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“Rules and Habits”

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Abstract:

The consequentialist variant of ethical egoism is subject to two major objections, the self-effacement objection and the excessive deliberation objection. I argue that a rule-consequentialist egoism can withstand these objections. Utilizing the concept of internalization, I argue that the rule-consequentialist egoist may train herself to habitually act in accordance with a rule. By doing so, she avoids the problem of excessive deliberation, while also ensuring that her action is in accordance with her criterion of rightness, her adopted set of rules. Furthermore, by building on the distinction between criterion of rightness and decision procedure, I counter the self-effacement objection by showing that an egoist can deliberate about her friends in an acceptably non-consequentialist manner, while maintaining that this decision procedure is justified on consequentialist egoist grounds. I then counter two forms of a further objection, rule-fetishism. I argue that internalization of rules allows us to maintain that we ought to follow rules, even in situations where the outcome won't be best, in order to avoid bigger problems with act-consequentialist egoism. I conclude by arguing that my defense of rule-consequentialist egoism robs Lester Hunt's flourishing-egoism of its motivation. Hunt's theory has a problematic conception of value, which either places the locus of value outside the egoist framework, or collapses into a consequentialist egoist theory.

Rules and Habits

Ethical egoism strikes many as an oxymoron; how can striving for one's self-interest count as ethical behavior? Lester Hunt, in his article "Flourishing Egoism," defends a flourishing-based version of the theory. In doing so, he raises a common objection to ethical egoism: the self-effacement objection. The objection contends that striving toward one's self-interest is inherently problematic; an agent who aims at maximizing her own good will often thwart her own goals. Hunt argues that this objection only affects a specific variant of ethical egoism, the consequentialist variant, while his preferred theory emerges unscathed. Hunt's thesis, however, rests upon a narrow vision of consequentialist egoism. I argue that rule-consequentialist egoism provides a framework within which we can counter major objections to the consequentialist mode of deliberation: the self-effacement, excessive deliberation, and rule-fetishism objections. Specifically, I utilize several related concepts from the literature to argue that the internalization of a rule as a habit allows the egoist to treat friends in an instrumentally justified, non-instrumental manner. Furthermore, I contend that Hunt's theory must either collapse into consequentialist egoism, or promote non-egoist conceptions of value.

Because this paper takes several twists and turns, it may help to first lay out the order in which I develop my thesis. I begin with a sketch of the self-effacement objection, as conceived by Hunt. I then turn to the problem of excessive deliberation and Peter Railton's concept of habits of thought. Hunt attacks these habits of thought as counterproductive for the consequentialist egoist. I present rule-consequentialist egoism as an alternative theory which can accommodate habits of thought in a way which escapes Hunt's objection. Interpreting habits of thought as internalized rules not only

dodges the excessive deliberation objection, but, when combined with Julia Driver's distinction between criterion of rightness and decision procedure, offers a way around the self-effacement objection. I return briefly to habits of thought, making explicit the importance of internalization to defeating the excessive deliberation objection. Internalization also gives rule-consequentialist egoism a route by which it may escape two forms of the rule-fetishism objection. I conclude by showing that not only has Hunt's theory lost its motivation, but that it has its own problematic conception of value.

The Self-Effacement Objection

Egoism, so the self-effacement objection says, contains the seeds of its own demise. Egoism posits an agent's own good as the standard by which we evaluate that agent's actions. The problem arises when we consider the apparent fact “that this outcome will probably not be achieved most effectively by people who are trying to achieve it, and who have no other ultimate aim” (Hunt 179). Suppose Derek is an egoist; his goal in every facet of his life is to benefit himself. As such, Derek maintains his relationships with others only insofar as they bring him some good. If Derek's friends caught on that he only values these relationships in proportion as they benefit him, a host of bad results would ensue. People want to know their friends care for them and value them as friends, rather than as means to satisfaction. These friends would surely oppose being treated as pawns in Derek's game of self-interest, and would break off their relationships with him. This, in turn, would be bad for Derek, as the cooperation and respect of others is essential to a person's good. It seems, then, that behaving egoistically undercuts the egoist's goals.

