

COLLECTED WORKS OF JOHN STUART MILL

VOLUME I

The Collected Edition of the works of John Stuart Mill was planned and directed by an editorial committee appointed from the Faculty of Arts and Science of the University of Toronto, and from the University of Toronto Press. The primary aim of the edition is to present fully collated texts of those works which exist in a number of versions, both printed and manuscript, and to provide accurate texts of works previously unpublished or which had become relatively inaccessible.

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Autobiography and Literary Essays

by JOHN STUART MILL

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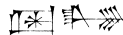
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Introduction

JOHN STUART MILL'S *Autobiography* offers details of his life, a subjective judgment as to its significance, and lengthy expositions of his leading ideas. It is therefore fitting that it should occupy the first place in an edition of his collected works. Indeed Mill himself, thinking of a smaller collection of essays, suggested to his wife that "the Life" should appear "at their head."¹ The *Autobiography*'s comprehensiveness makes the choice of other materials to accompany it less obvious. Those gathered under the rubric of literary essays were decided upon because autobiography is a literary genre, because these essays cast light on some of the personal relations outlined in the memoir, and because they derive from and help us understand a period Mill saw as crucial to his development. Indeed they allow us, as does the *Autobiography*, to see aspects of his character that are obscured in the more magisterial works. In particular, one finds specific evidence of aesthetic enthusiasm and taste, and of friendships and allegiances, that proves him not to have been the chill pedant of caricature.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES are seldom explicit about their purposes, which can be widely diverse. Yet to ignore the author's intentions is to run the risk of confusing, for example, confession with self-celebration, or diary with social anatomy. Mill helps us avoid this danger by presenting, in the first paragraph of his *Autobiography*, a warning that serves as an enticing framework for his overt statement of purpose. He cannot imagine that anything in a life "so uneventful" could be "interesting to the public as a narrative, or as being connected" with himself. But there are, he says, other reasons that justify the publication of the record: first, a description of his "unusual and remarkable" education should be useful in showing how much can effectively be taught to children; second, an account of the successive phases of a mind always eager and open will be "both of interest and of benefit" in "an age of transition in opinions"; and, finally, and to the author most significantly (though, as he does not point out, without direct public utility), an

¹*Later Letters [LL]*, ed. Francis E. Mineka and Dwight N. Lindley, *Collected Works [CW]*, Vols. XIV–XVII (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), Vol. XIV, p. 142 (29 Jan., 1854).

acknowledgment of his intellectual and moral debts is necessary to satisfy his sense of duty. Having thus established the terms of a contract with his potential audience, Mill closes the paragraph with an admonition that probably no one has ever heeded: “The reader whom these things do not interest, has only himself to blame if he reads farther, and I do not desire any other indulgence from him than that of bearing in mind, that for him these pages were not written” (p. 5).²

Anyone reading this introduction (and we beg the same indulgence) presumably believes, *malgré* Mill, that his “uneventful” life is interesting, or accepts, with him, the validity of his stated goals. One can proceed, then, to use the opening paragraph as an avenue into comment on the *Autobiography*, confident that one is on the author’s chosen route. To do so is doubly important, for some critics have chosen to treat his evident omissions and underplaying of events and people as evidence of suppressed psychological states or distorting attitudes. And such inferences may be correct: but at least one should give Mill credit, with his quirks and biases, for knowing what he was trying to do.

It is apparent, to begin with, that the narrative balance is affected by his notion of what his readers should properly take an interest in. As so often occurs in personal memoirs, there is a chronological imbalance: the first six chapters (about 70 per cent of the text) cover the period to 1840, when Mill was thirty-six years old, while the seventh and last chapter deals with the next thirty years. The title of that last chapter—“General View of the Remainder of My Life”—suggests summary and diminuendo, whereas the titles of the earlier chapters imply the rich detail that they in fact contain.

Although chronology is (in the main) the structural guide, the pace is irregular: ignoring some adumbration and very slight retrospection, one can say that Chapters i and ii cover roughly the same years (to *aet.* 15) from different points of view, intellectual and moral. Chapter iii, rather surprisingly, covers only about two years (to *aet.* 17). Chapters iv and v together deal with nine years (to 1830, *aet.* 24); they overlap in their accounts of the period from 1826 to 1829 (*aet.* 20 to 23). Chapter vi takes one through the next decade (to 1840, *aet.* 34), and Chapter vii brings the narrative to the point where Mill finally put down his pen, early in 1870 (*aet.* 63). Furthermore, the chapters vary considerably in length, so the average amount of space given per year in each period clarifies the emphasis:

TABLE 1³

Chap.	i & ii	iii	iv & v	vi	vii
No. of years	15	2	9	10	30
% of total pages	19	8	32	12	30
% of pages per year	1.3	4	3.6	1.2	1

²References to material printed in this volume are normally given in the text. The third of these stated purposes, it should be noted, is not present in the corresponding text of the Early Draft.

