

Pleasure and Desire¹

1. *Introductory Comment.* When I am asked, “what is your philosophy?”, I am sometimes inclined to say: “My philosophy is this: It doesn’t matter if you get what you want; what matters is that you enjoy what you get.” That’s a very compressed way of indicating that I don’t accept any form of preferentism as a theory of personal welfare; I accept a form of hedonism.

My preference for hedonism over preferentism would be pointless if there were no difference between pleasure and desire. Thus it is important to me that pleasure and desire be distinct items. Yet some distinguished philosophers have claimed (or have appeared to claim) that pleasure and desire are so intimately linked that it hardly makes any difference whether we choose preferentism or hedonism. Mill, for example, in a very well known passage says:

‘... desiring a thing and finding it pleasant, aversion to it and thinking of it as painful, are phenomena entirely inseparable or, rather, two parts of the same phenomenon – in strictness of language, two different modes of naming the same psychological fact; that to think of an object as desirable (unless for the sake of its consequences) and to think of it as pleasant are one and the same thing; and that to desire anything except in proportion as the idea of it is pleasant is a physical and metaphysical impossibility.’ (Mill, *Utilitarianism* quoted on p. 39 of *Introduction to Ethics*)

Mill vastly overstates his case here.² It is hard to believe that he really wanted to say that desiring a thing and finding it pleasant are “the same psychological fact”. Other philosophers have affirmed somewhat more modest doctrines suggesting various sorts of conceptual connections between pleasure and desire. Derek Parfit, for example, says:

‘What pains and pleasure have in common are their relations to our desires. On the use of ‘pain’ which has rational and moral significance, all pains are when experienced unwanted, and a pain is worse or greater the more it is unwanted. Similarly, all pleasures are when experienced wanted, and they are better or greater the more they are wanted. These are the claims of *Preference-Hedonism*. On this view, one of two experiences is more pleasant if it is preferred.’ (Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, p. 493.)

It is not clear whether Parfit is actually endorsing these views, or whether instead he is merely saying that those who believe in “preference-hedonism” believe them.

¹ I am grateful to Chris Heathwood and Owen McLeod for generous and insightful critical comments on earlier drafts.

² I discuss this passage at greater length in the appendix.

Christoph Fehige and Ulla Wessels suggest a different way of linking pleasure to desire. They seem to think that it is possible to “rig up” our concept of desire in such a way as to make it come out that people simply have to desire pleasures. As they use the term, a “preferentialist” is someone who thinks that the satisfaction of preferences has moral or rational importance. Using the term in this way, Fehige and Wessels say:

‘To a significant degree, [the preferentialist] can tailor concepts of preference for the sole purpose of making the preferentialist doctrine true, or plausible. Suppose, for example, she believes hedonic happiness (feeling good, that is) to be of moral importance; to make sure that preferentialism respects this claim, she could, when defining “preference”, simply stipulate (or rig up her concepts of representation and charge to entail) that people prefer, other things being equal, to feel good.’
(*Preferences. An Introduction* xxiii)³

My impression, based on this remark and remarks he makes in a couple of other papers⁴, is that Fehige thinks that it is possible to introduce definitions that forge a conceptual link between pleasure and desire. We can define our terms in such a way as to make it true that we always desire pleasures, or that we never intrinsically desire anything other than pleasure.

Other philosophers have affirmed other doctrines linking desire and pleasure.⁵

My aim in this paper is to investigate some of these claims of conceptual linkage. I will put my cards on the table at the outset: first of all, I think there are quite a few distinct ways in which one

³ “Representation” and “charge” are technical terms used by Fehige and Wessels. When they speak of representation, they mean the manner in which the content of a desire reveals itself in consciousness: must it be fully conscious? must the desirer be aware of every detail? Or is it possible to have an unconscious, merely dispositional desire? “Charge” indicates whether a desire is *for* something or *against* it.

⁴ See, for example, Fehige’s “Instrumentalism” in Elijah Millgram, ed., *Varieties of Practical Reasoning* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001). He expressed similar ideas in his “Sympathy A Priori”, presented at the University of Massachusetts two years ago.

⁵ Sometimes people cite Sidgwick as an example. (Alston, for example, does this in his article “Pleasure” in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* vol. 6, p. 345.) They think he believed in a conceptual linkage between pleasure and desire. One could easily get that impression if one focussed on such passages as this: “It will be well to begin by defining more precisely the question at issue. First, I will concede that pleasure is a kind of feeling which stimulates the will to actions tending to sustain or produce it; -- to sustain it, if actually present, and to produce it, if it be only represented in idea...” *Methods of Ethics* I.iv.2 (p. 42) That makes it look as if Sidgwick believes that pleasures are feelings that we desire to have when we don’t have them, and desire to prolong when we do have them. But this remark is preliminary. It is supplanted later when he clearly defines pleasure not by appeal to *what we in fact desire* but rather by appeal to *what is desirable*. He says: “I propose to define Pleasure – when we are considering its “strict value” for 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.” *Methods of Ethics* II.ii.2 (p. 127)

might think that pleasure is linked to desire. Some of the philosophers who endorse such linkage seem to be endorsing certain versions of the doctrine. Others endorse other versions. Yet others seem to be confusing distinct doctrines. It is important to focus on the most plausible forms of the doctrine. So I try to formulate what I take to be some of these. Then, with some interesting versions of the thesis at hand, I try to show that even the most plausible of these views is either false or else a substantive and controversial normative theory – not a matter of conceptual necessity. So my main thesis is approximately this: there is no interesting conceptual connection between pleasure and desire.

2. *Identifying Pleasure and Desire.* I want to evaluate a number of claims concerning the alleged conceptual linkage between pleasure and desire. A preliminary difficulty, however, is that we may not know precisely what pleasure and desire are in the first place. Let us look into this.

We might begin by taking desire to be the familiar relation we naturally express when we say that someone wants something. Here are some typical examples:

1. Bob wants a bottle of beer.
2. Bob wants to drink the beer.
3. Bob wants beer for next week.

These are informal, idiomatic, and perhaps slightly incomplete statements about Bob's desires with respect to some beer. We could introduce some detail and regimentation if we were to suppose that whenever anyone wants anything, he does his wanting *at a time* and the object of his wanting is a *state of affairs*.⁶ We can also suppose that whenever anyone wants something, his desire has *some strength*. Although this is somewhat more controversial, we can represent these strengths of desire in a familiar way with numbers. I will use higher positive numbers to indicate stronger desires; negative numbers to indicate aversions; and zero to indicate indifference.

If we were to make all those assumptions, then we could say that standing behind (1)-(3) are facts such as these:

⁶ When I speak of states of affairs, I have in mind fine-grained “propositional” entities; things that can be expressed in ‘that’-clauses, that can have truth values, that can be believed. I mean to include so-called singular propositions, such as the proposition that Bob believes when he believes that he himself is drinking beer.

- 1'. At noon today, Bob has a desire of intensity 3 for *Bob has a bottle of beer*.
- 2'. At noon today, Bob has a desire of intensity 5 for *Bob drinks some beer*.
- 3'. At noon today, Bob has a desire of intensity 7 for *Bob has beer next week*.

It would be nice to be able to provide an analysis of the concept of desire that appears in these examples. I doubt that it can be done. Of course, desire is some sort of “pro-attitude”. When we desire things we generally think well of getting them. Bob, in the examples cited, would probably say that getting and drinking some beer would be “a good thing” – something that he favors. But of course there are other “pro-attitudes”. These include hope, amusement, moral approval, love, etc. Is there some clear way in which we can distinguish desire from all these other “pro-attitudes”? Perhaps we should take note of some connections among desire and other things.