The problem this objection raises for ethical egoism is a practical one; what the objection shows is that “egoism advises us to conceal our ultimate aim from others and

perhaps ourselves” (Hunt 180). If it is in Derek's best interest to maintain healthy friendships, and valuing his friends as instruments of his self-interest is a sure way to ruin these friendships, then it follows that Derek ought to value his friends as ends in themselves. What this means is that egoism requires Derek to believe something inconsistent with itself; it requires that Derek ascribe intrinsic value to something not intrinsically valuable. The self-effacing nature of egoism is problematic when we consider egoism as a guide to conduct. As Hunt points out, “if it should turn out to be true that [egoism] can only be followed by using secrecy, lying, self-deception, and holding contradictory beliefs, this would ... seem to mean that this guide to life is an extremely difficult one to follow” (Hunt 180). This is not to say that a guide to conduct should be easy to follow, but when deciding between two otherwise equal theories, the simpler theory ought to be favored. In the case of egoism, the self-effacement objection makes it more than difficult to follow; egoism actually requires an agent to hold contradictory beliefs. Specifically, the agent is to view friendships as an instrument of his own good, while also viewing these friendships as intrinsically good, insofar as this is necessary to the maintenance of the friendship. Ethical egoism seems to be in big trouble.

Excessive Deliberation and Habits of Thought

In defending his preferred theory from this objection, Hunt rejects consequentialist theories of egoism. To make explicit this rejection, Hunt considers a defense of consequentialist egoism devised by Peter Railton, in his article “Alienation, Consequentialism, and the Demands of Morality.” Railton's defense contends that the self-effacing nature of egoism is not a problem for the theory, and, as such, the objection fails. As Railton sees it, the objection is an example of a more familiar objection to

consequentialism, namely, that “the temptation to indulge in excessive reflection about one's ends tends to interfere with the achievement of those ends” (Hunt 184). For example, Derek might deliberate not only about the outcomes of his actions, but about how much time he ought to allocate to such deliberation, including further deliberations about these deliberations, *ad infinitum*. Such chains of deliberation would prevent Derek from ever acting, thus thwarting his goals.

To avoid this result, Railton posits the “sophisticated consequentialist,” who can “develop standing dispositions to give more or less time to decisions depending upon their perceived importance, the amount of information available, the predictability of his choice, and so on” (Railton 449). The sophisticated consequentialist recognizes that consequentialist deliberation may often be self-defeating, and will cultivate “habits of thought” that allow her to preclude deliberation. A tightrope walker, for example, must concentrate if she is to survive, yet, if she focuses on the fact that she must concentrate, she will actually lose her concentration and fall. Developing a habit of thought which averts this higher-order concentration is thus necessary to the tightrope walker's action. In the egoist's case, Derek will want to develop a habit of thought which avoids deliberating about his friendships instrumentally; the habit will allow Derek to act toward his friends in the manner of someone who values them intrinsically.

Hunt offers an analysis of these habits of thought. As Hunt sees them, habits of thought are not actually thoughts, but proxies for thought. Habits of thought “can mimic, approximately, the results that conscious thought could be expected to produce if it could only work in some ideally rapid, logical, and well-informed manner” (Hunt 185). In cases such as that of the tightrope walker, such a substitute is desirable. If she were to deliberate, the tightrope walker would inevitably conclude that she ought to focus on

walking. The habit of thought allows her to reach this conclusion without actually deliberating; thus, she will not be distracted by the deliberation. The thoughts thus avoided are ones which are “eminently worthy of avoiding” (Hunt 185). Having these thoughts will interfere with her right action; she therefore ought to avoid such thoughts. Furthermore, as these thoughts ultimately do not affect her reasons for action, they are irrelevant, and she thus has no reason to entertain them.

The case of the tightrope walker, Hunt claims, is disanalagous to the consequentialist egoist's situation. Consider what thoughts it might behoove Derek to avoid. Suppose Derek is visiting a friend. While the friend is out of the room, Derek sees his friend's wallet under the couch. Derek knows that if he were to steal the wallet, he would benefit from the extra cash. Furthermore, his friend would merely assume the wallet was missing. Consequentialist egoism dictates that Derek ought to steal the wallet. This, however, puts Derek in the situation originally objected to. By subordinating the value of his friendship to the value of his own gain, Derek gives his friend “a definite and limited sort of value” (Hunt 186). Designating the value of friendship as contingent upon the value of self-interest precludes from Derek the ability to form “close personal attachments to other people, the sorts of attachment that are involved in love and friendship” (Hunt 186). Derek's willingness to deceive and cheat his friends for his own benefit will lead to the loss of those friendships, or otherwise cut him off from experiencing the positive benefits of caring for someone.

