Utilitarianism is generally described as a species of “hedonism,” a subject which is popularly divided as follows: On the one hand, there is “psychological hedonism”; on the other, there is “ethical hedonism,” which in turn has two main species, “egoistic” and “universalistic.” Psychological hedonism is the view that everyone actually does “seek” only his own pleasure. The two variants of the ethical theory are egoistic hedonism, according to which one ought only to “pursue” one’s own pleasure (or happiness?); universalistic, that one ought to “pursue” the general happiness (or pleasure?). It would be logically possible to extend this classification in various directions. For example, “psychological” hedonism could be broken down analogously to the classification of “ethical” hedonism, into “egoistic” and “universalistic,” the former being the theory that everyone in fact pursues his own pleasure; the latter, that everyone in fact pursues the general pleasure. We could also add a third category to both theories, that of “altruism.” Its “psychological” version would be the view that we, in fact, pursue only other people’s pleasure, and in its “ethical” version, that we ought to pursue only other people’s pleasure. For very good reasons, I think, these three logically possible additions are regarded as uninteresting because they are too implausible to be worth discussion. It seems a matter of obvious common sense that not everyone pursues the general happiness, and still more obvious, that they do not pursue only other people’s happiness; while on the ethical side, the theory that one ought only to pursue other people’s happiness seems bizarre.
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Why, and with what important implications is something we will consider in Chapter IX, but suffice it to say that I concur with these judgments of our three additional theories.

My concern in the present section is to complain about the principle behind this classification on the ground that it is seriously misleading. The picture of utilitarianism which it suggests seems to me an incoherent one. We shall go far toward understanding what utilitarianism has to offer as an ethical theory by exposing these sources of error.

Let us consider, to begin with, what "hedonism" is, or is supposed to be. In ordinary life, if we were to classify someone as a "hedonist," what would we be saying about him? We would surely be describing certain aspects of his behavior. We would, for example, be denying that he was a spartan, a puritan, or a masochist. We would also probably be implying that he was not an altruist. We would tend to think of a hedonist as a person who is not likely to be very responsible or even terribly prudent. The so-called "paradox of hedonism" can be cited in this connection: A very calculating sort of person, we would feel, is to that extent less of a hedonist than one whose actions were spontaneous or not terribly well-planned. Finally, we would most likely be implying something, in a rather general way, about the nature of his tastes. We would, for instance, be implying that he has some. A business executive who devoted all of his time to his work, seventy hours a week, and professed either to have no time for, or no interest in, the arts, good food, interesting company, and so forth, would not naturally be classified as a hedonist.

It may be that none of the above implications are of the sort for which we can be held strictly to account. A hedonist doesn't necessarily like olives, nor does he necessarily like and have a developed taste in good food. But what if he doesn't like music, art, women, sports, conversation, etc.? What would we say of a person who claimed to be a hedonist, but whose "hedonism" manifested itself in his sleeping on beds of nails and sitting for hours at a time, contemplating his navel? He might claim that he gets a unique pleasure out of resting on beds of nails and contemplating his navel, and this would be extremely odd, to say the least; it is safe to say that we wouldn't believe him. These are not the activities which one would normally be attributing to
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someone in describing him as a hedonist. But it is obvious that these are not the things with which utilitarians have been concerned, either to condemn or to recommend. Indeed, Mill makes it abundantly clear in the Essay on Liberty and elsewhere, that he regards the choice of style of living as up to the individual, and not a proper matter of concern for the moral theorist.

It is vital to the understanding of utilitarianism to see that it has nothing at all to do with this sort of thing. Nor is this merely because the utilitarians were using the word ‘pleasure’ in a more general sense, or perhaps because they were recommending that we seek happiness, rather than merely pleasure.¹ There are indeed a few passages in Mill which suggest this sort of thing. For example, there is the celebrated dictum that “It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied . . . and if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question.”² Again, there is the discussion in the Essay on Liberty of “Individuality, as One of the Elements of Well-Being,” in which it sometimes seems that he is in favor of being different for its own sake. But to regard these as central to his moral philosophy would be a mistake. Mill was not recommending that we seek happiness, because he believed that we do seek it, in the nature of the case. That “. . . human nature is so constituted as to desire nothing which is not either a part of happiness or a means of happiness . . .”³ i.e., the principle of “psychological hedonism” is the main interest of Mill on this point. If this is true, then there is no need to advocate that people seek happiness because there would be no point in it. What Mill obviously thought needed advocating is that people have regard for other people’s happiness, i.e., the general happiness. Those passages in which he seems to be telling us how to live our lives must surely be viewed in the light of the many passages in which he insists, often with great passion, that this is entirely our own business. Take, for instance, the two mentioned above. Certainly Mill is not saying that pigs or fools are

¹ This view is advocated in diverse places, e.g., in Aristotle and the Stoics, and occupies a central place in W. T. Stace’s book, The Concept of Morals (New York: Macmillan Co., 1962), Ch. 6. From the present point of view, all of these efforts are beside the point.

² Mill, Utilitarianism, p. 9.

³ Ibid., p. 36.

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immoral, insofar as they prefer slop to filet mignon, or pushpin to poetry. What he is saying, obviously, is that they are being piggish and/or foolish, and that people who know both in fact prefer the filet and the poetry. What has this to do with ethics? What has it to do with the “criterion of Right and Wrong,” which is the avowed subject of *Utilitarianism*?

The truth is, of course, that a person who believed that the desire for happiness is already the sole motive of all that we do would not be advocating anything in particular by advocating that we seek it. Consider questions like this: Is it better to be happy and poor, than unhappy but rich? Powerful and unhappy, or weak and happy? Beethoven unhappy, or Hugh Hefner happy? Socrates dissatisfied, or a pig satisfied? These questions are devoid of clear sense. As Mill says, “If the sources of pleasure were precisely the same to human beings and to swine, the rule of life which is good enough for the one would be good enough for the other.” He plainly does not mean, by the phrase ‘the rule of life,’ the rule “seek happiness!” for this is the “rule” which both of them, according to Mill, are already following. His point is that pigs do not know what it is like to practice philosophy or to listen to Mozart, and so are not in a position to choose. In supposing that the life of a Socrates is preferable to that of a swine, Mill is speaking from the standpoint of a human being, and indeed, of a particular sort of human being, a polished, erudite, and cultured nineteenth-century Victorian human being; and such a person just isn’t going to find any happiness in attempting to live the life of a swine. This is the crux of the matter. No particular sort of life is necessarily going to be a happy one—it depends on the individual in question.

Certainly, some interesting and puzzling questions can be asked along these general lines, and, significantly, are barely touched upon in Mill’s ethical writings. For example, consider gaiety. If a person is gay, does it follow that he is happy? There seems

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*Of course, some descriptions of lives imply that the lives in question are unhappy, e.g., “neurotic.” It’s just that we can produce relatively neutral descriptions of ways of life which would clearly be such that the ways of life described by them would make some people happy and others unhappy, let alone people happy and pigs unhappy, if pigs could live them at all.*
to be some logical connection here. But then if a person wants to be happy, shouldn't it follow that he would want to be gay? And if somehow faced with a choice between being always gay, versus living, say, the life of a Beethoven, which was generally rather somber, shouldn't it follow that he would have to choose the gay life? Yet, it is clear that Mill would not have thought so. Why not? It is difficult to say. He might have taken the line that Beethoven's life was, after all, happier than a life of continual gaiety would be. If so, this would evidently involve a shift of meaning in the term 'gay.' Consider the view, often heard among "intellectuals," that Heaven must be terribly dull—nothing but one continuous round of joy. Intolerable! Taken literally, this surely would be nonsense; it is contradictory to speak of "joyful boredom." What they must mean is that they would not get much joy from the sort of activities popularly associated with the idea of "heaven," e.g., continually singing the praises of God (which might be very distasteful to avowed atheists for example!). The point remains that if we try to give any particular content to the idea of a "gay life," or even a "life of pleasures" (cf., Mill's definition of 'happiness' as 'pleasure, and the absence of pain'), we find it quite sensible to suppose that we would prefer the kind of life that was lived by Beethoven, Lincoln, or Socrates, despite the fact that their lives were not apparently notable for the "quantity of pleasure" contained in them. To repeat, it is perfectly obvious that Mill realized that this was so.

What follows from all of this? It follows that it is misguided to think of utilitarianism as one species of the same genus of which "egoistic hedonism" is the other species, if we think of "egoistic hedonism" as a (supposed) "philosophy of life." According to this classification, egoism is one "way of life," viz., seeking one's own pleasure, while utilitarianism is another "way of life," viz., seeking the general pleasure. The only difference is that in one case you are seeking one person's pleasure, in the other everyone's. But this doesn't make sense. What, after all, is the ground on which we can advocate a "way of life?" Surely, it is of the following sort: You will (we might say), get more

If proof is needed, see the early portions of Mill's Autobiography.
real satisfaction out of life if you think of other people besides yourself. Selfishness is narrow, stultifying, restricting; the selfish life lacks richness and fullness. This is absurd because these are precisely the grounds which the "egoist" is recommending that we employ: We should seek the general happiness because it will make us happier. No doubt Mill, like many others, thought that this was true, as it may well be. But this is not relevant. For utilitarianism is out to show that we ought to have regard for the interests of other people on moral grounds. There is nothing wicked about choosing one way of life as against another, although it may be in bad taste to do so. But there is something wicked about killing other people when it happens to serve your interest to do so, regardless of the value of the "way of life" which recommends it.