There are some defeasible connections among desire, belief, and action. If Bob wants a bottle of beer, and he recognizes that one is available, and there are no conflicting desires standing in his way, then he very well may begin to take steps toward getting his hands on that beer. We shouldn't overstate this. There are many factors that might interfere: Bob's fear of alcoholism; Bob's lack of money; Bob's greater desire for champagne; Bob's overwhelming feeling of lethargy; Bob's irrational sense that he does not deserve to have anything he would enjoy; Bob's temporary paralysis.

So in the end we may have to appeal to intuitions. I may describe a case and say that in the case as described it would be correct to say that the protagonist desires something. I guess I will not be able to appeal to any analysis to prove it. But since you have undoubtedly wanted lots of different things, you may be familiar with the phenomenon of desire.

Now let us turn to pleasure.⁷ Just as a person may desire a state of affairs at a time, so he may take pleasure in a state of affairs at a time. Indeed, he may take pleasure in the very things he desires.

⁷ In fact I am going to turn at the outset mainly to *attitudinal pleasure* and not sensory pleasure. I do this largely because there is an obvious structural similarity between attitudinal pleasure and desire, whereas there is not very much similarity between sensory pleasure and desire. In a later section, I discuss alleged links between desire and sensory pleasure.

Thus, just as it makes perfectly good sense to say (as we do in (1)) that Bob desires a bottle of beer so it makes sense to say that Bob takes pleasure in, or enjoys, a bottle of beer. Thus we have:

4. Bob enjoys a bottle of beer.

And just as we found a more detailed and clearly regimented fact standing behind (1), so we find such a fact standing behind (4). It might be this:

4'. At noon today, Bob takes pleasure of intensity 3 in *Bob has a bottle of beer*.

There are many obvious similarities between attitudinal pleasure and desire. Most fundamentally, each is an attitude that one can take toward some state of affairs. The object of pleasure in (4') is the same as the object of desire in (1'). Another apparent similarity is that attitudinal pleasure is something we take *at a time*. In the example, Bob takes his pleasure at noon today. He might go on taking pleasure in having that beer for ten minutes. This is another respect in which attitudinal pleasure is like desire. It often lasts through time. Additionally, I assume that attitudinal pleasure (like desire) admits of degrees. This just means that it makes sense to say that someone takes more pleasure in one thing than he does in another; that he might take twice as much pleasure in one thing as he does in another. I use numbers in the standard way to represent intensities of pleasure.⁸

Again like desire, attitudinal pleasure is a “pro-attitude”. When you take pleasure in something, you like it; you enjoy it; you might even be delighted by it. Again, while it would be nice to have an analysis, I doubt that one will be found. I am also unable to provide any uncontroversial systematic distinction between pleasure and other “pro-attitudes”. So again I will have to appeal to intuition. I assume that we have all experienced attitudinal pleasure. At least in this way we can all be said to know what it is.

3. *An Attempt to Distinguish Sharply Between Pleasure and Desire* There is a certain attractiveness to the idea that pleasure and desire are pro-attitudes distinguishable in virtue of the fact that the objects of pleasure must be simultaneous with the pleasure, while the objects of desire must be future relative to

⁸ We could also represent displeasure as pleasure to a negative degree.

the desire. This temporal distinction between attitudinal pleasure and desire might help us to grasp the concepts more firmly – or at least to grasp the fact that they are distinct concepts.

Wayne Sumner seemed to be expressing a thought like this when he said,

Desires form one species of pro-attitude, identified by their intentionality and future-directedness. These features distinguish them from another species that includes such attitudes as enjoying something, finding it pleasant or agreeable... and so on. In contrast with desires, these attitudes can be directed only on contemporaneous states: I can enjoy only what I already have (or what is already happening).⁹

Sumner here seems to endorse two doctrines about desire and pleasure. If we allow ourselves some unexplained technical terminology¹⁰, we can state them as follows:

DF: If at t S desires that p be the case, then p is future relative to t .¹¹

PP: If at t S takes pleasure in p , then p is present relative to t .

Surely Sumner is right to say that we are often pleased about things as they are happening. For example, it would be perfectly natural for a traveler, as she stands before the Parthenon, to say, 'I am now very pleased to be seeing the Parthenon.' That apparently would be an instance of a person taking pleasure in a present object. It seems to me, however, that attitudinal pleasure is not limited to such present objects. As I see it, a person can take pleasure in facts about the past, present, or future. Surely no one would be perplexed if our traveler, upon her return from her journey to Greece, were to say, 'I am (now) very pleased that I had the chance to see the Parthenon.' That would seem to be pleasure in a past object. Now she is pleased about something that happened several days ago. Furthermore, it seems clear to me that that no one would be surprised if she were to say, prior to her journey, but at a time when the itinerary was fixed, 'I am (now) very pleased that I will have a chance to

⁹ "Something In Between" p. 13

¹⁰ I am alluding to the unexplained talk of some state of affairs being "future" or "simultaneous" with a desire. This sort of talk presupposes that each desired state of affairs be associated with some time – past, present, or future. In his discussion of this point in *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*, Sumner seems to assume that every object of desire is "temporally indexed". But this is problematic. Suppose Bob wants it to be the case that he *now be such that he will have beer in a half hour*. I am not sure how we should locate this object temporally. Other examples present similar puzzles. I discuss some of them below.

¹¹ Sumner discusses this "prospectivity of desire" thesis at greater length on pp. 128-30 of *Welfare, Happiness, and Ethics*.

see the Parthenon'. This seems to show that pleasure can be taken in seeing the Parthenon not only while seeing it, but also after seeing it and before seeing it.¹²

I am inclined also to reject DP. This doctrine implies that one cannot desire a state of affairs unless it is "future" relative to the time of the desire. This seems implausible. It often happens (at least to me) that after I have made a decision, I have a desire that my (already made) decision was the correct one. There is nothing even slightly odd about saying, 'I hope I made the right choice yesterday.' I could just as easily say that I now desire that my choice of yesterday was right. Perhaps it will be thought that what I really desire in such a case is that the *future effects* of yesterday's choice turn out to be acceptable. If so, consider the case of a person reflecting on the final days of a loved one. He might say, 'I now want it to be the case that she was free of pain during those last days before she died.' The object of desire here seems firmly embedded in the past. The desirer might know full well that her status during those final days will have no further effects. They are over and done with. Still, he desires that they had certain features.¹³

There are even deeper problems with Sumner's proposal. In some cases it is doubtful that the object of a desire has the relevant sort of temporal location. It is not merely that the object fails to be "future". Rather, the point is that it seems to make little sense to say that it is either future, or present, or past. Consider a case in which a person is concerned about a certain airplane. It was scheduled to land in San Diego at about this time. It might have landed early; it might be landing just now; it might land in a few minutes. Suppose the person wants it to be the case that either the plane did land safely, or that it is landing safely, or that it soon does land safely. He does not care which of these is the case. Sumner says that desires are 'future directed'. But in this case it seems that the object of desire is a three-part disjunction, with disjuncts about past, present, and future. I see no principled way to decide

¹² It is interesting to note that although Sumner sets out to defend the idea that *pleasure* must be directed toward present objects, he uses a different term in his comment. He says 'I can *enjoy* only what I already have...' The claim about present-directedness is much more plausible if restricted to enjoyment. There is nothing funny about saying that the traveler right now takes pleasure in, or is pleased about, having seen the Parthenon. But it would be a bit odd to say that she is right now *enjoying* the fact that she saw the Parthenon last week.

