

The emotional dog and its rational tail: a social intuitionist approach to moral ...

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An Outlook of Jonathan Haidt's Social Intuitionist Theory Introduction Various model-theories have been devised to best illustrate and explain the processes of deriving a moral judgment. Two of the most influential theories include the Rationalist and Social Intuitionist Theory. These two have been founded by several philosophers and psychologists; both of which have well-deserved merits and demerits. However, this paper will focus on Jonathan Haidt's Social Intuitionist theory -- its relative strength against the Rationalist theory.

The Outlook

The classic rationalist theory of moral judgment presented a strong relationship between reasoning and cognition. Moral standards, an important basis of any moral judgment, are deduced to be knowledge structures (cognition) that are established through several reasoning activities (Darley 353 qtd. in Haidt 4). This theory suggests that every time humans derive a moral judgment, they are practically exhibiting a particular reasoning activity -- one that covers morality.

On the other hand, Haidt offers an alternative theory called the Social Intuitionist Theory which presents the moral judgment's relationship to other significant factors -- one such factor is the human's intuition. Under this theory, the relationship between the two is considered sequential. He supports this by claiming " that moral judgment is caused by quick moral intuitions, and is followed (when needed) by slow, ex-post facto moral reasoning" (Haidt 5). Evidently, in terms of acknowledging the causal factor of a moral judgment, the first process to register and evaluate a circumstance (and then derive a judgment) is considered to have the closest

relation or influence to the judgment made. Haidt's theory claims intuition to be the first process our mind grasps in passing moral judgment.

An important difference between the rationalist and intuitionist theory is the interaction with other process factors aside from its perceived sequence.

While the rationalist model focuses on reasoning and only emphasizes the participation of other processes with regard this central concept, the social intuitionist model introduces the significant play of emotion, intuition, social influence aside from reasoning (Haidt 22). The low interrelation evident in the rationalist theory seems to neglect the capacity of the human mind processes to simultaneously act together and pose one prime mover -- reasoning. The high interrelation levels elicited by the social intuitionist theory illustrate the dynamism inherent in the human mind design.

The three supporting reasons of theory include 1) interfering with reasoning; 2) ecological variation; and 3) consilience (Haidt 23-24). Since the intuitionist theory perceives the speed of reasoning as second best to intuition, interfering with reasoning significantly "affects the quality of the post hoc reasoning produced" (Haidt 23). The affected quality of the 'reasoned judgment' could invariably determine its reliability when it comes to passing a not-necessarily, socially-acceptable judgment. Ecological variation, in the social intuitionist theory's context, predicts the distinguishable post hoc characteristic of the reasoning (Haidt 23). This reason supports the predictable identity of reasoning as conditions vary. The last reason, the consilience, presents the theory as a well-founded study, covering findings and theories in social and developmental psychology, neuroscience, primatology and anthropology (Haidt 24). Thus, a wide array of fields

supporting a single theory proves to have more merit than what is currently provided. Furthermore, this validates the significance of this theory for decision-makers. Haidt points out the need of “ correct understanding of the intuitive basis of moral judgment” to guide the decision-makers (3).

Conclusion

Passing a moral judgment is an important undertaking in making even the simplest task of decision-making. Thus, it is important to inculcate theories as these present intuitions aside from the commonly known reasoning factor. Acknowledging that a lot of other factors are at play in the human mind processes not just practically help us, but enables us to appreciate the unique human mind's design.

Work Cited

Haidt, Jonathan. “ The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist

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