

**Confessions of a Moral Schizophrenic\***  
**By Jayme Johnson**

**I. Introduction**

Philosophers who defend consequentialist ethical theories are currently faced with a serious problem. The problem, it is claimed, is that in making a moral decision, the consequentialist is required to take into account only the overall utilities of his alternatives. But to be a friend, it is not sufficient merely to treat a person in a particular way as a means of producing desirable consequences. In fact, the objection continues, it is an essential component of friendship that each person acts toward the other for the sake of the other, even though the friendship may be suboptimal at the time. Trying to form and maintain friendships – while considering only the good consequences that will accompany the friendship – results in a disingenuous relationship that can be psychologically unhealthy for both parties. Thus, the consequentialist seems to have a difficult choice to make: live in accordance with his ethical theory, try to reconcile it with his desire to have friends and risk having inauthentic friendships, or abandon consequentialism altogether.

While there are a variety of consequentialist replies to this problem, many of these replies seem to have a common strategy: to show that if one keeps consequentialism as a criterion of right action, but avoids using that criterion directly in making moral decisions, then it is possible to treat persons in the ways required for friendship, and hence, to have friends. To begin with, I will present a version of this problem that was introduced by

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Michael Stocker,<sup>1</sup> called the problem of moral schizophrenia. I will then consider a possible solution proposed by Peter Railton.<sup>2</sup> Railton claims that, in using the strategy of avoiding consequentialist deliberation in making decisions concerning friends and close others, a consequentialist can be what he calls “sophisticated.” As I interpret him, Railton’s further claim is that the so-called sophisticated consequentialist can avoid the problem of moral schizophrenia. I then consider two different possible interpretations of Railton’s theory, one from Cocking and Oakley, and another from Mason. I intend to show that none of the versions of sophisticated consequentialism considered in this paper can withstand Stocker’s problem as I have stated it.

## II. Preliminaries

In order to establish a basis for the dialectic of this paper, I will begin by introducing the problem in a form that both Stocker and Railton would find acceptable. In doing so, some basic terms and definitions must also be put forth.

Stocker claims that part of what it is to live the good life is to have harmony between one’s reasons and motives.<sup>3</sup> Particularly, it is crucial that one’s ethical theory allow one to have the good life without causing disharmony between reasons and motives. To have such a disharmony, Stocker claims, causes us to be *morally schizophrenic*. He writes, “Not to be moved by what one values – what one believes good, nice, right, beautiful, and so on – bespeaks a malady of the spirit. Not to value what moves one also

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<sup>1</sup> Stocker, Michael. “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories” *The Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. LXXIII, No. 14, (August 1976) 453-466. Hereafter “SMET.”

<sup>2</sup> Railton, Peter. “Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring 1984), 134-171. Hereafter “ACDM.”

<sup>3</sup> SMET, p.353. My interpretation is that Stocker holds this harmony to be a necessary condition for living the good life, whatever that may be.

bespeaks a malady of the spirit. Such a malady, or such maladies, can properly be called *moral schizophrenia*—for they are a split between one’s motives and one’s reasons.”<sup>4</sup>

To make this clearer, some kind of understanding of what motives and reasons are is needed. Given how difficult it is to give proper definitions to either of these terms, I have chosen to ground them in an example. Since the problem of moral schizophrenia arises in cases where there is a split between one’s reasons and ones’ motives, consider the following case in which an agent’s reasons and motives come apart. Suppose that Al often donates large sums of money to three particular charity organizations. If asked why he does so, Al says that he really believes in what these charities stand for, that he knows the money is being put to good use, and that it makes the world a better place when people give money to these groups. Call these Al’s reasons for giving money to the charities. But suppose further, that if one were to observe Al’s acts of donating money, one would immediately notice that Al gives money to one of these three charities at fund-raisers, and only when the same group of people is there to observe his charitable behavior. If they are present and observing, Al donates. If they are not, he does not donate. It seems, then, that Al is motivated to keep up the appearance of being a charitable guy, perhaps in order to impress the group of onlookers. In this case, Al has a motive to act in the way he does, though it is not one of his reasons for acting.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 353-54

<sup>5</sup> Note that under this construal of “reason,” something is a reason only if the agent is aware that it is, and would in fact use it to justify or explain his action. Thus, in cases in which there is some fact that obtains as a result of an agent performing an act, but the agent does not know of that fact obtaining, that fact cannot be counted among an agent’s reasons. The agent need not be aware of his motives, however. What moves an agent to act in a particular way, whether that motive is a desire or a commitment to a world-view, need not be conscious.

Since most of us, in making any decision—moral or otherwise—appeal to many reasons, and may have multiple motives, for Stocker’s schizophrenia to have weight, it must be realized that he is focusing on the main or primary reasons. Thus, in making a moral decision, these are moral reasons.

Railton uses the term “alienation,” and seems to use it in such a way that cases of moral schizophrenia are a subset of the set of cases of alienation. Since it is my intention to compare what these two philosophers have to say about this particular kind of alienation, I want to take a moment to show that, in the cases relevant to this paper; they are talking about the same phenomenon.

