

On the Nature of Moral Judgment

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Abstract

I critically examine the existing data in emotion research to show that empathy is not necessary for moral judgment. I argue that other emotions, such as disgust, are responsible for moral judgment, and that humans are able to make moral judgments without empathy. Autistic individuals are of interest because they are said to lack empathy, yet display some form of morality. Thus, empathy cannot be the core motivator in moral judgment.

Keywords: empathy, morality, moral judgment, autism, emotion, disgust, intuition.

Introduction

Empathy is the ability to vicariously share the emotions of others. Empathy involves imagining another's psychological state while maintaining a self-other differentiation; it is knowing another person's state of mind without their state of mind being the same as yours (Howe, 2013). Empathy as a whole involves both a cognitive component, recognizing what another person is feeling, and an affective component, vicariously sharing an emotion very similar to what you think another individual is feeling.

It is widely agreed that empathy as delineated is needed for moral judgment. Some researchers, such as David Howe (2013), claim that "empathy oils the wheels of social life" (p. 15). Other emotion researchers, such as Abigail Marsh (in press) and Simon Baron-Cohen (2011), argue that empathy is at the core of morality. Recently, this view has been criticized, notably by philosopher Jesse J. Prinz.

In this paper, I examine whether empathy plays a significant role in moral judgment, while examining which emotions are responsible for moral judgment. Although the question of whether empathy is responsible for moral development is an important one, this paper focuses only on moral judgment. I argue that empathy does not play a key role in moral judgment, and other emotions, such as disgust, are responsible for moral judgment. Furthermore, I argue that, despite lacking empathy, autistic individuals display instances of morality, thus empathy cannot be considered the core of moral judgment.

Moral Judgment

By 'moral judgment', I simply mean the judgments that individuals believe to be moral, where a moral judgment overrides other judgments. Moral judgment occurs when an individual judges whether another individual or group of individuals have transgressed a norm that is considered to override other norms. An action is usually considered a

moral transgression if the impermissibility of the action still holds if an authority figure said that it is permissible to commit the act (e.g., murdering someone for their car even if the Prime Minister said that it is permissible to do so). Moral norms override other norms. However, in many cultures, moral judgment is tied to religious authority, where moral norms are viewed as sacred and are usually commanded by an authority figure (e.g., imams or pundits). In these cases, moral norms override other norms, but are bound by an authority figure. For instance, eating pork in Islamic cultures or beef in Hindu cultures is viewed as a moral transgression because God prohibits the consumption of these animals. This norm trumps other norms and is considered moral rather than conventional because the judgment that it is wrong to consume pork in Islamic cultures or beef in Hindu cultures overrides other norms.

There are also moral judgments that are dissociated from affect. These are moral judgments based solely on reason. An example of a moral judgment dissociated from affect is making the judgment that stealing from independently owned markets is morally wrong because it takes away from a family's livelihood. It is possible to make this judgment without having an accompanying emotional reaction to the situation; you don't need to feel the emotion of anger or guilt when making this judgment. Rather, you may reach this judgment through reason alone. My paper is not concerned with judgments of this nature. This paper focuses only on moral judgments that are caused or accompanied by affect (e.g., moral judgments caused by emotion and moral judgments that cause corresponding emotions).

Emotion

An emotion can be thought of as a feeling that consists of specific representational or propositional content accompanied by a specific sensational reaction. To experience an emotion is to feel a certain way about something (representational or propositional content) and have a corresponding feeling. For example, if I say that murder is wrong and would feel guilty if I murdered someone or sad if someone else is murdered, I am experiencing either guilt or sadness in response to some propositional content. Therefore, if I am feeling guilty or sad, there is something that I am feeling guilty or sad about. Furthermore, this paper concerns both lower-level and higher-level emotions. Lower-level emotions include primitive emotions, such as happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, and anger. Lower-level emotions tend to be universal and basic, and can also be found in primates. Higher-level

emotions consist of more complex emotions, such as guilt and empathy. These are emotions that require higher-level cognitive processes, such as mind-reading and mirroring, and are less instinctual than lower-level emotions.

Moral judgments: theories of how they are made

Haidt's Social Intuitions Model of morality is grounded in intuition. Haidt's model is based on basic intuitions that all humans have, and he claims that these intuitions guide moral judgment. Furthermore, intuition and emotion are conflated in this model. For Haidt, intuitions include various automatic and uncontrollable cognitive processes, including emotional appraisals and the automatic processes that occur outside the control of consciousness and reasoning (Haidt, Bjorklund, & Murphy, 2000).

