

“Reading Marc D. Hauser’s *Moral Minds*”

Session 8: the latter half of chapter 4 (pp. 201-241)

December 19, 2008

Presented by Motoi Yao

Reported by Ryoji Sato

In session 7, we read the latter half of chapter 4 (pp. 200-241). On these pages, Hauser dealt with various mental faculties which are relevant to morality such as mind-reading, categorization, patience, and emotions. Each faculty has an important contribution to morality; without it, morality was impaired. Hauser mainly discussed mind-reading, categorization, and patience based on evidence in developmental psychology. According to him, the development of the mind-reading faculty corresponds to that of morality, and the capacity of patience in childhood predicts moral behavior in a child’s adulthood and limits his/her capacity to share.

In this chapter, he acknowledged an important contribution of emotions to morality. To evaluate how emotions are involved with morality, he mainly made use of pathological studies in which their subjects were patients who had damages to brain areas relevant to emotions (for example, ventromedial prefrontal cortex, VMPFC). According to Hauser, these patients showed different moral performance from normal subjects. Furthermore, Hauser conceded to the Humean creature in this chapter. He referred to Shaun Nichols’s psychological experiment which demonstrated that emotions can convert a conventional rule into a moral rule under some circumstance. Following his experiment, Hauser admitted that emotions influence not only moral performance, but also moral competence. The Rawlsian creature has to cooperate with the Humean creature hand in hand.

The content of this chapter was different from what I expected. It sounds odd to me that Hauser did not directly mention the moral organ which exclusively works for morality, which he originally endorsed its existence in chapter 1. According to him, faculties mentioned in this chapter were only members of the “support team” of moral faculty. Is there any moral organ which exclusively works for morality? If there is, what kind of function would moral organ perform? Although I am not sure, I am in favor of answering in the negative. Faculties for which Hauser argued are sufficient for giving rise to morality. Proper cooperation among those faculties is sufficient for morality. Prof. Nobuhara mentioned the possibility that a moral-exclusive organ, if it exists, functions as an organizer of the cooperation.

It seems to me the problem of whether there is a moral-exclusive organ cannot be answered a priori. One of our explananda was the observation that we can somehow intuit what is good or bad and we can tell which are moral problems and which are not. Hauser proposed the existence of moral faculty as an explanans appealing to the analogy to language, It is not, however, a deductive conclusion at all. It should be a research program. More and more empirical evidence for a moral-exclusive organ is needed, and there is a possibility that we do not need a moral-exclusive organ to explain our moral competence.