

ACTA PHILOSOPHICA GOTHOBURGENSIA

15

CAN A CONSEQUENTIALIST  
BE A REAL FRIEND?  
(WHO CARES?)

Jan Lif



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## **ABSTRACT**

The focal point of this dissertation is a recent debate on consequentialism and friendship. The main question considered is, “Can a consequentialist be a real friend?” Prior to that discussion, the notions ‘friendship’ and ‘consequentialist’ are explained. In the second chapter, it is claimed that ‘friendship’ is primarily about holding a distinctive ‘perspective’ on the other person and the relation one have with that person. In the discussion regarding the notion ‘consequentialist’, an overview of the history of utilitarianism is first provided in the third chapter as a background. In the fourth chapter it is then argued that the debate on consequentialism and friendship involves four different types of consequentialists, depending upon how the relation between ‘moral reasons’ and ‘motivations’ is conceived. By means of a critical analysis of the main arguments for and against the thesis that a consequentialist can be a real friend, set in relation to the outlined perspective required for ‘friendship’ and various conceptions of ‘consequentialist’, it is concluded that all types of consequentialists can be real friends. But in the final chapter, it is discussed whether this conclusion can show consequentialism true or false, and it is argued that the answer is no. The reason for this is that the debate itself is based upon a special conception of ‘moral philosophy’, which cannot account for the possible morality involved in friendship. This is revealed by means of certain critique put forward against this conception of moral philosophy which stems from contemporary feminist ethics. The final conclusion is that a consequentialist can be a real friend, but it is doubtful whether anyone really cares about this conclusion, as it does not make any difference to morality.

## **KEYWORDS**

ethics, morality, moral principles, method, consequentialism, utilitarianism, friendship, love, trust, partiality, value, alienation, detachment, deception, feminism, feminist ethics, mothering, moral knowledge

*To Gunilla and the memory of Ingemar*

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# 1

## Introduction

Can a consequentialist be a real friend?

That is the central question of this essay. It will first be discussed in the light of a recent debate on the subject within Anglo-American moral philosophy. But this is a story with a twist. Since I have come to suspect that this debate rests upon a model of moral philosophy that cannot properly conceive many important issues regarding consequentialism and friendship, I shall also consider the debate (including my own contribution to it) in the light of a critique of certain aspects of Anglo-American moral philosophy, which stems from contemporary feminist ethics. But to begin with, in this fairly long introduction, I wish to give the reader an overview of the topics and plan of this book.

The debate on consequentialism and friendship that will be attended to here was sparked off by certain claims made by Bernard Williams in *A Critique of Utilitarianism* (published 1973) and Michael Stocker's brief article "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories" (1976), and it has continued in various periodicals and books by a number of philosophers. A central assumption in this debate is that friendship is highly valuable, and if a moral theory cannot properly account for friendship then it should be rejected. In other words, the "overall human importance of friendship makes it a good test of the adequacy of a moral theory, at least if one thinks that morality is necessarily connected with human good. An adequate moral theory must be compatible with the attitudes and practical requirements of true friendship."<sup>1</sup>

In this debate however, 'friendship' is among the least scrutinized concepts of all. I find this to be quite unfortunate as it makes it difficult to recognize the value of many alleged problems in relation to consequentialism. Therefore, I will in the second chapter (*Friendship*) develop a brief sketch of friendship, which in the ensuing discussion will serve as an account of what should be

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<sup>1</sup> Neera Kapur Badhwar, "Why it is Wrong to Be Always Guided by the Best: Consequentialism and Friendship", *Ethics*, 101 (1991), p. 485.

meant by the latter part of the question, “Can a consequentialist be a *real friend*?”<sup>2</sup> At the end of this chapter I shall also put forward some reasons why one could take friendship to be highly valuable. This is in order to shed some light on why the problem of consequentialism and friendship has been considered a problem worthy of attention in the first place.

Although ‘friendship’ is something many consider to be a significant ingredient in life, it is certainly not a concept which is easy to elucidate, something which becomes immediately obvious when for whatever reason one tries to put the finger on it – for example when a conflict with a dear friend boils down to the agonizing question, “Are we really *friends*?” Thankfully, however, we need apparently not be familiar with any deeper meanings of the concept to be able to maintain such a relationship in our everyday lives. Being and having a friend require no preliminary academic studies; theoretical clarity is not a necessity for concrete competence in that field. If that were not so, few would probably be able to have friends – if anyone at all, that is.

Since friendship is considered to be something precious, the phenomenon has naturally attracted the attention of thinkers. Philosophers have pondered for millennia what friendship is and whether it really is something good. The first known philosopher within the Western tradition discussing the issue in detail was Aristotle, particularly in books VIII and IX of his *Nicomachean Ethics*.<sup>3</sup> Aristotle states, “without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods,” then sets out to explain how friendship is to be understood, and why it is a “necessary” and “noble” thing, essential to leading a good human life. His discussion was followed up by a number of philosophers through history (some notable examples being Cicero, Montaigne and Kant), and although some question certain details of Aristotle’s depiction, it has on the whole prevailed. The issue is still a subject of theoretical studies, though it

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<sup>2</sup> In this debate, however, not all speak of ‘friendship’ specifically; some talk about ‘close personal relations’ in general. But this does not make much of a difference. Their proposed arguments nonetheless work well with regards to my outline of friendship, as I do not find that they include any additional characterizations of ‘close’ relations that my sketch misses out.

<sup>3</sup> This is not to say that Aristotle is the first philosopher ever on friendship. For one thing, Aristotle is evidently inspired by Plato’s dialogue *Lysis*. But Socrates, who attempts to figure out what friendship is in the dialogue, does not get much further but than to the conclusion that he does not really know what it is: “Now we’ve done it... made fools of ourselves, I, an old man, and you as well. These people here will go away saying that we are friends of one another – for I count myself in with you – but what a friend is we have not yet been able to find out” (223a).



nowadays attracts sociologists and psychologists more than academic philosophers.<sup>4</sup>

However, ‘friendship’ is not an unequivocal concept. In the everyday usage of the term, it is employed to classify a number of personal relations which are quite unlike each other. But in the discussion concerning consequentialism, I find that it is a particular type of friendship that has been of interest – the kind that is vaguely distinguished from others by being referred to as *true*, *good*, or *real* friendship. This type of relationship is inherently multifaceted and complex, and I certainly do not aim to fully make sense of this complexity. I doubt anyone can. My sketch is quite minimal, yet it should be sufficient for the purpose it is supposed to serve, namely making some line of arguments in the debate on consequentialism and friendship a bit clearer.

Many philosophers, including me, who have written on the topic of ‘true’ friendship, owe a lot to Aristotle.<sup>5</sup> The general ideas and structure of my sketch builds to a large extent on his discussion on friendship in *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, readers familiar with Aristotle will soon notice that my sketch is not a straightforward review or defense of Aristotle’s account; there are similarities, but also differences. For this chapter, I have in addition had much help from writings by contemporary philosophers and social scientists on the subject, especially Lawrence Blum<sup>6</sup>, Neera Kapur Badhwar<sup>7</sup>, Janet R. Reohr<sup>8</sup>, and Laurence Thomas<sup>9</sup>.

In my outline, I shall argue that friendship is fundamentally about a distinctive *perspective* (on another person and the relationship one has to that person), and I will outline and explain three components I consider central to this perspective. First, that friends regard their relationship as being a *non-instrumental* one, that is, it is essentially not entered and upheld for the sole purpose of reaching some personal or external goal. Second, there exists a deep emotional attachment between friends that goes beyond mere appreciation or

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<sup>4</sup> For a concise account of the history of friendship research, see. Rosemary Bleiszner and Rebecca G. Adams, *Adult Friendship*, Newbury Park: Sage Publications Inc. (1992), chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup> I shall here refer to the version of *Nicomachean Ethics* translated by David Ross (rev. J.L. Ackrill and J.O. Urmson), New York: Oxford University Press (1998).

<sup>6</sup> *Friendship, Altruism and Morality*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. (1980).

<sup>7</sup> “Friendship, Justice and Supererogation,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 22 (1985): 123-131; “Friends as Ends in Themselves,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 48 (1987): 1-23; and “Why It Is Wrong to Be Always Guided by the Best: Consequentialism and Friendship,” *Ethics*, 101 (1991): pp. 483-504.

<sup>8</sup> *Friendship: An Exploration of Structure and Process*, New York: Garland Publishing Inc. (1991).

<sup>9</sup> “Friendship,” *Synthese*, 72 (1987): 217-236

liking; friends *love* each other. Third, friends *value each other for who they are*; a friend is not 'anybody', but a person, and recognition and positive valuing of a friend's distinctive personality is an essential feature of friendship. Thus, a 'real friend' will here be understood as an agent who holds a perspective that embraces these components. But 'friendship' might still fail to exist even if an agent holds such a perspective. The other person, the focal point of the agent's perspective, must also regard the agent and their relationship in the same manner for friendship to be the case.

Is it somehow controversial to claim that friendship is fundamentally about perspectives, i.e., place it in the eye of the beholders? I hardly believe so. The alternative would be to claim that friendship is something that goes beyond the perspectives of the involved agents; in other words, that it is a relation which is dependent upon certain metaphysical properties. Now, that sounds far too extravagant to me.

My sketch aspires to capture some everyday intuitions regarding friendship, hence, it should not be far-fetched or romantic, but in harmony with what is usually meant by the concept. Anyone who has ever had or been a real friend should find this sketch valid (while those who have never ever had any such friend will, unfortunately, not understand what I am talking about). Maybe I am wrong on this matter, and that would of course be a failure. But even if that were the case, at least I am not alone. Because, in light of the arguments presented, the debaters seems to endorse the same ideas.

However, each instance of friendship is obviously unique, and if we want to find out what makes different friendships *different* we have to inspect their particular characteristics. This sketch would only be of minor help for such an enterprise, because it aims to capture some core aspects, which *unite* all friendships. Moreover, this sketch does not apply to all relationships which are occasionally referred to as 'friendships'. What I depict is mainly a form of 'adult friendship', and I shall return to the issue of how it differs from other close personal relationships.

A possible difficulty that some could come to see with my account of friendship is that it seems to claim that friendship is a matter of *either/or*, i.e. *either* one hold this perspective, and then one is a 'real friend', *or* one does not, and then one is not a 'real friend' – and this surely goes against the everyday idea that friendship comes in *degrees*; that is, that one can be *more or less* of a friend. Now, it must be kept in mind that *this is not an exhaustive account of friendship*. This account is merely meant to capture some fundamental components of the *perspective* required for friendship – and the ones outlined here *are* of the either/or type. Although these components internally allow for

degrees (especially, but not exclusively, 'love'), they do not allow too much of it; they can easily transmute into something else, though, of course, it might be hard to exactly pin-point where this threshold is located (for example, when exactly do we 'love' someone, and when do we merely 'like' someone?). Furthermore, these elements are merely the ones which are of relevance for the forthcoming discussion regarding a consequentialist's abilities to pursue friendship. One could of course come up with other aspects of friendship (that are not of the either/or kind), which more clearly shows how friendship could be a matter of degree (for example, how generous, kind or helpful the persons involved in such a relationship are). But these aspects, I believe, are not of relevance for the forthcoming discussion, as they do not frame any problems that could be found distinctively troublesome for a consequentialist. In other words, they are too much of relevance to *any* kind of agent, regardless of moral convictions. The question here is, "Can a *consequentialist* be a real friend?"

But what is a 'consequentialist'? Variants on this notion are elaborated in the debate, yet I believe 'consequentialism' should firstly be explained. Therefore, I shall in the third chapter (*Consequentialism*) try to explain the general idea of consequentialism, and provide some reasons why someone would want to be a consequentialist (that is, adhere to a normative ethical theory that asserts that the end result of any conduct is the sole factor determining its moral status). Such an explanation can be made in many ways. It will here be done by way of a modest review of some arguments on the matter put forward by the four great grandfathers of the first outright consequentialist moral theory, utilitarianism. Utilitarianism was formulated in the late eighteenth century by Jeremy Bentham in *Principles of Morals and Legislation*<sup>10</sup>, and further developed by John Stuart Mill<sup>11</sup>, Henry Sidgwick<sup>12</sup> and G.E. Moore<sup>13</sup>. Why I have chosen these philosophers will be obvious, at least for someone who is familiar with the history of moral philosophy. It is scarcely an exaggeration to state that these philosophers established and shaped consequentialist ethics, and have offered the most influential arguments on the matter so far.

Roughly speaking, consequentialism is the idea that one ought always do what will make the outcome best. This idea has served as the foundation for an array of normative moral theories, and anyone even slightly acquainted with moral

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<sup>10</sup> Published 1789.

<sup>11</sup> In three essays called "Utilitarianism" published in *Fraser's Magazine*, 1861.

<sup>12</sup> In *The Methods of Ethics*. First edition published 1874, and the last (seventh edition) posthumously 1907; Edinburgh: R. & R. Clark Ltd.

<sup>13</sup> In *Principia Ethica*. First edition 1903, last 1948; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

philosophy can hardly have failed to notice that consequentialist ethics has been and still is heavily debated.

But why all this fuss over such a simple idea? Well, it is not difficult to immediately grasp its attraction: it is hard to deny the intuitive desirability of the postulate that one 'ought always do what will make the outcome best'. Furthermore, contrary to many other moral ideas, it can be developed into exceptionally precise moral systems. In principle, it provides exact answers to what one ought to do in cases of ethical dilemmas, leaving few (if any) gray areas on the moral map. And it is undoubtedly theoretically fruitful as it continues to give rise to new and interesting problems within moral philosophy, et cetera.

However, it does not take long before one detects a lot of negative aspects. Consequentialism can be found *prima facie* repelling as it runs counter to a variety of widespread intuitions on what a genuinely moral theory ought to endorse and what it ought not to endorse. As long as it is for the best, consequentialism approves of torture, slavery, murder, genocide, (fill in your favorite intuition on what is morally wrong here), and so on. Consequentialism can also be found to be unreasonably demanding; it apparently prescribes that we, in every single moment of our lives, must strive for the best outcomes for all, leaving no room for our personal projects or ourselves. And it has been accused of being totally useless. Since the cognitive capacities of human beings are quite limited, we cannot actually find out which actions actually lead to the best results, et cetera.

Nevertheless, it is "remarkable how [consequentialist ethics] tends to haunt even those of us who will not believe in it. It is as if we for ever feel that it must be right, although we insist that it is wrong."<sup>14</sup>

My intention with the chapter on Consequentialism is first and foremost to give the reader a general overview of the theoretical framework that constitutes and distinguishes consequentialist ethics as understanding it is essential for grasping the scope and limits of the various conceptions of 'consequentialist' that figure in the debate on consequentialism and friendship. But it is also crucial for understanding some major themes of the final chapter, when we come to the feminist critique of Anglo-American moral philosophy. However, this chapter has mainly been written for those who consider themselves unacquainted with consequentialist ethics. But it has also been written for those who are keen to reject such ethics too hastily, without really knowing what it is (alas, not unusual, I notice). Anyhow, those who have already heard the stories I

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<sup>14</sup> According to Philippa Foot in "Utilitarianism and the Virtues," *Consequentialism and its Critics*, ed. Samuel Scheffler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 224.

am about to tell might omit this somewhat long interlude and move straight ahead to the next chapter.

Now then, one way of challenging the idea of consequentialism has been by confronting it with the necessity, constitution and human need of close personal relations. This is what the debate on consequentialism and friendship is about, which we will finally reach in the fourth chapter (*Consequentialism as a Personal Morality and Friendship*).<sup>15</sup> A lot has been said in this debate, but it is unfortunately not sparkling clear in all respects. The participants have put forward a lot of arguments, but not all of them seem directed towards a jointly accepted and clearly formulated thesis. The disputants do, however, explicitly speak of possible *problems* with *consequentialism* and *friendship* and occasionally refer to each other regarding those alleged problems, but those references are from time to time the only glue that holds the debate together. (Thus, ‘debate’ must here be understood in a rather broad sense.) Several

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<sup>15</sup> Some of the most central participants in the debate are (in a somewhat chronological order), Bernard Williams, “A Critique of Utilitarianism,” in *Utilitarianism: For & Against*, New York: Cambridge University Press (1973), and “Persons, Character and Morality,” reprinted in *Moral Luck*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1981); Michael Stocker, “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories,” *Journal of Philosophy*, 73 (1976): 453-466; Lawrence Blum, *Friendship, Altruism and Morality*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. (1980); Earl Wrinkler, “Utilitarian Idealism and Personal Relations,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 12 (1982): 265-286; Tom Regan, “A Refutation of Utilitarianism,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 13 (1983): 141-159; Peter Railton, “Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality,” in *Consequentialism and Its Critics*, edited by Samuel Scheffler, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1988; first published elsewhere 1984): 93-133; David O. Brink, “Utilitarian Morality and the Personal Point of View,” *Journal of Philosophy*, 83 (1986): 417-438; William H. Wilcox, “Egoists, Consequentialists, and Their Friends,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 16 (1987): 73-84; Paul Gomberg, “Friendship in the Context of a Consequentialist Life,” *Ethics*, 102 (3) (1992), p. 552-554, and “Consequentialism and History,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 19 (1989), pp. 383-483; Frank Jackson, “Decision-theoretic Consequentialism and the Nearest and Dearest Objection,” *Ethics*, 101 (1991): 461-482; Neera Kapur Badhwar, “Why It Is Wrong to Be Always Guided by the Best: Consequentialism and Friendship,” *Ethics*, 101 (1991): pp. 483-504; Dean Cocking and Justing Oakley, “Indirect Consequentialism, Friendship, and the Problem of Alienation,” *Ethics*, 106 (1995): 86-111; Elinor Mason, “Can an Indirect Consequentialist Be a Real Friend?” *Ethics*, 108 (1998): pp. 386-393, and “Do Consequentialists Have One Thought Too Many?” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* (Vol. 2, 1999), pp. 251-252; Troy Jollimore, “Friendship Without Partiality?,” *Ratio*, XIII (2000): pp. 69-82; and Earl Conee, “Friendship and Consequentialism,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 72-2 (2001): pp. 161-179.

The reader will however notice that I do not, in the oncoming discussion, refer to, or even mention, some of these contributions. The reason for this is that some merely comment other writings, without (in my opinion) providing anything new or interesting, while others speak of different kinds of problem related to consequentialism and friendship that I do not find to be of relevance for my discussion here.

contributors do also include additional topics in their writings, and some of these seemingly do not have anything to do with consequentialism and friendship at all. Thus, part of my task in the analysis of this rather wide and not too clear-cut debate has been to dig out and clarify a crucial question about consequentialism and friendship. I have found that the apparently simple question, “Can a consequentialist be a real friend?” is in fact not so simple, but captures a lot. Virtually all contributors have had something to say about the practical possibilities for a consequentialist to pursue friendship, so there are lots of arguments to evaluate. And this is what I will do in chapter four.<sup>16</sup>

Still the question is not very precise. For starters, what does it mean to be a ‘real friend’? As said, this is not very well specified in the debate; but I believe my sketch in chapter two will hopefully depict that adequately. The question can thus be understood as, “Can a consequentialist maintain the perspective necessary for friendship?”

But what does it mean to be a ‘consequentialist’? This is somewhat explained in the debate. What all apparently agree on is that a ‘consequentialist’ basically must be understood as an agent who has adopted a consequentialist ethical theory as (in my terminology) a *personal morality*. Such an agent does not merely believe that the idea of consequentialism is true, that one ought always do what will make the outcome best.<sup>17</sup> The agent is also *motivated* by this conviction in everyday living and doing; she intentionally tries to always do what will make the outcome best for all. The question can thus be understood as, “Can an agent who has adopted a consequentialist ethical theory as a personal morality maintain the perspective necessary for friendship?”

But this will not do either, because the debaters put forward different conceptions with respect to how this general kind of consequentialist should be understood in more detail. I have in the debate identified and extracted four types of consequentialists. These I have labeled ‘approaches’; and there is *The*

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<sup>16</sup> There are at least two other general problems that can be conceived in the context of consequentialism and friendship. First, it can be dealt with as a problem of what consequentialist theories should include in their entailing conceptual index of what is *intrinsically valuable* (“Is friendship intrinsically (or instrumentally) valuable?”) Second it could be handled as a question regarding *ought* (“Ought one be a real friend?”) in context of morality. These issues will not be discussed in this essay. Both questions requires an extensive analysis of moral value, and the second seems also to stand in need of massive empirical examinations. Thus, both these problems are beyond the scope of this book. But this is of course not to say that they are uninteresting.

<sup>17</sup> Thus, the type of consequentialism that will be of interest here is the classic *agent-neutral* version, and there will be no discussion on whether *agent-relative* consequentialism and friendship is possible to reconcile. The reason for this is simply that that latter version does not figure in the debate.

*Naive Approach, The Simple Strategic Approach, The Advanced Strategic Approach* and *The Esoteric Strategic Approach*. Unfortunately, however, the debaters do not always clearly explain which conception they are talking about (some do not seem to know that themselves), thus not all asserted controversies are genuine, but merely verbal. The difference between these approaches lies in how the correlation between *moral reasons* and *motivations* should be understood. This correlation is central to the question of if a consequentialist can be a real friend, because it affects the perspective of the agent, that is, how the agent regards the world and the people in it. An agent who has adopted The Naive Approach is *directly* motivated by her consequentialist reason, and an agent who has adopted any of the other three approaches is in different ways and degrees *indirectly* motivated.<sup>18</sup> All these approaches have been claimed impossible to reconcile with friendship. Well, then, is this true? That is what I will attempt to figure out.

The fourth chapter will begin with an explanation of the notion of ‘personal morality’ and how it is connected to that of ‘approach’. After that, the above mentioned approaches will be examined one at a time. Naturally, every examination will start off with a clarification of what the approach involves. The key issue for each approach is if it somehow distorts the perspective necessary for friendship (outlined in chapter two). If it does, the agent cannot be said to be a real friend. But in this discussion, I will also consider another perspective – that of the agent’s friends. The reason for this is that some have put forward arguments in the debate that suggest that certain consequentialists cannot have friendship because such an agent cannot be regarded as a real friend by others. While the perspective of the consequentialist will be referred to as the *internal* perspective, that of the consequentialist’s friends will be called the *external* perspective. The latter obviously involve another kind of question, namely “Can an agent regard a consequentialist as a real friend?”

So, the simple question “Can a consequentialist be a real friend?” should in this context be understood as being more multifaceted: “Can an agent who has

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<sup>18</sup> The reader will notice that I do not stress the common distinction between *act-consequentialism* and *rule-consequentialism* in my discussion, which might be found confusing, especially since ‘indirect’ forms of consequentialism is often connected with rule-consequentialism. But that distinction is not really necessary to make here, as will be noticed. These approaches could be taken on by both act-consequentialists and rule-consequentialists, and the alleged problems that are said to arise in relation to friendship will be similar for both. However, one could of course come up with various problems specifically related to rule-consequentialism and friendship (discussing, for example, what type of rules a consequentialist could find appropriate to follow, and whether these are possible to reconcile with friendship), but such issues I leave aside, mainly because they are not discussed in the debate in question.

adopted either the Naïve, Simple Strategic, Advanced Strategic or Esoteric Strategic Approach to some consequentialist ethical theory as a personal morality maintain the internal and external perspective necessary for friendship?" I will conclude that all approaches are reconcilable with friendship.

Now, after all this has been said and done, we will quite naturally arrive at the other central question of the debate: has consequentialism been vindicated, or would it have been refuted if no approach had been possible to reconcile with friendship? But we will not do this. Whether "an adequate moral theory must be compatible with the attitudes and practical requirements of true friendship" will not be discussed - because it cannot be on basis of the debate on consequentialism and friendship. Why that is so is the subject of the last chapter.

The ultimate ambition of the debate on consequentialism and friendship has probably not merely been to ponder if a consequentialist can be a real friend or not. It has also been presumed that the inquiry would in the end provide an argument regarding the "adequacy of a moral theory." If it could be shown that consequentialist ethics make friendship impossible (or possible), that would somehow offer a (but certainly not *the*) reason for such ethics being inadequate (or adequate). If this were not the aim of the debate, it would be rather pointless. In the end, all arguments would only boil down to a conclusion unworthy of anything but a shrug. A consequentialist cannot (or can) be a real friend – who cares?

But in the process of analyzing the arguments in the debate, I slowly came to suspect that something was deeply problematical with the whole discussion. I did however not realize what the problem was until I finally got to its core issue. The debate does indeed provide lots of arguments for and against the thesis that a consequentialist cannot be a real friend, but it offers no reasons whatsoever regarding the adequacy of consequentialism. At first, I believed that this failure was merely due to the lack of arguments. But I eventually realized that that was not the problem. I found that even if the final answer to the question "Can a consequentialist be a real friend?" were a clear and acceptable "No!" this would not in any way prove consequentialism false anyhow, even though some tend to believe that. But why was that so? To cut a long story short, I found that the source of this failure lay deep down, beyond the explicit arguments in the debate. It was actually located in the model of moral philosophy that the whole debate was built upon – in other words, in the implicit disciplinary framework which had been employed in the debate. By a critical study of this framework, I found what the failure was: due to its inherent conceptual and methodological assumptions, the framework cannot



conceptualize the special moral concerns friendship give rise to. In consequence, the participants of the debate also failed to acknowledge this, because they had too much employed this very framework for posing and discussing the question (if a consequentialist can be a real friend or not). Therefore, the score was, paradoxically, settled beforehand. No matter how many arguments that were put forward, they would never resolve the core issue. Because a necessary presupposition for doing so is that the morality involved in friendship is in fact recognized.

But this sad conclusion does not make the debate totally pointless. When viewed from another point of view, something else can be learned. Beyond the question if a consequentialist can be a real friend or not, the debate reveals something more controversial: the scope and limits of a certain form of moral philosophy. The debate may offer reasons for reconsidering moral philosophy itself, due to its failure to vindicate or refute consequentialism.

I realize that this may sound peculiar and confusing. But in the fifth and final chapter of this book, I aim to make my suspicions on this matter clearer. The reader should be prepared for a rather speculative investigation, though. But hopefully, what I say may strike a chord in those who have had the same kind of suspicions. The title of the fifth chapter is *Feminist Critique and The Debate Revisited*, and what 'feminism' has to do with all this will soon be explained. (Unfortunately however, almost everything that is given the label 'feminist' is too often recognized as being something that is about and of relevance to women only. I believe this is a serious mistake. We can all learn from this kind of criticism, regardless of gender.)

The examination will proceed as follows. I will open chapter five with a general explanation as to what a disciplinary framework is, how it operates, and why it is necessary. A framework determines what questions are of interest, how they are to be understood, and how they are to be examined and discussed. A framework is necessary for any field of study, simply because without a framework, there would be no field of study at all! After that, I will sketch some distinguishing features of the framework of moral philosophy that I believe has been employed in the debate, and in fact dominates the so-called contemporary Anglo-American tradition. I shall also explain how consequentialist ethics is deeply tied to this framework. The grandfathers of Utilitarianism did not only come up with moral theories; in the process, they also set a new standard of how to understand moral problems (conceptually) and do moral philosophy (methodologically).

However, critical voices have been raised against this framework. Contemporary feminists have claimed that this 'traditional' form of moral

philosophy is not able to properly account for all types of moral concerns. I will review three interrelated themes of such criticism.<sup>19</sup> The first critique (*The Neglect of the Private Sphere*) aims to illuminate why and how this framework is unable to grasp the distinctive moral concerns that arise in a particular domain of human experiences, namely the ‘private sphere’. The reason for this is that the framework has been developed from and for another point of view, that of the ‘public sphere’. The second critique (*Epistemic Discrimination*) argues that the framework defines what is to count as moral knowledge in a fashion that is too narrow. Consequently, it ignores other types of moral knowledge, and how it is acquired. The final critique (*Distortion of Concrete Problems*) claims that applying the framework to certain moral concerns distort these concerns beyond recognition, and that this shows that the framework is incomplete and flawed.

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<sup>19</sup> The contemporary feminist critique of moral philosophy is pretty diverse. But the following writings have been my main sources for demarcating and compiling this critique: Margaret Urban Walker, *Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics*, New York: Routledge (1998) (especially part one), and “Picking Up Pieces: Lives, Stories, and Integrity,” in *Feminists Rethink the Self*, ed. Diana T. Meyers, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press (1997); Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1982), and “Moral Orientation and Moral Development”, in Eva Kittay and Diana Meyers (eds.), *Women and Moral Theory*, Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield (1987); Seyla Benhabib, “The Generalized and Concrete Other,” in Kittay-Meyers (1987); Virginia Held, *Feminist Morality*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1993), and “Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1990); Nel Noddings, *Caring: An Investigation in Gender-Sensitive Ethics*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press (1984); Vrinda Dalmiya and Linda Alcoff, “Are ‘Old Wives Tales’ Justified?” in Linda Alcoff and Elisabeth Potter (eds.), *Feminist Epistemologies*, New York: Routledge (1993); Eve Cole and Susan Coultrap-McQuin (eds.), *Explorations in Feminist Ethics: Theory and Practice*, Indiana University Press (1992); Lawrence Kohlberg, *Collected Papers on Moral Development and Moral Education*, Harvard Moral Education Research Foundation (1971), and “Stage and Sequence: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Socialization”, in D.A. Gosling (ed.), *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research*, Chicago: Rand McNally (1969); Alison Jaggar, “Feminist Ethics: Projects, Problems, Prospects,” in Claudia Card (ed.), *Feminist Ethics*, Lawrence: University of Kansas Press (1991); Susan Hekman, *Moral Voices Moral Selves*, Cambridge: Polity Press (1995); Ulla M. Holm, *Modrande och praxis: en feministfilosofisk undersökning* (“Mothering and Praxis: A Feminist Philosophical Analysis”), Göteborg: Daidalos (1993), and “Community, Autonomy or Both? – Feminist Ethics Between Contextualism and Universalism”, in Lilli Alanen, Sara Heinämaa and Thomas Wallgren (eds.), *Commonality and Particularity in Ethics*, London: MacMillan (1997); Anette Baier, “Trust and Anti-Trust”, *Ethics*, 96 (1986); Peta Bowden, *Caring: An Investigation in Gender-Sensitive Ethics*, London: Routledge (1997); Cheshire Calhoun, “Justice, Care and Gender Bias”, *Journal of Philosophy*, No. 9 (1988); Claudia Card, “Against Marriage and Motherhood”, *Hypatia*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1996).

I believe these fields of feminist criticism will help us better grasp the inadequately discussed (and therefore also poorly understood) morality involved in friendship, and why this morality cannot be taken fully seriously by the framework in question. This will then be set in relation to the debate on consequentialism and friendship. I will argue that it has been pursued too much under the influence of this framework; and since it cannot take the morality in friendship seriously, the debaters do not take that seriously either. But since I believe a necessary premise for being able to provide arguments for consequentialism being true or false is that such morality is in fact taken seriously, the debate can go on forever without getting anywhere. No matter how many valid and relevant arguments are presented for the question, can a consequentialist can be a real friend, this body of arguments will never be of relevance for this core issue.

Thus, the ultimate ambition of the debate cannot ever be reached.<sup>20</sup> The “overall human importance of friendship” might certainly make “it a good test of adequacy of a moral theory,” but not as the debate has been pursued. The debaters have not noticed this failure because they have not turned their attention to the framework they have employed. This is in a sense understandable, because frameworks are hard to get a grip of. But this has the effect that many who are critical of consequentialism in fact accept more of such ethics than they realize. They accept through usage a framework that stems from such ethics, and this I sense is one explanation why “consequentialism tend to haunt” even those “who do not believe in it.”

If I am right, we can also learn something else from the debate other than was intended. We see the scope and limits of traditional moral philosophy. This could give us a reason for reconsidering the framework it is built upon. Because we may want a framework in which the question “Can a consequentialist be a real friend?” can be discussed with more rewarding results. But this requires a framework that does not only take consequentialism seriously, but also the morality in friendship. But what such an alternative framework would look like, I do not know. Therefore, I will not attempt to sketch the preliminaries of a new framework, I will only point out that it might be necessary.

To conclude this fairly long introduction, I want to stress that my ambition with this book is not to close the case on consequentialism and friendship. Few

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<sup>20</sup> One can sure wonder why I bothered to write and include the fourth chapter at all, if I have come to this somewhat self-destructive finale. The short answer to that is that this has been a research project, which took off in the debate on consequentialism and friendship, but ended up somewhere else than I had expected on the way through it.

philosophical works provide the final word on a given matter. Indeed, many proclaim that they are the final word, but such declarations are more often merely a part of the philosopher's personal rhetoric than factual statements. The reader will soon discover that I raise more questions than I answer and much is being left open. Some may find this frustrating. But with a bit of luck, the road to an open end includes rewarding clarifications that make it easier to continue beyond that end. Behind the simple question "Can a consequentialist be a real friend?" is a perplexing maze of problems easy to get lost in. This essay is but one suggested way through the beginning of this maze. Every topic can be investigated in greater depth, or in a different way, than I have done. But depth is always paid with the price of scope. This essay aims for scope, but hopefully not to the extent that it is so dreadfully shallow that it says nothing at all. For one thing, although my discussion (especially in the fourth chapter) is primarily about consequentialism and friendship, it is possible that it could be found useful and relevant in other similar contexts too, i.e., philosophical discussions that deal with alleged problems that appear when some motivational structure necessary for pursuing some significant project in life are said to clash with the agent's moral convictions.

But how should this book be classified? I say it is a book in moral philosophy. But some might object and say that it is not, because it does not offer any answer to the question, "What ought to be done?" Well, if that is required of a book in moral philosophy, then this is not a book in moral philosophy. It is then more a book *about* more philosophy. One could very well change conception on how to comprehend moral issues from this essay, and perhaps even draw certain normative conclusions regarding actual-practical morality, but the connection between those steps are far from apparent. Personally, I see no such connection.

## 2

# Friendship

To be able to discuss whether a consequentialist can be a real friend or not, we must obviously grasp what it means to be a ‘real friend’. Therefore, I shall in this chapter put forward a brief sketch of friendship by exploring some distinguishing components that characterize the perspective of the agents involved in such a relationship.<sup>21</sup> This sketch will in the oncoming investigation serve as an account of what is meant by the latter part of the question, “Can a consequentialist be a *real friend*?” At the end of this chapter, I shall also provide some reasons why one could take friendship to be, or not to be, valuable in context of a good life.

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION: ACTIONS AND PERSPECTIVE

What it means to be a ‘friend’ is certainly not an easy question. In our daily life, however, most of us do not often contemplate that question – because we need not. We usually have a fair idea of who our friends are and who are not.

But if we for some reason have to confront the issue, I think we commonly try to distinguish a ‘friend’ by means of a suitable list of the various actions which are appropriate and inappropriate to perform if one aspires to be such a person, like ‘friends help each other’, ‘friends are kind to each other’, ‘friends do not let each other down’, ‘friends do not exploit each other’, and so on. Although such a list serves a function in everyday discussions when trying to figure out who is a friend or not, it clearly does not successfully isolate the distinguishing features

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<sup>21</sup> A note of warning: you may not want to read this chapter. Anyone who has flipped to this chapter in the belief that it may be helpful for becoming a better friend will be disappointed, as the sketch I am about to outline is not a practical guide to friendship. I do not even recommend reading it if one for some reason craves such information. I suspect there lurks a danger in contemplating the structure and value of friendship. The hazard is that one’s ability to pursue friendship may vanish. Alike the ‘paradox of hedonism’ (which will be discussed in the next chapter), the pragmatist paradox that maintains that happiness is not attained if one consciously tries to become happy, friendship may not be attained if one consciously tries to be a real friend using the concepts outlined below.

of a ‘friend’ in any deeper sense. Because no matter how long we make the list, we can always imagine persons whom could equally well perform the same actions, yet not be our friends.

A more accurate and fundamental account of the concept is rather to be found in something prior to actions. To identify a friend, we should instead shift focus and consider that which is conceptually prior to actions, i.e., a person’s reasons, motives, intentions and attitudes. What distinguishes friendship from other kind of relations is essentially not a matter of *what* friends typically do, but rather *how* and *why* the involved agents perform certain actions. In other words, a friend is first and foremost characterized by holding a distinctive *perspective* on the other person and their relation. I shall here outline and explain three components I consider utmost central to this perspective: *non-instrumentality*, *love* and *valuing the person*. A ‘real friend’ will be thus be an agent who holds a perspective which embraces these components, and ‘friendship’ will be the case if the object of the perspective, the other person, also holds such a perspective toward the agent. This perspective typically gives rise to, and prevents, certain actions; still, however, it would be futile to try to distinguish and demarcate exactly which actions.

However, we are obviously not equipped with a sensory apparatus that makes us able to shift focus and perceive what perspective another agent holds. But we usually take the actions, including the actions of speech, as satisfying indications of what is the case on this matter, and I believe we are often quite right; what perspective an agent holds is to a large extent revealed through her actions. We can never be totally sure, of course, but we have no other alternative.

## 2.2 COMPONENTS OF THE PERSPECTIVE

### 2.2.1 Prologue: Dale Carnegie

Many years ago, the book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* was published.<sup>22</sup> Author Dale Carnegie promised the reader on the very first page of the book that it would “enable you to make friends quickly and easily,” and as a result “increase your influence, your prestige, your ability to get things done” and “help you handle complaints, avoid arguments, keep your human contacts smooth and pleasant,” not to mention “increase your popularity.” As the title revealed, the key to success in life was evidently to win *friends*. The book

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<sup>22</sup> Dale Carnegie, New York: Simon and Schuster (1936); “the most popular work of non-fiction of our time.”

stressed that friends (contrary to brief acquaintances) have a close and devoted relation, which makes them more encouraged to do things for each other. According to the author, winning friends is a practical talent that anyone can become skilled at with a little bit of training. One of many suggestions was to appear interested in the persons you would like to be your friends (whether it were your supervisor, neighbour or spouse) by encouraging them to talk about themselves, their work and leisure pursuits; you should smile a lot in their company while remembering that "a man's name is to him the sweetest and most important sound in the English language,"<sup>23</sup> and, most importantly, make them feel valuable in your company. By following such simple rules of thumb, friends will be won, people will be influenced, and one's career and marriage will be secured. Should you experience weakness of will in the fatiguing process of making friends, encourage yourself by saying "to yourself over and over: 'My popularity, my happiness, and my income depend to no small extent upon my skill in dealing with people.'"<sup>24</sup>

The various techniques recommended by Carnegie could work out just fine in social interactions. Anyone making other people feel valuable in his or her company will probably be much appreciated and as a result be more able to acquire whatever she wants in life by help of others. Most likely, you have encountered such persons in many kinds of situations. Unless they are trying to exploit you for purposes you do not endorse, their company is usually a delight. Would it be inappropriate to label the relationship we may have with such a person *friendship*? Certainly not, if we take the term to simply signify 'any sort of friendly relationship' (which is not uncommon in ordinary use of the term). To better conduct and improve such relations, Carnegie's methods might be helpful.

But the type of relationship that will be scrutinized here is not simply 'any sort of friendly relationship' but a special one that sometimes, in lack of better terminology, is referred to as 'real', 'deep' or 'true' friendship. I believe most people intuitively sense that there is a major difference between real friendship and the kind of friendship Carnegie speaks about. Nevertheless, it is not all that easy to put a finger on what the difference really is. The former is somehow shallower, but shallow friendship resembles real friendship in many respects – at least on the surface. Going deeper, however, one will find that there are things in the perspective of a shallow friendship that should not be there and things that are not there but should be. But what are these things? I shall here try to point out some of them. But my ambitions are quite modest, due to the nature

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 55

of the subject matter in question. It cannot be denied that friendship *is* a complex matter, and even the few components I shall outline here are hard, if not impossible, to define precisely, without ending up in unrewarding perplexity. Therefore, I shall refrain from getting involved in too much detail, but to a large extent rely on examples related to the type of relation Dale Carnegie speaks about and thereby convey a sense of what is involved in these components.

### 2.2.2 *Non-Instrumentality*

Let us say that you are an undergraduate student who has read *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, and find that winning the friendship of your professor could be to your advantage. You start to smile a lot in his or her company and encourage your professor to talk about his or her personal research projects in and after class. Your professor finds your interest and clever remarks inspiring, and you begin to spend more and more time together. At the end of the semester, you are happy to find that both your grades and the professor's research have improved. You consider the relation with your professor to be over and you move ahead with your career elsewhere. Was this real friendship? I do not think you would say so. But why?

There are of course many possible reasons why this relationship was not friendship. But a fundamental aspect could be captured by means of a rough distinction between *instrumental* and *non-instrumental* relations. Your relation with your professor was typically of the former kind, while friendships are characteristically of the latter. These types of relations are pursued out of essentially different perspectives.

Instrumental relations have a clear purpose for the involved agents. Such a relation is conceived as primarily being means to some particular end; it is a crucial tool in a quest for obtaining some desired outcome. The agents in such a relationship are commonly fully aware of this, and if asked why they are involved in the relation, they refer to its specific purpose ("I spend a lot of time with my professor, so that my dissertation will be completed"). Instrumental relations may be short-lived or long-lived; it all depends on the nature of the specific purpose for which it exists. But when the involved parts have acquired their expected gains and expect nothing more, the relationship ceases to be rather quickly – the 'tool' has served its purpose, and is no longer needed.<sup>25</sup> In

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<sup>25</sup> C.f. Aristotle's discussion regarding two types of instrumental relations, "for utility" and "for amusement," and how these are "easily dissolved": "Now those who love each other for their utility do not love each other for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other. So too with those who love for the sake of pleasure; it is not for their character that men



daily life, instrumental relations are common and necessary. Without them, we would not be able to get around very well. We go to see a doctor for the sake of health, listen to a teacher for the sake of education, visit a car salesman for the sake of purchasing a vehicle and so on.

Non-instrumental relations, on the other hand, are by the involved agents not conceived as being means to an end. Contrary to instrumental relations, one cannot simply put forward any straightforward purpose with a non-instrumental relation at all. While those who are involved in an instrumental relationship are aware of its purpose and refer to that purpose for the reason why they are involved in it, those who are involved in a non-instrumental relation might not have contemplated such issues at all. The relationship ‘just is’, and those involved need not have considered why that is so to any larger extent. This is not to say that we cannot provide any reasons for why the relationship came about in the first place. All relationships do of course develop because of some reason (simply because all effects must have a cause), but not necessarily entailing a distinctive purpose. It must, however, be understood that ‘purpose’ is here meant in the *subjective* sense, i.e., what the involved agents bears in mind. We can from other points of view provide various *objective* purposes for non-instrumental relations. A religious believer could for example claim the purpose of friendship is to make us more competent in the art of loving mankind, a biologist could claim it is to secure our individual survival, a psychologist could claim the purpose is to obtain personal happiness, and so on. If such purposes also serve as subjective purposes for a relationship, then it is of course conceived as being instrumental; but they need not, even if they are objectively true.

