Character Traits, Situationism, and Cross-Cultural Research

Are There Global Character Traits: An Empirical Challenge Against Situationism

by

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Abstract

In this thesis, in the first chapter, I represent the problem between virtue ethics and situationism on character traits, and I will talk about three views on character traits, namely Global Character Realism, Global Character Instrumentalism, and Global Character Eliminativism. In the second chapter, I, firstly, consider four social psychological experiments which are prominent figures in the philosophical treatment of situationism, namely Stanley Milgram's (1974) Obedience Experiment, Philip Zimbardo's (1971) Stanford Prison Experiment, J. Darley and C. Batson's (1973) Good Samaritan Experiment, and Isen and Levin's (1972) Phone-booth Experiment. After setting the stage, I discuss Gilbert Harman's (1999) and John Doris' (2002) views for situationism. In the second chapter, I discuss whether or not the distinction between local and global character traits is a tenable one, and I draw the conclusion that there are empirically supported local character traits, rather than global character traits. In the third chapter, I consider some objections from virtue ethics against the Situationist Challenge, and I claim that they are not efficient to underestimate the Situationist Challenge. I argue for Global Trait Instrumentalism, which accepts the talk of global character traits as if they exist for explanatory and predictive purposes. In chapter four, I examine the findings of some cross-cultural research, and question whether concepts such as individualism, collectivism, and being obedient to authority can be considered as global character traits in comparison to traditional understanding of dispositional structure of character traits. I consider Jesse Prinz's (2009) Empirical Challenge against situationism as a tenable challenge, but I do not think it succeeds to demonstrate that cross-cultural research brings the global traits of character back to the stage. Lastly, I argue that even though there are empirical data from cross-cultural research that supports the existence of global character traits, virtue ethics cannot endorse the findings of cross-cultural research otherwise this leads virtue ethics to moral relativism, which is an undesirable conclusion for virtue ethics.

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Introduction

What is character? What does it exactly mean to call someone honest, courageous, virtuous, and so on? How can we grasp the concept of character? To answer these and similar questions we need to assess several ethical theories. In recent years, moral philosophy has observed the revival of virtue ethics with the burgeoning discussions in the field of situationist social psychology, especially discussions on character. Situationism claims that human behavior is influenced by situational factors, and we need to appeal to the situations rather than character traits so as to explain human behaviors. On the other hand, virtue ethicists argue that the only important thing is to cultivate noble character traits, and character traits are more crucial than situations to explain behavioral consistency.

Folk psychology tells us that individuals have character traits, and they would behave consistently in various situations. However, findings of social psychology experiments demonstrate that there is no cross-situational consistency over people's behaviors, instead people behave differently even in slightly changed situations.[1][2] Therefore, situationist social psychologist John Doris (2002) claims that social psychology experiments undermine our everyday belief that there are global character traits. Doris (1998; 2002) also claims that there are empirically buttressed local character traits, i.e. fragmented character traits, and virtue ethicists should appeal these instead of global character traits. Gilbert Harman (1999), more radically, argues that there are no character traits at all. Is Harman's *eliminativism* about global character traits true? Are there no global character traits? Virtue ethicists disagree with this conclusion.[3] They argue that there are global character traits.

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[1] I have Doris (1998; 2002) and Isen and Levin (1972) particularly in mind.
[2] Here, we should consider the distinction between personality psychology and social psychology. Personality psychology agrees with folk psychological accounts of character traits, on the other hand, social psychology raises skepticism about character traits.
[3] Julia Annas (2002, 2005), Nafsika Athanassoulis (1999),Rachana Kamtekar (2004), Joel Kupperman (2001), Christian Miller (2003, 2009), Sabini and Silver (2005), Gopal Sreenivasan (2002)

In this thesis, in the first chapter, I represent the problem between virtue ethics and situationism on character traits, and I will talk about three views on character traits, namely Global Character Realism, Global Character Instrumentalism, and Global Character Eliminativism. In the second chapter, I, firstly, consider four social psychological experiments which are prominent figures in the philosophical treatment of situationism, namely Stanley Milgram's (1974) Obedience Experiment, Philip Zimbardo's (1971) Stanford Prison Experiment, J. Darley and C. Batson's (1973) Good Samaritan Experiment, and Isen and Levin's (1972) Phone-booth Experiment. After setting the stage, I discuss Gilbert Harman's (1999) and John Doris' (2002) views for situationism. In the second chapter, I discuss whether or not the distinction between local and global character traits is a tenable one, and I draw the conclusion that there are empirically supported local character traits, rather than global character traits. In the third chapter, I consider some objections from virtue ethics against the Situationist Challenge, and I claim that they are not efficient to underestimate the Situationist Challenge. I argue for Global Trait Instrumentalism, which accepts the talk of global character traits as if they exist for explanatory and predictive purposes. In chapter four, I examine the findings of some cross-cultural research, and question whether concepts such as individualism, collectivism, and being obedient to authority can be considered as global character traits in comparison to traditional understanding of dispositional structure of character traits. I consider Jesse Prinz's (2009) Empirical Challenge against situationism as a tenable challenge, but I do not think it succeeds to demonstrate that cross-cultural research brings the global traits of character back to the stage. Lastly, I argue that even though there are empirical data from cross-cultural research that supports the existence of global character traits, virtue ethics cannot endorse the findings of cross-cultural research otherwise this leads virtue ethics to moral relativism, which is an undesirable conclusion for virtue ethics.

Chapter 1
Situationism and Global Character Traits

In the following chapter, I, firstly, talk about the debate between situationism and virtue ethics and why there is a dispute among them. After that, I explain four social psychology experiment, which are crucial for our discussion and are used by situationists. Thirdly, I discuss Gilbert Harman' eliminativism about global traits and his radical support for situationism. And lastly, for this chapter, I discuss John Doris' *milder* version of situationism, and his arguments against *globalism*.

1.1. Situationism and Virtue Ethics

We generally think that individuals have character traits. We try to explain their behaviors by appealing these character traits, such as honesty, generosity, and courage. And we expect a virtuous individual to behave virtuously in different locations and situations. If an agent is courageous, we expect him to behave courageously across the situations; we expect the agent to be consistent in their behaviors. As Aristotle suggests if an agent acquires the required proper character traits, these dispositions are "firm and unchangeable" (NE, 1105b1). And virtue ethicists argue that an agent should try to be a virtuous person so as to be moral agent and to cultivate a moral life.

On the other hand, Gilbert Harman (1999) and John Doris (1998; 2002), namely the situationists, shed their skepticism on the existence of virtues, or global character traits. They argue that empirical research does not satisfy the virtue ethicists' expectations about global traits of character. And the data which are gathered from social psychology experiments leave us with a different picture. The systematic research reveals that situational features play a crucial role in determining the individuals' behaviors rather than character traits. Therefore, the situationists argue that we should consider the situations rather than virtues so as to be moral agents and to have moral lives. So, what are these global traits of character that the

situationists reject? In the following part, I will shortly talk about global traits and two theses about them which are shared by both Aristotelian virtue ethics and situationism. In the future sections of this chapter, I elaborate more on virtue ethics while discussing Harman (1999) and Doris (2002) on global traits of character.

1.1.1. Global Traits

According to Doris (2002, p. 22), *globalism* about character traits includes two theses: consistency and stability.[4]

(1) Consistency: Character and personality traits are reliably manifested in trait-relevant behavior across a diversity of trait-relevant eliciting conditions that may vary widely in their conduciveness to the manifestation of the trait in question.

(2) Stability: Character and personality traits are reliably manifested in trait-relevant behaviors over iterated trials of similar trait-relevant eliciting conditions.[5]

Therefore, we can count a trait of character as a global trait of character if it exhibits cross-situational consistency across trait-relevant situations.

There are three views on global traits:

(1) *Global Trait Realism*: There really are global character traits which play a central role in the behavioral outcomes and psychological makeup of those individuals who possess them.

(2) *Global Trait Instrumentalism*: There really are no global character traits, but it is useful for explanatory and predictive purposes to talk as if there were such traits.

(3) *Global Trait Eliminativism*: There really are no global character traits, and we should eliminate all reference to them from our thought and language.[6]

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[4] I will talk about these two theses and a the third thesis below.
[5] Below, I also give the Aristotelian understanding of global trait while discussing Harman.

(1) and (3) are extremes for virtue ethics and situationism, respectively. Gilbert Harman, for instance, is a radical situationist and he is attacking on Global Trait Realism. However, none of these two extreme views is successful than the other. Global Trait Realism ignores the experimental data from the social psychology experiments, which sheds skepticism on the existence of global traits. Global Trait Eliminativism eliminates all reference to global character traits, even though the results of the experiments do not demonstrate there are no global character traits. Each view has impotencies against one another. That is why I am defending a type of Global Trait Instrumentalism in the following thesis.

1.2.   Social Psychology Experiments

In this and the following section, my plan is to reconstruct the lines of reasoning of the situationist psychology that is used against virtue ethics and to demonstrate where the problem arises and why it arises. Before doing this, I firstly will consider four notable social psychology experiments which are extremely crucial in the debate between virtue ethics and situationism. These experiments are important both for their methodological meticulousness and the morally disturbing behavior of their subjects demonstrate.

1.2.1.   Milgram's Obedience Experiment (1963)[7]

Milgram's well-known Obedience Experiment aims to understand the human tendency to obey authority and the factors that urge or reinforce this tendency. Milgram advertises his experiment in a local newspaper to draw the attention of possible participants. The study that Milgram conducted gathered subjects from a diverse range of age, gender-related, socio-economic, educational and cultural groups. In this study, Milgram measured the willingness of the participants to obey an authority figure who gives instructions them to perform acts that

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[6] Miller (2003, p. 373)
[7] See Milgram (1963), 'Behavioral Study of Obedience'. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 67, pp.   371-378.

conflicted with their personal values and conscience. The study consists of ordering a subject to administer increasingly more severe punishment to a victim (learner) in the context of a learning experiment. In this study, punishment is administered by means of a shock generator with 30 graded switched ranging from Slight Shock to Danger to Severe Shock. The victim (learner) in the study, unbeknownst to the instructor who administers electric shocks, is a confederate of the experimenter. In this study, 26 of the subjects (instructors) obeyed the experimental commands fully. Even some of the subjects showed signs of willingness to continue, they continued upon the 'kind' requests or verbal provocations of the experimenter, which included "Please continue," "The experiment requires that you continue," "It is absolutely essential that you continue," and "You have no other choice, you must go on." 14 of the subjects broke off the experiment at some point after the victim (learner) protested and refused to provide further answers. Milgram (1963) notes that the procedure of the experiment created extreme levels of nervous tension in some subjects: profuse sweating, trembling, and stuttering were typical expressions of this emotional disturbance. And some of the subjects demonstrated regular nervous laughter, which has caused seizure in some the subjects. The victim (learner) of the experiment was receiving faux electric shocks in the experiment. Although the victim was screaming as if (s)he is in agony after being shocked at the level of 330 V, and feigned unconsciousness, two-thirds of the subjects (65%) continued to give electric shocks to the learner up to 450 V.

