

Strawsonian theories of individual moral responsibility have proven problematic in ascribing responsibility for the morally worst sorts of acts—acts of evil—because they require that morally responsible agents become moral interlocutors with one another capable of mutual demand and address. The very perpetration of an evil act often places the perpetrator outside of the bounds of mutual moral demand and address, resulting in the absurd conclusion that the perpetrators of the morally worst sorts of acts are not responsible. That is, perpetrators commit evil acts by virtue of rejecting or being indifferent to second-personal demands; they eschew the values of the moral community altogether. According to Strawson’s account, such individuals are not members of the moral community because they reject the shared values that constitute it, thus rendering them unresponsive to or incapable of moral demand and address. Paradoxically, evil becomes its own excuse.

To resolve this problem, I argue that such theories can be salvaged if they accept a modified version of motivational externalism. The modification follows a conceptual distinction between moral and normative judgments. A moral judgment is the judgment that *it was right or wrong of someone* to have acted in a certain way. The judge assumes that the target shares a motivational background both with the speaker and the audience *and* is within reach of the relevant moral considerations. A normative judgment says that *what an agent did* was right or wrong. By focusing on states of affairs, normative judgments allow for the ascription of responsibility without requiring that the individual is capable of being motivated by specific moral considerations. For this reason, normative judgments are appropriate responses to acts of evil when perpetrators of evil do not share the motivational background required to be an appropriate target of moral judgments.