Chapter VII.
Mill's Theory of Self-Realization in a Context of Variables, and His Theory of Conduct. Commendation and Command, Virtue and Duty Examined.

§VII.i. Mill's theory of self-realization: unpacking the *telos* of existence. Mill's understanding of the *telos* of existence of the human individual and species has so far been depicted in its abstract form, with an indication that it is found in the development of the dispositions etc., of human nature, but without expansion of that link. The next step in unraveling the content of Mill's broad ethical doctrine is to examine his opening out of the end of existence, and the relation of that end to his theory of value. Examination of this process reveals that Mill's elaboration of individual and community *telos* and its relation to happiness implies a formula for conduct applicable to the particular existential world of any agent and so carries Mill's project closer to his goal of establishing a program of concrete action grounded in the enlarged principle of utility. In so doing, it may also be interpreted as an alternative and reconciliatory position between the traditional claims of universal virtue theorists and contemporary adherence to the moral pluralism thesis.

Self-realization, as the purpose or end of human existence, was not an uncommon element in nineteenth century political and social theory.[1] It formed a key component in many of the European Romanticist and humanist theories, and the dream of the emergence of *ein Volk von hoher Kultur* had crossed the Channel to influence the English Romanticists. Where Mill's theory differs from those of many of his influences is in its materialist, empiricist foundation. He rejected, as intellectually untenable, the transcendentalist origins of the European notions of self-realization, and substituted as an alternative evidence grounded in the natural sciences, and demonstrable either ostensively or by inductive logic. His theory of self-realization, as an expanded and concretized account of the *telos* of existence, will be seen to rest upon a set of premises drawn from his account of human nature.

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1 Mill was familiar with, and drew upon its presentation in, the works of Goethe, Schleirmacher, von Humboldt, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Carlyle, as well as the classical accounts of self-development. He was also aware of and had read the accounts of self-development in the minor works of Pestalozzi, Maccall, and Warren.

Mill's development of a theory of self-realization comprises his exposition of the concept of *telos* at the next level of theory. His account of what is, and how to achieve, the possible self is an advance on self-realization theory prior to and including the nineteenth century.[2] It is so in that it is undertaken by Mill with clear acknowledgment of the modifying effect of any of the multiplicity of possible contexts and of the variations between agents in terms of their original potentials. It will be demonstrated below that Mill's theory of self-realization embraces all possible intervening variables and is a dynamic and sophisticated account of how the unique *telos* of the individual agent is to be achieved in whatever existential circumstances and conditions make up the context within which that achievement is to take place. As such, it is the key point of reference in Mill's holistic theory. All the contributory theories are linked in this central explanatory theory.

The first stage in Mill's process of explanation is the depiction of the broad outline of self-realization which occupies the place in his broad ethical doctrine equivalent to that of the *telos* of existence in his psychophysiological theory. Furthermore, it is in that earlier theory that the ground for Mill's development of a theory of self-realization is to be found. The evidence of science examined in Part I confirmed for Mill that human beings are comprised at a psychophysiological level of a large number of dispositions, capacities, faculties, and talents which range across a spectrum from the most primitive animal appetites, shared by human beings with other living creatures, to a set of specifically human capacities. Each of these capacities, etc., is present originally in the individual agent in the form of a potential only. This is 'the raw material of human nature,' and the degree in which the potential is present comprises the irreducible individuality of a particular agent. It is not at birth as yet realized, and becomes so only through the processes of association and experience.

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2 The concept of self-realization was, and remains, a point of contention among philosophers and social commentators. For support of the concept see e.g. James Chowning Davies, 'The Priority of Human Needs and the Stages of Political Development.' in Pennock J. R. and Chapman J. W.(eds) *Human Nature in Politics*. New York, 1977 pp.157-196; and Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York, 1973. pp.52, 218. For an interesting counter-argument to that presented here, which focuses on the fact that self-realization does not logically stem from the concept of human beings as motivated primarily by species and self-preservation, see Peter Corning 'Human Nature *Redivivus*.' in Pennock and Chapman, *op.cit.* Further opposition to the concept of self-realization may be found in Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*. London, 1985; John Plamenatz. *Karl Marx's Philosophy of Man*. Oxford, 1975.

The point of pivotal significance for Mill's unfolding ethical doctrine is that it is only with exercise that the potential of any capacity is realized. He argued further that the evidence of science demonstrates here is an accompanying feeling of pleasure attached to the realization of potential in capacities through the medium of action and, crucially, that such feelings of pleasure, when maintained over time and in surplus to any accompanying feelings of pain, become recognizable as a durable feeling of happiness. This account of the manner in which happiness is achieved is the evidence that underpins Mill's depiction of the happiness principle as the motivation of all action to be directed by nature toward the *telos* of existence for both individual and species.[3]

Equally important in the unraveling of Mill's ethical doctrine is his recognition that human beings are natural creatures, and that every aspect of their natures must be taken into account in whatever courses of action are prescribed by the Art of Life to achieve the *telos* of existence.[4] Happiness, according to Mill, is a complex feeling involving all elements of consciousness. It is as much present in the satisfaction of the desires of the shared animal appetites and capacities as it is in the satisfaction of the desires of the specifically human capacities. As such, it is as much visceral as it is intellectual. This important link between the variety of happinesses and the achievement of *telos* was confirmed by Mill when he noted that individuals achieve realization of some faculties using primarily reason, and of others by the exercise primarily of feelings.[5] Therefore, he concluded, socio-political prescription must involve the totality of human nature, the gratification of self-interested desire as well as the pleasures of disinterested action, if it is intended to operate in the existential world.[6]

This position is expressed in Mill's development of the concept of self-realization as the manner in which the individual agent, in the environment of his or her time, could

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3 The echoes of Aristotelian theory are clearly to be heard in Mill's welding of the cultivation and development of dispositions to the achievement of happiness.

4 Today, and at most levels of analysis, such an appreciation is understood today to be trivially true. However, this understanding was not widespread in the England of the mid-nineteenth century. The conception of human beings as the highest creature in God's creation, and in a separate category to all other creatures, is implicit in the bulk of social and political theorizing up to and including the period of Mill's lifetime. Even today that conception is still a force to be reckoned with. While supernatural grounds for the view may have been seriously eroded in this century, and despite all evidence to the contrary, there still remains the lingering notion that human beings are, in some way and at some elusive level, able to dissever their rational choices of action, and so their choice of moral and political codes of behaviour, from their animal natures.

5 Mill, 'Autobiography.' *Works*. Vol.1 p.147.

6 Mill, 'Three Essays on Religion.' *Works*. Vol.10 p.380.

best achieve the greatest possible happiness. In the further development of the thesis argument, Mill's focus on self-realization as the means whereby happiness is achieved will be seen to occupy the centre of his web of theory, and is the key to tracing out the relation of its interlocking parts.[7] After drawing out and linking together the set of principles that underpin Mill's theory of self-realization, and noting how it melds with those that comprise his general theory of value, the ground is prepared for the examination of the logical emergence of his theory of conduct, which is the last and most important part of his broad ethical doctrine.

What is the shape of the self-realization theory developed by Mill? If it is to withstand the scrutiny of opponents of self-realization theories generally there are several necessary conditions it must fulfill. It must be intellectually satisfying, because it does not have the protection against hostile enquiry of the sanctity possessed by religious prescription. It must be desired by the individual agent, because it concerns a finite period of time, the only time known certainly to be available to the individual, and cannot hold out the promise of a glorious afterlife. It must be desired by the great majority of individuals, because unless it possesses broad appeal (i.e. it holds the promise of increasing the sum of good for all agents regardless of their personal qualities and attributes) it will be rejected by significant parts of that community. Finally, it must be realizable; in other words, it must conform to the core of human nature, and be within the power of the every individual to achieve. In addition to satisfying these necessary conditions Mill's particular theory of self-realization must be depicted in terms of the enlarged principle of utility, which means that it must also contrive to increase the sum of happiness in the community simultaneously to achieving the maximization of happiness for the individual. Does Mill's theory satisfy these conditions and achieve this end?[8]

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7 For recognition of the concept of self-realization as central to the totality of Mill's theorizing see: Alan Ryan, *The Philosophy of John Stuart Mill.* 2nd Ed. London, 1987 p.255; Wendy Donner, *The Liberal Self: John Stuart Mill's Moral and Political Philosophy.* Ithaca, 1991 p.4, and 'Mill on Liberty of Self-Development.' *Dialogue* Vol.36 1987 pp.227-237; John Skorupski, *John Stuart Mill.* London, 1989 p.13; Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason.* Baltimore, 1971 pp.193, 195-7.

8 Much criticism of self-realization theories rests on this ground. Bentham's Utilitarianism, for example, fails to satisfy these conditions. It is not intellectually satisfying, nor does it demonstrate how the self-serving individual will benefit the community. Also, it rests upon a simplistic account of human nature. Similarly, Godwin's theory of self-realization expressed as a form of communism fails because, while intellectually satisfying, and theoretically beneficial to both individual and community. it, too, rests upon an account of human nature which fails to acknowledge the tension between the animal and what Mill terms the specifically human aspects of that nature..

The substructure of the theory of self-realization, drawn from Mill's work and already demonstrated, consists of his account of human nature and his revised and expanded version of the ultimate principle of action. It is clear that Mill developed an understanding of human nature which chimes with the complexity of behaviours that occur in actual public and private life. It is many levels of sophistication greater than that of Bentham, and, consequently, Mill's modified version of Bentham's principle of utility, which rests upon it, is also more sophisticated.

