剑桥政治思想史原著系列（影印本）
CAMBRIDGE TEXTS IN THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

詹姆士·密尔政治著作选

James Mill

Political Writings

Edited by
TERENCE
BALL

中国政法大学出版社

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JAMES MILL
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丛书编辑

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本丛书意在使学生能够获得为了了解政治思想史所需要的最为重要的原著。就了解政治思想史而言，当代人的学识已经大大拓展了我们对不可缺少的作者的认识范围，对于这种发展，本丛书将予以体现。本丛书还将纳入一些不那么知名的著作，尤其是那些为确立知识的脉络所需要、并有助于凸显重要著作的意义的作品。当然，本丛书的主要目的还是基于最新的学术成果，就那些重要的原著本身提供新的译本。编者注重原作的完整性，作为本丛书的一个特点，我们在单独一一卷书的范围内对每个原作予以补充，加上辅助性的背景材料。每一本书都有导言，内容涉及该著作或相关著作的历史地位和现实意义，以及历史年表、进一步阅读的提示，还有（在适当时）关于书中所提及的重要个人的简要生平梗概。

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TO THE MEMORY OF

John Collwyn Rees
1919–80

Hiker and scholar

Preface

James Mill has had the double misfortune of being overshadowed by two thinkers with whom he was closely associated – his patron and mentor, Jeremy Bentham, and his first-born son, John Stuart Mill. Even the short work for which he is best known, the *Essay on Government*, is remembered mainly for the "famous attack" it called forth from the Whig historian Macaulay. Yet, when all is said and done, Mill was in his own time a formidable figure who earned the respect even of those who disagreed with him (including his nemesis Macaulay). Historian, political philosopher, psychologist, educational theorist, and economist, Mill repeatedly crossed the curricular and disciplinary boundaries that we take for granted today. Like his model Plato, Mill believed that all knowledge was of a piece, and must be grasped by the sort of "theory" that offers a "commanding view" of the whole.

The present volume can scarcely begin to do justice to the sweep and ambition of Mill's thinking. My main purpose in collecting these writings is to give the modern reader a brief but reasonably representative sampling of Mill's political writings, and in a way that shows his strengths and weaknesses as a political theorist and polemicist. In keeping with Mill's own design, this collection begins with the *Essay on Government*, departing, as branches from a trunk, in different directions to treat such allied topics as the protection of rights, a free press as a safeguard of those rights, the importance of education in enlightening the citizenry, and punishment as the primary weapon in the government's arsenal against anyone who violates the rights of fellow citizens. These are followed by a more topical polemic on the

secret ballot (1830). This collection concludes with an appendix containing Macaulay's critique of Mill's *Essay on Government* (1829) and Mill's heretofore unnoticed reply in his *Fragment on Mackintosh* (1835). Taken together, these selections will, I hope, enable the readers to form their own estimate of Mill's stature as a political theorist.

For helping me to understand the meaning of Mill's political writings I am much indebted to Isaiah Berlin, the late John Dinwiddy, Knud Haakonsen, Douglas Long, the late John Rees, Alan Ryan, Donald Winch, and William Thomas. I am also grateful to Donald Winch, William Thomas, Quentin Skinner, and Raymond Geuss for their detailed and very helpful comments on the introduction, and to Richard Fisher of the Cambridge University Press for his tact and patience.

Although he is much missed by his friends and admirers, John Rees's example endures. All Mill scholars are in his debt, and I record mine by dedicating this volume to him.

Introduction

James Mill (1773–1836) is arguably among the most underrated and least understood of modern political thinkers. He is pictured today, if he is remembered at all, as Bentham's faithful disciple and mouthpiece, and as the Gradgrind who imposed upon his long-suffering son the extraordinary education described at length in the latter's *Autobiography*. Although this present-day picture does, like any memorable caricature, contain a grain of truth, it obscures much more than it reveals. In particular, it misrepresents the way in which Mill's own contemporaries regarded him, and it underrates his influence and importance as a political thinker.