Haidt's approach is based on the 'affective primacy principle'. This principle, first articulated by William Wundt and later expanded on by Robert Zajonc, claims that minds are always perceiving and evaluating and that higher-level thinking is influenced by affective reactions, such as liking or disliking something (Haidt, 2007). That is, affective reactions precede higher-level thinking, where our affective system pushes us toward approaching or avoiding the situation or thing in question. Some theorists who endorse affective primacy have an evolutionary approach to morality, where it is agreed that the emotional building blocks of morality were already in place long before language and the ability to engage in conscious reasoning came about in humans (Haidt, 2007). On this view, moral judgment is much like perception-fast, automatic, and controlled by lower-level processes. Others who endorse affective primacy do not have an evolutionary approach to morality, but still view moral judgment as a fast and automatic process.

To avoid confusion and ambiguity between 'affect' and 'cognition', where such a distinction appears to imply that affective reactions do not involve any sort of mental computations, Haidt draws a distinction between moral intuition and moral reasoning. On Haidt's model, moral intuition can be thought of as the fast and automatic affect-laden processes in which an evaluative feeling appears in consciousness without any awareness of having gone through steps of reasoning (Haidt, 2007).

By contrast, moral reasoning involves conscious, mental activity that consists in transforming information about individuals, situations, and individuals' actions in order to reach a moral judgment (Haidt, 2007). This process is more effortful and less intuitive.

Haidt's model takes the affective primacy principle as its starting point. Haidt claims that moral judgments are simply gut reactions or intuitions. Rarely do we do invoke conscious reasoning when we make a moral judgment because we are guided by our intuitions. When conscious reasoning is invoked, it is after the first automatic process has run (the affective process of moral intuition), and moral reasoning can be seen as a post-hoc process. In the process

of moral reasoning, we search for justifications to support our initial reaction to the situation.

The following is an example of Haidt's that illustrates that individuals are guided by emotions when making a moral judgment:

Julie and Mark are brother and sister. They are traveling together in France on summer vacation from college. One night they are staying alone in a cabin near the beach. They decide that it would be interesting and fun if they tried making love. At the very least it would be a new experience for each of them. Julie was already taking birth control pills, but Mark uses a condom too, just to be safe. They both enjoy making love, but they decide not to do it again. They keep that night as a special secret, which makes them feel even closer to each other. What do you think about that, was it OK for them to make love? (Haidt, 2001, p. 814)

Haidt and colleagues (2000) conducted a study on moral judgment using the above scenario. When participants were asked if it was OK for Mark and Julie to make love, most individuals said no, it was not okay and they viewed it as a moral transgression. When pressed to explain why, most individuals claimed that the act is gross or disgusting. On their initial reaction, only 20% of the participants said that it was OK for Mark and Julie to make love. After the experimenter 'argued' with the participants, claiming that their judgment had no rational basis to be viewed as a moral transgression since no harm occurred, 32% of the participants said that it was OK for Mark and Julie to make love.

Haidt claims that because we do not invoke conscious moral reasoning and are instead guided by intuitions when making moral judgments, individuals experience moral dumbfounding. Dumbfounding occurs when an individual feels a quick flash of an emotion or intuition, say a flash of revulsion at the thought of incest, and reaches the conclusion that incest is wrong even if there are no negative consequences that follow the act. Then, "when faced with a social demand for a verbal justification, one becomes a lawyer trying to build a case, rather than a judge searching for the truth" (Haidt, 2001, p. 814). When affect is primary, we are often morally dumbfounded. Here, reasoning is viewed as an ex post facto process (Haidt, Bjorklund, & Murphy, 2001).

Further support for the affective primacy principle comes from studies that suggest that individuals have instant implicit reactions to stories of moral violations. Some examples that Haidt gives are from his studies that show that eliciting disgust in individuals will cause individuals to judge an action as a moral transgression. For example, most individuals claim that a man who masturbates into a chicken carcass and then cooks the chicken for dinner is immoral or has committed an immoral act. Participants in his study also found it immoral if someone cleaned their toilet with their nation's flag. In Haidt and colleagues' 2000 study mentioned above, only 13% of participants said that it would be OK for a woman to eat the flesh of a dead human, where the flesh was fully cooked so the woman would not

be harmed in any way. When the experimenter ‘argued’ with the participants about their justification for viewing the act as a moral transgression, some participants changed their mind, which increased the number of participants who viewed the act as permissible to 28%. Haidt states that the scenarios “were carefully constructed so that no plausible harm could be found, and most participants directly stated that nobody was hurt by the actions in question” (Haidt, 2001, p. 817). Thus, there was no one to empathize with. The scenarios were devoid of empathy, but acted on other emotions, and were designed to trigger intuitive judgments. The typical answer of an act causing harm given by individuals when attempting to justify an act as morally impermissible could not be used to justify their judgments.