Railton suggests that there is a form of alienation in morality. He tells a story about John and Anne, a married couple. According to the story, in response to a compliment about his care and affection for Anne, John replies that people should help each other out, and that in light of the fact that he is both in a good position to do so, and derives great pleasure from doing so, it just makes sense for him to care for her so. Yet, Railton continues, something seems wrong.<sup>6</sup> Though John is extremely moral, there is a clear sense in which Anne’s feelings could be hurt by John’s honest reply. “That he devotes himself to her because of the characteristically good consequences of doing so seems to leave her, and their relationship as such [*sic*], too far out of the picture—this despite the fact that these characteristically good consequences depend in important ways on his special relation to her.”<sup>7</sup> As a result of John’s failure to think of Anne as a reason in herself for his kind treatment of her, Railton claims, “there would seem to be an estrangement

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 137

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 137

between [his] affections and [his] rational, deliberative [self]; an abstract and universalizing point of view mediates [his] responses to others and to [his] own sentiments.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, we might use the term “moral alienation” to describe those cases of alienation in which agents are alienated from their affections by their moral points of view. In cases of moral alienation, an agent has a commitment to his moral view that is not congruent with the types of affections he may have for others.

Stocker’s similar worry in describing moral schizophrenia is that it too makes love relations lack authenticity, placing the goods of such a relation over the relation itself. An egoist, for example, in attempting to have a love relationship, will simply go through the motions, doing the pleasurable activities that accompany the relationship. Stocker gives something of a definition of the kind of love he has in mind when he claims that, “it is essential to the very concept of love that one care for the beloved, that one be able to act for the sake of the beloved. More strongly, one must care for the beloved and act for that person’s sake as a final goal; the beloved, or the beloved’s welfare or interest, must be a final goal of one’s concern and action.”<sup>9</sup>

In light of these considerations, I shall use the phrases “moral schizophrenia” and “moral alienation” interchangeably.<sup>10</sup> Further, when discussing love as it pertains to moral schizophrenia/alienation, I will mean love as Stocker describes it. Note that this

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 137

<sup>9</sup> SMET 456

<sup>10</sup> Strictly speaking, the phenomenon of moral schizophrenia can be shown in two distinct kinds of alienation. One is an agent’s alienation from her affections toward a close other. The second kind is the alienation that the close other feels toward the agent in question. Thus, using Railton’s example of John and Anne above, John’s moral schizophrenia causes him to be alienated from his affections for Anne, and likewise causes Anne to feel alienated from John. However since both of these kinds of alienation point to the problem of moral schizophrenia, this distinction is not problematic for the way these terms will be used in this paper.

construal of love need not be romantic. It should be viewed as a general, though authentic, kind of love that friends share as well.

Lastly, since this paper concerns a problem for consequentialist theories, and particularly those that do not have directly consequentialist decision procedures, I will limit the ensuing discussion to consequentialist theories that are meant only to provide a criterion of rightness.<sup>11</sup> Call all such theories varieties of “disengaged consequentialism” (DC).<sup>12</sup> A DC theory will be stated in terms of the following: An action A is morally right if and only if A’s causal consequences maximize value (among its alternatives); and the theory neither is nor is intended to be a decision procedure.<sup>13</sup> Call an agent committed to a DC theory a *dc-agent*. With some of the conceptual and terminological matters cleared up, and the scope set, I shift my focus back on Stocker, and provide an overall context for the problem of moral schizophrenia.

### III. Context: the Dilemma

The problem of moral schizophrenia can be couched in terms of the following dilemma.<sup>14</sup> The dc-agent either embodies his reasons in his motives or does not. If he does embody his reasons in his motives, then he sacrifices his ability to be a real friend, or

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<sup>11</sup> For a good treatment of this issue of whether consequentialist theories ought to be action guiding as well as provide a criterion of rightness, see R. Eugene Bales, “Act-Utilitarianism: Account of Right-Making Characteristics Or Decision-Making Procedure?” *American Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 8, 3 (July 1971)

<sup>12</sup> In calling a theory of the kind “disengaged consequentialism,” I follow James Lenman. See Lenman’s “Consequentialism and Cluelessness” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 29, no.4. Princeton University Press, (2000). I am limiting the scope of the paper to just these brands of consequentialism because I believe they provide the \*strongest arm\* with which to combat the current problem. This limitation of scope, then, is by no means intended to imply that moral schizophrenia does not afflict the broad range of ethical theories Stocker claims it does.

<sup>13</sup> What value ought to be maximized in determining the rightness of an action will vary based on a DC theory’s axiology. For example, hedonistic DC theories will be stated in terms of maximizing hedonic utility.

