Honorable Intentions Versus Praiseworthy Accomplishments: The Impact of Motives and Outcomes on the Moral Self

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A centuries-old philosophical issue—Do honorable intentions make an action praiseworthy or is the best action one that generates the greatest good for the greatest number?—was examined by telling subjects who were working to earn money for themselves or a charity that they succeeded or failed at the task. Confirming predictions derived from personal moral philosophy theory, idealistic individuals who stress the importance of fundamental moral principles (absolutists) felt the most positive about their own morality when they were working for a charity, irrespective of the consequences of their actions. Principled individuals who were not idealistic (exceptionists), however, reported feeling distressed when laboring for a charity rather than themselves and the most morally virtuous when they performed badly when working for personal gain. Relativistic subjects (situationists and subjectivists) did not rate themselves as positively when working for a charity. These findings indicate that, at the psychological level, individuals consider both intentions and consequences when evaluating their own moral successes and failures, but they differ in the weight that they assign to these two factors.

What distinguishes the moral from the immoral? Centuries ago Immanuel Kant (1785/1973) argued that the answer lies in the inherent goodness of one's intentions. Kant's deontological perspective maintained that striving to act in accord with fundamental moral principles matters far more than attaining some valued end, for a "good will is good not because of what it performs or effects, not by its aptness for the attainment of some proposed end, but simply by virtue of the volition, that is, it is good in itself." A good intention might fail and it might succeed, but these outcomes add nothing to the moral appraisal

> if with its greatest efforts it should yet achieve nothing, and there should remain only the good will (not, to be sure, a mere wish, but the summoning of all means in our power), then, like a jewel, it would still shine by its own light, as a thing which has its whole value in itself. Its usefulness or fruitlessness can neither add to nor take anything from this value. (p. 63)

Kant's view contrasts sharply with a teleological perspective that stresses consequences more than principles. William James (1891/1973), for example, maintained that few actions can be judged a priori, for an action that generates the greatest good for the greatest number of people is far more praiseworthy than an action that matches

Current Psychology: Developmental • Learning Personality • Social, Winter 1993–94, Vol. 12, No. 4, 296–311.

accepted canons of morality but yields little in the way of positive consequences. James believed that:

> Everywhere the ethical philosopher must wait on facts. . . . In point of fact there are no absolute evils, and there are no non-moral goods; and the highest ethical life—however few may be called to bear its burdens—consists at all times in the breaking of rules which have grown too narrow for the actual case. (p. 157)

The current research is based on the assumption that the philosophical distinctions raised by Kant and James correspond to distinctions made at the psychological level. Just as Kant and James differ in their emphasis on principles and consequences, individuals differ in the extent to which they stress moral rules and moral outcomes when making personal decisions about morality and immorality (Waterman, 1988). Piaget (1932/1960), in his early work, noted that children's moralities are largely shaped by their ability to consider both the consequences of the action and the moral purity of the actor's intentions. Hogan (1973) and Kurtines (1986) similarly distinguish between an "ethics of personal conscience" which is inner-focused, and an "ethics of responsibility," which concentrates on societal regulatory standards that define duties. Gilligan (1982, p. 65), in her analyses of sex differences in moral thought, noted that females' "hope that in morality lies a way of solving conflicts so that no one will be hurt" (concern for positive consequences), while males' moralities tend to stress the rational application of principles. Similarly, Forsyth (1980) draws a distinction between individuals who stress achieving positive consequences and individuals who base their decisions about morality on fundamental ethical principles. All these perspectives maintain that some individuals—those who adopt the principled orientation similar to Kant—will be more influenced by the good intentions when appraising morality, whereas others will be more Jamesian—they will use the quality of the consequences of actions to inform their judgments.

This prediction was tested by examining individuals' reactions to their own moral successes and failures. Subjects who varied in their emphasis on principles versus consequences were given the opportunity to earn money by successfully completing a series of problems. Some subjects were egoistically motivated: they were told they could keep whatever money they earned. Others, in contrast, were charitably motivated: they were told that their earnings would be donated to a charity. After the task was completed, subjects were given bogus information about their level of performance. Those given success feedback were told they had done well. These individuals were given their payment if they were working for themselves, or they were told that their earnings would be donated to a worthy cause. Subjects given failure feedback were told that they did not meet the minimum standards needed for payment. After receiving their feedback, subjects described themselves; they rated their overall affect, their level of morality, and their self-esteem. They also listed their thoughts.

