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Mill on Autonomy

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J.S. Mill does not himself often use the language of ‘autonomy’. When the word does appear in his work, it is because he is adopting the terminology of someone else – either when reviewing or in correspondence, when he attempts to speak to interlocutors in their own terms. The word had not sufficiently migrated into Philosophical English in Mill’s formative period for him to find it a natural way in which to express himself – though he does feel comfortable translating his own ideas into that idiom when necessary:

[V]ous savez probablement par mon Essai sur la Liberté, dans quel sens et avec quelles limites j’entends notre principe commun, celui de l’autonomie de l’individu. Je reconnais cette autonomie comme une règle rigoureuse dans les choses qui ne regardent que l’individu lui même. (*Letter to John Elliot Cairnes*, XVII: 1831–2)¹

Even if the word is not his own, however, closely related ideas are present in his work. Mill certainly believes that philosophically significant matters turn on whether one’s actions and beliefs emanate from the self in a way that allows a person to claim to be self-governed rather than externally controlled, and at various points he uses terms such as *spontaneity*, *individuality* and *originality* to signal ideas which overlap closely with the concept of autonomy. Although he is not a native user of concept, that is to say, it is not *so* alien to Mill’s thought as to render ‘autonomy’ a useless concept with which to engage with his work – nor, indeed, to render Mill’s work as a useless way to engage with the concept of autonomy.

The place in Mill’s work where the concept of autonomy seems most obviously relevant is in the argument of chapter III of *On Liberty* – and it on this chapter that I focus. Here, Mill argues that human beings should be allowed to live in accordance with their own natures, rather than ideals imposed externally. I outline his argument in section I, and the place of autonomy in Mill’s overall scheme of values, or “Art of Life”. In section II, I consider what it means to be governed by one’s own nature. As I note, in arguing that we should live according to our own nature, Mill does not intend to suggest that we should obey the diktats of an inbuilt pre-social essence. Rather, he has in mind that we live according to what he terms a ‘second nature’ shaped by processes of acculturation. To be autonomous in this sense, of course,

involves socialised into certain modes of life, and questions arise as to what kinds of socialisation is truly compatible with autonomy. I conclude, in section III, by attempting to give an indication of Mill's approach to this issue.

I. Autonomy in *On Liberty* III

On Liberty III is a sustained argument for the promotion of "Individuality". Individuality is marked by unaffected faithfulness to one's own nature. A person who has "Individuality" is one whose character has developed naturally – one whose "desires and impulses" are a result of the unfolding of their own deep-seated dispositions, and whose personality is therefore "properly their own". Mill's metaphor is organic: individuals should be allowed to "grow" according to their internal principles, rather than be "built" by external forces. A person has individuality when he "chooses his plan for himself" by "following their own nature" (*Liberty*, XVIII: 262, 265).

The ideal is, of course, really something of a *meta*-ideal. Because the call is to live according to one's *own* nature, whatever it may be – and Mill holds that "[t]here is no reason that all human existences should be constructed on some one, or some small number of patterns" (*Liberty*, XVIII: 270) – many different characters can exemplify individuality. This might be thought to imply that that individuality is a concept with no specific content. Yet Mill clearly sees substantive first-order traits as flowing directly from this meta-ideal, and this provides some constraints on what it means to develop one's nature. By "cultivating" our own nature, "and calling it forth," Mill holds, we become more energetic in character – for this involves encouraging our native desires and impulses, and "[s]trong impulses are but another name for energy" (*Liberty*, XVIII: 266, 263). It is revealing to contrast individuality with its absence: where a person is forced to restrain their own nature, Mill claims, "much [is] done towards rendering his feelings and character inert and torpid, instead of active and energetic" (*Liberty*, XVIII: 262). Mill's account, that is to say, characterises *passive* character as *lack* of character. At its limit, ascetic self-abnegation is literally that: a renunciation of the materials of personality, rather than a distinctive kind of personality.

As Skorupski (1999: 237) has pointed out, the ideal is reminiscent of Schiller's "grace" and Arnold's "sweetness and light". The idea of a human being at ease with, and unalienated from, their own nature – undistorted and authentic – of course loomed large in the period, being in part a reaction against perceived "artificiality" of the eighteenth century.² It is also connected, in Mill's hands at least, to a model of self-governance which it is not misleading to characterise as the *ideal of autonomy*.³ Insofar as one lives according to one's own nature rather than an extraneously imposed template, one gives *oneself* the law by which one lives. Our nature should be "allowed to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing" (*Liberty*, XVIII: 263). In this circumstance, Mill writes, a "person's own character" is "the rule of conduct" (*Liberty*, XVIII: 261). They exhibit "self-control" in choosing their "plan of life" and following it (*Liberty*, XVIII: 262, 263).

