



Genetic Interventions: Remarks on Evaluating Consequences

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IVF and embryo selection attitudes in the U.S.

1969 (pre Louise Brown)

Personally use IVF for infertility?	18%
Approve IVF for disease/disability?	35%

Harris, L. and Associates, Inc.; *Life Magazine*, 1969-04, 'Harris (1969): Science, Sex, and Morality Survey, study no. 1927'

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Mason, H. (2003) 'Gallup Brain: The Birth of In Vitro Fertilization'. *Gallup*

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Kalfoglou, A., Suthers, K., Scott, J., and Hudson, K. (2004) 'Reproductive Genetic Testing: What America Thinks', *Genetics and Public Policy Centre*

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2004

Approve embryo selection to avert fatal childhood disease?	68%
Approve embryo selection for adult-onset cancer?	58%
Approve embryo selection for strength or intelligence?	28%

Status Quo Bias?

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Two groups of students were asked to fill out a short questionnaire. Immediately after completing the task, the students in one group were given decorated mugs as compensation, and the students in the other group were given large Swiss chocolate bars. All participants were then offered the choice to exchange the gift they had received for the other, by raising a card with the word “Trade” written on it. Approximately 90 percent of the participants retained the original reward.

Gilovich, T., Griffin, D., & Kahneman, D. *Heuristics and Biases: The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

The Reversal Test

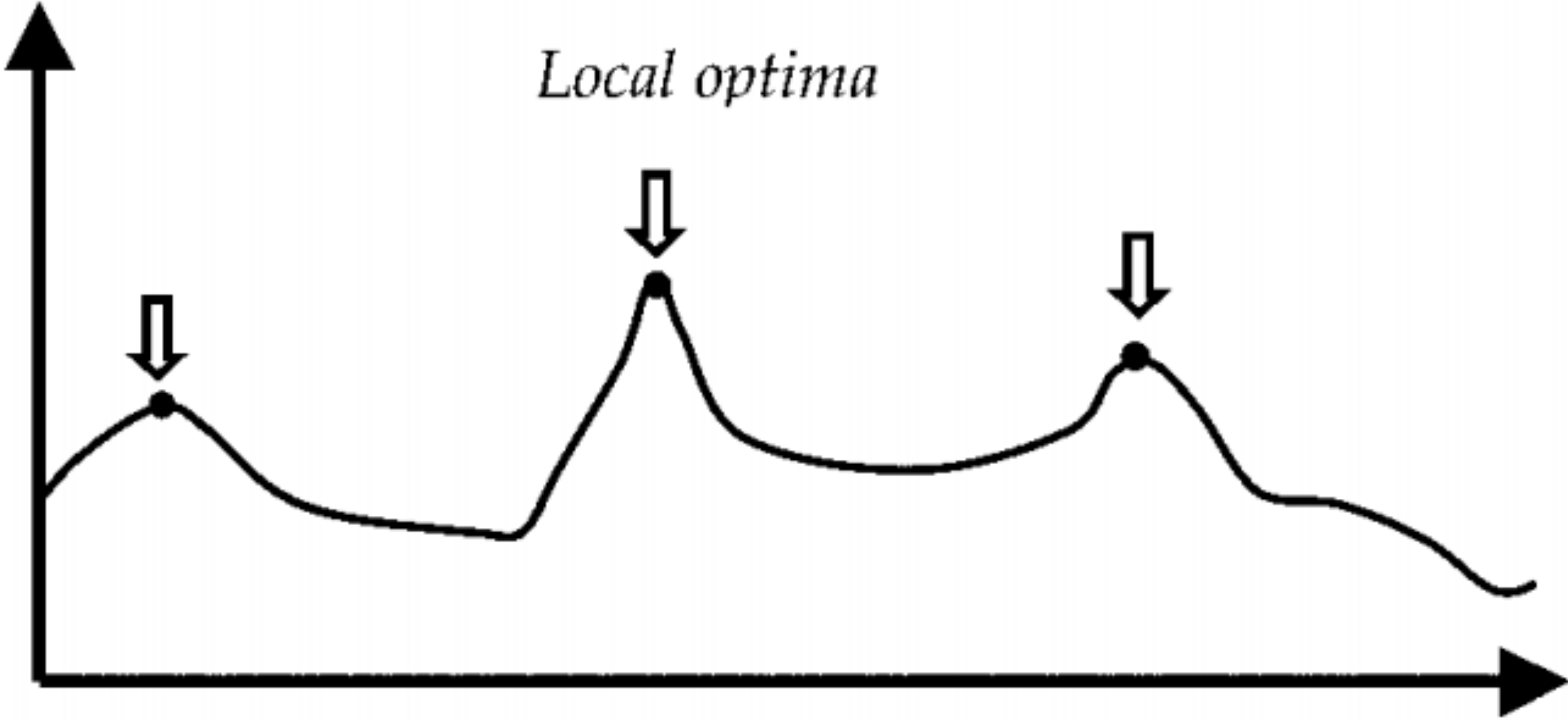
Bostrom, N. & Ord, T. "The Reversal Test: Eliminating Status Quo Bias in Applied Ethics" *Ethics* (116): 656–679

The Reversal Test

When a proposal to change a certain parameter is thought to have bad overall consequences, consider a change to the same parameter in the opposite direction. If this is also thought to have bad overall consequences, then the onus is on those who reach these conclusions to explain why our position cannot be improved through changes to this parameter. If they are unable to do so, then we have reason to suspect that they suffer from status quo bias.

Bostrom, N. & Ord, T. "The Reversal Test: Eliminating Status Quo Bias in Applied Ethics" *Ethics* (116): 656–679

Goodness of social consequences



Local optima

Possible values of parameter λ

Potential responses

- The Argument from Evolutionary Adaptation
- The Argument from Transition Costs
- The Argument from Risk
- The Argument from Person-Affecting Ethics

The Double Reversal Test

Bostrom, N. & Ord, T. "The Reversal Test: Eliminating Status Quo Bias in Applied Ethics" *Ethics* (116): 656–679

The Double Reversal Test

- Toxic spill thought experiment...

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The Double Reversal Test

Suppose it is thought that increasing a certain parameter and decreasing it would both have bad overall consequences. Consider a scenario in which a natural factor threatens to move the parameter in one direction and ask whether it would be good to counterbalance this change by an intervention to preserve the status quo. If so, consider a later time when the naturally occurring factor is about to vanish and ask whether it would be a good idea to intervene to reverse the first intervention. If not, then there is a strong prima facie case for thinking that it would be good to make the first intervention even in the absence of the natural countervailing factor.

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