¹³ Chris Heathwood pointed out that one could simply *define* desire in such a way that its object would have to be in the future. With the term defined in such a way, we would have to find a new term to express past-directed "desires". Perhaps we would use the word 'hope' in those cases. Or 'desire(past)'. Such maneuvers are possible, but pointless. The attitude seems the same whether the object is past or future. The introduction of a new term would violate Ockham's Razor.

upon any temporal orientation for a state of affairs like that, though it seems pretty clear that someone could want it to be true.¹⁴

Thus, though I am confident that there are important differences between pleasure and desire, I do not think we can distinguish them by appeal to their temporal features in the manner suggested by DF and PP.

One fairly small difference between pleasure and desire is this: the mere fact of desire does not entail belief in the desired object. Thus, it is perfectly natural to imagine that while Bob wants to have more beer next week, he is not already convinced that he will get it. But attitudinal pleasure seems different. If a person is pleased about some state of affairs, he generally thinks it has happened (or is happening, or will happen). Thus there would be something a bit strange if Bob were to say that while he does not know whether he will get beer next week, he is really quite pleased that he will be getting it. We might correct him: “You mean to say that you think you *would be* pleased if you were to get it, right? How can you already be pleased about getting it if you don’t know whether you will get it?” So the alleged difference between pleasure and desire may be expressed by two principles:

PB: Necessarily, if at t S is pleased that p is the case, then at t S believes that p is the case.

DB: It is not necessary that (if at t S desires that p be the case, then at t S believes that p is the case)

I think this marks is a genuine difference between pleasure and desire, but I recognize (a) that it is a small difference, and (b) some may not be convinced that it is a difference at all. And I also acknowledge that if someone claimed not to know what pleasure and desire are, these principles would not help much.

4. *A Preliminary Formulation.* Now that we have considered what pleasure and desire might be, let us turn to the question whether they are conceptually linked.

¹⁴ This point applies just as well to pleasure. Suppose on Monday you receive an email from a loved one who is sight-seeing in Greece. She says, ‘Parthenon on Monday.’ You are pleased about this. You think it is wonderful that she did see, or is seeing, or soon will see, the Parthenon. I see no way to identify the temporal orientation of the object of your pleasure. Are you pleased about something *present*, or something *future*, or something *past*?

In the passage quoted at the outset, Mill says ‘to desire anything except in proportion as the idea of it is pleasant is a physical and metaphysical impossibility.’ This suggests a very robust form of the linkage doctrine:

PD1: Necessarily, if S desires P to degree n at t, then the idea of P is pleasant to S to degree n at t.

I have not said much about what it means to say that the idea of P is pleasant to S. I assume it means that S enjoys, or takes pleasure in thinking about P. But if this is the intended meaning, then PD1 is obviously false. There are plenty of perfectly familiar cases in which a person desires a certain thing purely as a means to some further end. For example, suppose Bob lives far from the nearest liquor store and his car is broken. He will need to walk a long way in the hot sunshine to get some beer. We might say this: “he who desires the end, desires the necessary means.” So we may say that Bob wants to take that long walk – he has no other way of getting the beer. But we surely do not want to say this: “he who finds the idea of the end pleasant, finds the idea of the means pleasant.” Bob does not enjoy lugging a heavy case of beer in the hot sun. PD1 is obviously false.

In the passage quoted from Mill, there is a parenthetical remark that suggests that he might have intended his linkage claims to apply only in the case of *intrinsic* desire. Let us pursue this suggestion.

The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic desire is familiar. In some cases, a person desires something entirely because he desires some other thing, and he thinks he will get that other thing only if he gets the former thing. This seems to be what happens in the case of Bob and his walk in the hot sun. Probably he desired to take that walk but only because he wanted something else. If so, his desire for the walk was not intrinsic. It was extrinsic. He had that desire only because he had some further desire. His desire for the beer might have been like this, too. Maybe he wanted the beer only because he thought it would make him happy. But a person’s desire for happiness might be intrinsic. If the person desires to be happy, and there is no other thing, x, such that he desires to be happy because he desires x and he thinks he will get x only if he is happy, then his desire for happiness is intrinsic. He desires happiness for its own sake; *per se*; non-instrumentally. I grant that in real-life

cases these sorts of desire may blend. A person might have an intrinsic desire for happiness while at the same time he might also have a desire for happiness because he wants to make his children happy, and he thinks his children will be happier if he is happier. In that case he also has an extrinsic desire for happiness.

Making use of this concept of intrinsic desire, we can formulate a view that alleges a much more plausible connection between desire and pleasure. The idea here is that while we may desire all sorts of things, the only thing that we can *intrinsically* desire is our own pleasure. There are many different ways in which this doctrine could be worked out. Here is one possibility:

PD2: Necessarily, if at t S intrinsically desires p, then p is a case of S taking pleasure in something.

PD2 is not refuted by examples like the example of Bob who wanted to take a walk. In the example, Bob's desire to take a walk was not intrinsic. I assume that he wanted it only because he wanted some further thing, the beer. Let's suppose he wanted the beer simply because he thought he would enjoy the taste. Perhaps he just wanted to enjoy the taste for its own sake. In that case, Bob had an intrinsic desire to enjoy a certain taste. If so, the example is consistent with PD2. We could say that what Bob intrinsically desires is *Bob's taking pleasure in the taste of some beer*. The suggestion is that all intrinsic desires are relevantly like Bob's desire for the enjoyment of the taste of beer.

In a typically judicious and perceptive discussion of this sort of view, Sidgwick reminds us of a variety of cases that seem to refute PD2¹⁵. One class of cases involves benevolence. Surely it is conceivable that a person might give some money to charity, hoping thereby to ease the pains of some poor child in a distant land. When he does this, his intrinsic desire might be for the welfare of some unknown child. He might want it to be the case that *the suffering of some otherwise miserable child will be relieved*. He might at the same time have no expectation that he himself will ever know that such a child will be benefited, and accordingly he may fail to believe that he himself will get any pleasure out of such relief if it should happen. A Kantian might say that if he gave the money to charity because he

¹⁵ *The Methods of Ethics*, Book I, Chapter iv, Sections 2 and 3. In fact, Sidgwick is talking about *motivation* in the passage in question. His remarks are directed against a slightly different principle. However, it seems to me that his examples apply as well to the principle here being considered.

hoped to get pleasure as a result, then his act of charity would lack moral worth. Sidgwick's point here can be put into a Kantian mold: maybe the benefactor's act has moral worth; maybe he does it without thinking of or having any interest in its possible hedonic impact upon himself. If such a thing is possible, PD2 is false.

Sidgwick also reminds us that

'... men have sacrificed all the enjoyments of life, and even life itself, to obtain posthumous fame: not from any illusory belief that they would be somehow capable of deriving pleasure from it, but from a direct desire of the future admiration of others, and a preference of it to their own pleasure.' (*ME*, 52-3)

If it is possible for a person to have an intrinsic desire for posthumous fame while recognizing that he will not take pleasure in being famous when such fame finally arrives, then PD2 is false. Such a person has an intrinsic desire for something that is not a pleasure. I think the example succeeds.

Sidgwick goes on to cite other instances in which a person may want something so much that he is prepared to sacrifice his own pleasure in order to get this thing. Sidgwick calls these "ideal ends" and he lists (with capital letters) Truth, Freedom, and Religion. Earlier he had mentioned Art and even Business! He sums up the discussion by saying:

A man may feel that the high and severe delight of serving his ideal is a "pearl of great price" outweighing in value all other pleasures. But he may also feel that the sacrifice will not repay *him*, and yet determine that it shall be made. (*ME*, 52)

I think Sidgwick was fundamentally right about all this. The examples show that PD2 is false. We can have intrinsic desires for things that are not our own pleasures.

