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Animal Morality. Jerzy Chmurzyński and the Cognitive Ethology View

MORALNOŚĆ ZWIERZĄT. UJĘCIE JERZEGO CHMURZYŃSKIEGO WOBEC
POGLĄDÓW ETOLOGÓW KOGNITYWISTYCZNYCH

Streszczenie

W niniejszym artykule omawiam poglądy polskiego entomologa, filozofa i „ojca polskiej etologii” Jerzego Andrzeja Chmurzyńskiego na temat „moralności” zwierząt. Następnie porównuję jego stanowisko z poglądami badaczy etologii poznawczej, Marca Bekoffa i Frans de Waala. Chmurzyński rozważa obecność podstawowych wartości etycznych, takich jak dobro i zło, w zachowaniach zwierząt. Następnie formułuje pojęcie wartości biologicznych, obejmujących homeostazę, maksymalizację dostosowania i dobrostan. Dobrem dla zwierzęcia jest osiągnięcie tych wartości, a złem jest ich brak. Wartości biologiczne nie są przez zwierzęta rozpoznawane świadomie, ale są sprawnie osiągnane, za co są odpowiedzialne mechanizmy odruchowo-bezwarunkowe oparte na motywacji. Istnieją także zachowania zwierząt, które mogą budzić podziw, jednak brak możliwości zrozumienia abstrakcyjnych pojęć dobra i zła oraz dokonywania wolnego wyboru powodują, że zwierząt nie można uznać za istoty moralne. Chmurzyński wprowadza więc pojęcie zachowań moralnopodobnych. Niektórzy badacze z kręgu etologii kognitywnej formułują jednak odmienne wnioski. Bekoff modyfikuje pojęcie moralności, utożsamiając moralność z zachowaniami prospołecznymi. De Waal uważa, że zachowania małp człekokształtnych stanowią źródło ludzkiej moralności i zarazem jej niższy poziom. Poglądy przyznające zwierzętom status moralny zdają się mieć nie tylko cel poznawczy, ale również normatywny. Przyznanie zwierzętom statusu moralnego oznacza przyznanie im określonych praw. Oznacza to również zapewnienie im większej ochrony, niż miałyby to miejsce w przeciwnym wypadku. Moim zdaniem taki sposób formułowania moralności zwierząt, jak przedstawiają to etolodzy poznawczy, raczej utrudnia próby zrozumienia zachowań zwierząt w kontekście etyki. Koncepcja Jerzego Chmurzyńskiego dotycząca pojęcia zjawisk przypominających moralność lepiej ukazuje specyfikę zwierzęcych zachowań.

Słowa kluczowe: etologia, wartości biologiczne, zachowania moralnopodobne, zdolności zwierzęce

Introduction

The dynamic development of disciplines like ethology, cognitive science, comparative psychology, and primatology means that animal “morality” is being increasingly addressed in both public debate and world literature. Traditionally, morality presupposes indeterminism of behaviour and the possession of free will. Humans are usually the subject of moral inquiry because they can recognise, choose, and implement various possibilities according to both their conscience and cultural ethical principles. The moral decision that shapes an action is made through a combination of cognitive acts and free will. Rational and responsible behaviour implies self-knowledge *vis-à-vis* humans’ physical, spiritual, and mental nature.

Ethology is sometimes called the biology of behaviour. Its material object is all living beings capable of behaviour, from the simplest prokaryotes and protozoa to individual animals and people. Adopting the evolutionary paradigm, ethology contradicts the view that human and animal natures are strictly separate. It is an objectifying science, one that tries to sideline subjective experiences by analysing reasons for the behaviour of experiencing and acting subjects. Cognitive ethology exemplifies a different approach. It deals with “subjectivist” issues. Cognitive ethologists examine the thinking abilities of animals, their understanding of situations, and their ability to count and abstract. The tendency to attribute moral motivations to some animals is supported by primatologists’ observations of in-group social norm violations in animals. It is reinforced by studies suggesting the presence of emotional abilities like empathy and compassion in primates.

In ethological studies, one can distinguish (1) views that grant animals the capacity for moral behaviour, (2) views that consider animal behaviour to be the source of human morality, and (3) views where morality is a feature distinguishing human behaviour from animal behaviour. Marc Bekoff subscribes to the first view. He maintains that humans share basic moral predispositions with other animal species. Human morality is not exceptional when compared to the behaviour of other species. Frans de Waal subscribes to the second view. He maintains that certain abilities identifiable in great apes are the seeds of human morality. Such capabilities are what de Waal refers to as proto-morality. Polish entomologist, philosopher, and “father of Polish ethology” Jerzy Andrzej Chmurzyński subscribes to the third view. He has conducted research in accordance with classical ethology’s assumptions but asks questions about the ethical value of the animal world and how animals recognise good and evil. He has formulated the notion of moral-like phenomena, which contrasts with human moral behaviour.

