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James Mill's Common Place Books and their Intellectual Context, 1773–1836

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Summary

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This thesis is an intellectual history of James Mill's political thought, which focuses on four specific topics: his ideas on parliamentary reform; on libel law, or the freedom of the press; education, or man's ability to utilise his reason; and on established religion, primarily in the form of Mill's attitude towards the Church of England. At face-value, the thesis' main aim is to contextualize in detail Mill's published writings on these four subjects (which comprise its four chapters) by virtue of comparing them with unpublished manuscript material present in his common place books, which were transcribed as part of this PhD project.

Although the chapters are developed in such a way that they can be seen as independent studies of Mill's thought, there are of course more general themes which run through the thesis as a whole, as well as specific links between particular topics. One notable example is the notion that Mill employed 'dissimulation' in his published writings, that is to say that he did not necessarily express in public the full extent of his ideas, because of a fear that their radical extent would attract intrigue or prosecution from the reactionary governmental or religious authorities in Britain.

It is also prudent to note how Mill's well-documented intellectual influences are incorporated into the thesis. By this we are referring to the importance of the Scottish Enlightenment background to Mill's own education and upbringing near Aberdeen and in Edinburgh, and also the doctrine of Utilitarianism he adopted from Jeremy Bentham once in London. The particular nature of the material found in the common place books warrants a full re-evaluation of these influences, as well as an exploration of the possibility that additional influences beyond these two contexts have thus far been understated in studies of Mill. This suggests the value of the study to current Mill scholarship.

Contents

Acknowledgements

This thesis relies extensively on a transcription of James Mill's common place books made by the late Robert A. Fenn (1935–1993). I am very grateful to Mrs. Julia Fenn for permission to use the transcription for the basis of my research, and to Larry Johnston for his assistance in recovering it.

My research has been funded by the AHRC, as a collaborative doctoral award project between the University of Sussex and the London Library. I am grateful to the Librarian and staff at the London Library, where the first four volumes of Mill's common place books are held, for their help during the first three years of my studies, and for the use of their extensive collections. I have also made much use of the collections at the British Library, the University of Sussex Library, the Library of Somerville College, Oxford, and the British Library of Political and Economic Science at LSE, the latter of which holds the fifth volume of Mill's common place books.

My greatest expression of thanks, however, must go to my supervisors and colleagues at the University of Sussex, and more specifically at the Centre for Intellectual History, for their invaluable and seemingly limitless support given to me during the researching and writing of this thesis. I would like to thank in particular my supervisors, Richard Whatmore and Donald Winch.

Note on sources

The unpublished sources consulted in this thesis comprise a range of manuscript material in the five volumes of James Mill's common place books held in the archives of the London Library (volumes I–IV) and the British Library of Political and Economic Science (volume V). The transcription of the manuscripts consulted is an unpublished typescript by Robert A. Fenn, which was finalised in about 1993 and substantially checked upon its recovery in 2009. In 2010, as part of the research objectives for this PhD project, Mill's first four common place books, along with editorial and bibliographical material by Fenn, were published online under the auspices of the Sussex Centre for Intellectual History.[1]

Citations of material in the common place books in this thesis refer to the physical manuscripts. They follow the form of the volume of the ledger followed by a reference to the folio and scrap from which the extract was taken (e.g. *CPB* II 2^{ra1} relates to the first scrap (^{1}) in the first column (^{a}) on the recto (^{r}) of page 2 in common place book volume II).

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[1] *James Mill's Common Place Books*, ed. Robert A. Fenn; University of Sussex, 2010; online edn [http://intellectualhistory.net/mill/]

Prologue: 'Keys of Knowledge'

> And with regard to the danger of training the people generally to habits of servility and toleration of arbitrary power, if their education be entrusted to Government, or persons patronised by the Government, – we can only say, that although we are far from considering the danger either as small or chimerical, it is still so very great and good to have the whole facility of reading and writing diffused through the whole body of the people, that we should be willing to run considerable risks for its acquirement, or even greatly to accelerate that acquirement. There is something in the possession of those keys of knowledge and of thought, so truly admirable, that, when joined to another inestimable blessing, it is scarcely possible for any government to convert them into instruments of evil. That security is – the Liberty of the Press. Let the people only be taught to read, though by instruments ever so little friendly to their general interests, and the very intelligence of the age will provide them with books which will prove an antidote to the poison of their pedagogues… But grant, a reading people and a free press, – and the prejudices on which misrule supports itself will gradually and silently disappear. The impressions, indeed, which it is possible to make at the early age at which reading and writing are taught, and during the very short time that teaching lasts, are so very slight and transitory, that they must be easily effaced whenever there is anything to counteract them.
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> James Mill, 'Education of the Poor'[2]

In 1813 the Scottish philosopher, historian and journalist James Mill (1773–1836) contributed the article 'Education of the Poor' to the February edition of the *Edinburgh Review*. The piece was in one sense a restatement of the arguments Mill had advanced in the pamphlet *Schools for All*, published a year earlier, which had been both a robust defence of the Quaker Joseph Lancaster's scheme for establishing monitorial schools in order to provide cheap education for the poor, and an equally strong rejection of a competing education system devised by the Church of England. The British and Foreign School Society, the organisation associated with Lancaster's ideas, had advocated a method of instruction which was secular in nature, whereby reading of the Bible would

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[2] James Mill, "Education of the Poor," *Edinburgh Review* XXI, no. 41 (February 1813): 211–2.

take place, but nothing was taught about the doctrines of specific Christian creeds. This was the basis of the scheme's ecumenical structure, since the children of dissenters could attend alongside those from Anglican families. For the Church of England, however, such an arrangement was untenable. It feared that its authority would be undermined if children were educated without also being instructed in its catechism, and sought instead to promote schools for the poor which would remedy such an omission, thereby excluding those from dissenting faiths.

What is more important than the historical context to 'Education of the Poor' at this early juncture, however, is the fact that it contained a passage which effectively represents the four crucial aspects of Mill's political thought that this thesis is expressly concerned with investigating. Mill surmised in the article that the population at large could avoid corrupt and arbitrary government by virtue of possessing two 'keys of knowledge'. These keys were basic literacy, and the 'inestimable blessing' of a free press. Within the passage Mill also made mention of his attitude towards institutions such as the established Church of England, which can be read in his remarks about the 'poison' of certain pedagogues, and how education is entrusted to 'persons patronised by the Government'. These two latter statements reflected Mill's specific concern about the Church's aforementioned scheme for education which opposed the Lancasterian model.

During his long literary career whilst living in London between 1802 and his death in 1836, Mill would write extensively about political reform, libel law, education and established religion. In public such writings took the form of numerous published works, such as the aforementioned *Schools for All* or the famous essay *Government* (1820) for the *Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In private, Mill worked upon these ideas and arguments in his common place books. It is an analysis of the

contents of these manuscripts, which have hitherto attracted relatively little scholarly attention, that forms the centrepiece of this thesis. They are utilised in an attempt at contextualising Mill's political thought in detail, via the study of the four specific areas he alluded to in 'Education of the Poor'.

Introduction

The intellectual legacy of James Mill typically lies in shadows cast by the two towering figures with whom he was intimately acquainted: his mentor Jeremy Bentham, and his son John Stuart Mill. Mill acted as Bentham's editor, and became an interlocutor between esoteric Benthamese and plain English in a vein similar to that of Étienne Dumont, who had worked on translating Bentham's ideas into French. Bentham kept Mill close at hand. He subsidised Mill's living arrangements, leasing him a house in Queen's Square, London, from 1814, and invited him and his family to holiday with him on his summer vacations, such as those at Forde Abbey in Dorset between 1814 and 1818. For some historians, Mill is the midwife to Bentham's ideas on political radicalism, a role he is also judged to have taken up for David Ricardo in the domain of political economy, bringing the latter's economic ideas to publication and taking in hand his general education with the object of making him an effective parliamentary spokesman for Philosophic Radicalism.[3] With regards to the junior Mill, his father is infamous for prescribing him a zealous (albeit extremely thorough) education, which would eventually become a source of extreme consternation. Although John Stuart Mill was critical of his father for the upbringing which had made him into a 'manufactured man',[4] that James had an extraordinary influence on John's intellectual prowess is undeniable.

Remembering James Mill primarily as either Bentham's chief propagandist or J.S. Mill's fervent schoolmaster does however obscure the scale of his own scholarly achievements, reflected in his prodigious literary output. A brief review of this material

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[3] William Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals: Nine Studies in Theory and Practice, 1817–1841* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 33; Donald Winch, "Early Economic Writings," in *Selected Economic Writings*, by James Mill (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 23.
[4] John Stuart Mill, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume I - Autobiography and Literary Essays*, ed. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 162.

includes 12 essays for the *Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1816–1823); over 200 articles for *The Literary Journal*; ten articles for the *Westminster Review* (1824–1830) and another seven for the *London* or, as it would later become, the *London and Westminster Review*; the monolithic *History of British India* (1817, 6 vols.); *Elements of Political Economy* (1821), a 'school-book' expounding Ricardo's economic thought; and two works on psychology: the *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind* (1828) and *A Fragment on Mackintosh* (1835). Such a corpus (and the preceding list is merely a selection from a near 33-year writing career) means that any historian wishing to work on the history of Mill's ideas should, in theory, be well stocked with material from which to attempt an evaluation. A particular elephant trap in such a pursuit, however, is to view all of Mill's work through the prism of a perceived strict duty to advance the ideas of Bentham, based on the intense nature of their working relationship. By writing on topics which were pro-reform and ostensibly anti-establishment, the crux of an argument developed in this direction typically amounts to the idea that Mill purported to justify his ideas on representative government (or liberty of the press, or education, or whatever) using Bentham's doctrine of Utilitarianism as the ethical and moral system underpinning his arguments.

The problem with this approach is that it heavily discounts an additional intellectual influence which clearly also operated upon Mill's thought: the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment. Mill's upbringing and education was in Scotland, first in proximity to Aberdeen, the geographical area that is associated with Thomas Reid and the development of the Common Sense school of philosophy, and secondly as a student at Edinburgh University under luminaries of Scottish moral philosophy such as Dugald

Stewart.[5] Many historians of the Scottish Enlightenment have worked diligently to recover the importance of this influence to Mill's ideas. To some, Mill's philosophical and political positions were for all intents and purposes set *before* he met Bentham in either late 1807 or early 1808.[6] Since Mill was 35 at this point, the obvious question to ask is whether the lateness of this meeting in relation to Mill's life means it is unlikely that there was such a degree of change in his thought that could constitute an abandonment of any intellectual inheritance derived from Scotland.[7] But John Burrow interprets Élie Halévy as arguing that Bentham caused a *distinct* change in Mill's thought: in terms of psychology, for example, Mill proceeds from denouncing Hartley and Helvétius pre-Bentham to becoming an 'ornament' of the Associationist school after.[8] This seems a rather extraordinary turn of events given, for example, the fact that an argument can be made for the influence of the Common Sense school on Mill, which denied the Associationist claim of being able to 'provide a model of the way the mind works which is more precise and has greater explanatory power than the ordinary, everyday account of concepts and motives.'[9]

Burrow's own arguments, as well as those of Duncan Forbes and Knud Haakonssen, recover Mill's Scottish intellectual heritage in ways that show him as still influenced by Scottish moral philosophy in his later ideas. One of the key documents in this regard is Mill's *History of British India*, because its creation spans a period that began before the intellectual relationship between Mill and Bentham developed. Halévy argues that Mill's *HBI* 'may be considered, in a certain sense, as an instrument of Benthamite

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[5] A more thorough biographical account of Mill's earlier years in Scotland (1773–1802) is given in part II of chapter 4 below.

[6] Arthur Laurence Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer", unpublished D.Phil. thesis (University of Sussex, 1972), 1.

[7] Of course, an iteration of this argument could be applied to dismiss any influence of Mill upon Bentham's ideas, who was approaching 60 years of age by the time of their first encounter.

[8] J. W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 59.

[9] Ibid., 35.

propaganda', [10] but Burrow and Forbes both point to the hallmarks of Scottish conjectural history present in that vast body of work. Indeed, Burrow labels it 'not only the last, [but] also the most elaborate and detailed example of Scottish philosophic history.'[11] Forbes depicts Mill as a true believer in the 'progress of society' (as were the Scottish 'conjectural' historians and, also, as was Condorcet) and the nature of the *HBI* means Mill's 'attitude to the civilizations of the East would have been substantially the same if he had never met Bentham or come under his influence.'[12]

Haakonssen approaches this subject from a slightly different angle, one that describes both distinct schools of thought (i.e. Scottish and Benthamic) as possessing similar features. Although Mill's use of conjectural history broadly adopted the 'main ideas' of the Scottish conception of such a subject, it is also possible to demonstrate a basic affinity between Utilitarianism and the 'objectivist moral theory of the Common Sense school.' [13] Since there are clear ideas within the Scottish legacy that seem commensurable with the later thought of the Utilitarian school that Mill was so heavily involved in formulating, this case-in-point makes for a particularly pleasing fit within Mill's intellectual history. A.L. Lazenby helps to compound the notion of a Reidian influence on Mill, even going so far as to attribute it to the geographical factors of Mill's birthplace. Born in the parish of Logie Pert, Forfarshire, the 'extraordinary philosophies and beliefs' developed in the area surrounding Aberdeen where Mill was raised, Lazenby argues, could not fail to have had a distinct effect on those initially educated within it.[14] It was in Edinburgh, however, where Mill entered into membership

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[10] Élie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism*, trans. Mary Morris (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), 302.
[11] Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, 48.
[12] Duncan Forbes, "James Mill and India," *Cambridge Journal* 5, no. 31 (1951): 24.
[13] Knud Haakonssen, "James Mill and Scottish Moral Philosophy," *Political Studies* 33, no. 4 (December 1, 1985): 628–9, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.1985.tb01585.x.
[14] "[W]hat came to be called 'Scottish' critical views, as expounded by Francis Jeffrey, the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, were originated and developed in the Aberdeen Literary Society by Thomas Reid,

of the 'Select Society for General Subjects', along with John Barclay, James Millar (son of John Millar, the works of whom Mill used as a reason to attack Sir William Jones, the famous philologist), James Carson, and James and Thomas Thomson, brothers who would provide Mill with letters of recommendation upon his departure from Edinburgh for London in early 1802. All members of this circle, including Mill, were originally trained for divinity, but four of them were also licensed as medical practitioners and all except Carson contributed articles to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.[15] Lazenby argues for a significant scientific influence of the members of the society, despite their theological origins, on Mill's later methods of inquiry.[16]

The study of Mill's intellectual history has until now primarily been concerned with judging the strength of influence upon Mill's ideas from his Scottish and Benthamic contexts. This can be seen in analyses undertaken of Mill's *HBI*, a work which, as aforementioned, Halévy saw as clearly Benthamite propaganda yet ultimately and undoubtedly had its roots in conjectural history of the Scottish school. Burrow attempted to explain the dichotomy between Mill's use of conjectural history for the *HBI* and his Utilitarian outlook on the politics of nineteenth-century Britain by suggesting that Mill saw a break in history between uncivilized nations such as India and civilized countries like Britain. Thus, a barrier existed between these two concepts, and they never needed to come into contact. To borrow a term from Haakonssen, this is what could be labelled Mill's *modus vivendi* between Scottish conjectural history and

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George Campbell, John Gregory, Alexander Gerard and James Beattie, and transmitted by these men and through Archibald Alison and Dugald Stewart to the whole generation of 'Edinburgh Reviewers'. Since James Mill was one of that generation, and more particularly since he was greatly influenced by the writings of Thomas Reid, it might be suggested that his affinities for the Aberdeen school of criticism were partly a matter of geographical influences." Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer," 5.

[15] Ibid., 12.

[16] "Mill gained from his medical friends some insight into the techniques and methods of scientific analysis and investigation. Superimposed upon the cultural attitudes of the Montrose area of Scotland, with its taste for analytical argument and abstract discussion, Mill's education predisposed him to treat social problems in logical terms and to seek the principles of human behaviour in a scientific way." Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer," 14–5.

Utilitarianism, or what Burrow describes as a 'philosophy of history which teaches [Mill] to be a gradualist in India, just as he has a philosophy of man which teaches him to be a democrat in England.'[17] The problem with Burrow's suggestion, Haakonssen contests, is that in terms of institutions, Mill is not at all a gradualist in India, because his intention was 'to debunk the idea that any aspect of [Hindu society] had reached any degree of sophistication', and instead orchestrate a period of intensive rebuilding of Hindu political and cultural institutions along modern (i.e. British) lines.[18]

This thesis does not dispute the importance of either the Scottish Enlightenment or Bentham's doctrine of Utilitarianism to an understanding of Mill's intellectual history, although it does stress the effect of the latter as superior to that of the former. Its major contribution to the scholarly debate on Mill comes in its assertion that the range of intellectual influences which operated upon Mill's ideas and arguments is actually much wider than just these two contexts. Attention needs to be paid, for example, to the importance of certain continental Enlightenment thinkers, such as Condillac and Montesquieu, as well as philosophers closer to home, such as Edmund Burke and William Chillingworth. This claim is based on an analysis of the contents of Mill's common place books, the five thick volumes of manuscript material tended to by Mill over the course of his career as a journalist and philosopher whilst living in London. Within these books Mill performed in parallel two things of specific academic interest. First, he documented his reading, collecting instances and passages from the books, newspapers, pamphlets and speeches he found intriguing and wished to use as either intellectual support or fodder in his arguments. Second, he actually honed and projected these political, religious and philosophical arguments themselves. Since some of these projections even form the basis of Mill's published articles, such as the essay on

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[17] Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, 61–2.
[18] Haakonssen, "James Mill and Scottish Moral Philosophy," 635.

Government, what is effectively provided by the common place books is the ability to study Mill's arguments as they appear in two separate guises: the public or published instance, and the private or unpublished. By way of simple comparison, therefore, this thesis can ask questions not only about the intellectual provenance of Mill's ideas, but about the radical extent of them, and whether the thoughts he advanced publicly were a true representation of what he believed in private.

It is the content of the common place books that dictates the major tenets of this thesis. In exploring Mill's intellectual history, they function as a way of contextualising his ideas by showing the particular arguments of other thinkers which influenced him, and also as a way of providing commentary on these ideas, and demonstrating their extent when composed in a private guise. The common place books are also privileged as primary sources in this study, in that significant weight is given to their content above that of other sources. This is intentional. They have hitherto been underused in a scholarly sense as a source of insight into Mill's ideas, and the close reading of them presented in this thesis contributes not only to a deeper understanding of Mill's intellectual history, but also demonstrates their utility as a historical source for further investigations into extended, related topics, such as the growth of Philosophic Radicalism, the political context of suspicion and intrigue in Britain at the time of the first 'Reform Crisis', and the reading practices of nineteenth-century intellectual figures.

It is necessary, however, to introduce some caveats about the objective to study Mill's intellectual history primarily through his common place books. This thesis does not attempt to explain or investigate Mill's thought, for example, in a very systematic way or on a very wide basis. One reason for this is that the manuscripts, when transcribed and printed, account in total for around 1,500 pages of text, meaning only four topics

have been selected for an intensive treatment: those pertaining to Mill's ideas on the liberty of the press, political reform, education, and established religion. Neither is this thesis suitable as a biography. Whilst it contains biographical elements, these do not typically come from material found in the common place books. Moreover, the time frame of the manuscripts' composition means little focus can be made on the earlier parts of Mill's life in Scotland, or on the years leading up to his death in 1836, when his intellectual powers begin to decline. The majority of biographical context for these periods is therefore provided by reference to secondary works, such as the 1882 biography of Mill by Alexander Bain, or the autobiography of Mill's son John Stuart. Concentration is broadly maintained on the period which runs from just after Mill first met Jeremy Bentham, in 1807 or 1808, until about 1825, when his periodic occurrences of gout became more frequent, and his degenerating vision made it much harder for him to read and write for the purposes of his commonplacing.

Nevertheless, the period synchronous to the majority of the contents of the common place books is a very fertile period to study. It features, for example, the composition and publication of Mill's articles for the *Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the most famous of which, *Government*, is a crucial text in understanding the context of the early nineteenth-century debate on the politics of reform and Mill's place within it. It also encompasses Mill's attempts at separating the Church and the State in the context of education provision, via his support for the Lancasterian movement and Bentham's later plans in his *Chrestomathia*. The thesis is divided into four component chapters, but deep connections between the constituent parts are maintained throughout. The themes of these chapters reflect four distinct areas of Mill's ideas identified as central to his political thought in the prologue, but they are also selected for an eminently more practical reason: they are the subjects which Mill paid significant attention to in his

manuscripts, and to which he devoted the largest amount of pages. Whilst the common place books are frequently chaotic in their composition, to his credit Mill managed to maintain a sense of order around the thematic organisation of his material, and these four collections of material also stand out for this reason.

The first chapter of this thesis seeks to contextualise Mill's essay on the *Liberty of the Press*, published in 1821, which reveals in particular his ideas about the law of libel. A significant portion of the chapter is given over to a critical appreciation of the common place books themselves, and establishes a reusable methodology for recovering Mill's ideas and arguments from his manuscripts. The chapter also fully introduces the concept of 'dissimulation' in regard to Mill's published writings, or the idea that what Mill could advance publicly in his early nineteenth-century British context was significantly limited by the political authorities of the day, who wished to restrict the distribution of writings they deemed politically dangerous or 'seditious'. This theme is equally apparent in the second chapter, which focuses on the essay *Government* and allows for the assessment of both Mill's specific ideas pertaining to political or parliamentary reform in the period widely referred to as the 'Reform Crisis' and his underlying theoretical approach to legislation. The third chapter is concerned with the essay *Education*, within which Mill advocated the importance of a population instructed in the pursuit of happiness and the exercise of its own reason. These were both crucial factors to Mill's wider political thought, given that they contributed to the attainment of a popular 'democratical sentiment'. Finally, in the last chapter, Mill's thought concerning religion in the common place books is investigated, primarily in terms of his attitude to established religion, but also on the more complicated subject of his agnosticism, which itself presents an intriguing biographical question. Each chapter moves necessarily between commentary and context, in order to ascertain both the extent of Mill's thought

and the various political, social, religious and intellectual influences which can be seen to be operating upon it. Significant space is also afforded to practical considerations regarding the nature of the particular manuscript material being studied, with regards to its date of composition and its location within the common place books.

1. 'Quarries, not Ancient Temples': A comparative study of James Mill's published and unpublished writings on the liberty of the press

<div align="center">I.</div>

Attached to the files of Robert Fenn's transcription of James Mill's common place books is a document entitled 'Editing Principles'; a set of notes which outlined the small degree of fine-tuning necessary to complete what had become a lifetime's work. Amongst these notes lies a simple but astute editorial observation about the common place books which is the inspiration both for this chapter and the wider thesis it is a constituent part of:

> If you compare [Mill's] Britannica article 'Liberty of the Press' with the [manuscript] material in the various sections in [common place book volumes] I and II on the same topic you would be struck by what he did not use, and by what is not to be found.[19]

The purpose of this chapter is to undertake the comparative study suggested by Fenn in his 'Editing Principles', and bring to light material that is omitted from the article on libel law Mill published in 1821 in the *Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (hereafter *SupEB*) entitled *Liberty of the Press* but which can be found in the common place books. A working hypothesis, also drawn from Fenn, is that the ideas sketched or expanded upon in the unpublished manuscript material but not present in *Liberty of the Press* will show that the article represents only a more moderate version of what might be considered Mill's actual or true opinions about the subject. Connected with this objective, however, is a distinct methodological issue to address, concerning how the common place books actually function as a source for conducting the history of Mill's

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[19] Robert A. Fenn, "Editing Principles," c 1994, sec. 7.

ideas in this way. This critique of the manuscripts – which forms part III of this chapter – aims to demonstrate their richness and breadth, and show that their content allows for the detailed contextualisation of Mill's thought, more specifically by demonstrating the range of influences which operated upon it. In short, this chapter has both a very specific historical objective and functions as proof-of-concept for a method of investigating Mill's intellectual history. In this latter role, the chapter's outcome has clear implications for both the purposes of those which follow it, and the *modus operandi* of the wider thesis.