What does this study tell us about human behavior? How can the subjects of the study continue to shock the learner with 'severe' levels of electric shocks upon the kind request of the experimenter? How and why do the behaviors of the human beings change in the presence of an authority figure-- in this case it is the experimenter? Why do not the 35% of the participants obey the instructions of the experimenter when the 65% was obedient? Why do not 100% of the participants follow the instructions of the experimenter-- all of the

participants were in the same situation with their fellow subjects? All of these questions, and the answers to them, are crucial for grasping the importance of the 'situation' in human behavior. According to the situationists, the reasonable explanation of the subjects' behavior is the nature of the situation, or it is the situation that determines the subjects' behavior and the situation's impact on complex personality features and emotional changes. In Milgram's study, the presence of the experimenter as an authority figure creates a situation for the subjects to shock another human being. In the other sections, I will discuss the findings of Milgram's Obedience Experiment in detail and their importance for the debate between virtue ethics and situationism over character traits. I also will answer the questions above. The literature on the debate between situationism and virtue ethics still does not have an exact answer to the last questions. I think that situationists cannot announce their victory on the claim that the subjects' behavior vary as a parameter of situations rather than character traits without answering why the 100% of the subjects of the Milgram's Obedience Experiment do not behave in the same way even if the experimental situation was same for every subject.

1.2.2. Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment (1971)

The second notable experiment is Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment. Philip Zimbardo conducted this experiment at Stanford in the summer of 1971.[8] He broadcasted an ad in a local newspaper calling for volunteers in a study of the psychological effects of prison life. The aim of the experiment was to see what the psychological effects were of becoming a prisoner or prison guard. So as to do that, they constructed a simulated prison and they noted the effects of this institution on the behavior of all those within its walls. They choose a sample of 24 college students from the U.S. and Canada among more than 70 applicants. They eliminated the candidates with psychological problems, medical disabilities, and a history of crime or drug abuse by giving diagnostic interviews and personality tests. In the

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[8] Zimbardo (1971), <http://www.prisonexp.org/> (Accessed 31 May 2012).

end, the sample of the participants were created by a group of 'healthy', 'normal', intelligent and middle-class male subjects. And these participants were randomly divided into two groups by a flip of the coin. Half of them randomly became guards and the other half randomly assigned to be prisoners. The guards were given no specific training on how to be guards. They were free, within limits, to do whatever they thought was necessary to maintain law and order in the prison and to command the respect of the prisoners. And the prisoners were told that they must follow the guards' orders and rules. Although the first day passed without trouble, there was a rebellion on the morning of the second day. The prisoners removed their stocking caps, ripped of their numbers, and barricaded themselves inside the cells by putting their beds against the door. In response to this, the guards treated the force with force. The guards sprayed a fire extinguisher on the prisoners, stripped the prisoners naked, took the beds out, forced the ringleaders of the prisoner rebellion into solitary confinement; and they harassed and intimidated the prisoners. After that rebellion, the guards started to use psychological tactics instead of physical ones to hinder possible future rebellions. The guards forced the prisoners to participate in cruel and demeaning punishments such as forcing the prisoner to play naked leapfrog, smearing food in the prisoners' faces, forcing the prisoners to clean the toilets with their bare hands and so on. At the end of the fifth day, Zimbardo realized that they had to terminate the study prematurely. That is because they created a overwhelmingly powerful situation in which the prisoners were behaving in pathological ways and some of the guards were behaving in sadistic ways. The guards who didn't demonstrate any signs of pathological disorders, psychopathy and tendency to behave in a cruel way were inflicting cruelty and pain on the prisoners.

How can we explain these changes in the guards' behaviors, which were seen as 'normal' guys with no tendency to behave cruelly in the beginning of the research? It seems

like we need to appeal to the nature of the situation they were for explaining changes in their behaviors.

1.2.3.   Darley and Batson's Good Samaritan Experiment (1973)[9]

The third experiment that I will mention comes from the parable of the Good Samaritan. Darley and Batson (1973) designed an experiment which focuses on the helping behavior. Darley and Batson asked students of Princeton's Theological Seminary to give a talk, half on the Good Samaritan, and half on a different topic. Firstly, they are given a personality questionnaire about their religion and later they began experimental procedures in one building and then told to go to another building to continue. On their way to the other building to give a speech they encountered a man slumped in an alleyway. The question was under what conditions would a subject stop to help the moaning man. Some of the subjects were told that they were late and should hurry up; some of them were told that they had just enough time to be on time, and the rest were told that they would arrive early. Darley and Batson remarked that the amount of 'hurriness' caused a major effect on helping behavior of the subject, but the task variable didn't. In the end, 63% of subjects that were in hurry stopped to help, 45% of those in a moderate hurry stopped, and 10% of those were in a great hurry stopped.

In this study, it is found that a person in a hurry was less likely to help people even if he was going to speak on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Darley and Batson interprets that the results seem to show that thinking about norms does not imply that one will act on them. The subjects hurriedness and their failing to realize the connection of an emergency caused them to pass by the victim without stopping to help. Thus, the situationists conclude that the subjects' behavior was determined by the situation rather than their character traits.

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[9] See Darley and Batson (1973), 'From Jerusalem to Jericho: A Study of Situational and Dispositional Variables In Helping Behavior' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 27, pp. 100-108.

1.2.4. Isen and Levin's (1972) Phone-booth Experiment

In their studies, Isen and Levin (1972) investigated the relation between 'feeling good' and helping. They found that experimental subjects who had unexpectedly received a dime in the coin return of a public telephone more likely helped a confederate to pick up her papers than the control subjects who didn't find a dime in the phone-booth. Isen and Levin (1972) examined that subjects who have found a dime in a phone booth were 22 times more likely to help a passerby who dropped her papers than subjects who did not find a dime (88% v. 4%).

The experiments that I presented are some the most notable social psychology experiments. These experiments emphasize the importance of how do even the slight the changes in the features of the situation in can cause dramatic shift humans' behavior, "in ways that appear to conflict with ordinary thinking about personality and character."[10]

Now, I continue with two views in favor of situationism. Firstly, I take Gilbert Harman (1999) and secondly, John Doris (1998; 2002) into account.

1.3. *Gilbert Harman and Situationism*

Gilbert Harman is one of the most prominent moral philosopher who considers the results of social psychology experiments as evidence against the descriptive claims of virtue ethics. Harman (1999) rejects the claims of folk morality by relying on the studies derived from contemporary social psychology. Harman (1999, p. 316) argues, "It seems that ordinary attributions of character traits to people are often deeply misguided and it may even be the case that there is no such thing as character, no ordinary character traits of the sort people think there are, none of the usual moral virtues and vices." He also writes,

> Empirical studies designed to test whether people behave differently in ways that might reflect their having different character traits have failed to find relevant differences. It is true that studies of this sort are very difficult to carry out and there have been very few such studies. Nevertheless, the existing studies have had negative results. Since it is possible to explain our

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[10]Gilbert Harman (2009, p. 235), 'Skepticism about Character Traits'.

ordinary belief in character traits as deriving from certain illusions, we must conclude that there is no empirical basis for the existence of character traits (Harman 1999, p.316).

From these quotations, we can deduce that Harman has two aims in defending the findings of the empirical research against virtue ethics. Firstly, he employs the empirical research so as to demonstrate the idea that there are global character traits like virtues and vices, or the possession of global character traits, is untenable with studies in social psychology.[11] And, Harman's second is to explain why ordinary human beings believe that there are such kind of traits. He supplements his 'negative approach' with his second approach.

Harman (1999) distinguishes character traits psychological disorders and innate aspects of temperament. Character traits include virtues and vices, such as courage, cowardice, honesty, dishonesty, benevolence, malevolence, friendliness and so on. While Harman (1999) is making a characterization of character traits, he relies on Aristotelian conception of character traits. His characterization includes following points: (i) They are relatively long-term stable disposition to act in distinctive ways, (ii) The relevant dispositions must involve habits and not just skills, (iii) A person with the relevant character trait has a long term stable disposition to use the relevant skills in the relevant way, (iv) Character traits are *broad based* dispositions that help to explain what they are dispositions to do (Harman 1999, pp. 317-18).

It seems that Harman's list for character traits include necessary points for the characterization of such traits. But the question is whether or not Harman's characterizations sufficient for virtue ethicists' understanding of character traits. An honest person is disposed to act honestly. A courageous person is disposed to act courageously under any condition, in any situation, and so on. And we ordinarily suppose that a person's character trait helps us to explain some of the things a person does. For instance, some philosophers think that the

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[11] Christian Miller (2005) calls this approach as 'negative approach'.

ordinary conception of morality is best analyzed with a conception of virtue and character, and then it becomes possible to explain the features of morality in that respect (Taylor 1991, Hursthouse 1999). If we accept that this argument is true, then we can include Harman's characterization while analyzing a conception of a virtue or vice. However, this conception of morality represented by virtue ethicists is different from Aristotle's conception. What Harman conceptualizes is Aristotle's understanding of character traits. Although some philosophers, such as Miller (2003), think that even if Harman's characterization is necessary, it does not become sufficient in most of the cases; for my purposes, I will accept Harman's characterization.

Harman (1999) considers two of the notable social psychology experiments above, namely Milgram's (1963) Obedience Experiment and Darley and Batson's (1973) Good Samaritan Experiment. The results of Milgram's experiment represent very interesting findings concerning human behavior under the administration of an authority. Two-third of subjects obey the experimenter to the point of giving the maximum sever electric shocks to the learner (victim). How and why do the behaviors of the human beings change in the presence of an authority figure?

Let us take the fourth condition of the Aristotelian account of virtue: "Character traits are *broad based* dispositions that help to explain what they are dispositions to do." According to this criterion, it is reasonable to expect a virtuous person to behave virtuously in different types of situations. We can consider the results of Milgram's experiment with respect to being 'compassionate' and 'kind'. If a person is compassionate, it behaves compassionately to all other people, or at least we expect him to behave in that way. And a kind person always behaves kindly to other people irrespective of the features of the situation. However, Milgram's experiment represents highly controversial results about human behavior. It demonstrates that most of the people (65%) do not behave compassionately or kindly in the

presence of an authority. They inflict pain on victims by giving severe shocks, and they behave cruelly upon the request of the experimenter. Therefore, in Milgram's Obedience Experiment we do not detect the fourth condition of the Aristotelian virtue ethics.