My aim in this paper is to present Chmurzyński’s views on animal morality. I then compare his views to the views of Bekoff and de Waal (whom I take to be representatives of conventional cognitive ethology).

1. Biological values

Chmurzyński talks about values in both the objective and subjectivist sense. The objective sense refers to things and phenomena related to the needs of a self-steering cybernetic system. In this context, we can talk about the instrumental values of living systems. These are important for the survival and development of a specific genotype and for some individual organisms.¹ The subjective sense focuses on characteristics given to the living environment's components under the influence of emotions and beliefs. Ethologists use the operational notion of valence to evaluate the behaviour of experiencing subjects without reference to consciousness. Values in the subjective sense have traditionally been associated with a person who can consciously evaluate their behaviour and the characteristics of their living environment. Ethology extends this notion to other experiencing and acting subjects. Animals are taken to recognise values through both positive emotions (e.g. desiring and liking) and negative emotions (e.g. disgust and aversion).

Despite ethology's achievements, Chmurzyński does not search for morality in biology. Instead, he formulates the notion of *biological values*. Biological values are "biological, non-rational compasses that would allow them (animals and people) to recognise what is good and what is bad for them in their behaviour and in the surrounding world and its impact on them."² Chmurzyński understands categories of good and evil in a "weak" rather than "strong" sense. This involves evaluating the behaviour and the environment of a given organism as good and bad for *themselves*.³ In this sense, it is good for animals to maintain individual homeostasis, thereby maximising fitness and well-being.

For a long time now (1968) Stanisław Lem in his philosophical essay entitled *Biology and values* proposed treating the homeostasis of the body as a value. I think that he will not be offended by it when, after thirty years, I add two other values, more and more commonly accepted by biologists. [...] A "good" life is a life in the so-called "welfare," which means – in conditions ensuring physical and mental health – with a state of specific satisfaction. The second of these "added" by me "biological values" is "adaptation," this Darwinian fitness [...].⁴

1 S. Lem, *Biologia i wartości*, "Studia Filozoficzne" (1968) 3–4, pp. 35–37.

2 J.A. Chmurzyński, *Dobro i zło w kategoriach wartości biologicznych*, in: A. Wierciński (ed.), *Materiały z konferencji „Tradycyjne i współczesne systemy wartości. Przeciwnieństwo pierwsze: Dobro i Zło”* (Staszów, 10–12.12.1999), Warszawa–Kielce 2000, p. 260.

3 Ibidem, p. 259.

4 Idem, *Czy z „dewiacją” trzeba walczyć? O społecznej roli filozofii mówią uczestnicy posiedzenia KNF*, "Przegląd Filozoficzny – Nowa Seria" 32 (1999) 4, p. 139.

Thus, ethology does not explicitly state which behaviours are ethical. Rather, it highlights the behaviours that contribute to the survival of individuals of a species, which is itself an ethical and biological good.⁵

In modern biology, homeostasis is treated as the body's ability to maintain life processes at an appropriate level of order. Maintaining homeostasis is also identified with the general concept of health.⁶ An organism is an open system rather than a closed system (wherein entropy increases over time). An organism can maintain relatively stable parameters over time due to an influx of information and "low-entropic" energy from outside the system. The system achieves an internal balance by maintaining a constant temperature, morphology, blood volume, body fluid chemical composition, and the like. A negative feedback mechanism causes a reaction to small deviations from homeostasis.⁷

British neurologist and cyberneticist Ross Ashby built what he called a homeostat.⁸ This is an automaton with self-regulatory features, a model of living organisms maintaining homeostasis. Stanisław Lem talks about two types of homeostats: (1) a type constituting technical systems and simple organisms (bacteria, plants, and lower animals) with an innate program for responding to change and (2) a type constituting both organisms capable of learning and self-programming machines that can adapt to changing environmental conditions by searching for purposeful responses guaranteeing homeostasis.⁹ Individual body systems develop a certain autonomy by maintaining their state of balance. This is evident in sexual behaviour. Such behaviour maintains an appropriate level of homeostasis in the drive system. This affects its reduction, which does not influence the body's overall homeostasis (important for maintaining life's continuity). When it comes to quantitative regulation, we can talk about energy homeostasis. This involves balancing the body's energy consumption (or maintaining a constant body weight). In theoretical biology, the body's self-preservation actions are called homeostatic behaviours.

5 See W. Wickler, *Czy jesteśmy grzesznikami? Prawa naturalne małżeństwa*, trans. A.D. Tauszyńska, Warszawa 1974, pp. 42–48.

6 See J. Domaradzki, *O skrytości zdrowia. O problemach z konceptualizacją pojęcia zdrowie*, "Hygeia Public Health" 48 (2013) 4, pp. 408–419.

7 A change in body temperature, for example, stimulates the nervous system's receptors. These, in turn, trigger a reaction that results in homeostatic restoration. An increase in body temperature causes sweating and skin blood vessel dilation. Lowering the temperature causes blood vessels to constrict and muscle tremors to release additional heat.

