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J.S. Mill's quality of pleasure

Toshinari MIZUNO

In his book “Utilitarianism” Mill introduced the view that there are different qualities of pleasure into the framework of Bentham's utilitarianism. But he did not explain clearly what the quality of pleasure consists of. Therefore, the aim of my paper is to investigate what he had in mind with this notion.

First, I will critically examine the interpretation that quality of pleasure is reducible to quantity of pleasure, i.e. that a qualitative difference of pleasure is in the final analysis just a large quantitative difference: This reading, though, does not have sufficient textual evidence and in fact is even at odds with Mill's text. Secondly, I will try to show that the interpretation according to which quality of pleasure is to be analyzed as kind of pleasure points into the right direction, but does not make sufficiently clear what a kind of pleasure is. Consequently, I shall try to complete this account by understanding the relation between different kinds of pleasure in a way similar to the relation between real numbers and imaginary numbers.