7　Mill on the Epistemology of Reasons
A Comparison with Kant

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It is perhaps still not fully appreciated that Mill's demonstration of the principle of utility in chapter 4 of *Utilitarianism* runs directly parallel to his vindication of the principle of induction in Book III of the *System of Logic*.[1] This is unfortunate: to the extent that we lose sight of the structural similarities of Mill's theory of practical reason and his theory of theoretical reason, we fail to appreciate the overall ambition of his account of normativity—and miss opportunities to draw on Mill's account of theoretical reason in examining puzzles surrounding his account of practical reason and *vice versa*.

I have, in two recent articles, offered an interpretation of Mill's architectonic, which attempts to do justice to this parallel, by providing an interpretation of his account of normativity.[2] I wish here to expand upon that account. In section I, I offer a reading of the arguments for the principles of induction and utility, which suggests that Mill does not attempt to move from a non-normative starting point to normative conclusions, but rather draws on the already normative character of pretheoretical dispositions to form beliefs and desires. In section II, I suggest that Kant employs the same strategy in his appeal to "common human reason," and I sketch the basic connection of this strategy in Kant's work to his transcendental idealism. Although they are closer in some regards than we are accustomed to think, Mill, of course, is no transcendental idealist. In section III, I attempt to outline what might justify *his* trust in our natural reasoning propensities.

I.

I.i.　Mill on Theoretical Reason

III.iv.2 of the *System of Logic* is subtitled "Scientific induction must be grounded on previous spontaneous inductions." This subsection of the *Logic* contains a key claim:

> Need for Prior Inductions (NPI): "it is impossible to frame any scientific method of induction, or test of the correctness of inductions, unless on

the hypothesis that some inductions deserving of reliance have been already made."[3]

The claim separates inductive moves into two categories: scientific and pre-scientific inductions. Mill is not, of course, suggesting that the categories have neat boundaries. His point is, rather, that there is a distinction to be made between the consciously self-reflective methodology of science, and applications of reasoning "primitively pursued by the human understanding while undirected by science."[4] Science does not merely accumulate a body of knowledge by means of induction, but is also a practice that involves examination of the methods by which knowledge can be accumulated—and this is an examination that can be carried out, of course, only by means of the inductive method. Primitive inductions are, on the other hand, made without such reflective awareness and self-investigation.

In NPI, Mill makes two points. Firstly, that scientific inductions rely on the existence of previous inductive moves. The reason is clear to see: scientific inductions arise by inductively examining and refining pre-existent inductions. Once science is up and running, internal reflection upon, and refinement of, scientific inductions can take place. But in order to get science off the ground, reflection and refinement of some other mode of induction is necessary. And only primitive inductions are, at this stage, available. In the absence of primitive inductions, more refined modes of reasoning could not be established.

Secondly, and significantly, primitive inductions themselves are "deserving of reliance." Two accounts could be given of the origins of warranted beliefs. Mankind comes out of the cave, and starts—merely as a fact of empirical psychology—to have new beliefs triggered. Generalization, that is to say, is psychologically caused to happen and beliefs are automatically generated. Such generalizations are at this stage undeserving of reliance in the internalistic sense, even if they do in fact cause true beliefs to be formed; mankind is not capable, in principle, of acting in recognition of reasons, being merely another object moved around by causal forces. Later, man becomes sophisticated, and (somehow) reflects upon and evaluates that merely caused practice. Inductions from that stage become warranted, ceasing to be mere changes in belief profile caused by psychological factors, becoming justified moves made by reasoning agents. In this story, the pressure is on to show precisely how normative standards of evaluation arise from caused psychological acts; how one can escape characterizing such evaluations as anything other than further caused generalizations.

No matter, for this is not the story that Mill tells. Rather, Mill claims that primitive inductions are themselves "deserving of reliance" from the start. The first acts of induction, pursued "undirected by science" are themselves not brute happenings, but are already the adoption of beliefs that we take to be reasonable. We recognize uniformities (no less recognition, for being "involuntary recognition") and form beliefs on the basis of that recognition.

"[M]ankind learnt, as children learn, to expect the one where they found the other, long before they knew how to put their expectation into words by asserting, in a proposition, the existence of a connexion between those phenomena."[5] Primitive inductions are, that is to say, already acts in accordance with the norm of theoretical reason: beliefs formed on the basis of a realization that the results of primitive inductions are good beliefs to hold.

Mill, then, vindicates scientific induction by appealing to the fact that scientific induction is merely a sharpened form of an already warranted method of reasoning—primitive induction. This has in the past often been obscured by an over-reliance on Mill's *other* method of vindicating induction: the holistic appeal to the fact that past inductions have been successful. This is, to be sure, a vindication: induction is in this sense inductively self-supporting. But Mill is clear in NPI that the holistic justification will only be persuasive if there are already justified primitive inductions in place to which we can appeal.[6]

Scientific induction appeals to moves already recognized as reasonable—but we must consider how such prescientific inductions come to be seen as reasonable. A clue, as I have suggested, is given in Mill's repeated description of primitive induction as *spontaneous*.[7] On observing that $x_1, x_2, x_3, \ldots x_n$ are P, I spontaneously recognize that there is reason to believe that x_{n+1} is P: that such a belief is a good one to hold. Such a belief is not merely caused as a matter of fact, but held for a reason, and the normativity of beliefs is thereby established. With the knowledge that certain beliefs are reasonable, the possibility arises of metainductions generalizing over reasonable moves.

