

MILL AND THE CONSISTENCY OF HEDONISM

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Article:

Hedonism, it is sometimes claimed, is irredeemably vulgar; for it implies that there is nothing noble in life, that the pleasures that life affords are to be equally valued, no matter what their object. In his book *Utilitarianism* John Stuart Mill takes exception to this claim.¹ When defending the hedonism which underlies his utilitarianism, Mill suggests that the value of a given pleasure is contingent in part on its quality and that this fact allows one to distinguish different grades of pleasure, thus preserving a superior niche for the more noble of our pursuits. But many consider Mill's suggestion so far from being in real effort consistent with hedonism itself.² Only recently has there been any effort to acquit Mill of this charge of inconsistency.³ It seems to me that the discussions available in the literature leave the issue really quite murky. In this paper I shall try, first, to come to a clearer understanding of hedonism by distinguishing and commenting briefly on various versions of it and, secondly, to show that, while the theory of value which Mill apparently espouses seems *not* to be inconsistent with hedonism, nevertheless it may well be inconsistent with other views that he holds.

Part I

It is in fact misleading to ask of a certain proposition p whether or not it is consistent with hedonism. For there is no single theory which has a unique claim to the title "hedonism." Rather, there is an indefinitely large number of theories which have a claim to that title, and so the question to be considered, for each *version* of hedonism, is whether or not p is consistent with *it*. And the answer will vary from version to version.⁴

What conditions must a theory satisfy in order to warrant being called a version of hedonism? I think most philosophers would agree that every version of hedonism must imply that pleasure is in some way uniquely valuable; beyond that, however, perhaps nothing is required for a theory to be properly called a version of hedonism. And so, here is one version of hedonism:

(H1) Pleasure is uniquely valuable.

But H1 is very bare. Traditionally, proponents of hedonism have concerned themselves not only with pleasure but also with pain (which they dubiously claim to be in some manner the "opposite" of pleasure). Mill, for instance, claims the following to be true:

(H2) Pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends.⁵

G.E. Moore characterizes hedonism in a variety of ways.⁶ He says that it is the theory that: pleasure is the sole good; pleasure alone is good as an end; pleasure alone is good in itself; pleasure is the only thing at which we ought to aim; and pleasure is the only thing that is good for its own sake. He apparently regards all of these different formulations as different ways to express one and the same proposition; moreover, given that he stipulates that by "pleasure" he means not only pleasure but the absence of pain, it is fair to regard all of these formulations to be simply different ways to express what is expressed in H2. However, Moore does mention that hedonism might also be taken to be the theory that consciousness of pleasure is the sole good, and he does *not* regard this as equivalent to H2.⁷ Hence we have yet another version of hedonism:

(H2*) Consciousness of pleasure and freedom from consciousness of pain are the only things desirable as ends.⁸

Now none of H1, H2, and H2* is particularly easy to understand, and so it is not clear why anyone should think any of the theories expressed therein to be either false or ignoble. For instance, when Mill presents us with H2, he presumably is *not* to be understood to be saying that there are just two things — pleasure and freedom from pain — which are desirable as ends. Rather, he is to be understood, roughly, as saying that the only things which are desirable as ends are those situations which are cases of people (or other sentient creatures) being pleased or being free from pain; and there is an indefinite number of such situations. If we call such situations states of pleasure, and if we take "desirable as an end" (and "good in itself," "good for its own sake," *etc.*) to mean what "intrinsically good" means, then we might try to capture Mill's understanding of what hedonism is with the following:

(H3) All and only states of pleasure are intrinsically good.

And just as H2 has an analogue in H2*, so H3 has an analogue in H3*, where:

(H3*) All and only states of pleasure* are intrinsically good.

But, while in some respects H3 and H3* are clearer than H2 and H2*, they still contain the problematic phrases "state of pleasure" and "state of pleasure*." How are these phrases to be understood in this context? This is a matter that I shall not pursue here; for there is a graver problem that besets each of H1, H2, H2*, H3, and H3*, and this is that each is severely limited in that it fails to mention intrinsic badness, let alone degrees of intrinsic goodness and badness. Consider, for instance, the following states of affairs: (A) [Peter is pleased to degree 10 and Paul is in pain to degree 100], (B) [Peter is pleased to degree 100], and (C) [Peter is pleased to degree 10 and Paul is pleased to degree 100].⁹ A sophisticated version of hedonism would presumably allow us to declare C intrinsically better than B and E1 intrinsically better than A, but this is not an implication of any of the versions of hedonism so far considered. Yet it is fair to say that hedonists have traditionally been concerned with theories which would allow us to make just such a declaration. Before considering such theories, however, I shall stipulate that henceforth no distinction will be drawn between pleasure and pain on the one hand and consciousness of pleasure and pain on the other. It may be that there is such a distinction to be drawn; it is just that I will not draw it here. Following this practice will simplify our discussion without detriment to the subject-matter.

