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Bypassing the Will:
The Automatization of Affirmations

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Tous les jours, à tous les points de vue, je vais de mieux en mieux.
EMILE COUÉ (1916)

Rendered in English, the quotation declares "Every day in every way, I'm getting better and better." This optimistic self-evaluation was coined at the turn of the century by a French therapist named Emile Coué. To cure a variety of maladies, Coué recommended that his patients repeat this statement 20 times just after waking up in the morning, 20 times before falling asleep at night, and as often as possible during the day. Within a few days, according to Coué, his patients would indeed get better and better (papers presented at the Psychological Congress in Paris, France, 1916; cited in Coué, 1922).

This technique of systematically repeating a positive proposition about oneself was termed *conscious autosuggestion* (Baudouin, 1920; Brooks, 1922; Coué, 1916). The notion was that one's psychological makeup could be changed merely by *the force of frequent repetition*. No reinforcement was necessary; no psychoanalytic restructuring was involved; no hypnosis was required. Moreover, the therapy had the distinct benefit of being self-administered.

According to Emile Coué, the force of frequent repetition permits the imagination to bypass the will. Otherwise, the will actively resists change to the self-image: For one thing, the will tends to react by conscious counterarguing. But if a suggestion is indirectly delivered to the imagination (i.e., the unconscious) without resistance, then the thought becomes inculcated through natural processes of association and amplification. In short, active attempts to change a self-belief will not work; what does work is to make available a positive alternative belief.

The pronouncement that opened this chapter was recommended for the alleviation of a wide range of physical and mental problems. Specifically tailored versions were not recommended (Brooks, 1922, p. 90). The more

specific the pronouncement (e.g., "My headache is getting better and better"), Coué argued, the more likely it is that the problem itself will have to be mentioned—hence, setting in motion negative associations. For the same reason, Coué recommended letting one's mind drift to other thoughts during the repetitions: Resistance would be minimized while the statements were becoming etched into the self-image (Brooks, 1922, p. 85).

COUÉ'S IMPACT

During the 1920s, Emile Coué's ideas were very influential in Europe. Indeed, his charismatic personality and provocative ideas made the Nancy School of thought a leading force in theoretical psychology.[1] In France, at least, the Nancy School rivaled psychoanalysis as the predominant approach to psychotherapy (Barrucand & Paille, 1986). It also flourished in England, where at one time thousands of troubled Londoners walked around muttering to themselves: "Every day in every way. . . ." Thus it was no coincidence that, some years later, two Englishmen popularized a similar phrase: "I do believe I'm getting better, a little better all the time" (Lennon & McCartney, 1967).[2]

Coué had little impact in America. He did, however, conduct whirlwind tours to the United States in 1923 and 1924. His visits to New York City were the most extensive as well as the most tumultuous: There he was condemned by both the New York Medical Association and the New York Association of Churches. The masses, however, swarmed to his every public appearance (see *The New York Times*, August 5–12, 1923; January 14–March 13, 1924). Having published only one short book in English, he died in France shortly after his second visit to America.[3] The lack of access to his work in English may explain why his name is virtually unknown on this side of the Atlantic (Paulhus and Morgan, 1992). Even in Europe the formidable influence of Coué and the Nancy School faded after his death (see Barrucand & Paille, 1986).

Currently, however, a similar technique is flourishing in the therapeutic repertoire of the so-called New Age movement (Melton, 1991). In this context, optimistic self-statements are termed *positive affirmations*: Typically, they are utilized with the same procedure of frequent repetition. The current popularity of these techniques in the American New Age

[1]The Nancy School of philosophy and psychology was centered in the city of Nancy, France. The school preceded Coué (e.g., Liébault) and outlasted him (e.g., Baudouin). Nonetheless, Coué was by far the most renowned member, particularly internationally.

[2]Later, John Lennon (1977) used Coué's original phrase intact in his song "Beautiful Boy."

