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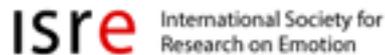
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Emotional Action and Communication in Early Moral Development

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Abstract

Emotional action and communication are integral to the development of morality, here conceptualized as our concerns for the well-being of other people and the ability to act on those concerns. Focusing on the second year of life, this article suggests a number of ways in which young children's emotions and caregivers' emotional communication contribute to early forms of helping, empathy, and learning about prohibitions. We argue for distinguishing between moral issues and other normative issues also in the study of *early* moral development, for considering a wider range of emotional phenomena than the "moral emotions" most commonly studied, and for paying more attention to how specific characteristics of early emotional interactions facilitate children's development of a concern for others.

Keywords

emotion, emotional communication, moral development, self-conscious emotion

Moral development in the second year of life constitutes a challenge to the caregiver–child dyad: Morality is a precondition for social well-functioning, and yet the means by which moral standards can be communicated and acquired seem extremely limited during a time when the child possesses neither propositional speech nor the cognitive abilities often considered prerequisites for moral reasoning (e.g., Kohlberg, 1981). In this article, we argue that emotional action and communication serve as main modes by which moral and other values are acquired and communicated in the second year of life, and that they do so in ways hitherto unrecognized in the literature.

In the first part of our article, we provide a working definition of morality and describe how its early development previously has been thought to relate to emotion; in the second part of the article, we delineate moral development, point to key transitions taking place in the second year, and highlight forms of emotional action and communication we hypothesize are contributing to moral development in this period. Throughout the article we will make clear where we are drawing conclusions from a body of evidence and where we are proposing hypotheses to be tested.

Defining Morality and its Relation to Emotion

Our lives are organized around concerns. By concerns we mean whatever is important to us, whatever we are interested in, and whatever engages us. *Moral concerns* constitute a subset of our concerns, namely those that are oriented toward justice, rights, and welfare—in short, *our concerns for the well-being of others* (Turiel, 1983). Morality comprises both these concerns themselves and those of our activities that serve our concerns for the

well-being of others. Violations of moral principles are associated with intrinsic, negative consequences for the well-being of others, such as physical or psychological harm, or limitations on their freedom. Accordingly, even children do not perceive moral concerns to be dependent on endorsement by an authority: most preschoolers say that it is wrong to hit another child even if the teacher were to say it was ok (Nucci & Weber, 1995).

The above definition of morality sets the moral apart from the *social-conventional* domain (Turiel, 1983). Social conventions are rules that are created by a society in order to coordinate social activity, but that do not carry with them intrinsic consequences for the well-being of others. For instance, the use of a school uniform is only seen as mandatory if it is required by the school. Other domains of normative reasoning include the prudential domain, which deals with personal safety and health, and the religious domain (see Smetana, 2006). These domain distinctions, however, do not preclude the possibility that an event may fall into more than one domain and relate to more than one concern (Smetana, Killen, & Turiel, 1991). For instance, a child may be in a situation of choosing between keeping a school uniform jacket on (conventional) or giving the jacket to another child who is freezing (moral).

The distinctions between moral, conventional, and other domains matter for the study of early moral and social development (Turiel, 1983). First, the situations involving neglect of moral concerns are different from the situations involving the neglect of concerns about conventions. Moral deeds and moral violations have intrinsic consequences for the well-being of other people, and the learning of moral principles is therefore less exclusively reliant on socialization than is the learning of conventional rules. Furthermore, moral and conventional rules are distinguished by the kind of reasoning used to justify them (Turiel, 2008), and by the emotions that are expected to arise following their violation (Arsenio & Ford, 1985; Lewis, 1992).

Morality and Emotion

Morality, when construed in terms of concern for the well-being of others, is tied to a wide range of emotions, when defined as attempts to establish, maintain, or disrupt relations with the environment of significance to the individual (Barrett & Campos, 1987); according to this functionalist view, emotions serve the *satisfaction of our concerns* (Frijda, 1986). The range of emotions flowing from moral concerns in fact goes well beyond what has often been considered the "moral emotions"— empathy,[1] guilt, shame, and pride (Eisenberg, 2000; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). Precisely which emotional reactions are evoked depends on how the environment relates to our concern for the well-being of others. When we witness an unprovoked physical assault we feel anger, when we realize that our act has caused suffering to somebody else we feel guilt (Lewis, 2008), when we see a chance of helping somebody else we feel hope, and when we see that our act is relieving the suffering of another we may even feel moral joy.

The above definition of emotion emphasizes what the individual is trying to do—his or her *action tendencies*—and how

these attempts serve the concerns of the individual (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991). Our moral concerns form part of the generation of emotions in the same way other concerns do: when we appraise something in the environment as being of relevance to the well-being of someone else, an emotion and an action tendency arise: when we see a child running toward the street, we anxiously rush to intervene because we appraise the survival of the child to be threatened.

