Context, Character and Consequentialist Friendships

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One prevailing objection to consequentialism holds that the consequentialist cannot promote both agent-neutral value and her own personal friendships: the consequentialist cannot be a genuine friend. Several versions of this objection have been advanced, but an even more sophisticated version of the charge is available. However, even this more sophisticated version fails, as it assumes a traditional, context-insensitive, account of character traits. In this article, I develop and defend a novel account of character traits that is context-sensitive and also supports a novel account of what friendship consists in. Application of the more plausible, contextual, account of character traits resolves the debate in favor of the friendly consequentialist.

1. INTRODUCTION

Character traits, as they are traditionally conceived, are context-insensitive. You possess a context-insensitive character trait just in case you would display its characteristic behavior across a broad range of normal circumstances. For example, you are honest just in case you would truth-tell across a broad range of normal circumstances. But context-insensitive traits are not sufficiently informative to enable us adequately to assess others morally, or adequately to predict their behavior. The contextual account of character traits, which I here defend, posits traits that are context-sensitive. You possess a context-sensitive character trait just in case you would display its characteristic behavior across any range of circumstances, whether they are normal or non-normal. For example, you are colleague-honest just in case you would be honest only with your colleagues; similarly, you are friend-and-family-honest just in case you would be honest only with friends and family. These new context-sensitive character traits are more informative, thus enabling us better to assess others and predict their behavior. Among its other virtues, the correct, contextual, understanding of character traits vindicates the consequentialist against the familiar charge that she cannot be a genuine friend.

There are two dominant versions of this charge. The first holds that, in order to achieve her goal of maximizing agent-neutral value, the consequentialist must have certain motivations or aims, but that these motivations and aims are incompatible with genuine friendship.[1] The

[1] Bernard Williams, 'A Critique of Utilitarianism', *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, ed. J. J. C. Smart and Bernard Williams (Cambridge, 1973), pp. 75–150; Michael

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second holds that the consequentialist must be disposed to terminate any friendship that fails to maximize agent-neutral value, while a genuine friend would hang on to these suboptimal friendships.[2] However, a new, more sophisticated version of this charge is available to the opponent of the consequentialist.[3] The more sophisticated version of the argument holds that to achieve her consequentialist goals, the consequentialist should be disposed to terminate her friendly character whenever it no longer promotes agent-neutral value, while a genuine friend would hang on to her friendly character; in short, the consequentialist cannot possess the character trait appropriate to genuine friendship. But this version of the charge of incompatibility is ultimately rooted in a traditional, context-insensitive, understanding of character traits. And if the character trait appropriate to genuine friendship is best understood contextually, as I argue, then the consequentialist can both achieve her consequentialist goals and possess the character trait appropriate to genuine friendship. The consequentialist can, thus, be a genuine friend.

2. GENUINE FRIENDSHIP VS. CONSEQUENTIALISM

The charge that the consequentialist cannot be a genuine friend may seem misguided at first, for the consequentialist can clearly bring about good consequences by promoting her own and others' friendships. But Bernard Williams and Michael Stocker hold that consequentialists cannot avoid psychological alienation in their friendships.[4] They argue that, to promote the overall good, the consequentialist must aim at and be motivated by maximizing agent-neutral value, but that a genuine friend's aims and motivations would, instead, be directed towards her friends. To avoid this motivational alienation, Peter Railton suggests that the genuine friend adopt indirect consequentialism, which does not require that agent-neutral value be the object of the genuine friend's motivations and aims.[5] Instead, the genuine friend must simply satisfy the consequentialist condition that she maximize the overall good, perhaps by following certain rules or always acting from a certain character or set of motives.

Stocker, 'The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories', *Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976), pp. 453–66.

[2] Dean Cocking and Justin Oakley, 'Indirect Consequentialism, Friendship, and the Problem of Alienation', *Ethics* 106 (1995), pp. 86–111.

[3] This new version of the argument is based on Elinor Mason's objections to Cocking and Oakley's version. See her 'Can an Indirect Consequentialist be a Real Friend?', *Ethics* 108 (1998), pp. 386–93.

[4] Williams, 'Critique'; Stocker, 'Schizophrenia'.

[5] Peter Railton, 'Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality', *Consequentialism and its Critics*, ed. Samuel Scheffler (Oxford, 1988), pp. 93–133.