<sup>14</sup> Many thanks are due to Dan Doviak for presenting Stocker’s problem of moral schizophrenia as a dilemma. I follow him in the basic structure of this dilemma and believe it frames the problem excellently. Doviak gave this structure to Stocker’s argument in a seminar talk called “A Problem for Disengaged Consequentialism” in Fred Feldman’s Phil 760 Seminar, (March 7, 2005). He has since written a paper of the same name.

enter into genuinely loving relationships. This is unacceptable, as these are profound sources of pleasure, happiness, etc. If he does not embody his reasons in his motives, then he becomes morally schizophrenic, and this too is an unacceptable situation. So DC theories are unacceptable. While Stocker does not state the problem in terms of this dilemma, there is good evidence to believe he would approve. He writes, "It is not possible for moral people, that is, people who would achieve what is valuable, to act on these ethical theories, to let them comprise their motives. People who do let them comprise their motives will, for that reason, have a life seriously lacking in what is valuable."<sup>15</sup>

The problem first arises when dc-agents attempt to embody their reasons in their motives. On this first horn of the dilemma, the dc-agent is aware of the value he places on the goods of friendship. He will attempt to have friends, but find he cannot consistently form and maintain a friendship given his consequentialist mode of thinking. The dc-agent may then attempt to reconcile this problem by ignoring his consequentialist motives for friendship, causing disharmony in his reasons and motives for having a particular friend. If the dc-agent chooses to ignore his consequentialist motives, he has then moved to the second horn of the dilemma, becoming morally schizophrenic. The condition of moral schizophrenia can then manifest itself in a variety of ways. Stocker points out some examples of "modest cases": weakness of will, indecisiveness, guilt, shame, self-deception, rationalization, and annoyance with oneself.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> SMET 455

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 454

Thus, following the dilemma, the dc-agent must choose between having friendships, love relations – and living as a moral schizophrenic – or having harmony between his reasons and motives, and dealing with the fact that authentic friendship and love is impossible given his ethical theory.

In the following passage, Stocker explains how hedonistic egoists get caught in the tangles of this dilemma. I quote him at length.

Hedonistic egoists take their own pleasure to be the sole justification of acts, activities, ways of life; they should recognize that love, friendship, affection, fellow feeling, and community are among the greatest (sources of) personal pleasures. Thus, they have good reason, on their own grounds to enter into such relations. But they cannot act in the ways required to get those pleasures, those great goods, if they act on their motive of pleasure-for-self. They cannot act for the sake of the intended beloved, friend, and so on; thus they cannot love, be or have a friend, and so on.<sup>17</sup>

I think this quotation contains an important argument. Though the argument is given specifically against hedonistic egoists, the problem can easily be generalized to be against any consequentialist theory – dc-theories included. If so, dc-agents, when attempting to be friends or have love relations, will find themselves very lonely, or worse still, will move to the other horn of the dilemma, becoming morally schizophrenic. In the next section I present this argument with the modifications necessary for it to target DC theories. As I suggested above, this argument is intended to show how dc-agents seem to be forced into moral schizophrenia by their own ethical theories. Call the following argument the argument to schizophrenia (ATS).

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 457

#### IV. The Argument

1. If S is a dc-agent, then S has good reason to enter into relations that are among the greatest sources of personal pleasure [or whatever value the agent's theory claims that rightness is the maximization of, e.g. happiness].
2. Love and friendship are among the greatest (sources of) personal pleasures [or, happiness, etc.].
3. Thus: If S is a dc-agent, then S has good reason to enter into love and friendship relations.
4. [But] If S is a dc-agent, S cannot act in the ways required to get those pleasures (S cannot act for the sake of the intended beloved or friend).
5. If an agent cannot act for the sake of the beloved, friend, then that agent cannot love, be or have a friend.
6. Therefore: If S is a dc-agent, then S cannot love, be or have a friend.
7. Therefore: If S is a dc-agent, S has good reason to enter love and friendship relations, but it's not the case that S can love, be or have a friend (from 3&6).

In light of (7), the dc-agent will want to have friends, but will not be able to use his ethical theory to motivate this activity. This prompts the move to moral schizophrenia.

The first lemma of this argument (1-3) seems right. No one who ever was, or had a friend – or felt love of any kind for that matter – would deny the enriching effects these relations have for one's quality of life. Furthermore, even though the dc-agent believes that his criterion of rightness is separated from how he makes decisions pertaining to friends, it seems that if it is even possible that there is a case in which the dc-agent must sacrifice a friendship in order to make some other morally right decision, then premise 4 is true. Since we should grant the truth of premise 5 as obvious, the second lemma (4-6) seems also to hold. Thus, ATS seems to pose a serious problem for any DC theory.

One way a dc-agent may try to get out of this problem is to deny premise 4. Premise 4, the dc-agent could argue, overlooks the fact that DC theories do not employ consequentialist decision procedures. True dc-agents, the objection might continue, can, and do, act in ways required to bring about the pleasures of friendship and love, and need not be committed to maximizing value in cases where the agent must make a decision that will affect his friendships. Hence, the dc-agent can make choices congruent with the proper treatment of his friends, even in cases in which that decision is not value-maximizing. For this counterclaim to be acceptable, however, it needs to be shown that it is consistent for someone to be a dc-agent and still do things for the sake of others. I will now attempt to develop this possible objection to the argument.

