Chapter III
Mill's Understanding of the Concept of "Happiness".

§III.i. The elusive nature of the concept of 'happiness.' In the naturalistic ground of Mill's holistic theory so far presented, the key concept of happiness has been conspicuous by its absence. The reason for its late appearance in this account of Mill's understanding of human nature is related to the elusiveness of its character and quality. It is difficult to find agreement between commentators regarding its meaning, and it appears often to be a matter of stipulated definition rather than commonly accepted understanding of its content.[1] It is, for example, depicted on the one hand as a rational goal, and on the other to be identical to sensual pleasure.[2]

It is also the case that many critics of Mill's theory make no distinction between his psychophysiological understanding of the term and its use as the core concept of his broad ethical doctrine. 'As Mill himself has taught us to think of it,' this view begins, 'utilitarianism holds that only *happiness* is desirable as an end in itself and that happiness in this context is identical with pleasure and the absence of pain.'[3] Once this

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1 Cf. Elizabeth Telfer, *Happiness*. London,1980 pp.1-4, 8-9; Mary Midgley, *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature*. Hassocks, 1979 p.289; Geraint L. Williams, *John Stuart Mill on Politics and Society*. London, 1976 pp.12, 19; Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*. Oxford, 1969 p.181; Jane J. Mansbridge, 'The Rise and Fall of Self-Interest in the Explanation of Political Life.' in *Beyond Self-Interest* J.J.Mansbridge (ed.) London, 1990 pp.3-22. It is fair to state that happiness, when approached as a philosophical concept, is such an elusive notion that few theorists have done more than simply stipulate the understanding they are prepared to use. Most use the term reluctantly and without delineation. The explanation for the rejection of the term lies in the perception of happiness as an effective feeling only, which was certainly widespread in the nineteenth century and persisted through much of the twentieth. Such a perception coloured much nineteenth and early twentieth century criticism of utilitarianism. This may have come about as a result of the influence of Kantianism on moral philosophy. Kant's view was that happiness as an emotion is morally unimportant, and its incorporation into ethical theory is both superfluous and misleading. Conversely, other commentators regard happiness used as an expression of the summation of a morally dutiful life based on the exercise of right reason as an acceptable usage of the term. See Lawrence Blum 'Kant's and Hegel's Moral Rationalism: A Feminist Perspective' in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* Vol.12 1982 No.2.

2 Cf. John Rawls' understanding of the term in *A Theory of Justice*, with that of Henry Sidgwick in *The Method of Ethics*. 7th Ed. London, 1907.

3 This representative statement comes from James Bogan and Daniel M. Farrell, 'Freedom and Happiness in Mill's Defence of Liberty.' *Philosophical Quarterly* Vol 28 1978 p.239. For

position is established, the concept of happiness, whilst the focus of interpretation, remains unanalyzed. The focus of attention becomes, not what *is* happiness nor its place in Mill's practical end of existence, but rather speculation about what conditions would have to apply if it were to be the guiding principle of moral action. The debates between the proponents of deontology and utility, and between those of rule- and act-utilitarianism, operate largely with this unanalyzed notion of happiness.

The difficulties that arise from this sort of interpretation of Mill's use of 'happiness' are manifold.[4] If it is the case that Mill's understanding of happiness as an ethical concept is equivalent to his understanding of the psychophysiological concept of pleasure, then all that can be said about happiness in the ethical sphere has already been said about pleasure in the psychophysiological sphere. The immediate problem with this stance is that interpreters of Mill's theory are then restricted to an understanding of human nature that is circumscribed by the meaning of pleasure - and pleasure, even complex pleasure, has been depicted by Mill as nothing more than the reception of intense and interesting sensations. It is now generally accepted, however, that Mill required 'happiness' to carry far more weight than this. From this viewpoint , it is then argued that whatever the shift of meaning from pleasure to happiness is, it is a break in continuity between the naturalistic ground of pleasure so far presented and the meaning of happiness in Mill's ethical doctrine (whatever that meaning turns out to be). Happiness, in this case, must contain some quality that is not present in human nature, and thus becomes the point at which Mill inserts what Stromberg termed the 'fiat of the theorist.'[5] Mill undoubtedly conflated his psychophysiological with his ethical meaning of the term, and why and how he did so is examined in Part II. What is to be undertaken here is the discovery of the psychophysiological understanding of the term acknowledged and accepted by Mill. How is this task to be approached?

First, distinction must be made between 'happiness' and 'pleasure.' Mill's account of the operation of human nature so far depicted is unequivocal in its claim that all

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similar starting points for subsequent interpretation, see e.g. H. J. McClosky, *John Stuart Mill: A Critical Study*. London,1971 p.59, and Charles Douglas, *John Stuart Mill: A Study of His Philosophy*. Edinburgh, 1885 pp. 82-187.

4 Isaiah Berlin's understanding of Mill's use of the term, for example, regards it to be so broad that it 'stretches its meaning to the point of vacuity.' (Isaiah Berlin, 'John Stuart Mill and the Ends of Life.' in John Gray and G. W. Smith (eds.), *J. S. Mill On Liberty in focus*. London, 1991 p.150.) Were happiness according to Mill to be, as Berlin suggests, 'something very like the "realization of one's wishes whatever they may be," then such a characterization would have great force. As it turns out, however, Mill did not operate with such an amorphous understanding.

5 Roland N. Stromberg, *European Intellectual History Since 1789*. New York, 1968 p.2.

knowledge is derived from the sensations received by the two sets of senses. If happiness is synonymous with pleasure, then it is something that is linked as tightly to intense and interesting sensations as is pleasure. That it is not so linked is clear to Mill both from the observations made by reflection and from the manner in which it is used in both common-sense and formal argument. An agent may be made happy by the knowledge that good fortune will attend him at some later date, but this state of mind is not identical to the pleasure felt in the stimulation of an external sense. It is true that many people do transpose the terms at this level, but there are many circumstances in which to do so would be incomprehensible.

Given Mill's comprehensive and complex account of 'pleasure' and 'desire' and their function in the achievement of 'end,' the claim that in Mill's theory pleasure is synonymous with happiness may now be seen to be inadequate. It does not suffice, in the simple and unanalyzed state in which it is generally used, as means with which to delineate his so-called 'fundamental commitment to ethical hedonism.'[6] Granted Mill himself occasionally used the terms in this way, but to do this is no more than to signal that 'happiness,' as a psychophysiological term, is of similar complexity to the term 'pleasure,' and stands in relation to the equally complex term 'desire' in as many different ways as does 'pleasure.' The richness of meaning discovered in the previous chapter for the terms 'pleasure' and 'desire' suggests an equally rich meaning for the term 'happiness' in Mill's account.

Another way of dealing with the problem of Millian happiness is simply to note the similarity between Mill's and Aristotle's teleologies, and then to make the assumption that Mill's teleology, whilst assuredly naturalistic, rests on the same foundation as that of Aristotle. Mill frequently acknowledged his debt to Aristotle and the impact of Aristotelian analysis on his work is plain. Aristotle regarded happiness as the end of existence on the indefeasible evidence that 'both the ordinary run of men, and persons of superior refinement' consider it to be so.[7] Many commentators and critics of Mill's work begin with this assumption. The trap that must be avoided however, is, on the warrant of this widespread consideration, then to regard happiness as either some

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6 For examples of interpretation of Mill's ethical doctrine in this way, see J.B. Schneewind, 'Concerning Some Criticisms of Mill's *Utilitarianism*.' in *James and John Stuart Mill: Papers of the Centenary Conference*. J. Robson and M. Laine (eds.) Toronto, 1976 pp.46-48; Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*. 7th Ed. London, 1907 pp.94-95; F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies*. 2nd Ed. Oxford, 1926 pp.117-120; T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*. A. C. Bradley (ed.) Oxford, 1888 §§157-169; G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*. Cambridge, 1903 pp.77-81; John Plamenatz, *The English Utilitarians*. Oxford, 1949 pp.141-142; R. P.Anschutz, *The Philosophy of J.S.Mill*. Oxford, 1953 pp.18-19.

7 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*. 1095a.

undefinable (except ostensively or contextually) state, or to stipulate its meaning according to the criteria of a particular philosophical theory, using as justification its being universally regarded as good.[8]

Aristotle's influence on the development of Mill's theory is clearly significant. Accordingly, it is important to note that the Aristotelian use of *eudaimonia*, most frequently translated as 'happiness,' means something more than a universally recognized and homogeneous state of mind.[9] According to Aristotle 'happiness' is, as *eudaimonia*, the condition that attaches to the achievement of excellence in whatever is the *ergon*, or characteristic activity, of the individual agent.[10] Using this as a guide for examination, it will emerge that Mill's psychological understanding of 'happiness' draws together the significant elements of his behavioral theory, his account of consciousness, and his epistemology into a subtle, sophisticated, and complex concept that expresses the scientific evidence of the existence of a *telos* for both individual and the human species.[11] Criticism of Mill that understands his use of the term in a way

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8 Undefined 'happiness' is then melded with undefined 'pleasure' and the resulting mixture used as Mill's criterion of 'good'. As is already emerging from the above pages, this is an unfruitful way of analyzing Mill's thesis. Stipulated definitions of 'happiness' that ignore any psychological understanding of the term also fail to address Mill's ideas on their own ground. For the rejection of 'happiness' as a definable term, see J. Hospers, *Human Conduct*. New York, 1961 pp.111, 114. For 'happiness' defined according to the criteria of a particular theory, see: J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*. Oxford, 1972 pp.93, 549, where happiness is defined as 'the successful execution of a rational plan' coupled with a 'sure confidence supported by good reasons' that the plan's outcome will endure. Alternatively, see D. J. O'Connor. 'Aquinas and Natural Law.' in *New Studies in Ethics*. W. D. Hudson (ed.) London, 1974 pp.106-7 for a Thomist account of happiness as both 'the perfection of the rational or intellectual nature' and the achievement of the *bonum universale* 'which is identical with God'. As an example of stipulated happiness in Mill's time, Whewell described it as being found in moral progress: 'we must be happy by being virtuous'. See J. B. Schneewind, *Sidgwick's Ethics and Victorian Moral Philosophy*. Oxford, 1977 p.112.

9 Alasdair MacIntyre, for example, points out that *eudaimonia* has a complex meaning, incorporating blessedness and prosperity as well as happiness. As such, it touches upon many aspects of the lives of both plain men and those of trained and educated capacities. See A. MacIntyre. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 2nd. Ed. Notre Dame, 1984 pp.148-149, 160.

10 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*. 1097b. Just as *eudaimonia* has frequently been translated simply as 'happiness', so *ergon* has been translated as 'function'. This translation is flawed in that it does not adequately convey Aristotle's understanding of what it is to be a human being. The better translation is 'characteristic activity'. See Anthony Kenny, 'Happiness.' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*. Vol.66 1965-66 p.96.

11 The claim that Mill's understanding of happiness is inclusive of all the activities of human existence has been made before. See e.g. Robert W. Hoag, 'Mill's Conception of Happiness as an Inclusive End.' *Journal of the History of Philosophy* Vol.25 1987 pp.417-431. The claim that Mill regarded psychology as the foundation of every aspect of the social sciences, including social and political theory is also not uncommon. See Alan Ryan, *The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill*. 2nd Ed. London, 1987 p.156; John Gray, *Mill on liberty: a defence*. London, 1983 p.70.

that ignores its relation to skill, achievement, self-realization, and contentment, limits its scope of analysis of Mill's work to simple hedonism.[12] Such criticism fails to note that, just as in the case of 'pleasure and 'desire,' Mill's account of 'happiness' is diffused across his work, and when extrapolated from it, is found to be rooted firmly in his account of human nature.

Mill was not unaware of the difficulties that surrounded his employment of happiness as the ultimate first principle of action in his broad ethical theory. He recognized that there is no common understanding of either its content or its method of achievement. Critics of utilitarianism, he believed, misunderstand precisely what happiness is, and instead confuse it with the secondary principles employed in its pursuit by particular individuals or that indicate its means of achievement in particular circumstances. This confusion works in two directions: critics fail to realize that the secondary principles employed by some agents in order to pursue happiness are as objectionable to utilitarians as they are to the supporters of opposing philosophies; and they also fail to realize that the secondary principles they approve are often similarly approved by utilitarians, but are considered by the latter to rest on the primary principle of utility rather than on some other and trans-empirical principle. 'There may be, and often is,' Mill wrote, 'a much greater unanimity among thinking persons, than might be supposed from their diametrical divergence on the great questions of moral metaphysics.' In fact, it is the misunderstanding of the nature of happiness, both by Benthamist utilitarians and their opponents, that is to be found at the root of much of the antagonism between them. Both sides, according to Mill, often fail to understand that 'those who adopt utility as a standard can seldom apply it truly except through the secondary principles [and] those who reject it, generally do no more than erect those secondary principles into first principles.'[13] Nowhere, it will be seen below, is this more apparent than in the criticism of happiness as the criterion of moral goodness.

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12 There is another confusing duality, similar to that which surrounds '*eudaimonia*', which occurs in translation of the term '*aretè*'. In many cases it is translated as 'virtue', and leads to the powerful statement that 'virtue is knowledge' found in Plato. It is also translated as 'skill'. From the perspective of the 'is' of identity, 'virtue is knowledge' and 'knowledge is virtue' are enigmatic statements. However, the alternative translations, 'skill is knowledge' and 'knowledge is skill' appear to form a pair of plain and verifiable identical assertions. The preference for one or other translation is also found to match the preference for one or other translation of a further key Greek term *nous*, which is sometimes translated 'soul' and at other times as 'mind'. The *à priorist* preference is generally to understand *aretè* to mean 'virtue' and *nous* to mean 'soul'; and the alternative meanings are those preferred by the *à posteriorists*. Mill's use of the terms not surprisingly follows that of the *à posteriorists*.

