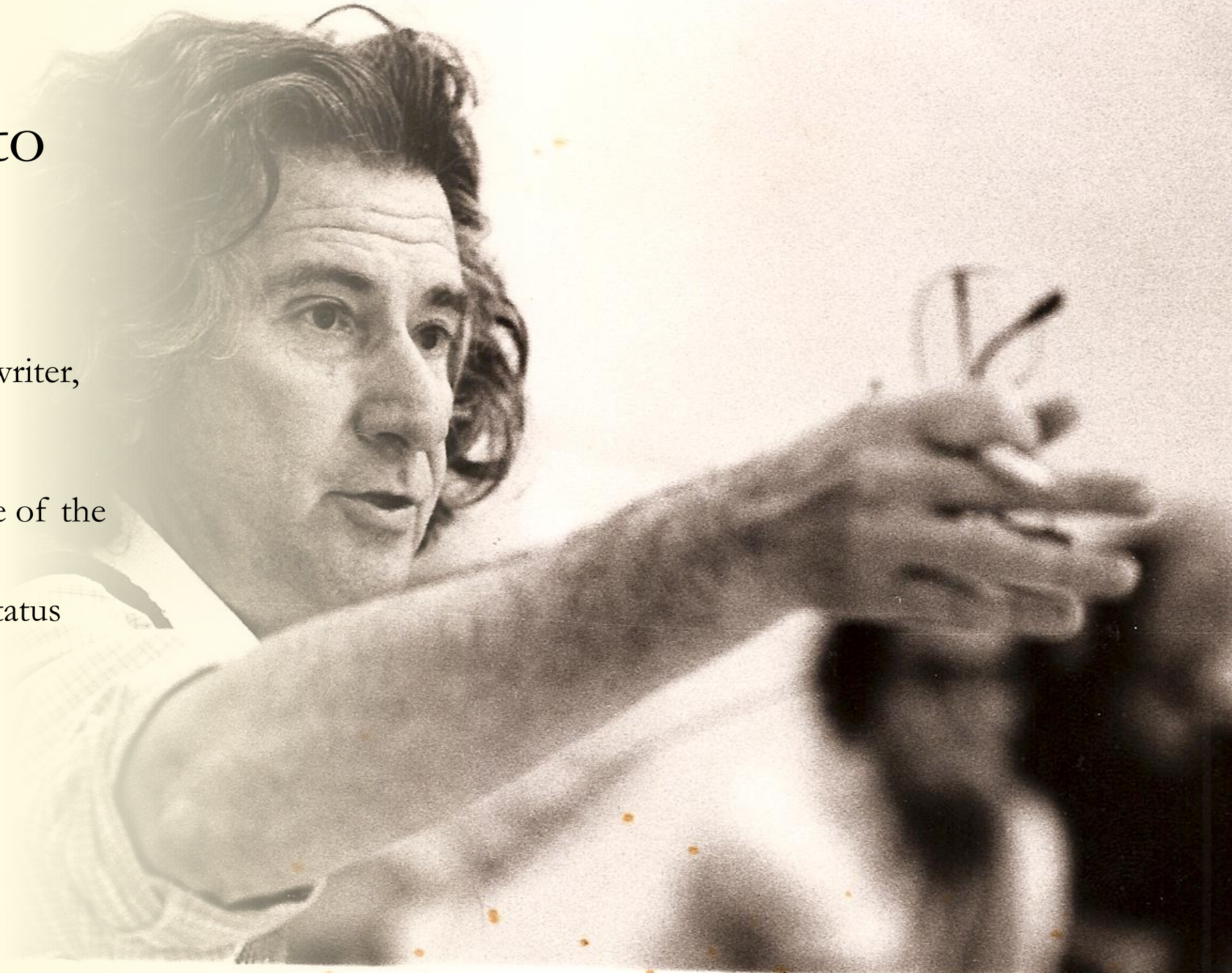# Some Thoughts on Empathy

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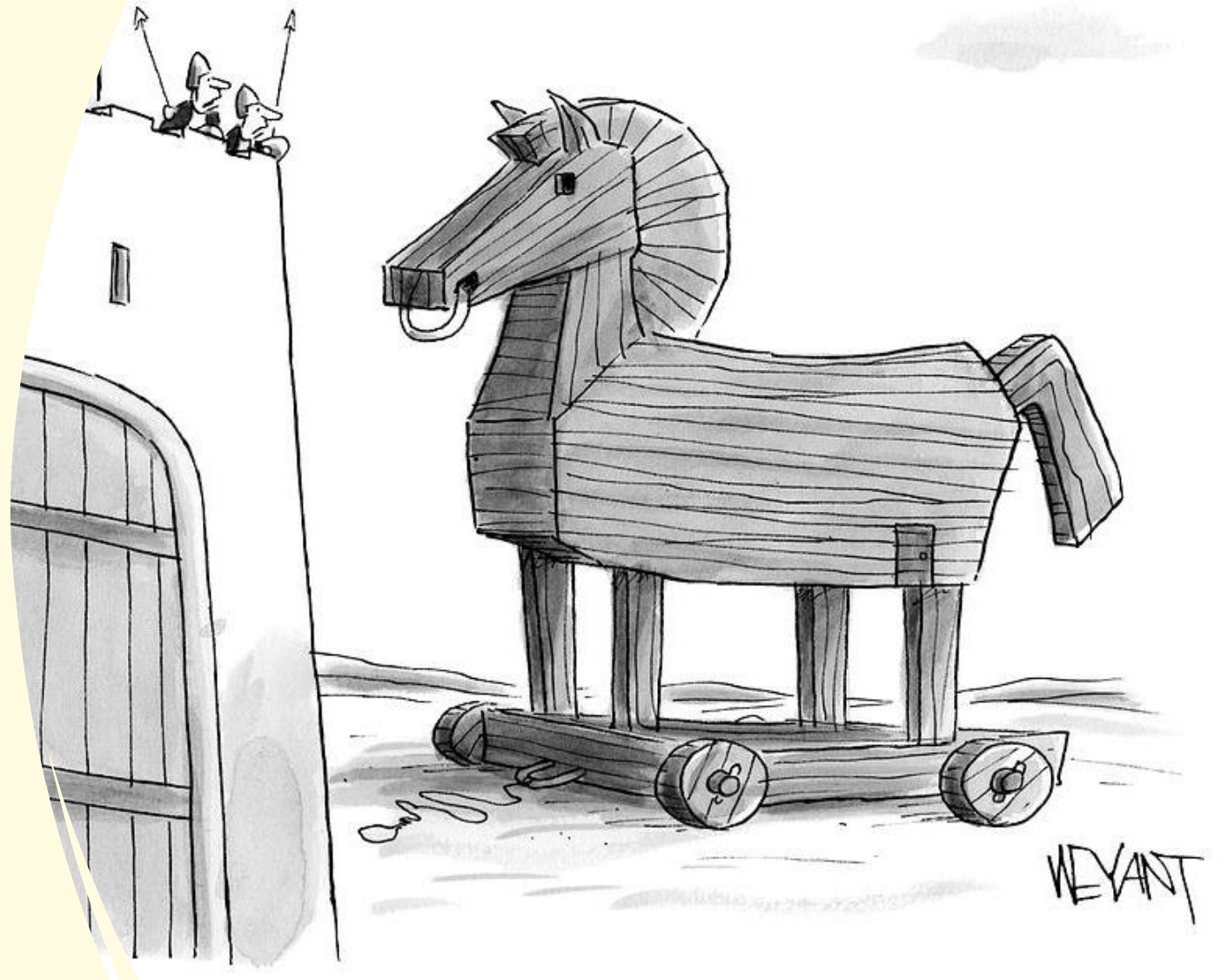
Who is Augusto Boal?

- Brazilian theater director, writer, and political activist

- Wrote todays text "Theatre of the Oppressed"

- Focuses on changing the status quo of theatrical works.

Empathy or Osmosis

- Empathy can be used as a weapon.
- Empathy is highly influential.
- Trojan Horse for other ideas.

"A love story, no matter how simple it may be, can be the vehicle of the values of another universe which is not that of the spectator."

- Augusto Boal

Who is Paul Bloom?

- Canadian-American Psychologist

- Written books on topics such as pleasure, morality, and empathy

- Bloom's main argument is that empathy is highly overrated.

- He isn't arguing that empathy as a whole is bad and that we should forego empathy, but rather understand its capability.

Prologue Summary

- Bloom talks about his experience with feeling empathy when the Sandy Hooks shooting happen.

- He used to believe the saying of how we don't often have enough empathy.