## V. Sophisticated Consequentialism

So long as the theory in question maintains an impersonal criterion of right – one that focuses strictly on rightness, or goodness, etc. in the abstract – the theory will be, as Stocker puts it, dehumanizing.<sup>18</sup> Railton, however, thinks that there is a solution to this problem in what he calls sophisticated consequentialism; he explains it in terms of subjective and objective positions. *Subjective consequentialism* is the view that whenever one faces a choice of actions, one should attempt to determine which act of those available would most promote the good, and should then act accordingly.<sup>19</sup> John, from the example given above, clearly represents the subjective consequentialist. Note that since the subjective consequentialist attempts to employ a consequentialist-oriented decision

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<sup>18</sup> SMET p. 460

<sup>19</sup> ACDM p. 152

procedure, subjective consequentialism is not a DC theory. *Objective consequentialism* is the view that the criterion of rightness of an act or course of action is whether it in fact would promote the good of those acts available to the agent.<sup>20</sup> An objectively consequentialist act (or life), Railton explains, is that act (or life) of those available to the agent that would bring about the best consequences. Finally, Railton asserts, a *sophisticated consequentialist* is someone who has a standing commitment to leading an objectively consequentialist life, but who need not set special stock in any particular form of decision making and therefore does not necessarily seek to lead a subjectively consequentialist life.<sup>21</sup> Given that the sophisticated consequentialist is not committed to any particular decision procedure, and is committed to objective consequentialism only as a criterion of rightness, sophisticated consequentialism is a DC theory. To better illustrate the position of the sophisticate, Railton offers a new character, Juan.

Juan is married to Linda, and like John, is viewed as a model husband. But when asked about his treatment of his wife, he gives a much different kind of response than John gives. Juan's response is "I love Linda. I even *like* her. So it means a lot to me to do things for her. After all we've been through, it's almost a part of me to do it."<sup>22</sup> Juan, Railton alleges, has developed standing dispositions to treat Linda in this way, and is not required constantly to evaluate whether this relationship is value-maximizing. Since Juan's decisions concerning Linda are guided by standing dispositions, Juan can be a consequentialist, and be involved with Linda for Linda's sake.

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 152

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* 153

<sup>22</sup> See *Ibid.* 150 for the complete Juan and Linda story.

Railton points out that even though someone like Juan does things for the sake of others, this need not prevent him from realizing that he enjoys the consequences of doing those things. He writes

A spouse who acts for the sake of his mate may know full well that this is a source of deep satisfaction for him – in addition to providing him with reasons for acting internal to it, the relationship may also promote the external goal of achieving happiness. Moreover, while the pursuit of happiness may not be the reason he entered or sustains the relationship, he may also recognize that if it had not seemed likely to make him happy he would not have entered into it, and that if it proved over time to be inconsistent with his happiness he would consider ending it.<sup>23</sup>

The further point embedded in this passage is that the SC-agent, even though he acts toward close others for their own sakes, need not continue to do so if it proves disadvantageous in the long run. There seems to be fine line here that the SC agent will have to walk. On the one hand, the SC-agent cannot scrap a relationship simply because it is inconvenient in some way. On the other hand, he must still keep track of the overall consequences produced by his being in that relationship. In order to live as a consequentialist but not be committed to a consequentialist decision procedure, then, the sophisticated consequentialist must attempt to meet a counterfactual condition: while he ordinarily does not do what he does simply for the sake of doing what's right, he would seek to lead a different sort of life if he did not think his were morally defensible.<sup>24</sup>

Hence, Juan is supposed to avoid the problem of moral schizophrenia so long as he tries, to the best of his abilities, to meet the counterfactual condition. In doing so, Juan can act for Linda's sake because he will have developed a disposition to treat Linda as an end;

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 141

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 151

and where Anne was made to feel alienated by John's moral schizophrenia, Linda would not feel alienated by Juan's reasons for treating her as he does. This story about Juan seems to provide impetus for the rejection of premise 4 of ATS. Juan seems to be living proof that a dc-agent *qua* sophisticated consequentialist can act in the ways required to bring about the goods of friendship and love. After all, he *does* say all the right things when asked about his stellar treatment of his wife.

I don't think Stocker would be moved by the Juan story. He might argue, in fact, that the sophisticated consequentialist can deny premise 4 of ATS only because he has already shifted into a state of moral schizophrenia, and that Railton has merely restated the problem as a solution. The extent to which the sophisticated consequentialist can reject this seems to be equivalent to the extent that he can meet and abide by the counterfactual condition. In order to determine whether this is plausible, three questions must be answered. The first question is what the proper understanding of the counterfactual condition is. The second question, "how can the consequentialist meet the counterfactual condition," can be answered only after the first. Third, the question of whether all of this will get the consequentialist out the grips of moral schizophrenia will be based on the answers to the first two.

## **VI. The Counterfactual Condition**

Recall that Railton's counterfactual condition is stated as follows: while the sophisticated consequentialist ordinarily does not do what he does simply for the sake of doing what's right, he would seek to lead a different sort of life if he did not think his were

morally defensible. The key to understanding how an agent can divorce his motives from his criterion of right, and further, how it is – as Railton proposes – that the agent could potentially seek to lead a different sort of life were his current life no longer morally defensible, is in the adoption and regulation of standing dispositions.<sup>25</sup> We are told that Juan, for example, has a standing disposition to treat his wife Linda as an end in herself. The sophisticated consequentialist makes everyday decisions on the basis of these developed dispositions. These dispositions may help the sophisticated consequentialist do things like block the regress of calculating utilities in that he may “develop standing dispositions to give more or less attention to decisions upon their perceived importance, the amount of information available, the predictability of his choice, and so on.”<sup>26</sup> More importantly, the sophisticated consequentialist can develop a disposition to avoid characteristically self-defeating modes of deliberation entirely, and that doing so need not be seen as self-deceptive or as acting in bad faith. Railton writes, “He can fully recognize that he is developing the dispositions he does because they are necessary for promoting the good. Of course, he cannot be preoccupied with this fact all the while, but then one cannot be *preoccupied* with anything without this interfering with normal or appropriate patterns of thought and action.”<sup>27</sup>