Mill's interests were by any measure remarkably wide, not to say encyclopedic. They ranged from education and psychology in his two-volume *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind*, to political economy (he persuaded his friend David Ricardo to write on that subject, as he did in his *Principles of Political Economy*), to penology and prison reform, to the law and history, and, not least, to political theory. On these and other subjects he wrote five books and more than a thousand essays and reviews. Little wonder that his contemporaries, critics and admirers alike, stood in some awe of the elder Mill.

One of James Mill's contemporaries, Harriet Grote (wife of the historian of Greece), thought him "a propagandist of a very high order, equally master of the pen and of speech." (We must, of course, recall that "propagandist" in nineteenth-century parlance meant merely a propagator of ideas, not a special pleader or paid liar.) Others were more critical. Karl Marx criticized Mill the economist

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for cloaking "bourgeois" biases in "scientific" garb. Others thought Mill dangerous for rather different reasons, including his commitment to democracy and a radical extension of the franchise. In his celebrated attack on Mill's *Essay on Government*, the Whig historian Macaulay singled out Mill as the most dangerous of the philosophic radicals, not only for his extreme political views but also because of his pernicious influence on the young.

Whether friendly or critical, Mill's contemporaries agreed that he was a force to be reckoned with – a fact forgotten or overlooked by succeeding generations of commentators as the elder Mill's reputation was eclipsed by those of Bentham and his son. Historians of political thought have only recently begun to recognize the extent of his influence. The work of William Thomas (1979), John Rees (1985), Robert Fenn (1987), and others has gone some way toward reassessing Mill's stature as a political thinker. These follow Donald Winch's (1966) reassessment of Mill's reputation as an economist and W.H. Burston's (1969, 1973) reappraisal of Mill's educational theories. It is with Mill the political theorist that the present volume is principally concerned.

Life

"When a man has risen to great intellectual or moral eminence," Mill wrote, "the process by which his mind was formed is one of the most instructive circumstances which can be unveiled to mankind." Yet the circumstances under which James Mill's mind was formed remained veiled during his lifetime. Mill, unlike his son, never wrote an autobiography or even a sketch of his early life, the details of which remained undisclosed even to his children. Why this should be so, I cannot say. But we can at least piece together the few scraps that we do possess.

James Mill was born in 1773 in Scotland. His father, also named James, was a shoemaker and smallholder of modest means, and was by all accounts quiet, mild-mannered, and devout. His mother, Isabel, was an altogether more forceful figure. Determined that her first-born son should get ahead in the world, she changed the family name from the Scottish "Milne" to the more English-sounding "Mill," and kept young James away from other children, demanding

that he spend most of his waking hours immersed in study. Unlike his younger brother and sister, he was exempted from performing household chores. His "sole occupation," as his biographer Alexander Bain remarks, "was study." (A regimen rather like that imposed by his mother upon her eldest son was later to be imposed upon his first-born son, John Stuart Mill.) In this occupation young James clearly excelled. Before the age of seven he had shown a talent for elocution, composition, arithmetic, and languages, Latin and Greek in particular. The parish minister saw to it that James received special attention at the parish school. At age ten or eleven, he was sent to Montrose Academy, where his teachers, Bain tells us, "were always overflowing with the praises of Mill's cleverness and perseverence." Sometime before leaving Montrose Academy at the age of seventeen, Mill was persuaded by the parish minister and his mother to study for the ministry.

Word of Mill's decision soon reached Lady Jane Stuart, wife of Sir John Stuart of Fettercairn and patroness of a local charity founded for the purpose of educating poor but promising boys for the Presbyterian ministry. Mill, eminently qualified on both counts, became the recipient of Lady Jane's largesse. As it happened, she and Sir John were just then looking for a tutor for their fourteen-year-old daughter Wilhelmina. They offered the job to James Mill; he accepted; and when the Stuart family moved to Edinburgh, he accompanied them.

