

Social Norms and Emotions

Abstract

In this talk, I defend a conventionalist theory of social norms. Conventions, in this theory, are patterns of interdependent expectations of behavior. Such patterns generate reasons for action for those who are involved in such patterns but lack the categorical normativity that characterizes social norms. Social norms are subsequently analyzed as conventions backed up by a whole raft of emotional dispositions such as fairness, trustworthiness as well as resentment and indignation. These emotions explain why social norms have a normative force that extends well beyond that of mere conventions and as a result have genuine authority over us.