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J. S. Mill's concept of individuality

Toshinari MIZUNO

Mill claims that individuality is a major ingredient of happiness in his *On Liberty*. However, some have asserted that his concept of individuality is not so clear. This paper aims to clarify Mill's concept of individuality.

(1) To have individuality means that one's desires and impulses are expressions of one's own nature (i.e., the expression of one's present character). Therefore one's individuality concerns only the manner of existence of one's desires and impulses. Desires and impulses that express one's own nature are the most essential ingredients of one's individuality.

(2) Two premises are necessary for one to have individuality. The first relates to certain human faculties, such as comprehension, action, and enjoyment. The second is that one's desires and impulses are balanced by consciousness. Certain human faculties and the balance of desires, impulses, and consciousness form the secondary ingredient of individuality.

Based on this interpretation of Mill's concept of individuality, I argue against Gray's and Donner's interpretations. Gray claims that one's individuality consists in the "quiddity" of one's self that is one's unique range of potentialities. According to Donner, Mill's individuality consists of a set of virtual abilities which is partially discovered and partially created by oneself. I argue that both Gray's and Donner's interpretations are inconsistent with Mill's concept in that they see individuality as one's unique potentialities and do not necessarily address the individuality of desires and impulses.