Arriving in Edinburgh in 1790, Mill enrolled in the University, where by day he pursued a full course of studies and in the evenings presided over the education of young Wilhelmina. Each experience left its mark. The Scottish universities at Edinburgh and Glasgow (and to a lesser extent Aberdeen and St. Andrews) had earlier been the hub of the Scottish Enlightenment and were still the premier universities in Britain. They had numbered among their faculty such luminaries as Francis Hutcheson, Thomas Reid, John Millar, Adam Ferguson, Adam Smith, and would – if the orthodox town council of Edinburgh had not forbidden his admission – have included David Hume as well. At Edinburgh, Dugald Stewart, under whom Mill studied, carried on the tradition of Scottish moral philosophy. In addition to moral philosophy, Mill's course of studies included history, political economy, and the classics, including Mill's favorite author, Plato. Mill's mind never lost the impress of his Scottish

education. As his eldest son was later to remark, James Mill was "the last survivor of this great school."

From 1790 to 1794 Mill served Wilhelmina Stuart not only as a teacher but as a companion and confidant. Her admiration for her tutor quite likely turned to love, and the feeling was apparently reciprocated. But that match was not to be. However promising his prospects, Mill was no aristocrat, a social fact which he was not allowed to forget. In 1797 Wilhelmina married a member of her own class and died shortly thereafter. Mill never forgot her; he spoke of her always with wistful affection and named his first-born daughter after her.

Upon completing his first degree in 1794, Mill began studying for the ministry. For the next four years he supported himself by tutoring the sons and daughters of several noble families. The experience was not a happy one. For repeatedly forgetting his "place" in "polite society" he suffered one insult after another. He harbored ever after an abiding hatred for an hereditary aristocracy.

Licensed to preach in 1798, Mill was unable to secure a position. He was for a time an itinerant preacher, riding on horseback from one parish to another, his saddlebags stuffed with sermons said to be learned but largely incomprehensible to his hapless parishioners. It is possible that Mill had already begun to lose his faith. At any rate, he had by the early 1800s become restless and disillusioned, and in 1802 he left for London and a "career in authorship." When he arrived in London he was twenty-nine and full of schemes for improving his situation. Little came of these, however, and he had to eke out a precarious existence as a journalistic odd-jobber and literary hack.

Mill's pen proved to be a prolific one. From 1802 until his appointment to the East India Company in 1819 Mill's literary labors were by any standard prodigious. Besides some 1,400 editorials, he wrote hundreds of substantial articles and reviews, as well as several books, including his *History of British India* in three large volumes. Some of these were doubtless labors of love; but most were labors of necessity, for Mill had to support himself and his wife Harriet, whom he married in 1805, and a growing brood of "brats." The first of nine, born in 1806, was named John Stuart in honor of his father's Scottish patron.

In 1808 James Mill met Jeremy Bentham, with whom he soon formed a political and literary alliance. The two were in many respects

kindred spirits. Both wished and worked for religious toleration and legal reform; both favored freedom of speech and press; both feared that the failure to reform the British political system – by, among other things, extending the franchise – would give rise to reactionary intransigence on the one hand, and revolutionary excess on the other. But the two men were of vastly different temperaments and backgrounds. Bentham, a wealthy bachelor, was an eccentric closet philosopher who fancied himself a modern law-giver and man of the world. Mill, poor, harried, and hard-working, was the more practical and worldly of the two. He was also the better writer and abler propagandist.

A hedonist by temperament and philosophy, Bentham believed that the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain were the twin aims of all human action. His philosophy, Utilitarianism, held that self-interest – understood as pleasure or happiness – should be "maximized" and pain "minimized" (Bentham, incidentally, coined the terms). And, as with individual self-interest, so too with the public interest. The aim of legislation and public policy was, according to Bentham, to promote "the greatest happiness of the greatest number." Mill agreed, after a fashion. A dour Scots Presbyterian and something of a Platonist, he took a dim view of unalloyed hedonism. Like Plato, he ranked the pleasures in a hierarchy, with the sensual pleasures subordinated to the intellectual ones.

Despite these differences, Mill proved an invaluable ally. He helped to make Bentham's ideas and schemes more palatable and popular than they might otherwise have been. But he also influenced Bentham's ideas in a number of ways. For one, Mill led Bentham to appreciate the importance of economic factors in explaining and changing social life and political institutions; for another, he turned Bentham away from advocating aristocratic "top-down" reform into a more popular or "democratic" direction.

