"Reasoning Practically" taken as a whole does not have a message; however, "moral psychology can be very interesting" is a message that it gets across pretty well, and I can imagine using it in a classroom for this reason alone. Implicitly, it also conveys the message that broadly Humean (and Davidsonian) frameworks may still have a lot to offer those of us who are interested in rationality—whatever the well-dressed ethicist happens to be wearing this season.

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The fifth chapter of John Stuart Mill's Autobiography contains a notorious and very long fourth paragraph in which Mill recounts his first lengthy depressive episode. The paragraph is simultaneously a narrative history of the famous "mental crisis," a causal explanation of it, and, as Candace Vogler convincingly makes out, a deductively tight argument that, provided several elements of Mill's philosophical view were correct, you ought to have a nervous breakdown. Vogler's reconstruction of that argument is the starting point for what is both a fascinating exploration of the unity of Mill's philosophical thought and a challenge to a received view in moral psychology: that the mind is composed of distinctly cognitive and distinctly conative components. (Today, these are paradigmatically beliefs and desires; the most prominent version of the view is called "belief-desire psychology.") In addition, Vogler's treatment is an intervention in the contemporary debate about practical reasoning. Both in its impressive control of the full body of work that Mill bequeathed to us and in its ability and willingness to deploy historical materials to think through contemporary problems, John Stuart Mill's Deliberative Landscape sets new standards in Mill scholarship.

The most important premises of Mill's argument were instrumentalism, the idea that all practical reasoning is means-end reasoning, and associationism, the psychological theory that Mill inherited from his father, James Mill (author of the Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind). On the associationist account, if an impression or idea of A is sufficiently often followed by an impression or idea of B, an associative link will be created between A and B. Thinking of A will then tend to make one think of B. Pleasure traverses associative links, so A's being pleasurable can come to make B pleasurable also, and since, on Mill's account, a desire consists in the idea of pleasure associated with (what we would call) the object of the desire, in this way, an agent can come to have a rich and complex array of desires and ends. Unfortunately, when associative links are "artificial" rather than "natural" (i.e., when they do not track genuine inferential connections between A's and B's), an analytically trained mind, such as Mill's, will dissolve the association. And when this happens, the derivatively pleasurable idea loses its hedonic charge. Instrumentalism entails that the only natural connections that matter will be those linking causes to desired effects; eventually, only hardwired desires, such as hunger, and the desires for the means to satisfying those will remain.
Barring extreme hardship, which tends to magnify the strength of the hard-wired desires, the ends that will survive analysis are insufficient to sustain a life, and the resulting motivational collapse that the young Mill experienced was thus a challenge to the Utilitarian program. Utilitarianism, in Mill's day, was first and foremost a radical political movement (rather than, as we usually think of it today, a free-standing ethical theory), and the core of its platform included better education and a higher standard of living. These, however, were just the circumstances that led not to the greatest happiness of the greatest number but rather to deep unhappiness.

Mill's crisis can also serve as an occasion for rethinking instrumentalism. Because instrumentalism restricts practical reasoning to determining means to given ends, one cannot, on the instrumentalist view, have reasons for one's ultimate ends; Vogler calls this the "arbitrariness problem." Mill seems to have been living that problem out: unable to justify his ultimate ends to himself, he ceased to care about them. So Mill's psychological recovery holds forth the promise of showing either how one can find reasons for one's final ends (thus refuting instrumentalism) or how one can motivationally stabilize ends, arbitrariness notwithstanding.

Mill attributed his recovery from the breakdown to—among other things—reading Wordsworth (in particular, the "Intimations of Immortality" ode), and Vogler goes on to reconstruct Mill's attempt to explain its effectiveness without giving up either of the two central premises of the previous argument. Now, on James Mill's account, a complex idea or train of thought contained as parts the simple ideas from which it was formed. An analytically trained mind was one that habitually decomposed complex thoughts and trains of thought into their parts. But if there were complex ideas whose ingredients blended to produce qualitatively new states of mind, they would not have parts to be extracted by analysis. And a thought blended with a feeling into a complex idea would have analysis-resistant motivational force. Poetry, Mill decided, was suitable for conveying blended ideas; poems compress ideas together, and their semantic density prevents one's mind from breaking down the thoughts they evoke into parts. So Mill proceeded to emend his father's psychology to allow blending.

