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Dossier Joshua Greene / Editor´s Introduction

Us vs. them?

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In Argentina and, I suspect, in Latin America more broadly, philosophy majors are mainly trained in the history of philosophy. When more contemporary debates are addressed, they are usually led by followers of "continental philosophy". Within this framework, some niches of analytical philosophy survive. What we hardly find are philosophical reflections that are based on current scientific research.

Surely, this has been the result of the reaction that philosophy, as a discipline, had at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, in the face of the advances in psychology. From German anti-scientism to logical positivism, a place of its own was sought for philosophy, independent of, or above, all the sciences. The consequences of this reaction are still being experienced in our Faculties.

The consolidation of evolutionary theory and the impressive advances in the field of neuroscience, among other scientific achievements, have made it unsustainable for philosophy to continue to turn its back on science. Works such as Joshua Greene's show us how rich and interesting ethical debates become when we approach them taking into consideration the knowledge achieved in other disciplines. It is my hope that the dissemination of his work in the Spanish-speaking world will contribute to erode the disciplinary wall that philosophy erected more than a hundred years ago.

1. Introduction

Philosophy and, in particular, ethics, has received a stimulating impulse by incorporating evolutionary theory as a framework for its considerations. In the work of Joshua Greene we can see both the adoption of this framework and the richness that the subsequent analysis acquires.

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However, many philosophers and scientists convinced of the importance of evolutionary theory have felt uncomfortable when it comes to explaining the place of normativity in this new context. In Greene's case, I understand that there is a certain tension between his adoption of an evolutionary explanation of our morality or, more precisely, of the emotions that led us to help "our own", to want to be fair to them, to not want to harm them, etc., and the need to offer a framework from which to criticize the tribalism to which such emotions give rise in the contemporary world. If we wish to criticize certain aspects of the present, and we understand that the origin of these problems lies in our moral emotions, then we must find a way to explain how natural selection has given rise to a capacity to adopt a metamorality from which to rebel against our original morality.

Therefore, although Greene adheres to the Humean conception according to which reason is the slave of the passions, his diagnosis pushes him to seek a way in which reason can cease to be enslaved, in order to guide us in the resolution of contemporary problems.

For my part, I believe that the most promising way to address contemporary moral problems would be to reconsider part of his diagnosis, that is, to reclaim (part of) our inherited emotions in order to, from there (and not from a metamorality), understand which cultural factors have been counterproductive and how, then, we should proceed to overcome our current problems.

In what follows I will briefly try to highlight certain weaknesses that I see in Greene's position, and then outline a new diagnosis that would allow a different approach to the moral difficulties to be overcome.

2. Diagnosis of the situation

In *Moral Tribes* we find a clear exposition of what is, for Greene, the moral problem to be solved. In our hunter-gatherer era, the relevant moral problems were due to a tension between a selfish tendency and a dependence on the group, that is, a tension between the *self* and the *we*. Greene illustrates the situation by appealing to what Garrett Hardin (1968) called "the tragedy of the commons."[1]

This tension could be overcome by virtue of the fact that, through natural selection, a set of

[1] "In Hardin's parable, a single group of herders shares a common pasture. The commons is large enough to support many animals, but not infinitely many. From time to time, each herder must decide whether to add another animal to her flock. What's a rational herder to do? By adding an animal to her herd, she receives a substantial benefit when she sells the animal at market. However, the cost of supporting that animal is shared by all who use the commons. Thus, the herder gains a lot, but pays only a little, by adding an additional animal to her herd. Therefore, she is best served by increasing the size of her herd indefinitely, so long as the commons remains available. Of course, every other herder has the same set of incentives. If each herder acts according to her self-interest, the commons will be completely eroded, and there will be nothing left for anyone." (Greene, 2013, p. 19).

moral emotions[2] was consolidated (emotions that lead us to care for others, to establish relationships of reciprocity and friendship, to feel guilt and shame, etc.). Hence, for Greene (2013), "[m]orality is a set of psychological adaptations that allow otherwise selfish individuals to reap the benefits of cooperation" (p. 23).