[3]Several other English works are rare but available in a few North American libraries. The earliest, Coué's booklet *Self-Mastery through Conscious Autosuggestion*, was translated into English by Van Orden. Baudouin's (1920) book, which extends Coué's ideas, was also translated into English by Eden and Cedar Paul. The most readable book on Coué's work was published in English by Harry Brooks (1922): It also explicitly compares Coué's and Baudouin's ideas.

movement appears to derive not from Coué, but from the traditions of alternative American spiritual movements dating back to the last century (Melton, 1991, p. 343). Also influential in promoting such techniques in America was the popularity of Eastern religions. For example, one of the first California gurus, Yogananda Paramahansa, had promoted such techniques as far back as the 1930s (see Yogananda, 1958).

Neither Coué nor the New Agists have provided any empirical evidence for the efficacy of positive affirmations. To contemporary hard-nosed psychologists, this gap is no coincidence—quack notions tend to crumble under scientific scrutiny. My reading of the literature, however, convinced me that Coué's claims have not heretofore been tested.

Moreover, experiments in my own laboratory have provided some empirical support for Coué's ideas. In brief, we had subjects repeat positive traits over and over. A subsequent request for self-descriptions showed some assimilation of these practiced traits into subjects' self-image and a boost in global self-esteem.

I must confess that we had never heard of Coué when we started these studies—only later did we find out how relevant his work was. So, before I give you the details of our research, let me step back and review the theory that actually did motivate these studies.

AUTOMATIC AND CONTROLLED SELF-PRESENTATION (ACSP) MODEL

In a series of recent papers (Paulhus, 1988; Paulhus, Graf, & Van Selst, 1989; Paulhus & Levitt, 1987), I have developed a model of automatic and controlled self-presentation (ACSP). It borrows from cognitive psychology the distinction between automatic and controlled processes (e.g., Logan, 1980; Posner & Snyder, 1975; Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977). *Automatic processes* are those that are so well practiced that they operate without attention: They are unintentional, effortless, and cannot be stopped once they are underway (e.g., automatic reading evidenced by Stroop interference). In contrast, *controlled processes* are intentional, flexible, and require attention to proceed (e.g., counting backwards).[4] Already, this distinction has been applied to various issues in social cognition (Bargh, 1984; Clark & Isen, 1982; Smith & Lerner, 1986).

A similar distinction among forms of self-presentation is not without precedent. Although they used different terms, Jones and his colleagues distinguished between overlearned and tactical self-presentation (e.g., Jones, 1964). Schlenker contrasted active and passive modes of self-presentation (Schlenker, 1987). DePaulo (1992) discusses the practicing of nondeliberate nonverbal behaviors until they become deliberate. Most relevant to the

[4]Note that the labels are not categorical—indeed, most cognitive processes are a combination of automatic and controlled mechanisms. Bargh (1989) has distinguished five criteria for defining automaticity: lack of awareness, unintentionality, uncontrollability, immutability, and efficiency (minimal attentional capacity requirements). Few processes satisfy all five criteria. It is the efficiency aspect of automaticity that is most critical to the ACSP model.

present model are recent experiments involving load manipulation and self-presentation (Baumeister, Hutton, and Tice, 1989; Gilbert, Pelham, & Krull, 1988; Swann, Hixon, Stein-Seroussi, & Gilbert, 1990).

With an aim to integrating these studies with my own research, I have proposed that self-presentation is a dynamic system of automatic and controlled processes (for a detailed review, see Paulhus, 1988). Although self-presentation takes many forms, I will deal only with aspects of self-presentation observable in self-descriptions.

At times such self-presentation is controlled—for example, when people give purposefully tailored self-descriptions: This mode resembles the traditional notion of impression management. Such *controlled self-presentation* requires attentional capacity for consideration of the specific self-presentational goal as well as the specific audience before deciding on the self-description.

In contrast, short bursts of overly positive self-descriptions are often observed in individuals giving mindless self-reports or undergoing stress. The self-descriptions can be generated with little reflection or memory search because they are highly practiced: This form I have labeled *automatic self-presentation*. Moreover, the array of traits emerging from this process will be termed the *automatic self*.

Note that automaticity plays a role at two points in the theory. First, the automatic self consists of the individual's most well-practiced and, hence, most chronically activated set of self-attributes. Although chronically accessible, these self-attributes are normally overridden in public self-descriptions. When stress or distraction triggers automatic self-presentation, this automatic self tends to emerge because it is so easily accessible.