"Egoism" could, perhaps, be advocated as a moral theory as well. If so, it would be a very peculiar one. It might, for instance, consist in the principle that we ought to disregard and suppress our benevolent impulses, however painful we find it to do so. A person acting in this way might be described as being selfish as a matter of principle (if a rather bizarre principle). In fact, "egoistic hedonists" do not advocate this. What they advocate, I take it, is that we should be concerned with other people only insofar as we happen to like or to be interested in them. Which is in turn equivalent to saying that one should do as one pleases. Critics have observed that this seems equivalent to having no moral theory at all. As Baier puts it, "[The egoist] does not have principles, he has only an aim." The egoist's position is rather similar to that described by Bentham as the "principle of sympathy and antipathy," which is (as he says), "the negation of all principle, [rather] than anything positive."

One could, then, advocate utilitarianism as a "way of life"; likewise, one could advocate egoism as a moral principle. But to

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8 Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Ch. I, sec. XII. The strongest statement on this point, with which I think Mill would have agreed, comes from Kant, who held that "one's own happiness is an end which, to be sure, all men do have (by virtue of the impulse of their nature) but this end can never without contradiction be regarded as a duty . . . because a duty is a constraint to an end that is not gladly adopted." Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysical Principles of Virtue*, trans., J. Ellington (New York: Liberal Arts Press, Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1964), p. 43.
do either would be unnatural (and to do both would be quite bizarre). This is what makes it so misleading to regard them as species of the same genus. Properly understood, these may not be incompatible “views” at all. The way to appraise a “way of life” may well be by considering what’s in it for you; the way to appraise the moral value of a course of action by considering what’s in it for everyone. But to confuse the two is to get into trouble, and the standard classification sanctions the confusion. The term “hedonism” ought to be confined to the “egoistic” form, whether taken (more naturally) as a principle for appraising “ways of life,” or as a moral principle; the man who is controlling his actions in the light of their effects on the general happiness is not “seeking happiness” or “seeking pleasure,” in any natural sense of these expressions. He may not be acting in this way merely on the ground that this way of life happens to be intrinsically desirable or satisfying. He most likely would be doing so as a matter of moral principle, i.e., because this kind of action is morally best. At any rate, this is the way in which we are going to regard the principle of utility in this book, although it seems clear to me that Mill and Sidgwick, if perhaps not Bentham,9 shared my views on the matter.

Psychological Hedonism

The theory of “psychological hedonism” has loomed large in the classical utilitarian literature, although it has not been quite clear just what role it is supposed to play. It seems to be a psychological theory, that is to say, a theory whose statements pur-

9 It is very difficult indeed to determine just what Bentham’s view on this matter was. The “official” doctrine is that everybody always pursues his own pleasure; that people are moral because they happen to enjoy it, or because they fear the sanctions attached to immoral actions; that the sanctions in question have been attached to them either by community custom (which is unreliable) or by legal imposition. Good laws, in turn, exist because people like Bentham who happen to enjoy being moral, and who like to see other people being so as well, press their adoption. It is not all that clear that my account is incompatible with this. It depends mainly on the doctrine of “sanctions,” which has its obscurities as well. Does he, or doesn’t he, allow the “internal” sanctions to be self-imposed as a result of reflection? We don’t know.
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port to describe human behavior in general in a non-tautological way. Prima facie, at least, it is plausible to say that ethical theories cannot be deduced from psychological theories. If this is so, then it is small wonder that the frequent occurrence of sentences of an ostensibly psychological hedonist kind raises the eyebrows of critics. The spectre of fallacy hovers over the entire operation. Yet, it does not seem altogether plausible to saddle the likes of Mill with this fallacy, as recent critics of Moore's destructive chapter on hedonism have been pointing out.¹⁰ We have a problem, then, of historical interpretation, and simultaneously (and more to the present point) a problem in conceptual analysis. Just what does psychological hedonism amount to? And why bother with it for purposes of ethical theory? These are the questions that concern us in this section. The answers are, briefly, that "psychological hedonism" is not, as recent writers have correctly pointed out, a psychological theory at all, and that the reasons for bringing it up are two: To formulate the principle of utility, and to assist in the proof of it. So far as the proof of utilitarianism is concerned, we will defer this topic to the final chapter of this book, in which the reader will also find my reflections on the celebrated question of the "naturalistic fallacy."

To begin our consideration of these questions, let us turn to some points about the general formulation of "psychological hedonism." In the first place, it is never put flatly as a theory about what people do, but rather about what they desire or aim at. Clearly, no one would go so far as to maintain that people always actually do maximize their pleasure. They hold, at most, that people intend to maximize it, or want to. In the second place, the theory has never been intended to cover absolutely all behavior of a human being, but only that portion of it in which the subject knows what he's doing, has a conscious view of his situation. For instance, take even this extreme statement by Bentham:

On the occasion of every act he exercises, a human being is (inevitably) led to pursue that line of conduct which, according to his

¹⁰ Cf., for example, Henry D. Aiken's article, "Definitions, Factual Premises, and Moral Conclusions" in Reason and Conduct, Essay III.
view of the case, taken by him at that moment, will be in the highest degree contributory to his own greatest happiness.11

Clearly, this statement is otiose if applied to those occasions when the agent does not take a “view of the case.” This is an important point, on which we will reflect further below. It is closely related to a third general point, that its proponents have found it essential to distinguish ends and means, or ultimate and subordinate ends, and to put the theory in terms of ultimate, rather than secondary or subordinate ends, or of means. All three of these points are well illustrated in the formulations in Mill’s Utilitarianism:12

1) Whatever is desired otherwise than as a means to some end beyond itself, and ultimately to happiness, is desired as itself a part of happiness, and is not desired for itself until it has become so.

2) Desiring a thing and finding it pleasant, aversion to it and thinking of it as painful, are phenomena entirely inseparable.

The section above goes further than my point (3), and distinguishes “parts of” happiness from “means to” it; there is a further expansion later on (which some would regard as more hedging in the face of difficulties), where he distinguishes “will” from “desire,” saying:

3) Will, like all other parts of our constitution, is amenable to habit, and that we may will from habit what we no longer desire for itself, or desire only because we will it. It is not the less true that will, in the beginning, is entirely produced by desire . . . habit is the only thing that imparts certainty; and it is because of the importance to others of being able to rely absolutely on one’s feelings and conduct, and to oneself of being able to rely on one’s own, that the will to do right ought to be cultivated into this habitual independence. In other words, this state of the will is a means to good, not intrinsically a good; and does not contradict

11 From Bentham’s Constitutional Code, quoted by Sidgwick in Methods of Ethics, p. 41.
12 All passages from Mill in this section are from Ch. IV of Utilitarianism, unless otherwise noted.
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the doctrine that nothing is a good to human beings but insofar as it is either itself pleasurable, or a means of attaining pleasure or averting pain.

This suggested separation of will and desire, with the assertion that the “desire” for pleasure is “original,” and the independence of the two “secondary” as a matter of later cultivation and training, is also employed in the earlier passage alluded to above, in which he develops the theory of “parts” of happiness:

4) There was no original desire of [virtue], or motive to it, save its conduciveness to pleasure, and especially to protection from pain. But through the association thus formed, it may be felt a good in itself, and desire as such with as great intensity as any other good.

A number of points strike me as being highly significant about all of this maneuvering. First, as a methodological observation made through hindsight, note the wavering between talk of causes and talk of reasons. Psychological hedonism might be thought to be a theory about the causes of human action. But Mill’s account here is inconsistent with this view, for in selection (3), he clearly implies that there are causes of human action other than desire, namely habit. When it comes to discussing habit, and the significance of the fact that people can through habit do things other than seek their own pleasure, Mill does not offer evidence to show that people never do out of habit things which conflict with the pursuit of pleasure. Instead, he talks about the point of cultivating habits, and offers the utilitarian criterion, in effect, as a justification for such actions, or rather, as an account of what justification people might give if they were “motivated solely by a desire for pleasure.” Another manifestation of this is in his discussion of virtue as a “part” of the “end.” Here it is argued that the desire for pleasure was “original,” i.e., came first in time. But note that the conclusion he actually argues for is that virtue may, through association, be “felt as a good.” This leads me to my second point, a general observation about the substance of Mill’s theorizing here. This is that he is trying to prove throughout that happiness is the only thing regarded as good in itself. This is what comes out in quo-
tations (3) and (4), wherein Mill is trying to account for apparent objections to the views laid down in (1) and (2), which are couched in terms of "desire." Clearly, this implies that Mill believes that desiring a thing means regarding it as good, or regarding it as desirable. 13

A further observation: Mill does not take up a kind of objection which a modern reader acquainted with Freud and contemporary literature would want to raise immediately; namely, what to do about compulsions and drives? Mill only discusses habit, which he admits to be distinct from "will," as he calls it; but in fact, what he is distinguishing it from is, again, desire, or better yet, from "regarding it as pleasant." Clearly, he is correct to make this distinction. Doing something from habit is not doing it because one regards it as pleasurable, even though, as Mill quite properly observes, a "desire for pleasure" might very well recommend the cultivation of certain habits. The point is, neither is doing it from a compulsion, which is clearly not a matter of habit; nor, for that matter, is doing it as a primitive response, or (perhaps) out of sheer whim. Clearly, there are a number of causes of apparently non-hedonistic behavior. What do they have in common? Surely what Mill would say, judging from his account in *Utilitarianism*, is that what they all have in common is that behavior from such causes is non-rational, irrational, or anyhow a-rational. The thesis of psychological hedonism is surely meant by Mill as an account of how people behave when they are aware of what they are doing, when they are acting voluntarily, intentionally, and on purpose—when they are thinking about action.