The key question is clearly what Mill means by "spontaneous" in this context, and how a belief's being spontaneously considered reasonable provides any assurance that it *is* reasonable—how spontaneity has any normative force. This question will be tackled below. For now, we might think of spontaneity by contrasting with it cases in which our response is conditioned in some manner. Such a response would be artificial, rather than spontaneous. Upon observing that $x_1, x_2, x_3, \ldots x_n$ are P, I spontaneously recognize that there is reason to believe that x_{n+1} is P. Had I been psychologically conditioned, I might well have had a different response—but such a response would not have been spontaneous, being rather a result of a nefarious influence.

Mill places initial trust in our natural reasoning propensities, as natural: spontaneous induction is afforded initial credibility on the grounds that it is the way that human beings unselfconsciously reason, and is asked to improve itself from there. Whether this is a viable move will concern us later. But we should note the assumption that our spontaneous—undistorted, uninterfered with—mode of reasoning is a good one is the position Mill is driven to as a thoroughgoing naturalist. "The laws of our rational faculty, like those of every other natural agency, are only learnt by seeing the agent at work."[8] If this mission statement is to be respected, and if the goal is the discovery of genuine norms of reasoning rather than mere description and

prediction of practice, it must be that principles that we naturally reason with are—at some level—in basic conformity with valid principles of reasoning. Such principles of reasoning cannot, of course, themselves be proved by appeal to more fundamental principles, without regress: "To be incapable of proof by reasoning is common to all first principles; to the first premises of our knowledge, as well as to those of our conduct."[9] Without any mode of pure intuitive insight into the best ways of forming beliefs, the naturalist must hold that our natural propensities to form beliefs are basically reasonable, and seek to iteratively improve them—there simply is nothing else to go on. We might call this the *naturalistic drive to trust.*

I.ii.   Mill on Practical Reason

Whereas theoretical reason concerns what there is reason to believe, "Practical Reason" concerns "Teleology, or the Doctrine of Ends"[10]—those things that we have reason to desire. As noted, Mill's demonstration of the principle of utility runs parallel to his demonstration of the principle of induction. Mill's method is again anthropological: as norms of theoretical reason were uncovered by examining actual instances of theoretical reasoning, so too norms of practical reason are uncovered by examining actual instances of practical reasoning. As such, questions about the desirability "can only be determined by practised self-consciousness and self-observation, assisted by observation of others."[11] It can be easily missed that Mill does not, in *Utilitarianism*, set out to demonstrate a hitherto undiscovered moral principle; rather, he sets out to explicate, defend, and refine a principle of practical reasoning that has been in operation all along. "If the end which the utilitarian doctrine proposes to itself were not, in theory and in practice, acknowledged to be an end, nothing could ever convince any person that it was so."[12]

It would be impossible to construct any philosophic theory of the desirable, unless on the hypothesis that there were already objects regarded as desirable to appeal to, in an effort to refine our normative theory. In this sense, Mill holds Need for Prior Desirability (NPD) as a practical parallel of NPI. Just as in the theoretical case, Mill's argument is not addressed to someone who "set[s] out from the supposition that nothing had been already ascertained,"[13] but rather to the individual who takes it that there are things that are desirable, and seeks to refine his theory of the desirable.

As Mill assumes our prescientific modes of reasoning are basically warranted, so too he takes for granted that our prephilosophic desires are basically warranted. Such, of course, forms the basis for the first step of the "proof." "[T]he sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it."[14] As observation of our own practices makes explicit that we regard induction as reasonable, so observation of our practices makes explicit that we regard pleasure as desirable. "Human nature is so constituted as to desire nothing which is not either a part of happiness or a means to happiness."[15]

Mill does not use the term "spontaneous" in his demonstration of the principle of utility—a matter for regret. For it is, in fact, only on the supposition that we *spontaneously* regard pleasure as desirable that the evidence of desire could be of normative standing. I recognize that a sensation's being pleasurable is reason to desire that sensation, and I desire pleasure: in this sense, my desire for pleasure is already the adoption of a desire I see as warranted. If my desire for fame is entirely traceable to nefarious causal circumstances, then that desire is not good evidence for the desirability of fame. As with the theoretical case, such indoctrination is easy to imagine, and is in fact all that it means to be judging under the sway of ideology or false consciousness. Indeed, Mill anticipates just this when discussing the competence of judges:

> Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, *irrespective of any feeling of moral obligation to prefer it*, that is the more desirable pleasure.[16]

The worry, clearly, is that judges might have their judgment disrupted by interfering factors. Indeed, this seems exactly Mill's diagnosis of the false consciousness of many of his moralizing contemporaries, indoctrinated into Victorian values. No doubt the Calvinistic virtues *are* genuinely desired by those espousing them: but this is only because their response has been conditioned by association.