Emotions, like morality, are not just oriented toward actions on the environment, but also toward *communication*. Vocal, facial, and bodily emotional signals provide information about people's moral and nonmoral concerns and appraisals, thereby influencing the social environment in ways that often serve our concerns more effectively than could our own actions (Saarni, Campos, Camras, & Witherington, 2006). If we cannot ourselves stop the child from running into the street, we may communicate our moral outrage that nobody else is trying to do so. In early moral development, emotional communication constitutes a primary route by which parents can regulate their child's behavior and communicate moral values. Like other aspects of socialization, parental emotional communication can modify how children display emotions and can ascribe significance to organism–environment relationships (Barrett & Campos, 1987).

In this article, we focus on the implications of the above conceptualization of morality and emotion for the study of moral development in the second year of life. Before expanding on our own view, we discuss a well-established account of the development of the moral emotions and their relation to conscience.

The Development of the Moral Emotions and Conscience: Michael Lewis' Proposition

The moral emotions emerge relatively late compared to what is often termed the "basic emotions," such as joy, anger, sadness, disgust, and fear (Ekman, 1992; Lewis, 1992). Empathy is the first of the so-called moral emotions to occur. Though early forms of empathic responses may be present in newborns (Sagi & Hoffman, 1976), a number of researchers hesitate to talk about empathy until young children start to *act* on their concern for the suffering of the other, which typically does not occur until the second half of the second year (Bischof-Köhler, 1991; Lewis, 2002). Guilt, shame, and pride then follow, usually in the third year of life (Lewis, 1992, 2007).

In Lewis' (1992) model, the moral emotions form part of the self-conscious emotions, whose development depends on the child's concept of self. More precisely, two aspects of the self-concept have been emphasized. The first aspect of the child's self-concept staging the development of self-conscious emotions is "objective self-awareness"—an awareness of itself as an entity existing separately from other entities (Lewis, 1992). This acquisition, often operationalized as the ability to recognize oneself in a mirror, usually emerges around 15–18 months of age. Objective self-awareness is linked to the onset of what Lewis calls self-conscious *exposure* emotions, which

include empathy (Bischof-Köhler, 1991; Lewis, 2002), but also embarrassment elicited by being the target of others' excessive attention (Lewis, Sullivan, Stanger, & Weiss, 1989) and envy. Empathy, the only exposure emotion usually considered a moral emotion, depends on self-awareness insofar as the ability to empathize with another person consists in the ability to imagine what it would be like for one*self* to be in that person's situation (Lewis, 1992, 2002).

The second aspect of self that develops is the awareness of standards, rules, and goals (SRGs) for behavior (Lewis, 1992, 2007), which involves moral as well as nonmoral SRGs. Children begin to appropriate SRGs in the third year of life, and their ability to evaluate themselves against these SRGs marks the onset of the self-conscious *evaluative* emotions: guilt, shame, pride, and evaluative embarrassment (as opposed to nonevaluative exposure embarrassment). Each of these self-evaluative emotions is characterized by different patterns of appraisal relating the self to SRGs, which lead to separable behavioral tendencies and psychological outcomes. In Lewis' (2008) framework, guilt is defined as the emotion elicited when the individual evaluates his *action* as a failure relative to an SRG, shame and evaluative embarrassment are defined as the emotion coming from a negative evaluation of one's *whole self*, while pride is defined as the evaluation of a specific act as successful relative to an SRG. Importantly, because the self-conscious evaluative emotions are thought to follow from the evaluation of the self against any kind of SRG, they are not limited to the moral domain as we have defined it. A child can feel shame for having failed a test, even though passing the test had little or nothing to do with the well-being of others.

The onset of the self-conscious *evaluative* emotions is tied to the emergence of conscience: an inner guiding system making children and adults act in accordance with internalized SRGs, even in the absence of external pressure (Kochanska & Aksan, 2006; Thompson, Meyer, & McGinley, 2006). Conscience has emotional as well as cognitive and behavioral components, and the most commonly discussed *emotional* components of conscience are precisely self-evaluative emotions like guilt, shame, embarrassment, and pride. The central *cognitive* component of conscience is the representation of the SRGs and the evaluation of one's own behavior against those SRGs. Finally, the *behavioral* components of conscience include behavior-regulatory skills, such as inhibition of inappropriate aggression (Kochanska & Aksan, 2006; Thompson et al., 2006).