The triggering of automatic self-presentation is also automatic. Stress or distracting stimuli have the power to automatically draw attention away from current tasks (Bargh, 1989; Pratto & John, 1991). Several propositions emerge from this simple theory, and they are examined in the sections that follow.

Proposition I: The Automatic Self Is Positive

Automatic self-presentation should be positive because people have a lifetime of practice describing themselves in (primarily) positive terms. There are abundant reasons for the preponderance of positivity in this lifetime of practice. In general, we are taught from childhood to give positive self-descriptions and positive explanations for our behavior (e.g., Heilbrun, 1964). Accordingly, in adulthood, well-socialized individuals tend not to derogate themselves except in selected situations. We know that we will be better-liked and given more rewards and opportunities if we impress others with our positive traits. Moreover, we tend to hear less about our negative side from others because they avoid bringing us the bad news (Tesser & Rosen, 1975). For all these reasons, self-descriptions tend to be positive, and their constant repetition will tend to yield an automatic self that is positive (Hogan, 1983).

Proposition II: The System Is Dynamic

Clearly, most social interactions involve multiple simultaneous tasks or goals: Impression management is only *one* of these tasks (Goffman, 1959; Jones, 1964; Schlenker, 1986). Others include collecting information, entertaining, controlling one's emotions, even fantasizing about future interactions with the partner.

Because attentional capacity is limited, increased attention to one task comes at the expense of attention to other tasks. If full attention is available for impression management, then it is maximally effective. Often, however, self-descriptions may be emitted mindlessly (Langer, 1989) or under other conditions of reduced attention to impression management. If attention is diverted while a controlled self-description is being attempted, then the automatic self will be more manifest: The latter requires no attention because it is so highly practiced.

Thus, the automatic self makes its impact by making available a default set of self-cognitions. Under full attentional conditions, these may be overridden, but under distraction they remain in force.

Proposition III: Affect Directs Attention

Affect plays a major role in this system because it is a powerful diverter of attention. In fact, according to Simon (1986), the very function of affect is to indicate that new priorities are in effect and warrant attention. In general, attention is drawn to any malfunction in a task currently running automatically: While you are driving, a child runs across the road. Or more apropos here: While modestly describing your assets during an interview, your attention is drawn to a huge rip in your shirt. Again, affect regulates attention by diverting it to the currently most important task. As a result, your tactfully modest self-description falters.

Often people focus on the affect itself (e.g., ruminating or engaging in mood repair). Usually the individual will withdraw from social engagement during such periods. If the self-description is continued, however, it will show the influence of automatic self-presentation.

Everyday Examples

Automatic self-presentation can be seen in the effects of social anxiety or social threats: One reaction is an impulsive self-promotion, for example, one-upsmanship or bragging. Another reaction is defensiveness, that is, an exaggerated rejection of any negative information from others. Both behaviors are bursts of positive self-presentation and are manifestations of the automatic self.

One might argue that such self-presentation is a *strategic* attempt to counter the current threat. It seems clear, however, that both bragging and defensiveness invariably give a *bad* impression. Neither is likely to be chosen as a purposeful strategy to improve one's public image.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

The first evidence for the ACSP model came from our studies on how self-descriptions change when people are emotionally aroused (Paulhus & Levitt, 1987; Paulhus & Lower, 1987; Paulhus & Reid,.1988; Paulhus & Suedfeld, 1988). In this series of studies, my colleagues and I used a microcomputer to present traits in a controlled fashion: Subjects responded "Me" or "Not me" to indicate the self-descriptiveness of each trait. During the self-report task, we manipulated subjects' level of emotional arousal and examined its effects on the choice of self-ascribed traits.

For example, Paulhus and Levitt (1987) presented an emotional or a nonemotional distractor along with each trait. Subjects were told to ignore the distractors and simply respond to the traits. The result was a *positivity effect*: That is, the presence of emotional distractors induced subjects to claim more of the positive and fewer of the negative traits than they did in the presence of nonemotional distractors. The duration of the increased positivity in self-presentation seemed to be brief: That is, it did not affect the subsequent trait presentation (5 seconds later).