From the beginning, Mill's account of human nature reflects his rejection of any supernatural explanation for the origin of the species.[9] Man, according to Mill, is not a creature set above other animals although burdened with animal appetites. He is, rather, a species of animal possessed of a specific cluster of faculties which characterize his humanity. The human species has a spectrum of faculties and appetites that ranges from those shared with other animals to those found only in human beings. These last he terms the higher faculties, and it is their possession that sets the human species above all others.[10]

Mill attached to this perception of a spectrum of faculties three significant observations which provide the rationale for self-realization. The first is that the mere possession of human faculties does not guarantee their possessor the status of human being. The reason for this is that the faculties exist, in the new-born child, only as potentials to be realized. Each human being, according to Mill, is born with a spectrum of faculties and dispositions, ranging from those common to more than one

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9 On the subject of Christianity, Mill echoed his father in considering it to be 'the greatest enemy of morality... by setting up factitious excellencies - beliefs in creeds, devotional feelings and ceremonies not connected with the good of human kind - and causing these to be accepted as substitutes for genuine virtues. See Mill, 'Autobiography.' *Works.* Vol. 1 p.43. Set against this position is Mill's praise of organized religion as the vehicle with which to persuade men to 'an ideal vision of moral greatness.' It inspires the feelings and imagination toward the achievement of 'grace of character' and of virtue. See Mill quoted in E. August, *John Stuart Mill: A Mind at Large.* New York, 1975. p.9: Mill, 'Autobiography.' p.47. Mill's dream of a religion of humanity rested on this latter view combined with the belief that such a religion, based on the rules and precepts which underpin the enlarged principle of utility, would act as a stepping-stone for non-rational agents from a condition of happiness comprised only of the cultivation and development of the lower appetites to an introduction to the happinesses of similar cultivation of the higher and specifically human nature which all agents possess in potential. The tendency in all agents toward religious belief could be harnessed in this way to provide the means whereby the principle of utility could be made first attractive and then rationally comprehensible to all human beings regardless of their original starting point in terms of intelligence, education, particular circumstances, and environment. See Mill, 'Utility of Religion.' *Works.* Vol.10 pp.405, 418-19; 'Autobiography.' p.43; 'The Gorgias.' *Works.* Vol.11 p.150; 'Utilitarianism.' *Works.* Vol. 10 p.205; 'On Liberty.' *Works.* Vol.18 p.271.

10 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' p.210.

species of animal to those that are uniquely human. At birth, these faculties and dispositions are present as potentials only.[11] Human beings must cultivate and develop 'the raw material of human nature' through education and association, through participation and observation, in their private lives and in the community, in order to realize their humanity.

The second is that the degree of potential realization of faculties and dispositions varies from faculty to faculty and individual to individual, as, for example, does height and coloring.[12] There is no effect on the possible general happiness of individuals in this variation inasmuch as all individuals are potentially able to achieve happiness through an infinite variety of combinations of cultivated and developed dispositions etc. It is important, Mill noted, that this observation that human beings are not homogeneous, and should not be expected to become so, is incorporated into an understanding of self-realization.

The third and crucial observation is that human beings are naturally social, and that a sector of the spectrum of faculties in each person consists of dispositions the potentials of which are realized only in society and whose realization necessarily involves other-directed action. The exercise and development of the 'social interests,' which Mill accused Bentham of ignoring in his (Bentham's) account of human nature, is the realizing by the individual of their potential in these dispositions.[13]

Finally Mill pulled all the aspects of his theory of self-realization together. The potentials in dispositions in their various degrees; the role of reason in choosing the most promising path of action to achieve the happiness which accompanies their cultivation and development; the impact on the individual of the range of intervening variables which occur constantly both internally and externally to modify the possibilities for happiness; and the means whereby the natural striving for happiness might be guided - all are understood by Mill to be compatible, always providing von Humboldt's maxim of harmony and balance is adhered to. In short, Mill concluded that in order to achieve the self-realization of the true nature and character of the individual *qua* individual, the realization of the potential of all faculties and dispositions must occur in balance and harmony.[14]

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11 Mill, 'Nature.' *Works.* Vol. 10 pp.396-97.
12 Mill, 'On Liberty.' p.270.
13 Mill, 'On Liberty.' pp.260-64; 'Principles of Political Economy.' *Works.* Vol.3 pp.763-65; 'Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy.' *Works.* Vol.10 p.15.
14 Mill, 'On Liberty.' p.261; 'Nature.' p.393.

Mill's justification for the theory of self-realization is that happiness, which is the objective of his revised and enlarged principle of utility and the sole criterion of value, is achieved through the realization of the potential in faculties and dispositions. That being so, the achievement of the good life for the individual requires the realization of the potential in all faculties and dispositions, from the animal to the highest, in balance and in harmony. This harmonious self-realization produces the greatest possible happiness for each individual, and, by way of each individual's realization of the potential in his or her social, or other-directed, faculties and dispositions, produces happiness for society. The greatest possible happiness for society will occur, according to Mill's theory of harmonious self-realization, at that moment when each individual comprising that society achieves the greatest possible personal happiness.

This theory of harmonious self-realization was adumbrated by Mill, in a letter to Thomas Carlyle as early as 1834. 'Though I hold the good of the species . . . to be the *ultimate* end (which is the alpha and omega of my utilitarianism),' he wrote, 'I believe with the fullest Belief that this end can in no other way be forwarded but . . . by each taking for his exclusive aim the development of what is best in himself.'[15] A quarter of a century later, in the full power of his maturity of thought, Mill continued to develop that theme. The core around which he developed the text of 'On Liberty' is Humbolt's statement that 'the end of man . . . is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole.' By 1859, Mill's understanding of self-realization was a fine balance between the Greek ideal of self-development and the Platonic and Christian ideal of self-government, expressing the end of his materialist teleology and implicit in his principle of utility.[16] When, toward the end of his life, Mill referred to 'On Liberty' as 'a kind of philosophic text-book of a single truth' and asserted that truth to be 'the importance to man and society of a large variety in types of character, and of giving full freedom to human nature to expand itself in innumerable and conflicting directions,' he was once again drawing attention to the centrality of a theory of harmonious self-realization to his understanding of the good life and to his teleology.

§VII.ii. Problems for Mill's Self-Realization Theory. Self-realization theory has, from the time of Turgot, attracted considerable attention and criticism. The cluster of objections to its depiction as the end of existence comprises a significant barrier to the

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15 Mill, 'Early Letters.' *Works*. Vol. 12 pp.207-8.
16 Mill, 'On Liberty.' pp.261, 266.

acceptance of any such theory. Each of these objections can be directed at Mill's account, and has to be overcome if self-realization is to operate as the keystone of Mill's theoretical arch.

The major critical claims against self-realization as the route to the greatest possible happiness are: i] Some capacities and dispositions are antisocial. Agents who develop antisocial capacities and dispositions do so at the expense of other agents' development. This being the case, some agents will fail to achieve maximum possible happiness. ii] Some capacities and dispositions are incompatible. It is not possible to cultivate and develop incompatible capacities to their fullest potential. Therefore no agent can achieve maximum possible happiness. iii] Self-realization is impossible because of lack of time and resources. No agent can develop dispositions and capacities to the level of highest potential achievement and of greatest happiness: *ergo*, no agent can achieve maximum possible happiness. iv] Self-realization is incompatible with the injunction that agents should act in ways that bring about the greatest happiness for all concerned. Thus, according to some critics, the fundamental tenet of Mill's enlarged utilitarianism fails.[17]

There are other objections that may be directed at Mill's theory. Self-realization as a concept has no logical relation with good. An agent may desire, for whatever reason(s), to achieve the highest personal degree of development in a non-moral sphere. The cultivation and development of such dispositions would be counterproductive to the second part of Mill's greatest happiness principle - the greatest possible happiness for the greatest possible number. Self-realization theory, if it is to be acceptable intellectually and applicable to existential societies has to accommodate a situation in which there exist agents who choose to cultivate and develop lower capacities rather than the specifically human ones, or who choose to develop antisocial capacities. It has to explain why an individual agent who chooses to select and develop one or two dispositions, faculties, or talents in which the potential in that agent is very high, and who cultivates and develops those to the exclusion of all

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17 These criticisms represent the composite argument of those commentators opposed to theories of self-realization, and noted above. The last objection is an alternative expression of the fundamental problem faced by utilitarian theory: how is it feasible to anticipate an agent to respond to the injunction to behave in the public sphere in a way that increases the general happiness when the agent is advised in the private sphere to behave in self-interested ways, and how is this to be reconciled with human nature. For representative depictions of this problem as recognized over time, see e.g. Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* Book I Ch.4. London, 1843; J.B. Schneewind (ed.), *Mill's Ethical Writings*. New York, 1965 pp.8-9.

others and in a way that is manifestly anti-social, does not achieve the greatest possible private happiness at the expense of the happiness of the community.

Mill's response to all these objections begins in his recognition of the significance of intervening variables in the lives of all agents and all communities. By examining his understanding of the nature and impact of such variables, and noting how this understanding is incorporated into his theory of self-realization, the problems confronting Mill's self-realization theory are seen to be addressed and resolved.

§VII.iii Mill's recognition of intervening variables and their effect on his theory of self-realization: the subtlety of Mill's theory of value increased. The importance of variables for Mill's general theory of value is paramount. It has been made clear that in Mill's conception of ends every particular end has happiness as the criterion of its achievement. It is also clear that just as ends are varied both in individuals and between individuals owing to the original degree of potential for cultivation and development in any and all particular dispositions, capacities and faculties, so the value of an end for one agent will be different from its value for another. In addition, the value of the general state of being of a particular agent, i.e. the happiness of that agent, cannot accordingly be judged against any universal scale, insofar as it is affected by the circumstances, experiences, and environment of the particular agent. The impact of variables has so great an effect that what may be a state of great happiness for agent A may equally be a state of neutrality or unhappiness in agent B.[18]

Examination of Mill's theory of value demonstrated that the outcome of an act is good for a particular agent if it contributes to the happiness of that agent, and does not adversely affect any other agent. This is the case with all actions confined to the agent's private setting. As such, a pleasure is contingent upon the agent's condition (in terms of consciousness, experiences, education, taste, etc.) at the moment the outcome of the act takes effect, and a happiness is the continuation or repetition of that pleasure over time in the same condition. From this it may be deduced that as the agent's circumstances change the response to the outcome of a similar or identical act may no longer be considered good, or a previously-considered good may cease to be valued, or even to become a disvalue. (These goods are those Mill linked to particular and private happinesses.) At this descriptive level, it is also reasonable to assume in a less-than-perfect world that some agents will be ill-informed concerning the nature of

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18 Mill, 'Utilitarianism,' pp.217-18.

genuine happinesses and goods, and will desire the illusion of happiness and regard it as good.

The introduction of the variables of circumstances and experience as part of the theory of value, and the acknowledgment of the differences between agents in terms of their original potentials in dispositions, capacities, and faculties, provide the ground for justification of the claims made by Mill. The dual employment by him of value terms in both descriptive and commendatory form completes the evidence with which to support the claims. Using this material, the controversial claim by Mill that 'the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it' and this 'being a fact, we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to require, that happiness is a good; *that each person's happiness is a good to that person*, and that the general happiness, therefore is a good to the aggregate of all persons,' will be discovered to be a statement of descriptive fact only.[19]

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What is the effect of intervening variables on the likelihood of particular agents achieving their *telos*? According to the evidence presented in Part I, all steadily satisfied desires are happinesses and, in Mill's general theory of value, happinesses are goods. At the same time, he noted, *some* happinesses are illusory or false. Nonetheless, they are, as confirmed there by Mill, still considered good by the ignorant desirers of those happinesses. Mill did not, at that point in his analysis of happiness, make any distinction between desires in terms of their relation to the fulfillment of a *telos*. Where he did do so, he made it clear that some desires are more valuable than others in achieving the end of existence.[20] It was only when Mill used evaluative terms in the commendatory sense that he was distinguishing between desires in terms of their efficiency as contributors to particular ends and to the general end, signified by the happiness that attaches to it. Mill's sympathy for those agents whose circumstances and experiences mitigate against their nurturing of productive desires, and consequently their mistaking false for genuine happiness, plainly signaled the distinction he made between desires whilst at the same time confirmed his assessment of the manner in which desire is recognized.