Their partnership was unique and, for a time, fruitful. With Mill's energy and Bentham's financial backing, Utilitarian schemes for legal, political, penal, and educational reform gained an ever wider audience and circle of adherents. This circle included, among others, Francis Place ("the radical tailor of Charing Cross"), the Genevan Etienne Dumont, the historian George Grote, the stockbroker-turned-economist David Ricardo, and – not least – the young John Stuart Mill. Each in his own way enlisted in the Utilitarian cause. The

cause was furthered by the founding of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge and, later, by the launching of the *Westminster Review* and the founding of University College London (where Bentham's body, stuffed and mounted in a glass case, can still be seen today). This small band of "philosophic radicals" worked tirelessly for political changes, several of which were later incorporated into the Reform Act of 1832. But Bentham and Mill, while maintaining a united front for political purposes, became increasingly estranged. Bentham was irascible and difficult to work with, and Mill on more than one occasion swallowed his pride by accepting financial help and personal rebuke from the old man.

In 1818, after twelve years' work, Mill's massive *History of British India* was published. Early in the following year he was appointed Assistant Examiner at the East India Company. His financial future finally secured, Mill no longer needed Bentham's largesse. The two men saw less and less of each other. Their political alliance continued even as their personal relationship cooled. Their uneasy friendship effectively ended some years before Bentham's death in 1832.

Mill did not exaggerate when he remarked that his "life had been a laborious one." Besides being a tireless reformer and prodigious writer, he supplied his son John with one of the most strenuous educations ever recorded in the annals of pedagogy. The elder Mill gave young John daily lessons in Latin, Greek, French, history, philosophy, and political economy. Literature and poetry were also taught, although with less enthusiasm (James Mill, like Plato, distrusted poets and poetry). John was in turn expected to tutor his younger brothers and sisters in these subjects. Each was examined rigorously and regularly by their stern Scots father, and the nine children, like their mother, lived with an abiding fear of his rebuke. The Mill household was not a happy one. Although the elder Mill mellowed in his later years, largely because his fear of financial ruin abated with his advancement in the East India Company, his children remembered him mainly for his "temper" and his humorless sternness.

Mill's strained relations with his wife and children stand in stark contrast with those he had with others. Young men especially sought him out for the pleasure of his company and the vigor of his conversation. As John Black, the editor of the *Morning Chronicle*, recalled on the occasion of Mill's death in 1836:

> Mr. Mill was eloquent and impressive in conversation. He had a great command of language, which bore the stamp of his earnest and energetic character. Young men were particularly fond of his society ... No man could enjoy his society without catching a portion of his elevated enthusiasm ... His conversation was so energetic and complete in thought, so succinct, and exact ... in expression, that, if reported as uttered, his colloquial observations or arguments would have been perfect compositions.

The same cannot, alas, be said of Mill's writings, which tend to be both dry and devoid of decoration.

Mill as writer and theorist

The elder Mill strove to write, he said, with "manly plainness," and in that endeavor he certainly succeeded. The reader is never at a loss to know just where his sympathies lie. Mill's manly plainness is particularly evident in his *History of British India*, which he calls a "critical, or judging history." His judgments on Hindu customs and practices are particularly harsh. He denounces their "rude" and "backward" culture for its cultivation of ignorance and its veneration of superstition, and leaves no doubt that he favors a strong dose of Utilitarian rationalism as an antidote. Although his *History* is in part a Utilitarian treatise and in part a defense of British intervention in Indian affairs, it is more than the sum of those two parts, important though they are. Mill's *History* shows, perhaps more clearly than any of his other works, the continuing impress and importance of his Scottish education. The criteria according to which Mill judges and criticizes Indian practices and customs derive from the view of historical progress that he had learned from Stewart and Millar, amongst others. This view holds that "man is a progressive being" and that education is the chief engine of progress. And this in turn helps to explain not only Mill's harsh judgments on the Hindus but his continuing emphasis on education.

Virtually everything that James Mill ever wrote had a pedagogical purpose. Mill was a relentlessly didactic writer with a schoolmaster's penchant for laying out, summarizing, and repeating his central points, in a manner more likely to be irritating than illuminating to the modern reader. Mill's most important political essays – *Government*, in particular – take the form of clipped, concise, deductive arguments.

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