

On the Evolutionary Origin of Morality

Ahlakın Evrimsel Kökeni Üzerine

DERYA SAKİN HANOĞLU 

Middle East Technical University

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Abstract: In this study, I will approach morality from a naturalistic perspective and defend that morality is a product of evolutionary processes shared by both human and non-human animals rather than that of human culture. My naturalistic approach is based on simpler components instead of high-level cognitive capabilities such as cognition. Rationality, judgment, and free will are indeed presented as necessary for morality in classical definitions of morality. However, I will put forward that the roots of morality can be understood as the biological disposition in the evolutionary process. Moreover, in this paper, I will propose that morality is not a phenomenon that ought to be restricted to humans. I think morality is not a phenomenon that is exclusively human; rather, morality can be expanded to non-human animals. To defend this claim, I will indicate that morality has a natural content and that this content does not have a structure that can only be justified on a rational basis, but that this normative structure can be established through biological/evolutionary mechanisms and can be explained in this way.

Keywords: Morality, naturalism, evolution, animal morality, naturalistic ethics, metaethics, non-anthropocentric ethic, rationality.



Introduction

My research question, as to whether morality is exclusively human entails a clarification about the nature of morality. In this paper, I put forward that morality can be re-defined from an evolutionary perspective. And what I am trying to do is to understand through animal behaviors that morality precedes cultures and religions. This in turn, will make it possible to seize anew the shared moral basis between human and non-human animals. Therefore, by redefining morality, we can expand it to non-human animals. Expanding morality to non-human animals has significance for understanding the nature of human morality either since when we examine animal behaviors, we do not merely see behaviors that are similar to human moral behaviors, but animal moral behaviors, such as creating appropriate conditions under a social life, maintaining social order, changing behaviors according to these conditions, adapting to the environment, excluding those who do not obey the rules, punishing and so on. These behaviors will be explained in detail below.

The agreements and rules in animals are warmly acknowledged Discontent yet arises when these very agreements and rules are regarded as moral. However, I think, the problem is indeed that what we call morality,—human morality—consist of rules and agreements. From primitive tribes to modern cultures, society is based on rules and agreements. These can be either simpler or more complex compared to other societies. We can regard morality as a kind of *biological imperative* as de Waal put it for empathy (2016, p. 132). We can easily describe those who break the agreement as either immoral, thief or murderer. Even though animals do not qualify verbally, they engage in behaviors that substitute it. One who steals foods and partners can easily be excluded once and for all as if they are blacklisted.

Those who investigate human nature merely with regard to socio-psychological perspective for understanding the nature of morality, often argue that human morality can be understood only as an emergent phenomenon. The temptation to ask as to why morality must be exclusively human cannot be resisted. Some sociobiologists (now evolutionary psychologists) agree with seeing morality as an emergent *human* phenomenon. In a sense, they assert that humans are the only species that can cross the boundaries of their biology for creating culture extending beyond their nature, and



that morality can only be produced by culture, i.e. human culture. Accepting morality as an emergent human phenomenon does not necessitate accepting it as a phenomenon that humans create by transcending their biology. In accordance with this assertion, what is observed in nonhuman animals is mostly considered as merely *moral-like* behavior (Aaltola, 2012; Callicott, 1984; Campbell, 2007; Keltner, Horberg, & Oveis, 2006; Killen, M., & de Waal, 2000) or “building blocks of morality” (Joyce, 2006), rather than genuine moral behavior. Only very few in the scientific community believe that at least some nonhuman animals, such as primates, may have morality of their own. It is a highly questionable distinction between very similar behaviors which are recorded by scientific experiments in non-human animals, which will be elaborated in the following sections in detail. The question I have in mind is whether the so-called moral-like behaviors are evidence for some kind of morality in nonhuman animals.

Animals are not capable of attributing themselves morality as well. We are the ones who attribute them morality through language. However, incapability that derives from the lack of a verbal language does not preclude to act morally. We, as humans, unlike animals, are creatures who discuss what morality is. This is what we also do by language, beyond morality in praxis. The naturalistic approach I advocate is not regarded to understand cultural codes, but it is essential for understanding human behavior that does not change despite all cultural codes. To be clear, what I assert/emphasize is that human morality cannot be explained by mere recourse to culture, while I do not deny the fact that it contains cultural elements. Culture certainly shapes and reshapes morality in due time. However, the structure of morality in all cultures involves core values which is common to all cultures such as protecting one’s own group, excluding those who harm the group, supplying basic needs like shelter and security and sharing resources which we also share with non-human animals. So, although morality is shaped culturally, culture is not the *basis* of morality. We, as members of mammals, are tend to live with others. Sociality is an adaptive value since it has evolved with the high benefits of conspecifics (Silk, 2007, p. 539). Being isolated cannot be chosen as a way of life. *Others* entails to live in congruency. We rationalize the sociality with cultural elements which we are also included by the evolutionary process. In this respect,



