

Emotions And Moral Judgment



PSYCH 1101: DAY 24

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VS



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The Foundational Role Of Empathy

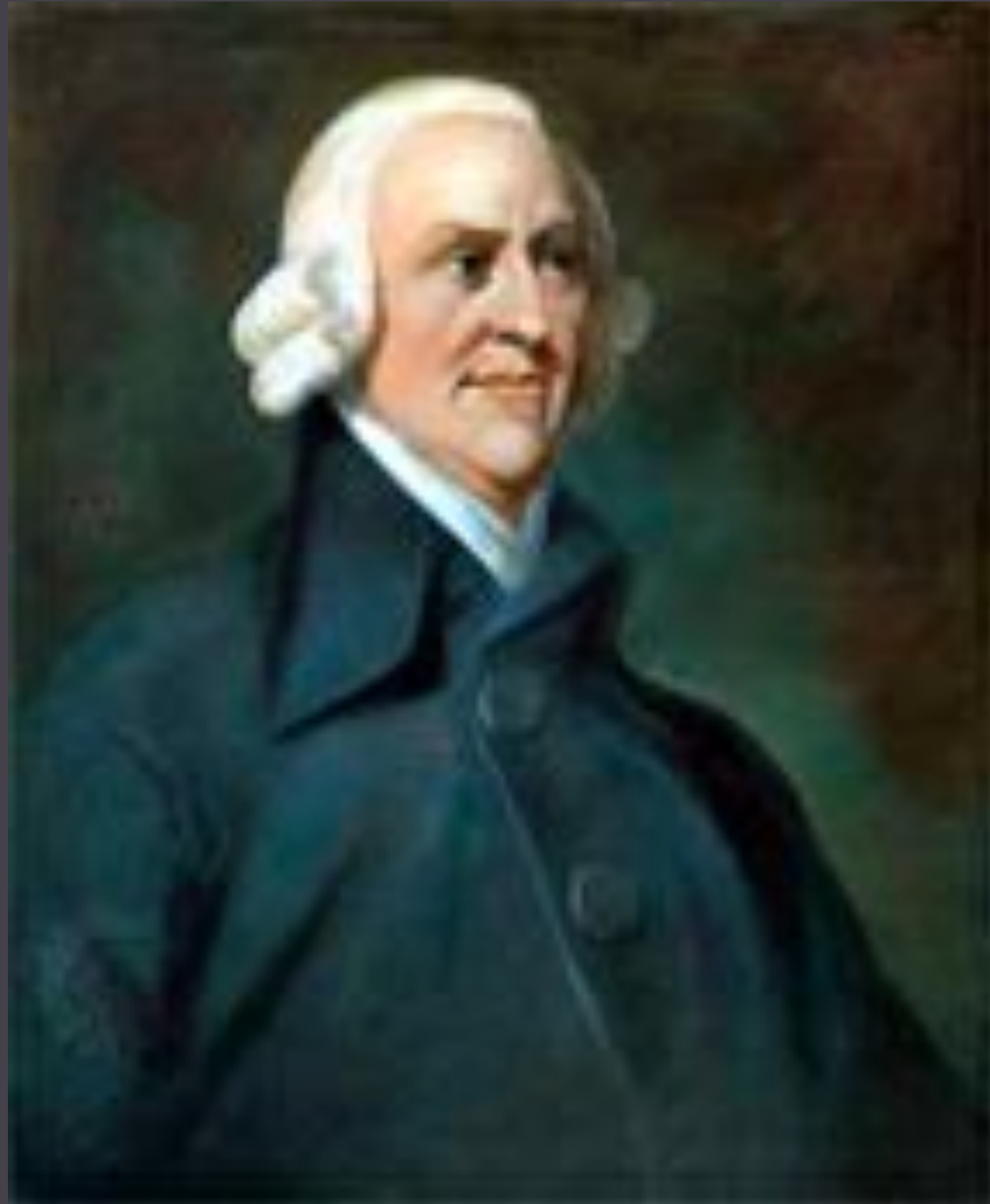


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What Is Empathy?

