Consistency and moral integrity: A self-determination theory perspective

Alexios Arvanitis   and   Konstantinos Kalliris

University of Crete   De Montfort University

Author Note

Alexios Arvanitis, Department of Psychology, University of Crete and Konstantinos Kalliris, Leicester De Montfort Law School, Leicester, UK.

Please address correspondence to Alexios Arvanitis, Department of Psychology, University of Crete, Tel. +3028310-77523, E-mail: a.arvanitis@uoc.gr

Abstract

If acting morally can be viewed as acting consistently with a moral principle or rule, then being a person with moral integrity can be viewed as consistently applying moral principles or rules across different types of situations. We advance a view of moral integrity that incorporates three distinct, but interrelated, types of moral consistency: cognitive, emotional and motivational moral consistency. Our approach is based on Self-Determination Theory, a motivational theory that can explain when a moral rule becomes the primary motive for behavior. We argue that moral integrity is achieved when a person acts on the basis of an internal moral system of principles, emotions and motives and provide an account of the way that it develops during a person's interaction with the environment.

Keywords: self-determination theory, moral integrity, cognitive consistency, morality, emotional integration

Consistency and Moral Integrity: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective

Consistency is a concept that emerges in most discussions of morality. Its importance is exemplified through the exploration of moral dilemmas, such as the trolley problem (Foot, 1967), which are used extensively in moral psychology and philosophy. It is not unusual for two moral principles, which both seem to be adopted by an individual, to support two utterly incompatible courses of action. Think of a scientist who simultaneously believes that i) it is a mother's duty to provide for her children and ii) science should never be used to cause suffering. Faced with the moral dilemma of either working for the weapons industry or allowing her children to starve, the scientist must reassess her moral principles, as they seem to contradict each other. This does not necessarily imply that the principles are always inconsistent. However, the core concern here seems to be related to some form of inconsistency, which emerges when applying the principles to certain situations. In line with deontological and rule utilitarian philosophical approaches, we will focus on (in)consistency of behavior with a principle. The term consistency will not refer to behavioral consistency, the lack of which is not a sign of moral failing once the complexity of social situations is taken into account (Nucci, 2019). We will instead focus on the type of consistency that allows individuals to behave in a principled manner.

Although the situation in the above example might appear theoretical and rare, people will face different moral challenges of a smaller or larger magnitude. A person of moral integrity should be able to resolve moral dilemmas and consistently act in a principled manner. This implies the possession of attributes that enable or cause moral behavior consistently. One way to discuss moral consistency is to focus on personality traits, such as the Honesty-Humility dimension of the HEXACO model of personality (Ashton, Lee, & De Vries, 2014) and the conscientiousness dimension

of a Five-Factor model (Ones, Viswesvaran, & Schmidt, 1993), or on the broader

concept of moral character (Fleeson, Furr, Jayawickreme, Meindl, & Helzer, 2014; for

a critical view on character see Doris, 2002). According to this approach, an

individual with certain 'moral' character traits would act according to these relatively

stable traits, which produce moral acts with high cross-situational consistency.

However, this type of character-focused consistency whereby a trait is seen as a broad

'moral' quality is not likely to help our scientist when two moral principles are in

conflict, as in the case of the moral dilemma presented above. These types of moral

dilemmas serve as a reminder of the complexity of moral consistency. Regardless of

which option the scientist opts for, she could be described as both consistent and

inconsistent, depending on various factors, including how strongly she is committed

to the moral principles in question. The principles per se are not inherently

inconsistent, as mentioned above, for one can be a humanitarian scientist and a self-

sacrificing responsible parent at the same time. In fact, in most cases, she will be able

to make a choice that is consistent with both humanitarianism and parental

responsibility. However, in this particular situation, she needs to rely on more settled

views on the relative importance of these principles.

To add to the difficulty of 'weighing' principles properly, social situations

offer subtle contextual cues, which influence the perceived relevance or importance of

the principles. Take for example the classic Good Samaritan experiment (Darley &

Batson, 1973), in which seminary students were placed in a position in which they

could help a person in need, as they passed him by in an alleyway. Instead of their

level of religiosity predicting helping behavior, it was a situational variable, namely

whether participants were in a hurry, that predicted the offer of help. Since

participants were on their way to give a talk, it can be argued that they also felt that

they had a duty to be on time. Therefore, when they were in a hurry, that duty became salient and overpowered the duty to help. The force of situational aspects is often subtle, but powerful. If we consider moral individuals as individuals that behave morally in a consistent manner, then they should be able to do so in different types of situations that pose significant challenges for consistency. If it is important for them to help people in need, then they should be able to properly weigh the importance of the probability of being five minutes late for giving a talk.