Harman (1999, p.322) elaborates on these findings,

> Now consider any one of the subjects who went all the way to 450 volts, past the label "Danger: Severe Shock" and well past the point at which the learner had stopped responding in any way. It is hard not to think there is something terribly wrong with the subject. It is extremely tempting to attribute the subject's performance to a character defect in the subject rather than to details of the situation. But can we really attribute a 2 to 1 majority response to a character defect? And what about the fact that *all* subjects were willing to go at least to the 300 volt level? Does *everyone* have this character defect? Is that really the right way to explain Milgram's results?

Harman (1999) appeals to social psychological explanation for the results of Milgram's experiment, rather than character traits. By relying on Ross & Nisbett (1991), he interprets the findings of Milgram's experiment as evidence for situationism rather than internal explanations of character traits. Harman (1999, p. 321) argues, "Social psychologists have shown many different ways in which ordinary observers wrongly infer that actions are due to distinctive character traits of an agent rather than relevant aspects of the situation." He thinks that it is the situation, not the character trait, that explains subjects' behaviors. And an observer makes 'the fundamental attribution error', if he infers that the subjects' destructive obedience is caused by the personal dispositions, rather than the features of the situation by taking the behavior at face value.[12]

Miller (2003) points out two deficiencies in Harman's interpretation of Milgram's experiment. Firstly, he argues that Harman does not tell us what global character trait is supposed lacking in this case. And secondly, he says that we are not given an argument for why the results of this extremely contrived experiment are supposed to have any bearing on the issue of the extent of trait possession in general (Miller 2003, p.369). It is true that

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[12] Ross & Nisbett (1991, p. 4) explains the fundamental attribution error, "People's inflated belief in the importance of personality traits and dispositions, together with their failure to recognize the importance of situational factors in affecting behavior, has been termed the 'fundamental attribution error'."

Harman does not explicitly tell us what global character trait lacks in Milgram's experiment. As I have pointed out above, 'compassion' and 'kindness' can be considered as major global character traits in Milgram's experiment. I do not think Miller's second point threatens Harman's ideas about Milgram's experiment. That is because Harman does not argue for how hard it is possessing character traits, he explicitly argues that there is no empirical evidence for the existence of character traits. In his recent work, Harman (2009, p. 241) argues, "I do not think that social psychology demonstrates there are no character traits, either as ordinarily conceived or as required for one or another version of virtue ethics. But I do think that results in social psychology undermine one's confidence that it is obvious there are such traits." It seems like Harman has changed his 'radicalism' or 'eliminativism' on global traits slightly. However, he still thinks that there is no empirical basis that social psychology experiments implies the existence of global character traits. I will talk more on this point in the other chapter.

Harman, secondly, considers Darley and Batson's (1973) Good Samaritan experiment. In this study, 63% of subjects that were in hurry stopped to help, 45% of those in a moderate hurry stopped, and 10% of those were in a great hurry stopped. And the topic of subjects' talks, whether it is on Good Samaritan or another talk, did not make any effect on subjects' behaviors. The determinant of subjects' behaviors was how much time did they have for their talks. In other words, it was hurriedness that caused variance in subjects' behaviors. Harman claims that according to the ordinary conception of morality, people can anticipate the subjects' helping behavior with respect to their character and religious beliefs. However, Harman (1999, p. 324) argues, "Standard interpretations of the Good Samaritan Parable commit the fundamental attribution error of overlooking the situational factors, in this case overlooking how much of hurry the various agents might be in."

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Harman (1999) draws the following conclusions from these two social psychology experiments. Harman (1999, p. 329) argues, "[O]ur attributions tend to be wildly incorrect and, in fact, there is no evidence that people differ in character traits. They differ in their situations and in their perceptions of their situations. They differ in their goals, strategies, neuroses, optimism, etc. But character traits do not explain what differences there are." He argues that (1) people, or observers, make the fundamental attribution error when they try to focus on character dispositions rather than the situations in predicting and explaining human behavior.

Harman also makes two other important claims about global character traits by relying on his interpretations of social psychology experiments. And these two arguments can be considered as a summary of his ideas on character: (2) There is no empirical basis to argue for the existence of global character traits, and (3) It is very hard to do studies that might indicate whether or not people differ in character traits, but the few studies that have been done do not support this idea; the results of social psychology experiments do not give any empirical basis for the existence of character traits. Harman is a global trait eliminativist and he thinks that there are no global traits and we should eliminate all the references to character traits from our life. And finally, he argues that if there is no such thing as character, then there is no such thing as character building, then it is meaningless to try to cultivate character traits.

Of course, Harman's work takes lots of criticism and it has virtue ethicists' rage on it as well. I will discuss some of the most important objections against situationism in the third chapter. Below, I continue with John Doris' version of situationism.

1.4. *John Doris on Global Character Traits*

John Doris' (2002) book, *Lack of Character*, represents the fullest account of philosophical presentation of situationism. Doris (2002) represents a similar understanding of

character traits in his book. Doris (2002, p. 15) says that "to attribute a character or personality trait is to say, among other things, that someone is disposed to behave a certain way in eliciting conditions." Therefore, Doris (2002, p. 16) represents the trait attribution with a conditional: If a person possesses a trait, that person will exhibit trait-relevant behavior in trait-eliciting conditions. Doris pays attention on the relation between global traits and behavioral consistency for his moral psychological understanding of situationism. That is because "an emphasis on (global) traits and behavioral consistency is entirely standard in the Aristotelian tradition of character traits" (Doris 2002, p. 18).[13]Therefore, we can say that Doris' discussion of global character traits and situations refers to the consistency condition of a virtue.

Doris, like Harman, argues that traditional understanding of virtue ethics is empirically insufficient. He thinks that the empirical data of social psychology experiments does not provide justification for the existence of global traits-- because the data does not satisfy Consistency and Predictive Expectations about global traits.[14]Before continuing, it would be useful to explain what Doris means with Consistency Expectation and Predictive Expectation.[15]

Doris (1998) comes up with these two types of expectations in his previous work, 'Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics'. Consistency Expectation tells us that we expect a virtuous person to behave virtuously in different types of situations-- even if the features of the situation changes. And Predictive Expectation tells us that if an individual possesses a certain global character trait, then the observers "who understand the nature of that trait could

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[13] For instance, Woods (1986, p. 149) says that Aristotle takes a virtue of character to be "a disposition to act unfailingly in a virtuous manner"; and Larmore (1987, p. 12) says that a virtue is "a firm disposition to act virtuously". These are only couple of examples that support the relation between global traits and consistency in Aristotelian tradition. That is why Doris (2002) pays specific attention on this point.

[14] Although he thinks in that way, he still leaves the a bit open by saying that maybe there are global traits but these are held by insufficient numbers of people.

[15] Although Doris (1998) uses slightly different terms for these two types of expectations, I use Miller's (2003) lexicon here.

reliably predict how the individual would probably behave in some set of either actual or non-actual trait-eliciting circumstances" (Miller 2003, p. 376). In fact, both of these expectations are criterion in Aristotelian understanding of global traits. And these expectations together, as Miller (2003) puts it nicely, are the primary means by which to illustrate the bearing that empirical work in social psychology has on the truth of certain descriptive claims about global trait possession. But do these expectations are true? Do we have any empirical basis to accept these expectations true? These are legitimate questions to ask, and Doris might take the burden of proving that they are false by relying on experimental date of social psychology experiments, but Doris' (1998; 2002) aim is different than that, and we can leave them aside in this project.

Doris (1998; 2002) does not present a systematic argumentation to refute the global traits. But, I will try to do it here. As I have said above, Doris argues that social psychology experiments demonstrate that there are not, maybe some, empirical justification for the existence of character traits which satisfy both consistency and Predictive Expectations (Doris 1998). The argument against *globalism*[16] follows (Doris 2002, pp. 22-3):

(1) Consistency: Character and personality traits are reliably manifested in trait-relevant behavior across a diversity of trait-relevant eliciting conditions that may vary widely in their conduciveness to the manifestation of the trait in question.

(2) However, the empirical data from the social psychology experiments fail to satisfy this consistency expectation.

(3) Evaluative integration: In a given character or personality the occurrence of a trait with particular evaluative valence is probabilistically related to the occurrence of other traits with similar evaluative valences. Therefore, it becomes possible for the third

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[16] Doris (2002) refers to global traits under the heading of *globalism*.

parties to understand the relevant trait and predict the behaviors or actions of the subjects reliably in relevant trait-eliciting situations.

(4) However, the empirical data from the social psychology experiments demonstrates that this is not the case.

(5) Systematic observation typically fails to reveal the behavioral patterns expected by globalism.

(6) Therefore, globalist conceptions of character are empirically inadequate.

Doris (2002) argues that the empirical evidence that is gathered from Milgram's Obedience Experiment, Zimbardo's Prison Experiment and so on indicates that compassion relevant behavior is far more situationally variable than the globalist these of consistency and evaluative integration would have us believe. He thinks that compassion marks an ethically crucial realm of human behavior which undermines globalist moral psychology. He generalizes the results about compassion to other traits and argues that globalism is an empirically inadequate account of human functioning. Even though situationism rejects globalism about character traits by rejecting three theses, namely consistency, stability and evaluative integration, Doris (2002) himself rejects the consistency and evaluative integration theses, and he endorses a variant of stability. In that sense, he differs from Harman and the thesis of global trait eliminativism, which argues there are really no global character traits and we should eliminate all reference to them from our thought and language. We can call Harman's as *strong* and Doris' as *modest* versions of situationism. However, Doris does not defend the thesis of global trait realism either. He calls himself an advocate of 'psychological realism' in ethics, which defends the idea that ethical reflection should be predicated on a moral psychology bearing a recognizable resemblance to actual human psychologies (Doris 2002, p. 112; Flanagan 1991). Although Doris is a situationist and he thinks that systematic empirical research undermines theses about global traits, he thinks that there are *local* traits,

and he examines this under the heading of the fragmentation of character. I will explain *local* traits of character in the next chapter.