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Justin Cocking and Dean Oakley respond, however, that Railton's move to indirect consequentialism fails to vindicate a consequentialist justification of friendship.[6] They claim that if the indirect consequentialist's relationships became suboptimal, that is, if they failed to maximize the good, she would terminate them. But, according to the ordinary concept of friendship, 'true and good friends will have a motivational disposition which involves a preparedness to act for the friend, such that the claims of friendship will sometimes trump the maximization of agent-neutral value'.[7] So, in acting under the disposition proper to friendship, a genuine friend would sometimes, though perhaps not always, sacrifice maximizing the good to promote a friendship.

Elinor Mason defends the consequentialist against Cocking and Oakley's objection. While Cocking and Oakley argue that the indirect consequentialist would be disposed to terminate any particular friendship that became suboptimal,[8] Mason argues that the indirect consequentialist should, instead, be disposed to terminate her pro-friendship disposition, or friendly character, when it becomes suboptimal.[9] Mason claims that we possess relatively stable characters and, so, to accord with our psychological nature, a consequentialist should develop and act from a friendly character that maximizes the good. Mason concludes that if one's friendly character is the subject of termination, indirect consequentialism is compatible with genuine friendship. 'The circumstances in which a [friendly character] becomes suboptimal are relevantly different from, and far less likely to occur than, the circumstances in which a particular relationship would become suboptimal.'[10] And if someone's friendly character maximizes the good, then her particular friendships are justified, even if they are suboptimal.

But Mason's shifting the subject of termination from one's particular friendships to one's friendly character does not help the friendly consequentialist. For the intuition underlying the key premise of Cocking and Oakley's incompatibility argument also underwrites a revised version of this argument that withstands Mason's response.

According to Cocking and Oakley's key premise, a genuine friend is disposed to sometimes sacrifice maximizing the good in order to promote her particular friendships. Plausibly, this premise is

[6] Cocking and Oakley, 'Indirect Consequentialism'.

[7] Cocking and Oakley, 'Indirect Consequentialism', p. 109.

[8] Presumably, terminating one's friendly character is different from terminating the friendships that it governs, though Mason does not defend this crucial claim. Someone could stop liking and caring about an individual without putting an end to her general liking and concern for others.

[9] Mason holds that the indirect consequentialist should endorse a 'pro-friendship disposition', not a friendly character. My representation of Mason's friendly disposition as a friendly character in no way relevantly distorts her position.

[10] Mason, 'Real Friend', pp. 392–3.

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motivated by Cocking and Oakley's pluralistic axiology, which implies that friendship, if not intrinsically valuable, generates reasons that compete with reasons grounded in objective value. Friendship is, hence, sometimes worth protecting even if it fails to promote the overall good, and the conditions under which we would terminate a friendship should accord with its value and the reasons it generates. This intuition underwrites a revised version of the key premise; the revised key premise enables Cocking and Oakley to generate a new argument for the incompatibility of consequentialism and friendship.

According to the revised premise, a genuine friend is disposed to sometimes sacrifice maximizing the good in order to promote her friendly character. Cocking and Oakley might argue that one cannot be disposed both always to terminate and sometimes to keep one's friendly character despite its connection to suboptimal outcomes. And, so, indirect consequentialism and genuine friendship are conceptually incompatible.

The claim that drives this new incompatibility argument is that one cannot be disposed both to always terminate and to sometimes keep one's friendly character despite its connection to suboptimal outcomes. If someone possesses the disposition appropriate to the consequentialist, she cannot simultaneously possess the character appropriate to genuine friendship; the indirect consequentialist cannot possess a friendly character. And this is why the indirect consequentialist cannot be a genuine friend. But why shouldn't the indirect consequentialist be able to possess a friendly character?

The most plausible line of defense available to Cocking and Oakley runs as follows: if a genuine friend is disposed to sometimes sacrifice maximizing the good, such that the claims of her friendly character will sometimes trump the maximization of agent-neutral value, then the genuine friend would sometimes promote her friendly character over agent-neutral value; but an indirect consequentialist would always promote agent-neutral value over her friendly character.[11] But, if the indirect consequentialist's and the genuine friend's values were ever to clash in some situation, someone could not, in practice, both sometimes favor her friendly character in her actions and always favor agent-neutral value in her actions. Therefore, if the genuine friend's and the indirect consequentialist's respective characters and dispositions are conceived as being wedded to action, then the indirect consequentialist cannot possess a genuinely friendly character. But as I argue in the following section, this attempted line of defense assumes a traditional, context-insensitive, understanding of character traits. The

[11] A second line of defense in favor of the claim that the indirect consequentialist cannot possess a friendly character is available to Cocking and Oakley. See Appendix B.

