

Morality as an Evolutionary Adaptation

- What we call morality among humans evolved from animals
- Apes and other higher vertebrates also display “reactive emotions”: sympathy, loyalty, and some version of altruism.
- The component elements of mature human morality—emerged gradually and piecemeal through many iterations of group selection
 - in response to adaptive pressures inherent in the increasing size and complexity of hominin social groupings.
- Collaboration emerged in response to the need for non-violent means of resolving intra-group conflict
- Cultural software was added to the old bio-cultural hardware

Appropriate Appeal to Evolution

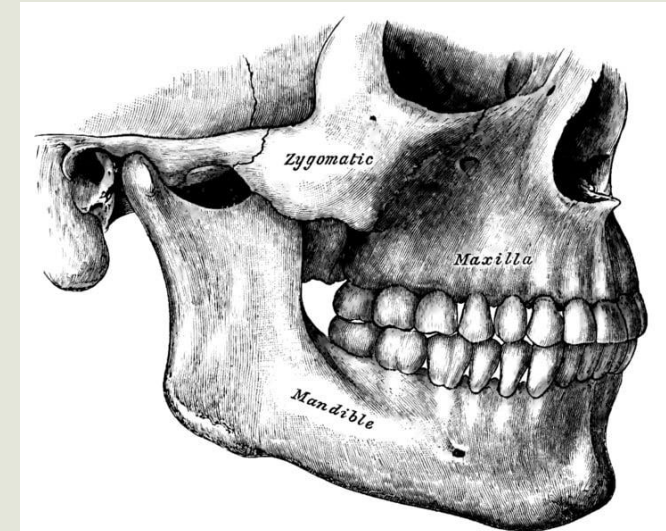
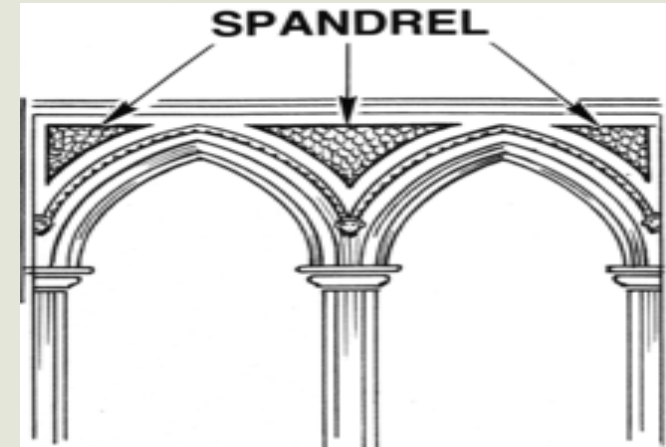
- Empirical Sense of Morality
 - We can inquire into the origins and functions of other traits, such as human linguistic capacities
 - Similarly, we can inquire into the origins and functions of the various psychological capacities and tendencies associated with ‘morality’.
- To describe the origin of morality
 - Scientific explanation of human capacities, tendencies, feeling and behaviour.
 - Appeal to natural selection pressures in the past to explain the evolution of a capacity for normative guidance, or more specifically, the origins of our sense of fairness or our resentment of cheaters.
- Context of Discovery v/s Context of Justification

Inappropriate Appeal to Evolution

- Appeals to evolutionary theory in justifying or undermining certain normative ethical claims or theories
 - for example, to justify free market capitalism or male-dominant social structures
- Appeals to evolution to explain our tendencies to
 - make certain particular kinds of moral judgment or inference, or to have certain characteristic moral intuitions
 - exhibit certain particular types of behavior in certain types of situation
 - exhibit certain particular systems of norms or types of practice

Evolution and Morality

- Biological altruism to Psychological Altruism to Capacity for Emotionally laden normative guidance
- Perhaps, morality is a “Biological Spandrel”
 - *Spandrels are byproducts of evolution. They arise due to the evolution of one trait, but this unintended trait may not have any function.*
- Even if our capacity and tendency to make moral judgments is an adaptation that evolved through natural selection, it remains possible that
 - the *content* of particular moral judgments is derived *autonomously*, i.e., free from causal shaping by particular elements in our evolutionary background—in roughly the way that the contents of our beliefs in physics or philosophy seem to be



Conscience

- Moral Compass that guides people regarding good/bad and right/wrong
- Conscience can be defined as the subjective awareness of the moral quality of one's own actions as indicated by the moral values to which one subscribes .
 - The intellect passing judgment on the goodness or badness of a particular act.
 - It is a judgment on particular, concrete, human actions.
 - It is an inner voice but is not equivalent to a feeling or an emotion.
- Provides a process involving application of "a set of value commitments" developed by all human beings from childhood

Conscience...

- Conscience not only drives or activates the attempt to refine belief but also translates belief into action and engagement
 - A motivational force, that swings into action in the assessment of personal choices and actions
 - The task of conscience is to coax, sway, persuade, threaten if need be, but in any case to see that the right thing is done
 - It creates guilt and regret if the voice of conscience is ignored or disobeyed

India Won't Join Asian Trade Deal RCEP. PM Says "Conscience Won't Permit"

"...Not that my resignation will cause anything even worth a flutter. But one has one's own conscience to answer to, I guess," - Mr. Kannan Gopinathan

In most death penalty cases, court invoked 'collective conscience' of society: Study

This was also true of 42% of cases in Madhya Pradesh and 51% of cases in Maharashtra during the same period, according to the study.

"In every aspect of life, values are very important because values are what make us sleep well. Values are what give us a clear conscience...in research, corporate world or education." – Narayana Murthy (Infosys Co-founder)

"I have no regrets about it. I have nothing to go back and change...Everyone has their own conscience to sleep with at night" – Virat Kohli

Conscience...

Voice of Conscience

- Commands
 - a particular act is 'to be done'.
 - It is an imperative and the individual is not free not to do the act.
- Forbids
 - a particular act is 'not to be done'.
 - It is an obligation to avoid such acts.
- Permits
 - a particular act is 'allowed' by one's own moral values.
- Advises
 - in which one is aware that an act is either probably better to do or probably worse to do.

Is Conscience always reliable?

Crisis of Conscience

- Weak or absent
 - Falling victim to habit,
 - Repeatedly yielding to contrary inclination.
- Unreliable
 - Corrupted by external influences
 - Advice coloured by other interests.

Developing conscience

- Reinforcing its importance and acceding to its commands
- Refusing to compromise even in the smallest of instances
- Following moral exemplars
- Writing solidifies conscience
 - Helps the formation of true conscience
- Documentary and visual incentives
 - Depiction as painting, or engraving, or as photograph

To sum up

- Morality might be influenced but is not determined by Law, religion, Customs etc.
 - In other words, the origin of morality cannot be located in any of these institutions
- The process of evolution over millennia led us to develop a conscience.
 - However, Conscience works at the subconscious or at the level of intuition and could also be prone to errors.
 - We still can and do use Conscience in our everyday lives
 - Compare it with visual perception

To sum up....

- Therefore, we need to investigate what is moral on the basis of reasons
 - Establishing the facts
 - Consequences of legalizing euthanasia; Allied forces' invasion in 2nd world rescued Jews
 - Imposes a requirement of consistency
 - Accepting all consequences emerging out of a stance
 - Question our intuitions
 - They may be nothing more than the product of prejudice, selfishness, or cultural conditioning
 - Weighing evidence
 - If there are exactly the same reasons in support of one course of conduct as there are in support of another, those actions are equally right, or equally wrong.. (Ex- Non-human animals)
 - Conceptual Analysis of terms
 - What is it to be a person (fetus)