Even about such action, it would be at least misleading to represent it as consisting entirely in calculations of pleasure. In general, we think in terms of the achievements of various "local" ends, as we might call them: e.g., marrying Jill, getting a job with Jones, seeing Gielgud do *Hamlet*, and so forth. The reason why the psychological hedonist represents pleasure as an "end" which we are ultimately "seeking" is this, I take it: If it could be shown that we would not enjoy it if a particular end were

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13 The Scraggs: "If Daisy Mae is the most desirable girl in the world, then we desires her!" ("L'il Abner," Waterloo *Record*, ca. January 20, 1966).
brought about—moreover, that it in turn wouldn’t cause any-
thing else that we would enjoy—then that would be sufficient
reason for not pursuing that end. Sufficient, that is, except
in one important case—that in which there are moral reasons
against it. For the present, we are not interested in a description
of the moral behavior of people, because we are interested in
discovering the foundations of a moral theory, i.e., reasons for
regarding something as morally good, right, wrong, etc. Thus,
what we must say, if we are to be psychological hedonists and
utilitarians, is that what people “naturally” do, if they are ra-
tional and before the onset of any moral considerations, is to
“seek their own pleasure.” What does this mean? It means, so
far as I can see, that they use the consideration that they would,
or would not, enjoy doing something as a standard for appraising
it (or courses of action leading to it); and as the standard for
appraising it in non-moral contexts.

It seems to me that we are forced to the conclusion that in
Mill’s account, psychological hedonism is, in fact, an attempt
to state what people regard as good. That this is so is evidenced
not only by the various statements quoted earlier from his
account, but by the very terms in which he summarizes his
effort to “prove” the principle of utility. “If the end which the
utilitarian doctrine proposes to itself were not, in theory and in
practice, acknowledged to be an end, nothing could ever con-
vince any person that it was so. . . . we have not only all the
proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to
require, that happiness is a good: Each person’s happiness is a
good to that person, and the general happiness, therefore, a
good to the aggregate of all persons.”

Is it plausible to suppose that even this is true, i.e., that people
do in fact regard conduciveness to their own pleasure (enjoy-
ment, happiness, satisfaction) as the ultimate standard of ap-
praisal for actions, is non-moral contexts? On this very important
question, I have two principal things to say. (1) If the misleading
words ‘in fact’ are eliminated from the last question, then per-
haps the answer is ‘yes’; (2) that in any case, from the utilitarian

34 In Moral Point of View, p. 267, Baier argues that pleasure is not an
“end” at all. His argument for this seems to show only that ends are not
principles; how it shows that pleasure can’t be an end is obscure to me.
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point of view we may take an affirmative answer to this ques-
tion as a completely uninformative one, because, for utilitarian
purposes, we may regard ‘conducive to x’s happiness’ as mean-
ing no more than ‘conducive to whatever x regards as intrin-
sically good.’ Both require explanation.

1) Clearly the question here is, just what is “pleasure”? This
is no easy question, and I do not intend to answer it in a precise
way. Instead, I wish to point out a few facts about the way in
which various theorists, especially utilitarian ones, have dealt
with such questions. To begin with, it is obvious that Mill and
Bentham use this word in a very broad sense. Bentham, indeed,
goes so far as to say that “By utility is meant that property in
any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage,
pleasure, good, or happiness (all this in the present case comes
to the same thing.)”\(^15\) Mill, in turn, says the following:

Those who know anything about the matter are aware that every
writer, from Epicurus to Bentham, who maintained the theory of
utility, meant by it, not something to be contradistinguished from
pleasure, but pleasure itself, together with exemption from pain; and
instead of opposing the useful to the agreeable or the ornamental,
have always declared that the useful means these, among other
things.

Pleasure in some of its forms; of beauty, of ornament, or of
amusement . . .

No intelligent human being would consent to be a fool . . . even
though they should be persuaded that the fool . . . is better satisfied
with his lot than they are with theirs . . . A being of higher faculties
requires more to make him happy . . . than one of inferior type . . .
We may attribute [this sort of preference] to pride . . . to the love of
liberty . . . or to the love of excitement . . . but its most appropriate
appellation is a sense of dignity . . . which is so essential a part of the
happiness of those in whom it is strong . . . Whoever supposes this
preference takes place at a sacrifice of happiness—that the superior
being, in anything like equal circumstances, is not happier than the
inferior—confounds the two very different ideas, of happiness, and
content.\(^16\)


\(^{16}\) Mill, *Utilitarianism*, pp. 5, 6, 8.
A later section will be devoted to the question of ‘quantity versus quality’ which is raised in these passages; they are sufficient to demonstrate that Mill was hardly concerned with the concept of pleasure in any narrow sense, and certainly not one in which it is opposed to satisfaction, enjoyment, appreciation of beauty, and so forth. If we turn to later theorists, we shall not find the story much altered in substance. For example, take the view of Sidgwick, who is rightly regarded as a sober, judicious, and careful thinker, often specifically (if with questionable justice) contrasted with Mill in these respects. Sidgwick concludes, after lengthy consideration, as follows:

I propose, therefore, to define Pleasure—when we are considering its “strict value” for the purposes of quantitative comparison—as a feeling which, when experienced by intelligent beings, is at least implicitly apprehended as desirable or—in cases of comparison—preferable. 17

Meaning by ‘desirable’ not necessarily ‘what ought to be desired’ but what would be desired, with strength proportioned to the degree of desirability, if it were judged attainable by voluntary action, supposing the desirer to possess a perfect forecast, emotional as well as intellectual, of the state of attainment of fruition. 18

This, I take it, does not come to very much more than the much-discussed view of Gilbert Ryle:

To say that a person has been enjoying digging is not to say that he has been both digging and doing or experiencing something else . . . it is to say that he dug with his whole heart in his task, i.e., that he dug, wanting to dig and not wanting to do anything else (or nothing) instead . . . to enjoy doing something, to want to do it and not to want to do anything else are different ways of phrasing the same thing . . .

(It should be mentioned that ‘pain,’ in the sense in which I have pains in my stomach, is not the opposite of ‘pleasure.’ In this sense, a pain is a sensation of a special sort, which we ordinarily dislike having). 19

17 Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics, p. 127.
18 Ibid., p. 111.
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We can also compare the recent view of Baier on this matter:

Both the claim that something is (or is found) painful or pleasurable and the claim that it is (or is found) pleasant or unpleasant have this important point in common: they indicate a person’s positive or negative response or attitude to something (a pursuit, activity, etc.). What the response or attitude is can be said in general terms. The positive response consists in a tendency to continue, to make efforts to repeat the activity, etc., to be disappointed, sad, or annoyed when it is interrupted, and so on. 20

The net purport of this is summed up very well in the observation of Francis Sparshott:

It does seem difficult to deny that if one asks a person, ‘Why did you eat those strawberries?’, the answer, “Because I like them” calls for no elaboration, whereas the answer, “Because I don’t like them” does. 21

The point is, that when writers attempt to define the notions of pleasure and enjoyment, invariably they end up saying, in one way or another, that they consist of a pro-attitude or positive evaluation of some experience on its own account. If this is so, then small wonder that “psychological hedonism” was so popular at one time, it being the theory that only pleasure is regarded as desirable on its own account. If this is true, then it is vacuously true. 22 If we can discuss anything about this theory, it seems to me that it can only be, how useful is it? And if at all, then for what? Perhaps we can go on to discuss whether “immediate experience” is a broader term than “sensation,” and propose to confine ‘pleasure’ to ‘desired sensation,’ leaving some other term to cover the more global experiences to which people attribute intrinsic value. Such a discussion, while it might be of interest for its own sake or in some other context, is

22 For the rest, the reader may be referred to Mr. Nowell-Smith’s account in his useful book, Ethicç, Chs. 8–10, wherein the thesis of the vacuity of “psychological hedonism” is well argued.
unnecessary here. The kinds of arguments used to support "psychological hedonism" surely demonstrate that it is not, as it was represented as being, a psychological theory which in a helpful way explains or generalizes about human action. Instead, it is a truism, if true at all.  

2) This takes us to my second point. We may by-pass these perhaps interesting questions about the exact differences between pleasure, enjoyment, satisfaction, "fulfillment" and the rest by simply admitting that we are trying to express, in some compact and general way, the standards which people employ in appraising courses of action in non-moral contexts. The purpose of this, in turn, is to specify the "utility" predicate. We want to say that moral value is proportional to utility; and utility, say Bentham and the rest, is pleasure and the absence of pain. But then it turns out that "pleasure and the absence of pain," after all the qualifications, interpolations, and interpretations are in, means "whatever it is that people seek for its own sake, when they are rational"; which is equivalent, in turn, to "that by reference to which people appraise courses of action" ("naturally," i.e., apart from moral considerations); which is, in turn, tautologically, what they regard as intrinsically good.

In sum, we can conclude that the generating idea of utilitarianism is a concern for the values that individuals adhere to. Whether or not this is precisely in accord with Mill's intentions, it is the idea that will be adopted here. An act's utility, then, is its productiveness of what those affected by it believe to be intrinsically good. Utilitarianism will be the principle that moral value (i.e., that by reference to which we are to appraise acts morally), is utility in that sense.

Since this formulation involves the notion of intrinsic value, it will be useful to comment on that subject, and on the theory

28 Mill, in writing about Bentham, saw through the sort of "psychological hedonism" advocated by the latter. He observes that, "In laying down as a philosophical axiom, that men's actions are always obedient to their interests, Mr. Bentham did no more than dress up the very trivial proposition, that all persons do what they feel themselves most disposed to do, in terms which appeared to him more precise." "Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy" in J. S. Mill, Ethical Writings, ed. J. B. Schneewind (New York: Collier Paperback Edition, The Macmillan Co., 1965), p. 56. It is interesting to note that Mill's perception of this point did not prevent him from trying again in Utilitarianism.
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of "ideal utilitarianism" advocated by Moore, Rashdall, and others. We turn, therefore, to these matters before producing our final version of the utilitarian formula.