The desire for pleasure, however, is different. It is not externally caused: our regard for pleasure as desirable has a "basis of powerful natural sentiment; and this it is which, when once the general happiness is recognised as the ethical standard, will constitute the strength of the utilitarian morality."[17] I spontaneously recognize that a sensation's being pleasurable is reason to desire it; this is not a brute happening, but already a desire formed in accordance with the norms of practical reason. Mill places trust in this initial propensity to find pleasure desirable, which, like our propensity to make inductive moves, does not present itself as a rule we choose to implement, but is nevertheless one we endorse. Spontaneous desires are afforded credibility on the grounds that this is the way that humans unselfconsciously desire, and this is the point from which a philosophic theory of ethics must depart. There is, once again, a *drive to trust*: without any direct *a priori* insight into the nature of the good or our obligations, and without an infallible God to guide us, we must assume that our natural dispositions to desire certain things are reasonable, and subject that norm to internal correction.

I.iii.   The Naturalistic Fallacy

All of this goes some way toward clarifying why Mill was not guilty of committing the "naturalistic fallacy." We should, of course, remember that the naturalistic fallacy threatens theoretical norms just as much as practical

norms. The reasonableness of primitive acts of induction cannot be claimed to *follow* from empirical matters of our psychology, any more than the desirability of pleasure *follows* from empirical matter of our psychology. This is merely another way of stating the Naturalistic Fallacy as applied to theoretical reason: Open Question Arguments threaten theoretical norms in just the same way as practical norms, and this is exactly the wedge that opens up the problem of induction. ("I know that you've seen one hundred elephants, all grey, and that you're therefore psychologically disposed to believe that Nelly is grey before you have seen her. But is that a *good* belief?")

Were Moore's arguments persuasive against Mill's account of the value of utility, they would hold equally against his account of induction. Of course, it is now generally taken to be the case that Moore misses his target when criticizing Mill, for Mill does not mean to claim that pleasure *is identical* to the practically good, or that the desired *is identical* to the desirable. Indeed, accentuating the theoretical parallel of such an identification perhaps makes it obvious just how strange such a belief would be—akin to holding that in the case of belief, the associatively generalized *is identical* to the warranted.

Most reconstructions of the "proof" now draw attention to the fact that Mill did not think it possible to *prove* his normative claims from psychological premises. Psychological premises are instead said to "determin[e] the intellect" in regard to normative conclusions.[18] This seems correct: Mill is explicit that only evidence, and not proof, could be given for his claims. But were the premises in question taken to be raw natural facts, it is not clear how an argument could be made that would even *evidence* normative claims—for this would still involve arguing from purely factual premises to normative conclusions.

I spontaneously recognize that there is reason to believe that x_{n+1} is P; I spontaneously recognize that a sensation's being pleasurable is reason to desire it. The judgments I make here are made on the basis of a recognition of these beliefs and desires as reasonable—at base, the spontaneously formed beliefs and desires Mill appeals to are already generated by acts of rule-following. To the extent that we take certain things as ends (things we have reason to pursue), and take certain things as warranted (things we have reason to believe), we are already engaged in a normative practice, and this is precisely the starting point of the "proof" and the vindication of induction. Mill does not attempt to move from factual to normative—and certainly not by any definitional sleight of hand—but is giving an account of norms we do actually endorse.

Mill holds that, prior to the philosophical defense of inductivism and utilitarianism, we do have knowledge of what there is reason to believe and to desire. The question, of course, is how that could be. How can we be assured that reasons that we spontaneously recognize reflect the genuine structure of value, or the genuine structure of the world? How are we to *defend* everyday reason? In order to explore Mill's answer to this question, it will be useful to compare Kant's response to the same question. For Kant

is instructively similar in taking as his point of departure a non-revisionary attitude toward basic modes of practical and theoretical reasoning. Kant also holds that in everyday operations, we *do* achieve instances of moral and factual knowledge; like Mill, he operates under the assumption that we do, prior to philosophical intervention, successfully operate as reasoners. His task is to explore the conditions that must necessarily obtain in order for such success to even be possible, and use philosophical reflection to steady those faculties against both under and overextension. And like Mill, his account invokes the notion of spontaneity.

II.

II.i.   Kant on Common Human Reason

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant tells us, that reason begins "with principles which it has no option save to employ in the course of experience, and which this experience at the same time abundantly justifies it in using."[19] We naturally draw on principles such as the principle of causation to understand the world—and such principles are "so unobjectionable that even common human reason readily accepts them."[20] Kant, like Mill, holds that we must place initial trust in the ability of such operations to achieve knowledge in everyday circumstances: his task is to investigate the conditions that must obtain in order for such knowledge to be possible. Investigation, Kant believes, shows that reason goes wrong when it strays into the terrain of metaphysical speculation. Prephilosophic reason naturally overreaches and attempts to apply concepts appropriate only *within* experience to metaphysical questions *beyond* experience. As such, we must check reason's tendency to go wrong—but such a project of sharpening reason can only take place by the internal process of reason's self-examination, a critique of reason by reason itself.

