

# Our Bioethics Future: Empowering the Next Generation

*"20 Years of Bioethics" - Singapore, June 17, 2021*



Center for Ethics

**Paul Root Wolpe, Ph.D.**

Raymond Schinazi Distinguished Research Chair of Jewish Bioethics  
Professor of Medicine, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, Sociology, Religion, &  
Neuroscience and Biological Behavior  
Director, Center for Ethics

**We ought to have been brought up in a particular way from our very youth, as Plato says, so as to both delight in and to be pained by the things that we ought.**

-Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1104b, 11-13)

# Outline:

1. A different definition of ethics
2. Three truths about ethics
3. Isn't ethics arbitrary?
4. Values are Converging
5. Where is Bioethics Going?
6. How Do I Fit in?

# A Different Definition of Ethics & Morality

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- Formal definitions of ethics:
  - “Rules of behavior based on ideas about what is morally good and bad”
  - “The branch of philosophy that deals with morality”
  - “A moral philosophy or code of morals practiced by a person or group of people”
- My Definition of Ethics (and morality)  
*“How we determine, express, and assess our values in the world (ethics); and how we establish, maintain, and conduct our relationships as expressions of those values (morality).”*

# Three Truths about Ethics



Truth #1: Ethics is based on *Values*.



# Three Truths about Ethics

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Could you do anything  
“unethical” stranded on a  
deserted island?



Truth #2: Ethics always involves

*Relationships*

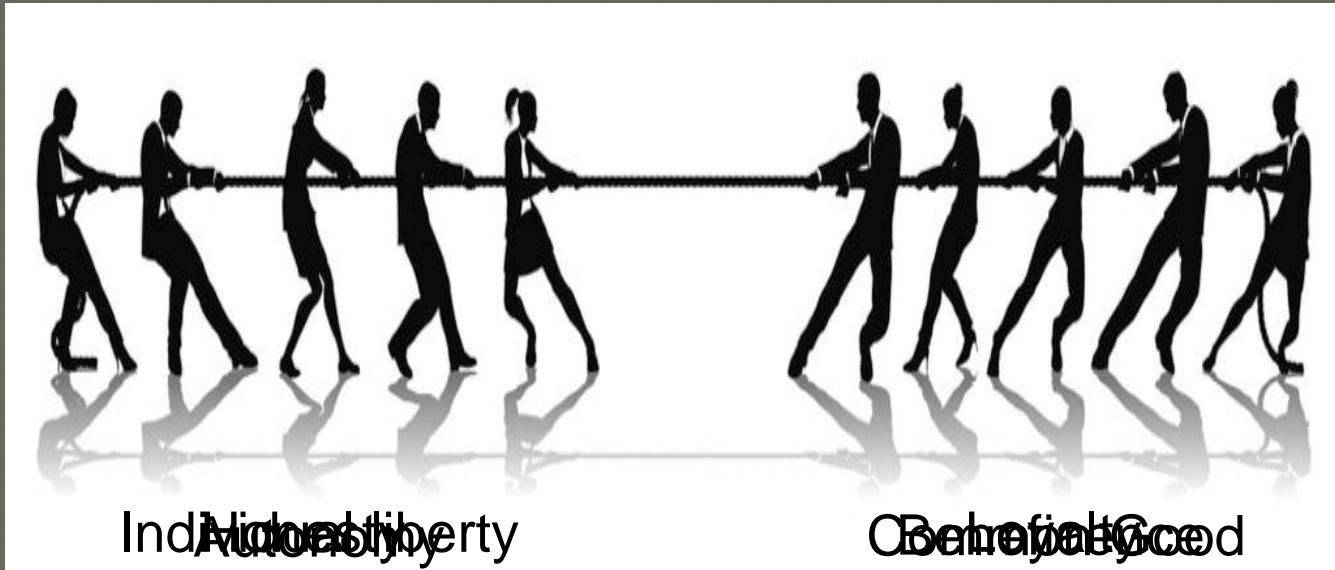
# Three Truths about Ethics

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- ◉ We are taught the wrong thing about ethics.

*We can all answer this question easily:*

- ◉ "Ethics is deciding the difference between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_."



*Truth #3:* Ethical dilemmas  
involve a **conflict in**  
**values:**

*A right vs. a right.*



# Isn't Ethics Basically Arbitrary?

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- "Isn't ethics just a matter of opinion?"
- "Is there one ethic for all time, or does ethics change in time and place?"
- "Why is there so much ethical controversy?"