Individual differences in orientation toward principles and consequences were conceptualized in terms of Forsyth's two-dimensional model of personal moral philosophies (Forsyth, 1980, 1981, 1985; Schlenker & Forsyth, 1977). This model, rather than

assuming individuals are either rule-oriented or consequence oriented, argues individuals can range from high to low in their emphasis on principles and in their emphasis on consequences. First, individuals differ in their acceptance of universal ethical absolutes. At one end of the continuum, highly relativistic individuals espouse a personal moral philosophy based on skepticism. They would tend to agree with such statements as "What is ethical varies from one situation and society to another," and "Whether or not a lie is judged to be moral or immoral depends upon the circumstances surrounding the action." In contrast, people who are low in relativism argue that morality requires acting in accord with moral principles, norms, or laws. Second, individuals also differ in their degree of concern for others' welfare. Those who are idealistic insist that "One should never psychologically or physically harm another person," and "If an action could harm an innocent other, then it should not be done." Others, however, do not emphasize such ideals, for they assume that harm will sometimes be necessary to produce good. The model thus identifies the four distinct personal moral philosophies shown in Table 1: situationism (relativistic and idealistic), subjectivism (relativistic but not idealistic), absolutism (not relativistic but idealistic), and exceptionism (neither relativistic nor idealistic).

The primary predictions focused on the differences between situationists and absolutists. Situationists stress the importance of avoiding harm and securing good, so their self-ratings of morality should be most positive when the consequences of their actions are positive and they are helping others. If their performance is negative, then their ratings should be negative since consequences, and not good intentions, are critical. Absolutists, however, feel that adherence to moral norms warrants moral approbation irrespective of consequences. Absolutists should therefore feel the most moral when working for a charity, irrespective of the consequences.

Secondary hypotheses focused on the two pragmatic groups (subjectivists and exceptionists). Because these individuals do not believe that moral actions invariably yield positive outcomes for others, their self-ratings should be influenced primarily by their own outcomes. They should be most positive when they succeed when working for themselves, and the least positive when they fail while working for themselves. Moreover, even though exceptionists stress moral principles more than subjectivists, increased feelings of morality were not expected for exceptionists working for a charity. Indeed, in prior studies of self-ratings of morality following moral transgressions exceptionists were more egoistic in their orientation than even the subjectivists. Forsyth and Berger (1982), for example, studied the emotional reactions displayed by all four ethical types after they cheated on a test. As expected, for most individuals (and absolutists in particular) self-rated morality and cheating were inversely related: people who cheated the least rated themselves the most positively. This relationship did not hold for exceptionists, however, for they rated themselves more positively the *more* they cheated (Forsyth & Berger, 1982, Study 1). These findings suggest that exceptionists, despite their nonrelativistic emphasis on moral principles, will feel the most positive when they succeed when working for themselves.

TABLE 1
A Taxonomy of Personal Moral Philosophies

Ideology	Dimensions	Approach to Moral Judgment
Situationists	High relativism High idealism	Reject moral rules; ask if the action yielded the best possible outcome in the given situation.
Subjectivists	High relativism Low idealism	Reject moral rules; base moral judgments on personal feelings about the action and the setting.
Absolutists	Low relativism High idealism	Feel actions are moral provided they yield positive consequences through conformity to moral rules.
Exceptionists	Low relativism Low idealism	Feel conformity to moral rules is desirable, but exceptions to these rules are often permissible.

METHODS

Subjects

The 81 men and 83 women who participated were selected from a larger group of approximately 300 introductory psychology students. The sample included 25 African-Americans, 131 whites, and 8 students from other racial groups. Experimental sessions were conducted by one of two white experimenters (one male, one female), who ran a proportional number of subjects in each cell of the design.

All of the subjects had previously completed a measure of ethical ideology, the Ethics Position Questionnaire (Forsyth, 1980), in their psychology class. The EPQ consists of two 10-item scales that measure idealism and relativism. Items such as "People should make certain that their actions never intentionally harm another even to a small degree" and "If an action could harm an innocent other then it should not be done" comprise the idealism scale. The relativism scale includes such items as "Different types of moralities cannot be compared as to 'rightness'" and "What is ethical varies from one situation to another." Both scales are internally consistent, stable over time, orthogonal to one another, and only slightly correlated with social desirability (Forsyth, 1980; Forsyth, Nye, & Kelley, 1988).

For all items, subjects indicated degree of agreement or disagreement using a 5-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Idealism scores ranged from 20 to 50, and the range for relativism was 20 to 46. The respective means for the two scales were 34.3 and 34.2, and the median for both scales was 37. Using a median split procedure, subjects were classified into one cell of the taxonomy of personal moral philosophies shown in Table 1.