Friendship is a typical example of a non-instrumental relation. As Janet R. Reohr writes, it is a relationship which “unlike most other relations... has no ultimate conclusion, no end result or product.” Certain “relations such as business relation exist for the purpose of production; teacher/student relation primarily exists to increase the learning and growth of the child; the therapist/client relation, policeman/citizen relation have specified purposes for existence.” But friendship “is not product-oriented; it is not concerned with

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love ready-witted people, but because they find them pleasant... And thus these friendships are only incidental; for it is not as being the man he is that the loved person is loved, but as providing some good or pleasure. Such friendships, then, are easily dissolved, if the parties do not remain like themselves; for if the one party is no longer pleasant or useful the other ceases to love him. (...) Thus when the motive of the friendship is done away, the friendship is dissolved, inasmuch as it existed only for the ends in question.” (*Nicomachean Ethics (NE)*, book VIII, 1156a10-25.)

outcomes.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, if we seriously ask ourselves what we intend to achieve from a friendship, we should find it hard to provide any obvious answer, as friendship is characteristically thought of as having no other end but itself.

Although the difference between instrumental and non-instrumental relationships is a rough distinction, it certainly has something going for it. It is hard to think of friendship as being primarily a mere instrument without violating deeply rooted intuitions. Someone who claims to be a real friend, yet is *primarily* focused on gaining something out of the relationship is usually considered to not be a friend at all, or, in some cases, a ‘bad friend’. Because if an outcome is what primarily matters, then *the other person* does not count primarily, and a distinctive feature of friendship is that the involved agents regard each other as the most valuable aspect of the relation. To see how and why this is so, one must however take into account the other two components of the perspective (“love” and “valuing the person”) that we will come to.

However, a common misunderstanding regarding this component should be eliminated: non-instrumentality does not entail lack of awareness regarding outcomes. The agents involved in a non-instrumental relationship can be fully aware of the beneficial results that their relationship give rise to, without for that sake viewing it as being instrumental. Friends are usually quite conscious of the positive upshots of their relation (whether it be happiness, self-development, a better tomorrow, and so on). To believe that such awareness automatically implies that the agent’s view their relation as instrumental is simply to mistake the *results* of a relation with its (subjective) *purpose*. For example, to claim, “Well, if I gain a lot a pleasure out of spending time with you, then the purpose why I spend time with you is to gain pleasure,” is obviously to jump too hastily to conclusions.

The relationship with your professor bears all the distinguishing characteristics of a typical instrumental relationship. You entered it because you wanted something, and it ended the moment you got what you wanted. Both you and your professor were probably very well aware of the simple purpose of your relation; you wanted better grades, he or she wanted to improve her research, and in the end, you both got what you wanted. So, in a sense, the relation was a success; and one possible reason why it turned out so could be the skill you obtained by following Dale Carnegie’s advice. Nonetheless, it was not real friendship, and saying that it were would be contra-intuitive, unless, of course, the notion merely signified ‘any kind of friendly relation’.

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<sup>26</sup> Janet R. Reohr, *Friendship: An Exploration of Structure and Process*, New York: Garland Publishing Inc. (1991), p. 21.

Although non-instrumentality is a necessary component of the perspective required for being a real friend, it is not a sufficient component. We can easily come up with relationships that are non-instrumental, yet not friendship. Typical examples could be those relations we have with people we refer to as being merely ‘acquaintances’ (for instance, contrary to the popular saying, your friends are not necessarily my friends). We need more to this perspective, not only for making the depiction of friendship more complete, but also for better understanding this component.

### 2.2.3 Love

Let us say that you work at a factory, and you have carefully studied *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. One day, during lunch, a person whom you have never seen before steps into the dining hall and takes the seat next to you. You start to converse, and almost immediately you find the person to be very nice; she has a wonderful way of making you feel valuable in his or her company. You figure that you would like to ‘win’ this person as a friend, but you do not actually deliberate much on why. The only reason you would be able to think of, if someone had demanded of you to provide one, would be that you simply find her nice. So, during your conversation, you start to smile and encourage this person to talk about her leisure pursuits, family members, and so on. You do find this part of your conversation quite dull, however, and listen with just one ear, but you do not let it show. You take your conversation to be a necessary evil for winning her as a friend. After all, Dale has said that this is the way it is to be done. Now then, it seems like you are not (at least not obviously) engaged in a purely instrumental relationship, since you are not especially concerned with what you might benefit from it. So, is this real friendship? I do not think you would say so. But why?

There cannot be friendship unless there is an emotional bond between the individuals involved in such a relation. It may be superfluous to mention that this bond has to be heartfelt, as it is obvious that you cannot be friends with those you dislike or are indifferent to. But this is not to say that any kind of positive feeling towards another person will do for friendship. The emotional bond has to be strong; merely ‘liking’ someone is not enough. It is indeed a danger in labelling emotions, but in spite of this I maintain that real friend *loves* each other.<sup>27</sup> If there is no love in the perspective, there cannot be friendship.

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<sup>27</sup> The notion of ‘love’ can be interpreted in many ways, and I believe some may find it inappropriate in the context of friendship. But there are no better concepts available; the current vocabulary of emotions is unfortunately pretty thin. However, if the notion for some reason

Carnegie does not demand that you love the people you would like to “win” as friends. This is of course understandable. Because you cannot simply train yourself to start loving other people the moment you meet them.

But what does it mean to love, in contrast to merely like, someone? When is love the case, and when is it not? It would of course be an impossible task to try to describe how love *feels*. Anyone who has ever loved someone knows how it feels, but I hardly believe anyone thinks such a feeling can be perfectly dressed in words.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, love is a compound and multifaceted emotion. It comes in different forms and degrees (I hardly believe anyone think they love their spouse in the same way as they love their friends), and entails a wide range of intricate attitudes and feelings: kindness, care, compassion, sympathy, and so on (the list is long).<sup>29</sup> It may therefore seem impossible to characterise love. That, however, would be quite unsatisfying. Even though love hardly can be perfectly characterised, we can at least outline a few features of such an emotional attachment, to be able to distinguish it from weaker (albeit positive) bonds.

To begin, when we love someone we take a *genuine* interest in the weal and woe of that person. We wish that person to be well and steer clear of unnecessary distress. We are happy *with* them, and we suffer *with* them. This interest is however not merely a wish. It also entails a motivation to act; we want to actively make our beloved ones happy, and relieve them of suffering.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, if we are indifferent to someone, we do not take any such interest in that person’s wellbeing at all. And if we truly hate someone, we may take an interest, but rather in the woe of that person and may be motivated to act so that that person becomes miserable. When we merely like someone, we do take an interest in the weal and woe of the other person, but we are not equally strongly motivated to act on their behalf.

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bothers you (maybe you understand love as involving some romantic and sexual attraction), feel free to exchange it with ‘like someone *very* much’ instead.

<sup>28</sup> Love poets try, but I personally think that they never hit the bull’s eye. However, they may occasionally come close: “The night has a thousand eyes,/And the day but one;/Yet the light of the bright world dies/With the dying sun./The mind has a thousand eyes,/And the heart but one;/Yet the light of a whole world dies,/When love is done.” (*Night*, Francis William Bourdillon)

<sup>29</sup> C.f. Lawrence Blum’s comprehensive discussion on “altruistic emotions” in *Friendship, Altruism and Morality*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. (1980).

<sup>30</sup> C.f. Aristotle’s remarks on goodwill: “so too it is not possible for people to be friends if they have not come to feel goodwill for each other, but those who [merely] feel goodwill are not for all that friends; for they only *wish* well to those for whom they feel goodwill, and would not do anything with them or take trouble for them.” (*NE*, book IX, 1167a5-10.)

Contrary to weaker emotions, love is a very secure and stable emotion. It does not come and go with the swing of mere moods.<sup>31</sup> Love may under certain circumstances decline, but it does not disappear easily. When we love someone, we are always genuinely interested in that person's weal and woe, though we may of course occasionally be slightly less motivated to act on their behalf. Weaker emotional bonds do oscillate depending on mood, and occasionally even disappear. We may like someone one day, but the next day we are indifferent to her (maybe for such a simple reason as that it is raining, and we are having 'a bad day').

Therefore, the mutual recognition of love gives rise to a strong *trust* between friends. We do not expect those who love us to let us down. If we are let down by someone whom we do not believe really loves us (perhaps we have put trust in each other by means of some verbal agreement or written contract), it is, from the emotional point of view, mostly annoying. However, being let down by someone whom we love and believed loved us too is a disaster, no matter if any eventual practical problems that follow from such a conduct may be inconsequential.<sup>32</sup> But how much trust we can, or should, put in our friends of course depends on the nature of the agents involved in the relationship, and the external circumstances surrounding it. (Must friends, as *friends*, always trust each other completely? This is an interesting question, but I shall not discuss it now, but postpone it to the fourth chapter, when investigating some alleged problems regarding friendship and the 'Advanced Strategic Approach'.) Furthermore, the concept of *partiality* (which some find to be an highly important element of friendship) is tightly connected to this aspect. The mutual recognition of love, which gives rise to a strong trust, also seems to entail an expectation that our friends should be partial to us; that is, not only stand by us, but also favour and side up with us, in various situations – and vice-versa. (But must friends, as *friends*, actually be partial? I shall return to this issue too in the fourth chapter, when discussing the 'Simple Strategic Approach'.)

An acknowledged aspect of love is that it is and can only be directed towards a fairly limited number of persons.<sup>33</sup> How many we can truly love is of course impossible to answer, but it is at least much less than the number of people we can like. It seems popular to assert that we can only love one person at most, but this seems like a romantic exaggeration that, when inspected more closely, yields strange implications. If it were true that we can only love one person,

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<sup>31</sup> C.f. Blum (1980), p. 18

<sup>32</sup> See Laurence Thomas, "Friendship," *Synthese*, 72 (1987), pp. 223-227, on this matter.

<sup>33</sup> C.f. Aristotle's argument on "the limit to the number of friends," *NE*, book IX, part 10.

then, for example, parents with several children would just be able to love one of them, or none, if they love each other.

Though these few remarks certainly do not entirely capture what love is, they at least provide some features; they are better than nothing. Whatever emotional bond we may have with someone, if it does not live up to the features outlined here, we can say that it is not love. If that is so, our relationship with that person cannot be said to be friendship. But although love is an important part of friendship, it is not enough. We can conceive relationships that involve love, without for that sake being friendship; and we can also conceive relations that are non-instrumental, and involve love, but are not friendships (I shall provide some examples later on). We need more; especially, we need to capture the importance of the object of love, the friend herself – the other person.

#### *2.2.4 Valuing the Person*

Let us say that you by now have learned *How to Win Friends and Influence People* verbatim. You have a large circle of superficial acquaintances, your career is doing great, but you just have not been able to find a real friend. (You know you have not, because you have read this chapter.) You find your situation frustrating, and blame Dale Carnegie for having made you think that real friendship could be obtained through a cheap pocket book. In desperation, you do what you consider to be the most sensible thing to do in your situation: you burn Dale Carnegie's book, and join a local sect called *The Worshippers of Real Friendship*. In the beginning, you are suspicious. There are only two other members. They welcome you with open arms. You wonder what they may want from you. But you discover that they sincerely do not really want anything; there is no member fee, and no other obvious obligations. But what about deep affection? After spending some time with the other members, you find that that is the case. The other members truly care for your weal and woe. You think, "Great! Real friends! At last!" But then you begin to doubt. You ask, "Who may be a member of this sect?" They reply, "Anybody! Everyone is welcome! We do not care who you are, what you do, as long as you worship!" In a rage, you leave the sect immediately. You say, "This was not real friendship!" But why?

Let us for the sake of the argument assume that the other members of the sect sincerely view their relationship with you as a non-instrumental relation and that they feel and exhibit love towards you. Still, however, it is not real friendship. The members of the sect do not know *you* in any deeper sense, and even if they did, that does not seem to matter to them. They clearly state that you could be *anybody*; in other words, they do not value you for whom you are.

Real friends, on the other hand, do know each other very well, and they value each other for being the persons they are. ‘Valuing the person’ is a distinguishing characteristic of the perspective involved in friendship, and understanding this component is of utmost importance, as it will make the picture more complete; missing pieces of the puzzle will fall into place.

To value something is to put importance and worth on that thing, and real friends value each other for whom they *are*. As Neera Kapur Badhwar puts it – when we define a thing, we engage in “a process of selecting the qualities we regard as essential: the qualities we think are ontologically fundamental in, and best explain, the constitution and behaviour of the thing defined.”<sup>34</sup> When the thing we define is a person, which qualities should we take to be “ontologically fundamental in” and “best explain the constitution and behaviour of” a person, so that our definition satisfactorily describes who someone *is*? Indeed, what we essentially *are* is an enduring and complicated philosophical issue. Depending on for what reason, and in which context, we examine the question we can come up with different answers. However, we need not make it exaggeratedly complicated here; we certainly need not tackle the philosophical mystery ‘what is a person?’ In context of friendship, I believe it is sufficient to assert that ‘the thing’ a friend value is the complex bundle of fundamental qualities which essentially characterize the persona of the other agent. Thus, we need only be concerned with “that constellation of fundamental, empirical, mental qualities – moral, psychological, aesthetic, intellectual – that constitutes an individual’s self or personality, and not with any Metaphysically Changeless and Simple Essence.”<sup>35</sup>

It is of course impossible to provide some kind of list of which, and how many, qualities we take into account when defining a person. Although “moral, psychological, aesthetic, intellectual” qualities should capture a lot, they are certainly not enough. Furthermore, we hardly take a person to merely be a catalogue of particular qualities on separate pages, rather, we think of a person as being a totality – a complex set of various qualities which, to a large extent, must be considered in combination in order to portray the person truthfully. What we take into account when defining a person are not simply those-and-

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<sup>34</sup> Neera Kapur Badhwar, “Friends as Ends in Themselves,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 48 (1987), p. 17. Although I quote Badhwar on this matter, her discussion regarding ‘valuing a person’ is quite dissimilar from mine. For one thing, Badhwar do not make a distinction between ‘valuing a person’ and ‘loving a person’, and her discussion mainly concerns what type of love that should be considered for understanding the idea that friends are ‘irreplaceable’ (a feature I also shall discuss, but in a different way).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

those qualities seen apart, but rather those-and-those qualities in their complex combination. Even ostensible ‘shallow’ qualities of a person (an individual’s way of eating or walking for instance) could be considered fundamental when seen in context of other qualities (as your way of eating and walking could be due to some moral or religious belief).

When we value a person, we put importance and worth on those fundamental qualities which define the person, in their complex combination. But like it is hard to explain what it means ‘to love’ (and that seems to be one reason why love poetry is so popular), it is also hard to explain what it means ‘to value a person’. One has to rely on an intuitive grasp of the concept here, but I do not take that to be exceptionally problematic – I hardly believe it is an alien or incomprehensible intuition, although it might be hard to dress in words. However, something should be said on this matter, and I believe some clarity can be provided by comparing the nature of this component with the ‘valuing’ involved in relation to works of art (and, as with the concept of ‘person’, we need not here tackle the enduring philosophical mystery ‘what is a work of art?’) By doing so, I not only hope it will become somewhat more understandable what it could mean to value a person, but also how this component is necessary for making sense of such things as the common idea that friends are ‘irreplaceable’, how friendships might come to an end, and how friendship differs from other types of close personal relations. This will however be quite a rough analogy, but it will have to do.

Works of art are complex matters, and maybe they can even be said to be as complex as persons, when taking into account their creation, constitution, history, and (in certain cases) development. When a work of art is valued, we do not merely see to certain details taken apart (brush strokes, composition, material, function, and so on), but to many qualities in their complex combination. This does not only include qualities inherent in the work, but also qualities beyond it. For example, although the history of the work of art is certainly not inherent in the work itself, it is nevertheless an important part of it. Like a person, a work of art can be found valuable although it does not arouse any strong feelings of affection; i.e., one can find a work valuable, put importance and worth on it, even if one does not ‘love’ the work. This is not to say that such feelings are superfluous or rare (I do not believe it is unusual that a positive valuation of a work of art entails a strong affection); it is merely to say that such feelings are not necessary in order to value a work of art for what it is.

Involved in the evaluation of many works of art is also the awareness that the work is unique; that there is only one work of this kind, with a specific history,



created at a certain point of time, in a certain way, by a certain author, for a certain reason, and so on. This insight often yield the opinion that many works of art are *irreplaceable*; if a work is irreversibly altered or destroyed, something precious is forever lost. In a similar fashion, the same goes for persons. Persons are unique, and cannot be replaced if lost. Similarly, it is commonly held that *friends* are irreplaceable, but this is more than just a different way of stating that persons are irreplaceable; it is more to say that there is something special with one's friends that makes them irreplaceable *qua* being friends. Although a friend in a trivial sense is irreplaceable (because a friend is obviously a unique person), the idea seems rather to be that this irreplaceability comes around in context of that one actually has a close relationship with this person, on basis that this person is a special person. Had it been a different relationship, for example some instrumental relationship, the other person would of course be irreplaceable *qua* person, but not in context of one's actual relation with that individual – because it is possible that someone else could equally well fulfil whatever is supposed to be gained from the relationship. Although all works of art are also irreplaceable in a trivial sense, one need not for that sake experience that something precious has been lost whenever a work of art is destroyed, because maybe one did not actually value that work, or one had no 'relationship' to it at all; literally speaking, one does not 'see' what is lost.

But to find a friend irreplaceable does not necessitate that one must value her regardless or forever. Persons can change and we might not like certain changes. It is not uncommon to lose friends because one 'grow apart' from each other, or because one find out things about friends one did not know (their secret political views, for instance), or because they die (and then there is nothing left to value except for memories), or in some other way change (for example, they might go through a radical change in personality after an accident). This is the way it is, and it is certainly not controversial, unless one holds some overly romantic conception of friendship.<sup>36</sup> In the same way, a work of art might be altered or destroyed, or we come to know about certain aspects about it that we did not know before (for example, we might initially think that the EUR is majestic and beautiful, until we get to know the fascistic reasons for which it was created), and then we might stop valuing it, and miss what we lost, or took it to be.

But this is of course not to say that all changes are for the worse (if anyone thought that). It would be utmost strange to claim that what we value is some

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<sup>36</sup> But this is not to say that we might not *love* someone who has changed (i.e. that they automatically become totally indifferent to us because they have changed); but if we no longer value that individual for the person she is, she is not our friend anymore.

‘static’ conception, and the moment this conception changes, we stop valuing it. If that was so, there would not be any friendships, because persons are clearly not static entities, they do change over time. And friendships can clearly be sustained, and even enhanced, because friends ‘grow together’.

Obviously, to be able to value someone for who she *is*, we must *know* that person well. Being merely acquainted with someone is not enough. But can we ever come to know another person to that extent that we can say that we know the *person*? Indeed, other people are mysteries, as we are not transparent. It would however be strange to claim that we can never know another person. We probably cannot know a person in all respects, but we can certainly know more or less. In fact, in some respects, we can probably know more about other persons than we know about ourselves.<sup>37</sup> We come to know persons by being with them, talking with them, listening to what they say, and observing what they do. We gain a picture of the other person and whether this is *the* true picture or not we cannot be *fully* certain.

But we do believe that we can know other people. One argument for this is that we can somewhat successfully predict their behavior on basis of what we know. We know what they will think about certain issues, and how they will act in certain circumstances. If we were constantly surprised, we certainly would have a reason to believe that we are wrong, and that we cannot know anyone at all. But we are not so constantly surprised (although we certainly may be occasionally surprised; to say that we know people well is not to say that we know them fully). This argument is of course dependent upon the idea that the fundamental qualities of a person manifest themselves by the behaviour of that person. That might not be correct, but it is all we have. Furthermore, someone could put up a façade to hide her innermost personality, and intentionally behave in a way she thinks would make others believe she is a kind of person she is well aware that she is not. Others would then be mistaken about who this

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<sup>37</sup> For instance, we might not successfully define ourselves. “In defining ourselves we may pick out as fundamental only the values and abilities we merely endorse, leaving out entirely those we act upon. Then our self-definition shows that we have a false self-image. Nevertheless, since this very selection expresses a higher-order value judgement (“*This* is what I most value, and want to be valued for [and to emulate]”), our self-definition necessarily constitutes and reveals something of our value-scheme and standards, hence of our identity. Or it can go the other way: we may pick out as fundamental in ourselves only the values and abilities which explain our actual goals and actions, leaving out entirely the ideals and aspirations we do not act upon, either because we are unable to articulate them accurately or because we disavow them and are, to that extent, living in bad faith. Nevertheless, insofar our self-definition is a true statement of the values we actually live by, it necessarily reveals something of our value-scheme and standards, hence of our identity.” (Badhwar (1987), p. 17.)

person is. But hopefully, not all of us act in such a way. And more than often, such people are quickly revealed, because few pretenders have the memory required to be successful liars for a long period of time.<sup>38</sup>

The problem with *The Worshippers of Real Friendship* was that they did not know you, and even if they did, it seems that it did not matter to them. Thus, you were not valued for who you are. Rather, they merely valued you on basis of a shallow quality of happened to possess: 'being a member of this sect'. Indeed, it could be a quality that could be regarded as an important aspect for defining you, but then it had to be seen in light of the combination of other fundamental qualities of you. By itself, it certainly does not define you as a person. The members of the sect could claim, "We do put great value on you; after all, you are a member of this sect!" But the obvious reply would be, "Yes, I am a member of this sect, but *I* am not merely 'a member of this sect'. My identity, who I am, cannot be identified as such. I could equally well be a dispensable parrot in the club house." Since one cannot be a real friend without valuing the other person, the members of the sect were not your friends.

As said, valuing the other person is an important piece of the perspective required for being a real friend. But, of course, it is not all by itself sufficient. Friendship is a intricate matter, and none of the components so far depicted are sufficient for friendship by themselves. One can easily conceive relations that are not worthy of being called 'friendship' because they are only non-instrumental – an example mentioned above was 'friends of friends'. It is also possible to conceive relations that only involve love, without for that sake being friendship – a simple example could be the type of relation which is based upon the strong emotional affection a 'cute face' might give rise to, whether this face belongs to another human or some animal. And we can think of relations where the involved agent's value each other for whom they are – for instance, one can highly admire a person one knows very well for being *that* person (and perhaps even wish to be more like him or her oneself) – still, it is not friendship, because one need not love that individual at all.

Neither is friendship the case if one component is missing. For instance, one could think of a non-instrumental relation where one also values the other

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<sup>38</sup> But what if we believe we know someone very well, but this person has actually deceived us, and we have deceived that person too? None of us then really know each other. But if we consider ourselves to be friends, are we really friends? We do hold the appropriate perspective, but the 'object' of our perspective is not what we believe it to be. We are then, in a sense, not really friends of 'each other', but of the false images we both put up. Is this 'real' friendship? It seems strange to say that. Although these are interesting questions, I will have to leave them aside.

person, but does not love her – this is the type of relationship one could have with an ex-lover, who has become indifferent to oneself. One could also conceive relations that involve non-instrumentality and love, but is not friendship. This, however, some could find strange, as some might think that the concepts ‘love’ and ‘valuing the person’ cannot be separated, assuming that if we love someone, we automatically value them as persons, and vice-versa: if we truly value a person, we also love this individual. If that were so, it would be wrong to separate these components as seemingly sharply as I have done. But this I believe should be made, because we can, by means of the distinction, better separate friendship from other kinds of close personal relations.

However, ‘love’ is indeed a multifaceted concept, used in various ways. Here, however, ‘love’ is defined as merely being a feeling (which has certain practical effects), and I believe we can exhibit such a strong emotional attachment to another individual, without for that sake valuing that person. This is of course not how ‘love’ is always understood. For example, the notion of ‘real love’ seems to include the idea that one feels strong affection towards someone, and also values that person. But that is just another usage of the notion. I believe the distinction between love and valuing the person can and should be made. Let me provide a simple example. I believe that many parents could love their children, yet without for that sake valuing them for whom they are (in more respects than ‘being my child’); in fact, some parents could hate the person their child has turned into (a criminal or maniac for instance), yet love that individual anyway. Is this incomprehensible? I do not think so. By recognizing the difference between ‘love’ and ‘valuing the person’, we might for one thing better understand the strange concept ‘hate-love’, and see that it is not an incoherent concept when we realize that the ‘hate’ has to do with the disvaluing of the *person*, and the ‘love’ with the mere *individual*.

Lastly, it should by now appear fairly obvious that another part of the complexity of friendship lies in the interrelation between these components. The components outlined here are all connected; they come into existence and are strengthened by means of each other. If one component is ‘weak’ (we could think of merely ‘liking’ someone instead of ‘loving’), it could have effects on the other components (for instance, I believe we are then more inclined to appreciate the relationship merely for what could be gained from it). And if one does not value a person to any greater extent, perhaps there will be less love in that relation (because I believe we are more inclined to love those we know and value). Although ‘valuing the person’ is an important feature of friendship, it would yet be futile to try to put a finger on which component is the ‘most important’ one. They are all important, in combination with each other.

Therefore, this sketch of friendship could be quite confusing, because I have described the components one by one, as if the perspective of a real friend consisted of three clearly separated elements. That, however, I hope has been understood is an oversimplification – yet necessary for concisely describing a phenomenon which is far from uncomplicated.

#### 2.2.5 *Epilogue: Other questions*

Friendship gives rise to many interesting questions. *How* do people become friends? On one hand, we could simply say that it is the result of an empirical investigation followed by a voluntary choice. We somehow realize that another person is likable, and we decide to become friends, because, as Laurence Thomas writes, “no one supposes that she or he had no choice but to be a person’s friend.”<sup>39</sup> But on the other hand, we could equally well say that it just happens, because “it is all too obvious that as a rule we do not self-consciously choose our friends in the way we choose, say, the clothes that we wear.”<sup>40</sup> But no matter how we describe the way we become friends, it is at least perfectly evident that we do have to spend a considerable amount of time with someone to become so. Obviously, we cannot value a person for who she is without knowing that person; and getting to know a person takes time. We could of course quickly find certain features of a person appealing (sense of humour, political ideas, and so on), and desire that we become friends, but even though “a wish for friendship may arise quickly” it is obvious that “friendship does not.”<sup>41</sup>

This is one reason why there is a limit to how many friends one can have. We cannot get to truly know, value and love each and every person the whole world, just a fairly limited number of people, and “[t]his seems to be confirmed in practise; for we do not find many people who are friends in the comradely way of friendship... Those who have many friends and mix intimately with them all are thought to be no one’s friend...”<sup>42</sup> (One could, however, wonder what comes first; non-instrumentality, love or valuing a person? That question has no answer, because it is like the question whether the chicken or the egg came first.)

Another reason why there is a limit to the number of friends has to do with the way friendship is upheld. Friendship is sustained by joint activity. According to Aristotle, “some drink together, others dice together, others join in athletic

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<sup>39</sup> Thomas (1987), pp. 217-218.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>41</sup> *NE*, 1156b30.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 1171a15.

exercises and hunting, or in the study of philosophy...”<sup>43</sup> Of course, exactly what friends do cannot be specified, it all depends on what kind of persons they are. But that friends *do* things together is obvious, and also that such doing is an essential part of nourishing the relation, “do and share in those things which give [friends] the sense of living together.”<sup>44</sup> However, as life is not eternal (at least not yet), the time we spend with our friends is precious. Were we to attempt to make as many friends as possible, we would as a consequence not be able to engage in any joint activity to the degree necessary for sustaining real friendship.

But unless we embrace some overtly romantic idea of friendship, we realize that even such relations can come to an end. There are many reasons why that could happen. For one thing, we could stop valuing someone for who she is, maybe because we (due to neglecting the need of joint activity) grow apart, and discover that the person we once upon a time knew has become a stranger. In a time and place where work and career count more than family and friends, this is likely to happen more than often. But it could of course also become apparent to us that a relationship we thought was friendship actually was not. A person who we thought we knew very well was in reality someone else who merely put up a façade. Or, the other person simply conceived the relation differently; while we thought we were friends, we were actually only acquaintances. The other person need not have intentionally deceived us; we could simply have merely misunderstood her intentions on this matter. But if we find *How to Win Friends and Influence People* in our alleged friends library, we might have reasons to suspect that something is fishy.

A question that follows quite naturally from all this is, *why* are we friends? Why do we find certain people appealing, and why do they find us so too? Is it because we are alike? Is it because we are different? Is it because we are... well, who we are? That is one of the greatest mysteries, and I do not have any answers, so I leave that question aside. The only possible explanation might be, as Montaigne simply put it: “Because it was he, because it was I.”<sup>45</sup>

It should always be remembered that the pursuit of friendship is a practical talent. We cannot study the theoretical aspects of such a relationship (for example, by reading this chapter) to learn how to become friends. We have to *do it*. If, however, we do not know where to start, we could start by reading Dale Carnegie’s book and following his recommendations. If we are to believe

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 1172a5.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 1172a7.

<sup>45</sup> Montaigne, “Of Friendship,” reprinted in *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*, ed. Michael Pakaluk, Indianapolis: Hackett (1991), p.192.

Aristotle, “what we learn to do, we learn by doing,” and smiling in the company of others and remembering that their first name is the sweetest word they can hear, is at least a start. But it is certainly not the whole story. But what the rest is, we just have to find out ourselves.

### 2.3 WHY FRIENDSHIP? WHY NOT?

Classic philosophers on the subject of personal relations frequently insinuate that real friendship is an utmost rare phenomenon.<sup>46</sup> This is often expressed with an undertone of pity and regret, as friendship is taken to be highly valuable, a necessity for being able to lead a good life. The many arguments in favour of this kind of opinion, which has echoed through the ages, can be traced back to Aristotle. It is hard to exaggerate Aristotle’s positive attitude towards friendship, as he devoted a considerable number of pages in the *Nicomachean Ethics* to explaining the importance of friendship for the good life of the individual and the world. According to Aristotle, friends are “the greatest of external goods,” and “without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods.”<sup>47</sup> Cicero writes that “all men, to the last man, are in agreement on the subject of friendship, whether they devote themselves to the public service, or choose a life of study and learning, or spend their lives in leisure, wholly wrapped up in their private concerns – yes, even those who totally surrender themselves to pleasure and amusement. All of them agree that without friendship life is not worth living – that is, if they have any interest at all in living the life of a decent human being.”<sup>48</sup>

Well then, is this true? Is friendship a necessary component for a good human life, and is suicide a reasonable option (as Aristotle and Cicero seems to

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<sup>46</sup> Aristotle is often attributed the saying “O my friends, there are no friends!” though it is unclear if he actually ever said it. But he did say that “it is natural that [real] friendship should be rare” because those who are able to have such relations are rare. (*NE*, 1156b25.) According to Cicero, “in all the course of history men can name scarcely three or four pairs of friends” (in “On Friendship,” in Pakaluk (1991), p. 85). Montaigne claimed that he knew how “rare” real friendship was, and therefore he “did not expect to find any good judge of it.” (in “Of Friendship,” *ibid.*, p. 197.) Kant found real friendship to be “an Idea” which one could use to measure the quality of existing friendships, but he was quite ambivalent if it existed or not. He said that we would not find any examples of real friendships in experience; they are all “defective” in comparison with the ideal Idea of friendship. (in “Lecture on Friendship,” *ibid.*, p. 211, ff.)

<sup>47</sup> *NE*, 1155a5.

<sup>48</sup> Cicero, “De Amicitia,” in Pakaluk (1991), p.110.

suggest) if one does not have any friends? I believe Cicero, at least, is right when he claims that many *think* so; the thought that friendship is valuable is a part of our everyday opinions. Hence, if friendship is a rare phenomenon, many sadly lack something important in life.<sup>49</sup> But what kind of arguments can be provided for that being so?

Well, first and foremost, one could claim that friendship is a delight. Maybe this is the one and only simple reason one has to give. It is nice to be in the company of others; loneliness is commonly considered dreadful. A quick glance at humankind seems to reveal that we do crave company.<sup>50</sup> But it also seems clear that any company will not do. Being surrounded by superficial acquaintances could be found terribly lonesome, no matter how many they are, because they do not truly appreciate us for whom we are. In their company, we are more of an anonymous object than a subject. We are still lonely. But with real friends, we find true companionship. People are different though; there are hermits. But there are not many of them, and not all of them have chosen their isolation freely. And those who have may simply have failed to make any real friends in life, and therefore despise friendship without really knowing what it is.

Furthermore, friendship is useful. Although this is a fact, it could be destructive to stress the useful aspect of friendship whilst actually being engaged in such a relation, as one could then take it to be instrumental. We require friends to get around more smoothly in many aspects of life, whether we need little or big favours, occasionally or often.<sup>51</sup> Without friends, we may not have anyone to turn to in hard times. Acquaintances are not necessarily reliable, neither is the police, nor is the social welfare system.

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<sup>49</sup> Although I believe the classic philosophers exaggerate the lack of friendship in the world, we would have to undertake quite extensive empirical investigations to find out if they are right or not. This issue will have to be left to psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists. Recent studies seem to reveal that real friendship is a matter of fact in all cultures. (See Robert Brain, *Friends and Lovers*, London: Granada Publishing Ltd. (1976)), though it is underrated in the west world. The reason why that is so is not seldom claimed to be cultural, economical and social reasons. (See Reohr (1991).)

<sup>50</sup> Aristotle's competence in the field of psychology may be doubted, but he might at least have a point in saying that "no one would choose the whole world on condition of being alone, since man is a political creature and one whose nature it is to live with others." (*NE*, 1169b17.)

<sup>51</sup> Aristotle asks, "... how can prosperity be guarded and preserved without friends? The greater it is, the more exposed it is to risk. And in poverty and in other misfortunes men think friends are the only refuge. It helps the young, too, to keep from error; it aids older people by ministering to their needs and supplementing the activities that are failing from weakness..." (*Ibid.*, 1155a10-15.)



Something which is often said with respect to friendship is that it fosters our characters; somehow we become better persons by interacting with other people in context of close personal relationships. (Children obviously require to be brought up, but no matter how successful parents may be, no person is perfect on coming of age.) Since good friends take a genuine interest in the weal and woe of each other, they honestly point out and correct each other's bad qualities, and highlight, encourage and learn from each other's good sides. According to Aristotle, "we can contemplate our neighbours better than ourselves and their actions better than our own, and if the actions of virtuous men who are their friends are pleasant to good men... the supremely happy man will need friends of this sort, since his purpose is to contemplate worthy actions and actions that are his own, and the actions of a good man who is his friend have both these qualities."<sup>52</sup> People we have a less close relationship with might not equally well assist us with this. If someone that I know briefly informs me that I am somehow good or bad, I might not take his or her claim seriously. After all, that person, contrary to a friend, does not know *me* (and do not take any genuine interest in my weal or woe). If we are to believe Aristotle, those who have real friends are actually taken to be better persons: "...we praise those who love their friends, and it is thought to be a fine thing to have many friends; and again we think it is the same people that are good men and are friends."<sup>53</sup>

Since friends have a close relationship in which they know each other very well, they are better at perceiving and responding to each other's needs.<sup>54</sup> Friends can make us see and understand other people's point of views better, and thus, we can become less narrow-minded when we have to perceive the world through the eyes of others. Consequently, we may find that this makes the world a better place; friendship may help us obtain a sense of community with others. "[F]riendship seems to hold states together," and "when men are friends they have no need of justice."<sup>55</sup>

Thanks to friendship, we may even obtain better health. "Friendship can be an elixir in this troubling world. One's present and future health, both physical and psychological, can be measured by and attributed to strong relational ties... Evidence is mounting that strong relational ties, i.e. friendship, may buffer people from stress and stave off illness as well as facilitate convalescence."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 1169b34-1170a4.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 1155a30.

<sup>54</sup> C.f. Blum (1980) p. 130, ff.

<sup>55</sup> *NE*, 1155a24-27.

<sup>56</sup> Reohr (1991), preface, p. ix-x.

So, friendship seems necessary for leading a good life. Thus, if friendship is a rare phenomenon, as has been claimed, then many miss out something important. But that is of course not for certain. All this praise can be questioned. But through the recognized history of philosophy, it is hard to find anyone seriously contesting the positive aspects of friendship that Aristotle *et al* propose. A possible reason for that may be that remarkable philosophers have continuously characterized friendship as a state that can only exist between truly *good* people. Subsequently friendship cannot give rise to anything bad, as good people do not do or allow bad things by definition. But if we disrespectfully of the traditional authorities on friendship disregard this persistent yet questionable precondition (which may stem from the bullying arrogance that often has been the trademark of remarkable philosophers) for the moment, and view friendship in a more realistic and unpretentious light, it is not all that difficult to turn the tables and come up with some reasons for caution regarding friendship.

Friendship could become more of a burden to carry more than a delight to enjoy. Friends in distress may seek our company and insist on sharing their sorrows and problems with us, no matter if we are interested or not. Due to our conscience, we could make their problems our problems, and dealing with them may obstruct other plans we have made. While a friend cries on our shoulder, we might find a kernel of truth in the saying “a friend in need is a friend to be avoided,” and envy the hermit whom happily minds his or her own business alone.

Furthermore, friendship is a risky business. Friends tend to reveal their secrets to each other, and this is not necessarily a good thing. As Immanuel Kant remarks, “it is very unwise to place ourselves in a friend’s hands completely, to tell him all the secrets which might detract from our welfare if he became our enemy and spread them abroad; it is imprudent not only because he might thereby do us an injury if he became an enemy, but also because he might fail to keep our secrets through inadvertence. In particular, we ought to place no weapon in the hands of a hot-headed friend who might be capable of sending us to the gallows in a moment of passion, though he would implore our pardon as soon as he had cooled down.”<sup>57</sup>

But even if we do not find friendship a burden or an immediate danger to our welfare or existence (our friends might not be hot-headed), there are other problems with such a relationship. For one thing, friendships do not necessarily improve our character at all. Friendship might make us short-sighted and narrow-minded, and as a result generate and maintain prejudice. Close groups have a tendency to be *closed*; the individuals in a group of dear friends may

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<sup>57</sup> Kant, in Pakaluk (1991), p. 217.

seriously desire to learn more about themselves and others by means of their active company and become better persons, but instead, unconsciously in the false belief that they gain more knowledge, merely cherish, and – through internal circulation – nourish and perpetuate a minor set of meagre opinions. Whatever is out of line with that the group already accepts can be blocked out, misrepresented or ridiculed. We think that we are open-minded and objective, since we seriously listen to what others have to say, but since we only actually listen to what *our friends* have to say, we could become biased bigots.

Following on from this, friendship does not necessarily make the world a better place at all. That “friendship hold states together” may indeed be true, in the same way as it is true that a closed group of friends remains stable. A small country in which all are more or less friends is probably very inherently stable and will not see the need for civil war. Yet this stability may be paid for with the price of hostility towards other states. States of friends may be more inclined to see the need for conflict, simply because they want to protect their inherent friendship from whatever does not tally with its assumptions and conceptions. Friendship may perpetuate and justify a kind of group egoism; we experience solidarity with our friends, but feel hostility towards those who are not our friends. Possibly, the only way that friendship could make the world a better place would be if all people on earth were friends; but as friendship has been characterized, that is obviously not possible. Therefore, maybe we should only have a large group of acquaintances (which we have gained through following Dale Carnegie’s recommendations), so that we do not become too small-minded.

One could of course also claim that friendship is neither good nor bad. Rather, it is nothing special. There is no need to exaggerate in praise or disapproval. It could merely be, as C.S. Lewis suggests, “something quite marginal; not a main course in life’s banquet, [but] a diversion; something that fills up the chinks of one’s time.”<sup>58</sup>

But whatever one thinks of friendship, the question if a consequentialist can be a real friend or not is still worth investigating. If friendship is essential to leading a good human life, the consequentialist would obviously miss out on something if she were not able to pursue friendship, and that could indeed be considered troublesome for various reasons. It could be found troublesome for the *consequentialist* reason, that the agent might not actually bring about the best possible outcomes if she is not able to pursue friendship – or for a *non-consequentialist* reason; for example, if “morality is made for man, not man for

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<sup>58</sup> C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich (1960), p.81.

morality”, as William K. Frankena claimed<sup>59</sup>, then a normative moral theory that prevents people from pursuing friendship and leading good lives is a defective theory, no matter what other merits it might have. On the other hand, if friendship is something one should steer clear of, well, then a consequentialist could actually find it relieving that she cannot pursue friendship, as she then need not worry about ending up in that miserable state (perhaps due to the apparently powerful human craving for intimacy), and a non-consequentialist could perhaps find a reason for changing her mind.

So, for better or worse, can a consequentialist be a real friend? Before we tackle that question, however, we shall first briefly consider the idea of ‘consequentialism’, to gain a somewhat better understanding of what it actually means to be a ‘consequentialist’, and why one would like to be one in the first place. But, as I have already said, those who do not stand in need of such information can skip the next chapter, and move ahead to the fourth.

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<sup>59</sup> *Ethics*, second edition, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall (1963), p. 116.

# 3

## Consequentialism

I shall here try to explain the idea of consequentialism (that one ought always do what will make the outcome best), and provide some reasons for why anyone would like to be a consequentialist (i.e., adhere to an ethical theory that asserts that the end result of any conduct is the sole factor determining its normative status). This will be done by way of a brief review of some arguments on the matter put forward by Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Henry Sidgwick and G.E. Moore.<sup>60</sup>

### 3.1 JEREMY BENTHAM AND *THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALS AND LEGISLATION*

Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) was educated as a lawyer at Westminster and Queen's College in Oxford, England. But he would never come to practice the trade much in his life, as he found the legal system in England at the time highly unsatisfying. The main problem, as he saw it, was the system's lack of reasonable theoretical foundations; it was to a large extent built on unfounded conventions blended with religious dogmas. Bentham therefore abandoned his career and devoted himself to the study of philosophy, chiefly the works of Locke, Hume, Montesquieu, Helvétius, Beccaria, and Barrington. Under the influence of these writers, he set out to bring about radical reformations in the field of legislation and political government through a range of proposals and essays. One of these was *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, which would become his most influential work.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> However, none of these philosophers actually employs the term 'consequentialism' in their writings on moral theory, but 'utilitarianism' (which, as soon will be apparent, is a type of consequentialist theory). As far as I know, the term 'consequentialism' was first coined by G.E.M. Anscombe in "Modern Moral Philosophy", *Philosophy*, 33 (1958), pp. 1-19.

<sup>61</sup> First edition published 1789, last 1824. All references are from the 1824 edition, reprinted in *Utilitarianism and Other Essays*, ed. Alan Ryan, Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd. (1987).