The result is a two-tiered ethical theory with the counterfactual condition functioning as a mediator between the two levels of thinking: an objective consequentialist

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<sup>25</sup> A disposition can be roughly construed as a functional state which takes situations as inputs and delivers actions.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 154

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* 154

criterion of right, and some kind of dispositional decision procedure.<sup>28</sup> Let's suppose, then, that the proper understanding of the counterfactual condition is just this (and the answer to question one): it is the way in which the sophisticated consequentialist regulates his set of dispositions so that his dispositions will be consistent with an overall consequentialist framework. Although Railton does not state it this way, it seems that the procedure for first adopting a set of dispositions – the starting point – will have to be one in which the sophisticated consequentialist considers all the sets of dispositions that are possible for him, consider of each set how much utility would be produced if he were to adopt it, then adopt that set which maximizes utility.<sup>29</sup> If this understanding of the counterfactual condition is correct, then it becomes an empirical matter whether a person can actually meet it. Answering question two, then, will be determined by the way in which the sophisticate moves between the levels of thinking.<sup>30</sup> There are, to my mind, two ways in which the sophisticated consequentialist could use his criterion of right to regulate his dispositions, and thus two subtly different versions of the theory. The second and third questions will have to be asked of both these interpretations.

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<sup>28</sup> While Hare also has a two-tiered structure to his ethical theory, the similarities *seem* to end there. I say “seem” because after looking more carefully at Hare’s theory, I am not entirely sure how it is supposed to work. [This, of course, is not a *reason* to think that this exhausts the similarities between to the two theories, only that I cannot see them now.] Hare’s and Railton’s theories appear similar in a general way in that both seem to prescribe two different modes of moral thinking: a critical level which will be consequentialist, and an everyday method of moral thinking, which will be established in some way on the basis of the critical level. See Hare’s *Moral Thinking*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1981. For a treatment of similar issues raised by Williams against Hare and Hare’s replies, see *Hare and Critics*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1988, p.185-196 & p.287-293.

<sup>29</sup> Fred Feldman has pointed out to me that this is roughly equivalent to Robert Adams’ motive utilitarianism. Railton is aware of the similarities and argues against the direct comparison of his view to Adams’. SeeACDM.

<sup>30</sup> Hare, for reasons unknown to me, believed that the question of how one moves between the levels of thinking of his theory is not a philosophical question. I disagree. I think that determining whether there can be better or worse ways to regulate our dispositions using an overall consequentialist schema is an important philosophical question.

## Interpretation 1:

The first interpretation of the counterfactual condition comes from Cocking and Oakley.<sup>31</sup> They begin their interpretation by putting the condition in terms of a regulator and a regulative ideal. They write, “A helpful way of putting the sophisticated consequentialist position is by saying that maximization of agent-neutral value will be his regulative ideal. To say that an agent has a regulative ideal is to say that he has internalized a certain conception of correctness or excellence, in such a way that he is able to adjust his motivation and conduct so that it conforms – or at least does not conflict – with that standard.”<sup>32</sup> Further, they hold that a regulative ideal can govern our behavior without becoming one of our motives. Since the regulative ideal is “an internalized normative disposition to direct one’s actions in certain ways,”<sup>33</sup> the sophisticated consequentialist can ground his motives for friendship however he see fit. This move seems to preserve the thrust of Railton’s strategy to get the sophisticated consequentialist out of the throes of moral schizophrenia, allowing for a unity between reasons and motives.

On the basis of this notion of a regulative ideal, Cocking and Oakley then argue that it is still unclear, in Railton’s example, why Juan’s relationship with Linda should qualify as a case of genuine love or friendship. While it can be granted that he acts for her sake, “there are many different kinds of relationships where we can favor others with our time and attention, and moreover, act for their sake, but which would not thereby necessarily

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<sup>31</sup> Dean Cocking and Jason Oakley “Indirect Consequentialism, Friendship, and the Problem of Alienation,” *Ethics*. 106 (October 1995: 86-111. Hereafter, “ICFPA”

<sup>32</sup> ICFPA p. 89-90

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* 90 To me, this sounds a lot like a fancy way of saying “conscience.”

qualify as friendships.”<sup>34</sup> After all, Juan’s regulative ideal is still consequentialist, and on these grounds, they argue, acting for one’s sake does not entail being a friend. Moreover, Juan’s having a deep sense of care and affection for Linda does not, in itself, entail that Juan is Linda’s friend, or that he has genuine love for her.