³Percentages are used because the setting of the text in this edition (parallel passages with blank spaces) and the number of footnotes make page counting unreliable. For that reason, in both Table 1

Explanatory light is thrown on the imbalance by Mill's tripartite division of his life: the first stage being one of education and of propagandism for Philosophic Radicalism; the second stage one of new ideas, assimilation, and reconsideration; and the third stage one of mature and steady (but not rigid) views, recorded in his major works. This division, seen in conjunction with the three purposes Mill announces, makes it clearer why he structured the *Autobiography* as he did.

The account of his education (first purpose) occupies most of the first three chapters, while the explanation of the "successive phases" of his mind (second purpose) is the main matter of the next three chapters. The division between these phases, however, cannot be distinctly drawn, and the third purpose, acknowledgment of debts, as is to be expected, is served through most of the work. The reason is that education in its widest sense is a continuous process, during which one moves through "phases" and incurs repeated debts. For example, looking at the transition from Chapter iii to Chapter iv, one sees that the former ends with an account of what Mill, in its title, identifies as the "first" stage of his self-education, and the latter, with its mention of the strenuous activities of the fledgling Philosophic Radicals (discussions, debates, studies, editing, essays), obviously is the next phase. But, while the narrative of sectarian activities in Chapter iv provides an excellent foil for the rejection of one-sidedness in Chapter v, it also outlines a continuation of the young Mill's education. Furthermore, his education of course continued in the exciting phase described in Chapter v, "A Crisis in My Mental History. One Stage Onward." And in each of these chapters, as in Chapters i and ii, he mentions people who influenced him. The thematic intertwining, with the consequent need to cover crucial periods from different standpoints, explains why the period of greatest overlap, from about 1821 to the early 1830s, gets most attention. A glance at Table 1 above will show that Chapters iii-v occupy about 40 per cent of the whole work, and on an average each year in that period is given more than 3½ times as much space as each year after 1840.

So, if we accept the premises Mill himself advances, the concentration on his education and intellectual development until his mid-thirties is neither surprising nor exceptionable. Indeed, the anomalous element is the final chapter, with its account of his next thirty years, in which there should be little matter relevant to his stated purposes. There is, in fact, some: most obviously, Mill pays important tribute to his wife. Chapter vi, which covers the decade of their first acquaintance, has in its title the strong assertion, "Commencement of the Most Valuable Friendship of My Life," but the continuation of the account into the final chapter results in almost one-fifth of it being dedicated to her part in his life and work. Indeed, he ties that account directly to his third purpose:

In resuming my pen some years after closing the preceding narrative, I am influenced by a desire not to leave incomplete the record, for the sake of which chiefly this biographical

and Table 2 below, the counts are based on Jack Stillinger's editions of the *Autobiography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969) and *The Early Draft of John Stuart Mill's "Autobiography"* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961).

sketch was undertaken, of the obligations I owe to those who have either contributed essentially to my own mental development or had a direct share in my writings and in whatever else of a public nature I have done.⁴

It may be noticed that here he somewhat modifies his initial statement of purpose: rather than referring to aids to his *intellectual and moral* development, he refers to those who contributed to his *mental* development and to those who shared in his writings and public acts. This modification further justifies the final chapter, for in its pages appear substantial accounts of his writings in maturity, in the course of which he mentions other debts.⁵ It cannot be denied, however, that after the last tribute to his wife, the focus does alter: in actual as well as proportional length, Mill gives more space to his parliamentary career (1865–68) than to any other period in his life, even that of his “mental crisis.”⁶ The account of that career, the events of which were fresh in his mind only a year after his defeat, is not easily justified on Mill’s stated terms. Indeed, its main interest surely lies outside them, in his own character and fame, which are described if not in a boastful, at least in a self-satisfied way.

Apart from the concluding portion of Chapter vii (which, untypically for Mill, was not rewritten), one can, then, gain considerable insight by accepting his exordium as accurate. In that light, some comment on the way he fulfils his goals is appropriate.

First, the description of his extraordinary education, initially at the hands of his father, but later and indeed for most of the time on his own initiative, is copious and full of interest. The account is also dense, as may be seen by comparing the combined lengths of Appendices B and C below, which attempt to reconstruct his early reading and writing, with their primary source, the early pages of the *Autobiography* (cf. especially pp. 9–25 with App. B, pp. 552–68). The early start (Greek at the age of three) was not then so exceptional as it now would be: to choose relevant comparisons, Bentham (with not much encouragement) was quick off the infant blocks, as (with more encouragement) was Macaulay. Mill was unusual, but he appears unique because he left such a full record. His detailed memory of those early years is surprising; however, he almost certainly had at least one *aide-mémoire*, a copy of the letter he wrote to Sir Samuel Bentham in mid-1819,⁷ setting out his educational accomplishments of the preceding six years. That letter confirms and slightly expands the account in the *Autobiography*, and strengthens our appreciation of two aspects of his education—its continued and indeed increasing intensity, and the fact that it was intermingled with daily

⁴P. 251. The composition of the concluding pages of Chap. vii is described on p. xxvii below.

