

John Stuart Mill Annual Seminar

Thursday 16th March 2023

3.30pm-6.00pm

Mary Somerville Room and Park 5

We invite you to this year's annual seminar, a series of talks exploring the ideas of John Stuart Mill. First enjoy afternoon tea with us in the Mary Somerville Room, and participate in a brief tour of the JSM collection to view some of its treasures. Then join us for three short talks, each of which will be followed by an opportunity for comments and questions.

Below is the full programme and synopses of the talks are overleaf. If you would like to join us, please RSVP to Sarah Butler, on librarian@some.ox.ac.uk or telephone 01865 270688 by Friday 10th March 2023. Thank you.

Programme

- 3.30pm Afternoon tea and JSM Library visits
(Mary Somerville Room, and the Library)
- 4.15pm Welcome from Sarah Butler, Librarian and Head of Information Services, Somerville College
(Park 5)
- 4.25pm Dr. Jeremy Fix, Fellow and Tutor in Philosophy, Keble College, University of Oxford
The Unity of the Moral Domain
- 4.55pm Prof. Albert Pionke, Professor of English, University of Alabama
Mill at Home: In the Margins of *Elements of Criticism*
- 5.25pm Julie Jack, Emeritus Fellow, Somerville College, University of Oxford
Did Mill present a satisfactory solution to the Achilles Paradox?
- 5.55pm Closing remarks from Sarah Butler



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Synopses

The Unity of the Moral Domain, Dr. Jeremy Fix

Utilitarians, like JS Mill, are well-known for having been out in front on a lot of issues of moral importance, including the moral status of the other animals. Indeed, it is often seen as a significant advantage of the view that it can easily explain the moral patiency of the other animals with respect to us. They are also well-known for having difficulties adequately explaining the significance of certain foundational moral concepts, such as consent. Indeed, it is often seen as a significant disadvantage of the view that it cannot easily explain how our moral patiency with respect to each other differs from that of the other animals. In this talk, Dr. Fix will tie these issues together and explain that the way that utilitarians account for the moral status of the other animals contrasts with a different explanation of our and their moral patiency which arises if we take seriously the foundational significance of consent.

Mill at Home: In the Margins of *Elements of Criticism*, Prof. Albert Pionke

Offering a brief welcome to and overview of Mill Marginalia Online, which has undergone an extensive technical redesign and significant upload of new data, Professor Albert Pionke will then discuss Mill's marginal additions to his 1774 edition of Scottish jurist and Enlightenment intellectual Henry Home, Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism* (1762). Widely used as a textbook on criticism and rhetoric and featuring remarks on the relationship between the emotions and the perception of beauty, grandeur, and the sublime, as well as taste more generally, Home's book prompted Mill's scepticism. Bordering at times on acerbity—e.g., "A superficial remark arising from an unphilosophical mode of observation" (vol. 1, p. 22)—Mill's marginal remarks suggest a greater degree of engagement, albeit negative, with Home than has yet been recognized by Mill's own, generally more forgiving, critics.

Did Mill present a satisfactory solution to the Achilles Paradox?, Julie Jack

In Book 5, Chapter 7, Section 1 of *System of Logic*, Mill proffers a solution to the Achilles paradox, conceived as consisting of a compellingly structured argument for the conclusion that Achilles cannot overtake the Tortoise. Mill's project of solving the paradox has the aim of explaining away the argument's claim to validity by showing up its reliance on specific kinds of hidden ambiguity. In Julie Jack's talk, she discusses some of the broader methodological aspects of such validity-refuting projects and tries to improve on Mill's treatment of the Achilles paradox.

For more information about the John Stuart Mill Library visit <https://www.some.ox.ac.uk/about/the-library/archives-special-collections/>