The idea that Mill is censored, either through self-restraint or by external (e.g. editorial or political) influences, in an article which purports to examine issues of press censorship represents something of a paradox. This claim is not however necessarily contentious. Terence Ball, for example, has concluded that in *Government*, another of Mill's essays published in the *SupEB* a year earlier and the subject of the next chapter, Mill 'undoubtedly pull[ed] his punches and downplay[ed] arguments in favour of radically extending the franchise.'[20] The distinct political context of early nineteenth-century Britain, to be explored in both this and the next chapter of this thesis, meant that the espousal of very radical ideas in published form was highly susceptible to censorship from governmental authorities, and this in turn can explain a hesitance or reluctance identifiable in Mill's published works. Indeed, the reactionary nature of the Attorneys General during Mill's lifetime meant that moderation of the radical discourse was a practical necessity for writers who wanted to avoid the seemingly ever-present threat of prosecution for seditious libel.

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[20] Terence Ball, "Introduction," in *Political Writings*, by James Mill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), xxxii.

An investigation which makes comparisons between what can be termed the public or published and the private or unpublished is methodologically complicated in the case of Mill, however, primarily because so little work has been done with the bulk of this private work: his manuscript material. If it is Fenn's observations that there are significant discrepancies between the *Liberty of the Press* article and the associated sections within the common place books which motivate a comparative study, it is he who also dampens any initial enthusiasm that the common place books themselves might simply reveal more radical specimens of Mill's published work ripe for such a comparison: 'These [manuscripts] are not akin to Bentham's manuscripts where large bodies of material in nearly complete form await the scholar's hand and editorial judgement.' The fundamental problem with using Mill's common place books as sources in a comparative investigation is crystallized by Fenn with a turn of phrase appropriated as the title of this chapter. It also echoes resoundingly throughout the rest of the thesis: 'the order of argument of the article is not to be found in the manuscripts. With few exceptions, the manuscripts must be seen as quarries, not as ancient temples slowly being uncovered by [Fenn's] patient archaeological work.'[21]

It therefore becomes obvious that the more straightforward proposed aim for this chapter – that is, the analysis of the difference between Mill's writings destined for print (in this case the *SupEB* article) and what remained unseen or private (in his common place books), in order to show that Mill moderated his published output to make it less likely to attract censorship from governmental authorities – is not possible without establishing a methodology that grapples with the task of having to draw out Mill's final argument from a source that is particularly fragmentary in nature. In turn, examining and attempting to combine the divergent material present in the manuscripts into an

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[21] Fenn, "Editing Principles," sec. 8.

authentic and coherent argument that is fit for comparison can give real depth to the question of what type of intellectual influences operated upon Mill's thought. This is particularly relevant given the paucity of citations of other works which exists in Mill's *SupEB* article. The common place books, conversely, actually function as veritable repositories of quotations, and allow a more thorough evaluation of such influences to take place.

If this combining of objectives into an overall endeavour results in a modicum of success, it proves two things beyond the initial argument that Mill is more radical in his ideas about libel law than his published output suggests. First, it demonstrates that there is intrinsic value in the common place books as a source for providing context to Mill's arguments about the liberty of the press. Second, it provides a justification to use such a methodology again in a comparative analysis of other topics that feature prominently in both Mill's published and unpublished writings. The expansive nature of Mill's bibliography – evidence of his intrepidness in intellectual endeavours – reveals a plethora of topics which interested him enough to warrant his own comment, both within the public and private domains. Within the confines of this particular thesis, further topics to be addressed using this methodology are on subjects pertaining to parliamentary reform, education and established religion, as outlined in the prologue and introduction. Fenn, thus far, appears to be the only scholar who has attempted a comparative analysis of a single topic that effectively straddles these two distinct realms of Mill's work, when he used the common place books to widen his understanding of Mill's true political philosophy. These results were particularly illuminating with regard to the different attitude towards the enfranchisement of the working classes expressed in the essay *Government* and in a reading of associated manuscript material, and some of

Fenn's steps are retraced in the proceeding chapter.[22] Despite a synopsis of Mill's common place books in existence as early as an appendix to Bain's 1882 biography of Mill, however, very little other scholarly attention has ever been dedicated to them.[23]

Before examining the nature and contents of Mill's manuscript writings on the liberty of the press in earnest, some basic historical background to the inquiry needs to be provided. This involves brief definitions of what is meant by the term 'radicalism' in early nineteenth-century Britain, and also an examination of the structure of libel law, in particular the offence of seditious libel, employed somewhat fitfully by the state as a weapon against such radicalism during the same period. Both objectives help provide contextual understanding of, and justification for, what motivated Mill to write so vehemently and profusely on the liberty of the press around 1821, the year of publication of the *SupEB* essay. Simultaneously, these objectives supply the argument for why Mill was surreptitious in advancing the extent of his ideas in his published writings – a practice that this thesis refers to as dissimulation, or the art of not expressly saying what one thinks.

It should be stated as a final introductory aside that this chapter treats the terms 'liberty of the press' and 'libel law' as interchangeable. Although clearly not synonymous, the terms are inextricably linked: William Blackstone saw libel law as 'the key to the reality behind the phrase "liberty of the press"', a sentiment echoed by Mill's treatment of libel law in the introductory passages of the *SupEB* article.[24] The offence at the heart of these terms – seditious libel – was defined at the trial of T.J. Wooler in 1817 as 'a publication

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[22] Robert A. Fenn, "The Nature and Structure of Mill's Political Arguments," in *James Mill's Political Thought* (New York: Garland, 1987).

[23] Alexander Bain, *James Mill: A Biography* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1882), 464.

[24] Joseph Hamburger, *James Mill and the Art of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 8.

calumniating his Majesty's Ministers in the exercise of the Government'.[25] It was, along with the religious equivalent of blasphemous libel, a major weapon used by the early nineteenth-century British governments to chill the press, and was a component of the infamous Six Acts, along with the outlawing of seditious meetings and the proscription of drilling, which followed the Peterloo massacre of 1819.[26] Within the common place books, Mill effectively interchanged the terms 'liberty of the press' and 'libel law' and sometimes merged them together, for example in a personal memo when he sets out a desire to 'point out the qualities desirable in a law for the liberty of the press. And then contrast them with the qualities of the supposed existing law.'[27] A letter from Mill to his *Britannica* editor Macvey Napier further demonstrates this flexibility in terms by showing Mill's nonchalance over what the article would eventually be titled.[28]

Issues over technicalities spill over into one further basic observation when comparing the two types of source worth mentioning here: although in the *SupEB* article Mill ostensibly distinguishes between offences that might be committed by the press towards 'Private Rights' and towards 'Government' by separating them into two sections of analysis, there is less effort to make such a partition in the manuscript.

II.

In order to bring the liberty of the press up to its status contemporaneous to Mill's time in the early nineteenth century, more specifically when his *SupEB* essay was published in 1821, it is necessary to begin this study in the late seventeenth century, with the

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[25] Michael Lobban, "From Seditious Libel to Unlawful Assembly: Peterloo and the Changing Face of Political Crime c.1770–1820," *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 10, no. 3 (September 21, 1990): 325, doi:10.1093/ojls/10.3.307; William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765), 4:150–3.

[26] It will be seen as a result of arguments advanced in chapter 4, below, that since blasphemous libel pertained to offences against the established Church of England, seditious and blasphemous libel were to some extent similarly interchangeable.

[27] Mill, *CPB* II, 3^{rb5}.

[28] Letter from James Mill to Macvey Napier, quoted by Bain in *James Mill*, 193.

lapsing of prepublication licensing laws. These laws, which had essentially allowed government control of the press, gave way to a new legal framework, introduced in 1695 by Chief Justice John Holt, which considered all forms of defamation, be they personal attacks or those aimed towards the state, as national threats. Libel law therefore had its origins as a device to reinforce national integrity because it 'protect[ed] the community from infighting and establish[ed] community standards for speech.'[29] Mill would come to dismiss this 'ground on which libel is prosecuted criminally' as 'the fiction that it tends to break the King's peace.'[30] In the eighteenth century, libels for political works continued to be criminally actionable when they were held to be likely to breach the peace, but the nature of the press itself was undergoing significant changes at this time which added complexity to the issue. Duplication technology and the development of provincial presses meant political information was now reaching further afield and attaining increased influence. Eckhart Hellmuth attributes the early radicalisation of the press in the 1760s – defined in part by their ruthless sarcasm and keen invective towards the political elites – as symptomatic of a developing popular political culture that these press advances contributed to.[31] The political elites felt a distinction could be made between a 'proper liberty of the press' and this growing 'intellectual licentiousness', or between what they labelled as 'privilege' and condemned as 'insolence'. The press constantly undermined the traditional political elite's monopoly of politics, so the elite continued to regard politics free of such populist pressures as an ideal.

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[29] Kathryn Temple, *Scandal Nation: Law and Authorship in Britain, 1750–1832* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 194–7.

[30] Mill, *CPB* I 81ᵛ.

[31] Eckhart Hellmuth, "The 'Palladium of All Other English Liberties': Reflections on the Liberty of the Press in England during the 1760s and 1770s," in *The Transformation of Political Culture. England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 471–3.

The political elites' traditional conceptions of the press, its utility, and how it potentially threatened the mixed constitution were not at all shared by radicals or reformers, who found the publication of newspapers and pamphlets which propagated their ideas much more central and thus beneficial to their cause. Prosecutions for seditious libels increased exponentially in the years following the start of the French Revolution in 1789,[32] and in 1792, William Pitt issued a proclamation warning against the epidemic of 'wicked and seditious writings' which sought to 'excite tumult and disorder by endeavouring to raise groundless jealousies and suspicions' in the King's subjects.[33] An attempt at reform of libel law in that year, Fox's Libel Act, did have a noticeable reducing effect on the ability of the government to prosecute those accused of committing seditious libel, because it gave the jury the ability to decide not just upon the factual nature of a supposed libel, but crucially its inherent tendency to provoke a breach of the peace. The major concern of radicals, however, was the starkly arbitrary application of the law of libel by the government. Since there was 'no predictable line of Home Office conduct', *ex officio* informations (essentially court summons) and prosecutions were used to punish objectionable language *a posteriori*, and usually only during particular flashpoints of political volatility, such as following the Peterloo massacre of 1819 when a huge increase in prosecutions occurred, many of which were for selling the same pamphlet.[34] Whilst the lack of consistency in the application of libel law may point initially to a relaxed approach to the press from government, in actual fact the uncertainty over action constituted a powerful weapon of oppression. Because the legal apparatus of the government in its pursuit of libellers could be financially ruinous to the accused, even for those acquitted, the scatter-gun approach of its

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[32] Lobban, "From Seditious Libel to Unlawful Assembly," 309.

[33] John Barrell, *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2–4.

[34] Lobban, "From Seditious Libel to Unlawful Assembly," 327–8.

employment led to prosecutions for libel law effectively becoming like a game of roulette. At the turn of the nineteenth century, therefore, the government had a particularly strong legal capability to harass and suppress, if not convict, radicals, their supporters and the vendors of their literature, amounting to a concerted effort to control dissent by using libel law as an archetypal 'Sword of Damocles'.[35] Mill employed the words of Burke to describe this situation, which was termed 'liberty by connivance'.[36]

'Radicalism' itself covered a diverse section of the population – from working-class movements, to religious millenarianism, to the Benthamites who would become the Philosophic Radicals – but historically the term has been subdivided into two types: 'popular' radicals, and middle-class or 'intellectual' radicals. Élie Halévy has described the latter grouping as giving doctrinal solidity to the former, whom he labelled the 'tumultuous and disordered radical agitation'.[37] But although Mill is certainly to be called a 'philosophic' or 'intellectual' radical, it is incorrect to assume that writers of his ilk held a monopoly on the printed radical word that the state countered with threats of prosecution for seditious libel. By the same token, obviously the concerns that Mill held over the threat to the liberty of the press posed by the government and its associated legal actors (such as the Attorneys General) were not reserved only for his 'philosophic' brethren: he is very clear, both publicly and privately, on the importance of a liberal press, because it was a truly effective path to good governance (Mill also believed it the only real check on state power, because 'public spirit' in most men was 'weak'.)[38] This notion can be reinforced by the fact that when William Cobbett, the radical pamphleteer, was prosecuted for treasonous libel in 1810, Mill privately condemned

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[35] Phillip Harling, "The Law of Libel and the Limits of Repression, 1790–1832," *The Historical Journal* 44, no. 1 (March 2001): 111–8.

[36] Mill, *CPB* II, 8ᵛ. The reference to Burke is from his "Speech on a Bill for the relief of Protestant Dissenters, March 7, 1773" in Edmund Burke, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (London: John C. Nimmo, 1887), 7:24.

[37] Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism*, 511.

[38] Mill, *CPB* II 8ᵛ³.

Cobbett's subsequent imprisonment in Newgate as being for a 'pretend crime', despite the clear ideological cleavage apparent between the two.[39]

A principal reason for a strong appetite for radical agitation in this period was the effects of the long war conducted on the continent. Whilst the political context of nineteenth-century Britain is of crucial importance to the next chapter on parliamentary reform, it is worth restating some basic details here. The conflict with France, at an approximate cost of £1,500 million, and a subsequent depression produced clear economic factors that exacerbated tensions at the start of the nineteenth century.[40] Very basically, the post-1815 resumption of industry on the continent meant Europe had less need of the products of English labour. In turn, English industry had less need of workmen, and the workmen on lower wages 'could no longer tolerate the regime of dear bread.'[41] Indeed the influence of France's role in explaining British nineteenth-century radicalism can also be seen from a rather different angle and much earlier than 1815, since Harling argues that it was the inherent fear of Tory ministers that they were facing a French-style revolution that led them to entertain using 'the mailed fist [of the law of libel]… even in the heart of London'.[42] In a similar vein, industrial relations had begun to suffer well before the cessation of European hostilities, with explosions in working populations and associated declines in working conditions aggravated by maldistribution of political power (Cornwall, for example, boasted twice as many MPs as Yorkshire but had a population only one quarter of the size), a limited electoral franchise, rotten boroughs, and flawed government policy decisions, such as the outlawing of trade unions in the Combination Laws of 1799. Halévy points to a general

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[39] Mill, *CPB* I, 85ʳ; for the Utilitarian vs. Cobbett debate see Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, vol. 2 (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 26, 115.

[40] The figure of £1,500 million is taken from Christopher Harvie and Colin Matthew, *Nineteenth-Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 24.

[41] Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism*, 337.

[42] Harling, "The Law of Libel and the Limits of Repression, 1790–1832," 107.

revival of liberal and democratic opinions within the country in the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century which, when taken in light of the aforementioned economic and political concerns, can begin to reveal some, if not all, of the fundamental motivations for journalists to pen (and vendors to publish) 'radical' texts attacking the government, its actors and its various props, such as the Church or the legal system.[43] In the opinion of the state, if these writings were to be considered a threat to national integrity then the authors and distributors could be prosecuted for seditious libel.

It is not difficult to find within Mill's common place books evidence of his own contempt for the prosecution of radical journalists on the grounds that their writings amounted to seditious libel, as the aforementioned reaction to Cobbett's imprisonment shows. 'If a tendency towards the breaking of the peace was a libel,' writes Mill in one particular witticism, 'then the selling of gin is the worst of libels.'[44] However, an interesting more general point about the prosecutions for seditious libel is that the process began to be exploited by radicals for propaganda purposes, the public nature of the trials giving the accused 'a forum [to] force the state to make its attitudes public … [and] by the 1820s the radicals had developed sophisticated methods for exploiting show trials and had high hopes for their political efficiency.'[45] The most striking example of this, the trials of T.J. Wooler and William Hone, ended in 'spectacular' acquittals and forced a rethink of government policy on the effectiveness of libel law as a tool of repression.[46] These observations, initially in tension with the evidence of Mill's clear disdain for the libel prosecutions that took place in the first half of the nineteenth century, actually chime significantly with what this chapter will come to

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[43] Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism*, 245; Mill describes the Church and the law as "props" of government in his 1824 article "Periodical Literature," *The Westminster Review* 1, no. 1 (January 1824): 213.
[44] Mill, *CPB* I, 100ʳ.
[45] Temple, *Scandal Nation*, 199.
[46] Harling, "The Law of Libel and the Limits of Repression, 1790–1832," 125.

term Mill's 'meditations' on libel law found in the common place books: long, courtroom-based speeches set out as if Mill is the litigant addressing the jury at a trial for seditious or criminal libel, and where he seeks in his defence to mercilessly expose the logical and moral shortcomings of the current law.

It cannot be said with conviction that Mill subscribed to this idea of utilising trials for propaganda purposes – in spite of his role as the Utilitarian propagandist-in-chief – because despite frequent controversy (primarily in the literary periodicals of the day) he never appeared to be personally in danger of being prosecuted, and some of his material appears to have been written well before this practice of exploiting the trials for political gain began in earnest. Mill did oppose the likes of Sir Samuel Romilly, however, concerning the decision on whether to publish Bentham's *Elements of the Art of Packing as Applied to Special Juries*, printed in 1809 but not sold until 1821. Both Romilly and Bowring felt that the attorney general, Sir Vicary ("Vinegar") Gibbs, would certainly prosecute Bentham for what was essentially 'an attack upon the whole administration of justice'. [47] Mill's use of the dialogue form in his manuscripts pertaining to libel law is, nevertheless, a fascinating and unexpected contribution to the overall utility of the common place books as a way of examining Mill's own position on the liberty of the press. It is perhaps also the closest one may get to a reproduction of how Mill spoke. It is to a textual description of these meditations, as well as a critique of the other collated manuscript material on this subject present in the common place books, that this chapter now proceeds.

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[47] Letter from to John Bowring from Sir Samuel Romilly, quoted by Bain in *James Mill*, 102.

III.

Robert Fenn's image of Mill's manuscripts as 'quarries', cited at the start of this chapter, is a particularly apt description of the common place books, given that they consist of scraps of material probably composed between 1810 and the mid-1820s which were merged, ordered and reordered into not always coherent forms throughout this time. Fortunately, the material with which this chapter is concerned is organised much more consistently than sections dedicated to Mill's other interests.[48] The content found under the title 'Liberty of the Press' exists across two of the volumes (I and II) and can be readily classified into two categories. The first category consists of extracts from other works such as books, pamphlets and newspaper articles. This compilation of material selectively quoted by Mill mimics the traditional 'Lockean'-style of common placing, that is to say each extract from a source is referenced to an edition in Mill's collection (or one to which he presumably had access) so that it could be recovered later for use in compositions.[49] These extracts are particularly valuable in providing context to Mill's ideas, because an impression can be conjured of the range of works he consulted whilst writing, as well as an idea of what comprised his personal library. This initial category can be further subdivided, the first subsection consisting of shorter passages from a multitude of other works, where fables (primarily cited from Sir Roger L'Estrange's *Fables of Aesop and Other Eminent Mythologists*),[50] the Bible, classical philosophy in both Latin and Greek, Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels,* and many Burke essays and speeches are the most frequently cited. The second subcategory consists of longer extracts (sometimes entire pages are copied verbatim) occasionally

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[48] Fenn argues that the relative neatness of the sections on 'Liberty of the Press' are testament to Mill's dedication to the subject. Of course it is not particularly difficult to argue the opposite; that disorganised, haphazard sections may point to a frenzied passion for a particular topic.

[49] Richard Yeo, "John Locke's 'New Method' of Commonplacing: Managing Memory and Information," *Eighteenth-Century Thought* no. 2 (2004): 1–38.

[50] Roger L'Estrange, *Fables of Aesop and Other Eminent Mythologists: With Morals and Reflections*, 8th edition (London: A. Bettesworth, 1738).

complete with sparing commentary from works such as Francis Holt's *The Law of Libel* and William Paley's *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*.

The inclusion of Holt's work in the second is a typical example of the duality that some material in the common place books possesses, and also corroborates an argument advanced by William Thomas that the purpose of Mill's common placing was to collect extracts for 'controversial' use, rather than for 'private rumination'.[51] Holt's *The Law of Libel* was probably primarily read for its scrutiny of libel law as it stood in 1812, since the published essay *Liberty of the Press* was intended to provide a synoptic evaluation of the law of libel as it stood at the time of its publication. Yet it unmistakeably also contains interpretations of this law that Mill would find irresistible to argue against. When Holt affirms that libel law 'contains nothing contradictory to the spirit of the [English] constitution', for example, Mill can be envisaged issuing a rejoinder along the lines of 'the course [lawyers] are pursuing is the very way to destroy the constitution of England.'[52] The use of Paley's *Principles* is similarly illuminating. It was a popular work made mandatory for Cambridge examinations from 1787 into the nineteenth century, and was probably useful to Mill in an elementary sense, for example where he uses it as evidence 'to expose the evil of punishing without a legislative enactment',[53] but the work's religious principle of utility was a prompt for Bentham to pen his more secular *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* in 1789, and it was also rejected by the likes of Dugald Stewart, a scholar to whom Mill clearly owed a portion of his intellectual heritage, having studied moral philosophy under him at Edinburgh.[54]

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[51] Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals*, 97.

[52] Francis Ludlow Holt, *The Law of Libel: In Which Is Contained, a General History of This Law in the Ancient Codes, and of Its Introduction, and Successive Alterations in the Law of England.* (London: W. Reed, 1812), 302; Mill, *CPB* II, 4^{rb5}.

[53] Mill, *CPB* II 8^{v3}; William Paley, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy [1785]* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2002), 352.

[54] James E. Crimmins, 'Paley, William (1743–1805)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21155, accessed 2

To this extent the *Principles* seemingly also had a secondary employment as Mill's intellectual fodder. The labelling of some material as 'controversial' can perhaps be expanded to include items Mill kept that assisted in normalizing his own opinions that had potential to be externally perceived as radical. Here, Mill's collection of historical or literary instances that professed logic similar to his own arguments can be seen as devices which essentially helped moderate his output. [55] His citation of Poggius Florentinus's fable 'A Priest and Epiphany' alongside comments on the necessity to allow a 'liberty of blame' towards public functionaries to be as extensive as the existing 'liberty of praise', is one such example of this technique being employed. Further, more striking examples of this technique will be illustrated in this chapter's conclusion.[56]

The second category of material comprises the items which have previously been described as Mill's meditations on libel law, essentially dialogues written from the viewpoint of a presumably radical writer accused of seditious libel and defending himself at court. The word 'Gentlemen' is frequently found interposed in these pieces, as if the meditations were in fact a script with which to address the jury. These longer, more developed tracts dominate the material on the liberty of the press within the common place books, and they are key to developing a commentary which depicts Mill's true position. In particular instances, the extracts show that Mill has distilled his thoughts and reading on libel law into sharpened rhetoric, in this first instance showing what Mill has taken from Paley's *Principles*:

March 2013]. On Dugald Stewart, Mill wrote that 'the taste for the studies which have formed for my favourite pursuits and which will be so till the end of my life, I owe to him'. Letter to Macvey Napier, cited in Bain, *James Mill*, 16.