Procedure

Sessions with individual subjects were conducted in a small laboratory room la-

belled "Studies in Organizational Behavior—Task Characteristics and Performance." The subjects, upon arrival, were given written and verbal instructions that described the goals of the project: the analysis of the impact of task characteristics and outcome consequences on people's task performance and attitudes. As an "employee" in the simulated industrial environment, subjects were asked to perform an experimental task as efficiently as possible. If subjects had any questions, they were answered by paraphrasing the written set of instructions. Subjects also signed an informed consent form that reiterated these instructions and stressed the importance of the project.

Subjects were led to believe that they were participating in a large, multicondition experiment, but in actuality they were assigned to only one of two different motive conditions: payment to *self* versus payment to *charity*. This manipulation of motivation was accomplished by showing each subject a large chart that displayed the supposed experimental conditions for the project. The chart depicted a 3 X 3 factorial design that crossed type of task (problem solving, assembly line, or telecommunication) with type of payment (no payment, payment-for-profit, or payment-nonprofit). The experimenter explained that subjects would be assigned to one of the 9 conditions shown in the chart, and asked the subjects to draw a slip of paper from an envelope to assign themselves to conditions. The envelope contained slips for only the problem solving/payment-for-profit condition and the problem solving/payment-nonprofit condition. Thus, all subjects were told they would be working on a paper-and-pencil task. Subjects in the *self condition*, however, were told they would be paid for their work:

> You are in condition 4: the payment/profit condition. If you succeed on the test by getting at least half of the items correct, you will earn a "salary" of $1 for each item you get correct. However, if you fail to get at least 5 items correct, then you earn nothing.

Subjects in the *charity condition*, in contrast, were told:

> You are in condition 7: the payment/not-for-profit condition. If you succeed on the test by getting at least half of the items correct, you will earn $1 for each item you get correct. However, if you fail to get at least 5 items correct, then you earn nothing. Your earnings then will be donated to the State Charitable Campaign. Here is the brochure in case you are interested.

Subjects then completed a 10-question bogus test of social intelligence. The stem of each multiple-choice question consisted of a statement supposedly made by a target person. Then, from a list of three alternatives, subjects were to select the one statement that the target person most likely also said. The fictitious test seemed valid, but was ambiguous enough so that subjects were not certain how well they were performing (Forsyth & Schlenker, 1977). Once the test was completed, the experimenter left the room for several minutes to grade the form. When he or she returned, subjects in the *success condition* were told: "You passed the test. In fact, you got 7 out of 10 correct, which is an excellent score. Because you are in Condition 4, you earned $7. (Because

you are in Condition 7, $7 will be donated in your name to the Virginia Employees Combined Charitable Campaign)." Those subjects randomly assigned to the *failure condition* were told "You did not pass the test. In fact, you got only 3 out of 10 correct, which is below the minimum level of performance. Because you are in Condition 4, you earn no money. (Because you are in Condition 7, this means that no donation will be made to the Virginia Employees Combined Charitable Campaign.) Successful subjects were then given 7 one-dollar bills, and asked to sign a receipt.

Dependent Measures

Self ratings. After subjects received their feedback, they were asked to rate themselves on twenty 5-point bipolar adjectives. These adjectives, which were drawn from Forsyth and Berger (1982), included general items such as good-bad, tense-relaxed, and positive-negative, as well as several items that focused specifically on morality (e.g., honest-dishonest, moral-immoral).

Self-esteem. Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). This index includes items that are both positively worded ("I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal basis with others.") and negatively worded (All in all, I am inclined to feel that I'm a failure."). Individuals indicate degree of agreement using a 5-point scale, and negative items are reversed before an overall average is calculated. Subjects also answered a situationally specific measure of self-esteem using the same response format: "At this moment, I feel very good about myself."

Cognitive reactions. After completing the self-perception and self-esteem measures, subjects were told to "take a few moments to reflect upon your thoughts, feelings, and emotions." They were then given 5 minutes to write down their thoughts before the experimenter returned with the final questionnaire.

Manipulation checks. The final questionnaire asked subjects to report their level of performance on the task and their perceptions of benefit using 9-point scales with labeled endpoints. Two items checked the effectiveness of the outcome variable: "How well did you perform on the task?" (very well vs. very poorly) and "What were the consequences of your performance?" (positive vs. negative). One item checked the motive manipulation: "Who experienced these consequences of your performance?" (consequences for me vs. consequences for others).