However, such emotional dispositions exert their positive influence within relatively small groups:

[b]iologically speaking, humans were designed for cooperation, but only with some people. Our moral brains evolved for cooperation within groups, and perhaps only within the context of personal relationships. Our moral brains did not evolve for cooperation between groups (at least not all groups). (ib.)

Hence, when we started to live in larger societies, made up of different "tribes", the morality that allowed individuals to give value to their group, became the cause of new problems, since it strengthened the different *us*, via various tribal biases, to the detriment of the different *them*, so that we again encountered a problem analogous to that of the tragedy of the commons, but now at the level of groups: it is no longer the I-us conflict, but the us-them conflict.

3. Kicking the ladder of evolution

Against this background, Greene seems to be looking for a way around the Humean approach. If the moral machinery, the emotional dispositions selected because they enable cooperative strategies, are now part of the problem, how do we stop them from being our compass? Clearly, it is no longer attractive for reason to be the slave of passions when they are the source of major contemporary conflicts. His approach is as follows:

I think it's clear that reasoning has no ends of its own, and in this sense reason is, as Hume famously declared, a "slave of the passions." ("Passions" here refers to emotional processes in general, not exclusively to lusty feelings.) And yet, at the same time, the function of reasoning is to free us from our 'passions.' (p. 137).

We can interpret this passage as saying that reason is what makes us capable of curbing certain passions, by virtue of the fact that it allows us to foresee that this will lead to a greater satisfaction of those same passions or of other more important ones in the long run. Greene

[2] I will adopt Antonio Damasio's (2003) conception of emotions. When we are afraid, we manifest it in different ways: our face will have a particular expression, we may tremble, we may have bristly hair, etc. Also, if we have the necessary elements, we can detect changes in the levels of certain hormones. All this has a potentially public character. However, our sensation of fear is not accessible to anyone else. This is a private aspect of fear. To distinguish the public from the private part, Damasio will call the former an emotion and the latter a feeling. So an emotion is the bodily disposition associated with feelings

himself seems to be telling us that this is how we should interpret this passage.[3]

However, Greene also stresses that,

[a]s moral beings, we may have values that are opposed to the forces that gave rise to morality. To borrow Wittgenstein's famous metaphor, morality can climb the ladder of evolution and then kick it away (...) as moral beings who can kick away the evolutionary ladder, it may be exactly what we want. Morality is more than what it evolved to be. (p. 25).

Morality can be identified with a set of emotional dispositions that made it possible to overcome the I-us tension. What we need in order to overcome the us-them conflict is not incorporated into these emotional dispositions. Rather, it is moral *thinking*:

[m]orality is nature's solution to the problem of cooperation within groups, enabling individuals with competing interests to live together and prosper. What we in the modern world need, then, is something like morality but one level up. We need a kind of thinking that enables groups with conflicting moralities to live together and prosper. (p. 26)

He will then add: "fortunately, the human brain is more than a bundle of selfish and social impulses. We can *think*" (p. 102).

Our ability to think would enable us to adopt a metamorality, that is, a morality that stands above all tribal moralities, and which is suitable for resolving us-them conflicts. Every member of every tribe possesses this capacity.

Now, here it seems that Greene would not consider that reason enables us to stop being guided by short-term feelings, in order to achieve in the long run something that we feel is more important. He argues that [t]he idea of a metamorality is not wholly new. On the contrary, identifying universal moral principles has been a dream of moral philosophy since the Enlightenment. The problem, I think, is that we've been looking for universal moral principles that *feel right*, and there may be no such thing. (p. 26, *italics in the original*)

What is the content of this metamorality, of this product of moral thought that is not associated with positive sentiment? Greene adopts the defense of utilitarianism as metamoral. As rational moral subjects, what we should be pursuing is the maximization of happiness, which implies adopting an impartial perspective, insofar as one's own happiness is not worth more (or less) than the happiness of the rest of the individuals. The defense of impartiality reflects the liberation of reason from its subordination to the passions. Greene emphasizes that "the ideal of "impartiality" comes from an intellectual recognition of some kind" (p. 203).