[55] This phenomena may also be seen in Mill's extensive use of Paley in his 1812 article on education and established religion entitled *Schools for All*, discussed more fully in chapter 4.

[56] Mill, *CPB* II 1^rb4; L'Estrange, *Fables of Aesop and Other Eminent Mythologists*, 381. The moral of the fable: "The Silliness of the Person does not at all derogate from the Dignity of his Character and Commission".

> This is what Paley says. Wherever there is no precise definition, to give the judge a power of
>
> punishing, is just so much tyranny. Gentlemen the case is clear. There is no definition of libel.
>
> All punishment, as for libel, then, is just so much tyranny.[57]

However there are considerable swathes of argument in the dialogues of the common place books that, much like the article *Liberty of the Press*, do not have verifiable literary references. Thus, suggestions of influences on Mill from other sources have to be tabled. In this example, the use of the term 'master packer' appears to allude to Bentham's aforementioned *Elements of the Art of Packing*:

> This juries, even when fair—when unbiassed [*sic*], have been too ready to [yield up their
>
> decision to the will of the judge]—When they are chosen by the master packer, for their known
>
> servility, where the principal [*sic*] of selection operates upon the speciality of juries, the case is a
>
> case of sheer corruption, and flagrant injustice.[58]

Stylistically there is much to describe about the meditations that is interesting. The arguments presented are methodical and the reasoning expressed by Mill, acting as the litigant, is impressive, for example:

> They say libel cannot be defined; yet they say that twelve unlettered men can in each individual
>
> instance tell what it is, and what it is not. But how can any man tell what is, or is not included in
>
> a general rule, if he knows not what the rule is?[59]

Whilst maintaining a style laced with unrelenting logic and showcasing an ability to transform the abstract into elegant explanations which are not uncommon to his *SupEB* essays, what is very different within the manuscripts is a demonstration of Mill's capability to argue passionately, which is a quality not particularly utilized in his

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[57] Mill, *CPB* II, 1[va]; Paley, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy [1785]*, 3.
[58] Mill, *CPB* I, 83[v].
[59] Mill, *CPB* I, 16[v].

published writings, Mill usually preferring to attend to his arguments with cold rationality and withering logic:

> Why was not Ld. Erskine punished for his pamphlet on the war—Burke for his *Thoughts on the cause of the present discontents*, etc.? Did these men mean to raise sedition? Was Ld. Erskine a Jacobin—Did Mr. Burke mean anarchy—was Chatham an enemy of social order, legitimate government and holy religion—Was Mr. Locke an incendiary? No—Gentlemen—these great, and ever venerable *patriotes*, did not believe with the lawyers that censorial writings on government had no tendency but to make men seditious.[60]

Alas finally, however, it is worth showing that a peculiarity of the meditations is that there are more rhetorical flourishes present within them than in any of Mill's published writings, to the extent that, in spite of accounting for the nature of the courtroom setting and its perceived decorum, they verge towards the ridiculous:

> Had I but the talents and experience which are this day exerted against me, and unhappily against the cause, what a flame of holy, of consecrated zeal, consecrated to the good of humanity, should I kindle within you.[61]

If the meditations can deliver snatches of Mill's thought in a form that appears unhindered by a necessity to moderate, then they point to what can be deemed Mill's unfettered opinion about the law of libel, and this is extremely valuable to the chapter's wider objectives. One issue that persists, however, is how to arrange these extracts into some kind of chronology. The conundrum of dating applies to both types of manuscript material thus far described but in varying degrees. Since Mill rarely dated anything, three different approaches can be used to determine when parts of the material on liberty of the press were written. Much can be gained by Fenn's detective work with regard to the physical construction of the manuscripts. Since a significant proportion of

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[60] Mill, *CPB* I, 82^r. Mill's emphasis.
[61] Mill, *CPB* I, 91^r.

the material is written on the back of envelopes and letters – which is not an unexpected practice given that paper was an expensive commodity in the early nineteenth century – a useful offshoot of this hoarding of scraps is that the postmark of the envelope or watermark of the paper provides a way of accurately determining the date after which the particular text was written, which is at least a partial remedy for aforementioned chronological concerns. One issue is that a postmark of 1820 cannot guarantee composition began at that time, since the manuscripts frequently contain passages written over several scraps which have different dates. At best, one can gauge a range over which the material might have been composed. An augmentation of the ability to determine dates of scraps comes in the analysis of Mill's hand, in that the distinct enlargement of this, attributed to his poor eye sight and crippling gout, allows for the identification of later work such as the material towards the end of the collection in volume II.[62] Finally, Mill's typical common placing, that is expressly the noting of extracts from the various works he had read, assists in the fact that the publication dates of these items, if contemporary to Mill's time, can help anchor the particular scraps they are written upon – a point which is obviously valid when applied to clippings from newspapers, speeches, and references to political events, for instance the citing of the 1809 case against Denis Hogan, who was accused of libelling the Duke of York in a pamphlet.[63] It is, of course, necessary to concede that Mill may not have read every contemporary item he cited in the year of its publication, nor comment on events within the year of their occurrence.

The conclusions drawn by Fenn about the dating of the material are worth repeating here: the second section of material in *CPB* I (between folio pages 81[r] and 105[v]) has nothing later than 1812–13, that is to say well before the *SupEB* article was published.

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[62] Bain, *James Mill*, 201.
[63] Mill, *CPB* II 6[va].

Therefore any similarities in tenets held or arguments found will suggest an intellectual position held for at least a decade. The first section in that volume (between folio pages 3^r to 19^v) has material up to the mid-1820s, i.e. contemporaneous to the publication of Mill's article in 1821. The material in *CPB* II probably comes from the late 1810s, as a significant number of scraps have been dated 1817–18, until the early 1820s since, as aforementioned, some scraps are in Mill's later enlarged hand. All of these conclusions have clear ramifications on the issue of determining the intellectual influences on Mill within the sections on 'Liberty of the Press', since they all date after the introduction of Mill to Bentham and, in effect, correspond to the period where their working relationship was at its closest. In particular, it should be noted that a significant number of scraps written on the reverse of the envelopes found in volume 2 reveal addresses of various Bentham residences, such as Forde Abbey in Somerset.[64]

<div align="center">IV.</div>

In accounting for the differences that arise between the essay *Liberty of the Press* and the manuscripts when considering the content of their respective arguments, it is prudent to separate the instances where comparisons have been made into categories. These categories make progressively greater contributions of value to this chapter's objective of determining whether Mill moderated his position for the published *SupEB* article when it is compared to the radical ideas found in his common place books. Such categories are delineated as follows: 1) comments by Mill on the contemporary legal status of the law of libel and the associated criticism levelled at lawyers and judges who exploit it; 2) Mill's argument that a strong correlation exists between a free press and good governance, which includes the virtues of criticism and the dangers of false praise;

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[64] See for example *CPB* II 2^{vb5}, 3^{rb6}, 4^{rb4}, 4^{v1}, 5^{rb3}, 5^{rb4}, 5^{rb5}, 5^{vb1}, 10^{r2}.

and finally, 3) the overwhelming belief expressed by Mill in truth as an effective counter to false facts, including against even the grossest of libels.

It is in the final section of the *SupEB* article where Mill begins to attack the 'manifold deformities of the English law of libel' − its unstable nature owing to a lack of statutory definition. Mill progresses logically, starting from the perceived legal doctrine that 'all indecency in discussion should be punished as a libel', to show that 'decent' and 'what the judge likes' are generally synonymous. This leads Mill to explode the fallacy that only true opinions are decent, arguing that if that is so, it is a short road to describing all discussion as indecent.[65] This sentiment is reproduced in the manuscripts in a more radical guise when Mill, in one of his courtroom dialogues, explains to the jury that definitions of libel law propagated by lawyers would, if executed consistently, result in 'put[ting] almost every man in the country in a prison.'[66] Indeed the manuscripts show Mill repeatedly resorting to this question of the meaning of libel within the wider law. In demonstrably earlier passages Mill complains that the press enjoys libel 'under connivance', and that it is, echoing Burke's *Speech on a Bill for the Relief of Protestant Dissenters*, 'like the law of pains and penalties against dissenters. It is not enforced − it is not executed in one out of a thousand cases in which it is violated.' There is 'nothing positive' about a law of libel that is 'still unwritten, still vague'.[67] In admirable foresight of the market for his *SupEB* article, he acknowledges that it is 'not easy to make [ordinary minds] perceive the Mischief of a vague, unwritten law',[68] whilst in later parts probably written in 1819, since there is a reference on the reverse side of the same scrap to an article from the *Morning Chronicle* written in that year, Mill refers to the legal

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[65] James Mill, "Liberty of the Press," in *James Mill: Political Writings*, ed. Terence Ball (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 131.
[66] Mill, *CPB* II 4^{ra1}.
[67] Mill, *CPB* I 81^v, 103^r, 87^r. The reference to Burke is from his "Speech on a Bill for the relief of Protestant Dissenters, March 7, 1773". See *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 7:24.
[68] Mill, *CPB* II 92^r.

'conspiracy' that refuses to define seditious libel, because 'they' know that to do so would shock the population.[69]

Even though the dating of material in this category of analysis shows Mill's concern over the questionable legal status of libel law was certainly long-running, it is not possible to show that the argument found within the common place books is inherently more radical in content than that which Mill makes in his *SupEB* article. Mill's logical reasoning – based on the idea that libel law is without definition and therefore without substance and, thus, legally dangerous and morally bankrupt – is essentially the same. Nor is Mill's complaint original or radical per se, since Mill refers both to Burke, who expressed a corresponding sentiment as early as 1771, and to the noting of a protest signed by a number of Lords on the passing of the bill for restricting the liberty of the press in December 1819, which 'points out very strongly the importance of defining a libel.'[70] Fundamentally, the principles of Mill's argument are also in line with that found in Bentham's *Elements of the Art of Packing*, a work published in 1821 but printed several years beforehand, in which it is surmised that if the law of libel were to be 'consistently and completely executed' it would reduce the government of England to despotism.[71]

Strong differences do exist, however, in the treatment reserved for judges and lawyers in the common place books. Mill rephrases his accusation found in the *SupEB* article that judges set their own standards for decency, but he is much more inflammatory, insinuating that they 'make libel law whatsoever they please'. Mill also deliberately

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[69] Mill, *CPB* I 16ᵛ.
[70] Mill, *CPB* I 15ᵛ; Burke, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 7:114. Mill is referring here to debates in the Lords on the Blasphemous Libel Bill.
[71] Jeremy Bentham, *The Elements of the Art of Packing as Applied to Special Juries: Particularly in Cases of Libel Law* (London: E. Wilson, 1821), 3.

questions their impartiality, arguing that the government has an interest in corrupting them:

> English judges have always been ready to abet the executive government in its warfare upon the liberties of the people … if we depend for [virtue in judges] upon individual merit, we shall be disappointed. Men are men – and yield to temptation.[72]

Even if Mill's opinion on judges can be somewhat tempered by him attributing their behaviour to either a human sense of fallibility or, couched in more Benthamic terms as necessary for them to receive a reward, Mill's accusations against lawyers seem to bear less internal restraint, for lawyers force authors to 'only write in applause of them and other instruments of evil' in order to avoid prosecution, which for Mill is intolerable:

> If we see a man who, to our eyes is guilty of mischief to his country, and unless his conduct is exposed will continue to work mischief—must we praise him? [I]f so, we must aid him, in ruining our country.[73]

In an allusion to Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Mill calls English lawyers 'stoicks', who equate a censure of the government with the burning down of a city.[74] Whilst the incendiary nature of Mill's comments seems indicative of a more general, pressing desire to remedy injustices within the English legal system, their analysis can only lead to rudimentary conclusions when used to answer the more general question about the true extent of Mill's radicalism. The remarks undeniably portray Mill as a vicious commentator on both the failings of the law itself, and the character of the actors associated with it and who propagate its misuse. They are also reminiscent of the acerbic comments made about judges in Bentham's *Art of Packing*, in which their

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[72] For article reference, see Mill, "Liberty of the Press," 131; for manuscript reference, see Mill, *CPB* II 8^{v1}.
[73] Mill, *CPB* I 88^v.
[74] Mill, *CPB* I 85^v; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 207.

particular actions are divided into two accusatory groupings relating to either corruption or deception. [75] But in these points Mill is fundamentally circumspect on what intentions, radical or otherwise, he might have to fix the broad problems he ascribes to the incumbent legal system, beyond the rehashed and unoriginal requirement for statuary definition of a libel. It is therefore obvious why these passages on judges and lawyers found within the manuscripts are not included in Mill's published article: they were too critical of public functionaries, of course, but moreover, they were unconstructive. Beyond this conclusion, in considering that the overarching purpose of Mill's *SupEB* articles was in one regard to act as expositions of Utilitarian doctrine, the need to exclude exasperated, sometimes unfocused criticism of this nature against the incumbent legal system beyond a dignified critique seems obvious. This marks the limit to which the existential factors of nineteenth-century libel law affected Mill's writing upon the subject, and the rest of this essay's conclusions focus on the manuscript content concerned with matters not essentially rooted in the contemporary legal debates of the day.

On the subject of the utility of a free press to the state, Mill's opinion is forthcoming in his published article, where he deems it the only adequate check on government, and argues that restraint upon it leads directly to despotism.[76] Within the common place books Mill cites the example of America to rail against the Attorney General's assumption that a free press is actually the very reverse of this position, i.e. that it would destroy government:

> … one would suppose pandemonium to exist wherever there is a free press. Do the feelings of
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> the Americans, the men who experience this curse, correspond with his speeches? Do they hate
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> their own country? for this is what was to be expected. Do they curse their own institutions? Do

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[75] Bentham, *The Elements of the Art of Packing as Applied to Special Juries*, 13.
[76] Mill, "Liberty of the Press," 116–120.

they prefer those of other countries? One would suppose, if the Attorney General speaks the truth, that not a rational creature would live in America, who could get away from it.[77]

Equally prevalent is a warning about the dangers of 'undeserved praise' of public men, which Mill considers 'as mischievous as undeserved blame', because the permitting of only favourable sentiments towards such figures in the press can establish an inherently dangerous public opinion, skewed by unrealistically positive perceptions.[78] As aforementioned, one might consider here what Mill owes to Burke for this argument, since there is a reference within the common place books to Burke's speech of 27 May 1790 during the Trial of Warren Hastings, in which is highlighted his concerns about the 'venality of the press'.[79] The usefulness of a free press and the dangers of false praise, which are both subjects given some regard in the *SupEB* article,[80] are also integral notions to Mill's more general theory on the utility of criticism, a concept afforded significant depth in the manuscripts, and which Mill is effective at employing in two related ways. Initially, Mill is keen to outline the effects of a 'grand fallacy', which is the belief that criticism of the government comes from those who wish to destroy it: 'either praise or hold your tongue… is Bonaparte's doctrine', argues Mill in an early scrap.[81] Such a fallacy is promoted because 'men do not like to have their faults pointed out; and the very use of a free press is to point out the faults of public men' even though, in actual fact, 'the stronger a man's love to good government the stronger naturally his hatred of bad[.] [C]riticism of government therefore is so far from a proof that a man wishes to destroy government that it is the very reverse.'[82] Mill collated

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[77] Mill, *CPB* I 89ᵛ.

[78] Mill, "Liberty of the Press," 123.

[79] Mill, *CPB* II 1ʳᵇ³. Burke said that he "was not afraid of the liberty of the press, neither was he afraid of its licentiousness; but he avowed himself afraid of its venality." *Parliamentary Register; or History of the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons ... during the Seventh Session of the Sixteenth Parliament of Great Britain*, vol. 27 (London: J. Debrett, 1790), 684.

[80] Mill, "Liberty of the Press," 126, 123–5.

[81] Mill, *CPB* I 98ʳ.

[82] Mill, *CPB* I 93ʳ.

historical and classical examples to prove this last point. Cromwell had, in the words of Clarendon at least, the ability to 'bear ill language and reproaches with less disturbance and concernment than any person in authority had ever done.' Louis XII did not take vengeance on the playwright who ridiculed him on stage, because 'they [did] me justice; they believe[d] me worthy of hearing the truth.' Isocrates, to Nicocles, said: 'Regard as your most faithful friends, not those who praise everything you say or do, but those who criticize your mistakes'.[83]

The second exploration Mill conducts into the utility of criticism sees an amalgamation of his theory of its virtues with the previously discussed problem of the lack of statutory definition for the law of libel and the related inconsistency in its execution, which Mill uses to build a logical justification to encourage active libelling of the ruling classes. In an example found in both volumes of his common place books, Mill rhetorically asks why an employer's reference on the character of a servant, when it portrays them negatively and disrupts their chances of new employment, is not defined as a libel. Mill states that the lawyer's justification in such a case would be thus: whilst such injury to their character may be 'unfavourable' to the servant, it is inherently 'useful' to the employer and, thus, the community.[84] Mill transposes the tenets of the argument into a more general, 'admirable' rule: that 'wherever the good of the community is served by freedom of speech, that freedom is legal, however hurtful to the individual against whom it is applied.'[85] He then lambasts the perceived hollow logic of lawyers that this particular development has revealed:

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[83] Mill, *CPB* I 100ᵛ; *CPB* I 88ʳ; *CPB* I 7ᵛ.
[84] Mill, *CPB* II 3ᵛ¹.
[85] Mill, *CPB* II 3ᵛ².

> But Oh, gentlemen, what a difference between the case in which the lawyers allow this freedom, and that in which they do not allow it. Where they do allow it the advantage is insignificant compared with that in which they do not allow it—work the difference.[86]

The inference from Mill's argument is clear: if it is permissible to libel servants because it is 'useful', there is nothing to suppose that the libelling of public figures is not equally useful. In one occurrence of this argument, which Mill writes on paper watermarked 1815 but which refers to a report in the *Morning Chronicle* published in January 1818, his repeated use of the phrase 'good for the community' to describe libels is instructive. Whilst Mill appears to be discussing only the necessity of libels against public figures to ensure good governance, his argument appears flexible enough to be applied to the writing of all libels irrespective of their targets, that is to say without the distinction that exists in the *SupEB* article between offences towards individuals and towards government. This flexibility is apparent because Mill repeatedly implies a *communal* benefit arising from a more liberal acceptance of libels, using language that seems remarkably similar to the sentiment of Holt's legal framework of 1695, which employed the law of libel to set *community* standards for speech. Mill has effectively inverted Holt's original argument for introducing libel law, and has brought its utility full circle: if one is concerned with the good of the community, texts that may currently be considered 'libels' actually need to be encouraged rather than punished.

The same tenets for this argument can also be found in material written much earlier (i.e. no later than 1813) in the manuscripts. This early occurrence is also interesting because, on the same scrap, Mill affixes a memo to '[c]ollect all the instances of this sort',[87] presumably in a similar vein to where he collated examples of public figures and classical authors accepting criticism and lauding its benefits. Mill's continued

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[86] Mill, *CPB* II 3^{v2}.
[87] Mill, *CPB* I 91^{r}.

motivation for adding legitimacy to his ideas through the crafty use of general historical and philosophical examples may be because it was a useful device to moderate ideas that would be perceived as radical, if it can be proved that what he prescribed was merely a reformulation of thought that had prior-existence in certain more venerable minds. However, this second instance of the argument is also crucial in that it implies an uncertainty to Mill's position, with regards to what limits should be placed on the publishing of libels. On the reverse of this earlier scrap can be found Mill explicitly stating the idea that freedom of speech ought not to be permitted in cases where it is injurious to the nation, or injurious to individuals without benefitting the nation, which Mill, in another example of mixing 'libel law' and 'liberty of the press', extrapolates into what he might consider a general maxim of the press.[88] This is a notion seemingly transferred wholesale to the *SupEB* article, particularly in the section dedicated to offences of the press versus individual rights.[89] Yet there is an obvious tension here between the 'positive' intervention in the liberty of the press to prevent injury that Mill develops in the pre-1813 scrap, and the 'negative' concept of an unrestrained practice of libelling for the communal good found chronologically later: one clearly cannot have both, and the rather flimsy assurance that Mill gives within the *SupEB* article with regards to building consensus on what particular truths (such as those inherited at birth) could be forbidden to prevent injury hints at where Mill's true opinion eventually lies.[90]

However, even if it is possible that Mill favours no restraints upon the press, what still remains is how one accounts for the potential damage to reputations that might occur from the torrent of statements that his general encouragement of libels seems destined to create. In one response to these concerns, Mill engages the abstract idea of indefatigable

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[88] Mill, *CPB* I 91ᵛ.
[89] Mill, "Liberty of the Press," 104–5.
[90] Ibid., 110.

truth, a concept which comprises the final category of analysis between manuscript and article. The defence Mill routinely employs against the danger of false libels – to personal reputation and to government alike – is an unrelenting belief in truth as 'the remedy to false facts'.[91] Indeed, the importance in establishing truth in cases of libel wholly eclipses any talk within the common place books of methods for obtaining compensation for injuries to reputation that occur when damaging falsehoods are propagated to the extent that truth takes on a dual role as both the defence to false libels and seemingly the *only* reward necessary in the event of dismissal of such falsehoods. This is in distinct contrast to Mill's discussion of pecuniary recompense measures in the *SupEB* article.[92] This idea of indefatigable truth is critical in an attempt to establish Mill's final position with regards to the liberty of the press and the associated law of libel, and predictably also represents the most radical component of his thought not revealed in his published writings. Within the common place books, Mill argues that 'freedom of the press [is] the cure for its own evils… false accusations can never be dangerous, except where freedom of speech is first annulled',[93] but he builds upon this argument to a more drastic, albeit nuanced, position than that expressed in his *SupEB* article. Even if the press published 'all imputations, just and unjust, without punishment,' Mill argues that 'members of government would not be without protection. Just defence [is] naturally more powerful than unjust attack.'[94] Mill regards the inherently powerful nature of truth as practically sufficient to secure society against the dangers of falsehoods perpetrated in the press. If *all* opinions are expressly permitted, truth will always supersede any machinations intent on propagating falsehoods.

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[91] Mill, *CPB* I 19ᵛ.
[92] See for example Mill, "Liberty of the Press," 101–103.
[93] Mill, *CPB* I 98ʳ.
[94] Mill, *CPB* I 99ʳ.