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more plausible, contextual, understanding of character traits resolves the debate in favor of the friendly consequentialist.

3. THE TRADITIONAL ACCOUNT VS. THE CONTEXTUAL ACCOUNT

As traditionally conceived, traits of character are wedded to action. For example, someone is honest just in case she possesses a suitable range of stable mental features that would issue in honest behavior across a spectrum of normal circumstances, when the circumstances call for honest behavior.[12] The range of mental features relevant to honesty may include the belief that honesty is valuable, the desire to live an open life, the intent to treat others as having autonomy, the strength of will to truth-tell in uncomfortable situations and, perhaps, further aversions, choices, emotions and processes of deliberation. In the honest person, the mental features relevant to her honesty should lead toward honest behavior across a spectrum of relatively normal circumstances.

Normal circumstances are circumstances that fail to mitigate someone's not behaving in a trait-characteristic way. For example, someone's desire not to muddy her shoes is a normal circumstance for compassion, as it fails to mitigate her not comforting a child who has fallen from his bicycle. Non-normal circumstances mitigate someone's not behaving in a trait-characteristic way. Someone's suffering a severe emotional disturbance is a non-normal circumstance for compassion, as it mitigates her failure to behave compassionately.[13] The honest person should be honest to people of different ages, interests, occupations and relations to her though, of course, her honesty should be tactful and may even allow for a few white lies. But if someone is chronically depressed or is hounded by the press to reveal vital national secrets, then circumstances are not normal and someone can still be honest even if she would not truth-tell in these situations. However, if circumstances are normal and she would not truth-tell when the opportunity arises, then she is not honest. Someone may believe that honesty is valuable, desire to live an open life, intend to treat others well, and be resolved to being honest in awkward situations but, yet, harbor a fear of the closeness to others that honesty can foster. If this normal fear would consistently preclude her behaving honestly, then she is not honest. In such a case,

[12] For someone's context-insensitive character trait to be wedded to action, it need be true only that she would behave in a trait-characteristic way, provided the opportunity, not that she actually has so behaved.

[13] An alternative, equally plausible, view holds that a non-normal circumstance mitigates someone's failure to be compassionate. However we construe the mitigating function of non-normal circumstances is irrelevant to the ultimate success or failure of the traditional account.

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the agent's honesty-related mental features are divorced from action because of the normal fear. But, on the traditional account, one's mental features must be wedded to action and, so, such an agent is not honest.

Similarly, the genuine friend's trait of character may be conceived as being wedded to action. Again, the revised premise I have suggested Cocking and Oakley endorse holds that a genuine friend is disposed to sometimes sacrifice maximizing the good, such that the claims of her friendly character will sometimes trump the maximization of agent-neutral value, provided the opportunity arises. Plausibly, one's friendly character is grounded in a certain set of stable mental features. These features include the beliefs that friends in general are valuable and that one's particular friends are fun, lively, interesting, or just easy to talk to, concern for and liking of one's friends, along with other intents, emotions, desires, processes of deliberation and strengths of will. These mental features should lead the genuine friend to display friendly behavior across a broad range of normal circumstances. If circumstances are not normal, say, if someone is chronically exhausted or depressed, then her failure to exhibit friendly behavior does not preclude her being a genuine friend. But if circumstances are normal, then someone possessing the mental features relevant to genuine friendship who would consistently fail to display friendly behavior is not a genuine friend, for her genuinely friendly mental features are divorced from action, due to the presence of some normal circumstance. The indirect consequentialist's adhering to the condition that her friendly character maximize the good fails to mitigate someone's not behaving in a friendly way. And, so, the indirect consequentialist's adhering to the condition that her friendly character maximize the good is a normal circumstance that precludes her keeping her friendly character and friendships along with it, while she otherwise possesses the mental features relevant to genuine friendship. So, on the traditional account of character traits, since the indirect consequentialist's genuinely friendly mental features are divorced from the appropriate friendly behavior due to the presence of the normal terminating condition, she does not possess the genuine friend's character.