The ideal of autonomy advocated here is not simply the exercise of will and choice in individual instances, but, as Mill quotes from Willem von Humboldt, “the most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole” (*Liberty*, XVIII: 261; Humboldt 1993: 10). In Mill’s hands, however, this end does not function as a single controlling good for individuals or society. Indeed, although he can at times seem to suggest that autonomy is *intrinsically* valuable – noting that it is “deserving [of] regard on its own account,” and that “[i]t really is of importance, not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it” (*Liberty*, XVIII: 261, 263) – the overwhelming body of Mill’s work commits him to a hedonistic theory of value. “[T]he general principle to which all rules of practice ought to conform, and the test by which they should be tried, is that of conduciveness to the happiness of mankind [...] the promotion of happiness is the ultimate principle of Teleology” (*System*, VIII: 951). The commitments of *On Liberty* III must be understood in this context.

In order to understand the place of autonomy in Mill’s philosophy, it will be useful, then, to note his understanding of the structure of human ends as outlined in *System of Logic* VI. Here Mill notes that human activity – *art*, in his terms – involves a great variety of ends. “The builder’s art assumes that it is desirable to have buildings; architecture, (as one of the fine arts), that it is desirable to have them beautiful or imposing. The hygienic and medical arts assume, the one that the preservation of health, the other that the cure of disease, are fitting and desirable ends” (*System*, VIII: 949). There are, Mill suggests, many valuable proximate ends in life. The ideal of autonomy is one such end – and, Mill is clear, a particularly central one. “Among the works of man, which human life is rightly employed in perfecting and beautifying, the first in importance surely is man himself” (*Liberty*, XVIII: 263).

Such ends *are* genuine ends: they are the focus and motivating ground on which agents deliberate and act. Often, however, our ends come into conflict. In such cases, it is the job of the grand commanding “Art of Life” – “Practical Reason”, as Mill also calls it – to determine the “place in the scale of [these] desirable things” overall, and to reconcile conflicts when these ends clash (*System*, VIII: 949–50). This determination, Mill suggests, should be made on the basis of their contribution to overall happiness. “I do not mean to assert that the promotion of happiness should be itself the end of all actions, or even of all rules of action. It is the justification, and ought to be the controller, of all ends, but is not itself the sole end” (*System*, VIII: 952).⁴ The ideal of autonomy, then, presents an end for human beings which itself is grounded on considerations of utility – and while that end can in principle give way to other ends, Mill is clear that its centrality to human happiness means that such occasions will be rare.

Autonomy is central to human happiness both at the level of individuals, and because of the broader social implications for a culture which values autonomy. On the individual level, autonomy is “one of the principal ingredients of human happiness” for agents themselves (*Liberty*, XVIII: 261). Someone who lives in accordance with their own nature, rather than an externally prescribed model, is simply more likely to live a fulfilled existence:

If a person possesses any tolerable amount of common sense and experience, his own mode of laying out his existence is the best, not because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode. [...] Such are the differences among human beings in their sources of pleasure, their susceptibilities of pain, and the operation on them of different physical and moral agencies, that unless there is a corresponding diversity in their modes of life, they neither obtain their fair share of happiness, nor grow up to the mental, moral, and aesthetic stature of which their nature is capable. (*Liberty*, XVIII: 270)

In contrast, those who are forced according to a mode unsuitable to their own nature find their capacities “withered and starved: they become incapable of any strong wishes or native pleasures” (*Liberty*, XVIII: 265). Autonomy, that is to say, makes a significant contribution to the final end of overall happiness by increasing the happiness of individuals who are themselves autonomous.

At a social level, Mill is clear that a respect for the ideal of autonomy is also conducive to overall happiness. The “atmosphere of freedom” that it provides is, Mill argues, a necessary condition for social progress, which is always dependent on the existence of individuals capable of originality. “Not only is it they who introduce good things which did not before exist: it is they who keep the life in those which already existed.” Such originality is only possible where an individual’s nature is allowed “unfold itself freely both in thought and in practice” (*Liberty*, XVIII: 267, 268). Without originality, there can only be a reproduction of what already exists and is customary; where this happens, there can be no improvement in social and intellectual conditions, but instead only stagnation.