Thus the position that Mill appears to reach in the common place books is an argument for the revocation of the law of libel. Simply put, there should be no restrictions on what can be said in the press, because to do so may prevent truth being disseminated. This is clearly a significant departure from what might be perceived as an acceptable opinion to advance publicly, and again Mill is found employing the technique of using historical examples – in this case classical references – to help reinforce his logical outcomes and portray them as not, therefore, technically or particularly 'radical'. In one instance, Mill cites Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric* to help compound his argument: quoting that 'generally speaking, that which is true and better is naturally always easier to prove and more likely to persuade.'[95] Despite the precarious nature of this conclusion, drawn out from a source which has been demonstrated as problematic, there are undoubtedly echoes of Mill's sentiments about truth within the *SupEB* article itself. For example, in Mill's assertion that 'the rule of permitting truth ought to be universal',[96] or in his argument that limiting unfavourable opinions on government infringes the benefits of a free press to such an extent that 'hardly any security for good government can remain.'[97] Mill even employs an expressly Utilitarian calculation which hints at this position, when he suggests that the benefits of establishing truth in cases of 'really hurtful acts' are seemingly greater than the 'inconvenience' experienced by a '[small] number of persons'.[98]

The inherently radical nature of Mill's final position in advocating the revocation of the law of libel gives the clearest indication yet of proof of this chapter's original hypothesis: that Mill restrained his published output by paring down his ideas on the

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[95] Mill, *CPB* II 7^{vb4}. Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese, Loeb Classical Library 22 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1926), 13.
[96] Mill, "Liberty of the Press," 110.
[97] Ibid., 130.
[98] Ibid., 109.

liberty of the press. But in pushing this judgement further, the question that arises from having shown that Mill logically arrived at such a radical position is to ask precisely why such revelations were then not included in published work such as his *SupEB* article. This particular question can pave the way to a more general summary of this chapter's conclusions.

V.

One reason that this chapter has frequently used to account for the differences in argument advanced in the published and the private instances of Mill's thought is his political context. It has been argued that Mill, as a radical journalist, felt compelled by external influences to moderate his output for fear of prosecution for seditious libel, the very thing his writings on the liberty of the press was designed to undermine. A different way to portray the moderation of Mill's thought, however, but using the same context, may be to describe him as a shrewd manipulator of the press, and such a distinction places him much more conspicuously within the activities of the Philosophic Radicals. Joseph Hamburger observed that the significance of Mill's proposals in *Liberty of the Press* lay 'in the way they reveal his view of the press as an instrument for provoking a constitutional crisis that might be resolved by the concession of fundamental reforms.'[99] In essence, the conclusions drawn in this chapter echo such a thesis: despite Mill's privately held opinions on the law of libel, his fundamental understanding of using the press as a way to destabilise government meant that, if his objective was the advancement of a grand Utilitarian reform project, only a moderate account of his beliefs was initially necessary in the *SupEB* article. Because Mill had a rational grounding in the politics of the day, which led to an understanding that wholesale change was practically impossible in the current political situation but

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[99] Hamburger, *James Mill and the Art of Revolution*, 32.

piecemeal reform was attainable if radical tracts could be devised properly, there was less need to advance the more extreme parts of his argument at the time of the publication of *Liberty of the Press*. Such a conclusion, of course, also mirrors Terence Ball's argument for Mill's moderation of the essay on *Government* outlined in the introduction to this chapter, that Mill deliberately downplayed his arguments on extending the franchise.

If contextual reasons can thus account for why Mill may have moderated the full extent of his ideas in his *SupEB* article, and suggest that he may never have intended to write a tract that reflected his real position in relation to the liberty of the press, what remains is to judge how effective the particular methodology employed in this chapter has been in revealing this more radical position. The comparative study of *Liberty of the Press* and Mill's manuscripts was crucial here for placing the more controversial passages of the common place books in sharp relief. This chapter's analysis of the manuscript material was also useful in establishing the primary intellectual influences on Mill's writings about the liberty of the press. In this regard one of the main conclusions drawn is the role Bentham plays in the content of Mill's common place books. This is in opposition to the conclusions of Halévy, who thought Mill's opinions on press freedom were set without influence from Bentham.[100] Fenn, however, saw the majority of the manuscript writings about the liberty of the press as part of a wider 'Benthamite concern over the proper theory and practice of rewards and punishments'.[101]

The importance of the liberty of the press to Mill's wider political thought expressed in his manuscripts can also be assessed via reference to this thesis' prologue. A free press

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[100] Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism*, 302.
[101] See editorial note to 'Liberty of the Press I' in *James Mill's Common Place Books*, ed. Robert A. Fenn; University of Sussex, 2010; online edn [http://intellectualhistory.net/mill/cpb1ch2.html, accessed 10 January 2011]

was a 'key of knowledge' for the population, and along with the provision of basic literacy, it would provide them with reading material that would act as an antidote to any corruptive or tyrannical opinions handed down by the institutions of political power, such as the government or an established church. Thus even if Mill seems willing to concede on the extent of the freedom offered to the press for the benefit of the pressing political objectives of the day, it is undeniable that a truly free press was a fundamental component of his wider political thought. It is towards another important aspect of this thought, Mill's ideas pertaining to how the population could attain good government through democratic innovation, that this thesis now turns, where the methodological approach first advanced in this chapter is applied to Mill's writings on parliamentary reform.

2. 'A cry for philosophy': James Mill's politics of reform and the essay on *Government*

I.

> [I]s it not strange that a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, avowedly founding his arguments on utility… should deliberately, in the very threshold of his argument, put aside *one half* the human race, of all ages and all characters and conditions, as unentitled to consideration?
>
> William Thompson, *Appeal of One Half the Human Race*[102]

This chapter is a study of James Mill's ideas on parliamentary reform, and focuses in particular on determining the radical extent of such ideas in their early nineteenth-century British context. Whilst each chapter in this thesis purports to study an aspect of Mill's political thought, it is this one in particular where two of Mill's most discernibly political texts are considered for comparison. The first of such texts is the essay *Government*, perhaps the most well-known apparent exposition of Mill's politics, published in the *Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (hereafter *SupEB*) in 1820 and subsequently in a collection of essays in 1823. The second text selected is not constituted in anything like as formal a way; it consists instead of manuscript writings primarily concerning the issue of parliamentary reform found in Mill's common place books, from about 1812 onwards, and heretofore subject only to fleeting scholarly attention.[103] Naturally, both primary sources come with a range of methodological problems, not least how their particular selection can be justified out of Mill's colossal bibliography. It is the purpose of this introduction to address such matters, as well as introduce a range of contextual and conceptual issues which also surround this particular topic. These issues are primarily concerned with a difficulty of definition

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[102] William Thompson, *Appeal of One Half the Human Race, Women: Against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Retain Them in Political, and Thence in Civil and Domestic, Slavery; in Reply to a Paragraph of Mr. Mill's Celebrated "Article on Government".* (London: Richard Taylor, 1825), 4.
[103] See for example Fenn, "The Nature and Structure of Mill's Political Arguments."

which persists when studying Mill's political thought, relating to both his objectives and his vocabulary.

According to Mill's biographer Alexander Bain, *Government* was 'a principal factor… in the train of events culminating in the Reform Bill of 1832.'[104] Other more-or-less contemporary observations of the essay, however, were far less emphatic in praise of its discernible virtues. One major and indeed infamous tenet of *Government* – its argument for a limited extension of the franchise which would exclude women, children, and men under 40 – attracted particular controversy. According to J.S. Mill, the justification for such an exclusion sat uncomfortably with his fellow Philosophic Radicals, whilst he himself thought it was the worst paragraph his father had ever written.[105] It also deeply troubled William Thompson, who criticised it as a betrayal of Mill's philosophical principles. It inspired his book-length *Appeal of One Half the Human Race*, a quotation from which, that hints at a perceived reticence or restraint in Mill's writing, forms this section's epigraph. Yet to most establishment (i.e. Whig and Tory) politicians, the extension of the franchise even this far was dangerously democratic.[106] A basic, if predictable, problem with perceiving *Government*'s radical extent, therefore, is that contemporary judgements about such a feature rest wholly on subjective interpretations of its content.

More modern analyses, meanwhile, are unsure even of the true purposes of *Government*. Some run counter to Bain's perception, regarding it as far too abstract or theoretical and hence of limited practical value to the reform politics of the 1820s and

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[104] Bain, *James Mill*, 215.
[105] Mill, *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, 106.
[106] Terence Ball, 'Mill, James (1773–1836)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18709, accessed 4 July 2011]

1830s.[107] One notable feature of the essay was that its argument rested on *a priori* foundations, Mill professing that political laws were to be deduced from a science of human nature, where experience had been condensed into axioms. Along similar lines, *Government* has also been criticised for giving little insight into Mill's true ideas, because the language employed in it was deliberately ambiguous,[108] or the literary equivalent of someone rolling with the punches.[109] Other commentators, moreover, see the essay's main function as a thinly-veiled Benthamite critique of contemporary approaches to reform.[110] In other words, it is an exposition of all that Mill detested about other attempts to reform the British political system which had come to be colloquially known as "Old Corruption", but it professed little by way of its own remedy. If any, all, or a combination of these three later readings are true, one wonders whether *Government* can actually divulge anything about Mill's political thought at all.

Concerns about utility can also be raised about the extracts this chapter selects from Mill's common place books, although they themselves offer a different set of challenges. Many of these issues are an echo of the broader methodological problems of this thesis initially outlined in chapter 1. In terms of construction, these manuscript writings do not really represent a text in any publishable or easily-consumable form. Instead they are a collection of fragments, either passages of Mill's own writing, or else extracts from, and analyses of, the works of other authors, organised together into chapters in a fashion which is not always entirely lucid. The ability to date the material

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[107] Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism*, 426; William Thomas, "James Mill's Politics: The 'Essay on Government' and the Movement for Reform," *The Historical Journal* 12, no. 02 (1969): 249, doi:10.1017/S0018246X00004295.

[108] Robert A. Fenn, *James Mill's Political Thought* (New York: Garland, 1987), 141.

[109] Ball, "Introduction," xxxii.

[110] H.S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 13; Biancamaria Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society: The Edinburgh Review, 1802–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 162; Stefan Collini, Donald Winch, and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 98.

is of pivotal importance, because it helps explain a certain limitation these selections impose on the chapter's wider objectives. They commence after Mill first met Bentham, and the majority were also composed after Mill's apparent conversion to Benthamite Utilitarianism, which, it is argued, can be seen played out in issues of the *Edinburgh Review* between 1808 and 1813.[111] There is little that can be positively identified as coming from post-1825, and this is one reason why *Government* is compared to the manuscripts, rather than a later text such as the *Fragment on Mackintosh* (completed 1832, published 1835). The *Fragment* was also an exposition of Mill's political thought, if wrapped in a concerted attack upon its eponymous Whig target.

In addition to the dating of material, Mill's organisation of it is also critical. The headings given to chapters which have a primarily political focus are inconsistent, and from this the first instance of the aforementioned difficulty of definition in this topic can be glimpsed. The manuscript sections utilised in this chapter are to be found under a range of titles, from the more recognizable 'Reform'/'Parl.[iamentary] Ref.[orm]'[112] (of which three separate chapters have been discerned, separable by date of composition) and 'Miscellaneous Politics', to the more obscure 'Aristocracy', 'Speculation & Practice' and 'Ins and Outs'. Interestingly, the heading 'Government' is not used anywhere.

Despite this range of misgivings about the primary texts consulted for this chapter, from problems regarding subjectivity and reticence in *Government* to issues of provenance and obfuscation in the manuscripts, both the published essay and the common place books are eminently fit for this chapter's purposes of a study of Mill's political thought pertaining to parliamentary reform when the two sources are considered together. Such

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[111] W.H. Burston, "Introduction," in *James Mill on Education*, ed. W.H. Burston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 2–3.

[112] Mill refers to the first chapter on reform in *CPB* I as 'Parl. Ref' in *CPB* III 146ʳ.

an argument is leveraged upon the fact that within the common place books can actually be found the working material for the *SupEB* essay, and it is from this discovery that a methodological justification for how this chapter proceeds is developed. Such working material exists in two distinct forms. Some extracts can be used to understand Mill's devotion to the deductive or *a priori* delineation of political laws, which was the method employed extensively in *Government* and also the subject of much of its criticism. Other selections contextualise the actual content of *Government*, that is to say the particular political reforms it advocates, and this in turn allows for commentary on what Mill's intended objectives actually were when he wrote the essay.

In a similar vein to Robert Fenn's conclusion about the relationship between Mill's article *Liberty of the Press* and its related manuscript material stated in the previous chapter, a complete draft of *Government* is also not to be found within the common place books. A similar attempt at reconstruction of an unpublished version of the text is thus required. But the nature of the material present in the manuscripts does allow for the exploration of a major recurring question of this thesis: *is Mill's thought more radical in scope than his published writings demonstrate*? A comparative analysis between published and unpublished material, based on the conviction that Mill's pen would be far less restrained when writing privately, certainly seems the most productive way to outline such radicalism. This task constitutes one of the core objectives of this chapter.

In assuming that such a comparative study will show Mill to be more radical in thought when writing privately, a distinctly related question follows, namely: *why would Mill moderate his published output*? This itself finds its answer in the chapter's other major objective: the investigation of Mill's political and intellectual context. However, since such a pursuit has other functions – it provides, for example, a large degree of narrative

scene-setting for the period of interest – the chapter's contextual study actually precedes the comparative one, and is taken up in parts II, III and IV below.

Questions about Mill's context, when combined with a perceived problem of definition when talking about his politics, provide a third more conceptual argument for comparing *Government* with the common place books. The fact that some working material for the essay exists in a manuscript chapter entitled 'Reform' or 'Parl. Ref' warrants an attempt to pin down what is meant when we talk about Mill's political ideas in this chapter. More precisely, this is a question about the true nature of his reform objectives, and by extension the depths of his radicalism. Mill's commitment to the *a priori* or deductive method raises particular questions about his specific attitude to parliamentary reform. The question is whether the logical product of Mill's theoretical approach to legislation is actually compatible with the realities of the political context he inhabited, where piecemeal or pragmatic approaches to politics ran up against more radical, wholesale or revolutionary interpretations.

An analysis of the context within which *Government* was written – a period of extraordinary political commotion in Britain – for the purposes of explaining differences between his published and unpublished political writing is also a very direct route into understanding the range of influences operating upon Mill. These influences can broadly be seen as apportioned into two major types. First, those relating to Mill's political context in both broad and specific terms. In the former this regards, for example, the impact of the French Revolution and its ensuing wars on Britain. In the latter it concerns, say, the importance of the Whig Party's position on parliamentary reform in the 1820s. Second, those influences identified as intellectual in character, such as that of the Scottish Enlightenment on Mill's upbringing and education, and the importance of Bentham and his doctrine of Utilitarianism to Mill's ideas following their

first meeting and subsequent collaboration as leading theorists of the Philosophic Radicals. These are the contexts, identified in the thesis' introduction, which previous studies of Mill's intellectual history have typically sought to illuminate. Beyond these two particular examples of intellectual influence, however, lie Mill's more understated literary influences. This is predicated to a greater extent on the extensive source material available in the form of the common place books, which clearly demonstrates Mill's voracious appetite for reading. Although any glance at Mill's bibliography of review articles can attest to such a trait, Mill's common place books actually provide what is at times a daily record of this activity. Evaluation of what kinds of texts are found in the manuscripts can lead towards conclusions about how they too were of significance to Mill's political thought. They suggest a distinct and hitherto under-explored continental Enlightenment influence on Mill.

II.

Our initial interest in this chapter lies with Mill's political context. This is because, generally-speaking, its delineation helps provide a narrative within which this study of Mill can be anchored to the wider historical period. This period is to be referred to as the 'Reform Crisis' of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Britain. More specifically, however, is the fact that there existed during this time a proscription, by reactionary and intransigent British political and religious authorities, of the dissemination of ideas purported to be philosophically or popularly radical, licentious, or seditious. Here, links can rapidly be formed with the previous chapter which discussed the political context to Mill's ideas on the law of libel. This chapter will argue that this factor can explain the above-mentioned reticence in the language of Mill's *Government*, and in turn it can be used to account for the differences between the

published essay and the corresponding manuscript material that this comparative study seeks to explore. This perception of a general opposition towards radical ideas can be reinforced by several particular instances in Mill's life which suggest he was aware of such limitations. J.S. Mill's observation in his *Autobiography*, regarding his father's distinct lack of optimism for ever seeing the prospect of 'good government' achieved in his lifetime, is one such example.[113] Another is found in a letter to Macvey Napier, on the proposed content of *Government*, where Mill reassures the editor of the *SupEB* that his essay would contain 'nothing capable of alarming even a [W]hig.'[114] A third can be seen in an 1836 article for the *London Review*, one of the last published in his lifetime, in which Mill rails against what he saw as the perjuring of philosophy by both state and church, and consequently their "cry" against it, which was both a self-conscious and self-interested resistance to all attempts at change.[115]

In suggesting that Mill was inhibited by the nature of the political context within which he composed *Government*, it is possible to argue that, in spite of the essay's reputation as the radical plan of parliamentary reform of the Benthamite sect, it was actually hamstrung as a representation of Mill's true thought. If this comparative analysis can provide evidence that such was the case by showing his manuscripts to be more radical in extent, then it is a contextual analysis which may explain the reasons *for* such differences. Whilst this is not to suggest there is concrete evidence for Mill acknowledging his practice of what the previous chapter has defined as dissimulation, instead reference is made to it because, *prima facie*, it seems that the advancement or

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[113] "He would sometimes say that if life were made what it might be, by good government and good education, it would then be worth having: but he never spoke with anything like enthusiasm even of that possibility." Mill, *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, 50.
[114] Letter from Mill to Napier quoted in Bain, *James Mill*, 188.
[115] James Mill, "Theory and Practice," in *Selected Economic Writings*, ed. Donald Winch (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 234.

promotion of very radical political ideas appeared beyond the limits of what was achievable in Mill's context. Thus, he moderated his published ideas accordingly.

But given Mill was writing during a period identified as the 'Reform Crisis', which was dominated by a political discourse geared towards the pursuit of reforms in some guise, it is patently false to suggest the situation was such that nothing could be said publicly about the topic at all.[116] Even concerted government actions against the propagators of very radical reform ideas, such as the passing of sedition or blasphemy laws to inhibit orators such as Henry Hunt, pamphleteers such as T.J. Wooler and printers such as Richard Carlile were not able to arrest the growing popular demand for change, easily found in the various protest and petitioning movements of the later 1810s. It is also incorrect to assume that all reform ideas circulating at this time had radical roots, since some initiatives to reform parliament were distinctly conservative in origin, even arising from within the aristocratic or oligarchical establishment known as "The Thing" itself. What is brought to mind at this juncture is Edmund Burke's 'rhetoric of prescriptive conservatism', rejected by Mill in his common place books, and the notion expressed by Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* that a state without some means of reform was unviable.[117] It thus seems sensible, when talking about Mill's political context as a way of explaining why he engaged in dissimulation, to also orientate his position in relation to these other movements for reform, from both radical and conservative quarters, to obtain a sense of the wider political discourse of the 'Reform Crisis'.

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[116] Eckhart Hellmuth has argued that a popular political culture was acquring definition in Britain from the late 1760s. See "The 'Palladium of All Other English Liberties': Reflections on the Liberty of the Press in England during the 1760s and 1770s," 472.

[117] J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 280; John Rowland Dinwiddy, *Radicalism and Reform in Britain, 1780–1850* (London: Hambledon, 1992), 266; Burke, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 3:358.

An evaluation of these aforementioned popular movements for reform, such as the Association movement of 1792–3, or the various actions that many see as giving rise to the events of Peterloo in 1819, is inherently useful for the wider understanding it gives to this period of study. But of significantly more importance is the groundswell of support for political change in this period by certain figures identifiable as Whigs. More specifically, this came from a reconstituted Whig Party, first, in opposition, under Charles James Fox, and later, in government, under Earl Grey. The support for parliamentary reform by the Whigs forms the backdrop to a more specific series of events: the dispute between Utilitarians such as Bentham, Mill and George Grote, and a number of Scottish (or Scottish-influenced or 'Philosophic') Whig writers notable for their contributions to the *Edinburgh Review*, such as Mackintosh and Macaulay. Beginning with the publication of Bentham's *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* in 1817,[118] the debate was fiercely contested for much of the following decade.[119] Its analysis specifically ties Mill to the wider narrative of the 'Reform Crisis', and also facilitates a transition from a discussion of his political context to his intellectual one.

The support for a distinctly 'Burkean' or gradualist approach to reform found in the *Edinburgh Review* puts Mill's diametrically-opposed deductive method employed at length in the essay *Government* in stark relief. It raises two conceptual questions for the remainder of this chapter to address. The first, touched on above in the description of Mill's deference to the *a priori* method, is that Mill's drawing down of political laws

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[118] Bentham's *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* had begun life as his *Parliamentary Reform Catechism*, which was offered anonymously (and unsuccessfully) to a publisher in 1809. Returning to the topic in the second half of the 1810s when the state of the country was 'alarming' and parliamentary reform was a 'necessity', Bentham attached a new 'Introduction' to the 'Catechism', forming the 1817 work. See "Plan of Parliamentary Reform, in the Form of a Catechism, with Reasons for Each Article: With an Introduction, Showing the Necessity of Radical, and the Inadequacy of Moderate, Reform," in *The Works of Jeremy Bentham, Volume III*, ed. John Bowring (Edinburgh: W. Tait, 1843), 435–553.

[119] See James Mill and Baron Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Utilitarian Logic and Politics: James Mill's "Essay on Government," Macaulay's Critique, and the Ensuing Debate*, ed. Jack Lively and John Collwyn Rees (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

from a science of human nature appears to signify a very philosophical, far-reaching approach to politics which can itself be perceived as very radical. This poses a specific conundrum regarding the definition of his political objectives, and whether the theoretical basis to his politics meant Mill's true thought aimed for something which transcended the limited concept of parliamentary reform. A second question arises from the fact that since both Mill and a number of these Whigs shared a distinct philosophical inheritance – the Scottish Enlightenment – and yet since they seemed to differ so greatly about method, there is an interesting biographical point to consider about the extent to which Mill's upbringing and education, first near Aberdeen but then subsequently at university in Edinburgh, was an influence upon his later thought. Simply put, the question is about the provenance of Mill's philosophical views on *deduction*, and whether his particular aversion to the Scottish Whigs' support of *induction* is indicative of a wider, more general disengagement with this Scottish Enlightenment legacy.

<div align="center">III.</div>

> Everything run, and was connected, with the Revolution in France; which, for above 20 years, was, or was made, the all in all. Everything… literally everything, was soaked in this one event.
> Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of His Time*[120]

This chapter has thus far appropriated the notion of a nineteenth-century 'Reform Crisis' to refer to the historical period it is concerned with. It is the primary aim of this section to offer some attempt at depicting the nature of this crisis as a way of exploring the context within which Mill's political thought can be seen to have developed. Whilst the end of this period might generally be perceived as 1832, when the first Reform Act

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[120] Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of His Time* (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1856), 80.

finally passed Parliament,[121] ascertaining where to begin is more complicated. This study will actually commence with an event which, though occurring in the late eighteenth century, echoed resoundingly into the nineteenth: the French Revolution. Since Mill was only sixteen when the Bastille was stormed in 1789, some justification should be offered for this choice (instead of, say, 1773, the year he was born, or 1802, the year he arrived in London). Simply put, it is the particular and pivotal importance of the French Revolution, both to Mill and the wider British political consciousness as a whole, which marks it out as a suitable starting-off point. The French Revolution, as well as its ensuing wars, were responsible for a reconceptualization of politics in Britain, as perceived by Henry Cockburn, whose contemporary observation is cited in the epigraph above. Such a reconceptualization created a hostile and difficult political atmosphere in Britain at a time characterized by immense insurrectionary suspicion at home and a distinct military threat from abroad, which radical political ideas had to percolate through. The distinct fear that the events in France would be repeated in Britain led the reactionary British political and religious authorities to clamp down on utterances deemed seditious or blasphemous, particularly those originating from the press, which had a distinct impact on attempts to propagate political ideas which the establishment perceived as radical.[122]

Mill's own responses to the violent excesses of the French Revolution and in particular the legacy those events bequeathed to philosophy are particularly interesting. In his

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[121] The contentiousness of even this point must be acknowledged for both methodological and historical reasons. Methodologically speaking, the material in Mill's common place books limits the viability of a including Mill's later work in a comparative analysis, given the manuscript material drops off significantly post-1825, well before historical events came to a head in the early 1830s. Historically speaking, the reaction of the working classes to the limits of the first Reform Bill once fully revealed has been interpreted by some historians as the foundation for later movements, such as Chartism. The 'Reform Crisis', therefore, can be perceived as extending well into Victorian-era Britain. See for example Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837*, 3rd Revised edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 356.

