Unsentimental ethics: Towards a content-specific account of the moral-conventional distinction.

Abstract

In this paper, we offer an overview and a critique of the existing theories of the moral-conventional distinction, with emphasis on Nichols’s neo-sentimentalist approach. After discussing some distinctive features of Nichols’s (2002) thesis and situating it within the context of his predecessors’ work [Blair, R. (1995). A cognitive developmental approach to morality: Investigating the psychopath. Cognition, 57, 1–29; Turiel, E. (1983). The development of social knowledge: Morality and convention. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press], we review a number of arguments and findings within the developmental literature that, collectively, pose a serious challenge to the proposition that emotion is indispensable for or plays a substantial contributory role in the
that emotion is indispensable for or plays a substantial contributory role in the construction of the moral domain. Furthermore, we report two studies whose results contravene those of Nichols’s (2002) Experiments 1 and 2 (the empirical basis for his norms with feelings hypothesis), while favoring a version of Turiel’s (1983) harm-based approach instead.

Keywords
Morality; Convention; Affect; Harm; Disgust

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