"Ideal" Utilitarianism

Shall we concur with G. E. Moore, Hastings Rashdall, and some subsequent writers, and simply identify maximum utility with maximum good? Why should we bother with such qualifications as "What Jones thinks is good," or "Everyone's good"? Many writers would, I think, regard such a change as so subtle as to be nearly inconsequential. This may be true in practice, but so far as pure theory is concerned, the difference is fundamental. The most striking effects of the difference are brought out in Chapter IX, wherein an argument for utilitarianism is constructed making use of the "premises" supplied by psychological hedonism (or rather, what's left of it at the end of our foregoing considerations on the subject). But other differences are serious from the beginning. They all follow from one central fact: If we say that the moral value of an act is proportional to the absolute intrinsic value of its consequences, then there is no logical connection between the principle and a concern with other persons as such. Whereas, I have argued, a concern for other persons as such is precisely the hub of utilitarianism. To identify "happiness" with "utility" is automatically, logically, to raise the question, "whose happiness"? And to make "the general happiness" the predicate of the principle of utility answers it. But, if we take the "ideal utilitarian" viewpoint, we should have to subjoin to it either a hedonistic analysis of value, which most writers would agree is untenable, or we would have to add normative premises to the effect that pleasure is good or happiness is good; or, to take my suggested version, that experiences which anyone thinks are good are good. None of this will do. I have insisted that we must distinguish between moral value, or evaluation from the moral viewpoint, and non-moral value or evaluation from some non-moral viewpoint. We shall have to ask of the "Ideal" utilitarian principle, whether the "ab-
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absolute intrinsic value” of the consequences is to be understood as moral value or non-moral value, i.e., as value from the moral point of view or from some non-moral point of view. If his answer is “non-moral,” then it seems to me that there is no moral reason to do anything if the value produced by it is merely non-moral. If he says “moral,” then I would be inclined to agree; only now we need to know just what things he thinks are morally valuable. But is this not precisely what a moral principle ought to tell us? It ought, that is, to tell us what to do. If it only says we should do what is best, then this answer is uninformative unless and until we know what is best.

Perhaps brows may be raised when I say that “There is no moral reason to do anything if the value produced by it is merely non-moral.” I do not mean that there is no relation whatever between moral and non-moral evaluation, but I do mean that insofar as something is thought to be (non-morally) good, this by itself may imply nothing about what we (morally) ought to do. If x is a good bicycle, then what has this to do with morality? As such, it has nothing whatsoever to do with it. But, if Johnny thinks that it is a good bicycle, then I am doing a morally good thing in giving one to Johnny, other things being equal. Johnny can think that it is one, whether or not it is one. What is objectionable about Ideal Utilitarianism can now be brought out by showing that it appears to want us to be concerned with what is valuable, rather than whether it is thought valuable. Thus, if I believe that Picassos are intrinsically good paintings (which is an aesthetic judgment), then if the phrase “absolute intrinsic value” in the Ideal Utilitarian principle is understood as including non-moral values, then on the Ideal Utilitarian principle I might very well think that it would be a morally good thing to cause people to see Picassos. If I believe that abstract impressionist art is intrinsically bad, then I may believe that I have a moral reason to suppress such art. In fact, this is exactly what happens in some places. The Communists, for example, appear to believe that if the aesthetic value of a kind of painting is negative, then people who produce that kind of painting should be thrown in prison, their canvasses burned, and spectators prevented from going to see them.

If people disagree about the value of such painting, they may,
on the “Ideal” utilitarian view, disagree about whether or not it should be suppressed. But, on the view advocated here, the aesthetic question is simply irrelevant. We may argue about the absolute intrinsic aesthetic value of abstract painting until we are blue in the face, if we are so inclined, but no conclusions arrived at in the course of it will have any moral significance as such. What matters for moral purposes is not whether it is good painting, but whether anybody thinks it is. If they do, then to that extent we have a moral reason for assisting, or at least not hindering, the activities which they perform on account of that evaluation.

The reason, I think, why “Ideal” utilitarianism and utilitarianism per se tend to be equated in recent literature is because of an assumption that “Ideal” utilitarians will tend to have utilitarian values in fact, as I shall document below. I am pointing out here only that what Ideal Utilitarianism implies about morality will depend entirely on one’s evaluative assumptions, and that this is totally unsatisfactory because that is what a moral theory ought to provide or make explicit—the evaluative assumptions. Hitler could have been an “Ideal” utilitarian, and probably was. He probably believed that the quantity of absolute intrinsic value brought into being by killing millions of Jews, and wresting millions of people from the activities they enjoyed in order that they might go out and die on the field of battle, was greater than if everyone had been permitted to live as he pleased. Ex hypothesi, this would be a dispute about intrinsic value. How is it to be resolved? This will simply raise all of the old questions over again, which shows that ideal utilitarianism is unsatisfactory as a moral theory. On the classical utilitarian view, on the other hand, questions about the absolute intrinsic value of anything are irrelevant, as such.

We must not fall into the mistake of inferring that according to the present account, “value” is “subjective.” It is important to bear in mind that, according to the view I am advocating, no “theory of value” is implied at all. We can quite consistently allow that intrinsic values are “objective,” whatever this may mean. I take it to mean at least that if two people are of different opinions about the intrinsic value of something, then at least one of them is wrong. This can be cheerfully admitted by
the utilitarian. On the other hand, some will take the "subjectivist" position, and claim that such quarrels are made of thin air. The utilitarian may likewise admit this, if he is so inclined. What he denies is that statements about intrinsic value per se may be admitted among the premises of moral arguments. (Statements about intrinsic moral value are, of course, another matter. We shall take up this subject in Chapter IV.)

**Intrinsic Value**

A teleological moral theory, of which utilitarianism is certainly an example, holds that the moral value of acts is due to the value of their consequences. It follows that some account has to be given of the value of consequences. That aspect of consequences, on account of which the acts producing them have the moral value they do, according to the view taken in this book, is their utility. The foregoing sections of the present chapter have been devoted to the subject of what we are to regard as constituting utility. At the same time, I have been going out of my way to avoid the identification of utility with "intrinsic value" per se. To some, this may seem paradoxical. Frankena, for example, defines the "teleological" view of ethics as follows:

A teleological theory says that the basic or ultimate criterion or standard of what is morally right, wrong, obligatory, etc., is the non-moral value that is brought into being.\(^\text{24}\)

If this were correct, then it would presumably follow that the teleological view of ethics must be Ideal Utilitarian; thus, that the preceding account of utilitarianism is logically ruled out.\(^\text{25}\)

Why does Frankena define it in this way? His reason is stated thus:

It is important to notice, here, that for a teleologist, the moral quality or value of actions, persons, or traits of character is dependent

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\(^{25}\) Ross, for example, says of the "Ideal" utilitarian theory that "Not only is this theory more attractive than hedonistic utilitarianism, but its logical relation to that theory is such that the latter could not be true unless it were true, while it might be true though hedonistic utilitarianism were not." (Right and the Good, p. 17.)
on the comparative nonmoral value of what they bring about or try to bring about. For the moral quality or value of something to depend on the moral value of whatever it promotes would be circular.  

This is a mistake. There is no reason why the appraisal of acts from the moral point of view cannot involve reference to the moral value of consequences, as opposed to their nonmoral value. Frankena evidently supposes that since the phrase “moral value” applies primarily to “acts, persons, or traits of character,” any value had by anything else (viz. consequences), must be nonmoral. The reason for not distinguishing morally significant consequences from consequences whose value is morally irrelevant would then be inappropriate because merely vacuous—namely, that consequences are not (generally) acts, persons, or states of character. This is beside the point. To say that something is good as a means is, of course, to imply that something else, namely that to which it is a means, is good “as an end,” or “in itself.” But the fact that something is good in itself from one point of view does not prevent it from being a means from another point of view. Similarly, the fact that something is morally intrinsically good does not mean that it is intrinsically good, period. It is often held that there must be such a thing as intrinsic good in an unqualified sense—goodness from no point of view whatever. This may be true, but I am questioning its relevance to ethics. Some consideration of this matter is therefore in order here.

It is common to make a distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value, for the very good reason that despite occasional attempts to question the validity or utility of the distinction, we need it in practical discourse. The general idea is that something is said to have “intrinsic” value if its having that value does not depend upon its relations—especially, its causal relations—to other things. If it does so depend, then its value is “extrinsic.” Thus, Moore employs as a definition of intrinsic

Frankena, Ethics, p. 13.

