

Mill's ethical problems and human nature

Mill was right: consequence and happiness are the basis of morality. But he could not solve two critical problems. First, happiness is not always morally good: how discriminate morally acceptable happiness? Secondly, when does an individual deserve to be denied happiness? Maximisation of happiness is not a morally acceptable criterion.

Morality gives no evolutionary advantage. (Altruism as such is not moral.) But evolution has endowed human nature with powers and propensities which endow individuals and traditions with the possibility of recognising how human beings *can* work towards the Moral Ideal; and also a drive which (amongst other, selectively advantageous, things) drives them to move vaguely in that direction. We have these attributes because they gave our ancestors selective advantage; they involve neither supernatural design nor supernatural support.

The Fundamental Principles of Morality (giving solutions to Mill's problems) can be derived by diagnosing and analysing these attributes; together with the source of the importance of morality -- the importance to individuals of their happiness and suffering.

The above establishes substantial constraints on morally acceptable action, not unique answers to all moral questions. No moral theory has plausible answers to critical moral questions.

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