13 Mill, 'Bentham.' *Works*. Vol.10 pp.110-111.

The claim that Mill's location in the contemporary debate concerning the most appropriate response for political theorists to the problem of moral pluralism will be found to be linked strongly to Mill's argument concerning the outcome of failure to recognize secondary principles as resting on a primary principle. Mill's opposition both to particular strains of Benthamism and to opponents of Bentham's ideas centres upon their dogmatic refusal to recognize the common ground on which both arguments ultimately rested. This same common ground exists today, it will be argued, and the manner and method of Mill's construction of his holistic theory provides a fruitful way of discovering and utilizing that ground.

Mill's recognition of the failure to comprehend the complexity of his account of happiness by his critics does nothing, however, to rescue that account from their criticism. That criticism, if unchallenged, undercuts fatally any claim for a naturalistic ground for Mill's ethical doctrine. To maintain the argument of this thesis, it must be demonstrated to be inadmissible insofar as it rests on a misunderstanding of the central concept. In order to reject the claim of identity between happiness and pleasure and to move forward the claim of the thesis there is required an analysis of happiness as it appears in Mill's work that embeds it firmly in his account of human nature as a psychophysiological state different (although not unrelated) to pleasure, and then a similar analysis that shows its operation in his broad ethical doctrine as the key concept of that doctrine *without changing its composition or qualities*. This chapter will perform the first of these two requirements. The second requirement is fulfilled in Chapter V. The remainder of this chapter will, then, provide an extrapolated naturalistic account of happiness taken from Mill's writing.

§III.ii. Mill's qualifications for the concept of happiness lays open its complexity. The achievement of happiness is the purpose and end of Mill's understanding of human nature and the culmination of his 'theory of life.'[14] He then carried over that end to become the first principle of his broad ethical doctrine.[15] The question to be addressed here is what did he understand to comprise happiness at the naturalistic, psychophysiological level. Once this is determined it will provide a firm foundation for examination of the concept as Mill employed it at the ethical level. Upon close inspection, it may be seen that the commonly-accepted version of Mill's account of

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14 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' *Works*. Vol.18 p.210.

15 *Ibid.*, p.234.

happiness is laid open by a series of qualifications and amendments that he attached to the original bald assertion of the principle of utility.[16]

The modifications and amplifications he made to the principle are noted below, and demonstrated to be derived from his account of human nature, particularly the interrelation between elements of consciousness, together with his awareness of the importance of circumstances, environment, experience, and other aspects of the context within which agents function. The qualifications that were made by Mill may be grouped under these three heads, and together they form a body of evidence in which Mill demonstrated his awareness both of their relation in the individual and of the impact of external circumstances on their successful combination, and which illustrates a far more complex understanding of the concept of happiness used by Mill than has previously been recognized.

The first qualification is the one that flags the existence of that complex understanding. Mill's primary assertion concerning happiness is that it is desirable and the only thing desirable as an end, which at once links it closely to pleasure inasmuch as pleasure (and the avoidance of pain) is the cause of all desires.[17] However, this relation is not one of identity, according to Mill.[18] 'Whilst pleasure is affirmed as the crucial part of happiness, it is a part only. Where it is distinct from happiness is in the time-frame of its occurrence. Pleasure, even exalted pleasure, is restricted to 'the occasional brilliant flash of enjoyment, not its permanent and steady flame.' On the other hand, happiness is an enduring and relatively stable state of mind that persists over significant stretches of an agent's life.[19] A reflective summation of the balance of moments of pleasure over moments of pain, over a period of time, is the indicator of the existence of happiness. And the manner in which happiness is achieved over time is confirmed by Mill to be through the exercise of dispositions and faculties 'whether of the heart or the understanding.'[20]

Whilst the Aristotelian relation of happiness to activity is clearly made by Mill, he also and significantly noted that happiness is *not* a condition amenable to direct desire. It is, in the exercise of any and all activities, 'only to be obtained by not making it the

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16 George Sabine made the shrewd observation concerning Mill's writing that its value and meaning are to be found in the qualifications as much as in the theory itself. See G. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*. 3rd Ed. London, 1963 p.706.

17 *Ibid.*, p.214.

18 *Ibid.*, p.215.

19 *Ibid.*, p.215.

20 Mill, 'Article in The Monthly Repository, March 1833.' *Works*. Vol.23 pp.556-558.

direct end.'[21] Mill here indicated his understanding of the elusive nature of happiness as a state of mind, not in terms of its recognition but in terms of its analysis. It is not possible, he stated, directly to aim at the achievement of a balance of pleasure over pain in any activity. Once a scrutiny of means takes place, such action results in 'either forestalling [happiness] in imagination, or putting it to flight by fatal questioning.'[22] The only way to obtain happiness, according to Mill, is to aim instead at the achievement of excellence to the degree that it is possible in each particular activity of the particular agent. Happiness, on this view, is the byproduct of such achievement. This theory of the obtaining of happiness was to become and to remain the core of Mill's philosophy of life, and its unraveling represents an important insight into the development of his ethical, social, and political theory.[23]

This further qualification of happiness again sets it apart from pleasure, insofar as all pleasures, both simple and complex, may be directly sought through action. Such actions may be at some remove from the eventual pleasure, but the pleasure-seeking process is one that can be organized rationally and executed with the end of pleasure as its only motive. Furthermore, as it is not possible for agents to aim to achieve happiness in the same rational manner that they aim to achieve pleasure, this leads to the conclusion that not only is the desire for happiness in some way different from the desire for pleasure, but also that it is not simply a rational goal.[24]

Additionally, Mill made an explicit link between happiness and ends, making the end of happiness the primary end of existence, and the reason all other ends are sought. When it is remembered that ends, as portrayed in Chapter I, are discerned by reason, the conclusion is that Mill has concurrently asserted a firm link binding happiness to reason. A related piece of information is that unhappiness, as Mill confirmed, may be avoided by the use of reason. This important clue provides a negative link also between happiness and reason, whilst at the same time reinforcing the link with pleasure insofar as unhappiness is described as a surplus of unpleasure over pleasure.[25] So reason, according to Mill's understanding, plays an important part in achieving happiness, but it does not act in isolation.

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21 Mill, 'Autobiography' *Works*. Vol.1. p.145.
22 *Ibid.*, p.147.
23 *Ibid.*, p.147.
24 *Ibid.*, pp.145-147.
25 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' p.210.

Next, Mill stated that happiness is a state of mind recognizable by reflection. This statement supplies three more key pieces of information. Reflection is a process of looking back on past events, including states of mind. It is beyond the ordinary meaning of the term to suggest the possibility of reflecting on a past instant of time. Given that pleasure is a state of mind of short duration, usually of some intensity, this suggests that happiness is both less intense than pleasure and of greater duration. Furthermore, reflection is a process that is more than mere recollection. As such it requires some rational element with which reflection must engage beyond the simple memory of a pleasure. (The notion of reflecting on the smell of a perfume, for example, is absurd.) This reinforces the significance of the part reason plays in the state of mind Mill terms happiness.

From this indication of reason's part in the discovery of happiness through reflection, it is clear that Mill's account of happiness also extends beyond the confines of morality. The satisfaction of the desire for happiness is, he stated, the sole end of *all* human action, and as such it subsumes the end of moral action. Just as in the private arena, where the exercise of capacities to achieve some degree of excellence in their performance is the (now acknowledged) indirect method of achieving happiness; so, Mill affirmed, in the public arena the development and exercise of the capacity for moral action, to whatever degree of excellence is possible, is likewise the indirect method of achieving happiness in that activity.[26] In the passages in *Utilitarianism* where this distinction is made, Mill gave clear indication that the first principle of happiness embraces far more than moral action and moral good. He specifically rejected elsewhere Whewell's understanding of happiness as purely the performance of public duty, and this rejection is reinforced here.[27]

According to Mill's account, the critics of the utilitarian doctrine have mistakenly elevated a secondary principle, that of moral action, to the position of primary principle, and then criticized the principle of utility from that perspective. This is, in Mill's view, a misapprehension of the utilitarian mode of thought, and it rests on a flawed understanding of how individual agents interact with the society in which they live. While the 'multiplication of happiness' in the whole group is the object of utilitarian morality, there are few occasions on which an individual is in a position to effect such a change. By and large, the individual's actions concern no more than a few people with whom he or she is in immediate contact, and with the *caveat* that

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26 *Ibid.*, pp.237, 218.

27 Mill, 'Whewell on Moral Philosophy. *Works*. Vol.10 p.184n.

actions are scrutinized so that they do not impinge upon the legitimate expectations of others, elsewhere the individual is free to pursue private happiness.[28] In the public arena the principle of utility focuses on the happiness of the group, and there the individual agent is required to act for the benefit of the whole.[29] But Mill pointed out with some force that the majority of individual agents are little occupied in public affairs. The great bulk of individual actions are performed in the private sphere, and in that sphere the agent is free to pursue private happiness.[30] Mill's understanding of utilitarian morality is, therefore, more intimate and less abstract than the target set up by his critics would suggest.

Finally, and importantly, Mill noted that all agents are able to obtain some happiness simply in the fact of their continued existence, but qualified this by relating the quantity and quality of that happiness to their circumstances and way of life.[31] One of the most worthwhile endeavors of individual agents, which is accompanied by 'a noble enjoyment,' is the conquering and removal of the great sources of physical and mental suffering - poverty, disease, indigence. and lack of education - that afflict societies. To whatever degree these are removed from the lives of any and all human beings, to that degree will their chance of greater happiness increase.[32] There may be drawn from this last qualification the firm conclusion that according to Mill's understanding the achievement of happiness is greatly affected by agents' environment, both at the personal and the public level.

From this framework of information it is possible to give a preliminary and rough description of what happiness is comprised, according to Mill. It is desired as an end, and therefore is connected in some way to pleasure; but at the same time it is the subject of reflection, and so also has a connection to reason. It varies between agents in a way that depends on the circumstances and environment of the particular agent, so is in some way linked to the world beyond the agent. And, it is less intense but of longer duration than pleasure. Each of these component parts: pleasure, desire, reason, environment, and end, are parts of Mill's account of human nature previously encountered in Chapter II. In order to depict more fully Mill's understanding of

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28 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' p.220.

29 The objection that agents often do not act in such a disinterested fashion, and so Mill's principle of utility is fragile at this crucial point, will be addressed below. It will be shown that Mill believed such actions to be self-interested insofar as they contribute also to the achievement of the greatest possible individual happiness *via* the production of happiness for the collective.

30 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' pp.218-219.

31 *Ibid.*, p.215.

32 *Ibid.*, pp.216-7.

happiness there follows an analysis of a particular happiness - that which attaches to the exercise of the specifically human disposition for justice - which demonstrates the linkage between these component parts, and discovers the importance of the relation between feeling, reason, and environment.

At the same time, the illustration of the achievement of justice, which is the core of moral values and judgments, as a type of happiness adumbrates the bridge Mill built between his account of human nature and his broad ethical doctrine. In this instance however, justice is being examined as a disposition, and as such is found in all human beings with a variable degree of potential for cultivation and development.

§III.iii. Illustration of the qualifications in action. The qualifications expressed in the connection between 'happiness' and 'justice.' Mill's analysis of the component parts of 'happiness.' The qualifications made by Mill concerning the concept of happiness are signposts toward a more detailed understanding of his use of the term. A further step toward this understanding takes place in tracing out an illustration of those qualifications as they apply to a particular problem faced by those who would argue a case for utility. Mill's argument for happiness as the ground of justice, which is found in Chapter V in *Utilitarianism*, has been the subject of considerable criticism, but such criticism has not related Mill's key concept back to its ground in human nature. By so doing, it will be argued here that Mill's case is strengthened considerably. After acknowledging that one of the greatest obstacles to the acceptance of the doctrine of utility, or happiness, draws its strength from the apparent incompatibility of the idea of justice and the principle of happiness, and that if this obstacle can be overcome then the case for happiness as the ultimate principle of action is much stronger, Mill began his argument by presenting evidence that justice has its origin in a set of feelings and instincts in human beings.[33]

The origin of the philosophical articulation of justice is stated by Mill to be 'a feeling bestowed on us by Nature,' and, as with other particular feelings or instincts, requires 'to be controlled and enlightened by a higher reason.'[34] Where Mill's understanding of justice is important for this account of his understanding of happiness is in his claim that justice is 'a particular kind or branch of general utility,' and as such its pursuit contributes to the happiness both of the individual and those in the individual's

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33 *Ibid.*, p.240. See also Mill's confirmation of justice as feeling prior to rational thought, in his letter to W. T. Thornton in 1863. *Works*. Vol.15 p.853.

34 Mill, 'Utilitarianism,' p.240.

immediate vicinity directly, and to the happiness of the community indirectly.[35] An examination of Mill's analysis of justice as an internal sense will serve to illustrate the central components of happiness and their relation as understood by him.

The notion of justice as an activity whose cultivation and development brings pleasure, and whose neglect brings pain, is unexceptionable as a metaphoric description. But, the notion that those pleasures and pains may be summated and reflected upon to determine the happiness that attaches to the cultivation and development of the disposition for justice does not resonate in the same way with the concept of abstract and objective justice. The belief that justice has an existence in nature as something absolute and external to human beings was recognized by Mill as one of the strongest obstacles to the acceptance of the doctrine of utility or happiness. It is in his demonstration of the relation of justice to happiness that Mill set out clearly his inclusion in the latter concept of three component parts: feeling, or emotion; reason; and circumstances or context. These component parts, once identified, can then be further examined in Mill's writing to form a fuller explanation of his understanding of the term. Once the understanding of the term, in Mill's sense, is comprehended, then the divide between justice as an intimate, naturalistic concept grounded in the pleasure which accompanies the satisfaction of a desire and ultimately in a state of happiness, and justice as an abstract and objective principle, can be bridged.