Now, sophisticated versions of hedonism — *i.e.*, versions which, among other things, deal with degrees of intrinsic goodness and badness — could be drawn up in a wide variety of ways. There seems to me, however, to be a particular group of such versions whose members have figured prominently (some more than others), if perhaps only implicitly, in past ethical theory. The "essential ingredients" of all versions in this group may be usefully presented as follows:

- (SH) (I)(a) There are states of pleasure and states of pain which have other than neutral intrinsic value;
(b) nothing else has other than neutral intrinsic value,
(II)(a1) the higher the intrinsic value of a state of pleasure or pain, the greater the degree of pleasure or the less the degree of pain associated with it
(a2) the greater the degree of pleasure or the less the degree of pain associated with a state of pleasure or pain, the higher its intrinsic value;
(b1) the lower the intrinsic value of a state of pleasure or pain, the less the degree of pleasure or the greater the degree of pain associated with it;
(b2) the less the degree of pleasure or the greater the degree of pain associated with a state of pleasure or pain, the lower its intrinsic value.¹⁰

This of course calls for some comment. But, although much of what is involved in SH will remain unclear, it will, I think, be seen that SH is clearer and more interesting than any of the versions of hedonism considered earlier and also that it helps carve out an important group of versions of hedonism.

First of all, it must be stressed that SH is *not* a version of hedonism. Rather, various versions of hedonism may be formulated with it as a base. This point should become clearer shortly.

Secondly, I shall not seek to clarify the terms "pleasure," "pain," or "intrinsic value." All are of course problematic, but it would be inappropriate to delve into them here.¹¹ However, the notion of a state of pleasure that is operative in SH may safely be regarded as that analyzed in the following definition:

(D1) p is a state of pleasure =df. p is a state of affairs which is necessarily such that, if it obtains, then someone is pleased.

And the notion of a state of pain may be explicated along the same lines:

(D2) p is a state of pain =df. p is a state of affairs which is necessarily such that, if it obtains, then someone is pained (or in pain).

Now, both D1 and D2 are liberal definitions — D1 is *too* liberal for H3, in fact — but they will do for present purposes.¹²

Thirdly, I use the term "associated" in a relatively straightforward manner. The pleasure associated with A , for instance, is Peter's, and only Peter's, and is of degree 10; the pain associated with A is Paul's, and only Paul's, and is of degree 100; the pleasure associated with C is comprised of both Peter's and Paul's pleasures and is of degree 110; and so on. In saying this, I am of course assuming that pleasures are commensurate with one another. In fact, SH is formulated on the assumption that pleasures and pains are commensurate with one another. (SH does not *require* such commensurability, but clause (II) is vacuous without it.) Of course, the assumption that pleasures and pains are commensurate with one another — whether in general or just in some instances — is problematic,¹³ but I shall not concern myself with it further.

It remains, finally, to clarify the puzzling phrases "the greater the degree of pleasure (pain)" and "the less the degree of pleasure (pain)." Instead of "the greater the degree of ..." I might have written imply "the more ..." and instead of "the less the degree of ..." I might have written simply "the less ...", but this would have been misleading. Consider clause (II al) of SH. If that clause had read "the higher the intrinsic value of a state of pleasure or pain, the more pleasure or the less pain associated with it," then its meaning would perhaps have been considerably clearer. But I avoided writing this for the reason that, in common parlance, "the more pleasure or the less pain" means what "the greater the amount of pleasure or the less the amount of pain" means; and to have stipulated that the sophisticated versions of hedonism with which we are to concern ourselves imply that, the higher the intrinsic value of a state of pleasure or pain, the greater the amount of pleasure or the less the amount of pain associated with it, would have been irresponsible — for it would have been to ignore all "non-quantitative" versions of hedonism, including Mill's apparently preferred version, where the intrinsic value of a state of pleasure or pain is seen not to be merely a function (if a function at all) of the amount of pleasure or pain associated with it.

Perhaps an illustration will help make this clearer. Consider once again the state of pleasure (B) [Peter is pleased to degree 100]. Let us assume, for the sake of convenience, that quantity of pleasure or pain is a function simply of intensity and duration; in fact, let us assume that, for any pleasure or pain, degree of quantity = degree of intensity x degree of duration.¹⁴ Then, for a (standard) quantitative hedonist (of the sort that subscribes to SH), B obtains when (i) Peter is pleased and the degree of intensity of his pleasure is 50 and the degree of its duration is 2 ($50 \times 2 = 100$), (ii) Peter is pleased and the degree of intensity of his pleasure is 25 and the degree of its duration is 4 ($25 \times 4 = 100$), and so on. A non-quantitative hedonist (of the sort that