But on an alternative, contextual, understanding of character traits, the indirect consequentialist can possess the genuine friend's character, despite the presence of the terminating condition, despite the fact that her friendly character is divorced from action. The contextual account of character traits posits traits that are relativized to those circumstances under which someone would exhibit trait-characteristic behavior. For example, someone is context-honest just in case she possesses a suitable range of stable mental features (the same range of features, in fact, as required by the traditional account). 'Context' in the trait predicate 'context-honest' picks out those circumstances under which she would

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truth-tell, no matter how narrow, broad, normal or non-normal this range of situations may be. Consider again the person who possesses the mental features relevant to honesty, but who also fears the possible consequences of truth-telling so greatly that it precludes her actually behaving honestly. The traditional account deems her not honest since her honesty-relevant mental features are divorced from action. But, instead, the contextual account attributes context-honesty *even though* her honesty-relevant mental features are divorced from action. The person who would behave honestly only with friends and family is friends-and-family-honest; the person who would behave honestly only in work-related situations is work-situation-honest.

The contextual account attributes to the indirect consequentialist the same kind of trait. Suppose the indirect consequentialist possesses the mental features relevant to genuine friendship. These mental features are divorced from action because of the presence of the consequentialist's terminating condition. But the contextual account deems her context-friendly, and this trait predicate picks out those circumstances under which she would display the appropriate friendly behavior, namely, those circumstances under which utility sums favor her friendly character. The indirect consequentialist is favorable-utility-sums-friendly. She possesses this context-relative trait despite the fact that it would not always issue in actual behavior. And, so, if character traits are conceived contextually, rather than traditionally, the indirect consequentialist can possess the traits appropriate to both the consequentialist and the genuine friend. Given the contextual account of character traits, the consequentialist can be a genuine friend.

Two immediate concerns arise for the trait contextualist. The first, more important, concern is that the traditional account of character traits seems perfectly plausible. Is there any reason, aside from the question-begging reason that it makes genuine friendship compatible with indirect consequentialism, to prefer the contextual account to the traditional account? Second, context-relativized traits seem to allow for a genuine friend never actually to promote her friendly character, as this behavior might always be precluded by the consequentialist condition of termination she adheres to. But don't genuine friends need to promote, in their actual behavior, their friendly characters and the particular relationships governed by them? I treat each of these two concerns in the two following sections.

4. CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

The contextual account of character traits is superior to the traditional account, for the traditional account's resources for attributing moral credit are impoverished; because of the fine-grained structure of

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the traits it posits, the contextual account can deliver moral credit where and how it is intuitively due. The contextual account thus better delivers moral credit, which is one of the primary purposes of attributing character traits.

Consider Rose, who believes that honesty is valuable, who cares about being honest to others, and who fully intends to exercise her strength of will so that she actually truth-tells across a broad range of normal circumstances. Truth-telling can lead to undesired consequences in many cases, so Rose, like many others, has fears that she must conquer in order to actually behave honestly. She successfully overcomes her fear of hurting casual acquaintances' feelings and ultimately, though tactfully, tells them the truth. However, she consistently succumbs to her similarly intense fear of the intimacy which she rightly believes honesty with her friends will encourage. Intuitively, she deserves some moral credit for being honest with her acquaintances but, yet, she also deserves some discredit for not being honest with her friends.

But the traditional account posits traits that are context-insensitive and, so, it lacks the resources to appropriately attribute moral credit. If Rose deserves both credit and discredit for her disparate behavioral tendencies, the traditional account is limited to four strategies for assigning this credit. First, it might simply deem her either honest or dishonest. But the attribution of honesty simpliciter fails to capture the discredit she deserves for her consistent failure to behave honestly across the entire range of one kind of situation while, conversely, the attribution of non-honesty (which might differ from dishonesty) fails to capture the credit she deserves for her consistent success at behaving honestly across the full range of a different kind of situation.