We might think it desirable for Derek to cultivate a habit of thought that precludes deliberations such as whether he ought to steal his friend's wallet. This, Hunt insists, is where the cases of the consequentialist egoist and the tightrope walker split. For the tightrope walker, deliberations about concentration are not directly relevant; they bring

no new information to bear on the situation. With or without the deliberation, the tightrope walker knows she ought to concentrate. Thus, she has no reason to have such thoughts. In our consequentialist egoist's case, however, deliberations regarding the theft of the wallet are relevant; they bear directly on the question which course of action ought to be followed. Furthermore, Hunt points out that “the thoughts to be avoided would imply that the action supported by one's unsuppressed thoughts would be *wrong*” (Hunt 187). In virtue of being a consequentialist egoist, Derek has a strong reason to contemplate such deliberations. Using a habit of thought to rule out thoughts of theft actually inhibits the consequentialist's goals. If stealing his friend's wallet will benefit Derek, then it is wrong for him to fail to do so. Thus, consequentialist egoism cannot accommodate the apparent value of friendship in a satisfactory manner.

Rule-Consequentialist Egoism

If, when speaking of consequentialist egoism, we mean act-consequentialist egoism, then Hunt's objection holds. Act-consequentialist egoism insists that the value of any given action is a result of the benefit to the agent. Thus, if it would ever benefit Derek to steal his friend's wallet, that is what he ought to do. To fail to do so would be to commit a wrong action. Habits of thought provide no assistance, as they will inevitably lead Derek astray; each individual action must be evaluated on its own. Fortunately, act-consequentialist egoism is not our only option. Consider, instead, a rule-consequentialist egoism. Such a theory would posit that an action's value lies in its conformity to a set of rules, the goal of these rules being the optimum good of the agent. Because following these rules will be in the best interest of the agent, the agent may reasonably refrain from some actions bestowing an immediate benefit; such restraint is in the interest of the

agent's overall good.

Suppose the following rule for Derek: "Do not steal from friends." Abiding by this rule will benefit Derek for several reasons. For starters, by acting in accordance with this rule, Derek will avoid fears of being caught. The ill effects of such a fear on the agent's good was noted by Epicurus, who wrote that "it is impossible for the one who commits some act in secret violation of the compacts made among men ... to remain confident that he will escape notice, even if for the present he escapes detection a thousand times" (Epicurus 74). This fear will weigh on Derek's mind in an adverse manner, as he will never be certain that his friends will not realize his duplicity.

A second reason this rule benefits Derek concerns his actually being apprehended. If Derek is caught stealing from his friend, he will not only lose that friendship, but will also gain a reputation for dishonesty, damaging his other friendships. Furthermore, Derek's victim may press charges against Derek. The problems stemming from this range from court dates to jail time, none of which are in Derek's self-interest. Following a rule prohibiting stealing will avoid these troubles.

Finally, following the rule will allow Derek to factor his friends into his deliberations in a manner which mimics the ascription of intrinsic value to them, a manner necessary to his maintaining these friendships. Derek will form healthy, lasting relationships, which is obviously in his best interest. It is true that there may be individual situations where Derek might benefit from cheating his friends. Under rule-consequentialist egoism, though, to do so would be wrong; to steal from friends goes against the code of rules accordance with which can be expected to result in Derek's greatest good. Thus, a rule-consequentialist variant of egoism can account for the value of friendship, in defiance of the initial objection.

There is another benefit to rule-consequentialist egoism: Railton's notion of "habits of thought" fits snugly into its framework, allowing rule-consequentialist egoism to overcome the excessive deliberation objection. We might suppose that, upon first accepting a rule, Derek has to consciously apply it to every relevant situation in which he finds himself. He must deliberate as to whether the rule bears on his situation, as well as to which action he ought to perform to conform to the rule. This, however, will not always be the case. Railton writes:

An individual could realize that his instrumental attitude toward his friends prevents him from achieving the fullest happiness friendship affords. He could then attempt to focus more on his friends as such, doing this somewhat deliberately, perhaps, until it comes more naturally (Railton 445).

Through repeated application, Derek will eventually act naturally in accordance with the rule; it will eventually be internalized as a habit of thought. As with the tightrope walker, it will benefit Derek to substitute a habit of thought in accordance with a rule for a conscious application of the rule itself. He will no longer be burdened with time consuming deliberation that might lead him to commit a wrong action. Furthermore, he will no longer have a reason to entertain thoughts of stealing, and may eliminate them from his deliberations.