Debriefing

All subjects were debriefed immediately after participation, through use of techniques developed in earlier studies (Forsyth & Berger, 1982; Forsyth, Pope, & McMillan, 1985; Forsyth & Nye, 1990). Subjects were first asked if they had questions or required any extra information. If they made no response they were told that previous subjects had asked about the need for the questionnaires or some other aspect of the experimental setting, and they were repeatedly asked to divulge their suspicions. Next, they were guided into an analysis of the necessity for withholding information during

some experiments. Several examples were presented, such as bystander intervention studies, and the experimenter explained why misinformation is sometimes necessary. Next, the specific deceptions in the current study were noted, and the necessity for these procedures reiterated. Subjects were then sworn to secrecy, and the experimenter once more asked them if anyone had spoken to them about the experiment. The experimenter explained why secrecy is important, and why violations of this secrecy can damage the outcome of the project. Lastly, after repeated attempts to prompt the subjects to admit any prior knowledge of the research, they were asked to leave their name and address if they wished to receive a copy of the findings.

RESULTS

Subjects' responses on the post-experimental questionnaire were examined in a series of 2 (motive: self vs. charity) X 2 (outcome: success vs. failure) X 2 (idealism: high vs. low) X 2 (relativism: high vs. low) X 2 (sex: woman vs. man) least-squares analyses of variance in which effect sizes were based on unique sums of squares. Post hoc tests, when appropriate, were conducted using Duncan's multiple range test.

Manipulation Checks

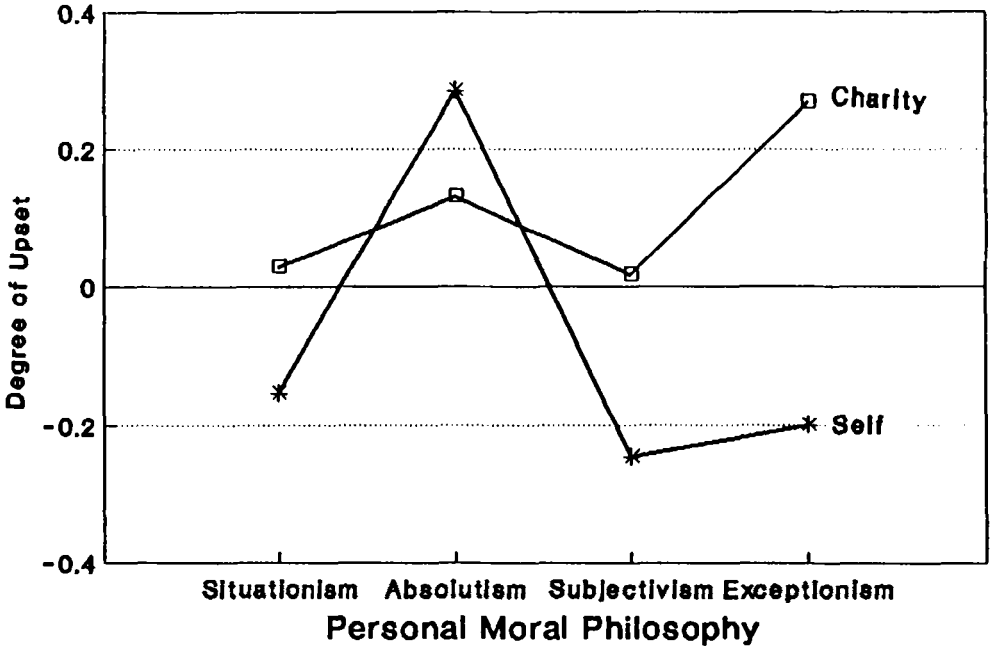
Both manipulations were successful. Subjects in the success condition felt the consequences of their performance were more positive than subjects in the failure condition; $F(1, 133) = 196.64$, $p < .05$. The means were 7.8 and 4.0, respectively. Similarly, subjects in the success condition rated their performance itself more positively than subjects in the failure condition; $F(1, 132) = 544.02$, $p < .05$. The means were 7.2 and 2.8. No other effects were significant on these two items, except for a sex main effect on the performance ratings; $F(1, 132) = 5.58$, $p < .05$. Men rated their performance more positively than did women; the means were 5.1 and 4.8, respectively.

Analysis of the item "Who experienced the consequences of your performance?" in contrast, revealed a main effect of motive; $F(1,132) = 51.68$, $p < .05$. The means were 6.2 and 3.0, respectively. The two-way interaction of motive and outcome, $F(1, 132) = 6.16$, $p < .05$, indicated that the successful subjects who were working for personal profit responded more positively than failure subjects working for personal profits (Ms = 6.8 and 5.7), but both means differed from the failure/charity and success/charity condition means (Ms = 3.4 and 2.6, respectively).

