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John Stuart Mill's Conception of Happiness and Hedonistic Paradoxes

Takashi Koizumi

I have tried in this paper to specify, first, J. S. Mill's conception of happiness and, second, understand the significance of hedonistic paradoxes in his theory of happiness, and, third, expound his way of dealing with these paradoxes.

I find that Mill has two kinds of theory of happiness: a theory of extrinsic happiness and a theory of intrinsic happiness. And I trace how he developed his idea of happiness, and especially how hedonistic paradoxes made him change his idea of happiness. By hedonistic paradoxes I mean two kinds of paradoxes Mill faced with. The first hedonistic paradox is that whenever we pursue our own happiness, we cannot get it; while whenever we pursue something else than our own happiness, we get it. The second paradox is that we have to sacrifice our own happiness in order to attain the other's happiness, and vice versa. I am particularly concerned about how these hedonistic paradoxes made him develop his theory of happiness, and also about how he dealt with these paradoxes.

Lastly, I have tried to make it clear to what extent Mill's utilitarian theory of happiness is tenable by examining his way of dealing with the paradoxes.