⁵The acknowledgments are not extensive, though Helen Taylor is given a page explicitly (and more implicitly), and Thomas Hare’s writings are also given a page.

⁶If we include the discussion of his writings while he was a member of parliament, the account fills about twenty pages, whereas that of his crisis occupies about eight.

⁷See *Earlier Letters [EL]*, ed. Francis E. Mineka, *CW*, Vols. XII–XIII (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), Vol. XII, pp. 6–10.

instruction of his younger siblings, especially of the two closest to him in age, Wilhelmina and Clara. In both these respects he was very unusual, especially when it is remembered that he had no formal education at all, his only teacher, in these early years, being his father, who was in truth using the child as a proving ground for his theories. (This wicked practice, it may be remarked, is found in all enlightened periods.) However, as Mill points out, his was not an education of cram; its great virtue, he believed, was that it enabled and encouraged him to think for himself, not only answering but questioning, not only getting but giving, not only remembering but discovering. This practice remained with him through life, and was connected with yet another distinguishing element: his curiosity and eagerness to learn. In the *Autobiography* this attribute is mentioned, although it surely tells against his assertion that anyone educated as he was could match his record. In the journal he kept while in France, his eagerness stands out as though in boldface, while one can read between the lines the efforts of his hosts, especially Lady Bentham, to prevent his doing lessons all the time.⁸

Probably the most extraordinary aspect of Mill's precocity was his ability from about twelve to fifteen years of age to comprehend and enunciate abstract ideas in economics, and some parts of philosophy and science. Many gifted children astonish with feats of memory,⁹ with ability to learn languages, and, perhaps most obviously, with great mathematical powers; Mill had these talents, but also showed astonishing maturity in his wide-ranging discussions with his father and others, in his self-directed studies, in his comments on his more formal studies, and in the major surviving piece of contemporary evidence, the "Traité de logique" he wrote while in France. And, without extending the case unduly, his editing, before his twentieth year, of Bentham's *Rationale of Judicial Evidence* (see the understated account on pp. 117–19 below) was a genuinely amazing feat.

In his account, of course, Mill, in keeping with his third purpose, is celebrating

⁸See Anna J. Mill, ed., *John Mill's Boyhood Visit to France* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960), esp. pp. 24, 28, 35, 43, 50.

⁹Given Mill's attitude towards his own life, it is not surprising that the *Autobiography* lacks particularity of detail. But there are some sentences that convey a sense of luminous memory breaking through the calm level. Often these have to do with his father's use of the Socratic method in teaching; "my recollection," he says, "is almost wholly of failures, hardly ever of success" (p. 35). Earlier he had remarked that he "well" remembered "how, and in what particular walk," his father had attempted to get him to understand syllogistic logic (p. 21); here he goes on to mention what was obviously vivid in his mind, forty years after the event, his inability to define "idea," and his father's challenging him for having said that "something was true in theory but required correction in practice" (p. 35). Shortly thereafter he says he remembers "the very place in Hyde Park where, in [his] fourteenth year," his father explained to him how unusual a person his education had made him (p. 37). Perhaps the most surprising passage is that concerning Ford Abbey, where the grounds, Mill (with his wife's help) says, "were riant and secluded, umbrageous, and full of the sound of falling waters" (p. 57). More often the emotion is excluded with the telling detail, and only retracing the process of revision gives an opening: he mentions reading Dugald Stewart on reasoning "a second or third time" (originally he had written—probably correctly—"third or fourth"), but he cancelled "sitting in the garden at Mickleham" (where the Mills had a cottage). The detail is striking for anyone who has handled the bulky folios of Stewart, another matter that Mill omits. (Pp. 188–9.)

not himself, but his father, and, despite the qualifications and explanations,¹⁰ it is a celebration, incorporating at least one memorable aphorism: “A pupil from whom nothing is ever demanded which he cannot do, never does all he can” (p. 35). Moving into the period of self-education, Mill, having learned his pedagogy, broadened his teaching to include others who were caught up in the Radicals’ increasing momentum,¹¹ and one can be sure that at least the demand side of the aphorism was observed. We cannot now recapture all the detail—let alone the enthusiasm—of the activities he joined in with others, but what is known is remarkable.

The earliest joint venture was probably the “Mutual Improvement Society,” not mentioned in the *Autobiography*, which flowered at least briefly under Jeremy Bentham’s patronage.¹² The date of Mill’s two surviving speeches for that Society, 1823 or 1824,¹³ suggests that in fact it may have melded with the “Utilitarian Society” that Mill says he founded in the winter of 1822–23 (p. 81); the latter also met in Bentham’s house, included Bentham’s amanuensis, Richard Doane, and convened once a fortnight to read essays and discuss questions of ethics and politics. This small group, which continued until 1826, included Mill’s most intimate friends, as did its successor, the “Society of Students of Mental Philosophy,” which met for detailed discussion of specific philosophic and economic texts in George Grote’s house from 1825 until early in 1828, and then again in 1829.¹⁴ In the mid-20s, emulating the *philosophes*, Mill kept a journal of his group’s activities, and wrote a few articles for a proposed Philosophical Diction-

¹⁰Probably the one he intended to tell most against a general application of his father’s methods is that on p. 37, where Mill says that much of what was accomplished was incompatible with “any great amount of intercourse with other boys.” (It need not be said that this pre-Freudian remark has no special reference to the English public schools.)