Self-Evaluation

Subjects' self-ratings on the 20 bipolar adjectives were examined using principle components analysis with varimax rotations. The four factors that emerged included *positive affectivity* (e.g., good-bad, pleased-annoyed), degree of *upset* (e.g., tense-relaxed, at ease-upset), social *attractiveness* (e.g., friendly-unfriendly, likable-nonlikable), and *morality* (e.g., moral-immoral, honest-dishonest). The eigenvalues for these four factors were 7.14, 2.0, 1.42, and 1.08, respectively, and together they accounted for

FIGURE 1
Degree of Upset Reported by Situationists, Absolutists, Subjectivists, and Exceptionists Working for Themselves (self) or for a Charity (charity).



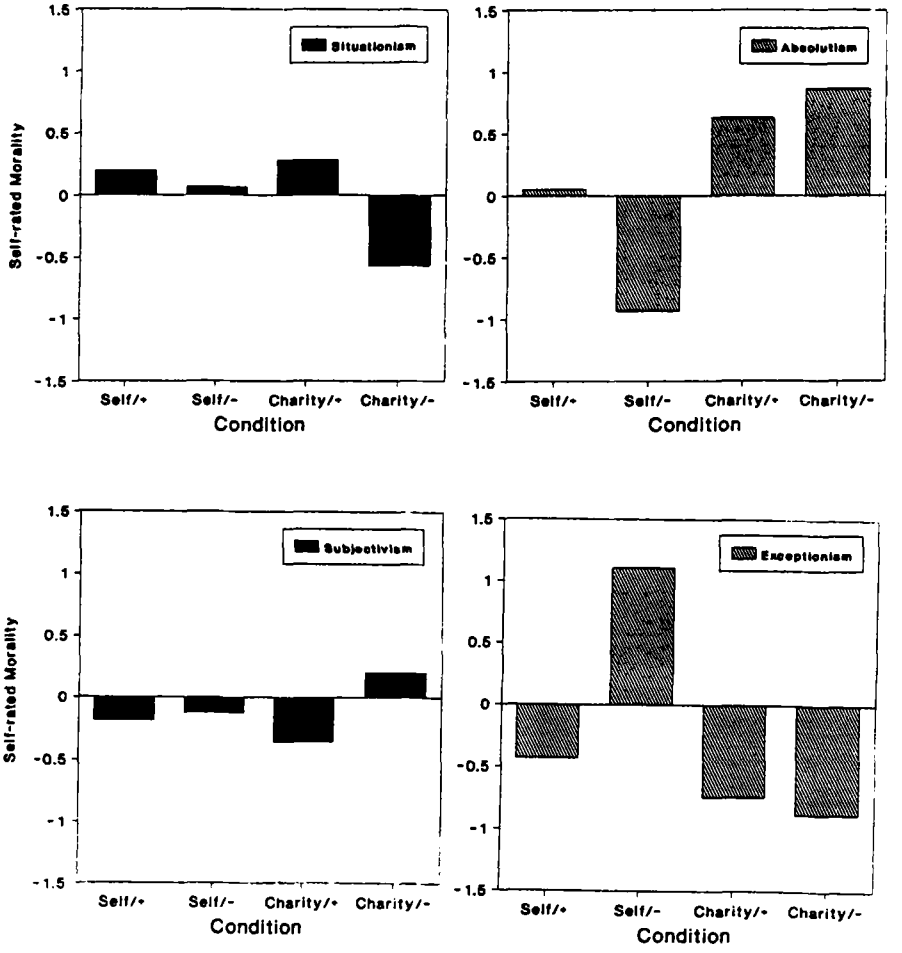
58.28 of the total variance. Alternative factor extraction methods yielded similar results (Snook & Gorsuch, 1989), and all analyses used the pooled within-cell correlation matrix to correct for possible treatment effects.

Positive affectivity and attractiveness. Subjects' overall affective reactions, as indicated by their factor scores for positive affectivity, were outcome-dependent—only the main effect of performance feedback reached significance; $F(1, 133) = 46.01$, $p < .05$. Subjects' ratings were more positive when they succeeded (+0.70) rather than failed (-0.70). Their responses on the third factor, social attractiveness, revealed a similar pattern; $F(1, 133) = 4.09$, $p < .05$. The respective means were .18 and -.18.

Upset. Analysis of the upset factor scores revealed a main effect of relativism; $F(1, 133) = 4.55$, $p < .05$. High relativists (situationists and subjectivists) were less upset than the low relativists (absolutists and exceptionists). The respective means were .08 and .11. The three-way interaction of relativism, idealism, and consequences, however, qualified this main effect to some extent; $F(1, 133) = 3.98$, $p < .05$. As Figure 1 indicates, the only low relativists who did not report being upset were the self-motivated exceptionists. Indeed, self-motivated exceptionists showed significantly lower upset compared to the charity-motivated exceptionists ($p < .05$).