Before finishing this chapter, it would be useful to draw some results from the discussion above. Quantities of empirical evidence indicate that behavior varies dramatically with slight situational variations. The first three experiments show that relatively minor manipulation in situation influences people's moral behavior. This suggests that people, who might seem to have global traits as measured by standard personality inventories, do not act on those traits; otherwise, behavior would vary as a function of traits, rather than situation (Prinz 2009, p.3). For instance, Hartshorne and May's (1928) honesty study, which assessed eleven thousand children on 33 behaviors in which honesty can be measured, discovered only a low correlation (about 0.2) across behaviors. Hartshorne and May's study demonstrates that individuals behave differently across contexts in which they are supposed to behave similarly, if they were acting under the influence of global traits. Then, if people have traits, then they need to be narrower than the traits supposed by virtue ethicists; even if a person does not steal may cheat on an exam, and this undermines the application of broad labels such as 'honest' and 'dishonest' (Prinz 2009, p.3). Therefore, all of these studies suggest that character traits are either narrow and efficacious or broad and inert (Prinz 2009, p.3). According to Harman and Doris, such traits lack psychological plausibility.[17]

Situational variability indicates that people's behavior is likely to be inconsistent with comparison to the virtue ethics' patterns expected on familiar trait categories, such as honesty, courage and so on. The skeptical argument represented by empirical results is a *modus tollens* (Doris and Stich 2006):

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[17] I will discuss this in detail in chapter where I will look at some major objections against situationism.

1. If behavior is typically ordered by global traits, systematic observation will reveal pervasive behavioral consistency.

2. Systematic observation does *not* reveal pervasive behavioral consistency.

3. Behavior is *not* typically ordered by global traits.

If this argument is sound, Doris argues it is, the central thesis in characterological moral psychology is seriously undermined, and globalist moral psychologies are deeply troubled. Doris (2005) insists that renderings of virtue ethics that are committed to globalism are not in vantage with respect to psychological plausibility.

1.5.   Conclusion

So far, in this chapter, I discussed the notable social psychology experiments and I reconstructed Harman's and Doris' situationism arguments against global traits. We can note that situationism has problem with three theses of *globalism*, namely consistency, stability and evaluative integration. Although Harman is a radical situationist and behaves as an eliminativist about global traits, Doris differs from Harman. Doris presents good discussion on descriptive explanation of moral psychology. Harman, himself being a situationist, thinks that social psychology experiments indicates that global character traits are empirically inadequate. He thinks that character traits are fragmented and they are local rather than being global, that is because there is good amount of empirical findings which support the fragmentation of character. That is why he thinks that virtue ethicists need to embrace local character traits which are empirically adequate instead of global traits.

Chapter 2
Local Traits

Before continue with some major objections against situationism, it would be better to explain the distinction between global and local traits, and to discuss some arguments for and against local traits. I will do this in the following chapter.

2.1. *The Fragmentation of Character*

In the last section of the previous chapter, I have presented Doris' understanding concerning global traits. In his book, *Lack of Character*, he contrasts two views of human nature: (i) *globalism*, which says that people possess global character traits and they behave consistently across various situations, and (ii) *situationism*, which says that people lack of these global character traits, and thus there is no consistency in humans' behavior across situations. And Doris (2002) defends *situationism* against *globalism*. He thinks that situationism is true and globalism is false, even though globalism is accepted by folks. By relying on these empirical claims he argues for two normative theses: (1) we should evaluate humans' behavior in terms of situation-specific traits, i.e. *local* traits, rather than global character traits, and (2) we should consider situation management rather than character development for moral education of humans.

Doris (2002) proceeds in the following so as to demonstrate that theses about situationism and fragmentation of character are true. He attacks on *consistency* claims of globalism concerning character traits. He makes a distinction between *intersituational* and *intrapersonal* consistency. A person population exhibits high intersituational consistency if there is a high positive average correlation between the distributions of the population members' behavior in various situations, and a person exhibits high intrapersonal consistency if the person's behavior is highly consistent across situations (Doris 2002, p. 64; Vranas 2004). And Doris (2002) argues that "the best explanation of the low intersituational

consistency is that intrapersonal consistency is typically low" (p. 63). Doris draws this conclusion from various social psychology experiments. It would be better to consider the results of these social psychology experiments to understand why Doris thinks that the character is fragmented.

Hartshorne and May (1928) in their study of honesty investigated over 8,000 schoolchildren. After their studies, they concluded that deceptive and honest behavior are not the function of 'unified' traits but are 'specific functions of life situations'. They interpreted that this is supposed to follow from the minimal cross-situational consistency they observed: The main intercorrelation between different pairs of situations presenting opportunities for deception or honesty was .23 (Hartshorne and May 1928, pp.123-7; Doris 2002, p. 63). Another study, Newcomb (1926), kept daily behavioral records at a camp for 'problem boys', and it found a mean correlation of .14 for behaviors relevant to extraversion/introversion. And Mischel and Peake (1982) found a mean intercorrelation of .08 for different situations intended to tap conscientiousness in college students. Although these consistency correlations are not measures of personal consistency, but they reflect relationships between the distribution of a population's behavior in different situations, not between different behaviors of particular individuals (Doris 2002, p. 63). Doris (2002), by looking at these consistency correlations argues that "we fail see a strong relation between these distributions, we have reason to doubt that individuals typically are acting consistently."

Hartshorne and May (1928) observed that as the situations they studied became more dissimilar, the relationship between behavior in those situations became increasingly tenuous. For instance, deceptive behavior in the classroom was less strongly related to deceptive behavior at home than to deceptive behavior in other classroom situations, and so on (Doris 2002, p.64). And they also found that even slight changes in situation were associated with

significant differences in deception.[18] Then Doris generalizes Hartshorne and May's (1928) observation: "typically the more dissimilar are situations, the weaker the relationship between behaviors". Therefore, consistency is proportional to situational similarity. The conclusion that we can draw this is the following. Doris allows the consistency of a trait relevant behavior over a reliably exhibited in iterated trials of similar situations. Although both the terms 'trait-relevant' and 'iterated trials' are relative terms, it sounds reasonable to argue that we can expect a person in a trait relevant way after *x* trials of similar situations. Therefore, Doris (2002, p. 64) argues that "where such temporal stability obtains, we are justified in attributing highly contextualized dispositions or 'local traits'." However, even if this is the case, we cannot draw the conclusion local trait attribution provides cross-situational consistency. That is because, 'the answer-key cheat' in one situation may be 'score-adding honest' in another situation.

Why should we abandon the idea that humans' behavior is determined by global traits like courage and why should we instead accept local traits, such as 'sailing-in-rough-weather-with-one's-friends-courage'?[19] Doris (Doris 2002, pp. 64-5) makes four observations against globalism and for the fragmentation of character. (1) Low consistency correlations across situations suggest that humans' behaviors are ordered by situations rather than global traits. (2) "The determinative impact of unobtrusive situational factors undermines attribution of global traits." (3) The relation between personality measures and overt human behavior is not empirically supported. (4) "Biographical information often reveals remarkable personal disintegration." If we take these four observations together, it seems like we have good grounds to support the existence of local traits instead of global traits. That is because, while systematic observation does not reveal a significant relation between human behavior and global traits, the fragmentation of character, or local traits, is empirically supported.

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[18] For the whole debate, see Doris (2002, pp. 63-66).
[19] Jonathan Webber (2007) asks a similar question in 'Character, Global, Local'.

One reason for Doris to bring the idea of local traits instead of globalism is, as I have said above, it is the case that intersituational consistency is low. And he tries to support this premise with various psychology experiments. Peter Vranas (2004), in his review of Doris' *Lack of Character*, criticizes Doris on this point. Doris supports this premise by referring to psychological experiments reported by Hartshorne and May (1928), Mischel and Peake (1982), and Newcomb (1929). Vranas (2004) argues that this support is not sufficient for Doris because the experiments he refers examine different character traits, respectively, honesty, conscientiousness, and extroversion/introversion, therefore, there is no accumulation of evidence for any single trait. Therefore, it is not likely for Doris to argue that intersituational consistency across individuals' behaviors is low. Vranas might have a point here. However, Doris can easily defend his position by relying on compassionate behavior experiments, namely Milgram's Obedience Experiment and Darley and Batson's Good Samaritan Experiment. It is true that there is accumulation of a single trait in Hartshorne and May (1928), Mischel and Peake (1982), and Newcomb (1929). But this is different for Milgram's, and Darley and Batson's experiments. From these experiments, we have enough empirical data for a single trait, compassion. In both of these experiments, the subjects were given the chances for compassionate behavior, but surprisingly merely small number of subjects took these chances under the presence of a kind experimenter and a passive bystander. Darley and Batson's experiment shows us that the likelihood of a given subject behaving compassionately decreases in inverse proportion to the degree of hurry that subject is in (Webber 2007, p. 430). Therefore, by applying Doris' situationism argument, Milgram's, and Darley and Batson's experiments, maybe not Hartshorne and May (1928), Mischel and Peake (1982), and Newcomb (1929), indicate that behavior is not determined by global traits such as compassion, but by such traits as in-a-hurry-compassion, on-time-compassion, time-

to-spare-compassion, presence-of-a-passive-bystander-compassion, and so on (Doris 2002, pp. 32-51).

The other reason for us to accept local traits rather than global traits is that, according to Doris, trait attributions foster better moral reasoning, deliberation, and choices, and the trait attributions that accurately describe human beings are necessary for producing successful moral deliberations and actors (Doris 2002; Upton 2009a). Of course, for that we need empirically supported and adequate trait attributions. And empirically trait attributions are local traits, not global trait attributions. Therefore, local trait attributions would help people to have better understanding of human morality, deliberation and moral reasoning.

For the textual evidence of this claim, we should consider Doris's (1998) previous work, 'Persons, Situations, and Virtue Ethics'. In this paper, he gives the example of flirtation. And the example follows,

> Imagine that a colleague with whom you have had a long flirtation invites you for a dinner, offering enticement of sumptuous food and fine wine, with the excuse that you are temporarily orphaned while your spouse is out of town. Let's assume the obvious way to read this text is the right one, and assume further that you regard the infidelity that may result as a *morally undesirable outcome*.[20] If you are like one of Milgram's respondents, you might think that there is little cause for concern; you are, after all, a morally upright person, and a spot of claret never did anyone a bit of harm. On the other hand, if you take the lessons of situationism to heart, you avoid dinner like the plague, because you know that you may not be able to predict your behavior in a problematic situation on the basis of your antecedent values. You do not doubt that you sincerely value fidelity; you *simply* doubt *your ability to act in conformity with this value once the candles are lit and the wine begins to flow*. (Doris 1998, pp. 516-7)

In this example, it is sad but true that the right descriptively accurate trait attribution is 'loyal-only-when-sober' or 'loyal-only-when-not-tipsy' of this lady. And she can recognize her actual morally destructive behavioral tendency with these trait attributions (Upton 2009, p. 182). If she is not one of Milgram's respondents, she can avoid such a situation by taking the lessons of situationism. And from this, and other vast of major social psychology experiments, Doris concludes that we should appeal attribute empirically adequate traits like 'loyal-only-when-

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[20] Emphasis is mine.

sober', 'mountain-climbing-courageous', and 'family-and-friends-just', which are called local character traits.[21]

Doris' local traits thesis gets various objections and responses. It is not possible to consider many of them here. In the following section, I will consider two objections, one from Candace Upton (2009) and the other from Christian Miller (2009).