5. *A More Subtle Formulation.* In his discussion of these examples, Sidgwick was thinking primarily of motivation; he was concerned to reject the claim (typically associated with psychological hedonism) that we are always intrinsically motivated by a desire for our own pleasure¹⁶. Sidgwick was trying to

¹⁶ In discussions of this topic we often see remarks about a desire for "pleasure and the absence of pain". Such talk may be convenient, but is strictly wrong. In some cases no available option would yield "pleasure and the absence of pain". Maybe the best we can hope for is an outcome with minimal pain. Furthermore, in some cases we do not aim for minimal pain – we might aim for moderate pain when that comes as part of a package deal involving maximal hedonic utility. Thus, it really would be better to speak of a desire for maximization of our own hedono/doloric status. When no pleasure is in the offing, I am not motivated (on this view) by a desire for pleasure.

show that this view of motivation is wrong. A person might be motivated by an intrinsic desire for some end even though he did not take that end to involve any pleasure for himself. But in several places in his discussion Sidgwick acknowledges that the achievement of such ends might anyway contain such pleasure whether or not that pleasure functioned as a motivator. This suggests a different approach to the linkage, to which I now turn.

We might think that if a person is intrinsically desiring something at a certain time, *and takes himself to be getting that thing at that time*, then he must take pleasure in the satisfaction of his desire.¹⁷ So, for example, if Bob wants (intrinsically) to be experiencing the taste of a certain beer, and is “right now” experiencing that taste, then he must be enjoying it. We may state the general principle in an informal way: “whenever there is something you want for its own sake, and you think you are getting it, you then enjoy it”. The principle is this:

PD3: If S intrinsically desires p at t, and S believes at t that p is coming true at t, then S takes attitudinal pleasure in p at t.¹⁸

This principle is not refuted by any of the examples already discussed. This is obvious in the case of the man who has an intrinsic desire for posthumous fame. Surely he is not so silly as to think that he has already achieved posthumous fame! The antecedent of PD3 is not true in this case. Nor is the example refuted by Sidgwick’s more abstract point about the fact that a person may be motivated by various ideals other than his own pleasure. PD3 does not say anything about *motivation*. It does not claim, for example, that one must always be motivated by a desire for pleasure. It merely says (roughly) that if a person takes himself to be getting something that he intrinsically wants when he wants it, he must enjoy it as he is getting it.

¹⁷ I added the phrase about “believing that it is coming true” in order to avoid a long digression concerning cases in which a person wants something and gets it, but is unaware of the fact that he is getting it. Such a person might fail to take pleasure in the object of his desire simply because he didn’t realize he was getting it.

¹⁸ I am again overlooking some problems about time. I intend the principle to apply to cases in which we would naturally say that the person is “getting what he wants when he wants it”. We would not say this about a person who wants to have more beer next week, even if it is *now true* that he will get more beer next week. The relevant date in such an example is *next week*. I am not sure how to work out the details of a correct formulation of the principle. I hope and trust it will make no difference in any of the examples I discuss.

I do not think that PD3 is true. I think it is refuted by a wide range of cases, some of which are similar to cases suggested by Sidgwick, but others of which are different.

a. I think PD3 is refuted by certain examples involving a person who has an intrinsic desire to do his duty. Suppose some Kantian wants to do his duty for its own sake. He is not interested in getting into heaven. He is not interested in the pleasures allegedly arising from knowledge of one's own virtue. He just wants to do his duty. Suppose on some occasion he takes himself to be in the midst of doing his duty. Still he might not take pleasure in it. He might be the sort of person who often (and honestly) says, 'I get no pleasure from doing this.' Indeed, he might think he would somehow tarnish his virtue if he were to get any pleasure out of doing his duty.

b. Here is another sort of case. Suppose a person filled with self-loathing. He thinks himself to be the worst of sinners. He thinks he deserves to be held in contempt by others. He is so overwhelmed by this sense of his own worthlessness that he intrinsically desires that others hate him. Suppose (sadly enough) that this poor misguided person takes himself to be getting what he wants – he thinks that others hate him. Surely it would be paradoxical to say that as a matter of conceptual necessity, this fellow must take pleasure in being hated. Maybe he is dismayed by the whole sorry state.

Talk of "satisfaction" can muddy the waters here. Someone might think that since this fellow is getting what he intrinsically wants, he must be satisfied. "There. Everyone hates you. I hope you're satisfied now." It is tempting to think that this implies that he gets a "feeling of satisfaction"; and it is furthermore tempting to think that this feeling of satisfaction is a feeling of some sort of pleasure; and thus that that he enjoys being hated by others. But, clearly enough, both of those temptations should be avoided. From the fact that his desire is satisfied (he gets what he wants) it does not follow that he "feels satisfaction". One need not *feel* anything when one's desire is satisfied. For to say that one's desire has been satisfied is just to say that the object desired has come true. That might happen without causing the desirer to feel anything. Furthermore, even if the desirer recognizes that his desire has been satisfied, and he has some feeling of satisfaction, it does not follow that that feeling of satisfaction is a feeling of pleasure. Maybe it is just the feeling that goes along with the recognition that things have turned out as wanted.

c. We can imagine a somewhat paradoxical case. Suppose another self-loathing person has just one intrinsic desire -- that he himself should take pleasure in nothing. Surely a person *could* have such a perverse desire. It seems to me that this person's desire could be satisfied. It could turn out that for a while he takes pleasure in nothing and sees that this is so. If this is right, then PD3 is false. For in the case as described the (perverted) desirer recognizes that he is getting what he intrinsically desires and (since what he desired was to take pleasure in nothing) does not take pleasure in it.

d. Obsessive desires generate yet another class of counterexamples to PD3. Imagine some person who has an obsessive desire to wash his hands. He may simply be *driven* to wash, so that there is no further object in mind. In such a case his desire seems to be intrinsic. Yet as he washes, and realizes that he is washing, he may take no pleasure in his behavior. It may seem utterly pointless and sick to him.

6. *A Different Approach.* A number of philosophers have toyed with the idea that there is another sort of conceptual link between pleasure and desire. This can be construed as an even more restricted version of the sort of view we have been considering. It concerns only sensations. We need to back up a bit in order to explain the proposal.

It is now almost universally agreed that the sensations, or feelings, that we call pleasures don't *feel alike*. There is in fact considerable phenomenological variety among these "sensory pleasures". Yet it is correct to call them all pleasures. Why is this?¹⁹ One popular view (suggested at the outset in the passage from Parfit) is that what these sensory pleasures have in common is something about desire. More exactly, it is that the people who experience them want to be experiencing them when they are experienced. According to one way of working out this idea, what makes it correct to call a certain sensation, or feeling, a sensory pleasure is the fact that the person who experiences that sensation has an intrinsic desire to be feeling it at the time that he feels it. This is often put forward as a definition, or analysis, of the concept of sensory pleasure. If any such view is correct, then there is a conceptual link between pleasure and desire.

¹⁹ Several different sorts of answer have been given to this question. Some, following Broad, have claimed that there is a phenomenally given "hedonic tone" that accompanies certain sensations. These are the sensory pleasures. Others have said that a feeling is a pleasure if it immediately causes a distinct feeling of "pleasure itself". All these views are discussed and rejected in my "Two Questions about Pleasure". I there cite passages from several other advocates of this approach. I also propose a novel solution to this "heterogeneity puzzle".