# JUST BABIES

THE

ORIGINS

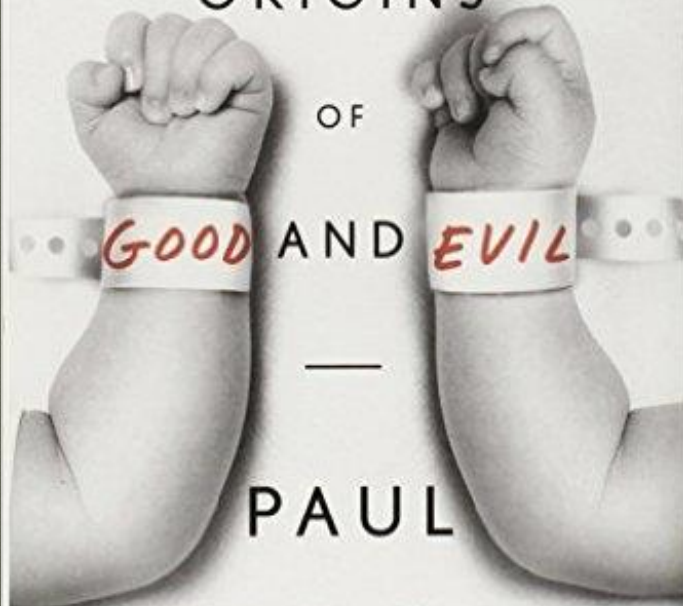
OF

*GOOD* AND *EVIL*

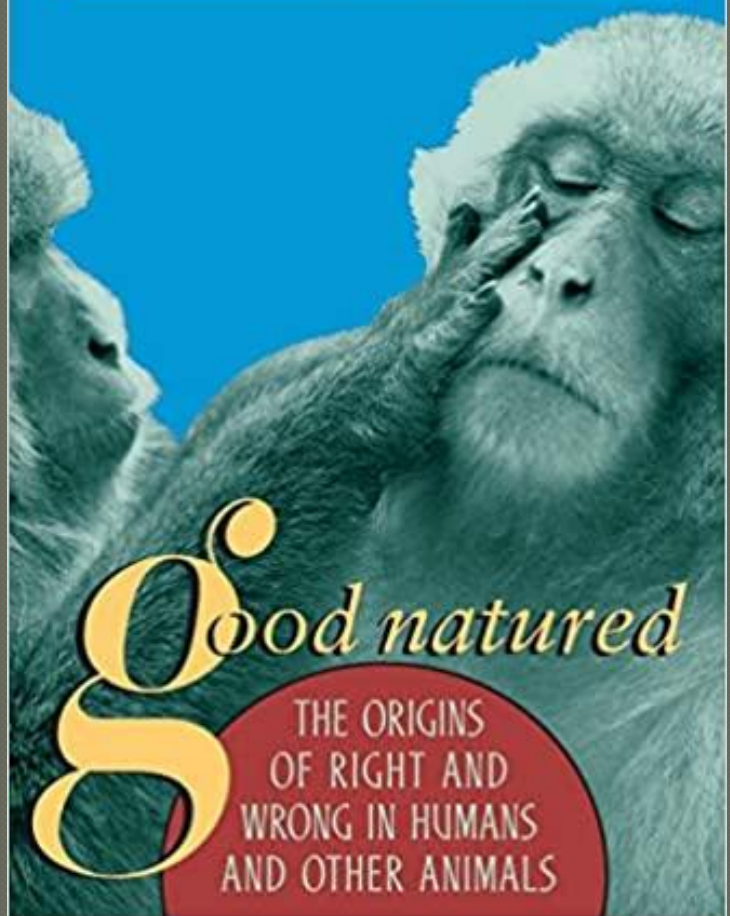
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PAUL