As the legal system was based upon the political, and the political system was supposed to be morality carried out in general practice, the first task for anyone who would like to get down to the fundamental issues would be to scrutinize some basic matters of ethics. Bentham found all popular moral conceptions at the time to be nothing but groundless guesswork.<sup>62</sup> At best, Bentham acknowledged, they could hint the proper direction of conduct, but that was not sufficient. Bentham sought to uncover and systematize what mankind *truly* ought to do. Doing so would be to improve "moral science," which presumably was to be understood as an enterprise that aimed to provide answers to moral questions with the same security, clarity and accuracy as natural science offered regarding the material world. This undertaking begins with a bold statement in *Principles*:

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their empire: but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while.<sup>63</sup>

How Bentham reached this somewhat controversial hypothesis concerning psychological hedonism was never disclosed. But his source was probably merely some simple empirical observations and a bit of subjective introspection. Nevertheless, out of this hypothesis, Bentham instantaneously derived the conclusions that pleasure was the one and only thing that humans found to be truly *good* in itself, and following from that, the *right* was simply to generate as much collective pleasure as possible.<sup>64</sup> This is what Bentham's *principle of*

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<sup>62</sup> Without naming any specific philosophers who defended any position, Bentham pointed out some moral systems he found "pretended" (on pages 78-83 in Ryan (1987)). It seems like his main targets of critique were moral-sense theorists who claim that we possess an ability to simply perceive what is right and wrong (e.g. Hutcheson and Shaftesbury), and those who claimed that morality somehow must harmonise with certain laws of nature (e.g. Hobbes and Locke).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>64</sup> Clearly, Bentham made an remarkably unqualified transition from *psychological* hedonism (that we seek pleasure in everything we do) to *ethical* hedonism (that we ought to do so). Furthermore, his formulation that humans are under the governance of pain and pleasure seems to insinuate hard-wired *egoism*, and from that it is a long way to the prescription that we ought to bring about as much *universal* pleasure as possible. Regarding the first problem, Bentham remained silent, and regarding the second he found that it was not a problem worth discussing at

*utility* prescribe, a principle which "approves or disapproves of every action, whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness<sup>65</sup> of the party whose interest is in question..."<sup>66</sup>

According to Bentham, any reasonable moral system must recognize this principle, unless it is to "deal in sounds instead of sense... in darkness instead of light."<sup>67</sup> But Bentham found that all traditional systems did not fully recognize it, and therefore they should be rejected. Bentham believed it to be not only moral hypocrisy, but also contra-productive for the collective pleasure, to establish the legal system on any other idea but the principle of utility itself. The method of procedure a lawgiver should adhere to was fairly simple (at least in theory): prior to any act, the lawgiver should attempt to objectively calculate the effects of all available options (i.e. possible laws), and choose that which realized as much overall pleasure as possible, taking into account the overall level of pleasure measured to its intensity, duration, certainty (or uncertainty), propinquity (or remoteness), fecundity, purity and (if other people are affected) extent.<sup>68</sup> To put it simple, a legislator should always do what would lead to the best consequences. Bentham did not merely discuss on how laws should be framed out of this method, but also the appropriate ways of handling crime and punishment.

At one point in *Principles* Bentham ask himself if there is any possibility that there could be some other foundation (apart from hedonism) on which

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length; he did not deny that it is in the individual's personal interest to gain as much pleasure as possible, but individuals frame a community, which is "a fictitious body," and "the interest of the community then is... the sum of the interests of the several members who compose it" (Ibid., p. 66).

<sup>65</sup> The notions 'pleasure', 'happiness' and 'utility' were quite interchangeable for Bentham. "By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good or happiness (all this in the present case comes to the same thing) or (what comes again to the same thing) to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered; if that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community; if a particular individual, then the happiness of the individual." (Ibid., p. 66.)

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 65. However, the principle of utility is often associated with the catchphrase "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," a slogan which Bentham borrowed from Beccaria, and first formulated in a much earlier work, "A Fragment on Government", published anonymously 1776.

<sup>67</sup> Ryan (1987), p. 65.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pp. 86-87. Bentham adds, however, that "[i]t is not to be expected that this process should be strictly pursued previously to every moral judgement, or to every legislative or juridical operation. It may, however, be always kept in view: and as near as the process actually pursued on these occasions approaches to it, so near will such process approach to the character of an exact one." (Ibid, p. 88.)

conceptions of what is right and wrong could be based. He is not really sure, but that does not disturb him; he "do[es] not know" and "do[es] not care."<sup>69</sup> This might sound arrogant, but what Bentham probably thought was that the only thing we can actually know for certain in this context is that humans take pleasure to be the only good, and consequently, any other suggestion on this matter would only be insecure speculations.

Although the truth of the principle of utility could not be fully proved, Bentham tried to show that competition was at least none, by arguing that many traditional moral ideas were unable to supply any secure and unambiguous answers to what ought to be done, whereas his principle of utility at least provided that. Even if Bentham left a lot of questions unanswered, he must have thought that he in any case had succeeded in establishing the groundwork of a "moral science": the principle of utility was meant to be a reasonable theoretical foundation, which could be applied to judge everything – whether it be morality, politics, legislation, and so on – as being either right or wrong depending on the consequences, leaving no gray areas in between.

Whatever one thinks of *Principles* it cannot be denied that it had an impact. Roughly speaking, it divided the political society of England into two groups: the conservatists, who found Bentham's ideas shocking – and the radicals (occasionally referred to as Benthamites), who considered his proposals enlightening. The latter was a loud minority, characterized by uncompromising disbeliefs in everything they took to be products of emotional outbursts rather than rational calculations; religious ideas were at the top of their hit list. Their most notable mouthpieces were John Austin and James Mill and, later on, the son of the latter, John Stuart Mill.

### 3.2 JOHN STUART MILL AND *UTILITARIANISM*

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) never attended any university. He was educated exclusively by his father, and would later come to work as a clerk for the East India Company. His private writings covered a wide range of subjects, but mainly on morality, politics and national economy. Much influenced by his father, Mill was in his youth highly convinced of the superiority of the Benthamite movement, and especially of the principle of utility.

The 'principle of utility' understood as Bentham understood it, and applied in the manner in which he applied it... fell exactly into its place as the keystone which held together the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 81.



detached and fragmentary component parts of my knowledge and beliefs. It gave unity to my conceptions of things. I now had opinions; a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy; in one among the best senses of the word, a religion; the inculcation and diffusion of which could be made the principal outward purpose of a life.<sup>70</sup>

At the age of sixteen, he formed the Utilitarian Society, a discussion club for those who were persuaded of the plausibility of Bentham's moral and political ideas. Bentham himself had been reluctant to label his theory an -ism, but the members of the society referred to themselves as "utilitarians," who believed in "utilitarianism." Initially, Mill was confident that practically all moral and political troubles in the world could be solved if the principle of utility was accepted and implemented. At the age of twenty, however, his optimism declined due to a nervous breakdown. He traced the source of his anguish to the benthamite tradition he had been a part of his whole life, a tradition which he now found was based upon dreadfully narrow-sighted conceptions of human nature and human good.

Bentham was "among those who have enriched mankind with imperishable gifts"<sup>71</sup>, Mill writes, and praises his conceptual and methodological clarity. In his quest for the truth, Bentham had courageously swept away everything he found redundant, but unfortunately, according to Mill, he had in his eagerness swept away too much. Bentham's greatest weakness was that he was the model example of a person who tries to attain truths by means of his own mind alone. In many scientific disciplines that would not have been a serious problem. But Bentham addressed issues on human nature and morality, and there he went wrong.

Human nature and human life are wide subjects, and whoever would embark in an enterprise requiring a thorough knowledge of them, has need both of large stores of his own, and of all aids and appliances from elsewhere. His qualifications of success will be proportional to two things: the degree in which his own nature and circumstances furnish him with a correct and complete picture of man's nature and circumstances; and his capacity of deriving light from other minds.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Mill, *Autobiography*, ed. Jack Stillinger, London: Oxford University Press (1971), p. 42.

<sup>71</sup> "Bentham", reprinted in Ryan (1987), p. 132.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

And unfortunately, "Bentham failed in deriving light from other minds."<sup>73</sup>

Mill was indeed not alone in having doubts about the utilitarian doctrine. The vast majority at that time found it to be an offensive moral theory which preferably should be rejected and forgotten as soon as possible, as it seemingly portrayed humanity as being essentially a bunch of uncivilized pleasure-seeking brutes. Nevertheless, Mill was convinced that utilitarianism had something going for it, but it was in need of some fundamental adjustments. Late autumn and winter 1861, Mill published three essays in the monthly *Fraser's Magazine*, called *Utilitarianism*, in which he attempted to improve and explain some basic ideas of the doctrine. Not only did Mill try to convince the public that utilitarianism was not as bad as often claimed, but also, if properly understood, actually much in line with how people commonly reflected upon ethical issues. Although Bentham only spoke of legislators and never explicitly argued that the principle of utility also should be employed as a guiding light for common people in their everyday concerns, Mill opened up the door for that possibility in *Utilitarianism*.

The first problem Mill tackled was Bentham's crude conception of the human nature and the human good. For Bentham, raw sensations of pleasure were the only thing humans find to be truly good; consequently, it did not seem to matter in theory what people did in practise to acquire it. Playing pushpin was as good as reading poetry, as long as it gave rise to the same amount of pleasure. Mill could not accept that, and argued that Bentham had wrongly depicted human nature. But Bentham's mistake was to implicitly put humans on the same level as animals, by assuming that there exists only one type of pleasure. Mill, who possibly through his depression had derived lights from other minds, had developed the intuition that humanity radically differed from animals by being sophisticated creatures whom could not only experience "low" pleasures of "mere sensation" but also "high" pleasures of "the intellect."<sup>74</sup> As animals had no intellect, they could not experience and desire anything but low pleasures. But humans had experience of both types, and typically attach more importance to high pleasure than low (unless they are simple brutes without a developed intellect). The reason for that is that high pleasure is found to possess more *quality*. Therefore, according to Mill, "it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid. The quote continues: "His writings contain few traces of the accurate knowledge of any schools of thinking but his own; and many proofs of his entire conviction that they could teach him nothing worth knowing."

<sup>74</sup> *Utilitarianism*, in Ryan (1987), p. 249.

satisfied.”<sup>75</sup> (But if one were to apply Bentham’s unsophisticated account of pleasure, one would wrongly conclude that the fool is happier than Socrates.) In consequence, pushpin could not be as good as poetry, and the principle of utility would not endorse it. Because pushpin could not bring out the same kind of high qualitative pleasure as poetry, since the latter greatly stimulated the intellect and the former did not. Mill therefore suggests that utilitarianism should be understood as a doctrine that seeks to maximize the level of qualitative pleasure.

Even though Mill conceived pleasure to be more complex matter than Bentham, he was nevertheless still a supporter of hedonism, a concept which for many was conceptually connected to selfishness. This had consequently made some thinkers jump to the conclusion that utilitarianism advocated a seeming contradiction in terms, namely ethical egoism. Mill stressed that the principle of utility certainly did not support egoism, but prescribed that one should attempt to bring out as much universal pleasure as possible. However, that proposal had also been a frequent target of criticism. The typical utilitarian was not seldom caricatured as a rigorously impartial individual who, in each and every thought and act, aimed to bring out as much pleasure as possible in the world, and thus utilitarianism required that an individual to be a “disinterested character” – “a standard... too high for humanity.”<sup>76</sup> Mill claimed that this was “to mistake the very meaning of a standard of morals... It is the business of ethics to tell us what are our duties, or by what test we may know them; but no system of ethics requires that the sole motive of all we do shall be a feeling of duty; on the contrary, ninety-nine hundredths of all our actions are done from other motives, and rightly so...”<sup>77</sup>

But another common criticism against utilitarian ethics was that it was impossible to live up to in practise. Bentham’s method of estimating how much pleasure that is actualised in one and every act is easy to describe, but hard, if not impossible, to live up to in practise. The commands of utilitarianism were said to be unacceptably hard, unless one viewed morality as an institution that demanded full-time slavery when it came to doing right. Mill thinks such criticism exaggerated. A utilitarian need not calculate all the time, because

there has been ample time [to calculate], namely, the whole past duration of the human species. During that time mankind has been learning by experience the tendencies of actions; on which experience all the prudence, as well as all the morality of life, is

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 281.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 289.

dependent. (...) Nobody argues that the art of navigation is not founded on astronomy, because sailors cannot wait to calculate the Nautical Almanack. Being rational creatures, they go to sea with it ready calculated; and all rational creatures go out upon the sea of life with their minds made up on the common questions of right and wrong, as well as on many of the far difficult questions of wise and foolish.<sup>78</sup>

In other words, Mill think that people already hold many opinions on what is right and wrong, and that they, to a large extent, are also justified in doing so on utilitarian grounds. For Mill, utilitarianism approved of many traditional concepts of morality as commonly held. That some of these concepts are not distinctively utilitarian to their spirit is perfectly all right; many of the things that create qualitative pleasure, like poetry, must be pursued for their own sakes, to give rise to such pleasure at all.<sup>79</sup> Though Mill argues for the supremacy of following certain traditional moral recommendations instead of trying to calculate all the time, he does not say that we should only do so (that is, leave everything as it is and just go with the flow); a utilitarian should rather develop a complex character able to act out of obedience to general moral concepts, but also exhibiting dispositions that increase the general good - and even be able to calculate, when circumstances call for it.

That many traditional concepts mankind subscribes to concerning morality can be found justified on utilitarian grounds is no coincidence, according to Mill. Mill means that the concepts have been developed through a reason through time – even though it might not have been all that obvious. The reason is utilitarian, and it can be understood by considering what Mill (in line with Bentham) thought was an indisputable fact about human nature: that we do not desire anything else than pleasure/happiness, and everything we do is somehow related to that desire. That psychological assumption serves as a ground for Mill's "proof" of utilitarianism:

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 295-297. One should not interpret this as a defence for intuitionism - "the popular theory of a natural faculty, a sense or instinct, informing us of right and wrong" (p. 273) - which Mill strongly rejected. Mill did not mean that humanity had evolved into being able of a priori perceiving what is right and wrong, but that our collective experience through time had taught us how to avoid the most obvious ways of doing wrong.

<sup>79</sup> Mill was much more explicit on this issue in *Autobiography* than in *Utilitarianism*. C.f. Mill (in ed. Stillinger, 1971) pp. 67-69 and 85-90.

The only proof capable of being given that an object is visible, is that people actually see it. The only proof that sound is audible, is that people hear it: and so the other sources of our experience. In like manner, I apprehend, the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people actually desire it... No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness. This, however, being a fact, we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which is possible to require, that happiness is a good...<sup>80</sup>

But a quick observation of mankind reveals that we seemingly do not desire only happiness, but a lot of things: wealth, power, fame, virtue, love, respect, and so on. However, some of these things are obviously not sought for their own sakes, but merely as means to other things (hardly anyone desires wealth, as being merely coins and bills, for no ulterior reason). But in the end, do we only desire happiness? Mill does not want to express it that simply. He claims that some things we desire, such as virtue, are not simply sought as means to happiness (yet if virtue was a one-way ticket to pain and misery, mankind would soon have excluded it as a viable option of life); instead, virtue, and a lot of other things, are somehow "*included* in happiness. They are some of the elements of which the desire of happiness is made up. Happiness is not an abstract idea, but a concrete whole; and these are some of its parts."<sup>81</sup>

Still, Mill has not really proved that people ultimately only desire happiness, or those things that happiness is made up of. "If the opinion which I have now stated is psychologically true – if human nature so constituted as to desire nothing which is not either a part of happiness or means to happiness, we can have no other proof, and we require no other, that these are the only things desirable."<sup>82</sup> To see if that is the case, Mill asks us to consult our deepest intuitions, to practise "self-consciousness and self-observation, assisted by observation of others."<sup>83</sup> Mill, of course, thinks it is true. "So obvious does this

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<sup>80</sup> *Utilitarianism*, in Ryan (1987), pp. 307-308. A proof which has been justly famous of not being a proof at all. If people see an object, it is of course visible. But the mere fact that people desire something is no argument of it being desirable. Like Bentham, Mill jumps too quickly from an *is* to an *ought* without qualifications. But that has to be left aside. What Mill presumed was that the thing we utmost desire in fact is desirable, for some reason.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 310, my italics

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 311.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 311.

appear to me, that I expect it will hardly be disputed...<sup>84</sup> Yet, "whether it is so or not, must... be left to the consideration of the thoughtful reader."<sup>85</sup>

### 3.3 HENRY SIDGWICK AND *THE METHODS OF ETHICS*

Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900) taught at Cambridge University, and became professor there 1883. His main contribution to moral philosophy was *The Methods of Ethics*, a highly technical work which not only offered the most thorough defense of consequentialist ethics ever seen, but also a careful and systematic investigation of the scope and limits of a range of common moral practises.<sup>86</sup> While *Principles* was written for the political society, and *Utilitarianism* for the general public, the intended audience of *Methods* was a relatively new breed: professional academic philosophers specialized in the theoretical aspects of morality. Just as the natural sciences had become increasingly specialized during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so had the subjects of philosophy. In comparison with *Principles* and *Utilitarianism*, *Methods* is a monumental work, and only a brief summary of some of its central ideas can be presented here.

According to Sidgwick, morality is a major concern for mankind. We often try to determine what ought to be done, and in that pursuit we employ various ethical methods we assume to be rational. *Methods* is "...an examination, at once expository and critical, of the different methods of obtaining reasoned convictions as what ought to be done which are to be found - either explicit or implicit - in the moral consciousness of mankind generally: and which, from time to time, have been developed, either singly or in combination, by individual thinkers, and worked up into the systems now historical."<sup>87</sup>

Sidgwick has, from the moral consciousness of mankind, extracted three general and ideal methods that are employed when trying to find out what ought to be done.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 312.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 314.

<sup>86</sup> The first edition of *Methods* was published 1874, and the last (seventh edition) posthumously 1907; Edinburgh: R. & R. Clark Ltd. All references are to the seventh edition.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., preface, v.

<sup>88</sup> However, Sidgwick hardly conducted any extensive anthropological or psychological investigations to reach the conclusion that these methods and ends were pursued by "mankind" in general. They were the most common positions of British ethical theorists at the time, and he probably just extracted the methods and ends from their works.

First, by means of *intuitionism*, the idea that knowledge on ethical issues is attained through reflection. This method is pursued either perceptually (by observing and evaluating particular acts), dogmatically (by adhering to and evaluating some set of ethical principles and rules), or philosophically (a procedure Sidgwick vaguely describes as one which might accept certain judgements that perceptual and dogmatic intuitionism make, but nonetheless “require some deeper explanation *why* it is so,” as it tries “to get one or more principles more absolutely and undeniable true and evident, from which the current rules might be deduced, either just as they are commonly received or with slight modifications and rectifications.”<sup>89</sup>) Second, there is the traditional form of *utilitarianism*, which prescribes that one ought always do what is best for all. Third, *egoism*, the doctrine stating that one ought to do what is best for oneself.

Since these three methods are assumed to be rational, they must be pursued for the sake of bringing about some end. The desired ends (which Sidgwick supposedly has also found to be explicit or implicit in the moral consciousness of mankind) are *human excellence* (or “perfection”), or *happiness* (universal or individual).

But when individuals consider what ought to be done, they typically do not consistently pursue one distinctive method with a clear end in mind. Rather, according to Sidgwick, the methods are utilized in a confused combination. Nevertheless, this has yielded a massive body of thought on what is right and wrong, also known as ‘common sense morality’. Although common sense morality is far from unambiguous, it cannot be denied that people in general somehow tend to get around by means of it. When faced with the everyday moral difficulties, people normally have pretty fair ideas on what ought to be done, and do not stand paralyzed awaiting orders. Furthermore, people usually tend to be more in agreement on what ought to be done than in disagreement. And for some reason, common sense is not a static system of opinions, but constantly in flux; roughly speaking, opinions on moral matters which are found appropriate today need not be so tomorrow. Common sense morality apparently serves a function, and it is open to change.

However, common sense morality is obviously far from perfect. We might find ourselves in situations when a moral decision has to be made, and common sense provides us with no information on what would be the right thing to do. Furthermore, our common sense could occasionally clash with other people’s common sense, and we might then discover that we actually have no way of figuring out who is right. We could also find that some recommendation from

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

common sense on what ought to be done appears obviously wicked, but we just cannot put our finger on why that is so.

Nonetheless, in ordinary life we commonly do not suffer that much from living with unclear and ambiguous moral conceptions; we get along just fine anyhow. But the evident vagueness of common sense morality has disturbed many philosophers (Bentham is a prime example). Although it provides us with answers to what ought to be done in many concrete cases, it lacks intelligible explanations to *why* we should rely to these answers. Therefore, common sense morality has been regarded as the main target of rejection in favour of a fresh and firm moral system provided by philosophy (once again, Bentham would be a prime example).

Sidgwick, on the other hand, does not think that is a constructive approach. Certainly, a philosopher should "tell men what they ought to think, rather than what they do think," and to do so the philosopher is "expected to transcend Common Sense in his premises, and is allowed a certain divergence from Common Sense in his conclusions." But "the truth of a philosopher's premises will always be tested by the acceptability of his conclusions: if in any important point he be found in flagrant conflict with common opinion, his method is likely to be declared invalid."<sup>90</sup> In other words, moral philosophy should first try to make sense of common sense morality, and not straight off reject it.

Nevertheless, Sidgwick's ambition is to find out what we *truly* ought to do. But for doing so, we need a secure foundation of undeniable true *moral axioms*, formal statements or principles from which other true statements can be obtained. For such axioms to be valid, Sidgwick asserts that they must satisfy four criteria: 1) they must be stated in clear and precise terms; no vagueness or ambiguity must be allowed; 2) they must be self-evident; i.e. they must not depend upon some other premises for their certainty; 3) they must not conflict with each other; and 4) they must be supported by the "consensus of experts" in the field of moral philosophy.<sup>91</sup>

Sidgwick examines in immense detail the vast body of moral ideas found in common sense morality, looking for the secure foundation from where we can confidently say what ought to be done. The first method to be examined is perceptual intuitionism, the idea that we can say what is right and wrong by merely observing particular events and actions. Even though "probably all moral agents have experience of such particular intuitions,"<sup>92</sup> Sidgwick quickly rules it out as a plausible method. For one thing, its advocates are unable to

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 373.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., pp. 338-343.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 100.



supply any good reasons of why whatever judgement that springs to mind should be taken as the final word. If people always came to the same judgements, we would indeed have reason to suspect that the method had something going for it. But we do not; "we become aware that the moral perceptions of different minds, to all appearance equally competent to judge, frequently conflict: one condemns what another approves."<sup>93</sup>

Since perceptual intuitionism is unable to provide any axioms, and Sidgwick moves on to dogmatic intuitionism, which is given the most extensive inspection. Supporters of dogmatic intuitionism claim that our common sense morality consists of a definite set of principles and rules which by themselves provide a secure fundament of morality. If that is true, it means that the principles and rules can fulfil the criteria of being axioms. In common sense morality we find a lot of rules; we are told to be wise and benevolent, act just, obey laws, keep promises, speak the truth, and so on. To find out if any of these dictums can serve as axioms, Sidgwick examines as many as he finds necessary, where the most central concepts are those of 'wisdom', 'benevolence' and 'justice'. No doubt, he puts substantial effort in to formulating them as clearly as possible, but what he finds is not what he wants. It turns out that no principle or rule pass the demand of being moral axioms. Most of them cannot be "stated in clear and precise terms," and if they can, they turn out to be uninteresting truisms. 'Wisdom' clearly formulated offers no guidance at all, but trivially states that we should do what is right. There exists no consensus on what 'justice' really is, but a number of equally acceptable formulations, which unfortunately conflict too much with each other to be axioms. 'Benevolence' prescribes no specific duties, as there seems always to be exceptions to whom, when, where and why we should be benevolent. Et cetera.

The principles and rules of common sense that dogmatic intuitionism cherishes are not totally worthless though; they are "good for guidance." But they cannot be "elevated into scientific axioms."<sup>94</sup> In other words, they can to a certain extent give us clues on what ought to be done in certain circumstances, but not offer any secure answers to what ought to be done.

Sidgwick is however confident that self-evident axioms can be discovered and formulated through applying the method of philosophical intuitionism on common sense morality, yet these axioms will have to be "too abstract a nature, and too universal in their scope, to enable us to ascertain by immediate application of them what we ought to do in any particular case."<sup>95</sup> Dogmatic

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 379.

intuitionism might have failed to reveal any axioms, but the method did point out some threads we should follow a bit longer. Sidgwick found that the apparently vague concepts of 'justice', 'prudence' and 'benevolence', as commonly acknowledged by dogmatic intuitionism, offers elements of self-evidence when inspected more carefully.

By distilling the meaning of these concepts, Sidgwick extracts four axioms. The first, extracted from justice, reads: "It cannot be right for A to treat B in a manner in which it would be wrong for B to treat A, merely on the ground that they are two different individuals, and without there being any difference between the natures or circumstances of the two which can be stated as a reasonable ground for difference of treatment."<sup>96</sup> The second axiom, from prudence: "Mere difference of priority and posteriority in time is not a reasonable ground for having more regard to the consciousness of one moment than that of another."<sup>97</sup> The third and fourth, both from benevolence: "The good of anyone individual is of no more importance from the point of view of the universe than the good of any other"; and: "As a rational being I am bound to aim at good generally - so far as it is in my power - not merely at a particular part of it."<sup>98</sup>

Anyone is free to deny that these axioms are reasonable. But Sidgwick believed that no one who is intellectually sober could possibly do that.<sup>99</sup> These axioms should hold without exceptions and not be subject to any limitations. But, as Sidgwick points out, they are highly abstract and hard to apply in concrete cases. What they merely formally state is that we ought to bring about as much good as possible in the world, now and forever. But what is the good?

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 380.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 381.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 382

<sup>99</sup> However, at the very end of *Methods*, Sidgwick tries to tackle some problems that arise in relation to the final method, i.e. ethical *egoism*. He admits that the reasons he has provided for universalism (that we ought to bring about as much good for as many people as possible) need not convince a stubborn egoist. She can simply deny that the good of another person is equally important as his or her own good, and Sidgwick realizes that he cannot provide any firm arguments for that not being so. At most, he can claim that an egoist ought to care for the universal good since such a strategy might best serve the egoist's own interests in the long run, but he does not find that approach fully satisfying. The only way to prove to the egoist that she is acting wrongly when only taking into account his own well-being would be through revealing some metaphysical moral order in the universe that condemns that. But no one has yet unmasked such an order, and therefore this "fundamental contradiction" (ibid. p. 508) in ethics unfortunately has to remain. Anyhow, Sidgwick did not find that problem to be an issue for moral philosophy, but for "general philosophy" (Ibid. p. 508.).

Early in *Methods*, Sidgwick discusses the meaning of central moral terms, such as 'ought', 'right' and 'good' (in those contexts when 'good' is used interchangeably with 'right'), and claims that "the notion which these formal terms have in common is too elementary to admit of any formal definition."<sup>100</sup>

Although such terms cannot be so defined, they are nonetheless always correspondingly used. Whenever someone judges something to be (morally) 'right', it is because it has been found advantageous in bringing about some morally reasonable end. Indeed, there are many reasonable ends which could be striven for, but Sidgwick maintains that they must ultimately be evaluated in terms of whether they are helpful for bringing about some final end, i.e. something which is not sought for any other reason but itself.

What is the final end of moral conduct? The answer to that question reveals what is *the ultimate good*, which Sidgwick proceeds to discuss immediately after stating the axioms.

To begin with, Sidgwick rejects the popular idea that the ultimate moral good could be human virtue (or "human excellence"). Sidgwick acknowledges "the importance of urging that men should aim at an ideal of character," but he cannot find such a character to be "valuable in itself but for the acts and feelings in which it takes effect, or for the ulterior consequences of these..."<sup>101</sup>

Rather, Sidgwick argues, the ultimate human good must be to experience a certain mental state, sensing a "Desirable Consciousness."<sup>102</sup> Many mental states are commonly held to be desirable (for example, the state of observing beautiful objects, knowing the truth, exhibiting virtue, and so on), but Sidgwick assumes that no one would take these states to be desirable unless they were also enjoyable. This assumption "ought not commend itself to the sober judgement of reflective persons."<sup>103</sup> Like Mill, Sidgwick asks the reader to consult his or her "intuitive judgement after due consideration."<sup>104</sup> What we should come to understand "when... we 'sit down in a cool hour'" is that "we can only justify to ourselves the importance that we attach to any of these objects by considering its conductiveness, in one way or the other, to the happiness of sentient beings."<sup>105</sup>

In conclusion, the allegedly self-evident moral axioms discovered by philosophical intuitionism, in combination with the "sober judgement" that the

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid. p. 32.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 393.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 397.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 400.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 400.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 401.

ultimate good is conscious experiences of happiness, yield that we ought to bring about as much happiness as possible for as many sentient beings as possible, now and forever. In other words, the doctrine of utilitarianism is basically true.

However, this conclusion cannot be accepted unless it somehow make sense of common sense morality. Sidgwick does not find that to be any problem. He claims that there exists a subtle connection between common sense and utilitarianism. When people find themselves in situations where no dictate of common sense applies, they "naturally" try to solve the moral problem in utilitarian terms. When people differ on the justification of certain conflicting moral rules "each naturally supports his view by urging its Utility, however strongly he may maintain the rule to be self-evident..."<sup>106</sup> Actually, the seemingly perplexed body of thought we refer to as common sense morality is in fact a system which tries to arrive at a utilitarian equilibrium. "Utilitarianism is that to which... human development has been always tending."<sup>107</sup> Thus, what Sidgwick argues (perhaps inspired by Mill) is that a fundamental rationality (utilitarianism) can be found in common sense morality which unites the apparent confusion on the surface. Sidgwick believes he has shed light on something in "the moral consciousness of mankind" which was already there, but not always perfectly evident.

Now then, if common sense morality is ultimately based upon a utilitarian rationale, should we the general public abandon it in favour of pure utilitarian calculations (i.e. adopt the kind of moral method Bentham recommended that legislators should adhere to)? There are several reasons why they should *not*, according to Sidgwick. For one thing, the general rules and principles of conduct provided by common sense are relatively uncomplicated to follow, while utilitarian calculations require a lot of hard intellectual work. Therefore, most people would likely fail to bring out the greatest happiness for the greatest number if they attempted to calculate the consequences of their actions, instead of sticking to common sense.

Furthermore, in line with Mill's ideas, what often makes people happy is that common sense is in fact occasionally anti-utilitarian in spirit. Many things we value in life cannot be properly pursued if they would be knowingly done so for downright utilitarian reasons:

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 426.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 456-457.

A man who maintains throughout an epicurean mood, keeping his main conscious aim perpetually fixed on his own pleasure, does not catch the full spirit of the chase; his eagerness never gets just the sharpness of edge which imparts to the pleasure its highest zest. Here comes into view what we may call the fundamental *paradox of Hedonism*, that the impulse towards pleasure, if too predominant, defeats its own aim.<sup>108</sup>

For example,

the pleasures of thought and study can only be enjoyed in the highest degree by those who have an ardour of curiosity which carries the mind temporarily away from self and its sensations. In all kinds of Art... the exercise of the creative faculty is attended by intense and exquisite pleasures: but it would seem that in order to get them, one must forget them: the genuine artist at work seems to have a predominant and temporarily absorbing desire for the realisation of his ideal of beauty.<sup>109</sup>

Hence,

the doctrine that Universal Happiness is the ultimate *standard* must not be understood to imply that Universal Benevolence is the only right or always better *motive* of action. For... it is not necessary that the end which gives the criterion of rightness should always be the end at which we consciously aim: if the experience shows that the general happiness will be more satisfactorily attained if men frequently act from other motives than pure universal philanthropy, it is obvious that these other motives are reasonably to be preferred on Utilitarian principles.<sup>110</sup>

A prime mission for a convinced utilitarian would therefore be to urge the general public to act in accordance with the existing codes of conduct, instead of trying to change them.

But this does not mean that we just should leave everything as it is. Although common sense involves an underlying utilitarian rationality, that does not imply that common sense is *perfectly* utilitarian. As said, common sense does not answer all moral questions, creates conflicts now and then, and is sometimes the source for obviously wicked moral suggestions. Thus, common sense will have to be refined now and then, and the tool Sidgwick recommends for undertaking such operations is “empirical reflective hedonism”; roughly speaking, to try to perceive what actions or rules of conduct would maximize the general

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 48, my italics.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 413.

happiness, akin to Bentham's suggested procedure. Certainly, trying to estimate exactly what overall quantity of pleasure one or another act or rule will give rise to is not easy. Sidgwick acknowledges this, but consider it overly pessimistic to believe that it would be impossible. Even if utilitarian calculations have to be quite rough, they are at least better than doing nothing.

But for reasons already stated, the general public should however not attempt to make use of empirical reflective hedonism, as it would probably be self-defeating. Those who are capable of making sound utilitarian calculations could only be "a class of persons defined by exceptional qualities of intellect, temperament and character."<sup>111</sup> Who these people are, and how many of them that exist, is however not specified.

### 3.4 G.E. MOORE AND *PRINCIPIA ETHICA*

Although *The Methods of Ethics* is a pioneering work of moral philosophy, it was temporarily ignored when new questions in the field appeared at the outset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. George Edward Moore (1873-1958), one of Sidgwick's own students, was largely responsible for these new questions. Moore was a fellow and lecturer of Trinity College in Cambridge, and became professor there in 1925. His main contribution to moral philosophy, and philosophy in general, was *Principia Ethica*. Moore claimed that consequentialist ethics should not be based on its hitherto traditional theory of moral value, that is, monistic hedonism, but instead embrace a more pluralistic model. His ideas on this subject is closely connected with his critique of how certain fundamental questions regarding moral language have been overlooked by moral philosophers through time, and also his rather bold assumptions concerning the nature of moral value; therefore, his discussions on these matters will be modestly reviewed here. Furthermore, Moore questioned the former thoughts that some distinctively consequentialist method of decision could be advantageous. However, Moore has primarily not been remembered for his contributions to the debate on consequentialist ethics. His careful attention to moral language in *Principia* set off a different epoch in moral philosophy during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which has been known as the shift from substantive normative ethics to conceptual clarifications on the meaning and nature of moral language, i.e, meta-ethics.

In the preface of *Principia*, Moore writes that it appears to him

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 490.

that in Ethics, as in all other philosophical studies, the difficulties and disagreements, of which its history is full, are mainly due to a very simple cause: namely to the attempt to answer questions, without first discovering precisely *what* question it is which you desire to answer. (...) I have tried in this book to distinguish clearly two kinds of question, which moral philosophers have always professed to answer but which, as I have tried to shew, they have almost always confused both with one another and with other questions. These two questions may be expressed, the first in the form: *What kind of things ought to exist for their own sakes?* the second in the form: *What kind of actions ought we to perform?*<sup>112</sup>

The two questions are arranged in order of urgency. To find out which actions we ought to perform, we need firstly to know what things ought to exist for their own sakes - because it is such things that our moral actions should bring about. To say that something ought to exist for its own sake, in moral terms, is to ascribe it the status of being *good*. Thus, taking the question to an even more fundamental level, the first task for moral philosophy is to sort out the meaning of the term 'good'.<sup>113</sup>

Unfortunately, however, the most acute flaw of moral philosophy is that no such enquiry has been seriously undertaken. Indeed, many philosophers have asked themselves "what is good?" and provided an answer, but failed to see that that question is not a single one, but two: firstly, it could be a question concerning the *meaning* of the notion 'good' itself, and secondly, of what things in the world that *are* good.

Many philosophers have through time overlooked the first question, and hastily leaped to the second. But as the notion 'good' then stands undefined, it has only been possible to conclude that 'good' is an analytic concept or true by some definition in natural terms, such as "good is virtue," "good is pleasure," and so on. Such definitions have never uncovered the true meaning of 'good', as they are in fact *definitions*.

A concept can only be defined when it is complex, or in other words, a bundle of other concepts.<sup>114</sup> But according to Moore, 'good' cannot be defined, as it is not a complex concept. It is rather a simple and undefinable *property*, which is a

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<sup>112</sup> *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (first edition 1903, last (used here) 1948), Preface, vii-viii, last two italics mine.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5: "how 'good' is to be defined, is the most fundamental question in all Ethics."

<sup>114</sup> A simple example: The concept 'cow' can be defined in a number of ways, by picking out crucial features of the object like "adult four-legged female animal which produces milk and eat vegetables and occasionally utters moo" And the concepts used here to define a cow are themselves also complex; a 'leg' can furthermore be defined as a 'one of the parts of the body of a human or animal that is used for standing and walking'.

part of certain natural objects, but not itself a natural object, akin to 'yellow'.<sup>115</sup> If one does not agree on this, one has to take 'good' to be a complex concept, or have no meaning at all.

Concerning the first possibility, Moore says, put briefly, that the "hypothesis that disagreement about the meaning of good is disagreement with regard to the correct analysis of a given whole, may be most plainly seen to be incorrect by consideration of the fact that, whatever definition that is offered, it may always be asked, with significance, of the complex so defined, whether it is itself good."<sup>116</sup>

If 'good' on the other hand had no meaning at all, it would mean the end of moral philosophy as we know it. But this is hardly the case, claims Moore. Even though we cannot exactly put our finger on what 'good' is, we do think it has a meaning. We *do* ask if certain things are good or not, and we *do* think there is some answer. When we dispute whether something is good or not, we do not disagree on the meaning of 'good', but of what things that possess the property good.

Those philosopher's who have tried to define 'good' in natural terms have therefore committed what Moore calls *the naturalistic fallacy*; they have tried to define something which is not constituted in such a way that it can be defined in the first place. Therefore, the most fundamental question of moral philosophy has for most of the time been wrongly answered. Moore argue that both Bentham and Mill committed the naturalistic fallacy in their writings (but whether this is true is certainly open for discussion). That mistake does not all by itself refute their conceptions on moral value, as they very well could have employed other reasons (than by definition) for stating that the appropriate end of all human action is universal pleasure/happiness.

Someone whom Moore believes recognized the need of employing such other reasons was Sidgwick, and Moore praises him for being (as far as he knows) the only ethical writer "who has clearly recognised and stated this fact," i.e., that 'good' cannot be defined.<sup>117</sup> Sidgwick sat down in a "cool hour" and carefully consulted his intuitions, and came to the conclusion that the only thing he could reasonably find to possess the property *good* in the world was conscious

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 10: "We may try to define [yellow], by describing its physical equivalent; we may state what kind of light-vibrations must stimulate the normal eye, in order that we may perceive it. But a moment's reflection is sufficient to shew that those light-vibrations are not themselves what we mean by yellow. *They* are not what we perceive."

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 17. (Moore intends Sidgwick's elaboration on the meaning of moral terms in *Methods of Ethics*, Book 1, chapter 3.)



experiences of pleasure, a conclusion he found to be in perfect line with common sense. Although Moore believe this method of determining what has intrinsic value is adequate, he challenges Sidgwick's conclusion. Moore's own intuitions rejects Sidgwick's monistic hedonism altogether. To see this, Moore asks the reader to

imagine one world exceedingly beautiful. (...) And then imagine the ugliest world you can possible conceive. (...) Such a pair of worlds we are entitled to compare: they fall within Prof. Sidgwick's meaning, and the comparison is highly relevant to it. The only thing we are not entitled to imagine is that any human being ever has or ever, by any possibility, *can*, live in either, can ever see and enjoy the beauty of the one or hate the foulness of the other. Well, even so... is it irrational to hold that it is better that the beautiful world should exist, that the one which is ugly? (...) Certainly I cannot help thinking that it would; and I hope that some may agree with me in this extreme instance.<sup>118</sup>

That Moore merely "hopes" that someone will agree with him has of course to do with the fact that clash of intuitions cannot be settled. One just has to 'feel' for oneself what intuition one accepts. But intuitions can be more or less well thought out, and Moore means that Sidgwick has not thought things out very well .

For one thing, an important matter Moore believed Sidgwick overlooked in his cool hour was the *principle of organic wholes*. According to Moore, many things can by intuition be found to possess the property of good, thus have intrinsic value. But things can also be bad, having negative value, or indifferent (having no value whatsoever). We may find that the existence of a beautiful object is good, lies are bad, but concrete is indifferent. Individual things can be parts of larger wholes, which themselves also can be good, bad or indifferent. One might here jump to the conclusion that the total sum of intrinsic value of a whole is equal to the sum of the parts. But this is something Moore denies, and illustrates the point with the example of being conscious of a beautiful object, a whole which has great intrinsic value. But the two parts of the whole have little value: a beautiful object is "commonly held to have none at all," and while merely being conscious is positive, it is insignificantly so.

Then, what has moral value? Sidgwick maintains that only one thing possesses the property good, namely conscious experience of pleasure. Moore finds that idea "absurd": "Could we accept, as a very good thing, that mere

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<sup>118</sup> *Principia*, p. 84. It is worth noticing that if one accepts Moore's intuition that goodness is independent of conscious experience, one has accepted a rather bold metaphysical assumption: that the ultimate good is something independent of human experience, i.e. 'ethical realism'.

consciousness of pleasure, and absolutely nothing else, should exist, even in the greatest quantities? I think we can have no doubt about answering: No.”<sup>119</sup> Instead, the greatest goods we find are complex wholes made up of a wide variety of individual parts. In *Principia*, but not in later works, he pointed out some wholes he found belonging to the absolute top, especially “personal affections and aesthetic enjoyments” as they “include *all* the greatest, and *by far* the greatest, goods we can imagine...”<sup>120</sup> Thus, Moore opened up the possibility for a utilitarian to regard such things as close personal relations, including friendship, as something which has final (intrinsic) value, i.e., not merely instrumental in relation to the universal net balance of pleasure.

Moore, however, never referred to himself as being a ‘utilitarian’, perhaps because he found the term too conceptually connected with narrow hedonism. But he fully agreed with the utilitarians that the consequences count – “right and wrong conduct must be judged by its results.”<sup>121</sup> Moore did however differ in some respects from his predecessors on how people should act to bring about the best consequences. Bentham rejected, at least demagogically, all existing moral customs and rules in favour of pure utilitarian calculations prior to any act (at least when it came to legislation). Mill suggested that one should have some faith in commonly held moral wisdom, and merely calculate when sticking to some established moral rule obviously would be for the worse. Sidgwick apparently left all utilitarian calculations to a minor group of experts, arguing that the masses would be better off if they followed the moral rules common sense advised.

Contrary to the earlier utilitarians, Moore claimed that one ought never, *ever*, break those fundamental moral rules that society in general accepts, even if one strongly believed that doing so would be for the overall best. Moore argued for such strict obedience by appeal to our limited capabilities of predicting consequences; as we can never fully know what consequences an act will lead to, we should be very careful in what we do. Moore thought that we have good reasons to believe that unconditional obedience to the moral rules of society is for the best, as, for a fact, society has prevailed. However, Moore is not stubbornly conservative. The fundamental moral rules of society he defended were in fact very few. Moore was unfortunately not very specific on this issue, but as typical rules that must be obeyed at all cost he mentions the rule not to

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<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106. (Therefore, Moore’s theory has later often been referred to by others as ‘ideal utilitarianism’ or ‘pluralistic consequentialism’.)

murder, the rule of keeping one's promises and the rule of respecting private property.

Yet, we might find ourselves in situations when decisions have to be made and no fundamental moral rule is in fact applicable. In such situations, we are allowed to calculate what ought to be done to bring about the best consequences. But that should be performed with utmost caution. Moore supplies the reader with three simple guidelines to be kept in mind.