2.1.1. Objections against Doris' Local Traits

Candace Upton (2009) defends a local account of character traits. However, her version of 'local' traits differs from Doris' local traits. Doris argues that virtue ethicists should accept local character traits such as 'mountain-climbing-courageous', because such traits are both empirically supported and their adoption can provide better understanding of moral reasoning, choices and behavior for moral agents. With embracing local traits, moral agents can stop making the 'fundamental attribution error'. However, Upton (2009) objects that Doris' local traits cannot be qualified as traits of character, and that Doris "Doris fails to establish that trait ascriptions are necessary for establishing the boons which local trait ascriptions are supposed to enable us to achieve, and that Doris's local traits' justification is wholly dependent upon the empirical situation, which holds only contingently" (Upton 2009b, p. 113). Therefore, Upton defends local traits of character which "enable us morally to appraise ourselves and others, to inform us of others' behavioral tendencies and in which mental features they are rooted and, thus, to predict and explain their behavior" (Upton 2009, p. 176). She defends attributions of local traits because of their theoretical necessity, rather than their allegedly empirical adequacy.[22]

Upton (2009) presents three objections against Doris' local traits. Firstly, she argues that Doris provides no reason why we should think of local character traits, such as mountain-

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[21] See Upton (2009).

[22] Upton claims that Doris defends the latter view which defends local traits on the grounds of alleged empirical adequacy.

climbing-courage, as a normatively-valenced character trait at all, rather than merely a disposition to behave. Secondly, she says that even if local traits are character traits, Doris gives no reason for the virtue ethicists to endorse local traits. And thirdly, she accuses Doris' local traits being empirically and normatively unstable.

I start answering these objections in the reverse order. Upton argues that Doris' local traits of character are empirically and normatively unstable. Firstly, it would be useful to say that Doris' local character traits satisfy the Consistency and Predictive Expectations for behavior that is restricted to the same narrowly construed particular type of situation. And we have enough empirical evidence to satisfy this claim. This being the case, it is possible to have empirically stable local traits from narrowly construed particular type of trait-eliciting situation (Miller 2003, p. 382). This empirical basis for the stability of particular local traits can also help us to get normative stability for that particular local trait as well. however, I think that Upton makes a mistake when she accuses Doris' local traits. That is because she, in fact, does not make a clear distinction between local and global traits. And she expects local traits to be consistent and stable in all of the similar trait-eliciting situations. She merely changes the word 'global' into 'local' when she support the existence of her allegedly 'local' traits. She considers local traits as "necessary for us accurately to morally appraise ourselves and others, and necessary for the concept of justice to retain its normative integrity" (p. 183).

Even though it is argued that Doris does not explicitly explain why the virtue ethicists should endorse local traits as character traits, the experimental findings of the social psychology research demonstrate that there is enough reason to accept local traits as traditionally-acclaimed character traits. Local traits are character traits, but they are not global. Local traits has an explanatory role in examining the human behavior. And local traits are supported by empirical research by social psychology, unlike global traits. Virtue ethicists support globalism about character traits without having any empirical data. Social psychology

experiments demonstrate that individuals do not demonstrate cross-situational consistency in their behaviors, that is because the situation, rather than global traits, determines their behaviors. It might be the case that this empirical research does not provide adequate reason for virtue ethicists to endorse local traits as character traits, but they do not have enough reason to ignore empirically supported local traits either.

Upton also argues that, "Only a very few real agents might possess the local traits which the agents in my cases possess. In such a case, local traits would *not* adequately describe *most of the population*, and local traits would not be empirically adequate" (p. 192). Doris proposed the idea that there are fine-grained local traits which can have stability after several iterations, but these are not cross-situationally consistent. Such kind of traits are situation-specific, and he thinks that they can differ "in terms of environmental features characterizable independently of individual psychological particularities" (Doris 2002, p. 76). That is why, I am not sure to what amount Upton's worry hold. Doris does not claim something like "we should be competent to describe most of the population with local traits." He says that even the personality critics agree that behavior will exhibit considerable temporal stability over iterated trials of highly similar situations (Mischel 1968, p. 3; Mischel and Peake 1982, pp. 734-7; Ross and Nisbett 1991, p. 101), but this does not grant the expectations of cross-situational consistency. Thus we cannot drive, unlike Upton does, to detect a particular local trait of character across the most of the population. It is true that Upton's understanding of local traits differs from Doris, but her conceptualization of local traits is quite similar to globalism. And this is not the concept of local traits which Doris talks about.

Here, I bring another objection against Doris' local traits. This objection comes from Miller (2009). Miller, interestingly, concerns some social psychology experiments which deals with subjects' positive and negative moods rather than the situation in which subjects are

in.[23] He investigates the relationship between positive/negative affect and helping behavior by referring to some systematic research of social psychology.[24] After his examination of experimental results concerning helping traits, Miller (2009) argues that the experimental research does not provide any support for the existence of local helping traits. Miller (2009) says that if our characters merely consisted of a collection of various local, then we would expect helping behavior to be highly fragmented as well. For instance, we would expect many people experiencing *positive affect* to help picking up the dropped papers in Isen and Levin's study, but maybe not to volunteer for a charity organization. However, Miller (2009, p. 165) argues that the empirical data suggests that a significant number of people with raised levels of positive affect would help in a wide variety of circumstances, while many of those without such raised levels would not. Therefore, Miller claims that "there seems to be more structure at work than a fragmentation model of character would lead us to believe." If we find an agent who helps to the others in various situations when he is in his positive mood, but does not in situations when he is experiencing the negative mood, then we can have enough empirical support for Miller's claims. However, the problem with Miller's argument is that, and Miller himself is aware of that too, even if we accept the existence of global helping traits, it does not follow that virtue ethicists win the fight against the situationists. It is because, what Miller calls global helping behaviors depend on subject's mood and affect, but our traditionally-acclaimed trait compassion, or other traits of character, must be independent of mood.

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[23] For literature overview, see Carlson et al. (1988) and Schaller and Cialdini (1990).

[24] However, I will not discuss these social psychology experiments here.

2.2. *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have discussed Doris' (2002) thesis of local character traits, whether or not local character traits exist. Doris (2002) contends that we should appeal to local traits of character instead of global traits, and he buttresses his view against globalism with four observations. He argues that we should accept the existence of local character traits rather than global traits because local traits are supported on the experimental basis, unlike global trait of character. I have considered three objections against local character thesis, two from Upton (2009) and one from Miller (2009). I have argued that none of these objections are successful against Doris' local character traits. None of these objections gives us good reasons to deny the existence of local character traits, and to accept the thesis about globalism. I think that, like Doris (2002) do, we should appeal to local character traits since their existence is supported by empirical research of social psychology.

Chapter 3
Objections Against Situationism

In the following chapter I will consider some general and crucial objections against situationism from virtue ethicists.

3.1.   Four Objections Against Situationism

Firstly, virtue ethicists claim that it is hard to be virtuous; therefore, the fact that most people are swayed by situational factors is no surprise to virtue ethicists. This objection has been made by Julia Annas (2005) and Gopal Sreenivasan (2004). In Ancient philosophy, it is argued that virtue is almost impossible to acquire. Only sages and who dedicated his life to cultivate character development can achieve virtue. And, with this respect, we should *try* to be virtuous by emulating these masters. Thus, we should not expect many people to be virtuous and to acquire virtue, as virtuous behavior rarely exists.

Is this objection grantable by situationism? There are two short comings of this objection above. First, if virtue is rare and it is hard to be virtuous, why do we need to appeal to virtue ethics as a moral theory of our lives? In fact, virtue ethics, by insisting the rarity of virtue, becomes too demanding, at least as demanding as Kantianism and consequentialism. Consequentialism suggests that we should act in a way where we only care utility. Kantianism urges agents to obey law-like dictates of reasons, even if the net result is total devastation. Although virtue ethicists argue that virtue ethics is not as demanding as other moral theories for it does not require methods of practical reasoning, we see that there is no reason to accept virtue ethics over Kantianism and consequentialism. If only sages can become virtuous, then this theory places itself above lay persons reach. And if only sages can be virtuous, then why normal people bother to be virtuous even though they know it is impossible to be virtuous? Virtue theory requires the same super-human methods of practical reasoning of Kantianism

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and consequentialism. Therefore, virtue ethics does not provide a better moral theory for us to reach the good lives that we are trying to find.

However, the concept of virtue might have an instrumental role for individuals, even if there is nothing like 'virtue' or 'virtuous'. Individuals can always aim and try to be morally better persons by appealing to the instrumental role of the concept of virtue. This claim that virtue is almost impossible to acquire is similar to Kant's 'Regulative Principle', which says that the ideas and principles of reason are to be used 'regulatively', as devices for guiding and grounding our empirical investigations and the project of knowledge acquisition.[25] However, virtue ethicists most probably will not be happy with this correlation. But why do individuals need the concept virtue to conduct moral lives, even though they know that it is impossibly (hardly-possible) to be a virtuous being? They can be morally good or right individuals by appealing to local traits, rather than global traits. They can regulate their behaviors according to various situations, and this does not make them immoral agents-- as Doris' Professional Flirtation Example.

This objection, secondly, underestimates the ramifications of situationist psychology. The claim virtue is rare leave the possibility of becoming virtuous. And this presupposes that behavior can be driven by character traits. However, we have no reason to believe that minds like ours are capable of being driven by inner traits. It would be perfectly reasonable to say that virtue is rare if most people were driven by character traits that were not virtuous (Prinz 2009, p.8). But situationist psychology alleges to demonstrate that people are not ordinarily driven by character traits. It is very problematic for virtue ethics assuming that human beings, who do not have character traits, can possess such efficacious traits. If situationism is right about human psychology, it is not possible for human beings to acquire such traits. Becoming

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[25] Michelle Grier (2012), < http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-metaphysics/ >.

virtuous requires a wholly different cognitive architecture (Prinz 2009). And moral education cannot help us to gain such new machinery for morality.

