

## Morality Takes Two: Dyadic Morality and Mind Perception

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One Friday night, you are out on a date at a restaurant, when your friends walk in. You wave hello, but when they come over, they look confused. One mentions that she thought you were on a date. You reply that you are. She points out that you're sitting alone and ask if you've been stood up. You say no, that you're just on a date by yourself, and that you never even intended there to be another person. Another asks if you just mean that you're treating yourself and you get a little testy when you have to repeat yourself – “No, I'm on a date. A real, honest to goodness date – just by myself.”

If your fictional self sounds a little ridiculous in this story, that's because our concept of “date” requires two people. Two people to gaze affectionately at each other, or two people to have awkward conversation, but nevertheless, the core of a date is two. While dating may be a trivial example, we suggest that the core of morality is also two – a dyad. However, unlike a date, where both people have equivalent roles (dating), the two people in a moral dyad have different roles. One person in the dyad – the moral agent – does the moral action while the other person – the moral patient – receives it. For example, in a theft, one person is the thief, and the other the victim; in a donation, one person is the donor and the other the beneficiary. We propose that all moral acts are (at least implicitly) dyadic, involving two different people, one as a moral agent and one as a moral patient.

The idea that people cleave the moral world into agents and patients is as old as Aristotle (Freeland, 1985), but out of this simple claim – that morality takes two – grows a theory of morality with a host of implications for psychology and the real world. *Dyadic morality* can help explain, for instance, why victims escape blame, why people believe in God, why people harm saints, why some advocate torture, and why those who do good become more physically powerful. In this chapter, we explore the idea of dyadic morality, its extensions and implications. In particular, we examine the following four tenets of dyadic morality.

- 1) Morality involves a moral agent helping or harming a moral patient.
- 2) Morality and mind perception are linked: Agency is tied to moral agents; experience is tied to moral patients.
- 3) Morality requires a complete dyad: An isolated moral agent creates a moral patient; an isolated moral patient creates a moral agent.
- 4) Morality requires two *different* people as agent and patient, which means that people are perceived as either agents or patients, both in moral acts and more generally, a phenomenon called *moral typecasting*.

We first explore the link between mind and morality, then examine dyadic help and harm, then explain how moral dyads complete themselves, and finally consider moral typecasting. Why start first with mind perception? Perceptions of mind are tightly bound to moral judgments, and as we will show, the structure of mind perception is split into two complementary parts that correspond to the two parts of morality. Perceptions of mind underlie the most fundamental of moral decisions: Who deserves moral rights and who deserves moral responsibility.

### *Morality and Mind Perception*

*Morality and Mind Perception are Linked: Agency is Tied to Moral Agents; Experience is Tied to Moral Patients*

In 2007, the Spanish government voted to extend basic human rights to chimpanzees and other great apes. These inviolable rights made it illegal to abuse or kill these creatures, protecting them from harmful medical experiments and sub-human living conditions in zoos. On the other hand, every year, the Canadian, Norwegian, and Russian governments hand out thousands of licenses to hunt harp seal pups, whose silky white fur and big brown eyes make them the darlings of furriers and animal rights activists, respectively.

In 2005, 12-year-old Bryan Sturm became angry with his grandmother and aunt for verbally putting him down, and enacted vengeance with a double-barreled shotgun, shooting his aunt in the head, and after reloading, his grandmother in the chest. An Ohio jury convicted him of two counts of murder, but because of his age, he was sentenced to only a few years in prison. Years earlier, in Oregon, 15-year-old Kip Kinkel murdered his parents and two classmates, and wounded twenty-five others. In contrast to Bryan's light sentence, Kip was handed 111 years in prison.