First, "a lesser good, for which an individual has strong preference... is more likely to be a proper object for him to aim at, than a greater one, which he is unable to appreciate. For natural inclination renders it immensely more easy to attain that for which such inclination is felt." Second, "almost every one has a much stronger preference for things which closely concern himself" and therefore "it will in general be right for a man to aim rather at goods affecting himself and those in whom he has a strong personal interest" because "the best thing we can do is to aim at securing some good in which we are concerned, since for that very reason we are far more likely to secure it." Third, "goods, which can be secured in a future so near as to be called 'the present', are in general to be preferred to those which, being in a further future, are, for that reason, far less certain of attainment."<sup>122</sup>

If these guidelines sound dubious, Moore's pessimistic view on our ability foresee consequences should be remembered. Moore does of course not claim that near good is somehow better than remote good, that an amount of good today is better than an equal amount of good tomorrow, and so on, but simply that we are probably more able to enhance the level of good in the world if we do not set our aims too high or too far away.

### 3.5 WHY BE A CONSEQUENTIALIST?

The classic utilitarians evidently holds different views on the issues of value and normativity. They disagree on the nature and scope of the good, and how and when one should act to best bring about this good. Nevertheless, at the bottom line they are in full agreement: one ought always do what will lead to the best consequences. That is, their moral theories are all built upon the idea of consequentialism.

Advocates of consequentialism often defend their theories by appealing to their alleged intuitive attractions. It is said to be hard to seriously consent to the opposing idea that one ought *not* always do what will lead to the best

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., pp. 166-167.

consequences. A consequentialist theory can be very precisely formulated and stand in no need for obvious ad hoc assumptions, and will leave no theoretical doubts on what one ought to do in cases of existing and possible moral dilemmas. It thus matches the standard that is attributed to scientific theories, regarding simplicity, accuracy and scope. It apparently leaves no grey areas on the moral map; anything and anyone is subject to moral evaluation.

Still, however, there exist apparent problems. But these are often excused for the time being (after all, no one has ever seriously claimed that consequentialist ethics is *perfect*), given the alternatives. The superiority of consequentialism is often demonstrated by considering the flaws of the major rivalling moral systems, e.g. virtue and duty theories.

Virtue theories holds that the foundation of morality is the development of good character traits, or virtues.<sup>123</sup> Even though this may indeed sound intuitively attractive, many consequentialists often argue that virtue theories do not get much further. No one has yet been able to clearly specify what the virtues are, let alone how they are to be acquired. Furthermore, normative virtue theories can be found too vague for comfort when it comes to the understanding and resolution of concrete moral and political dilemmas (for example, problems regarding abortion, euthanasia, distributive and retributive justice, and so on), as they seem unable to convincingly point out what in fact would be 'virtuous' (i.e., right) to do in such cases.

Duty (deontological) theories emphasize that morality is essentially a matter of duties or obligations.<sup>124</sup> Normative duty theories typically provide fairly detailed lists of what one ought to do, usually by stating what one ought not to do: do not steal, do not murder, do not lie, do not act out of the wrong motive, and so on. Different traditions in duty theory hold different views on what the duties are and from where they are derived. But they all assert that the duties are fixed and absolute; they must be followed at all times, irrespective of the consequences. Thus, duty theory is in a sense the most clear opposite to consequentialist theory, and therefore, consequentialists have often seen such theory as the main target of criticism. For one thing, it has been claimed that normative duty theories occasionally yield ambiguous answers (or no answers at all) to what ought to be done in certain cases of practical moral dilemmas, thus leaving the individual in need of moral guidance with no other choice but to

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<sup>123</sup> The first and most influential account of virtue theory appears in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

<sup>124</sup> The leading duty theorist in moral philosophy is naturally Immanuel Kant, who developed his ethical system in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), and *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1798).

decide what to do by means of flipping a coin. But the most fundamental critique is that duty theorists simply fail to provide any acceptable reasons whatsoever for their stubborn assertion that duties should be obeyed *irrespective of the consequences*. Unless one for some reason simply takes “because!” for an answer, consequentialists argue that the only way to convincingly vindicate such obedience would be to somehow show that it leads to the best consequences. In other words, duty theory stand unsupported until the day it can be proven to be based on consequentialism, an idea which has echoed through the ages ever since the days of Bentham.

Whether or not consequentialists are right on these matters can of course be questioned, and I certainly do not pretend to have done the alternative moral systems justice with these brief remarks. My intention has rather been to outline a few basic reasons for why anyone would support consequentialism instead of these alternatives. From such reasons, some might even want to be consequentialists, that is, actively adhere to some consequentialist normative ethical theory. But what it means to ‘be’ a consequentialist, and if such a person also can be a real friend, are the topics of the next chapter.

## 4

# Consequentialism as a Personal Morality and Friendship

We have now finally reached the question, “Can a consequentialist be a real friend?” In this chapter, this question will be discussed in light of the recent debate on the subject, and the main arguments from those I take to be the most influential participants will be examined. Before we undertake this discussion, some preliminary issues need to be explained.

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION: CONCEPTIONS AND STRUCTURE

What does it mean to *be* a ‘consequentialist’? Here, that notion will signify an agent who has seriously adopted some typical consequentialist normative ethical theory as a *personal morality*; i.e., an agent who has intentionally chosen to successively let all of her thoughts and acts - in everyday living and doing - be coordinated and regulated in some way that is supposed to achieve the distinctive aim of her moral theory. The type of consequentialism that will here be of interest is the classic *agent-neutral* version, which formally prescribes that everything an agent does ought to be for the overall best, judged from an impartial standpoint; in other words, anything an agent does is ‘right’ if it leads to the best possible outcome, that is, leads to best possible net balance of intrinsic value, and ‘wrong’ if it does not. (This characterization is indeed rather roughly put, but it is sufficient for the oncoming discussion.) Of importance, however, is that the agent need not objectively achieve this aim to be counted as a ‘consequentialist’ in this context. What is here of weight is that the agent, to the best of her knowledge and beliefs, at least aspires to do so.

An agent can however make theoretical and practical use of a consequentialist theory in a number of ways that do not qualify as adopting it as a personal morality. Since an understanding of the notion of ‘personal morality’ is vital for the oncoming discussion, I shall for the sake of reaching some clarity on this

matter mention two alternative usages that I find commonplace: consequentialism as an *academic morality*, or as a *Sunday morality*.

Accepting consequentialism as an ‘academic morality’ is merely to take an intellectual standpoint. This is not to say that such a standpoint will have no practical effects for the agent whatsoever. As the agent takes consequentialism to be true, she might very well spend a considerable lot of time working with the theory, analyzing and defending it at philosophical seminars and conferences, writing articles and books on the subject. Nevertheless, this is not to adopt the theory as a personal morality. No matter how much time the agent contemplates the theory, she need not aspire to actually live up to what the theory prescribes. In everyday living and doing, the agent might very well pursue radically different moral ideas or have no clear opinion at all on what ought to be done in actual-practical matters. If the agent anyhow managed to fulfill what consequentialism prescribes, it would merely be a coincidence.

A ‘Sunday consequentialist’ occasionally make practical use of the theory for the purpose of evaluating the rightness or wrongness of particular actions or events, prior to, or after, they have occurred. But like the academic consequentialist, the agent need not aspire to personally live up to whatever conclusions are drawn from such sporadic speculations. And even if she does, it might only be whenever the particular action or event that was evaluated comes within the agent’s range of sight. However, that is not enough to justify claiming that such an agent has adopted consequentialism as a personal morality. A personal morality *constantly* co-ordinates and regulates the thoughts and acts of the agent, not just occasionally – for example, at church, in hospitals, at the government house, and so on. In other words, an academic consequentialist looks on consequentialism as a kind of theoretical ‘toy’, a Sunday consequentialist occasionally implements it as a ‘tool’, while someone who has adopted consequentialism as a personal morality tries to more fully integrate the theory in her everyday life.

Now then, what it means to be a real friend has already been discussed; it is essentially about holding a special perspective on another agent and the relation one has with that agent. Thus, the question is if an agent who has adopted a consequentialist ethical theory as a personal morality is able to hold such a perspective. But from what has been said so far, I believe some have already decided what the answer is: it is either *obviously no* or *obviously yes*. Such quick responses are however often based upon way too hastily made assumptions.

Those who claim that the answer is *obviously no* typically reason something like this. Since agent-neutral consequentialism prescribes that we always ought

to do what will be in the interest of all, any agent who adheres to such a normative ethical theory will inevitably view all personal relations as instruments for making the world a better place, at all cost avoid loving certain people as that could make her biased, and not value persons for whom they are, but merely as soulless bricks that should be shuffled around for making the outcome best for all. This is not to say that the agent necessarily openly states or shows that this is what she thinks; the agent might very well conceal all this, and pretend it was not the case, deceiving all people around - being the typical caricature of the 'sly and cunning calculating consequentialist' that is now and then presented. The only interest a consequentialist could take in 'friendship' would be from a distanced and objective point of view. She might find it suitable that others are real friends, but the agent is not interested in genuinely pursuing such relations herself.

What is too hastily assumed here is that anyone who adopts a consequentialist ethical theory as a personal morality does not *want* to personally engage in any friendship-relation, or at least not genuinely. Well, if that were so, obviously no consequentialist could be a real friend, and the issue would be settled by default. But it is not obviously so. To be able to discuss the question, we have to take for granted that the consequentialist in question wants to be a real friend, and this is certainly not a too spectacular assumption. A consequentialist can for various reasons find it acceptable to be a real friend, perhaps because she is convinced that it is utmost valuable (perhaps because of the arguments presented in chapter two), and that it is for the overall best if she personally pursues such relations.<sup>125</sup> However, out of empirical investigations (or due to

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<sup>125</sup> Frank Jackson has argued that an agent-neutral consequentialist can justify a personal pursuit of friendship by appeal to some uncomplicated decision-theoretic deliberations: "Imagine that you are a police inspector who has been assigned the task of controlling a large crowd at a forthcoming soccer match. You have to choose between two plans: the scatter plan and the sector plan. The scatter plan is to put you in the following terms. 'Each person in the crowd is of equal value. Any plan which told a member of the police squad to focus his or her attention on any particular person or group of persons would be immoral. Therefore, each member of the squad must roam through the crowd doing good wherever he or she can among as widely distributed a group of spectators as possible.' The sector plan put to you in the following terms. 'Each member of the squad should be assigned their own sector of the crowd to be their special responsibility. This way members of the squad... will build up a knowledge of what is happening in their sector and of potential trouble makers in it, which will help them decide on the best course of action should there be trouble. [...] Although, as a general rule, each squad member should confine his or her attention to their assigned sector, [but] if things are going particularly badly in another sector... then a transfer of attention may well be justified.'" See Frank Jackson, "Decision-theoretic Consequentialism and the Nearest and Dearest Objection," *Ethics*, 101 (1991): pp. 473-474.



the other arguments presented in chapter two), some might of course come to the conclusion that they ought not personally to pursue friendship. As a point of reference, this type of agent will be referred to as the *Anti-Friendship Agent*.

Those who found the answer to be *obviously yes* could now be fully convinced that they are right. They typically reason something like this. Contrary to certain other moral theories, consequentialism does not oblige agents to adopt a particular perspective on other people and the world. Consequentialism merely states that we ought always to do what will make the outcome best. If holding the perspective necessary for being a real friend is found to be of utmost importance to ourselves and the world, i.e., will lead to the best outcome, then evidently consequentialism approves such a perspective. Therefore, the answer is obviously yes, a consequentialist can be a real friend. (In addition, some might declare that the only interesting issue regarding consequentialism and friendship is if anyone *ought* to hold such a perspective.)

But what is too hastily assumed here is that if consequentialism grants the perspective of friendship, then a consequentialist will have no problem in holding such a perspective. Even if a consequentialist finds that she should be a real friend, it is still open for discussion if such an agent actually can be a real friend.

Why is it not certain that an agent who has adopted a consequentialist ethical theory as a personal morality, and finds it apt to be (not merely pretend to be) a real friend, can be a real friend? Well, something that comes part and parcel with adopting an ethical theory as a personal morality is that one will intentionally relate all acts and projects to one's moral aim; a consequentialist will inevitably be *motivated* by a concern of always doing what will make the outcome best.<sup>126</sup> A main controversy in the debate to be considered concerns if the motivational state of such an agent is incompatible with the perspective required for being a real friend. So, the core of the problem has in a sense to do with the 'psychology' of such an agent, not with what she *does*. It does not matter if the agent manages to perform those actions we may take to be appropriate for a real friend; perhaps she cannot be said to be a real friend anyway, because these actions stem from a perspective which is distorted due to the agent's motivational state.

But obviously, one can be motivated in different ways, and I have found that there are four types of consequentialists that are discussed in the debate. These are agents that, in my terminology, have taken on different *approaches*, that is

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<sup>126</sup> If the agent is not so motivated, she has not adopted the theory as a personal morality, but is rather an Academic Consequentialist or a Sunday Consequentialist.

they have incorporated their distinctive moral aim into their motivational structures in different ways.

First, there is *The Naïve Approach*. This agent is in a pretty simple and straightforward way directly motivated by her consequentialist ambition in every thought and act. As will be pretty obvious, this approach stands out from the other (*strategic*) approaches; many will find it to be a caricature of a consequentialist. But it will be taken into account anyway, as it is not an uncommon or unbelievable caricature. Second, *The Simple Strategic Approach*. This agent is in the very pursuit of certain projects (such as friendship) directly motivated in a way that is found appropriate in relation to the project pursued. These motivations could be non-consequentialist to their character – nonetheless, this agent knowingly justifies having such motives by appealing to their contribution to the overall good, and is always aware of this. In a fairly apparent way to the agent, she is thus indirectly motivated and regulated by her consequentialist aspiration. Third, *The Advanced Strategic Approach*. This agent has, like the Simple Strategic agent, found it morally defensible and suitable to be directly motivated by other concerns than her consequentialist aspiration in the pursuit of certain projects. But unlike the Simple Strategic agent, this agent is in the pursuit of those projects not conscious of this justification. The agent is only attentive to her consequentialist ambition if it turns out that being directly motivated in a certain way turns out to not make the outcome best, and the agent needs to reconsider her way of life by means of consequentialist deliberations. This agent is thus in a more intricate way indirectly motivated by her moral aims. Finally, *The Esoteric Strategic Approach*. This agent is similar to the Advanced Strategic agent, but with the difference that this agent has decided to never reconsider her direct motives from a consequentialist standpoint. Once this agent has (by means of consequentialist deliberations) settled for a motivational structure, it is fixed and forever. In a rather extreme sense, this agent is indirectly regulated and motivated by her consequentialist moral aim.

Even though I have only listed four approaches, they should capture most scenarios. Ideally, they should encompass all the possible ways an agent could be motivated by her consequentialist ambition within the limits of still being a ‘consequentialist’, i.e., having adopted a consequentialist ethical theory as a personal morality. (Because one cannot take the connection between moral aims and motivations too far. If an agent were not motivated at all by her moral reasons, then it would be inappropriate to speak of a personal morality. And if the agent has not adopted a consequentialist ethical theory as a personal

morality, well, then she is not a ‘consequentialist’ any more, and as a result the question if she can be a friend *qua* consequentialist cannot be discussed.)

I shall explain some details regarding the structures and justifications of these approaches as the discussion proceeds. However, to say that these are the types of consequentialists that figure in the debate is not to say that these motivational structures are always clearly distinguished. The disputers generally speak of only two motivational structures, that of being *directly* motivated and that of being *indirectly* motivated. (While the Naïve Approach is a typical example of an agent who is directly motivated, the other three are variants of how one can be indirectly motivated.) In consequence, this makes certain argumentations confusing. There are many arguments in this debate, and most of these are explicitly directed against ‘indirect’ consequentialists, but since indirection can take at least three forms, not all these arguments strike their intended target.<sup>127</sup> Hopefully, my distinctions should sort out some confusion. I believe that we can understand and take certain arguments more seriously if we put them in context of these four motivational states.

Now then, it has been argued that certain approaches (motivational structures) are not possible to reconcile with friendship. Is this true? This is what I will attempt to figure out, by examining these approaches, one by one, and ask the question, “Can this consequentialist be a real friend?” – in other words, is this particular motivational structure possible to combine with the perspective required for being a real friend? The answer could be yes or no, but certainly not *obviously* yes or no.

For the first three approaches (the Naïve, Simple Strategic and Advanced Strategic), this question will be dealt with by considering two perspectives, both

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<sup>127</sup> An example is Peter Railton’s much discussed “sophisticated consequentialist” (developed in “Alienation, Consequentialism and the Demands of Morality,” *Consequentialism and Its Critics*, edited by Samuel Scheffler, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1988; first published elsewhere 1984): 93-133), who is supposed to be a consequentialist who is somewhat indirectly motivated. However, Railton does not specify *how* and *when* this agent should consider his moral aims, but ambiguously states that she should not think like a consequentialist at all times, but at the same time should be aware that she is a consequentialist. Railton’s agent could thus be interpreted as either being a Simple Strategic agent, or an Advanced Strategic agent. I assume that Railton takes his agent to be an Advanced Strategic agent, because he suggests (albeit without going into much detail) that constant awareness of one’s moral aim might be self-defeating. Certain critics (e.g. Dean Cocking and Justin Oakley, “Indirect Consequentialism, Friendship, and the Problem of Alienation,” *Ethics*, 106 (1995): 86-111) seem to interpret Railton’s agent as being a Simple Strategic agent, and therefore their arguments do not really hit the intended mark (that is, Railton’s “sophisticated consequentialist”). I have found many such misinterpretations in the debate which are due to vague characterizations of the notion ‘consequentialist’, but I shall however not push such issues in my own discussions.

equally important. The first is quite naturally that of the main character, the consequentialist. I shall call this the *internal* perspective. Does one approach inevitably make the consequentialist unable to embrace the perspective necessary for friendship? The second perspective will be that of the agent's friends. This will be called the *external* perspective. Will the fact that the agent is a consequentialist who has adopted some approach make it troublesome for her friends to regard the agent as a friend? A consequentialist who seriously wishes to pursue friendship cannot disregard this perspective. Although many projects in life only require that the agent pursuing them have the appropriate perspective, friendship is an *inter*-personal relation. Even if has consequentialist who has adopted an approach can be found reasonably able to view her friends appropriately, the case is not over. Because friendship is not the case if one's friends for some reason cannot regard one as such.<sup>128</sup>

When considering the fourth and final approach (Esoteric Strategic), the investigation will not deal with the perspective of the consequentialist or her friends. It will there be assumed that the agent embraces a perspective that goes in line with friendship, and that her friends accept this. Instead, it will be questioned if the fact that the agent *has had* a certain perspective once upon a time is troublesome for friendship. This is also an important question, because we can then see that the issue could be even more complicated. If one claim that the Esoteric Strategic agent cannot be both a consequentialist and a real friend, this must either be due to that one find that the agent is not a 'consequentialist' or not a 'real friend'. If this is so, my whole discussion is actually a failure from scratch. I shall, however, conclude that all four approaches are possible to reconcile with friendship.

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<sup>128</sup> However, the difference between internal and external perspectives is not always discussed separately in the debate, and some debaters do not even seem to recognize the distinction. But to make sense of certain arguments, and take them seriously, this distinction is necessary. Obviously, a necessary presupposition for discussing this perspective is that the consequentialist's friends are aware that the consequentialist is in fact a consequentialist. If the agent's were not so, it would be hard to see what the problem is. But what if the agent's friends do not know about his moral aims because the consequentialist has intentionally deceived them, is he then a real friend? This seems to be a problem for the internal perspective related to the external. Although it is an interesting question, I will leave it aside for now.

## 4.2 THE NAIVE APPROACH

Anyone who adopts consequentialism as a personal morality by some approach will initially make two assumptions. First, that the theory in question is true (from which meta-ethical speculation this conclusion is derived does not really matter here); second, the theory should have normative force, it should co-ordinate and regulate the agent in everyday living and doing.<sup>129</sup> These are the easy parts; they are after all merely formal assumptions. The hard part follows. How the theory should substantially operate normatively for an agent is not automatically given. Understanding that requires both conceptual analyses and empirical research. Depending upon what kind of empirical research that is being performed, and how such data is interpreted, agents who have adopted consequentialism as a personal morality may very well differ in opinions regarding which actions do and do not achieve their ultimate moral aims in certain actual situations. Involved in these deliberations is the issue of which motivational structure is for the best.

What unites those who adopt the Naïve Approach is that they take their consequentialist moral aim to be *directly motivational*. If these agents find themselves to have a moral reason for acting, this will also be their immediate motive for doing it. In contrast to the ‘strategic’ approaches that will follow, the Naïve agents recognizes no ‘middle step’ between their accepted moral justifications (reasons) for performing a certain act, and her motives for that act. The agents have for some reason dismissed the idea of motivational indirection, that consequentialism might justify the agent to act out of motives that need not be instantly expressed in the same terms as the moral theory. So, when asking such agents why something ought to be done, there will be no question about the answer: because it is what their moral theory prescribes them to do! It is their all-embracing moral duty; they perceive it as being the inevitable purpose for everything that ought to be done. And since the agents have adopted the theory as a personal morality, this must concern every act, day in and day out.

Why would an agent come to adopt the Naive Approach? I do not really know. I have never met such a consequentialist, and I do not think there are many of them around.<sup>130</sup> This could be someone who has quickly skimmed through the works of Bentham and Mill, wrongly interpreting the latter as

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<sup>129</sup> Academic consequentialists can settle with the first assumption. Sunday consequentialists must also accept the first, but can redefine the second to fit whatever practical purpose they want the theory to serve.

<sup>130</sup> This is not to say that I have never met people who have claimed to be such consequentialists, but after closer inspection they have all turned out to be Academic or Sunday consequentialists.

suggesting that one should always think like a utilitarian in everyday living and doing. To my knowledge, no distinguished philosopher has ever defended this approach; on the contrary, it is often put forward as a prime example of how one should *not* make practical use of consequentialism. The common explanation is that it is contra-productive, or even self-defeating.<sup>131</sup> As said, the Naïve Approach probably depicts a caricature of a consequentialist.

But the question here is, can this kind of consequentialist be a real friend?

#### 4.2.1 Internal Perspective: Split Vision

Influential arguments in the contemporary debate on consequentialism and friendship for the position that this type of consequentialist cannot be a real friend has been provided by Michael Stocker in his article "The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories."<sup>132</sup> According to Stocker, consequentialists are not able to adequately combine the moral reason that their moral theory provides, with those motives that friendship requires. This leads to a 'moral schizophrenia' - which ruins the agent's possibilities of pursuing friendship properly.<sup>133</sup>

Stocker's argumentation is based upon two premises. Both of them are true, here. First, consequentialism provides a *distinctive moral reason*, which for an agent that has adopted the Naïve Approach is directly motivational: anything that is done must without exceptions lead to the best outcome. Such an agent

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<sup>131</sup> C.f. *Utilitarianism* (in Ryan (1987), p. 289) and *Methods of Ethics* (p. 413). One could interpret Bentham as promoting this approach in *Principles*, but all such interpretations are wrong. Actually reading Bentham reveals that he never suggested that his theory should be adopted as a 'personal morality', but merely be utilized as a 'Sunday' theory for legislators.

<sup>132</sup> Published in *Journal of Philosophy*, 73 (1976), pp. 453-466. I must however admit that I find Stocker's article rather perplexing. It is not always sparkling clear what he is talking about. First and foremost, it lacks a comprehensible definition of 'consequentialist'. Stocker speaks of such an agent broadly and without qualifications. But it is somewhat apparent from his sporadic characterizations that he primarily intends someone who is consciously and directly motivated by consequentialism as a personal morality (c.f. p. 463 and p. 465). Moreover, towards the end of his article, Stocker grants the possibility that consequentialism might encourage indirection, but shortly states that "in regard to something of such personal concern, so close to and so internal to a person as ethics, talk of indirection is both implausible and baffling" (p. 463). Whether that is correct or not is a question that will be postponed to approaches that include indirection, e.g. all but this one. (It should also be mentioned that his critique is said to be directed to other moral theories too, those "prominent in the English-speaking philosophical world," p. 455. Stocker does however not identify those theories in more words than "current rule utilitarianism" and "current deontologies," p. 459.)

<sup>133</sup> But not only friendship, but also many other things, such as "the great goods of love... affection, fellow feeling, and community," *ibid.*, p. 461.

will consciously not do anything that she does not think contributes to the best possible universal net balance of good. Second, if an agent is to be able to properly pursue and engage in an interpersonal relation such as friendship, it must be done with the appropriate motives. This because friendship is a project that is *constituted* by being carried out with certain motives; if it is not, it is not friendship. Such motives are to directly "care for the beloved and, that one be prepared 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>134</sup> Even though this is rather shortly put, it is not an especially controversial premise, unless one takes the term 'friendship' to denote some different kind of relation than how it is understood here.

Now then, according to Stocker, these two sets of motivation are not compatible with each other. Being *directly motivated* in a way that is appropriate for friendship, and also *directly motivated* by what consequentialism prescribes, are motivations that - when directed at the same time towards the same project - clash. A consequentialist theory only takes into account the universal net balance of good and nothing else; everything and everyone are (in raw theory) subject to be used as means for, and evaluated in terms of, the fulfillment of this concern. The Naïve consequentialist is fully aware of this concern and also directly motivated by it. But if the agent also desires to be a real friend, she will also comprehend (unless some conceptual confusion is the case) that friends are not to be perceived in such a way; friends cannot be regarded as mere tools for the sake of bringing out the best universal balance of good, as it would then not be "a final goal of one's concern and action." Therefore, one cannot smoothly view a friend and do things for a friend out of the motives necessary for friendship, and *at the same time* out of the motives that the moral reason consequentialism provides. The motives are hopeless to 'harmonize', as they are mutually exclusive and offer no interrelated support. An agent that is motivated in both these ways at the same time will experience a 'moral schizophrenia' - a "position that is psychologically uncomfortable, difficult, or even untenable," and makes "us and our lives essentially fragmented and incoherent."<sup>135</sup>

I will, for the sake of the discussion to follow, acknowledge that the perspective *qua* consequentialist and *qua* friend are incompatible - and that anyone who has adopted the Naive Approach also has to embrace both these

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 456.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 456.

perspectives at the same time.<sup>136</sup> (However, note that the alleged problems this ‘incompatibility’ might yield are not only problems for those who accepts a consequentialist theory that do not include ‘friendship’ in its index of intrinsic value, because even if the agent takes ‘friendship’ to be intrinsically valuable (like G.E. Moore), this does not in consequentialist terms automatically imply that the agent’s personal friendships are somehow special; what still only counts is the universal net balance of friendships.) In this discussion, I shall steer clear of the term ‘moral schizophrenia’. Instead, I will call the phenomenon that arises when someone holds those perspectives at the same time ‘split vision’.<sup>137</sup> (Because Stocker’s notion is quite tendentious, and suggests that the agent is somewhat insane.) Now, the question is if split vision will distort the agent’s internal perspective to the extent that the agent cannot view her friends as *friends*?

Stocker uses a considerable amount of space explaining why split vision leads to a less good life. His entire argumentation regarding that is based upon the premise that “one mark of a good life is a harmony between one’s motives and [moral] reasons...”<sup>138</sup> Maybe that is so. But that is not the issue here. When it comes to the question of the agent’s internal perspective, Stocker remains utterly silent. He does however conclude that, “I have been concerned with what sort of motives people can have if they are to be able to realize the great goods of love, friendship, affection, fellow feeling, and community. And I have argued that, if we take as motives, embody in our motives, those various things which

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<sup>136</sup> However, it would be to proceed to fast to argue that these perspectives (*qua* friend, *qua* consequentialist) are not necessarily incompatible on basis that a consequentialist can (out of consequentialist deliberations) find it reasonable to *only* hold the perspective appropriate for friendship, i.e., not being directly motivated by distinctively consequentialist concerns at all when pursuing friendship. Because then one do not really bite the bullet and tackle the possible problems for the Naïve agent, but merely suggests that a consequentialist should adopt some ‘strategic approach’ instead. Maybe no sensible consequentialist would adopt this approach (and instead go for some ‘strategic’ form); but *if* someone did, would that constitute a problem for friendship? *That* is the question here.

<sup>137</sup> Note that split vision is not something which is uniquely a result of being a Naïve consequentialist. One could for example be a Naïve Christian or Naïve Biologist. A former could both embrace the perspective of persons as irreplaceable individuals created by an all-loving God, and at the same time as replaceable items that are only to serve as means for bringing out God’s ‘long-term plan for the world’. The latter could both view people as being genuinely altruistic and having a free will, and at the same time as egotistical robots completely controlled by what their ‘selfish genes’ find appropriate in relation to the biological evolution.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 453.



recent ethical theories hold [including consequentialism] to be ultimately good or right, we will, of necessity, be unable to have those motives.”<sup>139</sup>

Indeed, the naive consequentialist might be less able to ‘realize’ friendship because of the split vision. But that cannot simply be because the agent is “unable to have those motives” required. Because it follows from Stocker’s own argumentation that that conclusion is not true. If he is to make any reasonable sense of ‘moral schizophrenia’, he must accept that an agent can have two sets of incompatible motives of the kind outlined in the premises. This is, of course, also what he does. But if that had not been possible - say, because one set ‘of necessity’ deformed the other - there would be no comprehensible schizophrenia. Instead, we would have an agent that either did not want to pursue friendship (because the agent lets her consequentialist perspective deforms that of friendship, leading to the question being settled by default), or did not want to have consequentialism as a personal morality (the other way around, and then the agent would no longer be a consequentialist). Then why did Stocker anyhow say that *the agent* would be “unable to have those motives”? I do not know. But one possible explanation is that Stocker blends the Naive approach with the Simple Strategic (to be discussed later). The Simple Strategic agent does not have two perspectives at the same time, but one, which tries to combine those that are here split. Anyway, it is, as said, still possible that the Naïve consequentialist is less able to ‘realize’ friendship. Even though it cannot be because of the internal perspective per se, it might be due to the external perspective.<sup>140</sup> The agent’s friends may think of this split vision as something which is unacceptable. We now turn to that.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 460-461.

<sup>140</sup> On the other hand, on basis of some type of ‘Aristotelian’ framework, it could be argued that this agent is unable to be a real friend. In Aristotle’s account of friendship, the possibility of pursuing (real) friendship is intimately tied to the nature of the agent’s character – an idea which obviously comes part and parcel with Aristotle’s theory of Virtue Ethics, in which the acquirement and improvement of certain character-traits (virtues) constitutes the agent’s moral development, and the level of how well these traits have been developed signify the status of the agent’s moral wisdom. Therefore, it could be claimed that the Naïve agent’s split vision reveals an ‘imperfect’ (or even ‘degenerated’) character, that in consequence makes it impossible for this agent to pursue friendship properly. However, as should be fairly obvious in light of my sketch of friendship in the second chapter, I do not put much weight on that aspect of Aristotele’s concepts of friendship. So I will not push this issue.

#### 4.2.2 External perspective: Devaluing the Person

Could the Naïve agent's friends find her motivational state troublesome? To illustrate their suspicion on this matter, philosophers typically make use of examples. Stocker's scenario goes like this:

... suppose you are in a hospital, recovering from a long illness. You are very bored and restless and at loose ends when Smith comes in once again. You are now convinced more than ever that he is a fine fellow and a real friend - taking so much time to cheer you up, travelling all the way across town, and so on. You are so effusive with your praise and thanks that he protests that he always tries to do what he thinks is his duty, when he thinks will be the best. You at first think he is engaging in a polite form of self-deprecation, relieving the moral burden. But the more you two speak, the more clear it becomes that he was telling the literal truth: that it is not essentially because of you that he came to see you, not because you are friends, but *because he thought it his duty...*<sup>141</sup>

Well, what would you think if you were the one in the hospital? You might quickly draw the conclusion that Smith is not a real friend, as he seems to reveal that he actually does not want to pursue your friendship (that is, he is actually an Anti-Friendship agent, and does not even bother to put up an act to conceal it). He is there for entirely different reasons. If that is true, your judgement is entitled. If Smith anyhow claims to be your friend, he is either conceptually confused or lying.

But that need not be true. Maybe Smith just chose his words carelessly. Initially, he indeed explicitly justifies his visit in terms of the moral theory, which reveals that he is directly motivated by it. But further conversation could unveil that this is in fact not his sole motivational consideration, he did tell "the literal truth" but not all of it. He could also be directly motivated by a concern for you as friend. If Smith is not unserious in some of his statements, his field of vision is clearly split; he is visiting you because he finds it to be justified by his moral theory *and* because he perceives you as a friend.<sup>142</sup> So, what are you now to think of Smith?

The answer depends on if you still regard Smith as the person you once knew as a friend, or if he has changed to that extent that he no longer is the same person. As earlier argued, friendship is based upon a mutual valuing of those

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 462, my italics.

<sup>142</sup> This statement is however open to ambiguous interpretations. Please keep in mind what this approach is - and is not. Smith is here not visiting you because his moral theory has justified that he is motivated by a direct concern for you. To repeat, taking on consequentialism as a personal morality in such a way is to adopt some kind of 'strategic' approach.

essential qualities that constitute the other person. If such qualities change, friendship can cease to be, because then the person which one considered to be one's friend has become another person, which one need not value at all. But could the adoption of a personal morality really affect the essential qualities in an agent's constitutive personality to such an extent? Certainly. Imagine that you are not in error: Smith no longer perceives you as a friend, even though he did before. Maybe that is because he, while you were suffering from your illness, spent his days studying moral philosophy and came to the conclusion that friendship ought not to be pursued, and in consequence does not value you for whom you are, merely for what could be gained from your relation. If that was so, of course the Smith you knew before is not in all respects the same person who comes to visit you now. But that was not necessarily so. In this case, Smith has not undergone such a gross change in personality. Roughly speaking, one part of him is still the good old friendly Smith you knew before, while another part of him is the directly motivated consequentialist. Could you regard him as still being your friend?

The answer depends on *who* is to judge. Here, it is you. What could *you* consider to be fundamental constituents of your particular friendship-relation with *Smith*? You are naturally entitled to no longer regard Smith as a real friend *merely* because he is experiencing a split vision, and acts out of a double set of incompatible motives.<sup>143</sup> (However, if that is your sole reason, you should really ask yourself if whatever relation you had with Smith in the first place really was friendship, as it seems like a quite superficial detail.)

But maybe you are not bothered by the split vision per se, but the fact that one of Smith's field of vision is now *distinctively consequentialist*. Perhaps you and Smith have shared a long life as fellow Christian fundamentalists, truly believing that the ten commandments must be respected because God has said so - and that all who do not believe that are evil heretics that should be nailed to a cross and despatched to hell immediately. The Smith that comes to visit you at the hospital now is certainly another person from your point of view. He could still follow the Ten Commandments, but now he does not do it exclusively because God has said so, but also (or only) because it goes in line with what his recently found personal morality prescribes. This you need not accept; Smith has turned into a personality you consider wicked, and subsequently do not value anymore.

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<sup>143</sup> As earlier mentioned, someone who accepts some kind of Aristotelian framework regarding friendship might find that to be a perfectly valid reason. Smith could be found to have a 'degenerated' character, and thus not worthy of one's friendship.

If you do not find any of these two explanations valid, maybe the following will. At the hospital, you think of Smith as still being a friend. You do not find it immediately troublesome that he is split in motives, or that he has adopted the Naive Approach to consequentialism as a personal morality. But when you get out of bed and back to your everyday life, you discover that Smith no longer *behaves* as he used to. Maybe he spends more time at home than with you, doing empirical research for how to best achieve the aims that his personal morality prescribes. And when you occasionally meet, he is a total bore who calculates every act and keeps on babbling about "the good," "universal outcomes," "blameless wrongdoing," and so on, which you find totally uninteresting. Instead of being relaxed and entertaining as he used to be, he is perplexed and annoying. His company is painful. You could detest *what* Smith does and *how* he does it, yet without for that sake consider him morally wicked.<sup>144</sup> But you could of course be too whiny, and perhaps your former relation was not really friendship, as it ceases to be only because Smith does not act the precise way you want. But even though real friends have a greater tolerance towards each other's conduct than is usual in other kind of relations, there are limits. No matter how much you try to tolerate his new conduct, it can in the end turn out to be impossible. Smith's behavior, which is a result of his consequentialist split vision, might drive you up the wall. That Smith himself perceives you as a friend and really does his best need not matter. Although Smith is still a real friend, your friendship ceases to be, because *you* no longer consider him to be your friend.

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<sup>144</sup> You might actually dislike him because he is *too* moral. That, however, need not automatically follow because Smith is split in vision. Neither need it follow because he is a consequentialist. But it certainly could if he is a *dedicated* consequentialist, and someone who has adopted a moral theory as a personal morality could certainly be exceptionally dedicated. The problem is that Smith could attempt to be, as Susan Wolf calls it, a "moral saint," that is, "a person whose every action is as morally good as possible, as person... who is as morally worthy as can be." ("Moral Saints," *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LXXIX, No. 8 (1982), p. 419). According to Wolf, this is an unappealing figure for many reasons, and some people probably "regard the absence of moral saints in their lives as a blessing" (*ibid.*, p. 421). Because "a moral saint must have and cultivate those qualities which are apt to allow him to treat others as justly and kindly as possible. He will have the standard moral virtues to a nonstandard degree. He will be patient, considerate, even-tempered, hospitable, charitable in thought as well as in deed. He will be very reluctant to make negative judgements of other people. He will be careful not to favor some people over others on the basis of properties they could not help but have," (*ibid.*) and so on. Furthermore, "[a] moral saint will have to be very, very nice. It is important that he not be offensive. The worry is that, as a result, he will have to be dull-witted or humorless or bland" (*ibid.*, p. 422). If Smith is a moral saint, you might find him nauseating, because "there seems to be a limit to how much morality we can stand" (*ibid.*, p. 423).

Naturally, all of the above can be found irrelevant for your friendship with Smith. You need not find that Smith has changed into another person that you do not endorse. In fact, you can turn the tables and claim that the above given explanations actually are explanations to why you *can* consider Smith to still be your friend, if not even a better friend than before. Smith's split vision, partly consequentialist perspective, different behavior - all this could provide you with reasons for viewing Smith as being your best friend in the world. Because perhaps you are now more alike each other as persons, with more mutual interests. You could now share more experiences and rewarding discussions - whereas maybe you also have adopted the Naive Approach to consequentialism as a personal morality.

The lesson to be learned from this is that the question of if Smith can be (externally) regarded as a friend cannot be categorically answered with a yes or no. It all depends on who is judging. However, this is unfortunately not a lesson that all have learned. Some too hastily jump to the conclusion that *no one* can regard someone who has adopted the Naive Approach to consequentialism as a personal morality as a friend, period. This is sometimes simply based upon the mistaken belief that no such consequentialist wants to pursue friendship, and therefore cannot engage in such relationships. But most often, the conclusion seems to be drawn out of another more crude prejudiced belief: even if a consequentialist want to be a real friend, no one wants to be her friend. Well, that might be the case. Perhaps no one in this world would want to be such a person's friend. But this is no argument for claiming that no one *can* regard such a person as a friend, this is merely to state that no one *does*.<sup>145</sup> And this is not necessarily true either.

Although split vision is not inevitably impossible to reconcile with friendship, one can for many other reasons consider it to be a troublesome state of mind that should be avoided. An obvious problem is that the Naïve consequentialist might find herself in a situation when she *qua* consequentialist ought to perform a certain action, but *qua* friend should perform a radically different action. The agent could then truly experience a problematic schizophrenia, and either end up paralyzed, doing nothing, or, intentionally act counter to her consequentialist ambition (but as a result no longer be a 'consequentialist'), or, intentionally act in line with what she finds to be morally required (but as a result no longer be a 'real friend'). Another possibility is to adopt a different approach, one that seeks to obtain a 'unity of vision' between the agent's moral ambition and suitable

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<sup>145</sup> I have never actually heard it, but I believe some intolerant consequentialists could be equally prejudicial and claim the opposite: "It is impossible to regard anyone but a true consequentialist as a real friend! You see, *odi profanum, vulgus et arceo!*"

motivations in relation to certain projects, such as friendship. In other words, the agent could see the need for a thoughtful *strategy*. The approach to be considered next is the first ‘strategic’ kind of approach meant to make that possible.

#### 4.3 THE SIMPLE STRATEGIC APPROACH

An agent who has adopted the Simple Strategic Approach aspires to be coordinated and regulated by her consequentialist reasons in *all* living and doing. However, this agent does not (as the Naive agent does) conceive that those reasons need to operate up front as direct motives for each and every project and act; this is instead carried out more ‘indirectly’. In ordinary living and doing, the agent can find herself justified in acting solely and directly out of those motives that are considered appropriate in relation to certain projects (which could be clearly non-consequentialist motives, for example in such a project as friendship). Nevertheless, this direct motivational structure is still coordinated and regulated by her moral reasons, otherwise it would not be possible to speak of this approach as being a ‘personal morality’. In other words, the agent’s moral convictions justify certain projects and actions, but without being directly motivational themselves in the actual engagement in those projects and actions, and the agent is aware of this. (If the agent is *not* aware of this, then she is not a Simple Strategic Agent, but an Advanced Strategic or Esoteric Strategic agent.) In a figurative sense, the Simple Strategic agent has organized her moral reasons and up front motivations on different ‘layers’ (or ‘levels’), to obtain what could be called a ‘harmonious alliance’ between them, which is supposed to bring out the sought unity of vision in perspective.

Another way to illustrate the ‘indirectness’ involved in this approach is by means of the distinction between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ motives. As Marcia Baron puts it, “[a] primary motive supplies the agent with the motivation to do the act in question, whereas a secondary motive provides limiting conditions on what may be done from other motives. Although qua secondary motive it cannot by itself move one to act, a secondary motive is nonetheless a motive, for the agent would not proceed to perform the action without the ‘approval’ of the secondary motive.”<sup>146</sup>

If successfully adopted, this approach should not give rise to split vision. But *if* split vision becomes the case, it is not because this approach inevitably leads

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<sup>146</sup> Marcia Baron, “The Alleged Moral Repugnance of Acting From Duty,” *Journal of Philosophy*, 81 (1984), p. 207.

to it, but because the agent for some reason has not managed to properly adopt it. For the sake of clarity on this matter, let us recapitulate what split vision is. Split vision arises when an agent views something – a friend, for example – in two divergent ways at the same time. From the perspective of the Naive consequentialist, friends are both seen as means for bringing out the best universal outcomes, and as *friends*, individuals that are "final goals" for one's concern and actions. This split perspective is due to the fact that the agent directly applies two different motivations (qua consequentialist, qua friend) at the same time in living and doing – the two kinds of motivations are put immediately 'beside each other' in the up front perspective. An agent who has properly adopted the Simple Strategic approach should not experience split vision, because the approach allows the agent to view some things in just one way. One can say that the Naive agent is *internally directly* motivated *both* by consequentialist motives and motives appropriate for friendship. The Simple Strategic agent on the other hand is *internally directly* motivated by motives appropriate for friendship, and *internally indirectly* motivated by consequentialism (for actually being internally directly motivated by motives appropriate for friendship).