although humans are the sole agents to reason on something like the nature of morality, it does not follow that morality can be understood as a form of sociality that is only formed by and allocated to human culture. It could only be the human morality if we explain morality only in terms of human culture. If we just call it morality, we ignore the behavior we encounter in non-human animals. So, we can put forward the following statements. 1. Morality, even human morality, cannot be explained by culture alone. 2. There is no necessity for morality to be exclusively human. 3. The morality of a non-human animal and a human animal need not be exactly the same.

1. Moral Behaviors and Moral-like Behaviors

There is an underlying reason for the distinction between human behaviors and nonhuman animal behaviors since the prevailing idea is that humans change the environment surrounding them by their cumulative knowledge and technology while nonhumans adapt to the environment with their restricted behavioral repertoire. Whether the distinction is accurate or even really needed, is a questionable one. If we were to expect the exact same behaviors, we may not even find moral-like behavior in humans. Although everyone agrees that moral-like behaviors have been adequately observed, many argue that since these are not moral behaviors, we cannot attribute morality to non-human animals. However, we might start wondering in what ways human moral behavior would be different from “moral-like” behaviors of animals, since humans and animals share many emotions.

I think the moral-like behavior language does not respect other possible conceptions of morality because it is a very conservative approach to morality. If moral behavior has evolved through evolutionary processes, and the pre-human behavior is called *just* moral-like, human evolution may seem to be cut off from earlier evolution. Perhaps, we should call nonhuman behavior “primordial moral behavior” (Keltner et al., 2006) in order to point out more continuous change in time. Since primordial moral behavior is quite different from moral-like behavior by its very definition, it would be more plausible to use it instead of moral-like behavior in order to refer to the origins of morality in the evolutionary process.

What are these characteristics that humans attribute to themselves?



These characteristics are reason, free will, self-consciousness, language, and so on. According to a widespread view, human beings not only possess these characteristics, but also they are the sole species. Therefore, they are the sole species who have morality. Even if they encounter very similar behaviors in nonhuman animals, for instance, getting angry when noticing some inequality (Brosnan, 2013), and punishment for promoting cooperation (Raihani et al., 2012), since they have the claim mentioned above, they call them *just* moral-like behavior. So, the sole owner of morality always points to the same creatures, namely humans, and to the characteristics that only they have. Hence, we need to question whether morality is possible without resorting to those characteristics or not. If it is possible, then nonhuman behaviors should not be merely moral-like. The distinction between moral and moral-like behaviors is similar to the distinction between social and moral behavior. What makes us think that there is such a sharp distinction? However, since under conditions such as equality and inequality can be *felt* without forming the concepts of equality and inequality, both humans and non-human animals can also be responding these conditions. It does not narrow the concept of morality, but rather provides another morality reading.

Are not social behaviors as significant as moral behaviors? Do we attribute some divine property to moral behaviors in order to differentiate them from other social behaviors encountered in non-humans? Perhaps, if we reduce all moral behavior to social behavior, and refuse the distinction, then the problem can disappear. There are several findings for suggesting the presence of capability of behaving morally and of a sense of fairness for different kinds of animals from mammals to birds (Monsó, Benz-Schwarzburg, & Bremhorst, 2018, p. 284). Churchland argues that nonhuman animals are capable of behaving morally. She (2011, p. 8) thinks that social behaviors encompass moral behaviors, for moral behavior is just a subset of social behavior. Moreover, Patricia Churchland (2011) argues that commitment and care are shared by most mammals, not just humans, particularly by mothers and their offspring. To demonstrate her point, the author refers to rats (and not to chimpanzees or other species closer to humans regarding emotional expressions) for their valence of commitment (Churchland, 2011).



We could engage in a semantic wrangle about whether these values are really moral values, but a wrangle about words is apt to be unrewarding. Of course only humans have human morality. But that is not news, simply a tedious tautology. One might as well note that only marmosets have marmoset morality, and so on down the line. We can agree that ants are not moral in the way humans are, and that baboon and bonobo social behavior is much closer to our own. With no home movies to give us clues, we do not know whether the social behavior of other hominins—for example, *Homo erectus* or *Homo neanderthalensis* or *Homo heidelbergensis*—was very close to the social behavior of modern humans. Perhaps we can leave it at that, pending deeper scientific understanding (Churchland, 2011, p. 26).