¹¹See John Arthur Roebuck’s account in his *Life and Letters*, ed. R. E. Leader (London: Arnold, 1897), pp. 25–8. See also pp. 306–7, where Leader gives Roebuck’s speech at an election meeting in support of Mill’s candidacy for Westminster (reported in the *Morning Star*, 7 Apr., 1865, p. 2).

¹²See John M. Robson, “John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, with Some Observations on James Mill,” in *Essays in English Literature Presented to A. S. P. Woodhouse*, ed. M. MacLure and F. W. Watt (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), p. 254.

¹³One, “On the Utility of Knowledge,” was dated 1823 by its editor, H. J. Laski (who had the MS in his possession); see Mill’s *Autobiography*, ed. Laski (London: Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. 267–74. The MS of the other, “On Parliamentary Reform,” is inscribed by Mill “1823 or 24” (Mill-Taylor Collection, British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics).

¹⁴The Utilitarian Society included William Prescott (Grote’s banking partner), William Eyton Tooke, William Ellis, George John Graham, and John Arthur Roebuck; the Society of Students of Mental Philosophy (which Harriet Grote called “the Brangles”) included all these (though Tooke is not named in known sources) plus, at one time or another, George Grote, Horace Grant, Henry Cole, Edward Lytton Bulwer, “two brothers Whitmore” (probably George and William, who were members of the London Debating Society), and [John?] Wilson. (See Textual Introduction, *A System of Logic*, CW, Vols. VII–VIII [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973], Vol. VII, p. liii, and the sources there cited, and F. E. Sparshott, Introduction, *Essays on Philosophy and the Classics*, CW, Vol. XI [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978], p. viii n.)

ary to be edited by Charles Austin (see p. 110; the journal and articles seem not to have survived).

Another kind of mutual education, through propagation of the faith, was contemporaneous: public debate. First, in 1825, he and some friends¹⁵ debated against the Owenites of the Cooperative Society; then, from 1826 to 1829, they embarked on a more impressive scheme, the London Debating Society, in which the coming young men opened their minds and talents on major issues of the times.¹⁶ Less important were evening meetings to study elocution, and the formation of a class to learn German on the “Hamiltonian method.”¹⁷

Of greater significance in a wider sphere was the work done by the young Philosophic Radicals with their elders and mentors on the *Westminster Review*, founded in 1824 (see pp. 93–101), and on the *Parliamentary History and Review* during its brief career from 1826 to 1828 (p. 121), the latter year also seeing the Mills withdraw from the *Westminster Review* stable (p. 135). Throughout this period Mill’s practical education, the value of which he acknowledges on p. 87, was going on in the Examiner’s Office of the East India Company, which he had joined in 1823 on his seventeenth birthday. Finally, though the details are vague, one should not overlook the broad educational benefits of his less formal but undoubtedly strenuous and wide-ranging discussions with his friends on his daily walks between Kensington and the City, and his weekend and holiday excursions into the countryside. Even without analysis of his writings, one can wholeheartedly support his judgment that from 1822 to 1828 his “own pursuits . . . were never carried on more vigorously” (p. 89).¹⁸

Here one is moving to the second of Mill’s purposes, his desire to show “the successive phases” of a “mind which was always pressing forward, equally ready to learn and to unlearn either from its own thoughts or from those of others” (p. 5). The least precise of the three goals, it nonetheless gets very careful attention in the next few chapters of the *Autobiography*, those dealing with the period from the

¹⁵He mentions Roebuck, Ellis, and Charles Austin (pp. 127–9).

¹⁶See pp. 129–33. Roebuck was (for most of the period) Mill’s major ally, but many other friends joined in the fray. The Society continued for a few years after Mill (with John Sterling, a new friend made through the Society) withdrew in 1829.

¹⁷P. 123. Mill’s assertion that he “learnt German” at this time, and his later mention of reading “Goethe and other Germans” (adding in an earlier version, “either in the original or in translations,” p. 160^b), merit attention, because the question whether he read the language is often raised, especially in connection with his philosophy. The Hamiltonian method (set out in James Hamilton, *The History, Principles, Practice and Results of the Hamiltonian System* [Manchester: Sowler, 1829]) involved immediate word for word translation by the student, the method originally used, and apparently still approved, by James Mill, who, on 15 Nov., 1825, was one of a group that examined “eight lads” of poor families who had been learning Latin, French, and Italian by this system (*Morning Chronicle*, 16 Nov., 1825).