At the same time as resolving conflict between two seemingly opposing principles in complex situations, moral individuals should not only behave consistently with moral principles that are objectively perceived so or imposed by others; they should endorse the principles themselves in a state of reflective endorsement (Korsgaard, 1996). In a psychological, motivational account of morality that draws from Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Arvanitis (2017) argued that this is only possible at the motivational state of integrated regulation, where coherence and consistency of the moral rule with a person's broader value system is possible. A person who has achieved such an appropriate level of consistency may be able to resolve these conflicts through a system of values, moral rules and principles in a scheme that is reminiscent of Frankfurt's self-integration scheme of first-order desires and second-order desires, i.e. desires about desires (Frankfurt, 1987). Morality in this case relies on a level of consistency that would allow a person to resolve moral dilemmas by being able to determine which moral principles properly apply and how to prioritize them.

This is arguably the essence of moral integrity: having an *internal moral system* as a guide for behavior in the context of different situations. Thinking of integrity in terms of this moral system, and not in terms of a general moral propensity,

allows us to approach the way in which individuals with moral integrity deal with everyday moral challenges. The question we will here consider is how such an internal moral system develops. We will move past trait-based and situational-based accounts and use the framework of SDT, which views human motivation in light of the organism's continuous interaction with the environment. During that interaction and with the proper nutriments, a person is able to integrate aspects of the environment and resolve inconsistencies (Ryan & Deci, 2017). In terms of moral rules, we argue that the inconsistencies may be of cognitive, emotional and motivational nature, as explained below. By the end of our analysis, it should become evident how we can approach moral integrity in terms of this three-fold moral consistency that develops during the organism's interaction with the environment.

Cognitive consistency

Cognition is an intuitively appealing starting point for the study of moral behavior. However, resolving cognitive inconsistencies in order to achieve consistency with a moral rule is not a simple endeavor. Moral rules can be thought of as cognitive elements prescribing behavior. There may be higher order rules, such as general principles of human interaction, and lower order rules, such as specific work rules. According to Balance Theory (Heider, 1958), people will seek balance among these different prescriptions and their behavior. This, in itself, is not an easy task to undertake. Even on a strictly rational level, an individual would be required to construct a hierarchy of rules, with general principles at the top and lower rules at the bottom, in order to behave morally with a high level of consistency. This sketch of consistency is similar to Frankfurt's effort to describe the integrated self as a consistent self who fully identifies with different levels of volitions (for example, desires for valuable things generate first-order volitions and desires to desire valuable

things generate second-order volitions). Our ability to reflect on these volitions and attach different weights to them is, at least in part, responsible for the existence of this two-level scheme. So, a person with integrity does not act randomly according to the most powerful desire at any given moment but rather reflects on it and critically assesses what she values in order to create a harmonious system (Frankfurt, 1971). Our scientist, of course, seems to have a different kind of problem, as two higher-order desires to abide by her chosen moral principles are in conflict. In real life, even harmonizing higher and lower-order rules can be tricky. A higher, universal principle might be that people ought not to lie, while a lower rule might be that negotiation should be conducted with frankness. If, in some cases, individuals may think it would be best not to tell the truth, then they would be required to classify their behavior either as something other than a lie (maybe a white lie) or as a lie altogether and produce an overarching principle, for example the protection of the dignity of others, that would compensate for the initial inconsistency with the 'no-lying' principle. Even this seemingly simple example will find seasoned philosophers disagreeing on a consistent set of principles and rules that would prescribe moral behavior in all given circumstances.

The path toward consistency is more challenging than the preceding discussion reveals. In their attempt to achieve consistency of rules, principles, and behavior, individuals are susceptible to cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), especially when they have a sense of personal responsibility and are likely to bring about aversive consequences with their actions (Cooper & Fazio, 1984) or, more generally, when their freely chosen behavior violates important aspects of the self-concept (Thibodeau, & Aronson, 1992). More relevant to our discussion is the self-standards model of cognitive dissonance (Stone & Cooper, 2001), where dissonance

is considered to be experienced when there is a discrepancy between individuals'

behavior and their self-expectancies for the self-attributes of competence and

morality. According to this account, the process involves a comparison between

behavior and a self-standard brought to mind in a specific context, for example

between the behavior of bluffing and the self-standard of sincere interaction with

others. Individuals may resolve the discomfort experienced by a perceived

discrepancy through attitude change, self-justification, even trivialization of dissonant

cognitions (Simon, Greenberg, & Brehm, 1995) or, in our case, trivialization of a

moral principle or rule. Dissonance may thus lead to rationalizations that aim to

protect self-esteem, even at the expense of the moral character of a person's behavior

or attitude. An extreme example is the derogation of a victim, when people feel they

cannot alleviate her suffering (Lerner & Simmons, 1966). A pertinent account of self-

protective rationalization is offered by Bandura's (1999) theory of moral

disengagement, particularly stressing the role of moral agency.