Cocking and Oakley explain that the reason Juan might hold these feelings for Linda, act for her sake, and *still* not be a friend is that having a friend, as opposed to being a teacher, or doctor – who also may care for others, and act for their sake – involves a specific set of acceptance and terminating conditions that are proper for friendships. Call *acceptance conditions* the conditions under which an agent would enter a friendship relationship. Correlatively, call *terminating conditions* the conditions under which a person would withdraw from a relationship.<sup>35</sup> Without intending to employ a controversial use of the following term, call a person’s set of acceptance and terminating conditions his set of *governing conditions*.<sup>36</sup> Using this manner of speech, Railton’s sophisticated consequentialist may appeal to the counterfactual condition, saying that he has as part of his regulative ideal the governing conditions conducive to being a friend because this is value-maximizing, that if it failed to do so would stop, and that, “this does not entail that the agent is thereby *moved* by his concern to maximize agent-neutral value in his loves or friendships.”<sup>37</sup> Hence, granting that an agent’s motives can be separated from his criterion of right, Cocking and Oakley interpret the counterfactual condition (call this interpretation COI) to be mediating upon each particular friendship relation that an agent engages in.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 92

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* 94

<sup>36</sup> I am merely following Cocking and Oakley in the use this term to refer to an agent’s set of acceptance and terminating conditions for a relationship. See *Ibid.* 96

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 94

The sophisticated consequentialist, on this interpretation, can meet the condition by checking the state of each of his friendships against his regulative ideal periodically to see if the relationship is still value-maximizing, without having to admit that his motives for friendship are separated from his reasons. This answers question two.

However, Cocking and Oakley believe that while it is good to make the distinction between motives and governing conditions, this does not get the sophisticated consequentialist out of trouble.<sup>38</sup> They claim that it is “an unjustified leap for consequentialists to think that appealing to this distinction between [governing conditions] and motives establishes their claim that being governed in these ways by the condition of maximization of agent-neutral value is compatible with the motivational disposition proper to relationships of friendship and love.”<sup>39</sup> One way to illustrate this is to return to Railton’s examples of John and Juan. Though Juan differs from John in that his motives for friendship are separate from his criterion of right (his regulative ideal), both Juan and John, as consequentialists, have the same governing conditions for particular friendship relations, and Juan and Linda’s relationship should not be viewed as any more authentic than John and Anne’s does.

If we take Cocking and Oakley to mean the same with the phrase ‘agent-neutral’ as I in my use of ‘impersonal,’ then the following argument seems to capture their position. Call this the argument from COI.

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* 94

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* 96

1. If an ethical theory has an impersonal set of governing conditions which serves to regulate an agent's disposition for a particular friendship, then the acceptance of that theory by an agent cannot provide the agent with the psychological disposition necessary to facilitate and maintain that friendship.
2. Sophisticated consequentialism has an impersonal set of governing conditions which serves to regulate an agent's disposition for a particular friendship.
3. Therefore the acceptance of sophisticated consequentialism by an agent cannot provide the agent with the psychological disposition necessary to facilitate and maintain a particular friendship.

To put this conclusion in terms of the overall dialectic in this paper, if Cocking and Oakley are correct, then the sophisticated consequentialist is no longer justified in denying premise 4 of ATS. The sophisticated consequentialist who compares each disposition to treat a particular friend in the required ways against his regulative ideal will be required to have in his set of terminating conditions a condition that will morally obligate him to end the particular friendship-disposition if it becomes suboptimal. Were this to occur, the SC-agent would then no longer be able to appeal to that disposition as justification for the friendship. Without that, the SC-agent is back into the original quagmire, perhaps desiring to maintain the friendship, but having this desire conflict with what his ethical theory requires of him.

What the argument from COI shows, then, is that while the sophisticated consequentialist can have harmony between his reasons and motives, given that he will still be morally required under certain circumstances to abandon his disposition for being

a friend to a particular person, he will not have the psychological disposition necessary to be a friend, and still cannot be a friend in the sense that Stocker elucidates. This is all that needs to be shown for the sophisticated consequentialist to slide over to the second horn of the above dilemma, and become morally schizophrenic. Hence, if Cocking and Oakley are correct in their interpretation of the counterfactual condition, the answer to question three is “no”, moral schizophrenia is just as much a problem for the sophisticated consequentialist as it is for any other dc-agent.

I agree with this conditional conclusion. If a sophisticated consequentialist accepts COI, and attempts to regulate his disposition to act in a particular way toward each and every person, he will do little better than John in alienating his friends, and himself. This will put the sophisticated consequentialist on the fast track to moral schizophrenia. I believe, however, that this conditional is only trivially true. I don't think Cocking and Oakley have it right. On COI, the SC-agent is required to develop a *particular* standing disposition to treat a particular friend in the ways required for authentic friendship. For example, Juan, on COI has an authentic relationship with Linda because he has developed a particular treat-Linda-for-Linda's-sake-disposition, and regulates that disposition with his consequentialist regulative ideal. Yet this gives Juan little or no advantage over simply regulating the friendship itself. Juan's disposition in this case would provide no added buffer. Hence, Juan would lose the apparent harmony between his reasons and motives for treating Linda properly as soon as either the relationship would become suboptimal, or he were faced with a choice between maintaining the relationship and some other utility-maximizing alternative.