The processes leading up to the appropriation of SRGs and the emergence of conscience are not well understood. A large body of research has investigated factors predicting the internalization of SRGs and the development of conscience, including parenting behaviors (Hoffman, 1970; Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957), child characteristics such as temperament (Kochanska, 1993, 1997), and parent–child relationships (Laible & Thompson, 2002; Londerville & Main, 1981). However, most of this research has been done with children already at the age where children are assumed to have developed some form of conscience. The studies that have been done on factors in the second year affecting later conscience development have focused more on using individual differences in infancy or early toddlerhood to predict later individual differences in conscience measures (e.g., Kochanska, 2002; Kochanska, Aksan, Prisco, & Adams, 2008), and less on the mechanisms by which the young child begins to be concerned with SRGs.

We believe it is necessary to consider a wider range of emotional phenomena than the moral emotions in order to better understand the earliest forms of moral development, including the steps leading up to the development of self-conscious moral emotions and conscience. Not only do the emotions generated by our moral concerns reach well beyond the "moral emotions" to include emotions like anger, fear, and joy; the child's emotions also co-occur with the emotions of social interactants, forming a set of interplays between emotional action and communication having particular consequences for the child's moral development.

A second, yet related, issue is the need to consider the differences between the various kinds of SRGs the child is appropriating. Social-domain theorists have documented substantial differences in the situations pertaining to moral, social-conventional, and other kinds of concerns in older children (Turiel, 1983). This gives reason to believe that the processes leading up to the child's adoption of SRGs may differ depending on the kind of SRG in question.

In what follows, we lay out a new framework for studying moral development in the second year of life and its relation to emotion. We begin by providing a broadened delineation of what kinds of phenomena are involved in early moral development, before providing an analysis of some forms of emotional interaction where key steps in moral development in the second year take place.

*R*edelineating Moral Development in the Second Year of Life

We include in our notion of moral development the acquisitions that *directly or indirectly* contribute to the development of (a) concerns with the well-being of others and (b) the ability to act on those concerns. In broadening the notion of moral development, we propose a distinction between *homologous* and *heterologous* components of moral development, and show how this distinction maps onto moral development in the second year of life.[2]

The most obvious constituents of moral development are phenomena that are *homologous* to adult morality: early forms of what we call morality in adults. This class of developmental acquisitions includes early forms of prosocial behavior, such as helping and empathy (for a review, see Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006); the ability to engage in conversations about justice, morality, and conventions (Damon, 1975; Nucci & Turiel, 1978); and the regulation of anger and aggression (Eisenberg, 2000).

In the second year of life, children's homologous moral acquisitions are quite impressive, as they become able to help familiar and unfamiliar adults; for example, in retrieving lost objects and doing chores (Rheingold, 1982; Warneken &

Tomasello, 2006), cooperating toward a shared goal (Warneken, Chen, & Tomasello, 2006), sharing objects with peers and adults (Hay, Caplan, Castle, & Stimson, 1991), showing a variety of empathic behaviors (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner, & Chapman, 1992), and demonstrating awareness of standards (Kagan, 1981).

The tendency to engage in moral and moral-like action develops alongside the tendency to engage in immoral action. Indeed, we believe that moral development depends not only on the experiences of promoting the well-being of others, for instance in helping and empathy, but also on experiences of failing to consider the well-being of others. As the child starts harming others, and doing so in new ways (for instance through verbal, not only physical aggression; Dodge, Coie, & Lynam, 2006), the child becomes exposed to a range of social reactions elicited by the violation of moral principles. By analogy, the experience of failing a test does not resemble the experience of succeeding, but insofar as failure motivates future effort, small setbacks are nevertheless inherent to success.

Acquisitions that do not resemble adult morality, yet contribute to its development we term *heterologous moral acquisitions*. These acquisitions contribute to moral development not by constituting progress in moral understanding or behavior, but by setting the stage for such progress, and include forms of aggression, but also nonaggressive ways of causing harm to others, for example, through teasing or limit-testing. Like errors of mass-conservation in preschoolers, heterologous moral acquisitions are normative "errors" that serve a function on one stage of development but not necessarily on another: when the same mistake is made by an adult, it is no longer a step in a developmental sequence.

The concept of heterologous moral acquisitions is more difficult to grasp than the concept of homologous moral acquisitions because heterologous moral acquisitions do not bear a linear relation to later moral development. For instance, although we hypothesize that being the target of *some* adult anger after a moral violation will facilitate moral development, the most aggressive children will probably not become the most moral. In support of this idea, Eisenberg et al. (2006) conclude that the usual negative correlation between prosocial behavior and aggressive behavior is not present in early childhood, at least not as unequivocally as it is in later childhood. Under some circumstances aggression is even *positively* related to prosocial behavior during the first years of life (Gill & Calkins, 2003; Yarrow et al., 1976). In other words, aggression and prosocial behavior may be positively related at one stage of development, even though they are negatively related at other stages.