Why are apes protected from harm while seal pups are hunted by the millions? What makes a 15-year-old responsible for his crimes but not a 12-year-old? What distinguishes those with moral rights and/or moral responsibilities from those lacking these attributes? The answer is mind: An entity's or person's mental capacities place the entity or person either inside or outside the moral circle. But what mental capacities specifically? The ability to critique Shakespeare and appreciate Wilde? The ability to speak or to cry "Ouch!" when poked? And what exactly is the moral circle to which having a mind gains one entrance? There seem to be two important moral circles: The first qualifies something for inviolable moral rights, the second

qualifies something for moral responsibility (see also Haslam, this volume). Membership in these circles is exactly what is at stake when we discuss the fates of chimps versus seals, and the responsibility of murdering adolescents. Research suggests that minds are perceived along two unique dimensions, each corresponding to one moral circle.

### *The Mind Survey*

To investigate the link between perceived mind and moral rights and responsibilities, we conducted an international study in which over 2000 respondents evaluated both the mental abilities and the moral standing of a number of different entities, including a dog, a normal adult, a child, a person in a persistent vegetative state, a fetus, a robot, a dead person, a chimpanzee, and God (Gray, Gray, & Wegner, 2007). Each respondent evaluated entities on either a specific mental capacity (e.g., the capacity to feel pain, the capacity to communicate), or on one of two moral questions. The first tapped moral rights and asked which entities would be most difficult for the participant to harm – in other words, which entities deserved more protection from harm. The second tapped moral responsibility and asked which entities should be most punished for causing someone's death.

When the survey responses were analyzed, the results were striking (Figure 1). First, people perceived the minds of these entities along two broad dimensions, which we labeled experience and agency. Experience is the general capacity for sensation and feelings and includes the capacities for hunger, fear, pain and pleasure. Agency, in contrast, is the capacity to do and intend, and includes the capacities for self-control, judgment, communication, and memory. These dimensions are independent in this analysis, which means that an entity can have agency without experience or experience without agency, and that mind-having is not simply a matter of degree (less versus more) but of type (agency, experience, or both). These

two dimensions of mind map onto other dimensions by which we perceive others, including warmth (experience) and competence (agency) (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007) as well as human nature (experience) and human uniqueness (agency) (Haslam, this volume; Haslam, Loughnan, Kashima, & Bain, 2008).

Of special importance, the survey indicated that the two types of moral standing were predicted by the two dimensions of mind. Experience – the capacity to feel – determined whether an entity deserved moral rights and protection from harm, while agency – the capacity to do and intend – endowed an entity with moral responsibility and warranted punishment for killing another. In the words of Aristotle, those with agency are moral agents – entities capable of doing good or evil, right or wrong – while those with experience are moral patients – capable of having good or evil, right or wrong, done to them. Only entities with self-control and judgment are truly capable of doing evil and able to be held accountable for their actions. Compare the wrongness of an adult killing a puppy with a toddler doing the same – the actions of the adult can be labeled evil, but it is much harder to call the toddler evil because he or she lacks the mental capacities that confer moral agency. Similarly, only someone with the capacity to feel pain and pleasure can truly be wronged. Both a tin can and a mailman might be punctured by a gunshot, but because only the mailman feels pain, only he is a moral patient who can be a victim of evil.

### *Types of Mind*

When the characters from the mind survey were plotted according to how much experience or agency each was seen to possess, clusters were revealed (Figure 1). Possessing both agency and experience, and so qualifying as both moral agents and moral patients, were adult humans, who can be both the perpetrators and victims of evil. Animals and children were

seen to be solely moral patients, with experience but reduced agency, explaining both why it is wrong to harm them and why they are not held morally accountable for their actions. Opposite to this corner of the graph was God, who can complete moral deeds (and possibly immoral deeds, depending upon what you believe about God's justness), but cannot be harmed by the actions of others – an omnipotent but unfeeling deity. The dead person, who lacked both experience and agency, was neither a moral agent nor a moral patient.

Perceptions of mind concerning other targets – and therefore the moral judgments concerning them – were less clear-cut. For example, fetuses and people in persistent vegetative states were seen to have intermediate amounts of experience, therefore leaving open the question of whether they are moral patients and deserve protection. Nowhere is this ambiguity more salient than in debates about abortion and the right of patients to remain indefinitely on life support, with those attributing mind to these entities arguing for human rights and those not attributing mind to them arguing against such rights.