8 W. Ross Ashby, *Wstęp do cybernetyki*, trans. B. Osuchowska, A. Gosiewski, Warszawa 1961, pp. 125–127.

9 See S. Lem, *Summa technologiae*, Lublin 1984, pp. 53–56.

Chmurzyński also talks about the biological value of fitness. Fitness determines an individual's survival and reproductive success in a given population. Its value is measured by the number of offspring produced during the life of an individual organism. Added to this is the number of grandchildren in the next generation (taking into account the probability of these offspring's survival). The greater the number of offspring carrying the genes of an individual compared to the general population, the greater that individual's degree of fitness. This value is derived from the product of the probability of survival and the number of offspring produced. Fitness (W) is a function of outputs (e) and inputs (n)¹⁰:

$$W = f(e, n).$$

Individual fitness is the ratio of the number of individuals (with a specific phenotype) achieving *average* reproductive success compared to the number of individuals (with a specific phenotype) achieving *maximum* reproductive success. The degree of fitness is based on a specific phenotype's maximum growth rate in a given population. It is achieved through individual reproduction, while indirect fitness is achieved by assisting relatives in social activities.¹¹ *Inclusive* fitness is determined by the reproductive success of an individual's genes (which can reside in themselves and/or in related individuals).¹² The sociobiological principle of fitness maximisation relates to maximising the effects of inclusive fitness (which the sex drive and the maternal/paternal instinct are responsible for).

Fitness is related to altruistic behaviour understood in the biological sense. Unlike psychological altruism, biological altruism does not invoke notions of motivation and intentionality. It only focuses on behavioural aspects.¹³ The ability to make a personal sacrifice for others (care for relatives' offspring or sick individuals) is a product of so-called Hamiltonian altruism (i.e. nepotism). Allotropic actions manifest themselves in altruistic behaviour towards unrelated individuals and even

¹⁰ J.A. Chmurzyński, *Słownik encyklopedyczny biologii zachowania i pojęć pokrewnych*, Warszawa 2011, (on typescript rights), Vol. 2, p. 357.

¹¹ An example of indirect fitness is the role of a caretaker. Here, older offspring help raise younger siblings. Another example is the tasks performed by sterile social insect workers in raising the colony's offspring. In this type of fitness activity, individuals aid the survival of genes shared with other members of the colony.

¹² See A. Urbanek, *Na granicy biologii i socjologii*, „Nauka Polska” (1980) 3–4, pp. 119–120.

¹³ In sociobiology, notions of altruistic behaviour and selfish behaviour are used without quotation marks. When it comes to altruism between animals, one can talk about lower (generalized) altruism and higher (reciprocated) altruism. The first type relates to cases of nepotism; the second type relates to actions directed at unrelated individuals. See B. Sadowski, J.A. Chmurzyński, *Biologiczne mechanizmy zachowania*, Warszawa 1989, pp. 569–571, 598–599.

members of other species. This mechanism is activated by cross-species triggers (e.g. cries of despair). Individual homeostasis and fitness are also interconnected, and linked to an individual's health.¹⁴

Welfare, says Chmurzyński,

is a state of lasting (and not temporary) mental well-being and physical health indicating that an individual lives in harmony with the surrounding environment, i.e. in a situation where the stimuli and environmental information affecting the nervous system and behaviour are within the range of sizes accepted by the organism, in which the individual is able to cope with environmental factors.¹⁵

Welfare is related to a given individual's subjective feeling of pleasure or pain. A positive value is what is pleasant, and a negative value is what brings pain and suffering. Hence, it is "good" to strive for pleasure and "bad" to be in situations of discomfort, pain, or unfulfilled drives. We can also talk about different levels of welfare, from high (*good welfare*) to low (*poor welfare*). For Chmurzyński, a high level is a prerequisite for experiencing pleasure. Prolonged stress prevents the attainment of pleasure. In contrast to pleasure, welfare entails a *sustained* state of "good." This applies to the state of organisms in all life aspects (from the cellular level to the level of felt emotions). Like homeostasis and fitness, welfare is also related to health. A low level of health equates to a low level of welfare. But, an organism can be in good health while having a low level of welfare. Over time, this will lead to a deterioration in health. Chmurzyński's research practice employs both objective and subjective methods to inquire into subjectively experienced states of pleasure and pain.¹⁶

For Chmurzyński, animals do not consciously recognise biological values. But, these values can be efficiently achieved *via* reflexive and unconditional mechanisms based on motivation (including learned motivations). We can identify two types of behaviour: (1) behaviours related to avoidance, moving away, or rejection reactions and (2) behaviours related to approaching and remaining in the field of beneficial stimuli. These latter types of behaviours involve making contact with other organisms (e.g. during eating, copulation or interaction with offspring).

¹⁴ See J.A. Chmurzyński, *Dobro i zło...*, p. 260.