As we know, we sometimes shy away from our initial reaction to a moral situation and may change our judgment. On Haidt’s model, there are at least three ways in which our immediate intuitive responses can be overridden. The first is through conscious verbal reasoning, where we weigh the cost and benefits of each action that can be taken. The second is by reframing a situation which would then trigger a second flash of intuition that may compete with the first. The third is through social reasoning, where we engage in conversation with others where they may raise arguments that would change our initial response (this is what occurred in the study mentioned above). However, according to Haidt, it is moral intuition, and not moral reasoning, that guides our initial moral judgment. Haidt claims that “moral reasoning is often like the press secretary for a secretive administration—constantly generating the most persuasive arguments it can muster for policies whose true origins and goals are unknown” (Haidt, 2007, p. 1000). For Haidt, moral judgment is not dissociable from affect, where affect is always primary.

To further emphasize the role that intuition and emotion play in moral judgment, Wheatley and Haidt (2005) created a study where 63 subjects (37 females, 26 males) were hypnotized to feel disgust when they heard the words ‘take’ or ‘often.’ Participants heard a story about a student council president named Dan who organizes and facilitates faculty-student discussions. The scenario included one of two versions of the following sentence: “He [tries to take]/[often picks] topics that appeal to both professors and students in order to stimulate discussion” (Haidt, 2007, p. 1000). 22 out of the 63 participants who felt a pang of disgust upon hearing these words while reading the scenario condemned Dan, and then engaged in post-hoc reasoning in an attempt to justify why he should be condemned. They were unable to find a reason, and their initial gut reaction was overridden by controlled processes. What is more, Wheatley and Haidt (2005) found that one third of the participants in the hypnotic disgust condition came up with post-hoc justifications, claiming that ‘Dan seems snobby’ or ‘that he’s up to something.’ According to Haidt, “they invented reasons to make sense of their otherwise inexplicable feeling of disgust” (Haidt, 2007, p. 1000). This emphasizes the role that moral intuition usually plays in moral

judgment. While moral reasoning sometimes plays a role, it is preceded by intuition on Haidt’s model. Furthermore, Haidt claims that the system responsible for affective primacy is a rather ancient system, whereas the system responsible for moral reasoning is new cognitive machinery that was shaped by adaptive pressures.

Haidt’s model of moral judgment goes beyond what has been discussed here. For instance, he provides an evolutionary account of morality, and he discusses what he believes to be the five domains, or foundations, of moral judgment. However, we are concerned with how moral judgments are made, and while the evolution of moral judgment is important, it does not concern us here. However, it is worth mentioning the following, though it is merely speculative. Empathizing requires what appears to be uniquely human cognitive abilities. While there is talk of a mirror neuron system (which many believe is a precursor for empathy) in macaque monkeys, empathizing requires higher-level cognitive abilities, such as putting yourself in someone else’s shoes, and imagining how they are feeling, and then vicariously sharing that emotion. Unlike other emotions that are automatic and have been shaped by evolution over many, many years, empathy is relatively new compared to other emotions. This could explain why we see forms of morality in many animals that are similar to human morality (e.g., sharing, caring, harm prevention, etc.). All this speculation is meant to say is that if the Social Intuitions Model is correct, then empathy would play a very little, if any, role in moral judgment.

Similar to Haidt, Shaun Nichols argues that affect or emotions, such as disgust, play a role in moral judgment and in the survival of norms throughout history. In *Sentimental Rules*, Nichols (2004) argues that affective responses, such as disgust, play a significant role in treating certain disgust violations as immoral rather than morally neutral. If a norm is backed by an affective response, the norm will be maintained and survive. For instance, Nichols shows that certain etiquette norms that were around in the Medieval era that were not continuously backed by an affective response are no longer around, while those that were backed by an affective response are still around in contemporary etiquette. The key point here is that affect plays a significant role in determining how we treat certain violations, and there appears to be a “striking connection between our emotions and our norms” (Nichols, 2008, p. 268). Here, affect and moral judgment go hand in hand, where emotions elicit a moral judgment, or a moral judgment is accompanied by emotion. An example given by Nichols (2004) is individuals finding it immoral when a guest at a dinner party spits into his glass and drinks it. Although no one is being harmed and there is clearly no moral violation, the disgust elicited by the act leads to the judgment that the act is immoral. Alternatively, we may judge the act as a moral transgression because we think that it is disgusting.