According to Churchland, mammals are motivated to show commitment and care for others because social problem-solving is grounded and shaped by them. Moreover, she agrees that social behavior and moral behavior seem to have the same spectrum of actions. She supports her claim of this single continuum with adding that “neuroscientific data showing that whether a subject sees a merely social event or a conventionally “moral” event, the same regions of the prefrontal cortex show increased activity” (Churchland, 2011, p. 60).

Rowlands also argues that non-human animals are moral subjects. He makes a distinction between moral agent and moral subject. According to him, concepts and cognitive capacities necessitate to be held morally responsible for their behaviours; the lack of these capacities preclude them from the being moral agents. Although he excludes animals from being moral agents, he admits that animals are moral subjects that can behave on the basis of moral motivations. These motivations entail “a sense of what is fair and what is not” (Rowlands, 2012, p. 32).

Analyzing moral behavior would enable us to gain significant clues about what morality is. If we list the expectations for the content of morality, then we can lead our way to present our model for the emergence of morality: to maintain social order, prosocial tendency, indirect benefit to the self, to motivate helping behavior, to care and support, enforce or improve integrity. By doing this, I am planning to expand the scope of moral behaviors from human species to some animal species. Current human moral sense is so modern that there are still tribal societies do not have the



idea that we have now. Can we say that they do not have morality? I should note that many who accept moral emotions as the basis of morality restrict it to humans, it is moral-like for non-human primates (Keltner et al., 2006). For this very reason, I criticize not only those who defend traditional ethics that prioritize rationality for morality but also those who both defend naturalized ethics and restrict it to humans such as Keltner, Prinz, Ayala, and Searle.

2. What Is Morality?

Attempting to define morality is trying to determine the boundaries of morality. A definition of morality can pave the way for answering the question whether the boundary circumscribes only humans. In other words, a new definition of morality may enable us to answer the question whether the boundaries of morality can be expanded to include non-human animals. If it turns out that they can be so expanded, then this new definition may also help us determine the extent of this expansion.

Although the answer to the question “what is morality?” at first seems to be applicable to all societies or cultures in the sense that morality is regarded as a system that leads to the good (whatever it is) and right (whatever it is) behaviors, it is evident that different philosophers and societies answer it differently. The most common and accepted answers may be listed in the following way: “certain codes of conduct put forward by a society or a group, or accepted by an individual for her own behavior, or, normatively referring to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons,” (Bernard and Gert, 2020) and, “moral virtue; behavior conforming to moral law or accepted moral standards, esp. in relation to sexual matters; personal qualities judged to be good” (“Morality,” n.d.).

When we think about the concepts in these definitions, it will be possible to give a different answer to the question of morality because some concepts in these definitions are problematic. The main one is “rational”. Who or which beings are rational and what the conditions of rationality/being rational are rather disputed. In addition, the reason why rationality should be a necessary condition of morality can be also doubtful. Rationality as a necessary condition of morality can be seen consistent with



the traditional moral philosophies. Since rational agents are considered to be merely beings who attributed morality, rationality is taken for granted for morality. Rational beings are considered not only the ones who endorse the rules, but also the ones who make a judgment about whether a certain behavior is morally appropriate. The subject of rationality would be a separate study. So, I will not built naturalistic morality on rationality. We have motivations to act in a way or other way without any appeal to rationality. Moreover, rationality and the concepts we produce on morality are only to justify our behaviors on what we feel, not to act morally since we do not only make moral judgments, but our moral judgments also accompany our moral feelings. We do not have enough time to think about every action we perform before we do. Evolution has given us our emotions as short-cut, to act quickly without resorting to thinking. But if we realize that we are wrong or right for what we have done, we justify our behavior by rationalizing. Indeed, it does not mean that we do everything in this way. Under crucial situations, we plan ahead, but it does not necessitate a reciprocal relation with moral behavior.