Secondly, Annas (2005) and Rachana Kamtekar (2004) claim that situationists discuss a notion of character that has nothing to do with the notion espoused by virtue ethicists. Virtue ethicists accuses situationists, especially Doris and Harman, of presupposing that character traits are supposed to be behavioral dispositions like habits, or unthinking automatic responses. Annas (1993, p.51) writes that virtue includes "a firm tendency to act and decide in one way rather than the other." What she means with 'firm' is similar to what Doris (2002, 2005) means with 'robust'. In addition to this explanation, Annas (2002, p.11) claims, by relying on Aristotelian moral theory, "Virtue is a disposition to which the agent's practical reasoning is essential." In this sense, having a trait or virtue is more than engaging in certain kinds of habits, or automatic responses; it needs to be in relation with practical reasoning. Virtue creates a relation with deliberation.

Virtue ethicists argue that situationism does not have such an understanding of virtue. However, apparently, this is not the case for situationism. Doris (2002, p.17) writes, "Virtues are not mere dispositions but *intelligent* dispositions, characterized by distinctive patterns of emotional response, deliberation, and decision as well as by more overt behavior."[26] This explanation of virtue demonstrates that both virtue ethics and situationist psychology have similar understanding of 'virtue'. Situationists may reason in the following way: If character traits exist, they would be like automatic reflexes; if behavior were controlled by reflexes, then they need to be triggered by automatic responses under certain conditions, regardless of slight situational changes (Prinz 2009, p.9). Virtues have practical capacities—they are flexible and context sensitive, and they are not reflexes according to virtue ethicists. Since reflexes are robust across wide range of situations, they are not affected by reasoning. If you

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[26] Emphasis in original.

have a justice-reflex, you have to struggle with any case where there is injustice (Prinz 2009). For instance, in Milgram's (1974) obedience experiment, you should not harm the learner upon the kind request of the experimenter. However, this and similar experiments demonstrate that people do not have such reflex-like dispositions, and situational context can cause dramatic changes in behavior. We can argue that, as Prinz (2009) also does, situationist experiments demonstrate that behavior is not controlled by reflex-like traits. Therefore, the objection above, which says that the situationists' understanding of virtue is not same with the virtue ethicists' understanding of virtue, is not granted. That is because the situationists share same understanding of the concept of virtue with virtue ethicists.

When we look at situationist experiments, we realize that subjects of experiments, generally, engage in deliberation. They generally think over the situations and their decisions about acting. Therefore, if character traits are practical skills, then they should be available when subjects decide what to do (Prinz 2009, p.9). Suppose that individuals care about the moral concept of *x* and they contemplate over situations and about which actions are appropriate with *x* and which are not, and what is the right and wrong thing to do. If character traits are practical skills, then we expect to see them in individuals' behaviors. However, when we look at situationist experiments, we observe that few of the subjects in these experiments behave in accordance with this disposition. We can still argue that if a person is an active and deliberating agent, then features of the situations cannot be enough to explain his behavior. That is why we also need to take individual's construal of the situation, his goals, and his conception of himself, and his conception of himself as a responsible agent (Badhwar 2009, p. 281). The follow-up post-experimental questionnaires that Milgram distributed, and his post-experimental interviews with the subjects of the experiment revealed many of the subjects' (non-global traits). Although Milgram's subjects were deliberating and

choosing agents, 65% of them did not behave appropriately with their supposed and predicted 'dispositional' traits.

For instance, Darley and Batson's (1973) Princeton Theological Seminary experiment demonstrates that subjects tended to help to a moaning stranger if they were not in hurry to give a lecture (63 %), but not if they were late (10 %). Sreenivasan (2004, p.60) explains this situation in the following way, "the fact that one is in hurry can defeat the reason to help someone in distress". Is it really plausible to leave a groaning person because you are late for a talk? Zimbardo's (1971) and Milgram's (1974) experiments demonstrate that people, who have authority to inflict pain onto the others, continue to torture even if they condemn torture or even if they know that it is unjust to inflict pain on the other parties. What Sreenivasan (2004) says is this, when two norms are pitted against each other, we are forced to violate one of them; in these experiments, subjects may conclude that it is rational not to help a person in distress (Prinz 2009, p.10). If that was the case, virtue ethics would have answer against situationist challenge. However, this is not so. We can claim that, by relying on experimental findings of situationism, even though people have reasoning dispositions, they are incapable of scattering them under certain situational changes (Prinz 2009, p.10). The situationist experiments might demonstrate that not only behavioral reflexes, but also reasoning is affected by situational context.

It seems that reasoning is context-sensitive and one reason can override the other(s) in a situation. However, I do not think virtue ethicists argue for this view because of two reasons. Firstly, if they accept that reason is context-sensitive, then they accept the effects of the situation over the agent's behavior. If this is the case, if the context and the situation determines the agents' action, then why do we need to appeal to character traits? Secondly, if we accept Sreenivasan's view, " the fact that one is in hurry can defeat the reason to help someone in distress", then it is absurd to argue for being virtuous. A virtuous person would

never leave a moaning person in agony. We expect a virtuous person to behave virtuously, compassionately, not just to pass-by, if there is a person in need. Thus, I argue that none of these objections above prove that situationism is untenable. Therefore, virtue ethics is decrepit before the experimental situationism.

Some philosophers who dissatisfied with the interpretations of situationism of social psychology experiments can argue that situationism makes wrong in interpreting behaviors of moral agents by relying on the data from social psychology experiments. For these experiments do not represent the real life situations. And agents are distorted by some features of artificial situations in these experiments. For instance, they can claim that it is unlikely for individuals to be in Milgram-like situations. However, I do not think this is a legitimate objection. One reason for that is we do not come equipped with two sets of psychological mechanisms: one for the lab and another for everyday life. Therefore, it does not matter whether or not one is in Milgram-like situations, one will be using only one psychological mechanism in every each situation. The second reason is that, we can see real life correlations of these 'artificial' social psychology experiments. For instance, Darley and Latane (1968) demonstrated the 'Bystander Effect' after the murder of Kitty Genovese in 1964.[27]Genovese murdered by a perpetrator in front of her non-responsive neighbors. Her neighbors, during the attack on her, was fully aware of the situation but they were nonresponsive. Even though she screamed "Oh my God, he stabbed me! Help me!", and her cry was hurt by several neighbors, none of the neighbors did try to interrupt the perpetrator.

This event is very similar to the bystander examples that I have talked above. Social psychologist may explain the situation with social influence, in which individuals observe the reactions of the others and they behave in conformity with the rest of the population.

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[27] Even though Wikipedia articles are not 'welcomed' by professionals, here is a good article on the murder of Kitty Genovese, Reached at May 20, 2012. < http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_Kitty_Genovese>.

However, what we would expect from a virtuous person, who has global traits, to behave consistently with that disposition. We would expect him to behave courageously, honestly, and so on, no matter what the features of the situation are. This case is very similar to Milgram's experiment. Although an observer expect a moral agent to behave virtuously and not to give sever electric shocks to the learner in the other room, most of the agents continue giving shock until the end. Maybe they know what is morally right to do, but they just do not represent consistency and stability in their behaviors; the situation determines their acts.

There are other real life examples which correlate with Zimbardo's Prison Experiment. In Zimbardo's experiment, guards started to behave swaggeringly and sadistically, and they were not ordered by any authority. They put their own rules in the prison. They put bags over the prisoners' heads. They forced the prisoners to strip naked, and they harassed the prisoners. The guards smeared the food to the faces of the prisoners, and they forced the prisoners to clean the toilets with their naked hands. Similar demeaning and 'monster' events occurred in the war in Iraq, in Abu Ghraib prison.[28] The things those were happening in Abu Ghraib found their place in the newspapers as 'Abu Ghraib Scandal', where American military and security personnel were breaking chemical lights and pouring the phosphoric liquid on detainees, pouring cold water on naked detainees, beating detainees with a broom handle and a chair, threatening male detainees with rape, allowing a military police guard to stitch the wound of a detainee who was injured after slammed against the in his cell, using military dogs to frighten and intimidate detainees with threats of attack, and sodomizing a detainee with a chemical light.[29] How do we have information about these degradations and tortures in Abu Ghraib? That is because the perpetrators photographed them, and they shared these 'tropy shots' with their friends.

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[28] Abu Ghraib is one but not only example, we can count My Lai and other similar cases.
[29] Seymour Hersh, "Torture at Abu Ghraib," *The New Yorker*, May 10, 2004.

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After these photos were published in the newspapers, although the rest of the world was shocked, Zimbardo said that he was not surprised that it happened. And he added that he has exact, parallel pictures of prisoners with bags over their heads from his Prison Experiment.[30] In this case, e have a similar events occurred both in the simulation and the real prisons. Craig W. Haney says, "If anything, the smiling faces in those pictures suggest a total loss of perspective, a drift in the standard of humane treatment."[31] It is hard to try to make sense of such kind of inhumane and immoral acts, and it is very hard to understand what were these perpetrators thinking while doing these. Maybe we can support Doris and Murphy's (2007, p. 26) argument: Perpetrators of atrocity typically occupy excusing conditions and therefore not morally responsible for their conduct. Although character debates in moral psychology relate to the discussion moral responsibility in one way or another, it will not be discussed here. The thing that I am claiming is that the argument which says that social psychology experiments are not real and thus individuals cannot inhabit in such kind of situations does not make sense. As it is clear from Abu Ghraib example, military and security members do not behave in the light of global traits, and their behavior is swayed by the situations.

There is one more objection that I would like to consider before finishing this chapter.

Lastly, the social psychology experiments that I have discussed comes up with the following results: in Milgram's experiment 65% of the subjects were obedient; Isen and Levin's (1972) study that subjects who have found a dime in a phone booth were 22 times more likely to help a passerby who dropped her papers than subjects who did not find a dime (88% v. 4%); Darley and Batson's Good Samaritan reported that passersby not in hurry were

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[30] Jonathan Schwartz, "Simulated Prison in '71 Showed a Fine Line Between 'Normal' and 'Monster'," May 6, 2004.

