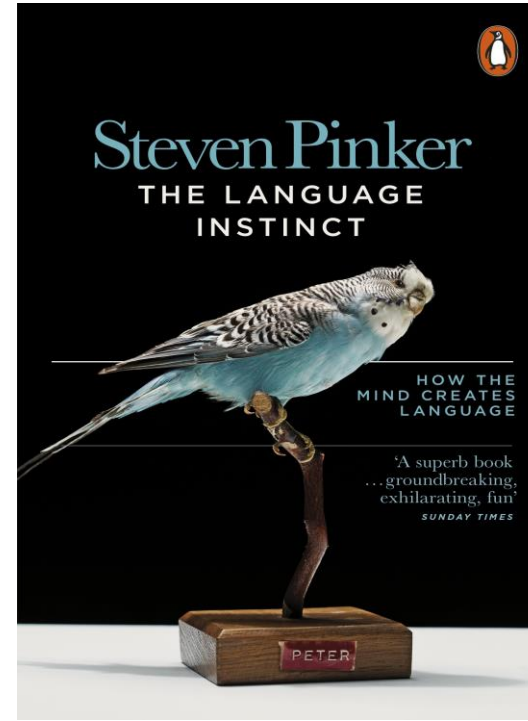
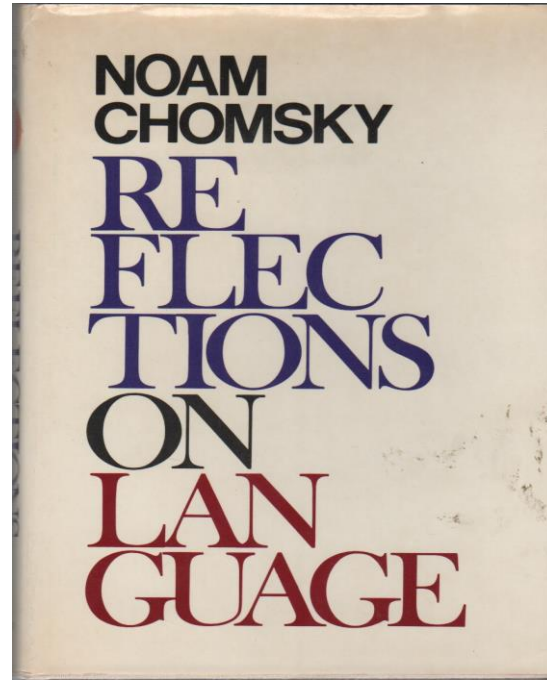
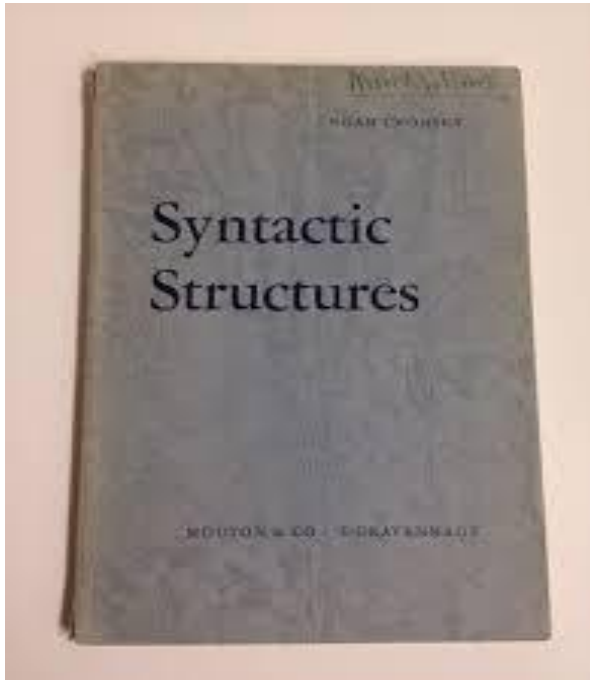