In conclusion, he will say,

if I'm right, utilitarianism is special, and Bentham and Mill did something unprecedented in

[3] He notes that the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, "the seat of abstract reasoning," cannot be independent of the dopaminergic reward system. (see p. 368).

intellectual history. They wrested moral philosophy away from the automatic settings, away from the limitations of our biological and cultural histories, and turned it over, almost entirely, to the brain's general-purpose problem-solving system. The manual mode doesn't come with a moral philosophy, but it can create one if it's seeded with two universally accessible moral values: happiness and impartiality (p. 204)[4]

So Greene is led to argue that: 1) we possess a cognitive capacity that can kick the ladder of evolution; 2) that capacity can create or recognize new values; and, 3) one of those values is impartiality, which should take precedence over the old passions.

Now, is it really possible to kick the evolutionary ladder? Greene understands that birth control shows that we can indeed rebel against evolutionary designs. However, it seems reasonable to assume that birth control is executed with a view to increasing our well-being (or to avoiding an increase in our discomfort), and it could be argued that the pursuit of well-being has been selected because it is an efficient way for consciousness to contribute to the survival and reproduction of individuals.

As Damasio (2012) points out, the paramount value for whole organisms consists of healthy survival to an age compatible with reproductive success. Natural selection has perfected the machinery of homeostasis to permit precisely that. Accordingly, the physiological state of a living organism's tissues, within an optimal homeostatic range, is the deepest origin of biological value and valuations. The statement applies equally to multicellular organisms and to those whose living "tissue" is confined to one cell. (p. 48)

If this hypothesis is correct, then consciousness, and all our cognitive capacities, would not be capable of generating new values:

Consciousness came into being because of biological value, as a contributor to more effective value management. But consciousness did not invent biological value or the process of valuation. Eventually, in human minds, consciousness revealed biological value and allowed the development of new ways and means of managing it. (Damasio, 2012, p. 28)

On this account, our conscious feelings would offer us access to the state of our body, and by consciously and intelligently pursuing well-being we would only contribute to the survival and reproduction of the organism of which we are a part. If birth control contributes to our well-being, by implementing it we would not be kicking the ladder of evolution.

On the other hand, as noted by Hrdy (1999), even infanticide can be understood as part of the strategies selected by nature, insofar as it is a bet on quality breeding at a later, more favourable time, when conditions may make reproductive success more likely.
Obviously, both Damasio's and Hrdy's positions may be wrong, but I introduce them here

[4] Greene understands automatic settings and manual mode as follows: "The moral brain's automatic settings are the moral emotions we'll meet in part 1, the gut-level instincts that enable cooperation within personal relationships and small groups. Manual mode, in contrast, is a general capacity for practical reasoning that can be used to solve moral problems, as well as other practical problems" (p. 15).

with a view to illustrating that a stronger argument would be needed to support the claim that it is possible to kick the ladder of evolution.

We could think that our rationality is an exaptation. But again, exaptations are not a proof that the evolutionary ladder can be kicked, but simply that what was selected because it made a certain contribution to survival and reproduction can then be used in another way, *albeit for the same purpose*. If reason has been selected because of its usefulness for the achievement of what we value, can it possibly rebel against all our values? Can reason assign value to something out of nothing?

Greene (2008) asks:

If science tells me that I love my children more than other children only because they share my genes (...), should I feel uneasy about loving them extra? If science tells me that I am nice to other people only because a disposition to be nice ultimately helped my ancestors spread their genes (...), should I stop being nice to people? If I care about myself only because I am biologically programmed to carry my genes into the future, should I stop caring about myself? (p. 76)

If we adopt a Humean-Darwinian approach, these questions do not seem to make sense. Following the exposition of this approach offered by Curry (2006), from Hume we adopt the idea that it is our passions, our feelings, that determine what is valuable. We are moral subjects because we have certain passions associated with the common good (we feel good when helping, we feel bad at the mere imagination of killing someone with our hands, etc.), not because we have a reason that determines that it is right to help or wrong to kill and that somehow motivates us to act. What the Humean-Darwinian approach takes from Darwin is the explanation of why we have these feelings. We have come to have them by virtue of evolution by natural selection. Evolution by natural selection has given rise to an animal with certain feelings, which are then the basis on which we can build a moral theory.