Although this might sound complicated, this is not an overly eccentric agent. Simplified, this agent could be conceived as someone with high ideals, who consciously and actively "tries to fit her friendships in the context of a life that contributes as much as possible to making the world better... [who] tries to see her friendships as part of a bigger picture and asks how her friendships affect her contribution to a better world."<sup>147</sup> This need not be a far-fetched person, on the contrary; I believe we have probably all encountered this kind of character (although they might not be distinctive consequentialists), and maybe you consider yourself to be one.

However, can this consequentialist be a real friend?

#### *4.3.1 Internal Perspective: One Thought Too Many*

Although the Simple Strategic agent is allowed to hold direct motives that are not consequentialist, she is at the same time fully aware that these motives are justified by her moral reasons. It is this very awareness that has been claimed to constitute the main problem for this agent's ability of being a real friend. Bernard Williams has formulated this problem as being about "one thought too many," and tried to illustrate it by means of an example in which a man by

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<sup>147</sup> Paul Gomberg, "Friendship in the Context of a Consequentialist Life," *Ethics*, 102 (3) (1992), p. 553.

appeal to his consequentialist justification saves his wife instead of a stranger, and comments:

... surely this is a justification on behalf of the rescuer, that the person he chose to rescue was his wife? It depends on how much weight is carried by 'justification': the consideration that it was his wife is certainly, for instance, an explanation which should silence comment. But something more than this is usually intended, essentially involving the idea that moral principle can legitimate his preference, yielding the conclusion that in situations of this kind it is at least right (morally permissible) to save one's wife. (...) But this construction provides the agent with one thought too many: it might have been hoped by someone (for instance, by his wife) that this motivating thought, *fully spelled out*, would be the thought that it was his wife, not that it was his wife and that in situations of this kind it is permissible to save one's wife.<sup>148</sup>

The alleged difficulty with "one thought too many" is not meant to be a problem that only arises in such acute situations. Rather, the problem is that the Simple Strategic motivational structure is arranged in such a way that the agent will *always* have one thought too many, and this is said to make friendship (among other things) impossible. In a recent article commenting Williams 'thought', Elinor Mason writes that friendship "seem to require non-consequentialist motivation... apparently [according to Williams], the motives required for genuine personal relationships are not compatible with [conscious] belief in consequentialism, because belief in consequentialism will always provide an overriding motive to maximize the good. Thus... an agent who believes in consequentialism must have the conscious thought that their action is justified, and furthermore, that thought must be a motivating thought on all occasions, and that is to have one thought too many."<sup>149</sup>

Indeed, the perspective required for friendship entail motivations that are not consequentialist. If the agent had *no* such motives at all, the question would quickly be settled. But the Simple Strategic agent has such motivations, so that is not the problem. The alleged problem is rather that these motives are *knowingly justified* in consequentialist terms. Well then, do the agent then have a thought that is one *too many*? Cannot she properly be said hold the perspective required of being a real friend? As I see it, there are three main types of arguments that have been put forward on this matter in the debate.

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<sup>148</sup> Bernard Williams, "Persons, Character and Morality," reprinted in *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 18, my italics.

<sup>149</sup> Elinor Mason, "Do Consequentialists Have One Thought Too Many?" *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol. 2 (1999), pp. 251-252.



These arguments are here called *Inevitable Instrumentality*, *Lack of Love*, and *Alienation*. I shall limit myself to an examination of these, as I find them to be the most interesting ones.

#### 4.3.1.1 *Inevitable Instrumentality*

In short, this argument claims that this type of agent cannot be a real friend, because this agent cannot consistently regard any relation as truly non-instrumental. Many critics of consequentialism have proposed this argument, but it has most clearly been articulated in the debate on consequentialism and friendship by Neera Kapur Badhwar.<sup>150</sup> According to Badhwar, a consequentialist cannot be a real friend, because this agent has two commitments that

would have to be expressed in the following kind of thought: ‘As your friend, I place a value on you out of friendship and not out of consequentialist considerations – but as a consequentialist I do so only as, all things considered, valuing you thus promotes the overall good.’ As a non-schizophrenic, undeceived consequentialist friend, however, she must put the two thoughts together. And the two thoughts are logically incompatible. To be consistent she must think’, ‘As a consequentialist friend, I place special value on you so long, but only so long, as valuing you promotes the overall good’... Her motivational structure, in other words, is instrumental, and so logically incompatible with the logical structure required for friendship.<sup>151</sup>

In other words, the agent’s awareness of her fundamental justification for her direct motivations constitutes a thought that is one too many, as it leads to an inevitable instrumentality.<sup>152</sup> However, nothing prevents the agent from truly loving the other person, or valuing her for who she is. Nonetheless, the agent regards the other person and the relation she has with that person as an instrument, and therefore it is not real friendship. Now, if this argument is

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<sup>150</sup> In “Why it is Wrong to Be Always Guided by the Best: Consequentialism and Friendship,” *Ethics*, 101 (1991), pp. 483-504.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 493.

<sup>152</sup> It should be clarified that Badhwar does not explicitly speak of ‘instrumentality’ as being the main problem with consequentialists and friendship. The problem Badhwar sees is that friends, in the eye of the consequentialist, become ‘replaceable’. “As ultimate ends, friends and friendships are irreplaceable; as means to the overall good, they are eminently replaceable.” (*Ibid.*, p. 493) However, I do not believe the notion of ‘irreplaceability’ really captures the problem. I grant that friends regard each other as irreplaceable – this was discussed in context of ‘valuing the person’ – but if an agent regards her alleged friend ‘replaceable’, I believe the problem is not essentially that she fails to value the other person, but rather that she conceives their relation as instrumental.

correct, but the agent does *not* regard her relationships as such, she either has to be split in vision (i.e., be a Naïve Consequentialist), or somehow ‘deceived’ (i.e., be some kind of Advanced Strategic or Esoteric Strategic Consequentialist), or simply not someone who has adopted a consequentialist ethical theory as a personal morality at all.

But is this argument correct? Will the Simple Strategic agent inevitably have to regard her friendships and friends as mere instruments for promoting the overall good? Are the two commitments (qua consequentialist, and qua friend) “logically incompatible”?

To see what kind of arguments are of relevance here, we have to be careful and understand how the Simple Strategic agent is constituted. It is of no help to argue that a consequentialist *need not* be aware of her fundamental moral justification for her direct motivational structure, because that does not solve the problem for the Simple Strategic consequentialist (which Badhwar obviously speaks about). It is merely to say that one ought to be an Advanced Strategic or Esoteric Strategic consequentialist.<sup>153</sup> Neither would it be of any help to argue that a Simple Strategic consequentialist might never face some situation in which she find it required to ‘sacrifice’ her friend, or ‘terminate’ her friendships, for the sake of the overall good. Even if such a situation for some reason never occur, the problem of instrumentality remains, as the agent would still maintain something like, “Being a real friend is important, and that I shall always be, *because* being such promotes the overall good!”

Now then, cannot the Simple Strategic agent be a real friend because she has a thought that inevitably render all relations instrumental? Actually, this is possible – but it is not necessarily so. Badhwar’s argument conceals an ambiguity (that I find to be very common), which turns out to be crucial when revealed. Two Simple Strategic agents could think two different thoughts, which disclose two different perspectives: (1) “I am your friend *because* that promotes the overall good (and thus our relation is morally justified),” or, (2) “I am your friend *and* that promotes the overall good (and thus our relation is morally justified).”

If the Simple Strategic agent seriously thinks (1), the agent clearly regard the relationship as being an instrument, since the ultimate reason why the agent is involved in the relation is *because* it promotes the overall good; and that is obviously “logically incompatible” with the perspective required for being a real friend. On the other hand, if the agent thinks (2), it is not an instrumental

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<sup>153</sup> This mistake is however not uncommon. For example, c.f. Earl Conee’s reply to Badhwar in “Friendship and Consequentialism,” *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 72-2 (2001), pp. 174-175.

relation, because then the agent indeed recognizes that the relation promotes the overall good, *and* finds the relation is morally justified, but the agent need not regard that justification as the reason for why she is involved in the relation at all. The agent's awareness of her moral justification is then not one thought too many. However, if someone (Badhwar, perhaps) were to claim that this thought also necessitates that the Simple Strategic agent regard her relations as instrumental, I believe one would be saying something unacceptable. Because that would make it virtually impossible to have any non-instrumental relationships at all; as soon as one spots an ulterior consequence of a relationship (that one might happen to fancy) then the relation is counted as 'instrumental' – and that is simply to demand too much of a non-instrumental relation. We would then never be allowed to see any positive consequences of our relationships at all for them to count as non-instrumental. We would not only be forbidden to view our “friendships as part of a bigger picture,” but in any similar picture at all, as that would always be “logically incompatible.”

The question is, however, may the Simple Strategic agent think (2), or must she necessarily think (1) to be a consequentialist at all? Does the idea that the agent thinks 'and...' clash with the definition of what it takes to pursue consequentialism as a personal morality? Or does it clash with the definition of the Simple Strategic Approach? It does not, I think. I believe that those who think the contrary wrongly assume that it somehow necessarily follows that a consequentialist must take her fundamental moral justification for any activity as being the reason for why one pursues the activity. But this is a caricature, which indeed could capture some consequentialists, but certainly not all. Granted, there could be consequentialists that seriously thinks 'because...' and these cannot be real friends. But a Simple Strategic agent does not *have to* think that. Likewise, someone could claim that “I am your friend *because* that makes me happy,” and that could reveal that the relation is in fact not friendship (it all depends on what the agent really means). But it can hardly be wrong for a friend to think or say “I am your friend... *and* that makes me happy.” Why would it then be wrong to think “... and that promotes the overall good”?

If the agent is allowed to think 'and...', the problem is solved. This agent could, but need not, inevitably regard her friends as instruments, although she is aware of her underlying moral convictions. The agent has not a thought that is one too many, at least not because it inevitable leads to instrumentality. Thus, the internal perspective is not inappropriate for *that* reason.

Nevertheless, the agent's friends could still regard this awareness as being a thought that is one too many. Because if a friend confronts a Simple Strategic agent (who thinks 'and...') and wonders, for example, “Would you still be my

friend if that turned out to be immoral?” (which the Simple Strategic agent translates into “Would you find your direct motivational structure justified if it did not promote the overall good?”) and hears the reply, “Not a chance!” – this might provide the friend with a reason for not regarding the agent as a friend. But this is a problem for the external perspective, which we shall return to later on.

#### 4.3.1.2 *Lack of Love*

The second type of argument claims that the Simple Strategic agent cannot be a real friend because such an agent cannot truly love another person. The reason for this is not simply that this agent for some reason cannot have any deep feelings for another person – that she for some unavoidable reason has to be a frosty Anti-Friendship agent. Rather, the alleged problem is based upon the idea that love requires more than ‘mere feelings’, it also require ‘partiality’, and due to the ‘thought too many’, the Simple Strategic agent cannot be partial, and subsequently she cannot really be said to truly love another person.

Friendship obviously requires love, and let us assume that love requires partiality. This could of course be denied. But I shall leave that discussion aside – because it is nonetheless a common intuition that friendship somehow involves (or even demand) partiality, although it might of course be questioned if this is because of the love involved in such a relationship. So, if a consequentialist cannot be partial, then there is no love, and subsequently no friendship. Well, then, can a consequentialist be partial to her friend(s)?

At first glance, the answer could be found to be obviously *yes*. A Simple Strategic agent can very well be partial to her friends, as she can justify being so out of consequentialist deliberations. She might, for instance, come to the conclusion that she *can* favour her friends because she will most probably never face such an extreme situation in which not doing so would be for the worse, or, that she *ought* to favor her friends because doing so is probably for the best, regardless of situation (she might be highly influenced by G.E. Moore’s advice that a consequentialist should be cautious and not set her aims to high or too far away in ordinary living and doing).<sup>154</sup> So, if friendship requires love, and love

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<sup>154</sup> The agent could also find herself justified in being partial by taking Derek Parfit’s popular notion ‘blameless wrongdoing’ (elaborated in *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press (1984)) seriously. In short, Parfit claims that a consequentialist could be justified to be disposed to promote the good of near and dear, rather than strangers, even if that would obviously be for the overall worse in the short run (in particular actions) – because being so disposed could be found positive, either because it could be found to be for the overall best in in the long run, or because a world in which people are so disposed would be a better world than if not. Thus, the agent could find herself doing something wrong, yet be “blameless” anyhow.

requires partiality, and a consequentialist can be partial, it does not seem impossible for a consequentialist to be a real friend.

But it need not be that simple. It could be claimed that this is not satisfying, because the Simple Strategic agent's partiality is ultimately based upon (impartial) consequentialist deliberations. As Lawrence Blum writes:

Even if an impartialist argument were able to justify benefiting friends rather than others in situations in which we regard it as appropriate, it would not give us what we want. For what friendship requires is acting for the sake of the friend as such, rather than because, as it (contingently) turns out, such a practice serves the general interest, or is otherwise amendable to an impartialist justification. It is [thus] not merely that an impartialist justification does not work. In addition, actually taking up such a perspective of impartiality regarding one's own friendship would signify a distorted relationship with one's friends. (...) Such an attitude evidences an *emotional detachment* not compatible with true friendship.<sup>155</sup>

That is, one could argue that the Simple Strategic agent is partial out of wrong reasons. In consequence, the agent is in a sense not (in my terminology) 'genuinely' partial, but more of 'artificially' partial.<sup>156</sup> That could be found incompatible with the nature of love, as it evidences an "emotional detachment". But what is the difference between these two kinds of partiality, and is the former really necessary for the love involved in friendship?

Regarding the first question, I shall try to capture the distinction by means of a discussion on the subject provided by Troy Jollimore.<sup>157</sup> Jollimore claims that whatever a consequentialist agent does, she is ultimately never really partial (although a quick glance at her actions might give the impression that she is). Jollimore (correctly) states that "[a] friendship cannot exist where feelings of love and affection are not present."<sup>158</sup> However, "the mere existence of such feelings does not constitute a friendship. For a friendship to exist these feelings must be brought into the open: they must be *expressed* through action. It is only when two individuals allow their *feelings* about each other to influence how they treat each other that a friendship can exist."<sup>159</sup> Thus, "two people who like

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<sup>155</sup> *Friendship, Altruism and Morality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. (1980), pp. 60-61, my italics.

<sup>156</sup> These terms might be considered somewhat tendentious, but that is not my intention; I have just not been able to come up with any better labels.

<sup>157</sup> In "Friendship without Partiality?" *Ratio*, XIII (2000), pp. 69-82.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72, my italics.

or love each other cannot be friends if their feelings remain unexpressed. (...) For an agent to express her feelings, her feelings must have significant influence over her actions...<sup>160</sup>

So, if the agent's *feelings* for another person do not have such 'significant influence' over the agent's actions, love is not 'brought into the open', and there cannot be friendship. Thus, love cannot be expressed through actions that do favour the beloved for some other reason, for example, impartial considerations regarding the promotion of the overall good. If this is correct, it seems like the Simple Strategic agent cannot be said to truly love another person, and it does not really matter what this agent does. For example, even if the Simple Strategic agent in William's example does not say, "Sorry dear, there are more drowning at the other end!" but instead, "I will save you, even if there are more people drowning at the other end! *Because I love you!*" and merely in addition adds "... *and this is for the best!*" this is of no help. That is, even if this agent strongly feels for another person and finds it morally acceptable to be motivated to benefit this person rather than a stranger, this action do not really express love, because these direct motivations are ultimately based upon an impartial justification (and not the feelings involved). Since the agent fully aware of this, she clearly has 'one thought too many'. Because all actions of the Simple Strategic agent "are determined by the nature of the impersonal good and not by her personal feelings," and therefore "they express only her commitment to the impersonal good, and not her personal feelings."<sup>161</sup>

Jollimore's discussion is a bit perplexing, as much weight is put on the idea that love has to be 'expressed' through (genuinely) partial actions for being the case. If that is so can certainly be discussed, but I shall leave that aside.<sup>162</sup> Nevertheless, from Jollimore's discussion, we can see the difference between two forms of 'partiality' – those which I called 'genuine' and 'artificial'. What Jollimore seems to grant is that a consequentialist indeed can be partial, but only 'artificially' so, and that is not appropriate in relation to love. That is, even if this agent performs seemingly partial actions, which stem from her direct motivational structure, she is not 'genuinely' partial (here understood as partiality solely stemming from personal feelings toward the other person), because she indirectly justifies such motives and actions out of impartial considerations. At most, this agent could be found to exhibit 'artificial'

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>162</sup> However, Jollimore's discussion regarding the consequentialist's expressions do have some significance for the alleged problem of 'trust', which shall be discussed regarding the Advanced Strategic approach.

partiality (here understood as partiality ultimately based upon something else but personal feelings, i.e., consequentialist reasoning), but that is not enough. Moreover, even if the agent were to attempt to justify acting out of her deep feelings for another, the thought too many is still there, because *that* justification is also knowingly based upon consequentialist deliberations. Her actions would still ultimately be “determined by the nature of the impersonal good and not by her personal feelings.”

If we assume that friendship requires love, and love requires ‘genuine’ partiality (disqualifying ‘artificial’) then the Simple Strategic agent cannot be a real friend. But the question is, does the nature of love necessarily entail ‘genuine’ partiality? At this point, intuitions might clash. If we consider relations that are profoundly close, such as those which typically exists between parents and children, or romantic lovers, we might sense that ‘artificial’ partiality *is* inappropriate; and taking up such a perspective in such a relation *does* evidence an “emotional detachment” – as it would be to disconnect one’s feelings too much from the relation, coldly incorporating partiality like a clause in a contract.

But does the same go for a friendship-relation? That could be denied. According to Shelly Kagan, some indeed argue that “to love an individual one must be willing to favor that individual in various ways, even when doing so fails to promote the greater good; if one is not willing to show such favor then this indicates that the given individual is not loved after all. (...) The question, however, is whether such willingness to favor is an essential part of love or friendship... if we recognize the existence of other possible expressions of love – and see therefore that favoring is not the only possibility – then the plausibility of the [above] claim will be greatly reduced.”<sup>163</sup>

In Kagan’s world, the nature of love does not necessarily entail any partiality at all; but this I believe is a way too bold statement. According to Kagan,

[l]ove and friendship are, of course, rich and varied phenomena, each involving a complex of more specific attitudes and relations: both typically involve an openness toward the friend or loved one, a desire to make efforts to correct misunderstandings and to deepen the level of intimacy; one usually takes pleasure in the happiness of the other person, and the recognition of the mutuality of the relationship is itself a source of pleasure; furthermore, since one typically find some traits of the friend or loved one particularly attractive, the esteem of the other person is often especially central to one’s feelings of self-worth, and one may derive special pleasure from being in the company of the other, or in the sharing of experiences.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> *The Limits of Morality*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (1989), p. 368.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 367-368.

In this account, 'genuine' partiality is not included at all, and my own brief outline of love in the chapter on friendship did not include any such partiality either; I merely claimed that love typically gives rise to partiality (but I did not explain what *type* of partiality). In context of friendship, I believe it is enough to say that love is the case if we strongly feel for the other person, and sincerely care for her weal and woe. If love entails partiality, I believe that 'artificial' is enough.

To successfully argue that the Simple Strategic agent cannot be a real friend due to 'lack of love', one must show that 'genuine' partiality is a part of the *definition of appropriate love for friendship*. But obviously, we have then reached a discussion that could go on for quite some time. Does the love involved in friendship necessarily include 'genuine' partiality? Some might think so, but I am not so certain that they are correct. I believe they blend the love involved in much more intimate relations (such as between parents and children, or lovers) with the love involved in friendship. In other words, they make the mistake of advocating a 'overly romantic' conception of friendship (or, to be more precise, one aspect of friendship – the love). If that is so, they do not really speak of friendship anymore, and maybe a consequentialist cannot be a *loving parent*, or a *lovely lover*, but that is another discussion.

But if I am wrong – and the love involved in friendship requires 'genuine' partiality, the Simple Strategic agent cannot be a real friend (and might find a reason to reject her consequentialism, or switch to some other approach, i.e., the Advanced or even Esoteric, depending upon how much is required for partiality to be really 'genuine'). But whether this is so or not, I actually do not know. Ultimately, this problem requires a much deeper analysis of the concept of 'love' involved in friendship; but that is unfortunately beyond the scope of this book. Maybe it is even beyond the scope of any book. Can a Simple Strategic agent really love another person? I leave that question for you to decide.

#### 4.3.1.3 Alienation

The final argument claims that this type of consequentialist has a thought that is one too many because it renders the agent 'alienated' from her close personal relationships. Indeed, 'alienation' is a popular concept, frequently deployed to illustrate all sorts of problems regarding consequentialist ethics. But what 'alienation' *is* has strangely not been as much discussed.



However, Peter Railton has made an attempt to depict alienation, which is often referred to.<sup>165</sup> According to Railton, “at a perfectly general level alienation can be characterized only very roughly as a kind of estrangement, distancing, or separateness (not necessarily consciously attended to) resulting in some sort of loss (not necessarily noticed).”<sup>166</sup> To illustrate how this might be the case, Railton provides the following example:

To many, John has always seemed a model husband. He almost invariably shows great sensitivity to his wife’s needs, and he willingly goes out of his way to meet them. He plainly feels great affection for her. When a friend remarks upon the extraordinary quality of John’s concern for his wife, John responds without any self-indulgence or self-congratulation. ‘I’ve always thought that people should help each other when they’re in a specially good position to do so. I know Anne better than anyone else does, so I know better what she wants and needs. Besides, I have such great affection for her that it’s no great burden – instead, I get a lot of satisfaction out of it. Just think how awful marriage would be, or life itself, if people didn’t take special care of the ones they love.’ His friend accuses John of being unduly modest, but John’s manner convinces him that he is telling the truth: this is really how he feels.<sup>167</sup>

We should notice that “John’s remarks have a benevolent, consequentialist cast... [he is] not self-centred or without feeling. Yet something seems wrong.”<sup>168</sup> But to find out what is wrong, “[t]he place to look is not so much at what [he says] as what [he doesn’t] say.”<sup>169</sup> What is it then that John does not say? We might discover this by considering what John’s wife might feel about his statement; she might not at all appreciate it.

Anne might have hoped that it was, in some ultimate sense, in part for *her* sake and the sake of their love as such that John pays such special attention to her. That he devotes himself to her because [*sic*] of the characteristically good consequences of doing so seems to leave her, and their relationship as such, too far out of the picture... She is being taken into account by John, but it might seem she is justified in being hurt by the way she is being taken into account. It is as if John viewed her, their relationship, and even his own affection for her from

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<sup>165</sup> In “Alienation, Consequentialism and the Demands of Morality,” reprinted in *Consequentialism and its Critics* (first published elsewhere 1984), ed. Samuel Scheffler, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1988), pp. 93-133.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 94.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

a distant, objective point of view – a moral point of view where reasons must be reasons for any rational agent and so must have an impersonal character even when they deal with personal matters.<sup>170</sup>

Railton claims that John shows alienation; “there would seem to be an estrangement between [his] affections and [his] rational, deliberative [self]; an abstract and universalizing point of view mediates [his] responses to others and [his] own sentiments.”<sup>171</sup> This Railton find to be problematic; for one thing, alienation might give rise to “a sense of loneliness or emptiness – or of the loss of certain things of value – such as a sense of belonging or the pleasures of spontaneity,” and could “make certain valuable sorts of relationships impossible.”<sup>172</sup>

John, as briefly depicted here, seems to be a Simple Strategic consequentialist. He justifies his direct motivations by means of his moral conviction, and he is fully aware of this, without being split in vision. But what is the problem? It is that Anne, his wife, might not appreciate his remarks, and due to that, John could certainly have a hard time pursuing their relationship, and find a reason to change the tune. But Anne’s conception is a problem for the external perspective. We now ask, is there something wrong with John’s *internal* perspective that makes him unable to maintain their relationship? In this example, John and Anne are spouses, but we could equally well think of them as friends, and see the same problem.

But what is the problem? It could be tempting to say that John in fact views their relationship instrumentally (and the usage of the concept ‘alienation’ is but another way to make that point), and Railton himself seems to grant that possibility when he says that John “devotes himself to her *because* of the characteristically good consequences of doing so.” If that is so, then John obviously has a distorted perspective. But it is not obviously so, because John could equally well been devoted to her *and* recognize the good consequences of doing so. Furthermore, love do not seems to be missing, unless John is a liar (or we demand ‘true’ partiality).

So, what *is* the problem? What is it that John is “estranged, distanced or separated” from (that he “does not necessarily consciously attend to”), and why does this supposedly make it hard for him to pursue close relationships? That is

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., pp. 95-96.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p. 97.

actually not clearly explained by Railton.<sup>173</sup> However, one could interpret Railton as intending to say something akin to what Bernard Williams has said on the subject.<sup>174</sup> According to Williams, most of us

are partially at least not utilitarians, and cannot regard our moral feelings merely as objects of utilitarian value. Because our moral relation to the world is partly given by such feelings, and by a sense of what we can or cannot 'live with', to come to regard those feelings from a purely utilitarian point of view, that is to say, as happenings outside one's moral self, is to lose a sense of one's moral identity; to lose, in the most literal way, one's integrity. At this point utilitarianism alienates one from one's moral feelings; we shall see a little later how, more basically, it alienates one from one's actions as well.<sup>175</sup>

Williams speaks of a special type of consequentialist, namely a utilitarian who sees universal preference-satisfaction as the ultimate good. His arguments regarding 'alienation', however, are not exclusively a problem for that kind of consequentialist. They seem relevant for anyone who adopts some consequentialist ethical theory by means of the Simple Strategic Approach.<sup>176</sup>

Obviously, the feelings and actions involved in any personal project for a Simple Strategic agent are regulated by her fundamental commitment to the consequentialist doctrine (after all, this is how 'personal morality' has been defined). Such a 'personal project' could be a 'friendship', but I believe the 'actions' related to the project Williams speaks about need not necessarily only be particular actions in *that-or-that* instance of friendship, but also the general motivational structure preceding any project (that the agent justifies on the basis of her consequentialist convictions). According to Williams, many only seem to see a problem with the demands of the consequentialist doctrine and such personal projects, or the motivational structure preceding those project, if these come into some kind of conflict. But Williams do not seem to think that this is not the most interesting problem. Even if a deeply important personal project does not conflict with the moral convictions in any sense, the agent views his or

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<sup>173</sup> But he do present a solution to the alleged problems, "sophisticated consequentialism", which I shall return to when discussing the Advanced Strategic approach.

<sup>174</sup> This discussion is undertaken in "A Critique of Utilitarianism," in *Utilitarianism: For & Against* (with J.J.C. Smart), New York: Cambridge University Press (1973). However, his expression "one thought too many" is from Williams (1981), but in that article he much say the same things as in "A Critique...".

<sup>175</sup> Williams (1973), pp. 103-104.

<sup>176</sup> That it is this approach Williams has in mind is fairly obvious in light of what he says on pages 114-116 (ibid.), regarding this agent having different "commitments" on different "levels" and being fully aware of them.

her personal projects in an inappropriate way anyhow, since he or she views them through his or her ‘consequentialist glasses’.

That is,

[t]he point here is not, as utilitarians may hasten to say, that if the project or attitude is that central to his life, then to abandon it will be very disagreeable to him and great loss of utility will be involved... it is not like that; on the contrary, once he is prepared to look at it like that, the argument in any serious case is over anyway. The point is that he is identified with his actions as flowing from projects and attitudes which in some cases he takes seriously at the deepest level, as what his life is about (or, in some cases, this section of his life – seriousness is not necessarily the same as persistence). It is absurd to demand of such a man, when the sums come in from the utility network which the projects of others have in part determined, that he should just step aside from his own project and decision and acknowledge the decision which utilitarian calculation requires. It is to alienate him in a real sense from his actions and the source of his action in his own convictions. It is to make him into a channel between the input of everyone’s projects, including his own, and an output of optimific decision; but this is to neglect the extent to which *his* actions and *his* decisions have to be seen as the actions and decisions which flow from the projects and attitudes with which he is most closely identified. It is thus, in the most literal sense, an attack on his integrity.<sup>177</sup>

Thus, the agent sets all his projects in relation to his consequentialist moral justification, and this is troublesome because he will then relate to these projects in an inappropriate fashion; he cannot seriously regard any project as being something that is distinctively *his* project alone, although it could be central to his life, but as projects which ultimately are dependent upon the projects of all other people in the world. If we are to believe Williams, this is alienating and absurd. The agent will become (as Railton expressed it) “estranged, distanced, and separated” from all of his projects, and also alienated from himself. Because, according to Williams, one’s character (*who* one is) is partly constituted by one identifying oneself with certain projects as being one’s own distinctive *personal* projects. But this ‘distinctiveness’ is lost when the projects are viewed through the ‘consequentialist glasses’ (when the agent ‘steps aside’ from the projects); they turn into matters for each and everyone in a general sense, i.e., no one in particular. To view one’s projects in such a way is to discard one’s integrity on these matters; one can no longer identify oneself with the projects, and since such an identification is vital for understanding who one is, one will also lose touch with oneself. This alienation could be frustrating, but

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., pp. 116-117.

the agent need for that sake not understand the cause of this frustration, because the agent might not realize that it is his awareness of his consequentialist moral justification for any project that is alienating, and therefore “one thought too many.”

But how could this be a problem for friendship? Indeed, the agent might somehow feel alienated, but why would this make the agent unable to be a real friend? What is wrong with his or her perspective? One possible explanation might be found by setting alienation in relation to the component ‘valuing the person’. Involved in such a personal project as friendship is obviously at least one more person (the friend); and if one is alienated from all of one’s personal projects, it could follow that one also is alienated from the persons tied to certain projects. (I say that *it could follow*, because I am not entirely certain how it would; but for the sake of the argument, this will be assumed for the time being.) Like the agent’s personal projects ‘disappear in the crowd’ when the consequentialist glasses are on, so might other people. As a consequence, it could (somehow) be argued, the agent is unable to truly value people for whom they are. Although the agent can surely *know* a person very well, the consequentialist agent might fail to fully ‘see’ her persona, as the agent looks to so many other things, namely the weal and woe of all. That is, the distinctive characteristics of the other person, and her uniqueness *qua* friend, is ‘pushed aside’, and made less significant in light of everything else; the friend floats out and become nothing but one tree in a large forest, i.e., no one in particular. Comparing once again with the evaluation of works of art (and this is hopefully not an incomprehensible analogy), one could claim that the other person (even if it is a close friend) is for the consequentialist but one painting in a gigantic museum of art. This is not to say that the agent fails to love the person (like the consequentialist might find one painting in the museum being more attractive than the rest); yet, however, the distinguishing aspects of the other person could turn vague, ‘blur’ in the crowd. This could certainly be found ‘alienating’. (As a practical consequence, the agent might fail to detect subtle changes, and relate to them, and one day suddenly discover that the person she once valued *qua* friend in fact has become someone else, a stranger, without her notice.) Thus, in Railton’s example concerning John and Anne, the problem is that Anne is being taken into account by the alienated consequentialist John, but not because “it is her” alone. She is taken into account in light of John’s consequentialist convictions, but, unfortunately, this means that John possibly does not take *her* fully into account; he do not value her for who she is. This John might however not notice. He might sincerely love Anne, and not see their relationship as a mere instrument, but yet something is missing anyhow – Anne *qua* Anne. If this

is so, John cannot be a real friend, and possibly nor can any Simple Strategic agent either.

However, all this is obviously questionable. Williams (and Railton's) arguments seems to ultimately rest upon assumptions about how people in general are constituted – that most people's character is dependent upon one being identified with one's personal projects in a certain way (and this way disqualifies any consequentialist glasses). *If* it is so, then Simple Strategic consequentialists will necessarily be alienated from their projects. But this is not for certain, and since Williams do not put forward any sociological or psychological evidence for that being so, his assumption is not supported.

For one thing, John need not be alienated at all. This all depends on how he conceives his projects, and their relation to the rest of the world and himself. He need not at all feel detached from them, on the contrary. They could be deeply important to *him*, but not merely because they are important and central to *his* life, but *also because* they are also found important and connected to the rest of the world. This could provide John with a sense of attachment, not detachment, with himself, his projects and the rest of the world. John could equally well have found that if he had conceived his projects as 'only' being 'his' personal projects, he would not be able to see any connection with them to the rest of the world, and that he then would experience alienation – but for different reasons: he could think that even though he is engaged in many important projects, these are disconnected from the rest of the world. In a figurative sense, the globe continues to spin, and there is nothing he can do to change (or not change) that. He is but one diminutive person in a large world, and that could surely give rise to "a sense of loneliness" or "lack of belonging." But seeing oneself, and one's projects that one identify with, as parts of a "bigger picture" could remedy this alienation. In consequence, a Simple Strategic agent need not experience alienation at all, on the contrary.

However, *if* John is alienated, the reason for this need not necessarily be because he is a Simple Strategic agent; it could rather be because he has not thought things over very well. He fails to see any connection between his projects and the rest of the world, and himself. He does not really see things in a "bigger picture," and perhaps he cannot for some reason – but this he must do, if he is to be this type of consequentialist. But that problem is John's problem alone, not necessarily all other Simple Strategic consequentialists.

But one could still argue that even if John is not alienated from his projects (but sees them through thoughtful consequentialist glasses), he is still alienated from Anne; he does not fully value her for whom she is. Is this true? Well, one could perhaps claim that, on basis that he takes into account not only her when

evaluating their relationship. However, that he does not take into account *only* her is not to say that he does not take *her* into account. He could very well appreciate her for who she is, nothing speaks against that. And his moral convictions certainly do not prevent him from valuing her so, although his moral conviction of course makes him value other things too. Although he sees things in a “bigger picture,” he need not for that sake stare at the forest and fail to see the trees.

Thus I do not believe ‘alienation’ automatically follows from being a Simple Strategic consequentialist, but most importantly (in this context), I do not find this argument to pose a serious problem for friendship in relation to the internal perspective of the agent.<sup>178</sup> If ‘alienation’ is somehow a problem for friendship, it has to do with the external perspective (for example, Anne might not at all appreciate being seen in a “bigger picture”), like all other problems so far discussed in this section. That, however, is not in any way meant to make those problems less important. To repeat (if it has been forgotten), the external perspective is equally as important as the internal one when it comes to friendship. Friendship is not only about one perspective; like tango, it takes two.

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<sup>178</sup> But as earlier said, ‘alienation’ is a popular concept, often put forward, but less often explained. So I am not certain that my discussion here really captures what all philosophers who have spoken about consequentialism and ‘alienation’ have intended to say. But I can live with that.

For example, a different argument regarding consequentialists and alienation has been put forward by Dean Cocking and Justin Oakley in “Indirect Consequentialism, Friendship and the Problem of Alienation,” *Ethics*, 106 (1995), pp. 86-111. Cocking and Oakley admit that a consequentialist need not experience any pressing alienation from her friendships, as such an agent can indeed find it allowed to be appropriately motivated in particular instances of friendship, yet this does not solve the problem of alienation and friendship, because all friendships for this agent will nonetheless be conditional upon the promotion of the overall good; i.e., the agent would nevertheless terminate a friendship if this were found to not be for the best. However, Cocking and Oakley do not really explain how this “terminating condition” would be a problem for the consequentialist (the internal perspective), but argue mostly that this would be troublesome for the agent’s friends (the external perspective). They claim that a friend of a consequentialist might find this condition alienating (even if the consequentialist herself does not constantly bear it in mind), and this might be correct. But for the same reasons as will be put forward regarding the external perspective and alienation (as here characterized), that is not necessarily so. However, Cocking and Oakley can be found to not merely say that. They also seem to insinuate that this “terminating condition” is, all by itself, incompatible with friendship, but they do not provide any explanation to why it that would be so, i.e., why it obviously must be excluded in any appropriate definition of friendship. One possible interpretation is that Cocking and Oakley’s argument is really about *instrumentality* (that is, the terminating condition somehow makes all relationships for a consequentialist ‘inevitably instrumental’). But this I would deny, for the same reasons I put forward earlier regarding that alleged problem.

Furthermore, if the *cause* of the external perspective being problematic is the nature of the consequentialist, then this problem will of course become a problem for the consequentialist too.

#### 4.3.2 External perspective: Loneliness

Could there be a problem with this approach and the external perspective? There certainly could. Consider again what Williams wrote: "...it might have been hoped by someone (for instance, by his wife) that this motivating thought, *fully spelled out*, would be the thought that it was his wife, not that it was his wife and that in situations of this kind it is permissible to save one's wife." (Although this example is about a man and his wife, we could equally well think of it as being about two friends.)

Naturally, the alleged problem has nothing to do with the rescuing itself, but somehow with the indirect motives underlying the direct motives of the rescuing operation; the man saving her does so out of more thoughts than merely "it is her." Of course, in the split second when he reached out his hand, he might not have had any particular thoughts at all in mind; but by being this kind of consequentialist, he would, prior to the act or after it, nevertheless ultimately justify his direct motives (when all his motivating thoughts are "fully spelled out") with reference to its contribution to what is best for all.

If it turned out that the man ultimately was involved in a relationship with her *because* that would promote the overall good, and that his reason for rescuing her was because he wanted to sustain the relation in order to able to promote the good, he clearly regarded their relationship as being an instrument. Thus, if the man had acted *solely* out of pure consequentialist motives, the wife could rightfully have filed a complaint; her husband would then obviously not at all have taken into account that "it is her." But he could certainly take that into account (by thinking 'and' instead of 'because'), so the trouble need not simply that it is *not* her. The problem would then rather be that it is not *only* her, but also a whole lot of other people (each and every individual in the world, to be precise), that count for the man rescuing her.

Could the wife consider this to be a problem? Well, William's example is obviously carefully designed to generate such suspicions; if there had been a complete stranger saving the woman, we would probably not have found the rescuing especially problematic, at least not at first glance. But in this particular scenario, it was a husband saving his wife. Spouses are lovers, and I believe some spontaneously feel that lovers should primarily (maybe even exclusively) be concerned with each other's weal and woe; thus, we could claim the man commits a kind of emotional bigamy by not being exclusively concerned with



his wife weal and woe, although he does of course not love each and every individual in the world. In other words, the wife might feel that the man does not really love her, as he does not act 'truly' partially. But this, of course, depends on what *she* puts in the notion of 'love'. If she does not believe that love require 'true' partiality, she need not take it to be a problem.

The woman could certainly feel alienated, detached. Although she could feel valued for who she is, she could still find it problematic that she is not *only* valued this way. If she asks the man, "Would you still be my friend if that turned out to be immoral?" she would hear the sincere reply, "Not a chance!" – perhaps followed by the comforting assertion, "but it will probably never turn out so." Still, this might indeed cause a feeling of loneliness; she could experience that she is, for the man, but one insignificant part of a picture that is much larger than her. However, this is not to say that the woman has to be an egocentric that demands undivided attention. She can very well highly respect, admire and even praise the man's high ideals and moral convictions, yet feel detached anyhow. In consequence, their relation might fade away (and since this detachment could be somewhat subtly experienced, none of them might be able to put the finger on why their relationship ceased to be). But this is of course very individualistic. Whether or not one feels disconnected from the other person depends to a large extent on how one interprets and relates to the situation. The woman could equally well take the man's extra thoughts to not be alienating at all. Even though she is but one part in the "bigger picture," she is undoubtedly a significant and highly treasured part. If the situation is viewed in that way, the relationship could actually improve. Rather than experiencing a sense of loneliness, the woman could feel that she is standing very close to the consequentialist; she is not *all* that matters, but she matters *a lot* in context of the broad-minded consequentialist's life.

Well, then, is there a problem with the Simple Strategic approach and the external perspective? Once again, that all depends on the personality of the friend of the consequentialist. Some could take this consequentialist to be an alienating figure (and we cannot simply dismiss them on basis that that they "have the *wrong* feeling") while others might not. To state that people *must* think so-and-so about this kind of agent would be ridiculous, and anyone doing so probably does it merely on basis what she personally would think, or (like Williams) appeals to some unfounded assumptions about the psychology of people in general.

Although the Naïve and Simple Strategic approaches are based upon quite different motivational structures, they have in common that the agent is at all times consciously aware of her consequentialism moral ambition; in other

words, consequentialism plays a clearly visibly ‘subjective’ role for the agent. One could find this to be a problem, For instance, it could be alienating for the consequentialist, like it was for John (who did not manage to see things in a bigger picture). Furthermore, if people in general actually find the Simple Strategic agent to be an alienating figure, or if ‘genuine partiality’ is actually a necessary part of the love involved in friendship, such a consequentialist would indeed have a reason for adopting some other approach. The approach to be considered next, the Advanced Strategic Approach, is based on a strategy that attempts to yield a perspective in which this subjective element is occasionally invisible for the agent.

#### 4.4 THE ADVANCED STRATEGIC APPROACH

The ultimate aim for an agent that adopts the Advanced Strategic Approach is naturally to live up to whatever consequentialist theory prescribes. But this aim is not supposed to play any apparent role *at all* in the agent’s (subjective) motivations, except when required from time to time. As the agent has decided to be a consequentialist, she must of course at some initial stage contemplate which type of direct motives lead to the best outcomes. This is similar to how the Simple Strategic agent deliberates, with the difference that the Advanced Strategic agent also includes the factor that she will not be aware of the consequentialist justification at all times after this initial stage. The direct motives of the Advanced Strategic agent are indeed indirectly connected to his or her consequentialist justification, but the route from such justification to subjective motives is far more implicit for this agent than a Simple Strategic one. However, the agent might (or might not) face situations in which it turns out that certain motives lead to outcomes that are for the worse. When such situations occur, the agent should reconsider her motivational structure by means of consequentialist deliberations.

We could portray this agent as someone who (like the Simple Strategic agent) tries to fit her personal projects in the context of a life that contributes as much as possible to making the world better, yet (unlike the Simple Strategic agent) does not seek to constantly observe such projects as contributing to making the world better. The reason why an agent would not like to view her projects in light of fulfilling such a function is because she believes that such a concern would ruin the possibility of pursuing certain highly important projects properly, and, in consequence, she would not make the world a better place. The agent might take Sidgwick’s classic ‘paradox of hedonism’ seriously, and also

find that it is applicable to all normative consequentialist theories (not only those which are based on pleasure being the ultimate good). The agent attempts to avoid a ‘paradox of consequentialism’, believing that if she pursues certain projects in the conscious belief that they will make the world a better place, the world will not become a better place, because one will fail to properly pursue such projects.

However, although the agent wants to avoid the paradox of consequentialism, she does not want to drop the possibility of deliberating in consequentialist terms altogether (this is what the Esoteric Strategic agent does), because she might find that that could be for the worse too. If faced with a hard moral problem, she wants to be able to resolve it by means of consequentialist deliberations, and not merely state that anything goes. Thus, the agent wants to keep her consequentialist aims as a regulative operator somewhere in her motivational structure, and also be able to contemplate her aim from time to time. The agent wants to find a balance between her ‘common moral thinking’ and consequentialism as a regulative and justificatory operator for such thinking.