subscribes to SH), however, while commonly (but not necessarily) agreeing that the degree of pleasure or pain is a function of the amount of pleasure or pain, denies that it is *only* a function of this amount; he will stipulate further that the degree of pleasure or pain is *also* a function of some other factor or factors. Suppose that a particular non-quantitative (*i.e.*, not *purely* quantitative) hedonist (of the sort that subscribes to SH) believes that the degree of pleasure or pain is a function simply of the amount of pleasure or pain *and* some other factor *f*. Then, with respect to *B*, he will say that it obtains when (i) Peter is pleased and the degree of intensity of his pleasure is 25 and the degree of its duration is 2 and the degree of *f* is 2 ($25 \times 2 \times 2 = 100$), (ii) Peter is pleased and the degree of intensity of his pleasure is 10 and the degree of its duration is 2 and the degree of *f* is 5 ($10 \times 2 \times 5 = 100$), and so on. So, for such a hedonist, the degrees of pleasure and pain mentioned in SH cover not just intensity and duration of pleasure and pain, but also *f*, and it would be consistent with his version of hedonism to say, for instance, that it may on occasion happen that (C) [Peter is pleased to degree 10 and Paul is pleased to degree 100] obtains *and* that the amount of Paul's pleasure is *less* than the amount of Peter's pleasure, just as long as he agrees that the degree of *f* with respect to Paul's pleasure is more than ten times as great as the degree of *f* with respect to Peter's pleasure.

It should be clear by now why SH does not itself constitute a version of hedonism. It is essentially "incomplete" in that it leaves the phrases "the greater the degree of..." and "the less the degree of..." uninterrupted. That is, SH provides no stipulation as to exactly which elements of pleasure and pain are to be included in the hedonic calculus and, hence, in the computation of the intrinsic value of a state of pleasure or pain. But now the drawing up of sophisticated versions of hedonism on the basis of SH is relatively straightforward. For instance, I take it that a (standard) quantitative version of hedonism based on SH is to be formulated in some such manner as the following:

(SH1) SH & the degree of pleasure or pain associated with a state of pleasure or pain is a function of, and only of, the quantity of the pleasure or pain associated with that state of affairs.

The second clause of SH1 (following the ampersand) in effect stipulates how the terms "the greater the degree of..." and "the less the degree of..." are to be understood. So, too, the version of hedonism considered above, where the factor *f* was introduced, might be formulated thus:

(SH2) SH & the degree of pleasure or pain associated with a state of pleasure or pain is a function of, and only of, (a) the quantity of the pleasure or pain associated with that state of affairs and (b) the degree of *f* of this pleasure or pain.

We should note that SH1 and SH2 are both "fixed" in the sense that neither allows for a variation of the elements that go to compose the degree of pleasure or pain and, hence, for a variation in the way that the intrinsic value of the state of pleasure or pain at issue is to be computed. That is, the implication of these versions of hedonism is that, if one of the elements mentioned happens to be absent from the state of affairs in question, that state of affairs does not have a determinate intrinsic value. For instance, the state of pleasure (*F*) [Peter is pleased and his pleasure is of an intensity of degree 10] is, on SH1, of indeterminate intrinsic value, for the element of duration is absent from it.¹⁵ Similarly, the state of pleasure (*G*) [Peter is pleased and the quantity of his pleasure is of degree 10] is, although of determinate intrinsic value on SH1, of indeterminate intrinsic value on SH2.¹⁶

Versions of hedonism based on SH need not be fixed, however. They may be "variable" in a number of ways. For instance, a (nonstandard) quantitative version of hedonism based on SH could be drawn up along the following lines:

(SH1') SH & the degree of pleasure or pain associated with a state of pleasure or pain is a function of and only of:

(a) the quantity of the pleasure or pain associated with that state of affairs, if there is such a quantity; or

- (b) the intensity of the pleasure or pain associated with that state of affairs, if there is no duration of pleasure or pain associated with it; or
- (c) the duration of the pleasure or pain associated with that state of affairs, if there is no intensity of pleasure or pain associated with it.

Clearly, this is just one variable quantitative version of hedonism that may be drawn up on the basis of SH; and, of course, many non-quantitative versions of hedonism, both fixed and variable, may be drawn up on the basis of SH. In general, then, there are indefinitely many sophisticated versions of hedonism.

The question that now confronts us is: what is Mill's (preferred) theory of value and is there any reason to believe it to be inconsistent with hedonism?

Part II

As noted earlier, Mill claims that H2 is true. But it would be a mistake to call H2 Mill's "preferred" theory of value, given that certain of his remarks strongly suggest a theory considerably more sophisticated than H2.

Mill himself considers various objections to the utilitarianism which he espouses. One of these concerns its hedonistic underpinnings and runs thus:

Now such a theory of life excites in many minds, and among them in some of the most estimable in feeling and purpose, inveterate dislike. To suppose that life has (as they express it) no higher end than pleasure—no better and nobler object of desire and pursuit — they designate as utterly mean and groveling, as a doctrine worthy of swine.¹⁷

The objection seems a forceful one. After all, Bentham himself is famous for saying that "quantity of pleasure being equal, pushpin is as good as poetry." Bentham has been construed as thinking poetry nevertheless better than pushpin because the quantity of pleasure associated with the former — when measured according to its intensity, duration, *and* other elements that Bentham thinks are to be included in the calculation — is greater than that associated with the latter.¹⁸ Mill apparently thinks that Bentham's contention (so interpreted) is correct, but, in case anyone is unpersuaded that, according to a purely quantitative assessment of pleasure, pushpin will *always* be outranked by poetry, he suggests that hedonism need not be purely quantitative, saying:

It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognize that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that, while in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasure should be supposed to depend on quantity alone.¹⁹

Whether or not Mill fully endorses a qualitative version of hedonism is not entirely clear from his remarks, given that he also says that (quantitative) utilitarians "have fully proved their case."²⁰ Nevertheless, it is with a qualitative version of hedonism that Mill is most often associated, and this is not unreasonable, since he takes some time to defend it. On this score he is especially noted for saying the following:

If I am asked what I mean by difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure, except its being greater in amount, there is but one possible answer. Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure.²¹

Mill then continues to elaborate this theme, ending with his famous aphorism that it is "better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."²²

Now, it must be stressed that Mill's remarks are sketchy and far from clear, and that, for this reason, the comments that are made in the remainder of this paper are quite tentative. Nevertheless, it appears that Mill's preferred theory of value is some non-quantitative version of hedonism which invokes the concept of the quality of pleasures and pains. It is true that he does not unambiguously reject Bentham's quantitative version of hedonism; nevertheless, it does seem clear that he regards a qualitative version of hedonism with considerable favor. Now, although Mill's remarks obviously leave room for a variety of interpretations, it seems appropriate to claim that the quantitative version of hedonism which Mill is prepared, albeit reluctantly, to discard is that version spelled out by SH1. Of course, Mill never explicitly mentions the concepts of a state of pleasure, intrinsic value, and so forth, but it seems clear that he has something very much like SH1 in mind. Given this, it seems appropriate to claim that that version of hedonism which he regards most highly is one which is a straightforward alternative to SH1, that is, one which reads exactly like SH2 but where f is stipulated to be the factor of quality. In short, Mill's preferred theory of value appears to be the following:

(SH3) SH & the degree of pleasure or pain associated with a state of pleasure or pain is a function of, and only of, (a) the quantity of the pleasure or pain associated with that state of affairs and (h) the degree of quality of this pleasure or pain.

Now, although the plausibility, let alone the truth, of SH3 is certainly open to question, the fact that it is a version of hedonism seems not to be. So what reason could there be for claiming that SH3 is "inconsistent with hedonism"?

The charge of inconsistency which many philosophers have brought against Mill's admission of quality into the hedonic calculus is, unfortunately, often not accompanied by any explicit argument; rather, Mill's "departure" from hedonism is merely slated as obvious. Sometimes, however, arguments are given. It seems to me that such arguments fall into three main categories in the available literature. The first line of argument manifests a lamentable bias toward the quantitative in that it boils down to ruling out all non-quantitative versions of hedonism by fiat.²³ In essence, it is claimed that only SH1 (or something close to it) is a correct formulation of hedonism; it is then noted that SH3 is inconsistent with SH1; and it is concluded that Mill's preferred theory of value is inconsistent with hedonism. Well, *of course* SH3 is inconsistent with SH1, but given that, once the bias has been exposed, the latter appears to have no better claim to the title "hedonism" than the former, the conclusion is hardly established.²⁴ And if, as many seem to think, SH1 implies that life is ignoble, it does not follow that hedonism — i.e., each version of hedonism — implies this. Whether or not SH3 implies this is something I shall not discuss, for the concept of nobility deserves fuller treatment than that which I can supply here. But off hand, I see no reason to think that SH3 does imply this, and presumably Mill would concur.

Now, if, as seems clear, SH3 is properly called a version of hedonism, then the claim that SH3 is "inconsistent with hedonism" is quite puzzling. Nevertheless, there is an interesting interpretation which may be given to this phrase in this context. On this interpretation, when it is claimed that SH3 is inconsistent with hedonism, what is meant is that SH3 inconsistent *in itself*, in that the admission of quality into the hedonic calculus by means of the second clause of SH3) is inconsistent with certain other propositions contained in SH (that is, contained in the first clause of SH3). The second and third main lines of argument take this tack.

The second line of argument is suggested by certain remarks made by Moore.²⁵ Moore criticizes Mill's appeal to public opinion as a determinant of the values to be attached to pleasures of different qualities. At one point, it seems that he takes such an appeal to be inconsistent with hedonism in so far as it requires considered preference, rather than pleasure (and the absence of pain), to be a criterion for determining the intrinsic value of a state of affairs. The suggestion is, then, that an appeal to such a criterion contravenes clause (1) of SH. I propose to ignore this argument here, however. It is difficult to unravel and, moreover, it appears to rely on the claim that Mill regards a universal, or almost universal, preference of one type of pleasure over another (on the part of those who have had experience of both) somehow to *render* the former type of pleasure of a higher quality than the latter. This claim may seem plausible (given the wording of the passage cited earlier: "... what *makes* one pleasure more valuable than another..."), but it is quite controversial. After all, the view that the

value-contributory nature of the quality that a particular pleasure has is somehow contingent upon expert public opinion is exceedingly odd and is, for that reason, not to be attributed to Mill if an alternative and more straightforward view is available. And there is such an alternative view, namely, the view that expert public opinion is the best *guide* that one has when trying to decide to what extent the quality of a particular pleasure contributes to the value of that pleasure.²⁶ This alternative view seems not to be at all inconsistent with clause (I) of SH.