　　　　According to the account presented above, on the one hand, cognitive

consistency can facilitate the alignment of behavior with higher moral rules and, on

the other hand, it may lead to the distortion of moral rules for the protection of a

person's self-esteem. In the latter case, individuals exhibit selective attention in order

to avoid ego-threatening information and cling to ego-enhancing interpretations,

thereby facilitating the compartmentalization or fracturing of the self (Brown & Ryan,

2004). For example, a person may both adopt the scruples of a ruthless entrepreneur at

work and abide by the role of a loving father at home so long as the two are relatively

isolated within the psyche (Ryan & Deci, 2003). Such compartmentalization allows

individuals to defend themselves against negative self-attributes and negative feelings

that accompany unethical behavior. Conversely, integration would allow individuals

to confront unethical behavior (Thomas, Ditzfeld, & Showers, 2013). Our scientist's response to her dilemma will not be morally sound on all grounds if the principles are compartmentalized and the scientist is protected from facing the fact that, in these circumstances, she cannot be both a responsible mother and a humanitarian. It is therefore not enough for individuals to employ cognitive resources in order to create a coherent hierarchy of moral principles and rules; there are deeper self-related processes that facilitate moral consistency.

Even with this initial discussion on the role of cognitive consistency in morality, it becomes evident that moral integrity cannot be treated as a mere rational task of producing a consistent moral system of rules and principles. Haidt (2001) also argued that moral judgment does not exclusively rest upon strict moral reasoning but on intuitions. We can think of people as intuitive philosophers struggling to create a consistent set of moral rules while interacting with each other and the environment. In order to get a full grasp of this process we need to go beyond rational cognitive consistency into the analysis of emotional and motivational consistency.

Emotional consistency

The challenges of cognitive consistency notwithstanding, there is growing literature advancing the position that both reason and emotions shape our moral convictions and determine our moral actions (Saunders, 2016). The question that naturally emerges is what role emotions have in shaping moral actions and whether emotions are a part of the internal moral system described here. If consistency with (and among) one's moral principles and rules is important, should we be looking for a similar type of *emotional consistency* in moral judgment and action? If so, what qualifies as emotional inconsistency?

The starting point of our analysis is the basic distinction between self-conscious emotions (guilt, shame, embarrassment, pride) and other-focused emotions (anger, contempt, disgust, elevation, gratitude, compassion) (e.g., Haidt, 2003; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). In terms of consistency, we should ask whether certain moral norms go hand-in-hand with certain moral emotions, sometimes defining the nature of the moral character of a behavior. Although we could use moral norms to describe which emotions are moral or do the opposite, that is, use moral emotions to describe which norms are moral (Prinz & Nichols, 2010), we will adopt an SDT perspective on how both emotions and norms relate to the self.

According to an SDT account of morality, Arvanitis (2017) argued that authentic moral behavior is an autonomous, self-determined form of behavior because it does not entail contingencies beyond the application of a moral norm. Any sense of 'ought' that does not emanate from the self, in a way that the principle or rule underlying the behavior becomes the reason for the act, will inevitably cast doubt upon the moral character of the act. In this light, certain emotions would serve as a manifestation of authentic, autonomous motivational processes that support the implementation of a moral rule whereas other emotions would serve as a sign of self-serving, distorting, defensive motivational processes. We will argue that other-focused emotions are more likely to manifest consistency with a moral rule whereas self-focused emotions may in fact undermine such consistency. What we are essentially in search of is which emotions are intertwined with a moral rule and how the self can prove useful in their disentanglement from other emotions.

Moral rules are prescriptions for interacting with other people and therefore, by their very nature, are directed toward others. Of course, it is the self that engages in moral other-oriented behavior, but the focus is on others rather than the self. The self

here becomes a medium for the observance of the rule and refers to the self-as-

process, the I and not the me (for this distinction see Ryan & Deci, 2017). If

emotional consistency is important (and we argue that it is, especially with regard to

moral integrity), emotions have to be other-oriented at the same time. For example,

prosocial behavior would be expected to align with sympathy and compassion, that is,

specific other-focused emotions that are pertinent to the situation and not guilt for

failing to provide help. If the locus of attention switches from the others to the self,

the behavior will cease to be as much about others and will start being about one's

own self (the self-as-me). Therefore, in helping others, self-conscious emotions will

re-orient individuals toward the self and may trigger ego-protecting defensive

mechanisms, possibly leading them astray from moral rules that were aimed to help

others. We will return to this point.

Other-focused moral emotions are also about how the behavior of others is

consistent with moral rules, rather than only how the behavior of the self is so. They

are directed toward upholders or violators of rules. Anger has been linked to

individual rights violations, contempt to violations of community codes and disgust to

violation of purity-sanctity (Rozin, Lowery, Imada, & Haidt, 1999; cf. Hutcherson, &

Gross, 2011). Elevation is elicited by other people exceeding moral standards and has

been linked to prosocial behavior. Gratitude is elicited by being benefited by others

(Algoe, & Haidt, 2009). All the above emotions seem to align with specific norms,

without, however, necessarily providing a one-to-one link to moral behavior. Not

every feeling of anger or gratitude is connected to a moral rule. Not every rule has a

corresponding emotion. Also, not all other-focused emotions exhibit the same

properties with regard to moral behavior. For example, whereas it is easier to see how

empathy is linked to moral social behavior, "righteous anger" can both be associated

with morally justifiable retribution on the one hand, and with error-prone cognitive biases leading to vigilantism on the other hand (Tripp & Bies, 2010). Therefore, other-focused moral emotions do not necessarily lead to moral behavior. Still, both moral rules and other-focused emotions concentrate on others, making their coexistence in the context of moral behavior likely.