¹⁵ Idem, *Słownik...*, Vol. 1, pp. 343.

¹⁶ Assessing the level of animal welfare requires employing both (a) objective criteria used in laboratory diagnostics, statistical analyses, and behavioural observations and (b) subjective criteria like observing animals' perceptions of their environment. These requirements are best met through applied ethology, which is arguably leading the study of welfare levels in animals. Conventionally, welfare indicators are divided into physiological, behavioural, health, and production indicators. This classification is often considered to aid in the development of reliable research methods. See R. Kołacz, Z. Dobrzański, *Higienna i dobrostan zwierząt gospodarskich*, Wrocław 2006, pp. 131–142.

2. Moral-like behaviours

Observations of certain animal behaviours evoke admiration and respect in humans. We are, then, inclined to talk of “honour,” “honesty,” “self-sacrifice,” or “heroism.” However, only a free act can be judged in moral terms. Chmurzyński argues that non-human animals cannot have rational ethics. Humans are the only living beings capable of understanding abstract concepts of good and evil. They are, then, the only living beings capable of freely choosing between good and evil. Chmurzyński, therefore, introduces a new concept: *moral-like* (morally similar) behaviours. *Per analogiam*, this is animal behaviour that occurs in situations where human behaviour resembling it would be morally evaluable.¹⁷ “The vast majority of these phenomena – if not all – in the animal world are only similar to moral ones, and this is for a basic reason: animals are not aware of possible alternative behaviour, nor are they aware of the choice, especially between their own threat and avoiding it.”¹⁸

We sometimes talk of the “heroism” of a dog rescuer “sacrificing” its life. But, as Chmurzyński points out, such behaviour is not the result of conscious deliberation. Rather, it is the result of training, habits, and instincts.¹⁹ A kind of “heroism” also occurs in insects. When an anteater pierces the wall of a termite mound, termites will cover the hole so that workers have time to cement it again. The termites do not understand the situation and then decide to sacrifice themselves. Rather, they respond to a key stimulus called *stigmara*,²⁰ also found in ant colonies. Another example is “chivalrous” behaviour towards the “weaker sex” (depending on whether males or females are weaker in any given species). Here, there is a relationship between the effectiveness of weapons and the inhibition to use those weapons (e.g. tribal rituals inhibiting men’s aggression towards women). In the context of intraspecific aggression, instinctive inhibitions and rituals prevent antisocial behaviour. These include triggering stimuli that either inhibit parental aggression towards offspring or invoke nurturing behaviour. There can also be reconciliatory gestures and welcome rituals causing a reversal of aggression

17 See B. Sadowski, J.A. Chmurzyński, *Biologiczne mechanizmy...*, pp. 524–525.

18 J.A. Chmurzyński, *Słownik...*, Vol. 1, p. 1050.

19 After hearing cries for help, a Newfoundland lifeguard dog throws herself into the stormy sea to rescue a child and two men clinging to a surfboard. With extraordinary effort, she saves them, but her heart then fails. She falls to the sand, giving her life. See J.A. Chmurzyński, *Stosunek do zwierząt – odpowiedź*, “Bunt Młodych Duchem” 25 (2005) 3, pp. 11–14.

20 *Stigmara* is a key stimulus in ant colonies related to an incentive to work. Here, individual ants are not guided by signals from other ants, but are motivated by signs of work done (especially nest construction and repair). *Stigmara* triggers an appropriate stage of action in ants until the changed state (built nest or repaired nest) provides the next stimulus, thereby causing a change of “duties.”

or the unloading of aggression on a bystander. These behaviours engender personal bonds between individuals and the ability to distinguish friend from foe.

Chmurzyński draws attention to the “ethical” aspect of courtship ethology. An example is fierce, but usually bloodless, mating fights.

[T]hese fights, like territorial fights, take place in accordance with the rules of the innate “code of honour” of such behaviour. We call this behaviour moral-like because, although innate, it is governed by rules similar to ethical ones. Thus, in mating combat, snakes do not use their venomous teeth, and ruminants do not use their hooves but their horns, and only in frontal attack, never from the side.²¹

The sort of rule-bound tournament fighting can also be observed in some fish species.

Chmurzyński asks whether animals’ merits can be recognised. He concludes that they may be good in the functional sense. The rescue dog was good because she fulfilled the task she was trained to perform. Chmurzyński also discusses cases of “sacrifice” in wasps. He observes the risky flights they take each day to bring nectar to their larvae.

Ethological practice easily justifies such an approach – even in relation to invertebrates, which to non-specialists wrongly appear to be animals that are not individually differentiated. To this day, I remember the extraordinary hunting prowess of one female, B28, *Sphegidae*, *Bembix rostrata* L. – positively standing out from the PI individuals with whom I worked individually in my life since 1950!²²

Such an individual has a better life efficiency than the others; she fulfils her “life tasks” well. Colloquially, we often confer valuative properties onto animals. We might talk of a “good police dog,” a “good racehorse,” or a “good breeding bull,” for example.