Such is autonomy’s value. It is important to distinguish this *end* from the *rules* which Mill suggests should be followed to secure that end. The rules which Mill suggests will allow us to bring about that end seem, in the first instance at least, relatively simple and, he thinks, uncontentious. “[T]he greatest difficulty to be encountered does not lie in the appreciation of means towards an acknowledged end, but in the indifference of persons in general to the end itself” (*Liberty*, XVIII: 261). Individuals should be given a sphere of freedom in which their nature can assert itself without restriction. They “should be free to act upon their opinions – to carry these out in their lives, without hindrance, either physical or moral, from their fellow-men, so long as it is at their own risk and peril” (*Liberty*, XVIII: 260). In order to realise the ideal of autonomy, that is to say, we need a robust rule against interference with behaviour which concerns primarily the agent themselves.

II. Socialisation and Second Nature

The apparent simplicity of this rule gives way to a far more complex picture when we attempt to spell out what is to *count* as such a form of interference. For all that was said in section I, Mill might be thought to embrace an image of man according to which all that is necessary for realisation of the ideal of autonomy is for an individual to be placed in splendid isolation – to be left alone to sprout full personhood and personality. This, of course, is not Mill’s view. He is well aware that dependence is an inescapable condition of human life. And he is equally aware that our dependence

is a condition not only of goods which compete with, and must be balanced against, the ideal of autonomy, but a condition of realising that ideal itself.

This can be best seen by considering what Mill means by ‘human nature’ – that thing to which we should give free scope, and by which we should be governed. Mill is clear that he does not think of each individual’s human nature as an inbuilt essence which exists prior to socialisation.⁵ Observing various patterns of human activity and thought which have occurred in history, he notes, we see that human nature exhibits “astonishing pliability” and is “changeable” (*Civilization*, XVIII: 145). Observing the difference between individuals in different settings demonstrates the “extraordinary susceptibility of human nature to external influences” (*Subjection*, XXI: 277). Our nature as human beings does not inhere within us untouched by our environment, Mill thinks, but is formed by our socialisation into certain forms of life.

Indeed, Mill indicates that, *without* such a process of socialisation, our nature would extremely *undesirable*. Without suitable civilizing influence, he suggests, individuals would be cowardly, selfish, imprudent, dishonest, and unjust – hardly traits one should seek to give free expression to and live in accordance with.

[N]early every respectable attribute of humanity is the result not of instinct, but of a victory over instinct; and that there is hardly anything valuable in the natural man except capacities – a whole world of possibilities, all of them dependent upon eminently artificial discipline for being realised. [...] The truth is that there is hardly a single point of excellence belonging to human character which is not decidedly repugnant to the untutored feelings of human nature. (*Nature*, X: 393)

Mill’s call for individuals to live according to their distinctive human nature, then, is not a call to follow their *untutored* nature. It is not untutored nature which we should follow, but human nature, suitably cultivated – what Mill terms our *second nature*.⁶

It is through such fostering commenced early, and not counteracted by unfavourable influences, that, in some happily circumstanced specimens of the human race, the most elevated sentiments of which humanity is capable become a second nature, stronger than the first, and not as much subduing the original nature as merging it into itself. [...] [W]hat self-culture would be possible without aid from the general sentiment of mankind delivered through books, and from the contemplation of exalted characters, real or ideal? This artificially created, or at least artificially perfected, nature of the best and noblest human beings is the only nature which it is ever commendable to follow. (*Nature*, X: 396)

The promise of a second nature for human beings is appealing. It offers simultaneously a way to resist the idea that all the materials for flourishing lie entirely within the individual, and at the same time offers hope that we might see external norms and cultural scaffolding as non-alienating. As it stands, however, the idea might

seem to have the air of paradox: something acquired, but nevertheless natural. How are we to understand the notion?

The process of acquiring a second nature, for Mill, must ultimately be explained in terms of the associationist account of mind – “the theory which resolves all the phenomena of the mind into ideas of sensation connected together by the law of association” (*Blakey’s History of Moral Science*, X: 23). The laws of association are relatively easily stated: sensations give rise to ideas of sensations; if two ideas are either *similar*, or repeatedly experienced *contiguously* (*i.e.*, in close succession or simultaneously), the ideas will tend to recall one another. Though relatively simple, the power of association in Mill’s philosophy can barely be overstated, for when the processes are iteratively applied over time, he argues, ideas come to recall one another so instantaneously and automatically, that our mental life changes dramatically.