The final line of argument is suggested by remarks made by Moore, W.D. Ross, Robert McNaughton, Raziel Abelson, Richard Taylor, and many others.²⁷ In outline, this argument runs as follows: whereas to appeal to the *quantity* of a pleasure or pain as a determinant of the intrinsic value of a state of affairs is consistent with hedonism, to appeal to its *quality* as such a determinant is to appeal to a criterion other than merely pleasure or pain, and this is not consistent with hedonism. In order that this argument may be properly assessed, something, finally, needs to be said about Mill's notion of quality. Unfortunately, it is just not at all clear what Mill regards the quality of a pleasure (or pain) to be. But if we look at the passages cited above and the text that surrounds these passages, it is apparent that Mill regards intellectual pleasures more highly than he does sensual pleasures and that this has to do with the difference in quality between these two sorts of pleasures. Given this it seems to me that there are two main ways to interpret what Mill says regarding quality. The first way is to say that properties such as [being intellectual] and [being sensual] (and such like²⁸) just are themselves qualities of pleasures. On this interpretation, qualities are clearly what may be called "object oriented" properties; for a pleasure is intellectual (or sensual, *etc.*) by virtue of the fact that the object in which the pleasure is taken stimulates the intellect (or the senses, *etc.*). The second way to interpret Mill's remarks on quality is to regard the quality of a pleasure as some "felt aspect" of the pleasure. That is, Mill is on this view to be regarded as believing that intellectual pleasures typically have a certain felt aspect to them which is distinct from that which typically accompanies sensual pleasures. (Just what a felt aspect of a pleasure is supposed to be is again something that is very difficult to make clear; but I think it uncontroversial to state that intellectual pleasures *do* typically "feel" different from sensual pleasures.) On this interpretation, too, qualities are, indirectly at least, object oriented properties; for the felt aspect of an intellectual (or sensual, *etc.*) pleasure is contingent upon the fact that the pleasure is taken in a particular sort of object. For want of better terminology, I shall call the properties at issue on this second view of qualities [feeling "intellectual"], [feeling "sensual"], *etc.* (The reason for the use of inverted commas will become apparent shortly.)

The question with which we now have to deal is this: why should it be thought, on either of the foregoing views concerning quality of pleasure, that to appeal to such quality as a determinant of the intrinsic value of a state of affairs is inconsistent with hedonism? If we stick with the first view concerning quality, the answer is, I think, fairly straightforward. Critics of Mill's version of hedonism, with this view in mind, have in essence asked why it should be thought that, *ceteris paribus*, [being intellectual] is a property which contributes more to the intrinsic value of a state of pleasure than [being sensual]. The rationale that they have provided on Mill's behalf goes something like this. The properties [being intellectual] and [being sensual] are, like all qualities, object-oriented. So, to assess the difference in the way they contribute to the intrinsic values of states of pleasure and pain, we must look to the objects of the pleasures and pains in question. To take a concrete case (where "greatly" modifies the quantity, and only the quantity, of pleasure concerned): why should it be thought that (*J*) [Peter is greatly pleased at composing poetry] is intrinsically better than (*K*) [Paul is greatly pleased at playing pushpin]? The reason is that the *object* of Peter's pleasure is intrinsically better than the *object* of Paul's pleasure. The object of Peter's pleasure is the state of affairs (*L*) [Peter composes poetry], and the object of Paul's pleasure is the state of affairs (*M*) [Paul plays pushpin]. Now, *L* is intrinsically better than *M* because *L* is a "state of intellect" and *M* is not. That is, *L* entails (*N*) [Peter is engaged in intellectual activity], and *N* is intrinsically good. Now it is from *N* that *L* "inherits" its intrinsic value; and it is in part from *L* that *J* "inherits" its intrinsic value; and it is this sort of "inheritance" which *J* has and *K* lacks that renders *J* intrinsically better than *K* and, in general, states of intellectual pleasure intrinsically better than states of sensual pleasure. But then the critics point out that, if this is the reason for *J*'s intrinsic preferability over *K*, the admission of quality into the hedonic calculus is inconsistent with hedonism. For the rationale requires that *N*, which is neither a state of pleasure nor a state of pain, be intrinsically good, and this is inconsistent with clause (I) of SH.