Over a period of many years, and in a variety of places, Richard Brandt defended views of this sort. For example, in one place Brandt²⁰ proposed the “gratification-enhancement theory.” In this passage he seems endorse the idea that there is some sort of definitional or conceptual link between pleasure and desire:

“Ordinary sensory pleasures, of course, count as forms of gratification; and we do desire them at the time—indeed, that is part of the definition of ‘pleasure’.”

Shelly Kagan says something similar:

“... the connection between pleasure and desire is a striking one. We may well be able to use the latter notion to help fix the referent of the former. Indeed, the original proposal to analyze pleasure as desired mental states can be seen as a friendly suggestion along these lines.”²¹

He then goes on to present a theory of pleasure—a reduction of “pleasant experience” in terms of desire.

William Alston, Tom Carson and others who have been interested in desire-based analyses of pleasure have offered similar accounts. Carson, for example, says this:

‘According to the motivational theory, to say that an experience is pleasant is to say that the person who has it would prefer to undergo it or continue it rather than not, if he were choosing solely on the basis of its felt quality (this rules out choosing because of “any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it” or not prefer it); ...’ (Carson, pp. 44-5)

All these philosophers seem to be endorsing (or at least seriously considering) something relevantly like this:

PD4: Necessarily, if S is a sensation experienced at a time, t, by a person, P, then S is a *sensory pleasure* if and only if P intrinsically desires at t to be experiencing S.

PD4 has a number of interesting features that merit attention. One concerns a certain restriction of scope. PD4 applies only to *sensations*. It says that intrinsically desired sensations are

²⁰ “Overvold on Self-Interest and Self-Sacrifice,” Brandt (p. 225 in Heil, ed., Brandt (1993))

²¹ “The Limits of Well-Being,” on pp. 173-174 in Paul, Miller, and Paul, eds. (1992):

sensory pleasures; it does not say that other intrinsically desired things are pleasures, or that they are pleasant. Thus, PD4 is not subject to counterexamples like the ones I discussed in connection with PD3. Every one of those counterexamples involved someone who intrinsically desired some state of affairs in which he did not take pleasure. But those states of affairs (his washing of his hands; his being held in contempt by others; his feeling of no pleasure; his doing of his moral duty) were not sensations. Thus, it is not obvious that there is any direct way to carry over those counterexamples to the present hypothesis.

Another interesting feature of the proposal concerns time. This view does not imply that one must desire pleasures *prior to their occurrence*, nor does it imply that one must continue to desire them *after their occurrence*. It implies only that sensory pleasures are intrinsically desired *at the moment of their occurrence*. This analysis of the concept of sensory pleasure is therefore based on the assumption that Sumner's view about the temporal orientation of desire is wrong. For according to this analysis, pleasures are sensations that are desired *at the time when they are experienced*. If all desires were future-oriented, as Sumner claims, it would be impossible for anyone to desire to have a sensation at a time when he was already having it. It would follow from PD4 that no one ever experiences sensory pleasure.²²

It is also interesting to note that this sort of definition makes the property of *being a sensory pleasure* an extrinsic, contingent property of each sensory pleasure. Each specific token sensation that is counted as a sensory pleasure by PD4 is a pleasure precisely because the one who experiences it has an intrinsic desire for it at the time of its occurrence. But *being intrinsically desired by the person who experiences it* is a contingent, extrinsic feature of the sensation. The sensation could have taken place without having that feature. As a result, that very sensation could have taken place without being a sensory pleasure. It also implies that there could be two sensations that are intrinsically indiscernible, but one of them is a sensory pleasure (because the one who experiences it has the right kind of desire for it) and the other is not (because the one who experiences it does not have the right kind of desire for it). Some find these implications hard to accept.²³

²² Some of the cited philosophers add a clause to the definition in which they speak of a desire for the sensation *to continue*. That would be a "future-directed" desire. If the theory were formulated entirely in this way it would be consistent with Sumner's claim.

²³ I see nothing wrong with these features of the desire theory of sensory pleasure. My own view has the same implications.

Clearly, PD4 does not imply that one who experiences a sensory pleasure must have an “all things considered” desire for a pleasure. That would be silly. A man with a serious heart condition could very well recognize a certain sensation to be a sensory pleasure, and could for that very reason overwhelmingly prefer that it stop. His all things considered desire might be based on fears about what the sensation might cause – another heart attack, for example. The proposal requires only that he have an *intrinsic* desire for the pleasurable experience while he has it. This is consistent with his having all sorts of *extrinsic* preferences for it to cease.

Finally, we should note that this proposal purports to link a kind of *attitudinal* desire with a kind of *sensory* pleasure. The claim is that a sensation counts as a sensory pleasure if and only if the one who has it has an intrinsic attitudinal desire for it to occur (or to continue).

I am convinced that definitions along the lines of PD4 are mistaken. One reason for this is my conviction that there are people who simply do not want to have sensations of the sort that we would naturally call “pleasures”. I think no one will dispute certain familiar facts about garden variety anti-hedonists: there are people who, all things considered, prefer not to have sensory pleasures. Some have this attitude as a result of religious training; others may have developed it after years of bad luck in the pleasure department; some may have it in connection with depression, self-loathing, or other psychological oddities; yet others may simply be by nature “pleasure averse”. They might know what sensory pleasure is, and they may have experienced it in the past. For one reason or another they may simply prefer not to have any more of it.

Of course, most of these comments concern *extrinsic* desires. A person who has had bad luck in the pleasure department may have mixed feelings about pleasure: on the one hand, as a result of bad experience, he has learned to shy away from pleasure. But on the other hand, possibly, if he could get the pleasure without having to suffer the downside, he would go for it. Such cases have no relevance to PD4, since it makes no mention of extrinsic desires. The claim made by PD4 is that sensory pleasures are feelings that are *intrinsically* desired. It could be argued that one who has been “twice burned” by pleasure might still have an intrinsic desire for pleasure – it is just that he has an *overall* preference to avoid that sort of thing.

But I think there can be cases that go beyond these familiar ones. I think it is possible for there to be a person who, for one reason or another, does not have even an *intrinsic* desire for sensory pleasures. When feeling such a pleasure, such a person might sincerely say, ‘Yes, I can feel it. It does feel pleasant. It is an enjoyable feeling. But I wish it would stop. Not because of consequences or accompaniments, but just for its own sake. I prefer not to have such feelings.’ An extreme variant of the self-loathing person discussed above might satisfy this description; similarly a pathologically pleasure-averse person might satisfy it. Finally, there is the person who, after years of religious indoctrination, has fully embraced an anti-hedonistic dogma. Any such person could experience a sensory pleasure without having an intrinsic desire for it.

The preceding comments concerned alleged cases in which someone feels a sensory pleasure but does not have an intrinsic desire to be feeling it. They are thus alleged counterexamples “from left to right”. I think there are also some counterexamples “from right to left”. These are cases in which someone intrinsically desires a certain sensation, but it is not a sensory pleasure. Here is a case that involves no pathology or irrationality. It just involves the passage of time and changes in taste, or preference. Suppose that many years ago Bob tasted a certain exotic beer. It had a very unusual taste that he really enjoyed. Then, for many years, he could not find any more of that beer. He kept looking, though, because he wanted to experience that taste again. Suppose at last he finds some more of that beer and he goes for it. He is right now drinking the beer and paying careful attention to its taste. Alas, it does nothing for him. Though the beer tastes as he thought it would taste, he simply does not enjoy it. After a few moments, his desire for further tasting disappears. However – and this is the point relevant to PD4 -- for a moment Bob was intrinsically wanting to experience the taste of the beer but he was not enjoying it. Though the sensation was intrinsically desired, it was not a sensory pleasure. This shows another way in which PD4 is false.

