

## Moral Choices XIV

**There are other metaphors, which affect our moral decision making processes.**

[Reflections based on J Haidt The Righteous Mind]

In the Book I have been reviewing Haidt uses a number of metaphors to help us understand our process of making moral choices. The major metaphor has been the elephant representing our emotional/physiological response to a moral question, and the rider on the elephant as the internal mental commentator that supplies rational arguments in favor or in opposition to the emotional primary response. Another metaphor he uses, which I have not commented upon is what he calls "True taste restaurant" metaphor. You probably know we taste 5 separate tastes with our tongues: salt, sour, sweet, bitter and "umami" [earthy taste]. We enjoy our food because these can be mixed and matched to appreciate interesting flavors. He then describes a "true taste restaurant" where only one of these tastes is permitted; his example is "salt" so that salt is the only food served at this "true taste restaurant." Naturally nobody would want to eat at a place where only salt was served, because in order to create interest in our food we combine the five flavors in unique and creative ways. Likewise with our morality; we have six foundations, but most educated, independent, Western and Democratically oriented people concentrate on only two: namely care/harm and fairness. If a moral act doesn't harm anyone else or is not un-fair, it is considered "acceptable" even though it might violate our gut reaction or our traditional morality. However that is the equivalent to eating in the moral "true taste restaurant." As Catholics we recognize a whole spectrum of moral foundations including loyalty, sanctity and authority, the moral history of our faith tradition, the Bible and much more. And as Catholics we want to make our moral choices with the largest view toward the good as we can get. Haidt found that "educated, independent and Western oriented" Americans were stunted in their capacity to make moral changes!

IHM Pray for us.

*Fr. Jerry*