To maximise fitness, animals think in terms of true and false.²³ Truthfulness and deception (falsity) can be assessed as good or bad for an individual, depending on the functions these states play in the organism’s strategy.²⁴ Understood this way,

21 B. Sadowski, J. Chmurzyński, *Biologiczne mechanizmy...*, p. 459.

22 J.A. Chmurzyński, *Dobro i zło...*, p. 266.

23 See idem, *Prawda i fałsz z perspektywy biologicznej*, in: A. Wierciński (ed.), *The Peculiarity of Man*, Vol. 6, *Materiały z konferencji: Tradycyjne i współczesne systemy wartości. Przeciwnieństwo drugie: „Prawda i fałsz”* (Staszów, 8–10.12.2000 r.), Warszawa–Kielce 2001, pp. 387–420.

24 “Strategy is understood in sociobiology and behavioral and evolutionary ecology as genetically programmed way of functioning of individuals of a given species (e.g. way of reproduction, ‘production’ proportion of males to females) or the behavior of an individual in a conflict situation – both in the face of environmental ‘adversities’ (e.g. food resources, thermal conditions, etc.), as well as competition with other individuals.” Idem, *Prawda i fałsz...*, p. 403.

truthfulness is a tool for achieving biological values by competing with kin and fighting for territory, food, or against predators. Animals enter into relationships with others by sending true or false signals, signals that are essential for their survival.

Researchers often employ game theory when investigating species adaptation as it relates to truthfulness and deception. Organisms (consciously or unconsciously) use truth and falsehood to win in a game played with other organisms (of their own species or a foreign species). An example of this is a two-individual zero-sum game of opposing interests (where the benefit or “payoff” is fixed). Such a game is played between a predator and a potential prey. At stake is (1) the survival or death of the prey and (2) satiation or starvation for the predator. Chmurzyński investigates the beginnings of individual merit in animals at a high level of development. He mentions Koko the gorilla, who used sign language to falsely blame someone else for damage she had caused to her studio.²⁵ Koko could be subject to moral judgement, were she capable of realising that it is right to tell the truth and wrong to lie. “Isn’t there at least a ‘beginning’ of merit in animal individuals, then, if, for example, chimpanzees and gorillas can lie? – *Ignoramus et ignorabimus* [...]”²⁶

3. Moral-like behaviours and animal morality

Regarding cognitive ethology findings, Marc Bekoff states that “[m]orality is an evolutionary trait, and ‘they’ (other animals) have it just as much as we do.”²⁷ He talks about animal morality without scare quotes. Morality is a social phenomenon involving a dense network of interconnections between members of a community. Behaviours shaping complex social relations refer to gains and losses, and moral norms are created on this basis. As such, “animals have a wide repertoire of moral behaviour, and their collective life is shaped by these patterns of behaviour. The terms of right and wrong play an important role in their social interactions as well as ours.”²⁸ Bekoff divides moral behaviour into three types:

1. Cooperation, including reciprocity, altruism, honesty, and trust.
2. Empathy, expressed in sympathy, grief, comfort, and compassion.
3. Justice, including honesty, sharing, fair play, and forgiveness.²⁹

25 See F. Patterson, E. Linden, *The Education of Koko*, New York 1981, pp. 134–135.

26 J.A. Chmurzyński, *Stosunek do zwierząt...*, p. 11.

27 M. Bekoff, J. Pierce, *Dzika sprawiedliwość. Moralne życie zwierząt*, trans. S. Szymański, Kraków 2011, p. 11.

28 *Ibidem*, p. 9.

29 See *ibidem*, pp. 97–212.

Bekoff argues that great apes, wolves, coyotes, elephants, rats, mice, dolphins, and whales display these types of behaviours. He does, however, allow that this list may be extended. There may be other new species that can exhibit moral behaviour. Bekoff explicitly creates a new understanding of morality by identifying morality with generically relativised *pro-social* activities. Morality is taken to be a feature of evolutionary adaptation. It is manifested in cooperation within communities. This cooperation increases group cohesion and reduces selfish tendencies. The development of pro-social behaviour (morality) is then rewarded with a higher degree of survival and reproductive success.

Frans de Waal has a slightly different emphasis. He is particularly concerned with the genesis of morality: “There is a close relationship in human behaviour between empathy and compassion and their psychological expression in altruism. It is reasonable to assume that the altruistic responses of other animals, especially mammals, are based on similar mechanisms.”³⁰ De Waal maintains that the following abilities can be distinguished as the source of morality:

1. Compassion related to emotional contagion.
2. A tendency to internalise rules (*viz.* the expectation of punishment when violating social norms).
3. Reciprocity related to trade and revenge.
4. Communicative abilities related to maintaining good relations with others.