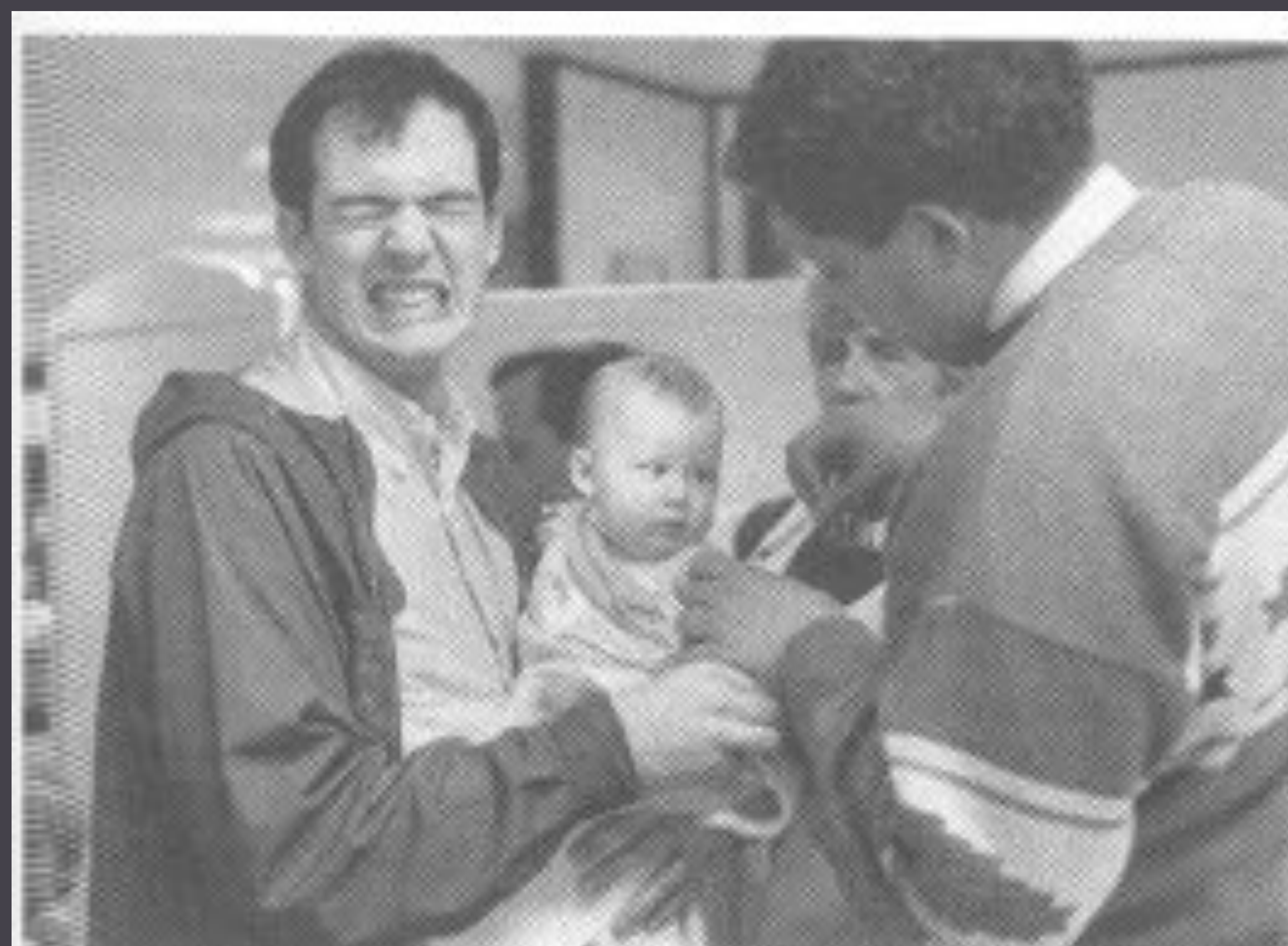
- “...the experience of feelings, chiefly emotions, similar in kind to those expressed by or known to exist in another person. It...sets aside our own personality, and moves us to partake of the pleasure or pain, the happiness or misery, of others” (Davis, 1900)
- A vicarious affective experience that is more appropriate to the situation of the other than to oneself. (Hoffman, 1987)

Instinctive Empathy



“When we see a stroke aimed, and just ready to fall upon the leg or arm of another person, we naturally shrink and draw back our own leg or our arm, and when it does fall, we feel it in some measure, and are hurt by it as well as the sufferer.”