Kant's project, in this sense, is to investigate the claims of reason internally. Assuming that common human reason has basic warrant in the knowledge claims we start out with, to stabilize these claims with an explanation of the conditions of their possibility—and to show why *certain*, but not all, uses of theoretical reason are illegitimate.[21] As Robert Stern has put it, "[t]he key to Kant's strategy is to offer a way of allowing 'ordinary consciousness' to hang on to principles such as the principle of causation . . . but to argue that these principles are only valid for objects as they appear to us within experience, and so cannot be employed within any metaphysical speculations."[22] Thorough investigation allows us to refine our application of the principles that common human reason identifies, but philosophic reason "nonetheless respects our 'everyday' commitment to principles like the principle of causality."[23]

Kant's acceptance of everyday reason comes through even more clearly in his practical philosophy, and nowhere is it better on display than in the concluding section of *Groundwork* I.[24]

> [C]ommon human reason . . . knows very well how to distinguish in every case that comes up what is good and what is evil, what is in conformity with duty or contrary to duty, if, without in the least teaching it anything new, we only, as did Socrates, make it attentive to its own principle; and that there is, accordingly, no need of science and philosophy to know what one has to do in order to be honest and good, and even wise and virtuous.[25]

Indeed, Kant is occupied in the vast majority of the *Groundwork* with an analytic exposition—not a synthetic derivation—of an already tacitly accepted moral principle. The work starts with a "transition from common rational to philosophic moral cognition" and from there moves on to found a "metaphysics of morals."[26] When he turns, in *Groundwork* III to attempt a deduction of morality—in an effort to ward off claims that morality might be a "chimerical idea"—he reaches the "extreme boundary of all practical philosophy."[27] To the extent that there was an attempt to derive practical laws from some non-practical perspective, this justification was later retracted, to be replaced with an appeal to the "fact of reason": that we do, by common consent, feel conscious of the moral law.[28]

Kant's moral philosophy starts from the claim that we *do* recognize moral claims—it is not an attempt offer a proof of the Categorical Imperative from a perspective external to practical reason, for nothing could convince someone who recognized no practical reasons *at all* that they were subject to such requirements. (This should bring to our mind Mill's claim that no moral philosophy would be possible, were it not for our prephilosophic recognition of some things as desirable.) Of course, Kant's claim that prephilosophic thinking has a basic level of competency in acting in accordance with valid practical norms does not imply that there is no place for philosophy. As he puts it, "[t]here is something splendid about innocence; but what is bad about it, in turn, is that it cannot protect itself very well and is easily seduced."[29] Common human reason is worthy of trust, but it is easily misdirected: in the practical case, philosophy is needed in order to check our tendency to imagine that reason's demands are negotiable, and in order to vindicate the claims of common reason when challenged by one who is unsure of their bindingness.[30] But for Kant, like Mill, philosophic work must take the form of defending and clarifying the demands of practical reason from the perspective that already accepts basic claims of practical reason—there is no attempt to derive normative claims from some non-normative perspective.

II.ii.   Spontaneity in Kant

The challenge is to show how the reasons recognized by prephilosophic human reason are genuinely valid reasons. If our everyday move from an instance of constant conjunction to causation were justified, it might be claimed that justification could be strengthened by internal critique. Similarly,

if our everyday application of a test of universalization had *some* degree of validity, analysis and critique could stabilize and improve such judgments. But some account needs to be given of why these operations of the mind are deserving of any reliance in the first place. This need not be a derivation of such norms—but some account that leads us to think them a source of basically trustworthy claims. Kant, like Mill, appeals to the fact that the application of this mode of reasoning is *spontaneous*—vindication is provided by the fact that human beings *spontaneously* apply the concept of causation to the world and *spontaneously* make moral judgments. Of course, Kant has a distinctive story to tell about the notion of the spontaneity.[31]

In forming beliefs, Kant notes we are receptive to sensible impressions. By way of our senses, we are presented with an intuition—but this chaotic array is itself unstructured. The process of making judgments and forming knowledge about the world, Kant explains, involves the mind taking up intuition and applying concepts.

> Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognising an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is given to us, through the latter it is thought in relation to that representation (as a mere determination of the mind).[32]

The application of concepts is, according to Kant, performed by the Understanding. As hinted at in the quote above, the Understanding acts "through a spontaneity of cognition (in contrast to the receptivity of the sensibility)."[33] In order to gain knowledge of the world, that is to say, an individual must be presented with sensible data, but the mind itself spontaneously applies concepts. Some are empirical concepts, themselves formed by the Understanding as abstractions from intuition—but in order for such to be formed, some more primitive concepts must be available to guide the abstraction of empirical concepts. Such pure concepts of the Understanding—the Categories—are our most basic modes of interpreting the world. Causation is one such concept—and this concept is spontaneously applied to interpret the manifold of intuition.

The characteristic feature of spontaneity in Kant's work, of course, is that it is empirically uncaused—when Kant discusses the freedom of the will in the Third Antinomy, he draws upon the notion: "[t]he transcendental idea of freedom . . . is that of the absolute spontaneity of an action."[34] And it is in the sense of being spontaneous that judgments of the Understanding are free: "If an appearance is given to us, we are still completely free as to how we want to judge things from it."[35] This process is one of active judging, and Kant notes "this spontaneity is the reason I call myself an intelligence."[36] Kant holds that were judgments not made freely, by the spontaneous application of concepts to intuition, they simply would not be my judgments: they

would be mere changes in a belief profile, causally brought about. "When I say: I think, I act, etc., then either the word I is applied falsely, or I am free. Were I not free, then I could not say: *I* do it, but rather I would have to say: I feel in me a desire to do, which someone has aroused in me. But when I say: I do it, that means spontaneity in the transcendental sense."[37]