Before concluding this discussion of PD4, I’d like to mention a puzzle raised by Sidgwick in Chapter iv of *Methods of Ethics*. The puzzle concerns the question whether, even in the most straightforward cases, we have intrinsic desires for sensory pleasures. To focus the discussion, let’s introduce a simple example. Suppose Bob particularly enjoys the taste of a certain beer. Suppose he is just now drinking some and enjoying the taste. Let us agree that his experience of the taste of that beer is a sensory pleasure for Bob. In this case, Bob is not pathological or anti-hedonistic; he wants to be tasting that beer. But suppose we ask him *why* he wants to be experiencing the taste of that beer.

He might say, 'I want to experience this taste because I enjoy it; it tastes good; I take pleasure in the way it tastes. If I didn't enjoy the taste, I wouldn't want to experience it.'

These remarks seem innocent and familiar enough, yet they are apparently in conflict with the idea behind PD4. For Bob's imagined remarks seem to indicate that he does *not* have an intrinsic desire for the taste sensations he gets when drinking the beer. He tells us that he desires the sensations because he wants enjoyment and he thinks he will get enjoyment from the sensations. He says that he would not want to experience the taste if he did not enjoy it. Thus, he seems to be telling us that his desire for the taste of the beer is not intrinsic. He desires to experience the taste of the beer because he desires something else – the enjoyment he gets from experiencing that taste. This, according to PD4, yields the result that his sensation of taste is not a sensory pleasure for him.

The problem arises here as a result of the way in which we have defined intrinsic desire. Earlier, I said that a person has an intrinsic desire for a certain thing if he wants that thing for its own sake, *per se*, not because he takes it to be a means to some further thing. Yet even in this simplest of cases, Bob's desire to taste the beer seems not to satisfy the definition. He desires the taste of the beer not for its own sake, but for the sake of the pleasure he expects to get out of it.

Perhaps it will help to replace the concept of intrinsic desire with a close cousin. Let us make use of the concept of a "final desire" defined as follows: Person P finally desires sensation S =df. P desires S simply because he enjoys (or thinks he would enjoy) the way S feels. It seems correct to say, in the example just cited, that Bob finally desires the taste of the beer.

We can now revise PD4 as follows:

PD4': Necessarily, if S is a sensation experienced at a time, t, by a person, P, then S is a *sensory pleasure* if and only if P finally desires S at t.

Reflection on the proposed definition indicates that this is equivalent to:

PD4'': Necessarily, if S is a sensation experienced at a time, t, by a person, P, then S is a *sensory pleasure* if and only if P desires S at t simply because he enjoys (or thinks he would enjoy) the way S feels.

Note first that this account of sensory pleasure does not purport to explain sensory pleasure entirely by appeal to desire; rather, it explains sensory pleasure by appeal to a combination of desire and *enjoyment*. But of course enjoyment is itself another kind of pleasure. Enjoyment, as I understand it, is attitudinal pleasure. So the current proposal is equivalent to this:

PD4'': Necessarily, if S is a sensation experienced at a time, t, by a person, P, then S is a *sensory pleasure* if and only if P desires S at t simply because he takes attitudinal pleasure in (or thinks he would take attitudinal pleasure in) the way S feels.

I think this is nearly true. We'd get closer to the truth if we were to drop the bit about desire. Let me explain why I think the bit about desire is mistaken. Suppose Bob is (a) a religious fanatic who is trying to rid himself of desires, or (b) an anti-hedonic freak who does not desire pleasurable sensations, or (c) self-loathing, thinking himself unworthy of all pleasure. Suppose we force some swell-tasting beer on him. The taste of the beer might be a sensory pleasure; he might take pleasure in the way it tastes; yet at the same time in any of cases (a), (b), or (c), he might not have any desire for that sensation for any reason, and especially not because he take pleasure in the way it feels.

6. *Yet Another Approach*. In several papers, Christoph Fehige has suggested that there is a way to guarantee a conceptual connection between pleasure and desire.²⁴ In one place he hints that he thinks we can "rig up" our concept of desire in such a way as to make it become a necessary truth that everyone desires pleasant states of mind. This would be a remarkable feat. One wonders how anyone could "rig up" some concepts in such a way as to make people desire things that they in fact do not desire. In this final section, I want to explain and comment upon Fehige's suggestion.

Fehige formulates his thesis by saying that "pleasure is desired". He explains this by saying that with respect to "every pleasant state of consciousness it holds true on conceptual grounds that... I desire to be in that state." (*Instrumentalism*, p. 53) So the conceptual connection between pleasure and desire that he advocates seems to be this:

²⁴ The introduction to *Preferences* was written jointly by Fehige and Ulla Wessels. Fehige defends a similar position in his "Instrumentalism" p. 53 as well as in his 'Sympathy A Priori'.

PD5: Necessarily, if P is a pleasant state of consciousness, and S is a person, then S desires to be in P.

This principle surely does affirm a conceptual link between pleasure and desire. The argument for F depends upon a certain “rigged up” concept of desire. Fehige, perhaps following Mill and others, makes use of the idea that we can define desire in terms of pleasure by saying that “desires are pleasant thoughts”.(4) More carefully spelled out, the theory is that S desires P iff if S were fully and vividly to represent P to herself, she would be pleased. (3?) Making use of this concept of desire, Fehige argues as follows:

"I desire the things that it would be pleasant for me to imagine. Now, my imagining that I am in a certain pleasant state of consciousness must involve an imagining of that state, and, as with all states of consciousness, nothing that does not involve that state itself *counts* as an imagining of it. (Anything that involved only different states would at best count as an imagining of those states or as a misimagining of the one at issue.) But if my imagining to be in a certain pleasant state of consciousness involves that very state and is therefore pleasant itself, then it constitutes a desire to be in that state. In other words, for every pleasant state of consciousness, it holds true on conceptual grounds, given the concept of desire that has been outlined here, that I desire, pro tanto, to be in that state."²⁵

It may be a bit misleading to say that Fehige has argued for the conclusion that we always *desire* pleasant states of consciousness. As he makes clear, he is using a peculiar conception of desire. As he uses the term ‘desire’, it is correct to say that a person desires a certain state iff the person would find it pleasant to imagine that state. Let us use ‘F-desire’ to indicate this Fehigian conception of desire. Fehige’s claim is that we always F-desire pleasant states of consciousness. So his pleasure-desire linkage claim is more accurately understood as:

PD5’: Necessarily, if P is a pleasant state of consciousness, and S is a person, then S F-desires to be in P.

It might appear that PD5’ is of no general interest since it does not allege a conceptual connection between pleasure and desire; rather, it alleges a conceptual connection between pleasure and F-desire. But I find that alleged connection interesting, too. I want to point out something about Fehige’s argument for PD5’.