The idea of justice, Mill wrote, occurs first in feeling as a moral sentiment. It is a feeling bestowed by nature, and, as with other feelings it is a subjective state affected by external events.[36] As do other feelings, the natural feeling or disposition that underpins the idea of justice has moments of intensity and interest, and these moments are the basis of a desire. The idea of justice was analyzed by Mill to be inextricably linked to the feeling, experienced by all human beings, of fitness, or desert. 'It is universally considered just,' he wrote, 'that each person should obtain that (whether good or evil) which he *deserves*, and unjust that he should obtain a good, or be made to undergo an evil which he does not deserve.' As such the feeling is one of reciprocity and is stimulated by the behaviour of other agents, and the consequences that follow behaviour.[37] Furthermore, to see justice done and to see injustice punished 'always give[s] us pleasure, and chime[s] in with our feeling of fitness.'[38] This is the

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35 *Ibid.*, p.241.
36 *Ibid.*, p.240.
37 *Ibid.*, p.242.
38 *Ibid.*, pp.245-246.

first stage in Mill's account of justice as 'a particular kind or branch of general utility' or happiness.[39]

Mill recognized that while the desire to punish and to praise according to the consequences of actions is 'a spontaneous outgrowth from two sentiments, both in the highest degree natural, and which either are or resemble instincts,' and are located within both the spheres of self-interest and of other-interest, they do not alone comprise all the elements of justice, nor are they the sole origin of the happiness that accompanies the feeling of justice.[40] Such feelings and instincts are common to all animals, he noted, and as such they operate solely as subjective, nonrational dispositions. There are additional elements to Mill's depiction of the idea of justice which contribute to the utility, or happiness, that attaches to its operation. The most significant of these is the impact of reason.

In the understanding of justice employed by the critics of utilitarianism, reason operates as a disinterested and objective instrument of social organization, above and beyond the influence of emotion. By contrast, Mill's account of the place of reason in the determination of objective justice points to the critical relation between reason and the *feeling* of fitness, or desert. In uncultivated and undeveloped animal nature, the feelings and instincts that are the origin of justice are unbridled and unrestrained. By contrast, there operates a process of 'tempering and cooling the feeling of justice in human beings, stated Mill, which is 'controlled and enlightened by a higher reason.'[41] Human beings have a developed faculty of reason that enables them, unlike other animals, to stand back from particular cases and to reason their way to an independent and objective code of behaviour applicable to the whole community. In this way social peace and stability are maximized. Reason analyzes the feeling of justice by locating the actions to which it responds, such as those of keeping or breaking faith, of keeping or breaking promises, of impartiality, and of equality of treatment. In this way, and using the specifically human characteristic of reason, the subjective feelings of justice are distinguished from particular cases and generalized into a formal idea.[42]

The introduction of reason does not, however, dissever the idea of justice from its origin in feeling and instinct. This is illustrated by Mill in his analysis of the relation between justice and positive law. Positive law is the product of reason alone, he

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39 *Ibid.*, p.241.
40 *Ibid.*, p.248.
41 *Ibid.*, p.240.
42 *Ibid.*, pp.248, 255, 240.

noted, and set against this the idea of justice as the reasoned expression of a feeling or emotion that enables human beings to distinguish between just and unjust laws.[43] Justice, therefore, is more than reason alone Mill did not deny that reason enables agents to appraise positive laws as either just or unjust as rules of social behaviour. He was adamant, however, that it does so only by drawing on the promptings of the feelings and instincts of human beings for confirmation that the law provides the appropriate desert for action. It does so on the basis of satisfaction of the desire of the instinct and feeling of justice for the pleasure that accompanies the witnessing of appropriate desert.[44] (Reason, it was demonstrated above, performs the same function in the private affairs of the individual agent. It discovers the cause of the desired pleasure, and discerns the path of action to be taken in order to achieve that desired pleasure.)

§III.iv The importance of reason in Mill's account of happiness. The status of reason in Mill's work is regarded by many theorists as paramount, and this view rests on the importance in the Mill corpus of the *System of Logic*. However, the purpose of the *Logic*, according to Mill, went beyond an analysis of reasoning. Mill's goal was to shift the focus of logical analysis away from its exclusive concentration on deductive proof, and to introduce an auxiliary inductive process that would enable the development of what he termed the 'Logic of Experience.' In short, Mill's negative goal was to demonstrate that formal logic, which the intuitionists regarded as the whole of logic, is not concerned with inference and therefore is remote from experience. As such it is of limited practical use in the testing of evidence. His positive goal was to develop a more comprehensive logic, in which formal logic had its original function, but one that was able to deal with both psychological and experiential evidence.[45]

Mill's recognition of reason as the element of consciousness that discerns both the direct and the indirect path to pleasure has already been noted. It will be further

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43 *Ibid.*, p.242.

44 This analysis is further reinforced by Mill in his commentary on James Mill's *Analysis of the Human Mind*. See *Works*. Vol.31 p.212.

45 Mill's awareness of the need for such a revision and expansion to the scope and method of logic may be clearly seen in his review of Whateley's *Elements of Logic*, written in 1828. There he pointed out that the schoolmen understood philosophizing to consist of two parts: first, the establishment of premises, and second the deduction of conclusions from the premises. The rules of formal logic concerned only the second part of the process, and could only prevent them from drawing conclusions unwarranted by the premises. They could not, however, furnish any test of truth applicable to the premises. Filling this gap in the structure of logical analysis is the goal Mill set for himself in the *Logic*. See Mill, 'Whateley's Elements of Logic.' *Works*. Vol.11 pp.12, 35.

explored below how reason, in the shape of education, observation, and informed choice, becomes significant in the practise of Mill's secondary principles of action.[46] What is important here is to discover the relation of reason to feelings in the complex state of mind that Mill terms happiness. It has already been demonstrated in Mill's analysis of the concept of justice, that it is reason that bridges the gap between the feeling of justice common to all agents and the abstract and objective understanding of justice. Does this process operate elsewhere in the experience and recognition of happiness? What further evidence is available of Mill's recognition of reason as an element in the experience of all happinesses, both those of a particular capacity and of life in general?

Mill's broad link between reason and the feelings of pleasure and satisfied desire is clear enough. Reason is not, as is happiness, an end in itself. It is, rather, the instrument with which ends are discovered and the means to achieve them discerned.[47] The operation of reason, in this sense, is to discover choices, to weigh outcomes, and, in short, to calculate what actions within a particular activity will result in the greatest balance of pleasurable feeling over painful feeling. Mill confirmed that this is the case, in *Utilitarianism*, where the result of this process is understood by him to signify

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46 The technical problems that critics have discovered in Mill's psychologically and empirically based logic are beyond the scope of this dissertation. (The major portion of Skorupski's sympathetic treatment of Mill's work is concerned with the development of his system of logic, and Ryan, in the Preface to the second edition of his examination of Mill's philosophy notes that 'the area in which the degree of sophistication with which Mill's work is discussed has changed most strikingly', and concedes that much of the previous criticism of Mill's logic has been modified.See e.g. Ryan *op.cit.* p.x-xv.) The popularity of the work suggests, however, that the intellectual climate of the time was indeed searching for a method whereby explanations, other than those sanctioned by the dominant classes, of the significant social and political tendencies of the age could be made with some confidence. The social sciences, which attempted to do so, were experimental sciences, and consequently their theorems were unable to withstand the criticism of those who argued from the perspective of the deductive sciences. (Sciences, 'in the only proper sense of the term' were defined by Mill as 'inquiries into the course of nature'. See 'A System of Logic.' Book VI Ch.XII §1, p.943.) Mill's achievement was to develop a system of logic that had the flexibility necessary for application to the problem of truth in the social sciences. It was intended as a support for the inclusion of both psychological and experientia evidence in the formulation of a logically defensible argument, and as such to act as an intellectual bulwark for *à posteriorist* social and political theory. This intention in itself suggests the importance to Mill's thought of a relation between reason and other elements of consciousness. A persistent theme in this thesis is the presentation of Mill as an applied philosopher. As such it is an examination of Mill's determination to relate theory to empirical evidence. This results in conclusions that are plausible, have a high degree of probability, but leave room for the possibility of error, and therefore are vulnerable to attack by opponents. This is the rationale for developing a new sort of logic that would allow the erection of as strong an argument as might be made within that framework of possible error.

47 See for examples of this position, Mill, 'Sedgwick's Discourse.' *Works*. Vol.10 p.50, and 'Speech on Population: Reply to Thirlwall.' *Works*. Vol.26 p.307.

happiness.[48] The relation of reason to feeling in the discernment of happiness is underlined in his assertion that in many instances the choices to be made and the actions to be performed have been confronted by generations of human beings, all of whom have reasoned to the same conclusions, and have passed down this experience in the form of rules and precepts both of prudence and of morality. 'During all that time,' he wrote, 'mankind have been learning by experience the tendencies of actions; on which experience all the prudence, as well as all the morality of life is dependent.'[49] In his explanation of the place of previous experience in the relation of reason to feeling when calculating correct prudential or moral action, Mill confirmed its significance as an element of happiness.

How does reason interact with feelings in the discovery of happiness? The feelings of pleasure, either simple or complex, are such that their being experienced serves to generate the desire for the prolongation or repetition of the sensation. Nonetheless, feelings of pleasure are often accompanied or followed by pain, and as such can be rationally observed to be costly, or potentially dangerous, or both, if taken to surfeit or indiscriminately. Also, the most intense feelings of pleasure are liable to overwhelm other less intense pleasures, and the consequent desire for those most intense feelings will lead, if unchecked, to an imbalance and disharmony in the life of the individual. In order to achieve the 'permanent and steady flame' of happiness both in particular activities and in general, it is the role of reason to discern the three constituent conditions of that state: permanency, safety, and uncostliness. In addition, in order to achieve a general happiness in life, reason is needed to ensure the exercise of the other-interested aspects of human nature as well as the powerful, self-interested ones.[50] The role of reason in the choice between, and the balance among, feelings of pleasure was confirmed by Mill when he noted that in those individuals who have not yet, because of youth or circumstances, attained reasoned judgment in matters of choice between pleasures, the 'judgment of the experienced' is available to be their guide.[51]

The same judgment of the experienced is called upon in the process of translating the dispositions toward desert and just action into objective codes of social and moral behaviour. The subjective emotions that signal pleasure in the activities of agents that are regarded by Mill as virtuous, are cultivated and developed into adherence to

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48 Mill, 'Utilitarianism,' p.224.
49 *Ibid.*, p.224.
50 *Ibid.*, pp.211, 215.
51 *Ibid.*, p.215.

disinterested codes of public behaviour through the guidance and approbation of the community and historical wisdom of the group. For example, the bridge between the subjective disposition for desert and the objective concept of justice accepted by the group is, according to Mill, accomplished by the use of reason and the judgment of generations of the experienced. The same process occurs in the translation of the other virtuous dispositions of the individual agent - themselves linked by activity to pleasure - into the objective and disinterested codes of morality and social behaviour accepted by the group.

Rather than happiness being identical to pleasure, it turns out that when the qualifications and modifications Mill made to his theory are taken into consideration, the feelings (and emotions) of pleasure are a part of happiness, but not the whole of it. The additional element of reason (or, in its absence, the reasoned judgment of the experienced) is also required, and it is the task of that instrument to discern the balance that exists between pleasure and pain, to judge which feelings of pleasure are worth pursuing and which may be sacrificed, and to devise the means whereby to obtain such a balance of pleasurable feelings. Importantly, it is reason that distills the subjective feeling experiences of the generations of individuals in the arena of public conduct into a disinterested, codified form.

In the light of this understanding of the relation between reason and feelings, Mill's depiction of the end and purpose of existence 'with reference to and for the sake of which all other things are desirable' as being 'an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments, both in point of quantity and quality' may be seen as grounded in a pragmatic consideration of the operation of consciousness. The interaction of reason, as 'self-consciousness and self-observation,' with feelings of pleasure and the desires that attach to them are necessary elements in the complex state of happiness.

They do not, however, operate in isolation. Mill's recognition of the context in which both emotion and reason interact, and the impact of that context on the possibility of achieving happiness by both individual and group, is the point at which he went beyond the theorizing of speculative philosophy and moved into what Stevenson refers to as the realm of 'applied philosophy.'[52] It is the awareness and incorporation of the

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52 Leslie Stevenson, 'Applied Philosophy.' *Metaphilosophy* Vol.1 No.3 July 1970 pp.258-67. See also Francis Snare, *The Nature of Moral Thinking*. London, 1992 pp.50-51 where the contrast between applied and 'armchair' philosophy is succinctly demonstrated.

context in which the interaction of emotion and reason takes place that provides the third element in Mill's understanding of the term 'happiness.'

