

Future Selves and Present Moral Philosophers: Our Epistemic Superiors in Moral Matters

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Abstract

Moral expertise requires a level of reliability in moral matters that is significantly higher than that of the average person. I argue that this requirement of epistemic superiority in moral matters is sometimes fulfilled by our future selves and generally fulfilled by present moral philosophers. Our future selves are more reliable in answering moral questions than we are when they have been prepared to answer those questions by various epistemic activities such as gathering relevant empirical information, assessing their moral import, and weighing different moral considerations. The whole point of such troublesome epistemic activities is to create future selves who are our epistemic superiors in the moral questions at issue, and often it is transparent to us after the epistemic preparation process that this goal has been achieved. Moral philosophers usually have even stronger epistemic advantages over us than our prepared future selves. That is because they also have additional time to prepare for answering moral questions while having epistemic skills and knowledge that allow them to use that additional time more effectively. Another way to see that moral philosophers are our epistemic superiors in moral matters is to imagine a hypothetical transition process in which an average person obtains all the epistemic qualities of moral philosophers.