

Self-Control, Emotions, and Responsibility

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I discuss circumstances under which emotional valence (positive *v.s.* negative emotions) influences morality, especially responsibility, in divergent ways. Self-control capacity is essential to determine capacity-responsibility, a pre-condition for attributions of moral (and legal) responsibility. In the first part of my talk, contrary to the “cognitive” model of self-control, I defend the view that self-control is an emotional skill whose exert depends crucially on the presence of positive emotions.

Negative emotions like guilt and shame, which originate from moral transgressions and self-control failures, have been thought to promote responsible behavior prospectively. However, I question the view that these emotions, specifically guilt over shame, are “a pathway to morality”. To support my argument, I use some data collected in a recent collaborative research, according to which being prone to these negative emotions generates a moralizing attitude when attributing responsibility to oneself and to others.