

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

Session 11: the former half of chapter 6 (pp. 307-335)

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In session 11, we read the former half of chapter 6 (pp. 307-335). The title of chapter 6 is “Roots of Right”. From this chapter, we got into part three “Evolving Code”. Hauser mainly discusses animal reciprocal behavior in this chapter and tries to investigate which part of the moral function is peculiar to humans. Reciprocity is used as the most important aspect here.

At first, Hauser introduces us to animal trolley problems. Trolley problems are the thought experiment we already read. Now, let’s imagine that five chimpanzees are on a railroad and one large chimpanzee is on the footbridge. According to the survey, we (human beings) think that it is more permissible to push the large chimpanzee for saving the five chimpanzees. Then Hauser asks us: what is the difference between humans and chimpanzees? How can we justify the fact that appeared in this trolley problem? We distinguish between humans and animals by distinctive abilities, such as language, consciousness, emotion, etc. Hauser argues that the crucial point is not a psychological difference between humans and animals, but our emotional attachment which is designed to guarantee the human welfare for over millions of years. According to this point, the answers to the chimpanzee’s trolley problems can be explained by the fact that our emotional attachment to humans surpasses that to animals. If this view is correct, we can reconsider the role of the Humean creature as something guiding our judgment.

Cosmides and Tooby did the cheater detection experiment (discussed in the last chapter) and suggested that the cheater detection ability is peculiar to humans. Then Hauser says that we have to observe animals whenever we say some ability is peculiar to humans. So this chapter is consistently introducing various animal observations.

The first question is whether animals can expect an event. If they can foresee, then they can distinguish between socially right and wrong. By the psychologist Eduard Tinkelpaugh’s experiment, the primate brain has evolved to set up expectations for their survival.

In “Darwinian Nodes of Action,” Hauser introduces an animal observation that focuses on the capacity for self-propelled motions, and explains that animals have that capacity.

The next section “Who am I?” is devoted to an investigation of animals’ sense of

self, and ends with the philosopher Herbert Mead's following words: "Any gesture by which the individual can himself be affected as others are affected, and which therefore tends to call out in him a response as it would call out in another, will serve as a mechanism for the construction of self" (p. 326).

The last part in this session is named "Crocodile Tears." This part is devoted to animals' emotion or feeling. Hauser says that it is difficult for humans to understand animal emotions. Our understanding of animal emotions would not explain their competitive acts. Hauser states that reconciliation among animals shows us differences between species. The reconciliation is developed as a form of solving conflicts. This is because it sustains valuable social relationships. So, here the Humean creature and value are connected. To understand animals' need is not easy for us. But our feeling and mind have many common features with animals. In this sense, the Humean creature has an ancient evolutionary heritage.