To some extent we desire the common good, which explains why we can adhere to an ethical theory that requires behaviors that contribute to the common good. But if we did not desire the common good, if we were beings who are not in the least affected by the suffering of others, no rational argument could lead us to adhere to norms that require us to care for those who suffer. From this perspective, what is valuable will be what we actually feel to be valuable. Then, we will look for the means that contribute to achieving what we consider valuable, and once we have determined the means, we will know what we should do.

In a moral argument we would find these elements: a premise that states what is valuable for us (which is determined by our emotional nature), a second premise that determines what is the means to achieve that valuable end (a means that is determined by how the world is and that we will come to know thanks to our cognitive capacity, which allows us to know what is the cause of what) and a conclusion that is stated as a duty.

This approach understands that an ethical theory should establish, first, what it is that we

really value by inquiring into our emotional nature (which will have to include emotions that promote the common good, if we are to be able to speak about morality). Second, ethical theory should make use of the relevant scientific knowledge in order to establish which means are more conducive to our valued ends. And thirdly, taking into account what we value and the best means to achieve it, it will be able to conclude what our duties are.

But this brings us to a central point: what underlies values? This view offers an evolutionary explanation of the origin of values. It is a matter of chance that one mammal values one thing and another mammal values something else. One mammal may value fruit and another mammal may value the meat of another animal. All this is the product of genetic mutation in its interaction with the environment (which includes, obviously, other living beings). This is the origin of values. Then, the capacities of each animal will help it find adequate means to obtain what it considers valuable.

From the Humean-Darwinian approach, it does not make sense to ask whether we are justified in valuing what we ultimately value. But it does make sense to ask something different, namely, whether or not it is justified to legalize abortion (i.e., whether or not it should be legalized), whether or not we should fight patriarchy, whether or not we should redistribute wealth. The arguments would take this form: since we value x, and since redistributing wealth contributes (or not) to achieving x, we should (or not) do x. But how can we justify what we ultimately consider valuable? The Humean- Darwinian understands that, ultimately, we will say that we value something because we do, because we feel that way. In relation to this valuation, the only thing we can do is to offer a (evolutionary) explanation of why we feel this way, but never a justification.

Going back to Greene's last quote, I would say that love for my children is among the ultimate values, so there is no point in wondering whether or not I should love them so much. Their welfare is part of my moral compass. I can accept an argument in support of the claim that the impartiality of certain institutions contributes to the welfare of those reached by those institutions. That is, I can accept an instrumental defense of impartiality, but never could the defense of impartiality require me to renounce to my ultimate values.[5]

The fact that Greene considers that contemporary moral problems have their origin in our emotions seems to lead him to abandoning the Humean-Darwinian approach in favor of a pre-Darwinian Kantian-style anthropology. I do not think it necessary to delve into the

[5] As Williams (1981) points out, "There can come a point at which it is quite unreasonable for a man to give up, in the name of the impartial good ordering of the world of moral agents, something which is a condition of his having any interest in being around in that world at all" (p. 14). On the other hand, the instrumental defense of impartiality would not be in contradiction with some of Greene's (2013) own considerations in this regard: "To be perfectly honest, I don't know how the ideal of impartiality took hold in human brains, but I'm fairly confident (…) [that] the ideal of impartiality has taken hold in us (we who are in on this conversation) not as an overriding ideal but as one that we can appreciate. None of us lives perfectly by the Golden Rule, but we all at least 'get' it." (p. 201)

objections that could be raised against this position, because Greene himself, in other passages, seems to adopt the defense of a more nuanced position.

4. Prioritizing model-based learning

In Greene (2008), in his defense of consequentialism (which does not imply a defense of utilitarianism) he states:

I am not claiming that consequentialist judgment is emotionless. On the contrary, I am inclined to agree with Hume (...) that all moral judgment must have some affective component, and suspect that the consequentialist weighing of harms and benefits is an emotional process. But, if I am right (...), this sort of process (...) is, as I have said, a weighing process and not an "alarm" process. (p. 64)

This kind of approach no longer seems to require kicking the ladder of evolution, nor adopting a notion of moral correctness that does not involve any feeling of approval.