§III.v. The interaction of reason and feeling in the quest for happiness occurs in, and is linked to, context. While reason is the primary element that interacts with feeling and instinct in forming the idea of justice, and facilitating the achievement of the happiness that attaches to its exercise, Mill was aware of an additional significant contribution to the process made by the context in which such interaction occurs. As has already been noted, Mill recognized the differences between individuals as stemming from experience, environment, circumstances, and education, as well as differences in potentials in capacities. This set of modifying influences shapes the types of activity chosen by the individual agent to achieve pleasure, and the manner in which they are pursued. This is the same set of modifying influences noted by Mill to work on the operation of justice both as a feeling and instinct, and during the process whereby that instinct is shaped and influenced by reason.[53]

Just as in the existential world the individual choice of activity with which to achieve pleasure is linked to the context and circumstances of the individual, so the feeling and instinct of justice in the individual is also found in a variety of forms. Additionally, just as the particular circumstances of the individual are altered by the environment in which they develop, the feeling and instinct for justice is shaped and influenced by a reason which is itself subject to the impact of the social environment. This results in a development of an understanding of the components and parameters of justice that varies from agent to agent, age to age, and society to society. Nonetheless, throughout these changes in the idea both of particular and abstract justice, the relation with happiness remains constant. Over time and space, wrote Mill, 'the notion of justice varies in different persons and always conforms to their notion of utility.' This is Mill's recognition that instances occur where justice, as a kind or type of feeling to which happiness is attached, varies depending on the impact it has on other feelings of happiness. In those varying circumstances it is warranted by reason to hold those views on justice, 'and the sense of natural justice may be plausibly appealed to in behalf of every one of these opinions.'[54]

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53 For example, children of different cultures and ethnic backgrounds come to embrace different understandings of revenge for wrongs received by either themselves, their families, or the wider community of which they are a part. Each child has the same disposition for desert: context and environment condition the manner in which it is expressed.

54 Mill, 'Utilitarianism,' pp.243-244.

On this account, justice is not, according to Mill, an immutable concept. Rather, it is variable, albeit within a narrow range, both in individual consciousness, and in the particular society in which it is defined. 'Not only have different nations and individuals different notions of justice,' Mill noted, 'but, in the mind of one and the same individual, justice is not some one rule, principle or maxim, but many, which do not always coincide in their dictates and in choosing between which, he is guided either by some extraneous standard, or by his own personal predilections.'[55] The only constant is the link between whatever is the accepted idea of justice and the expectation of happiness that attaches to it.

By transferring the pattern of analysis of justice, acknowledged by Mill to be one of the most important of the specifically human capacities, onto other specifically human capacities, what emerges is an outline of the mutable nature of happiness, which at the same time confirms its complex composition of feelings, reason, and context.[56] The nature and structure of the concept, in Mill's depiction, goes beyond its psychophysiological components to embrace the particular arena in which it functions. As an instrument with which to understand the behaviour of individual agents, Mill's account of happiness derived from the evidence of science will become extremely important in the development of his socio-political theory.

§III.vi. The location of happiness in the context of individual circumstances, time and space. Both in the sphere of private actions, and in that of other-affecting actions, Mill was acutely aware of the limiting effect of circumstances on the rational pursuit of happiness as the end of existence. The individual, in his or her pursuit of the happinesses that accompany the cultivation and development of faculties, may be impeded directly in this aim by a variety of environmental, cultural, time-specific, and social circumstances.[57] In the private sphere, it must be recognized that the circumstances, experiences, education, and, not least, the personal potentials of the individual agent are factors that impact on the likelihood of happiness in that sphere. While the individual may be richly endowed with powerful feelings and great energy, and thus endowed with great potential, it is often the case that they fail to achieve their full measure of possible happiness. And the cause of this failure is always found, noted

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55 *Ibid.*, pp.251-252.

56 Mill, 'A System of Logic', Book VI Ch.IV §4, p.859; 'Utilitarianism,' pp.210-11; 'On Liberty,' p.262; 'Autobiography,' p 49.

57 Mill, 'Utilitarianism,' p.216.

Mill, in 'some defect of culture, or something wrong in the circumstances by which the being has originally or successively been surrounded.'[58]

It was the recognition of the power of context that led Mill to the realization that, in the unfolding of ordinary life, 'paradoxical as the assertion may be, the conscious ability to do without happiness gives the best prospect of realizing such happiness as is attainable.' Through the interaction of reason with feeling, the individual may be able to construct for him, or herself, those sources of happiness that are unaffected in terms of duration, security, and costliness, by the vicissitudes of circumstances. Mill's acknowledgment of the Stoicism underlying this position emphasizes his belief that happiness is not the quietist search for a merely painless existence undertaken by some proponents of utilitarianism, but is a commitment to the superior quality of purposeful active life.[59]

As far as the public actions of agents contribute both to their individual happiness and to the happiness of the group, Mill was extremely sensitive to the context in which these actions were performed. The impact on the happiness that attaches to other-directed actions by the circumstances and conditions of the individual's environment has great significance for the development of his ethical doctrine, and even greater pragmatic importance for the working out of his social and political theory. Mill's recognition of the cultivation and development of the disposition for other-directed action as central to the achievement of happiness is matched by his awareness of the fragility of that disposition when exposed to the buffeting of the existential world.

'Capacity for the nobler feelings is in most natures a very tender plant,' he wrote, 'easily killed, not only by hostile influences, but by mere want of sustenance.' It is a specifically human capacity that is subject to distortion, not only by the influence of misleading examples, but also by drudgery and lack of leisure time in which to cultivate it. In such circumstances, human beings are, understandably, likely to reach for the easier path to pleasures and to absorb themselves in the pleasures that accompany the desires of the external senses. 'Men lose their high aspirations as they lose their intellectual tastes,' Mill observed, 'because they have not time or opportunity for indulging them; and they addict themselves to inferior pleasures, not because they deliberately prefer them, but because they are either the only ones to

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58 Mill, 'Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties.' *Works*. Vol.1. pp.363-364.
59 Mill, 'Utilitarianism' p.211.

which they have access, or the only ones which they are any longer capable of enjoying.'[60]

Mill recognized that with the increasing complexity in context and environment that is concomitant with the economic, technological, and intellectual development of societies, human beings would increasingly lose their way in their search for happiness. They would become confused, and be misled into pursuing inappropriate goals which were discovered too late to be counterproductive to their overarching end. Mill's primary aim in the social and political life of his time was to develop a pragmatic doctrine whereby *all* individuals might be redirected in their search for the best possible existence. This endeavour, for Mill, turned on the means of returning to the emotional source of happiness, which is pleasure - particularly the pleasures that attach to the exercise of the specifically human capacities - and of the discovery of the arrangement whereby such pleasure could best be obtained and sustained.

To achieve this end, Mill understood the role of reason to be in part the discernment of the causes of pleasure and pain, the discovery of methods both direct and indirect to achieve pleasure, and the calculation of the best method to sustain or repeat pleasures over time securely and at the least cost. Another significant part of reason's role, in Mill's scheme, was to recognize the failure of many of the traditionally desired objects in public and private life to provide such pleasures. In the realm of the individual's existential environment, it is the function of reason to come to the realization that the paths to happiness are often to be found through acceptance of the qualities of the materials at hand.[61] In fact, Mill went on to point out, in some cases adverse circumstances 'give the best prospect of realizing such happiness as is attainable.' Oppression, in these instances, he noted, enables an agent to 'cultivate in tranquillity the sources of satisfaction accessible to him' without worry over their continuance or their disappearance.[62]

§III.vii. The tripartite nature of happiness recapitulated. The above analysis of Mill's understanding of justice into its component parts contains an important distinction between the feeling and instinct for justice, which is the origin of the happiness that attaches to the concept, and the understanding of justice as a core concept of morality. This distinction between the natural, psychophysiological origin of the concept of happiness and its eventual contribution to the development of

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60 *Ibid.*, p.213.
61 Mill, 'Autobiography' pp.87, 149-153.
62 Mill, 'Utilitarianism' pp.217-218. Cf. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1101a.

prescriptive doctrine is an important aspect of Mill's naturalistic theory. His awareness of the link between reason and emotion (or feeling), and their joint striving for happiness, enabled him to present a naturalistic ground for what is one of the core concepts of moral theory.

Mill made it perfectly clear that, in his understanding, the original sentiment that underpins the concept of justice is 'the natural feeling of retaliation or vengeance, rendered by intellect and sympathy applicable to those injuries, that is to those hurts, which wound us through, or in common with, society at large.' Furthermore, he continued, at this level 'the sentiment itself has nothing moral in it.'[63] The shift from the natural feeling or instinct for justice to the understanding of justice as a moral idea takes place through the operation of reason, which modifies and interprets the feeling according to the conditions and circumstances of the society and of the feeling individual. Mill's recapitulation of the concept states that 'the idea of justice supposes two things; a rule of conduct and *a sentiment which sanctions the rule*.' In nature the sentiment takes precedence and is modified by reason and context to admit the value of a general rule of conduct.[64]

Mill's intention to locate the origin of justice in a natural feeling and instinct in order to demonstrate that that quintessential moral concept has its ground in the desire and striving for happiness is the purpose of Chapter V in *Utilitarianism*. There justice is demonstrated by Mill to originate in the same location as the desires for all other pleasures, and to be fundamentally linked to his conception of happiness. The dissection of what is the relation between justice and utility made by Mill has shown his understanding of happiness to be comprised of three component parts. These parts are: first, the original feeling or instinct; second, the modification of that feeling or instinct by another element of consciousness, the element of reason; and finally the interaction of both feeling and reason with the conditions and circumstances that comprise both the particular and community context in which such interaction occurs. This framework of parts that come together to form the happiness that accompanies the achievement of justice is argued here to be the same component parts of *all* happinesses in Mill's account of human nature. In the section that follows is found additional confirmatory evidence that reinforces the present interpretation of Mill's understanding of the basic framework of happiness as set out in his account of the

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63 Mill, 'Utilitarianism' pp.248-249.

64 *Ibid.*, pp.244-245, 249. (Emphasis added.)

connection between justice as a feeling or instinct, and the doctrine of utility or happiness.

§III.viii. Reinforcement of the claim for Mill's tripartite understanding of 'happiness' The types of happiness depicted by Mill. Mill recognized the requirement for his enlarged account of utilitarianism to be shown to rest upon a solid foundation of demonstrable and indefeasible facts, if it was to succeed as an instrument of practical social and political reform. He firmly believed that whatever is promulgated as a challenge to things which derive their support from powerful and widespread beliefs can only succeed if it is able not simply to refute those beliefs but also to substitute others of even greater power in their place.[65] In the absence of his intended work on ethology wherein it might have been expected that Mill would present a naturalistic account of happiness, any defense of the enlarged doctrine of utility has to obtain an understanding of that key concept by assembling evidence from a broad cross-section of Mill's writings.

It is the acknowledgment of the three elements - feeling, reason, and context - acting in concert as the necessary condition for the recognition of what is happiness for any particular individual or community, at any particular time, which provides Mill with an instantly recognizable ultimate principle of action that is also flexible and subtle enough to be applicable in both particular and general circumstances. Mill's theory of human nature, as outlined in Chapter II, noted that the combination in consciousness of feelings, memory, beliefs, and reason, together with physiological responses (sense receptions), creates phenomena he referred to as 'states of being.' These feeling states are generally accepted as expressions of the satisfaction of animal appetites.

What is also significant for the present argument is that, according to Mill, the states of being that signify the pleasures that accompany the cultivation and development of specifically human capacities are also feeling states. As such, they are states of the body mingled with states of the mind. They are, Mill wrote, 'states of feeling and of *thought coloured by feeling*.'[66] This is a clear indication that Mill's account of the higher pleasures and happinesses is not confined to the exercise of reason alone. Those capacities that are specifically human are also comprised of feelings. This information will be discovered later to unlock Mill's moral theory and its relation to happiness. To confirm that this inextricable connection by Mill of the operation of reason and the

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65 Mill, 'Autobiography' p.269.
66 *Ibid.*, p.151. (Emphasis added.)

force of natural feelings and instincts is recognized by him to underpin the totality of ethical, social, and political doctrine is the task of the remainder of the thesis. At present, the purpose is solely to affirm Mill's awareness both of the presence and the significance of the relation between the three elements of feeling, reason, and context, as they come together to form the ultimate principle of action - the pursuit of happiness.

When the account of happiness presented by Mill and generally accepted by his critics, which states that happiness is pleasure and the absence of pain, is reconsidered in this more complex form, the question of how Mill believed the presence of happiness to be acknowledged and confirmed by the individual is answered in some detail. When the separate elements that comprise the state of happiness are considered individually, it will be seen that their combination by Mill as the expression of that state is foreshadowed in each. This foreshadowing begins with Mill's consistent recognition of feelings and instincts as of prime importance, not only in the area of animal appetites, but also in the characteristically human life of both individual and community.

Mill's naturalist thesis has been demonstrated to locate the origin of all motivation in the satisfaction of desires for pleasures, and to understand pleasures as classes of sensation. Furthermore, pleasures as sensations were subsequently referred to, by him, as feelings. Mill followed this depiction of pleasure as feeling by demonstrating that feelings are also states of mind - that is they employ more than one element of consciousness. However, in the mix of elements of consciousness that comprise a particular feeling the distinction Mill made between pleasures is now also noted to be a distinction between types of feeling.

There are two types of pleasure, simple and complex. Simple pleasures, Mill stated, are those felt by the external senses alone: while complex pleasures are felt by a combination of internal and external senses, or by internal senses alone. The elements of consciousness employed to experience simple pleasures as feelings are those possessed by all animals. However, in order to experience complex pleasures (that is pleasures that are compounds of simple pleasures together with the pleasures that are experienced by the internal senses), the introduction of uniquely human elements of consciousness is required. These are the elements of reason and imagination.[67]

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67 Mill, 'Writings of Alfred de Vigny.' *Works*. Vol.1 p.466; 'Autobiography.' pp.350-354.