[122] See for example Barrell, *The Spirit of Despotism*.

common place books is found evidence of a particular frustration toward the obstinacy of the government towards matters of political reform, especially regarding what Mill calls their 'perjuring' of or cry against philosophy in the formation of such reform ideas. Mill cast the French Revolution as a 'true gift from heaven' to conservative enemies of reform, precisely because of the damage it did to the reputation of philosophy as a vehicle for establishing sound political laws which sought to protect, rather than destroy, property.[123] The concept that giving power to the people would lead to the destruction of property, a foundation of conservative opposition, was dismissed by Mill as 'the most extraordinary argument that ever was brought, to impugn a good case.'[124] Mill especially lamented the opposition towards philosophy because the violence in France was itself a political warning missed by the government: the French state's long-running refusal to give consent to reform, and their subsequent giving of it with so many conditions attached, was in part a reason why it the Revolution was so unsuccessful and unfortunate.[125] For Mill, contrary to political authorities' supposed objectives of keeping revolutionary fervour at bay, such activity was actually more likely to provoke a similar scenario to that witnessed in France once a certain threshold had been reached.

Yet whilst reference to the 'Reform Crisis' clarifies this study by defining the period of investigation, it can also cloud the perceived objectives. This is because despite its copious use thus far, the term 'reform' clearly does not encapsulate all that is meant by 'politics'. With specific regards to Mill, a pressing issue at this juncture is how these two terms can be correlated satisfactorily, along with a third, 'government', the eventual

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[123] Mill, *CPB* I, 45^r.

[124] Mill, *CPB* I, 30^r. It is of note that Bentham's mature views on the 'virtual universality of suffrage' in his *Plan for Parliamentary Reform* expressed a similar sentiment regarding the security of property. This is in contrast to Bentham's earlier *Catechism*, where he had regarded universal suffrage as "being in a general view inadmissible". See Philip Schofield, *Utility and Democracy: The Political Thought of Jeremy Bentham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 150–1.

[125] Mill, *CPB* I, 43^r.

title of his 1820 essay, in an attempt to define his objectives. This problem arises from a fact stated in this chapter's introduction, that whilst Mill's manuscripts seem to contain material being worked up for *Government*, this is primarily within a section referred to by Mill as 'Reform' or 'Parl.[iamentary] Ref.[orm]'. The natural supposition to make, therefore, is that the published essay is a tract on this very issue. But *Government* itself was both a very synoptic article, in that it purported to give a detached, scientific account of three 'systems' of government (monarchic, aristocratic and democratic) along with definition for its 'means' and 'ends', and the proposals it expounded were deduced by Mill *a priori* from a science of human nature. Both of these features suggest that if the essay had political objectives, they lay beyond the remit of 'mere' parliamentary reform, even if the organisation of Mill's own manuscripts postulates that his political ideas *were* tightly bound up with such a particular theme. This very question of *Government*'s objectives troubled John Stuart Mill, and Donald Winch has highlighted how conceding that the essay *was* merely a reform act would have been impossible, given Mill's deference to such a philosophical method.[126]

Some previous scholarly attempts at squaring Mill's objectives specifically regarding parliamentary reform with his wider political philosophy have relied on Mill's practical activity to portray his thought as a two-stage process. Joseph Hamburger has argued that Mill viewed reform – ostensibly the 1832 Reform Act – as a first step to the inevitable securing of greater constitutional changes. This can explain why instances of Mill's practical involvement in politics, such as his letters to Brougham, then Lord Chancellor, on the eve of the passing of the Reform Act in the early 1830s, appear to concede vital political ground in a way that seems incompatible with his philosophic principles.[127]

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[126] Mill, *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, 164; Donald Winch, "Mill on Scope and Method," in *Selected Economic Writings*, by James Mill (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 369.
[127] Hamburger, *James Mill and the Art of Revolution*, 22.

Robert Fenn may offer some support to Hamburger's argument, describing it as one of the great ironies of Mill's politics that the deductive position championed so rigorously in his manuscript writings was nothing like the practical one he actually adopted.[128] William Thomas, in this regard, sees Mill as essentially uninterested in the practical consequences of his own political arguments, and claims that this is one reason why younger Utilitarians found *Government* wanting as a concrete 'plan for the present', because it was actually a rather more abstract 'vision for the future'.[129] Biancamaria Fontana, meanwhile, sees Mill as a victim of his own pursuit of a rigorous philosophical language with which to express the demand for reform, which became somewhat immobilizing in terms of practical application as he 'plunged himself more deeply into theoretical inconsistencies'.[130] The comparative analysis of Mill's manuscripts, in part V with regard to his philosophical approach to knowledge, and in part VI concerning his ideas pertaining to parliamentary reform, makes an attempt at clarifying the issue of Mill's true political objectives at the chapter's conclusion possible.

That Mill's practical endeavours appear to conflict so greatly with his own philosophy goes some way to explaining the nature of this particular section's narrative, which portrays in broad strokes the political context within which Mill would have thought and wrote about his political ideas. What is notable is how disconnected portions of said narrative appear to be from the actualities of Mill's political life. Naturally, this is partly explained by the fact it commences in 1789, over two decades before Mill arrived in London and began his literary career in earnest. At the other end of the scale, *Government* was itself published in 1820, thus over a decade before the first Reform

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[128] Editorial note to 'Speculation & Practice' in *James Mill's Common Place Books*, ed. Robert A. Fenn; University of Sussex, 2010; online edn [http://intellectualhistory.net/mill/cpb1ch5.html, accessed 10 January 2011]

[129] Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals*, 145.

[130] Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society*, 162.

Act was eventually passed in 1832.[131] But by this sense of detachment reference is also made to various peculiarities regarding Mill's lack of involvement in key aspects of the 'Reform Crisis' more generally, such as the fact that he did not write for the more 'popular' radical newspapers which advanced radical political ideas and who were the primary targets of the repressive legislation of the period (such as Thomas Wooler's satirical *The Black Dwarf*). Or, that he was never a participant in any form in the mass reform meetings that descended into riot or violence, such as at Spa or St. Peter's Fields. Or, that he did not sit as an MP – independent, Whig or otherwise – in the House of Commons, even if he had a hand in the election of some of his friends and associates, such as David Ricardo.[132] It must be asserted, then, how relevant such events are to wider purposes. Quite simply, their inclusion is necessary for the underlining they give to the notion that any publicly advanced attempt at instigating change in the political system in Britain, in whatever degree, had to be couched in extremely modest terms, so as not to attract attention from either a suspicious, anti-philosophical governmental authority, or a public possessed of a distinct anti-revolutionary sentiment. Their contribution is as evidence for the perception that writers such as Mill had to employ dissimulation when publishing political texts which could be labeled radical, in order to avoid the prospect of prosecution for seditious libel. Nowhere does this overarching reactionary nature in Britain, as well as the French Revolution's contribution to its origins, seem more effectively highlighted than in the experiences of William Pitt when subpoenaed at the treason trial for John Horne Tooke in 1794. The Prime Minister had, in his earlier political career, campaigned for a degree of parliamentary reform. But the tenets of his arguments delivered pre-1789, it was pointed out in court, were actually

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[131] A much fuller account of Mill's participation in the events of the early 1830s, including his aforementioned correspondence with Brougham, is given in Bain, *James Mill*, 363–368.

[132] Dror Wahrman argues that James Mill was clearly influenced by events such as the Peterloo massacre, as seen by his references to 'the mob' in *Government*. See *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, C. 1780–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 388.

eerily similar to those of the accused.[133] The impact of the French Revolution had utterly changed what was acceptable to say about reform in the political discourse of early nineteenth-century Britain. In wishing to advance ideas on reform, Mill had to adapt his published writings to this discourse or face potentially ruinous censure.

<div style="text-align:center">IV.</div>

From 1789 onwards the suppression of revolutionary fervour akin to that witnessed on the continent became a *de facto* objective of government. One finds manifestations of this policy throughout the history of the period, from the aforementioned Pitt, to the succeeding Pittite ministries of Perceval and Liverpool and the Whig ministry of Earl Grey. A major subtext to the desire of political elites to prevent Britain replicating events in France was the development of hostility towards espousers of political ideas which were perceived as going beyond notions of acceptability, that is to say radical. This was a European-wide development, but Britain is perhaps particularly notable because of the emergence of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in 1790, which came to be regarded as the cornerstone of philosophical conservatism.[134]

Burke's text encapsulated the sentiment that Britain abhorred revolutionary change, and that reform, by definition, could only be performed experimentally, the 'faults of the state' approached in the same manner one would attend the 'wounds of a father, with pious awe and trembling solicitude.'[135] Burke vehemently rejected any revolutionary interpretation of politics, and the deduction of such interpretations *a priori* by philosophers. Interestingly, these two objections would be later seen by the Whig critics

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[133] J. P. W. Ehrman, Anthony Smith, 'Pitt, William (1759–1806)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22338, accessed 12 April 2012]

[134] J.G.A. Pocock, "Introduction," in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, by Edmund Burke (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), vii.

[135] Burke, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 3:358.

(and heirs of Burke) of Mill's *Government* as hallmarks of that essay.[136] The *Reflections,* a response to the radical sermonising of Richard Price, in turn prompted its own responses, such as Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae* and Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*.[137] The initial effect of Paine's text in particular was to educate and enthuse radicals, who subsequently called for parliamentary reform and changes along the lines of those enacted in France, whilst simultaneously attracting a sustained government effort to repress such demands.[138]

This ideological battle between radical and reactionary forces in Britain was supplemented but then supplanted by a real-life war. From Pitt's assertion to Parliament in 1792 that 'unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country, when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace',[139] the continent descended into the Revolutionary (1792 to 1802) and then Napoleonic (1803 to 1815) Wars. Whilst the instability of France had obvious positive connotations for Britain in its early stages of development, the British government became increasingly concerned that events there could eventually be mirrored at home, either by product of internal conspiracy or external invasion. In what might be seen as the state's own initial attempts to win the ideological argument, it began to fund loyalist periodicals from October 1792, including a new daily newspaper, the *Sun*.[140] In May of that year, Pitt had issued a proclamation targeting printers and booksellers, warning against an apparent epidemic of 'wicked and seditious writings' which sought to excite 'tumult and disorder'.[141] As outlined in the previous chapter, the size of the press had been increasing since the 1770s, and the public dimension it had given to politics since

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[136] Ibid., 3:306.

[137] Pocock, "Introduction." Mackintosh later embraced the Burkean notion of conservatism.

[138] Eric J. Evans, *Parliamentary Reform in Britain, C. 1770–1918* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 12.

[139] William Pitt, *The War Speeches of William Pitt, the Younger* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), 16.

[140] Edward Vallance, *A Radical History of Britain* (London: Little, Brown, 2009), 260.

[141] Barrell, *The Spirit of Despotism*, 2.

meant it became a natural government target.[142] The tailor Francis Place, later a close associate of Mill and a Philosophic Radical, described the late 1790s as Pitt's own 'Reign of Terror', complaining that a 'disloyal word was enough to bring down punishment upon any man's head'.[143]

With the onset of the Revolutionary Wars the necessity for the British government to defend the existing order from both external and perceived internal threats became even more pronounced. Many opposition Whig politicians, such as the Duke of Portland, supported the government on the war issue, leaving an anti-war Whig rump in Parliament under Fox. A sustained crusade by the government against radical agitation for reform also took place, which was primarily manifested as a legislative campaign aimed at curbing the liberties of the press. Paine's aforementioned *Rights of Man* is one of the most illuminating instances of this attempt to do away with 'seditious' works. It had by this point allegedly reached over 2 million people, approaching a quarter of the total population of Britain.[144] Paine was indicted on a charge of seditious libel in 1792, and eventually tried (and found guilty) *in absentia*. In 1794 *Habeas Corpus* was suspended and 1795 saw the passing of the 'two bills' or 'Gagging Acts', ostensibly due to an attack on the royal coach as George III rode in state to open Parliament. These legislative acts – the Seditious Meetings Act and the Treasonable Practices Act – extended the law of treason to include inciting hatred of the King, his heirs, his government or the constitution. They also restricted public meetings to fifty people, unless prior consent had been obtained from a magistrate. On 16 November 1795 Fox had addressed an (ultimately unsuccessful) protesting rally against the passing of the

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[142] Jeremy Black and Donald M. MacRaild, *Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 131.

[143] Francis Place, "Collections Relating to Political Societies," Add. MSS 27808, f. 110, British Library.

[144] Vallance, *A Radical History of Britain*, 261; Eric J. Evans, *Britain Before the Reform Act: Politics and Society 1815–1832*, 2nd ed. (Harlow: Longman, 2008), 6.

treason bills of between two- and thirty-thousand people.[145] It marked the end of a particularly fractious year, with the country also suffering economically from famine. By 1799, the government's persistent legislative attack on the diffusion of 'seditious words' was arguably complete when it successfully outlawed the London Corresponding Society, one of the major proponent groups of political reform.

The history of Britain synchronous with the start of the French Revolution in 1789 and ending either with the rise of Napoleon as First Consul in 1799 or the end of the Revolutionary Wars in 1802 therefore seems not particularly notable for any real type of achievement for supporters of reform. A combination of economic conditions, a coalescing of widespread popular movements in support for reform measures (as exhibited in the petitioning and protest movements of the 1810s and 1820s), and a more pronounced Whig influence in the reform debate, however, all appeared to signal change at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It is towards this last factor, concerning the reconstituted Whig Party under Fox, which this study is most drawn to, for the express relevance it has to Mill's aforementioned dispute with the Whigs of the *Edinburgh Review* in the 1820s.

The realities of Britain's economic situation make a compelling case for reform agitation increasing in the nineteenth century, specifically post-war in 1815. Although Élie Halévy has pointed to a more general revival of liberal and democratic opinions within the country in the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century, the crux of the matter appears to be economic. Whilst 1815 saw the return of peace, there was no return of prosperity. Post-war resumption of industry on the continent meant Europe had less need of the products of British labour. In turn, British industry had less need of workmen, and the workmen on lower wages became unable to purchase essentials such

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[145] Leslie George Mitchell, *Charles James Fox* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 140.

as bread.[146] Whilst economic problems were by no means a product solely of the years of peace – Luddites had broken machines in South Yorkshire, Lancashire and the East Midlands since 1811, for example – the post-war slump exacerbated the situation, and popular support for reform began to be seen as directly proportional to the extent of the economic difficulties.[147] In this regard 1815 is also notable for Parliament passing the Liverpool administration's infamous Corn Law, which kept both food prices and, subsequently, social tensions high.

Popular pressure for reform in the early nineteenth century manifested itself in three particular ways, as the public meeting, the mass petition, and in the popular radical press. The freedoms of the press, a topic depicted in detail in the previous chapter, was heavily circumscribed by particularly disastrous instances of the public meeting, such as those held in London at Spa Fields in late 1816 and in Manchester at St. Peter's Fields in August 1819. The riot which followed the second meeting at Spa Fields provided Lord Liverpool's government with enough evidence of an insurrectionary conspiracy to orchestrate a concerted legislative attack on supporters of reform on a level echoing the repression of Pitt's 'Reign of Terror'. The pretext for the new 'gagging acts' and the renewed suspension of *Habeas Corpus* was the inflation of an incident in January 1817, which saw the Prince Regent's coach attacked en route to Parliament.[148] The 'Peterloo' massacre which followed the meeting at St. Peter's Fields can also be counted as evidence of further government success against the reform movement. It yielded the ability to introduce more legislation, this time in the form of the 'Six Acts', including the Blasphemous and Seditious Libels Act and the Publications Act.[149] Bentham,

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[146] Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism*, 245.
[147] Black and MacRaild, *Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 130–1; Evans, *Parliamentary Reform in Britain, C. 1770–1918*, 16.
[148] Vallance, *A Radical History of Britain*, 313.
[149] Black and MacRaild, *Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 133.

resuming his writings on parliamentary reform from 1816, felt Britain was 'at the very brink:–reform or convulsion, such is the alternative.'[150]

The existing political order appeared to weather the discontent and agitation until the economic recovery of the 1820s. Indeed, according to some commentators, the government never lost control of events in this period.[151] But whilst trade revived the economy, there remained a motivation amongst political elites to adapt at least parts of the old regime as a necessary practical response to the 'virulence of popular protest', such as at Spa Fields and Peterloo, and an 'existence of real revolutionary conspiracies', such as on Cato Street in 1820.[152] There appears to be a redefinition of the political agenda here, whereby an establishment-led attempt at parliamentary reform, which was thought required to off-set the threat of revolution, took over from the reform demands of radicals. Ostensibly, the reform cause was taken up by Whigs keen to relieve the popular pressure for change that had resulted in the political violence and sedition of the late 1810s. However, additional motivations for advancing electoral change lay in the Whig desire to engender a requisite change in the franchise, which in turn would head off concerns about the despotism of the incumbent Pittite governments.

It is around this growing interest in the reform agenda by establishment political actors identified as Whigs which the focus now tightens. The term 'Whig' has its own convoluted history, and particular reliance is made here on the work of J.G.A. Pocock to navigate its fluidity, as well as that concerning the related term 'Tory'. It is important to emphasize that any increasing interest the Whigs had in the parliamentary reform debate of the early nineteenth century should not necessarily be interpreted as either novel or

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[150] Bentham, "Plan of Parliamentary Reform, in the Form of a Catechism, with Reasons for Each Article: With an Introduction, Showing the Necessity of Radical, and the Inadequacy of Moderate, Reform," 435.
[151] Evans, *Parliamentary Reform in Britain, C. 1770–1918*, 17.
[152] Michael Rapport, *Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 62–3; Vallance, *A Radical History of Britain*, 286.

opportunistic. By the 1790s, Fox was an advocate of a broad household suffrage, and by 1797 that well-educated women could receive the vote.[153] In 1810, the Whig MP Thomas Brand's notion that the suffrage should be given to all male householders secured over one hundred votes in the Commons.[154] There was thus no distinct 'entrance' of the Whigs into the reform debate, and it is incorrect to suggest that the occasion was a true *volte face*. Nevertheless, the take up by the Whigs of the reform cause in the 1820s was conducted in a piecemeal and apologetic fashion.

The nature of this Whig position requires some unpacking before it can be seen as conducive to the overarching investigation: as the inductive, experimental counterpoint to Mill's philosophical or deductive method of determining political laws. At the same time, the analysis provides an insight in to Mill's own intellectual history, particularly regarding his Scottish Enlightenment influence, explored in part V of this chapter below and again, more substantially, in chapter 4, as well as the foundations of his own political radicalism as a Benthamite, a topic of part VI below. Mill detested the Whig approach to reform, and the extent of his disagreement can be seen in the sharp essay *Periodical Literature* written for the first issue of the *Westminster Review*. As well as an interesting critique of *periodical* literature, portrayed as *published* (i.e. book-length) literature's emaciated, reactionary sibling, it was a well-structured attack on how such organs propped up the aristocracy. Mill makes frequent use of the 'seesaw' analogy to explain the Whigs' political behaviour, the alternating advancement of popular (or radical) causes with aristocratical (or despotic) causes in the pursuance of a 'middling' or moderate way, communicated in the vaguest of language, which essentially constituted the giving of one hand to the cause of political reform, and the taking away with the other, with a perennial preference for maintaining the power of the aristocratic

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[153] Colley, *Britons*, 248.
[154] Pocock, "Introduction"; Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society*, 153.

body regardless. The Tories were only marginally different, according to Mill's description. Because they were the ministerial party, they believed the aristocracy *were* the country, and thus there was never any need to pander to public opinion.[155]

Periodical Literature is also inherently useful for the frank assessment Mill makes in it of the incumbent political system, along with the most basic delineation of his objectives for parliamentary reform. Mill was targeting the accrued political power of the aristocracy but this term itself had a complex definition. It of course encompassed the 'small number of leading families' who returned the majority of the members of the House of Commons. These 'great families' possessed the representation of the counties exclusively, and also nominated or influenced the return of members for a large proportion of the boroughs. Alongside the great families in the composition of the ruling aristocratic body were two 'props', the church and the law (or the clergy and lawyers respectively). The population in general had fallen into a state of dependence upon these two classes of men, and the governing power was thus obliged to secure their services by dealing out 'certain minor shares' of the 'profits of misrule' to them. Other electors in the boroughs, meanwhile, found it in their interest to sell their votes to the highest bidder. This opened the door to a 'class of monied men' to also become 'sharers in the possession of the powers of government' and join the aristocracy. But Mill could ascertain little real difference between a borough elector who sold his vote, and the borough or county elector who gave his vote, out of habit, to their lord. Both were instances of clear and obvious corruption; they were the constituent parts of a government in place not for the good of the community, but for the ruling body. Mill's objective to allay such corruption was simple: to place the 'right of voting for members of parliament on such a footing, that it shall not be for the interest of the voter to give

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[155] Mill, "Periodical Literature," 219.

his suffrage from any other motive than the verdict of his conscience, preferring the fittest man.'[156] This would effectively make the interest of men and their duty coincide. It was this simple demand, Mill felt, that singled him and his fellow Utilitarians out as political 'radicals'.

The term 'Whig' has been used as a byword to define the aristocratic domination of British politics since the early eighteenth century, frequently in tandem with the terms 'oligarchy' or 'supremacy'. British radicalism had often been expressed as a sustained attack on the Whig aristocracy, and their corrupt control of politics, patronage and finance. But by the late 1820s, the group that would become the reformers of 1832 are identified by Pocock as 'New Whigs', who, although retaining the outlook of an aristocracy, had found a language which enabled them to reform themselves internally.[157] There were also organisational changes to the Whigs in this period which allow for a more solid definition of the term. The foremost of these appears to be the aforementioned reconstitution of the Whig Party as the anti-war parliamentary rump under the initial control of Fox. This group appropriated the name 'Whig', in part thanks to the *Morning Chronicle* newspaper, which announced that the 'great body of Whigs of England had sat in judgement on the disputes between Burke and Fox and pronounced in the latter's favour.'[158] A Tory, meanwhile, had become an 'inflexible defender[s] of the Revolution-Hanoverian Whig regime' – a supporter of "Old Corruption". There is thus a clear distinction to be made between the Whig Party (Burke's 'New Whigs') and the century-old Whig regime that Burke's 'Old Whigs'

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[156] Ibid., 213.
[157] Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, 309–10.
[158] Ibid., 284.