The second year contains a number of heterologous moral acquisitions, making young children sometimes seem to become *less* moral over this period. Most parents experience an increase in aggression over this period, leading into the so-called "terrible twos." Some studies have suggested that the level of aggression reaches a local maximum around 18 months (Hay, 2005). During the second year, most children also begin to anticipate adult reactions to many of their transgressions (Dunn & Munn, 1985; Lamb, 1991). Additionally, parents gradually

enforce more behavioral rules for their children (Gralinski & Kopp, 1993), and already toward the end of the first year there appears to be an increase in conflicts between parents and children as the child starts to move independently (Biringen, Emde, Campos, & Appelbaum, 1995; Campos, Kermoian, & Zumbahlen, 1992).

We will now discuss some key forms of emotional interactions in the second year of life—some involving phenomena homologous and some involving phenomena heterologous to adult morality—which we hypothesize to be central to the child's moral development. Although sibling interactions provide rich sources of social experience for young children (Dunn & Munn, 1985), we will limit ourselves to parent–child interactions.

Expanding the Horizon: Emotional Action and Communication in Moral Development during the Second Year of Life

The Roles of Social Joy and Parental Encouragement in Early Helping Behavior

Helping others in need is a central part of our being concerned with the well-being of others. While motoric limitations prevent the newborn from helping, older children and adults often face strict obligations to help. The second year is when we first see signs of infant helping, and it is the emergence and elaboration of that skill we are attempting to understand.

All forms of helping behavior studied in infants involve social interaction. Its inherently social quality sets early helping apart from adult helping, which can take place even when the beneficiary is unaware of the benefactor (Batson & Shaw, 1991). From early in their second year, infants will give help to an adult experimenter who is unsuccessfully reaching for an object (Warneken & Tomasello, 2007), attempt to help their mother in a wide range of activities (Rheingold, 1982), and gladly share with their peer, sometimes even more readily than 2-year-olds (Hay et al., 1991). Their enthusiasm is evident even when they are commanded by adults to retrieve objects (Rheingold, Cook, & Kolowitz, 1987).

The immense pleasure that infants take in interacting with other people, what we call *social joy*, supports early helping behavior. Emde, Biringen, Clyman, and Oppenheim (1991) argue that infants are born with a basic motive for initiating, maintaining, and terminating interactions with others. Trevarthen (2006) has similarly held that an intersubjective instinct is present at the earliest stages of life, both in humans and other primate species. Toward the end of the first year, the infant has developed the ability to engage in joint attention, or exhibit "secondary intersubjectivity" (Trevarthen, 2006), which represents an interest in what other people are concerned with. The ability to engage in joint attention emerges before the first birthday, but continues to develop into the second year, from sharing, to following, to directing other's attention (Carpenter, Nagell, & Tomasello, 1998). With the development of joint attention comes also the tendency to take on a shared goal with

the other person, be it through manual cooperation (Warneken et al., 2006) or through the provision of information (Liszkowski, Carpenter, Striano, & Tomasello, 2006). We believe that the joy experienced in social interactions functions as a stage-setter in moral development, motivating children to engage in behaviors that will gradually be transformed into moral behavior proper.

There is much disagreement about how social interaction influences the young child's helping behavior, particularly about whether parental encouragement is necessary for infant and toddler helping. Some studies with toddlers and young children have found a negative effect of material reward (Warneken & Tomasello, 2008) and parental praise and encouragement on children's prosocial behavior (Eisenberg, Wolchik, Goldberg, & Engel, 1992; Grusec, 1991). Findings like these have been used to support the claim that early helping behavior springs from an evolved altruistic motivation that does not depend on social interaction (Warneken & Tomasello, 2009).

The claim about the inefficacy of parental efforts to facilitate early helping is puzzling. Most parents value their children's prosocial tendencies, and likely do what they can to promote these tendencies. Though it is possible that parents are wholly misguided in their efforts, we argue instead that apparent puzzle stems from too narrow a construal of what constitutes parental reward, encouragement, and praise. Parents have available to them a multitude of means by which they can reward helping behavior, material rewards being only one. Next, encouragement and praise are often thought of as exclusively verbal messages (e.g., Henderlong & Lepper, 2002), but there are reasons for reconceptualizing encouragement and praise in early development. For one thing, children in their second year will not understand complex verbal attributions of some positive outcome to their performance. Moreover, the best way for the parent to sustain a child's activity may in fact be to engage in the activity with the child since young children take such pleasure in social interaction. For instance, parents may choose to paint together with the child rather than merely praising the child for being good at drawing. According to the functionalist definition of emotion, it is a sign of enjoyment that the parents remain engaged in the activity, even if they do not display a canonical "joy face." Children may very well pick up this sign of enjoyment, and take it as encouragement—just as adults would do.

