

Moral Choices IV

The basis for the formation of moral choices

So why did the working class folks react so strongly to the gross morality story Professor Haidt told them? And why did the graduate students react with a concern that if no one is harmed, a person can act as they please? What constitutes a moral “wrong?” How do we choose? Consider: a family’s dog was killed by a car in front of their home. The family had heard that dog meat was delicious so they cut up the dog’s body and cooked it and ate it for dinner. Nobody saw them do this.” What is your response to this? Was it morally wrong? The dog was dead after all, and so they didn’t harm it. It was their dog, and they had a right to do what they wanted with it. Chances are if pushed you might give an answer like this: “Well, I think it’s disgusting, and I think they should have just buried the dog, but I wouldn’t say it was morally wrong.” Someone else might simply respond that it is wrong...end of story. Why the difference? If you think of yourself as an individual who is unique, more or less integrated with the world around you, and a “center” of awareness, emotion, judgment and action you probably respond to moral situations in an individualistic manner; because you place yourself at the center: what others do is their business unless it hinders you. However there is another way of developing the self, and that is a sociocentric orientation: this dominates most of the ancient [thus Biblical] world, and with it as a moral basis there are other elements that enter into the formation of moral choices: such as loyalty, respect, duty, piety, patriotism and tradition.

IHM Pray for us.

Fr. Jerry