De Waal does not directly identify these abilities with morality, however. Rather, he thinks of them as constituting the germ of morality, what he calls *proto-morality*. Thanks to proto-morality, humans have certain natural moral tendencies. These have been harnessed into a moral system created by cultural development. De Waal uses the analogy of innate linguistic ability and language acquisition. “[I]n the same way, we are born with moral capacities and a strong tendency to absorb the moral values inherent in our social environment, but we are not born with a moral code.”³¹

Like Bekoff and de Waal, Chmurzyński adopts an evolutionary paradigm when reflecting on morality. He does not consider human and animal natures to be strictly separate. However, unlike Bekoff, he does not equate morality with pro-social behaviour. Although humans have phylogenetically developed out of the natural world and belong to it, they have attained a higher level, a level that is unavailable to other species on Earth. Against the background of evolutionary development,

³⁰ F. de Waal, *Małpy i filozofowie. Skąd pochodzi moralność*, trans. B. Brożek, M. Furman, Kraków 2013, p. 52. See idem, *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals*, London 1986.

³¹ J.C. Flack, F. de Waal, ‘Any animal whatever’: Darwinian Building Blocks of Morality in Monkeys and Apes, “Journal of Consciousness Studies” 7 (2000) 1, p. 23.

Chmurzyński subscribes to a metascientific notion of developmental “jumps.” There has been an increase in the level of organisation through the process of *emergence*.³²

The abilities humans have achieved in this way include abstract thought, conceptual speech, culture, aesthetic sensitivity, creativity, and, of course, ethics.³³ Chmurzyński primarily associates morality with the capacity for abstract thought. The *sui generis* feature of our species is the ability to defy our biological, behavioural impulses. Polish anthropologist Tadeusz Bielicki (collaborating with Chmurzyński) argues that the ability to declare obedience to the principle of maximising fitness is a unique peculiarity in humans.³⁴ Humans can consciously reflect on and shape the order of moral norms. Bekoff, however, follows the example of human morality when discussing animal morality. He also blurs the distinction between social and moral norms. This renders a discussion about morality in the animal world meaningless. According to Chmurzyński, “[a]mong animals we can find *animalia cogitantes* or *aesthetici*, but man is the only animal morale.”³⁵

De Waal distinguishes between social norms and moral norms, and he looks for the appropriate degree of morality in great apes. He focuses on evolved mental abilities and mechanisms, specifically, those related to the interests of the community. For de Waal, these can be considered the foundations of morality. They appear in the form of a hierarchy with humans at the top. “Are animals moral? Let’s just sum it up by saying that they occupy several levels of the morality tower.”³⁶ Chmurzyński calls humans the “monkey-human being.”³⁷ He outlines a common area, a “boundary strip” of animal and human features. Ethological studies show that many seemingly

32 Emergentism is the view that new properties appear suddenly in the world (in leaps and bounds). This creates a hierarchical structure of entities where each is higher (or more perfect) than previous ones. Although it is the result of gradual developments in the human brain, the sudden change in human cognitive abilities can be described as a “mental phase change.” V.S. Ramachandran, *Neuronauka o podstawach człowieczeństwa. O czym mówi mózg?*, trans. A. Binder, M. Binder, E. Józefowicz, Warszawa 2012, p. 36.

33 Konrad Lorenz uses the term “fulguration” to describe the evolutionary process of human’s creation. This term comes from the Latin word *fulguratio* (lightning). According to Lorenz, fulguration most accurately reflects the process of creating something previously non-existent. An example is the operation of a simple electrical model. Connecting two independent systems creates a third system with entirely new properties. The behaviour of these properties does not result from a simple summation of the processes occurring in the primary electrical circuits. Rather, the combination gives rise to qualitatively new systemic properties. See K. Lorenz, *Odwrotna strona zwierciadła. Próba historii naturalnej ludzkiego poznania*, trans. K. Wolicki, Warszawa 1977, pp. 75–77.

34 See T. Bielicki, *O pewnej osobliwości człowieka jako gatunku*, “Kosmos” 39 (1990) 1, pp. 129–146.

35 J.A. Chmurzyński (personal communication, September 25, 2015).

36 F. de Waal, *Małpy i filozofowie...*, p. 215.

37 J.A. Chmurzyński, *Co etolog może powiedzieć człowiekowi? (Głos w dyskusji na Szóstym Festiwalu Nauki)*. *Ecce Homo* (24.09.2000), [author’s typescript], p. 2.