This problematic concept actually should alarm us to question our position about morality. The relationship between morality and rationality seems like moving in a circle. Still, if we look closely, we see that the concept in the definition of morality defines itself. That is, morality is defined by rationality and those who say that rationality is necessary for the definition of morality are also those who think that they possess rationality. In such statements as “humans are the mere species who are rational” and “morality is uniquely human”, the terms ‘rational’ and ‘morality’ seem to be allocated to humans and thereby restricted. To be more precise, this restriction can be expressed as follows: even though the concept of human being does not figure in the defining statements given above, what is meant by rational being is merely humans¹ as an indubitable consequence of such an inference. To be clear, the claim that morality is shared by only rational beings because those human beings are rational is a circle. The definition also deems rationality to be human attribute since it does not refer to the rational *beings*, but it refers to the rational *persons*. When we see moral-like behaviors in rational beings, we attribute morality to them. When we see

¹ At least very few agree that non-human animals are also rational.



such behaviors in non-rational beings as well, should we attribute morality to them as well? Should we call them rational, moral or both? Then, we have to change our definition of morality. I think that it is moral behaviors themselves that lead us to the right direction if we wish to change the definition of morality. Re-definition of morality requires whether we encounter moral behaviors in a species or not.

2.1. Evolutionary Origins of Morality

I think that the conception of morality as something unique to humans is self-proclaimed and rarely questioned. Questioning this uniqueness may put an end to some human privileges like moral superiority. Non-human animals may exhibit similar behaviors under experimental conditions as given below.² For example, some observations have encountered events in which individuals who do not harm or do not get harmed, but witness the event, do not punish others as third party but solve the problem.

Two female chimps were sitting in the sun, with their children rolling around in the sand in front of them. When the play turned into a screaming, hair-pulling fight, neither mother knew what to do because if one of them tried to break up the fight, it was guaranteed that the other would protect her offspring, since mothers are never impartial. It is not unusual for a juvenile quarrel to escalate into an adult fight. Both mothers nervously monitored each other as well as the fight. Noticing the alpha female, Mama, asleep nearby, one of them went over to poke her in the ribs. As the old matriarch got up, the mother pointed at the fight by swinging an arm in its direction. Mama needed only one glance to grasp what was going on and took a step forward with a threatening grunt. Her authority was such that this shut up the youngsters. The mother had found a quick and efficient solution to her problem, relying on the mutual understanding typical of chimpanzees (de Waal, 2016, p. 67).

We can see from the quote above that when chimpanzees encounter a problem, it is subtly resolved by third parties. Another experiment on non-human animals is about equality and fairness.

² In many experiments, it has been observed that some non-human animals have highly complicated behaviors such as accountability, learning, recognizing objects/persons, predicting the behaviors of others and acting accordingly.



After they performed as task, we rewarded both monkeys with cucumber slices and grapes after determining that they all favored the latter over the former. The monkeys had no trouble with the task if they received identical rewards, even if they both got cucumber. But they were vehemently opposed to unequal outcomes, if one got grapes and the other got cucumber. The cucumber monkey would contentedly munch on her first slice, but after noticing that her companion was getting grapes, she would throw a tantrum. She'd ditch her measly veggies and shake the testing chamber with such agitation that it threatened to break apart." (de Waal, 2016, p. 197).

As we can see, monkeys react to something that we call unequal. They can compare themselves based on what others get. Rejecting the food is a sort of protesting because someone else gets a better one. Rejection is also getting nothing over getting something. The further experiments on equality also show that monkeys object not only to getting less than the other but also getting more (de Waal, 2016, p. 198). The monkey that receives grape also reject the grape, if it is advantageous for it. Both monkeys act as if they know the concepts of equality. Maybe they do. But we can at least say that they have the sense of equality to act according to it.

Commitment is another significant term for understanding morality. It provides the long-term relationship that is quite significant in human social life. Parents devote themselves completely not only to their offspring but also to others they care about (Keltner et al., 2006). Keltner et al. have in mind that commitment in humans provides the long-term relationship which they think animals do not have. They do not accept the relationships in rats as ultrasocial because they think they are all siblings, and it does not count as helping others, if others include only their family members. However, such a commitment is encountered in animals as well. Below is a good example of a long-term relationship among chimpanzees:

[Geisha is] Mama's adoptive daughter. Unlike the others, Geisha never took any break to eat or socialize and stayed with the corpse all the time. She acted like people do at a wake. A wake was originally a period during which mourners kept vigil over a deceased person at home. Probably humans originated wakes in the hope that their loved one would come back to life, or else to make absolutely sure that he or she was dead prior to burial. Geisha is the daughter of Kuif. Mama had taken her under her wing after her mother's



death. This was logical, given how tight Mama was with Kuif. Now, after Mama's death, it was Geisha who spent the most time with the corpse, even more than Mama's biological daughter and granddaughter. All the females visited in total silence, an unusual state for chimps. They nuzzled and inspected the corpse in various ways, or spent time grooming it (de Waal, 2019, p. 49).

