

Animals can act morally even if they are not responsible for what they do

questions can be skewed by environmental influences of which I am unaware, and so over which I have no control. Whether or not this work is correct, the more important point is that the ability to engage in critical scrutiny of my motivations will give me control over them only if I have control over the critical scrutiny. We began with the problem of explaining my control over my motivations, but have merely substituted for this another problem: the problem of explaining my control over my critical scrutiny. This has all the hallmarks of a classic regress problem. We haven't explained control at all, merely pushed the problem back a step.

The second way of challenging the philosophical orthodoxy is by pointing out that there is another way of understanding the "ought" of moral motivation – a way that has nothing to do with control. There is, for example, the "ought" of prudence. If you want to live for a long time, then you ought – prudentially – to give up smoking, drinking to excess, and the helmetless riding of your Harley Davidson at ridiculous speeds. This "ought" has nothing to do with control. Even if you are completely incapable of resisting the urge to smoke, drink, and motorcycle helmetlessly, it is still true that you ought to do so, prudentially speaking, if you want to live a long and healthy life. You ought to give up these things in the sense that this is the prudent thing to do – and this is true even if you can't bring yourself to give them up.

There is a corresponding way of understanding the "ought" of moral motivation that has nothing to do with having control over those

motivations. In this sense, you ought to do something because it is a good thing to do – and this is true even if you are incapable of doing it, or refraining from doing it. One might say that the dog ought to help his friend lying prone on the road, because it is a good thing to do – even if the dog has no control over whether or not he does this. This is sometimes called an *externalist* sense of the moral ought.

So, I think the traditional way of understanding the "ought" of moral motivation in terms of the idea control is questionable, and there is another way of understanding this "ought" that does not rest on this control. This opens up the possibility of a new way of thinking about the moral capacities of animals. Animals can, in fact, act morally even if they are not responsible for what they do. Animals can be motivated by the desire to do good (and also bad) things even if they are not responsible for their actions. The dog can be motivated by the desire to rescue his companion, and rescuing his companion is a good thing. But this does not imply that the dog is responsible for what it does. This allows us to make sense of the growing body of evidence that supports the idea that animals can act morally without returning us to the merry old heyday of animal trials. It is, I think, exactly the right way to think about animals and their moral abilities.

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