Simple ideas become associated, and can combine into more complex ideas; but importantly, when made repeatedly, inferences and interpretations, because they are *themselves* constellations of ideas, can become conjoined with the ideas which occasion them – and can thereby enter into our conception of what it is that we perceive and desire. Where once the idea that *this object is a face* was separate from my perception, by gradual processes of association, over time, the act of perception and interpretation become “intimately blended”, and I come to see the object *as a face*; where once the idea of my virtue was separate from the idea of my happiness, by constant conjunction and “through the association thus formed,” it enters into my conception as “a part of happiness” (*System*, VIII: 641–2; *Utilitarianism*, X: 237).

Such changes are transformational, entering deep into our processes of cognition and affection. Indeed, they can become so deep-rooted as for it not to appear obvious by introspection that they have their origin in association. “[T]he laws of the mind [...] are capable of creating, out of those data of consciousness which are uncontested, purely mental conceptions, which become so identified in thought with all our states of consciousness, that we seem, and cannot but seem, to receive them by direct intuition” (*Examination*, IX: 140). What is in fact an acquired association may seem to us to have all the properties of an original feature of mind, appearing from the inside as extant, unforced, and more capable of influencing us than we are of it; once acquired, that is to say, they can seem as if second nature to us.

If our second nature is to be harmonious and consistent – as we have seen above is Mill’s desire – however, it cannot involve incorporation of characteristics which go against the grain of our original nature, but rather a development and elevation of elements of that nature.⁷ Mill gives the example of the growth of the moral feelings, which he notes are able to become in human beings “a second nature, far better and more unselfish than he was created with” (*Theism*, X: 459).

[I]f, as is my own belief, the moral feelings are not innate, but acquired, they are not for that reason the less natural. It is natural to man to speak, to reason, to build cities, to cultivate the ground, though these are acquired faculties. The moral feelings are not indeed a part of our nature, in the sense of being in any perceptible degree present in all of us [...] Like the other acquired capacities above referred to, the moral faculty, if not a part of our nature, is a natural outgrowth from it. (*Utilitarianism*, X: 230)

It is because the moral feelings are an *outgrowth* of our native instincts towards vengeance and sympathy – aspects of our original nature “with which that association would harmonise, which would make us feel it congenial” (*Utilitarianism*, X: 231) – that they are able to become so seamlessly integrated into our second nature.⁸ The same is true for other characteristics which would become as second nature to us: if they are to truly form part of a consistent and full second nature, they must be grounded in and consonant with the materials we are given biologically. “[T]he duty of man is the same in respect to his own nature as in respect to the nature of all other things – namely, not to follow but to amend it” (*Nature*, X: 396). But we are not infinitely malleable.

III. Influence, Interference, and False Consciousness

As we have seen, Mill argues for the ideal of autonomy: the value of developing, and being governed by, one’s own distinctive nature. Mill’s ideal of autonomy involves the expression and governance not of some pre-social nature, however, but of our second nature as social beings. As such, the rule adverted to above – that if we wish to realise the ideal of autonomy, we ought not to interfere with any behaviour which concerns primarily an agent themselves – is on closer inspection far more complicated than it might initially seem. For to live according to our second nature involves a form of dependency on processes of acculturation which make it possible for us to acquire and sustain that nature. Either (and it matters little which terminology we adopt) interference must be construed so as to allow for such processes, or the rule against interference itself must be taken to have exceptions, even prior to the question of the potential balancing of autonomy against other ends by the Art of Life.⁹

The most pressing issue, however, is how socialisation into a *second* nature is compatible with a commitment to allowing an individual’s *distinctive* nature to generate the governing principles of their own life. Socialisation into better forms of our nature, Mill is clear, is necessary for us to realise our potential as human beings – but if that process is too comprehensive, it will result in merely in the replication of existing custom and little of distinction. The problem is most acute during the latency period of the young, when we must determine to what extent an individual must be governed externally in order that the most basic forms of socialisation can occur.¹⁰ But a generalisation of the problem applies anywhere where we seek to influence individuals, and the question arises as to whether that influence results in heteronomy. Though we are unlikely to be able to draw a clear and bright line between influence which is compatible with autonomy and interference which does violence to the ideal, Mill’s general orientation on the issue can be gleaned by comparing his relative openness to influence with the extreme wariness expressed by Humboldt in *Spheres and Duties of Government* – the work which Mill quotes at the start of *On Liberty* as the motto of that work.