(now Tories) defended against its enemies via their support of the Septennial Act, the Toleration Act, and the national debt.[159]

The Whigs took up a reform agenda which included tolerating both a limited franchise and rotten boroughs, and advocated 'virtual representation', which was in contrast to actual representation, and maintained that one class could virtually represent another because their 'interests' were identical. This agenda was supported in the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*, the quarterly magazine founded in 1802 by Henry Brougham, Sydney Smith and Francis Jeffrey. It is this periodical, perceived as 'both the manifesto and major vehicle of propaganda for parliamentary reform', which explicitly ties Mill to this broader narrative.[160] Mill had much in common with the *Edinburgh* reviewers: he was a Scottish *émigré* writer, a devoted pupil of Dugald Stewart, and an alumnus of Edinburgh University. He had even written for the *Edinburgh* as early as 1808.[161] But by the time Mackintosh, now a convert to Burkean 'philosophical conservatism', attacked Bentham's aforementioned *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* in a review of 1818, Mill had taken up the cause of philosophic radicalism.[162] Mackintosh's review became the first shot of what was to be a long-running ideological battle between the competing approaches to reform of these Whigs and the Philosophic Radicals. *Government*, regarded as Mill's response, followed in 1820.

The language used to describe the conflicting positions toward reform argued by the *Edinburgh* reviewers and the Philosophic Radicals respectively ('ideological battle' and 'competing approaches') insinuates that they were incommensurable. Many commentators have actually highlighted the opposite, suggesting both concordance in

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[159] Ibid., 284–5.
[160] Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society*, 148.
[161] "Smith on Money and Exchange," *The Edinburgh Review* XIII, no. 25 (October 1808): 35–68.
[162] Pocock, "Introduction," xlii; Collini, Winch, and Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics*, 45–6.

ideas between the two sides, and even the maintenance of friendships across the divide.[163] Other interpretations see the real differences as only due to the scale of reforms suggested, with the Whigs unable to stomach the true extent of philosophic radicalism.[164] Whilst the radical extent of such ideas will be explored more fully in part VI below, what is of particular notice at this point are the differing philosophical foundations of the two approaches. There was a chasm-like disagreement engendered on this topic, and it particularly animated Mill in his manuscript writings. The Whigs had broadly argued that any reform should be inductive, that is to say experimental, above all moderate, and that parliamentary reform in particular was a matter of political expediency designed to alleviate revolutionary sentiment rather than principle. There is a clear Burkean legacy to these ideas, but the philosophy of those in the orbit of the *Edinburgh Review* also had specific roots in the Scottish Enlightenment, and this too helped define their opposition to philosophic radicalism.

There are two elements to this concept of the Scottish Enlightenment context that are worth making explicit here for their particular relevance to Mill's intellectual history expounded in the following section. The first comprises the ideas of Thomas Reid, and his contribution to the Scottish 'Common Sense' school, which held that principles common to all men formed the foundation of all reasoning. The second is the legacy of Dugald Stewart upon his pupils at Edinburgh University, in particular his instruction in the investigative field coined 'conjectural history' – history extrapolated from scientifically established principles of human nature. Mill's *History of British India*, published in 1817, was regarded as one of the last instances of this tradition. Jeffrey, for example, who became the first permanent editor of the *Edinburgh*, was regarded as

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[163] Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society*, 161; Collini, Winch, and Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics*, 93–4.
[164] Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, 12–13.

'continuing the war of the eighteenth century Scottish Common Sense philosophers against sensation psychology', which he now saw as represented by Bentham. Bentham himself had dismissed Common Sense as a euphemism for unreasoning prejudice.[165] Macaulay, meanwhile, was extremely critical of the use of Mill's deductive method in *Government*, and saw it as incompatible with the 'very different method of investigation' found in the *History of British India*, which was more in line with what he perceived as Mill's 'Scottish interest in conjectural history'.[166]

That the inductive approach of these Scottish Whigs was anathema to Mill represents an intriguing point in his biography, originating from the fact that although he seemingly had as valid a claim to a Scottish Enlightenment inheritance as the philosophic Whigs, he came to adopt a very different methodological stance regarding reform. Does this suggest he veered away from such a legacy? The debate on whether Mill consciously abandoned his Scottish education in preference for a different philosophic position (e.g. one which had its origins in Bentham's thought) has never been definitively settled, and many studies, such as those cited in this thesis' introduction, have wisely argued for a degree of conflation between the two contexts.[167] As has been insinuated, Mill's own Scottish credentials in this regard were certainly in order. The case for a pronounced Reidian intellectual influence has been made strongly in one particularly study, which goes as far as linking such an influence to the proximity of Mill's upbringing to Aberdeen.[168] Similarly, whilst Jeffrey, along with fellow *Edinburgh* editor Brougham and frequent contributor Francis Horner had all 'sat at the feet of Dugald Stewart in the

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[165] Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, 56; Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, 11.
[166] Collini, Winch, and Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics*, 110–1.
[167] See for example Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals*, 98; Duncan Forbes, 'James Mill and India', *Cambridge Journal* 5, no. 31 (1951): 19–33; and Donald Winch in Mill, *Selected Economic Writings*, 388.
[168] Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer."

lecture halls of Edinburgh',[169] Mill had seemingly done the same, and with as much devotion.[170] Furthermore, there is also the notion to consider that these Philosophic Whigs were not actually representative of the Scottish Enlightenment tradition themselves, given Burrow's appraisal that Common Sense philosophy in Whiggish hands degenerated into 'becoming literally common sense without capital letters'.[171]

Even the casting of Mill as an advocate, along with Bentham, of sensationalist psychology by a contemporary critic (and perceived staunch defender of Common Sense) like Mackintosh is problematic, since Mill himself was still opposed to Associationist psychology as late as 1806, and subsequently seemed only to undergo a change of heart once he had met Bentham just after this point. Although Hartley's principle of association, along with the Greatest Happiness principle derived from Priestley and, to a lesser extent, Helvétius, was of immense importance to Bentham's doctrine of Utilitarianism which Mill adopted, this particular change in Mill's view has been explained in one study as a separation of his philosophy of history from his philosophy of mind. It can therefore not be construed as a complete break from Scottish moral philosophy, because the radical political philosophy that Mill deduced from the latter was congruous with (if not identical to) the former.[172] Haakonssen's aforementioned argument that a particular strand of Common Sense philosophy – the school's 'objectivist moral theory' – *did* possess longevity in Mill's ideas, in the sense that it has some affinity with the philosophical stance exhibited in writings such as *Government*, is also of relevance here. Mill, along with Stewart and Mackintosh, were

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[169] Michael Fry, 'Jeffrey, Francis, Lord Jeffrey (1773–1850)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14698, accessed 17 Feb 2012]

[170] On Dugald Stewart, Mill wrote that "the taste for the studies which have formed for my favourite pursuits and which will be so till the end of my life, I owe to him". Letter to Macvey Napier, cited in Bain, *James Mill*, 16.

[171] Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, 56.

[172] Ibid., 62; Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism*, 433.

all supporters of the idea that 'the moral world is in principle completely well ordered' and therefore without uncertainty. Whilst this was used as an argument '*against* large-scale intervention' in society by the Whigs, it was just as useful a justification for the philosophic Radicals' argument '*for* such intervention'. What resonates loudly from the idea of a complete moral theory is one convincing explanation for why Mill favoured an *a priori* approach to political matters, because he felt that from such a position 'derivative sciences', such as politics, 'could be conceived with deductive certainty.'[173]

The purpose of this section originated in an attempt to understand the meaning of, and interplay between, the terms 'politics', 'reform' and 'government' to a study of Mill's political ideas, by examining both his political and intellectual context. More specifically, it asked the question of whether the nature of this context problematizes the conception of Mill's true political objectives, and if these objectives can be viewed as orientated towards the cause of parliamentary reform, or if their perceived radical extent transposed the limits of such a concept. The apparent need for writers such as Mill to practice dissimulation when attempting to convey their political ideas to a wider audience, coupled with Mill's opposition to the Whigs' inductive approach to reform, which preached gradual and piecemeal changes to the existing political system, and his belief that legislation should be derived from a science of human nature, all point towards the suggestion that his political thought was much more radical than he was ever prepared to advance publicly. What follows in part V, below, is a more concerted utilization of the material found in Mill's common place books to explain why Mill deferred to the *a priori* method, and an investigation into the potential provenance of the ideas that underlined it. By doing this, a route is prepared for part VI, which turns to a

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[173] Haakonssen, "James Mill and Scottish Moral Philosophy," 628–641.

more specific consideration of the content of *Government* and in particular the reform ideas portrayed in it, an essay steeped in the language of this method.

<p style="text-align:center">V.</p>

'Speculation' and 'practice' are the shorthand terms used by Mill to explain his theoretical or *a priori* approach to knowledge, which, he argued in *Government*, should be used to deduce political laws from a science of human nature. These terms form the title of a manuscript chapter in the common place books which contains Mill's most meaningful arguments in support of this theoretical, 'deductive' method. All of Mill's published writings appear to be based on deeply held convictions concerning the importance of these abstract philosophic principles.[174] Deduction consisted of the correct balance of theory with practical evidence, what Mill defined as '*systematized experience*' or 'the results of experience put into order.' Since '[t]he business of legislation is wholly theoretical', Mill believed that he could accurately ascertain sound political principles using such an approach.[175] The opposite approach was one of induction, characterized by an insufficient (or non-existent) application of theory, and too heavy a reliance on a limited degree of experience – a method one might term 'experimental'. Mill criticised this as 'random imitation,' or 'the generalization of one or two particular cases' which was then paraded, mistakenly, as truth.[176] To actually legislate from such premises was disastrous: 'to put [politics] under the dominion of practice is an attempt to put it under that which just so far as it acts upon it, is sure to act wrong.'[177]

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[174] Bain, *James Mill*, 217.
[175] Mill, *CPB* I, 108ᵛ.
[176] Mill, *CPB* I, 106ᵛ.
[177] Mill, *CPB* I, 108ᵛ.

In the common place books, Mill juxtaposes the strengths of his deductive or theoretical approach against the logical fallacies and errors of the contrasting 'inductive' method, which he characterises as the experimental approach to politics dominant in contemporary Britain. As has been intimated in the previous section, Mill projected this a-theoretical or experimental stance on to the approach to parliamentary reform adopted by establishment politicians such as the Whigs.[178] This section analyses both Mill's argument *pro* the deductive method and *contra* the inductive method by virtue of a close reading of the relevant manuscript writings and associated published works on this topic. Its objectives are three-fold: to define in precise terms what the deductive method for Mill entailed, as both a system of deducing laws and a tool for critiquing existing approaches to reform; to trace the particular intellectual and literary influences that impacted upon these ideas; and finally to comment on how responsible the method might be for the perceived radical nature of his politics. This last objective is intended to facilitate a bridge to the next section of the chapter, which will analyse the radical extent of Mill's political ideas as expressed in their differing published and private guises in *Government* and the common place books respectively.

As has been recounted both in this chapter and elsewhere in the thesis, there are two broad intellectual contexts to Mill's thought which dominate many studies of his ideas; the Scottish Enlightenment background of his upbringing and education, particularly whilst at Edinburgh University, and the doctrine of Utilitarianism he later adopted from Bentham. A typical question derived from such studies is to ask to what extent these contexts influenced him concurrently. There exists an interesting methodological problem, however, when attempting to use the common place books to contextualise Mill's ideas regarding his support for the deductive method in this way: there is nothing

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[178] Macaulay's response to Mill is particularly illuminating in its defence of induction. The most accessible version of his article of 1829 is in Mill and Macaulay, *Utilitarian Logic and Politics*.

discernibly of Bentham's thought in the manuscript chapter, and there is very little Scottish material. Such facts should of course not form the basis of a drastic claim, *viz.* that Mill was *not* influenced by either Scottish moral philosophy or Bentham in the development of this philosophical method, but their absence or scarcity from the manuscripts does raise some salient points about the nature and efficacy of the source material.

A few reasons can be posited as explanations for this situation. The first is to ask whether this study misinterprets the content of the manuscript chapter 'Speculation & Practice' and, by extension, the common place books in general. By this it is meant whether such material should be judged, as William Thomas has argued, as being only for 'controversial' use, that is to say as a repository of material which Mill could use to sharpen his own argument *against*, rather than as using their citation as proof of influence upon Mill's thought, or agreement with the ideas of the original author.[179] This chapter will argue that whilst Thomas' judgement has merit in some instances, it cannot be applied to the manuscripts as a whole, since it is undermined in this particular respect by the fact that it is clear that the material Mill does cite (such as extracts from works by Wolff, Montesquieu and Madame de Staël, all outlined below) has concordance with his own position. As a useful counter-example, however, the material collated by Mill on the Whig statesman (and follower of Burke) William Windham in the manuscript chapters on 'Liberty of the Press', can clearly be seen as a collection made for provocative use, not least because it underscores Mill's aversion to Windham's conservatism.

A second argument for the paucity of expected material is that since the major tenets of such ideas were either internalized by Mill, or perhaps even common placed elsewhere,

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[179] Thomas, *The Philosophic Radicals*, 97.

a lack of citation here should not necessarily constitute a corresponding lack of influence upon his own thought. In terms of a Scottish influence, Mill would have read the key works whilst studying for or at Edinburgh.[180] As the common place books rarely possess material from this period of his lifetime (indeed there is only one scrap that definitely comes from the 1790s, the time synchronous with Mill's attendance, and that is merely a note on a lecture on moral philosophy given by Dugald Stewart found in volume IV) it is sensible to suggest that their lack of appearance within his manuscripts should not constitute a deliberate shunning.[181] Against this hypothesis, however, lies the example of Plato. Plato's *Works* was the book Mill borrowed the most during his theological studies at Edinburgh, as noted in the library lending record reproduced in Bain's biography.[182] It is also heavily cited by Mill in the common place books. Mill did however employ other systems for recording his reading beyond that of commonplacing, such as the collection of notes and marginalia made in the pages and end leaves of a set of 66 books that he left to his son John Stuart, and which are now in the library of Somerville College, Oxford. Works that are Scottish in origin, such as by David Hume, Adam Smith, and Dugald Stewart can all be found within this collection, and its existence in turn belies a further methodological issue with the common place books: although of clear value, they cannot be taken as the sole source for contextualising Mill's ideas.

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[180] See, for example, the analysis of Mill's university borrowing record in Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer," 9 as well as the treatment of this subject in chapter 4 below.

[181] This argument is an appropriation of one by J.R. Dinwiddy about the general lack of material attributable to Bentham's direct influence in the common place books on a wider scale. Dinwiddy argues that '[o]ne would hardly expect Mill, in a passage in his own commonplace book, to restate the first principles of utilitarian theory and to explain that what he meant by calling something good was that it was conducive – and by calling something bad or evil that it was inimical – to the aggregate happiness of the members of the community. So much could surely be taken for granted.' *Radicalism and Reform in Britain, 1780–1850*, 266.

[182] Bain, *James Mill*, 18.

In attempting to rectify this methodological issue, this section assumes that two different types of influences can be perceived on Mill's ideas regarding his preference for the deductive philosophical position: those that are explicitly cited, and by virtue of such citation can be seen as of particular interest to Mill because he recorded them within a manuscript chapter entitled 'Speculation & Practice', and those that are implicit or less pronounced in his manuscripts, but which his intellectual biography suggest influenced him. It is to this latter category that the aforementioned Scottish and Benthamic contexts are predominantly placed. With regards to the former category, the perception resulting from this study is that Mill had a much more varied set of influences on his philosophical method than previous studies have suggested.

In forging an effective definition of what Mill's deductive method entails, much should rest on his high regard for political economy, which can be evidenced from an article published in 1836 in the *London Review* (the organ which the *Westminster* had amalgamated with), entitled 'On Whether Political Economy is Useful'. Although this constitutes one of Mill's last articles published before his death, it is notable that the themes present in the article are apparent even in Mill's earliest literary writings.[183] The article performs a dual role: at the same time as lauding political economy as an example of a complete science, it professed to demonstrate the virtues of the method from which its laws were deduced. Mill's perception of the utility of political economy arose from the fact it was concerned with 'the things which [man] denominates the matter of *wealth* − the great object to which almost all the toils and cares of human beings are directed'.[184] Since Mill's politics have been regarded as 'an attempt to create

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[183] Editorial note to 'Speculation & Practice' in *James Mill's Common Place Books*, ed. Robert A. Fenn; University of Sussex, 2010; online edn [http://intellectualhistory.net/mill/cpb1ch5.html, accessed 10 January 2011]

[184] James Mill, "On Whether Political Economy Is Useful," in *Selected Economic Writings*, ed. Donald Winch (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 374.

… a political analogue of the competitive market process', much can be made of the apparent relationship between Mill's political economy and his philosophic method, and the parallel pursuit of what he calls 'good' legislation, i.e. his politics. Clearly, Mill felt the method was applicable to both sciences.[185] Mill seems to have found the ability to widely apply his philosophic position exhilarating, believing that a 'commanding view obtained by the mind over a most interesting and complicated mental scene' was a 'gratification of the highest value.'[186]

Political economy has long been regarded as at the heart of Philosophic Radicalism. Leslie Stephen, for example, saw the belief in Malthus' theory of population as 'the most essential article of their faith'.[187] It was by no means, however, an exclusive domain. Early nineteenth-century political economy evoked a wide range of different political positions, and sharply contrasting expectations in the minds of many, including Whigs.[188] Mill's own ideas came to be heavily influenced by Ricardo, whose contribution to the debate surrounding the 'Bullion Controversy' had caught his interest in 1809. Mill has been regarded as the primary motivator behind Ricardo's eventual publication of *Principles of Political Economy* in 1817, whilst his own *Elements of Political Economy* (1821) was a distillation (a 'school-book') of the *Principles*. Despite both being Philosophic Radicals (even if Ricardo was the more politically moderate), neither of their positions on political economy, nor the idea that political economy could be 'understood as a science of laws',[189] can be seen as coming from Bentham. Both Mill and Ricardo were, however, clearly influenced by Adam Smith. Ricardo had chanced upon the *Wealth of Nations* in 1799, ascertaining from it that political economy could

[185] Collini, Winch, and Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics*, 112.
[186] Mill, "On Whether Political Economy Is Useful," 373.
[187] Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, 2:138.
[188] Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics of Commercial Society*, 168.
[189] Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism*, 281.

be treated as an abstract science.[190] Mill had defended Smith's 'doctrinal and policy views' in much of his early economic writing, and, of course, had also been instructed by Smith's pupil, Dugald Stewart.[191] Halévy makes sense of this by dividing the social science of the Philosophic Radicals into two constituent groups of laws. The physical laws of political economy were derived from Ricardo and, by extension, Malthus and Smith. The psychological laws, via Bentham, came from Hartley, Priestley and Helvétius.[192] Indeed, Mill's use of political economy in the doctrine of Utilitarianism may have been as a 'stabilizer', giving doctrinal solidity to Bentham's more abstract notion of the 'felicific calculus'.[193]

The majority of the 'Speculation & Practice' manuscript chapter is related only to Mill's 1836 article on political economy's second role: justifying the deductive method's ability to produce sound principles. In this case, the objective is not the deduction of political economy but of political principles, or what might be termed the objective of legislation. Mill sees the speculative approach of the deductive method − and the resulting 'commanding view' which is only attainable by a 'theoretical' man or a 'philosopher' − as the most conducive route to good government, because 'the business of legislation is *thinking*.'[194] In direct opposition to the 'theoretical' man, who thinks, is the so-called 'practical' man, who is governed by his senses rather than his reason: '[t]he theoretical [man] draws his general rules from a full induction of particular cases: the practical man generalizes his own individual case, and makes it a rule for all others.'[195] Whilst this is Mill's critique of contemporary British politics writ large, later

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[190] Terry Peach, 'Ricardo, David (1772–1823)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23471, accessed 1 March 2012]
[191] Winch, "Early Economic Writings," 23–4.
[192] Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism*, 433.
[193] Collini, Winch, and Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics*, 112.
[194] Mill, *CPB* I, 109[r]. My emphasis.
[195] Mill, *CPB* I, 107[v].

chapters of this thesis show that Mill also applied this argument to matters of education and religion.

For Mill, the population of Britain consisted of practical men, or 'hackneyed performer[s] of mechanical operations.' Constraining this sentiment to a more conventional attack upon the aristocracy sees Mill accuse them of cynically 'fashion[ing a new] wisdom followed in England [*sic*]… to plunge into action without deliberation'. Such behaviour has elsewhere 'been looked upon as characterising beings altogether irrational or approaching to irrationality', and what Mill finds particularly disturbing about the British case is that even Aristotle thought that the principle that theory was the only thing on which practice could be safely built was so obvious that it did not need illustration, yet here was the 'wisest of all nations' extolling that 'thought is dangerous'.[196] The allusions between a statement of this sentiment, and the investigation into the hostility of Mill's political context explored earlier in this chapter, which saw him lambast the 'cry' against philosophy, are clear.

It is worth considering at this juncture whether Mill is casting a critique of empiricism, such is the apparent devotion to rationalism found in the above manuscript examples. Indeed, the Whigs had attacked the Philosophical Radicals in this very way, accusing them of 'violating the principles of sound "Baconian" inductivism.'[197] Such a consideration appears misguided: Mill seems not to be actually critical of the empiricist approach to knowledge (and the Philosophic Radicals as a whole were both 'convinced their methods were empirical' and 'at a loss to know what the fuss was about'),[198] merely that the theoretical man, and here Mill cites Madame de Staël, will '[appreciate]

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[196] All quotations are from Mill, *CPB* I, 106[r].
[197] Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, 33–4.
[198] Ibid.

things from reason, and not from habit.'[199] Mill's stance can again be seen to be reflective of that of Stewart's, who saw experience as 'a blind and useless guide' without theory, and that a legitimate theory 'necessarily presupposes a knowledge of connected and well-ascertained facts, more comprehensive by far than any mere empiric is likely to possess.'[200] Thus, '[a]ll men generalize', believed Mill, but 'in the ignorant mind the parcels [of knowledge] are few… [t]he philosopher therefore is the man who comes down the nearest to particulars.' In a rare citation of Smith, Mill states that this idea is 'finely illustrated in [Adam] Smith's *Essay on the History of Astronomy*'.[201]

In expanding upon the status and use of empirical evidence to the philosopher in deducting legislation, Mill argues that a certain type of person is required to think theoretically, essentially one who is 'instructed with a less scattered knowledge'.[202] In one of the longest extracts used by Mill, from Christian Wolff's *Preliminary Discourse on Philosophy in General*, it is actually argued that the theoretical man is not someone who needs an enormous historical knowledge, because such a necessity is bypassed by an ability to apply *philosophic* knowledge instead. Mill cites Wolff's belief that to apply our philosophic knowledge to the problems of human life is much more effective than relying on what we know historically. Whilst the philosopher 'perceives the condition under which something is predicated of a being, and consequently, he does not attribute the predicate to the being unless he sees that the condition is present', history:

> [Tells us] only that a thing can be or occur, and not why it can be or occur. Therefore it
> frequently happens that in dealing with the problems of human life we attribute a predicate to a

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[199] Mill, *CPB* I, 110ʳ; Anne Louise Germaine de Staël, *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, & Joy, 1818), 1:183.

[200] Dugald Stewart, *The Works of Dugald Stewart: Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: Hilliard and Brown, 1829), 317.

[201] Mill, *CPB* I, 107ᵛ; Adam Smith, *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* (London: T. Cadell Jr. and W. Davies, 1795), 10–22.