Vogler shows how Mill's introduction of a distinctive category of "chemical" sciences in the *System of Logic* was meant to make sense of a psychology that allowed for qualitative "blending," and in doing so, she shows how his attempts to cope with what most of us would think of as personal problems shaped Mill's work in the areas of philosophical theory seemingly most removed from the personal. She also advances an intriguing solution to a problem familiar to students of *Utilitarianism*: how it is that Mill's "higher" and "lower" pleasures can be generally compared. (The objection occurs even to introductory students, that no one has ever been both a human being and a pig, and so no one is in a position to make the comparison from within his or her own experience.) Vogler holds that the higher pleasures are blended states of mind. Since everyone starts out with the unblended lower pleasures, introspective competence and a decent memory equip anyone who experiences the higher pleasures to compare them with the lower.

Mill's attempt to make sense of his crisis without surrendering the central tenets of his view is complex and ingenious but, Vogler proceeds to argue,
unsuccessful. Associationism and instrumentalism were not independent views; like contemporary belief-desire psychology, associationism is a theory that one is likely to find plausible only if one already thinks instrumentalism true. Instrumentalism legitimizes the separation of the affective and intellectual components of the mind. But once separated, they cannot be recombined to produce the mental activities that we engage in, in roughly the way that body-sculpting different muscle groups on weight machines doesn’t give you a functionally strong body. (Vogler fleshes out the analogy with an argument that separating cognitive ideas from conative pleasure put Mill in the position of being unable to explain novel and cogent trains of thought.) And she concludes by arguing that if one is careful to reconstruct the arguments of On Liberty in a manner acceptable to an instrumentalist, they run aground on the cognitive/conative bifurcation in Mill’s psychology.

This last part of Vogler’s argument is rewarding to work through, and I am fully sympathetic to the claims it supports; however, I do not see that she has shown that Mill’s associationist psychology, and the science of character that he proposed to build on it, could not do what On Liberty needed. Vogler is right to think that Mill’s introducing a second notion of “character,” one that must be the result of “self-culture,” is an element of the argument that must be undergirded if it is not to amount to a fatal shift in topic. But a demonstration that it cannot be supported is absent, and my own view is that the materials available for reconstructing the Liberty argument have not been exhausted. On the Subjection of Women seems to me the more promising place for Vogler to have pressed Mill. Much of the argument of Subjection consists of just the kind of analysis that chemically blended ideas were supposed to forestall, and Mill would certainly not have wanted to allow that a poem’s producing a blended (and so both motivating and unanalyzable) idea of, say, feminine submissiveness could count as a legitimate response to the analysis.

At the outset of her project, Vogler tells us, she took the moral psychologist’s bifurcation of the mind into intellectual and affective components to come first in the order of explanation: philosophers accepted the instrumentalist (in her vocabulary, the “calculative”) model of practical rationality because they accepted the belief-desire split. But she later came to think that the actually rather vulnerable psychological view had adherents only because they already accepted the instrumentalist view of practical justification. Thus far I agree, but Vogler also indicates that the instrumentalist moral psychology can be abandoned while leaving the calculative model of rationality standing. I am not sure that I see how. Vogler has developed an important objection to the belief-desire family of philosophical theories of the mind. The instrumentalist model of practical rationality gives rise, again and again, to philosophical psychologies in that family; while the instrumentalism does not logically entail the bifurcation, the bifurcation is a kind of shadow of the view of practical reasoning. Surely the right formal model of practical reasoning will not be one that casts an impossible psychological shadow.

Vogler has written a philosophical history of the very best kind, one that exhibits a trajectory of thought from the inside and makes of it an arresting object lesson of present import. I do not know of any better writing on Mill,
and Vogler's landscape of the problem space of practical reasoning is a must-read for anyone in the field.

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