Other Manipulations

To extend the generality of this positivity effect, we conducted a series of studies using other manipulations to induce arousal. For example, Paulhus and Lower (1987) found the positivity effect in subjects undergoing exam apprehension. Loud white noise yielded the same positivity effect (Paulhus & Lim, 1987).

Further studies were conducted to determine whether the positivity effect required arousal per se or merely attentional diversion. The above studies were ambiguous in this respect; therefore, we tried other manipulations that were more clearly attentional. For example, when subjects were forced to respond to the trait words at high speed, we found the same positivity effect (Paulhus & Reid, 1988).

A skeptical colleague argued that arousal had not been ruled out as the mediator because the speed requirement may have created high arousal. In response, we settled on digit counting as the best arousal-free manipulation of attention (Paulhus, Graf, & Van Selst, 1989). In essence, subjects performed a dual task: They were required to keep track of a digit stream while they were responding to the usual trait adjectives. Attentional load was manipulated by varying the rate of the digit stream: high load (2 digits per second); low load (1 digit every 2 seconds). Results showed that responses to traits presented under high load were more positive than responses to traits presented under low load.

Hence, attentional diversion alone appears to yield the positivity effect. Given that arousal is known to reduce attentional capacity (Easterbrook, 1959), the efficacy of our various arousal manipulations can also be attributed to reduced attention. The complete set of studies can therefore be explained by a single principle: The robust positivity effect is mediated

by a reduction in attention that subjects have available for describing themselves.

Conclusion

It is clear that honest trait responses require attentional capacity: It takes attention to scan one's memory. When the required attention is diverted, honest responding is disrupted, but the disrupted responses are not random or error-like: They are systematically more positive than the originals.

We concluded that attentional diversion from honest responding invokes a different mode of self-descriptive responding: Subjects' self-descriptions are emerging from a different source, the automatic self—one that is more positive yet requires less attention to generate. When attentional resources are diverted this information remains available for generating self-descriptions (Paulhus, 1988).

Note that we have two forms of "true self" here. The self-description that emerges under distraction is "true" in the sense that it is uncontrolled and, hence, uncensored. The self that emerges under instructions to "respond honestly" is also "true" in the sense that subjects are reflectively searching for information to reach a decision—for example, recent behavior, peer comments, etc.[5] Neither of these operationalizations is consistent with the standard view of the true self as a deep-seated and accurate character reservoir (e.g., Higgins, 1987; Rogers, 1959). Indeed, the latter conception of true self does not have a place in the ACSP model.

Does Distraction Always Increase Positivity?

The ACSP model predicts that the automatic self should appear when any type of controlled self-presentation is disrupted. So far we have shown this effect as an increase in positivity when honest responding was disrupted. The positivity effect should be even stronger if subjects were initially engaging in negative self-presentation (i.e., faking bad). If subjects were initially engaging in positive self-presentation (i.e., faking good), however, the disruption should actually *decrease* the positivity of self-presentation (see Figure 26.1).

We tested the hypotheses by manipulating subjects' attention while they engaged in various self-presentation strategies (Paulhus & Murphy, 1987). Subjects were instructed either to fake good, fake bad, or respond honestly. Attentional load was manipulated with affective versus non-affective distractors. As predicted, under high load, all self-presentation strategies converged toward a relatively positive but intermediate level of self-presentation.

These results illustrate the basic elements of the ACSP model. People

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[5] In a small sample we found that responses collected under the accuracy mode correlated much more highly with standard personality scales than did those collected under the speed mode. The scales were Costa and McCrae's (1989) FFI measures of the "Big Five," which have been comprehensively validated against behavior and peer ratings.
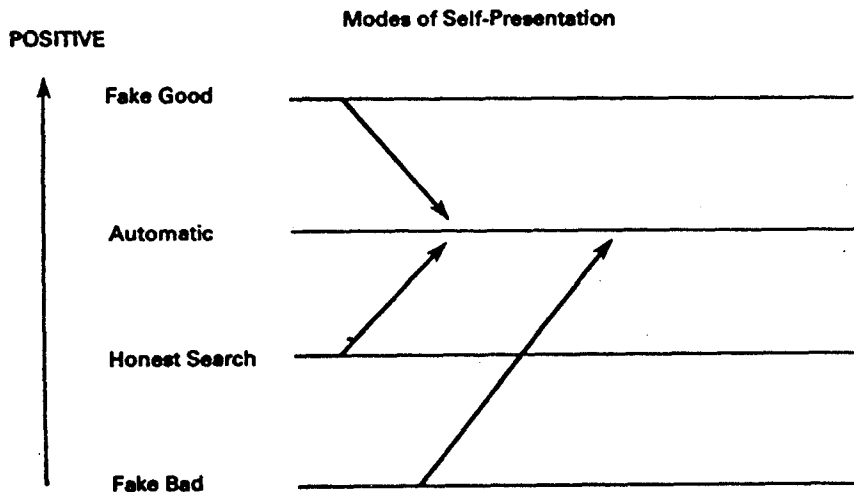
Modes of Self-Presentation

