

Nature and ethics after Darwin

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With Darwin, who regarding this question disagreed with Wallace, added to the idea regarding the naturalisation of man and the mind started by Spinoza and Hume, in the sense that the evolutionary genealogy of *Homo sapiens* can also explain (Ayala, 2004) our intellectual and ethical *capacity* starting from the proto-moral dispositions (social instincts, sympathy, altruism) rewarded by our evolutionary history and which we share with the species nearest to ours. Neurobiology (Edelman, 1999, Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia, 2006) and primatology (de Waal, 2006) in all its complexity from an evolutionary point of view are trying to complete such a naturalization.

It is a demanding programme, which emancipates us: 1) from the supernatural origin of the “fact” of reason and of ethics; “2) from the materialistic and “saltationist” anthropology of Hobbes; 3) from the modern subjectivism, according to which reason and ethics do not originate through divine creation. Nor are they a result of natural processes. Rather, they should be allocated in sort of dualistic-transcendental *limbo*. It is the destiny of the “pure subjectivity” of Kant, and of the “divine spark” of the vichian ape pushed by Croce against Darwinian naturalism. Darwin, on the other hand, using a formula, suggested an *a priori* biology which in one way makes it possible to answer *plausibly* the ethic-anthropological question left, by no coincidence, also by Kant: Man, where do you come from? Too little to be a creation of a God, to much simply to have been down to chance!” on the one hand, it cannot be levelled, in an anti-dualistic fashion. Nor considering the natural law of Tommaso, or the “ontologic jump” mentioned in current catholic theology which however accepts evolution (Facchini, 2006).

The naturalization of ethics does not supply a “reliable set of specific ethical norms” (Mayr, 1997). However, it makes it possible to construct a building of ethics based on naturalistic foundations (Dennett, 2004), without precipitating into any form of misleading reductionism, or anthropological nihilism. In fact, it can try to cultivate a *fruitful* vision (Edelman, 1999) of human “nature”: an anthropology of eco-belonging, capable of teaching us to make ethical choices which, through understanding and cultural evolution, can increase and extend social instincts of sympathy and altruism which are already “incarnated” in evolution, in the *a priori* bio-ethics, of our species.

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