The "alarm" type emotions are inflexible, absolute emotions, indifferent to the weighing of harms and benefits. These emotions, useful as they were to overcome problems within a single *us*, would be an obstacle when it comes to overcoming problems between more than one *us*.

When we see a friend in serious trouble, we do not need to carry out any kind of reasoning to come to his aid. We possess automatic emotions that push us immediately to do so. The selection of strong emotions like this allowed us to reap the fruits of tribal cooperation. The desire to punish those who violate group norms also possesses a force that may have contributed to the group's success. However, we may find that our impulse to help is affected by factors that we would consider morally arbitrary (e.g., the disposition is not the same if the one who needs help is someone close as if it is a stranger) and the desire to punish the violator of group norms may lead to condemnation of actions that do not generate harm, such as homosexual relations.

These emotions are associated with the myopia of model-free reinforcement learning processes. This type of learning consists of assigning values (positive or negative) to various actions, depending on the results previously obtained by them. For example, a rat may come to value positively the pressing of a lever, because such action has resulted in obtaining rewards (food). If the link between pressing the lever and obtaining food is stable, pressing the lever will acquire the value of a reward in itself.

The advantage of this type of reinforcement learning is that it is very efficient in stable contexts. The perception of the first indicator of the presence of a reward will automatically give rise to an action (or a series of actions), that will lead the agent to the achievement of the reward, without having had to waste energy on considerations of any kind. The negative side of this type of learning is its rigidity. If the rat is fed to satiety before being presented

with the lever, it will still waste energy pressing the lever when it is in front of it, because the pressure of the lever has acquired a positive value.

Alarm-type emotions would have the myopia of model-free reinforcement learning. Certain actions are strongly associated with positive or negative value, regardless of what the consequences of those actions are. Perhaps retributivist emotions gave rise to stable positive group dynamics, but that does not mean that we should cling to them today, if a deeper analysis showed us that a different attitude towards punishment would allow us to achieve better results.

Fortunately, we have another type of reinforcement learning, namely, model-based learning. In this case, the agent accumulates information and builds a causal model of the environment in which it operates. Given a goal, the agent can analyze which is the best way to achieve that goal. Obviously, this process is more "expensive", since it requires analyzing several alternatives before initiating the action. However, in unstable environments it is much more efficient than model-free learning. For example, if a rat gets the food after overcoming the challenges of a maze, it could assign positive value to the last step prior to getting the food, then to the step before the last one, and so on, until it reaches the moment it is placed in front of the maze. Once habituated, the rat will act automatically until it reaches the reward. If the food is always in the same place, this type of model-free learning is optimal. However, if the food is moved, the rat will continue to behave in the same way for a long time, even though its behavior is inefficient. In contrast, model-based learning allows us to acquire a general knowledge of the maze, so that if the food is no longer in the usual place, we can think of alternative routes that may be successful.

Thus, even though our tribal biases are supported by alarm-type emotions, still we are able to overcome them to the extent that we become aware of them and of the problems they generate in the us-them relationship. From this perspective, reason would cease to be enslaved insofar as it were not subordinated to model-free learning: "[t]hanks to our capacity for "slow," domain-general, model-based thinking, we need not be slavishly bound by our model-free habits" (Greene, 2017, p. 11).

But here again we are faced with a question: What is the relationship between model-based learning and goal assessment?