Mama, a female chimpanzee in Burgers Zoo, Netherlands, had adopted her friend's daughter, Geisha, after her friend died. Mama had a long life (1957-2016). Although there is no biological relationship between Mama and Geisha, their relationship is so strong that Geisha did not leave the corpse of Mama for a long time. It is obvious that there is a commitment between them. Although de Waal does not specify it as a long-term relationship it does seem so.

The question is, shouldn't we then attribute moral quality to these behaviors? So, we need to touch upon the general consideration about the evolutionary origin of morality. In this context, let me review very briefly evolutionary aspects of morality such as altruism and cooperation. Fitzpatrick (2017) states that altruism and cooperation are the central issues about morality for a naturalistic account. A behavior is altruistic in the evolutionary sense if it increases the fitness of other organisms in the evolutionary sense (Sober & Wilson, 1998, p. 17), and a behavior is altruistic in the psychological sense if it is ultimately motivated by the desire for the well-being of others in the psychological sense. In the psychological sense, altruistic motives allow one to take care of their children, or to help others. In the evolutionary sense, Sober (1988, p. 83) claims that "it is better to be selfish, [but] it is better to live among altruists than among selfish individuals". Altruistic behaviors provide advantage in groups because altruists care for the benefits of others in those groups. Altruistic behaviors are also encountered in a variety of species from bees to humans.

[Evolutionary biology] claims to explain such apparently altruistic traits as the bee's barbed stinger and human morality. These and other characteristics are said to be only apparently altruistic because individuals who help others receive benefits in return or promote their "genetic self-interest" by helping copies of their own genes that are found in the bodies of others (Sober & Wilson, 1998, p. 6).



While both egoist and selfish behavior is self-directed, altruistic behavior is other-directed. To clarify, “[w]hen self-interest and the welfare of others coincide, it will be impossible to say whether the resulting behavior was produced by egoistic motives, by altruistic motives, or both” (Sober & Wilson, 1998, p. 249). What really matters may not be actually whether individuals are inherently selfish or altruistic. For self-oriented, self-directed individuals to be able to maintain their lives in a social environment, their behaviors need to be other-directed even if their thoughts and ultimate goals are self-interested. A further question is whether moral behaviors are triggered by self-directed or other-directed reasons. Although the egoist helps others to receive benefit in return, altruist also helps others to receive benefit in return (Sober & Wilson, 1998, p. 6).

Our similarities/differences with our closest relatives, namely chimpanzees, are often questioned and compared. Chimpanzees are intriguing subjects to look at if morality can indeed be approached from an evolutionary perspective. However, those who argue that morality is uniquely human would object to this. The questions, “Do chimpanzees punish others for impure acts or violations of duties? And if they do not, why do they not? Are there species-specific characteristics or facets of social organization that make humans care about purity or duties while chimpanzees do not?” (Keltner et al., 2006, p. 212), point to the lack of some characteristics in chimpanzees in social organizations. Keltner et al. think that chimpanzees do not punish others for violations like we do by asking these questions. However, humans may not be the only species that care for and punish others when we look closer to animal behavior. Chimpanzees punish others for many acts and violations. Perhaps Keltner et al. are saying that chimpanzees do not have the third party punishment that is an objective decision making system, executed by someone other than those who do the harm or get harmed in a conflict and violation. Although there are those who assert that third party punishment is not part of chimpanzees’ social organization (Riedla, et al., 2012), some observations have encountered events in which individuals who do not harm or do not get harmed, but witness the event, do not punish others as third party but solve the problem. For instance, a female chimpanzee solves a problem between two young chimpanzees who cannot share a branch of tree by splitting it into



two, without punishing them by taking the branch from them when they do not come to an agreement about who gets the tree branch (de Waal, 2016, p. 167). This might not be an example of third party punishment, but might be an example for third party reconciliation. This observation shows that the third-party punishment may not be the foremost property for the social maintenance; rather, third party reconciliation may be sufficient. Besides, chimpanzees can be a good starting point; however, to focus solely on chimpanzees is a sort of “chimpanzism” in the words of de Waal, which is another version of anthropocentrism (Ibid.).