But one can certainly wonder how an agent would proceed to adopt this somewhat complicated approach. One suggested method is to develop a ‘suitable character’, and involve in this development the ability to not constantly relate to one’s fundamental moral aim, yet without totally disregarding it. In other words, the agent should develop a character, but also incorporate a possibility of reconsidering her character if that turns out to be necessary.<sup>179</sup> This is certainly not a far-fetched suggestion; I believe many often

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<sup>179</sup> This seems to be how Railton (1988) suggests that anyone who aspires to be a “sophisticated consequentialist should proceed. (However, as earlier stated, it is not perfectly clear whether Railton’s sophisticated consequentialist should be understood as an Simple Strategic agent, or an Advanced Strategic. But I take it to be an agent of the latter kind; for one thing, Railton’s sophisticated consequentialist is supposed to avoid ‘alienation’, which is an alleged problem for the Simple Strategic agent.)

Railton distinguishes between “subjective” and “objective” consequentialism. The former is “the view that whenever one faces a choice of actions, one should attempt to determine which acts of those available would most promote the good, and should then try to act accordingly,” while the latter “is the view that the criterion of rightness of an act or course of action is whether it in fact would most promote the good of those acts available to the agent,” i.e., objective consequentialism “concerns the outcomes actually brought about, and thus deals with the question of deliberation only in terms of the tendencies of certain forms of decision making to promote appropriate outcomes” (p. 113). 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...” (p. 114).

ponder what kind of person they would like to be, and also try to become such a person, even though they of course may not do it out of consequentialist reasons. There is hardly a major difference between trying to become a better person, merely because one wants to be a better person, and try to become a special kind of person because one believes that would be for the overall best.

But to say that this approach is not far-fetched is of course not to say that it is easy to adopt. In contrast to the two preceding approaches, this one obviously requires a lot more of the agent; developing a character is not done in a jiffy, but must be acquired through a vast amount of intellectual and psychological work. The greatest difficulty is obviously that of being able to forget certain beliefs and motivations at certain times, and bring them back into one's consciousness when a 'mental moral alarm clock' sounds.<sup>180</sup> But one has to learn from experience when it is appropriate to deliberate in consequentialist terms, and when it is not, and how it is to be done; and this is an ongoing process.

However, moral theorists who have defended variants of this approach have been very quiet when it comes to its actual practical adoption. Most have only been interested in putting forward arguments which theoretically gives reasons why approach *ought* to be adopted, but no one gives any detailed descriptions of how it is to be done. But this might be excused. For one thing, the ways to make use of this approach are indeed very individualistic. The world, and the people within it, is a complex business; different people are different in respects to knowledge, points of view, culture, and so on. The Advanced Strategic

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Just like a "sophisticated hedonist," who desires to be happy, "might proceed precisely by looking at the complex and contextual: observing the actual modes of thought and action of those people who are in some way like himself and who seem most happy" (p. 103), a sophisticated consequentialist may also proceed. A hedonist "will find that few [happy] individuals are subjective hedonists; instead, they act for the sake of a variety of ends as such." Thus, the agent "may then set out to develop himself the traits of character, ways of thought, types of commitment, and so on, that seem common in happy lives." But "[c]ould one really make such changes if one had as a goal leading an optimally happy life? The answer seem to me a qualified *yes...*" (p. 104).

The "sophisticated consequentialist may learn that consequentialist deliberation is in a variety of cases self-defeating, so that other habits of thought should be cultivated. The sophisticated consequentialist... 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." (p. 115).

<sup>180</sup> An obvious problem is that an agent might fail with this, and fall back to the Simple Strategic Approach, with a blend of the Naive Approach. The agent tries to have certain motivations at certain times, but unable to forget certain others that ought to be forgotten, and might in consequence experience a distressing self-defeating split vision.

Approach is of course meant to be possible to adopt, but certainly not in the same way for everyone. It is probably therefore philosophers who have suggested this approach only have outlined it broadly. The rest is left to the consideration of the thoughtful readers.

But to be able to embark on the discussion of whether this approach is possible to reconcile with friendship, it must be assumed that the agent is someone who has successfully adopted the approach. Because the question is, can this consequentialist be a real friend?

#### *4.4.1 Internal Perspective: Self-Deception*

In ordinary living and doing, this agent will be able to hold the sole perspective that being a real friend requires. If this agent were *not* able to hold such a perspective, that would either be because the agent is simply a poor friend (yet for other reasons than her consequentialist ideals), or because the agent has failed to adopt this approach properly. Thus, from what is apparent at first glance, to both the agent and her friends, much should speak in favour of that this individual is being a real friend.

However, what you see is not always what you get in this case. The agent is still a consequentialist. In a, from time to time, sealed shut compartment of the agent's mind lurks the distinctive consequentialist perspective, waiting to get out. Though it might sound odd, the agent has in fact a kind of *split personality*. On one hand the agent will be The Good Friend. On the other hand, when circumstances call for it, she can turn into Dr Consequentialist. This metamorphosis might happen more or less often - or maybe not at all; the agent's life might turn out to not contain any moral conflicts or emergencies which require consequentialist deliberations. (However, there is no split vision, because the agent is not these two figures at once. The Good Friend is not, in ordinary living and doing, aware of Dr Consequentialist. But Dr Consequentialist knows The Good Friend very well.)

Well then, is this split personality somehow internally incompatible with being a real friend? Since the personality is split, we have to ask ourselves which person we should consider. Dr Consequentialist or The Good Friend?

If we examine the mentality of Dr Consequentialist, we could do it at two occasions. First, when the agent is in the process of adopting the approach. This state is unavoidable, and might be found troublesome, as the agent then will critically evaluate if she actually ought to pursue friendship, and how this is to be done. Second, when the agent faces a situation when she has to reconsider her character (and friendships) by means of consequentialist deliberations. Both these situations could give rise to problems, but these would merely be of the

same kind that the Naive and Simple Strategic agents have to face, such as split vision, thoughts too many, alienation, and so on. And those problems have already been discussed. If they had been devastating problems, well, then they would be so for the Advanced Strategic agent too. But, as I have argued, they are not. Nothing new, so far.

If there is to be a *distinctive* problem with this approach and friendship for the internal perspective, it must be some problem that is the case when this agent is The Good Friend. But, as said, when we examine this person, there is apparently no problem. The Advanced Strategic agent will be able to hold a perspective appropriate for being a real friend. However, we might find it to be a problem with the fact that what is seen is not all there is. Since this agent has taken the strategy of indirection to a quite extreme degree and involved a conscious choice of not being conscious of, and motivated by, her consequentialist justifications, this agent seems to have to engage in a form of self-deception. Simply put, self-deception is to hide some truth from yourself, or, allowing yourself to believe something that is not true. The Good Friend could sincerely claim to others: “I am not a consequentialist!” and believe it to be true herself.

Stocker hints that this is somehow a problem:

... in regard to something of such personal concern, so close to and internal to a person as ethics, talk of indirection is both implausible and baffling. Implausible in that we do not seem to act by indirection, at least not in such areas as love, friendship, [etc.]. In these cases, our motive has to do directly with the loved one, the friend... Talk of indirection is baffling, in an action- and understanding-defeating sense, since, once we begin to believe that there is *something beyond* such activities as love which is necessary to justify them, it is only by something akin to *self-deception* that we are able to continue them.<sup>181</sup>

First of all, is this true? Will the Advanced Strategic agent have to deceive herself? The answer is obviously yes. Contrary to the Naïve or Simple Strategic agent, there is something hidden beyond the everyday perspective (the direct motives) this kind of agent holds that the agent has intentionally chosen to not always be aware of: the moral justification of this everyday perspective. If there were no such self-deception, the agent would be aware of this, and thus not have adopted this approach; she would instead have adopted the Naïve or Simple Strategic Approach.

But the interesting question is if this is a problem for being a real friend. Does this self-deception lead to a twisted internal perspective that is incompatible

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<sup>181</sup> Stocker (1976), p. 463, my italics.

with being a real friend? (Note that Stocker does not explicitly say it is a problem; he merely concludes that it is necessary. But by using the tendentious term “self-deception,” he hints that it is troublesome.) Intuitively, we might sense that there is something fishy with this agent. Somehow, the self-deceived person is not ‘true’. It does not matter, one could say, if the perspective she presents to herself and to others is perfectly compatible with being a real friend; it is, due to self-deception, somehow ‘soiled’. If this argumentation is to be successful, it requires that one take into account not only the perspective as it is at a given time, but also the route to that perspective.

There seems to be something going for that idea. For instance, what if the agent initially detested close personal relations (i.e., were an Anti-Friendship agent) but by consequentialist reasoning came to the conclusion that she ought to force herself to pursue such relations genuinely? Contrary to the former approaches, the Advanced Strategic approach indeed makes such a radical metamorphosis possible, even though it might of course be hard to accomplish psychologically. Would we say that the agent, in the end, is a real friend? I believe some would not. But why?

I shall postpone this question to the discussion regarding the Esoteric Strategic Approach. The question is if the route to a perspective should count when evaluating the perspective, and that is the main issue in respect to the Esoteric Strategic agent. If the Esoteric Strategic agent cannot be a real friend, then the Advanced Strategic agent cannot be so either. But I shall argue that they can.

#### *4.4.2 External Perspective: Lack of Trust*

Could there be some problem with split personality for the external perspective? We could of course repeat the same problems that applied to the former approaches. It could be claimed that people in general do not appreciate such a personality. But that is not certain, as it was not quite certain that a Naïve agent cannot be regarded as a real friend merely on basis that she is split in vision. It could also be claimed that a split personality is alienating; but that all depends on how the friend relates to the situation.

But even if we did not find this kind of consequentialist an annoying or alienating character, could there be some other problem? Well, one could find it troublesome that this agent is at all times a *latent* consequentialist that, if the situation calls for it (when the ‘mental moral alarm clock’ rings), could engage in consequentialist deliberations and calculate to do and say things that are supposed to be for the overall best. Also, one might find it problematic that this agent (in the process of developing a ‘suitable character’) possibly could have

acquired certain reflexes (which the agent might be totally unaware of in ordinary living) that, when the situation calls for it, might make her act in a sudden and unexpected way. One could therefore suspect that one does not really know where one has got this agent. Who is this person now? What does she think? Why does she do that? Why does she say that? What will she think and do tomorrow? and so on. One might sense that one really cannot tell for what reason the agent does and says things, and what she will do next. In other words, the agent could be regarded as unreliable, unpredictable, and untrustworthy.

To trust someone is to have the belief or confidence in the honesty and reliability of that person. Someone whom we sincerely trust we do not expect to let us down, not lie to us, not harm us, and so on. Trust is clearly an important element of friendship.<sup>182</sup> Someone who, say, has a clear record of slandering, revealing our personal secrets to others, or being a dishonest sycophant (“Jan, I promise you, this is unquestionably the most convincing argumentation I’ve ever read!”), is indeed hard to regard as a real friend. If it turned out reasonable to believe that an Advanced Strategic Agent cannot be trusted, it would certainly be hard for many to regard that person as a friend. Well then, is it reasonable?

According to William Wilcox, the maximization of agent-neutral value will too often conflict with the well-being of a friend, and therefore a consequentialist is even more untrustworthy than an egoist:

An overriding commitment to the maximization of impersonal value, like an overriding commitment to the maximization of one’s own pleasure, has practical effects that are too pervasive to leave room for the *commitment* to particular persons necessary for friendship. In fact, any form of consequentialism containing a plausible conception of impersonal value will fare even less well in this respect than egoism. It is at least barely conceivable that someone could believe that another person’s welfare could never conflict with his own pleasure – or at least that they would conflict only rarely. But it is much less plausible to believe that a particular person’s welfare rarely conflicts with the maximization of impersonal value.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> But this is not to say that I take trust to be a distinctive element of friendship, i.e., that it is independent of the components I outlined in the second chapter. Rather, as claimed, I take trust to stem from ‘love’ in context of friendship; that is, we put trust in friends, and we do not expect them to let us down, *because* they love us. Obviously, however, this can be questioned (someone might argue that trust is in fact an independent element). But whatever the truth might be on this matter, it is merely a detail, and it does not change the general idea of the forthcoming discussion.

<sup>183</sup> William H. Wilcox, “Egoists, Consequentialists, and Their Friends,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 16 (1987), p. 79.



Thus, it would be reasonable to not trust an Advanced Strategic consequentialist, as the world is apparently constituted in such a way that her 'mental alarm clock' will go off most of the time. In consequence, we would be justified in thinking that an Advanced Strategic agent will often think in distinctive consequentialist terms and act and speak in such a way that her moral aims are realized. This means that the agent could be dishonest, lie to us, let us down, sacrifice our well-being for the sake of the overall good, and so on. We could indeed find such actions morally good (if we are consequentialists ourselves, that is); however, we could find that the agent is everything but trustworthy, and therefore we would find it hard to regard her as a real friend.

The line of reasoning Wilcox puts forward regarding the necessary ambivalence of a consequentialist is frequently repeated. But it is for good reasons not contested. Much is based upon empirical assumptions that need not be correct. According to Earl Conee, "... it should be agreed that any commitment making frequent demands that pull us away from a friend would jeopardise or destroy the relationship."<sup>184</sup> However, a sensible view of how the world is constituted implies that a consequentialist will have good reasons to be the kind of person who stay loyal to her friends. Wilcox wrongly pictures how a rational consequentialist would relate to her friends. Because

the interests of friendship and consequentialism can be reasonably expected to usually coincide. The point of common sense that we do best partly by doing well by our friends is usually quite reasonable for a consequentialist to accept. This point is clearly correct from diverse sensible perspectives. It is reasonable on various grounds to suppose that it is an insuperably good thing to have close friends and spend some time treating them well, and to suppose that only rare emergencies might override the maximal value of this sort of conduct. In any such view, circumstances only occasionally give a consequentialist good reason to believe that concern for a friend even competes with consequentialist considerations. This slight and occasional threat of conflict does not jeopardise the relationship or indict the consequentialist viewpoint.<sup>185</sup>

Therefore, there are good reasons to trust this kind of consequentialist agent. Even if her 'mental moral alarm clock' might go off, this does not imply that the agent will *often* see the need to let her friends down, as the world becomes a better place if one remains loyal to one's friends. If the agent let her friends

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<sup>184</sup> Earl Conee, "Friendship and Consequentialism," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 72-2 (2001): p. 161.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 161-179.

down, that would only be in “rare” or “occasional” circumstances, and that could be a price one is ready to pay. The risk that a consequentialist turns against us is minimal.<sup>186</sup>

Well then, whom are we going to believe? Wilcox or Conee? If we believe that Wilcox is correct, we have reasons to believe that consequentialists are not trustworthy, and subsequently we may be unable to regard them as friends. If we believe Conee, on the other hand, we have reasons to believe that consequentialists are trustworthy, and thus we should be able to regard them as friends (and if we cannot, it is at least not because they are untrustworthy).

But both Wilcox and Conee build their ideas on empirical speculations that are hard to verify. Unless we turn omniscient, we cannot ever come to know which one of them that are right on this matter. Does the discussion have to end with that? Not necessarily. This insight (i.e that we cannot really tell which one of them is correct) might worry us, and make us suspicious and careful. The problem is then not that one simply *cannot* trust a consequentialist (maybe one can); the problem is rather that we are aware of the fact that we cannot *know* if we can trust her. This might yield a gnawing paranoia, that we (despite how intensively the consequentialist tries to convince us that she is trustworthy) cannot shake off. And a consequence of this paranoia is that we might take certain precautions, that in the end destroy our friendship with such an agent.

To see how this could be the case, let us first consider another kind of situation in which the same predicament could occur. Let us say that you regularly visit a professional therapist to deal with your psychological problems. You suspect that you are a latent child abuser, and you want to illuminate and eliminate this possible psychological disposition, before you do something really wicked. To succeed with this, you must be totally honest, and tell the therapist exactly what you think, feel and do. You find this extremely agonizing and embarrassing, as you have to reveal intimate matters about yourself that you would prefer to keep confidential. Your therapist has however sworn to never reveal your secrets, no matter if you had done something wicked, and this you find relieving and helpful. But one day you find out that your therapist is in fact

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<sup>186</sup> If we are to believe J.J.C. Smart, consequentialists are in fact among the trustworthiest people: “as a matter of untutored sociological observation, I should say that in general utilitarians are exceptionally trustworthy and that the sort of people who might do you down are rarely utilitarians.” (“The Methods of Ethics and The Methods of Science,” *Journal of Philosophy*, 62 (1965), p.348.) (Though it is not for certain what kind of consequentialist Smart refers to (he might be speaking of Academic or Sunday consequentialists), we might find it reasonable that he is correct regarding those who have adopted consequentialism as a personal morality too. Consequentialists are, *in general*, trustworthy. So, there is no reason to find the Advanced Strategic agent unreliable.)

an Advanced Strategic Consequentialist, and not, say, a genuine Kantian, which you had always believed. During your next session, you once again ask the therapist if she would *ever* reveal your secrets, and as expected she repeat that she would not. But this you know is not quite true. As she is in fact a consequentialist, she would reveal your secrets if that were for the overall best. You do, however, take it to be more likely that your therapist will not reveal your secrets, as it would be for the overall worse if therapists regularly did so. But still, it is not a closed option for the therapist. Although you still trust your therapist to a certain extent, you do not do so entirely. To be on the safe side, you take what you consider to be small precautions. You leave out the nastiest details of your fantasies when in session with the therapist, because you do not consider them *that* important, and you dare not take the little risk that they become public. But unfortunately, the devil lurked in those very details, and your psychotherapy fails.

Although this example pictures a pretty extreme situation, the core problem it illustrates could be found to be a problem in a friendship-relation too. If our friend is a consequentialist, it is undeniable not a closed option for her to reveal our secrets, lie to us, boil us in butter, and so on. We may find this annoying, and take certain precautions. We could refrain from being totally honest about ourselves, what we think and do, and even tell straightforward lies, just to be on the safe side. We could get caught lying, and even though it might not be a terrible serious lie, the consequentialist could begin to suspect that it is *we* that are not trustworthy, and subsequently take precautions herself. So, we end up in a paranoid state, in which we do not trust the consequentialist, and the consequentialist does not trust us (and this we say, is not *our* fault, but the consequentialist's, and vice-versa). Such a development is obviously destructive, and could damage the relationship to the extent that it fades away, especially if we, like Laurence Thomas, believe that "the bond of trust between deep friends is cemented by the equal self-disclosure of intimate information."<sup>187</sup> Such information would definitely not be shared if we do not trust each other.

However, the consequentialist could attempt to block this vicious development by trying to convince us that she would never, *ever*, do anything that would harm us (or lie about our competence just to make us happy), because that *would* be for the overall worse. But no matter how many good reasons she put forward, perhaps assisted by statistics or untutored sociological observations declaring that consequentialists in general are trustworthy, it might

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<sup>187</sup> "Friendship," *Synthese*, 72 (1987), p. 223. See pp. 223-227 for his discussion about the necessity of mutual self-disclosure in friendship.

not help at all. Because we may constantly wonder for what reason she is trying to convince us about *this*, and become even more suspicious. Who is doing the talking, is it The Good Friend or Dr. Consequentialist? If it is the former, would Dr. Consequentialist agree? And if it is the latter, is she really telling the truth? Or is she merely saying this because she believes it will be for the overall best if we believe that consequentialists never let their friends down?

How should the consequentialist tackle that problem? Well, she could argue that it is also for the overall best if consequentialists tell the truth. But this is not of much help either, because the same problems apply to that statement. As Troy Jollimore remarks, even if a consequentialist claims to have adopted “a policy of scrupulous honesty,” that agent “has no way to convince other people that she has done so: her claim to have done so is... simply an indication that she believes making such a claim is a way of maximizing the good.”<sup>188</sup> There seems to be no easy way out of this difficulty. A world of egoists is often described as being a paranoid world in which there is no trust, because people are constantly suspicious of each other. Unfortunately, a world of universal philanthropists might be the same thing.

But it need not be like that. This paranoia could of course be considered irrational. In light of Conee’s line of argumentation, should it not be considered so? Would a sensible person not find it worth the risk to trust a consequentialist after all? Maybe we would. But of course, those who do not think so will not be easily convinced. For one thing, irrational beliefs could hold us in a tight grip no matter if we want them not to. Some people are afraid of flying, and they refrain from flying, even though they are well aware that it is irrational. Thus, even someone who thinks it is irrational to not trust a consequentialist might take destructive precautions anyhow.

One could claim that people are not perfect, and friends hardly trust each other fully.<sup>189</sup> This is undoubtedly true. Unless we live in a fantasy, we are well aware of the fact that anyone (even a Kantian) could let us down (perhaps due to weakness of will, perhaps due to insanity), not merely consequentialists. This insight seems not to be a problem for friendship from what we can tell. Although the consequentialist moral ambition entails a latent inclination of letting us down, this need not be considered a difficulty for the external

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<sup>188</sup> Jollimore (2000), pp. 77-78.

<sup>189</sup> If we are to believe Kant, “[there is a] secret falsity even in the closest friendship, so that a limit upon trust in the mutual confidence of even the best friends is reckoned a universal maxim of prudence in intercourse; of a propensity to hate him to whom one is indebted, or of a hearty well-wishing which yet allows of the remark that ‘in the misfortune of our best friends there is something which is not altogether displeasing to us.’” (*Religion*)

perspective. On the contrary, it could actually enhance the relation. After all, as said by Conee, “the consequentialist has the inclination in question out of deference to *morality*...” and “[t]his basis for the inclination is better thought to merit respect from a friend than to suggest a lack of respect for the friend. It is innocuous to the mutual trust and respect that serves as a bond between good and true friends. In fact, a friend’s recognition of the existence of this ground should foster trust and respect.”<sup>190</sup>

So, what conclusion should be drawn? Should one trust a consequentialist or not? I cannot settle that. I have to be a bore again, and ‘merely’ state that, in the end, it is up to the friends of the consequentialist to decide. What do you think? Are you prepared to gamble, or are the stakes too high?

#### 4.5 THE ESOTERIC STRATEGIC APPROACH

Needless to say by now, the ultimate aim for any agent who decides to adopt the Esoteric Strategic Approach is to best fulfill whatever her preferred consequentialist theory prescribes. But contrary to all former approaches, this aim is not meant to play any apparent regulative or motivational role in the everyday living and doing of the agent *whatsoever*.

This agent has of course knowingly found consequentialism to be true and been involved in deliberations on how this truth is to regulate her life. If not, this approach would not qualify as being a personal morality. But those contemplations only take place once, in an initial state prior to the subsequent everyday life of the agent. In that initial state, the agent considers which kind of direct motivational structure that she ought to embrace in living and doing to fulfill her consequentialist aims. Which motivational structure is found to be optimal does of course depend on a lot of factors which must be taken into account. The agent has to carefully investigate the general context of her particular situation, in light of its historical, social, political and cultural milieu. The agent might find that some clearly non-consequentialist (or even anti-consequentialist) motivational structure is optimal (whether it be ‘the common sense of here and now’, Kantianism, Virtue Ethics, Christianity, or equal), and ought to be embraced in every respect. To this point, the Esoteric Strategic agent is obviously in concord with the Advanced Strategic agent. But unlike the latter agent, the former will not allow the possibility of ever going back to the initial state of consequentialist contemplations. The Esoteric Strategic agent does not ‘mentally program’ herself to have any kind of ‘alarm clock’ that

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<sup>190</sup> Conee (2001), pp. 171-172, my italics.

should go off if a future situation seemingly calls for consequentialist deliberations. The selected motivational structure of the Esoteric Strategic will be hard-wired, forever and without exception. In the following everyday living and doing, the agent will not even be aware of the fact that she has thought in terms of consequentialism once upon a time. In a sense, the agent is however still a consequentialist, though she has taken the concept of regulative and motivational indirection to its most extreme (and final) degree.

The reason why an agent would adopt this approach is obviously that she believes that it will be for the overall best. But to my knowledge, no moral philosopher has explicitly defended the adoption of this approach. However, some advocates of the Advanced Strategic Approach have at least hinted that the Esoteric Strategic Approach might be advantageous, but no one has dared to claim that for certain.<sup>191</sup> This approach does not figure in the debate in issue, but I shall consider it anyway.

For what reason could anyone find this approach advantageous? I personally do not know of any realistic scenarios. This approach is indeed risky business, as we cannot for certain tell how the future will be. But imagine that you come to believe that God and paradise exist. Before you came to this belief, however, you were an atheist who had adopted the Advanced Strategic Approach as a personal morality. Your mental alarm clock will ring and remind you that it is time for reconsiderations. In a cool hour, you realize that if you want to come to heaven when you die (which obviously would be the best consequence) you must switch to the direct motivational structure endorsed by Christianity, and start acting out of a good will, follow the ten commandments, love Jesus, and so on. You might want to stay on the safe side, and stick to the Advanced Strategic Approach. If it in the future would turn out that your belief was in fact wrong, you surely would want to be able to reconsider your motivational structure. But that is not recommended if you have very good reasons to believe that God exists. Because doubting the existence of God is not seldom claimed to be a secure way of ending up in hell. Sticking to the Advanced Strategic Approach could be considered 'being doubtful' by whoever handles the applications of entering paradise in heaven. You must be 'fully dedicated' to Christianity in

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<sup>191</sup> For example, when Peter Railton outlines his "sophisticated consequentialist" (which I have identified as being an Advanced Strategic Approach) he initially discusses how a hedonist could escape the paradox of hedonism: "... a sophisticated hedonist might have reason for changing his beliefs so that he no longer accepts hedonism *in any form*" (Railton (1988), p. 106). Railton does not explicitly include this possibility when turning to consequentialism as a personal morality, but it is certainly possible to *mutatis mutandis* suggest that a sophisticated consequentialist might have reason for changing his beliefs so that he also no longer accepts consequentialism *in any form*, a move which would render the agent Esoteric Strategic.

your personal morality. If you dare not take the risk of ending up in hell, you must drop the Advanced Strategic Approach. Only the Esoteric Strategic Approach will do.<sup>192</sup>

Though it certainly might not be psychologically easy to adopt the Esoteric Strategic Approach, it is not logically impossible. (In fact, this approach could be found easier to adopt than the former. The Advanced Strategic Approach requires the agent to forget consequentialism at certain times, which might seem even more complicated than just forgetting it.) Methods of adopting it will, however, vary from person to person. Those who are emotionally distanced from the idea of consequentialism (Academic and Sunday consequentialists for example) may well find it uncomplicated. Those who for some reason cannot free themselves from the thought that there is something going for consequentialism might find themselves in need of extreme self-imposed manipulation and propaganda, perhaps backed up by hard physical torture, akin to the treatment poor Winston was subject to in George Orwell's *1984*.

Can this consequentialist be a real friend?

#### *4.5.1 Is There a Problem?*

If we presume that the agent has successfully adopted this approach – and of course also settled for some everyday perspective that does not clash with friendship – there is obviously no point in wondering if this agent's internal perspective is compatible with friendship or not. It simply is.<sup>193</sup> However, the agent's friends might not find this agent to be a real friend, because she has in fact settled for this perspective by means of consequentialist deliberations. But such disapproval does not necessarily follow, like it did not necessarily follow for a Naïve agent's friends. Some might indeed find this agent unworthy of friendship, but that would merely be on the basis that one for some reason does not fancy consequentialists in the first place. Let us here assume that the

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<sup>192</sup> We could also imagine “an all-knowing demon who controls the fate of the world and who visits unspeakable punishment upon to the extent that he does not employ a Kantian morality. (Obviously, the demon is not himself a Kantian.) If such a demon existed... consequentialists would have reason to convert to Kantianism, perhaps even make whatever provisions could be made to erase consequentialism from the human memory and prevent any resurgence of it.” Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>193</sup> One could of course question if it is possible to gain such a perspective from consequentialist deliberations (psychologically speaking), or if certain potential moral perspectives (Kantianism, Christianity, Virtue Ethics, etc.) are appropriate for friendship, but that is beyond the scope of this essay.

Esoteric agent's friends do not come to know about the consequentialist deliberations the agent undertook once upon a time, and if they do, they do not care. Would there still be a problem with the external perspective? Obviously none that is related to the agent being a consequentialist. Hence, we cannot find any distinctive problems with this approach and the internal and external perspectives. Can this kind of consequentialist be a real friend? The answer has to be yes.

But I realize that this might not be accepted. One might sense that there is something bizarre with the Esoteric agent and friendship. Even though the internal and external perspectives are suitable, one could object to my conclusion, either on basis that *this agent is not a consequentialist*, or *this is not friendship*. If one proposes these objections, one must advocate conceptions of 'consequentialist' or 'friendship' that differ from mine. But as I see no reason to alter my own conceptions, I do not consider these objections alarming. However, if I am wrong, then these objections might give rise to troublesome consequences for my entire discussion in this chapter. So I shall briefly review them.

Regarding the first objection, I take the Esoteric Strategic agent to be a 'consequentialist', simply because this approach does not violate my definition of 'personal morality'. But one could subscribe to some other definition, which does not approve of this approach. Such a definition would include a requirement that the agent must at all times be consciously attentive to the fact that she has intentionally chosen to "let all of her thoughts and acts - in everyday living and doing - be coordinated and regulated in some way that is supposed to achieve the distinctive aim of her moral theory." If one requires that, then is not only this approach disqualified, but also the Advanced Strategic; no one adopting these approaches would count as being 'consequentialists'.

Must a definition of 'personal morality' include such a requirement? Indeed, in some moral-theoretical contexts, that is obviously so. A variety of ethical systems entail that the agent is consciously aware of her moral aim, and if she does not constantly reflect upon, and is directly motivated by this aim, she is either immoral or non-moral. (Traditional Kantianism and certain forms of Christian ethics are typical examples of such systems.) But in the context of *consequentialism* as a personal morality, such a requirement would be clearly misplaced; consequentialism only prescribes that one ought always do what will make the outcome best, and it should thus be optional by which means (including personal motivations) one attempts to carry out this aim (and in my stipulated definition, it is enough that one *attempts*). However, one could still



disagree, and maintain that the notion ‘personal morality’ somehow ‘essentially’ involves a constant awareness of one’s moral ambition, and therefore an agent must think in characteristically consequentialist terms at all times to be counted as a ‘consequentialist’; for some reason, a personal morality cannot be self-effacing. I will however not push this issue.

Regarding the second objection, I take the Esoteric Strategic agent to be able to be a real friend because she can hold the perspective required. But someone could claim that it is not enough to declare that this agent is involved in a state of affairs which can be appropriately labeled ‘friendship’. What also must be taken into account when judging this, it could be argued, is the route to that perspective, i.e., how the perspective originated.

Why should we have to do that? Well, consider this simple example. Let us say that you and me are the greatest friends. But once upon a time, I was a pure egoist, who only cared about my own welfare, and would do anything to get what I wanted. After a number of disappointments, I realized that it was my conscious egoism that obstructed me from fulfilling my selfish aims (I could, say, not love anyone but myself, and this many around me found alienating, and rejected my company). To resolve this problem, I visited a competent hypnotist who altered my mind entirely. When I walked out of her office, I was fully convinced that I was, and had always been, a philanthropist – while the truth is that I am, and will always be, an Esoteric Strategic Egoist.

Are we really friends? If you and I hold the required perspective, I would have to say that we are. But some might find this troublesome, even upsetting. The problem, it could be argued, is not that I *have* motivational thoughts that could be considered too many, but that I *have had* such thoughts, once upon a time. One major cause to my current perspective is that I, for self-regarding reasons, decided to forget my self-regarding reasons. Thus, some could say, this is not really friendship, because one cannot seriously claim that an egoist can be a real friend. *Mutatis mutandis*, it could be argued that a consequentialist cannot be a real friend, because anyone who obtains such a perspective on the basis of all-regarding reasons (instead of reasons more intimately tied to the friend) have also had ‘too many’ thoughts. In consequence, the Esoteric Strategic agent cannot be a real friend, and neither can the self-deceived Advanced Strategic agent, nor the Simple Strategic agent, and Winston did certainly not truly ‘love’ Big Brother. Their perspectives are, in a sense, ‘soiled’.

But I will not push this issue either. I stick to the idea that friendship is nothing more and nothing less than a matter of perspective. The Esoteric Strategic Consequentialist can be a real friend, and so can the self-deceived Advanced Strategic Consequentialist. In consequence, I have to accept that even

an Esoteric Strategic Egoist (and even an former Anti-Friendship agent) can be a real friend, and I see no problem with that. I also believe that Winston actually loved Big Brother, in the end.

However, some will still see a problem. But those who do so must provide some definition of friendship, which prohibits that such a relationship can be established on the basis of certain reasons, whether it be egotistical or consequentialist. Such a definition must include more than the internal and external perspectives of the involved agents at given times. It must also include which routes to such perspectives are appropriate and which are not.<sup>194</sup>

Indeed, friendship does commonly originate in certain ways, through certain actions (this was briefly discussed in chapter two). We meet people, we like them, we spend time with them, and in that process we gain a certain perspective towards them. We usually do not visit a skilled hypnotists and afterwards start to view a complete stranger as a real friend. We do not usually engage in consequentialist deliberations to find out if certain perspectives are justified or not.

But that people *commonly* do not become friends on consequentialist grounds (or are hypnotized) is no good argument. It would be, if friendship by definition included a clause that stated that certain routes to such a relationship is forbidden; but I have never heard of any such definition, and I hardly believe it could be accepted; it complicates things way too much. Which ways to a perspective are forbidden, and which are allowed? Why, more specifically, should consequentialist deliberations be disqualified? Indeed, friendship *is* complicated. It *is* hard to put the finger on what it is to have a relationship that is ‘non-instrumental’, involves ‘love’ and ‘valuing someone for whom she is’. But why make it more complicated?

Nonetheless, those who still suspect that the Esoteric Strategic agent cannot be real friend will obviously not be that easy to convince. We will have to live with that, awaiting their definition of ‘friendship’ and see if we can agree on it. But I suspect this would be extremely problematic. For one thing, such a definition might turn out to be quite metaphysically extravagant, and allow statements like “Well, you and I believe we are friends, but you see, *in reality* we are not!” to be true. There is something annoying about a definition that allows for that. In consequence, we can never ever know who our real friends are, or if we are real friends ourselves for that sake. If not merely the

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<sup>194</sup> One should however be mindful when doing that. What is one trying to make sense of? If one seeks to define friendship so that no consequentialist ever can be a real friend, one can surely wonder if this is just not some rhetorical trick for the sake of rejecting consequentialism, not necessarily making sense of actual friendship as commonly understood.

perspectives counts, what more should count? I do not know, and frankly, I do not care.

#### 4.6 CONCLUSION

With the Esoteric Strategic Approach, my investigation has come to an end. It is however possible to continue. Yet another kind of agent that could be investigated is someone who manages to objectively live up to what consequentialism prescribes, but is not subjectively aware of that prescription, has never been aware of it, and will never be.

This is certainly not an impossible figure. But to wonder if such an agent can be a real friend requires a radically different discussion. It could not be conducted by discussing internal or external perspectives, as this agent has obviously not adopted the theory as a personal morality. Such a discussion would instead have to be more somewhat more abstract. Personally, I do not even know where to start. But obviously, it would be an interesting discussion. What if we found out that this agent could not be a real friend? Maybe we would then have to seriously reconsider a lot about friendship that we typically take for granted. Maybe friendship actually ought to be rejected, erased from the human mind and for all future replaced with less closer relations; maybe all works on the subject should be burned and replaced with *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Or maybe we would find out that friendship in fact does not exist. It had merely been a conceptual fantasy, invented by philosophers, but never practiced. Interesting questions indeed, but far beyond the scope of this book.

Therefore, the story ends here. From what I can tell, any consequentialist that aspires to be a real friend can be one, and her moral convictions do not make it obviously impossible for others to regard her as a real friend; in other words, the internal and external perspectives need not be distorted. Hence, a consequentialist can pursue real friendship. If she cannot, it would have to be due to other reasons than her fundamental moral convictions (perhaps she is too

much influenced by Dale Carnegie); but those would be problems anyone can face, regardless of personal morality. Being a consequentialist certainly does not automatically make one *more able* to pursue friendship than anyone else; but it probably does not make one less able either.

# 5

## Feminist Critique and The Debate Revisited

The story could have come to an end with the previous chapter. The problem under consideration, "Can a consequentialist be a real friend?" has been discussed, and although the answer in the end merely turned out to be "it depends," it was nevertheless an answer, and the case could have been closed. But the story does not end there.

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION: DISSATISFACTIONS AND SUSPICIONS

I am terribly dissatisfied with my own discussion in the last chapter. Most likely, I am not alone. Some might have found my examination too narrow or too imprecise from the very beginning; and some of those who accepted the frame and scope of the formulated problem might yet have found awkward gaps in my argumentation, and judged my subsequent conclusions as being badly supported. However, such critique does not bother me that much; there is always more that can be said, and what has been said can always be said better. But when dealing with philosophical problems, one must at some point come to a halt. Otherwise one would just go on forever and never 'get anywhere' at all. I certainly do not claim that I have said the final words on the matter I have dealt with; I merely conclude that I have said enough for the time being.

My current dissatisfaction has not to do to which *degree* the discussion is complete. It has to do with the entire discussion itself. I suspect there is something deeply troublesome with *how* and *why* the problem was handled by both myself and the various philosophers I made use of. No matter how well the question had been specified, no matter how detailed the argumentation had been, and no matter how sound conclusions that had followed, I suspect the discussion would inevitably have missed some important issues. It did however take quite some time and a somewhat radical switch in perspective before I managed to grasp this suspicion and dress it in words. But I am still not entirely

sure what I have seen, if it is anything worth seeing at all. Therefore, the reader better prepare for a rather tentative discussion in this final part.

I will soon attempt to clarify what I intend to do here, and why. But initially, I shall prepare the ground by sketching two concepts which will be of relevance for the oncoming discussion, ‘outlooks’ and ‘frameworks’.

### *5.1.1 Outlooks and Frameworks*

For the same reason as one must sooner or later end an inquiry, that is, to ‘get somewhere’, one must initially come to understand where to start. An important part of any philosophical investigation is therefore to firstly dissect and analyze the collected data, and settle for a clear ‘outlook’. If an outlook for some reason is not established, one will not know what one is trying to accomplish. One will never know what is being looked for, but instead just keep looking at everything and nothing, and the inquiry will not take off.

When I began examining the debate on consequentialism and friendship, I believed it would be a fairly straightforward project. The debate was well demarcated, at least in the sense that the debaters explicitly discussed consequentialism and friendship and occasionally referred to each other’s arguments on the matter. But what really was the main question was not obvious. There was no unique outlook initially clarified and settled for; the debate swung back and forth between several. Extracting a distinct outlook thus became an important part of the project. In the previous chapter, I explained that my discussion would be restricted to those problems that were said to arise when the especial motivations that follow the adoption of a consequentialist ethical theory as a personal morality were confronted with the perspective necessary for pursuing friendship.<sup>195</sup> Naturally, this particular outlook did not come to me at once out of the blue; I gradually extracted it during the process of analyzing the limited data (i.e. the collection of writings on the subject) I had set out to examine. I would however not like to say that it was the most obvious, or only possible, outlook. I could very well have extracted some other out of the same data. (For example, I could have analyzed the debate in terms of what the debaters claim constitutes intrinsic value, or how to combine friendship with

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<sup>195</sup> In a sense, an ‘outlook’ is the same thing as a ‘question’, but I use the former notion instead to avoid some misunderstandings. Because identically formulated ‘questions’ can be very different ‘outlooks’ depending upon underlying framework. For example, if a physician specialized in biochemistry poses the question “what is health?” in a laboratory, he or she probably intends to figure out something very different from what ‘people in the street’ might wish to know when they ask the same question.

optimal outcomes of individual or collective actions, and so on.) But I decided to go for the one I eventually selected as I found it to be one that made best sense of most of the arguments presented in the debate. When I had settled for this outlook, I knew what I was looking for. I could then sort out and analyze those arguments I found relevant for my particular inquiry and exclude everything I found irrelevant.

If an inquiry is to be correctly understood by others, it is necessary to introduce and specify the outlook from the outset. It should be precisely formulated and if found to be deviant from some standard or somehow controversial, subsequently explained and justified. If an outlook is not clarified, unrewarding misunderstandings will obviously follow. I am confident that there is no question about what I sought to accomplish in the last section, although it might of course be questioned to what extent I managed to do it.

But an outlook also requires a 'framework' in order to be comprehensible. A framework provides the fundamental conceptual and methodological presuppositions that define a field of study, such as 'moral philosophy'. Roughly speaking, the conceptual part defines what the subject is, while the methodological part delimits how the subject is to be pursued. These presuppositions are strongly interrelated; depending upon how a subject is defined, certain theoretical and practical methods will follow quite naturally. But the methodology can also affect what the subject is, depending upon what is found (and not found) during the process.

In the beginning of the former part I had to clarify my outlook to make the inquiry understandable. But prior to that clarification, I did *not* have to explicate the constitution of the framework in which the outlook was put. I found it sufficient to state that it was an examination in 'moral philosophy', without for that sake explaining what kind of subject that is. The reason for this is that I assumed that other moral philosophers already knew this - and also that I actually share the same framework as them. If I had been wrong, then this would quickly have been revealed; nothing said would have been understood by anyone but myself. But this I have good reasons to believe is not the case, unless I have been lied to. However, even though a framework is established and widely shared, it is not certain that all those who share it are able to explain it in any greater detail. But this is not necessary either. A framework is agreed upon and shared in the very exercise of it, not through a joint dissection and disclosure of its details each and every time by those who employ it. It would indeed be quite strange if every inquiry (whether it be in moral philosophy, physics or cooking) had to begin with an explanation to 'what the subject is'

and how it is pursued. There would then probably be no inquiries at all, merely discussions about the subject.

But how is this framework I so far merely have called ‘moral philosophy’ constituted? How come I share it with others? Why do we accept it? Where does it come from? There are no obvious answers to such questions, and they are seldom asked – and that is a part of the problems to be considered here.

### 5.1.2 *The Problem*

But even after I had settled for an outlook, it was not always easy to make something of it. Since the debate was quite ambiguous, I could not simply straightforwardly cut out and analyze relevant arguments. Instead, I often had to ‘crystallize’ such arguments by means of interpretation. My intention was of course not to ascribe to philosophers arguments they did not provide, nor deform and misconstrue statements, but to make them fit my particular outlook at their best appearance. This might sound odd, but it is not. I take such a procedure to be a necessary and uncontroversial part of many philosophical inquiries. For one thing, it is futile and unproductive to try to ‘have it all’, that is, try to interpret and make sense of all possible problems one can extract from a set of data. (One could of course include and review several divergent outlooks in an inquiry for increased scope. But then one should bear in mind that scope is often paid for with the price of depth.) Furthermore, it should never be forgotten that philosophy is not like mathematics; linguistic interpretations are quite often a necessary part of understanding a philosophical argumentation. But, of course, it is possible to misinterpret, wrongly ascribe and deform arguments, by mistake or for the sake of scoring rhetoric points. This I sincerely hope that I have not done; but the philosophers I have made use of are of course allowed to disagree.