Actually, the situation is a bit more complicated than this. See Moore’s Principia Ethica, Ch. I, for an interesting discussion of the “principle of organic unities.” See also Clarence I. Lewis, An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1947), for Lewis’ multiple distinctions of “instrumental,” “extrinsic,” “intrinsic,” “inherent,” and “ultimate” values. We may neglect these for the present. The knowledgeable reader will note that a good deal is owed to Lewis in this section.
value, that value which a thing would have, if it existed by itself “in absolute isolation.” This definition tends to raise hackles, as though the existence of intrinsic values in that sense were a questionable, metaphysical matter. If we consider the argument by means of which it is concluded that there must be such things, we find that this is not so. This argument (which stems, at least, from Aristotle),\(^{28}\) is as follows: Suppose we say that A is good “on account of” B (e.g., because it produced B). Clearly, the words “on account of” have the logical function of shifting the weight of accountability, so to speak, onto something about B. If, in turn, we ask “And why is B good?,” then either we shall have to give an answer in similar form, “on account of C,” or we shall have to give an answer equivalent to, “Well, just because it is the sort of thing it is.” (Moore, and the Russell of “The Elements of Ethics” tend to say that there is literally no reason why what is intrinsically good is good—it “just is.”)\(^{29}\) It is important to see in this conclusion, that something or other must be held to be good “in itself” if anything is held to be good at all, is argued for on purely logical grounds—the ground, namely, of the logic of the phrase “on account of” or whatever equivalent is used. If we employ such a phrase, we imply that our evaluation is incomplete. Thus, I find this hoary argument entirely convincing: Unless something is “intrinsically” good, then nothing can be genuinely good at all. (We may, I take it, dismiss the use of ‘good for’ in which it is synonymous with ‘efficient at’ as secondary and uninteresting.)

It is important to see that this argument does not have any efficacy whatsoever regarding another matter with which the word ‘intrinsic’ has for centuries been connected, namely the dispute concerning “objectivism” versus “subjectivism.” Such early moralists as Clarke, Cudworth, and Price share with G. E.

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\(^{28}\) *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, i-ii. Aristotle, however, is trying to establish that there is a single Supreme Good, and the argument notoriously fails to establish this conclusion. It is not unreasonable to cite Aristotle’s model argument as the prototype of arguments about intrinsic good. Nevertheless, many excellent philosophical arguments have not proven what their authors wanted to prove with them, although they may prove something else of equal interest.

Moore the tendency to suppose that "intrinsic" values must be "objective." Thus Moore, in his essay on "The Conception of Intrinsic Value," begins by saying that he is going to talk about "the most important question, which . . . is really at issue when it is disputed with regard to any predicate of value, whether it is, or is not, a 'subjective' predicate"; he maintains that "from the proposition that a particular kind of value is "intrinsic," it does follow that it must be "objective." Now, if this is true, then it is so only if the word 'intrinsic' is used in a different sense from that in which the aforementioned argument stemming from Aristotle uses it. It is obvious that regardless of what analysis we offer of evaluative predicates, we can and must always distinguish between valuing something for its own sake and valuing it because of its contribution to something else.

Discussions of this kind tend, in fact, to assimilate three distinct issues. On the one hand, there is the question of whether "value" is "subjective," in the sense of being in some way mind-dependent. Secondly, there is the question whether the truth-value of an evaluative sentence necessarily varies with the person uttering it. Thirdly, there is the question whether any values are "intrinsic." There is certainly considerable tendency to run these together, as in Moore's essay mentioned above. The tendency is to suppose that 'intrinsic,' 'absolute,' and 'objective' are, if not altogether one and the same in meaning, at any rate necessarily connected. This is not so; indeed, it is to be accounted among the achievements of recent ethics to have clarified this point.

Now Moore convinced himself, mainly by means of the "open question" test, that 'good' was not definable in "naturalistic" terms. Having inferred from this that 'good' was a "non-natural" property, it then appeared to him to be logically possible that some things should have this property whether or not there is anyone around to notice the fact. In his discussion of Hedonism,

31 On the first question, see Paul Edwards’ *The Logic of Moral Discourse*, Chs. 1, 2. On the second, see C. L. Stevenson, *Facts and Values* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1963), e.g., "Relativism and Non-Relativism in the Theory of Values." On the third question, see Lewis’ *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*.
he goes on to argue that there (perhaps) actually are a few. By way of countering Sidgwick's view that "if there be any Good other than Happiness to be sought by man, as an ultimate practical end, it can only be the Goodness, Perfection, or Excellence of Human Existence," he offers the celebrated "two worlds" argument, in which the question is posed whether we should be "entirely indifferent" as between a world which, though "exceedingly beautiful," was entirely unpopulated and unobserved, and another which was as foul and ugly as the first was beautiful, but equally unpopulated. Moore asks, "Is it irrational to hold that it is better that the beautiful world should exist, than the one which is ugly? Would it not be well, in any case, to do what we could to produce it rather than the other?"\(^\text{32}\)

Despite this result, we find Moore asserting, in his chapter on "The Ideal," that "by far the most valuable things, which we can know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects."\(^\text{33}\) What is more, we find that similar results were arrived at by practically all of the best-known ethical writers of this century. When they come to consider the question, what general kinds of things really have "intrinsic value," the answer is almost uniformly that they are "states of mind" of the general kind mentioned by Moore. A few cases are worth citing. Rashdall regarded Virtue and Happiness as the only intrinsic goods, adding that other

\(^{32}\) Moore, *Principia Ethica*, p. 83. Although the immediate aims of this discussion is to establish that there are some things other than states of mind which actually have intrinsic value, I think there can be no doubt that Moore supposed that the result of this experiment would be to give additional weight to his analysis of value as an objective, but non-natural, property. Thus, at the outset of the chapter (p. 60), Moore remarks that "It is very difficult to see that by 'approving' of a thing we mean *feeling that it has a certain predicate*—the predicate, namely, which defines the peculiar sphere of Ethics . . ." I agree with Nowell-Smith that if this is what Moore supposed he was doing, then the experiment is a failure. What the experiment does prove, of course, is that we can have evaluative attitudes *toward* things other than minds. Cf., Nowell-Smith's *Ethics*, p. 74. Thus, later writers who wished to bring this argument to bear against emotivism are off the track. Independently of this, I am also inclined to agree that it would be pointless to exert any effort to bring such a world into existence; the important point for the purpose of this book, however, is that this simply is not a morally significant question.

\(^{33}\) Moore, *Principia Ethica*, p. 188.
states of mind besides pleasure go into the latter, and that virtue is a state of mind too, only concerning “thought and volition” as well as feeling.\textsuperscript{34} Ross finds that virtuous disposition, pleasure, the apportionment of pleasures, and knowledge exhaust the list of intrinsic goods, adding that “It might of course be objected that there are or may be intrinsic goods that are not states of mind or relations between states of mind at all, but in this suggestion I can find no plausibility.”\textsuperscript{35} C. I. Lewis regards the “realization of positive value-quality in experience” as the only intrinsic good.\textsuperscript{36} Frankena finds that although pleasure in the narrow sense is not all that is intrinsically good, yet “the broader and somewhat similar thesis that nothing is intrinsically good unless it contains some kind of satisfactoriness seems to me to be clearly true,” adding that “knowledge, excellence, power, and so on, are simply cold, bare, and valueless in themselves unless they are experienced with some kind of enjoyment or satisfaction.”\textsuperscript{37}

There is something impressive about the unanimity with which the best ethical theorists have regarded various states of mind or experiences as the only (or most important) intrinsically good things. Why shouldn’t other things be allowed to be intrinsically good, one might wonder? Beethoven Quartets, for example? Surely the answer, in part, is that these theorists have not meant their thesis to be incompatible with the attribution of value to such things. But “intrinsic value” is special. Why?

Consider how parallel to this is the treatment accorded to the question, “What is it that people desire, really?” The tendency is to answer, ‘satisfaction.’ This satisfactory answer is a function of the logic of the case. After all, to say that a desire had been satisfied is to say that the person in question got what the desire is a desire for. The fact that people often get what they desire, and are still dissatisfied is due to the fact that they have other desires as well. If you desire an x and I give you an x, you are not entitled to complain on the score of dissatisfaction with that action of mine unless you’ve changed your mind meanwhile.

\textsuperscript{34} Rashdall, \textit{Theory of Good and Evil}, I, 63–80.
\textsuperscript{35} Ross, \textit{The Right and the Good}, p. 140.
\textsuperscript{36} Lewis, \textit{An Analysis of Knowledge}, p. 392.
\textsuperscript{37} Frankena, \textit{Ethics}, p. 74.
But the same consideration that shows that "satisfaction" is a natural answer to the question, "What do we really desire?" shows also that it is vacuous. As we saw above, "pleasure" falls into the same category.

Similarly, if we ask "what is good in itself?" we are apt to go through a sequence such as this: If I think that Beethoven Quartets are good, it is because I enjoy them; if I didn't enjoy them, then I wouldn't think they were good. What it is to be good is to be a means of enjoyment; so enjoyment must be good in itself. Compare this with: If I think that something is good, then I am in favor of it; and if I weren't in favor of it, I wouldn't think it is good. So what is good in itself must be "favoring." What's wrong?

It isn't so much that the conclusion in each of these sequences doesn't "follow." What's wrong is that the word 'good' seems to be used in different senses in premises and conclusion. The conclusion, one might say, is vacuous. What does it mean to ask, in the same tone of voice throughout, "Which is better: Beethoven's Quartet in C# Minor, or the pleasure of listening to Beethoven's Quartet in C# Minor?" Moore presumably regarded this as a sensible question. But is it?

Consider the following:
(a) "Jones enjoys playing the oboe."
(b) "Jones plays the oboe for its own sake."
(c) "Jones thinks that playing the oboe is intrinsically good."

What is the difference between any two of these? Certainly they could be used interchangeably in many cases. If there is a contrast, it is probably on incidental points. For instance, (c) could be true, even though Jones himself doesn't play the oboe, but not (a) or (b). Or, perhaps (b) or (c) could be used to describe the case where Jones suffers intensely from playing the oboe, and he doesn't expect to gain anything by it, and he doesn't expect to entertain others. But in this case, (b) or (c) would be equivalent to "Jones is a compulsive oboe-player," would it not?