Greene (2017) correctly points out that in model-free learning we assign values to actions, while in model- based learning it is the goal that has value, and our accumulation of knowledge allows us to choose the most efficient actions with a view to achieving our valued goal:

[t]he difference between model-free and model-based decision making is not that one involves some kind of rock-bottom, affective judgment of value, while the other does not. The difference, instead, is that model-free learning, unlike model-based learning, attaches values directly to actions (in context), independent of their consequences. In other words, model-free learning gives us intuitions that are "perceptual" or "dogmatic". By contrast, for

a model-based agent, the value is attached to the goal, a consequence, and actions acquire value based on an understanding (a model) of which actions are likely to lead to which consequences. Thus, all moral judgment involves some kind of brute evaluation (an "intuition" of some kind at some level), but some evaluations are of broad goals that apply across countless contexts, while others are automatic responses to specific actions and action types. (pp. 10-11)

We can admit that model-based learning is clearly consequentialist. It evaluates available actions in terms of their relation to valued goals. But why would we adhere to utilitarianism? Why should the goal be the maximization of total (not self) happiness? Utilitarianism required an ability to kick the evolutionary ladder. If instead of focusing on a capability (reason) with such a characteristic (the ability to kick the ladder or evolution), we focus on one of the reinforcement learning models (model-based), we need to assume that there is something that is inherently rewarding. It is not the case that we can deliberate about what should count as a reward. How does maximizing happiness, from an unbiased position, become the goal that takes precedence over, for example, the priority we give to our children, or the consolidation of a relationship or friendship? I return to what I have already said. I can well understand that, in the framework of our societies, it is very fruitful to design institutions with the objective of being impartial, but this is because it contributes, as a means, to consolidate what I value most. And what I value most can only receive an evolutionary explanation, but not a rational justification.

The tension in Greene's position derives from his understanding that the problems originate from values that were selected in the past. Hence he asks:

[w]hat if our moral intuitions are stuck in the Pleistocene epoch? Even worse, what if the biological directive to spread our genes, both now and in the past, gives us moral instincts that are good from a biological perspective and bad from a moral perspective? I think these considerations give us good reasons to worry about our moral intuitions. (Greene, 2017, p. 6)

For my part, I do not quite see what this moral perspective is that allows and requires me to prioritize the maximization of happiness, even if it means distributing my resources impartially between strangers and those who give meaning to my life.

Greene seems to have always been aware of this tension:

It seems that one who is unwilling to act on human tendencies that have amoral evolutionary causes is ultimately unwilling to be human. Where does one draw the line between correcting the nearsightedness of human moral nature and obliterating it completely? (Greene, 2008, p. 76)

From what has been said above, I consider that it does not make sense to want to erase it completely. How would it be possible to do so? From where would new goals be obtained? Hence, while I agree that there are moral problems to be solved in our contemporary world,

I consider that the appropriate way of dealing with them is to reconsider which part of our evolved characteristics is vindicable, and which part has become a problem, but this dividing line can only be drawn from values that we already possess and whose origin can only be evolutionary.

5. Revised diagnosis

I will outline below a different diagnosis from the one presented by Greene, simply to indicate how I believe we should frame the debate on what the main contemporary moral problems are, and how we can solve them.

In line with Greene, this diagnosis accepts that we have inherited a set of moral emotions that strengthened group bonds within small groups, and that we currently live in environments which are very different from the one in which those emotions were selected. There is, then, a mismatch between our moral emotions and contemporary cultures. Unlike Greene, this diagnosis states that the root of our moral problems lies in the cultures to which we have given rise, rather than in our inherited emotions.[6]

In *Mind the gap*, Richard Wilkinson notes,

> there are reasons for thinking that strong selective pressures have endowed us with a desire for friendship and a tendency to find rejection or a lack of friends a source of anxiety.
> It is the principle of reciprocity that makes cooperative relationships a workable basis of social life. The sense of indebtedness, of the need to make a return gift, appears to be universal and is probably an evolved predisposition that amounts almost to a genetically encoded basis for a social contract. In a world where people's daily survival depended not on money in the bank but on the strength of their social bonds, social exclusion would inevitably be highly aversive. If you are excluded from the cooperative group, you risk being victimized or preyed upon. (Wilkinson, 2001, p. 33)

Indeed, our well-being depends, to a large degree, on the consolidation of certain reciprocal relationships, such as those of friendship or partnership. But nowadays our survival depends more on the money we have in the bank than on the exclusion of groups of friends.
In *Moral Tribes* Greene notes that