- Empathy is viewed more around morality and kindness

- He believes that emotional empathy can cloud our judgment and bias.

- Our empathy should be more rational than emotional

- He uses examples such as 9/11 and the Holocaust to push his view more.

Chapter Three Analysis

- Bloom argues that our empathetic responses are frequently aimed at individuals or situations that are more visible or emotionally engaging, rather than those that are most in need of help.

- Bloom points out that people might feel a strong empathetic connection to a celebrity facing a personal crisis, while ignoring the suffering of less visible individuals.

- This approach uses reason and evidence to determine where our help is most needed and can be most effective.

Chapter Four Analysis

- In Chapter 4 of "Against empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion", titled "Intimacy", Bloom discusses the detriments of either having too much empathy or too little.

- Bloom argues that in situations like being a therapist it's helpful to have a lot of empathy to relate to the patient, but in situations like getting chemo or other serious operations it's better to have less empathy.

- Empathy can be described in a slew of different ways but they can also be described in 3 different parts: Religious, Sexual and Mundane.

- There are partials to empathy and how people act.

- Bloom emphasizes that intimacy requires vulnerability, where individuals expose their true selves, fears, and desires.
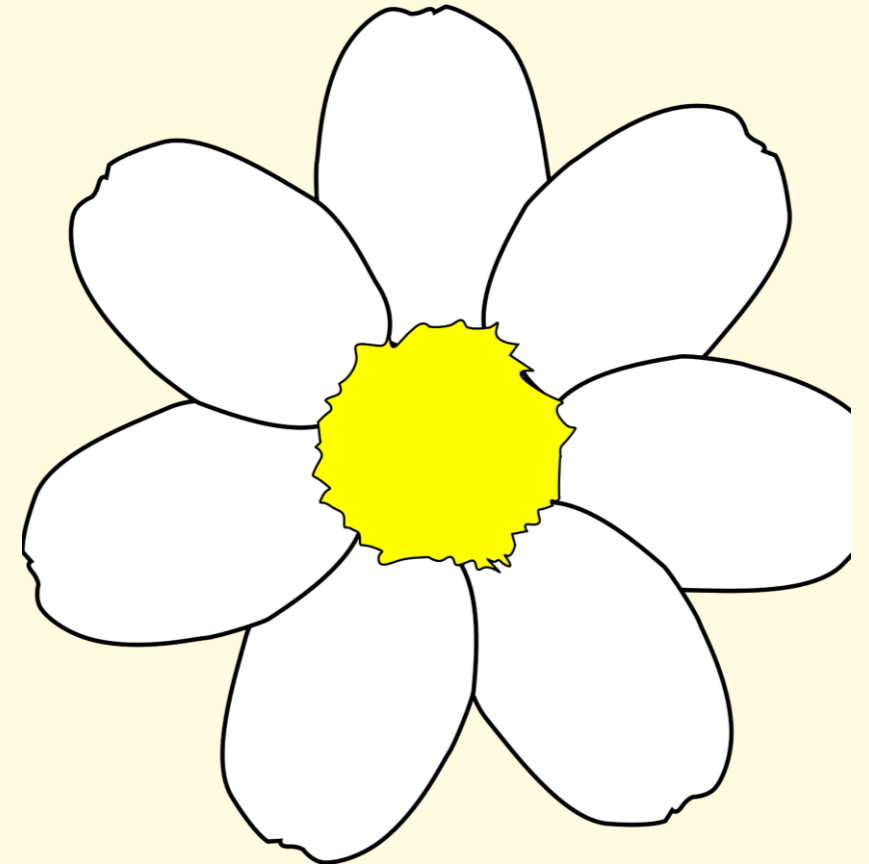
Conclusion

- As a whole, Paul Bloom argues that empathy is often not the best course of action.

- Bloom uses an example of therapists and radiologists, where the therapist is better inclined to use empathy rather than the radiologist.

- Bloom suggests that we should use logic and reason over empathy when applicable.

- Overall, Bloom does not bash empathy like how we expect, but rather proposed the claim that "empathy does not fit into every situation".

Discussion Questions

- What does empathy mean to you?

- What would you do if someone you know gets hurt?

- If a train that you cannot stop comes down a track with 5 people stuck and you stand next to the lever that when pulled, switches the train to another track that only has 1 stuck person, would you pull the lever and why?