That the two dimensions of mind link to two moral roles suggests that if there were more dimensions of mind there might also be more moral roles, but we propose that, in both morality and mind, two is the magic number. The dyadic roles of moral doer and recipient, agent and patient, are not simply aspects of the moral world; they define its very structure.

### *The Dyadic Structure of Morality*

#### *Morality Involves a Moral Agent Helping or Harming a Moral Patient*

Imagine a typical moral event, such as assault, murder, and theft (on the side of evil) or charity and rescue (on the side of good). Each of these acts requires at least two people, a person to assault, murder, steal, give, or rescue; and a person to be assaulted, murdered, stolen from, given to, or rescued. Indeed, without two people, these actions lose their moral status. Without a

moral agent (e.g., a thief), stealing becomes losing something; without a moral patient (e.g., a victim), stealing becomes finding something. Even the language of morality reflects this dyadic structure – you cannot simply kill or assault, you must kill or assault *someone*.

Some evidence for the necessity of both agent and patient for (im)morality comes from the work of Nichols and Knobe (2007), who presented people with a variety of potentially moral scenarios and found that only those with both a clear perpetrator and victim were judged as wrong. For example, rape but not tax evasion was seen as wrong because rape has a clear victim, while the harm of tax evasion is less obvious. If moral acts need both an agent and patient, the link between mind and morality implies that wrongdoing should involve both an evil intention on the part of a perpetrator (agency) and suffering on the part of a victim (‘patency’). In fact, these two criteria are explicitly stated by the law as necessary for wrongdoing under the terms *mens rea* and *actus reus*, respectively (Hart & Honoré, 1985).

*Mens rea* is translated as “guilty mind” and means that the person who perpetrated the act must have recognized the wrongness of the misdeed and have been able to act otherwise. In other words, the person had to be able to appreciate the distinction between right and wrong and be able to exert self-control – both capacities of agency. *Actus reus* is Latin for “guilty act” and means that someone must have done something wrong – usually by harming another person. Psychological research on moral decision-making has further confirmed the importance of these two components by finding that intentions (agency) and outcomes (patency) serve as the basis for judgments of wrongness (Cushman, 2008, this volume).

### *More Than Harm?*

Defining morality as involving a dyad in which one member (the agent) harms or helps the other member (the patient) may seem overly restrictive, especially in light of research that

finds that moral judgment extends beyond harm and justice to other domains, such as purity and respect for authority (Graham & Haidt, this volume; Haidt & Graham, 2007). We suggest, along with others (e.g., DeScioli & Kurzban, 2009), that these additional domains build on a harm-centered dyadic core of morality. Evidence for this suggestion comes from developmental science, which has shown that young infants are attuned to helping and harming behaviors (Bloom, this volume; Hamlin, Wynn, & Bloom, 2007). Infants and young children are also distressed by others' expressions of pain (Eisenberg, 2000; Martin & Clark, 1982; Zahn-Waxler, Robinson, & Emde, 1992), but presumably not by other moral violations. Anyone who has seen what young children put in their mouths may suspect that purity concerns and moral disgust are not innate.

Older children also provide support for the centrality of harm in moral judgments. For example, the work of Turiel (2002) and Nucci (1981) finds that although children see transgressions involving harm as morally wrong, other violations (e.g., defying authority, eating in a disgusting manner) are more often seen as violations of societal rules, customs, or norms rather than morality. Interestingly, the relative wrongness of these non-moral transgressions seems to depend on the presence of another person affected by them (i.e., a victim/moral patient).

Of course, the harm-based evolution of morality does not bar people from developing additional domains of morality, and in fact, the moral innateness of harm provides a way for other moral domains to be established. For example, violations of purity can be likened to something that induces physical or mental harm to the self or society. This is probably why when people talk about moral violations of other domains, they often fall back on the perceived harm it causes (Graham & Haidt, this volume; Haidt, 2001).