Mill's distinction between happinesses, and his categorization of them as either genuine or false, was based on their conduciveness to the achievement of the end of

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19 *Ibid.*, p.234. (Emphasis added.)
20 *Ibid.*, p.235.

existence for either individual or community. Some happinesses are more efficient in contributing to that end than others. Some are, as noted above, counter-productive to that end. Mill's understanding of how particular agents come to pursue particular happinesses, whether they be genuine or false, revolved around his recognition of the significance of two types of intervening variables: first, the set of internal variables, which comprises the original potentials for cultivation and development of dispositions, capacities and faculties; and second, the multiplicity of external variables which comprise the experiences, circumstances, education and environment of the particular agent.

The concept of internal variables indicates the importance Mill understood to attach to the differences in individual raw natures which underlies and produces differences in potential and developed individuality. Because of this variability of potentials Mill refrained from presenting a defined ideal toward which human beings should strive. 'Such are the differences among human beings,' he wrote, 'in their sources of pleasure, their susceptibilities of pain, and the operation upon them of different physical and moral agencies, that unless there is a corresponding diversity in their modes of life, they neither obtain their fair share of happiness, nor grow up to the mental, moral, and aesthetic stature of which their nature is capable.'[21] Accordingly, Mill argued that all agents may, if they choose, develop their particular mix of raw desires and feelings to the highest degree possible, and that this development is the route to individual realization and its consequent happinesses. Here happiness is directly linked by Mill to self-realization of the individual, not in the achievement of an external intellectual or moral bench-mark, but through the attainment of the highest degree of perfection possible in dispositions etc., given the original variable potential for cultivation and development within the agent.

The set of internal variables, the capacity for cultivation and development in dispositions etc., is, then, the original distinction between agents, and Mill predicated the outcome of cultivated and developed potentials - that is, the individuality of the agent - on their original state as desires and feelings. It is the strength and depth of the individual's raw desires and feelings that indicate the potential level of realization and happiness. 'Those who have the most natural feeling,' acknowledged Mill, 'are always those whose cultivated feelings may be the strongest.'[22] This is not to say that such agents *will* achieve greater happiness than those with lesser potential, but it is

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21 Mill, 'On Liberty,' p.270.
22 *Ibid.*, p.263.

comparable to the indicative observation that a genetically gifted athlete can be *anticipated* to reach a higher level of achievement in the sphere of athletic endeavour than a non-gifted one. Whether he or she does so or not depends on a large number of factors external to the individual.

External variables comprise the particular experiences, education, and circumstances of the agent, together with the circumstances and environment of his or her location in time and space.[23] Mill recognized that an agent has virtually no control over many of the personal circumstances nor of the social, cultural, religious, and economic environment into which he or she is born. Regardless of the original potential for cultivation of dispositions possessed by an agent, they cannot be anticipated to be fully realized in unfavorable conditions. This is the case both in particular and in general circumstances. The individual agent is hampered in cultivation and development of potentials should he or she be isolated from education, example, and opportunity to do so. This situation, Mill noted, occurs for a multiplicity of reasons attaching to class, occupation, ethnicity, gender and available opportunities. The community is similarly hampered in a social, cultural and religious environment which favors counter-productive modes of action and behaviour over those that would be conducive to the cultivation and development of the spectrum of human dispositions.

One of the most significant transformations in Mill's intellectual position came about when he realized that such variables were not inevitable in their effects, and that the doctrine of necessity was not equivalent to fatalism.[24] His recognition that the prevailing tendency to regard the traits of human nature and character-formation as immutable was incorrect, and that the key to their transformation was in the alteration of external intervening variables, is marked by him as the starting point of his philosophical endeavour.[25]

Just as intervening variables affect agents in both their private and public spheres of action, modification and alteration of them has to occur in both. To this end, Mill

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23 Mill's recognition of the significance of external variables occurs throughout his work. For representative examples of his acknowledgment of the importance of particular circumstances to the development of individuality and the achievement of happiness, see Mill, 'Effects of Gambling.' *Works*. Vol.22 p.77; 'The Negro Question.' *Works* Vol.21 p.93. For acknowledgment of the importance of the social and cultural environment see Mill, 'Bentham.' *Works*. Vol.10 p.99; 'Spirit of the Age III.' *Works*. Vol.22 p.257.

24 Mill, 'Autobiography.' pp.176-77.

25 *Ibid.*, p.270. For a full account of Mill's understanding of the relation between external variables and their modification in order to achieve happiness see Mill, 'A System of Logic.' Book VI Ch.II, *Works*. Vol.8 pp.836-43.

realized that there needs be more than a code of imperative commands. An agent cannot be commanded to choose that which would bring about the greatest possible happiness, simply because such a choice must ultimately rest on the desire of the agent if happiness is to result. Alternatively, guidance toward action which will bring about such happiness will assist the agent in making a choice. Mill saw commendation as a significant part of such guidance.

§VII.iv. The effect of the introduction of commendation on the development of Mill's general theory of value. The satisfaction of desires that have no contribution to the end of existence for either individual or community is the achievement of false happiness, which has a double impact on the achievement of *telos*.[26] It affects the self-realization of the individual agent, and it affects the community-realization, both of which are understood by Mill to be the goal of the enlarged principle of utility. Promulgation of the knowledge of how to distinguish between the actual value of genuine happiness and the illusory value of false happiness thus becomes one of the most important goals of Mill's ethical doctrine, and it begins in his general theory of value with the shift in the meaning of value terms from description to commendation.[27]

At the level of description, a value term is one that covers every aspect of each of the departments of life, and as such is used to describe the objects and actions of life in terms of efficiency in their contribution to the achievement of standards of prudence, policy, beauty, and morality. At the level of commendation, Mill used such terms in conjunction with his development of a theory of conduct in order to guide, exhort, and

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26 The origin of indifferent or counterproductive desires has been demonstrated in Part I to be due, not to any inherent flaw in the nature of the agent, but in the impact of the variables in the life of the agent.

27 R. M. Hare 'Geach: Good and Evil.' in *Theories of Ethics*. Philippa Foot (ed.) Oxford, 1977 p.75, accepts the descriptive understanding of 'good' in this sense (above) but argues for the primacy of the commendatory understanding of the term. Mill does not reject the commendatory use of 'good'. Nor is it necessary to do so, when, on examination, its use can be sheeted home to the satisfaction of a criterion or set of criteria used by the commender. The use of 'good' as a commending term in this sense chimes with the requirements of a naturalist moral doctrine, providing that doctrine rests upon the equivalence of morality with satisfaction of a set of requirements when acting in the public sphere. The difficulty presented by the commending use of 'good' is found in the overlap implied between the theory of value in which it occurs and the theory of conduct that attaches to it. In Hare's preferred usage 'this is good' carries the implication 'do this'. While this command is very often implied in the usage of 'good' it is equally often not present. Objects and actions that are instrumentally efficient are regarded as 'good' in a purely descriptive sense. They are valuable for achieving an end, but in such cases the end is optional for all agents, and beyond the potential or capacity of many. Such usage may be commendatory to a few agents, but for the majority the implied command is without force.

persuade individuals to act in ways that achieve the *telos* of existence.[28] In order to maintain the integrity of his naturalist theory, Mill's general theory of value must encompass each level without losing coherence or consistency between the areas, and at the same time must serve each area adequately.[29] To do this, it must operate with equal efficiency in all the settings of action that occur in an agent's life.

There are two spheres of action engaged in by all agents: the private sphere, which is the exclusive concern of the individual; and the public sphere, wherein the actions of the agent affect others. Within each sphere all actions are undertaken by agents in order to achieve the satisfaction of desires. Private happinesses, those that can be designated solely self-affecting, are private goods. Their commendation by Mill is unreserved providing always that they are pursued in harmony with one another, they are conducive to the achievement of *telos*, and are so without impingement on the achievement of others' happinesses. Public happinesses, that is those happinesses the achievement of which is obtained via other-affecting actions, are commended as goods when they tend toward the achievement of *telos* for both individual and the species (represented by the other agents affected). These are the most valuable goods in Mill's understanding, and as such rank higher in terms of Mill's enlarged principle of utility than do private happinesses of particular agents.

According to Mill, then, the pleasures and happinesses that signify the satisfaction of desires in the private sphere are of two types: genuine pleasures and happinesses, which are those that contribute to the realization of the potentials for excellence within the individual agent, and thus to that agent's self-realization; and false pleasures and happinesses which fail to do so, and are often counter-productive to that end. Mill had a similar understanding of genuine happiness as it accompanied actions to satisfy desires in the public sphere: genuine happiness there is the simultaneous satisfaction of private desire and the generation of happiness for other agents affected by the action. By extension, it is possible to envisage action performed in the public sphere intended to bring about community happiness, but which in fact is counter-productive of that happiness.[30]

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28 The overlap between any theory of value and the theory of conduct expressing it is similar to that which exists between Mill's *telos* and ultimate principle of action. Their separate presentation here is undertaken for the sake of clarity, and with the recognition that in practice they are indivisible.

29 For a succinct account of the difficulties in presenting such a single basic form of the good, in terms of which all others can be defined, see G. von Wright, *The Varieties of Goodness*. London, 1963 p.17.

30 This is problem is examined further in Chapter VIII.

The introduction of the commendatory use of value terms, intended to signify this relation of action undertaken for pleasure and ultimately happiness to the end of existence, announces the overlap between Mill's general theory of value and his theory of conduct. Following this recapitulation of Mill's spectrum of happinesses, it becomes clear how the descriptive use of adjectival value terms, particularly of the term 'good,' shifts to become a commendatory use. This commendatory use of 'good' is the indication of the shift from the method of science to that of ethics, and is part of the Art or Theory of Life. An action which is conducive to the *telos* of existence is one to be commended; its opposite, regardless of the apparent pleasure and happiness it generates, is one to be repudiated. Furthermore, commendation and repudiation are evaluations based not on some external and inflexible benchmark, but on the relation of the action to the cultivation and development of the specific potentials of the particular agent. As such they will vary from agent to agent according to the internal and external circumstances and condition of the agent.