Parents' use of praise and encouragement will also vary with age and skill level of the child. One reason why praise has detrimental effects on intrinsic motivation is that it is sometimes taken to imply low competence (Henderlong & Lepper, 2002). However, this is less of a problem if the competence is already recognized as low by the person. Moreover, studies of the negative effects of extrinsic rewards have looked at activities children were already enjoying (Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973), but initial extrinsic rewards might be less detrimental if there is no intrinsic motivation in the first place. So far, the few studies finding negative or no effects of social feedback and material reward on early helping behavior have looked at behaviors that appeared relatively well rehearsed. We hypothesize that positive emotional messages from parents will have

dramatically different consequences on helping when the behavior is less routine.

The following description given by a mother of a 14-month-old in an ongoing interview study in our lab illustrates the complexity of early emotional interactions involving helping behavior:

> So I asked him: "Could you help mommy put the clothespins away?" He came over and picked one up and he put it in the container, and put another two or three in and then he wanted to grab the container again and shake them out again. And then we would start, and I would usually say: "okay, let's just leave the pins in the container" and he didn't really do that and he kept shaking them out. Then we picked them up again and I asked him to help me: "Can you help me pick them up?" He seemed to enjoy it, it was kind of fun, like a little bit of a game. But then eventually I was trying to pick up the pins as quickly as possible and move the container away so he didn't keep doing the dumping out and refilling the pins. I just tried to distract him.

We then asked how she responded when her son picked up the clothespin: "Well I was very excited. I was like, 'thank you, that's so helpful!' I praised him a lot, and he smiled in response."

The anecdote is fairly representative for the more than 70 mothers we have interviewed, and suggests that the role of the socializing agent is more than that of providing explicit praise or material rewards. Socialization happens through different forms of social interaction (Grusec & Davidov, 2010) and by means of subtle, emotional signals of encouragement, guidance, and interruption responsive to the child's own actions. Although evidence is currently inconclusive with respect to the role of social facilitation of early helping behavior, we think it is necessary to consider both parents' encouragement and the children's social joy to be important factors in the development of early helping behavior. Positive experiences from engaging in prosocial behavior may over time teach young children ways of creating new positive interactions by adopting a concern for the well-being of others.

Empathy and the Communication of Suffering and Anger

Empathy depends on bidirectional communication: if we do not detect that the victim is suffering, there is nothing for us to respond to and, inversely, if we cannot communicate our empathy *to* someone what reason is there for showing it (see Bavelas, Black, Lemery, & Mullett, 1986)? Though most theorists consider empathy to be central to moral development, few have considered the communicational factors involved in its elicitation.

Empathy is defined as an emotional reaction more congruent with someone else's situation than one's own (Hoffman, 2000). Despite this very broad definition, empathy is most typically thought of as a response to suffering, as opposed to helping which often occurs in the absence of suffering. Unlike helping, empathy reflects our concern for others' well-being even when we do not know how to solve the other person's problem: the communication of our concern serves a function in itself.

As noted, veridical empathy seems to appear some time during the second year. Still, at the end of the second year, children respond to naturally occurring maternal distress with prosocial behavior, including comforting, in less than half of the reported instances, according to mothers (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, et al., 1992; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, & King, 1979). In a videotaped laboratory assessment of responsiveness to simulated distress, Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, and Emde (1992) observed prosocial behavior in 14- and 20-month-olds in 20–30% of instances, while they observed a concerned expression in 40–50% of the cases of the mother or the stranger pretending to be in pain. Further complicating the picture, van der Mark, van IJzendoorn, and Bakermans-Kranenburg (2002) found, in a female sample, a decrease in response to strangers' distress from 16 to 22 months of age. In sum, children's ability to act on their concern for the well-being of another is undoubtedly present, yet not very reliable, in the second year of life.

The unreliability of early empathic responses may in part stem from a failure to communicate suffering in a way toddlers understand. Young children are especially dependent on clear signs of suffering in order to respond empathically because, as Hoffman (2000) argues, the ability to imagine what someone else is experiencing merely on the basis of information about the situation they are in is cognitively quite advanced. Vaish, Carpenter, and Tomasello (2009) exposed 18- and 24-month-olds to a situation where a perpetrator damaged the property of a victim who did not show any signs of sadness, and reported that these children only responded with empathic concern 25% of the time. Unfortunately, the various ways by which caregivers and others communicate suffering to young children are not well documented, nor are any differences between the communication of physical and psychological harm.

Even after perceiving the suffering, the child may not always know what to do about it (Thompson & Newton, 2010). Especially in the first half of the second year, infants do not have a clear understanding of how the needs and desires of other people differ from their own (Repacholi & Gopnik, 1997). If the other expresses suffering in a situation unlike a situation the child has been in before, the child may not know what the problem is, which could be why some children engage in "hypothesis-testing" and "trying on" of the pain when they see their mother in distress (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, et al., 1992).