Now, I believe that some such reasoning as that just presented may well *in fact* reflect the proper way to determine the intrinsic values of states of affairs such as *J* and *K*.²⁹ Indeed, it seems reasonable to accuse Mill of self-deception and to claim that it is really this sort of reasoning which underlies his acceptance of the value to be found in the quality of a pleasure or pain. For Mill certainly does give the impression that he wants to have his cake and eat it too, and this is presumably what many of his critics have picked up on.³⁰ That is, he does give the impression that he thinks that states of intellectual pleasure are more noble and hence better (in general) than states of sensual pleasure because there is an independent value to be attached to the objects of intellectual pleasures and none to the objects of sensual pleasures. If this is in fact what Mill thinks, then he is of course guilty of inconsistency. (At least, this is so if he bases his opinion on the sort of rationale provided above.) But it is not clear that this is what he thinks for, as noted earlier, his remarks are quite sketchy — and the convinced supporter of SH3 would presumably be unmoved by the foregoing account. For the account provides a scenario in which the intrinsic value of *J* is computed by appeal to the non-neutral intrinsic value of a state of affairs, *N*, other than a state of pleasure or pain: but despite the fact that the rationale is correctly premised on the fact that qualities are object-oriented properties, it does *not* show (and this is what opponents to Mill's version of hedonism appear traditionally to have overlooked) that this value *must* be computed in such a fashion. In fact, it seems clear that this cannot be shown. For it seems quite consistent, on the present understanding of the notion of quality, to claim, for instance, that *N* is not intrinsically good but that it tends to be *extrinsically* good, in that it tends to promote pleasure, and that *this* is the source of *J*'s intrinsic preferability over *K*. Such an account strikes me as eminently implausible — even if its details could be worked out — but it is consistent with clause (I) of SH. Or a supporter of SH3, utilizing the present notion of quality, might simply say that, even though qualities are object-oriented properties, it is wrong-headed to seek for a ground of their value-contributory nature in the object in question. He might say that quality just does contribute to the value of states of pleasure and pain, just as intensity and duration do, and that it is inappropriate to ask "Why is it that states of intellectual pleasure are, *ceteris paribus*, intrinsically better than states of sensual pleasure?" in much the same way as it is inappropriate to ask "Why is it that states of intense pleasure are, *ceteris paribus*, intrinsically better than states of dull pleasure?" In either case, he might say, the only answer is an unenlightening one, namely: "That's just the way it is." And, once again, this response, though singularly frustrating to the critics of SH3, *is* consistent with SH and, given that it is open to the proponent of SH3 to make such a response, it shows SH3, on the first view of quality, to be consistent in itself.

On the other hand, it may be that it is the second view of quality with which Mill is working, namely, that view where [feeling "intellectual"] and [feeling "sensual"], *etc.* (rather than [being intellectual] and [being sensual], *etc.*) are qualities of pleasures and pains. Why might an appeal to qualities of this sort be thought to be inconsistent with hedonism? I am not sure, but it might again appear that Mill is trying both to have his cake and eat it. For it should be noted that there would appear to be no *necessity* for all and only intellectual pleasures to feel "intellectual" (hence the inverted commas), or for all and only sensual pleasures to feel "sensual," and so forth. And suppose we were to ask Mill: which is intrinsically better, (*J*) [Peter is greatly pleased at composing poetry and his pleasure is such that it feels "sensual" to him] or (*K*) [Paul is greatly pleased at playing pushpin and his pleasure is such that it feels "intellectual" to him]? One gets the impression (but, again, it is no more than that) from what he says that Mill would wish to say that *J* is nevertheless intrinsically better than *K*; but this, of course, would be inconsistent with his view that states of pleasure of an intellectual quality are intrinsically better, *ceteris paribus*, than states of pleasure of a sensual quality.³¹ And *why* would Mill say (*if* he would) that *J* is intrinsically better than *K*? Again, this would presumably be because he attaches greater independent value to the object of Peter's pleasure than to the object of Paul's pleasure; and if he does this for the reasons outlined above when discussing *L*, *M*, and *N*, then, once again, Mill is guilty of inconsistency. But, while Mill's remarks perhaps suggest that he *does* take this route, it must again be stressed that SH3 on its own by no means implies that he *must* take it.

Let us take stock of where we now stand. *None* of the foregoing arguments has succeeded in showing SH3 inconsistent in itself. Moreover, I know of no further argument which might show this. SH3, therefore, appears consistent in itself. On the other hand, *if* Mill holds that objects of intellectual pleasures may themselves

be intrinsically good even when these objects are not themselves states of pleasure or pain, then this view *is* inconsistent with SH3. And we have seen that, whether one adopts the first or the second view concerning quality, there may be good reason to believe that Mill does hold this view. But we have also seen that, on neither the first nor the second view of quality, is it the case that Mill, by subscribing to SH3, is *required* to hold this view.