Second, the traditional account might grant that Rose is honest to a degree. But honest-to-a-degree is not a trait attribution that is sufficiently rich and informative to justify any useful inferences about the actual behavior Rose might display. And useful inferences about behavior attach to appropriate attributions of moral credit. Suppose that Rose would behave honestly in half the kinds of honesty-evoking situations she could encounter, but that she would not behave honestly in the other half. The attribution of partial courage fails to pick out the kinds of situation in which she would truth-tell, so we can only guess about the kind of behavior she would display. Thus, we can only guess about which beliefs, expectations and behaviors are appropriate responses to each kind of situation in which we might encounter Rose.

Third, the traditional account might deem Rose honest and her acts towards her friends non-honest (or, conversely, it might deem her non-honest and her acts towards her acquaintances honest). But if her acts of non-honesty issue from a 'firm and unchangeable' state within the agent (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1105b1), then they are not

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whimsical and the agent is the proper object of credit attribution, not her acts. Further, Rose's honest behavior towards her friends might always be precluded by some stable fear. If so, then there is simply no act to which the traditional account can even attribute credit but, yet, Rose still deserves credit for her inner honesty-related features.

In a final attempt to grant moral credit, the traditional account might point out that Rose possesses the appropriate inner honesty-related features, and that these features are instrumental in helping to secure the good life for her. But suppose that a love of higher math, the intent to compose a canon, and an affinity for soccer could somehow bring about honest behavior and, along with it, the good life. We would be reluctant to attribute moral credit on the basis of these mental features' instrumental value; mere instrumental value is not a sufficient basis for attributing trait-related moral credit.

So, the traditional account cannot deliver the right amount of moral credit in the right way to its proper object. But since moral credit and discredit attach to trait attributions, the contextual account can deliver Rose the kind and amount of credit she is due. She is both acquaintance-honest, for which she deserves and receives credit, and she is not friend-honest, for which she deserves and receives discredit. Further, the context-relativized traits which the contextual account posits justify inferences about the specific kinds of situations in which people will behave honestly, so that others can adjust their beliefs, expectations and behaviors accordingly. Finally, the contextual account posits its context-relative traits only if someone possesses a certain range of mental features appropriate to a trait and, so, acknowledges these features' intrinsic value. And if traits of character are conceived contextually, rather than traditionally, the indirect consequentialist can possess the disposition proper to genuine friendship.

5. THE CONSEQUENTIALIST FRIEND

This brings us to the second main concern for the trait contextualist. The disposition proper to genuine friendship might not ever issue in any actual acts, as the consequentialist condition of termination might always supersede these acts, and someone may object that we need to promote our friendships and their governing characters in our actual behavior.

Assume that promoting our friendships via behavior is the primary way of promoting our friendly characters. Friendship is valuable for a variety of reasons. It promotes the general welfare, happiness and self-esteem, it makes possible activities and institutions that are necessary for living in communities, and it generally makes our lives full. And friendship's intrinsic features allow for it to have these functions.

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Friendships involve loyalty, trust, sympathy, mutual liking, shared interests, concern for the other's sake, desire for the other's well-being and company, the belief that one's friend is valuable, promises, commitments, expectations, and shared activities and experiences. Over time, as these features of friendship are borne out behaviorally, the psychological bonds of friendship develop and flourish.

Now, if Mason is right, utility sums favor our possessing a friendly character, and it is highly unlikely that circumstances would change so that our friendly characters became suboptimal. In these favorable circumstances, our friendly characters would issue in actual behavior in our friendships and, so, it would be possible to develop deep, meaningful friendships governed by robust, act-oriented dispositions. But do our friendly characters need to issue in actual behavior?

If the empirical situation never favored our friendly characters, then we could probably never develop friendships at all, as actual friendly behavior is necessary to develop the trust, loyalty and other psychological bonds characteristic of friendship. But suppose that the empirical situation shifted from favorable to unfavorable; suppose that we were able to develop the deep bonds of friendship but that we were, then, forced by consequentialist moral considerations no longer to promote our friendly characters via actually promoting our friendships in behavior. Could we retain our friendships and friendly characters under these circumstances?

Yes. In several kinds of case, people retain their friendly characters, and the friendships governed by them, when the possibility of acting to promote their characters becomes remote or non-existent. People often endure long periods of self-chosen or forced isolation during which they either do not or cannot actually interact with others and, thereby, promote their friendly characters in their behavior. Other people suffer the death of all their friends and, so, cannot actually behave in a way that promotes their friendly characters. But, yet, in both kinds of situation, people plausibly retain both their friendships and the friendly characters governing them, despite the fact that neither the friendships nor their governing characters connect up with any actual behavior. This is especially plausible in situations in which isolated friends wish they could interact with one another and regret that they cannot.