However, while working I could not help feeling slightly annoyed. I realized that I viewed the debate from a specific point of view, and therefore I might not make full sense of everything that was being said.<sup>196</sup> That did not bother me *that*

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<sup>196</sup> “From time to time it felt “like pushing and shoving things to fit into some fixed perimeter of specified space. All those things are lying out there, and they must be fit in. You push and shove the material into the rigid area getting it into the boundary of one side, and it bulges out on another. You run around and press in the protruding bulge, producing yet another in another place. So you push and shove and clip off corners from the things so they’ll fit and you press in until finally almost everything sits unstably more or less in there; what doesn’t gets heaved *far* away so that it won’t be noticed. (Of course, it’s not all *that* crude. There’s also the coaxing and cajoling. And the body English.) *Quickly*, you find an angle from which it looks like an exact fit and take a snapshot; at a fast shutter speed before something else bulges out too noticeably. Then, back to the darkroom to touch up the rents, rips, and tears in the fabric of the perimeter. All that



much however. After all, I took it to be necessary for getting somewhere; I had to accept that I could not have it all. Nevertheless, there were some issues that I could not make sense of and that really bothered me. Who cares if a consequentialist can be a real friend or not? What was the point of the debate? What was it really meant to show in the end, and for what reason? Obviously, the point with the debate must be to say something of importance regarding consequentialist ethics, not merely ask a question just for the sake of it and see what answers could be given. And the most important question was of course if consequentialist ethics is true or false, if it should be rejected or not, on basis of whether a consequentialist can be a real friend or not. This must have been the ultimate aim of the debate, otherwise it would have been quite pointless. But I simply could not understand how this question could ever be answered on basis of the debate – and many of the debaters themselves did not provide any clues on this matter. Some did mention that their discussion was meant to deal with that topic.<sup>197</sup> But in my opinion, they did not tackle it to any greater extent. Many merely presented an array of arguments and concluded in the end that consequentialism was possible, or impossible, to reconcile with friendship. But *why* those conclusions, in the end, would constitute arguments for consequentialism being true or false was left unexplained.

Why was that so? Initially, I thought the problem had to do with me, that I was stupid, and that that was the reason why I did not understand how a positive or negative answer to the question, "Can a consequentialist be a real friend?" could provide an argument for consequentialism being true or false. Maybe it was obvious, but I had just missed the point. But no matter how hard I tried, I could not come to see how this discussion could ever come to any of those conclusions. So I started to suspect that this discussion, or, an answer to the question at issue, in fact could not ever show consequentialism to be true or false. In an attempt to see this, I went beyond the explicit arguments, and examined the foundation preceding the arguments. That is, I examined the type of moral philosophy that I took the debate to be built upon. I came to realize that the question was a particular outlook, set and made comprehensible within a particular framework, and the reason why this discussion could not show consequentialism true or false was not due to the 'wrong' outlook, but due to underlying conceptions, provided by the framework, of what moral philosophy

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remains is to publish the photograph as a representation of exactly how things are, and to note how nothing fits properly into any other shape." (Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, New York: Basic Books (1974), preface, p. xiii.)

<sup>197</sup> C.f. Stocker (1976) p. 453, Railton (1988) pp. 98-99, Badhwar (1991) p. 485, Mason (1999) p. 245, Jollimore (2000) p. 70.

'is' and is supposed to achieve. To show consequentialism to be true or false by means of the outlook in question requires a framework that makes sense of the morality involved in close personal relations; only then would problems of friendship become forceful arguments that could be used to actually vindicate or reject consequentialism. But I found that the framework does not, and cannot, account for that – and therefore the end of the story was settled in advance.

This, I shall admit, I found to be extremely speculative. So I was tempted to not dig any deeper into it. I could have ended the discussion in the previous chapter by saying something like "since consequentialism has not been shown impossible to reconcile with friendship, well, consequentialism cannot be rejected on that ground," and left it there, hoping that no one would bother to question the validity of that statement. After all, it had not happened before.

### *5.1.3 What Will be Done*

But I will not leave it there. In this chapter, I shall say a lot indeed.<sup>198</sup> But my main purpose is to put forward two ideas.

*First*, that the debate in question is pointless (and this includes my own contribution to it); it cannot show consequentialism either true or false on basis of an answer to the particular outlook in question, and therefore one can certainly wonder if anyone really cares if a consequentialist can be a real friend or not. The reason for this is that the debate has not been radical enough; the debaters have tried to reject or vindicate consequentialism by means of arguments within a framework that has disqualified these arguments as posing any serious problems in the first place. In other words, the conceptual and methodological presuppositions that lurks in the background and renders the outlook comprehensible, also eliminate the force of the outlook in advance. To show that consequentialism is true or false by means of a positive or negative answer to the question "Can a consequentialist be a real friend?" one must acknowledge certain moral values that friendship involves. I believe that there are in fact such values, but these cannot be seen or understood unless one takes 'practical knowledge' (or 'knowing how') seriously as a source to moral understandings. But the framework merely sees to 'theoretical knowledge' (or

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<sup>198</sup> However, let me assure you that I do not aspire to say anything remarkable new or original. Much of what I will say has been said before, but often in different words and by means of different concepts, and for different reasons. The only thing that could perhaps be considered innovative is my angle of approach; I do not believe that employing 'feminist critique' for bringing forward the points I want to make is that common.

‘knowing that’) and therefore such values are rendered invisible by it.<sup>199</sup> An explanation as to why the framework does not take such knowledge seriously lies in the reasons why, and from which perspective, it was created and is still preserved.

*Second*, I shall claim that the debate should instead be construed as an implicit critique of the framework. Because if it is so understood, one can learn something from it. The debaters have probably wanted to say something of importance; for some reason, they do seem to care if a consequentialist can be a real friend or not. But as the explicit issue under consideration apparently does not add much of interest to moral philosophy, one might need to reconsider it from a different angle.

But there is a long way to go before we come to these two claims, and they will be rather briefly discussed when we eventually get to them. We shall take a detour, and leave the debate on consequentialism and friendship for quite some time. Some will wonder if it has been lost on the way, but I assure that it has not. I urge the reader to be patient. Because the arguments supporting these two claims require another kind of discussion, one which has to do with moral philosophy in general. We need space to speak about ‘the framework’, and why it is unable to acknowledge certain moral concerns.

The structure of the oncoming discussion is as follows. I will begin with sketching a contour of the framework in question (*A Framework of Moral Philosophy*). After that, I will put forward a critique that claims that this framework is inherently flawed and incomplete, which stems from feminist ethics (*Feminist Critique*). This might be found surprising, as ‘feminism’ is not usually what springs to mind in relation to conceptual and methodological questions of moral philosophy. But feminist ethics is actually very relevant to this matter. It has not only disclosed many unseen features of the framework in question, but also provided helpful criticism of it, much on basis that it is not able to make full sense of the morality involved in close interpersonal relations.<sup>200</sup> Therefore, I have found it to be an ideal source of insights for

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<sup>199</sup> Thus, my discussion is *not* about the somewhat ‘classic’ problem that consequentialist theories are ‘hard to put into practice’, i.e. that they do not provide any clear guidance in particular circumstances. My posed problem is quite different. As said, I claim that the framework, which has generated such ethical theories such as consequentialism, is unable to acknowledge certain values in the first place; and therefore, even if ethical theories that stem from it (such as consequentialism) could provide guidance, this would be of no help anyway, because whatever guidance is provided, it is not for how to understand or enhance moral values entailing friendship.

<sup>200</sup> Including the somewhat controversial term ‘feminism’ is bound to stir up some confusion regarding the purposes of this chapter. I better make it clear that my examination, in general, does not deserve to be called ‘feminist ethics’, if such ethics are “identified by its explicit commitment

getting down to the possible underlying difficulty of the debate. However, feminist ethics is a large discipline, and I shall here be using some concerns of it in my own way, for my own purposes. With the help of this critique, I argue that the framework of moral philosophy under consideration, despite its pretensions, fails to recognize and handle the moral concerns of close personal relations such as friendship (*The Personal Domain and Friendship*). Not until all this is said and done, shall we finally return to the debate (*The Debate Revisited*), and I will attempt to show how all this reveals the debate to be pointless, and that it should be interpreted in a different way. And there I shall leave it. I will not speculate too much about what consequences this (if it is correct) could have for moral philosophy in general, although I shall mention some possible effects (in the final section, *What now?*). I dare only state for sure that *if* we want to make sense of the morality involved in friendship, we do need a different framework.

## 5.2 A FRAMEWORK OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY

I shall begin with an outline of some characteristic features of the framework of moral philosophy that will be considered. Although this framework has generated a number of labeled moral theories, the framework itself has no name. When for some reason referred to, the simple notion 'normative ethics' is often deployed without qualification. That is, the framework is not always recognized as being *a framework*, but rather as being *the subject* itself. Why this is so is hard to put a finger on, and I shall return to that question later on. But a distinguishing label will be useful for the forthcoming discussion; therefore, I shall simply, for want of better names, call this framework 'TMP' (Traditional Moral Philosophy).

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to challenging perceived male bias in ethics", as Alison M. Jaggar claims (in "Feminist Ethics: Projects, Problems, Prospects", in *Feminist Ethics*, ed. Claudia Card, Lawrence: University of Kansas Press (1991), p. 97). Because that is not my explicit commitment, here (which is not to say that I find it unimportant). Instead, I call this inquiry 'feminist' for the same reason as Margaret Urban Walker call her inquiry in *Moral Understandings* 'feminist', because, like her, "I have found in feminist ethics something I did not find elsewhere." This chapter is 'feminist', and like Walker I do not say so because it is "about women, or because I am a feminist, or because I call them 'feminist.'" Rather, this chapter is feminist because it is "imbued with insights, commitments and critical and interpretative techniques of feminist theories made by many women in the past several decades." (*Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics*, New York: Routledge (1998), pp. 19-20.)

### 5.2.1 *Ambition and Method*

The ultimate ambition for an agent who adheres to TMP is to obtain moral knowledge. On basis of such knowledge, the agent would presumably be able to separate right from wrong, good from bad, provide a sensible answer to what could be taken to be morality's most basic question, "what ought to be done?" and come up with justified practical advice in concrete situations calling for moral guidance.

Of course, such an ambition is not new. Mankind has for as long as there has been moral problems wanted to know what ought to be done, and find out what is right and what is wrong. Supporters of TMP, however, often insist that such pursuits have frequently been based upon nothing more than superficial guesswork, simple reliance on habit and tradition, or the advice from self-appointed moral authorities (most clearly visible in religious contexts). Indeed, such pursuits do provide mankind with answers to what ought to be done, and they can be based on seemingly sophisticated and complex discussions. But when inspected more closely, they all tend to be built upon rather awkwardly vague assumptions and riddled with contradictions, which disqualify the pursuits from providing any *justified* answers. A supporter of TMP strives to obtain *secure* theoretical knowledge and from such knowledge deduce what is the *truly* right thing to do.

According to TMP, the key to such knowledge lies in the establishment of true and universal *moral principles*. Simply put, such principles are to be considered 'true' if one can find nothing that speaks against them (render them 'false'), and 'universal' if they are valid for each and everyone, at all times. The apparatus that should be utilized for formulating and justifying such principles is the human mind, and, if found helpful, interpersonal argumentation. A presupposition underlying this idea is that we all are, on the bottom line, quite alike as human beings. We should all be able to agree and come to the same conclusions if we are subject to the same information, and comprehend rational and logical argumentation. Certainly, one can never be sure that those principles that might be established are in fact 'true' and provide us with 'secure' theoretical knowledge on ethical matters – but as long as we cannot come up with any convincing arguments that they are not true, we should accept them. After all, what more can one ask for?

When determining what could be the true and universal principles of morality, and when deducing substantive prescriptions from such principles, adherents of TMP proceeds roughly as follows.

After being carefully formulated, it has to be evaluated if one or several suggested principles could plausibly be considered true and universal. If they

for some reason obviously cannot be so considered, they should plainly be rejected. But it is of course not always possible to instantly judge if some suggested principles are 'obviously' unsupported. For one thing, one could mistake oneself for being objective on the matter, while actually being prejudiced or a victim of devious propaganda, and thus not really able to make a reasonable judgement. To avoid jumping to conclusions, one should attempt to analyze the principles under idealized situations, striving to be as objective as possible by keeping an eye on, and ignoring, irrelevant personal opinions, and perhaps also debating the arguments for and against the suggested principles with other people – a process which could be helpful for disclosing one's own, or other people's, unsuitable preconceptions on the subject. Hopefully, after internal (personal) and external (interpersonal) considerations, one might come up with one or several principles that reasonably appears true and universal to morality, that clearly states what is right and what is wrong and leaves no gray areas in between, and have no serious arguments speaking against them.

When one or several principles have been established, the next task is to deduce justified prescriptions, which inform what ought to be done in concrete situations that stand in need of moral guidance. The first question when facing such a situation is of course if the established moral principles obviously provide a specific prescription in that case. If they do, the case is easily solved. But it is of course seldom that easy, because 'concrete situations that stand in need of moral guidance' are complex matters. It might not be all that easy to conceive what really is the distinctive moral problem in a given situation. Moreover, if different spectators observe the situation from different point of views, they might interpret it differently, see different moral problems, and consequently provide different answers to what ought to be done (even though they accept the same principles). It is therefore of utmost importance that it is initially clarified what the distinctive moral problem in such a situation is. This requires that the situation and how oneself and others understand it, is carefully analyzed and illuminated. The complexity of the concrete situation should be refined, relevant and irrelevant factors should be sorted out, until the 'core' moral problem is perfectly visible to all. In the end, what is left after such a process is an imagined hypothetical situation, which is freed from the messy factors of the concrete. If the moral principles provide an answer to what ought to be done in the hypothetical situation, this insight is to be deduced back to the concrete situation and analyzed to see if it should be prescribed there too. If the hypothetical and actual situations are compatible in all morally relevant aspects, there should be no problem. But if they are not, the hypothetical situation has to be reconsidered until they are. It could of course also not be possible give any

prescription whatsoever, as it could turn out that an understanding of the problem requires unavailable data. But hopefully, it should be possible in most cases to deduce justified advice from the established principles, as long as one is thorough and patient.

However, in the process of trying to make out what justified advice follows from principles in concrete situations, one might discover that the principles inevitable give rise to clearly unacceptable prescriptions. One must then examine if these prescriptions are in fact acceptable (and our judgement was wrong), or if this is actually a sign that the principles are unacceptable (and that we thus were not thorough enough when establishing them), or in need of refinements. Should the principles pass this stage too, well, then we can be fairly confident that we 'know' what ought to be done in that concrete case. Obviously, one reason why one might be mistaken that a principle gives rise to 'clearly' unacceptable prescriptions is that one has not pursued the investigation properly. To succeed, one must consciously strive to be as unbiased as possible, and guard oneself against emotional outbursts and prejudice (individual or collective). This, however, is not to say that emotions nor 'prejudice' must be discarded the moment they are discovered; in fact, they can be 'relevant factors', but they must not be taken to be final words without qualification. They must be examined from an impartial point of view; and if such aspects are to be taken into consideration, it can only be on the basis that such a consideration assists the ultimate aim of the pursuit.

The spirit of anti-authority in TMP, the idea that we can and should reach agreement on moral issues by means of rational and well-founded individual and interpersonal argumentation, correlate well with what often is taken to be the general ambition of 'the scientific method'. Roughly speaking, (natural) science tests hypotheses by means of highly controlled experiments under idealized situations, and could be regarded as a kind of 'democratic method' in the sense that all should reach the same conclusions if confronted with the same data. The scientific method has proven itself to be exceedingly fruitful for obtaining knowledge about the material world, and although science deals with *what is*, and TMP with *what ought*, the latter is probably much inspired by the former, and desires to obtain the same success. This, I believe, is not a too wild assumption, as TMP actually came around in the same era as the scientific method made its first major advances, i.e. the enlightenment, a time known for its great belief in the possibilities and abilities of what human reason can achieve, if properly employed.

### 5.2.2 Normative Moral Theories

This elegant framework has generated several normative moral theories. Although they provide different answers to the question "what ought to be done?" (as they endorse different moral principles) they all, ultimately, share the same conceptual and methodological ideals regarding the aim and pursuit of moral philosophy and also what a 'moral theory' should be, that is "a consistent (and usually very compact) set of law-like moral principles or procedures for decision that is intended to yield by deduction or instantiation (with the support of adequate collateral material) some determinate judgement for an agent in a given situation what is right, or at least morally justifiable, to do."<sup>201</sup>

Anyone just slightly familiar with contemporary moral philosophy should be able to identify which theories stem from this framework. The most obvious examples are Kantianism and Consequentialism (and the many variants of them). However, these theories are not really 'based on' this framework, because those who firstly formulated them also invented the framework in that very process (because this framework *is* an invention; it has not come from nowhere). That is, the framework did not come 'first', and the theories followed. The process was interrelated, and one just has to peek back into chapter three of this book to see how that is the case in context of the consequentialist movement.

For example, Bentham promptly stated that he wanted to do "moral science," and found that such a pursuit required the proper formulation and establishment of true and universal moral principle. His *Principles* is for the most part a discussion about alternative suggestions, and why they do not fit the standard of moral philosophy that he himself accepted. At the outset of the first edition of *The Methods of Ethics*, Sidgwick explained that he believed that "ethical science" would be "benefited by an application to it of the same disinterested curiosity to which we chiefly owe the great discoveries of physics."<sup>202</sup> And it is obvious that "[t]he determinate goal of *The Methods* is to systematize moral understandings under precise, unified, comprehensive and universal ideals that would rid judgements of the uncertainties and discrepancies inherent in actual circumstances, personal aspirations and desires, and pragmatic considerations. In such methodologies, attention to the messy contingencies of concrete situations is set aside in favor of the theoretical project of organizing moral knowledge under general principles and rules of conduct that exhibit the exactness and formality of mathematics. Unique and definite answers to moral

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<sup>201</sup> Walker (1998), p. 36.

<sup>202</sup> Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, vi.



questions can then be provided by subsuming particular cases under the relevant principles.”<sup>203</sup>

However, the consequentialists were not the first who adhered to this conception of moral philosophy, and they were certainly not the last. Immanuel Kant stated at the very beginning of the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* that his purpose was “the search for and establishment of the supreme principle of morality.”<sup>204</sup> Although Kant clearly rejected consequentialist principles, his method for formulating and defending his categorical imperative was not radically dissimilar from the method used by the consequentialists that followed.

So, although many moral theorists provide dissimilar answers to the question “what ought to be done?” they are not in so much fundamental conflict with each other as one might first believe when first confronted with their theories. As they share the same conceptual and methodological framework regarding moral philosophy, the purposes of *why* and *how* they provide this answer is very much the same. Even though this is sometimes denied (especially when a wild discussion between defenders of different moral theories do not seem to get anywhere with their dispute), it is fairly obvious that moral philosophers whom embrace this framework do understand what they are talking about. When they ask each other, for example, what is “the *right* thing to do?” they do understand what the question means, why it should be answered, and how it should be answered. However, if someone who does not embrace the same framework asks the same question, it could mean something quite different.

But, of course, even those who embrace the same framework are in conflicts with each other. When it comes to the question which moral theory that is the *true* theory, and for what reasons it is so, the debates continues. In such discussions, the point of, and the difference between, ‘outlooks’ is most clearly visible. The point of outlooks (such as the one captured as the question “Can a consequentialist be a real friend?”) is either to establish, refine, question, reject or simply raising suspicion about moral theories.

### 5.2.3 Hopes and Pessimism

It should not be hard to grasp the attraction TMP exercises. If morality could be put on a theoretical basis of true and universal principles, we would be able to say that we *know* ‘what ought to be done’. Thus, we would no longer have to guess and quarrel about the answers, and, to a certain extent, no longer be

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<sup>203</sup> Peta Bowden, *Caring: An Investigation in Gender-Sensitive Ethics*, London: Routledge (1997), p.3.

<sup>204</sup> Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:392.

bothered by ‘normative anarchists’ (in various disguises) whom proclaims that ‘anything goes’. We could perhaps even find a meaning of life.

But there could be more to this than mere theoretical satisfaction. The world as we know it is a difficult place. It is overflowing with conflicts of different magnitudes, ranging from individual perplexity to full-scale wars between nations. In light of the fact that such conflicts repeatedly arise, one might take it for granted that it will always be like that. But that need not be so. The source of many such conflicts are moral disputes, and if it could be demonstrated that they actually circle around principles that all thoughtful human beings actually agree upon, we might be able to resolve such conflicts in a more decent manner. If it is possible to make the world a better place by means of insights provided by TMP, we do not have to watch it go down the drain because we let ‘anything go’.

That TMP has not succeeded with this is often highlighted by its critics. After more than two centuries of thinking, moral philosophers still dispute which principle, or principles, that are actually true and universal. No consensus has been reached, and it looks like there is a long way left. Moreover, it has been suggested that *even if* a some principle or principles were eventually established, this would be of no use anyway. Wars would still be fought, as dictators and soldiers seldom listen to arguments provided by philosophers. And *even if* everyone agreed to some principle or principles, there still remains a critique that claims that the deduction from such principles down to concrete situations constitutes a way too long and winding road that it is easy to get lost on; that is, it is possible that a moral truth could be impossible to put into actual practice. Thus, to claim that TMP could make the world a better place is utopian thinking, critics (sometimes called ‘pessimists’ by supporters of TMP) maintain.

But what is wrong with utopian thinking? Even though this is a quite pretentious vision, it is not totally unrealistic. The possibility of making the world a better place by means of TMP is at least not logically impossible, even though it is obviously theoretically and practically difficult. Besides, it could be asked, has not TMP actually made progress? Consider the many moral-philosophical works written in this tradition concerning medical ethics, animal liberation, environmental ethics, political philosophy, and so on... Have not these had any influence at all? There is no obvious reason why TMP should be given up, supporters might claim. The alternative seems to be to drop all thoughtful moral investigations and leave the world as it is, to return to primitive guesswork on what is right and wrong, and force our opinions upon others and ourselves. This certainly does not sound appealing. Should we not at least continue to *try* to know what is right and wrong?

Well, we could of course also just sit around and await a miracle. Maybe some trustworthy 'god' will soon step down and explain with all necessary clarity what ought to be done. If that happens, well, then we need no longer bother to wonder. But this has yet not happened, and I believe we have no good reasons for believing that it will. And even if we came to know that it *would* happen, we still have to figure out what ought to be done, now and here, until then. For now, we only got ourselves and our rational minds to make use of when trying to figure out what ought to be done, so let us make the best of it. The alternatives sound far too pessimistic and dangerous.

However, do those moral philosophers that adhere to TMP do so because they have found it to be superior in light of the alternatives? Of this I am actually not certain, and neither are many critics of this 'tradition'. Speaking for myself, I cannot seriously claim that I have accepted this framework because I have been convinced that it is the prime way of pursuing the subject; because I have not come to know of any serious alternatives at all. I cannot pinpoint the exact time *when* I adapted the framework I have embraced, and I believe no one can. I can now only conclude *that* I have done so. *Why* and *how* this happened is hard to explain. I am at least certain that it was not given to me a priori; rather, I have employed it through an ongoing process in which a number of interrelated factors have played their role, in which no specific factor can be said to be 'the' factor. This process probably started when I entered the university and took my first course in moral philosophy. I have since then constantly been trained in moral philosophy by a relatively small set of teachers and textbooks, all of them limited to a tradition without a given name, but when referred to usually simply generalized as 'western ethics', or, slightly more specific, 'modern moral philosophy'. Through this process I have employed some kind of framework, and learned how to understand and deal with moral problems, and also how to not deal with them. I have also preserved the framework; when I have occasionally taught moral philosophy myself, I have passed it on

However, employing, upholding and passing on a conceptual and methodological framework should not be taken to be some kind of problem all by itself. If there were no shared frameworks at all in moral philosophy, there would be no subject. However, a framework can of course be found flawed, if it prevents one from making full sense of the subject matter one aspires to understand, or generates distorted analyses, and brings about incomplete or even incorrect prescriptions. If it is discovered that a framework for some reason is flawed, the natural solution would of course be to repair the defects, or create and employ a new one. But that is often easier said than done. The most obvious problem is that frameworks are hard to get a grip on, as they are

complex matters, impossible to dissect and expose in each and every detail. Moreover, as frameworks constitute the means one employs to get a grip on things in the first place, removing it will leave one incapable of gripping anything, which could be found frustrating, unless one already has some alternative framework in reserve. But most importantly, ‘discovering’ that a framework is flawed is not all that easy. It could be all one has got, and thus one has nothing to compare with. And then one might not even notice that the framework is flawed, due to a vicious circle: the framework will actively make one see certain things in certain ways, and discard other perspectives, upholding the framework. No matter how much someone else attempts to point out that things can be seen in another way, one will not see it, but instead claim that *they* see things the wrong way.

Philosophy and science aspires to be as neutral and self-critical as possible. But as they are human enterprises, they can of course also be carried out by individuals who are much too affected by their personal prejudices, wishful thinking or desire for prestige. Therefore it is not impossible that (bad) philosophers and scientists can, more or less consciously, exercise conceptual and methodological propaganda over other individual’s minds with the same power and conviction as political and religious ideologies. If one is a victim of such propaganda, one will be even less able to detect if the framework one has adopted is flawed; one will instead be so convinced of the appropriateness of the framework that anyone or anything speaking against it *must* be mistaken, and those who do not understand that are nothing but ill-taught or just stupid.

Well, then, could there be something wrong with this elegant framework?

### 5.3 FEMINIST CRITIQUE

Although the above depicted framework could appear fairly innocent, it has been criticized by many feminists who claim that it conceptualizes normative ethics in a ‘male’ fashion, which effectively neglects, trivializes and distorts certain ‘female’ moral issues. Needless to say, ‘feminist critique’ has figured for several centuries, aiming to seize oppression of women through revealing ‘male’ bias and domination in various domains, such as personal relations, society, politics, science, philosophy, and so on. However, the distinctive branch of ‘feminist ethics’ that will be attended to here is relatively new. If one traces back its development we are lead to a specific starting point: the dispute between moral psychologists Lawrence Kohlberg and Carol Gilligan. Much ink

has been spilled over this controversy, and I shall be no exception. For the sake of providing a background to what will be discussed, I will briefly review it.

### 5.3.1 Kohlberg and Gilligan

More than three decades ago, moral psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg at Harvard University put forward the hypothesis that individuals under normal circumstances go through a six-stage development (divided into three two-stage levels) in moral reasoning in life.<sup>205</sup> At first, at the *preconventional* level, people simply obey authority (stage 1), but eventually learn how to satisfy their own needs, and partly consider the needs of others (2); they then move to the *conventional* level: where people seeks the approval of others by conforming to stereotypical roles (3), a conformity that later is increased in the belief that the social order ought to be maintained (and to diverge from the order would be fatal) (4); to finally enter the highest level of moral reasoning, the *postconventional* order: morality is here firstly associated with rights and duties of the whole society (5), but ultimately the person begins think for himself, and will adapt, justify and consider morality in universal principles (6).

Even though many details of Kohlberg's theory were new, it was generally meant neither to be radical nor controversial. Kohlberg did not intend to bring forward anything groundbreaking in moral-developmental psychology. Rather, his theory aimed to go smoothly in line with what most moral psychologists at the time found obvious. Kohlberg tested his theory by presenting an ethical dilemma to individuals of different ages and backgrounds, and by means of an interview he observed how the subjects reasoned around it.<sup>206</sup> In the end, he found his theory to be accurate. But in this investigation, he did discover something peculiar. The theory worked very well with the males he interviewed, but not with many females. Many 'mature' women actually reasoned around the moral problem in a way that put them on the same level as

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<sup>205</sup> See *Collected Papers on Moral Development and Moral Education*, Harvard University: Moral Education Research Foundation, (1971).

<sup>206</sup> The problem in question was the 'Heinz dilemma': "In Europe, a woman was near death from cancer. One drug might save her, a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The druggist was charging \$2000, ten times what the drug cost him to make. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No." The husband got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. Should the husband have done that? Why?" (This formulation of the dilemma is from Kohlberg's "Stage and Sequence: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Socialization", in *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research* by D.A. Gosling (ed.), Chicago: Rand McNally (1969).

children, the preconventional level. That, however, did not make Kohlberg reconsider his theory. Instead, he claimed that many women's moral maturity *was* severely lacking, and he explained this in terms of social circumstances. Since many women 'failed' his test, there must obviously be something wrong with the moral education of women in society.

However, an associate to Kohlberg, Carol Gilligan, did not accept the conclusion that many women were less morally mature. She claimed that there was nothing 'wrong' with the women's moral competence, even though they scored low on Kohlberg's test. Rather, they had *another kind* of competence, which the test could not reveal. Thus, there was something problematic with Kohlberg's theory, not the women. Seemingly neutral, the theory was actually inherently biased. In her book *In a Different Voice*, she writes: "At a time when efforts are being made to eradicate discrimination between the sexes in the search for social equality... the differences between the sexes are being rediscovered in the social sciences. This discovery occurs when theories formerly considered to be sexually neutral in their scientific objectivity are found instead to reflect a consistent observational and evaluative bias."<sup>207</sup> In other words, facts had been interpreted to fit a theory, which was assumed to be correct prior to the tests performed.

Gilligan put forward a different theory, an alternative developmental scale, in which the highest level of moral reasoning was not motivated by the formulation and application of universal principles, but rather by understanding and sustaining the personal relations and emotional ties involved in the particular context of the faced moral problem. Gilligan interviewed a collection of women regarding the moral difficulties involved with their abortion, and found her theory correct. What she claimed to have discovered was a "different voice," or "perspective" on moral issues. She called the voice that Kohlberg heard the "justice" voice, and the voice she had discovered the "care" voice. However, "[l]ike the figure-ground shift in ambiguous figure perception, justice and care as moral perspectives are not opposites or mirror-images of one another... Instead, these perspectives denote different ways of organizing the basic elements of moral judgement: self, others, and the relation between them."<sup>208</sup>

Although Gilligan found the different voice mostly articulated by women, she stressed that "this association is not absolute, and the contrasts between male and female are presented here to highlight a distinction between two modes of

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<sup>207</sup> *In A Different Voice*, London: Harvard University Press (1982), p. 6.

<sup>208</sup> "Moral Orientation and Moral Development", in *Women and Moral Theory*, Eva Kittay and Diana Meyers (eds.), Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield (1987), p. 22.

thought and to focus a problem of interpretation rather than to represent a generalization about either sex.”<sup>209</sup> The reason why more women than men applied the care-perspective was not because of any ‘biological necessities’, but rather ”these differences arise in a social context where factors of social status and power combine with reproductive biology to shape the experience of males and females and the relation between the sexes.” Gilligan also refused to order the two voices in to any kind of hierarchy. Instead, she claimed that they were both equally acceptable, and for the sake of humanity, both voices need to be heard, as they complement each other.

Gilligan did not walk away without being subject to critique. Her investigation was heavily accused of being biased in both selection of samples and method of investigation. Gilligan was, however, perfectly aware of this. She explicitly stated that her ”findings were gathered at a particular moment in history, the sample was small, and the women were not selected to represent a larger population. These constraints preclude the possibility of generalization and leave to further research the task of sorting out the different variables of culture, time, occasion, and gender.”<sup>210</sup> At first glance, this might appear to be a major drawback. But in a sense, it supports a point she wanted to make. Why was Kohlberg’s test not regarded as biased, even though it led to such results? Why did he not claim that his investigation “precludes the possibility of generalization”? Obviously, because he assumed that he was right. Theory interpreted facts, but the theory was not questioned, because it went smoothly in line what most moral-developmental psychologists assumed to be true. But the vast majority of these psychologists, and their predecessors, were all males who studied other males.

### 5.3.2 *Feminist Ethics*

It is hard to exaggerate the impact of Gilligan’s work. *In a Different Voice* has already become a modern classic within feminist ethics. According to feminist moral philosophers, Gilligan did not only say something about the underlying biases in the field of moral psychology, but also about moral philosophy in general. Because, for a fact, Kohlberg’s conception of morality did not come from nowhere, he followed a strong tradition in moral psychology which correlated very well with the type of moral philosophy which had been the centre of attention after the enlightenment, that is TMP.

Feminist ethics is however an extremely diverse subject. It covers almost every topic conceivable within ethics as a philosophical discipline. This might

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<sup>209</sup> Gilligan (1982), p. 2.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

give the impression that feminist ethics lacks a clear focal point - which is actually true. Feminist ethics is a young subject, and no consensus has yet been reached on what it 'really is', or what the most pressing issues on the agenda are and how these are to be handled. As earlier mentioned, distinctively *feminist* ethics can be distinguished from other subjects as it involves the explicit commitment to the liberation of women as its ultimate aim. But obviously that does not all by itself suggest the means of reaching it.

But roughly, one can make out two main tracks of feminist ethics that have followed the Kohlberg-Gilligan controversy. The first is a critique of the aspiration of TMP to be an all-embracing and neutral enterprise that seeks to reveal timeless universal truths about morality, by revealing it to be a gender-biased enterprise that supports and perpetuates a 'male' point of view when regarding and handling moral questions and which neglects 'female' perspectives. Second, the attempt to work out new conceptual and methodological frameworks, which better make sense of these neglected perspectives and entailing moral questions.<sup>211</sup> The most well known theory in this respect is Care Ethics.

I shall here review three interrelated topics from what I take to be the first track.<sup>212</sup> This first topic (*The Neglect of the Private Sphere*) states that TMP has been developed from and for a special point of view on the world and the people in it, which in consequence renders it unable to account for other types of perspectives and activities that could provide moral insights. Much due to this distinctive perspective, TMP assert that merely an exclusive form of 'theoretical knowledge' can serve as being 'moral knowledge', consequently disqualifying 'practical knowledge' from being any moral knowledge at all; that

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<sup>211</sup> However, these issues need not necessarily be related to women exclusively – therefore, this track is occasionally named 'feminine' (instead of 'feminist') ethics instead.

<sup>212</sup> In this discussion, I shall speak in sweeping terms about 'men' and 'women'. I apologize for this brute generalization, but to come to my point with this discussion (and not end up in a lengthy conceptual analysis of gender), I will keep this rough generalization anyway, although I do not endorse it. I will also express myself quite sweeping and generalizing with regards to 'feminists'. But, of course, what I will say is not what all feminists say, and not all feminists agree with it - this must be remembered.

Also, in my discussion I will employ the concept of 'mothering' in a quite straightforward and simple way. This concept, however, is neither uncomplex or uncontested. For a more in-depth analysis of the concept, consider Ulla M. Holm, *Modrande och praxis: en feministfilosofisk undersökning* ("Mothering and Praxis: A Feminist Philosophical Analysis"), Göteborg: Daidalos (1993). Moreover, consider Claudia Card's article "Against Marriage and Motherhood" (in *Hypatia*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1996), pp. 1-21) for a discussion on why one could be "skeptical of using the institution of motherhood as a source of paradigms for [feminist] ethical theory" (p. 1). But for my purposes, I believe the concept will serve its function.



is the subject of the second topic (*Epistemic Discrimination*). The final topic (*Distortion of Concrete Problems*) claims that TMP, due to the alleged difficulties, cannot conceptualize certain moral problems as actually being ‘moral problems’ at all and will in the process of trying to ‘make sense’ and ‘understand’ these problems, inevitably transmute them into something which they are not.

### 5.3.3 *The Neglect of The Private Sphere*

Properly pursued, TMP is supposedly able to grasp all types of moral concerns, regardless of wherever they occur and whomever they concern. But certain feminists claim that it is not necessarily so, because TMP has been developed exclusively from and for a special point of view on ethical matters, by a clique of individuals who in a general sense have been subject to quite similar circumstances. For one thing, they have all been men; they have all been white, educated and pretty wealthy; they have all been professional philosophers, connected to academies, or at least the academic world. As a result, they have viewed the world and the people in it from a specific perspective and configured an ethics that best suit this perspective.

The perspective TMP has been developed from and for is that which matches the point of view taken within the ‘public sphere’ (a sphere which traditionally has been the realm of white, educated and wealthy men). In consequence, another realm (which traditionally has been the realm of many women) has been neglected and rendered invisible, namely the ‘private sphere’. The distinction between these two spheres is a tough one to draw, at least in any detailed sense, but it is certainly not an incomprehensible one. Roughly speaking, the public sphere is the realm of ‘worldly matters’, of the general interests of the *polis* as a collective body, of politics and legislation, and so on. The private sphere, on the other hand, is the realm of ‘individual matters’, of close personal relations, love and affection. Although these two ‘spheres’ are obviously abstract entities, their respective location is in some cases pretty apparent; the public sphere can be found at the university and in the government house, and the private in the household of the family.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Or, in other words, “the public realm is the realm of culture, rationality and universality, of the universal citizen who rises above his particularities of his situation; this realm has been defined in exclusively masculine terms since the beginning of Western philosophy. The private realm, by contrast, is the realm of the body and nature, irrationality and particularity, the situated individual; this realm has been identified as the sphere of the feminine.” Susan Hekman, *Moral Voices, Moral Selves*, Cambridge: Polity Press (1995), p. 35.

Depending upon from which sphere an agent takes his or her point of view, the world and the people in it will be experienced differently. But such dissimilar experiences are not necessarily merely a result of different empirical observations, i.e., that one straightforwardly sees different things. Rather, the *interpretation* of such observations becomes different depending upon viewpoint. For example, according to Seyla Benhabib, we can take two standpoints toward ‘the other’, either as ‘generalized’ or ‘concrete’, and we do tend to take the former when viewing others from the point of view of the public sphere, and the latter when viewing others from the private sphere. When we view the other as generalized, we “view each and every individual as a rational being entitled to the same rights and duties we would want to ascribe ourselves. In assuming this standpoint, we abstract from the individuality and concrete identity of the other... what constitutes moral dignity is not what differentiates us from each other, but rather what we, as speaking and acting rational agents, have in common.”<sup>214</sup> On the other hand, when we view the other as concrete, we “view each and every rational being as an individual with a concrete history, identity and affective-emotional constitution. In assuming this standpoint, we abstract from what constitutes our commonality. We seek to comprehend the needs of the other, his or her motivations, what he or she searches for and desires.”<sup>215</sup>

Thus, what are the *moral* concerns involved in a given situation turn out differently depending upon from which sphere one perceives the situation. Clearly, the perspective of the public sphere fits the framework of TMP perfectly. The moral philosophers who think that “ethical science” would be “benefited by an application to it as the same disinterested curiosity to which we chiefly owe the great discoveries of physics,” as Sidgwick put it, and attempts to formulate, justify and apply true and universal principles should obviously not take into account any distinctively personal or private concerns, but ultimately see to the common concerns of all.

However, this effectively put certain activities of mankind in the centre of attention when it comes to moral considerations, while others become peripheral. It is astonishing how much attention many distinguished moral philosophers have paid to activities that concern ‘public affairs’, such as state legislation, while activities that relate to ‘private affairs’ have been ignored. As Virginia Held suggests, one example of such a neglected activity is ‘mothering’. A mother nurturing and caring for her child is indeed engaged in a

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<sup>214</sup> Seyla Benhabib, “The Generalized and Concrete Other”, in *Women and Moral Theory*, eds. Eva Kittay and Diana Meyers, Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield (1987), p. 163

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid*, p. 164.

complex human activity, one which is pursued within the private sphere, involving a perspective of the child as being a concrete other. However, “the result of the public/private distinction, as usually formulated, has been to privilege the points of view of men in the public domains of state and law, and later in the marketplace, and to discount the experience of women...virtually no moral theory in the history of ethics has taken mothering, *as experienced by women*, seriously as a source of moral insight...”<sup>216</sup>

It could be tempting to claim that this neglect has entirely to do with a form of blindness, that the vast majority of moral philosophers have all been men, and thus not have had the same immediate access to ‘female’ experiences and activities, or that they have had no such access at all, as most of them have been “clerics, misogynists, and puritan bachelors.”<sup>217</sup> Although this could be a perfectly valid explanation regarding some moral philosophers, it hardly covers all. Except for some obvious examples (Kant and Sidgwick), not all moral philosophers have been “puritan bachelors” without family life. Rather, the perspective and subsequent activities of the private sphere have probably been regarded as something one should steer clear of in context of pursuing moral philosophy ‘properly’. The private sphere is a dangerous place, it could be claimed, as it gives rise to a narrow-sighted view of the world (the only thing that is seen is the household) and the people (the only ones that is seen is the family) in it. Pursuing ethics from that point of view could be taken to inevitably lead to partiality and a lack of consideration for too many others, which obviously runs counter to the ambition of TMP to provide prescriptions valid for all. At most, activities of the private sphere could be observed and morally evaluated ‘from above’, like an aquarium.<sup>218</sup> But that such activities could provide any special moral insights ‘from within’ has not been considered.

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<sup>216</sup> Virginia Held, “Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 50, Supplement, (1990), pp. 324-325, my italics.

<sup>217</sup> Anette Baier, “Trust and Anti-Trust”, *Ethics*, 96 (1986), pp. 248-248.

<sup>218</sup> When so observed, mothering “has been interpreted as either ‘natural’ and driven by instinct, and thus as irrelevant to morality and the construction of moral principles, or it has been interpreted, at best, in need of instruction and supervision by males better able to know what morality required and better able to live up to its demands,” according to Held (1990), pp. 324-325 (Held, however, offer no examples of who might have explicitly claimed this). That the activity *itself* could provide any moral insights worth considering has not been examined, because anything ‘governed’ by natural impulses has been found to lie ‘outside morality’. “But how can the care of children possibly be imagined to lie outside morality? A parent trying to decide when to punish and when to forgive, or how to divide attention between several children, or what ideals to hold up to her child, is of course engaged in acting morally. Certainly she is involved in moral deliberation. That this vast region of human experience can have been dismissed as ‘natural’ and thus as irrelevant to morality is extraordinary... that only shows how deficient these moralities

But this can of course be denied. Some moral philosophers could claim that they have actually paid a lot of interest to such questions and, for instance, written about family, friends and personal relations in relation to ‘practical ethics’. But it is a fact that the vast majority of these moral philosophers have not written about these issues in light of how they are experienced ‘from within’ the private sphere, and no one has written about the morality in mothering *as experienced by women*. Although a supporter of TMP must admit this, he or she can maintain that this is not necessarily a major problem, it does not obviously render TMP defective. At most, one could notice that many moral philosophers have *applied* the framework in a narrow fashion to a particular set of moral problems. But the framework itself, however, is not to blame. Nothing said so far, it could be claimed, shows that it is not an all-embracing framework, suitable for everyone and everything, regardless of ‘sphere’.

But it is not necessarily that easy; I believe TMP in fact *cannot* conceive many moral concerns, as they are experienced within the private sphere. To see such concerns as posing any ‘moral problems’ at all, TMP must transform them and in that process many significant aspects are inevitable lost. However, we will come to that later. But one reason for this, which we will come to now, is that TMP advocate a very restricted conception of ‘moral knowledge’.