[31] Jonathan Schwartz, "Simulated Prison in '71 Showed a Fine Line Between 'Normal' and 'Monster'," May 6, 2004.

more likely to help a groaning person who is in agony than were passersby in hurry (63% v. 10%). Mantell (1971), after he repeated Milgram's experiment in different countries, reported that 85% of the German subjects were obedient to the orders of the experimenter; and it is found that the least obedient were the Australians with 28% compliance rate.[32] My question, this being the case, is the following: why not 100% of Milgram's subjects were not obedient, how can we explain the behavior of the 35% who were not obedient? Same questions are valid for the other experiments as well.

There is no such a question in the situationism literature. Every scholar questioned why does the 65% of the subjects behaved in the directions of the experimenter. But they didn't question why does the 35% didn't obey the authority. Suppose that I accepted the situationism's explanation concerning the behaviors of the 65% in Milgram's study and I accepted. In this case I appeal to the claim that it is the situation which determines individuals' behaviors rather than global traits, that is because even a slight change in the situation can cause detrimental changes in individuals' behavior. In this case, it is unlikely to support the claim that global traits determines the individuals' behavior, as global traits are not consistent and stable. And they do not satisfy Consistency and Predictive Expectations. But why does not the 35% behave in the same with the rest of the 65%? There is no change in the situation; the experimental set up and processes are same for each subject in Milgram's study. Therefore, we would expect to see every each individual to behave in the same way as there is no change in the situation. However, this is not the case, we have the 35%. What is the cause of their disobedience? Is it some type of trace for character traits? Some parties may argue that 35% is not an important rate, thus they can ignore this population. However, this would be no benefit for situationism-- it could be considered as covering the evidence. Frankly, I do not have an exact answer to these worries. However, I do not think this could be considered as

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[32] I will discuss Mantell (1971) in the following chapter as well.

the existence of global traits either. If this would have been the case, then the defenders of global traits would have been in the same stalemate too-- then they have had to explain why 65% behaved in the way they did.

We can say that affects of emotions play a crucial role for the 35% rather than global traits. And this inhibits the subjects to obey the instructions of the experimenter. But, I am not sure whether or not virtue ethicists would appreciate emotional explanations for character traits. We can also claim that the moral education of the subjects play an important role in their behaviors as well. A defender of global traits can argue that most of the test subjects, 65% did not receive and adequate moral education which habituated them into both recognizing and responding to the demands of the situation.[33] A defender of globalism can also argue that if the subjects in Isen and Levin's study would have taken the adequate moral education, then they wouldn't have changed their behaviors in the situation of finding a dime. I am not sure, but the arguments about moral education can be true. However, when we look at Mantell's (1971) redone Milgram's experiment in Germany and Australia, we get different results, 85% and 28% obedience rates respectively. If we accept the previous claim about moral education, then we should end up saying that the Australians are morally more educated than the Americans and the Germans, and the Germans are less educated in terms of morality. But I do not think this is the thesis that we should accept. We always need to keep in mind that cultural situations have extremely important effects on individuals' behavior. And I will discuss this in the next chapter.

Before concluding this chapter, it would be useful to make some remarks. Doris (2002) argues (i) for situationism, and naturally (ii) against globalism. That is because he thinks that there is no empirical research which supports global traits of character. From his empirical theses, he draws two normative claims. Unlike Harman, Doris thinks that there are

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[33] Miller (2003, p. 385)

character traits but they are fragmented. In other words there are local traits of character, rather than global traits.[34] And that moral education should not aim at inculcating robust virtues but rather at helping people bring about situation propitious to virtuous behavior.[35] But he does not make any exact conclusion concerning moral education by relying on his empirical theses; and he does not support his claim that we should accept local traits as character traits so as to emanate virtuous behavior. And the last two objections might cause danger to Doris' situationism. That is why I am supporting Global Trait Instrumentalism, which accepts the talk of global character traits as if they exist for explanatory and predictive purposes. This view, as I have discussed in the beginning, is combination of Global Trait Realism and Global Trait Eliminativism, which are both extremes of virtue ethics, and crude situationism. I do not see any harm accepting the talk as if there are global character traits for practical reasons. By defending global trait instrumentalism, we can both utilize situationism and virtue ethics too. For instance, we can explain why the 35% was not obedient in Milgram's experiment by appealing to the instrumental language of global traits, and at the same time we can still hold the situationism's explanation for the 65%.[36] Maybe we can say that the 35% was behaving disobediently because they were given good moral education so as to be a moral person. Or we can say that the 35% was not obeying the orders of the experimenter because they were behaving 'virtuously', unlike the 65%. According to Global Trait Instrumentalism, it is possible to explain the behavior of the 35% by appealing to virtues, or global character traits, just for the explanatory reasons, even though there are no global character traits. Thus, Global Trait Instrumentalism should be preferred over the other views because it utilizes the experimental findings of social psychology and it accepts the

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[34] Vranas (2004)

[35] Doris (2002, pp. 92-127) discusses his view with respect to moral education under the heading of 'From Psychology to Ethics'.

[36] I am planning to develop this view in my future works, this is just an preliminary attack.

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language of the global character traits for explanatory and predictive reasons, as if there are global character traits.

Chapter 4
Cross Cultural Research

In this last chapter I will examine an experimental challenge from cross-cultural research, which Jesse Prinz (2009) brings, against situationism. This experimental challenge argues for the existence of global traits such as being individualistic, being collectivistic and being obedient. These types of traits are different from the traits of character that globalism argues for. And they cannot be defended by virtue ethicists because these types of traits vary from culture to culture, and they are not consistent and stable either. However, if virtue ethicist wants to embrace these traits as global traits, then they also need to take the burden of trapped in moral relativism.

4.1. A Cross-Cultural Experimental Challenge against Situationism

Situationist psychology experiments aim to demonstrate that we should consider situations rather than character traits to examine whether individuals behave consistently or not in different situations, or slightly changed situations. According to situationism, there is no consistency in people's behavior. And situationists conclude that there are no global character traits either. However, cross-cultural comparisons demonstrate that there might be behaviorally efficacious character-like traits. For instance, it is reasonable to say cultural difference in the degree of individualism and collectivism seems to affect character. It is true that people in Western Europe, and people raised in Western Europe culture tend to be individualists, and people in cultures in the Mediterranean, South America, South Asia, and East Asia tend to be collectivists (Hofstede 2001, qtd. in Prinz 2009). Of course, being an individualist or a collectivist causes differences in attitudes and behavioral tendencies

(Triandis 1995). People in individualist cultures tend to express their emotions and tend to be frank about their attitudes; on the other hand, people in collectivist society tend to be timid to express their emotions before the others. Individuals tend to be self-promoting, and collectivists tend to be motivated by a sense of duty to others (Prinz 2009, p.13). For instance, Turkish culture might be considered as a collectivist culture to some extent. Most of the people in Turkey do not send their aging relatives, i.e. their parents, to nursing homes, and they care their relatives themselves. This is mostly because people think that they have some type of a duty against their relatives. However, this is not the case in more individualist cultures.

Another research on cross-cultural correlations, Levine et al. (2001), discovers that people in poor countries tend to be more helpful than people in rich countries. Experimenters watched to see if people would give a pen back for a stranger who 'accidentally' dropped it. Experimenters examined that people in Brazil, Malawi, India, and China were more helpful than people in the U.S. (New York City), the Netherlands, and Italy. Although the correlations between collectivism and helpfulness were not very high, but still positive, in this research, there was a very strong correlation between helpfulness and economic situation (Prinz 2009). It is found that people in poor countries are more likely to help than people in rich countries.

Milgram's infamous obedience experiment was conducted in various countries. When it was conducted in the U.S., it was found that 65% of the subjects were obedient to the urges of the experimenter. When we consider this experiment in the borders of the U.S., it is not possible for us to see character traits because Milgram used an exclusively American sample. However, character becomes visible when this experiment is done in different countries. For instance, Mantell (1971) reported that 85% of the German subjects were obedient to the orders of the experimenter. And it is found that the least obedient were the Australians with 28% compliance rate; 40% of men and 16% of women were fully obedient. These data show

that people from different countries perform differently in the same experiment. Therefore, we can add 'nationality' as another major factor in cross-cultural research. Americans are hyper-individualistic, Germans are extremely obedient, and Australians are resolutely anti-authoritarian. Therefore, we can claim that nations have their own character, 'national character' (Prinz 2009).[37] What these experiments do demonstrate? Prinz (2009) says that when we look at cross-cultural and cross-nationally, character seems to reappear. Here, I agree with him. When we examine the agents from the same country, we do not see character traits because situational variables delete most of the variance.

These findings of cross-cultural research support the view that there may be global character traits. Therefore, there occurs an empirical challenge against Doris' and Harman's empirical evidence. Doris can answer in the following way. "These 'consistency correlations' are not measures of *personal* consistency; the correlations in question reflect relationships between the distribution of a *population's* behavior in different situations, not between different behaviors performed by particular individuals" (Doris 2002, p.63). Let us consider Milgram's obedience experiment again. When Milgram conducted this experiment over American subjects, he did not find the traces of character. However, when this experiment done in different countries, there were dramatic changes in the rates of obedience across the people of different countries. In fact these re-done experiments and other cross-cultural correlations demonstrate not only consistency in population's behavior but also in personal behaviors. Even though Doris (2002) claims that we fail to see a strong relation between behavioral consistency of relevant individuals and the population distribution of behaviors in different trait-relevant situations, once we look into cross-cultural correlations, e.g. national origins, we see systematic variation across individuals. Therefore, Doris seems faulty when he claims that the intersituational consistency is low because it seems like cross-cultural research

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[37] Although some thinks that this term 'national character' connotes a negative meaning, here it is appropriate for scientific use.

demonstrate that intersituational consistency is high.[38] However, we should note that high intersituational consistency does not say anything about intrapersonal consistency; even if intersituational consistency is high, intrapersonal consistency might still be low-- which is the conclusion that Doris (2002, p. 63) draws for situationism.

Doris and Harman might raise an objection; they might say that being a collectivist, individualist or being obedient to an authority are not character traits because they are not like being honest or courageous (Prinz 2009). However, these categories are similar to the traditional understanding of virtues or character traits. Character traits, in the classical tradition, are supposed to be long-term, global, and efficacious dispositions that influence reasoning and deliberation. The traits that I mentioned above are seems like traditional character traits: they have long-term, global, and robust dispositions that affect people's practical reasoning and behaviors.