At any rate, it seems clear that "he does it because he enjoys doing it" is not alternative to "he does it for its own sake," but
ordinarily is just another way of saying the same thing. If so, then it is misleading to talk about the "intrinsic goodness" of pleasure.

Does it make any sense to "evaluate" pleasure? What are we doing when we do this? Principally, I think, we are pointing to the connection between pleasure and the evaluation of things which are pleasurable. Philosophers have been suggesting, in recent years, that, in the words of Baier, "everybody must agree that the fact that he would enjoy doing something is a reason for him to do it; that he would not enjoy it, a reason for him not to do it." This, I suggest, is equivalent to the intent of "psychological hedonism" as discussed above. As such, it is perhaps, a logical comment on the concept of enjoyment, or at most, a comment on the way people do, in fact, evaluate things. It seems to me otiose to make such statements about oneself.

But if I say that the fact that Jones enjoys having something done is a reason for me to do it, I do make an intelligible, normative remark. I am not implying that I do it for Jones because I enjoy doing it, or even because I enjoy doing it for Jones; for I may dislike Jones personally. When people contribute money to help relieve starvation in India, it is not because they like Indians. Most likely, they don't know any Indians, and certainly not the ones who will be helped by their contributions. Such actions are usually, or at least often, done from a feeling that one ought to help people who are starving, whether one happens to know and like them or not. One might say that they contribute because the Indians are people in need. One might make such contributions even though one would much prefer, intrinsically, to spend it on things one enjoys.

To try to sum up the results of this complicated discussion, I want to suggest that to talk of "intrinsic value" in the abstract, without regard to any special point of view or context, is most naturally to draw analogy to evaluation of the aesthetic sort. "I do it for its own sake" is typically like "I enjoy it." If asked why one enjoys it, one replies, if one can, by indicating those features of the experience which attract one. Immediate experience is the natural home of "context-less" evaluation. This is

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Baier, Moral Point of View, p. 111.
shown by the fact that philosophers of art invariably begin by pointing out that art objects are contemplated for their own sakes, and not because of their connections with anything else. Moral evaluations, I suggest, are more complicated than this. They are not "contextless" in the above sense. It doesn't particularly matter how the prospect to other people's interests "immediately strikes" me. To suggest that moral evaluation is assessment of the intrinsic value of something is to suggest that I am doing the same sort of thing in asking why I ought to help old ladies cross the street, help relieve starvation or avoid harming people as I am doing when asking why "Don Giovanni" is a good opera. Surely not. If I have a native sympathy with other people, a natural desire to forward their interests, then no doubt some of my moral evaluations will be like this. The interesting cases, however, are those in which I do not particularly share the interests of the people affected by my actions. Such people are people whose judgments of intrinsic value may be in conflict with mine, whose way of life may be quite different. To say that the moral evaluation that nevertheless they have a right to pursue the interests they have is based on another judgment of "intrinsic value"—namely, a judgment of the intrinsic value of Jones' thinking that such-and-such has a high intrinsic value, where in my opinion its intrinsic value is very low—is to put a great strain on the notion of "intrinsic value."

On the other hand, it is not true, either, that the judgment that we ought to respect other people's values is itself merely "instrumental" or "extrinsic." As moral philosophers have been pointing out, to take such a view is inevitably to try to justify morality on non-moral grounds, usually of self-interest. They tend to agree that such justifications will not work. What to do about this will be considered in my final chapter, but meanwhile, I have been trying to make clear that we need to complicate the picture of evaluation for moral purposes, by introducing a category which might be labelled "intrinsic moral value," or perhaps, "intrinsic value for moral purposes," or "intrinsic value from the moral point of view." If my analysis of utility is correct, then I can point to the overwhelming agreement of recent moral philosophers that only states of mind or experiences have "intrinsic value" as support for it. What they must have been
talking about was "intrinsic moral value." Surely, they were not endorsing the tastes of people who enjoy what the philosophers themselves would not enjoy. Rather, they were agreeing with me, that the fact that other people enjoy something is a good reason for helping them to procure it, or at least for letting them do it unimpeded, regardless of what one thinks of their taste. The generalization of this would be to say *prima facie*, that if someone regards doing x as an intrinsically (non-morally) good thing, then it is a good thing (morally) to assist him in doing x (regardless of the “real” intrinsic value of doing x).

**Qualities and Quantities**

Since Mill wrote *Utilitarianism*, there has been dispute about his contention that "quality" as well as "quantity" should be taken into account in determining utility. Some have held that this is flatly inconsistent, others that it is only inconsistent with "pure" hedonism, and still others that it is not inconsistent at all. My own view is that this entire question has been enormously muddled, and could have been avoided by making a few rather obvious distinctions. Moreover, I am inclined to think that Mill comes out reasonably well on this score—more of the muddle is in the critics than in Mill.

Let us consider the passage in which this matter arose. Mill is discussing the "superiority of pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments" over "mere sensation." He remarks that

Utilitarian writers in general have placed the superiority of mental over bodily pleasures chiefly in the greater permanency, safety, uncostliness, etc. of the former—that is, in their circumstantial advantages rather than their intrinsic nature. And on all these points utilitarians have fully proved their case; but they might have taken the other, and, as it may be called, higher ground, with entire con-

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sistency. It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recog-
nize the fact, that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and
more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimat-
ing all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the
estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity
alone.\textsuperscript{42}

It seems clear that Mill is thinking of “pleasures” as experiences
which one desires on account of their immediate character, as
one would expect from our reflections above. If we count per-
manency, safety, and uncostliness as “circumstantial” (as seems
reasonable), then we must turn to the “internal” character of
these experiences when we are estimating their desirability in
terms of variables which might reasonably be accounted their
“intrinsic nature.” How many such variables are there?

G. E. Moore plainly thought that there could be, in the
nature of the case, but one:

If you say ‘pleasure’ you must mean ‘pleasure’: you must mean some
one thing common to all different ‘pleasures,’ some one thing, which
may exist in different degrees, but which cannot differ in kind.\textsuperscript{43}

Moore thought of the term ‘pleasure’ as if it were comparable
to, say, ‘height’ or ‘water.’ It would indeed be natural to think
of just one measure appropriate to height and water—altitude
and volume—although even here one might point out that there
could be differences (e.g., height above sea-level, or from the
base, or from the ground?) Of water, sometimes one is more
interested in feet-below-flood-tide than in volumes; sometimes
in area covered, etc. Neglecting these, however, the point re-
mains that ‘pleasure’ need not be construed in this fashion.
I am not sure that it is even natural to do so. Surely, Mill is
thinking of ‘pleasure’ as analogous to ‘color’ rather than to
‘height.’ In the case of ‘color,’ it won’t do to argue that there
must be “some one thing common to all different colors, which
may exist in different degrees, but which cannot differ in kind.”
If we do (say, “being visible”), then the common property in
question is by no means incompatible with variations other than

\textsuperscript{42} Mill, Utilitarianism, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{43} Moore, Principia Ethica, p. 80.
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In 'quantity.' In the case of color, there are, for instance, intensity, hue, and saturation. Just as one might prefer different colors on account of their hue, as well as their intensity, so one might prefer different experiences on account of their specific feeling-tone as well as their intensity. This could reasonably be called "rating pleasures in quality as well as in quantity." In fact, reflection shows that we do just that. The pleasures of wine-tasting are not, I suppose, nearly as intense as those of whiskey-guzzling, or taking a hot shower, or of sexual activities. But a person might very well prefer them, on account of their greater subtlety and delicacy.

The reason, I suppose, why there has been so much fuss about this is that the words 'quantity' and 'quality' both have several different senses; philosophical critics are prone to picking the worst at their disposal when they interpret an author they are resolved to ridicule. The utilitarian—and any other moral theorist, for that matter—must have some method of rating different acts, such that one is preferable to another. The word 'value' is obviously susceptible to adjectives like 'more' and 'less,' and one has to find something with which to correlate it, in order to have a theory at all. The "quantity" in question for utilitarians is 'utility,' and this is taken to be identical with 'happiness,' for example, (or, in my case, "what people put a value on"). We have seen, in Chapter II, the point, and the difficulties, of speaking of "quantities" in this connection.

The word 'quality' is doubtless the greatest source of trouble for the question of "quantity versus quality"; the trouble is probably due again to ambiguity. Sometimes the word 'quality' has an evaluative ring to it, as in 'quality versus price,' or 'a person of quality.' In such cases, we may speak of "high quality" and "low quality," because the word 'quality' has an evaluation built into it. ('Quality,' in this usage, is in fact a quantity.) If one says, "courage is a good quality of character," then it makes no sense to ask, "Yes, but is it a high or a low one?" In the phrase "good quality," 'quality' has to be taken in a neutral sense (although not the phrase as a whole, obviously, nor the word 'good' in it). The phrase, "a good, but low, quality" makes no sense as it stands. Most people, I think, have the evaluative sense of 'quality' in mind when they read Mill or Moore on
quantities vs. qualities of pleasure. Since Mill is using 'quality' here as an index of value of pleasure (i.e., of its preferability or desirability), it would be circular for him to be using it in the evaluative sense. Mill says explicitly, in our quoted selection above, that “some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others.” In the next sentence, he uses ‘quality’ in precisely the same location as ‘kind’ was used in the sentence preceding. He could not easily have made it more evident that by ‘quality’ he meant ‘kind.’

If understood in this way, what Mill says is in no way dubious or contradictory. How could one conceivably prefer one experience to another if not on the basis of its being the kind of experience it is? Is it not absurd to suppose that hedonists are maintaining that only the “quantity” of a pleasurable experience as distinct from its quality is relevant in evaluating it? (As if pleasure bad only “quantity,” whatever that would mean.)