Answering the Objections

With the rule-consequentialist egoist framework in mind, we can combat Hunt's contention that habits of thought suppress information that is not only relevant to deliberation, but would alter the conclusions of our deliberation if included. On an act-

consequentialist egoist view, Hunt's objection holds; including the suppressed thoughts in Derek's deliberations will result in a different recommendation (steal the wallet) than situations where Derek merely acts from habit (don't steal the wallet). This is because the value of the action is found in the result of the action. Through the lens of rule-consequentialist egoism, on the other hand, an action's value is located in its conformity to a rule. Because the rule-consequentialist egoist's code will include a prohibition against stealing from friends, to do so would be wrong. Thoughts which might promote stealing from friends will be irrelevant to deliberations (at best), and likely to cause great harm to the agent taking such thoughts seriously; thus, the rule-consequentialist egoist is right to screen out such thoughts. Because habits of thought are really just internalized rules, any action stemming from a habit will be in accordance with a rule, and will therefore be correct. Thus, irrelevant and harmful thoughts are suppressed by habits of thought, and we know these suppressed thoughts are ones that in fact ought to be suppressed.

Having demonstrated that Hunt's objection to habits of thought does not hold against a rule-consequentialist interpretation of egoism, the upshot of this being that Railton's solution to the problem of excessive deliberation stays intact, it remains to be seen if rule-consequentialist egoism can answer the self-effacement objection. I contend that it can. To get the response rolling, I return to Railton's "sophisticated consequentialist." Railton distinguishes between *subjective consequentialism* and *objective consequentialism*. Subjective consequentialism holds that "whenever one faces a choice of actions, one should attempt to determine which act of those available would most promote the good, and should then try to act accordingly" (Railton 449). In determining her course of action, the subjective consequentialist utilizes a distinct mode of deliberation, the consequentialist mode. Objective consequentialism, on the other

hand, “is the view that the criterion of the 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” (Railton 449). The objective consequentialist, being concerned with actual outcomes, utilizes whichever mode of deliberation happens to bring about the best outcome. The sophisticated consequentialist, then, “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” (Railton 449). The sophisticated consequentialist distinguishes between means and ends, understanding that aiming at satisfaction is not always (or even often) the best way to attain it.

In her article “Consequentialism and Feminist Ethics,” Julia Driver, building on Railton's insight, offers a further distinction (originally made by R. Eugene Bales). Driver differentiates between the criterion of rightness for our actions and the decision procedure we use to determine our actions, noting that “it may be the case that being a good consequentialist might not entail that one use consequentialist decision procedures, since those very procedures may interfere with actual production of the good” (Driver 192). The sophisticated consequentialist understands this subtlety, and is thus unattached to the consequentialist mode of deliberation in pursuing her consequentialist goals. From here we can differentiate two distinct questions: “Why should I act morally?” and “How do I act morally?” These questions correspond to Driver's distinction. When asked why we ought to act morally, we give a criterion of rightness; when asked how we act morally, we offer a decision procedure.

The self-effacement objection relies on a conflation of these two questions; the objector mistakes the egoist's consequentialist criterion of rightness for an endorsement of a consequentialist decision procedure. When the egoist maintains that we ought to

pursue our own self-interest, the objector assumes this to mean that the egoist should deliberate with this end in mind. Act-consequentialist egoism also conflates these questions, or, at any rate, gives the same answer to both. The act-consequentialist egoist views others as means to her satisfaction, and figures them into her deliberations accordingly. This, unfortunately, leads right into the self-effacement objection. People do not take kindly to being valued in this manner, and the act-consequentialist egoist must somehow mask her end if she is to pursue her self-interest. Rule-consequentialist egoism, on the other hand, preserves this distinction in a way which allows it to sidestep the self-effacement objection. The rule-consequentialist egoist views promotion of the agent's good as her criterion of rightness, as the reason to act a certain way. However, this does not entail a consequentialist decision procedure. The rule-consequentialist egoist instead endorses adherence to a set of rules as her decision procedure, as the guide to how she ought to act.

Having posited egoism as the reason one should act in a moral manner, we turn to the question, "how does one act morally?" The rule-consequentialist egoist offers this answer: by adopting a set of rules, according to which one chooses how to act. But just which rules should we adopt? If the rule-consequentialist egoist's initial choice to adopt a set of rules is egoistically motivated, then it seems that the rules adopted ought to be those which work to secure the agent's own good. Take our recurring example. Derek knows that it is essential to his living a good life that he have close friends. Thus, he adopts rules which allow him to cultivate and maintain these relationships. One such rule will be that which was mentioned earlier, "Do not steal from friends."