### *Completing the Moral Dyad*

*Morality Requires a Complete Dyad: An Isolated Moral Agent Creates a Moral Patient; an Isolated Moral Patient Creates a Moral Agent*

Although we have proposed that the core of morality is a dyad in which one person helps or harms another, it is possible to think of acts that seem wrong but involve only one person. Haidt and colleagues' example of someone having sex with a dead chicken and then eating it (Haidt, Koller & Dias, 1993), initially seems both wrong, harmless, and something one can do alone. Although these actions initially seem to involve no moral patient, we suggest that people typically do infer the presence of a victimized moral patient. In the case of dead-chicken sex-buffets, the victim could be the memory of the chicken, the children whose morals might be twisted by learning about this episode, or you gentle reader, who becomes psychologically scarred from thinking about how exactly you would have to position a chicken carcass for intercourse. Of course, examples can be constructed which explicitly deny the presence of a victim, but the point is that dyadic morality gives us an automatic victim detector – a reflex, like our leg jerking after being tapped on the knee. If something seems wrong, there must be someone harmed by it.

Informal evidence exists for this automatic moral patient detector. For example, those who think that homosexuality is wrong frequently cite the harm done to others, such as children (Bryant, 1977), and those who see the wrongness in flag burning point to the harm it indirectly causes our veterans (Welch, 2000, p. 173). In terms of psychological evidence, DeScioli (2008) finds that people cannot help but see victims in response to perceived wrongdoing, even for victimless offenses – a phenomenon he calls the “indelible victim effect.” In his studies, participants are presented with a variety of transgressions (e.g., eating dog, flag burning, grave

desecration, homosexuality, suicide) and are asked to rate both their wrongness and the extent to which each involves a victim. He finds that when people rate an offense as wrong, they perceive a victim 89% of the time, but when they do not perceive the offense as wrong, a victim is perceived only 15% of the time (DeScioli, 2008, p. 48), which suggests a strong link between moral wrongness and there being a moral patient. These studies suggest that even nondyadic moral situations are automatically squeezed into a dyadic template. Just as people will twist objective facts to support their moral judgments (Ditto, this volume), so too will they create a moral dyad to account for actions that seem wrong.

### *Suffering Needs a God*

Dyadic morality suggests that when we see an isolated moral agent, someone being immoral alone, we fill in the moral dyad by seeing a suffering victim. But if perpetrators need victims, it should also be the case that victims need perpetrators. In other words, people should complete the moral dyad for isolated moral patients by seeking moral agents to blame for unfair suffering. Anecdotally, it certainly appears that people are only too ready to blame (and sue) someone for their misfortune. Someone trips on the sidewalk and sues the homeowner, someone chokes on a hamburger and sues the cook, someone spills hot coffee on himself and chastises the company in court for not having sufficient warning labels. What happens, though, when harm befalls someone and there is no person or corporation to blame? If morality is dyadic, moral patients should need to find a moral agent, even if none is readily apparent. Luckily, there appears to be one entity powerful enough to accept blame for an entire universe of suffering – God.

There are lots of reasons to believe in God. He gives meaning to a potentially meaningless life (Paloutzian, 1981), He provides control in a chaotic world (Kay, Gaucher,