# THE PRISONER'S DILEMMA

PRISONER B

	STAY SILENT	BETRAY
STAY SILENT	1,1	3,0
BETRAY	0,3	2,2

PRISONER A





# Steven Pinker

## THE BLANK SLATE

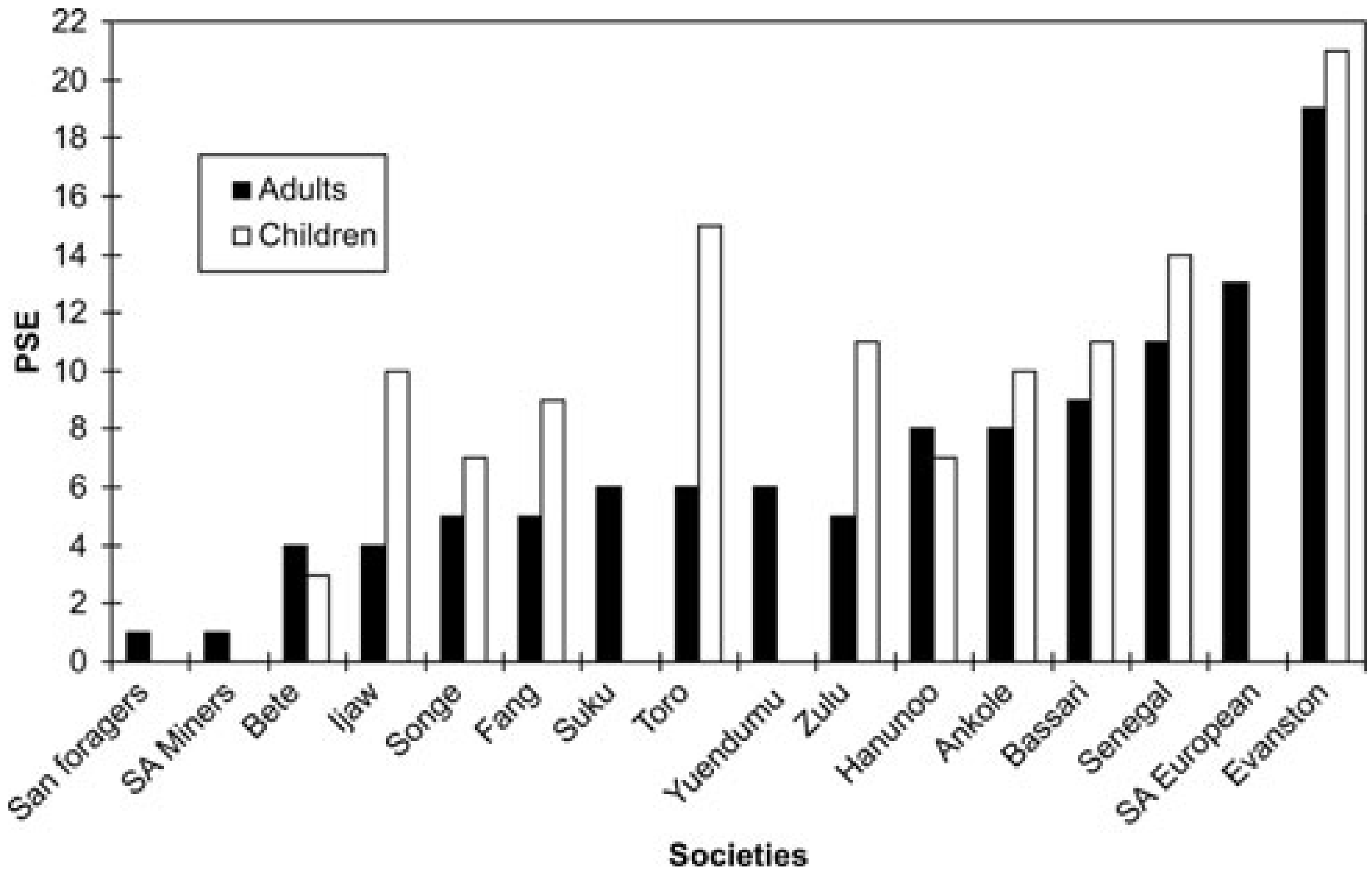
THE MODERN DENIAL  