An especially significant situation occurs when the child has *caused* the suffering. From early in the second year, parents expect children to be respectful of other people (Gralinski & Kopp, 1993), and the communication of this expectation has consequences for moral and empathic development. Hoffman (2000) argues that the role of caregivers is to draw attention to the harm suffered by the other person. This "other-oriented induction," Hoffman (2000) proposes, fosters internalization of moral concerns by an empathy-mediated guilt. In support of Hoffman's theory, Zahn-Waxler et al. (1979) found that mothers who often explained to the child how their harmful actions affected others, had children who were more likely to engage in reparative behaviors.

A parent is usually communicating much more than merely an expectation of what the child should attend to in situations where the child has hurt someone else. Parental expectations are also signaled by attempts to stop what the child is doing, for instance the biting or hitting, and the immediacy and determinedness with which the parent intervenes further communicates the seriousness of the child's transgression.

To illustrate the complexity of empathy-involving interactions, consider a situation where a frustrated child has bitten the mother. In this fairly common scenario, the mother communicates both anger and suffering, transforming the child's initial frustration into a concern for the mother's pain or simply distress. One of the mothers we interviewed gave the following description of a situation when her 21-month-old daughter had bitten her.

> She was very upset, very unhappy. She kicked me, and her shoe hit my head … so for the first time that I can remember that I showed her real emotion. She hit me! I showed Alice that I was really upset, and I said "you hit mommy's head" and started to tear-up. I was really going to cry, and she just stopped crying … I don't know how you would describe the look on her face, because she was upset, she was crying, she was kicking and then all of the sudden she hits me and I look like I'm going to cry and I'm telling her that she did something to me that I was very upset and then she stopped … Her eyes were searching my face so I reached that conclusion that her eyes were kind of looking at me and they were watery and they were looking up at me and she was trying to figure out what was going on, and I thought I saw a bit of remorse.

The daughter seems to have been responding to both the anger and the suffering of the mother. Indeed, it is not necessarily sensible to pull the two apart since the anger is rooted in the harm caused by the child.

There is a dearth of knowledge about how these emotional transactions involving empathy, suffering, and anger actually happen. Because of the relatively low frequency with which moral transgressions against the mother occur, they are very hard to study in the home and even more difficult to study in a laboratory. Nevertheless, the communication of, and drawing attention to, suffering of others, especially when caused by the child, seems to us to be a highly important contributor to the early development of a moral concern for others' well-being.

Anger, Aggression, and Regulation

Aggression usually represents a moral failure, but in morality as in most realms of life there is much to learn from failure. As we argued in the foregoing section, when children cause harm to others they can elicit communication of both anger and suffering from interactants, communication that is crucial to the child's understanding of and concern for the well-being of others. For this reason, we believe that the normative development of aggression early in life alters the path of the child's moral development.

Infants do become more aggressive in the second year of life, making child-caused harm to others an increasingly common phenomenon (Dodge et al., 2006; Tremblay et al., 2004). As part of the attempt to foster their children's concern for others, caregivers need to regulate their children's aggressive behavior. The challenge in regulating the child's aggression, especially when the anger leads to harming someone else as in the example

above, is to strike a balance between the communication of disapproval and the comforting aimed at down-regulating the child's anger.

Parents communicate their values on multiple levels when they are attempting to regulate children's aggression. A calm, but nonreinforcing response to a violent anger outburst communicates both that the parent does not approve of the child's reaction and that the parent considers a calm disapproval more appropriate than reciprocating the child's anger. Denham (1993) showed, in her study of interactions between 2-year-olds and their mothers, that mothers who responded in calm or even a cheerful manner to child anger tended to have children who exhibited more positive emotions and who were friendlier toward strangers. However, there is reason to believe that different parental strategies may be needed to regulate aggressive anger, and also that the pattern of interaction may be different for 1-year-olds than for the 2-year-olds studied by Denham. The transitions in locomotor abilities before and around the first birthday are likely to lead to large changes in the parent–child dynamics, and a corresponding host of new challenges for the dyadic regulation of anger (Biringen et al., 1995; Campos et al., 1992; Lemrise & Dodge, 2008).

Exploration and Prohibition: A Hypothesis of Early Domain Distinctions

The increased mobility and independence of children in their second year of life also means that infants will enter a new world of prohibitions. Parents report an increasing number of prohibitions over the course of the second year (Gralinski & Kopp, 1993), as children start climbing on furniture, going down staircases, picking up dirty objects from the ground and putting them in their mouth, and throwing food on the floor. A major challenge for parents of these children is to find means of communicating prohibitions to a child who does not yet possess propositional speech.