#### 5.3.4 Epistemic Discrimination

TMP aims to generate moral knowledge, supply a sound epistemological source from which reasonable answers to the question “what ought to be done?” can be deduced. The rationale of this ambition is quite obvious; without knowledge, the agent is supposedly left with unsatisfying guesswork and speculation. Simply put, supporters of TMP conceptualize ‘moral knowledge’ as the awareness that certain theoretical principles are true and universal. However, this awareness must of course have been preceded by proper rational reasoning and critical argumentation – it is obviously not enough to ‘merely accept’ some principles without inspecting the arguments that justify them, because then the agent is still merely guessing, and cannot be said to possess knowledge.

Not seldom, supporters of TMP claim that this is actually how ‘moral knowledge’ is ‘commonly’ understood. This conception is not simply an academic philosophical invention, but in line with what most people think – that is, when they actually *think* about it. (To support this, one could refer to allegedly scientific facts, for instance the psychological investigations performed by Lawrence Kohlberg et al.) However, feminists have criticized this

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are for the full range of human moral experience.” (Virginia Held, *Feminist Morality*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1993), p. 36.)

conception, and argued that it sets a biased standard, which consequently exclude other types of 'moral knowledge', and the processes of obtaining such knowledge. As a result, certain activities that many women have carried out have been unjustly regarded as not being based upon any 'moral knowledge' at all. Feminist do not totally agree with each other on how this 'other' type of knowledge is to be understood, but one suggestion, which 'care ethicists' often put forward, is that it has to do with 'practical knowledge', or 'knowing *how*' – and the reason why TMP cannot account for this type of knowledge is because it focuses exclusively on theoretical knowledge, or 'knowing *that*'.<sup>219</sup>

According to Vrinda Dalmiya and Linda Alcoff, much epistemology of traditional philosophy (including ethics) assumes that "S knows that *p*" – where S stands for an individual's cognizer and *p* stands for a proposition – is "adequate for all possible knowledge and as a consequence of this assumption, all knowing becomes *propositional*," which is an "exclusive preference for 'knowing that'..." This has led to an "epistemic discrimination," which disqualifies "practical knowledge" as *knowledge*, that which "one learns only through observing another person, participating in an activity with another, or simply trying it out ourselves alone."<sup>220</sup> But "[k]nowing is not necessarily a matter of saying and representing what is the case but can also be a kind of practical involvement in the world."<sup>221</sup> However, "it might seem... that 'S knows how to do *x*', is simply the *implicit form* of 'S knows that *p*'. But the difference between the two formulae is much deeper. When S knows that *p*, S grasps the proposition *p* and goes on to assent to it in a 'knowing way' (i.e., S believes it with justification). When S knows how to do *x*, S is still required to grasp *p*, but this is not expressed in a consequent *justified belief* that *p* but rather in a use of *p* for achieving a desired goal."<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> "There is something wrong, caring ethicists say, with focusing on ethical *reasoning*, with focusing on the abstract, hierarchical ranking and deducing of ethical norms and rules from first principles; and with focusing on universal justification on completely rational and formal grounds. Such a narrow view of the moral domain has long made women's capacities for ethical reasoning invisible, degraded or dubious." Of course, "[c]aring ethicists do not say that women are incapable of logical, abstract or hypothetical reasoning. But they do think that the exercise of those capacities might be peripheral and irrelevant in morally demanding situations," according to Ulla M. Holm, in "Community, Autonomy or Both? – Feminist Ethics Between Contextualism and Universalism", *Commonality and Particularity in Ethics*, eds. Lilli Alanen, Sara Heinämaa and Thomas Wallgren, London: MacMillan (1997), p. 406.

<sup>220</sup> "Are 'Old Wives Tales' Justified?", in *Feminist Epistemologies*, eds. Linda Alcoff and Elisabeth Potter, New York: Routledge (1993), pp. 220-221.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 235.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.

Within the framework of TMP, there is no such thing as ‘knowing how’ when it comes to morality; moral knowledge is ultimately a question about theoretical insights, ‘knowing that’. This is of course not to say that TMP finds ‘knowing how’ unimportant. An adherent of TMP can very well acknowledge that suitable practical knowledge is of utmost significance for ‘succeeding’ with some moral aim; that is, living up to whatever the true and universal moral principles prescribes. For example, many stress the importance of developing or upholding a appropriate character, dispositions or automatic ‘reflexes’.<sup>223</sup> Nevertheless, no supporter of TMP would seriously claim that it is possible for an agent, when it comes to *morality*, to have ‘*knowing how*’ without any prior ‘knowing that’. The former must, whether it be in some direct or indirect way, always be based upon the latter. One simple way this can be seen is by observing how keenly supporters of TMP uphold the ‘evident’ distinction between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’, and straightforwardly or in some roundabout way stress that the former concept has priority over the latter.

Is this epistemic discrimination? Well, in light of certain activities, this conception of moral knowledge could appear quite restricted. Taking the activity of ‘mothering’ within the private sphere once again as an example, a mother who appropriately cares for her child could be found to apparently know what morally ought to be done with regards to their close relation – but it seems strange to claim that this complex activity is based upon ‘knowing that’, i.e., some kind of theoretical awareness of what ought to be done, which has been obtained by means of thoughtful reflection upon the truth and universalizability of moral principles. Rather, it seems like a mother ‘knows how’ to do the right, and has learned that by experience gained in the very process of caring, possibly also by observing others (yet she need not have consciously reflected upon her observations), and is constantly refining the skills through her experiences. This, of course, is not to say that mothers do not think at all about what they are doing – that they are some kind of pre-programmed machines that follow nature’s instructions; it is merely to say that they certainly need not have pondered moral principles to ‘know’ what ought to be done.

However, according to TMP, although ‘appropriate mothering’ might be praiseworthy, a mother does not really ‘know’ that are the ‘right’ things to do – unless she has thought things over, i.e., considered and justified her activity by means of theoretical reflection. (There is nothing strange about this, a supporter of TMP might add; the same goes for many activities, such as driving a car, baking bread, killing in combat, and so on.) Still, this might yet be found odd. Does not a mother try to do the morally right in light of the close relation she

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<sup>223</sup> C.f. the indirect ‘strategic approaches’ in the previous chapter.

has with the child, and might she not actually learn what are the right things to do by doing them? “No,” a supporter of TMP replies, “she might *do* the right, but that does not imply that she *knows* what is right.” But that, of course, is only possible to say with a straight face if one does not count ‘knowing how’ as moral knowledge.

This could not only appear odd because it set a standard of ‘moral knowledge’ which disqualify insights of mothers; it also apparently support a somewhat narrow conception of ‘moral education’. If one accepts that ‘moral knowledge’ has to be ‘knowing that’, which is only possible to obtain through thoughtful reflection, then whatever many mothers do, they certainly do teach their children any morality, as they do not pass on any justified awareness of “what ought to be done” when caring for them, or teaching them how to socially interact with other people. At most, mothers can indeed pass on their practical skills, but as these does not count as moral knowledge, they do not pass on anything of interest regarding the ‘important’ questions of morality. If the model of moral knowledge provided by TMP is ‘correct’, we never actually *know* what is right and wrong before we come to understand that knowledge on such matters is gained by theoretical reflection upon the truth and universality of moral principles; and those who never come to such reflection, will never be able to come to really *know* what ought to be done.<sup>224</sup>

But one can of course deny that this sums up to any problem of interest. “So what?” – a supporter of TMP might ask. “If moral knowledge is not simply to be equated with the collection of prejudices accumulated by the age of eighteen, we must have an acceptable theoretical conception of ‘moral knowledge’. At most, this is nothing but a quarrel about the definition of a word, ‘knowledge’,

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<sup>224</sup> “Central to moral theory has been the issue of how moral principles, and hence moral decisions in particular cases, are to be justified. We owe that interest in justification in large measure to the modern period’s concern to find foundations for knowledge that are, in principle, accessible to any rational individual. (...) As adults, moral theorists may naturally find questions about distinguishing learned prejudices from justified moral beliefs more pertinent to their moral lives. And certainly one of the capacities that we hope moral agents will acquire is the capacity to draw just those kinds of distinctions. But we may pay a price by too strongly emphasizing the acquisition of moral knowledge through individual, adult reflection... we may lose sight of the fact that our adult capacity for rational reflection, the size of our adult reflective task, and quite possibly our motivation to act on reflective judgements depend heavily on our earlier moral education. Whereas moral theory has not been altogether blind to the importance of moral education, few have given moral education a role comparable to that of adult reflection in the acquisition of moral knowledge. (Francis Hutcheson comes to mind as a notable exception.) The result is an ideology of moral knowledge: the belief that moral knowledge is not only justified but also acquired exclusively or most importantly by rational reflection.” Cheshire Calhoun, “Justice, Care and Gender Bias”, *Journal of Philosophy*, No. 9 (1988), p. 457.

and if someone want to call ‘practical’ skills ‘knowledge’, then do it. We, however, prefer another definition (that might appear ‘odd’ if one does not understand its point), but you may define it in whatever way you like. What does it matter?”

Well, it could matter for several reasons. The conception of ‘moral knowledge’ as essentially being about ‘knowing that’ has not merely been ‘one’ definition of moral knowledge, it has been ‘the’ definition, in much moral philosophy and moral psychology (clearly, this was the conception Kohlberg presupposed). Thus, if there are moral insights involved in certain activities, yet these have not been possible to capture by means of this definition, they have subsequently been overlooked and rendered invisible in those disciplines that advocate this definition.

I believe that many human activities that involve close personal relations, such as ‘mothering’ as experienced from within the private sphere, in fact entail important moral insights and acknowledgments of significant moral values – but these cannot be captured if one approach the activity from the point of view of TMP. To see and make sense of such insights and values, they must be approached from a point of view that, for one thing, takes ‘knowing how’ seriously.

To suppose that this is an inconsequential difficulty for TMP, which can easily be remedied by means of ‘broadening the view’ might be wishful thinking. Slightly modifying the concept of ‘moral knowledge’ is of no help either – because ‘the’ definition in question is too much a necessary and central feature of its conceptual and methodological framework. So any such ‘modifications’ will inevitably question the whole point of the framework. But this might actually be quite necessary. Because if TMP is supposed to make sense of all moral concerns, but cannot, then this is certainly an indication of that TMP might be incomplete and flawed.

It might be the case that if one tries to understand certain moral concerns, too much influenced by the idea that morality is chiefly a matter of obtaining ‘knowing that’, one will in fact transform and distort those concerns, and no longer see them for what they are. We now come to that.

### *5.3.5 Distortion of Concrete Problems*

It would not surprise me if many find the critique that has been put forward this far as misfired. Sure, a supporter of TMP might grant, there could lie some truth in that TMP has been developed from and for the perspective that the public sphere entails, and that many philosophers in that tradition have not been



especially concerned about how moral issues could be experienced within the private. It might also be granted that TMP has set a somewhat exclusive theoretical standard of what is to count as 'moral knowledge', and not bothered to conceptualize other types of wisdom. But these are no serious problems, it could be claimed. The critique that has been put forward is nothing but uninformed complaints, based upon some basic misunderstandings of TMP.

Properly pursued, TMP is supposed to be able to grasp all types of moral concerns, regardless of wherever they occur and whoever they concern. Regardless if a problem comes about in the public or the private sphere, regardless if the problem is a problem for a man or a woman, regardless if the nature of the problem has to do with legislation or child rearing, and so on, TMP can offer a proper understanding of the problem and a fruitful discussion, which in the end will yield some practical advice for what ought to be done. If one stays on track and does not give up in advance, one will eventually discover that the superiority of TMP is most clearly visible when it is put to the test of providing guidance regarding concrete moral problems. Of course, a supporter of TMP certainly admits, this is a *difficult* process. The route from a faced moral problem to its possible resolution is a long and winding road with many pitfalls. Morality *is* a complicated subject, one has to be thorough and patient.

However, maybe it is not merely 'difficult' to come up with answers to what ought to be done in certain situations calling for moral guidance by means of employing TMP. Maybe it is in some cases actually impossible – *because* one puts them in the light of TMP. That is, an application of the conceptual and methodological framework of TMP could distort certain moral concerns, consequently transforming them into something which they are not. If this is so, it does not matter if any 'practical advice' is actually provided in the end, because that advice is not relevant to the *initial* problem. It is relevant for *another* problem, that which one comes to see when the initial problem has passed through the filter of TMP.

Can this be clearly demonstrated? Maybe not. For one thing, it can certainly not be shown in such a way that a stubborn adherent of TMP would be convinced; because such a person does not think of his or her perspective on moral issues as being affected by any 'filter' at all. But more importantly, it is hard to demonstrate this difficulty since a major part of it is based upon how certain moral problems are 'experienced' from particular positions and obviously it is not easy to dress such experiences in words. Therefore, the following attempt will be quite limited, but it will have to do.

Suppose a person faces concrete difficulties of personal matter, for example, how to be a 'good mother', and wonders what ought to be done. As she

conceives this to be a *moral* problem, she seeks the advice of a moral philosopher, who assures her that he will help her out on this matter, as this is the type of questions he is trained to deal with. He might add that his task will not be to straightforwardly command her what she ought to do (and not do), but rather help her to a better understanding of the morality involved in her problems, what types of arguments are relevant to them and what kind of advice could follow from them, that is, what could be suggested to be the *right* things to do.

How the moral philosopher would approach the difficulties involved in ‘mothering’ of course depends on what type of framework he accepts (in this case it is TMP), and which pedagogical method he prefers. But he could start out with a review of the various moral theories he finds relevant to the likely moral problems involved in the activity (for example, “when to punish and when to forgive, or how to divide attention between several children, or what ideals to hold up to her child”<sup>225</sup>, et cetera), explain their entailing principles and on which arguments they rest. He could then move on to explain how the problems of mothering could be clarified, by means of providing various hypothetical examples that sort out and purify the distinctive problems. Finally, he could end up with an exposé of what he takes to be the relevant arguments that the theories provide regarding the problems of mothering (perhaps also mention his own opinion on which arguments he finds most convincing and why), and ask of the woman that she carefully makes up her mind regarding which moral principles (and entailing theory) she considers to be true and universal (whether it be the Principle of Utility or the Categorical Imperative or the Golden Rule or the Ten Commandments, and so on), evaluate the arguments she has been confronted with, and in the end derive what it would be *right* or *wrong* for her, in her situation, to do.

Certainly, it could be the case that the woman finds this kind of lecture helpful. She might derive some justified practical guidance to what she ought to do. In addition, she could also come to see her activity in a ‘bigger picture’ which she might find encouraging and inspiring.<sup>226</sup>

But she could also find the whole discussion deeply problematical, and complain that she has learned nothing from it – not simply because she for some reason might not be able to derive any practical guidance from it, but rather because she does not find that it captures or is relevant to the specific moral problems of ‘mothering’ that she experiences in the concrete pursuit of that activity in the first place. If she so complains, is it simply due to that she has not

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<sup>225</sup> Held, (1993), p. 36.

<sup>226</sup> Akin to the ‘non-alienated’ Simple Strategic agent.

paid close attention to what has been said – or has something in fact been missed out? What could that be? Why might the philosopher not be able to acknowledge the problems *she* sees?

Well, he might not be familiar with them, simply because he has never experienced the activity. But even if he has experienced ‘mothering’ (‘he’ could very well be a ‘she’) or something akin to it (he might be a father), he might not be able to make sense of them anyway, since he attempts to fit them into a framework that presupposes that all *moral* problems can be conceived as theoretical problems, which should ultimately be discussed and eventually ‘resolved’ in light of true and universal principles, like moral-political questions concerning ‘worldly matters’ in the public sphere. But since “the family is not identical to the state,” we could “need concepts for thinking about the private or personal, and the public or political,” that “have to be very different from the traditional concepts.”<sup>227</sup>

The woman could claim that seeing and understanding certain moral issues involved in ‘mothering’ within the private sphere might require that one actually experiences that activity, as only by means of such an experience can one see the moral values involved. From this point of view one gains a deeper understanding of the morality involved in the actual close relationship in question, how it is connected to the distinctive ‘concrete others’ involved and their emotional ties (that which the ‘different voice’ Gilligan heard tried to articulate). But since the moral philosopher takes another point of view, looking upon mothering ‘from above’, like fish in an aquarium, he consequently fails to acknowledge those values.

The moral philosopher could when hearing these complaints simply deny that there are any such moral values, on basis of that his intuitions on the matter provide him with no such impressions. But this, of course, is not an interesting reply, as his intuitions hardly speak for each and everyone. However, the philosopher might give it a shot, and say, “well, then, explain it to me clearly what it is about ‘mothering’ that provides moral insights, so I might see if there is something to be learned too.” But, unfortunately, this could be impossible; what the moral philosopher requests, cannot necessarily be provided. The woman might say that her insights cannot be perfectly dressed in words and systematized – as can be done with much ‘theoretical’ (scientific) knowledge – since they rest upon ‘practical’ knowledge. So, it might actually not be possible for her to ‘clearly explain’ her insights.

Naturally, this reply could be regarded as a lame attempt to kill the discussion. The philosopher might maintain that there are no special moral values involved

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<sup>227</sup> Held (1990), p. 334.

in ‘mothering’ – or admit that there very well could be (and that these might only be possible to disclose from within the pursuit of that activity), yet declare that *even if* that is so, it adds nothing of interest to moral philosophy. Since these ‘values’ apparently cannot be articulated in a way that everyone can understand, they cannot be scrutinized in discussions regarding morality. Experiencing moral values is one thing, discussing and dealing with them is another thing. The latter, however, is necessary for ‘getting anywhere’, i.e., saying something of general interest with regards to the basic question of ethics, “what ought to be done?”

But the woman might disagree, and point out that the philosopher presupposes something which is not for certain, that discussions about morality must fit standards relevant to TMP. Indeed, mothers do discuss with each other about doing the right; they do scrutinize the moral values involved in ‘mothering’. But they do it in a radically different way, as their conversations takes ‘knowing how’ seriously. Doing the ‘right’ as a mother is a practical skill, and therefore you need not only concrete experience of ‘mothering’ to be able to see the values involved, but also to be able to deal with them and share your knowledge on the matter in the first place. Instead of a monologue on theories and principles, you have dialogues about experiences, perhaps expressed through personal or imagined narratives.<sup>228</sup> However, the philosopher might argue that whatever they talk about, and howsoever they do it and whatever they might come to do as a result of such discussions, it must be possible to capture all of this in terms of theoretical moral knowledge. But if it is presupposed that ‘knowing that’ defines moral knowledge, the moral philosopher might actually not be able to understand what they say in the first place. If ‘knowing how’ cannot be translated into ‘knowing that’, he will either not hear anything at all, or make out other kinds of moral problems. If he joins the discussion, he could, although his intentions are probably good, misrepresent the actual problems under consideration. In other words, the conceptual and methodological framework of TMP he has internalised could transform the moral problems related to ‘mothering’ into outlooks that suits the framework. This could be somewhat destructive, as these outlooks do not make sense of the moral problems involved in mothering as they are experienced by women, but instead

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<sup>228</sup> The usage of actual dialogue, stories and narratives is within feminist ethics often put forward as a beneficial method for disclosing and dealing with moral issues of personal concern; see, for instance, Benhabib (1987), pp. 168-171 (“A Communicative Ethic of Need Interpretations and the Relational Self”), and “Picking Up Pieces: Lives, Stories, and Integrity,” by Margaret Urban Walker, in *Feminists Rethink the Self*, ed. Diana T. Meyers, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press (1997), pp. 62-84.

transform them into other problems. For understanding these concerns, a different framework is required.

Or so the woman could claim. Again, it could be asked, is she wrong? Has her critique misfired, is it nothing but uninformed complaints based upon some basic misunderstandings? Have many feminists incorrectly criticized TMP and are their efforts to work out alternative frameworks unnecessary pursuits? Or is something wrong with TMP?

But one need not necessarily conclude that anything is ‘wrong’ with any of them. For various reasons, the woman and the moral philosopher see different moral problems in the situation in question, as they take different point of views. But, to repeat, if Carol Gilligan is right, these “perspectives are not opposites or mirror-images of one another... Instead, these perspectives denote different ways of organizing the basic elements of moral judgement: self, others, and the relation between them.”<sup>229</sup> Possibly, both might in the end even reach similar practical conclusions regarding what ought to be done, but out of radically different perspectives and entailing discussions.

However, if one for some reason takes it for granted that one perspective is superior, one will fail to understand and appreciate the other. If one stubbornly maintain that ‘moral problems’ *must* fit the framework of TMP to be properly understood and handled, then there is not only something wrong with the particular woman in the example above, but with all women who fail to realize that.<sup>230</sup> *She* does not know how to deal with moral problems; *she* looks at the wrong things; *she* is the one who ‘distorts’ the problems, as she persistently wishes to consider them from a point of view that provides nothing of much relevance to ‘morality’. Unfortunately, there is not much that can be said to convince someone who seriously takes that to be true. (Naturally, the same goes for the woman. If she persistently insist that her perspective is superior, she will inevitably fail to understand the points the moral philosopher is trying to make.) But why is the perspective she takes and the issues she conceives from it not ‘central’ questions of ‘morality’? Because they *are* not or because TMP cannot

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<sup>229</sup> Gilligan (1987), p. 22.

<sup>230</sup> However, “[i]t is not the case, certainly, that women cannot arrange principles hierarchically and derive conclusions logically. It is more likely that we see this process as peripheral to, or even alien to, many problems of moral action. Faced with a hypothetical dilemma, women often ask for more information. We want to know more, I think, in order to form a picture more nearly resembling real moral situations. Ideally, we need to talk to the participants, to see their eyes and facial expressions, to receive what they are feeling. Moral decisions are, after all, made in real situations; they are qualitatively different from the solution of geometry problems.” Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, Berkely: University of California Press (1984), pp. 2-3.

conceive them as such? The latter does not necessarily imply the former. But the latter might, if it is correct, provide an indication that TMP cannot grasp all moral concerns, regardless of wherever they occur and whomever they concern, and is thus incomplete and flawed – although it might appear elegant at first glance.

#### 5.4 THE PERSONAL DOMAIN AND FRIENDSHIP

The feminist critique challenges the ambition of TMP to be applicable to all moral concerns. Obviously, one factor which makes this criticism distinctively *feminist* is that it is focused on disclosing the inability of the framework to account for certain 'female' experiences. However, I agree with Alison M. Jaggar that "it would be a mistake to identify feminist ethics with attention to some explicitly gendered subset of ethical issues. On the contrary, rather than being limited to a restricted ethical domain, feminist ethics has enlarged the traditional concerns of ethics."<sup>231</sup>

I believe there is much to learn from the feminist critique, regardless of gender. In the foregoing discussion, the main point was indeed that TMP possibly fails to acknowledge moral concerns involved in a particular 'female' activity, namely mothering. Some might have found this discussion irritating, not only because it spoke of 'women' in a quite generalized way, but also because it seemingly only addressed a particular set of women, mothers. To be honest, I do not pretend that I actually know that mothering provides moral insights, because I am not a woman, not even a parent. But the reason why I take this type of feminist critique seriously is because I find that this critique is not merely applicable to that angle of approach. I believe it is applicable to many human activities of personal concern that involve close interpersonal relations. The feminist critique not 'only' disclose difficulties with TMP in relation to mothering in particular, but also with regards to many moral concerns, including (but not limited to) actual friendship. The reasons for this are the same as it was concerning mothering; TMP cannot account for certain moral insights that the actual pursuit of such an activity gives rise to. Actual friendship, I believe, is pursued within a domain of human experiences I here shall refer to as the 'personal domain' (I prefer to call it 'personal domain' instead of 'private sphere' simply because I find that the latter could be too much identified with "some explicitly gendered subset of ethical issues"). In this domain, issues of personal relations, and their *morality*, are of central

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<sup>231</sup> Jaggar (1991), p. 86.

concern; but when these are put in light of TMP, they are (like mothering within the private sphere) rendered invisible or distorted. If this is correct, I believe it is troublesome for the debate on consequentialism and friendship, which I shall return to in just a moment.

The 'personal domain' is far from a marginal domain of human life, but one that we are constantly involved in, irrespective of gender. However, we may not always conceive this domain as being a 'distinctive domain' that we occasionally detach ourselves from (like I believe we can do regarding such a domain as the 'political'); and a possible reason for this is that the very common and everyday nature of this domain makes it somewhat invisible. Nevertheless, I believe this domain involves certain experiences, a particular perspective on the world and the people in it. When we reflect upon *the other* in the activity of a close personal relationship (whether it be a 'mothering', 'fathering', 'loving', or 'friendship' relation, and so on) from within this domain, we do regard the person we are connected to in that relationship as a being a concrete other, and conceive that it involves distinctive moral values. Depending upon type of relation, however, these values are probably different. Mothering is obviously not the same kind of relationship as friendship. Within the pursuit of friendship, I do believe that we take the complex aspects of 'non-instrumentality', 'love' and 'valuing the person' (and the attitudes that stem from these aspects, for example, 'trust' and 'irreplaceability') as not merely being neutral criteria of what it means 'to be a real friend', but as aspects which actually have great moral significance and give rise to certain moral concerns. But like TMP fails to take into account the perspective and subsequent moral concerns involved in the activity of mothering, so does TMP fail to take into account the morality involved in friendship.

Moreover, how to deal with the moral concerns in friendship and do 'the right' in such a relationship, is not something which can be taught by studying theories. (For instance, I do not believe anyone has learned anything of importance in this respect by reading Dale Carnegie, or the chapter on 'friendship' in this book.) This, like mothering, is a practical skill, and it is learned and developed through actual social interaction with other people. We learn to be a 'real friend' by engaging in personal relations, by perceiving and responding to the reactions of others; without such an engagement, we can never come to know what it takes to be a real friend (or good mother or father, and so on). However, this is obviously a type of *knowing how*, and since TMP does not conceptualize that as being moral knowledge, then whatever we 'know', it is not anything about morality. But this disregard, I believe, runs counter to many strong intuitions that are held within the personal domain. That

we do not actually learn anything of *moral* (but ‘merely’ practical) weight by socially interacting with other people seems odd. For one thing, it trivializes everything we learned in our childhood and youth (those times when we most clearly learn to socially interact) concerning what one morally ought to do, and not to do, in context of close personal relations.

All this could be denied, of course. It could be denied that there are any such values that I speak about involved in friendship. Such a denial is of course hard to ‘prove’ wrong, as one cannot force people to have experiences. So, like John Stuart Mill, I cannot do more than leave it to the consideration of the thoughtful reader. But even if some might agree to a certain extent, it could be yet argued that one should nonetheless apply the framework of TMP to better understand the alleged ‘morality’ in close personal relations. We must, it could be claimed, occasionally step back and out of the perspective of the personal domain and view it ‘from above’, to see what the distinctive moral problems are, and also how to deal with them. But such a move is troublesome, as it could lead to distortion; the distinctive concerns of that domain vanish when one switches perspective, one loses sight of the moral values involved in it. Because TMP offers no concepts to understand or evaluate the moral concerns as they arise within the personal domain; and one reason for this is that TMP has not been developed from or for that domain. However, this is not to say that TMP is totally misdirected or useless; it is actually only to say that TMP works for a special perspective on a limited set of moral concerns, but not all.

However, I believe some might want to maintain that it is not so. Like Mill found his creed in the principle of utility, some might have found it in the conceptual and methodological framework of TMP (or some theory that TMP has generated) and obtained a unity to their conceptions of things. They could argue that they *have* better understood the moral values of friendship and the moral importance of being a real friend by scrutinizing such relations in light of TMP. To support this claim, they might provide dozens of examples from their everyday lives in which they faced a moral problem in relation to friendship, and ‘solved’ it by means rational reflection upon their preferred moral principles. For example, “last night I had the opportunity of spending the evening at a bar or visiting a close friend at the hospital, and I realized the it would be for the best if I went to the hospital, although I really did not want that, because the weal and woe of friends is more important than temporary amusements.” But such examples entirely miss the point. I do not deny that a supporters of TMP might have derived ideas such as ‘friendship is conducive to the overall net balance of happiness’, ‘I shall treat my friends as ends in themselves’, ‘I shalt not covet my friend’s house’, from their favourite



principles, but I hardly believe they have gained any deeper insights regarding the moral values involved within the activity of friendship itself. They have at most have learned something about the theoretical aspects of the morality *of* friendship in general, but not about the morality *in* practical friendship.

If I am right, some might be worried. For instance, if Kohlberg's test correctly depicted how men commonly reason around moral problems, does this not show that men are less able to pursue personal relations, as they will then always regard the moral aspects of such relations in line with something akin to TMP? Well, if Kohlberg's test in fact showed that, men should certainly worry. But this is in fact not for certain. Because Kohlberg's test was conducted in a special way. He confronted his test subjects with a hypothetical problem (Heinz dilemma), not a concrete problem related to them personally, and observed how they reasoned around *that* type of problem. Gilligan, on the other hand, interviewed women about a concrete problem related to them personally. And this way of posing 'a moral problem' might make a difference. "The hypothetical problem studied by Kohlberg – whether Heinz should steal a drug to save his wife – is obviously a very different kind of problem from the real one faced by the women studied by Gilligan – whether or not to have an abortion. But even when two groups are asked about what seems to be the same problem, they may interpret it to a different degree as real or as hypothetical, and this difference too should be studied for its possible significance."<sup>232</sup> That is, it is possible that the 'filter' of TMP was actually forced upon the participants in the test in advance, by means of the nature of the example utilized.

But it might also worry some moral philosophers (regardless of gender), who realize that they have been trained to see all moral issues in the light of TMP, and find it hard to do otherwise. But I hardly believe they need to worry either. I do not think such moral philosophers are less able to pursue close personal relations. The reason for this is that I believe that most moral philosophers are only Academic or Sunday moralists, who indeed view moral problems through a certain filter and consequently discuss them in a special way at seminars and in textbooks, but go along like everyone else when the work day is over and look upon their family and friends from the viewpoint within the personal domain. There might, of course, be exceptions. There could be philosophers who truly take the perspective of TMP into the personal domain too; and these I believe do not pursue their personal relations very well. But such philosophers are probably rare.

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<sup>232</sup> Held (1993), p. 67, my italics.

But what about the agents I depicted in the previous chapter, those who had adopted consequentialism as a personal morality and managed to pursue friendship? Did not that discussion somehow show that TMP can in fact be applied to concerns of the personal domain, such as friendship? Of course not. In that discussion, there was a clear boundary between ‘morality’ and ‘friendship’. The agent’s ‘personal morality’ was never in fact ‘applied’ *in* his or her friendships, not even indirectly, but remained on the outside at a safe distance the whole time.

## 5.5 THE DEBATE REVISITED

Can a consequentialist be a real friend? Who cares? Obviously, those who have discussed the question (including me) do care. But why? What was the debate ultimately meant to lead to? Hopefully, the question has not been posed and discussed merely for the sake of passing time, but also in the belief that something of importance would come about in the end. The ultimate question must have been, does the discussion somehow render consequentialist ethics true or false? If this had *not* been the aim, the debate would have been quite unrewarding. But strangely, no one in the debate really tackles this final question. At most, it is briefly mentioned, but it is not followed up by any deeper arguments. The reason for this could be that it is somehow obvious that if a consequentialist can, or cannot, be a real friend, then this provides us with some argument to think that consequentialism is true, or false. But this is far from obvious.

In fact, I do not believe the debate as it has been pursued can show consequentialism to be either true or false. I suspect that it is pointless, and now it can be explained why I believe that. This requires no extensive discussion, because most of the groundwork has already been made by means of the feminist critique. What I am about to say should be quite unsurprising.

The relevance of the outlook in question is settled beforehand and the reason for that is that consequentialist moral theories stem from TMP. But since this framework cannot conceptualize the moral concerns involved in friendship, as they are conceived within the personal domain, nor do consequentialist ethics conceptualize such concerns either. Let us assume that the answer to the question “Can a consequentialist be a real friend?” was a sparkling clear “no!” – could this provide one with a reason to consider consequentialism false? Well, if one presumes that there are significant moral values involved in the practical activity of friendship, which can only be detected from within the perspective of

the personal domain in terms of 'knowing how', then one would have a reason for thinking so. One could then argue something like this. If an agent cannot be a real friend due to the fact that the agent is a consequentialist, this means that the agent fails to grasp certain moral knowledge, namely the practical knowledge required for being a real friend. If it is claimed that consequentialism is an exhaustive moral theory, it would mean that if a consequentialism is true, a (perfect) consequentialist would in fact grasp everything there is to know about morality – but if there is moral knowledge that the (albeit perfect) consequentialist cannot grasp, then consequentialism is not true.

But such an argumentation is evidently disqualified in advance by TMP. Because TMP does not consider 'knowing how' in the personal domain as moral knowledge in the first place. To know something about morality is to 'know that' some moral principle, or some particular judgement that stems from such a principle is true (for instance, that one ought always do what will make the outcome best). Therefore, someone who supports consequentialism on basis of this framework will hardly care if a consequentialist cannot be a real friend. His or her response becomes quite predictable: that one 'knows that' the principle of consequentialism is 'true' is enough, and whether an agent who for some reason 'adopts' such a theory as a 'personal morality' cannot be a real friend is no counter-argument against the idea that consequentialism in fact provides the most convincing theory regarding "what ought to be done." Indeed, awareness of such a theory certainly does not automatically imply that one practically knows what ought to be done at all times, but that does not make a difference - one should keep in mind the 'obvious' distinction between 'theory' and 'practice' (or 'criterion of rightness' and 'method of decision', a terminology popular among consequentialists).

To show that consequentialism is false can only be made within a framework that takes the personal domain and entailing knowing how seriously; because only such a framework would be able to acknowledge the moral values involved in friendship. But TMP does not – therefore, the framework which renders the outlook comprehensible, also disarms the outlook in advance, and there is no simple remedy for this difficulty. One cannot just alter the outlook in this context to make it possible to show consequentialist true or false on basis that a consequentialist can, or cannot be, a real friend. The only way it would be possible would be by attacking the *framework* itself, arguing that it does not take the morality of the personal domain seriously, and that *this* is somehow a massive problem.

This, however, is not explicitly claimed in the debate. Therefore, it could be regarded as pointless. However, the debaters probably wanted to say something

of importance, and if one interprets the debate as being an implicit critique of the framework instead, it becomes much more interesting and rewarding. If it had been the case that those who attacked consequentialism on basis that a consequentialist cannot be a real friend did so because they wanted to show that there was something wrong with the framework – that it cannot account for the moral concerns in the personal domain, then such arguments as ‘the problem of split vision’, ‘alienation’, ‘distorted love’, ‘trust’, and so on, would indeed say something of importance. These arguments could then have been found to reveal that a consequentialist could fail to not only acknowledge, but also know-how to deal with moral values involved in friendship. But none of the debaters claim that they are dissatisfied with the framework. They go for the theory of consequentialism and by doing so their argumentations become superficial and powerless. The debaters should have been more radical; they should instead have first tried to disclose the conceptual and methodological basis of the framework, then made use of their arguments to reveal difficulties with this framework, and perhaps also offered some alternative framework which better copes with the morality involved in friendship.

Why, then, do not the debaters discuss the framework instead? Why were they not more radical in their critique? I suspect that one reason for this is that the framework is in fact not recognized as a framework. Frameworks are murky waters, they do not introduce themselves as frameworks when encountered. They define and set the limits of the point and method of investigations, i.e. what type of outlooks that are of relevance, and what they are supposed to achieve. Frameworks are developed, established and accepted by applying them; they hide in the light when they are employed. If every investigation (regardless of subject) had to begin with an explanation to the conceptual and methodological structure of the framework employed, there would hardly be any investigations at all. Furthermore, the framework of TMP is to a large extent a ‘dominating’ framework in moral philosophy today (if one asks moral philosophers what is considered to be the ‘greatest’ moral theories of today, I believe the vast majority will not hesitate to declare that it is either Consequentialism or Kantianism, or some other theory that the framework has generated). This is, however, is hardly because the framework has proven itself successful in answering the question “what ought to be done?” since after more than two centuries of debating, no moral theory which the framework has generated has yet come close to being the final answer. Rather, the framework seems upheld by habit and tradition; and it stems from a powerful tradition with prestigious ancestors. This domination seems to have established the framework to such a degree that it is often not recognized as *a framework*, but *the subject*.

It has a firm grip on many moral philosophers, who seem to regard it as *the* way of pursuing the subject of ‘moral philosophy’, not *a* way. In consequence, all questions that are asked, and all discussions that are pursued, must become outlooks that fit this framework if they are supposed to make sense in the first place.<sup>233</sup>

It is therefore not strange that the debaters have not attacked the framework. For one thing, I believe not all have actually recognized it, as it hides in the light. And those who might have recognized it, might not have had any sparkling clear alternatives to it at hand. Therefore, they might have had to settle with a question that they find *almost* criticizes the framework, but not entirely, and intentionally left out the ultimate question. But this is not very helpful. If one wants to criticize a framework, one must do so. There are hardly any short-cuts, and the outlook “Can a consequentialist be a real friend?” is certainly not one.

There is, I shall admit, another explanation to why I do not believe the debate on consequentialism and friendship can show consequentialism true and false, and that is because I am missing out something everyone else understands. If the answer to the question had been “no!” this somehow shows consequentialism to be false, and everyone understands this; everyone, except me, that is. The problem has to do entirely with me; I am the one who believes there is a framework that hides in the light, and prevents the debate from tackling the final question. But it is not so. Due to this, I have misconceived the arguments, and interpreted them as being about something which they are not. I am the one who is too influenced by the framework, and therefore I believe that everyone else is too. This is a perfectly valid explanation. I just cannot see how this debate can show consequentialism true or false. But others might do, and I encourage them to explain to me how that could be the case. However, such an explanation must not be based upon arguments which are meant to show the superiority of *another* framework, because then I am right – then this discussion was in fact about problems with the framework, not a about consequentialism in particular, and the question why this was not obvious in the debate, but

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<sup>233</sup> Clearly, “[t]he dominance of a disciplinary paradigm shows in its prevalence in shaping professional work and training, its embodiment in the structures of courses and texts, its secure seating in prestigious institutions, and its conspicuous presentation in central venues of publication and discussion...” Therefore, “[i]t is almost inevitable that work at odds with a regnant paradigm will present itself as challenging or attacking the paradigm, or as an attractive alternative to it. A measure of the dominance of a paradigm is its success in making work done within its discipline but done in other ways struggle against it, thereby acknowledging and reproducing its importance. Not to address the paradigm or the work it informs is simply to appear ill-trained or professionally out of it.” Walker (1998), pp. 18-19.

concealed as a discussion about consequentialism and friendship, remains a mystery.

This might sound quite destructive, but it is not meant to be. If I am right, we could learn something else from the debate on consequentialism and friendship, something which maybe was not intended by the debaters. We might have learned about the necessity to clearly attack the framework, if that is what one is dissatisfied with. To attack a theory which the framework has generated with arguments that the framework has already disqualified is pointless. But if one is dissatisfied with consequentialist ethics, yet does not realize that the reason why one is, has fundamentally to do with the framework, not the theory, then consequentialism might “tend to haunt” oneself, even if one “does not believe in it.”

## 5.6 WHAT NOW?

We have now reached the end, not only of this chapter but also of this essay. It started in one end and ended up somewhere else indeed. So, what now?

If one simply denies that anything of interest has been put forward in this chapter, not much need happen. But if one thinks the opposite, one could argue that TMP should be rejected (and also its entailing theories, including, but not limited to, consequentialism) as it might not be able to provide us with any extensive answers to all moral questions. A moral realist could draw skeptical conclusions – we can never come to know what ought to be done. A moral constructivist, on the other hand, could claim that the project of TMP has failed, but another approach is possible; perhaps morality could be better understood by starting at another end, namely that of close personal relations within the personal domain. One could also argue that TMP need not be rejected at all, rather put in its ‘proper place’. It is a helpful framework, but only concerning certain moral issues from a specific point of view. For instance, it might be useful in such a field as the ‘political domain’ regarding legislation, like Bentham thought. Such a position, however, seems to entail some form of methodological, or even moral, relativism – and that might be considered unsatisfying.

These are indeed interesting and important questions. But I shall not tackle them. I need not, my aim here has been more modest. I have merely aimed to reveal the scope and limits of the framework in question, and tried to show that a consequence of these is that certain discussions become pointless – in this case the debate on consequentialism and friendship. I do take the framework of

TMP to be a highly admirable construction regarding both ambition and method, which has much to offer; but it cannot make sense of everything there is to friendship. We do not learn anything about the possible morality *in* friendship from studying and applying TMP. We might learn about the morality *of* friendship, but that is another thing.

Friendship is obviously a central human concern that many care about, and although we probably learn more about the possible morality involved in that activity by practicing it, we could perhaps learn more if we were assisted in this pursuit by a different moral-philosophical framework. Like feminists crave a moral philosophy which make sense of distinctively ‘female’ aspects of morality, one could also desire a framework that takes the moral concerns of the personal domain seriously, and offers a more thorough understanding of the morality involved close personal relations. However, this is not to say that we need yet another ‘moral theory’. Such a framework could very well be radically unlike TMP, and whether it would produce a ‘moral theories’ (in the sense as the notion is understood within TMP<sup>234</sup>) is a different question. But how such a framework would be constituted, I do not know, and I am not certain that those ethical systems that are often presented as being ‘alternatives’ (e.g. normative Care Ethics, but also Virtue Ethics) provide us with what one wants; but it might be the case.

But what I do know, however, is that such a different framework must be understood as being *different*, even if it seemingly tries to answer the same question as TMP, i.e., “what ought to be done?” If it is instead regarded as an ‘alternative’ framework, it will not get very far, because whatever is said to be an ‘alternative’ is always judged on basis of what it is supposed to be an alternative to. A framework that differs from TMP – and attempts to understand and discuss *other* moral concerns (and thus conceives the question “what ought to be done?” differently) – but is judged by the standard set by TMP of what is to count as ‘moral concerns’ is doomed to failure. If it is so judged, the different framework will not be better understood, merely assimilated into TMP, in which it will no longer be worth more than an insignificant footnote. If TMP is such a ‘dominating’ framework as many feminists claim, this will be hard to avoid. But it is hardly impossible, if one is aware of what one is trying to do, and does not fear the typical propaganda that is often cried out when someone questions TMP, that is, that all different frameworks are built upon nothing but

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<sup>234</sup> That is, “a consistent (and usually very compact) set of law-like moral principles or procedures for decision that is intended to yield by deduction or instantiation (with the support of adequate collateral material) some determinate judgement for an agent in a given situation what is right, or at least morally justifiable, to do.” *Ibid.*, p. 36.

primitive guesswork, and will resurrect the ghosts of normative anarchism, and create a world in which anything goes.

I am confident that if we applied the outlook “Can a consequentialist be a real friend?” to a different framework, one which takes the moral concerns of the personal domain seriously, we would witness a discussion very dissimilar from how it was pursued in the debate. Whether or not it would vindicate or refute consequentialism in the end is not for sure; maybe that aspect would be found uninteresting. But, as said, I do not know how such a framework would be constituted, but I do care.



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