FIGURE 26.1   Effect of attentional load on various levels of self-presentation.

are capable of presenting themselves using any number of strategies including an honesty strategy. Regardless of the initial strategy, there is a default level of self-presentation that appears when the strategy is disrupted. This default provides a relatively positive but not perfect level of self-presentation.

This principle of a default level of self-presentation points to a process model involving both automatic and controlled components. All the strategic self-presentations require substantial attentional resources: The default self-presentation does not—presumably because it is highly practiced. Hence, the default level of self-description is appropriately termed the "automatic self."

In toto, these are the basic studies supporting the ACSP model. A limitation in all of them is the assumption that the default self-presentation, the automatic self, had its origin in a lifetime of self-presentational practice. This assumption would be more convincing if we could experimentally create arbitrary automatic selves and then test whether they reappeared under distraction.

AUTOMATIZATION IN THE LABORATORY

Other types of social judgments have already been automatized in the laboratory (e.g., Smith & Lerner, 1986). A similar automatization of self-descriptions would permit a more systematic investigation of critical issues in the model. Given that these studies are the most relevant to Coué's work, we will provide more detail than for the earlier studies.

We conducted three studies designed to induce new automatic selves

(Stoffer & Paulhus, 1992; Paulhus, Bruce, & Stoffer, 1989). All three stud involved a practice phase and a test phase. In the practice phase, subjc were asked to respond repeatedly to a set of 12 traits. Pilot studies show an asymptote after 7 or 8 repetitions: That is, subjects' speed and cons ency appeared to level off at that point. Hence, in the following stud we set the number of repetitions at 10 to ensure automatization.

In the test phase, subjects were asked to respond honestly to the sa traits: They were specifically advised to forget what they had done dur the practice phase. The test was given twice: (1) an accuracy test wh subjects were told to take as much time as they wanted, and (2) a speed test where they were told to answer as fast as they could. Automatizati effects should show up as intrusions of practice on the posttest. The AC model will be supported to the extent that practice carries over to speeded, but not to the accuracy test.

Automatization Study 1

To simulate the positive automatization typical of Western socialization, had one group of subjects practice maximally positive self-descriptions, t is, fake good. For comparison, we had another group fake bad duri practice. Finally, a control group simply practiced honest self-descriptio

Results   The model was supported by a significantly greater c ryover to the speeded than to the accuracy test. That is, the automati self appeared more clearly under speeded conditions. These results clear from Figure 26.2. However, there were also several unexpected fects:

1.   Carryover was greater for faking good than for faking bad. Apparently positive traits are more easily assimilated than are negative traits.
2.   There was some carryover of faking good even to the accuracy test—that the honest self-image. Consistent with Coué, subjects are assimilating so positive traits into their self-beliefs.
3.   Faking bad had one paradoxical effect: Negative traits that were origina admitted in the pretest were later repudiated in the posttest. Apparent repeated denial of one's negative traits tends to undermine one's belief them.

Level of automatization   It is not clear from Study 1 whether aut matization acts on the overt response (e.g., pressing the "not me" butt for the trait "sociable") or on the covert response (denying that one sociable). Automatization of the covert response would be a more impre sive finding, implying that repetition had increased the availability of th practiced responses. If so, carryover should still appear even if we mad the response mode as different as possible from the practice mode.