Self-conscious emotions have a different focus and only an indirect link to moral rules. Once the self-as-process behaves in a manner that is either consistent or inconsistent with moral rules, the behavior reflects on the self-as-me, involving the real or imagined evaluations of others (Leary, 2004). It is through this reflection that self-conscious emotions emerge (for cognitive self-evaluative models see Lewis, 2016; Tracy & Robins, 2007). However, not all self-conscious emotions operate in the same way. Shame and hubristic pride are directed to global and stable properties of the self-concept whereas guilt and achievement-oriented pride, as well as embarrassment, are directed to less stable and specific situations (Tracy & Robins, 2004). In all cases these emotions may be associated with ego-involvement, which is an internal self-esteem-based pressure for specific outcomes (Ryan, 1982). Ego-involvement will trigger defensive, ego-protecting processes rather than the tendency to do what is right. It should be higher in cases where moral self-evaluation generalizes across the self-concept rather than restricted in specific situations where amendments may be possible. When such generalization takes place, consistency with a moral rule becomes more challenging because it undermines the trait self-esteem of the individual. Instead of adhering to a moral norm, the individual is likely to become defensive, even at the expense of adherence to the moral rule. Compared to more situational emotions, shame and hubristic pride should therefore present greater difficulty for behaving morally. This account may provide an explanation for why

shame mainly restrains immoral conduct while guilt promotes moral conduct (Sheikh, & Janoff-Bulman, 2010) or why hubristic, and not authentic, pride undermines moral behavior (Krettenauer, & Casey, 2015). It seems that the more situational the nature of the self-conscious emotions, the less probable that they will pose an obstacle to moral behavior.

We could therefore argue that the more global and stable the attribution of a moral transgression or of a moral action to the self-as-me, the stronger is the control on the individual and the less flexibility is allowed for the self-as-process (the *I*) to accommodate and adhere to moral norms. As long as a self-conscious moral emotion is specifically situated, more flexibility is permitted for an alignment of cognitions and emotions leading to a moral act. The usefulness of self-conscious emotions in moral acts is therefore dependent upon the openness and flexibility with which the individual will process these emotions. This point can be made for moral emotions in general, whether they are self-conscious, such as guilt, or other-focused, such as anger. It is not only what type of emotions individuals experience, but how they regulate those emotions that matters as well. Returning to the scientist in our example, her decision would be considered moral if it were accompanied by love and sympathy for her children or the whole of humanity rather than by the experience of shame or guilt. Still, guilt might not be as detrimental as shame with regard to the morality of her decision, since it would be easier for the scientist to regulate guilt in a way that would not overwhelm or control her. In other words, it would be easier for her to regulate her behavior on the basis of what is right rather than on the basis of what would protect her self-esteem.

When faced with a moral dilemma, individuals will probably not be experiencing a single emotion. Any social situation requiring moral judgment could

evoke different types of emotions. For example, people may find it difficult to accept a moral norm that runs contrary to their interests, their past behavior, or another moral rule, thereby invoking, say, anxiety or guilt, alongside gratitude or compassion. The feelings can be overwhelming or overcontrolled, leading to rigid adherence to incoherent principles. Instead, the same emotions can be mindfully perceived and treated as informational inputs for moral growth and integrity. Such flexibility is offered by the capacity to manage volitionally one's emotions, a capacity called emotional integration (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick, & La Guardia, 2006). It involves being open even to negative emotions, which, if mindfully processed, can result in subsequent lower arousal and better cognitive functioning, when compared to emotional distancing (Roth et al., 2018; Roth, Vansteenkiste, & Ryan, 2019). Through integrative emotion regulation, it is likely that emotional conflict will be approached with high flexibility, leading in turn to an alignment of moral rules and emotions, i.e. emotional consistency.

Moral integrity does not simply refer to a property of the individual that causes moral behavior in one, isolated instance, but in a substantial range of situations. If, as we have argued, a behavior is considered moral only when it is consistent with a moral rule, cognitions and emotions should point toward the adherence of that rule through an integrated, rather than fragmented, mode of functioning. Otherwise, a fragmented self would apply different criteria to similar situations and exhibit contradictory emotions. Both cognitions and emotions would then be part of the internal moral system that guides moral behavior. In order to better understand how moral emotions and moral norms may harmoniously combine to induce moral behavior we need to probe deeper into the motivational process of integration.

Motivational consistency

An important psychological question that arises from the discussion above is how impersonal ought standards, which are irrespective of a person's wishes (Heider, 1958), become integrated in the self and create a consistent set of moral principles and rules that are harmoniously intertwined with corresponding moral emotions across different types of situations. In this section, we will explore how this internal moral system develops through the motivational process of integration. In our view, motivation is a central element of moral behavior and any inconsistency on this level could deeply undermine it.