This variable evaluative scale, which alters subtly between agents and circumstances, is an accurate reflection of the existential judgments made by individual human beings in their attempts to maximize happiness. It is applicable to both private and public spheres of activity. Returning to the type of meaning carried by evaluative terms (particularly the term 'good'), when used by Mill, the distinction between the descriptive and commendatory usages adumbrates the overlap between Mill's general theory of value and his theory of conduct which is to be examined in the following section. The distinction between types of meaning parallels the differences between happinesses in the public and private actions of agents.

Once the relation between commendation as the evaluative understanding of 'good' as a term used to describe a happiness that contributes to the *telos* of the individual or community and the descriptive understanding of the same term as referring to what is considered a happiness by a particular agent affected by the multiplicity of intervening variables is noted, the claim made by Mill for qualitative differences between happinesses (or goods) and its relation to his simultaneous claim that happiness is the sole good may be unraveled. The parallel psychophysiological claim that the only evidence of a thing's being desirable is that it is desired is similarly made clear.

According to Mill, all genuine goods are so by virtue of the fact that they are evaluations of the happinesses that accompany the cultivation and development of the original and natural potential excellence in a disposition, capacity, or talent - either

self-interested or other-directed - and that such cultivation, referred to by Mill as self-realization, is the route to the greatest possible happiness for both individual and the community. The abstract conception of happiness is paralleled by the abstract conception of good, and particular and concrete happinesses are regarded as particular and concrete goods. Furthermore, that which is an aid to the achievement of happiness, i.e. that which is contributory to the *telos*, is an instrumental good.

This layered approach to the meaning of happiness provides the explanation of Mill's claim for qualitative differences in concrete happinesses, whilst at the same time affirming that abstract happiness is the sole criterion of good. There are two explanations of the qualitative differences in the depiction of Mill's general theory of value. The first explanation is linked to Mill's understanding of internal intervening variables. Mill's enlarged principle of utility pivots on the claim that happiness, and consequently goodness, is found in the cultivation and development of potentials in dispositions, capacities, and faculties toward the end of self-realization. Such cultivation can only take place to the degree of potential inherent in the agent. This means that some agents will be able to, and some will, experience a greater or lesser degree of happiness in the cultivation and development of particular dispositions depending on their original potential in those dispositions. This is simply a recognition of difference between agents and to note the difference in quality of happiness (good) between agents is again descriptive.

But Mill went further and noted that some agents are experiencing goods of a lesser quality than is possible for them so to do. The second explanation is Mill's expansion of this claim and concerns the impact of external intervening variables on the choices of the individual agent. Sometimes, due to the effect of those variables, agents will choose to strive after false pleasures and happinesses. Sometimes, again due to circumstances, agents will choose to pursue the nearer and coarser pleasures and happinesses. They do so because they have not the experience of the higher forms of happiness.[31] (This is particularly the case in Mill's distinction between animal and specifically human capacities, and the happinesses that accompany them.)

The distinction between genuine and false happinesses is also a distinction between true and false goods. Just as genuine happiness is that feeling which accompanies the steady performance of actions that contribute to self- and community-realization, and is truly good, so false happiness, which fails to do so, is a false good. Nonetheless, for

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31 Mill, 'Utilitarianism,' pp.212-13.

the experiencing agent, subject to the effect of intervening variables, the false good will be considered to be a genuine good, unless and until further experience, education, or example changes his or her perspective. This is the case also with coarse pleasures and happinesses. The qualitative difference between happinesses, or goods, is, in the first case, the difference between their genuine or false contribution to the achievement of self-realization, and so to the attainment of the *telos* of the individual or the community. In the second case it is directly connected to the cultivation and development of potentials in dispositions.

Both explanations are, when read against the background of evidence provided above, coherent and consistent in their content. They are so because of Mill's development not of an immutable code of value and goodness, but a flexible set of guidelines applicable to all events and circumstances, and adaptable by all agents. The strength of Mill's general theory of value as a guide to the worth of objects etc., in each individual's pursuit of the end of existence is its ability to act across the spectrum of actions and of individual human natures and potentials. It does not set down universal and unalterable scales of value. Instead, recognizing that the number of individual agents is matched by an equal number of ends (understood as self-realization), it sets out to provide guidelines only. It acknowledges that cases must be evaluated according to their own circumstances and conditions. Whatever are the circumstances of the case modify the value of the action taken in that case. Mill underlined his recognition of the need for this flexibility when he recognized that agents will, on some occasions, choose the lower rather than the higher good; will, at other times, do so continuously and deliberately; and will sometimes do so wittingly but without the strength to do otherwise.[32] These are the existential conditions which affected Mill's formulation of a general theory of value, and equally they are the conditions which underlie his development of a theory of conduct.

§VII.v. Mill's theory and doctrine of conduct. Why is explanation of Mill's theory of conduct significant at this point? Mill's goal required that he go further than simply discovering the reason for, and end of, human conduct. His ambition was to contribute to the successful achievement of that end, and to do so meant that he was required to develop a means of reference which every agent in any given set of circumstances could consult for guidance in choosing the appropriate action for the most beneficial result. As the examination of Mill's response to this requirement unfolds it will be

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32 *Ibid.*, pp.212-13.

noted that there is a significant overlap between the areas of application for secondary principles and the types of obligation that are found in his writing.

It will be demonstrated below that when the Art of Life translates the law of nature into prescriptive theory, the ultimate principle of action becomes the origin and base of Mill's general theory and doctrine of conduct. The thrust of the theory according to Mill is that agents should in all cases, and must in many, perform whatever actions are productive of happiness for the individual and for the species in order to achieve both their personal *telos* and that of the group. And just as the ultimate principle of action is too broad to be applicable to particular areas of activity in any practical sense, so also is Mill's general theory of conduct. Because of the equivalence of the two broad, abstract theories, it might be anticipated that the types of obligation that are contained within the general theory will have a similar relation to that theory as do the secondary principles of action to the ultimate principle.[33]

The presentation of Mill's account of human nature and *telos* has demonstrated that, for Mill, the prospect and achievement of happiness are the natural inducement and reward that attach to agents' performance of actions which contribute to the survival and melioration of both individual and species. Happiness, as the state of being accompanying the cultivation and development of the potentials in dispositions etc., varies in its quality depending on the original nature of the agent and the circumstances and environment of that agent. Mill's theory of value is his guide to the relative worth of different happinesses to particular agents in a variety of circumstances. Mill's theory of value is not purely descriptive, however, and the introduction of the commendatory version of evaluative terms signals its overlap with his theory of conduct. Mill's goal was to maximize both the quantity and the quality of happinesses, and general happiness, in the life of all individuals, and to do this required a comprehensive prescriptive doctrine applicable to all agents in all circumstances.

The primary statement of Mill's general theory of conduct is comprehensive and unequivocally rivets his ethical doctrine to his account of human nature. All natures according to Mill, including and especially human nature, are each comprised of 'the *ensemble* or aggregate of its powers and properties: the modes in which it acts on

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33 If this is the case, and the types of obligation may be firmly established both as constituents of the general theory and as alternative expressions of secondary principles, the further step of noting the derivation of the constituent parts of the general theory of obligation from the descriptive evidence of science will contribute significantly to Mill's larger proof of the enlarged principle of happiness.

other things (counting among these the senses of the observer) and the modes in which other things act upon it; to which, in the case of a sentient being, must be added, its own capacities of feeling or being conscious. The nature of the thing means all this; means its entire capacity of exhibiting phenomena.'[34] Given that this is the case, he argued that specifically human nature, in order to achieve the greatest possible happiness, 'requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing.'[35]

Having concluded that 'artificially created or at least artificially perfected nature of the best and noblest human beings, is the only nature which it is ever commendable to follow,' Mill formulated his general theory of conduct.[36] 'The duty of man,' Mill wrote, 'is the same in respect to his own nature as in respect to the nature of all other things, namely not to follow it but to amend it.'[37] This assertion, considered as an amplification of the primary injunction to amend nature confirms Mill's belief that it is the duty of all agents to amend their animal as well as their specifically human dispositions etc.[38] It underwrites Mill's theory of self-realization; it is expressed above in Mill's theory of value; and it continues to be unfolded below in Mill's theory of conduct. Modification of human nature, particularly those elements of nature the exercise of which results in happiness is thus flagged as the goal of Mill's social and political theory.[39]

Mill's theory of conduct is the logical outcome of his method of ethics. Once the relation between the payback and the teleological end is discovered, (as it was discovered by Mill and many other theorists before him, stretching back to Aristotle), it is then the function of reason to determine the best method of achieving the greatest amount of happiness possible for the individual and for the community, thereby rationally contributing to the achievement of the teleological end of existence for both individual and community. The best way of organizing behaviour that chimes with the ultimate principle of action is the best way of achieving the teleological end.

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34 Mill, 'Three Essays on Religion.' *Works.* Vol 10 p.374.
35 Mill, 'On Liberty.' p.263.
36 Mill, 'Three Essays on Religion.' p.396-7
37 *Loc. cit.*
38 Mill rejected all ethical doctrine which attempted to introduce into theories of conduct, duty, or obligation any material external to human beings. See also Mill, 'Three Essays on Religion.' pp.393, 375; 'A System of Logic' Book VI Ch.IV §4, p.859; 'Utilitarianism.' pp.210-11.
39 Mill, 'Three Essays on Religion.' pp.391, 396-397.

The rationale for the development of such a prescriptive theory has also been confirmed by Mill. The greatest happiness possible for any agent is the cultivation and development of dispositions etc., to their maximum aggregate level. This ideal state is referred to by Mill as self-realization. This is the *summum bonum* of any individual existence, and is identical with the achievement of the *telos* of that individual's life. However, it is the case that many individuals do not achieve this level of cultivation and development across the spectrum of potentials, and so do not achieve maximum happiness. The task confronting Mill was, then, to develop a doctrine of conduct to guide *all* individuals toward the achievement of maximum happiness, and in the process generate the maximum happiness for the community. The ground of Mill's theory of conduct - that each individual has a duty to amend his or her original nature - is thus justified as the most efficient way of achieving the highest possible degree of happiness available to that individual (which also is the achievement of the individual's highest possible contribution to the survival and melioration of both self and species).