In order to see why judgments made spontaneously might be afforded a basic level of trust, we must observe that for Kant, the world to which concepts like causation apply—the phenomenal world, the world of appearances—is not itself mind-independent. This world is constructed by the mind. What constitutes correct judgment about that world is therefore intimately tied up with the functioning of our minds; objects of the phenomenal world must conform to our modes of understanding. If the phenomenal world is constructed by the mind, it is no surprise that concepts that are spontaneously applied by the mind to the world have some *prima facie* validity. (Of course, concepts such as that of causation do not apply to the *noumenal* world of things-in-themselves.) Categories that reflect the structure of the reasoning subject can be taken as appropriate to the phenomenal world, exactly because the structure of the phenomenal world is itself a reflection of the reasoning subject. And neither is the *freedom* of such judgments mysterious— after all, in their transcendental aspect, such judgments are *themselves* not empirically caused events, but acts of a non-empirical subject that is outside and prior to that causal nexus.

This account of theoretical spontaneity is the basis for Kant's account of practical spontaneity.[38] Kant's commitment to the reciprocal relation between morality and freedom is well known. "The autonomy of the will" is the "supreme principle of morality."[39] If morality is to take the form of a universal and necessary law—"for all rational beings as such, not merely under contingent conditions and with exceptions, but with absolute necessity"[40]—then its directives cannot be based on any particular willed end, but rather on the purely formal basis of law itself. "[N]othing is left but the universality of a law as such, with which the maxim of the action ought to conform," and such forms the basis for the derivation of the Categorical Imperative.[41] When one acts on a maxim that is in accordance with the Categorical Imperative, one is in this sense conditioned by no end, acting with autonomy—an individual's action is not subject to any "natural law of his needs."[42] Moral freedom is the property of the will such that "it can be efficient independently of alien causes determining it."[43] In this sense, the connection of ethical action to spontaneity is clear, and Kant draws out exactly this connection in the *Groundwork* III, when outlining how transcendental idealism could allow us to conceive of ourselves as free by locating man in the intelligible world.

Just as the phenomenal world is constructed by theoretical reason, so moral legislation is constructed by practical reason. "[T]he will is not just subject to the law, but subject in such a way that it must also be viewed as self-legislating, and just on account of this as subject to the law (of which it

can consider itself the author) in the first place."[44] The free agent legislates the moral law, and as such, moral truth is deeply connected to the structure of the will of the free agent. It is of little surprise, then, that actions that exemplify human spontaneity—whether they are the products of philosophical reflection or are prior to such reflection—are actions under reasons. Free actions, which are not empirically caused when viewed from the transcendental perspective, are actions in recognition of reasons, and as such connected to the norms of practical reason. Spontaneous action itself already manifests a normative configuration.

None of this, of course, is to claim that spontaneity is a sufficient condition for truth. It is neither the case that all acts that have their root in spontaneous choice are morally good acts, nor that any belief formed spontaneously is warranted, just because they stem from free acts of the transcendental subject. *All activity* of the Understanding, and therefore all perception, involves spontaneity—not merely that which results in true beliefs. And heteronomous action, as action, involves the free adoption of some maxim.[45] Nevertheless, Kant provides a link between the world of reasons and the notion of spontaneity.

III.

III.i.   Can Mill Adopt Kant's Account?

A brief reminder of the state of play. Mill holds that in order to form any philosophic theory of what there is reason to desire or to believe, we must appeal to our presphilosophic practices. Such practice is grounded on our spontaneously taking certain things to be desirable or reasonably believed. I observe that $x_1, x_2, x_3, \ldots x_n$ are P, and I spontaneously recognize that there is reason to believe that x_{n+1} is P. Similarly I observe a sensation's being pleasurable, and I spontaneously recognize that there is reason to desire that sensation. The question we were left with at the end of section I was: how can we be assured that reasons that we spontaneously recognize reflect the genuine structure of value, or the genuine structure of the world? How are we to *defend* everyday reason?

Kant provides one possible answer to this question. With a similar account of the relationship between our philosophic theory of reasons and prephilosophic practice ("common human reason"), Kant too claims that we make theoretical and practical judgments on the basis of our spontaneous recognition of reasons. Kant's account of spontaneity offers a basic motivation to trust such judgments: they reflect the legislating moral agent, or the mind constructing the phenomenal world. Kant's transcendental idealism can offer an account of the fitness of our natural judgments by connecting the truth of those judgments to the operations of the mind. Moreover, the Kantian account of spontaneity can ground such an explanation with an account of how such judgments are not caused.

But of course, Mill is no transcendental idealist, and this debars him from accepting this solution. In his more considered moments Mill was a phenomenalist, believing matter to be no more than the permanent possibility of perception, and this connects him in interesting ways to the Idealist tradition.[46] But contra Kant, he nevertheless maintains a resolute commitment to philosophic supposition that activity of the mind must be treated as entirely within and subordinate to nature. Man is part of the natural world, and can be studied as such. In this sense, Mill is a committed naturalist about the mind.

For Mill, the spontaneous activity of our mind, then, can have no logical connection to how the world must be structured; there is no conceptual link between truth and our modes of apprehending the world. Such a position would require "that the universe of thought and that of reality, the Microcosm and the Macrocosm (as they once were called) must have been framed in complete correspondence with one another." But "an assumption more destitute of evidence could scarcely be made."[47] Such is Mill's criticism of intuitionism: that any attempted derivation of the way the world is from the way we are disposed to think about it is doomed to failure. From this direction, Mill's naturalism makes it difficult to see how any account of why our spontaneously thinking that certain beliefs and desires are reasonable could be worthy of any trust at all. This *naturalistic drive to doubt* clearly runs against the naturalistic drive to trust: and this is exactly what makes the problem seem intractable.