Self-Determination Theory adopts an organismic-dialectical perspective, stressing the inherent potential of the organism to actualize its potentials, integrate new experiences and aspects of the environment and operate from a unified, coherent self. At the same time, it focuses on the active role of the environment in nurturing or thwarting these intrinsic tendencies (Ryan & Deci, 2002). The interaction between the individual and the environment can result in differing levels of integrity, ranging from a whole and coherent self (wherein different aspects, cognitive and emotional, are harmoniously interconnected) to a fragmented, reactive self (wherein different aspects are isolated from each other).

Moral integrity should be subject to the same fundamental process of organismic integration. If, as we have argued, consistency with a moral rule is achieved when a person has achieved both cognitive and emotional consistency, this is more easily attainable when operating from an integrated, rather than a fragmented self. According to SDT, this distinction is not dichotomous, but can be represented along a continuum. We will analyze this continuum in terms of the example of prosocial behavior, which is generally seen as moral behavior. We will begin with

less autonomous types of motivation and end with the most autonomous types of motivation.

On the one end there is amotivation, the most alienated form of motivation, where a person sees no value in acting or does not feel competent enough to engage in prosocial behavior. Next is external regulation, where a person, for example, engages in prosocial behavior in order to attain a monetary reward or avoid a fine. This behavior will not generally be considered moral because the primary motive here is the attainment of a reward or the avoidance of punishment rather than the moral rule itself. Next comes introjected regulation, where a person engages in prosocial behavior in order to maintain or enhance self-worth. The person has only partly internalized the importance of prosocial behavior and behaves morally primarily to avoid self-administered punishments, such as guilt or shame, and attain self-administered rewards, such as pride. This is an important and complicated form of motivation with regard to morality, since it is associated with most self-conscious emotions. Assor, Vansteenkiste, and Kaplan (2009) make a useful distinction between introjected avoidance and introjected approach motivation (the former aims at the avoidance of low self-worth and the latter aims at the attainment of high self-worth) and find introjected avoidance motivation more controlling and less autonomous than introjected approach motivation. In relation to self-focused emotions, an interesting topic of research might be whether shame and hubristic pride operate more on the level of introjected avoidance motivation whereas guilt, embarrassment and authentic pride more on the level of introjected approach motivation. However, neither of these types of motivation exhibit the autonomy that would be expected in terms of a self-endorsed adoption of a moral rule.

A more autonomous type of motivation is regulation through identification, where a person identifies with the value of prosocial behavior. Although the person here identifies with the moral rule, thereby making the rule a deciding factor of behavior, identifications in general may still remain compartmentalized especially if associated with negative events (see Weinstein, Deci, & Ryan, 2011). At the level of integrated regulation though, prosocial behavior should be deeply assimilated and in full coherence with a person's whole system of values, principles and rules. Acting in accordance with a rule becomes a natural extension of the self and is autonomously regulated. It is at this type of motivation that we would expect to find the level of cognitive and emotional consistency we have been arguing for. Integration, for example, would ensure that a person would not exhibit self-fragmentation allowing him to be both a loving father and a ruthless entrepreneur at the same time. Finally, there is intrinsic regulation, where individuals engage in prosocial behavior because they find it satisfying and enjoyable. This type of motivation is associated more with intrinsic inclinations than with a moral rule and therefore cannot be classified as moral behavior in terms of motivation and moral integrity (for more on this, see Arvanitis, 2017).

Although the preceding analysis provides a roadmap for understanding the type of motivation that is connected to moral behavior, it does not explain how and when integration can be supported. Drawing on the work of Deci et al. (1994), who studied how people develop self-regulation for activities that are not inherently satisfying, Arvanitis (2017) proposed that three contextual events will allow for integration of moral norms: providing meaningful rationale for the adoption of a moral norm, acknowledging the feelings of conflict between an inclination and the adoption of a moral norm, and conveying choice so that a person is allowed to take

responsibility. A closer look will reveal that the underlying psychological processes

may in fact be related to the three types of consistency that have been analyzed above.

Firstly, providing *meaningful rationale* is closely connected to cognitive

consistency. Showing people that a specific moral norm is consistent with values and

principles that they already endorse is likely to facilitate a cognitive process of

alignment of this norm with the true self. It therefore provides the cognitive basis for

the adoption (i.e., integration) of a moral norm. This type of cognitive consistency

does not necessarily extend to emotions. Secondly, *acknowledging possible feelings of

conflict* is supportive of the process of emotional integration. It invites individuals to

process emotions non-defensively and act according to deeply held values. Such a

process will be facilitated if emotional conflict is acknowledged in the first place.

Thirdly, equally important for integration is the *conveyance of choice* as well as a

sense of responsibility. Keeping in mind that cognitive and emotional consistency is

not achieved in a vacuum, but within the person, the 'self' represents the most

important aspect of integration. It is the center of the whole process, which brings all

other cognitions and emotions in line with it. When this type of motivational

consistency is achieved, it will be accompanied by a sense of choice and

responsibility. As evidenced by Deci et al. (1994), the opposite also holds: offering

choice supports integration. In fact, their research shows that all the above-mentioned

contextual events facilitate integration whereas limited presence or lack thereof leads

to introjection.