The conditions to be satisfied in the development of such a theory within the framework of a naturalist ethical doctrine are the same as those that apply to the development of a theory of value. It must derive from Mill's account of human nature. It must be equally applicable to each and every individual in the community. It must be conducive to the *telos* of the species. Finally, it must acknowledge and incorporate the existence of variables: both those that have shaped individuals' and the community's life, and those that apply to the event at hand.

What, then, are the necessary elements of such a theory and doctrine of conduct? It must have a clearly articulated relation with reason, and the other component parts of consciousness. It must be able to relate the state of being of the agent with the actions performed, and to explain the effect of one upon the other. It must delineate clearly the rules and precepts of which it is comprised. And it must provide justification for the types of rules and precepts so delineated. What follows is an analysis of the theory of conduct that is the spine of Mill's enlarged principle of utility. In it evidence is assembled which confirms that while Mill made no attempt to present that theory as a stand-alone intellectual product, he provided across the breadth of his writing ample material that justifies its delineation in the form in which it is presented here. The nexus between Mill's account of human nature and its *telos*, and his broad ethical doctrine is reinforced in that the purpose of his theory and doctrine of conduct is the achievement of both the individual and community end of existence.

At this prescriptive level, it will be seen below that the relation between the ultimate principle of action and the secondary principles covering the practice of the Art of Life which are derived from it, is similar to the relation between Mill's general theory of value and the types of value applicable in all areas of evaluation and judgment that are derived from it. Given this relation, any examination of the types of obligation Mill set forth in his work is simultaneously an examination of the undescribed secondary principles of action which govern classes of actions and that are later incorporated into his social and political theory.[40]

What might be anticipated to comprise Mill's general theory of conduct from the evidence so far presented? The link between human nature and secondary principles is one of reinforcement of certain pre-existing patterns of behaviour. The method of science's examination of human beings' original and untutored patterns of behaviour together with their function determined the most efficient way of achieving happiness in particular classes of action and depicted it as the first principle of action. This was then translated by Mill into a comprehensive cluster of secondary principles of action. The secondary principles function as intermediate concrete guides to action that sit between the ultimate principle and particular practice. This clearly depicted link between human nature and the broad prescription of Mill's Art of Life demonstrates the latter to rest firmly on the original condition of the former. Mill's theory of conduct is a further elucidation of the guiding function of the cluster of secondary principles, and as such must also originate in nature as a pattern of behaviour followed by all agents prior to development of reason. Reason serves to guide action to purposeful ends; the general and particular ends are happinesses; happinesses, as the expression of the achievement of *telos* have as their major ingredient cultivation and development of the original dispositions etc., of human nature; whatever are promulgated as rules and precepts of action to achieve these ends must therefore chime with the original dispositions, faculties, and capacities of human nature. The following analysis serves to confirm this ground.

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40 Just as Mill recognized that the ultimate principle of action required secondary principles whereby to focus action at a practical level, so the broad statement of his general theory of conduct requires a more closely woven presentation for it to withstand scrutiny and to act as an account of agents' obligations in the existential world of action. The degree of overlap between the ultimate principle of action and Mill's general theory of conduct is further expressed in its parallel development to the derivation of the secondary principles of action from the evidence of science using the teleological end of existence and the ultimate principle of action as their foundation. Just as the secondary principles that govern particular spheres of practical activity must comply with the ultimate principle, so the types of obligation found in Mill's theory have his primary statement of agents' duty to amend nature as their focus.

§VII.vi. The status of reason in Mill's theory of conduct. The injunction to amend each and every aspect of human nature was considered by Mill to be the primary duty of every agent. It must therefore be linked to Mill's ultimate principle of action. This link is indirect however. Amendment of nature is a rational endeavour and so cannot be identical to the ultimate principle of action because that principle has been established as operating prior to the development of the rational faculty in human beings. Nonetheless, its effect is identical albeit intensified insofar as it brings about the greatest happiness possible for the individual and the community via the only path of action which, according to Mill, 'it is ever commendable to follow.'[41] To discern the best way by which to achieve the greatest sum of pleasure over pain in any and all activities steadily and over time - in other words to achieve the greatest possible happiness - is, he stated, 'the rational purpose of human life and action . . . the end of morality [and] the end of rational conduct.'[42]

The significance of reason in Mill's development of broad ethical doctrine now becomes clear. It is the element which characterizes specifically human nature, and the interaction of reason with the laws of nature is that which lifts the individual agent above the level of unreasoning adherence to the commands of uncultivated appetites and dispositions. 'With the employment of reason,' Mill asserted, 'though we cannot emancipate ourselves from the laws of nature as a whole . . . we can obey nature in such a way as to command it.'[43] This assertion is of great significance in the unfolding of Mill's thesis. He did not advocate the repression of the appetites and dispositions that comprise human nature which he recognized would have been a futile exercise, and in any case the happinesses that accompany the development of human beings' lower nature contributes to their overall degree of happiness. Rather, he saw that the primary function of human reason was to modify and amend the powers, properties, and modes of action which comprise that nature.[44] Accordingly, duty in general is discovered through the application of reason to circumstances.[45] Furthermore, Mill

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41 Mill, 'Three Essays on Religion.' pp. 96-7.

42 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' p.214.

43 Mill, 'Three Essays on Religion.' p.39.

44 Alan Ryan notes Mill's link between obligation and feeling as the core of the theory of conduct, and states that this alone is unsatisfactory because it 'confuses the feelings which a man may have when he thinks he is under an obligation with the obligation itself.' (See Ryan, *op.cit.* p.209.) However, it is clear Mill recognized that duty is more than feeling, as is demonstrated above. There is a similarity between Mill's understanding of the link between reason and desires in the development of a theory of conduct, and that of Hume. See David Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature.* (Ed. with Introduction by T.H. Green and T.H. Grose) 1886, Book II Part III § 3. Reprint Aalen1964. pp.193-97.

45 Mill, 'Whewell on Moral Philosophy. *Works.* Vol.10 p.172.

averred that moral duty is discoverable using the same faculty and following the same procedure.[46]

So it is that reason is first the bridge between the desires of the agent and their general expression, and, at a higher level, between the ultimate principle of action and the theory of conduct understood as composed of an indefinite number of secondary principles. It is the instrument through which Mill is able to translate the abstract enlarged principle of utility into a concrete, empirically demonstrable code of practice. The ultimate principle of action is the fundamental law that underpins Mill's enlarged utilitarianism. Insofar as it is connected with the way agents *do* act as living creatures it is connected to the laws of nature, but insofar as it is presented by Mill as the inclusive and prescriptive command which guides all action toward a teleological end it is a normative statement produced by the Method of Ethics. As such, it is the foundation of Mill's theory of conduct. And each individual's faculty of reason is that on which Mill relied for the understanding, acceptance, and application of that theory.

§VII.vii. What is the relation between duty and virtue in Mill's injunction to amend nature in order to achieve the *telos* of existence? What is the function of duty? It has already been demonstrated that self-realization is the achievement of the *telos* of existence for every individual agent. This is identical to the achievement of the greatest possible happiness for the individual. At the level of the community a similar realization of potentials signifies a similar achievement of happiness. Mill followed this depiction of the route to the greatest happiness by attaching to it the injunction to amend nature in order to achieve that end. This then is the link between Mill's theory of conduct and his theory of self-realization as the expression of the *telos* of existence.[47] It is the duty of every agent to realize his/her potentials across the spectrum of dispositions etc., and this duty lies at the heart of the enlarged principle of utility.

The remit of the injunction is wider than that of prudence and self-interest however. The origin of this wider concept of duty is located by Mill in the constitution of human nature. With the benefit of the evidence so far accumulated it is clear that when he referred to it as 'a spontaneous outgrowth from two sentiments, both in the highest degree natural, and which either are or resemble instincts; the impulse of self-defense, and the feeling of sympathy,' he was including the dispositions in agents the desires of

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46 Mill, 'Sedgwick's Discourse.' *Works*. Vol.10 p.74.

47 Recognition of Mill's theory of conduct as it applies to the private agent is uncontroversial. See e.g. Ryan *op.cit.* p.249

which are satisfied both through self-interest and other-interest. Agents naturally are disposed to act in ways that increase happiness both for themselves and for others, Mill stated, and his concept of duty extends to the amendment of those latter dispositions also.[48] Here, then, the link between the individual's duties both to him/herself and to the species is clearly made by Mill, and further welds his theory of conduct to its origins in human nature. However, this link appears to conflate two distinct notions: that of duty, which for Mill is a code of action designed to amend the nature of agents, adherence to which is observable by others; and that of virtue which is the internal, unobservable state of being of the amended agent.

It will be helpful in understanding both the holistic and specific nature of Mill's theory of conduct if his understanding of virtue is extrapolated and viewed as a distinct aspect of the nexus between his account of human nature and its *telos*, and the broad ethical doctrine which is derived from it.[49] Before doing so, the effect of such a separation must be acknowledged. It is clear from the above evidence that Mill's theory of conduct was intended to cover all aspects of existence, both internal and external. It incorporates the private obligations of individuals as well as those they have in the sphere of public action. To state, as is frequently done, that whenever obligations apply to the acting agent in an isolated and private capacity with no affect beyond the particular agent, they are psychological obligations, and whenever obligations apply to the acting agent in any public and other-affecting sense, they are social obligations, is to make a convenient distinction of analysis only.[50] In practice, the psychological obligations and the social obligations come together and interact, as do many other aspects of the private and public existence of human beings. In Mill's work the overlapping of psychological and social obligation is not separated out, and results in a richly textured theory. The separating that is done below achieves its explanatory value only at the expense of subtlety. As Mill's theory of obligation is examined in practice, noting the overlapping of psychological and social obligations becomes an important element in fixing obligation into the framework of agents' behaviour.

Mill demonstrated a classical understanding of virtue as meaning in its large sense the rational cultivation to excellence of the dispositions and capacities that comprise human nature in harmony and balance, resulting in the creation of a 'virtuous character.' This chimes with the understanding of virtue found in Aristotle and

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48 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' *Works*. Vol.10 p.248.

49 What follows is an extension of the examination begun in Chapter V §iv.

50 For an example of this distinction, see A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, *A Natural Science of Society*. Glencoe, Ill., 1948 pp.43-48.