Morality. Analysis of the factor scores for self-rated morality revealed a complex higher-order interaction of idealism, relativism, outcome, and motive that qualified several other lower-order interactions; $F(1, 133) = 4.90$, $p < .05$. As Figure 2 indicates, the relativistic subjects (situationists and subjectivists) did not differentially evaluate

FIGURE 2
Degree of Moral Worth Reported by Situationists, Absolutists, Subjectivists, and Exceptionists When Succeeding (+) or failing (–) when Working for Themselves (self) or for a Charity (charity).



themselves across the four conditions. Situationists rated themselves more negatively when they failed when working for a charity, but this effect is not significant. Subjectivists, in contrast, generally gave themselves lower ratings on the morality factor, except when they failed when working for a charity. Again, however, this trend was not significant.

More striking differences emerged for the nonrelativistic subjects. Absolutists felt extremely moral when working for a charity, regardless of the consequences of their

work. Indeed, absolutists rated themselves more positively when they failed in a charitable action than when trying to secure personal gain ($p < .05$). Exceptionists, in contrast, rated themselves as particularly moral when they failed while working for personal gain ($p < .05$).

Sex differences. Men and women rated themselves differently on three of the four factors. Compared to men, women rated themselves as more upset and moral; Fs(1, 133) = 9.00 and 5.87, ps < .05. The respective means for degree of upset and morality were .10 and .30 for women and -.10 and -.31 for men. Sex also interacted with motivation on ratings of social attractiveness; $F(1, 133) = 4.78$, $p < .05$. Men rated themselves more positively when they were self-motivated (.17) rather than charity-motivated (-.18). Women, in contrast, displayed the opposite (though nonsignificant pattern; their means were -.14 and .15, respectively.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem scores were not influenced by the manipulations and they did not vary in relation to ethical ideology. A main effect of outcome and a two-way interaction of outcome and idealism emerged, however, on the measure of situational self-esteem; Fs(1, 133) = 14.05 and 4.22, ps < .05. Inspection of the means for the interaction indicates that the outcome information had a much greater impact on high idealists than low idealists ($p < .05$). The means for succeeding and failing high idealists were 4.3 and 3.4, whereas these same means for low idealists were 4.1 and 3.7.

Cognitive Reactions

Two raters who were blind to the subject's condition and ethical ideology used the categories shown in Table 2 to classify subjects' responses to the thought-listing procedure. The two raters worked independently, and were told to use as many as four categories to describe subjects' thoughts. For example, the subject who stated "I feel that I have let down a charitable organization. I feel that I should have done better" was given the classification of *Charity* for mentioning the charity and *Negative* for expressing negative, unhappy feelings. In contrast, the subject who stated "I feel kind of bad. The questions were a little hard. I would not mind taking it over again" was classified as *Negative* and *Excusing*. The two coders agreed on 93.9% of the classifications, even when the use of differing numbers of codes counted as disagreement. These disparities were resolved through discussion between the coders prior to analysis.

High idealists. The number of thoughts in each category was significantly related to both outcome and motive; the overall $X^2(21)$ was 51.62, $p < .05$. However, most of the differences were limited to high idealists. Of the 21 situationists who expressed negative thoughts, 76.1% had failed; $X^2(1) = 8.82$, $p < .05$. In addition, even though only three situationists referred to the charity, they were all working for the charity; $X^2(1) = 4.18$, $p < .05$. Significantly more (64.3%) of the situationists who were self-reflective were also working for themselves rather than a charity; $X^2(1) = 4.44$, $p < .05$.

TABLE 2
Categories of Thoughts Expressed by Subjects

Category	Characteristics	Examples
Excuses	Complaints about the fairness of the test, citing difficulty of questions, distractions	How did you expect someone to get all 10 or even some correct? I don't think this test was an accurate way to judge how I think a person will react.
Positive Affectivity	Generally positive thoughts and feelings, happiness, enjoyment	Pleased that I did well in the problem solving. I'm happy I got seven dollars.
Negative Affectivity	Generally negative thoughts and feelings, sadness, disappointment	Should have done better. I ran over a dog Monday night and I feel awful about it. There was nothing I could do.
Upset	Anxious, distressed, nervous, worried	Extremely pressured. Feeling tense about the experiment.
Content	Relaxed, tired, free of tension	I feel at ease. Contentment; carefree
Charitable	Explicit mention of charity	I would have been happy to have money to donate to the charity. I feel that I have let down a charitable organization.
Self-reflective	Referring to the self, evaluation of personal qualities	Very aware of who I am. Pleased with who I am. I have always looked upon myself negatively.
Other	Uncodable	Roses are red violets are blue. This is interesting but I want to get out of here.