Furthermore, as Nichols points out, in our society we have norms that prohibit the gratuitous display of bodily fluids. These norms are closely linked with disgust responses, and

are what makes these norms moral rather than conventional. For instance, many find it immoral when others wipe their nose on their cap or clothing, or re-swallow saliva (Nichols, 2008). Borrowing Haidt's example, in Western culture we find it immoral if a man masturbates into a chicken carcass and then cooks it for dinner despite the fact that no one is being harmed. It is evident that the disgust elicited by the scenario is what leads to the judgment that the act is somehow immoral. Furthermore, in many Eastern cultures, a woman who is menstruating would be considered immoral if she partook in a religious ceremony, or served food to others. Menstruation is viewed as dirty or unclean, thus eliciting disgust in many individuals who are a part of that culture. What is more, while such actions are considered immoral, individuals would not find it immoral if the fork is placed on the wrong side of the knife at the dinner table (a conventional transgression). Here, we can see how affect plays a role in determining whether we treat a transgression as moral or conventional.

According to Nichols, if a norm is not affectively backed, we would not consider it a moral transgression. Harm norms, in just about every culture, are closely linked to our emotional responses to suffering (Nichols, 2008). For instance, children usually regard hitting another child or pulling a school mate's hair as morally wrong, and usually refer to the victim's suffering for justification. These examples emphasize the importance of emotion in moral judgment. Furthermore, we see how moral judgments can be made without empathy, and are instead guided by other emotions that are elicited by the act in question.

The view proposed by Nichols, that affectively-backed norms survive throughout history, is called the affective resonance hypothesis. According to Nichols, this hypothesis claims that "norms that prohibit actions to which we are predisposed to be emotionally averse will enjoy enhanced cultural fitness over other norms" (Nichols, 2008, p.269). As we have seen so far, this hypothesis is plausible, and accounts for the survival of norms throughout history and the norms that are intact in our society. Further support for the affective resonance hypothesis comes from the fact that we view affectively-backed norms more seriously than norms that are not backed by affect (e.g., spitting into a glass and then drinking it vs. placing the fork on the wrong side of the table).

It is also important to note that when disgust or pains at seeing another suffer is accompanied by the judgment 'X is wrong', it is not clear that empathy plays a role. When we are disgusted by something, rarely do we have anything or anyone to empathize with. For example, we do not empathize with anyone when we view a man masturbating into a chicken carcass as a moral transgression, nor do those in other cultures empathize with anyone when they view a woman who is menstruating that serves food as immoral. It may be the case that we do sometimes empathize with others when we make moral judgments that are elicited by others' suffering. However, this need not be the case. If we are bothered by another's suffering and view an act as a

moral transgression because of it, there are other emotions, such as distress or anger, which can be responsible. For example, if I see you pull someone else's hair and view it as a moral transgression, it may be because I get distressed when I witness confrontations, or that I am a conflict resolver. I do not need to empathize with the victim in order to judge your action as a moral transgression.

According to Nichols, the reason why harm norms survive throughout history is because humans have an aversive response to seeing others suffer. He claims that, "norms are more likely to be preserved in the culture if the norms resonate with our affective systems by prohibiting actions that are likely to elicit negative affect," and it is clear that "our normative lives would be radically different if we had a different emotional repertoire" (Nichols, 2008, p. 272).

Nichols (2008) puts forth a version of sentimentalism that differs from traditional accounts of sentimentalism, such as subjectivism and emotivism. However, like other sentimentalists, Nichols (2008) maintains that given the empirical research on moral judgment, "core moral judgment is mediated by affective response" (p. 263). Nichols claims that all normal individuals have an affective mechanism that is implicated in core moral judgment, and responds to harm or distress in others.

