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Relation between virtue and happiness in J. S. Mill

Toshinari MIZUNO

According to Mill, virtue is a disposition that produces happiness to others and/or oneself. Furthermore, Mill claims that virtue is not only an important means to happiness, but also a part of happiness. This paper attempts to understand Mill's claim that virtue is a part of happiness through a critical examination of major interpretations of this claim offered by Berger, Crisp, and Skorupski. According to Berger, Mill's claim that virtue is a part of happiness means that virtue is one of goods that compose happiness. According to Crisp, the claim means that one's enjoyable experience to act virtuously belongs to his own happiness. According to Skorupski, the claim means that insofar as one finds virtue as pleasant, one desires it for itself. I argue against Berger's interpretation, and Crisp's as well. Then, I modify and defend Skorupski's interpretation by considering that Mill takes virtue mainly as a disposition.

This interpretation clarifies a characteristic of Mill's "hedonism" that people desire only pleasures and things associated with pleasures for themselves. I call this view "extended hedonism."