Infants can use distal emotional communication from others to regulate their behavior already around their first birthday. Social referencing—the child's active seeking of information about an ambiguous situation—is illustrated in a study of 12-month-olds' behavior on a visual cliff (Sorce, Emde, Campos, & Klinnert, 1985). When mothers posed sad or angry faces, infants were much less likely to crawl onto the deep side of the visual cliff than when their mothers posed joyful or neutral faces. Social referencing thus provides the preverbal child with a rich source of information about caregiver evaluations.

All prohibitions are not equal, however, and an important process in moral development is the ability to distinguish prohibitions rooted in moral concerns from prohibitions rooted in conventional or prudential concerns. Whether they intend to or not, mothers do provide information that helps children make these domain distinctions. For instance, Smetana (1989) found evidence in a home-observation study of 2- and 3-year-olds that moral and social-conventional issues elicit different kinds of interactions between toddlers and their mothers. Mothers typically responded to toddlers' moral transgressions by focusing on the consequences of the transgression for others' rights or welfare, while they focused more on social order in response to conventional transgressions.

The domain distinctions are probably also present before the second birthday, but hardly any studies have been done to assess these distinctions. One difficulty is that social domain theory research has traditionally relied on verbal reasoning to make distinctions between domains. As already noted, emotional communication is dramatically more central during the preverbal age (Kochanska, 1994). Both Smetana (1989) and Nucci and Weber (1995) did include codes for emotion in their observational studies, but these codes did not go beyond the valence and intensity dimensions. Though these dimensions have yielded domain distinctions with older children (Arsenio & Ford, 1985), finer distinctions are needed to detect domain differences in interactional patterns in the second year of life.

In the following, we describe some ways in which emotional aspects of the parental prohibitions can provide the young child with information about the nature of their transgression.

Quality of anger as signal of seriousness of transgression. The circumstances eliciting anger differ from the circumstances eliciting annoyance largely by how serious the problem is for the individual. When the eliciting circumstance is a child's transgression, the degree in seriousness can be related to the nature of the transgression. Moral transgressions, for instance involving harm to others, are likely to be considered much more serious than conventional transgressions, for instance involving spilling food. The distinction between moral and conventional transgressions based on intensity of parental anger is quantitative rather than categorical, but may still be informative to the child.

Intensity may not be the only dimension of anger allowing the child to differentiate between different domains. A complete account of how parental anger communicates evaluations of child behavior requires more research on the range of anger behavior expressed by the parent. Snapping at the child because the parent had a rough day might, from the child's perspective, be a qualitatively different form of anger from talking very sternly at a child who has bitten a sibling, and may therefore have different effects on future child transgressions.

Fear as a signal of prudential transgressions.   Fear, even more than anger, is linked to a particular set of transgressions, namely those involving threat to the child's well-being. Safety prohibitions are necessary even if the mother does not attribute any responsibility to the infant, simply because she cannot tolerate that the infant is exposed to danger. Accordingly, rules pertaining to the child's safety are among the earliest rules to be endorsed by mothers (Gralinski & Kopp, 1993). Prohibitions against dangerous behavior may thereby serve as stage-setters for later prohibitive interactions, whereby the child for the first time becomes thoroughly acquainted with the notion of parental behavior regulation.

Perceiving that one's child is in danger is an exceptionally powerful elicitor of fear. One mother participating in our mentioned interview study gave us the following description of a situation where her 16-month-old daughter had fallen down the staircase:

> I screamed out her name and I ran down to the, to where she had stopped, and I picked her up and I held her really tight and was shaking so hard. My husband heard me, and he came running in. I was too afraid to even look at her, so I just gave her to my husband and I just said "honey, is she ok? Is she ok? I just can't look at her right now, I'm so scared." [Fortunately, the child was in fact not hurt]

Fear behavior is no less subject to variation than is anger behavior. The difference between responding to an immediate threat and calmly implementing a prevention so as to be sure that no harm occurs is large, although they would both be classified as attempts to keep the child from doing something dangerous. Again, what is needed is to study the detailed emotional characteristics of the mother's response, and to learn how these characteristics relate to the situation and to the child's behavior.

Disgust as a signal of mess-making transgression.   Many of the behaviors of the young child may be disgust-evoking. These kinds of transgressions will mostly, though not exclusively, fall in the social-conventional domain. We hypothesize that the expression of disgust constitutes a particular kind of prohibitive communication to the child, which can elicit both shame and limit-testing behavior. For instance, around their second birthday children no longer take disgust expressions in others as a reason for avoidance but as a reason for exploration (Gopnik, personal communication, February 24, 2010).

To summarize, attention to the specific characteristics of the emotional message prevents us from lumping together a large class of parental behavior, when directed toward very young children, into a single category of "prohibitions." Only in making such distinctions in the empirical approach can we hope to understand how children come to understand what is particular about moral transgressions, compared to other kinds of transgressions.