The motivational aspect of integration and the nutrients that support it is best

captured by SDT's concept of needs, treated as "innate psychological nutriments that

are essential for ongoing psychological growth, integrity and well-being" (Deci &

Ryan, 2000, p. 229). Research in the field has identified three basic psychological

needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness that, when satisfied, lead to integrity and growth, or, when thwarted, lead to fragmentation and defensiveness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The more an environment is supportive of the three needs, the more the organism is able to bring experiences into a unity. Arvanitis (2017) argued that environmental principles that create need-supportive environments are likely to be integrated themselves and will therefore represent authentic moral principles.

The whole procedure discussed so far goes beyond simple cognitive or emotional consistency and ascribes a central role to the natural intrinsic growth tendencies of the self that energize the whole process of moral behavior. In this sense, it is the self that determines the moral character of an act or, in other words, moral integrity is the defining property of moral behavior. On the question of whether the integrated self is capable of producing consistent behavior, Koestner, Bernieri, and Zuckerman (1992) found that individuals who self-regulate are more likely to behave accordingly with their attitudes and traits. Similar future research in the field of moral psychology will ideally serve as a test for the type of motivational consistency that we describe above.

From consistency to moral integrity

In the preceding discussion of consistency, the self plays a central role and serves as the main link among the three types of (in)consistencies. In all three types, we basically refer to the consistency of behavior with a moral principle or rule, not as it might appear on the outside, but from within the self. In order to better understand how such consistency manifests itself we focused on cognitions, emotions and motives. In terms of cognitive consistency, moral rules and principles have to align with each other to form a coherent set of imperatives that is liable to the distortion of cognitive dissonance when there are discrepancies with the self-attribute of morality.

In terms of emotional consistency, moral rules and principles have to align with emotions that are not connected to introjects and contingent self-esteem but are, instead, autonomously processed by the self through integrative emotion regulation. In terms of motivational consistency, intrinsic tendencies have to align with moral principles and corresponding emotions so that rules and emotions are properly integrated in the self. In the end, the integrated self is where cognitions, emotions and motives align in order to produce moral behavior. This alignment creates an internal moral system that, we submit, lies at the core of moral integrity.

The level of moral integrity essentially corresponds to the quality of that internal moral system. The more individuals integrate moral principles during the interaction with their environment the more it becomes broad, refined and honed in a manner that it produces moral behavior across diverse situations that are often characterized by demanding moral dilemmas. As long as people operate from integrated regulations, they will act consistently with the moral principles they have integrated.

Different types of situations would, of course, pose different types of moral dilemmas. As individuals are faced with such dilemmas, it is how they interact with their environment that determines whether they will operate from an integrated self or from a fragmented self. On the one hand, an environment which is need-supportive, that is, conducive to the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, is more likely to help the individual process the situation openly and behave according to inherent values and principles. On the other hand, irrespective of environmental need support, individuals may have a propensity for the development of moral integrity. High reasoning skills would support cognitive consistency, high other-focused empathy (that is, an affective

reaction that is more appropriate to the conditions of others - see Hoffman, 2001)

would support emotional consistency, and an autonomy orientation (Deci & Ryan,

1985) would support motivational consistency, all of which may be properly

considered as aspects of moral character. Moral integrity is likely to arise during -

different- need supportive situations that pose moral dilemmas for an individual who,

in turn, has the propensity to achieve all types of moral consistency.

 A question worth considering is what type of moral principles would a person

of moral integrity be expected to endorse under this SDT perspective. A first attempt

at answering this question was offered, on the basis of a procedural account of

morality that builds on the principles of organismic integration, by Arvanitis (2017).

He argued that an SDT account of morality would not be relativistic, but universal, in

a way in which Kantian morality is universal. People would not integrate norms that

often require the threat of punishment in order to be maintained, such as the "ideals"

put forward by authoritarian regimes, and would instead integrate moral principles

that are often advocated by established theories of political and moral philosophy. To

take this reasoning further, the moral system constitutes a system of coherent, well-

aligned moral principles that the individual actively and reflectively brings into

congruence with other aspects of the self. This process involves a possible

modification of principles and accommodation with other internalized principles. A

person of moral integrity, that is a person with a highly developed moral system, will

have undergone an arduous process of constant assessment of principles that would

make the endorsement of broadly considered immoral principles highly unlikely. Of

note, these ideas have to be empirically tested in order to gain more support.

 These points support the view that integrity is closely connected to the process

of self-integration and can be further explored through the lens of SDT in the way that

we have described. Coming to consistently abide by our higher-order moral principles is a complex process which involves all three of the above sub-processes (the cognitive, the emotional and, perhaps most obviously, the motivational). This complex process is better described not as a lonely consideration of abstract principles but as a combination of these sub-processes, which heavily depend on environmental stimuli and support. Therefore, in order to be moral, our scientist does not simply need to answer the question 'which principle is more important for you?' as a philosopher would in a scholarly article. Neither can she rely on an abstract positive moral character trait of hers. Depending on her propensities, experiences and environmental support she will have developed an internal moral system of motives, principles and emotions, which will facilitate the consistent application of her higher-order principles to practical situations. As difficult as it may be to achieve, this is the essence of moral integrity.