In Humboldt’s view, “[w]hatever does not spring from a man’s free choice, or is only the result of instruction and guidance, does not enter into his very being but still remains alien to his nature” (Humboldt 1993: 23). Mill could not endorse such a thoroughgoing suspicion about external influence, given his account of our second

nature as itself socially formed. This generates significant disagreements, in particular, on society's collectively organised influence on individuals *via* the apparatus of state. Humboldt is clear that almost *any* positive action from the state should be seen as an impermissible restriction on individuals' ability to decide for themselves. This is so whatever the character of that endorsement: whether by "laws, exhortations, bounties, [...] immunities, monopolies" (Humboldt 1993: 33). "[H]owever widely certain kinds of influence may naturally differ from coercion, – as exhortation, or the mere procuring of facilities for the acceptance of ideas, – there still exists [...] a certain preponderance of the State's views, which is calculated to repress and diminish freedom" (Humboldt 1993: 55). Mill, in contrast, is more circumspect, distinguishing *authoritative* and *non-authoritative* state action. Authoritative state action – forcing or prohibiting certain behaviour – certainly violates individual autonomy. But,

[t]here is another kind of intervention which is not authoritative: when a government, instead of issuing a command and enforcing it by penalties, adopts the course so seldom resorted to by governments, and of which such important use might be made, that of giving advice, and promulgating information; or when, leaving individuals free to use their own means of pursuing any object of general interest, the government, not meddling with them, but not trusting the object solely to their care, establishes, side by side with their arrangements, an agency of its own for a like purpose. (*Principles of Political Economy*, III: 937)

The pattern is of suspicion and relative openness is repeated in Humboldt and Mill's respective discussions of education. Humboldt argues that state provision of education is incompatible with the spontaneous development of the individual, "since whatever has unity of organization invariably produces a corresponding uniformity of results" (Humboldt 1993: 50). "[I]t is much more convenient and less harmful to appoint guardians where parents are remiss, or to subsidize them when they are indigent." (Humboldt 1993: 50). "[I]f education is only to develop a man's faculties, without regard to giving human nature any special civic character, there is no need for the State's interference" (Humboldt 1993: 50). In contrast, Mill is clear that while "government must claim no monopoly for its education," there should be no barrier on the state offering education.

Though a government, therefore, may, and in many cases ought to, establish schools and colleges, it must neither compel nor bribe any person to come to them; nor ought the power of individuals to set up rival establishments, to depend in any degree upon its authorization. It would be justified in requiring from all the people that they shall possess instruction in certain things, but not in prescribing to them how or from whom they shall obtain it. (*Principles of Political Economy*, III: 950)

Of course, such processes of shaping and influencing do not emanate only from the state. "Human beings owe to each other help to distinguish the better from the

worse, and encouragement to choose the former and avoid the latter,” and such help can be offered by individuals, groups and society, too (*Liberty*, XVIII: 277). But Mill’s willingness to countenance significant state influence is telling, suggesting that he views robust forms of acculturation as compatible with the development of a second nature which can still be thought of as distinctively our own.

There are, of course, cases in which influence *does* amount to coercion, and interferes with the autonomy of an individual. Sometimes this will be transparent to the individual concerned – as when someone is given a ‘choice’ between imprisonment and converting religion – thought sometimes it will require the exercise of considerable judgement. The most troublesome cases, perhaps, are when influence amounts to coercion, but is invisible to the agent themselves. Where an individual is acculturated into a second nature which is harmful to their interests, that process may shape also the individual’s ability to clearly apprehend their own situation; an individual’s second nature, to that individual, will *appear* natural, even if it does not truly constitute an elevation of their original nature or is otherwise damaging to their interests. In associationist terms, ideas might become deeply associated before we are able properly able to reflect and gain critical distance on those associations. Such, of course, is the phenomena of false consciousness.

Being unable to examine the actual contents of our consciousness until our earliest, which are necessarily our most firmly knit associations, those which are most intimately interwoven with the original data of consciousness, are fully formed, we cannot study the original elements of mind in the facts of our present consciousness. (*Examination*, IX: 141).