¹⁸In the Early Draft the sentence as first written reinforced the point by continuing, “than during the next few years.” Harriet Taylor underscored “few” and Mill responded with the question, “meaning of this mark?” Her answer, whatever it was, led to the deletion of the words.

time of his mental crisis in 1826–27 until 1840, when the *Logic* was virtually completed. He says that in his account of “these years of transition” he has mentioned only those of his “new impressions” which appeared then and later “to be a kind of turning points, marking a definite progress” in his mode of thought (p. 175). And he goes on to indicate that he was considering much more in those years than the account indicates. The nature and intensity of some of these considerations are to be seen in the literary essays in the present volume.

Many of the changes, these essays also imply, came through personal contact of the kind already suggested, as his circle of acquaintance broadened. The record of “successive phases” of his mind is, therefore, again seen to be intertwined with that of his debts, and so the second and third purposes are served together. Often his desire to acknowledge his intellectual debts is greater than his desire to trace his development, with the result; quite intentional on Mill’s part, that emphasis falls on certain aspects of his development at the expense of others. For example, the brief period of near withdrawal from his customary activities from 1828 to 1830 is left in shade, and little evidence is available elsewhere to fill in the picture. And the years of active political sectarianism in the *London and Westminster Review*, years that have troubled many who otherwise admire Mill (after all, he says he had already forsworn at least overt sectarianism [see pp. 115–17]), are excused by the plea of circumstance, inadequately described. Again—and from the perspective of the editors of this volume, quite regrettably—Mill gives little space to his writings for journals in the 1830s, and much of that concerns his mainly political leaders in the *Examiner*.

As mentioned above, one important change, Mill’s new aesthetic interest, is seen in his literary essays. In particular, they indicate the shift in thought following his distress over the effects of purely analytic methods, and point to the existence of what was not quite a school, or even a coterie, but certainly was a group quick to respond and to interact. The relief Mill found in Wordsworth’s poetry (pp. 149–53), and his related discovery of Shelley (a favourite of Harriet Taylor’s), as well as his love of music (almost unmentioned in the *Autobiography*),¹⁹ and his growing appreciation of drama, painting, and architecture, all had a part in inducing the aesthetic speculations found in these essays. Though they do not amount to an important theory, elements of them are of considerable value, and helped clarify for Mill both the place of emotion in individual lives and in the human sciences, and what he took to be his proper role in the “Art and Science of Life,” as “Scientist” or “Logician,” and not as “Artist” or “Poet.”²⁰

Mill was markedly influenced by his new acquaintances, most significantly by

¹⁹There are references on pp. 21, 147–9. He played the piano (and composed in an amateur way); the piano he used in France still exists, in Fondation Flandreysy-Espérandieu, Palais du Roure, Avignon.

²⁰See John M. Robson, “J. S. Mill’s Theory of Poetry,” *University of Toronto Quarterly*, XXIX (July, 1960), 420–37, and, for a more personal application of the theory, Robson, “Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill: Artist and Scientist,” *Queen’s Quarterly*, LXXIII (Summer, 1966), 167–86.

W. J. Fox's circle of Unitarians,²¹ including Harriet and John Taylor, by Thomas Carlyle, and by John Sterling. Through Sterling (and perhaps through Cambridge friends of Charles Austin) Mill became acquainted with other of the Cambridge "Apostles," and it is of more than passing significance that his reaching out for "radicals" of different kinds brought into the net of the *London and Westminster Review* some of these apparently incompatible, but equally enthusiastic proponents of a new order. When one considers the subjects and provenances of Mill's articles in the present volume, the network of relations is evident: of those articles published in the 1830s, four of the five that appeared before 1835 were in Fox's journal, the *Monthly Repository* (which in these years was Mill's main organ for non-literary essays as well); all those after that date were in the *London and Westminster* under his own editorship. Not all the articles are actually reviews, but of those that are, two deal with William Bridges Adams, a protégé of Fox's, who married Sarah Flower, the sister of Harriet Taylor's closest friend (and Fox's lover), Eliza. Browning also was a member of Fox's circle, and only accident (see pp. xxxiii–xxxiv) prevented Mill's review of his *Pauline* from appearing. Tennyson, Helps, Milnes, and Bulwer (see App. F, p. 604) were all Cambridge men, the first three Apostles. This evidence does not justify an accusation of puffery, though the reviews are favourable, but Mill can at least be seen as showing bias in his selection of subjects. And there is other evidence of his raising a wind. Exhalations include his placing, in the *Examiner*, reviews of Eliza Flower's musical compositions,²² and complimentary notices of the *Monthly Repository*.²³ In return, the *Repository* blew some kisses, mentioning as a new publication the pamphlet reprint of Mill's "Corporation and Church Property," and commenting, "Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest' this little pamphlet, which is full of the marrow of a sound philosophy and morality." In "Characteristics of English Aristocracy," a review of Bulwer's *England and the English*, there is praise for the appendices Mill contributed anonymously on Bentham and James Mill that might well normally have gone unnoticed. And there is an unambiguous (to the informed) reference to Mill: "The most accomplished and perfect logician we ever knew, has the best appreciation of the beautiful and the poetical."²⁴

In all ages, and even among the virtuous, *manus manum lavat*, and altruism may be a form of self-help. There were, in that age of excitement, when the old order (again) seemed to be passing away, many opportunities for the daring and enthusiastic young to air and share their views, and as Mill passed through his

²¹Mill surely knew of Fox, if he had not actually met him, as early as 1824, for Fox contributed to the first number of the *Westminster* the lead article, which almost certainly is one of the two Mill says he took most to heart (see p. 96 below).