There is one final point to make. It seems possible for certain pleasures to be object-less; that is, it seems possible that someone should be "just pleased," *i.e.*, pleased but not pleased at or in anything. In fact, if we pay attention now to pain, instead of pleasure, it is *clear* that someone can be "just in pain." Do such pleasures and pains have qualities? On the first view of quality, it is obvious that they do not; on the second view of quality, it is not clear whether or not they do. But let us now focus on the first view of quality, if this is the view that Mill in fact holds, and if SH3 does in fact capture his preferred theory of value, then it follows that he is committed to declaring such states of pleasure as (*O*) [Peter is tremendously pleased but not pleased at anything] (where "tremendously" perforce modifies only the quantity of Peter's pleasure) to be of indeterminate intrinsic value. This is because the element of quality, required by SH3 for the hedonic calculus to be operable, is absent from *O*. But to say that *O* is of indeterminate intrinsic value is very odd, in that it forbids our saying that *O* is intrinsically better than *A*, for instance. Now, if Mill were nevertheless to hold the view that *O* is intrinsically better than *A* (as it perhaps seems he would), then once again he would be guilty of inconsistency. Of course, this observation is predicated on the propriety of attributing SH3 to Mill, and it trades on the fact that SH3 constitutes a fixed version of hedonism. If it were in fact the case that, not SH3, but some variable version of hedonism akin to SH3 is that version which constitutes Mill's preferred theory of value, then this point would not necessarily apply.³²

NOTES

1. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957).
2. For example: G.E. Moore. *Principle Ethica* (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1903). pp. 77-81; W.D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1930), p. 145; Robert McNaughton, "A Metrical Concept of Happiness" (*Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 14 (1953-4), 172- 182), p. 182; A.C. Ewing, *Ethics* (New York. Collier Books, 1962), pp. 42-35; Raziel Abelson, "History of Ethics," in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 3, edited by Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1967), p. 97; Richard Taylor, *Good and End* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1970), p. 94: and many others.
3. For example: William Frankena, *Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice. Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 69; Ernest Sosa, "Mill's Utilitarianism," in *Mill's Utilitarianism*, edited by James M. Smith and Ernest Sosa (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1969); Norman O. Dahl, "Is Mill's Hedonism Inconsistent?," in *American Philosophical Quarterly Monograph No. 7* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973); Fred Feldman, *Introductory Ethics* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), pp. 30-6. Rem B. Edwards. *Pleasures and Pains: A Theory of Qualitative Hedonism* (Ithaca Cornell University Press. 1979).
4. I shall assume that every theory is a proposition (usually a conjunctive proposition), and I shall assume that it is understood what it is for one proposition to be inconsistent with another. Actually, when it comes to theories such as hedonism, the latter matter is quite complicated. For instance, many philosophers take hedonism (or some version of it) to be the sort of theory which, if true, is necessarily true and, if false, is necessarily false. Now, if some version of hedonism – call it *h* – is a theory of this sort, and if it is false, then *every* proposition *p* is such that the conjunction of *p* and *h* is *necessarily false*. Presumably, however, *not* every proposition *p* would be, or ought to be, considered *inconsistent* with *h* – in the sense of "inconsistent" at issue – just because *h* is false. But I shall not pursue this matter further here.
5. Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
6. Moore, *op. cit.*, pp. 59, 62, 64, 65.
7. Moore, *ibid.*, p. 90.

8. Whether, instead of "freedom from consciousness of pain," H2* should read "consciousness of freedom from pain" is a matter that I shall not investigate here.
9. I shall use square brackets thus to distinguish the naming from the expression of states of affairs. I shall not attempt here to elucidate the concept of a state of affairs but shall simply assume that states of affairs are properly said to be the "bearers" of intrinsic value. Note that the numbers used in stating *A*, *B*, and *C* are of course quite *ad hoc* and used purely for illustrative purposes, as is the case with all such use of numbers in this paper.
10. Dahl (*op. cit.*, p. 54) appears prepared to deny that a sophisticated version of hedonism requires either clause (IIa1) or clause (IIb1) of SH. I suppose that this is true, but such clauses do seem to be required if we are to capture the essence of those versions of hedonism that are historically significant. Notice that, although SH makes no explicit mention of the concepts of intrinsic goodness and intrinsic badness, these concepts do feature implicitly in clause (I). For whatever has other than neutral intrinsic value is either intrinsically good or intrinsically bad. Also, by "the higher (lower) the intrinsic value of *p*..." is meant: the better (worse), intrinsically, *p* is...
11. On the consciousness of pleasure and pain, see Edmund Husserl, *Ideas*, translated by W.R. Boyce Gibson (London: Collier-Macmillan, Ltd., 1962), pp. 238- 240, 255, 303-4; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, translated by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1966), p. 14; and Karl Duncker, "On Pleasure, Emotion, and Striving." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. I (1940-1), p. 399. On pleasure, pain, and the associated concepts displeasure, happiness, unhappiness, and so on, see Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1949), pp. 107-110, and the numerous articles which Ryle's discussion has spawned. On intrinsic value, see G.E. Moore, *Philosophical Studies* (London: Kogan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1922), Ch. 8, Roderick M. Chisholm and Ernest Sosa, "On the Logic of 'Intrinsically Better,'" *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 3 (1966), 244-9; and Roderick M. Chisholm, "Intrinsic Value," in A.I. Goldman and J. Kim ed., *Values and Morals* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1978).121-130.
12. I say that D1 and D2 are "liberal" because they imply, for instance, that *A* is both a state of pleasure *and* a state of pain. Why is D1 *too* liberal for H3? Because, given D1, H3 implies, for instance, that *A* is intrinsically good, and this is surely not constant with the intention of a proponent of H3. This problem does not arise with SH, however, whose clause (I), given D1, does not imply that *A* is intrinsically good but only, and acceptably, that *A* may have other than neutral intrinsic value: for it is left to clause (II) of SH to determine just what the intrinsic value of *A* is.
One possible anomaly, however, is this: given D1 and D2, the state of affairs (*D*) [Peter is pleased to degree 10 or Paul is in pain to degree 100] is *neither* a state of pleasure *nor* a state of pain, and thus, given clause (I) of SH, is intrinsically neutral – just as, for instance, (*E*) [there are rocks] is, given clause (I) of SH, intrinsically neutral. Whether or not this observation points up a shortcoming in D1 and D2 is, however, a matter that I shall not investigate, since it is strictly irrelevant to the present inquiry. Cf. Roderick M. Chisholm, "The Intrinsic Value in Disjunctive States of Affairs," *Nous*, 9 (1975), 295 -308, and my paper "Evaluatively Incomplete States of Affairs," *Philosophical Studies*, 43 (1983), 211-224, for a fuller treatment of this topic.
13. For instance, does it even make sense to say that my pleasure in eating a chocolate éclair is twice as intense as my pleasure in listening to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony? Or that Peter's pleasure is half as intense as Paul's pain? And so on. Cf. McNaughton, *op. cit.*, for an extensive discussion of this problem.
14. Here and later, I follow Feldman, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-5.
15. Assuming, as above, that quantity of pleasure or pain is a function simply of intensity and duration.
16. It is worth noting that, even though *F* is intrinsically indeterminate on SH1, whenever it obtains a state of pleasure of determinate intrinsic value also obtains. This state of affairs will be one of the indefinite number of states of affairs which satisfy the following form (*i.e.*, which supply a value for *x*): [Peter is pleased and his pleasure is of an intensity of degree 10 and of a duration of degree *x*]. We might therefore say that, while *F* has no non-derivative determinate intrinsic value, whenever it obtains it has a derivative determinate value – this value being the non-derivative determinate intrinsic value of whatever state of affairs happens on that occasion to obtain and to satisfy the above-mentioned form. Whether or not similar remarks may be made with respect to *G* on SH2 is unclear; see the final