Similar effects occurred for absolutists. These individuals were much more likely to report negative thoughts when they failed rather than succeeded; $X^2(1) = 8.23$, $p < .05$. Of the 17 negative thoughts reported by absolutists, 76.5% occurred after failure. Absolutists who succeeded when working for themselves also reported more positive thoughts relative to those who failed or those who succeeded when working for a

charity; $X^2(1) = 9.79$, $p < .05$. Of the 14 positive thoughts reported by absolutists, 57.1% occurred in self-motive/success condition and the remaining were distributed evenly across the other three conditions. Lastly, only three absolutists referred to the charity, but they were all working for the charity; $X^2(1) = 3.86$, $p < .05$. In contrast, significantly more of the absolutists (63.6%) were self-reflective when working for themselves rather than a charity; $X^2(1) = 3.54$, $p < .05$.

Low Idealists

Chi-square analyses revealed only one significant relationship between exceptionists' thoughts and the experimental treatments. Only five exceptionists reported positive thoughts, but all five were in the self-motivated conditions; $X^2(1) = 4.02$, $p < .05$. None of the exceptionists who worked for a charity reported positive thoughts. No significant effects were found for subjectivists.

DISCUSSION

Studies of moral judgment indicate that, in many cases, individuals consider both intentions and consequences when formulating their appraisals. As Piaget (1932/1960) illustrated in his early studies, when judging others' morality evaluators begin by first weighing the quality of the consequences produced: an action that yields negative outcomes is condemned, whereas an action that yields positive outcomes is praised. In time, however, individuals learn to also consider intentions. Older children and adults, for example, when asked "who is naughtiest: a child who accidentally breaks 15 cups or a child who breaks a single cup while trying to steal some jam," answer the jam-stealer because "the one who broke the 15 cups didn't do it on purpose" (Piaget, 1932/1960, p. 130). Even adults, however, display elements of heteronomous thought: the best intentions cannot make actions that yield terrible consequences moral, and actions done with the worst intentions are rarely condemned if they generate great good (Darley & Shultz, 1990; Forsyth, 1985).

But how do individuals evaluate the morality of their own actions? The two-factor model based on consequences and principles offers a partial answer by stressing both the personal and situational determinants of moral judgment and action. The person side of this equation is based on individual differences in personal moral philosophies (Forsyth, 1980, 1985). According to this model individuals' moral beliefs, attitudes, and values comprise an integrated conceptual system of personal ethics. This integrated system, or personal moral philosophy, provides guidelines for moral judgments, solutions to ethical dilemmas, and prescriptions for actions in morally toned situations. The situational side includes the responsibility of the actor for the consequences, the match between the action and moral principles, and the nature of the consequences themselves.

This model suggests that, as with moral judgment in general, individuals consider both intentions and consequences when evaluating their own moral worth. Individuals differ, however, in the weight they assign to these two factors. As predicted, idealistic

individuals who stress the importance of fundamental moral principles—absolutists in Forsyth's (1980) taxonomy of personal moral philosophies—put intentions before consequences. Although they reported feeling more upset by the testing situation in comparison to other subjects, absolutists felt the most positive about their own morality when they were working for a charity rather than themselves. Working for a good cause was sufficient to garner moral approbation, irrespective of the overall success or failure of the effort. As Kant proposed, their virtue lay in their volition, rather than its successful fruition.

Situationists, who are more relativistic than their absolutist counterparts, did not rate themselves as positively when working for a charity, but otherwise they responded similarly to the absolutists. All subjects reported more positive self-esteem when they succeeded rather than failed, but this asymmetry was particularly pronounced for the high idealists. Absolutists' and situationists' thoughts were also more negative in content when they failed rather than succeeded, reflecting their greater concern for achieving positive outcomes. Low idealists did not show such a negative preoccupation after failure. The idealists, when working for a charity, were also more likely to report thoughts pertaining to the charity—either remorse over failing it or happiness over helping it—and when working for their own benefit they reported more self-reflective thoughts. Low idealists rarely mentioned the charity and reported few self-reflective thoughts.

Exceptionists' reactions to the situation were not, however, predicted. Like subjects in all ethical categories, their global self-ratings, including overall affective, attractiveness, and self-esteem, were influenced more by performance than motive or personal moral philosophy: When they succeeded they rated themselves more positively and when they failed they rated themselves more negatively. Exceptionists, however, reported feeling distressed when laboring for a charity rather than themselves. They also did not feel particularly moral when working for a charity; indeed, they felt most morally virtuous when they performed badly when working for personal gain. Exceptionists also reported more positive thoughts in the self-motivated conditions rather than the charitable conditions.