Worse still, within Mill's naturalistic picture, we perhaps even lack a clear conception of what spontaneity could be. I noted above that one way of framing Mill's account of spontaneity is by contrasting it with cases in which our response is in some sense conditioned, or artificial. Responses that are caused are not responses in recognition of reasons, but merely changes to my belief/desire profile. In contrast, when I spontaneously recognize that there is reason to believe that x_{n+1} is P, or reason to desire some pleasure, this response is not merely caused as a matter of fact, but held for a reason. It is clear that Kant's account of transcendental freedom provides a way to understand what this might mean. But Mill cannot appeal to a non-empirical agent behind the empirical causal order. For Mill, it is clear that even if the spontaneous judgments are not *merely* caused changes to my belief or desire profile, they nevertheless must still *be* caused. Let us first tackle this issue.

III.ii.   Millian Spontaneity

An account of spontaneity is, in essence, an account of what it means for the will to be free, and Mill offers a theory of such freedom in *Logic* VI.ii. Although this portion of the *Logic* has in general not been well received, it was central to Mill's thought—he recounts that the development of this portion of the *Logic* was "very important to myself . . . & even (if I may use the expression) critical in my own development."[48] The treatment offered is, of course, compatibilist.

> No one who believed that he knew thoroughly the circumstances of any case, and the characters of the different persons concerned, would hesitate to foretell how all of them would act. Whatever degree of doubt he may in fact feel, arises from the uncertainty whether he really knows the circumstances, or the character of some one or other of the persons, with the degree of accuracy required: but by no means from thinking that if he did know these things, there could be any uncertainty what the conduct would be. Nor does this full assurance conflict in the smallest degree with what is called our feeling of freedom.[49]

Our actions are causally determined, but nevertheless we are free. Mill holds that a cause on a person with a character and a set of desires does causally necessitate an action. It is of course *not* true that if that person had some alternative character and set of desires that that same cause would necessitate that same action: this would be to hold that there was "some peculiar tie, or mysterious constraint exercised by the antecedent over the consequent."[50] Had that person had different desires, or a different character, he might well have acted differently. This, Mill concedes, would be of little consolation if our character and desires are beyond the control of an individual to influence. But, he points out, we *can* influence our character and desires. We can place ourselves in circumstances that modify our character, and we can practice better habits. Admittedly, this is itself merely another necessitated action, wholly determined. But we must keep in mind that *this* action will be determined as a function of external circumstances *and our character and desires*.

   This is, Mill believes, enough. We are capable of modifying our character and controlling our reaction to stimulus, because the action of modification is in a large part determined by our own current character and desires. Mill does not overstate the case—a person is not in *full* control, and there can be no miraculous switching of dispositions.[51] But, nevertheless, the individual

> has, to a certain extent, a power to alter his character. Its being, in the ultimate resort, formed for him, is not inconsistent with its being, in part, formed *by* him as one of the intermediate agents. His character is formed by his circumstances (including among these his particular organization); but his own desire to mould it in a particular way, is one of those circumstances, and by no means one of the least influential. We cannot, indeed, directly will to be different from what we are. But neither did those who are supposed to have formed our characters, directly will that we should be what we are.[52]

The view expressed is, of course, what we would now think of as a compatibilist theory of autonomy. As Gerald Dworkin puts it: "autonomy is conceived of as a second-order capacity of persons to reflect critically upon their first-order preferences, desires, wishes, and so forth and the capacity

to accept or attempt to change these in light of higher-order preferences and values."[53] Although Mill does not use the term, it is clearly this notion that he appeals to in characterizing the feeling of moral freedom: "indeed, if we examine closely, we shall find that this feeling, of our being able to modify our own character *if we wish*, is itself the feeling of moral freedom which we are conscious of."[54]

It is necessary that we not be *overwhelmed* by causal antecedents: that our character and desires—including any higher-order desire to alter our character and desires—play a significant role in the determination of our behavior. It must be that we *ourselves* dictate our actions, not external circumstances. The extent to which our internal character determines our actions rather than external causal factors, of course, will be a matter of degree—in the vast majority of cases both will be present. But this is merely to say that we can be more, or less, free on any given occasion.

Judgments must live up to this standard too. A judgment can be spontaneous in the sense that it is not caused directly from the outside. Judgments must of course be part of the causal order—but they must emanate from the subject himself. It is in this sense that, prompted by experience, *I* must judge that x_{n+1} is *P*, in order for that to count as judgment; *I* must judge that pleasure is desirable. And, importantly, *were* I not to take the norm of induction or pleasure as providing good reasons to believe or to desire, I would have judged otherwise. Spontaneous judgments, that is to say, are judgments that are under the control of reason that I endorse and hold to be good reasons.

