Adaptation and Ethics

Ethical Naturalism in a Modern World

iBooks Author

iBooks Author

iBooks Author is Apple's new application for creating textbooks for the iPad platform. For this post, I investigated using iBooks Author as an authoring tool.

iBooks Author is available for free for Mac OS X. I installed it on an i7 Macbook Air running OS X Lion using the App Store. The application is very similar in look and feel to Keynote and is probably derived from the same code base.

With iBooks Author, an interactive textbook with embedded videos, 3D models, and galleries of images can be created and staged to iBookstore. Further, the book can be quickly previewed on an iPad that is connected via a USB cable.

Is it revolutionary? No, but it is evolutionary in simplifying the creation and upload of books for consumption on the iPad. Having previously endured the pain of epub format from a developer's perspective, I can attest to the impact of having efficient tools for content authors.

There are some hiccups I noticed, like the fact that mathematical equations from Microsoft Word for Mac can't be inserted directly (you need MathType to do this), but there are some interesting capabilities like support for 3D models based on the Collaba format that are unexpected for an initial product version. Also, for PDF export there is limited ability to control the format and

Morality and Ethics

Folk Morality and Ethical Naturalism

A descriptive naturalistic approach to ethics and morality can explain the complex folk morality that we observe in the modern world.

Ethical Drift and Evolving Morality

OVERVIEW

1. Ethics and morality show change over time

2. The observed change has been for the better in many Western societies.

3. Folk notions about right and wrong are based on many different intuitions and ideals.

4. Ethical naturalism can accommodate evolving systems of right and wrong, and may even explain why improvements in the condition of people and societies arise from that evolution.

Philosophers have long been interested in trying to understand what is good and what humanity should strive to do. But while philosophers created theories and argued logical consistency, ordinary folk have been practicing **ethics** and **morality** with little reference to any particular ethical calculus.

The secular project that starts to show great promise in the Enlightenment was and remains an evolving system. In the West, we observe that: (1) human welfare has largely improved, (2) law and fairness as a proxy for moral reasoning has been massively expanded and, (3) although religious ideas have influenced moral reasoning, they are neither necessary or sufficient to explain (1) and (2).

The "folk" morality of the bulwark of Westerners is a pastiche of affect, of self-analysis, of heuristics that are deontological in practice, and that often mix in some utilitarianism for virtue-decisions at the level of the State. And, yes, there are influential examples religious notions impacting decision-making.

Ethical naturalism is one way to partly explain why moral and ethical improvement is possible given that there is no philosophically principled approach or planning involved in our decision making. In an adaptive ethical naturalist framework, the individual, in striving for freedom and economic well-being as part of an organic state, participates in an optimization process on what Sam Harris refers to as "The Moral Landscape."

Ethics

Long discussions about what is and what is not good or desirable.

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Chapter 1 - Ethical Drift and Evolving Morality

Morality

What is and is not good or desirable.

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