These findings extend previous studies of a two-factor model of morality based on principles and consequences. Prior studies indicate that individuals who differ in relativism and idealism divaricate when making moral judgments (Forsyth, 1985), on contemporary moral issues (Forsyth, 1980; Singh & Forsyth, 1989), in Machiavellian orientation (Leary, Knight, & Barnes, 1986), when attributing responsibility after wrongdoing (Forsyth, 1981), and when judging the ethics of psychological research (Forsyth & Pope, 1984; Schlenker & Forsyth, 1977). In general, absolutists are the most harsh when appraising those who violate moral principles and generate negative consequences, whereas exceptionists are the most forgiving (Forsyth, 1981, 1985). In addition, in two studies of reactions to one's moral transgressions (cheating and lying) absolutists evaluated themselves more negatively relative to the other moral types (Forsyth & Berger, 1982; Forsyth & Nye, 1990). These results, when combined with the current findings, suggest that absolutists are more extreme in their reactions in moral settings. When they themselves break a moral principle, they react with greater

distress and discomfort. When they are working for a good cause, in contrast, they respond positively no matter what consequences they produce. Exceptionists, in contrast, display only muted moralistic reactions. Indeed, in a study of cheating exceptionists rated themselves more positively the more they cheated, and this study indicated that they felt the most moral when working for their own benefit. These findings suggest that exceptionists' reactions to their own moral and immoral behavior are governed more by their own personal outcomes than by consequences for others or the degree to which the action matches a moral principle.

To close on an epistemological note, the current study contrasts with Kohlberg's (1983) view of science as well as with current constructivistic analyses of moral thought (Haan, 1982; Kurtines, Alvarez, & Azmitia, 1990). Kohlberg's work is a case of research that defies science's mandates for value-neutrality. He based his theory on an ethical philosophy that dates back to Aristotle and finds expression in the ethics of such philosophers as Kant. Kohlberg, however, did not stop at suggesting that individuals' thoughts may parallel philosophers' arguments. Rather, he suggested that individuals who follow the ethical decision processes prescribed by certain philosophers are more moral than individuals who do not rely on such processes. Kohlberg thus ranks one kind of morality over other kinds of morality, but he feels justified in his claims since they are based on empirical evidence attesting to the invariance of his stages and their transcultural university.

The current approach draws on philosophical analyses, but only at the descriptive level. In many cases philosophical arguments raise questions that psychologists feel are best answered empirically. Aristotle's model of morality, for example, argues that moral development is based on both habit formation and self-perception processes. Dienstbier, Hillman, Lehnhoff, Hillman, and Valkenaar (1975) base their emotion-attribution model of morality on these notions. Similarly, both Boyce and Jensen (1978) and Forsyth (1980) offer taxonomies of individual differences in moral thought that draw on distinctions made within moral philosophy. These philosophical distinctions, however, are used only at the theory-construction state, and are not used as evidence attesting to the validity of the psychological theory of individual differences. Philosophy is concerned with making prescriptive statements concerning how actions and individuals should be morally evaluated, and thus how people should make moral judgments. Psychology, in contrast, proposes and tests theoretical formulations of how individuals do make judgments and why they perform particular actions. In addition, although the current approach uses moral theory as a means of describing individual differences in moral thought, it does not argue that any one philosophy is more morally advanced than another. To do so would be to commit the naturalistic fallacy of moving from "This is how individuals make judgments" to "This is how individuals should make judgments."

This approach also contrasts with a constructivistic approach to research. Constructivists, noting the problems with traditional philosophies of science, recommend the use of alternative research methods: ethnography, detailed interviewing, thick description, the intimate involvement of the researcher in the data collection processes, and close scrutiny of the participants' construction of the situation (Haan,

1982; Kurtines, Alvarez, & Azmitia, 1990). The current approach, in contrast, utilizes more traditional research methods. Adopting a post-positivistic view of science, the current work assumes that researchers are striving to increase and systematize our knowledge about the subject matter. They must therefore relate observations back to theoretical constructs that provide the framework for interpreting data and generating predictions, and test the theory using objective, empirical methods rather than logical claims, subjective feelings, or researchers' opinions. Such a view maintains that a psychological analysis of morality, if it is to be scientific, must remain within these boundaries. Hypotheses offered must be empirically testable, using methods that other scientists accept as adequate (Einhorn, 1982).

NOTES

This research was supported by the Grants-In-Aid Program for Faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University. Thanks are extended to Laura Matney, Timothy Dodd, and Gregory Morgan for their assistance with various aspects of the project, and to William Hoyt, Michael McCullough, and Josephine Welsh for their comments on earlier drafts.

Date of acceptance for publication: 3 March 1993. Address for correspondence: Donelson R. Forsyth, Department of Psychology, Virginia Commonwealth University, 810 W. Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23284-2018.

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