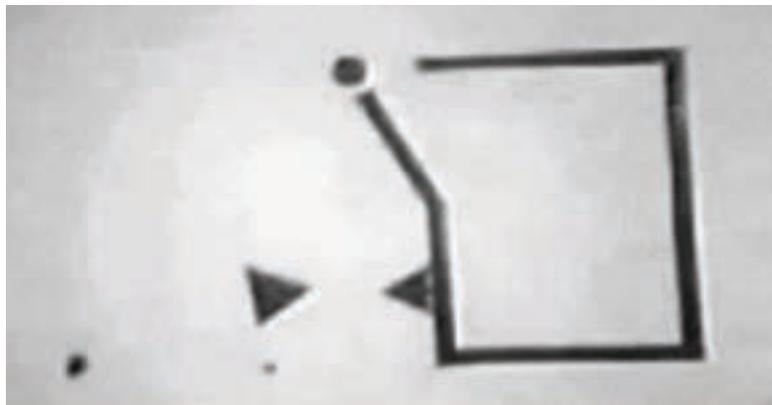




The Brain with David Eagleman
Episode 5: Why Do I Need You?

1) Why does it make sense to say “half of us is other people?” What would you be like if you were born 500 years ago with exactly the same sequence of DNA, but a different environment around you? 1,000 years ago? 10,000 years ago?

2) In the Heider and Simmel experiment from 1944, viewers couldn't help but assign intention to moving shapes. Name at least 3 other examples of our penchant to do this in modern life. (Don't forget to consider popular characters in animated children's films.)



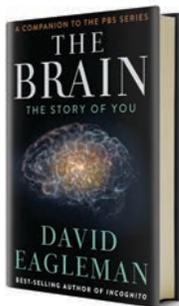
3) Did this episode give you a new understanding of empathy? How would you describe what it is now? Speculate on an evolutionary reason why the ability to step into another person's shoes is so important.

4) A recent study demonstrated that the pain of social rejection can be reduced a bit by taking a Tylenol. Why?

5) Many evolutionary thinkers have come to the conclusion that individual selection (survival of the fittest) and even kin selection (protecting your close family) is not enough to explain all the facts of human behavior. Additionally needed is the concept of *group selection*. Here's the concept: if a group is composed entirely of people who cooperate, everyone in the group will be better off for it. On average, you'll fare better than other people who aren't very cooperative with their neighbors. What aspects of human behavior might the hypothesis of group selection shed light upon?

6) After watching this episode, can you identify instances of dehumanizing propaganda that you've been exposed to in your life? Identify specific examples. How do these examples modulate the networks involved in understanding other people as humans?

7) For the participants, what was a key ingredient in the power of Jane Elliott's blue-eyes/brown-eyes experiment?



More depth on the issues in this episode can be found in the companion book, [*The Brain: The Story of You*](#)