Notice, however, that premise 2 of the argument from COI is true only if Cocking and Oakley's interpretation of the counterfactual condition is correct. Perhaps there is a better interpretation available. In the next section I explore a second interpretation that comes from Elinor Mason.<sup>40</sup> On her interpretation, premise 2 of the argument from COI is false.

### **Interpretation 2:**

Rather than interpret Railton as suggesting that each individual relationship-disposition be regulated, Mason thinks that the counterfactual condition mediates between the regulative ideal and a set of broader dispositions. Mason sees Railton as arguing that the good sophisticated consequentialist, in judging what to do, looks at dispositions rather than actions, "and the disposition which will produce the most good overall may not be a disposition to choose the act which appears to be the best on each occasion."<sup>41</sup> In the case of friendships, then, the condition would not mediate between the regulative ideal and a disposition for friendship with a particular person, but on the disposition proper to being a good friend overall. On this interpretation, "the sophisticated consequentialist will not give up a relationship whenever that relationship is less than optimal"<sup>42</sup> as would be suggested by the Cocking and Oakley interpretation. Someone holding this second interpretation, as I mentioned earlier, would reject premise 2 of the argument from COI. The reason for this should now be clear. The Masonian sophisticate uses her regulative

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<sup>40</sup> Elinor Mason. "Can an Indirect Consequentialist Be a Real Friend?" *Ethics*, Vol. 108, No. 2 (Jan. 1998), 386-393. Hereafter "CICRF".

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* 388

<sup>42</sup> CICRF p. 387. Mason defines "optimal" as the best an agent can do, not the best that could possibly be done.

ideal to govern a general pro-friendship disposition rather than over each disposition for the treatment of a particular friend.

The manner in which the counterfactual condition mediates between the criterion of right/regulative ideal and the set of dispositions, on Mason's interpretation, creates a sort of hierarchy of dispositions. The governing conditions proper for friendships would be regulated by a general pro-friendship disposition, and the acceptance/terminating conditions would themselves be dispositional. In this case, the terminating condition would be a disposition to cease having a pro-friendship disposition if it could no longer be argued that the best lives are had by those with friendships, and that it is a better world in which such relationships exist. So long as these two conclusions can be upheld empirically, the sophisticated consequentialist may keep and maintain the pro-friendship disposition, and thus engage in true friendships. The agent meets the counterfactual condition by developing this structure of dispositions and changes a given disposition only if it is no longer morally defensible to keep that disposition. (This answers question two.) A major advantage to this interpretation, Mason argues, is that under it "the circumstances in which a pro-friendship disposition would cease to be optimal are much more drastic than the circumstances in which a particular relationship would cease to become optimal."<sup>43</sup>

The difference between the Cocking and Oakley and the Mason interpretations is easily seen in the following example. Dick is a sophisticated consequentialist who recently discovered that he could make a substantial improvement in the conditions of a certain third-world nation. In order to do so, however, Dick would have to end his life as he now

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* 392

knows it and move there, devoting himself entirely to the task. Dick has many friends that he cares deeply for. Of all those who Dick considers his friend, he cares most deeply for his long-term girlfriend Joan. Dick knows that moving away and starting a new life means severing his ties with Joan, and that there is little or no chance that they will be reunited.

If Dick follows the model of sophisticated consequentialism offered by Cocking and Oakley's interpretation, he must compare his relationship with Joan against the impersonal greater good of improving a third world nation. Since his regulative ideal is consequentialist, and he uses the counterfactual condition to mediate between that ideal and his particular relationships, he seems committed to breaking his ties and moving away. On the Mason interpretation, since he has no reason within the context of the relationship itself to end it, in order to be committed to moving away, Dick must be prepared to say that it is a better world in which one has a disposition to give up having a pro-friendship disposition if given an opportunity to help strangers. Since a world in which people give up friendships for impersonal goods is effectively a world with no friends at all, and Dick knows a world where people have friendships like his with Joan is better than one without, Dick should stay, continue to have a pro-friendship disposition, and continue being a loving friend to Joan [and his other friends].

So on this second interpretation, Mason argues, the sophisticated consequentialist can have harmony between his reasons and motives, and also have friendships. The problem with this interpretation, however, is that Mason's view offers no principled reason that Dick in the above example should have to choose between maximizing some impersonal good, and giving up his pro-friendship disposition specifically. Perhaps

Mason could attempt to argue along the following lines. The reason why Dick must be ready to develop a disposition to give up his pro-friendship disposition when it conflicts with the greater good of helping strangers is that this is precisely what Dick must do in order to be moved to relocate his life. If there were some problems that led him to end certain friendships independent of the opportunity to improve the conditions of the third world nation, then it is feasible that Dick could end all of his friendships, each for those independent reasons. But to give up all of them for a consequentialist reason is simply to fall back into the Cocking and Oakley interpretation, where each particular friendship would be regulated by the consequentialist ideal.

I don't think this line of argument gets at the heart of the matter. The problem with Mason's view, as I see it, is that it seems wholly arbitrary that of all of Dick's dispositions, it is his general pro-friendship disposition that must be put to the test. Let's not forget the fact that Dick is a consequentialist, and should be selecting, maintaining – and possibly editing – all of his dispositions by holding them to consequentialist ideal of utility maximization. Mason must explain, then, why Dick is required to give up on friendship altogether as opposed to selecting a disposition that would allow him to have some friends and discard others, or to have a disposition that allows him to advocate friendship for others up to some point. Without some explanation as to how it would be utility maximizing for Dick to give up his pro-friendship disposition altogether, Mason's view makes no sense.