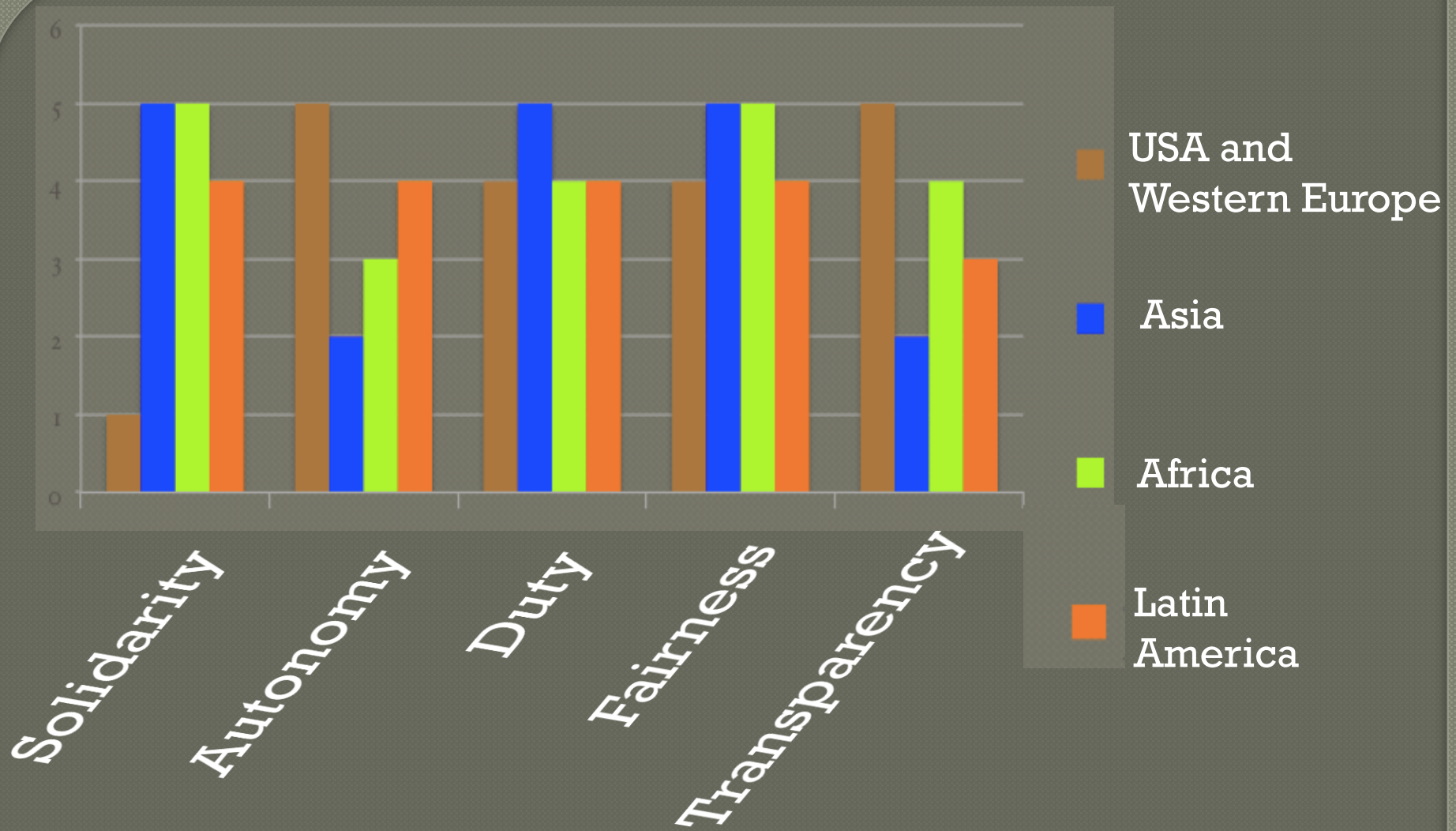
BLOOM



FRANS DE WAAL



*Good natured*  
THE ORIGINS  
OF RIGHT AND  
WRONG IN HUMANS  
AND OTHER ANIMALS

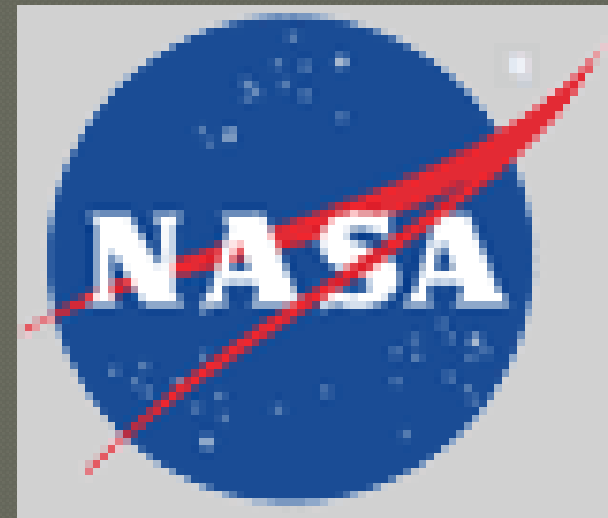


Ethical variation is generally about differentially weighing competing values, not about a difference in the values themselves.