²²3 July, 1831, pp. 420–1; 8 Apr., 1832, p. 230; 21 Apr., 1833, p. 245; 20 Apr., 1834, p. 244; and 4 Jan., 1835, p. 4.

²³17 Mar., 1833, pp. 164–5; 14 Apr., 1833, pp. 229–30; 16 June, 1833, pp. 372–3; 8 Sept., 1833, p. 567; 15 Dec., 1833, pp. 788–9; 12 Jan., 1834, p. 21.

²⁴*Monthly Repository*, n.s. VII (Mar., 1833), 215, and *ibid.* (Sept., 1833), 601, and 593.

“successive phases” he joined in or was touched by the Philosophic Radicals of the 1820s, the Romantics, the Saint-Simonians, the Unitarians, the Cambridge Apostles, the new bureaucrats, the Philosophic Radicals of the 1830s; in some cases he was at or near the centre, in others on the periphery—but never was he to be ignored.

A change came, however. The last stage (on his account) was one in which he thought himself rejected by “society,” and in which, in any case, he rejected the society of most others. His relation with Harriet Taylor, a relation which they seem naïvely to have thought neither would nor should cause comment, resulted in their eventual isolation from all but a few, such as the Carlyles (and there was constant and increasing tension even with them). Mill’s account of his movement into maturity of opinion, then, ought to be seen also as a movement away from the influence of groups. He did not, it should be clear, go into intellectual solitude, for quite apart from the constant interchange of views with Harriet Taylor, he read and corresponded widely (for example with Auguste Comte). He was not, however, in an arena where the constant push-and-pull of allegiances, opinions, and events could initiate major fluctuations of belief. When, in the mid-1860s after his wife’s death and his retirement from the East India Company, the time did come for him to plunge into turbulent political waters, his general attitudes were indeed firm, though his expression of them in particular circumstances led some to believe him fickle. And at that time, as young men gathered round him—Bain, Cairnes, Fawcett, Morley, even Spencer—it was his influence on them that mattered, not theirs on him. And that tale he does not choose to tell.

The tale he does tell, right from the beginning of the *Autobiography*, as we have seen, is that of his third purpose: acknowledgment of his intellectual and moral debts, the importance of which justifies brief analysis. It is hard and indeed unwise to identify separately the elements that make up Mill’s accounts of his teachers and friends; there is some mention of their characters, some of their careers, and some of their writings, as well as of their relations with Mill, and all these matters bear on one another. Also, a few people of obvious importance are mentioned almost in passing,²⁵ one may infer because the exigencies of narrative did not easily permit of a fuller account. As has been argued, the tributes and assessments are entwined with the accounts of his education and the movement of his mind; nonetheless, if we look simply at the main emphasis of passages, almost one-third of the final version is given generally to an account of his debts. (A considerably higher proportion is found in the Early Draft, which includes, *inter alia*, longer passages on Roebuck and Sarah Austin and necessarily excludes the narrative of the final

²⁵As an example (not a complete account), the following persons, all of whom most certainly influenced Mill in some significant way, are, except as noted, given two sentences or less: Ricardo, Joseph Hume, Samuel Bentham and his family (about five sentences), Mill’s teachers in France. Say (four sentences), W. E. Tooke, William Ellis, G. J. Graham, Thirlwall (three sentences), Coleridge, Goethe, Fonblanque (three sentences), and Bain.

years.) The relative weighting is interesting. Ignoring all those of less than one-half page in length, one finds:

TABLE 2

Tribute to and discussion of	App. no. of pages	Tribute to and discussion of	App. no. of pages
James Mill	19½	Charles Austin	1½
Harriet Taylor Mill	14	Carlyle	1½
Roebuck	4 ²⁶	Sarah Austin	1 ²⁷
John Austin	3	Sterling	1
Comte	3	Maurice	1
Wordsworth	2½	Helen Taylor	1
Bentham	2	Hare	1
Saint-Simonians	2	Black	⅔
Tocqueville	2	Grote	½

Such computation (which ignores the strength as well as the kind of comment) does rough justice to Mill's account; but he himself is not even-handed. Given other evidence, including Mill's writings, no one is likely to challenge the placing of his father and his wife at the head of the list of those who influenced him. The kind of influence and its effect are perhaps moot, especially in the case of his wife, but one can easily accept his estimate of their weights. Mill says his conscience spoke to him in his father's voice (p. 613); there can be no doubt that there was a literal transference of this function to Harriet Taylor after James Mill's death in 1836, if not before, and only a little that Helen Taylor played a speaking role after her mother's death in 1858.²⁸ There is no room here for essays on these extraordinary relations; our comment is only that they were, certainly from a psychological point of view, as important as Mill indicates.