References

Algoe, S. B., & Haidt, J. (2009). Witnessing excellence in action: The 'other-praising'

emotions of elevation, gratitude, and admiration. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, *4*, 105-127. doi: 10.1080/17439760802650519

Arvanitis, A. (2017). Autonomy and morality: A Self-Determination Theory discussion of ethics. *New Ideas in Psychology*, *47*, 57-61. doi: 10.1016/j.newideapsych.2017.06.001

Ashton, M. C., Lee, K., & De Vries, R. E. (2014). The HEXACO Honesty-Humility, Agreeableness, and Emotionality factors: A review of research and theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 18*, 139-152. doi: 10.1177/1088868314523838

Assor, A., Vansteenkiste, M., & Kaplan, A. (2009). Identified versus introjected approach and introjected avoidance motivations in school and in sports: The limited benefits of self-worth strivings. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 101*, 482-497. doi:10.1037/a0014236

Bandura, A. (1999). Moral disengagement in the perpetration of inhumanities. Personality and social psychology review, 3, 193-209. doi:10.1207/s15327957pspr0303_3

Brown, K. W., & Ryan, R. M. (2004). Fostering healthy self-regulation from within and without: A Self-determination theory perspective. In A. P. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.), *Positive psychology in practice* (pp. 105-124). New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. doi: 10.1002/9780470939338.ch7

Cooper, J., & Fazio, R. H. (1984). A new look at dissonance. *Advances in experimental social psychology, 17,* 229-268. doi: 10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60121-5

Darley, J. M., & Batson, C. D. (1973). "From Jerusalem to Jericho": A study of situational and dispositional variables in helping behavior. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 27*, 100-108. doi: 10.1037/h0034449

Deci, E. L., Eghrari, H., Patrick, B. C., & Leone, D. (1994). Facilitating internalization: The self-determination theory perspective. *Journal of Personality*, *62*, 119-142. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6494.1994.tb00797.x

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). The general causality orientations scale: Self-determination in personality. *Journal of research in personality, 19*, 109-134. doi: 10.1016/0092-6566(85)90023-6

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The" what" and" why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological inquiry, 11*, 227-268. doi: 10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01

Doris, J. M. (2002). *Lack of character: Personality and moral behavior.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Fleeson, W., Furr, R. M., Jayawickreme, E., Meindl, P., & Helzer, E. G. (2014). Character: The Prospects for a Personality-Based Perspective on Morality. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 8(4),* 178–191. doi:10.1111/spc3.12094

Foot, P. (1967). The problem of abortion and the doctrine of double effect. *Oxford Review, 5,* 5-15.

Frankfurt, H. (1971). Freedom of the will and the concept of a person. *The Journal of Philosophy, 68*, 5–20. doi: 10.2307/2024717

Frankfurt, H. (1987). Identification and Wholeheartedness. In Ferdinand Schoeman (ed.) *Responsibility, Character, and the Emotions: New Essays in Moral Psychology* (pp. 27-45). New York: Cambridge University Press. doi: 10.1086/293130

Haidt, J. (2001). The emotional dog and its rational tail: a social intuitionist approach to moral judgment. *Psychological review*, *108*, 814-834. doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.108.4.814

Haidt, J. (2003) The moral emotions. In: R.J. Davidson, K.R. Scherer and H. H. Goldsmith (eds), *Handbook of Affective Sciences* (pp. 852– 870). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of interpersonal relations*. New York: Wiley.

Hutcherson, C. A., & Gross, J. J. (2011). The moral emotions: A social–functionalist account of anger, disgust, and contempt. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *100*, 719-737. doi: 10.1037/a0022408

Hoffman, M. L. (2001). Empathy and moral development: Implications for caring and justice. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Koestner, R., Bernieri, E., & Zuckerman, M. (1992). Self-regulation and consistency between attitudes, traits, and behaviors. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 18,* 52–59.

Korsgaard C. (1996). *The sources of normativity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Krettenauer, T., & Casey, V. (2015). Moral identity development and positive moral emotions: Differences involving authentic and hubristic pride. *Identity*, *15*, 173-187.

Leary, M. R. (2004). Digging deeper: The fundamental nature of "Self-conscious" emotions. Psychological Inquiry, 15, 129-131. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/20447215

Lerner, M. J., & Simmons, C. H. (1966). Observer's reaction to the "innocent victim": Compassion or rejection? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 4*, 203-210. doi: 10.1037/h0023562

Lewis, M. (2016). Self-conscious emotions: Embarrassment, pride, shame, and guilt, and hubris. In L.F. Barrett, M. Lewis & J. M. Haviland-Jones (Eds.), Handbook of emotions (4th ed., pp. 792-814). New York, NY, US: Guilford Press.