McGregor, & Nash, 2010), and He even acts as a surrogate parent by filling attachment needs (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1992); Shaver & Mikulincer, this volume). On top of these functions, we suggest that God is also the ultimate moral agent, the entity to which people attribute otherwise unattributable helps and harms. In this view, the main reason people see God acting in the world is not to explain the marvel of sunsets or the wonder of life, but rather to explain otherwise inexplicable salvation and suffering (Gray & Wegner, 2010a). Evidence suggests that people do see the hand of God in beneficial events. God is held responsible, for example, when a person is suddenly cured of disease or survives a potentially lethal “accident” (Pargament & Hahn, 1986; Pepitone & Saffiotti, 1997; Spilka & Schmidt, 1983), but there is reason to suspect that people perceive God more in cases of suffering than in cases of salvation, because negative events are consistently more powerful and in need of explanation than positive events (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; Taylor, 1991). Imagine the difference between getting a job and losing a job: Getting a job feels good, but not as good as losing a job feels bad. So although people may thank God for benefits received, they may be even more likely to view Him as the cause of a catastrophe. In the frame provided by Janoff-Bulman (this volume), people should be less inclined to see God for things that should happen, and more inclined to see Him for things that simply *shouldn't* happen.

There is certainly anecdotal evidence to support this claim; just look at newspapers and blogs after natural disasters and you will see the Almighty frequently invoked. People saw God's divine wrath behind the Haitian earthquake of 2010, with one televangelist suggesting that God was punishing the nation for a “pact with the devil” that Haitians made in the 17<sup>th</sup> century concerning slavery (Media Matters for America, 2010). In 2005, Ray Nagin, the mayor of New Orleans, saw evidence of God's hand in the devastation of Hurricane Katrina (Martel, 2006); in

2004, many saw evidence of God's displeasure in the Indonesian tsunami (deBorchgrave, 2005). In a more controlled study, we examined the link between suffering and belief in God in the United States.

The Pew Foundation collects statistics on the average level of religious belief in each state, and the United Health Foundation computes a "health index" for each state, which incorporates levels of infant mortality, cancer deaths, environmental pathogens, and even violent crime victimization. Taking the reverse of this health index yields a "suffering index" and the correlation between this measure and the proportion of people in each state who believe strongly in God is  $r(48) = .69, p < .001$  (Figure 2). This link remains significant even after controlling for median income and education (percent of people with bachelor's degrees),  $\beta = .37, p < .01$  (Gray & Wegner, 2010a).

These results suggest that when people suffer, they tend to hold God responsible for their plight. Of course, people should blame God for their suffering only when they cannot complete the moral dyad with another person, and one study suggests that this is the case (Gray & Wegner, 2010a). In this study, participants read one of four stories about a family on a picnic in the bottom of a ravine when water suddenly floods the valley. In half of the stories, the family escapes with no ill effects, in the other half, the entire family (including the dog) drowns in the flood. The stories are further divided such that sometimes the flood is caused by a dam worker upstream, while in the other half, there is no clear explanation of the flood. When people were asked to say how much the events in the story were "part of God's higher plan" they saw a significant role for the Almighty only when the family died and there was no other person to blame. This suggests that God serves as a surrogate moral agent to whom the cause of suffering is ascribed when no other person can be found.

Although people may believe in God for many reasons, suffering may prompt belief in God because of the dyadic nature of morality. Suffering may also evoke religious belief for additional reasons: People go to God for relief, and even when God is seen as causing suffering, He is often also ascribed a reasonable rationale for doing so. Nevertheless, it seems that an isolated moral patient needs a moral agent.

### *Intention and Suffering*

The dyadic nature of morality suggests that suffering needs to be ascribed to an intentional harm, but the link between suffering and intention also seems to function in reverse, whereby intention leads to suffering. This may seem odd, for unless someone possesses evil telekinetic powers, how can intention by itself harm another person? Barring the existence of mental death rays, it is still possible that the *perceived* intention of a moral agent can influence the experience of a moral patient. Imagine yourself receiving a slap from either a jilted lover or a friend trying to kill a mosquito – the insect-targeted slap would seem to hurt less because it lacks the emotional affront of the harmful one. Of course, the friendly slap would also likely be softer, but even an identical harm (e.g., a 50V electric shock) might hurt differently depending on the perceived intention behind it.