Although I agree that cross-cultural research sheds doubt upon situationism, I am suspicious about counting the different distribution ratios which the experimenters from different societies and cultures as evidence for the existence global traits. Are these results enough for counting collectivism, individualism and being obedient to authority as global character traits? And how can we apply the findings of a cultural research, which includes many individuals of a particular culture, to the individuals of a particular culture, i.e. how can we make generalizations about particular individuals concerning character traits? Mantell (1971) examined that 85% of German subjects were obedient in Milgram's redone experiment. This experiment, maybe, gives us reason to call the German nation 'obedient', but I do not think we have neither sufficient nor necessary reasons to call a particular German obedient to the authority. However, we are making trait attribution for a particular nation, and about a particular individual from a particular nation, for practical reasons. People are creating

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[38] Consider Individualism and Collectivism debate again.

stereotypes about almost everything to ease their lives. A variety of national stereotypes is part of our popular culture. For instance, Italians are said to be 'volatile', Germans 'hard-working', the Dutch 'clean', the Swiss 'neat', the English 'reserved', and so on.[39]We can expect a Turkish man to be helpful because Turkish people generally take care of their elders, or because of other reasons. However, this is exactly the point where the observers make mistake, they are making the fundamental attribution error-- as I have discussed above.

Joan Miller (1984) conducts a research with Hindus in India on the fundamental attribution error.[40] She has shown that Hindus are more likely than Americans to explain events in terms of situational or contextual factors. Miller asked her subjects to describe, and then to account for, 'good', or 'wrong' things that someone they knew well had recently done. Their explanations were coded into broad categories of which the most relevant were those corresponding to general dispositions, such as generosity and clumsiness, versus context, such as 'there was no one there to help' and 'it was dark'. It is found that individualistic, person-oriented U.S. subjects invoked general dispositions 45% of the time to explain negative or deviant behaviors, on the other hand Hindu subjects invoked them only 15% of the time. U.S. subjects appealed to dispositional explanations 35% so as to explain positive or pro-social behaviors, while Hindu subjects appealed to dispositional explanations 22%. However, we have interesting results for contextual/situational explanations. For instance, Hindu subjects invoked contextual reasons 32% of the time for deviant behaviors, on the other hand U.S. subjects invoked them only 14% of the time. And although the U.S subjects appealed to contextual explanations only 22% of the time for pro-social behaviors, Hindu subjects invoked contextual explanations 49% of the time. After getting these results from two sample of subjects, Miller made a control comparison to demonstrate that the differentiation in explanation of American versus Hindu was not the result of differences in the actions or

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[39] Milgram (1992, p. 200), 'Nationality and Conformity', *The Individual in a Social World*.
[40] I am using Ross and Nisbett (1991, pp. 185-6) for quoting Miller's (1984) research.

behaviors to be explained (Ross and Nisbett 1991, p. 186). She asked her American subjects to explain the behavior of her Hindu subject. And she got consistent results concerning her cultural difference hypothesis: the American subjects explained the Hindu-generated behaviors with the same proportions of dispositional and contextual explanations which they have applied to their behaviors that they generated themselves (Ross and Nisbett 1991, p. 186).

As Miller (1984) claimed, it might be true that the Hindus do not make attribution error, or they make less attribution error than the Americans. However, just one study is not enough to draw conclusions concerning the distinction between the East and the West. It is possible that situational factors play an important role in determining behavior in the East than in the West. But at the same time, it is possible to argue that the Hindus may not be showing "greater situationist insight, they simply may be explaining more situationally determined behavior" (Ross and Nisbett 1991, p. 186). But I think that, supporting Ross and Nisbett (1991), situational influences, in the non-Western contexts, are both powerful determinants of individuals' behaviors and notable explanations of behavior. With this claim, I didn't argue anything against Prinz's argument, but I tried to support the view that "different cultures construe the world in ways that are truly different base."[41]

Let me consider another important cross-cultural experiment so as to make my view clearer. Stanley Milgram (1961) conducts a research to see if experimental techniques could be applied to the study of national characteristics, and in particular to see if one could measure conformity in two European countries: France and Norway. Milgram was thinking that conformity is a good way to detect whether a national culture exists or not by looking at if men adhere, or conform, to common standards of behavior: "this is the psychological mechanism underlying all cultural behavior" (Milgram 1992, p. 203). Milgram's was inspired

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[41] Ross and Nisbett (1991), p. 186.

from Asch's (1951) Conformity Experiment. Asch's aim was to investigate the to what extent the social pressure from a majority group could affect a person to conform. And Milgram (1961) applied this research to cross-cultural environment.

In Asch's study, the naive subject was placed in a group of five subjects who were confederates of the experimenter-- however, the naive subject had no idea about that. The group of half dozen of subjects was shown a line of certain length and they were asked which of three other lines matched it. In some trials, all of the confederates gave wrong answers. And the naive subject was so placed that he heard the answers of most of the group before he had to announce his own decision (Milgram 1992, p.202). In 18 trials total, the confederates gave the wrong answer on 12 trials, i.e. critical trials. After the experiments, Asch found that under this type of a social pressure, a large amount of the subjects went along with the majority's decision rather than defending their own unmistakable observations. The results follow: 32% of the participants who were placed in this *situation* went along and conformed with the explicitly incorrect answers of the majority, in 18 trials. And over the 12 critical trials, in which all of the confederates gave the incorrect answer, 75% of participants conformed at least once and 25% of participants never conformed.

Milgram conducted a similar research, however, he elected to use tones rather than lines because they better suited for the aims of his research.[42] The first experiment included twenty Norwegian and twenty French subjects. And the sample of the each group was similar to the other in terms of age, educational background, and a good geographical representation. In the first experiment the Norwegian students conformed to the group on 62% of the critical trials; and the French subjects conformed to the group on 50% of the critical trials (Milgram 1992, pp. 205-6). In the second trial of the experiment, the subjects were told that the results

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[42] I will not give the details about the set up here. It is very similar to Asch's Conformity Experiment. For details see Milgram (1992, pp. 201-14; 1961, pp. 45-51).

of the experiments would be applied to the design of aircraft safety signals. With these second set of experiments, the experimenters were concerned about the importance of the experiment itself to see if this might alter the original findings (Milgram 1992, p. 209). In the end they examined that the level of conformity was higher in Norway, it was 56%, and it was 48% for France. The results of these experiments are similar to the results of the social psychology experiments that I have discussed. There are always a group of person who behaves in conformity with the majority, and there is another group of scapegoats.

What does this experiment tell us about the characteristics of nations? Milgram (1992) says that Norwegians have a deep feeling of group identification, and they are strongly attuned to the needs and interests of those around them (p. 212). Norwegian society is highly cohesive, and it is not a surprise to see that social cohesiveness has tight relationship with a high degree of conformity. Ant the situation is not case for the French. They represented less conformity in the experiments. Although Milgram is not a situationist, we can derive conclusions for in favor of situationism from these experiments. It is true that both the Norwegian and the French nations have some sort of characteristics which, in some cases, have effects on individuals' behaviors. It is also true that national characteristics are affected by various features of situations, such as economical, ecological, cultural and so on. On the ground level, situational factors create the dynamics of a nation, and the social context, or situations, determine the individuals behaviors, or have effects on individuals behaviors. We can call the Norwegians highly cohesive, but we can even accept this high level of cohesiveness as a trait of that particular nation. In that way, we only structure stereotypes for our practical reasons, to make our lives easier. Even though we accept cohesiveness of a particular nation as a global traits of character, we can, hardly, argue that the individuals of that particular nation have that particular global character trait and they behave consistently with that trait. That is because, the empirical data of the systematic research gives us good

grounds to be skeptical about the existence of consistent and stable global traits of character. However, I still am not sure whether or not we should accept Prinz's claims about the existence of global character traits. It is true that the nations have their own character, but this does not help us to argue that the individuals' of a particular nation share or have the same trait of character.

Before finishing this chapter, I would like to explain my other worry concerning one of the cross-cultural research mentioned above. Levine (2001) found that people were especially helpful in cultures that rate high for collectivism, including Brazil, Malawi, India, and China; many individualist cultures were less helpful, including the United States (New York City), the Netherlands, and Italy (Prinz 2009). And, by relying on these findings, Prinz claims that people in poor countries tend to be more helpful than people in rich countries. It is unsurprising to find a good correlation between helpfulness and economic variables. However, the research that Prinz's quoting does not give adequate data to draw an exact condition between helpfulness and collectivism, or helpfulness and individualism. That is because we do not know whether this research compares the rich or poor people of rich countries and rich or poor people of poor countries, and so on. I think, there should be further experiments which compare the poor people of the rich countries, and the poor people of poor countries, [43] so as to determine a healthy relation between economic situations and helpfulness. After such kind of a study, we may find good correlation between economic situations and helpfulness and then, maybe, we can argue for the existence of global traits of character. However, I do not find the relation among collectivism, individualism, helpfulness and economic situations satisfying with the data from Levine (2001).

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[43] Same for the 'rich' case as well.

4.2. Conclusion

In this chapter, I considered an empirical challenge from Jesse Prinz (2009) against situationism. He argues that even though situationism demonstrates that individuals' behaviors are determined by situations rather than global character traits, as there is no consistency and stability in individuals' behaviors across situations, global traits reappear when we look at cross-culturally. Although this view seems appealing, I am skeptic about it because of two reasons. Firstly, it is not clear whether the traits, such as being collectivist or individualist, can be considered as global traits of character. Even if we accept them as global character traits, virtue ethicists cannot embrace them as global character traits. That is because these traits vary from culture to culture and virtue ethicists acceptance of these traits as global would lead them moral relativism. A virtue must be consistent and stable, and it should not vary across the situations according to Aristotelian tradition. Secondly, I do not think these traits cause any serious problem for situationism. Even if we accept them as global traits, they will apply to a nation or culture, in other words to a set of people. But this does not give us any good reason to apply these traits to the particular individuals of that set, or nation or culture. And there is no harm of accepting nation's characteristics as global traits for situationism. We can do it for practical reasons, to make our lives easier; even though global traits really do not exist.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I defended Global Trait Instrumentalism, and I draw the conclusion that we can consider some types of traits of character which can empirically be supported by cross-cultural research. In the first chapter, I have discussed Harman's and Doris' understanding of situationism, which both argued *globalism* is not possible. In the second chapter, I have discussed Doris' local traits of character. Doris comes with the idea of the fragmentation of character, and he argues that there local traits rather than global traits. Local traits are, unlike global traits of character, are supported by empirical research from social psychology. Therefore, we should evaluate people not in terms of robust character traits but rather in terms of local, situation-specific traits. And I defended the existence of local traits against some objections. In the third chapter, I have taken some recent and important objections against situationism into account and answered them. And lastly, I have discussed Prinz's Empirical Challenge against situationism. And I draw the conclusion that this Empirical challenge does not threaten situationism.

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