HUCK VS. JOJO:

MORAL IGNORANCE AND THE (A)SYMMETRY OF PRAISE AND BLAME

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Abstract

When Huckleberry Finn fails to turn in Jim, he believes he is going to hell for doing what he has been raised to believe is wrong. When Susan Wolf's JoJo—raised by his dictator father to embrace his father's evil values—grows up, he tortures peasants on a whim. Are they morally responsible? Many philosophers have simply assumed what our pretheoretic intuitions are in these cases, and their assumptions have prompted two thoughts: (a) childhood deprivations of moral knowledge excuse from responsibility, and (b) blameworthiness and praiseworthiness are symmetrical, so that whatever agential features excuse from one will excuse from the other. In this paper, we discuss tests we designed and had implemented to reveal what people's pretheoretic intuitions actually are in such cases. Both theses are really more nuanced than they have been taken to be, and our unified explanation for the results reveals an underexplored feature of responsibility.