Perceived intention can change pain because pain represents not only the physical parameters of a harm, but also its emotional meaning. Intentional harms inflict not only the pain of the stimuli, but also the emotional sting of malice. Studies suggest that this is the case (Gray & Wegner, 2008). In one experiment, participants who received intentional electric shocks felt more pain than those who received accidental shocks. Moreover, follow up studies suggest that intentional shocks not only hurt more but engender a greater skin conductance response, suggesting that this effect extends beyond subjective experience to physiology.

These studies indicate, then, that not only does suffering lead to the perception of intentional agency, but perceptions of intentional agency also lead to increased suffering. This further supports the idea of dyadic morality – the notion that people possess a moral template that links agency and patiency, intention and outcomes, evil and suffering.

### *Moral Typecasting*

*Morality Requires Two Different People as Agent and Patient, Which Means That People Are Perceived as Either Agents or Patients, Both in Moral Acts and More Generally*

So far, we have discussed three parts of dyadic morality: the link between the two dimensions of mind perception and the two moral roles, dyadic help and harm, and the power of the moral dyad to complete itself, whether by finding patients to receive moral wrongs, or by finding agents to account for suffering. In the remainder of the chapter, we focus on the final part of dyadic morality: moral typecasting.

Picture a typical immoral act, such as a theft, in which one person (the thief) takes money from another person (the victim). Now imagine that the thief and the victim were the same person. The theft now turns into a person taking money from him- or herself – perhaps out of a wallet or bank account – but in either case, the act loses its moral punch. This thought experiment suggests that moral acts require a dyad consisting of two *different* people, and that for any single act, a person can be *either* the moral agent *or* the moral patient, but not both. Although this either/or restriction may seem obvious for a single moral act, research suggests that people perceive others more generally as either moral agents or moral patients, but not both (Gray & Wegner, 2009). This is called *moral typecasting*, for just as actors are typecast into certain roles which makes it difficult to see them in other roles (just try to imagine a cute child actor as a villain), so too are people typecast into the mutually exclusive moral roles of agent and

patient. These roles of agent and patient are not simply momentary viewpoints, but more enduring perceptions of character (Pizarro & Tannenbaum, this volume).

Most fundamentally, moral typecasting means that the more someone is seen as a moral agent (a hero or villain) the less he or she can be seen as a moral patient (a victim or beneficiary). Given the link between morality and mind, this means that the more someone is seen as capable of acting intentionally and earning blame or praise (moral agency), the less he or she should be seen as capable of feeling pain and pleasure (moral patiency). Indeed, when participants are asked to rate a variety of targets on their capacity for blame/praise and pain, an inverse relation is found such that those who earn blame (e.g., Hitler) and praise (e.g., Mother Teresa) are seen to be insensitive to pain, and those who are sensitive to pain (e.g., victims of crimes, orphans) are viewed as incapable of earning blame or praise (Gray & Wegner, 2009).

### *Blame, Pain, and Typecasting*

The inverse relation between moral agency and patiency can have some surprising effects. For example, perceiving moral agents to be less sensitive to pain may license people to harm them. Although this would be unsurprising in the case of evil agents – Who wouldn't want to heap pain upon Hitler? – it would be more interesting if people allot more pain to Mother Teresa simply because she seems relatively insensitive. Of course, people would be unlikely to spontaneously harm the saintly, but the idea is that, if people *had* to harm someone, they would sooner do it to Mother Teresa than to an ordinary person.

To test this idea, we asked participants to imagine that they had three pain-producing-pills to divide between pairs of people (an odd number was chosen so that someone would have to receive more pills). These potential pain recipients were drawn from a population of moral patients (e.g., an orphan), neutral people (e.g., a bank teller), good agents (e.g., Mother Teresa)

and bad agents (e.g., Hitler). When we looked at people's pill allocations, we found that, unsurprisingly, bad agents were assigned the most pain and patients the least. As predicted, however, Mother Teresa and her crew of altruists received more pain than ordinary people, suggesting that despite all of the good that heroes do, people are willing to assign them pain when someone has to be harmed (Gray & Wegner, 2009). These findings suggest that people harm good-doers not despite their good deeds, but because of them. By doing good, they appear less sensitive to pain and therefore are more likely to receive it from others. This assignment of suffering may seem unfair, but the concept of typecasting suggests that there are even more ways in which virtue fails to pay.