At this point, one might raise the self-effacement objection. While these rules do secure friendship, it is still the case that they do so only as a means to the agent's own

good; the friendship is not valued in the intrinsic manner necessary to maintain it. But is this an accurate depiction of the structure of rule-consequentialist egoism? I think not. Though egoism serves as our criterion of rightness in adopting a set of rules, these rules do not necessarily have to explicitly aim at egoist goals; the agent's own good need not be included in the formulation of any rule. Often we will find that, as in the case of friendship, the agent's self-interest should *not* be included. Instead, our rules should take friendship (or any other good we might aim for) as their goal. This is not to say that the egoist values her friends intrinsically, as the rule itself is only adopted insofar as it satisfies our egoist criterion of rightness. Nevertheless, it is not the case that the rule-consequentialist egoist deliberates about her friends in the instrumental manner objected to.

How can this be? If Derek's subjecting his friends to egoist deliberations will alienate them, resulting in the loss of friendship, and the only way to avoid this result is to refrain from such deliberations, Derek will be justified in adopting some other decision procedure. It will be in Derek's interest to act in accordance with a rule which cannot be overridden by considerations of his own gain. This seemingly blind adherence will be justified once it is realized that "certain ways in which we think (or do not think) may be justified or not on instrumental grounds, though they themselves cannot be characterized as instrumental" (Driver 192). Following a rule which prohibits stealing from friends is justified instrumentally; following this rule will promote Derek's good. This is because, by following such a rule, Derek will avoid factoring his friends into his deliberations in an objectionable manner, and thus alienating them; as far as his friends can tell, Derek genuinely takes their interests to heart. In turn, having such close friendships benefits Derek; he leads a happy life filled with close friends he can count on in times of need,

share experiences with, and so on.

Though our actions ultimately aim at securing our own interest, we do not actually deliberate with self-interest in mind; we instead act according to rules which secure something essential to our good. Egoism as a criterion of rightness demands that an agent's actions achieve her self-interest. It does not demand, however, that she use a specific decision procedure. Though it may be true that egoism justifies our actions, we can still maintain that “we are so designed that in our most intimate circumstances it is not good to think in terms of the theory” (Driver 195). That is, things like friendship must be treated in a manner which mimics their being intrinsically valued, never being subjected to deliberations like that found in the wallet case. It is the instrumental use of friendship (or other relevant goods) in deliberations that is at the heart of the self-effacement objection, and it is this use that is avoided on the rule-consequentialist egoist's model. Thus, the rule-consequentialist egoist can treat friends in a way that avoids the self-effacement objection.

Habits of Thought Revisited

I now return to the topic of habits of thought, and explore why the internalization of rules is important to rule-consequentialist egoism. Ethics is about how we ought to live. As such, issues regarding the practicality of implementing our ethical theories eventually arise. One such issue, especially of interest to consequentialists, concerns our everyday deliberations. Consequentialists of both the act and rule varieties recognize the need to act in accordance with rules. On the act-consequentialist view, “general rules, like 'keep promises,' are mere rules of thumb which we use only to avoid the necessity of estimating the probable consequences of our actions at every step” (Smart 423). Rules of

thumb are loose guides to conduct, but must be broken if “the goodness of the consequences of breaking the rule is *in toto* greater than the goodness of the consequences of keeping it” (Smart 423). In the final analysis, what matters for the act-consequentialist is an act's promotion of the good. If following a rule achieves this, it may be followed; if the rule does not promote the good, it must not be followed. In our everyday lives, however, we often find that acting in accordance with a rule is best.

What this amounts to is the recognition that people, even act-consequentialists, do not and cannot deliberate about each and every action. To deliberate over our action's consequences at every step would subject us to charges of excessive deliberation. Constant deliberation will interfere with carrying out our plans; there comes a point when we must make a decision and act. To avoid this, some amount of rule following is necessary, even if these rules are loose. But even rule following might require excessive deliberation, as an agent might deliberate about which rule applies in a given situation, which features of the situation are relevant to choosing a rule, and so on. So we see that internalization becomes a necessary feature of rule following. A rule must become a habit, an action done without deliberation. When the rule-consequentialist egoist habitually acts on an internalized rule, she avoids the counter-productivity of excessive deliberation, while also ensuring that she is acting correctly, because the action accords with her set of rules.

Rule-Fetishism

The necessity of internalization to avoiding excessive deliberation also offers an avenue by which the rule-consequentialist egoist may counter a common objection: the rule-fetishism objection. The objection capitalizes on an apparent tension between rules

and consequences. I will formulate the objection in two ways. The first formulation bears on the issues of internalization and excessive deliberation as they relate to rule-consequentialism generally; the second formulation deals with a problem more specific to rule-consequentialist egoism.

