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Emotions versus Reasons: A Critical Analysis of Jon Elster’s View about Social Norms

Abstract: In this paper I will analyze the individualistic interpretation of social norms developed by Jon Elster. First, I will present his argumentation regarding his distinction between rationality and social normativity which will also provide the opportunity to present his conception about the most important features of social norms. In the next two sections I will analyze his attempt to distinguish between social norms and other types of similar rules and his typology of the main categories of social norms. Finally, I will mention several objections that in my opinion affect his theory of social normativity based on the emotional states of our minds.

Keywords: Jon Elster, social norms, emotions, rationality, individualism.