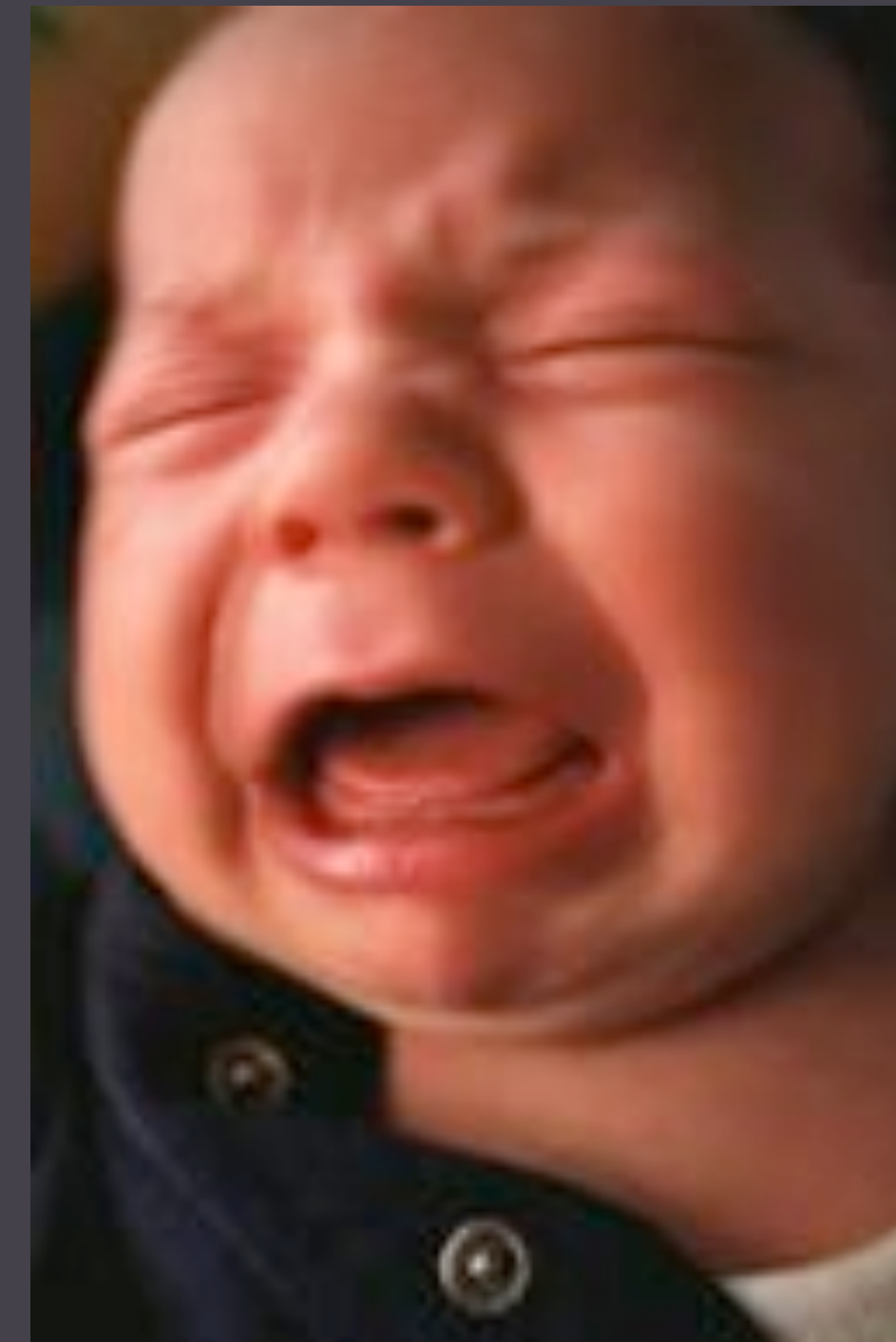
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Empathy In Infancy