> [a]s with the evolution of faster carnivores, competition is essential for the evolution of cooperation. Suppose that both groups of herders live on magical pastures capable of supporting infinitely many animals. Under these magical conditions, the uncooperative group has no disadvantage. Selfish herders can go on adding animals to their respective herds, and heir herds will simply grow and grow. Cooperation evolves only if individuals who are prone to cooperation outcompete individuals who are not (or who are less so). Thus, if morality is

[6] The debate around diagnosis depends to a large degree on the reading we make of our hunter-gatherer past. The conclusions we draw will be very different if we accept Pinker's (2011) arguments than if we accept approaches such as those of, for example, Wilkinson and Pickett (2009), Sapolsky (2017) or Konner (2015).

a set of adaptations for cooperation, we today are moral beings only because our morally minded ancestors outcompeted their less morally minded neighbors. And thus, insofar as morality is a biological adaptation, it evolved not only as a device for putting Us ahead of Me, but as a device for putting Us ahead of Them. (Greene, 2013, p. 24)

Let us accept, for the sake of argument, that hundreds of thousands of years ago moral emotions were selected that allowed the cooperators to prevail over the selfish. What is certain is that the discovery of agriculture may have given rise to those magical grazing grounds that enable the reappearance of selfish strategies. Agriculture gave rise to the accumulation of resources, to the struggle for them, to the use of slaves, to a population growth that gradually confined women to caregiving tasks and, therefore, to the private sphere. As Konner (2015) points out, "[p]lowing, livestock, and war put male strength at a premium, and those who could built coalitions to rule women and weaker, poorer men." (p. 155). Strategies that in our hunter-gatherer era would have led to the failure and disappearance of the individuals who adopted them, can now lead to the high places in the hierarchies.

If we look, then, at the interrelationship of the masculine elites, we can consider that the great contemporary moral problem is the one that pits us against them. However, from the point of view of women and many men, the problem is that we are moving from cooperative and egalitarian societies to hierarchical and competitive societies, which are fertile ground for selfish strategies to proliferate.[7]

Individuals who are "programmed" to value social relationships among equals may well, by virtue of their neural plasticity, adapt to hierarchical and competitive societies. This may be seen as a bliss, because well-being will now be associated with the height reached on the hierarchical ladder. However, adaptation to hierarchical societies comes at a cost. Our stress reaction, for example, generates a whole set of benefits, as long as it is activated occasionally, as we would expect it to be in egalitarian societies. But in societies like ours, where competition is constant, the reaction is repeated on a daily basis, resulting in chronic stress that has a negative impact on various aspects of our well-being. This is just one example of how our nature, selected in an egalitarian and cooperative environment, leads to suboptimal results in contemporary societies. And the proposed path to overcoming this suboptimality is not to modify our nature, but rather our culture.

In conclusion, if this diagnosis is correct, it would not be central to establish the way in which reason, System 2, dorsolateral prefrontal cortex works, nor would it be central to determine the way in which model-based learning takes place. Rather, what is central is to determine which our true goals are, how a given culture hinders or contributes to their achievement, and which goals are subordinate. Since reason is slave of the passions, it does

[7] If we were to compare our social organization to those of our closest primate relatives, it would seem that we have moved from being a bonobo-like society, where females are not subordinate, to a more chimpanzee-like society, with an alpha male at the top.

not make much sense to delve into the abilities of the former if we start from a confusion as to what our fundamental passions are.[8]

If we look at the past, we will see problems. But if all the past is a problem, we will have to appeal to the fact that, by chance, the past has given rise to something that allows us to detach ourselves from it, and this seems unpromising from positions that accept a Humean-Darwinian approach. Yes, we must look into the past, but to see at which point we lost our way, generating what seemed to be good means, but which turned out to be detrimental to our conscious wellbeing. Once this has been clarified, we will be able to evaluate the different institutions, habits, actions, etc.

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[8] Obviously I do not detract from, for example, what we have learned regarding cognitive biases (Kahneman (2011)), on the psychological level, or the role of AMPA and NMDA receptors or of the dopaminergic system, at the neuroscientific level. However, such knowledge will really be useful if we gain more clarity about our goals, and, in this sense, I find the research of Panksepp y Biven (2012), Porges (2011), Churchland (2011), among others, very attractive.

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