The feelings that indicate the presence of complex pleasures are the feelings that accompany, for example, the employment of the aesthetic sense.[68] More importantly, as reflections of other complex pleasures, Mill went on to state, they are also the feelings that underpin the virtuous activities of the *Socratici viri*, and are at the root of all morality.[69] To clarify this depiction of a common cause for the exercise of *all* human beings' capacities, Mill first made the distinction between the desires of animal appetites, satisfied by the achievement of simple pleasures, and experienced by the individual agent as feelings; and the desires of specifically human capacities, satisfied by the achievement of complex pleasures, and experienced by the agent as emotions. Having made that distinction, Mill was then able to link the striving for pleasurable emotion that is the basis of the satisfaction of the desires of specifically human capacities, with the set of those specifically human capacities that comprises what are termed 'virtues.'[70] The capacity in human beings for strong emotion is, Mill wrote, 'the material out of which all *motives* are made; the motives consequently which lead human beings to the pursuit of truth. The greater the individual's capability of happiness and of misery, the stronger interest has that individual in arriving at truth.'[71]

In this fashion, Mill made the connection between the primary motivation in human beings for pleasure and the achievement of every characteristically human virtue. When Mill wrote, in *Utilitarianism*, that any human being might, with education and the exercise of his or her faculties, find happiness 'in the objects of nature, the achievements of art, the imaginations of poetry, the incidents of history, the ways of mankind past and present, and their prospects in the future,' he understood that happiness to be comprised of the complex pleasures felt as emotions. Similarly, when he noted that the internal impulse to act morally is 'a feeling in our own mind; a pain more or less intense, attendant on violation of duty,' he directly linked virtuous action to the complex pleasure or pain that underpins its pursuit.[72] Just as the pleasures that accompany the satisfaction of the desires of human beings' simple animal appetites are feelings as states of mind, so there are complex pleasures that accompany the

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68 Mill, 'Thoughts on Poetry and its Varieties' pp352-354; 'Autobiography' p.151.

69 See Mill, 'Grote's Plato.' *Works*. Vol.11 pp.438-439.

70 By naming the activities which cultivate and develop specifically human activities 'virtues', at the level of psychophysiological theory, Mill was following Aristotle. (See Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*. 1097b1, 1187a1.) Mill did not change the meaning of the term when he employed it in the development of his broad ethical doctrine: rather, he extended it, again in similar fashion to Aristotle. The extension of the meaning and its use in the ethical sphere is explained in Part Two.

71 Mill, 'Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties.' pp.363-364.

72 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' pp.216, 228.

satisfaction of the specifically human capacities, and these are experienced as a different class of feelings, commonly called 'emotions.'

Feelings, then, are certainly present in Mill's thought as an integral part of the experiencing of pleasures of both types, and in any consideration of the experience of happiness as being comprised of pleasure, we are compelled to include in the analysis the state of the agent's feelings. Happiness is more than feelings of pleasure alone, however, as Mill pointed out. It is the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain, and unless this state is to be one of chance it requires the input of a further element of consciousness - reason. To make a purposeful attempt to distinguish between pleasures in terms of their relative value, to analyze and summarize the pleasures and pains attached to the exercise of a capacity, and to discern the best way by which to achieve steadily and consistently the greatest sum of pleasure over pain in any and all activities, is, according to Mill, 'the rational purpose of human life and action . . . the end of morality [and] the end of rational conduct.'[73]

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From the evidence so far presented Mill's understanding of the nature of human beings and their motivation toward their common end contains the delineation of three types of happiness. The first, and most basic of these is found in the satisfaction of their shared animal appetites. These appetites desire and are satisfied by essentially simple pleasures, which, through the employment of reason, are easy to summate, to link to means of achievement, and to maintain as simple happinesses. These simple happinesses, in common with all types of happiness, require a set of circumstances that conduce to continued, safe, and uncostly repetition of moments of pleasure.

The second type of happiness that may be extrapolated from Mill's account is found in the satisfaction of the desires of specifically human capacities, the activities of which are fundamentally private in their exercise. The raw material of these happinesses are compounds of the pleasures of both the external and internal senses. To achieve this type of happiness, human beings must cultivate and develop the range of specifically human capacities, which in turn requires conducive circumstances beyond those of the simple happinesses. These circumstances take the form of education, exemplars, and in the absence of experience, the judgment of the experienced. Again, reason plays a significant role in the achievement of such happiness.

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73 *Ibid.*, p.214.

There is a third type of happiness depicted by Mill. These are the happinesses that accompany the satisfaction of those desires of specifically human capacities which involve other-directed actions. As with the self-interested happinesses, they have complex pleasures as their raw material. And for the cultivation and development of these capacities there is also required conducive circumstances, education, exemplars, and the judgment of the experienced. These happinesses are distinguished in their attainment by the development of habitual behaviours in the exercise of the particular capacities to which they are attached. This both reinforces their power to produce such happiness, and results in the development of character.

§III.ix. The problem inherent in this depiction of happiness. Happiness, as Mill described it, is a complex interaction of desire for a general or particular end, which is the steady, secure, affordable provision of pleasure, and the means to steady satisfaction of that desire which is recognized by reflection. It is planned for and secured by the employment of reason, which, whilst influenced by the larger context of the temporal cultural, social, economic, and ethnic environment, determines within the narrow context of the agent's circumstances the best means whereby happiness is to be obtained.

In this depiction of what constitutes happiness, provided by the method of science, Mill does not make any distinction between particular happinesses other than that some are simple and others complex. It is legitimate at this point in his analysis to claim the happiness that accompanies the satisfaction of a self- or other-destructive disposition as equally satisfying to its possessor as the happiness that accompanies the satisfaction of the disposition to self- or other-benefiting acts: the happiness which accompanies the satisfaction of the desires of a masochistic disposition is indistinguishable from the happiness that accompanies the satisfaction of the desires of an altruistic disposition.

It is clear that Mill did not intend his understanding of happiness to be interpreted in this way. Were it to be so, his injunction always to act 'so that the outcome of . . . action produces the greatest amount of happiness for all involved,' would be unworkable as the foundation of an ethical doctrine.[74] The problem for Mill was to discover why there exists a universal acceptance of some happinesses, as analyzed above, and an equally universal rejection of others.

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74 The fact that so many commentators have made just this point reinforces the claim made here that few critics have made any serious attempt to unravel Mill's understanding of the nature of happiness, and its relation to the composition of human nature.

To ask this simple question of the nature of happinesses, a question which on reflection seems so obvious - 'Why is happiness so eagerly striven for? What is its function in human existence? What is its purpose?' - was Mill's penultimate task for the method of science. By doing so, Mill discovered the bedrock on which to rest his ultimate principle of action and so his enlarged utilitarianism. The method of science provided him with empirically testable proof why some happinesses are accepted and others rejected, and that proof became the benchmark against which to measure *all* happinesses and so the foundation of his broad ethical doctrine. The relation of happiness to human existence is the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter IV.
The *Telos* of Existence: Mill's Formulation of the 'Philosophia Prima peculiar to Art'[I].[1]

§IV.i. Mill's understanding of the relation between the Doctrine of Ends and the Method of Science. Mill's teleological methodology is of primary importance in the development of his holistic understanding of humanity and human relations.[2] He was emphatic in his assertion of the necessity of a single, all-embracing purpose or end of existence as the foundation of social theory, insofar as that end forms the 'standard by which to determine the goodness or badness, absolute and comparative, of ends, or objects of desire.'[3] Without a clearly established *philosophia prima* by which to test all subordinate ends, Mill believed that there is inevitably resort to 'a mere compound, in varying proportions, of the old moral and social traditions' whenever socio-political theory is attempted.[4]

Mill's first principle is clearly stated. It is that 'happiness is desirable, and the only thing desirable as an end: all other things being only desirable as means to that end.'[5] Nonetheless, without a clear understanding of what Mill intended by the term 'happiness,' confusion in interpretation of his meaning of that principle is both probable and understandable. While it is universally recognized that Mill's formulation of his teleological end comprises, in his own words, 'an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments, both in point of quantity and quality' for each individual agent and for the community of all agents, there is an important question attached to this account of the end of human existence and prefiguring of ultimate principle of action.[6] Why did Mill consider happiness (and, contiguously, pleasure) to be the teleological end for human beings? Why, for

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1 Mill's characterization of the first principle of teleological theory in this fashion, and his justification for so doing, is found in his *Logic*. See Mill, 'A System of Logic.' Book.VI Ch.XII. §7, *Works* Vol.8 p.951.

2 *Ibid.*, pp.949-52.

3 *Ibid.*, p.951. This position placed Mill in opposition to Comte, as he acknowledged.

4 *Ibid.*, p.951n. In this footnote, Mill is referring specifically to the flaw he perceived in Comte's theorizing.

5 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' *Works*. Vol.10 p.234. The Aristotelian echo heard in the assertion is an alert to the complexity of meaning Mill has for the statement. As with Aristotle's exploration of 'happiness' in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, this simple statement from Mill requires considerable unravelling to discover his meaning.

6 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' pp.214.

instance, did he rate it more valuable than moral integrity or obligation to perform one's duty? These attitudes and practices have been considered most valuable by other theorists, and yet in Mill's theory they are displaced from the dual status of both end and foundation of ultimate principle of action by happiness. Even with the explanation of Mill's meaning of the term, as set out in the previous chapter, the problem of happiness remains. It is the discovery of the relation between happiness as a signal of the achievement of *telos* and as the route to it, that provides an explanation for Mill's assertion that happiness is the only thing desirable as an end.

§IV.ii. The discovery of the end and purpose of human existence from the evidence of science, together with the formulation of a theory of action whereby human beings move toward that end. Mill was unequivocal in his assertion that the starting point of all investigation of ethical, social, and political matters is in the nature of human beings.[7] So far, Mill's account of human nature as examined in the previous chapters has illustrated his original indicative understanding of the key terms which are to be subsequently translated by him into the evaluative and prescriptive terms of his normative theory. These separate understandings when augmented by an account of the relations between the terms, and the modifications to the concepts that occur as a consequence of those relations, have already provided the ground of what Mill termed the 'indispensable relations' that guide human conduct to its most efficient end. What remains to be examined is Mill's account of the penultimate task of the method of science which was to discover the explanation for those indispensable relations.

This chapter is a depiction of Mill's re-examination of his account of human nature so far presented with the intention to discover the simplest and most economical expression of its working. This is Mill's endeavour to discover and delineate the fewest general propositions from which all the existential activities expressing that nature can be understood.[8] The fundamental proposition in Mill's explanation of human activity is that pleasure and pain are the well-springs of all action. As such they are discovered by his employment of the method of science to be necessary to the very existence of both the individual human being and of the species. Furthermore, when this knowledge is added to the understanding of the interaction between desire for pleasure and the processes of reasoning, with the resulting striving for happiness, Mill concluded that the evidence provided by science demonstrated that human beings' actions may be generalized as driven by the desire for happiness, and that that desire is

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7 Mill, 'Three Essays On Religion.' *Works*. Vol 10 pp.374, 391, 396-397; 'On Liberty.' *Works*. Vol. 18 p.92.

8 Mill, 'A System of Logic.' Book III Ch.XII §6, p.472.

the primary force contributing to the continued survival and melioration of the species. There is, in this conclusion, the implicit conditional that if human beings want to survive and obtain some betterment in their lives, both as individuals and as a species, then they must continue to strive for happiness. The outcome of Mill's analysis by the method of science is his conclusion that the survival and melioration of both individual and the species is the purpose and end of human existence - its *telos* - and that striving after happiness is the first principle of action whereby this end is to be achieved. The task of this chapter is to discern Mill's evidence from science to support this position.

A complication occurs in that while Mill gave clear instructions as to how his methodology proceeded, he did not provide a detailed account of how that methodology was used by him to discover the relation between happiness, as the ground for all action, and the *telos* of existence. What follows is a reconstruction of the way Mill determined the empirical ground for his *philosophia prima*, which uses as its raw material the evidence of science found in Mill's writing, and sets against that an account of his 'reasonings which connect the end or purpose of every art with its means.'[9] Thus the analysis of the rationale Mill had for presenting happiness as the end of existence begins by first depicting Mill's understanding of what is the *telos* of existence for the human species and the principle of action whereby most efficiently to achieve that *telos*, as discovered by the method of science.

§IV.iii. The discovery by the method of science of the *telos* of human existence. The *telos* of human existence accepted by Mill, and discovered by the method of science, is the survival and melioration of both individual and species. Given that Mill did not provide any concise presentation of this teleological end, how is the claim to be demonstrated, using Mill's work as the source of the demonstration? The first step is to recapitulate the way the method of science is said by Mill to operate. This briefly notes the processes involved, the subject matter of science, and the limitations of the scientific method. With the method of science as a background, the next step is to present evidence in Mill's work of his discovery and acknowledgment of the statement of the *telos* in both its parts; first, as the survival, and second, as the melioration of both individual and species.

Mill's understanding of the operation of the method of science was that of observation and prediction of effects. Its end is the production of propositions which are able to

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9 *Ibid.*, §6. p.949.

be verified or falsified.[10] From his observation of the manner in which human nature operates, there has been presented in the previous chapters a series of propositions concerning human motivation and behaviour. Using these as the raw material, Mill employed the method of science to deduce the fundamental principle with which to achieve the *telos* of existence. This, as already noted, he anticipated to be something other than the mere wish or stipulation of a philosopher.

Mill was keenly aware of the interrelation between human physiology and psychology, and installed that interaction as the foundation of his understanding of human nature. The development of the sciences that explain the relation between thoughts, emotions, and volitions, were, in the mid-nineteenth century, in their infancy. But Mill, while conscious of the provisional nature of psychophysiological analysis, was certain that discoveries in that science would contribute greatly to the art of moral philosophy and political theory.[11] 'The relations, indeed of that science [i.e. the science of mind, or psychology] to the science of physiology must never be overlooked or undervalued,' he wrote, going on to assert that, 'it must by no means be forgotten that the laws of mind may be derivative laws resulting from laws of animal life, and that their truth therefore may ultimately depend on physical conditions; and the influence of physiological states or physiological changes in altering or counteracting the mental successions is one of the most important departments of psychological study.'[12] It was from this direction that Mill expected there to emerge the descriptive teleological end and first principle of conduct according to the method of science.[13]

Mill was not, however, blind to the limitations of science in its ability to predict effects, and this awareness of the margin of error present in nineteenth century scientific laws was carried over by him into his understanding of the *telos* and first

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10 Mill, 'On the Definition of Political Economy.' *Works*. Vol.4 p.312; 'Utilitarianism' pp.207-208. See also Alan Ryan, *The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill*. 2nd Ed. London, 1987 p.189.