III.iii.   Reason's Self Analysis

Clearly, however, nothing in this account of spontaneity can connect the fact that we spontaneously reason in a certain manner directly to the structure of the world. A defense of our spontaneous reasoning propensities therefore must take the form of a search for conditions under which the norms we find spontaneously compelling are *not* reliable: conditions under which we are particularly prone to be led astray. The only response, in other words, to the naturalistic drive to doubt must be an active process of charting the conditions under which those norms we find compelling lead to results at some way at odds with the world: where our natural reasoning propensities find themselves overreaching, we must correct our process of reasoning in light of these results. This cannot dispel the drive to doubt: but to the extent that it is successful in placating it, it transforms that drive from a negative and skeptical attitude into a genuinely critical one.

Like Kant, then, Mill turns reason upon itself to examine its own methods of belief and desire formation. This is exactly the project that is taken on—at least for theoretical reason—in the *System of Logic*. It too is an internal process of reason's self-examination: a critique of reason by reason itself.

> [I]nduction by simple enumeration . . . though a valid process, it is a fallible one, and fallible in very different degrees: if therefore we can substitute for the more fallible forms of the process, an operation grounded on the same process in a less fallible form, we shall have effected a very material improvement. And this is what scientific induction does.[55]

Mill calls the process of refining and correcting our prephilosophic reason—finding instances in which prephilosophic reason leads us astray—the process of "ulterior revision." Failed instances of induction refine my willingness to trust any and all beliefs spontaneously regarded as reasonable, generating "ulterior revision of these spontaneous generalizations" and leading to "a stricter and surer method than that which they had in the first instance spontaneously adopted."[56] Reason charts its own capabilities, and revises its practices in light of these findings.

So, for instance, we spontaneously form the belief that *all* swans are white, upon seeing many and only swans that are white. The norm under which this belief was formed must be subject to ulterior revision, upon discovery that such a move is reasonable only in certain circumstances. Metainductions ranging over the conditions under which instances of induction have been faulty lead to improved practices of reasoning—as given by the Canons of Induction in *Logic* III.viii. Such ulterior revision corrects our understanding of what can give us reason to believe, internally. Of course, it must remain an open possibility that even our most central judgments will not withstand this process and must be disregarded: we might learn that the norms we spontaneously apply might fail *in their entirety* in certain situations (such as "distant parts of the stellar region"[57]) that are entirely foreign to our current experience.

It is only under the condition that faulty modes of reasoning are able to be isolated, and censured, that we could have any faith that the norms refined from our spontaneous tendencies lead to judgments that reflect the way that the world is. We can feel increased—though never total—confidence in norms that remain in place after such a process.

> The beliefs which we have most warrant for, have no safeguard to rest on, but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded. If the challenge is not accepted, or is accepted and the attempt fails, we are far enough from certainty still: but we have done the best that the existing state of human reason admits of [. . .] we may rely on having attained such approach to truth, as is possible in our own day. This is the amount of certainty attainable by a fallible being, and this the sole way of attaining it.[58]

One might well object that, unanchored, this process requires just too much optimism: that the drive to trust is just *too* trusting. Whereas of course it is promising that reason does not undermine itself completely, but only in

part—that an inductive examination of induction does not force us to abandon that practice as defective *tout court*, but only in specific circumstances—this can count for little. A basically capable mind, refining its modes of reasoning, can be assumed to achieve successful judgments, it might be admitted, but Mill does too little to show that the norms of reason we find spontaneously compelling are basically fit to interpret the world.

The worry does have bite, and can perhaps be pressed most forcefully in the case of practical reason, where Mill gives us little indication of what it would mean for us to find our norms in need of ulterior revision. That we can, from the inside, gain some measure of objectivity in our judgments, remains for Mill an article of philosophic faith. It is indicative of a distinctively liberal optimism, however—a hope that freedom, dialogue and honest inspection of the data, can, and will, eventually lead to truth—and under the naturalistic picture it is not entirely clear what, besides skepticism, the alternative is.[59]

NOTES

1. One author who makes this point explicit, however, is John Skorupski. See, for instance, Skorupski (1989: 286): "Mill's way of vindicating the claim that happiness is desirable, is exactly analogous to his way of vindicating the claim that enumerative induction is rational."
2. See Macleod (2013a and 2013b). The view proposed is roughly as follows. Mill is, contrary to common opinion, a cognitivist about normative statements. There is no firm textual evidence to support a noncognitivist reading, as has sometimes been argued. Indeed, such an interpretation suffers from the fault of anachronism and is difficult to reconcile with the clear commitment in *Utilitarianism* to the possibility of evidence being given for norms. I suggest that Mill holds that our belief in the reliability of inductive moves, as well as the desirability of pleasure, is vindicated by something akin to intuition. Although his endorsement of the normativity of these intuitions might seem to be in tension with the arguments he offers against the "intuitionist school," this tension is merely apparent.
3. Mill (1843, *CW*: VII.319). All references to Mill's works are to the authoritative edition of *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Mill, 1963–1991—cited as *CW*, followed by volume and page number), unless otherwise indicated.
4. Mill (1843, *CW*: VII.318).
5. Mill (1843, *CW*: VII.318).
6. This account will perhaps raise the suspicion that I am misrepresenting Mill as a foundationalist, appealing to primitive inductive moves as warranted and sitting as the basis of all theoretical knowledge. But if the story I have told is foundationalist, it is only in a very loose sense of the term. Though primitive inductions could be described as foundational in terms of temporal ordering—coming first in time—they are not conceptually prior in justificatory terms, once other scientific inductions have been established. At that point, as much, if not more, support flows to primitive inductions from scientific inductions as from primitive induction to scientific inductions. They support, and are supported.
7. See Skorupski (1989: 192–95, 285–86).