Unlike traditional sentimentalist accounts of moral judgment, Nichols claims that affective responses do not always suffice to explain moral judgment. Rather, moral judgment is also dependent on a body of information that specifies a class of transgressions (Nichols, 2008). This body of information, however, is affectively-backed, where the norms are not the emotions, but rather, norms that have been backed by negative affect survive throughout history. Recall that this is the affective resonance hypothesis. We see how Nichols' maintains a sentimentalist view of moral judgment, showing how affect is the core of moral judgment, and responsible for the survival of norms throughout history. This suggests that for norms that do not appear to rest on emotion (appear more rationalized) or are not congruent with emotion, they are still caused by emotion. For Nichols, the emotions that are present in the affective resonance hypothesis are universal and innately specified, and include the basic emotions, such as anger, disgust, fear, and sadness. What is important to take out of this discussion is that emotions, like disgust, that guide moral judgment do not require that empathy be elicited.

The following is a dilemma used in philosophy to examine moral judgment. In the Trolley Dilemma, individuals are posed with the following situation: there is an out-of-control trolley heading in the direction of five hikers. The trolley is unable to stop, and will result in killing the five hikers who are unaware that the trolley is headed in their direction. On another track, there is one individual who will not be hit and killed by the trolley if it continues on the track it is on, but would be killed if the trolley was redirected. The question is whether it is morally right to pull a lever that will redirect the trolley on the track where the single individual resides, thus killing him and saving the

lives of the five hikers. Most people claim that pulling the lever is a morally right action. When posed with a slightly different version of this dilemma, the Footbridge Dilemma, where the only way to save the five hikers is to physically push a large man off of a bridge because he is the only object heavy enough to stop the trolley from running over and killing the five hikers, most people respond that this would be a morally wrong action. While the consequences of both actions are the same, one act is viewed as morally preferable while the other is not.

Some, such as John Mikhail (2008), may try to justify this through moral reasoning, claiming that we invoke the doctrine of double effect when attempting to make a moral judgment. The doctrine of double effect is the doctrine that states that an action is permissible if the consequences of the action are foreseen but not intended, but impermissible if they are both intended and foreseen. However, it may be that we experience revulsion when thinking of harming an innocent person. That is, in the Footbridge dilemma, we experience disgust at the thought of physically pushing the large, innocent man off of the footbridge, which is why we judge the act as impermissible. In the Trolley Dilemma, we do not experience the same emotion because we are not asked to imagine physically pushing someone onto a trolley track. Here, we can see that affect may be responsible for our moral judgment, where a judgment is either accompanied by emotion (we judge that harming an innocent man is wrong because it is repulsive), or as Haidt proposes, an emotion causes a moral judgment (we feel disgusted at harming an innocent person which drives the judgment that it is wrong) where we then engage in post-hoc reasoning, attempting to justify why one action is permissible although the other is not, despite the fact that the consequences are the same.

Thus far, we have explored two theories, one proposed by Haidt and one by Nichols, that suggest that affect plays a significant role in making moral judgments. This is not to say that other emotion researchers deny this. Of course, Marsh, Baron-Cohen, and others would agree that affect plays a considerable role in moral judgment. However, they would also hold that empathy is one of the most significant emotions that play a role in moral judgment. Neither Haidt nor Nichols explicitly denies that empathy plays a role in moral judgment. What I have tried to illustrate is that emotions other than empathy, predominantly disgust in the given examples, are responsible for moral judgment. What is more, in the examples given above, it is not evident that empathy is invoked when making moral judgments or when viewing transgressions as moral transgressions. In the examples provided by Haidt, there is no one to empathize with, and no one is being harmed in the given situations. The same applies to the examples given by Nichols. Thus, we see that moral judgments can be made without invoking empathy, and that disgust plays a significant role in motivating moral judgment.

Examples from Autism

Autism is a spectrum disorder, so I will not be making any specific claims about autism here. Rather, I will be giving a brief and general account of autism with regard to what we are concerned with in this paper. Individuals with autism show the following impairments: an impairment in reciprocal social interactions, which includes lack of awareness of others' feelings; lack of imitative abilities; lack of social play; extreme literal-mindedness; lack of appropriate social behaviours, such as not meeting one's eye gaze when speaking; and obsessive insistence on routine and order (McGeer, 2008). Given the characterization of impairments in autistic individuals, it is clear that they lack empathy as I have defined it above.

Philosopher Victoria McGeer examines what lessons we can learn from autism with regard to morality. McGeer discusses how autistic individuals interact with others in an attempt to examine their ability to make moral judgments.