Nucci, L. (2019). Character: A developmental system. Child Development Perspectives, 13, 73-78. doi: 10.1111/cdep.12313

Ones, D. S., Viswesvaran, C., & Schmidt, F. L. (1993). Comprehensive meta-analysis of integrity test validities: Findings and implications for personnel selection and theories of job performance. *Journal of applied psychology, 78*, 679.

Prinz, J., & Nichols, S. (2010). Moral emotions. In J. Doris and The Moral Psychology Research Group (eds.) *The moral psychology handbook (pp. 111-146)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199582143.003.0005

Roth, G., Shachar, B.-H., Zohar-Shefer, Y., Benita, M., Moed, A., Bibi, U., Kanat-Maymon, Y., Ryan, R. M. (2018). Benefits of emotional integration and costs of emotional distancing. *Journal of Personality, 86 (6), 919-934*. doi:10.1111/jopy.12366

Roth, G., Vansteenkiste, M., & Ryan, R. (2019). Integrative emotion regulation: Process and development from a self-determination theory perspective. *Development and Psychopathology,* 1-12. doi:10.1017/S0954579419000403

Rozin, P., Lowery, L., Imada, S., & Haidt, J. (1999). The CAD triad hypothesis: a mapping between three moral emotions (contempt, anger, disgust) and three moral codes (community, autonomy, divinity). *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *76*(4), 574-586. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.76.4.574

Ryan, R. M. (1982). Control and information in the intrapersonal sphere: An extension of cognitive evaluation theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 43,* 450–461. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.43.3.450

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2002). Overview of self-determination theory: An organismic-dialectical perspective. In E. L. Deci & R. M. Ryan (Eds.), *Handbook of self-determination research* (pp. 3-33). Rochester, NY, US: University of Rochester Press.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2003). On assimilating identities to the self: A self-determination theory perspective on internalization and integrity within cultures. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook on self & identity* (pp. 253-274). New York: The Guilford Press.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. New York: Guilford Publications.

Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L., Grolnick, W. S., & La Guardia, J. G. (2006). The significance of autonomy and autonomy support in psychological development and psychopathology. In D. Cicchetti & D. Cohen (Eds.), *Developmental psychopathology: Vol. 1. Theory and methods* (2nd ed., pp. 295–849). New York, NY: Wiley.

Saunders, L. F., (2016). Reason and emotion, not reason or emotion in moral judgment.

Philosophical   Explorations,   *19*,   252-267,   doi:

10.1080/13869795.2016.1212395

Simon, L., Greenberg, J., & Brehm, J. (1995). Trivialization: the forgotten mode of

dissonance reduction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 68*, 247-

260. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.68.2.247

Sheikh, S., & Janoff-Bulman, R. (2010). The "shoulds" and "should nots" of moral

emotions: A self-regulatory perspective on shame and guilt. *Personality and

Social Psychology Bulletin*, *36*, 213-224. doi: 10.1177/0146167209356788

Stone, J., & Cooper, J. (2001). A self-standards model of cognitive dissonance. *Journal

of Experimental Social Psychology*, *37*, 228-243. doi: 10.1006/jesp.2000.1446

Tangney, J. P., Stuewig, J., & Mashek, D. J. (2007). Moral emotions and moral

behavior. *Annual   Review   of   Psychology,   58,   345–372.*

doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.56.091103.07014

Thibodeau, R., & Aronson, E. (1992). Taking a closer look: Reasserting the role of the

self-concept in dissonance theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*,

18, 591-602. doi: 10.1177/0146167292185010

Thomas, J. S., Ditzfeld, C. P., & Showers, C. J. (2013). Compartmentalization: A

window on the defensive self. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 7*,

719-731. doi:10.1111/spc3.12061

Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2004). Putting the self into self-conscious emotions: A

theoretical   model.   *Psychological   Inquiry*,   *15*,   103-125.   doi:

10.1207/s15327965pli1502_01

Tracy, J. L., & Robins, R. W. (2007). The self in self-conscious emotions: A cognitive

appraisal approach. In J.L Tracy, R.W. Robbins & J.P. Tangney (Eds.), *The self-*

conscious emotions: Theory and research (pp. 3-20). New York, NY, US: Guilford Press.

Tripp, T. M., & Bies, R. J. (2010). "Righteous" anger and revenge in the workplace: The fantasies, the feuds, the forgiveness. In M. Potegal, G. Stemmler, & C. Spielberger (Eds.), *International handbook of anger: Constituent and concomitant biological, psychological, and social processes* (pp. 413-431). New York, NY, US: Springer Science + Business Media.

Weinstein, N., Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2011). Motivational determinants of integrating positive and negative past identities. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 100*, 527-544. doi:10.1037/a0022150

Notes on contributors

Dr. Alexios Arvanitis is an Assistant Professor of Social Psychology at the

Department of Psychology, University of Crete. His research includes the application

of Self-Determination Theory in social, political and moral psychology.

Dr. Konstantinos Kalliris is now a Lecturer in Law at the University of Essex. His

research interests include the tensions between law and autonomy, paternalism,

perfectionism and the study of criminal justice systems.