[202] Mill, *CPB* I, 111ʳ.

being without the condition under which the being possesses the predicate. As a result, the judgement is false.[203]

The position on history exhibited within these manuscript citations has distinct similarities with the Scottish tradition of conjectural history, which Mill likely imbibed during his education at Edinburgh. Mill's subservience of history to philosophy, in a way which produces a scientific account of human nature for the philosopher, also evokes David Hume's 'chief use' of history.[204] There are also echoes of this sentiment in Bain's biography of Mill, which, in attempting to justify why *Government* had a lack of historical references, alluded to this separation between the historical and the philosophical thinker, and their associated utility to society:

> [Mill] knew as much history as any man of his time … [but W]hat was wanted [in *Government*] was a formal and exhaustive setting forth of the generalizations of *historical facts*, widely examined, sifted, and compared; a process that John Mill would have been the first to do homage to, as the only complete and satisfactory supplement to his deductive positions.[205]

Mill's own idea of the historian, posited in his review of Fox's *History of James II* in 1808, concords with both these analyses. He states that the historian's task was to delineate the natural laws of man's progress in society and avoid 'a dry statement of vulgar, historical facts'.[206] Later in the 'Speculation & Practice' manuscripts, in an item identifiable by Mill's enlarged handwriting as coming post-1824,[207] and hence after the publication of *Government*, Mill clarifies the use of knowledge of a practical nature by the legislator's (or philosopher's) use of experience:

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[203] Mill, *CPB* I, 111ʳ; Christian von Wolff, *Philosophia Rationalis Sive Logica* (Frankfurt, 1732), 19–20 The extract is given in Latin, with a translation supplied by Fenn.

[204] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding and Other Writings*, ed. Stephen Buckle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 76.

[205] Bain, *James Mill*, 232–3. My emphasis.

[206] James Mill, "A History of the Early Part of the Reign of James the Second; with an Introductory Chapter.," *Annual Review of History and Literature* 7 (January 1808): 99–101.

[207] Attributed by Robert Fenn to Mill's crippling attacks of gout, which were becoming more frequent.

> The man who theorizes, provided only he does it well, is the only man who applies experience, that is the knowledge of the past, to the regulation of the future, in a way calculated to ensure correctness.[208]

This statement is important for two reasons. First, it can be construed as an argument justifying Mill's own deliberate omission of facts in the essay *Government*. Facts were important to Mill because they were to be used in a calculation – as Bain's descriptive 'exhaustive setting forth' process implies – to ensure the correctness of his philosophy, but their presence in a discourse promoting such philosophy was largely irrelevant. Second is that the advancement of the notion that a correctly delineated theory can be used for the 'regulation of the future' directly links Mill's use of history to the delineation of legislative principles, that is to say it gives a distinct political angle to this application, one that could be used to justify the advancement of specific political laws or reforms.

A good proportion of the manuscript material is dedicated to building an argument for placing a philosopher – a rational thinker with an ability to generalize – at the head of a legislative body of government. Since the business of legislation is *theorising* or *thinking* (Mill uses both terms), and because practice by its very nature only deals with the particular, it is not possible to use it to acquire skills in theorising, or making general rules, that is to say, the principal goal of legislation. Thus, paradoxically, being practised in legislation is not an ideal quality in a legislator. Mill appropriates an argument from *Lettres persanes* to reinforce this point, where Montesquieu argues that one should pass over officers for promotion who have spent time patiently waiting in junior positions, because 'they [will] have become narrow-minded by attention to

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[208] Mill, *CPB* I, 114[v].

detail'.[209] But Mill has to juggle his logic somewhat when describing exactly *who* can act as a legislator in order to avoid a contradiction, because whilst he is so dismissive of practical men, the only type of person skilled enough for legislation is someone who has *practice* in theorising. This is the philosopher, 'he alone it is that has practice in that which is the distinctive operation of the legislator.'[210]

Drawing upon another of Mill's articles for the *London Review* in 1836, 'Theory & Practice', sees the employment of similar rhetoric explicating the belief that the theoretical approach was superior to more practical endeavours, particularly regarding the art (or in Mill's terms, 'the business') of legislation. It can also be seen, like its predecessor, as containing working material from the manuscript chapter 'Speculation & Practice'. The article has a distinct importance, however, for the contemporary twist Mill gives to the text, bringing his argument for a deductive approach to politics to bear against the reform pursuits underway in nineteenth-century Britain, as discussed in the earlier parts of this chapter. Whilst only superficially distinct from the thought projected within the common place books, the article does contain perhaps the starkest justification yet for Mill's deductive or *a priori* approach, encapsulated in the belief that Mill saw philosophy as soon able to discover the 'sequences' to all human knowledge:

> If philosophy shall ever discover these sequences, and it is making constant advances, all knowledge competent to human nature will be correctly summed up in a few propositions and mistaken practice will be no longer possible.[211]

Where this specific article is of further enlightenment is in its final stages, where the protagonist of the dialogue offers some examples of current malpractice within the British political system. The comments here are very similar to those found at the

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[209] Mill, *CPB* I, 108^v; Charles-Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes* (Amsterdam: Pierre Brunel, 1721), 1:191.
[210] Mill, *CPB* I, 109^r.
[211] Mill, "Theory and Practice," 232.

beginning of Mill's manuscript chapter, and are aimed at the two Houses of Parliament, whose members are dismissive of theory as a method of improvement. In essence, Mill argues that a 'conjuring trick' has been performed on the population, whereby a false dichotomy between theory and practice, when in fact the latter is but an unrefined instance of the former, has convinced man to think less of philosophy. Mill complains that the term 'philosopher' is now pejorative, and that Parliament, the origin of such contempt, 'will be the last place on earth where, in an assembly of men pretending to be educated, philosophy will be treated with disrespect'. He even goes as far as introducing personal targets of his attack, citing by name all the 'great men' who have been 'equally eager in the use of the same language': Windham, Fox, Pitt, and Burke.[212]

From the attempt to define exactly what is meant by Mill's philosophical position when it is argued that he had a deductive approach to politics, and the suggestion that there is a distinct Scottish legacy to his method, it is towards a further contextualisation of his ideas, based on the contents of the common place books, that this section now proceeds. By virtue of Mill's biography, and in particular the importance he ascribed to classical texts in the education of his son John Stuart, it is not unsurprising to find a distinct classical influence in a manuscript chapter related to method. Mill makes a particular reference to Plato's seventh book of *The Republic*, of which almost the whole 'is on the vast importance of general over particular knowledge ([t]heory versus practice)'.[213] Yet Mill also relies on more contemporary sources, as attested by the citations heretofore mentioned from Montesquieu, Wolff and Madame de Staël. These employments, it should be noted, are generally limited to particular quotations seemingly used to buttress Mill's own position or give further illumination to his own argument.

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[212] Ibid., 234.

[213] Mill, *CPB* I, 112^r; Plato, *The Republic*, ed. Giovanni R. F Ferrari, trans. Tom Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 220–251.

The common place books also support the perceptions of J.H. Burns and Donald Winch of a discernible *philosophes* influence upon Mill.[214] More specifically, this influence appears to be that of Condillac, of whom Mill cites two chapters from his *Treatise on Systems*. Such a speculation needs to be approached with caution. Mill had presented Condillac's *Traité des Sensations* to his son upon the latter's return from his sojourn in France in 1821, however John was quick to assert that a resemblance between the respective 'systems' of Condillac and his father's was superficial.[215] His father's citations of Condillac within the common place books, however, do highlight a striking similarity with regards to the philosopher-legislator figure that goes beyond superficiality. According to James Mill, Condillac's chapter from *Traité des systèmes*, '*De la nécessité des systèmes en politique, des vues et des précautions avec lesquelles on les doit faire*' ('On the Necessity in Political Systems of Views and Precautions with which They Ought to be Constructed') is a 'good chapter on the use and abuse of systems'. The tenets of the argument in Condillac's chapter appear very similar to Mill's overarching argument found in 'Speculation & Practice' and his approach to political reform. Condillac states that:

> [We] cannot blame those who want to introduce changes in government, but we should invite them to acquire all the knowledge needed to do so strictly in accordance with the situation … Those who do not bring all this circumspection to governmental reform run the risk of precipitating the destruction of the state.[216]

Such a passage certainly evokes the contemporary concerns of Mill regarding the inductive approach to reform advanced by the Whigs. It is also analogous to the

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[214] J.H. Burns, "The Light of Reason: Philosophical History in the Two Mills," in *James and John Stuart Mill: Papers of the Centenary Conference*, ed. John M. Robson and Michael Laine (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 12–13; Mill, *Selected Economic Writings*, 390.

[215] Mill, *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, 64.

[216] Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, "A Treatise on Systems," in *Philosophical Writings of Etienne Bonnot, Abbé de Condillac*, trans. Franklin Philip (London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1982), 143.

argument proposed by Burns, who sees the legislator of Mill's *HBI* (who deals with 'genera' not 'particulars') as very similar to Condillac's *machiniste*.[217]

Mill quotes more extensively from chapter 17 of *Traité des systèmes*, where Condillac argues that 'metaphysical analysis' is responsible for

> giv[ing] the true system of each art. It is only that which can rise to the creation of rules, which can reduce those rules to the smallest possible number, and render the theory of the arts as useful as it is possible for them to be.[218]

Such a quotation is striking for the similarity it bears to the one to Mill's concerning the philosophical discovery of sequences found in 'Theory and Practice' and quoted above. More generally, both of Condillac's chapters cited within the common place books offer lines of reasoning similar to Mill's own argument. He argues, for instance, that prejudice towards political systems is not the fault of the system itself, but the behaviour of those who construct it. For Condillac, the mechanic or engineer ('*machiniste*') is someone who can manipulate the system to maintain its function ('restores the springs and winds up the whole machine as circumstances require'), based on the fact that they have a full induction of its various constituent processes. A state or political society is a complex machine, but it is a machine none-the-less, and that means it follow the same laws as physics:

> In a complex machine, there is a progression of causes and effects whose principle lies in a first cause, or a progression of phenomena that is explained by a first cause. Thus the universe is just a huge machine.[219]

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[217] James Mill, *History of British India*, vol. 6, 3rd ed. (London: Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1826), 226; Burns, "The Light of Reason," 13.
[218] Mill, *CPB* I, 112ᵛ; Condillac, "A Treatise on Systems," 148–50.
[219] Ibid., 148.

Analysing Condillac's own intellectual influences can act as a useful bridge back towards the theme of a Scottish context of Mill's ideas on method, and towards a conclusion to this section. Whilst the implicit influence of Scottish moral philosophy, particularly that of Dugald Stewart, on Mill's ideas was explored at the beginning of this section, Condillac's thought also has a distinct Scottish affinity. Hans Aarselff, for example, sees both the 'invisible hand' of Adam Smith, stirring people into social action, and David Hume's example of two rowers in a boat instantly recalled by Condillac's conception of the progress of language as a process of development requiring repetition, well-formed habits and steady social interaction.[220] Since extracts from both these two Scottish authors also appear in Mill's manuscript chapter 'Speculation & Practice', one could posit that Mill's use of Condillac is because it reaffirmed his own position. This can even be forged into an explanation supporting the lack of Scottish material within the common place books advanced previously: its influence was instead felt indirectly.

Of the Scottish material that is present, a reference to Smith's *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, which Mill used to justify his remark on the philosopher being the man 'who comes down the nearest to particulars', has already been accounted for. Two further scraps relate to David Hume. The first instance is in reference to the dispute between Francis Jeffrey and Dugald Stewart following Stewart's publication of his *Philosophical Essays* in 1810. This debate was centred around the status of metaphysics as an experimental science, and Jeffrey accused Stewart of scepticism in this regard. Mill saw a reading of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* as a way of settling the argument 'very well', and the work draws Mill to the conclusion that '[a]ll our knowledge of human

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[220] Hans Aarsleff, "Introduction," in *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, by Etienne Bonnot De Condillac, ed. Hans Aarsleff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xii–xiii.

nature is experimental.'[221] The second instance is Mill's citation of a quotation from Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*: 'Philosophical decisions are nothing but the reflections of common life methodized and corrected'. Mill proceeds from here to critique '[o]ne of the characteristics of the Practical man' in distinctly Humean terms: '[they] mistake forms for substances, formalities for essentials; concomitants for principals'.[222]

Considering the importance of the influence of Hume on Mill evokes the aforementioned similarities between their positions on the role of history to philosophy. Yet it also brings to mind the recurring question that arises from attempts to understand the two major competing intellectual contexts to Mill's ideas: whether the nature of his methodological position represents a break with his Scottish inheritance, or whether it is a more complicated mix between Scottish moral philosophy and Bentham's doctrine of Utilitarianism. This question arises because Hume believed that men can have no knowledge of the world but what they derive from 'Experience', with 'Experience' consisting of 'Sensation' and 'Reflection', and Bentham was sympathetic to this notion that knowledge was derived from sensations. However, scholarly interpretations of the Scottish Enlightenment influence upon Mill, in particular that he initially and predominantly belongs to the Common Sense school of Thomas Reid, suggest a potential conflict here in Mill's ideas.[223] Reid, who succeeded Adam Smith as Professor of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University, wrote a contemporary critique of Hume, giving him credit for taking Locke's premises to their logical conclusion, but pointed out that the final outcome was patently absurd. Against Hume's belief that an

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[221] Mill, *CPB* I, 108ʳ.
[222] Mill, *CPB* I, 108ʳ; Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding and Other Writings*, 131.
[223] See for example Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer"; Haakonssen, "James Mill and Scottish Moral Philosophy." The influence of Hume on the young Mill's religious thought is discussed more fully in chapter 4.

impression (an idea) had no existence apart from the perceptual situation in which it figures, Reid constructed the Common Sense view that took for granted the existence of persons to whom perceptual acts can be attributed. Reaching a conclusion on the importance of Hume to Mill thus represents the limitations to the methodological approach to this section: it cannot be ascertained on the virtue of two small extracts relating to his work, and the analysis of implicit influences do not yield enough evidence to decide either way.

These limitations notwithstanding, this section has shown that a wide range of intellectual influences contributed to Mill's ideas on method within his common place books, many of which have hitherto been understated in importance to his thought. It has been demonstrated, for example, that Montesquieu and Wolff, to give just two contemporary figures, were used by Mill to justify his preference for the deductive approach to knowledge. The logical arguments of classical authors such as Plato are also important, as is the thought of Condillac, whose *machiniste* also seems inherently like Mill's philosopher-legislator figure, suggesting a far greater *philosophes* influence on Mill's thought than has previously been stated. What this section's findings portray, therefore, is a sense that even if it is difficult to delineate where Mill intersects the two mental landscapes provided by his Scottish intellectual inheritance and the influence of Bentham, his intellectual history should not be bound to simply negotiate a strict compromise between these two positions when projecting an argument on his philosophic method. It is only by virtue of using the common place books that the importance of a thinker such as Condillac can be confirmed and solidified, and this alone suggests their value to the study of Mill's ideas.

More conducive to the overarching aim of this chapter, however, is the fact that Mill's manuscript writings on method, which champion the virtues of deducing legislation

from philosophical principles, build towards an irresistible justification for the employment of *a priori* arguments as seen in published political writings such as *Government*. To Mill, the deductive method was a rationalist approach to legislation, calculated from a science of human nature, and which he believed was eminently knowable by those equipped to think philosophically. At the same time, this approach heavily criticised the alternative, inductive approach to politics of the Whigs, which by extension suggests Mill felt attempts at piecemeal reform of the existing political system were fundamentally mistaken, at best resulting in no discernible benefit, at worse advancing revolution by not giving way to reform quickly enough. Mill's writings on method suggest his political ideas to be radical by definition, because his opposition to more moderate reform measures appeared as strong as his belief in the validity of laws deduced from a scientific, rather than a historical or practical basis. The purpose of the ensuing section of this chapter, therefore, is to examine these political ideas specifically, as they were advanced by Mill in published form in *Government*, and unpublished form in his common place books material on topics such as 'Parliamentary Reform'.

VI.

The contextual study of Mill conducted in the earlier sections of this chapter has led to the supposition that his political thought, as depicted in texts such as *Government*, can not necessarily be taken as a full and accurate reflection of his ideas. The direct inference to this is that such ideas were actually more radical in scope than what he was prepared to advance publicly. The nature of the period Mill was writing in – the 'Reform Crisis' of the early nineteenth century – is one explanation for such a reticence, because of the reactionary nature of governmental and religious authorities. There is, in

addition, a significant intellectual argument concerning Mill's perceived dissimulation, based upon his preference for a deductive approach to determining the laws of 'sciences' such as political economy or legislation. The very nature of this theoretical underpinning explicitly rejected the experimental or inductive reform measures emanating from establishment political actors such as the Whigs. In its place, it suggests a more far-reaching interpretation of politics that was by its definition radical. Although *Government* ostensibly relied on such an *a priori* method, the argument thus far has been that Mill still had to shield the more radical aspects of his political thought from public view. To this end, the primary aim of this final section is to ask whether the content of Mill's unpublished common place books can substantiate such an argument.

This section employs the comparative method to determine the radical extent of Mill's political ideas, by highlighting the differences between Mill's published text, the essay on *Government*, and extracts from his unpublished common place books. Mill's manuscript chapters entitled 'Reform' (but also referred to as 'Parl. Ref.') present the most interesting material to consider for this activity. The second of these chapters is particularly important, as it was made up between 1817 and 1820, that is to say synchronous to the time *Government* was composed. But whilst the overarching hypothesis about determining Mill's radicalism may be relatively straightforward, its execution in methodological terms is anything but. The manuscript material, as has been noted elsewhere, does not simply exist as a more radical version of *Government*. In addition, there is a need to avoid accusations of relativism in the selections made from Mill's common place books. In trying to identify Mill's understated literary influences, for example, the danger is that if one only chooses passages in the manuscripts to interpret based on what one oneself finds interesting, one might unknowingly skew the conclusions drawn. This warning is particularly applicable to the third chapter of

manuscript material on 'Reform', where the style of commonplacing is such that it at times resembles a daily record of Mill's reading, and the prevalence of choice becomes an acute scholarly hazard.

At face-value, *Government* is an abstract essay, initially focused on defining the ends and means of its subject. This should not be especially surprising, given its ostensible purpose as an article for the *SupEB*. But by using the common place books to provide intellectual context to the essay, one can show just how deeply Mill's political thought was rooted within the discourse of the 'Reform Crisis' of the early nineteenth century. This notion rests primarily upon the fact that the manuscript material has express relevance to certain passages of *Government*, and more developed instances of Mill's published arguments can often be found within the unpublished writing, such as his thoughts on the suffrage, or on the role and function of the House of Lords and the monarchy. The common place books, however, offer more than just points of comparison. They demonstrate Mill's commitment to reform through his impassioned defence of it against its conservative critics. They also show his opinion on the French Revolution, an event to which much importance has already been ascribed in this chapter, as well as evidence of particular literary influences to his thought, especially French writers such as Condillac, Condorcet, and Madame de Staël, and also, significantly, the English conservative philosopher (and Whig MP) Edmund Burke. In short, the common place books provide a richness to Mill's intellectual history not conveyed by the published *Government*, and one product of such richness is that conclusions about the extent of Mill's radicalism, one of the chapter's main objectives, can be readily drawn.

At the beginning of Mill's essay, the end of government is deemed relatively straightforward, and delivered in assured Benthamic terms: to increase the utmost

pleasures, and diminish the utmost pains, which men derive from each other. It was a difficulty regarding definition, however, to delineate the actual means of achieving such a state, and this constituted Mill's primary task for the essay. *Government* opens with the claim that previous attempts to describe the purpose of government have always suffered from a lack of clarity, to which Locke's premise that government was 'the public good' and Bentham's argument that government was 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' are the two cited examples.[224] Mill seeks to address the alleged opaqueness of these prior works in his essay, but whilst arguing that the fundamentals of human happiness can only be understood by an analysis of the whole science of human nature, he also states that the breadth of this kind of topic is such that it would be impossible to elaborate on within the confines of an essay as compact as *Government*. It thus makes sense, according to Mill, to 'content ourselves with assuming certain results'. From this confidently brusque yet undefined position, Mill dictates several laws upon which he bases his definition of the ends and means of government:

> the actions of men are governed by their wills, and their wills by their desires: that their desires are directed to pleasure and relief from pain as *ends*, and to wealth and power as the principal means: that to the desire of these means there is no limit; and that the actions which flow from this unlimited desire are the constituents whereof bad Government is made.[225]

The means, depicted here as 'wealth and power' of which man has no desire to limit, give the question of government a powerful economic dimension. Government is to do with the distribution of the 'scanty materials of happiness', and most of these 'objects of desire' and 'means of subsistence' are the product of labour, the 'foundation for all'. Furthermore, and in completing the definition of the end of government, the greatest happiness of a society is attained by 'insuring to every man the greatest possible

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[224] James Mill, "Government," in *James Mill: Political Writings*, ed. Terence Ball (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3.
[225] Ibid., 17.

quantity of the produce of his labour'. Mill's perception is that such a state can only be reached by an agreement of mutual benefit between men, that is to say an arrangement where 'a great number of men combine, and delegate to a small number the power necessary for protecting them all.'[226]

The seemingly innocuous assertion that there existed a mutual agreement between men as the foundation for government is actually one route in to understanding the radically democratic underpinning to Mill's thought as shown in his manuscript material. A significant portion of such writing is used to justify the notion of increased popular involvement in government, as well as defending such a suggestion from contemporary detractors of reform in this guise. One common reason 'against giving the people rights' according to Mill, has been that 'men will always do mischief, when not compelled by force.' He argues that this is simply not true, 'because it is not in their interest.' 'Government', after all, 'is the interest of all men':

> Indeed those who talk of the propensity of the people to non-obedience forget that without obedience there is no government; they can only use force against one part, by the obedience of the other. It is because one part of the people are obedient, that governments have the means of employing force against another part.[227]

Mill also seeks to 'pulverize' the notion that 'the English constitution is the best in existence', because its distribution of power tilts less towards the people than in other constitutions.[228] The defence of the argument for people participating more fully in government is developed along two lines. First, the notion that the people lack the required probity for government is dismissed because 'the people, as a whole, can have no sinister interest.' Second, and in response to the idea that they also lack the required

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[226] Ibid., 5.
[227] Mill, *CPB* I, 48ʳ.
[228] Mill, *CPB* I, 43ᵛ.

intelligence, Mill argues that the people have, historically, been capable of taking a small share in a government alleged as 'the best in the world'. Since they are now more intelligent, they are surely capable of participating more.[229]

In *Government*, the determination of the means of government is a complex endeavour because it revolves around the need to sufficiently restrain the 'small number' delegated with power in order to secure the whole community against abuse. Very basically, it is a question of how to protect the many from the sinister interests of the powerful few, and there are clear allusions here to Bentham's political thought which we find in published form in his *Plan of Parliamentary Reform*. Historically, Mill argues that of the three 'species' or forms of government that have existed – democracy, aristocracy and monarchy – all fail to provide such security. In terms of a democracy, the system of government collapses under the weight of having to resort to deliberations from the entire community. The strongest benefit of the democracy, however, is that it represents the interests of the *entire community*, and whilst such interest can be mistaken – thereby leading to error – it can never go willingly against itself. Mill's evaluation of democracy is one that must be kept in foremost thoughts when later considering his own practical application of politics to obtain good government. The two other forms of government suffer from the machinations of sinister interest. An aristocratically dominated government will exploit the community, taking from them as much as they please of the objects of desire. A further comment on the aristocracy is Mill's belief that a hereditary one is likely to lack intellectual aptitude, since such powers are the 'offspring of labour' and they are deprived of a strong motive to labour owing to their wealth and position. The analysis of the monarchical form of government is broadly the same, Mill reinforcing his point that 'whenever the powers of Government are placed in any hands

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[229] Mill, *CPB* I, 54ᵛ.

other than those of the community… those persons will make use of them to defeat the very end for which Government exists.'[230] The similarity between these two latter systems should be noted at this juncture; in Mill's manuscripts, little distinction is actually made between the monarchy and the aristocracy, and Mill often uses the latter term as a byword for those who hold political power and an interest in opposition to that of the community (a 'sinister' interest).