About others, though, some caveats concerning Mill's judgment must be entered. His attitude to his mother has caused speculation: not mentioned in the *Autobiography*, she is given, in isolated comments of a derogatory kind, almost all of which were cancelled, only about one-half page in the Early Draft. When he began that draft, Mill was excessively, indeed petulantly, angry at his family because of what he (and/or Harriet) took to be their slighting response to his marriage; in revision, he at least moved from derogation to silence. It is likely that his mother and his siblings did not "influence" him, using the word as he intends it, but one may well regret the attitude and the omission. At the very least it is odd that a strong feminist, writing under the correcting eye of an equally strong feminist, should have given himself but a single parent in the opening narrative sentence of

²⁶In the Early Draft; about three pages were removed in the final revision.

²⁷In the Early Draft; the passage was removed in the final revision.

²⁸Though Helen Taylor had nothing to do with the formation of Mill's central views, she was a major influence on the expression of his ideas and on his actions in the last decade of his life.

his autobiography: "I was born in London, on the 20th of May 1806, and was the eldest son of James Mill, the author of *The History of British India*" (p. 5).

Other questions can here only be asked:²⁹ if John Austin gets (deservedly) three pages, surely Bentham deserves more than two, and George Grote more than one-half—and what of Harriet Grote? Wordsworth merits at least the treatment he receives, but where then is Coleridge? (The answer lies partly, but only partly, in the discussion of the "Coleridgeans," Sterling and Maurice.) Does not Tocqueville, whose influence, curiously enough, is not acknowledged at all in the Early Draft, deserve as much space as Comte (even if we admit that much of the three pages devoted to the latter is given to denial of influence)? Surely Carlyle, whatever Mill's later judgments, had more influence than Roebuck (who was on his own admission a pupil of Mill's)—and, again, where is Jane Carlyle? Could he not have mentioned his colleagues in the East India House, such as Thomas Love Peacock? The questions pile up, and answers implying the deliberate downplaying of friendships, or the desire to avoid comment on those alive to read the account, do not seem adequate. Of greater relevance are Mill's and his wife's attitudes to the people discussed and the exigencies of narrative and of thesis: the case he is making does not require equal or absolute justice, and a story—even one the author claims to be devoid of interesting episode—militates against judgmental balance. One certainly may regret that Mill's denigration of self led him to the purposes he thought proper, and so to exclude much that other autobiographers, many of them of narrower experience and less insight, delight us with. But his judgment should be respected. Although his mind, his life, and his career have an interest beyond the significance he attached to them, in developing his stated purposes Mill faithfully adheres to his contract with the reader for whom "these pages were . . . written."

The *Autobiography* stands alone among Mill's book-length works in the abundance of MS materials that have survived.³⁰ We have no fewer than three complete MSS—Mill's original draft, a revised MS also in his hand, and a transcript of the whole—as well as a four-page piece of holograph draft independent of the other MSS. The three complete MSS were among the collection of letters and papers owned after Mill's death by Helen Taylor, bequeathed by her to her niece Mary Taylor, and sold at auction in 1922 by the executors of the latter's estate. They are

²⁹One of them seems best relegated to a footnote, important as it is: would it not have been instructive for him to have given more space to the influence on him of the dead (Aristotle, Bacon, Locke, as well as the acknowledged Plato)?

³⁰This section on the composition of the work and the transmission and first publication of the text draws (sometimes verbatim) on two previous accounts by Jack Stillinger—"The Text of John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, XLIII (Sept., 1960), 220–42, and the introduction to *The Early Draft of John Stuart Mill's "Autobiography"*. These in turn are indebted to Albert William Levi's pioneer work in "The Writing of Mill's *Autobiography*," *Ethics*, LXI (July, 1951), 284–96.

listed together, “a large parcel,” as lot 720 (third day) in Sotheby’s sale catalogue of 27–29 March, 1922: “MILL (John Stuart) Auto. MS. of his AUTOBIOGRAPHY upwards of 220 pp. 4to; with an earlier draft of the same in his hand, and a copy, mostly in the hand of Helen Taylor, *with the suppressed passages*.” The lot went for £5 5s. to Maggs Bros., who resold the MSS separately.