The first formulation of rule-fetishism is presented in Brad Hooker's "Rule-Consequentialism" as the collapse objection, which asserts that "rule-consequentialism collapses into extensional equivalence with act-consequentialism" (Hooker 432). The rule-consequentialist and the act-consequentialist both view maximization of the good as the goal of action, the key difference being how this maximization is achieved; the rule-consequentialist argues that maximization will come from acting according to a code of rules. The collapse objection contends that, when selecting which rules are to be included in the code, the good will be maximized if the rule-consequentialist includes "specific exception clauses to moral rules against harming others, breaking promises, etc." (Hooker 433). Hooker continues:

If this is right, then rule-consequentialists are forced by their own criterion for rule selection to embrace rules with these exception clauses. The same sort of reasoning will militate in favor of adding specific exceptions aimed at each situation in which following some rule would not bring about the best consequences. Once all the exception clauses are added, rule-consequentialism will have the same implications for action that act-consequentialism has. This would be a fatal collapse (Hooker 433).

In this way, rule-consequentialism ends up possessing the same context sensitivity as act-

consequentialism, and thus loses any real edge over the other theory. In fact, rule-consequentialism can no longer be seen as a distinct theory; the course of action recommended by rule-consequentialism, post collapse, is to perform whichever action will maximize the good.

The collapse objection is not so damning as it may appear. The rule-consequentialist's response relies on internalization. Internalization of a code composed of rules with exceptions for every unique situation does not seem possible, or, if possible, not helpful. Hooker's defense against the objection rests on a similar point, that "the more plentiful and more complicated the rules to be learned, the higher the costs of learning them would be" (Hooker 433). The ideal code of rules will be somewhat limited, because the benefits of the exceptions will at some point be outweighed by the costs of learning them. I contend, however, that a stronger defense can be mustered, one which relies on the idea of internalization as a necessary antidote to the excessive deliberation objection.

Because rule-consequentialism, with exceptions factored in, is extensionally equivalent to act-consequentialism, the agent may instead internalize the act-consequentialist's single maxim: maximize the good. But is it possible to internalize this maxim? Certainly not. Maximizing the good under act-consequentialism is context sensitive; the features of each and every situation will have to be analyzed so that the right course of action may be surmised. This amounts to no internalization at all. The agent finds herself deliberating at every step, and thus incurs the excessive deliberation objection. Following a rule of thumb will be of no avail, because the act-consequentialist is to break the rule to maximize the good. Knowing when to break a rule of thumb requires deliberation about the specifics of the situation, and every situation must be analyzed to determine whether to follow or break the rule. Again, excessive deliberation

rears its ugly head. The rule-consequentialist can avoid this outcome if she refuses to devise exceptions; this will prevent the collapse. Lacking exception clauses means the rule-consequentialist will sometimes fail to maximize the good *in a given situation*. The act-consequentialist, however, will fail more often, falling prey to excessive deliberation.

By refusing to grant exceptions, the rule-consequentialist emphasizes following a rule over maximizing the good. It might be objected that this constitutes rule-fetishism. On what grounds can the rule-consequentialist's refusal to grant exceptions be justified? Consider an example raised in relation to the excessive deliberation objection. In emergencies, we often find that achieving the best outcome requires that we act quickly. Stopping to deliberate about how exactly we might achieve the best outcome will obstruct our goal; in the time it takes us to deliberate, the opportunity for action will pass, and the best outcome will not be achieved. Because avoiding this is paramount, the rule-consequentialist “has reason to inculcate in himself certain dispositions to act rapidly in obvious emergencies. The disposition is not a mere reflex, but a developed pattern of action deliberately acquired” (Railton 449). In other words, the agent trains himself to act accordingly in emergencies. The agent will internalize a rule that he ought to provide aid in emergencies, such that he will do so automatically. This allows the agent to avoid deliberating when time is short. Granting that no rule can adequately maximize the good in every situation, there will be cases in which the rule-consequentialist performs some act worse than that which he would have performed, given sufficient time to deliberate. Yet, discerning situations in which this will happen itself requires deliberation; taking time to execute this deliberation brings excessive deliberation back to the surface. Allowing any exception starts the rule-consequentialist down a problematic path; thus, “it may still be right for him to develop this disposition, for without it he would act rightly in

emergencies still less often” (Railton 451). By acting in accordance with an internalized rule, the rule-consequentialist will inevitably encounter scenarios where he fails to maximize the good. Tallying together all scenarios, however, we see that the act-consequentialist fails still more often, attached as she is to consequentialist modes of deliberation.