The obvious common ground between current evolutionary and developmental approaches is that, instead of looking at human morality as coming from the outside—imposed by adults on the passive child, or imposed by culture on a fundamentally nasty human nature—it is generated from the inside. What we mean by “inside” is *not* that things happen in isolation from outside influences: evolution operates on the basis of ecological pressures, which come from the outside, and development takes place in constant interplay with the outside world. What we mean instead is that the decision making and emotions underlying moral judgments are generated within the individual rather than being simply imposed by society. They are a product of evolution, an integrated part of the human genetic makeup, that makes the child construct a moral perspective through interactions with other members of its species (Killen, M., & de Waal, 2000).

We may find the rules that should be obeyed and behave accordingly by our internal experiences.³ It may occur internally in us by means of evolutionary products, such as emotions. Emotion as a product of evolution points out to a state – an internal state. Even though emotion is internal to us, it plays a significant role in the interaction that individuals establish with others. Moreover, this role of emotion is to ensure occurrence of moral judgments/behaviors in the interaction between individuals.

Conclusion

In this paper, I approached morality from a naturalistic perspective

³ It should be noted that what I put forward is not a dichotomy that morality is either cultural and external, or internal and non-cultural. However, if morality is based on culture, it will be something we construct and produce. Moreover, I only emphasize something we already have through emotions, without any appeal to produce it.



by addressing social behaviors in both humans and non-human animals. Even if the claim that morality is deeply rooted in our nature is accepted by evolutionary biologists and philosophers such as Joyce, Ayala, Sober, and Wilson, it is still hard for them to attribute morality to non-human animals. So, I aimed to show the possibility of morality to be expanded in non-human animals in terms of animal behavior studies made especially by the primatologist de Waal. The question of how far moral behaviors can be attributed to non-human animals can be raised. So, my starting point was our closest relatives, chimpanzees. I hope that future detailed studies on animal behaviors and morality will make it clear how far we can go.

When we drill down into the non-human animal behaviors, the social behaviors of non-human animals can also be viewed as moral behaviors. Indeed, morality is deeply rooted in our nature, and our moral behaviors are not required to be highly intellectual. The basic life-sustaining motivations that human beings share with other animals can be considered as the basis of moral behaviors. I have tried to provide arguments and cited empirical evidence for attributing morality to non-human animals. Sociality is required for the presence of others. Thus, moral behavior can emerge in such a place where being social is essential. To live appropriately with others in a society can be a problem that must be solved by these life-sustaining motivations as the moral basis. There is no need for the high cognitive capability to behave morally. It does not mean that emotions are cultural, instead it contains social content which is associated with others. Emotions are both adaptive and include social aspects. In that regard, moral behaviors can be explained with basic emotions without any need of appealing to intellectual and cognitive capability, and cultural elements. In accordance with that, my future study will be on these emotions that make one behave morally in order to understand the nature of life-sustaining motivations which compel to live with others in harmony.

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Öz: Bu çalışmada ahlaka doğalcı bir bakış açısıyla yaklaşacağım ve ahlakın, insan kültürünün bir ürünü olmaktan çok, hem insan hem de insan olmayan hayvanlar tarafından paylaşılan, evrimsel süreçlerin bir ürünü olduğunu savunacağım. Bu çalışmadaki doğalcı yaklaşımım üst düzey bilişsel yetenekler yerine daha basit bileşenlere dayanmaktadır. Klasik ahlak tanımlarında, rasyonellik, yargıda bulunma ve özgür irade ahlak için kesinlikle gerekli olarak sunulmaktadır. Ancak ben ahlakın köklerinin evrimsel süreçten gelen biyolojik bir eğilim olarak anlaşılabilirliğini ileri süreceğim. Dahası, bu yazıda, ahlakın insanlarla sınırlı olması gereken bir fenomen olmadığını ileri süreceğim. Yani, ahlakın yalnızca insana ait değil; insan olmayan hayvanları da kapsayacak şekilde genişletilebilir olduğunu düşünmekteyim. Bu iddiayı savunmak için, ahlakın doğal bir içeriğinin olduğunu, bu içeriğinse sadece rasyonel bir temelde gerekçelendirilebilecek bir yapıya sahip olmadığını, aksine bu normatif yapının biyolojik/evrimsel mekanizmalar yoluyla kurulabileceğini ve bu şekilde açıklanabileceğini belirteceğim.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ahlak, doğalcılık, evrim, hayvan ahlakı, doğalcı etik, metaetik, insanmerkezci olmayan etik, rasyonalite.