Automatization Study 2

The procedure was identical to that in Study 1 with two exceptions: (1 Instead of responding with a key-press, subjects had to respond aloud, an
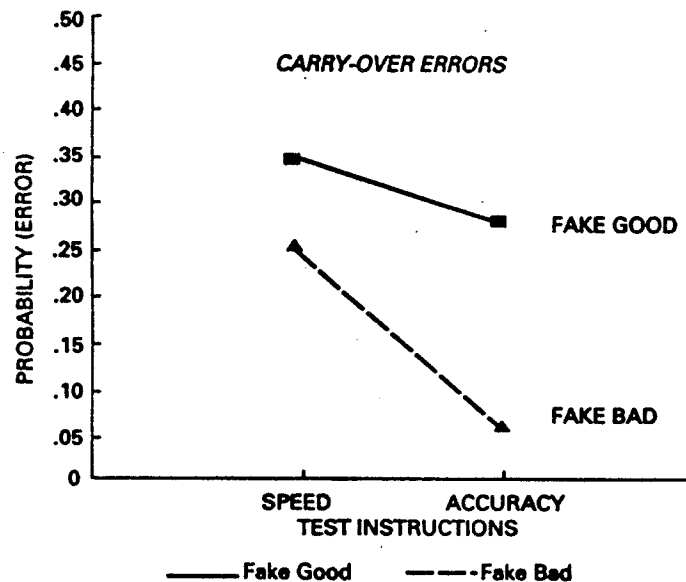
FIGURE 26.2   Carryover errors in speeded and accuracy conditions.

(2) instead of responding "me" or "not me," they responded "yes" or "no." Results showed the same pattern of carryover although somewhat weaker.

Automatization Study 3

The above carryover effects may be temporary. After all, the test session was held only five minutes after the practice session. Hence, Study 3 was a replication of Study 1 with one significant change: We varied the test delay across three lengths: 10 minutes, 30 minutes, and 24 hours. For the first two levels, subjects were given a filler task of rating various musical selections for likability and complexity. For the third level, subjects were dismissed after the practice phase and did not rate the music (20 minutes) until they arrived for a second session the following day.

Results showed no effect of delay on the carryover of positive traits. The effect was significant even after 24 hours. None of the three delays showed any carryover of negative traits. In sum, the ACSP model is supported by these 3 studies, but it must be qualified by a positivity bias.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the above studies were designed to test the ACSP model, they also support and extend Emile Coué's seminal ideas. In particular, the

three automatization studies support Coué in demonstrating the feasibili of changing one's self-image through the force of frequent repetition. I modern terms, the automatization of positive self-descriptions has bee shown to have systematic and enduring cognitive effects.

How enduring? At this point we can say only that the effects last a least one full day. We are currently running studies to extend the te period even further. Of course, even with the limited duration alread demonstrated, we don't know whether the cognitive effects would translat into behavioral changes: That is, will changed subjects act in accordanc with their new self-image?

Note the contrast with previous work demonstrating the internali zation of self-presentation (e.g., Gergen, 1965; Rhodewalt & Agustdotti 1986). In those studies, subjects were asked to role-play (i.e., fake) a new self-image while meeting with an interviewer. Subjects were more likely t assimilate the new self-image if (1) the interviewer accepted the image b giving positive feedback (Gergen, 1965), and (2) subjects perceived thei self-enhancement as freely chosen (Rhodewalt & Agustdottir, 1986). In our studies, no such reinforcement or perception of choice was needed—onl the force of frequent repetition.

What Is the Mechanism for Change?

As noted in the introduction, Emile Coué disputed the feasibility of direc attempts to change one's self-beliefs. In accord with Coué's early clinica observations, recent experimental evidence has verified that willful at tempts to change the availability of negative thoughts are doomed to failure. Indeed, rebound effects are more likely (Wegner, 1989). The promotion of positive thoughts appears more effective (Paulhus & Reid, 1991; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Wenzlaff, Wegner, & Roper, 1988).

Coué also warned against techniques that trigger resistance to change His solution was to "bypass the will" and change the self-image through the mere force of frequent repetition: Such repetition would increase the likelihood that such self-thoughts would fuse to the individual's self-image.