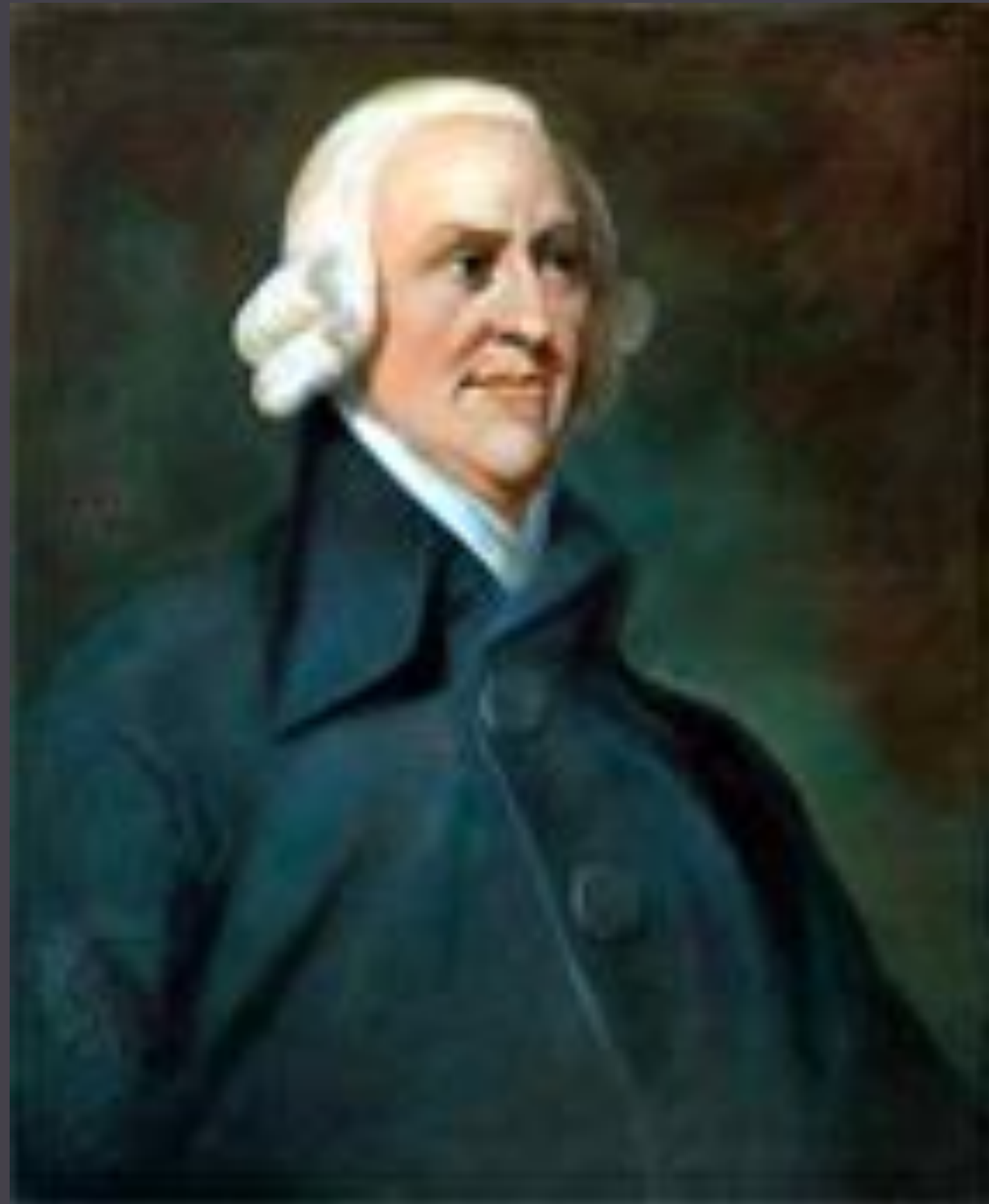
- From birth to 14 months infants will react with distress to cries of other infants.
- After first year, the distress of others will lead to helping behaviors.



Empathy In Non-Humans

- Albino rat distressed--suspended in midair. Fellow rat will press lever to lower him/her.
- Rhesus monkeys press bar to receive food reward (large or small). Large reward causes electric shocks for another monkey. Most monkeys will stop pressing bar for large reward.
- Rats will free other rats from a cage and “celebrate” with each other (but choose to free rats even if they don’t get to hang out)

Empathy Through Perspective Taking



“By the imagination, we place ourselves in the other’s situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter, as it were, into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some ideas of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them.”

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Empathy Leads To Moral Concern And Help

- Daniel Batson: Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis
 - Feeling empathy vs. thinking rationally about an individual in need
 - Empathy leads people to **care more** and to offer **more help**
 - Selfishly help to feel good? No--people prefer help over other activities that will improve their mood

[Reader A]: “The satellite images show the extent of damage, but remains impersonal. This picture graphically shows the actual devastation and number of deaths... [the user then provides a link to a high-resolution image of hundreds of dead bodies on a beach, seen with a stark clarity in detail]”

[Reader B]: “After seeing this I feel physically revolted. Every one of those people could well be someone's brother or sister, or parent.... or child....”

[Reader C]: “Horrific. I just donated \$150 to the Red Cross. I had been thinking about it, but it was that image that pushed me over the edge.”

What If We Did Not Have
Empathy?

Psychopathy As A Breakdown In Empathy



13-year-old mugger, when asked about one of his victims:

"What do I care? I'm not her."

Gary Gillmore:

"I was always capable of murder ... I can become totally devoid of feelings of others, unemotional. I know I'm doing something grossly ... wrong. I can still go ahead and do it."

Ted Bundy:

"I mean, there are so many people"