Plato.[51] Mill, as did his Greek exemplars, also distinguished within that broad understanding a narrower category of virtue that is connected to the performance of acts and the exhibition of character in the public sphere. This narrower virtue is crucial to the development of virtuous character, and as such is the focus of much of Mill's writing on virtue, but it is not the only understanding he had of the concept. The account Mill gave of the broad concept of virtue in his non-polemical writing regards it as the rationally-driven all-round development of character, through the acquisition of excellence in the variety of dispositions and capacities which comprise human nature.[52] The difficulty caused by his failure to distinguish clearly in his writing which meaning of the term he is using is apparent in *Utilitarianism* for example where he attempts to address a 'common language' understanding of virtue as comprising only duties of perfect and imperfect obligation, using himself the same term but with a far more shaded meaning.[53]

How are we to discover Mill's meaning of both the broad and the narrow categories of the term? Mill began by affirming that a virtue in the broad sense comprises more than feeling alone: it is feeling (as desire-creating sensations connected to a disposition or raw capacity or talent) first combined with reason, and then translated into volition.[54] As such it is also something other and more than the mere performance of an act.[55] Furthermore, being in a virtuous state is not having a desire *for* virtue, which is impossible insofar as virtue has the necessary element of reason and therefore cannot be the focus of prerational dispositions. This means that for a disposition or capacity to be classed as virtuous it must promote an end other than virtue. Therefore, according to Mill, the recognition of virtuous dispositions or capacities is through their

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51 See Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*. 1103a, 1106b, 1107a; *Politics*. 1279a, 1134a. Plato, *The Republic*. F. M. Cornford (Tr.) Oxford, 1941, pp.8, 13, 29, 37, 171. Ernest Barker, *(The Political Thought of Plato and Aristotle*. New York,1959 pp.97-98.) notes that both Aristotle and Plato regarded the larger conception of virtue as the fulfilment of function. W. F. R. Hardie, (*Aristotle's Ethical Theory*. Oxford, 1968 p 94.) notes that for Aristotle the concept of virtues contains that of moral virtue.

52 See e.g. Mill, 'The Gorgias.' *Works*. Vol.11 pp.106n, 139-140, where Mill acknowledged that each virtue was achieved through the application of reason to capacities etc, to cultivate and develop them into skills. This is confirmed in 'Grote's Plato.' *Works* Vol 11 p.401 where Mill regards artistic or professional skill in any department of life as virtue, and notes that the teaching of skills equates with the teaching of virtue.

53 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' pp.235-39, esp. pp.236-37.

54 Mill, 'Periodical Literature: Edinburgh Review.' *Works*. Vol.1 p.323; 'Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy.' *Works*. Vol.10 p.15.

55 This is a frequently discussed topic in moral philosophy. The division of opinion is between those who hold that it is the act that is moral, and others who believe that motivation to behave in a moral way is a necessary ingredient of the act. Mill's stress on cultivation and development of dispositions etc. underscores his belief that motivation is a significant factor in *all* acts, not only those that are observed to be morally correct.

demonstrable results, and those results are always the generation of happiness.[56] Broad virtues are recognized in Mill's schema by their ability to produce happiness. In other words, they are the forms or states of being of the dispositions and capacities as they are cultivated and developed by agents to their potential degree of excellence.

The meaning of virtue in the narrow sense as used by Mill follows the same pattern of development as found in the spectrum of broad virtues. Originally there exists in the nature of every individual a disposition to act in ways that benefit others.[57] The desire to do so interacts with reason which discovers the manner in which to act. The act is then performed, and its effect in cultivating and developing the other-directed disposition is simultaneously to generate happiness for the actor and to shape the actor's character. Mill regarded this particular state of being as the development of moral virtue. It is the virtue of 'common language' and, in Mill's understanding, the crucial narrow virtue that is developed only by happiness-generating acts in the public sphere. This understanding of the narrow virtue of morality was recognized by Mill to underpin the duties of perfect and of imperfect obligation, and together they complete his account of both the internal and external aspects of action in the social arena.[58]

There are then three discernible elements to the specifically moral virtue. The first is the existence of an admittedly weak disposition in human beings to act in ways beneficial to the species as a whole. The second is the rational conviction that to do so is worthwhile as a means to achieving the happiness that accompanies the satisfaction of the disposition's desire. This conviction provides the volition to act, which action has the corollary effect of adding to the happiness for the whole. The third is the translation of rationally-driven volitions to act in other-benefiting ways from a source of self-interested pleasure into ends in themselves. The complex chain of virtue is thus grounded on the existing seed of conscience in the individual agent; is assisted by reason to become a rationally chosen means with which to achieve the larger end of

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56 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' p.235. There is a similarity between Mill's understanding of the impossibility of desiring virtue and the impossibility of desiring happiness. Their relation is confirmed by Mill as existing via the generation of happiness. The connection of both to the faculty of reason underscores that relation.

57 These are the 'germs of feeling' the desires of which are regarded by Mill as crucial to the achievement of the *telos* of the species, and, at the same time, are noted by him to be fragile and easily occulted by other more insistent desires particularly those human beings have in common with all other animals.

58 Mill, 'Thornton on Labour and Its Claims.' *Works*. Vol.5 pp.650-51. Mill's understanding of the duties of perfect and imperfect obligation is presented in the following section.

utilitarianism; and finally becomes desired for its own sake for the pleasure that accompanies its exercise.[59]

Mill also provided an explanation of the way virtue, in the narrow sense, achieved its primacy in moral theorizing. The means to an end become in some agents a matter of pleasure, and thus an end in themselves. The reason for this is that there is, in human nature, the capacity whereby 'things originally indifferent, but conducive to, or otherwise associated with, the satisfaction of our primitive desires, become in themselves sources of pleasure more valuable than the primitive pleasures, both in permanency, in the space of human existence that they are able of covering, and even in intensity.' Virtues in the broad sense are able in this way to be perceived as ends in themselves. In Aristotelian or Platonic usage this is the broad virtue sense as it is used to recognize skill or developed talent. It is a quality of an agent, rather than of an act. It is the key component of character. Virtue in the narrow sense is a special case of this translation.[60]

Mill's understanding of the relation between virtue and duty hinges upon the link between desire, volition, reason and action.[61] The amendment of original human nature and its desires in the way that will maximize happiness is in fact the cultivation and development of the desires in the direction of those ends that provide the highest happiness. This is accomplished by reason and through action, and its result is expressed by Mill as the amendment of each particular nature to its highest degree of cultivation, which he understood as its attainment of general virtue. The chain of connection between potentials in dispositions in raw human nature and the achievement of the greatest happiness is thus welded to the concept of virtue in Mill's thought. Within this understanding of the broad concept of virtue, a similar connection operates between the other-regarding dispositions found in original nature and the development of moral virtue. So, according to this depiction action in both the private and public spheres is the means whereby amendment of nature is accomplished, virtue is attained, and happiness achieved. So Mill's primary statement of the duty of agents is the concentrated expression of his ambition to develop a code of practice applicable to all actions, use of which will bring about for every agent the achievement of a virtuous (and thus happy) state. This understanding of the relation

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59 Mill, 'Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy. p.15; 'Three Essays on Religion.' p.394; 'Utilitarianism.' p.235-36.

60 Mill 'Utilitarianism' *Works* Vol 10 pp.236-237

61 For the explanation of this link see Chapter II §§iv-v. above.

between duty, virtue, and happiness, is reinforced when Mill's account of types of duty and their spheres of operation is examined in the following section.

§VII.viii. The nature of prescription in Mill's theory and doctrine of conduct: types of duty and their spheres of operation. There are generally recognized three broad types of obligation: first, obligation in terms of the rules of an optional exercise, e.g. the rules of chess oblige the player to follow them in order to play the game. It is optional whether an agent chooses to play, but if the choice to do so is made, then the obligation to obey the rules is incurred. Call this 'rules obligation' A second type of obligation will be called 'conditional obligation.' This is similar to rules obligation, in that it is the choice of the agent whether or not the obligation is accepted. If outcome *x* is the desired end, then action *y* must be performed. In circumstances where rules or conditional obligations apply, the actor has the option of refusing to participate. There is a third type which is a far stronger obligation. An agent must act in manner *A* in order to achieve outcome *B*. This will be called 'unconditional obligation' and is, in existential conditions, backed by either or both social and legal sanctions. An agent may refuse to fulfill unconditional obligations only at the expense of suffering the penalty of sanction. It will be noted below that Mill's acknowledgment of rules obligations in the wider sphere of society is found, for example, in his appreciation of the force of customary morality. His awareness that such obligations overlap with unconditional obligations, sometimes to the detriment of the agents involved, is important to the overall development of his broad ethical doctrine and is explored later in his analysis of the impact of custom and tradition on the achievement of happiness. In the main however, Mill's general theory of conduct centres on conditional and unconditional obligations to amend nature. This is made plain in his depiction of the ways in which human nature can be cultivated and developed.

There are, Mill noted, two ways in which agents may modify and amend their original natures. The first of these is a broad consequentialism, and consists in acquiring 'knowledge of the properties of things, and [to] make use of the knowledge for guidance' to achieve desired ends. To do so, he noted, is simply to follow the 'rule[s] of prudence, for the adaptation of means to ends; for giving effect to our wishes and intentions whatever they may be.'[62] The rules of conduct depicted by Mill which apply in this private sphere of action rely for their adherence on the informed choice of the agent recognizing and accepting their validity. They are, for that reason, conditional. The second, but crucially significant, means of amendment is the rational recognition

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62 Mill, 'Three Essays on Religion.' p.380.

and acceptance of what are regarded by Mill as moral duties. Such 'right action,' according to Mill, has a further element that goes beyond prudence and is 'something more and other than merely intelligent action.'

The codes of duty in the public sphere are categorized by Mill as duties of perfect and imperfect obligation, and correspond in form both to the unconditional and conditional obligations previously noted. Where these ways of rational modification of capacities overlap is in their each having as their raw material the original appetites, capacities and dispositions present in all human natures. Accordingly, they both comprise pragmatic prescriptive codes that acknowledge what is now recognized as the fundamental ground of Mill's theoretical system: the ultimate principle of action in human beings, whereby the survival and melioration of both individual and species is assured, and is expressed as universal striving for the condition of happiness. Where the discovery of moral duties differs from the discovery of prudential means to ends is in the fact that the original material to be amended, namely the other-affecting dispositions, is both fragile and elusive [63]

Mill's theory and doctrine of conduct was primarily concerned with social and political action, because without the conducive ness of the external environment, cultivation and development of the spectrum of dispositions etc., cannot successfully take place. This once again points up the crucial significance of the narrower virtue of morality. Accordingly, his account of perfect obligation is foremost in the depiction of types of duty contained within his theory. The reason for this is that agents' actions in the public sphere affect the *telos* of the community, and as such Mill was concerned to depict as imperative rules of conduct toward that end. He did not merely stipulate such rules, however. Given the nature of human beings and the importance of the rational process in the achievement of happiness, Mill was at pains to instruct agents in the result of action in the public sphere as it affects the community (and ultimately species) *telos*. Once agents are made aware of the results of public action, and the corollary of private benefit, they will accept more readily the unconditional imperatives that apply to those actions.[64] Mill's theory echoes Aristotle in noting that no agent is an isolated individual, and that all agents are members of the group and as such perform some actions in the public sphere. Actions performed by agents in the public sphere must, in order to fulfill the *telos* of the species, be actions that contribute to such happiness. The payback for the acting agent is the contribution to private

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63 Mill, 'Three Essays on Religion.' p.356.