OF HUMAN NATURE

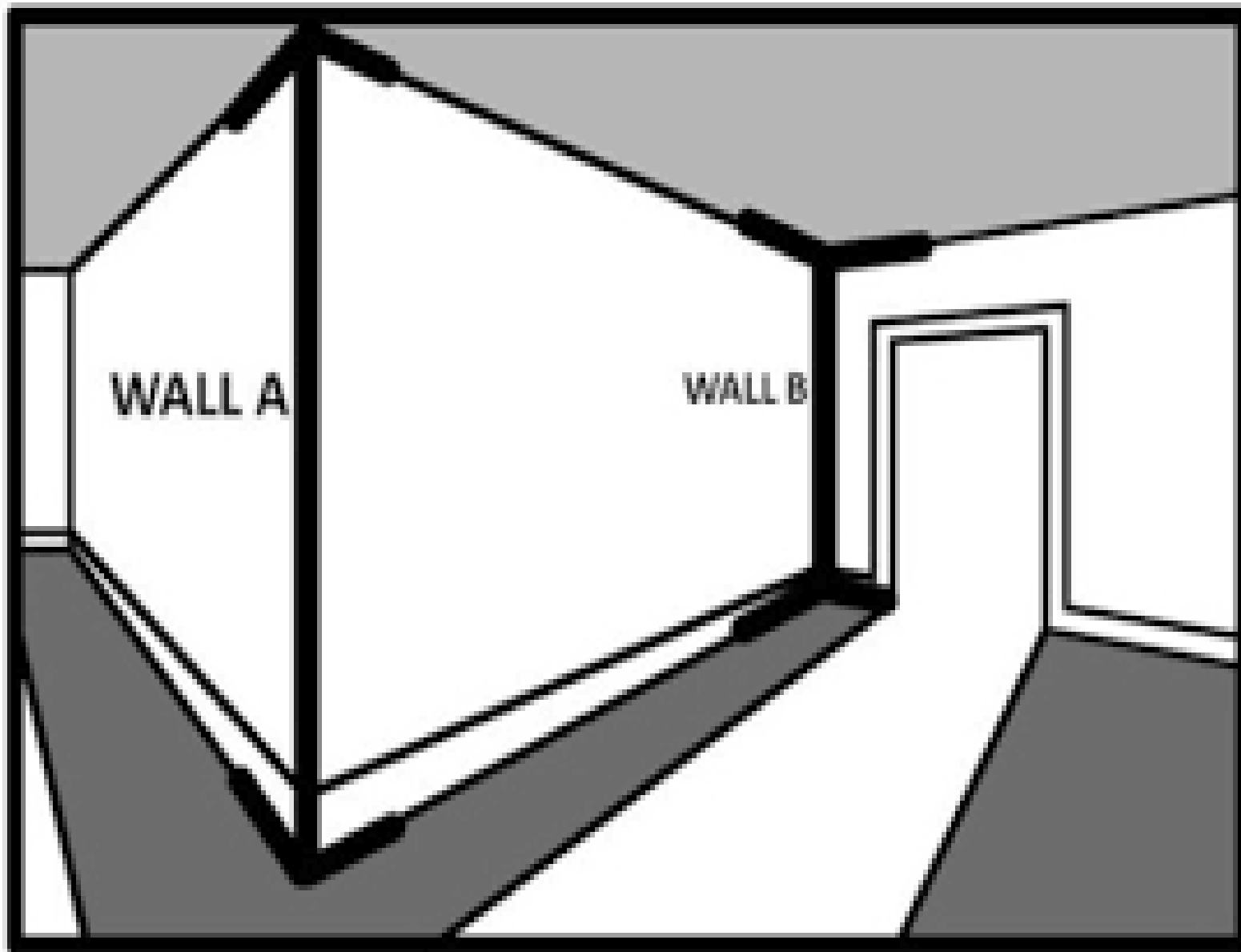
'Magnificent and timely'  
DAILY TELEGRAPH











“Western self is a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world’s cultures.”