unique human abilities have their roots in the animal world. Chmurzyński calls this “the dawn of human abilities,”³⁸ and asks, “where in the animal world does man begin?”³⁹ The human world is inextricably linked with culture (which is itself the result of biological evolution). Both a phylogenetic biological heritage and ontogenetic patterns of behaviour are present in humans.⁴⁰ For Chmurzyński, manifestations of culture can grow out of a biological heritage. They can take over tasks no longer fulfilled by the biological drive. They can perform functions with no equivalent at the animal level. Ethics appears among people due to *substitution* (cultural features replacing natural mechanisms).⁴¹ According to Chmurzyński this is how ethical and legal norms appear. In conjunction with social institutions (e.g. the police and the judiciary), these norms ensure the inviolability of the human body and private property. As mentioned, Chmurzyński thinks that morality is inextricably linked to the capacity for abstract thought. Experiments involving monkeys and apes (specifically chimpanzees) have revealed remarkable abilities to count and learn human speech. Such skills might point to the beginnings of abstract thought. Describing thinking in monkeys, Chmurzyński talks about “pre-” or “sub-human” intelligence. He also adds a new category to the general three-way delineation between concrete thinking, image-movement, and abstract (imaginative-conceptual) thinking. He calls this *imaginative-concrete thinking*.⁴²

Attempts to naturalise morality often come from the field of neurophilosophy. Here, a social behavioural system is taken to be conditioned by processes occurring in the brain.⁴³ Chmurzyński maintains that morality is a phenomenon belonging to the world of culture (which arose during humans’ phylogenetic development). Both humans and animals strive to attain biological values. But, abstract concepts of good and evil and free choice between them are only available to humans. For Chmurzyński, culture and the ethics belonging to culture stem from nature.

38 Idem, *Obraz człowieka – „być sobą” z perspektywy zwierzęcia i człowieka*, in: A. Latawiec, K. Kłoskowski, G. Bugajak (eds.), *Filozoficzne i naukowo-przyrodnicze elementy obrazu świata*, Vol. 2, Warszawa 2000, p. 67.

39 Idem, *Czasoprzestrzeń w życiu zwierząt i człowieka*, in: R. Stefański (ed.), *The Peculiarity of Man*, Vol. 20, Toruń–Kielce 2014, p. 69.

40 Idem, *Natura – kultura: opozycja czy koniunkcja?*, “Kosmos” 39 (1990) 1, pp. 77–96.

41 According to Lorenz, “culture has created norms of human behavior that can in a sense be a substitute for innate behavior programs and play the role of stabilizing, preserving factors in relation to excessively rapid development. There are traditional rules of behavior that have become ‘second nature’ to man.” K. Lorenz, *Regres człowieczeństwa*, trans. A. Tauszyńska, Warszawa 1986, p. 104.

42 J.A. Chmurzyński, *Słownik...*, p. 1059.

43 See P.S. Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Theory of the Mind/Brain*, Cambridge 1988.

These phenomena are closely intertwined. The relations between them shape patterns of behaviour, motives of conduct, and human ideas. On the so-called compositional approach,⁴⁴ the spiritual level (containing culture and ethics) stands in both a reductionist and complementary relation to the biological level.⁴⁵ But, Chmurzyński does not think that morality can be *biologised*⁴⁶ (even if biological values are a natural phenomenon). This is because ethics already belongs to another world. It belongs to the community of the human spirit, to culture. Putatively moral behaviours in animals are not homologous to human morality. They are only analogous.

Chmurzyński's classical ethology is programmatically dissociated from the subjectivist approach of its predecessor, zoopsychology. Bekoff and de Waal's cognitive ethology studying animal minds and by taking up issues that can be described as "subjectivist." There are, though, methodological problems related to this approach. According to Chmurzyński, these relate to (1) studying animals' subjective experience of emotions, (2) imagining how a searching picture (search pattern) is presented to an animal, (3) comparisons between human and animal mental abilities, and (4) studying the capacity for abstract thought in animals.⁴⁷ Morgan's methodological principle – thinking parsimony – is key to the practice of classical ethology. It allows us to avoid cognitive ethology's difficulties, difficulties involving the use of transferred introspection. This is exemplified in primatologists like de Waal and Jane Goodall's work.⁴⁸ Classical ethology generally avoids anthropomorphisation

44 See A. Urbanek, *Rewolucja naukowa w biologii*, Warszawa 1973, pp. 63–68.

45 See J.A. Chmurzyński, *Natura – kultura...*, p. 81.

46 Founder of sociobiology E.O. Wilson has called for the *biologisation* of morality. See E.O. Wilson, *Sociobiology the New Synthesis*, Cambridge, MA 2000, p. 701.

47 A cognitive ethologist can use analogy to compare human and animal subjective emotions. On the one hand, we are dealing with a specific emotion when certain stimuli act on certain emotional brain structures to cause certain behaviours in humans. On the other hand, we are probably dealing with a homologous human emotion when (a) an animal is affected by similar stimuli and (b) its brain is stimulated by homologous emotional functional structures causing human-like behavioural phenomena.

