

# Amoralists, Inverted Commas, and the Puzzle of Moral Internalism:

## An Essay in Experimental Metaethics

Kenneth Wesley Shields

Dr. Philip Robbins

### ABSTRACT

The central question addressed in this dissertation is whether one must have some degree of motivation to comply with their moral evaluation in order to count as genuinely making a sincere moral judgment. Those that view motivation as intrinsic to moral judgment (internalists) grant this condition on moral evaluation, while those that take motivation to be extrinsic to such judgments (externalists) deny this condition. The traditional dispute between internalists and externalists has centered around thought experiments devised to test the coherence of scenarios involving an agent that genuinely makes moral judgments while being entirely unmotivated by them—an individual called the amoralist. Recently, experimental methods have been employed to determine whether non-philosophers find amoralist scenarios coherent. This dissertation is concerned primarily with addressing two open questions regarding this recent experimental research: (1) what is this research really tracking in terms of folk psychology, and (2) what impact does this research have on the traditional philosophical dispute over moral internalism. I address (1) by presenting new research showing that amoralist scenarios seem more coherent in factive contexts (e.g., understands that **X** is wrong) but less coherent in non-factive contexts (e.g., believes that **X** is wrong). I call this the Factivity Effect, and I argue (via experiments) that it is likely a feature of our cognitive architecture concerning morality. I address (2) by arguing that empirical investigation of our shared concepts impacts metaethical questions—particularly the traditional dispute over moral internalism—in a way that is arguably unique to this branch of analytic philosophy. In short, moral psychology is vital for metaethics.