### *Typecasting and Blame*

People say that doing good is its own reward, but many of us intuitively believe that doing good is good for other reasons as well. Indeed, those who do good are admired and revered, and they often receive rewards in the form of accolades and medals (see Walker, this volume). What happens, however, when doers of good succumb to temptation and act immorally?

It would make sense for the misdeeds of heroes to be measured against their contributions to society, such that the more good people do, the less blame and punishment they receive for their mistakes. Typecasting suggests, however, that previous heroes should earn just as much blame as everyone else, if not more, because heroes are moral agents – who not only earn praise, but are also capable of earning blame. Moral typecasting suggests that in the conceptual space of morality, villains are close enough to heroes that it should take little to turn adoration into revulsion.



Evidence for the futility of virtue in escaping blame comes from studies in our laboratory showing that heroes are punished at least as much as ordinary people for misdeeds, even when the misdeeds can be interpreted more charitably (Gray & Wegner, 2010b). For example, if the Dali Lama and an ordinary person both take \$10 that does not belong to them, people punish the Dali Lama more harshly. While some may see the misdeeds of heroes as acts of hypocrisy (Monin & Merritt, this volume), the ultimate use of the money is unspecified, leaving space for a more charitable interpretation of the theft; it could be that His Holiness is using the money for orphans or to feed the homeless, but people withhold the benefit of the doubt and heap on blame. In another study, people assigned just as much blame to someone who cheated on a test after organizing a book drive for seniors as to someone who cheated after loitering and taking drugs outside the local mall (Gray & Wegner, 2010b).

The fine line between hero and villain is in contrast to the psychological distance between moral agents and patients. Because perceptions of moral agency and patiency oppose each other, moral patients (e.g., victims) should best escape blame. The same studies documenting the futility of heroism also highlight the power of victimhood; in contrast to heroes, who often receive more blame than neutral targets, victims consistently received less blame (Gray & Wegner, 2010b). Whether in the case of theft, negligence, vandalism, or simple callousness, those for whose previous harm was made salient were assigned less blame. These results suggest that when a person wishes to shirk blame, she or he should bemoan the difficulty of life and the harms received at the hands of others.

### *Typecasting and Torture*

The recommendation that one should play the victim to escape blame seems to run counter to the research showing that people blame victims in order to believe that the world is

just (Lerner, 1980; Lerner & Simmons, 1966). For example, victims of rape are frequently blamed for their misfortune because people do not want to believe that terrible things can happen to innocents (Furnham, 2003). But if just world theory says that victims earn more blame, and moral typecasting says that victims receive less blame, which is right? It turns out that both are right, depending on the circumstances. Blaming the victim depends on being emotionally involved with the victim's plight, so it is only when people feel uneasy that they view victims as guilty (Cialdini, Kenrick, & Hoerig, 1976). This suggests that putting some psychological distance between people and the suffering other will reduce dissonance and lead them to see that victim as less rather than more guilty.

People ascribing blame to victims is more than just an academic issue; it underlies the current debate about torture. Torture is supposed to reveal its victims' guilt, but it may instead just lead to the inference of guilt (Greenberg & Dratel, 2005). When people see another person in pain, their discomfort at the victim's suffering may cause them to perceive the victim as blameworthy and hence deserving of pain. On the other hand, those who are relatively distant from torture may follow the rules of typecasting and see the victims' suffering as evidence of innocence, because pain and blame are inconsistent with each other. The different predictions of just world/dissonance and typecasting may explain the debate on torture, with those closely associated with the torture justifying it, and those at greater distance condemning it.