11 Mill, 'System of Logic' Book.VI Chapter 4 §2 pp.849-852.

12 *Ibid.*, p.851.

13 Mill, 'Inaugural Address to the University of St. Andrews.' *Works*. Vol.21 pp.240-242. This important linkage between physiology, psychology, and environment is echoed in the *Logic* where Mill asserts that, contrary to the arguments of the à priorists, 'our actions follow from our characters, and our characters follow from our organization, our education, and our circumstances.' See Mill, 'A System of Logic' Book VI Ch.III §2, p.847. Mill's anticipated goal for the study of psychophysiological links was ultimately to be the formulation of scientifically verifiable principles of social theory. Analytic psychology was to be the ground on which 'all the moral and political sciences ultimately rest.' See Mill, 'Autobiography.' *Works*. Vol. 1 p.213. Mill's endeavour to discover such laws has been described as an 'attempt to expound a psychological system of logic within empiricist principles.' See J. B. Hartmann, quoted by R. F. McRae, 'Introduction.' *Works*. Vol.7. p.xxi.

principle of human existence. A theorem of science, he wrote, 'is not ripe for being turned into a precept, until the whole, and not a part merely, of the operation which belongs to science has been performed.'[14] Nonetheless, in the physical sciences the law-like statements reached by observation are used on a provisional basis to formulate theory, whilst simultaneously being further subjected to tests and observation with the aim of refining their ability to predict effects. The situation is the same in the formulation of the rules and precepts of human social behaviour. Furthermore, in the social sciences the law-like statements cannot be anticipated to encompass every act of every agent, simply because 'if all the counteracting contingencies, whether of frequent or of rare occurrence, were included, the rules would be too cumbrous to be apprehended and remembered by ordinary capacities, on the common occasions of life.'[15]

Recognition of the impossibility of framing laws that will cover every action by human beings placed Mill in the position of being able to accept the deductions of science concerning the end of existence with full awareness of their limitations. This did not inhibit their usefulness prior to their refinement, because, as he wrote, in the interim 'the common rule may very properly serve as an admonition that a certain mode of action has been found by ourselves and others to be well adapted to the cases of most common occurrence; so that if it be unsuitable to the case in hand, the reason of its being so will be likely to arise from some unusual circumstance.'[16] This *caveat* is most important in the unraveling of Mill's social and political theory, and its applicability, as he was aware, begins at the level of the method of science.

§IV.iv. The evidence for Mill's acceptance of survival and melioration as the *telos* of existence deduced by the method of science. What is the *telos* of human existence according to the method of science? The first claim made by Mill's method is that it is fundamentally the continued survival of both the individual human being and of the species. The evidence Mill used to reach this conclusion demonstrates his growing acceptance of the Darwinian thesis of natural selection between the time of its publication in 1859, and Mill's draft of his *Three Essays on Religion* completed in 1873.[17] In this work, completed in the year of his death and published posthumously,

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14 Mill 'System of Logic' Bk VI Ch.xii. §3 p.945.

15 *Loc.cit.*

16 *Ibid.*, p.946.

17 For confirmation of this acceptance, see Mill's letter to Alexander Bain, April 1860, in 'Later Letters' *Works*. Vol.15 p.695; Mill to Hewett C. Watson, January 1869, in 'Later Letters.' *Works*. Vol.17 pp.1553-54; also Mill to Edward Livingstone Yeomans, March 1869, in 'Later Letters.' *Works*. Vol.17 p.1570.

the evidence to support the first half of the deduction of science is presented in some detail, albeit with Mill's usual cautious observation that complete confirmation of the thesis was not at that time available. Helen Taylor noted in the Introductory Notice to the *Three Essays* Mill's similar position to that of Darwin, and affirmed the coincidence of thought that may be discovered between them.[18] Darwinism, at this time, was rapidly making an impact on the minds of those thinkers such as Mill who were unable to bend their intellects to the requirements of faith, and at the same time were searching for an alternative ground for human existence.[19]

The primary statement of Mill's acceptance of survival as the purpose of existence was made as a comprehensive remark that encompassed all living things. When faced with the problem of what purpose can be discerned in the construction and capacities of both animals and plants, Mill responded by stating that 'there is no blinking the fact that they tend principally to no more exalted object than to make the structure remain in life and in working order for a certain time: the individual for a few years, the species or race for a longer but still limited period.' Given that this is the general case, it is only a short step to his conclusion that 'the end [of existence] is but the qualified permanence, for a limited period, of the work itself.'[20]

Mill continued to test the selection theory particularly as it applied to human beings. He accepted the claim by Darwin that the core of the evolutionary tendency is the retention of beneficial traits and characteristics in developing species, precisely because of their value to the survival of the possessors.[21] When this claim was laid over human nature, Mill discovered that 'after deduction of the great number of adaptations which have no apparent object but to keep the machine going, there remain a certain number of provisions for giving pleasure to living beings, and a certain number for giving them pain.' The question ther became whether pleasure and pain were survival mechanisms or not. Mill reached the conclusion that 'there is no positive certainty that the whole of these ought not to take their place among the contrivances for keeping the creature or its species in existence; for both the pleasures and the pains have a conservative tendency; the pleasures being generally so disposed as to attract to the things which maintain individual or community existence, the pains so as to deter from such as would destroy it.'[22]

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18 Mill, 'Three Essays on Religion.' p.371.
19 Ninian Smart, 'Developments in Christianity in Western Europe' in *The World's Religions* Cambridge, 1992 pp.342-43.
20 Mill, 'Three Essays on Religion.' p.456.
21 *Ibid.*, pp.449-450.
22 *Ibid.*, p.457.

Mill went one step further in the incorporation of pleasure and pain into the survival mechanism of human beings. He noted that 'pleasure when experienced seems to result from the normal working of the machinery, while pain usually arises from some external interference with it.' Moreover, even when the pain originates in the human being, he realized that 'the appearances do not indicate that contrivance was brought into play purposely to produce pain: what is indicated is rather a clumsiness in contrivance employed for some other purpose.'[23] For Mill, pleasure and pain, the core components of happiness and unhappiness, of motivation and volition, were traceable to their origin in their contribution to the survival of the individual and the species.

The final conclusion he drew from this evidence demonstrates not only an acceptance of Darwin's theory of natural selection and that the purpose of existence is primarily survival, but also indicates his intent on to incorporate that theory and its conclusion into the development of his own socio-political theory. 'All natural impulses, all propensities sufficiently universal and sufficiently spontaneous to be capable of passing for instincts, must exist for good ends,' he wrote, and determined that in that case, they 'ought to be only regulated not repressed.' His justification for this injunction rests on the Darwinian assertion that 'the species could not have continued to exist unless most of its inclinations had been directed to things needful or useful for its preservation.'[24] Moreover, the original spur for the development of his socio-political theory may be argued to be Mill's recognition that in human beings every instinct and capacity is capable of perversion, but not that such perversion is inevitable. The purpose of social and political theory in these circumstances becomes that of modifying and guiding behaviour in order to achieve the *telos* of existence in the most efficient manner possible.

Melioration is the companion motivation to survival, and is the second strand of Darwinian theory. It is also such a long-held view of philosophers that its origins are obscure. From Heraclitus onward, an awareness of the cycle of life as that of hypertrophy and atrophy, melioration and decay, may be noted. This bleak view of human existence served as the impetus for many alternative and 'optimistic' theories both of philosophy and of theology, which strive to imbue human existence with some significant rationale, and to provide human beings with a protection against the

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23 *Ibid.*, p.458.
24 *Ibid.*, p.398.

knowledge of inevitable cessation of being.[25] It was Mill's view that, unfortunately, those alternative theories, by incorporating the dispassionate, scientific terms of the naturalists' theories and transforming them into 'the symbols of feelings which their original meaning will by no means justify' became 'the most copious sources of false taste, false philosophy, false morality, and even bad law.'[26] Mill, on the other hand, placed himself unequivocally in the camp of the Darwinians, and his acceptance of melioration as the second important aspect of the human *telos* is clearly apparent in his writing, but on what grounds did he do so?

The evidence of science found in Mill's work to underpin this position is infrequent but significant. Its significance lies in the lateness of its appearance in his writing in a bald form. Mill's attitude toward organized religion in the nineteenth century was antagonistic, and at the same time his position regarding the existence or otherwise of a Supreme Being was agnostic. There was, as far as he was aware, no conclusive evidence either to prove or to disprove such existence.[27] Mill was in no doubt, however, of the serious impediment to progress in, and reform of, social attitudes provided by organized religion in England. It was the bulwark of superstition and the worst kind of customary morality against the sort of reformation of social practices and institutions he wished to introduce. Nonetheless, Mill was aware that to criticize openly the established organized religion and to promote his own agnosticism would be counterproductive for his long-term ambition of creating an alternative social and political structure in England.[28]

Because of the constriction placed on open disavowal of the claims of organized religion, and of the serious consequences that would accompany the advertisement of his acceptance of the Darwinian theory of the end of individual existence as being a contribution to the survival and melioration of the species, these views were unpublished during his lifetime. The scientific evidence Mill relied upon to support his argument does not appear in the *Three Essays on Religion* , but the conclusions drawn from that evidence are clear. The second strand of the Darwinian thesis, which is that

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25 Mill had great sympathy for this need for an explanation and justification for existence. He believed that the need might even be channelled into a more productive end than that of supporting the existing organized religion. The steps Mill took in the direction of developing an alternative theology are hinted at in his expression of sympathy with the basic human need for a religion. See Mill 'Three Essays on Religion' pp.418-20.

26 *Ibid.*, p.373.

27 *Ibid.*, pp.434-441.

28 His awareness of the tension in his position is confirmed by Mill in 'Three Essays on Religion' p.372, and esp. p.404. See also Helen Taylor's 'Introductory Notice' to this work for further reinforcement.

the purpose of individual existence is also to strive for individual betterment through which will be achieved the betterment of the species, is endorsed by Mill with only the merest flicker of reservation.

Insofar as intelligence is the development of a capacity of human beings (in conjunction with other capacities) it is part of the natural striving for survival. Furthermore, according to Mill, its employment in the unfolding of human life has as its joint end (in conjuction with the achievement of survival) the melioration of both individual and species life. As such, Mill argued that the rational construction of artificial aids to human existence and betterment is as much a part of the natural process as those happenings in nature that are beyond human intervention. Reason is the natural process whereby human beings 'emancipate [themselves] from the laws of nature as a whole' and the direction of this emancipation is the melioration of existence.[29]

When Mill turned his attention to the natural development of both individuals and the species, he noted that there is an 'ordinary and predominant tendency of good [to progress] towards more good.' Health, strength, wealth, knowledge, and virtue, according to Mill, are cumulative in their effect, and their improvement makes it easier to gain other benefits.[30] Mill also went on to note that similarly the general tendency of counterproductive developments is also toward an increase in their debilitating effects. And it is this natural development of capacities, either for meliorative or for destructive ends, which occurs in human nature that provides the focus of Mill's socio-political theory. Natural development of capacities is in the direction of improvement[31], and the rational faculty in human beings, as Mill was aware, assists the development of both types of capacity. The recognition of the possibility of distorted development of the meliorative tendency in human beings in conjunction with his recognition of the possible perversion of those instincts and capacities that contribute to the survival of both individual and species, will be seen below to underpin Mill's goal to develop social and political theory that would assist the development of meliorative capacities and retard that of the counterproductive ones.

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29 *Ibid.*, pp.375, 379, 381.

30 *Ibid.*, p.388.

31 The term is used here in a non-evaluative sense. In this broad sense it is understood to mean only 'increase in efficiency'. As such it may be applied to both meliorative and destructive capacities.

While the evidence provided by the method of science to support the claim that melioration is part of the *telos* of human existence may be sparse, there is a second level of acceptance to be found throughout Mill's work. His incorporation of the meliorist position in his social and political thought has been recognized as a component of Mill's theoretical stance by commentators, although not without criticism.[32] In *Spirit of the Age* Part III, for example, Mill endorsed the concept of melioration when he stated that he is 'a firm believer in the improvement of the age.'[33] However, this is not to say that he was unaware of the possible pitfalls.[34] Again, in the *Logic* there is affirmed by Mill a reciprocal action between human beings and their circumstances which produces necessarily either a cycle or a progress in those circumstances. 'It is my belief, indeed, that the general tendency is, and will continue to be...one of improvement; a tendency towards a better and happier state.' This, he maintained, is a theorem of social science and confirmed his belief that there is progressive change both in the character of the human race, and in their outward circumstances so far as molded by themselves.[35]

It is this second level of acceptance of melioration as part of the *telos* of human existence that is the subject of further examination below. Melioration does not rest in Mill's writing as firmly as does the motivation of survival on the evidence of science, yet it is the aspect of Mill's teleological theory that provides the backbone to his socio-political theory. As indicated above, why this should be the case is explicable in terms of Mill's ambition, his influences, and the environment and culture in which he wrote.