Let S be some possible pleasant state of consciousness and let P be some person. If P were to imagine S, then P would be imagining something pleasant. Fehige appeals to a general principle (I’ll call

it 'F1') about the imagination of pleasant things: If P (vividly, fully) imagines something that is pleasant, then P's imagining itself is also pleasant. In the passage I quoted earlier, Fehige argues for F1 by pointing out that when P imagines something that is pleasant, then the state P is imagining is pleasant, and that state is involved in P's imagining, so P's imagining is pleasant. Therefore, if P were to (vividly, fully) imagine S, P would be pleased. But it then follows that P F-desires that state, S. For, according to the definition of F-desire, to say that P F-desires S is just to say that if P were to (fully, vividly) imagine S, P would be pleased. Since Fehige has already argued that if P were to imagine S, P would be pleased, it follows that P F-desires S. Therefore, for every possible pleasant state of consciousness, S, and every possible person, P, P F-desires to be in S.

I think this argument fails. The crucial principle, F1, seems to me to be false. From the fact that my imagining of something pleasant "involves" a pleasant thing, it does not follow that my imagining is itself pleasant. Suppose I hate the McCoy's, every last member of that blasted clan. Now I hear about their family reunion. They had a wonderful time with lots of beer and corn on the cob. But though the object of my imagining is the McCoy picnic, and that picnic "involves" lots of pleasure, and my imagining is as vivid as you please, the imagining is not itself a pleasant state of consciousness. I take no pleasure in imagining the pleasures of the McCoy's; I might even be pained to think of their pleasures.

Surely no one would think that when I imagine a red-hot fire, that my imagining must itself also be red-hot; or that when I imagine the agitated state of mind of my riled-up neighbor, that my imagining must also be agitated and riled-up; or that when I imagine the hate-filled state of mind of some terrorist, that my state of mind must also be hate-filled. Fehige seems to think that it is different with pleasure. His argument makes essential use of the principle, F1, that imaginings of pleasure must themselves be pleasant. But I think that principle is false.

The other controversial feature of Fehige's argument is the rigged definition of desire according to which for a person to F-desire a thing is for it to be the case that if that person were to imagine that thing vividly, he would be pleased. The definition seems far too broad. Suppose Bob has never tasted a certain beer and has no idea how it tastes. He has never even heard rumors about this beer. It is utterly outside his ken. I think that in such a case we have to agree that he has no desire to

²⁵ "Instrumentalism", p. 53.

experience the taste of that beer. But it might anyway be true that if he were to vividly and fully imagine the taste of that beer, his imagination of it would be pleasant. Fehige's definition then entails that Bob already F-desires to taste the beer. As a remark about the implications of a novel and somewhat arbitrarily defined technical term, that is incontrovertible. But it seems pretty obviously wrong if it is taken to imply anything about any sort of genuine *desire*.²⁶

So it appears that Fehige's argument fails. Even after we have "rigged up" our concept of desire so that it analytically contains the concept of pleasure, we still cannot derive the even more controversial claim that everyone F-desires to be in every pleasant state of mind.

7. *From Negativities to Positivities*. So what is the truth about this? What is the connection between pleasure and desire? My answer is somewhat disappointing. There is no conceptual connection between these concepts. At most we can say this: in the case of ordinary, psychologically healthy individuals, we often find their own pleasures among the things they want for their own sakes. And furthermore, among such individuals, we often find that when they are enjoying a pleasure, they want it to be that way. Nothing more.

I want to close with a bit of speculation. Earlier I mentioned a puzzle about the heterogeneity of sensory pleasures. They don't feel alike in any phenomenally given respect. Yet they are all correctly categorized as pleasures. Some philosophers have claimed that what they have in common is that they are intrinsically desired. That is, these philosophers endorse something relevantly like this:

PD4: Necessarily, if S is a sensation experienced at a time, t, by a person, P, then S is a *sensory pleasure* if and only if P intrinsically desires at t to be experiencing S.

I have already explained why I think PD4 is false.

²⁶ Some philosophers have said that desire is intrinsically *painful*. I think there are clearly some cases in which a person desires something but finds it painful to imagine that thing. Suppose Bob has had some health problems and is on the wagon. He can't drink beer. It might be that when he imagines the delightful taste of his favorite brew, tears come to his eyes. Imagining that taste is not at all pleasant for him. I leave it to others to determine whether this consideration bears on Fehige's concept of F-desire.

I am inclined to give a different answer to the question about sensory pleasures. I am inclined to say that what they have in common is not that they are desired, but that they are *enjoyed*. More exactly, my view is this:

PsPa: Necessarily, if S is a sensation experienced at a time, t, by a person, P, then S is a *sensory pleasure* if and only if P takes intrinsic attitudinal pleasure at t in the fact that he himself is experiencing S.

My view then purports to explain sensory pleasure by appeal to intrinsic attitudinal pleasure.²⁷

Here's my speculation: I speculate that some philosophers may have vaguely and incompletely sensed the truth of PsPa. But they were not adequately sensitive to the difference between intrinsic attitudinal pleasure (which plays the crucial role in the true PsPa) and intrinsic attitudinal desire (which plays the same role in PD4). Having confused these closely related attitudes, these philosophers affirmed PD4 instead of PsPa. Perhaps they thought PsPa was trivial, or tautological, or somehow contrary to the rules. In any case, they ended up affirming PD4 instead of PsPa. And this, possibly, explains why so many philosophers insist that there just has to be an important conceptual connection between pleasure and desire when really there is an important conceptual connection between sensory pleasure and attitudinal pleasure.

Appendix -- Mill's Formulations

I would like to take a more careful look at the passage from Mill that I quoted at the outset. The passage is a part of just one rather long sentence. It is composed of phrases, or segments, in which Mill says several different things. Since I will want to refer back to these segments, I have taken the liberty of inserting some markers to identify five segments in the passage. In that passage, with my markers inserted, Mill says:

²⁷ I discuss and defend this view at some length in "Two Questions about Pleasure". I will not discuss it further here.

‘... (A) desiring a thing and finding it pleasant, aversion to it and thinking of it as painful, are phenomena entirely inseparable or, rather, (B) two parts of the same phenomenon – (C) in strictness of language, two different modes of naming the same psychological fact; that (D) to think of an object as desirable (unless for the sake of its consequences) and to think of it as pleasant are one and the same thing; and that (E) to desire anything except in proportion as the idea of it is pleasant is a physical and metaphysical impossibility.’ (Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. IV, paragraph 10)

In each of the indicated segments, Mill mentions something from the desire family (“desiring a thing”, “thinking of a thing as desirable”) and he mentions something from the pleasure family (“finding a thing pleasant”, “thinking of a thing as pleasant”, “the idea of a thing being pleasant”). In each segment he says something about how the item from the desire family is linked to the item from the pleasure family. He seems to indicate five different ways in which a pleasure item might be related to a desire item. His claim in A is that they are inseparable; in B that they are two parts of the same phenomenon; in C that they are “in strictness of language two modes of naming the same psychological fact”; in D that they are “one and the same”; and in E that they necessarily proportional.

I assume throughout that Mill mentions certain phenomenon *types*; his point is that those types are linked because of facts about their *tokens*. Thus, if he were to say ‘desiring a thing and finding it pleasant are inseparable’, I would take him to mean that on any occasion on which someone desired a thing, he would also find it pleasant, (and vice versa). Thus, the types are linked because a token of the former type occurs if and only if a token of the latter type occurs. Similar relationships are involved in the other cases.