We conducted a study to examine torture in the lab. Participants learned of a young woman suspected of stealing and then listened as she was tortured by having her hand submerged in ice-water. Half of the participants met this suspect face to face and sat next-door during the torture, while the other half did not meet her and only listened to a recording of previous torture. Thus, although both were exposed to torture, only the first group of participants

were nearby and felt complicit in the victim's suffering. After the presumably painful torture, participants rated the likely guilt of the victim. As predicted, those nearby the torture acted in line with just world/dissonance predictions and ascribed more blame following the painful torture, whereas those at a greater distance did the opposite, in line with typecasting predictions (Gray & Wegner, 2010c).

Thus, those far from suffering appear to sympathize with victims, whereas those involved react harshly. This suggests that for judgments of blame, victimhood helps except when those doing the blaming are close to the victim's suffering. In addition to exploring the moderators of typecasting, this study demonstrates the flexibility of important moral judgments. Most of us would like to think we take strong stands on moral issues, but these data and the work of others in this volume suggests that both moral judgments and behavior hinge on situational factors (Ayal & Gino, this volume; Cushman & Greene, this volume; Eyal & Liberman, this volume; Skitka, this volume).

### *Becoming Agentic*

The research on typecasting reviewed so far examines when *other* people perform or receive moral deeds. What happens when we ourselves do good or evil? Does moral typecasting apply to oneself? Research suggests that typecasting not only applies to oneself, but that it can change people's capacity for physical agency.

It has long been known that self-perceptions can act as self-fulfilling prophecies, such as when people who are led to see themselves as extroverted actually become more extraverted (Bem, 1967; Fazio, Effrein, & Falender, 1981). It may be that self-perceptions of moral agency are also self-fulfilling, such that when people are led to see themselves as moral agents, they actually become more agentic. If this is the case, it would suggest that agency – self-control,

tenacity, and willpower – is a consequence and not a precursor of good deeds. Perhaps someone like Gandhi was not born with the capacity for heroism, but acquired it by attempting to do good. This may be one reason why moral agents differ from normal people (Walker, this volume) – their moral deeds have transformative power.

The power of moral deeds to increase agency was tested by allowing people to do good before measuring their physical self-control. Study participants were given a dollar and either told to keep it or told they could donate it to charity. They were then asked to hold up a 5lb weight for as long as possible. Those who did good by donating the dollar to charity were able to hold up the weight significantly longer (Gray, in press), suggesting that doing good may not just feel good (Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008), it may also increase agency. Of course, because moral agents can be either good or evil, doing (or thinking of oneself doing) evil should also increase agency. This appears to be the case, as people who wrote fictional stories about themselves doing good or evil could hold a weight longer than those who wrote about a more neutral deed (Gray, in press). In fact, people who wrote evil stories held the weight somewhat longer, suggesting that evil deeds – like violence – may not only get people what they want (Baumeister, this volume), but may confer an agency boost. Of course, there are other reasons to recommend good deeds over evil ones, but whether a person does good or evil, moral typecasting seems to work through moral deeds, transforming the weak into the mighty. This suggests that perhaps the best route to increased self-control and physical endurance or recovery from trauma (Pearlman, this volume) and psychopathology (Doron, this volume) is to do moral deeds.

### *Summary*

Morality is complex. The ways in which people make moral judgments, why people behave badly, and society's options for making people do good are all difficult issues. Nevertheless, we have shown that many questions about morality can be answered by focusing on its dyadic nature, which affects how people ascribe moral rights and responsibilities, why people harm saints and free victims, why many believe in God, and how moral deeds can change people's agency.

In particular, the dyadic approach to morality suggests that (a) morality involves an agent helping or harming a patient; (b) conceptions of mind and morality are related; (c) moral dyads need to be completed; and (d) any one person is viewed as either a moral agent or a moral patient. Of course, morality can take a variety of forms, many of which are discussed elsewhere in this volume, but the dyadic perspective on morality suggests that, despite appearances, all moral situations share a fundamental structure. Inside every instance of right or wrong beat two hearts.

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