However that may be, my formulation in terms of ‘degree to which x thinks y desirable’ has no ambiguities of that kind in it. However, there are parallel questions which can be raised and which we need answer in specific cases. If, for example, a person is very fond of something of which I am very unfond, while another shares my tastes, I am likely to prefer the second’s pleasures to the first. But the whole bent of the utilitarian outlook is toward toleration of other people’s tastes. It is precisely in the belief that other people must be free to have their own values that utilitarianism is distinctive—it is austere neutral in the matter of choosing the kind of life one wishes to live. Prima facie, then, it requires us to rate only the degree to which other people are interested in things, rather than the particular things they are interested in, as morally relevant. This implication, understandably, runs contrary to the grain of some moralists; accordingly some discussion at this point is called for.

“Apparent” Versus “Real” Satisfactions

The aforementioned moralists will accuse me at least of being excessively naïve. Surely, we can distinguish between what a person thinks is good, and what is really good for him? Ought
we not prefer the latter to the former? My answer is that there are two ways of doing this. According to one interpretation, the present view is in consonance with making such a distinction, and thus, in some circumstances, of preferring the “real” to the “apparent” good of some (other) individual. In another way, or perhaps another set of ways, this distinction is either illegitimate, or morally irrelevant; if it is made, we are obliged to prefer the “apparent” to the “real” good of an individual.

Let us begin by taking an example. Suppose that Johnny (who is twelve years old) has a very high mathematical aptitude, but hates mathematics. He wants to be a used-car salesman, for which his aptitude is not obviously exceptional. In these circumstances, conscientious parents will have to decide how far they should push him in mathematics. They might reason that the life of a mathematician is preferable to that of a used-car salesman, and that they are therefore justified in pushing him to take mathematics courses and work very hard at them, despite the fact that he dislikes this very much and would prefer to go out and play ball, or read back issues of Autocar magazine. Are they justified? It depends on what we are to regard as the determinants of “preferability,” when it is alleged that the life of a mathematician is preferable. If this is a judgment of the intrinsic value of such a life, then certainly the parents have a right to make this judgment; but Johnny has a right to disagree with them, and in the present case, he does. It might be objected that Johnny is not in a position to know, and there is also something to be said for this. However, what if he were to study as a mathematician, very much against his own will, and find it quite unendurable, as is possible? This, I suggest, is the heart of the matter: The judgment that the life of a mathematician is preferable to that of a used-car salesman is irrelevant, unless there is evidence that Johnny will come to share this view. If it can be foreseen, at least probably, that he will do so, then there might be justification in setting him on the path to that end, rather than countenancing a temporary aberration of his inexperienced youth.

The adoption of a person’s own view of his good rather than, flatly, his good, as the measure of utility does not, then, automatically countenance the satisfaction of merely momentary
views of it. People can and do change their minds about what is good for them. All that is required is that we make the view of the individual the ultimate test of what is "his good," for moral purposes. Bentham, as we know, held that every man is the best judge of his own interest. Taken as it stands, this simply isn't true. Very often other people are better judges of our interests than we are, and we can know this to be true. Obviously, that is why we often seek out advice on subjects related to our own interests. But, from the fact that other people might be better judges of our interest than we are, it does not follow that we are not in a position of "epistemological primacy," as one might call it, with respect to our own interests—for we are. This, I take it, is what Bentham either meant or should have said: Each person is the ultimate arbiter of what is in his interest. It is Jones who, at some time, must be satisfied if something is satisfactory for Jones. If something is in his interest, then he must eventually find it to be so.

None of the above is to be construed as denying that there might be a real question as to which of two kinds of lives is really, intrinsically, better. What meaning might be attached to this predicate, if the person's actual satisfactions are regarded as irrelevant, is not presently in question. Intuitionists will find it meaningful, hedonists meaningless, and others one way or the other; as I have tried to make clear, a judgment on this point is not needed here. The question is whether the supposed real, intrinsic value of a way of life is the relevant standard in moral matters, when and if it diverges from the standard of the individual's own view of the matter, in the long run. The utilitarian view is that it is not. But in all of those senses of the phrases "real vs. apparent interest," (satisfaction, advantage, or good) in which they are compatible with the use of the subject's own feelings or appraisals as the ultimate test, these contrasts are perfectly meaningful and useful on the present account of utilitarianism.

Moreover, I believe that I can claim the support of enlightened popular opinion on this matter, if this is thought to carry any particular weight. These are halcyon days for utilitarianism,

44 See Ch. VIII for further discussion.
45 It may not be much, since popular opinion, even "progressive" or "enlightened," is subject to change of fashion, generally without notice.
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in the large-circulation "family" magazines, the daily advice columns in the newspapers, etc. Nearly all agree, for example, that it is the child's own satisfactions and not those of the parents which ought to be made the ultimate standard of appraisal in determining how to treat and guide him. The standard, in other words, is individual autonomy. To this, I am proposing, the utilitarian can say only "amen."

Three Puzzles: Unrealizable Satisfactions, The Rights of Animals, and Mr. Smart's Electrodes

The foregoing discussions allow us to add something on some particularly thorny questions of a rather specialized kind, among which I find three of special interest. The first, which will become important in connection with promising (discussed in its own right in Chapter VI), concerns the question of how, or perhaps I should say whether, to attach positive value to the production of states of affairs which are regarded as good by some persons who, for whatever reason, will never experience the states of affairs in question. The second one concerns the question of the moral status of animals. The third is the question whether we should think that certain rather exotic sources of experience, such as drugs or artificial stimulation of the nerves by means of electrodes, count as goods. The special interpretation of utility which I have been arguing for above will, I think, cast some light on these matters.

(1) It would presumably be self-contradictory to talk of unexperienced pleasures. Similarly, if perhaps not quite so obviously, it seems strange to attribute happiness to nonexistent persons. Nevertheless, people do go out of their way at times to do things for people who are dead or otherwise not in a position to know that the things in question are being done. We can question the rationality of desires whose fulfillment cannot be experienced by the persons having them; or, we can question the rationality of our taking them seriously; in any case, we need to do something about them. The present formula, I suggest, helps by showing how this might be brought under the umbrella of utilitarianism. If our moral criterion is productive-
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ness of things valued by anyone, then we can argue plausibly what we could not argue plausibly using the “pleasure” formula, that there is value in carrying out the wishes of persons now dead. It does seem that people can put a high value on states of affairs which they will not be able to experience, e.g., posthumous fame. There is another source of support in the fact that unquestionably it is precisely the fact that x was valued by Jones and not the fact that x is “intrinsically” valuable, which is very often at stake. ‘Jones would have liked that’ is advanced as a credible reason for doing things by friends, admirers, or well-wishers.

The effect of the present formula is, however, merely to bring both sides of these disputes within the utilitarian framework, not to settle them. The question whether it is rational to want things one won’t be able to experience is certainly an open one; so is the question how much, if any, weight is to be put upon such wants when it comes to weighing them against the wants of living people who will be able to experience their fulfillment. The question becomes interesting only in fringe cases.

(2) The second question is whether animals are to “count for one,” along with people, in our moral concerns. If we were to define utility in terms of pleasure, it seems reasonable to suppose that many animals would have to be counted in on the principle of utility. Moreover, it is obvious that to some extent they do—it is surely wrong to inflict gratuitous suffering upon animals. But what about eating them, for example? We do not suppose that if we murder a man with the purpose in mind of eating him—bearing him no ill will, you understand—that is sufficient to justify the act. Yet, people invoke this argument on behalf of the justifiability of killing animals. Is there a real difference?

One consideration is evident, at least. If animals were able to talk with us, it would make a striking difference in most of our opinions about them. Imagine a cow not only looking at her approaching butcher with that sad and reproachful expression cows have, but also able to say to him as he approaches, “You brute! Have you no humanity at all?” Certainly if animals could employ moral language, as well as act as if they experienced pain or pleasure, that would put them into the category of
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"moral persons." This does make a difference, but should it? Should it, especially, on the Principle of Utility?

As I have said, if we define utility in terms of pleasure, it should make no difference. But if we define it as I have suggested, perhaps a more satisfactory explanation is forthcoming. We cannot expect to infer from an animal's apparently having a pro-attitude toward something any willingness or ability to defend its view as a sound one. Since animals are unable to talk, we can only suppose that they are unable to "have moral concepts"—if indeed this amounts to anything other than being able to use moral language anyway. Therefore, we suppose that the reason we have no obligation to respect the animal's point of view is that animals don't really have "points of view."

It still doesn't follow from this that we are right in killing animals for food; but it does seem to move us several steps in that direction. Rawls' suggestion that we owe the duties of justice only to those who have the concept of justice is much in accordance with my view, and his view would surely account for the disparity here. At the same time, I suggest, we can not say that we owe the (less stringent) duties of charity only to those who have the concept of charity. Thus, we can be said to have a (weak) duty toward animals, which consists in not inflicting gratuitous suffering on them; and at the same time we do not owe the (strong) duty of justice to them, which would involve treating them as moral persons.

My purpose here has not been to solve fully the problem about animals, but rather to point out the kind of difference made by defining utility in the present way rather than in a narrowly hedonistic manner. We shall find similar advantages of this view at some of the later stages of my exposition.