The items and linkages Mill mentions can be arranged and rearranged in various ways so as to form quite a large array of possible combinations. In the following charts I have indicated some of these combinations. The first part of the chart is based on the idea that the item from the desire family is the phenomenon that consists in someone’s desiring something; and the item from the pleasure family is the phenomenon that consists in that same person’s finding that same object pleasant. Given that there are five modes of linkage, we get five possible combinations, as follows:

item from desire family	item from pleasure family	mode of linkage
1. S desires x	S finds x pleasant	inseparable
2. S desires x	S finds x pleasant	common parts
3. S desires x	S finds x pleasant	coextensive names
4. S desires x	S finds x pleasant	identity
5. S desires x	S finds x pleasant	proportionality

Each of these combinations is associated with a principle. The principle associated with combination (1), for example, says that the phenomenon that consists in someone's desiring something is inseparable from the phenomenon that consists in that same person's finding that same object pleasant. In other cases it might take a bit of rewriting to construct the principle; but the rewriting will not involve any serious conceptual problem.

It should be obvious that each of these first five principles is utterly implausible. Bob might desire a bottle of beer, but he might not find one pleasant because he never gets one. Those phenomena are in fact not identical or inseparable or proportional. (I discussed something like (2) in the body of the paper. I claimed that it is either obviously false or completely trivial depending upon how it is interpreted.) A different set of principles would be generated if we substituted a different member of the pleasure family. In Segment D Mill uses the expression 'to think of it as pleasant'. The intended referent is not entirely clear, but it is possible that Mill was thinking of the phenomenon that occurs when someone thinks that experiencing, or getting, something would be pleasant. If we so interpret the phrase, we get five different combinations:

6. S desires x	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	inseparable
7. S desires x	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	common parts
8. S desires x	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	coextensive names
9. S desires x	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	identity
10. S desires x	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	proportionality

The principles associated with those combinations are implausible, too. Bob might desire to be buried in the family plot, but he might not think being buried there would be pleasant. He might, however, just take some pleasure in thinking about being buried there. In other words, he might find the idea of being buried there pleasant. Mill uses this latter phrase in Segment E. Maybe he meant to use it all along. In any case, it generates five different possible linkage claims, corresponding to these combinations:

11. S desires x	The idea of x is pleasant to S	inseparable
12. S desires x	The idea of x is pleasant to S	common parts
13. S desires x	The idea of x is pleasant to S	coextensive names
14. S desires x	The idea of x is pleasant to S	identity
15. S desires x	The idea of x is pleasant to S	proportionality

Every one of the preceding fifteen combinations generates a principle that is implausible. Bob desired to walk to the liquor store, but he did not find the idea of taking such a walk. Maybe that's because he wanted to take the walk only because he wanted to get (and drink) some beer, and he thought that drinking it would be pleasant. This suggests that we might want to substitute *intrinsic desire* for *desire*. This seems justifiable since in Segment D there is a parenthetical remark in which Mill says "unless for the sake of its consequences". Maybe he was thinking of intrinsic desires all along. This yields fifteen more principles associated with these combinations:

16. S intrinsically desires x	S finds x pleasant	inseparable
17. S intrinsically desires x	S finds x pleasant	common parts
18. S intrinsically desires x	S finds x pleasant	coextensive names
19. S intrinsically desires x	S finds x pleasant	identity
20. S intrinsically desires x	S finds x pleasant	proportionality
21. S intrinsically desires x	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	inseparable
22. S intrinsically desires x	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	common parts
23. S intrinsically desires x	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	coextensive names
24. S intrinsically desires x	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	identity
25. S intrinsically desires x	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	proportionality
26. S intrinsically desires x	The idea of x is pleasant to S	inseparable
27. S intrinsically desires x	The idea of x is pleasant to S	common parts
28. S intrinsically desires x	The idea of x is pleasant to S	coextensive names
29. S intrinsically desires x	The idea of x is pleasant to S	identity
30. S intrinsically desires x	The idea of x is pleasant to S	proportionality

The principles associated with combinations (15) – (30) are refuted by a variety of cases discussed in the body of the paper. A Kantian moralist who intrinsically desires to do his duty might not find doing his duty pleasant; nor would he have to think that doing his duty would be pleasant. A perverted person whose intrinsic desires are for his own misery and suffering might not find the ideas of these things pleasant, but he might want them anyway.

In Segment D Mill uses the phrase 'to think of an object as desirable'. That strongly suggests that Mill was thinking (at least some of the time) of a different member of the desire family. Clearly there is a big difference between in fact desiring something and thinking that it is desirable. The former is a mere matter of psychology; the latter is a belief about some sort of normative matter. Making suitable substitutions we then get fifteen more possible doctrines:

31. S thinks x desirable	S finds x pleasant	inseparable
32. S thinks x desirable	S finds x pleasant	common parts
33. S thinks x desirable	S finds x pleasant	coextensive names
34. S thinks x desirable	S finds x pleasant	identity
35. S thinks x desirable	S finds x pleasant	proportionality
36. S thinks x desirable	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	inseparable
37. S thinks x desirable	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	common parts
38. S thinks x desirable	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	coextensive names
39. S thinks x desirable	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	identity
40. S thinks x desirable	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	proportionality
41. S thinks x desirable	The idea of x is pleasant to S	inseparable
42. S thinks x desirable	The idea of x is pleasant to S	common parts
43. S thinks x desirable	The idea of x is pleasant to S	coextensive names
44. S thinks x desirable	The idea of x is pleasant to S	identity
45. S thinks x desirable	The idea of x is pleasant to S	proportionality

I am inclined to think that every one of these last fifteen principles is false. I think there are circumstances in which desirable things are utterly unpleasant (someone might think it would be a good idea to visit the dentist, for example). I also think that there are cases in which pleasant things are undesirable (tasty but unhealthful wining and dining, for example).

We might think that Mill meant to focus on things that are *intrinsically desirable*. After all, in Segment D he talked about things that are desirable “unless for the sake of consequences”. If we follow up on this suggestion, we get fifteen more principles:

46. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	S finds x pleasant	inseparable
47. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	S finds x pleasant	common parts
48. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	S finds x pleasant	coextensive names
49. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	S finds x pleasant	identity
50. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	S finds x pleasant	proportionality
51. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	inseparable
52. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	common parts
53. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	coextensive nms
54. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	identity
55. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	S thinks that getting x would be pleasant	proportionality
56. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	The idea of x is pleasant to S	inseparable
57. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	The idea of x is pleasant to S	common parts
58. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	The idea of x is pleasant to S	coextensive names
59. S thinks x intrinsically desirable	The idea of x is pleasant to S	identity

60. S thinks x intrinsically desirable The idea of x is pleasant to S proportionality

I am inclined to reject all of these, too. I think there are some things that are intrinsically desirable but not pleasant (deserved painful punishment, for example). I also think there are some pleasant things that are not intrinsically desirable (undeserved criminally indecent pleasures, for example). But even if I (I am a hedonist, after all) thought there was a connection between intrinsic desirability and pleasantness, I would have to reject these things. Not everyone is a hedonist. There are plenty of axiologists who think certain things are intrinsically desirable even though they do not think those things are pleasant. Each of these principles says something to the effect that *everyone* thinks that intrinsically desirable things are pleasant. Nonhedonists may fail to have the alleged beliefs.

But my main point here is not to refute these principles. I tried to refute plausible linkage claims in the body of the paper. My main point here is to indicate that Mill's remarks suggest at least sixty different principles, each making a linkage claim about some member of the pleasure family and some member of the desire family. I think that in Segment A of the quoted passage, Mill explicitly says things suggestive of the claim indicated here by combination (1). In Segment B, his words suggest (2). In Segment C, it appears to be (3). However, in Segment D he skips ahead and expresses something more like (54) or (59). In Segment E he seems to be thinking of (15).

The more interesting historical question is this: what linkage claim did Mill really mean to affirm? I have no views on that. I leave it to those who know more about Mill's intentions to tell us.

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