48 "The answer to the question 'Is anthropomorphism dangerous?' is therefore: yes, it is dangerous for those who want to maintain a wall between humans and other animals. It places all animals, including humans, on the same level of explanation. However, it is not a threat to researchers using an evolutionary perspective, as long as they treat anthropomorphic explanations as hypotheses. Anthropomorphism is one of the options available, but it should not be underestimated, given that it relates intuitions about ourselves to beings like us. It is the application of human self-knowledge to the study of animal behavior. What could be wrong with that? Or even: Does anyone really believe that anthropomorphism can be avoided?" F. de Waal, *Małpy i filozofowie...*, pp. 93–94. "It's not easy to explore feelings, even when the subjects are people. I know how I feel when I am sad, happy or angry, so if my friend tells me he is sad, happy or angry, I naturally assume that his feelings are similar to mine, but of course I cannot be sure.

in the interpretation of animal behaviour, allowing the use of moderate, reasonable anthropomorphism, taking into account the evolutionary level, of the behaviour under study without the use of transposed introspection.

Conclusion

When asked whether animals can be moral, Chmurzyński replies that they seek what is “good” for themselves in the form of biological values. And, some of their behaviour is analogous to human moral behaviour. Bekoff and de Waal, in contrast, think that there is a kind of animal morality. De Waal looks for the origins of human morality in the animal world. He seems to think that human and animal morality are equitable. He states that

to disregard the common ground of us and other primates and to deny the evolutionary origins of human morality would be like reaching the top of a tower, and then the statement that the rest of the building is irrelevant, that the precious notion of “tower” should be reserved for its top. While semantics provides a good breeding ground for academic disputes, it is mostly a waste of time.⁴⁹

It appears that there is both a cognitive and a normative motivation behind the modern account of animal morality.⁵⁰ According to Bekoff, the idea that animals are moral agents has “important implications for our moral relationships with other animals and for our moral responsibility to them. We will not explore these implications, but we feel it is important to note that what animals think and feel should be included in our treatment of them.”⁵¹

In his reflections on good and evil in the animal world, Chmurzyński avoids excessive optimism when interpreting the achievements of the modern biological sciences. He also does not extend the traditional notion of morality to the animal world. The contemporary discussion involving de Waal and Bekoff concerning animal morality is also linked to the search for an argument for the extension of animal rights.⁵² Better treatment of other beings is not so much related to recognising

As we try to understand feelings more distant from our own, it becomes more and more difficult. When we ascribe human feelings to animals, we are accused of anthropomorphism – the cardinal sin of the ethologist. But what’s so terrible about that?” J. Goodall, *Przez dziurkę od klucza. 30 lat obserwowania szympanców*, trans. J. Prószyński, Warszawa 2019, p. 27.

49 F. de Waal, *Małpy i filozofowie...*, p. 215.

50 M. Bekoff, *Manifest zwierząt. Sześć powodów, żeby okazywać więcej współczucia*, trans. A. Pluszka, Warszawa 2019.

51 Idem, *Dzika sprawiedliwość...*, p. 14.

52 B. Müsschenga, *Animal Morality and Human Morality*, in: idem, A. van Harskamp (eds.), *What Makes us Moral? On the Capacities and Conditions for Being Moral*, New York–London 2013, p. 115.

them as moral subjects but rather (as the history of humanity indicates) to recognising them as similar or as valuable as we are. However, the search for moral similarity in the process of phylogeny, would involve the assumption of a purposive evolutionary process. In light of Chmurzyński's arguments, the method employed by many participants in the animal morality debate (including Bekoff and de Waal) appears problematic. It becomes difficult to (1) establish the source of human morality and (2) explain phenomenon of moral-like behaviour occurring in the animal world.

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ANIMAL MORALITY: JERZY CHMURZYŃSKI AND THE COGNITIVE ETHOLOGY VIEW

Summary

In this article, I discuss Polish entomologist, philosopher, and “father of Polish ethology” Jerzy Andrzej Chmurzyński’s views on animal “morality.” I then contrast his views to those of cognitive ethology researchers Marc Bekoff and Frans de Waal. Chmurzyński reflects on the presence of basic ethical values like good and evil in animal behaviour. He then formulates the notion of biological values. These include homeostasis, fitness maximisation, and welfare. For animals, it is good for animals to attain these values and bad to lack them. Animals do not consciously recognise biological values but can still attain them. Reflexive and unconditioned mechanisms based on motivation are responsible for this process. There are also animal behaviours we admire. Yet, animals cannot be considered moral or immoral because they do not understand abstract concepts of right and wrong, and they cannot make free choices. Chmurzyński thus formulates the notion of moral-like animal behaviour. Some researchers in cognitive ethology reach different conclusions. Bekoff modifies the notion of morality by equating it with pro-social behaviour. De Waal believes that the great apes occupy the lower floor of the “edifice” at the top of which is human morality. Views that grant animals some moral status seem to have both an epistemic and a normative purpose. Assigning animals moral status entails granting them certain rights. It also entails providing them with more protection than would otherwise be the case. In my view, this way of framing animal morality, as presented by cognitive ethologists, rather hinders attempts to understand animal behaviour in the context of ethics. Jerzy Chmurzyński’s formulation of the concept of moral-like phenomena better reveals the specificity of animal behaviour.

Keywords: ethology, value, moral-like behaviour, animal abilities

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