Now, suppose that the empirical situation has favored the consequentialist and her friendly character, allowing her to develop deep, meaningful friendships. If the empirical situation shifted to become unfriendly to her friendly character, she would be morally required to behaviorally promote other values; she could not behaviorally promote her friendships and their governing character. Nonetheless, she could retain her friendships and her friendly character. Although some overriding consideration may preclude you from behaviorally promoting

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your friendships, this consideration need not weaken the deeply-felt psychological bonds connecting you to your friends. Your friends might need to be mature in order to comprehend why you must cut off the behavioral aspect of your relationship. Specifically, a genuine friend would realize that a seemingly trivial shift in utility might result in her consequentialist friend's (traditional) friendly character's becoming suboptimal. But a genuine friend would not conclude that you valued her less than a seemingly trivial shift in utility. A genuine friend would understand the nature of your consequentialist moral commitments and, so, friendship's psychological bonds would remain. A genuine friend might even be grateful for your cutting off the behavioral aspect of the relationship, reasoning thus: 'I love my (consequentialist) friend, and her cutting off the behavioral aspect of our relationship is further evidence that she is a decent, morally grounded person, which is partly why I befriended her in the first place. I respect and love her, though I will be behaviorally isolated from her for a time.' And, consistent with one of the major purposes of character trait attribution, to attribute a friendly character to you, despite the fact that you do not behaviorally promote it via your friendships, is to attribute a kind of moral credit to you. This credit attribution recognizes that you have gone through the long and difficult process of developing the psychological bonds of friendship and that, in this realm at least, you are a worthy person.

Hence, while the contextual account of character traits posits traits that may preclude actual behavior, contextual traits are perfectly consistent with our pre-theoretic intuitions about the relation between actual behavior and character. Mediated by the appropriate understanding of character traits, consequentialism and genuine friendship are, conceptually speaking, perfectly compatible.

Further, there is no reason for thinking that consequentialism and genuine friendship, whose proponents possess the appropriate respective disposition and character, are psychologically incompatible. I can be psychologically (and behaviorally) bonded to my friends, while still believing that I might in the future rationally decide, however regrettably, to isolate myself from these friends and meditate in a cave for a decade. Similarly, I can still be bonded to my friends, while believing that I may behaviorally isolate myself from my friends in virtue of consequentialist moral considerations. My friends might feel psychologically alienated from me if they fail to understand the nature and depth of my feelings, beliefs, motivations or reasons. But that alienation is the unfortunate fault of my friends, not consequentialism.

My opponent might suggest that the compatibilist position I endorse ultimately collapses into the claim that a genuine friend would understand her consequentialist friend's actions and, so, is neither conceptually nor psychologically alienated from her friend. Hence,

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the opponent might continue, this defense could be applied to the original compatibilist arguments put forth by Williams and Stocker, and my appeal to character traits is superfluous. But this objection misconstrues my position. Suppose the consequentialist were to abandon her suboptimal friendships. Even if her newly abandoned friends understood the consequentialist's actions, it does not follow that consequentialism and genuine friendship are compatible. For the consequentialist might abandon her friends with beliefs, feelings and motivations that are inconsistent with genuine friendship. She might abandon her friends curtly or harshly, with no explanation or sorrow. A consequentialist who possesses a genuinely friendly character would abandon her friends with gentle tact and a loving, sorrowful explanation. Her friendly character ensures that she would approach her friends with the sensitivity and empathy they deserve. Character traits and, specifically, the appropriate understanding of character traits, are crucial to this compatibilist debate.

6. CONCLUSION

One final concern for the compatibilist remains. The compatibilist position I here defend is effected by showing that someone who possesses the disposition appropriate to the indirect consequentialist can also possess the character trait appropriate to the genuine friend, provided her friendly character trait is divorced from action. But, runs the objection, this is not the only way to make indirect consequentialism and genuine friendship compatible. A distinct compatibility position can be achieved by arguing that someone possessing a traditional, context-insensitive, action-wedded friendly character can also possess the disposition appropriate to indirect consequentialism, provided her consequentialist disposition is divorced from action.