64 Part of this process is the attachment of commendatory evaluation to such acts. This illustrates the intermingling of Mill's theories of value and of conduct.

happiness that accompanies the cultivation and development of the social virtues (i.e. other-directed dispositions).[65]

Mill's account of duties of perfect obligation may be seen to correlate with his understanding of the concept of justice. The class comprises those duties which 'a person may rightfully be compelled to fulfill.' These 'positive duties' are implicitly linked with their origin in the natural dispositions of human nature felt trans-subjectively and translated into objective concepts of justice in Mill's statement that they 'may be *exacted* from a person, as one exacts a debt.' This unconditional sense of obligation is used to depict those acts one must perform (or refrain from performing) in virtue of the rights of those affected by the performance (or non-performance) of the acts.[66] The distinguishing feature of perfect obligations is their connection to Mill's concept of justice, and via that concept the connection with happiness is firmly established. They are, in the terms used here, unconditional moral obligations on all agents and are backed by the sanction of the state.

Conversely, duties of imperfect obligation are subject to no legal sanction. These are the duties 'which we wish that people should do, which we like or admire them for doing, perhaps dislike or despise them for not doing, but yet admit that they are not bound to do so.' They are recognized as moral obligations, but without the same universality as unconditional duties. These conditional obligations are also duties that originate in natural dispositions. They differ, however, from duties of perfect obligation in that they are the subject of informal rather than formal sanction. (They are the stuff of social rather than jurisprudential analysis.)[67] The distinction between the enforcement of unconditional and conditional obligations is an important one. In the former case, failure to fulfill one's obligation is sanctionable by law, but in the case of conditional obligations where no correlative right exists, Mill states only that 'it would be desirable or laudable' for a person to act in such a manner, and to this end he or she may be 'persuaded or exhorted, to act in that manner,' but cannot and should not be compelled to do so.[68]

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65 This reward or payback is a recognized feature of moral actions. See e.g. W.K. Frankena, *Ethics*. 2nd Ed. Englewood Cliffs,19' 3 p.64.

66 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' pp.246-47; 'Thornton on Labour and Its Claims.' p.650.

67 Mill, 'Utilitarianism.' pp.246-47; 'Thornton on Labour and Its Claims.' p.651.

68 Mill refers readers to Alexander Bain's, *The Emotions and the Will*, (particularly the chapter on 'The Ethical Emotions and the Moral Sense'] for illustration and reinforcement of this point. See 'Utilitarianism.' p.246, 24(n.

The introduction of choice in the public sphere of action is of great significance to the unfolding of Mill's socio-political theory. For performance of conditional moral actions, and their subsequent effect on the development of agents' virtuous characters, to take place, Mill has implied two necessary conditions: the first is that agents must occupy an environment in which choice is possible, and the second is that they must be of sufficient rational development to recognize the different values which attach to and exist between choices. He has no quibble with the enforcement of a set of unconditional obligations in order to achieve the basic framework of that environment, but confirms that the larger portion of it is the province of choice rather than of compulsion.[69] The chain of connection between the enlarged principle of utility and Mill's promotion of liberty is flagged here. This connection continues in the examination of Mill's understanding of duty in the sphere of private action.

Within the private sphere of action (that which affects no other agent) Mill promoted the maximum degree of freedom and autonomy. At the same time, he was aware that the untutored agent may either pursue false happiness or fail to realize potential happiness. To gain the end of the greatest possible happiness agents need guidance in the form of rules and precepts of action. Provision of this guide, as he noted, is part of the province of the Method of Ethics or Art of Life. The development of such a guide occurs in conjunction with a commendatory evaluation of acts, and forms the core of his theory of authority.[70] The imperative for the achievement of the *telos* of the individual agent, as a member of humanity, is to maximize both private and general happiness. In the public arena, it has been shown that Mill operated with two types of duty, one unconditional and the second conditional. Where there is room for possible confusion is in his employment of conditional obligation in the arena of private existence also. There it is open to uncoerced agents to choose which activities to pursue in order to achieve private happiness. However, for each particular agent some activities are more productive of happiness than others, and integrate to produce a greater degree of general happiness. If it is the case that a particular agent wishes to achieve the greatest possible happiness (and Mill has demonstrated that all agents do wish to do so), then that agent is required to act in certain ways. This is the conditional use of obligation, and expresses the application of Mill's primary statement of agents' duty in the private domain.

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69 Mill, 'Utilitarianism,' pp.220-21.
70 See Chapter X.

The private life of the individual is by far the largest portion of that life, and correspondingly the second usage of conditional duty constitutes a significant portion of Mill's broad ethical doctrine. The conditional imperatives which operate in the departments of prudence and policy, and of aesthetics, guide the development of the private virtues. (Here virtues are understood as 'the dispositions that are most conducive to one's own good or welfare, or alternatively, that prudence or a careful concern for one's own good is the cardinal or basic moral virtue, other virtues being derivative from it.'[71]) Mill regarded himself as justified in this overlap between public moral values and the private individual values on the grounds that agents' private actions contribute to their broad virtue and character development, and the quality of each agent's character impacts on the manner in which they perform public conditional duties.

§VII.ix. The link between the indicative account of *telos* and Mill's prescriptive theory. It is now possible to outline the shift from the indicative evidence of the method of science to the prescription of the Art of Life as it is expressed in Mill's theory of conduct. The link between the conditional obligations on agents in the spheres of public and private action and the composition of human nature, which is expressed in its most succinct form in Mill's injunction to amend nature, is demonstrable as follows: Human nature in its original uncultivated state comprises a range of potentials in dispositions - both those that are purely self-interested and those that are other-directed - and each potential, when cultivated and developed in activity is accompanied by pleasure (which, when made reliable over time via the employment of reason, is transformed into the state of happiness). Such happiness is the natural payback for the agent's performance of actions that contribute to the *telos* of existence understood as the survival and melioration of both individual and species. This is the indicative *telos* and first principle of action in operation. Mill's unproven first principle is that good consists in the achievement of the *telos* of existence, and is indicated by the achievement of the state of happiness. It is, therefore, in all agents' best interests (and, subsequently, in the community's best interests) that capacities are cultivated and developed in order that the happiness that accompanies such self-realization is achieved.

There is the possibility, however, that agents will be misled into striving after false pleasure and happiness, which results not only in their failing to achieve the greatest possible personal happiness, but also in the diminishment of the happiness of the

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71 Frankena, *op. cit.*, p.64.

community. In order to counter this possible error, Mill developed a theory of conduct which operates on two levels: the level of unconditional imperatives in the sphere of public action, and the level of conditional imperatives in both the public and the private spheres. Significantly, there is at the level of conditional imperatives a necessary condition of freedom of choice, while at both levels agents' rational awareness of the existential rules and precepts is, for Mill, fundamental.[72]

The bridge between the internal state of the individual agent's nature and Mill's theory of conduct thus turns out to be his understanding of virtue. Public and private spheres of action are not completely separate in Mill's theory any more than they are in Aristotle's writing. Mill also pointed to the connection between the private activities of agents - activities governed by conditional obligations - and the achievement of the greatest possible public happiness. The development of agents' habits and characters in the private sphere affect their public actions. So there is a sense in which conditional obligations which operate in the private sphere are also connected to the unconditional obligations that operate in the public sphere. This suggests that there is a reflection of an agent's private character and habits in his or her public behaviour, and consequently on the performance of unconditional obligations. The development of a virtuous character via the cultivation and development of dispositions and capacities in the private arena will also have a strengthening effect on the fulfillment of conditional obligations in the public sphere. Honest and rule-abiding behaviour in the private sphere, as it becomes part of the agent's character, will carry over into the actions performed in the public sphere.

On the other hand, failure to act dutifully - that is to amend one's nature - in the private sphere results in the diminished opportunity to *be* oneself. It results in the stunting of one's virtuous growth, and of one's character formation; it has the effect of retarding one's self-realization, and consequently of lessening one's achievement of happiness. The important connection made by Mill between amendment of those dispositions etc., which operate in the private sphere, and the *telos* of the species, now becomes clear. Failure to act dutifully in the private sphere has an impact on the performance of duty in the public sphere. The lessening of achievement of private happiness has the corollary effect of diminishing the total of community happiness. The logical conclusion, drawn by Mill, is that the rational maximization of private

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72 Mill was aware of the problem of comprehension which may occur in some part of the collective, and developed his religion of humanity to address that problem. See Chapter X.

happiness is necessary for the achievement of the greatest possible community happiness.

The connection between Mill's broad theory of conduct and his understanding of moral action is found in the conclusion that the virtuous private individual is better equipped to be a virtuous public actor. Broad virtue development, guided by the rules and precepts of conditional morality and prudential policy assists the development of the narrower moral virtue. Conversely, for the individual agent the performance of unconditional obligations in the public sphere achieves the same end as choosing to perform conditional obligations in the private sphere, namely happiness, and consequently achievement of the *telos* of existence. So, the cultivation of other-directed dispositions, which are part of the descriptive account of human nature, chimes with both perfect and imperfect acts of obligation, as part of the prescriptive theory of action derived from that account, insofar as they all contribute to the happiness of the community. The same relation is present in the sphere of public action, either at the conditional or unconditional levels of obligatory action, as is present in the private sphere wherein the conditional level of obligation only operates.

This account of Mill's theory of conduct has, of course, a direct relation to his general theory of value. The distinction between types of duty chimes with different use of commendatory evaluative terms. The commendatory force attached to value terms used to describe the class of objects actions, etc., that is those that come under the heading of unconditional duties, is most powerful. It is the positive evaluation of the worth of performing moral duty, and the use of evaluative terms in these circumstances carries the weight of command. Duties of imperfect obligation and those conditional duties that occur in the private sphere, on the other hand, fall outside what might be termed 'strict moral duty.' They form, instead, a broad category of non-compulsory virtuous acts. An agent is advised to perform these acts of conditional obligation, except in circumstances detrimental to the well-being of the performing agent. The commendatory force of evaluative terms in such cases falls short of command, but is a powerful recommendation.