paragraph of this paper. Also, see my paper, mentioned in noted 12, for further discussion of such matters.

17. Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
18. Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1970), pp. 38-9. For a different account of what Bentham wanted to say, see Edwards, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
19. Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
20. *Ibid.*, p.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
23. One reading of Moore, *Principia Ethica*, p. 78, suggests this line of argument. See Dahl, *op. cit.*, p. 47, for an exposure of this bias.
24. Actually, "of course" is perhaps a bit strong, since SH3's inconsistency with SH1 may not be immediately obvious. That SH3 is inconsistent with SH1 is, however, to be seen in the following explication of my use of "function." When I say that x is a function of (and only of) y , one implication is that the computation of x must take y (and need only take y) into account. Hence, where y is logically independent of z , saying that x is a function of (and only of) y is inconsistent with saying that x is a function of (and only of) y and z . It should be acknowledged here, however, that one can seek to reconcile Mill's remarks on quality with a purely quantitative version of hedonism such as SH1. Sosa (*op. cit.*), for instance, attempts just this in an interesting interpretation of *Utilitarianism*, according to which (i) Mill subscribes to (something like) SH1, but also (ii) Mill believes that, the higher the quality of pleasure, the greater the quantity. Whatever the merits of such an interpretation, however, the thesis surely strains plausibility. Moreover, and more to the point here, the interpretation is explicitly predicated (Sosa, *op. cit.*, p. 369) on the assumption that a non-quantitative version of hedonism is somehow inconsistent – and it is just this assumption that I am concerned here to deny.
25. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, pp. 78-9.
26. Certain remarks made by Mill *op. cit.*, p. 15) seem especially appropriate to this view. Cf. Dahl, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-5; Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 93.
27. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, pp. 79-81; Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 145; McNaughton, *op. cit.*, p. 182; Abelson, *op. cit.*, p. 97; Taylor, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-4.
28. How to continue this list is not clear. I shall use square brackets thus to distinguish the naming from the expression of properties. Cf. note 9 *supra*.
29. See my paper, "On the Intrinsic Value of States of Pleasure," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 41 (1980-1), 26-45, for a fuller treatment of this topic.
30. See Mill, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-14. In this long paragraph Mill appears to suggest that sensual pleasures are "low" and "inestimable" because of the "undignified" nature of their objects.
31. See note 30 *supra*. This diagnosis of the case is of course predicated on the assumption that K' , even though involving an "intellectual" *feeling*, is – like K – not a state of pleasure whose *object* is intellectual. Of course, it is possible to derive intellectual pleasure from playing games (such as push-pin), but in this context it is intended that it be understood that Paul takes pleasure in the physical and sensual aspects of the game only.
32. I have benefited from discussions on the topic of this paper with Fred Feldman, Richard Henson, Fadlou Shehadi, and Sarah Stebbins. I have also profited from reading an unpublished manuscript on hedonism written by Earl Conee.