(3) Mr. Smart, in his interesting account of utilitarianism, mentions a psychological experiment carried out on rats, in which some electrodes were attached to their brains and attached to

46 Perhaps I should have said 'if,' rather than 'since.' I gather that psychologists (as opposed to rhapsodizers) do not, at present, attribute the use of language to animals, in any serious way. The lack in animals, moreover, is not merely physiological, in many cases. Parrots and minah birds can mimic, and thus can pronounce words. Yet we don't think that they talk.

levers such that the rat "would neglect food and make straight for this lever and start stimulating himself. In some cases he would sit there pressing the lever every few seconds for hours on end." So the question arises: if some such apparatus were invented for humans, would the resultant enjoyment be part of "the sort of life that all our ethical planning should culminate in?" Smart's ensuing discussion of this is incisive and illuminating, by and large, and the reader will want to consult it. I shall add only a small point to his remarks. This point is in reference to Smart's suggestion that the notion of happiness is "partly evaluative." To call a person 'happy' is

To say more than that he is contented for most of the time, or even that he frequently enjoys himself and is rarely discontented or in pain. It is, I think, in part to express a favorable attitude to the idea of such a form of contentment and enjoyment. That is, for A to call B 'happy,' A must be contented at the prospect of B being in his present state of mind and at the prospect of A himself, should the opportunity arise, enjoying that sort of state of mind.48

It is not clear that this is true, though there is doubtless some tendency in the direction Smart mentions. But we might reflect on whether our own valuations ought to enter into the picture at all. It may be true that we cannot, psychologically, believe that someone else really has a value which we cannot share, but to permit it to enter into the picture in any sense in which we can control this tendency is to run the risk of altering the utilitarian view. At any rate, the question in the case of electrode-operating is not how we feel about it, but how the people who indulge feel about it. So much Smart recognizes. But the further question, which Smart presumably would not put much weight on, is whether the people in question think that the states of mind induced by electrode operation are good ones. This is a question which might, and perhaps in most cases would (as we observed in the section above), be identified with the question of enjoyment. Clearly, those of us who haven't tried it are not in a good position to carry on the argument about its intrinsic merits, as Mill pointed out in his remarks about Socrates and the pig, as discussed in the second section above.

A question of a type which in some cases could be very serious is raised in Smart’s penetrating observation that very often we are not contented at the prospect of doing x, even though we would be contented if we were doing x, and perhaps even though we know now that we would. “If Socrates had become a fool he might thereafter have been perfectly contented. Nevertheless, if beforehand he had been told that he would in the future become a fool, he would have been even more dissatisfied than in fact he was.”49 The question is: Under such circumstances, which fact do we go by? Do we take steps to put him in the future state of contentment, contrary to his present wishes, or do we go by his present wishes, thus lowering his overall contentment level? The formula I propose puts the weight, prima facie, on the side of the present wishes. Not unless I can convince the agent that the future state would be a good one am I justified in counting it a positive utility that he be put in that state.

However, in extreme cases, this rule must be broken. I suggest that the condition which would justify this, other than the condition when the agent’s present preferences are immoral,50 is that in which the agent’s rationality is genuinely in doubt. In that case, there is a doubt that the agent’s preferences are founded on evaluations at all. My formula suggests that the preference is for the agent’s assessment until really good grounds for doubting his sanity are at hand (which, unfortunately, are notoriously difficult to spell out).

We normally assume that if Jones likes something, approves of something, prefers something to something else, loves it, desires it, wants it, orders it, tends to go after it, or in general, shows that he has a pro-attitude toward it (either behaviorally or by applying pro-expressions to it), then he thinks that the thing in question is a good thing, or would be good for him to have or to get, or is better than the other thing (in the case of the relational expressions employed). By this I mean that we are normally expected to defend our pro-attitudes, so that if we

49 Ibid., p. 13.
50 See Ch. VI below. The chief defect in traditional discussions of utilitarianism is neglect of the fact that it provides a criterion for evaluating desires.
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have a desire which we regard as a bad one, we must qualify statements to the effect that we have them, so as to let people know that we do not regard these desires as providing good grounds for acting. The basic point remains that we cannot expect people to satisfy our desires if we do not ourselves think them worthy of being satisfied. This “assumption” may perhaps be defended on broadly logical grounds, but for whatever reason, it is normally made. It is for this reason that we will, in general, assume that what a person enjoys, what pleases him, or what he prefers, likes, wants, desires, etc., are likewise measures of utility. In the cases where the assumption does break down, we shall morally prefer the alternative to which he applies explicitly evaluative language, if any.

In the event of the subject’s unwillingness or inability to use evaluative language in connection with the things in question, if he otherwise expresses pro or con attitudes toward them, we shall assign utility (positive or negative) to them until further notice. If a man is faint with pain, he is unlikely to take the trouble to formulate evaluative sentences about it. We obviously would have no reason to expect him to, or to require him to, under normal circumstances. But what if a person is in a state which we would normally assume he regards as undesirable, but he insists that he regards it as desirable? This could conceivably happen, and when it does, we regard it as relevant. The fact that the fakir on his bed of nails is uncomfortable does not automatically mean that we’d be doing him a good turn by getting him off of it. He knows he’s uncomfortable, but he regards that as a good thing. Unless we can convince him that his reasons for wanting to suffer are bad ones, we will just have to leave him alone.

These observations give us further criteria of weighing utilities. The values which a person holds more deeply and strongly count as higher utilities than those he holds as secondary. Indeed, the criteria of measurement, for each individual case, are provided by his own evaluative scheme. Again, it is necessary to remember that discussion of his values is possible. Indeed, we can produce an abstract argument to show that it is, in a

51 Nowell-Smith’s Ethics (p. 99) offers interesting support here.
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sense, a *prima facie* good. For if A has a certain value which B regards as bad, and B convinces A that A is (was) in the wrong, so that A adopts some new value instead, then *prima facie* this is an increase in utility, since A’s reason for adopting it (and the hypothesis is that he had a reason, i.e., that B convinced him, rather than, say, drugging him) must be that the new value is higher than the old one.

Thus, there seem to be some advantages in our new formulation, even though it was adopted primarily on the ground that it was the view underlying the old formula. Further advantages, I hope, will be shown in Chapter IX, wherein the question of proof is taken up.

**Final Formulation**

We are now in a position to suggest a precise statement of the principle of utility. The concern of this chapter has been to understand what utility consists in; the view taken is that it consists in the bringing about of whatever is thought to be intrinsically good by those affected, except, of course, for what is thought to be morally good.\(^{52}\) We have not paid very much attention to the evaluative predicate, which is to figure in the principle. This is a matter which deserves attention for, as pointed out in the Introduction, we do not want to ride roughshod over the distinctions which need to be made between the “teleological” and the “deontological” vocabulary of ethics, for example. To say that an act is one we are morally obliged to do, have a duty to do, or are bound in justice to do, is generically different (as well as having finer differences with each other) from saying that it would be a good thing to do from the moral point of view. It would not do at all, for example, to settle for Moore’s formula, that x is a duty if and only if x produces more good than any other alternative.\(^{53}\) This would appear to imply the ludicrous result that if I would like strawberry jam better

\(^{52}\) The extent to which moral views count as utility will be considered later.

than peach on my toast for breakfast one morning, then it is my duty to have strawberry rather than peach.

In later chapters, especially Chapter VI and onward, I shall try to give an account of the differences in meaning between 'morally good' and 'morally obligatory,' in order to give an account of the moral principles making use of the differences. Meanwhile, it is enough to observe that we need a formulation which is neutral as between these sets of expressions. For this purpose, we may use the word 'value' to good effect.

Mill and Bentham put the matter in terms of 'right' and 'wrong,' Sidgwick adding that what is meant is 'objectively right' and 'objectively wrong,' thus giving us a formula such as this: Acts are objectively right insofar as they increase utility, objectively wrong insofar as they diminish it. This is rather satisfactory, except that it might be thought that 'right' and 'wrong' are themselves in the "deontological" set; it might also be held that these expressions are not naturally thought to be matters of degree. Therefore, we shall say that the single fundamental predicate is a relational predicate, 'is of greater moral value than.' Thus, the objective moral value of x is greater than that of y if, and only if, x has greater net utility than y.

For moral purposes, of course, we are concerned to appraise human acts, intentions or motives and characters. To many people it seems unnatural to think of comparing the activities of volcanoes and babbling brooks with that of moral agents. This is fair enough, in a way. We could, therefore, restrict the formula further so as to apply it only to acts; intentions and motives will be considered in the next chapter, and seem to depend for their appraisals upon the previous existence of standards for appraising acts. Thus, our narrower version will run as follows: Where our variables range over any set of acts which are alternatives to each other on any particular occasion of choice, x has more objective moral value than y if and only if x has more utility than y.

We may then define 'x is morally good' as being equivalent

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54 Sidgwick, Methods of Ethics, p. 411.
55 Bentham talks of "tendencies" as well, in the Introduction to The Utilitarians, p. 18: "By utility is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good or happiness."
to ‘the net moral value of x is positive and exceeds the net moral value of doing nothing at all’; in parallel fashion, ‘x is morally bad’ as equivalent to ‘the net moral value of x is negative and is less than the net moral value of doing nothing at all.56

Finally, we may substitute our definition of utility in the formula to obtain the following: One alternative has more objective moral value than another if and only if it produces a greater net amount of what is valued by those affected than the other produces.

In Chapters IV and V, we shall take up general questions of method in the application of this rather abstract principle. Then we shall be in a position to take up the more concrete issues which are, in a sense, the heart of the matter.

56 Perhaps “doing nothing at all” might be felt to be a vacuous description on the ground that in a situation of choice, whatever you do, including refusing to make a decision, is “really” a choice. I think this is slightly sophistical; better to say that one can be held responsible for not making a choice as well as for making any particular choice, in some situations.