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The above exploration of the nexus between Mill's account of human nature and its *telos*, and the development of his broad ethical theory - in the form of the enlarged theory of utility - has established their relation. However, Mill's goal of developing a social and political theory whereby to bring about the promulgation of the rules and precepts of his principle of happiness required that he also examine existential

conditions to note the operation of the natural desire for happiness in action. Mill's reasoning in this endeavour is plain. He had no intention of promoting a radical theory of organization, nor of arguing for the virtues of his theory without evidence of its operation in social and political organization. He needed to examine that which existed in order to note the existence of institutions and practices conducive to the achievement of individual and community happiness; to determine how they might be improved; and also to note those counterproductive to that end, in order to prepare the way for their remodelling.

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Part Three.
Mill's Translation of Theory into Praxis: the culmination of his holistic philosophy and its potential for engagement with contemporary debate.

Part Three: Introductory remarks.

Part One provided the evidence of Mill's naturalist ground on which he developed a broad ethical theory and doctrine. Part Two examined the nature and content of that doctrine, noting the relation of happiness to good, and of Mill's account of human nature and its *telos* to his general theories of value and of conduct. The summation of Parts One and Two is contained in Mill's understanding of self- and community-realization as the indicators of the achievement of the greatest possible happiness and so of the attainment of the *telos* of existence for individual agents and for the community. At various points during the exposition of these parts, Mill's philosophy has been seen potentially to engage with particular aspects of the contemporary debate, and so evidence is gradually being accumulated with which to support the claim that a relocation of Mill's position in that debate is worthwhile.

Two things happen in Part Three. The first is that the final stage of development of Mill's holistic theory is examined. In Parts One and Two, Mill was aware that the development of his philosophy was largely taking place in the laboratory and the study. In Part Three it engages with the existential conditions of his time and is directed toward the translation of his theory into a program of action. One of the products of Part Three is the presentation of the key element of Mill's theory and doctrine as he intended it to be installed in the institutions and processes of social and political life, and to note its derivation from the evidence presented in Parts One and Two. This linkage of intended praxis with its philosophical ground is achieved via an analysis of the conceptual terms used by Mill as criteria of measurement in existential circumstances of the existence and degree of happiness in both individual agents and in the community. This is done through an examination of his understanding of the concepts of perfectibility and of progress, and their relation to the enlarged principle of utility.

Mill's theory required a form of measurement for the self-realization, happiness, and attainment of *telos* in the lives of individuals and of the community. To this end, he adopted the contemporarily powerful concepts of perfectibility and progress. This marks the beginning of the confrontation of Mill's thought with the problem of contemporary political theory. It also marks the point at which many of today's thinkers will part company with Mill. They will do so on the grounds that the concepts of 'perfectibility' and 'progress' are no longer legitimate currency for the development of political theory in the contemporary climate.

The position taken by the present thesis is that the fruitfulness of Mill's holistic philosophy as a potential means of breaking the log-jam in contemporary debate and the basis of the claim for Mill's relocation in that debate are brought into focus at this point. The advantage Mill's thought brings to the contemporary discourse on political theory is that he was not burdened as are late twentieth century thinkers, by an intellectual proscription on the concepts of perfectibility and progress. In fact, the opposite was the case. In the nineteenth century - the Age of Progress - the terms were used at all levels of society to signal optimism and confidence in the anticipated perpetual improvement of the conditions of life for each and all. Mill's requirement for criteria with which to measure self- and community-realization, and so to measure the achievement of happiness and the attainment of *telos* was fulfilled by the terms 'perfectibility' and 'progress.' However, according to critics of the terms, they are too amorphous to act in any way other than as the expression of approval of change and cannot be employed in the development of political theory.

The rejection of the terms by present-day thinkers seems to imply a rejection of Mill's thought at this point and to signal a vulnerability in the unfolding of his holistic philosophy. This is to ignore Mill's methodological approach to the delineation and definition of terms. Long before the events of the late nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century turned this optimism and confidence into dust - and with it the use of the terms - Mill recognized their wooliness and ambiguity. The result of the examination of the terms as they are employed by Mill across the broad spectrum of his writing is recognition that his understanding of them is as specific and clear in its content and structure as is his understanding of other terms in his philosophy. By unraveling his precise delineation of their meaning, and their employment as criteria of measurement of the achievement of self- and community-realization, Mill's employment of the terms 'perfectibility' and 'progress' is seen, clearly and with as great a degree of accuracy as is possible given the amount of data to be considered, to indicate and measure the happiness of both individual and society. In addition, they

are confirmed as the criteria Mill intended to employ in the measurement of the successful implementation of his enlarged utilitarianism in his development of a program of social and political action. The achievement and measurement of perfectibility in the individual and progress in the community is also the measurement of the attainment of *telos*. Once this is understood, Mill's development of a program of action to improve the conduciveness of circumstances and environment of agents and community for the achievement of those conditions is recognized as identical to development of a method of bringing about the greatest happiness possible for both individual and group.

The result of Mill's analysis was an understanding of the relation between the progress of the community and the perfectibility of the individual agent. By its means, Mill was able to develop an understanding of how the *telos* of the individual agent is attained via the perfecting, as far as possible within the existential circumstances and environment of his or her life, of the spectrum of potentials in dispositions etc., in harmony and balance. Similarly, when the perfecting of agents in this way is brought about in sufficient numbers, so attainment of the *telos* of the community which is measured by Mill in terms of its progress is also attained. He further noted that they are synergistic when directed toward the *telos* of existence. However, he also noted that they are not always directed to that end. One outcome of the examination undertaken in Part Three is confirmation of Mill's understanding of the significance of balance and harmony to the achievement of self-realization, and to cement that process into the foundation of both social and political doctrine.

There is a second, and in today's context more significant, outcome of Mill's delineation of the terms. It is in this second outcome that Mill's holistic theory will be claimed to be potentially valuable within the present debate concerning moral pluralism. Both 'perfectibility' and 'progress' were understood by Mill to be rational concepts and so are achieved primarily through the use of reason in choosing courses of action. This understanding is underlined by his placing of reason in the most prominent position in his theory, alongside that of liberty. (The difference between Mill's position and that, for example, of Rawls, is in his connection between desire, volition and reason, with desire demonstrated to precede reason.). However, reason, even in its employment as an instrument whereby to achieve the perfectibility of the agent, transmutes over time into habitual responses to associations. Choices once made on the rational ground that they are best suited to satisfy desires, and so begin the chain of events which results ideally in the perfection possible for some disposition etc., become over time choices made automatically by habitual response. By exploring

the part played by reason whereby agents may, if they choose, achieve perfectibility, Mill was also able to delineate the location of the major obstacles to the end of the principle of utility.

The obstacles to the achievement of the greatest possible happiness are found within the habitual patterns of response, judgment and action which Mill referred to collectively as 'customary morality.' This is not to say that Mill believed the totality of customary morality to be an impediment to the achievement of perfection for the individual and progress for the community. Some aspects and practices within it are accepted by Mill to be conducive to that end. It can, and often does, develop in ways that assist the achievement of happiness and so the attainment of *telos*. Frequently, however, it mutates with time until it is expressed in rules and precepts that are indifferent, or counterproductive, to that end. This is the reason why Mill's attitude toward customary morality was ambivalent.

Given the variability of outcomes from the practice of customary morality, it was important to Mill to discover and to demonstrate the way in which the process loses direction and results in the complex situation now recognized as moral pluralism. This was done by Mill in exploring more fully the relation between reason and the striving for happiness as self-realization. The development of that relation becomes one of habit, as already noted, and it is the habitual performance of actions that leads to their becoming divorced from their original purpose. This, over time, becomes the substance of what Mill termed 'customary morality.'

Customary morality, for Mill, held the position in his development of theory which today is occupied by moral pluralism. However, rather than rejecting the significance of moral pluralism for the development of political theory, or alternatively requiring that it be placed centre stage in such an endeavour, Mill saw clearly that customary morality contained both valuable and disvaluable elements. His task, as he saw it, was to discern how the valuable elements came into being and to protect and increase them; and at the same time to discover how the disvaluable elements arose, and to work out a way of diminishing their power and preventing the formation of other similarly disvaluable moral responses.

He did so by following his methodology of first examining the concept to discover its origins. The core of customary morality, and the point at which Mill's examination becomes a prescient commentary on contemporary depictions of moral pluralism, is in his depiction of the role of reason in its development. Reason is one of the most

important elements of Mill's program of action as well as the key concept to contemporary theorists' understanding of how neutral political theory is to be developed, The way in which Mill depicts its transformation into the practices of customary morality in context and over time, indicates his recognition both of the impact of epistemic conditions and of the cultural, environmental, and particular circumstances and conditions in which agents mature on the development and power of customary morality. The similarities between Mill's account of the origin and development of customary morality and the contemporary understandings of moral pluralism are significant. The difference between them is in Mill's positive response to the problematic content of customary morality, and in the way he did so within the framework of his broad ethical doctrine.

Once the part played by reason was discovered, and the way in which it is transformed into the ground of customary morality (or moral pluralism) was delineated, Mill was then in the position to begin to develop a program of action, comprising institutions and practices, with which to alter incrementally the conditions of both the lives of particular individuals and that of the community in ways that would be conducive to the achievement of happiness and so attainment of the *telos* of existence. With this end in view, the development of Mill's social and political theory can be seen as a response to the problem of customary morality as an impediment to the achievement of the goals of his enlarged utilitarianism. Alteration and modification of customary morality was seen by Mill to be necessary only if the practices and beliefs were indifferent or counterproductive to the achievement of happiness. The plurality of moral positions was examined by him against the criterion of an umbrella or universal ethical position. Providing customary morality was directed toward the end of happiness (perhaps not directly but ultimately) then the practice was valuable and should be retained in its particular epistemic or cultural context. If it was not so directed, and so was indifferent to or disvaluable for that end, then Mill required that the practice be modified or dissolved altogether. All the elements of Mill's social and political theory may be seen to be directed toward this end.

The thesis concludes with a chapter in which the key element of Mill's social and political theory - liberty - is related to his project as outlined above. The significance of liberty as a means whereby happiness is achieved, rather than an end in itself, is stressed as the focal point in Mill's development of socio-political theory. Finally, by means of a rehearsal of how Mill's theory engages with contemporary issues in social and political life, his responses to the questions posed within the contemporary debate concerning the development of political theory are summarized. The conclusion of the

thesis is a restatement, in the light of the evidence presented, of the original claim that Mill's position in the contemporary debate requires alteration for the potential contribution of his thought to the resolution of the problems of moral pluralism and the antagonism between liberal and communitarian ideas to be realized.

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