

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

Session 12: the latter half of chapter 6 (pp. 334-356)

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In session 12, we read the latter half of chapter 6 (pp. 334-356). Hauser investigates an animal’s moral ability, following the former session. Contents of this part are as follows: 1. Natural Telepathy, 2. Weighting Waiting, 3. Domesticating Violence, and 4. Tempted by the Truth of Another. Here I summarize them in order.

The argument in “Natural Telepathy” is that apes can read others’ minds as humans. But they can use the information only to forestall others, but not to construct a cooperative relationship with others.

In “Weighting Waiting,” Hauser investigates the self-control ability of animals by looking at delaying action. The questions here are as follows: 1. How long time delay can animals permit? 2. How do animals calculate food’s value and the time needed for obtaining it? 3. How can animals do such a calculation? Hauser states that many animals can’t wait.

In “Domesticating Violence,” Hauser asks the following questions: Why do animals rarely kill each other? Why do animals start and stop killing? Primarily, are there any “principles of harm” in animals or humans? There are several explanations. For example, K. Lorenz contended that the offensive instinct is controlled by another’s obedience gesture. According to another experiment, apes become offensive when the serotonin level decreased as humans. D. Barry explained this with a neurological approach. According to him, testosterone motivates aggression. On the other hand, serotonin adjusts aggression. Aggression of animals had been controlled by selecting, domesticating, and taming them. An animal’s offensive impulse is reduced by breeding. Artificial selection affects the brain level more rapidly and thus affects the action level. But the process of this change is still unknown.

In “Tempted by the truth of another,” Hauser discusses whether only humans have empathy. After surveying some experiments, Hauser suggests that animals can have empathy.

As a conclusion of this chapter, the central part of the basic ability which comprises human moral ability can be seen in animals in a germination form. Some animals have the principle of action that human babies inherently and ultimately have. This ability is dependent on the mind-reading and, in some form, introspection abilities.

But there are still differences between humans and animals; for example, apes and birds have difficulty restraining their impulse. Hence it can be said that only humans have all parts of moral ability. Only humans have evolved to have such a perfect set of abilities.