
Introduction

Less than six centuries ago, humans were the fixed nucleus around which the planets, the Sun, the stars, and possibly the cherubims and seraphims daily revolved. Even Almighty God took an almost obsessive interest in our comings and goings. Copernicus nudged our earthly sphere off center stage, but humans remained the pride of God's creation: a little lower than the angels but crowned with honor and glory. By the time of Descartes, it was conceded that our bodies might be part of the mechanical world, but the human mental realm encompassing soul and rationality and limitless will set humans distinctly apart from the material realm and from the beasts. In the eighteenth century this special separation of humans came under vigorous attack from such philosophers as La Mettrie, Holbach, and Hume; but it was Darwin, a century later, who rooted humans firmly within the natural world amidst the other species. Humans have some marvelous characteristics—intricate social relations, a useful thumb, and we're clever with tools—but we are unequivocally animals. We evolved under the same forces that shape other species, and evolved from roots shared by very close cousins: humans are closer in evolutionary history and genetic makeup to chimpanzees than chimps are to gorillas or orangutans.

How shall we deal with this dramatic half-millennium of downward mobility? Three responses have been common. First, some cling to the wreckage, clutching whatever scraps of special status might keep them afloat. We may be largely the products of our evolutionary and conditioning histories, but we retain some small vital element of miracle-working power. Thus Roderick Chisholm insists that we can still exercise free choices that transcend our causal histories:

If we are responsible . . . then we have a prerogative which some would attribute only to God: each of us, when we really act, is a prime mover unmoved. In doing what we do, we cause certain events to happen, and nothing and no one, except we ourselves, causes us to cause those events to happen. (1975, 395)

Richard Taylor asserts that each deliberative self-determining human is a "self-moving being" who can "cause an event to occur—namely, some act of his own—without anything else causing him to do so," and Taylor acknowledges that his "conception of men and their powers . . . is strange indeed, if not positively mysterious" (Taylor 1963, 52). And C. A. Campbell (1957) carves out a tiny niche of contra-causal free will in which we decide to exert or withhold the effort to rise to duty against tempting desires, and that special nonnatural power sustains humanity's exclusive title to free will and moral responsibility and genuine morality.

A second approach shares a basic premise with the first—saving autonomy and moral responsibility and genuine morality requires special powers beyond the natural—but draws the opposite conclusion: free will (and moral responsibility and knowledge of genuine morality) are antiquated vestiges of pre-scientific (or at least pre-Darwinian) thought, and they must be banished. Thus B. F. Skinner (1971, 200) asserts that "autonomous man is a device used to explain what we cannot explain in any other way. He has been constructed from our ignorance, and as our understanding increases, the very stuff of which he is composed vanishes." John Hospers claims that, on deeper examination of human behavior, the notion of autonomy disappears, and "'Right' and 'wrong' . . . have no meaning here either" (1958, 141). E. O. Wilson agrees, proclaiming that "the time has come for ethics to be removed temporarily from the hands of the philosophers and biologized" (1975, 562).

A third response has gained favor among contemporary philosophers. It may strike some as a philosophical version of whistling past the graveyard, in this case, past the graveyard of the miracle-working powers that propped up the special human capacities for morality, autonomy, and moral responsibility. This is the response of compatibilism: when we fully grasp the implications of contemporary natural science (including Darwinism), we recognize that a thoroughly scientific Darwinian naturalism can be reconciled with the uniquely human powers

that enable humans and humans alone to act morally (or immorally), live autonomously (or heteronomously), and be morally responsible (and justly deserving of reward or retribution).

This book champions a fourth response. Autonomy and morality remain vitally important to natural human animals. They must not be discarded along with the mysteries and miracles, for they require no such props. But when humans and human behavior plunge out of the angelic realm and land on earth amidst the other animals, the fall does have a profound impact. The simple hopes of the compatibilists—nothing philosophically important has changed, and our views of free will and moral responsibility and morality require little revision—cannot be sustained. We remain autonomous moral animals, but with important differences: first and foremost, we must share our moral world with other species.

Darwinian naturalism challenges the traditional philosophical assumption of human exclusivity for autonomy and morality. If autonomy and morality are useful adaptations (rather than god-given or self-made mysteries), then it is likely that other animals evolved similar autonomous and moral behavioral adaptations in response to similar environments. By rejecting schemes to guarantee a human monopoly on autonomy and morality, we can examine them writ large in the natural world we share with other animals.