One individual McGeer takes particular interest in is Temple Grandin. Grandin is a successful professor of animal science, and a livestock equipment designer. Growing up, Grandin had a speech impediment that made speaking very difficult for her. Although she was able to hear and understand sentences, her words, though she tried to utter them, rarely ever made it out of her mouth, and came out as a stutter when they did. Grandin also had auditory and tactile problems. Despite the issues in childhood, adolescence, and even today, Grandin has progressed, and continues to progress, finding different ways to deal with her impairments.

In reviewing a passage from Grandin, McGeer claims that Grandin is aware that she "lacks the normal emotional profile of other human beings, specifically 'the feeling of attachment' that drives others, for instance, to endanger themselves for the sake of a comrade, dead though he may be" (McGeer, 2008, p. 232). What is important here is Grandin's acknowledgement that she lacks the sort of empathic connection that many scholars believe is responsible for morality. However, individuals with autism, like Grandin, appear to have a sense of duties and obligations that are binding on all individuals.

McGeer claims that there must be some other source of "autistic moral concern, since empathy in the sense of affective attunement with other people seems clearly beyond the scope of their experience" (McGeer, 2008, p. 234). Let us explore a few examples of morality in autistic individuals, and determine what else could be responsible for their morality.

McGeer (2008) gives the example of an autistic individual who was unable to fathom that every home did not have a well-tuned piano. This individual, who has a love for pitch and music, thought that there should be an amendment requiring every home to have a well-tuned piano. In his eyes, he is attempting to make the world a better place from what he thinks is important to him. In this case, it is possible that this individual was distressed, be it personal or other-

oriented, at the fact that not everyone had a well-tuned piano.

Then, there is also Grandin, who appears to want to know what the ‘right’ thing to do is, and Grandin has made extraordinary efforts to understand what this could be. In order to make her behaviour socially acceptable and to display some sort of morality, Grandin has built up a storage of memories and experiences, watched numerous television shows and movies, and has read many newspaper articles in an attempt to guide her social behaviour in a morally praiseworthy way. While lacking empathy does make it challenging for autistic individuals to act in morally appropriate ways, as they lack the ability to share emotions with others or to understand others’ emotions and point of view, it appears that this “does nothing to undermine their interest in so acting; it does nothing to undermine their moral concern” (McGeer, 2008, p. 234). One explanation for this could be that for high functioning autistic individuals, such as those with Asperberger’s syndrome who understand that people have separate minds but have difficulty understanding others’ emotions, have difficulty perspective taking because they project their own view point, which is very different from others’ view point, onto others.

One explanation offered by McGeer is that given that autistic individuals have a need and desire for rule-following and routines, the moral agency displayed in autistic individuals is a result of abiding by the social and moral rules that they have been taught, even if not fully sharing our understanding of what those rules are meant to serve. To illustrate this line of reasoning, McGeer tells the story of an autistic man who was playing a game of scruples, a board game where the players listen to stories and say what they would do in the given situation. This individual was given a story about a woman who had no job and no financial support and had several young children. The owner of the store saw the woman stealing a small amount of groceries from his store. When asked what he would do in the situation, the young man replied that “everyone has to go through the checkout line. It is illegal not to go through the checkout line. She should be arrested” (McGeer, 2008, p. 240). According to McGeer he was unable to understand that a milder response was called for.

While it is clearly an open question how deep the moral understanding of autistic individuals are and whether their morality is ‘genuine’, it is clear that they are capable of making moral judgments based on their passion for rules, order, and routine. Recall that moral judgment is the judgments that individuals believe to be overriding. Given their desire for order and rule-following, it is no surprise that autistic individuals’ moral judgments do not stray far from societal norms. In the same way that a Hindu would consider it immoral to eat beef or a follower of Islam to pork because God said it is wrong, an autistic individual would say it is wrong to stray from the rules that society has set in place. Although speculative, it could be the case that the motivation behind the way in which autistic individuals

make moral judgments and display moral agency is their rule-following behaviour (concern for social order).

Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that contrary to popular belief, empathy is not necessary for moral judgment, and plays a marginal, if any, role in moral judgment. Other emotions, such as disgust, are responsible for moral judgment and play a significant role in how we view transgressions. Furthermore, I have shown that despite lacking empathy, autistic individuals display instances of moral judgment, and their morality is more than likely guided by concerns for social order or rule-following behaviour. Thus, empathy is not necessary for moral judgment.

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