§IV.v. What is Mill's understanding of the first principle of action according to the method of science? The Art of Life in Mill's hands proposed to itself the end of existence to be the good life.[36] Where Mill's concept of end differs from the narrowly moral conception of first principles promulgated by those to whom he was opposed is

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32 See e.g. John Gray, *Mill on liberty: a defence*. London, 1983 p.70ff. and Susan Mendus, *Toleration and the Limits of Liberalism*. London 1989 p.104. For criticism of Mill's embrace of meliorism, see John Gray, *Liberalisms: Essays in Political Philosophy*. London, 1991 p.226; Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*. London, 1972 p.274; Roland N. Stromberg, *European Intellectual History Since 1789*. New York, 1968 p.111; Charles van Doren, *The Idea of Progress*. New York, 1967 p.239.

33 Mill, 'Spirit of the Age III.' *Works*. Vol.22 p.253. See also 'A System of Logic.' Book VI Ch.X §3, pp.913-14; 'On Liberty.' pp.261, 263; 'Three Essays on Religion.' pp.396-97.

34 See e.g. Mill, 'Spirit of the Age Part III.' p.253

35 Mill, 'A System of Logic' Book VI Ch.X §3, pp.913-14.

36 That this is the case is uncontroversial. Controversy arises, however, the moment Mill's understanding of the nature of the 'good life' is broached. Where this occurs in Part Two, it will rest on the evidence produced in Chapters II-IV.

that it extends beyond 'the life of goodness' understood in terms either of duty, of obedience to the will of God, or of recognition of an external, immutable moral law, and into an account of the holistic 'good life' possible for every agent. In this sense it was intended by Mill to be the underpinning of a complete 'theory of life' and to embrace rather than to focus upon a theory of morality.[37] According to Mill's account of his methodology, in order to flesh out his theory of life he returned this first principle to the method of science with the command that science should determine the most efficient way in which such an end can be achieved.[38] This is the ultimate task of the method of science.

The conclusion Mill reached by the method of science is not unexpected. It is that the pursuit of happiness is the means whereby the good life will be achieved. This, then, is the scientifically determined first principle of action. And this first principle of action was then able to be taken up by Mill and installed as the normative end of existence, and as the foundation of the principle of utility, with the complete assurance of its justification via the method of science. The question to be addressed here is how did the method of science reach this conclusion?

Mill points the way in the opening paragraphs of *Utilitarianism*. 'All action is for the sake of some end, and rules of action, it seems natural to suppose, must take their whole character and colour from the end to which they are subservient.'[39] If the end is clear and known, he went on to say, then it must provide the benchmark test of what is right and wrong in action. This proposition is generally taken to be an oblique statement of Mill's ground for his ethical doctrine, with the greatest happiness considered to be the end of all action and the principle of utility to be the benchmark test of right and wrong. There is a danger here, however, insofar as to do so comes perilously close to understanding the proposition in terms of what is already taken to be its consequences rather than in terms of what empirically demonstrable evidence is available to support it. This is precisely the mistake Mill attributes to the *a priorist* theorists, and one he warned against.

The alternative method of analysis is first to understand the proposition at the level of the method of science, rather than that either of ethics or of the Art of Life. From this perspective, Mill is restating in a different form that which he has already been shown to believe: in order to achieve the good life, the art of life turns to the method of

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37 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' p.210.
38 Mill, 'A System of Logic.' Book VI Ch.XII §2, p.944.
39 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' p.206.

science for an account of what is the end of life and how is it to be achieved. Once the end is known, and the method of achievement understood, then rules of action may be framed to assist agents toward that end. And the 'whole character and colour' of those rules will extend into every aspect of life.[40] Approached from this direction, the concept of rules is also altered. The statement of an end, and the provision of an account of the means whereby that end may be reached, together imply a conditional rule: if the desire of action is to achieve a particular end, then the most efficient means should be utilized. Such conditional rules are the province of the indicative conclusions of science, and do not detract from the descriptive status of those conclusions.[41]

Using this alternative approach to discover the end of existence, it has been outlined above how Mill reached the conclusion that the *telos* for human beings is the survival and melioration both of the individual and of the species. Taking this as the benchmark against which all action is to be evaluated, the method of science is now required to provide a first principle of action. That principle of action is well-known to everyone even slightly familiar with Mill's work: it is to perform those actions that produce happiness. What remains to be discovered is why and how the method of science reached this conclusion. It is the discovery of the relation between the striving for happiness and the survival and melioration of the species.

The evidence from which the method of science reached the conclusion that 'actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they produce the reverse of happiness' - with rightness and wrongness here understood in the conditional sense - has already been presented in the preceding chapters. The indissoluble link between pleasure and desire in human nature, and the relation of that link to the *telos* discovered by the method of science has similarly been touched on in the present chapter. What follows is the distillation of the relation between pleasure, happiness, the end of existence understood as survival and melioration of the species, and the presentation of the conclusion of the method of science that the first principle of action is the pursuit of happiness.

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40 Mill's extension of the rules concerning the achievement of happiness beyond the moral department of life is one of the most important elements of his 'Proof of Utility' (See Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' pp.234-239.), and is examined in detail in Chapters V-VII.

41 For example, the evidence of science underpins the conditional rule: if one wants to function physically as a healthy human being then one has to eat a nutritionally well-balanced diet and to take frequent exercise. This uncontroversial and unexceptionable statement ranks on a par with: if one wants to achieve a certain type of life, then one has to behave in a certain manner. There may be objections to the certain type of life, but this is irrelevant to the conditonal rules whereby that life is achieved. They remain descriptions of the manner in which such a life may be lived.

There is a two-stage development of the first principle of action diffused across the indicative information that comprises Mill's account of human nature. The first stage is the discovery of the first principle as it applies to all animals, and the second stage is the discovery of that principle as it applies specifically to human beings. As the stages unfold it will become apparent that the separation of *telos* and first principle of the method of science is an artificial one undertaken for purposes of explanation only, and that in practice motivation and end in human beings are inextricable. That this is the case in the evidence of science is then carried through by Mill into the depiction of the *telos* and ultimate principle of action that form the ground of his enlarged Utilitarianism.

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The first stage of discovery of the principle directing all actions has already been outlined above, and will be rapidly reiterated here. Mill affirmed that human nature, in common with the natures of all other animals, is instinctively and dispositionally inclined to survival and melioration. Furthermore, these goals have operated as the *telos* of human beings throughout the life of the species. The implication in this affirmation is that such instincts and dispositions were operating to that end prior to the development of reason in the human species. Therefore, granting that reason is a relatively recent phenomenon, the impulse to achieve the end of existence in that prerational state must have been driven by something other than reason. Whatever was the motivational force for survival and melioration during that period, and remains the motivational force in animals other than human beings, must be the first principle of action.

Mill made clear that the single driving force for human activity at the level of being prior to reason, which in the present state of human being comprises what he termed the 'lower' nature, is pleasure and the avoidance of pain. As explained above, those activities which either are accompanied by pleasure or avoid pain are also those activities that contribute to the survival and melioration of both individual and species at the level of simple animal nature. They are also the activities Mill understood to satisfy simple animal appetites and desires. From this evidence presented above by the method of science, the conclusion of that method is that just as the striving for pleasure and the avoidance of pain contribute to the survival and melioration of the species, they become, in combination, the first principle of action at the stage of human development that is prior to, or outside, reason. The naturally developed first principle of action is the striving for pleasure which comprises those activities that contribute to the survival and melioration of both the individual and the species.

How the pursuit of pleasure achieves the *telos* of existence at this pre-rational level has been noted. At a more sophisticated level, Aristotle described pleasure as attaching to the exercise of faculties, and Mill has been shown to have concurred with this description when he described the importance of cultivating and developing the specifically human capacities. When this agreement is set side by side with Mill's understanding of the function of dispositions and instincts in the survival and melioration of both individual and species, the place of pleasure in the variety of processes becomes clear. Just as the contrasting descriptions of the abstract end of existence for any species and that for individual human beings serves to clarify Mill's position concerning that end, so the comparison between the pleasurable sensations experienced by other species of animals with those pleasures experienced by human beings will serve to bring out the nature of Mill's understanding of the function of pleasure in the achievement of the concrete end of existence for individual human beings.

The manner in which all animals are impelled to preserve and enhance individual existence, and to contribute to the survival and betterment of the species of which they are members is through the exercise of instincts and dispositions. The motive to exercise such instincts and dispositions is supplied by the quality of the sensations that accompany their exercise, and of those that attend the failure to exercise them. The instinct to eat nourishing food, for example, is rewarded by the satisfaction of hunger; the instinct to seek shelter from inclement circumstances, is rewarded by melioration of bodily condition; and so on. The sensations that accompany life-preserving and -enhancing activities are such that they make the effort of doing so worthwhile. Conversely, the sensations animals feel when instincts and dispositions are denied or the animal is unable to satisfy them are frustrating, distressing, and unpleasant. Animal behaviours with regard to others of their species demonstrate instincts for pair-bonding to produce offspring and for the nourishment and protection of young, as well as that of congregating in packs, herds, or flocks for mutual benefit. There is also ample evidence provided by animal observers that the sensations felt by animals when exercising these instincts and dispositions resemble those which human beings regard as pleasant.[42]

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42 For Mill's concurrence with this description, see Mill, 'Bentham.' *Works*. Vol.10 p.96; 'Whewell on Moral Philosophy.' *Works*. Vol 10 pp.185-187; 'Utilitarianism.' p.248.

The significance of pleasure, at the instrumental level, in the life of both individual animal and species is plain to see Without such a stimulus, or reward, the performance of such actions as contribute to the survival of the particular animal and of the species is not guaranteed, and the highest possible chance of maintaining and improving the existence of either or both is not ensured. Because the pleasurable stimuli attach to the exercise of those instincts and dispositions that contribute to the survival of the species, they are instrumental in that survival. Because the same exercise produces pleasurable stimuli for the individual animal, the reception of such pleasant sensations is end in itself for the particular animal.

How does this account of pleasurable sensations in animals relate to the experience of pleasure in human beings? Human beings, insofar as they share the same animal instincts and dispositions, also exercise them in order to preserve and enhance the life of the individual and of the species. They also, as individuals, receive rewards in the form of pleasurable satisfactions after exercising these innate impulses to behave in certain ways, and suffer similar discomforts when unable to achieve the satisfaction that accompanies such exercise.[43] Thus it is that pleasure serves the same function in the impelling of human beings to exercise their animal instincts for survival and enhancement of both themselves as individuals and the community, as it does in all other animal species. Just as in other animal species, the pleasant sensation that accompanies or follows the exercise of an instinct or disposition is an end in itself for the individual human being, whilst at the same time is instrumental, or a means, in the continuing process of survival and melioration of the species

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The second stage of analysis of the first principle of action as concluded by the method of science focuses on the difference between the human and all other animal species. At the concrete level that difference is most apparent in the complexity and efficiency of organization of resources and in the capacity of human beings to influence and alter their circumstances and surroundings. The development of technology, of highly complex social and economic structures, of religions and cultures, are the external evidence of the gulf between the human and other animal species.

The single most important reason for the emergence of human beings as the most efficient of the animal species in terms of the *telos* of existence is the development of the capacity for reasoning. At the abstract level, the defining characteristic of the

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43 This analysis is a paraphrase of that presented by Mill in his 'Three Essays on Religion.' See p.458.

human species is the ability to reason.[44] With the development of reason, so the survival and melioration of both individual and the human species entered a new realm of possibilities. The significant point to be noted here is that there is also a concomitant expansion of the possibilities of misadventure as the level of complexity of activities increases. How did Mill's method of science express this advance in organizational efficiency in terms of a first principle of action?

By factoring reason into the account of the first principle of action at the lower level of human nature, and by expanding that account of nature to include what Mill termed specifically human capacities, the result is the refinement of the striving for pleasure as the first principle of action into the striving for happiness. This occurs as the individual agent applies reason to both the quality and quantity of pleasure, to the conditions of its continuation or repetition, and to the awareness of the circumstances and environment in which the state of mind occurs. In the present highly complex development of the human species, the striving for happiness is the refinement of the earlier striving for pleasure, and it is now happiness that underpins both public and private activities. As such, according to Mill's method of science, it is happiness that is the driving force toward the *telos* for both individuals and the human species in complex industrial society.

To conclude that the striving for happiness is the first principle of action is not, however, to abandon striving for pleasure as part of that principle. According to Mill's method of science, the two sets of desires exist concurrently in all human beings and are both significant in the achievement of the human *telos*. Referral to Mill's explanation of their relation shows how this occurs. The instrumental value of the 'lower' or animal pleasures, in human beings, is found in their insurance of the performance of actions that contribute to the survival and melioration of the individual and, more importantly, of the species. Their status as ends of action in the individual human being is the pay-out of that insurance.

At the same time, the greater quality and complexity of human individual and community life, brought about through the exercise of reason and exhibited in the cultivation and development of specifically human capacities, is only possible because

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44 There is an interesting argument that the capacity for reason itself rests upon the accidental development of an extraordinarily flexible and subtle larynx in human beings, which, allied to the possession of the opposed digit, underpins communication and recording of information. This is perfectly compatible with the psychophysiological position argued here to be taken by Mill.

of the pleasures that attach to the exercise of those capacities. For example, the capacity to create buildings, to perform scientific experiments, to excel, in fact, in any of the specifically human capacities (that is, those capacities that involve the use of reason) might be ignored in favour of the exercise of pleasure-producing animal instincts and dispositions, were they not also productive of pleasures. So it is that the exercise of these specifically human faculties has the same result in terms of the preservation and enhancement of individual human life and of the life of the human species as do the less complex set of instincts and dispositions that human beings share with other animals. In terms of the abstract end of existence of the human species they are vital means, as is the pleasure that accompanies their exercise: in terms of the concrete end of the individual human being, the pleasures that attach to them are ends in themselves.

