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Moral Development

After reading and watching the videos, I can clearly reflect on three main points that really stood out to me. One being animals showing empathy and similarities to moral development of humans. The second being the morality among different cultures and religions. Finally, the distinguishability of right and wrong using facts. These three topics stood out the most to me and would like to share my opinion on them.

In the first TED Talk, Frans discussed many studies done with mammals, in particular, different species of monkeys and elephants. I thought it was interesting how these mammals corresponded the same empathy and morals that humans do. Frans discusses a study that used two chimpanzees to test their ability to work together and simultaneously. The chimpanzees had to pull a pallet to get their food; however, the pallet was too heavy for any one chimpanzee to pull on its own. This caused a chimpanzee to ask another for help. What was very interesting to me was not only that the other chimpanzee helped, but seeing one encourage the other to pull on the rope. Another interesting study was the unequal compensation study with two monkeys. After completing a task, researchers would give one monkey a cucumber and the other a grape, the latter being more of a delicacy to monkeys. The monkey who got the grape seemed to enjoy his/her work while the other was obviously upset about the unequal compensation, throwing the cucumber across the room.

In the second TED Talk, Harris discusses the morality among different cultures and religions. This comparison was more interesting than I anticipated. The point that stood out the most in this discussion was how to cloth women. The difference between the advertisement of women's bodies in America compared to eastern countries is astounding. In other countries it is shameful for a woman to advertise her body, where in America it is odd not to advertise. Harris displayed two images beside each other. One being eastern women wearing the hijab and the other being a magazine stand in America that had women displayed in lingerie and bikinis. This difference raises a question of what is truly the right way to cloth a woman. As a man, it is easy for me to fall into lustful thinking that directs my decision-making skills; therefor, I believe there is a good balance between the two.

Lastly, I would like to indulge on my opinions of Harris's discussion on right and wrong. He opens his talk with this question of what is truly right and what is truly wrong. I believe this will always be a question and topic among humanity and is not solely based on facts. I do not believe there is one right answer to any problem. My favorite analogy to this is that $2 + 2$ sometimes equals 4. I will not go into details on this but it is a famous problem to ask an engineer or mathematician.