The second formulation of rule-fetishism alleges that rule-consequentialists are sometimes faced with situations in which a violation of the rule maximizes the best consequences. The rule-consequentialist essentially must choose what part of her theory to violate; either she violates the rule (and emphasizes the theory's consequentialist aspect) or she fails to maximize the good (violating the consequentialist aspect). Let's return to Derek's scenario. While visiting a friend, Derek notices his friend's wallet under the couch. While the friend is out of the room, two options present themselves to Derek: Derek may **a**) steal the wallet, his friend being none the wiser, or **b**) follow the rule, but not maximize his good (he won't have as much cash as he otherwise would). If Derek does **a**, he places emphasis on maximizing his own good, regardless of the rules; if Derek does **b**, he seems to blindly worship the rules, regardless of the consequences. What should Derek do in this dilemma?

As was the case with the collapse objection, the rule-consequentialist egoist should follow the rule, even if this fails to maximize the good in a given situation. Returning to Driver's distinction between criterion of rightness and decision procedure, we see that Derek may value his friends instrumentally without being required to deliberate about them as such. Because treating a friend as a means to Derek's self-interest will result in the loss of this friendship, Derek is justified in developing a disposition to treat his friends non-instrumentally. This disposition will take the form of

habitually following a rule against stealing from friends. Derek will act toward his friends in a manner consistent with, but not indicative of, an intrinsic value of friendship.

Because his friends are not being deliberated about as means, there is no ground for complaints of ill treatment. It may be that there are situations where Derek might successfully steal the wallet and preserve his friendship, but Derek has no reliable method of knowing when this will be the case. Deliberating about his friends in an egoist fashion opens Derek up to the dangers of being caught, of having to constantly hide his motives, and of ultimately losing his friendships. Following the rule avoids this, far more often resulting in better outcomes for Derek. Far from rule-fetishism, strict adherence to the rule allows Derek the benefits of non-instrumental reasoning, justified on instrumental grounds.

Let's see if rule-consequentialist egoism can survive a stronger formulation of this objection. Suppose Derek is in a situation where he must either **a**) sacrifice his life to save a friend (*rule-consequentialist egoism*) or **b**) let his friend die (*rule-consequentialist egoism*). If Derek chooses **a**, in what sense can he be said to be an egoist? Sacrificing one's life seems to be the opposite of self-interest. On the other hand, if Derek chooses **b**, then he is guilty of treating his friend in the manner initially objected to.

This objection relies on a narrow view of self-interest. If by self-interest we mean that Derek must, in the final analysis, aim for his survival, then it will be the case that, as an egoist, Derek must let his friend die. But there must be more to self-interest than mere survival. Though Derek may live another day, he does so alone, with no one to share his life with. This sort of sharing, however, is essential to a good life; close friendships offer an indispensable contribution to one's own good. As was argued above, maintaining such a friendship requires Derek to develop a habit of treating his friends non-instrumentally.

Even in dire situations, Derek will act on this habit. Suppose he did not. Suppose he stopped to deliberate about the benefits of sacrificing himself for his friend as opposed to letting him die. Stopping to deliberate indicates that Derek has made some distinction between this and other scenarios as having some characteristic which permits breaking the rule. But to make this distinction requires that Derek already have stopped to deliberate; Derek has incurred the excessive deliberation objection. To reap the rewards of a habit of thought, Derek must be willing to act on it consistently, even when this means he fails to maximize his good. If he did not, he would fail to maximize his good still more often. If Derek wasn't so disposed as to sacrifice himself, he wouldn't have the close friendship to begin with. But this means that Derek has not led a good life, the kind the rule-consequentialist egoist aims for. Thus, Derek is better off devoting himself to his friends in a way that may eventually require sacrifice. Presumably, a short life filled with close friends is preferable to a long and lonely one; for this reason, the rule-consequentialist egoist will dedicate herself to the sorts of relationships she would be willing to sacrifice herself for.

Where This Leaves Hunt

Having shown that rule-consequentialist egoism can circumvent the above objections, Hunt's flourishing-egoism now lacks motivation. This motivation resided in the apparent fact that consequentialist egoism could not properly account for the non-instrumental decision procedure required to maintain valuable friendships. By focusing on act-consequentialist egoism, Hunt misconstrues the nature of habits of thought, an essential ingredient to overcoming the self-effacement objection. Rule-consequentialist egoism allows a proper interpretation of habits of thought, an interpretation which can

bypass Hunt's objection. If rule-consequentialist egoism is still on the table, what reason do we have to adopt Hunt's theory? Ethical egoism seems to fit more naturally within a consequentialist framework. Once it is established that one ought to pursue their own good, the question generally asked is, "how should I act in order to achieve my own good?" The question is naturally answered in consequentialist form: if you do *x*, then your good will be served. If one finds that such straightforward deliberation interferes with achieving one's good, then we must obviously devise some other method of bringing about self-interest. The rule-consequentialist egoist can provide such a method, and, as a result, Hunt's theory never gets off the ground.