8. Mill (1843, *CW*: VIII.833).
9. Mill (1861, *CW*: X.234).
10. Mill (1843, *CW*: VIII.949–50).
11. Mill (1861, *CW*: X.237).
12. Mill (1861, *CW*: X.234).
13. Mill (1843, *CW*: VII.318).
14. Mill (1861, *CW*: X.234).
15. Mill (1861, *CW*: X.237).
16. Mill (1861, *CW*: X.211, my emphasis).
17. Mill (1861, *CW*: X.231).
18. Mill (1861, *CW*: X.208).
19. Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason* Avii). In referring to Kant, I follow the convention of citing A/B editions in the case of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and volume/page number of the *Academie* edition for all other works. Translations used are listed in the bibliography.
20. Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason* Avii). Kemp Smith translates *gemeine Menschenvernuft* as "ordinary consciousness"; Guyer/Wood opts for "ordinary common sense." It seems important, for purposes here, to retain consistency of translation between uses of *gemeine Menschenvernunft* between the *Critique* and the *Groundwork*, and I have therefore used the Gregor/Timmermann translation of "common human reason."
21. Kant's use of common human reason has of course been compared to the Scottish Common Sense tradition. See Kuehn (1987). Interestingly, such a comparison has also recently been made with Mill. See Miller (2010: 17ff).
22. Stern (2006: 110–11).
23. Stern (2006: 111).
24. K. Ameriks (2003) usefully draws attention to Kant's parallel use of common reason in the theoretical and practical cases. See also Guyer (2008).
25. Kant (*Groundwork*: 4.404).
26. Kant (*Groundwork*: 4.392).
27. Kant (*Groundwork*: 4.445, 402; *Groundwork*: 4.455).
28. Kant (*Critique of Practical Reason*: 5.31; 5.42). See Ameriks (2000: 189–233) on this reversal.
29. Kant (*Groundwork*: 4.404–05).
30. It is interesting to note that the misapplication of practical reason comes from its underextension: exactly the opposite tendency from the theoretical reason, which runs into difficulties when it overextends itself. Whereas the worry for theoretical reason is that it attempts to speak to matters beyond the boundaries of sense, the worry for practical reason is that it mistakenly takes heteronomous claims to apply when in fact moral claims do.
31. In what follows, I present a picture of Kant's account of spontaneity, and its relation to his transcendental idealism, which is at best un-nuanced. This is for the sake of brevity, and hopefully nothing said is too misleading. For useful accounts of spontaneity with a focus on the theoretical, see particularly Pippin (1997). Ameriks (1991); Allison (1990) and (1996) contain much useful material on practical spontaneity. Sgarbi (2012) also provides a useful overview.
32. Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*: A50/B74).
33. Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*: A126).
34. Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*: A448/B476).
35. Kant (*Prolegomena*: 4.290.)
36. Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*: B158).
37. Kant (*Lectures on Metaphysics*: 28.269).
38. Kant (*Groundwork*: 4.452). As Pippin points out, however, though it is tempting to equate the two, Kant is not committed to claiming that practical

and theoretical spontaneity are identical. (See Pippin, 1997: 52–54.) Nevertheless, Kant was committed to the claim that the moral individual exercises some form of spontaneity: see Allison (1990: ch. 3).
39. Kant (*Groundwork*: 4.440).
40. Kant (*Groundwork*: 4.408).
41. Kant (*Groundwork*: 4.421).
42. Kant (*Groundwork*: 4.439).
43. Kant (*Groundwork*: 4.446).
44. Kant (*Groundwork*: 4.431).
45. See Allison (1990: ch. 5).
46. Mill's account of matter as the "Permanent Possibility of Sensation" is given in Mill (1865: ch. 11). See N. Capaldi (2004: 310–14) for an account of Mill that connects him to the British Idealists. Capaldi perhaps overstates the case—see J. Skorupski (2007)—but there is more than a grain of truth to the claim that there is internal momentum in Mill's work toward his nineteenth century successors.
47. Mill (1865, *CW*: IX.68).
48. J. S. Mill to F. Nightingale, 10 Sept. 1860, *CW*: XV.706n. This letter is cited in E. Millgram (2010: 169). Though Millgram's account is quite different to that offered here, Millgram certainly seems to me correct in drawing attention to just how central Mill's theory of freedom was to his philosophic project.
49. Mill (1865, *CW*: VIII.837).
50. Mill (1865, *CW*: VIII.838).
51. Cf. Kant on the choice of our fundamental maxim to prioritize either morality or self-interest (*gesinnung*). Such a choice of fundamental maxim is radically free, as is the choice to *switch* maxim at any time. See Kant (*Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*: 6.48).
52. Mill (1865, *CW*: VIII.840).
53. Dworkin (1988: 20).
54. Mill (1865, *CW*: VIII.841).
55. Mill (1843, *CW*: VII.568).
56. Mill (1843, *CW*: VII.318–19).
57. Mill (1843, *CW*: VII.574).
58. Mill (1859, *CW*: XVIII.232).
59. I owe thanks to Martin Sticker and Allison Stone for commenting on previous drafts of this chapter.

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