# Convergence of Values

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- Russian Aerospace Medicine Meeting, 2002



# Convergence of Values

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- Russian Aerospace Medicine Meeting, 2002
- BEINGS Conference 2002  
(Biotechnology and the Ethical imagination: A Global Summit)



# Ethical principles for the use of human cellular biotechnologies

Paul Root Wolpe, Karen S Rommelfanger & the Drafting and Reviewing Delegates of the BEINGS Working Groups\*

Recent developments in bioengineering promise the possibility of new diagnostic and treatment strategies, novel industrial processes, and innovative approaches to thorny problems in fields such as nutrition, agriculture, and biomanufacturing. As modern genetics has matured and developed technologies of increasing power, debates over risk assessments and proper applications of the technology, and over who should have decision-making power over such issues, have become more prominent. Recently, some scientists have advocated that ethicists “step out of the way,” whereas others have called for greater ethical scrutiny, or even for moratoria on some lines of research<sup>1,2</sup>. As a community, however, we must together determine the proper application of these powerful biological tools. This paper, a consensus statement of a group of interdisciplinary delegates drawn from the top biotech-producing countries of the world, offers a set of ethical principles to contribute to the ethical conversation about human cellular biotechnological research moving forward.

of BEINGS, and so were excluded from official consideration (for a more detailed explanation, please see **Box 1**).

The challenges related to biotechnologies have spawned conferences, white papers, and sets of guidelines, all trying to suggest ways to responsibly contain the power of biotechnologies, such as synthetic biology<sup>1</sup>, human genome sequencing, stem cells<sup>2</sup>, and reproductive germline editing<sup>3</sup>. Contributions of various kinds have been proffered by groups such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO; Paris)<sup>4</sup>, the US National Academy of Sciences (Washington, DC), the UK Royal Society (London), the Chinese Academy of Sciences (Beijing)<sup>3</sup>, and the Hinxton Group (Baltimore, MD)<sup>5</sup>. The BEINGS Conference Statement of Principles presented here is intended to complement, not compete with, these important statements, and emphasizes elements we believe are absent or insufficiently covered in other such statements. In the pages that follow, we give some background on the BEINGS selection of delegates, approach, and philosophy, and then propose ten principles to guide the use of human cellular biotechnologies that emerged from our discussions at BEINGS.

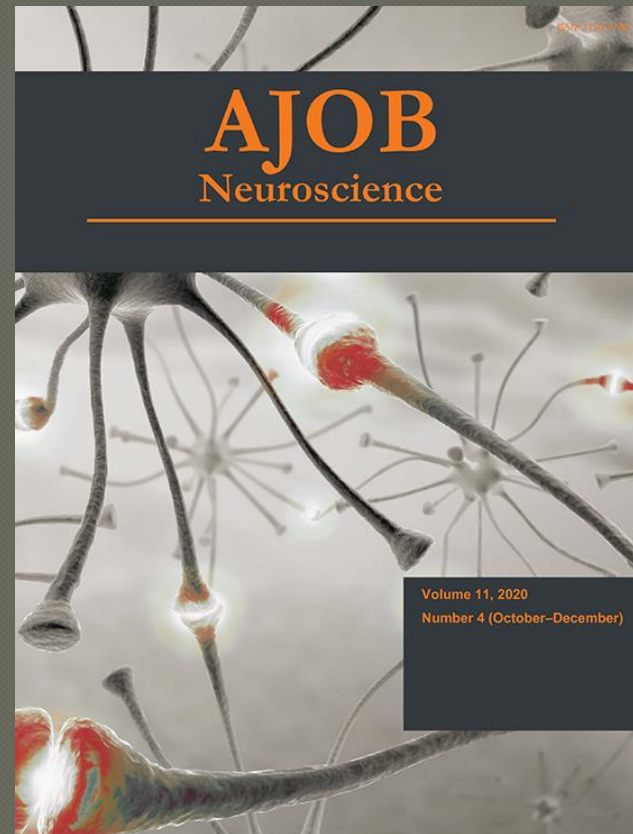
# Convergence of Values

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- Russian Aerospace Medicine Meeting, 2002
- BEINGS Conference 2002  
(Biotechnology and the Ethical imagination: A Global Summit)
- Global Neuroethics Summits



GLOBAL NEUROETHICS  
SUMMIT | 2019



THE  
**NEUROETHICS**  
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Hosted by the Center for Ethics, Neuroethics Program at Emory University.

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# Areas of Highest Activity in Bioethics

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- Artificial Intelligence and Big Data (Federated Machine Learning)
- CRISPR, Genetic Engineering
- Consumer Medicine, Home-based Diagnostics and Treatment, Digital Phenotyping (FML)
- Public Health, Pandemics
- Environmental Health, Food
- Diversity, Inclusion, Internationalism



# How Do I fit In?

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*There are significant problems to be solved in the coming years. How do we in bioethics represent the highest level of ethical leadership in solving the challenges ahead of us?*

- International collaboration
- Recognizing value differences while focusing on areas of convergence
- Flexibility of regulations
- Open debate on value propositions
- Real moral leadership





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# Center for Ethics

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