Early Draft. The “earlier draft” was purchased from Maggs in 1923 by Jacob H. Hollander, Professor of Political Economy at Johns Hopkins University, who kept it until his death in 1940, after which it was stored for nearly two decades in a Baltimore warehouse. In 1958 it was acquired with the rest of Hollander’s library by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. More than just “earlier,” it is in fact the original draft of the *Autobiography*, consisting of 169 leaves all told—139 leaves constituting the first finished version of the work plus thirty leaves of rejected text retained together at the end of the draft. Written in the late months of 1853 and the early months of 1854 (see below on this and other datings), the MS contains a complete account, as Mill then would have given it, of his life up to his marriage in 1851. The paper is apparently that used in the East India Company office where Mill worked, half-sheets of white laid foolscap measuring *c.* 33.6 × 20.8 cm., with either a Britannia watermark (on about half the leaves, irregularly throughout) or one of three countermarks: “STACEY WISE 1849,” “C ANSELL 1851,” and “C ANSELL 1852.” Mill wrote in ink, generally on both sides. Before beginning a leaf, he folded it once lengthwise, to divide each page into two long halves *c.* 10.4 cm. wide;³¹ he originally composed only in the right-hand half, saving the space at left for his revisions and for corrections, comments, and other markings by his wife.

Columbia MS. The second of the complete MSS (to take them in the order in which they were written), the “Auto. MS.” of the description in Sotheby’s catalogue, was bought from Maggs by Professor John Jacob Coss, acting for members of the Department of Philosophy at Columbia who presented it to the Columbia University Library in April, 1923. This MS consists of 210 leaves (not counting those left blank by Mill or used as wrappers) measuring *c.* 26 × 21.5 cm. The first 162 leaves, medium blue paper sewn in twenty-leaf gatherings marked A through I (with the initial leaf of A and the last seventeen leaves of I left blank) and containing either a fleur-de-lis watermark or the countermark “WEATHERLEY 1856,” constitute a revised version of the Early Draft text plus a three-page continuation, the text of 247.35–251.9 below. This part of the MS was written in 1861. The remaining forty-eight leaves, a gathering marked K and made up of twenty-four sheets of darker blue (unwatermarked) paper folded separately and

³¹He used the same method in the extant MSS of “Notes on Some of the More Popular Dialogues of Plato” (see Textual Introduction, *Essays on Philosophy and the Classics*, CW, Vol. XI, pp. lxxxii–lxxxiii, and illustration facing p. 175) and in the surviving MS page of “The Silk Trade” (see *Essays on Economics and Society*, CW, Vol. IV [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967], illustration facing p. 138).

unsewn, represent—except for text taken over from the Yale fragment (see below)—the first and only draft of the rest of the *Autobiography*, written in the winter of 1869–70.

Rylands transcript. The third of the MSS sold at Sotheby's, the "copy, mostly in the hand of Helen Taylor, *with the suppressed passages*," went to an unknown English buyer, and was lost sight of until July, 1959, when it was discovered in the London salerooms of Messrs. Hodgson and acquired by the John Rylands Library, Manchester. Consisting of 282 leaves of various kinds and sizes of paper, the transcript was made mainly or entirely in the months just after Mill's death by three writers—Helen Taylor, Mill's youngest sister Mary Elizabeth Colman, and an unidentified French copyist. It is from this MS that the first edition of the work (1873) was printed, and the "descent" of the text is thus simple and straightforward: Mill revised, recopied, and continued his original version (Early Draft) in the Columbia MS; Helen Taylor and her helpers copied the Columbia text in the Rylands transcript; and the work was set in type from the Rylands transcript.

Yale fragment. In addition to these complete MSS, Mill's first draft of the present 251.18–259.21, the "Note . . . concerning the participation of my wife in my writings" given below beginning on p. 250, is extant at Yale. This is written on the four pages of a folded sheet of bluish-gray wove paper, page size *c.* 25.8 × 20.2 cm. The MS bears the pencil date "[1861]" in the hand of a twentieth-century scholar or archivist, but the basis for this dating is not clear. Mill could have drafted the note any time between the completion of the Early Draft, in 1854, and the writing of the last part of the work in 1869–70. The tenses, the tone, and the mention of *On Liberty* as a "book" (pp. 256–8) strongly suggest that it was composed no earlier than 1859, after his wife's death and the publication of *On Liberty*, and probably after 1861, because it was not included in the continuation of the Early Draft written at that time.

In his surviving letters Mill first mentions the Early Draft on 23 January, 1854, four days after recording in a diary entry his bitterness at having "procrastinated in the sacred duty of fixing in writing, so that it may not die with me, everything that I have in my mind which is capable of assisting the destruction of error and prejudice and the growth of just feelings and true opinions."³² Replying to a letter now lost, he writes to his wife:

I too have thought very often lately about the life & am most anxious that we should complete it the soonest possible. What there is of it is in a perfectly publishable state—as far as writing goes it could be printed tomorrow—and it contains a full writing out as far as anything can write out, what you are, as far as I am competent to describe you, & what I owe to you—but, besides that until revised by you it is little better than unwritten, it contains nothing about our private circumstances, further than shewing that there was intimate friendship for many years, & you only can decide what more it is necessary or desirable to

³²Diary entry for 19 Jan., 1854, in *The Letters of John Stuart Mill*, ed. Hugh S. R. Elliot, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910), Vol. II, p. 361.