Beyond this, Hunt's theory has problems of its own. Hunt presents flourishing-egoism as the brainchild of Ayn Rand. On the flourishing-based account, there is one supreme value: the agent's own life. This value is "something that cannot in any straightforward sense be maximized....it is the value that must be achieved – or, as she says, 'sustained'" (Hunt 180). Hunt stakes the further claim that a life "is made up of actions – one's life is simply everything one does" (Hunt 188). It seems reasonable to call this aggregate of actions one's way of life. From this, we move to Hunt's next assertion: "Describing a settled hierarchy of values is equivalent to describing a way of life: the sort of life that is lived on the basis of that hierarchy" (Hunt 189). So far, flourishing-egoism amounts to a notion of self-interest as a certain way of life defined by a hierarchy of values. Hunt goes on to claim that "one's interests are sustained only by achieving that which is of value, while that which is of value is achieved by means of virtue. The acts of which such virtue consists, whatever they might be, are the ones that her ethical standard singles out for praise and condemnation" (Hunt 181). Hunt's flourishing-egoism, then, holds that the egoist lives the good life by acting in accordance with virtue, and, in doing

so, achieving those values which compose the good life.

A possible objection Hunt raises to his own theory argues that egoism can *only* be consequentialist. Taking self-interest as our criterion of rightness, we find that our actions must “be evaluated on the basis of how much good they produce for the agent, and this would mean that actions are evaluated on the basis of the effects that they have on the agent. But this, of course, is consequentialist egoism” (Hunt 188). Insofar as our actions result in our own good, we seem committed to consequentialist egoism. This argument, he claims, relies on a notion of self-interest that “carries the implication . . . that actions can never have value in themselves for the agent who performs them” (Hunt 188). If an action has intrinsic value, this would mean that its value is no longer agent-relative, as required by egoism. Hunt denies this, noting that “people treat many of the things that they do with friends and lovers as good in themselves and, precisely as such, as good for them” (Hunt 188). Because Hunt designates the agent's life as the supreme value, and further defines a life as made up of actions, it is possible on his account for an agent to value an action as both egoistically good and intrinsically good; maintaining otherwise is the onus of the objector.

As Hunt uses the notion, intrinsic value either collapses into egoistic value, opening him up to the objection that egoism is inherently consequentialist, or extends value to something beyond agent-relative good. The dilemma's horns grow from Hunt's argument that actions can be both intrinsically and egoistically valued. We need to make sense of the statement that an agent may value an action as good in itself and, as such, good for her. If this is interpreted to mean that an action can be intrinsically valued precisely because it is constitutive of the life of the agent (which is egoistically valued), then the concept of intrinsic value collapses into egoistic value. If the action was not part

of the agent's life, it would have no value; in what sense can it then be said to have intrinsic value? Of course, if an action has value because it is part of the kind of life which it is good for the agent to live, the egoist is on the road toward consequentialism. Performing the action has an effect on the agent, namely, changing the course of her life for the better.

If, on the other hand, an action is good for the agent because it is intrinsically valuable, Hunt is no longer expounding egoism. Again, if self-interest is living a way of life described as a hierarchy of values, then “one's own interest is (consists in) the attainment of value, and one of the most valuable things is the good of other – that is, certain other – people” (Hunt 183). If these certain other people are valuable because they are part of the agent's life, they are not intrinsically valuable; as was stated above, they could just as easily not be a part of the agent's life, and would then lack value. If these people are sought out because they have value, which the agent ought to attain, the agent is no longer a straightforward egoist; value has been located outside the agent.

The intuition I believe Hunt is grasping at is the one which rule-consequentialist egoism can illuminate; friendships require non-instrumental deliberations, which are in turn instrumentally justified. If an agent is to reap the rewards of friendship, she must treat them non-instrumentally, which Hunt mistakes for treating them intrinsically. Rule-consequentialist egoism accounts for this intuition, robbing Hunt's problematic theory of its motivation.

Conclusion

Rule-consequentialist egoism presents itself as a particularly robust variant of ethical egoism. Not only can it survive three major objections to both egoism and rule-

consequentialism, but it provides a framework which gives natural interpretation to several concepts crucial to consequentialism including habits of thought, internalization, and the distinction between criterion of rightness and decision procedure. The theory preserves these concepts in a manner which survives Hunt's attacks, in turn eliminating what motivation his theory had.

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