We have, ultimately, two means of determining whether the second nature we acquire from processes of acculturation beyond our control are coercive rather than enabling. The first is to draw on the tools of psychological analysis to understand the formation of our own character. Though we may be unable *merely by introspection* to understand our own character with any distance, associationist psychology allows us insight into which aspects of our personality can be explained as results of the process of socialisation – and which aspects belong to our original nature and must therefore be regarded as unalterable. “[A]ssociations which are wholly of artificial creation, when intellectual culture goes on, yield by degrees to the dissolving force of analysis” and appear as “arbitrary” (*Utilitarianism*, X: 230). Analysis may reveal that our second nature involves the inculcation of characteristics at odds with our original nature, and which therefore involve not an elevation, but a defacement of our original nature. Such a discovery may give us reason to think that better, less fractured, modes of existence are possible.

The second mechanism is to compare our own second nature to that of those engaged in “different experiments of living” (*Liberty*, XVIII: 261). Within a suitably diverse society, there will be limited, but real, divergence between processes of acculturation at work and the resultant natures of individuals. An even greater variety can be observed by the study of history (Macleod 2017: 272-4). Examining different natures and cultures affords us some critical distance on our own modes of being,

allowing us to see alternatives to what might otherwise seem necessary. Such alternatives might, in whole or in part, seem to offer better possibilities for us – “the unlikeness of one person to another is generally the first thing which draws the attention of either to the imperfection of his own type” – and cause us to consider whether we “might possibly learn something from them” and “which of these are fit to be converted into customs” (*Liberty*, XVIII: 273, 267).

Such judgements can be made, of course, only against the measure of happiness: where those very different seem from us seem to be leading more genuinely fulfilled existences, there may be something to learn about the deficiencies of our nature. The test of happiness might seem like a problematic one: that exactly the power of false consciousness is the ability to convince individuals that they are happy and fulfilled, even against their better interests. For Mill, however, human happiness is the ultimate test – if one form of being genuinely *does* make us happier than another, there is nothing more that can be said for it. Human happiness is the tribunal against which our natures must be measured and changed.

Notes

¹ All quotes from Mill are taken from Mill (1963–91) and are given in terms of (*short title*, volume: page).

² See, of course, *Liberty*, XVIII: 253 and *Civilization*, XVIII: 117ff. on Mill's own view on the artificiality of the eighteenth century.

³ See, for instance, O'Neill (2003: 3–4), Gray (1996: 54–55, 78), Colburn (2010: 15–19), and Berger (1984: 232ff.).

⁴ Tellingly, Mill directs the reader to “the little volume entitled *Utilitarianism*” for “an express discussion and vindication of this principle” (*System*, VIII: 951).

⁵ See, in particular, Riley (2015: 258–60), who rightly draws attention to the following passage in Mill's *Principles*: “Of all vulgar modes of escaping from the consideration of the effect of social and moral influences on the human mind, the most vulgar is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences” (*Principles of Political Economy*, II: 319).

⁶ The idea of ‘second nature’ is utilised in McDowell (1994: 84ff.) in a way that strikes me as deeply related. Like McDowell, it seems to me that Mill holds that second nature plays a role not in practical, but also theoretical, reason. See Macleod (2019).

⁷ The transformation and improvement of human (second) nature is an important part of what Mill means in referring to “man as a progressive being” (*Liberty*, XVIII: 224). It comes, of course, of in the context of the growing importance of dynamic and evolutionary accounts of human nature in both biology and philosophy. See Mandelbaum (1971: 163–236).

⁸ On this point, Mill stands in contrast to nineteenth-century philosophers Leiter (2007) terms ‘morality critics,’ who clearly see morality as dissonant with our underlying nature: Marx and Nietzsche. This should not be allowed to obscure a basic continuity of thought between Mill and these thinkers on the social origins and internalisation of morality as a system.

⁹ The standing of a broad rule against interference in matters which concern only an agent themselves is of course a matter of ongoing debate. As noted, autonomy is only one end amongst others; the teleological orientation and multiplicity of goods in Mill's account of practical reasoning is hard to reconcile with any rule as “absolute” (*Liberty*, XVIII: 224). See, most recently, Turner (2013) for useful discussion.

¹⁰ See Donner (1991: 165–72) for a particularly useful discussion of how Mill approaches the give due to the value of autonomy for those who cannot yet be autonomous.

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