Transgression Curiosity

Knowledge of what is morally wrong is a prerequisite for adult morality, even if such awareness does not always lead to moral action. Early in development, children are not always certain how others will react to their actions, and this uncertainty often leads to curiosity and exploratory behavior. As such, curiosity about transgressions reflects both this uncertainty about others' expectations and the lagging-behind of the child's moral motivation; the adult's emotional communication in response to the child's transgressions is likely to influence both.

"Transgression curiosity" refers to the interest young children show in exploring and overstepping the boundaries of permitted behavior. Bretherton and Bates (1979) report that just

after their first birthday, infants seem able to sometimes anticipate their mother's reaction to what they do. By the time they were 18 months of age, all six infants in Dunn and Munn's (1985) Study 1 had at least once been observed to draw their mother's attention to their own transgression, often while smiling or laughing, while other times they will simply look to see how the mother reacts (for similar findings, see Lamb, 1991).

The situational and relational factors eliciting transgression curiosity in infants are not well understood, and no systematic laboratory study has been conducted to investigate this phenomenon so revelative of early normative understanding. The phenomenon bears similarity to social referencing discussed earlier, except that infants exhibiting rule curiosity seem to have formed determinate expectations for how the parent will react. Parental reactions to transgression curiosity are in themselves a topic worthy of study. We expect that the domain-differentiated responding we hypothesized in the preceding section will also be present in the responses to transgression curiosity. Moreover, the playful and sociocognitively advanced character of the child's transgression is likely to also elicit some ambivalent or even positive responses from the adult, such as laughter, especially if the transgression is not perceived to be very serious.

Exploratory transgressions will help the child understand their social world, just as manual manipulations of physical objects help the child understand their physical world. Their expectations of adult reactions to their transgressions will be consolidated or modified, and insofar as the adult reactions are differentiated, this social exploration will help the children differentiate moral, conventional, prudential, and other domains of transgressions.

Coda

Moral development is a development of what children are concerned with and how they act on those concerns; it is the process of coming to care about the well-being of other people. Focusing on the second year of life, we have highlighted how this process depends on a range of interactions between child emotional action and parent emotional communication. Some of the acquisitions in early moral development are similar to, or homologous with, forms of adult morality and some are dissimilar from, or heterologous with, adult morality. Precisely which role the phenomena discussed above play for the development of a mature morality, is a topic for future research.

Emotions are especially central in moral development in the second year because the child lacks many of the linguistic and cognitive abilities often considered necessary for morality (Lewis, 1992). Yet, the framework for relating emotional and moral development articulated in this article is no less applicable to the later stages of moral development. The importance of emotional *communication* for moral development deserves particular mention here as it is too commonly overlooked in the literature. The focus on emotional communication represents a shift away from self-awareness toward other-awareness, or

metaphorically speaking a shift away from a "mirror self" (Amsterdam, 1972; Lewis et al., 1989)—a self reflected in an inanimate surface—and toward a "looking-glass self" (Cooley, 1956/1902)—a self reflected in the social environment. Cooley's ideas were later taken by Lewis and Brooks-Gunn (1979) as a basis for their exploration of the self and self-development; in Cooley's view, the individual gains self-awareness only through the eyes of others: "Each to each a looking-glass, Reflects the other that doth pass" (Cooley, 1956/1902, p. 184).

The notion of the looking-glass self maps nicely onto what we consider mature morality to consist in: the concern with how our behavior is experienced from the point of view of other people, and the desire to act in a way that promotes their well-being. By allowing children and adults to acquire and develop these moral concerns, the processes of emotional interactions described in this article point toward the moral self-evaluation and self-evaluative emotions first observable sometime in the third year of life, but persisting throughout our lives as mature moral beings (Lewis, 1992).

Notes

1 Some do not consider empathy an emotion, but rather an emotional process (Haidt, 2003; Tangney et al., 2007) or an affective response (Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Sadovsky, 2006; Hoffman, 2000), because empathy does not satisfy the traditional criteria for an emotion, such as a distinct facial or physiological expression (Ekman, 1992), a particular appraisal pattern (Roseman & Smith, 2001) or core relational theme (Lazarus, 1991).

2 By arguing that an acquisition forms part of moral development, we are not assuming that variation in this acquisition will necessarily explain variation in some index of moral sense later in development. A predictive relation is not a guarantee for a developmental connection between two phenomena (in the same way no correlation is a guarantee for causation), nor is the lack of a predictive relation proof that there is no developmental connection. The ability to walk provides an illustration: variation in walking ability at 12 months of age is probably not a good predictor for what occupation the person will have at age 25. Still, for many people, the ability to walk is going to be essential for their professional activities.

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