Let's suppose, however, that such an explanation is possible, and that while Mason has not provided it, there is good reason to hold this dispositional hierarchy view. There

is, even still, another problem for Mason. This next problem is that it is not at all clear whether the Masonian sophisticate is even a consequentialist anymore. It seems that, a good Masonian SC-agent will only ever have to make one consequentialist decision in his life with regard to friendships. He will decide whether or not to develop a pro-friendship disposition on consequentialist grounds, but following that, may never make a consequentialist decision regarding a friend or friendship again.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, it seems that the moment in which the so-called sophisticated consequentialist of the Mason variety would begin to deliberate in a consequentialist way over some situation involving friendship, the agent would fall immediately into Stocker's problem again. Perhaps a good way to remedy this potential threat would be for the sophisticated consequentialist to either forget that he was one, or never to consciously acknowledge that he was.

This *remedy*, however, seems to point toward the same problem that has concerned Stocker all along. Consider it in this way. In order to avoid the charge of moral schizophrenia, the consequentialist must keep pushing himself further and further away from his criterion of right. Now it seems that the best way to preserve psychologically healthy interpersonal relationships is to not even acknowledge that one is a consequentialist at all. The fact that it is unclear whether the Mason-variety sophisticate remains a consequentialist shows that the consequentialist faces a pragmatically paradoxical type of situation quite similar to the paradox of hedonism.<sup>45</sup> The prescription

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<sup>44</sup> This is barring extreme circumstances. It may be that there could arise a state of affairs such that maintaining a pro-friendship disposition would result in having terrible things happening to those one cares about most. For instance, say that one was plagued by demon who would seek to indulge in the slow torture of anyone the agent became friends with. In this case it might be best, on consequentialist grounds, not to keep a pro-friendship disposition.

<sup>45</sup> In ACDM, Railton proposes a solution to the paradox of hedonism which, as he describes it, "is that adopting as one's exclusive ultimate end in life the pursuit of maximum happiness may well prevent one from having certain experiences

for being a good consequentialist seems to be to not really believe in consequentialism, at least morally speaking. The moment the sophisticated consequentialist slips back into a consequentialist deliberative framework in some situation involving a friend, he will at once be alienated from his affections for the friend, and if the friend knew that agent had shifted back, the friend may too feel alienated. Perhaps a good way to put the condition of the sophisticated consequentialist who has developed a value-maximizing set of dispositions, but for all other practical purposes is divorced from his criterion of right, is *fragile*. The SC-agent can get away with doing this so long as there are no extenuating circumstances that may cause the agent to plunge back into a consequentialist deliberative framework. Put in this way, the condition begins to smack of the moral schizophrenic in a state of self-deception.

The answer to the question whether the Mason variety sophisticated consequentialist escapes the problem of moral schizophrenia is not as clear, but I think that there is good reason to think that he has not. Part of the problem is that it is difficult to make sense of the rationale behind Mason's interpretation. Putting that problem aside and giving her view the benefit of the doubt, however, does not fare much better. First, it is not clear, if the sophisticate has escaped the problem, whether he is even a consequentialist at all. Second, if it is granted that the agent is still a consequentialist, it seems as if he is so in an almost paradoxical way. Finally, given this paradoxical way in which the consequentialist remains one (despite an utter lack of evidence for this in the choices he makes), it seems that there is good reason to believe that the sophisticate is in a

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or engaging in certain sorts of relationships or commitments that are among the greatest sources of happiness." See p. 140.

psychologically fragile state, and is perhaps even self-deceived about his ethical position. These clues, once again, seem to point toward the sophisticate having fallen on the second horn of the dilemma and having hidden this fact from himself.

## VII. Final Thoughts

If what has been put forth is accurate, no matter which of these two interpretations of Railton's sophisticated consequentialism one might subscribe to, the sophisticate will be morally schizophrenic. Perhaps there is evidence for this independent of how the counterfactual condition is interpreted. Consider once again, the way in which the condition is stated: while the sophisticated consequentialist ordinarily does not do what he does simply for the sake of doing what's right, he would seek to lead a different sort of life if he did not think his were morally defensible. Before one even attempts to regulate one's dispositions using this condition, if one considered what this condition was recommending, the would-be sophisticate may find himself in the face of a near contradiction. When applied to friendships, the condition effectively prescribes doing what will bring about the best results overall, and while this is not the reason for having friends, if it happened that having friends wasn't what brought about the best results overall, then don't do it anymore. The contradictoriness of this is perhaps better seen in this analogous condition: "don't do an act for the sake of the money, but if there is no money, don't do it."<sup>46</sup> No wonder the result of trying to develop a set of dispositions using this condition to mediate seems to lead to a psychologically unhealthy state. It

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<sup>46</sup> Thanks to Fred Feldman for pointing this analogy out to me.

simultaneously prescribes doing things for the sake of others even if it is not value-maximizing to do so, but also not to do it if it is not.

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