Clifford Geertz

Westerners have more independent views of self than non-Westerners. They are far more likely to understand their selves in terms of internal psychological characteristics, such as their personality traits and attitudes, and are less likely to understand them in terms of roles and relationships, than are people from non-Western populations (Heine 2008).

Independent self-concepts are more likely to demonstrate

- (1) positively biased views of themselves;
- (2) a heightened valuation of personal choice;  
and
- (3) an increased motivation to “stand out”  
rather than to “fit in.”

## 1. Positive Self-Views

East Asian cultural context evidence for self-serving biases tends to be null, or in some cases, shows significant reversals, with East Asians demonstrating self-effacing biases (Heine & Hamamura 2007).

## 2. Personal choice

European-American children preferred working on a task, worked on it longer, and performed better on it, if they had made some superficial choices regarding the task than if others made the same choices for them. In contrast, Asian-American children were equally motivated by the task if a trusted other made the same choices for them (Iyengar & Lepper 1999).

### 3. Analytic versus holistic reasoning

Key factor influencing the prominence of analytic versus holistic cognition is the different self-construals prevalent across populations. First, independent self-construal primes facilitate analytic processing, whereas interdependent primes facilitate holistic processing. East Asians' recall for objects is worse than Americans' if the background has been switched indicating that East Asians are attending more to the field. This difference in attention has also been found in saccadic eye-movements as measured with eye-trackers. Americans gaze at focal objects longer than East Asians, who in turn gaze at the background more than Americans (Chua et al. 2005).



However, consistent with much ethnography in non-Western cultures (e.g., Geertz 1975), research shows, while Americans attend to dispositions at the expense of situations (Gilbert & Malone 1995), East Asians are more likely than Americans to infer that behaviors are strongly controlled by the situation

For example, compared with Westerners, some non-Westerners :

- (1) Have less dynamic social networks, in which people work to avoid negative interactions among their existing networks rather than seeking new relations (Adams 2005);
- (2) Prefer lower to higher arousal-positive affective states (Tsai 2007);

(3) Are less egocentric when they try to take the perspective of others  
(Cohen et al. 2007; Wu & Keysar 2007);

(4) Have weaker motivations for consistency (Kanagawa et al. 2001; Suh 2002);

(5) Are less prone to “social-loafing” (i.e., reducing efforts on group tasks when individual contributions are not being monitored) (Earley 1993);

(6) Associate fewer benefits with a person’s physical attractiveness.  
(Anderson et al. 2008)

# Language Diversity

- There are languages without sounds (sign language) languages without adjectives,
- Languages that seem not to have even noun-verb distinction,
- languages without logical connectives like 'if' or 'or',
- language without tense, without aspect without numerals.
- Some languages have thousands of verbs others only thirty.

- Some languages make distinctions that we would not think of making. Thus in English we have plural markers for nouns (book, books) Kiowa has a marker that means “of unexpected number”.
- In many languages all statements must be coded with verbal affixes for the sources of evidence that is all statement sentences are marked with whether one saw it, heard about it, inferred it, etc. Kwakwaka'walan insists on every noun referent to be coded as visible or not. (For review see *The Myth of Language Universals*). (Evans & Levinson 2009)

- Universal grammar has not been practically successful in modeling competencies in comprehending or producing language.
- No language organ was found in the Brain.
- No real genetic underpinning of language.

1. Viewing people as individuals faced with choice of utility is a model that is cultural. Decisions as often both highly social based on mimicry and social contagious and not reducible to utility.
2. Stressing innate language capacities is also a cultural preference there are alternative views of language that seem more plausible. Human languages are tools. Tools to solve the twin problems of communication and social cohesion. Tools shaped by the distinctive pressures of their cultural niches – pressures that include cultural values and history and which in many cases account in many cases for the similarities and differences between languages.” (Daniel L. Everett )

- Be aware that social science is often a cultural endeavor.
- Different models of what it means to be human
- Acceptance of historical and cultural difference
- Learning from cultures on how to do things differently
- Overcoming the Self

# Beyond Individualism

- a. Network Society
- b. Algorithmic support
- c. The Asian Century