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Journal Assignment #6

**First Entry:** Both nature and nurture play a role in human morality. My belief is that nurture plays a significantly larger role than nature. In John Gray’s introduction of the article “Are We Born Moral?” he states that “only humans possess the intellectual powers that are needed to repress natural impulses, and so only they can be moral.” To me this means that nurture obviously is the key factor in morality. All mammals have innate behaviors and desires and are naturally wild and do things instinctively, humans are the only mammal that have the ability to think before they act. Although nature allows all humans to be self-aware and have thought processes, morals are taught throughout life and in society. If a person is secluded their entire life they can be aware of themselves but how would they know right from wrong? Nature is what gives humans their bodies and minds but I don’t think it gives us our morals. The article “Demonic Males” by Richard Wrangham describes how temperament affects the behaviors of humans. To me, his explanation of temperament in humans only furthers my belief that human morals come from nurture. Temperament is defined as an element of personality that shows an individual’s emotional reactions to situations in the real world. Temperament is something that we are born with, something that nature gave us. If an ape were to be predisposed with a violent temperament he would act on those emotions because he has no moral compass or conscience. Humans however are taught morals, so if a human male was predisposed to violent behavior, he has the ability to control those emotions and make a positive choice because of the morals he was given through nurture. I believe the role of nature is minor when compared to the role nurture plays in human morality. I believe that nature would probably contribute 10% or less to morals. Nurture is what gives humans a moral compass.

**Second Entry:** “The Mind”, an article by Marc Hauser, contains vital information about why human language is so essential to being human. The part of the article that I found the most informative and interesting was his point on the difference between humans and chimpanzees. Although we share 98% of our genes, chimp’s minds are not able to produce and compute many things that the human mind can. Generative computation is the ability to express and make meaning of words, symbols, and actions; this is a major element of human language that makes us so unique and different from chimps. We are able to create things in our mind and make sense of it all and specifically express what we want with our language. Humans without language I do not think would be humans at all. What makes humans ‘people’ is our ability to communicate and create. Although all animals have ways of communicating it is nothing like how humans do. If there was no human language that was able to address specific concerns then how would our society be what it is today? Aitchison describes in the article “Grandmama’s Teeth”, the evolutionary factors that have contributed to human’s ability to have human language. I didn’t know before this article that the mind is not the only thing that allows us to create language. Our lungs, mouths, vocal cords, and teeth have changed over time to accommodate human language. Our lungs have adapted to unusual breathing patterns in order to speak for long periods of time without getting winded. The vocal cords, mouth and teeth all contribute to the production of language that are specific to humans. Without these evolutionary traits we would not have ‘human’ language, without human language we would not have humanity or a productive society. Humanity is dependent on our ability to express emotions and thoughts through words. I believe human language is necessary to be fully human, and although some people use sign language they still are using their minds to create words and expressions which others can understand. Lastly, Lakoff and Farb explain in their articles the tendencies humans have while using language. Farb explains the categorization of language and how humans have the ability to organize in their minds different words and meanings. This categorization is what allows humans to process and understand the world and their surroundings. Lakoff explains how metaphors are so complex and specific to humans, how the human mind almost relies on metaphors to comprehend language and how a human speaks with metaphor to get a point across. The information from Farb and Lakoff further my belief that humanity is dependent on human language.