The indirect consequentialist could, indeed, possess a disposition that is divorced from action, but an action-divorced disposition is not appropriate to indirect consequentialism. The disposition proper to indirect consequentialism is essentially wedded to action, for its central purpose is to enable the indirect consequentialist to bring value into the world. If the indirect consequentialist's disposition is divorced from action, it cannot so enable her. Further, the purposes of someone's friendly character extend far beyond that of the indirect consequentialist's disposition. A genuine friend's character enables us morally to assess her, to explain and predict her behavior, and to inform others about her. And, as I have already argued, if someone's friendly character is understood as wedded to action, it cannot serve its purposes. Hence, the indirect consequentialist's disposition must be understood as wedded to action, while the genuine friend's character

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can be understood as divorced from action. And, so, the particular compatibility argument I have advanced is the only one available to the compatibilist.

I have argued that a new version of the charge that consequentialism and friendship are incompatible is available. According to this version of the charge, the consequentialist cannot possess the character trait proper to genuine friendship. However, an understanding of friendship that is fully supported by the weight of common sense, along with a contextual account of character traits, ameliorates any tension ostensibly plaguing the friendly consequentialist. The consequentialist can possess the character trait proper to genuine friendship; the friendly consequentialist is strained neither by conceptual incompatibility nor by psychological alienation.

APPENDIX A

Cocking and Oakley misunderstand a crucial element of Railton's position, and Mason joins them in this misunderstanding. Cocking and Oakley claim that Railton's indirect consequentialist would be disposed to terminate any relationship that became suboptimal. But Railton states that: 'it may be that [someone] should have a character such that he sometimes knowingly and deliberately acts contrary to his objective consequentialist duty'.[14] Further, he explicitly addresses a case wherein an indirect consequentialist sometimes appropriately favors his wife over promoting a greater amount of agent-neutral value.[15] Thus, Railton's response to Cocking and Oakley's objection would be that the indirect consequentialist would, indeed, sometimes promote her friendships at the expense of promoting agent-neutral value, which is why the consequentialist can be a genuine friend. I pursue Cocking and Oakley's line of objection since the version of consequentialism it targets is both interesting and not wholly implausible and, so, worth consideration.

APPENDIX B

A second line of defense in favor of the claim that the indirect consequentialist cannot possess a friendly character is available to Cocking and Oakley. They might cite one feature of the consequentialist's disposition, namely, the condition of termination that her friendly character maximize the good. If the consequentialist's friendly

[14] Railton, 'Alienation', p. 121.
[15] Railton, 'Alienation', pp. 120–1.

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character fails to satisfy the condition that it maximize the good, she must terminate this character. They argue that this terminating condition is inimical to the concept of genuine friendship, since its pivotal justificatory and guiding role is to maximize the good. And since the indirect consequentialist must adopt the terminating condition as part of her disposition to maximize the good, Cocking and Oakley could conclude that the disposition itself is inimical to genuine friendship.

But this attempted defense of the alleged incompatibility between the indirect consequentialist's disposition and the genuine friend's character is not in fact open to Cocking and Oakley. This is because they endorse a pluralistic axiology according to which the claims of agent-neutral value sometimes trump the claims of friendship, and vice versa. When the claims of friendship and agent-neutral value compete, an agent endorsing Cocking and Oakley's ethical theory will, appropriately, sometimes let the claims of agent-neutral value win. And in these cases, the terminating condition is pivotal in justifying and guiding her actions. Thus, since the terminating condition plays a crucial justificatory and action-guiding role in their own justification of friendship, Cocking and Oakley cannot consistently object to its presence in a consequentialist justification of friendship. Nor can they consistently hold that it is the terminating condition's scope of application, its applying in every case, that is their real concern. For it might turn out for Cocking and Oakley that the claims of agent-neutral value always, again appropriately, trump those of one's friendly character. In such a case, the terminating condition applies as if the agent were a consequentialist but yet its scope of application is unobjectionable. And, so, appeals to the role that the terminating condition plays in the indirect consequentialist's motivational structure fail to show that she cannot possess a friendly character. Of course, it does not follow from these considerations that the indirect consequentialist can be a genuine friend; it follows only that this attempted defense of the alleged incompatibility between indirect consequentialism and genuine friendship fails.

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