

Concept

a powerful, intriguing, inspiring, or perhaps odd idea distilled to its essential elements

In November 2002, I announced the behaviourome, or human mental map, project—a map of ideas—to understand ourselves and whether the number of ideas is finite.

A 1994 International Bioethics Survey asked 6000+ people in 10 countries 150 questions on bioethics dilemmas. From its results, I proposed that the number of human ideas *is* finite. The evidence continues to suggest that the number of ideas is finite, and thus countable. We'll know after we map them.

The project aims to compare mental maps and idea diversity between individuals and species in order to develop descriptive bioethics into a common framework for comparative ethics. The map will aid policy making that respects diversity of people within a culture and globally. Guidelines should be culturally sensitive regarding ethical, social, and legal aspects. We'll have to ensure that the map is used well and not to dictate majority views to minorities. Individual mental maps will help people consider all of their ideas and make moral choices.

On the map, the number of ideas depends on the arbitrary limits placed around them. A virtual map will be useful for communication, but at present there's a physical model for the initial construction phases. This four-dimensional box includes

points representing ideas on a matrix for different types of ideas within a framework of six sides: the ideals of self-love, love of others, loving good, loving life—with time memories and hopes. I propose to add heritage memories and hopes to the four ideals in decision making. Such memories include our biological, social, and spiritual heritage in biology, medicine, society, and religion. We can imagine more sides with multiple dimensions and other principles. The model doesn't exclude beings who can't think; they share a memory (history) and future heritage. The four ideals are seen in beings that appeared in evolution before humans did. The intention is to study all ideas used when facing a moral dilemma; other areas of the human mind that include ideas will be explored for integrating into a mental map.

The project is open to all who wish to contribute in an open spirit of academic multidisciplinary understanding. For more about International Behaviourome <http://www.biol.tsukuba.ac.jp/~macer/menmap.html>.

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Is the Number of Ideas Finite?

Indications are, yes!



By Darryl Macer