It is in the balancing, the summation, and the organization of achievement of the complete range of pleasures available to human beings, in a way that is both efficient in the sense of maximizing the quantity and of achieving a balance between quantity and quality, that constitutes happiness. This complicated procedure is the province of reason in conjunction with the feeling states of pleasure, operating in the context of the individual life and using as its medium the cultivation and development of the potentials in the spectrum of capacities, that results in the achievement of happiness in the individual agent. And just as the activities that produce pleasure in all animal species are those that concurrently contribute to the survival and melioration of the individual animal and the species, so the more complicated processes and activities that produce happiness in the human being are equally those that contribute to the continuation and betterment of both individual and human species. Thus it is that the conclusion of the method of science is that the first principle of action in human beings whereby they will move toward their individual and community *telos* is to strive to achieve happiness.

§IV.vi. Conclusion of method of science. There is a similarity between Mill's account of pleasure and that of Aristotle in their joint linkage of pleasure to function. The desire for, and attainment and prolongation of, pleasure is noted by Aristotle to be linked to the exercise of capacities. Pleasure accompanies, and embellishes, the achievement of excellence and of end in activity, and because excellence and the achievement of end is good, pleasure is therefore considered good. Mill's functional account of pleasure expands upon and fills in some of the gaps in the Aristotelian explanation. Mill's analysis begins by stripping away all the elements of human nature that have 'no apparent object but to keep the machine going,' and then examines those

remaining. The remaining functions are those that comprise the elements that give pleasure and those that give pain. These, Mill claimed, are equally necessary as 'contrivances for keeping the creature or its species in existence,' insofar as pleasures are generally sensations that 'attract to the things which maintain individual or community existence' and pains are those that 'deter from such as would destroy it.'[45] Thus Mill affirmed that desire for pleasure has, as its primary function, that of preservation and melioration of the individual and the species.[46]

This expanded understanding of the nature of pleasure became the core of Mill's analysis of happiness. The inclusion of reason, and the location of the interaction between reason and feelings in the environment and circumstances of the individual agent, enabled Mill to present an analysis of happiness that established its origin firmly in the nature and evolution of human beings as the primary rational species. The method of science, which in Mill's case included an awareness and acknowledgment of the Darwinian thesis, enabled him to elaborate on Aristotle's classification of happiness as that which is naturally sought by all agents. He concluded that the underlying reason for their search for happiness is linked to the *telos* of existence. Pleasure is the prerational reward for actions that contribute to the survival and melioration of the species, and happiness is the reward available to rational human beings for the organization of pleasure into secure, affordable, and repeatable patterns of sensation with which to accomplish the same end.

This analysis made by Mill highlights two important aspects of his theory that will later reappear in his development of a broad ethical doctrine. The first is that not only do pleasure and happiness have a significant degree of overlap insofar as happiness is comprised in part of pleasure and that the simple animal pleasures, when organized and balanced by reason, are equally important as happinesses as are the cultivation and development of specifically human capacities; but also that the first principle of action and the *telos* of existence overlap to the extent that they are only distinguishable in analysis, not in practice.

The second aspect is that the introduction of reason, as a core component of happiness, brings with it the possibility of malfunction. If an agent is operating with a flawed understanding of what is pleasure and what is happiness, distortion can occur. This is where reason is both the most beneficial and the most potentially destructive

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45 Mill, 'Three Essays on Religion,' p.457.
46 *Ibid.*, p.458.

element in the pursuit of happiness and the achievement of the individual and community *telos*. The complex nature of happiness is far more vulnerable to mutation and misdirection than is the simple desire for pleasure as it operated at the primitive level of human development. The circumstances and environment of both individual and group are now significant factors in the possible level of success in the achievement of end. The spectrum of levels of achievement of the *telos* of existence has become, with the introduction of the complicated motivation of happiness, much wider. The problem of how best to achieve a qualitative increase in the level of melioration in both individual and species - which, as indicated above, is identical to achieving a qualitative increase in the level of undistorted happiness - is now present. An analysis of the manner in which Mill approached this problem begins with his shift of the indicative *telos* and first principle of action discovered by the method of science into the ground of his prescriptive theory.

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Part Two.
Mill's Broad Ethical Doctrine and Its Ground.

Part Two. Introductory Remarks. The psychological stage of Mill's development of socio-political theory is completed in the early part of Part II. The ground established in Part I concerning Mill's understanding of human nature and its *telos*, and particularly his location of reason as without independent impact on volition, has established his indicative understanding of the motivation and processes of human action as being significantly different from that of the majority of participants in the contemporary debate concerning moral pluralism. It has not removed him from that debate however. Instead, there has emerged a picture of the foundation on which Mill was to erect his broad ethical doctrine unlike yet compatible with the variety of positions taken by present-day thinkers. Mill's understanding of the relation between desire and reason, between reason and happiness, and their joint relation to the achievement of the *telos* of existence, provides many points at which he is of interest to those thinkers who are concerned with the development of a political theory that can encompass moral pluralism without abandoning the search for universal application.

Part II focuses on the translation of the evidence concerning the nature of happiness and its purpose and function in human existence into the ground and principles of a broad ethical doctrine. It is an examination of the relation between the imperatives to act and the development of a body of rules and precepts developed by Mill's Art of Life which were intended to assist the achievement of *telos* for both individual and the community.

Mill's first goal for the Art of Life was the assertion and defense of an acknowledged unproven first principle of action as the expression of his universal virtue theory. The ultimate principle of action - so act that the result of action is the production of the greatest possible happiness for all concerned - is Mill's understanding of the bedrock of 'a cosmic moral order,' to use Taylor's phrase. Mill's defense of this single and unifying principle of action as the basis for a comprehensive ethical doctrine is to refer repeatedly to the evidence provided by the method of science, to the effect that it is

both teleologically and historically justified. As the principle was elaborated by Mill it was repeatedly reachored in his account of human nature and its *telos*. The strength of Mill's argument lies in just that connection. For the principle of utility as Mill justified it to be overturned there must be an attack on his account of human nature and its *telos* as presented in Part I.[1]

The establishment of the principle of happiness as the ultimate principle of action and so the necessary but unproven first principle of a broad ethical doctrine does not, however, answer the demands of that doctrine. Critics could well point to Mill's account of happiness and note that it is not one but a plurality of happinesses. As such, they will inevitably be in conflict at some time, within the particular agent, or within the community of which the agent is a member. The very notion of the 'greatest possible happiness' is an aggregate of this plurality of happinesses. If this is the case, then many different sorts of theorist - including classical Benthamite utilitarians - can claim the same end to be the goal of their theory. Mill's theory is required to go further and explain the relation of the plurality of happinesses to the central concept of happiness as posited in the principle of utility, and it is in the explanation he provided, and which is presented below, that Mill engages once more with contemporary debate.

Mill was aware that the ultimate principle of action was not, in itself, able to guide action in the variety of its expressions in the normal course of an agent's life. Accordingly, his second goal for the Art of Life was the establishment of a plurality of particular virtue theories, each defensible in its own terms, but each related to all others through a common relation to the universal principle of happiness. These secondary principles of action must rest upon and be derivable from Mill's account of human nature and its *telos* if consistency is to be maintained. Mill's overview was similar to that of Aristotle in that the cultivation and development of dispositions, faculties and capacities is the route to happiness. Thus happiness is achieved via

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1 This is not to deny that other forms of attack are possible, nor that they have been employed to deny Mill's thesis. However, to refuse to engage his account of human nature and its *telos* is to refuse to engage the premises on which his enlarged principle of utility rests. As such, any argument that proceeds in this fashion is seen to rest ultimately on a simple denial of Mill's assertion of the principle rather than a refutation. It is precisely that form of attack which Mill regarded as bad philosophy, and against which he fought throughout his writing career. It will be examined below that Mill was well aware of the shift he made from the 'is' of the method of science to the imperative 'ought' of moral doctrine, but his explanation of the subsumption of the imperative in the broad conditionals of his ethical doctrine is reinforced by his attachment of that shift to his account of human nature and its *telos*. Once again, objections to the shift must address and be able to overcome that objection if they are to succeed.

activity in the dispositions, faculties and capacities which are present as potentials in all human natures. In Mill's theory, development of the principles which promote such activity, and so guide agents to happiness, are the secondary principles of action, and they are linked each to all in their joint derivation from the ultimate principle of happiness.

Mill's next step was to acknowledge and formalize the introduction of a variety of classes of good. With the development of secondary principles of action, Mill was able to explain his claim that some activities are more valuable than others in that they produce a higher quality of happiness and so a different sort of good, and to formulate this into a general theory of value. The explanation he gave depends for its justification on the acceptance of his understanding of human nature and its *telos*. Once again Mill's theory engages with the contemporary debate. The introduction of a general theory of value brought Mill's ethical theory forward to the point where it was able to provide an explanation of how, within the range of possible goods, within the spectrum of potentials which comprise individual nature and within the environment and particular contextual conditions of their lives, agents were to achieve the greatest possible good. Mill did so by the introduction of the concept of self-realization, and its adjunct, his theory of conduct.

Self-realization, according to Mill, is the cultivation and development of dispositions etc., possessed in potential by each agent. Self-realization to its highest degree - what Mill termed the perfectibility of agents, and so engaged again with contemporary debate in his understanding and defense of the term rejected by so many present-day thinkers - is identical to the achievement by the agent of the greatest possible happiness available to him or her. Simultaneously, self-realization, as the modification and improvement of nature, is equivalent to the agent achieving his or her particular *telos*.

There are a number of objections to the concept of self-realization, and Mill foresaw these and addressed them. They are: first, agents will, as part of their nature, choose to cultivate and develop only those dispositions which bring them the greatest happiness. These will not necessarily include altruistic dispositions, and so pursuit of such self-realization will militate *against* the achievement of the greatest possible happiness for the community. Secondly, agents cannot develop all potentials to their greatest possible degree because of lack of time and resources. They cannot then achieve their greatest possible happiness. Instead they have to choose between a multiplicity of happinesses and if happiness is the ground of ethical doctrine to

acknowledge this is to accede to the claim of the moral pluralists. Thirdly, the achievement of happiness, in Mill's terms, requires circumstances conducive to the development of dispositions etc., to their greatest degree possible. These are unavailable to a great number of agents. In fact, counterproductive conditions and circumstances prevail in many lives. This means that many agents are condemned to lives that fail to achieve the greatest possible happiness.

Mill's response to these objections was the expansion of his explanation of self-realization, and his depiction of its operation in the context of environment and of the particular circumstances and conditions of the individual agent. By introducing the concept of harmony and balance, Mil noted that agents must cultivate and develop a balance and harmony between dispositions etc., as well as within them. When it is remembered that some of the dispositions found naturally in all agents are other-directed, Mill's injunction to harmonious development necessarily includes the development of these altruistic feelings.

The recognition of the force of circumstances and environment in shaping the lives of agents is also incorporated in Mill's development of a broad ethical doctrine. His promotion of the instructed class, in other words that group of agents whose environment and circumstances have enabled them to advance a considerable way along the path of harmonious self-realization, to the position of general mentors, guides and exemplars to the as-yet uninstructed class was a significant step in overcoming the problem of original condition of agents in their variety of particular circumstances. The development of his theory of conduct, with its differentiation between commendation and command, and its recognition of the necessity of opportunity to experiment with lifestyles and activities in order to *understand* rather than simply to memorize the code of ethics that leads to the greatest possible happiness for each and all is once again firmly grounded in his account of human nature and its motivation to action Each step of this process demonstrates the engagement of Mill's broad ethical doctrine with the current debate.

There are, in Part II, several further points at which Mill's theory makes contact with the contemporary argument concerning the status of moral rules and precepts in the development of political theory. Reason is demonstrated in Part I to be a means employed by consciousness to achieve the satisfaction of desires for happiness. Mill returns to his understanding of reason and weaves it into his account of the development of both universal and pluralist moral theory. Mill's place for reason in the development of broad ethical theory is confirmation of the claim that for Mill all

ethical judgments are connected to the striving for happiness. They may or may not be efficient in that regard, but their intention is to achieve happiness. As far as this touches the contemporary debate, it results in the notion of the priority of right over good being undermined, as also is the notion of neutrality.

Harmonious self-realization is a perfectibilist theory, and in its development Mill's holistic philosophy engages the objection of political liberals to the possibility of perfection. The concepts of perfectibility and progress are addressed more completely in Part III, but their introduction here flags the way in which Mill's theory will address their problematic nature. Perfectibility is available to all agents regardless of their original potentials in dispositions, and in their contingent circumstances. In the demonstration of Mill's understanding of perfection and of each agent's capacity to achieve it there is also an examination of his recognition of the impact of environmental relativity and the relativity of implicit qualifying conditions on the achievement of self-realization. This provides his response to the communitarian criticism of liberalism as rejecting context.

Finally, the problem of reconciliation between liberal individualism and communitarian group-membership is addressed in Mill's understanding of the manner in which harmonious self-realization is achieved. Harmonious self-realization, according to Mill, requires the full participation of the individual agent in community, and the cultivation and development of other-directed dispositions. Neither self- nor other-interest is dominant: in the circumstances most conducive to happiness they operate in harmony and balance. His depiction of the manner of their co-operation suggests a way of reconciling the apparently antagonistic key elements of both liberalism and communitarianism.

In Part II, Mill is demonstrated to have developed a broad ethical theory and doctrine wherein the commensurability and compatibility of apparently antagonistic moral beliefs is discovered through the medium of the universal virtue theory which underpins the enlarged principle of utility. In this way, also, Mill reconciles the necessary conditions which underpin liberal and communitarian positions and which are the defining core of their antagonism at the level of ethical theory. Both universal and pluralist moral theories come together in the common ground of Mill's account of human nature and the end of existence for both individuals and the community understood as expressed in the striving for happiness In conjunction with his reconciliation at the level of psychophysiology, found in Part I, the argument for Mill's position to be repositioned in the contemporary debate is reinforced.