Our three automatization studies directly supported Coué in showing a carryover of practiced traits even to honest self-descriptions. Somewhere during the process subjects assimilated new traits into the honest self. Recent empirical evidence has supported the claim that both chronically and temporarily accessible traits influence subsequent behavior (Bargh, 1989). Moreover, conscious repetition makes a self-descriptor more accessible (Smith & Lerner, 1986). Accordingly, when people are asked to reflect on who they are, these highly accessible traits bias the information search, thus making more likely their confirmation as part of the self (Higgins, 1989).

Positive-Negative Asymmetry

The fact that positive traits were more easily automatized than negative ones is an intriguing finding. This asymmetry in acceptance of positive versus negative information may simply reflect the well-known positivistic bias in self-evaluations (Greenwald, 1980; Paulhus, 1986; Taylor & Brown,

1988). Particularly relevant are studies showing that positive traits are easily processed and easily recalled whereas negative traits are poorly processed and difficult to recall (e.g., Kuiper, Olinger, McDonald, & Shaw, 1985).

Or, the result could reflect some other form of the positive-negative asymmetry manifested in a variety of phenomena (Peeters & Czapinski, 1990): For example, differences in the processing of emotions (Diener & Emmons, 1985), the complexity of representations (Peeters & Czapinski, 1990), and differences in desirable responding (Paulhus & Reid, 1991).

Several known mechanisms provide possible explanations for the greater assimilation of positive than negative traits. Perhaps inhibitory reactions accompanying the self-ascription of negative traits prevent their assimilation (Peeters & Czapinski, 1990; Taylor, 1991). Although more accessible after repetition, they may not reach the final stages of incorporation. Also, negative events grab attention more than do positive events (Pratto & John, 1991): Recall Coué's warning about the debilitating effect of drawing attention to the repetitions—particularly those that have negative implications. These mechanisms warrant further study as possible explanations why the automatization process seemed to be nullified when subjects faked bad.

But our results showed that the practicing of already-held negative traits actually *reduced* the likelihood of claiming them. This surprising result remains wide open for speculation. Perhaps an undermining process operates when subjects perceive that they are being *required* to describe themselves with negative traits. Note, however, that no such undermining appeared for positive traits, or perhaps the negative affect accumulating from repeating multiple negative traits make them feel too negative to claim afterward. In any case, ACSP theory must be qualified with a positive-negative asymmetry argument to explain these data.

Clinical Applications

The relative ease of assimilating positive traits is particularly important because of its relevance to psychotherapeutic efficacy. Recent evidence from a variety of sources suggests that accentuating the positive may be more effective than attempts to eliminate the negative (Paulhus & Reid, 1991; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Wenzlaff, Wegner, & Roper, 1988).

The indirect nature of the repetition approach may also prove advantageous in therapeutic applications. In future studies we hope to test whether the repeated affirmation procedure (RAP) is superior to more confrontative methods of changing the self-image. In particular, we plan to apply RAP to the daunting task of alleviating depression. Depression and perhaps other affective disorders seem to be obvious candidates for a therapy that improves positive worldview. Particularly informative would be a clinical outcome studies comparing repeated affirmations with standard therapeutic techniques.

As a potential psychotherapy, RAP seems to fall into the general category of cognitive therapy. Given that the latter cover a wide gamut of techniques, a tentative distinction of repeated affirmation therapy would

be useful here. The basic elements comprise (1) positivity, (2) repetition, (3) non-focus, and (4) non-specificity. These follow directly from Coué's recommendations. Although other cognitive approaches emphasize various subsets of these elements, only the repeated affirmations technique expoits this combination.

I have tried to show that the ACSP and Coué theories complement one another. The former provides a cognitive mediation principle for the latter: Coué provided ideas that expand the scope of the ACSP research. The criticism was that Coué's charisma (not his ideas) was the source of his popular success (Barrucand & Paille, 1986). Hence, the enthusiasm waned after Coué's death despite the activity of many disciples. This criticism cannot be refuted, given the dearth of scientific evaluation. Only when the RAP technique is tested in clinical outcome studies will Coué's provocative claims finally be evaluated.

Coda

Unabashedly, I declare myself the first member of the Coué rehabilitation society: His reputation languished in ill-repute for many years. From my point of view, however, every day in many ways, he's looking better and better.

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