Mill also rejects in *Government* the Hobbesian notion that it is better to avoid the anarchy of no government, which would expose every man 'to depredation from every [other] man', and instead be exploited by either a monarchy or an aristocracy. Whilst Mill admits it is very difficult to go against Hobbes' idea that 'absolute Monarchy is the best', he resorts to his conception of human nature to justify why this reasoning actually constitutes an error.[231] Firstly, although it is perceived that a monarch or aristocracy will satiate themselves with the objects of desire and leave the rest to the community, this is in not true in practice. The plunder will continue, leaving the rest of the community with only the 'bare means of subsistence'. Secondly, there is no upper limit to a human's capacity for selfishness, to 'possess himself of the objects of desire at the cost of another'. This concept extends in an 'infallible sequence', argues Mill, to an unbounded demand for power over the acts of other men, both in terms of the number of persons this power extends to, and the degree over the actions of each. There are of course two well-known classes of means 'by which the conformity between the will of one man and the acts of other men may be accomplished': pain and pleasure. Pleasure can be evoked by sharing the profits of misrule. But pain is a much more efficient obedience mechanism, and terror the grandest invocation of it. The end achieved by a monarchy or aristocracy is thus one of desperate cruelty for the majority of the community, unless an

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[230] Mill, "Government," 9.
[231] Ibid., 10–11.

adequate 'checking' body can be established to temper the selfish desires of those in power.[232]

Mill's true attitude towards the role of the monarchy and the aristocracy in the institutions of government can be perceived in his assertion within the common place books that the 'natural and powerful tendency of the rich few to govern absolutely the poor many', which he finds well illustrated in Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae*. It is a puzzling feature of politics that 'the doctrine [is] always [of] taking measures to protect the rich against the poor' which, Mill continues, 'is about as wise as taking measures to protect the wolves against the sheep… it is to make that stronger which is naturally too strong.' For Mill, 'the old approved maxim has always prevailed': 'they deny that what is good for the prince is bad for the subjects', and this is true for 'a single despot, or a compound one', that is to say a monarchy or an aristocracy.[233]

In *Government*, however, Mill states that whilst the representative system functions as a formulator of legislation, it cannot execute laws, and here the monarchy is perceived to be useful, since a king-like figure is the most perfect example of an executor. Bentham, too, was willing to concede the execution of laws to a monarch (even if he described that particular institution as 'dross [with] glitter on it'), in return for a 'democratic ascendency', i.e. popular control of the House of Commons.[234] Moreover, if such an institution did not exist, Mill argued, it would have to be invented. This differentiation between the monarchy and the aristocracy allows Mill to then specifically consider the utility of the House of Lords as an institution, which Mill says should hold no fear of dissolution, providing it too has some merit. In the common place books, however,

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[232] Ibid., 12.

[233] Mill gives this maxim in Latin: *Si Principi bene est, civibus male esse negent. CPB* I, 32^r

[234] Bentham, "Plan of Parliamentary Reform, in the Form of a Catechism, with Reasons for Each Article: With an Introduction, Showing the Necessity of Radical, and the Inadequacy of Moderate, Reform," 447.

opposition to both institutions is much more forthcoming. The monarchy and the aristocracy are the people's 'natural and irreconcileable [*sic*] enemies'.[235] Mill states that if the objective is good government, the powers of government are to be executed for the good of the community in general, and not for the advantage of any small number. If this end is unachievable without destroying institutions such as the House of Lords, then such institutions stand directly opposed to the welfare and happiness of human beings and to the best interests of human nature. 'If they are not essential,' wonders Mill, 'where would be the harm in parting with them?'[236]

When Mill orientates *Government* towards a more contemporary analysis of British politics, the fundamentals of a prescription for effective measures pertaining to parliamentary reform can be glimpsed. Attention is first cast upon the orthodox idea that the British constitution is a perfect form of government, existing as a balance between the three types of government hitherto delineated and thus eminently stable and secure. Mill believed there was simply no proof for this claim of perfection, and sought to demonstrate it by simple logic: two contrasting groups need only join forces with one another to supersede the influence of the third. This was essentially what Bentham had termed the 'conjunct yoke of two partial and adverse interests' to which the universal interest was sacrificed.[237] Whilst Mill more straightforwardly labelled, in *Government*, the perception of balance as a conjuring trick,[238] his opinion of the existing political system of Britain was much more damning within his manuscripts. The idea of perfection is dismissed by the notion that 'our government [is] not the fruit of human wisdom', it exists by a mere 'chance stroke', and 'to suppose it good from this

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[235] Mill, *CPB* II, 14$^\text{v}$.
[236] Mill, *CPB* I, 38$^\text{r}$.
[237] Bentham, "Plan of Parliamentary Reform, in the Form of a Catechism, with Reasons for Each Article: With an Introduction, Showing the Necessity of Radical, and the Inadequacy of Moderate, Reform," 440.
[238] Mill, "Government," 16.

circumstance merely, is just to beg the question.'[239] What was needed for security of government was thus the insertion of a checking power which would protect the interests of the community against the sinister interests of those in whose hands power lay by fortune of circumstance. Those in possession of this power existed, according to Mill, as 'three millstones about the neck of the people, which crush them to the ground', possessing 'undue power, wealth torn from the people by taxes, or undue privileges, and undeserved respect'.[240] A bulkhead against this power is provided, Mill argues in *Government*, in the 'grand discovery of modern times', the system of representation.[241] Representation is depicted here as a purely rational or logical choice, its advancement does not appear to be driven by any particular ideology. It requires two things: a degree of power sufficient for the business of checking, so it can oppose the sinister interests of opposing groups even in combination; and it must have an identity of interest with the community, or else it falls into the same trap as the body is it designed to confront, and will make mischievous use of its power. It is, essentially, what Mill envisaged to be a reformed House of Commons.

Since the checking body must have power that exceeds the combined power of all other groups, the only rational check that can itself limit its influence is to circumscribe the period of time which its members can serve on it before re-election is due. Whilst lessening the duration is thus the instrument which ensures representatives continue to identify their interests with the wider community, this does not mean a member stands only for one term – indeed, Mill thought the opposite beneficial – but that the check on his use of power is so effectively limited by the threat of expulsion that he will always act in the interest of his community. This is an implicit argument against the Septennial

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[239] Mill, *CPB* I, 51ʳ.
[240] Mill, *CPB* I, 120ʳ.
[241] Mill, "Government," 21.

Act, which set the maximum life of parliaments to seven years, and Mill's position was made more pronounced in a later article entitled 'Periodical Literature' for the *Westminster Review*, in which Mill called the Septennial Act the 'greatest mockery of popular rights.'[242] In the common place books, Mill is even more explicit in his claim that elections should be annual, arguing that there is no distraction in having an election during the interval between one parliamentary session and another. He finds concordance with this stance in a citation from Burke's *Speech on a Bill for Shortening the Duration of Parliaments*: 'The object in view is to have parliaments as frequent as they can be, without distracting them in the prosecution of public business.'[243]

Mill's attitude in *Government* towards extending the suffrage attracted stringent criticism from both his fellow Philosophical Radicals (who argued it did not go far enough) and from more conservative quarters (who argued it was already dangerously radical). The suffrage, in *Government*, was the elected body which chooses (the 'choosing body') the members of the checking body, and in a straight-forward appeal to logic Mill suggested that such a choosing body should be the community at large. But whilst universal suffrage is implicit in this initial utterance, Mill did, however, advance examples of how it could be made smaller. Ostensibly these appear to be posited for reasons of efficiency, but their inclusion is perplexing because they seem somewhat arbitrary limitations. To this end, Mill's active exclusion of women, children and men under 40 because, he argues, their interests were alleged to be the same as those to which he did give the vote, casts a heavy shadow on his legacy.[244]

Mill's manuscripts in this regard can be cast as something of a redemption, because he appears far more emphatic in support of universal suffrage, and far less convinced of the

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[242] Mill, "Periodical Literature," 246.
[243] Mill, *CPB* I, 167ᵛ; Burke, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 7:72.
[244] Mill, "Government," 27.

ability to temper it for reasons of efficiency. Mill's citation of Burke within the manuscripts appears to be as a means of justifying the stance he adopted in *Government*. It was Burke's view that all individuals 'have an indefeasible right to all the power which they are capable of exercising without injury to themselves.' That which they are not capable of exercising can of course be done by others, but the right is retained to choose these persons. 'No species of men', it continues, 'ought to be excluded except for specific reason shewed.' Such reasons, which perhaps are ones Mill felt convincing enough to include in *Government* regarding women, children and men under 40, have a requirement (an '*onus probandi*') to prove 'that the admission of such people to the power of chusing would be injurious to the people themselves.' [245] But Mill's consideration of this *onus probandi* actually appears to result in a much more liberal interpretation of who should possess the suffrage. For it is from Burke's argument that we 'ought to go as near to universality as we can' that Mill arrives at the conclusion that it is so difficult to define this 'glaring line of distinction' that the 'onus of proof lies glaringly upon those who would restrict.' Without a convincing argument that evil will result from universal suffrage, Mill says, he is inclined to support its adoption as per the 'previous and decisive reasons', that is to say in reference to the fact that all individuals have an indefeasible right to choose their representatives.[246]

By extension, it is a relatively short step from Mill's thought on the suffrage to his ideas on representation, and this in turn can link to his notions about the configuration of the checking body. Mill analyses several modes of representation, including that relating to representation of property, which itself is developed more fully in tandem with his thoughts on interest in its public, private and sinister guises. In Mill's critique of Lord Liverpool's reform attempts in *Government*, his opposition to the representation of any

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[245] Mill, *CPB* I, 167ᵛ; Burke, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 7:72.
[246] Mill, *CPB* I, 178ʳ; Burke, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 1:494–496.

interest except that of the community is laid out. Liverpool felt that the interests of different fraternities – landowners, lawyers, merchants, army officers, etc. – should be given direct representation, which would constitute a representation of the interests of the community at large. But Mill argues that since all fraternities will have sinister interests, this is a sham theory. There is no proof that these sinister interests would cancel each other out, nor that fraternities would follow the common rather than their own interest – since to do so would be to go against their own human nature. In Mill's view, a 'motley representation' as posited by Liverpool is as bad as the 'motley aristocracy' that already existed.[247] In the common place books, Mill's opposition to such a system – what he specifically terms 'variegated representation' – can be seen reinforced by his reading of Condorcet's *Life of Turgot*. A representative of the clergy, nobility or another class, and the representative of the population as a whole, are clearly not the same thing. With the man in the former regard seeing himself as a delegate of the particular order he represented, and 'obliged in honour to support all its pretentions'. The object, therefore, 'should be to unite the citizens among themselves; whereas we divide them, when we mark, with a stronger line, the bounds of their separation.'[248] Mill's views on representation based on class interest were only superficially distinct from those on variegated representation. Class interests were selfish in the sense that they were fundamentally in opposition to the community, and composing a government of class representatives meant composing it of 'three or four sets of men… having each an interest hostile to the community.' The underlying argument to this stance was again one essentially democratic: 'The individual interest is of course the foundation of every thing.' All interests that are not held in common with one another are opposite, and

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[247] Mill, "Government," 34.
[248] Mill, *CPB* I, 162ʳ; Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, *The Life of M. Turgot, Comptroller General of the Finances of France, in the Years 1774, 1775, and 1776* (London: J. Johnson, 1787).

private, class and public interest all conflict with each other.[249] These statements appear

to be a direct refutation of the type of virtual representation Mill himself appeared to be

advocating in the concluding passages of *Government*, where his extolling of the virtues

of the 'middle rank' as the class 'which is universally described, as both the most wise,

and the most virtuous part of every community' suggested the franchise needed only be

extended to them.[250]

What attracts perhaps more attention than any other topic within Mill's manuscripts

pertaining to reform, however, is not justification for specific ideas such as universal

suffrage or the secret ballot, but a defence of the very notion of reform from its

numerous political detractors. Such a defence has been highlighted elsewhere in this

chapter, in particular Mill's opposition to the "cry" against philosophy from various

state and religious authorities, which appears to be predicated on a fear of insurrection

inspired by the events and excesses of the French Revolution, and the linked belief that

government based on philosophy was a route to the destruction of private property. Mill

actually saw such cries as the clearest indications of the rude health of such powers.[251]

But here also exists the most extensive defence of parliamentary reform which has

specific implications for this chapter's more conceptual questions, regarding Mill's

political objectives and the extent of his radicalism. Mill can be found, for example,

rejecting the notion that the motivation of the reformer is to 'be in opposition to all

established laws and government', to which he adds the rhetorical question 'to wish to

improve the laws and government, means to wish to destroy all law and

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[249] Mill, *CPB* I, 179r.

[250] Mill, "Government," 40. Mill's manuscript writings in effect reinforce an argument made by Terence Ball, who reads Mill's comments on the 'middle rank' as proof that he was 'an early defender, *avant la lettre*, of the idea of a meritocracy whose members are drawn from all classes and walks of life', as opposed to an advocate of the representation of only middle class interests. See Terence Ball, "James Mill", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), online edn, Summer 2010 [http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2010/entries/james-mill/ accessed 1 March 2013]

[251] Mill, *CPB* I, 173v.

government?'[252] Mill prepares ripostes to a wide selection of arguments against reform, such as the notion that reform is difficult to obtain (an illusion based on 'vague fears'),[253] that England is a prosperous country and therefore does not need reform (a clear logical fallacy),[254] that reformers can never agree ('many must be the shades of difference on every interesting point'),[255] or that the people are disposed to disobey, disrespect and despise their superiors (when in fact the 'very reverse is the case').[256] Whilst these responses are based on seemingly sound principles, Mill can also be seen descending into withering sarcasm when listing further examples of objections to reform, such as in a passage which was later reproduced by J.S. Mill in a debating speech on parliamentary reform.[257]

There are, in addition, particular arguments against reform which attract more sustained criticism. On the topic of the French Revolution, for example, Mill explores both explanations for its violent legacy and reasons why it is unlikely to be repeated in England. The inherent conservatism of the English, which Mill finds in Hume's *History of England* (that the English 'are very difficult to rouse to resistance against established government') is one such reason. But Mill also argues that conservatism can itself explain the fate of Louis XVI, and show that the "antijacobins" [*sic*] who believed that

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[252] Mill, *CPB* I, 169ᵛ.
[253] Mill, *CPB* I, 161ʳ.
[254] Mill, *CPB* I, 45ᵛ, 50ʳ.
[255] Mill, *CPB* I, 57ᵛ.
[256] Mill, *CPB* I, 46ʳ.
[257] "First of all, They are all villains who say it is necessary. This is sound and substantial, and why? because they are all villains who dare to dispute the strength of it.—Well, this is one argument. Favour us with another. The Greeks, or more properly speaking, the Athenians, were all villains; and at a time when all the rest of the world was distinguished for civilization and morality, were sunk in the truest brutality and barbarism. A third reason, why the British constitution needs no improvement is, that the people who say it does are called Radicals. A fourth reason is, that Mr. Canning says, it is not needed. A fifth reason is that Mr. Hume's name is Joseph, that he was an assistant surgeon in India, and made a small fortune there—that he very often speaks Scotch, and sometimes makes grammatical blunders. A fifth [*sic* sixth] reason is, That Robespierre cut throats. A seventh reason is that George the 4th is the best of princes. An eighth reason is, that Cobbett and Hunt are rather suspicious characters. A ninth reason is, that the world has always been very foolish; and therefore there is no reason it should improve." Mill *CPB* I, 181ᵛ. A version of this speech given by J.S. Mill can be found in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, Volume XXVI - Journals and Debating Speeches Part I*, ed. John M. Robson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), 285.

it was a 'giving way' to reform which spawned the French Revolution are gravely mistaken. This position can later be clarified by a quotation from Madame de Staël, who compares the differences between French and English nobles, the latter of which 'demanded rights for the Commons conjointly with rights for themselves', whilst the former 'opposed these rights when claimed by the *Tiers Etat*', were subsequently too weak to refute such demands, and then fled the country making a constitutional monarchy impossible.[258]

Talk of revolutionary fervour, as well as explanations for it, are a useful bridge towards a final contextualisation of Mill's political thought attempted in this chapter: his identification with the term 'radical', and his assessment of the wider population's inclination to radicalism, which is based heavily on refuting the perception that the people, given power, would wilfully destroy property. Regarding his own nature, Mill states that he does not know what the term 'radical' means, and if it is 'a bad thing, I am not for it.' He conveys his perplexity at being labelled a radical, given that his motivations are only the pursuing of laws calculated to secure the interests of the many against 'the encroachments and usurpations of the few':

> If it means the procuring of laws which may take the powers of government out of the hands of those who with the power cannot but have the will to use them in opposition to the ends of their institution, and when they are taken out of such hands to place them in the hands of those who shall neither have the powers nor the will to use in opposition to those ends, I can imagine nothing more congenial to my soul than radicality.[259]

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[258] Mill, *CPB* I, 35ʳ–35ᵛ; de Staël, *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution*, 1:432.

[259] Mill, *CPB* I, 170ᵛ.

Regarding the wider population, Mill sees in them merely a love of good government. His inference, therefore, is that disaffection which might be labelled by observers as radical only arises when a government deliberately abuses its power:

> Those who have all the means of influence and authority—all the power of instruction, to be exercised with every advantage, must have made a shocking use of their advantages to allow the people instead of loving to detest them.[260]

It is the very object of radical reform, claims Mill in the common place books, to lessen taxes, improve the law, and to make property more valuable. 'The People', argue Mill, possess three general desires: that the power exercised over them is 'necessary for the ends of government' and not more; that 'the portion taken from them… under the guise of defraying the expenses of government' is 'as little as possible'; and that they have securities 'for those requisites of their own happiness'.[261] There is thus no inclination within the population to 'annihilate property', and this is evident to Mill based on the machinations of interest. In the experience of the Americans, who, Mill reminds us, have a 'practically universal' suffrage, there is the utmost of respect for property rights.[262] Furthermore, Mill can find no logic in the belief that the people 'should they wish to take those good things from the few… if they do not wish them to be secure to themselves.' Quite simply, man wishes all other men to respect the rights of his property, and this he can obtain 'upon one condition only–that of respecting theirs.'[263] This sentiment, Mill believed, could be read in Turgot's *Formation et Distribution des Richesses*.[264] Finally, Mill sees a contradiction in those 'who affirm… that the people, if they had the power would destroy the rights of property' but 'do yet affirm that to the

[260] Mill, *CPB* I, 172ʳ.
[261] Mill, *CPB* I, 173ᵛ.
[262] Mill, *CPB* I, 179ʳ.
[263] Mill, *CPB* I, 180ᵛ.
[264] Mill, *CPB* I, 160ʳ; Anne-Robert-Jacque Turgot, *Réflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses* (n.p., 1788).

people the rights of property are of the greatest advantage.' If the government is not for the good of the greatest number, its extinction would be desirable. But since one of the great ends of government *is* preservation of property, a 'respect for the laws of property is implicit in the very circumstances of people's living together in society.'[265]

That the people's interest revolves around a mutual respect for property illuminates the final argument Mill sets out in *Government* is his objection to the maxim that 'people are not capable of acting agreeably to their interests'. His opposition stems from the fact that he believes the whole 'chain of reasoning' exhibited in the essay is dependent upon the principle that 'the acts of men will be conformable to their interests'. This is a complete and 'irrefragable' chain which stands upon a strong psychological foundation. Mill argues that

> it is indisputable that the acts of men follow their will; that their will follows their desires; and that their desires are generated by the apprehensions of good or evil; in other words, by their interests.[266]

Any claim to the contrary is usually the retort of the aristocracy and is, in Mill's view, patently absurd. The aristocracy represents evil by design, the representative democracy evil only by mistake. In the latter, the mistake can be cured with knowledge, which centres education at the heart of Mill's democratic political thought.[267] There is no antidote to the former, however, and exploitation of society by the aristocracy can only be limited by checking their powers.

The implication from the attempt to compare two of Mill's political texts and demonstrate the true depths of his radicalism is that, beneath the veneer of the reform measures implicit in *Government*, and atop the philosophical principles established in

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[265] Mill, *CPB* I, 180ᵛ.
[266] Mill, "Government," 36.
[267] This concept is expanded upon in the following chapter on Mill's ideas concerning education.

the chapter on 'Speculation and Practice', lies a wholesale plan for government that is revolutionary in its scope, and unrecognisable from the political institutions of Mill's context. This is actually not Mill's objective. Mill acknowledges within his manuscripts that all speculative plans, however excellent in theory, are shunned.[268] This, when coupled with Mill's attitude towards the French Revolution, draws him away from the perception that he is a political thinker who is revolutionary in outlook, and towards one with a concerted interest in the politics of reform. The question thus becomes how radical his *reforms* actually were, rather than whether his perceived radicalism outstrips any notion that his thought contributed to the concept of parliamentary reform.

In determining the radical extent of Mill's thought as expressed in the common place books, much of what he writes speaks for itself. An overarching impression from the manuscripts is one of sharp democratic principles, as well as the promotion of reform measures based on ahistorical, theoretical understandings. Such measures, especially with regard to the suffrage, clearly surpass those which can be perceived in *Government*. Just as emphatic are Mill's impassioned statements defending the cause of reform from its enemies, which reinforce the idea posited at the start of this chapter that Mill himself was a defender of philosophy against the "cry" rung out against it by the church and state authorities. What is less apparent in the manuscripts, however, is that Mill's ideas constitute a grand political plan of the type authored, for example, by eighteenth-century *philosophes*. Whilst Mill quotes passages which firmly suggest an appreciation for such an approach, such as that from Carlo Antonio Pilati about Machiavelli's maxim to 'cut down and uproot everything',[269] which seem to suggest the razing of existing political structures in order to begin again, Mill tempers this with an

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[268] Mill, *CPB* I, 42ᵛ.
[269] "Weak legislatures and faint-hearted politicians have not understood that maxim of Machiavelli, that in such cases one must cut down and uproot everything." Carlo Antonio Pilati, *Traité Des Loix Civiles*, vol. 1 (La Haye: P.F. Gosse, 1774), 47–8 quoted by Mill in *CPB* I, 29ʳ.

acknowledgement that the great theoretical political works are perpetually 'slighted as mere visions' in practice.[270] Such an acceptance can shed some light upon a resolution to the longstanding problem regarding the definition of Mill's political objectives. Whilst Mill is certainly not abandoning the use of philosophy in legislative matters altogether – itself a rather unlikely proposition – it does help explain the relationship between Mill's philosophy and the concept of parliamentary reform that this chapter has previously found difficult to clarify. A quotation Mill selects from *The Idler* offers much insight around this issue: '[f]orms of government are seldom the result of much deliberation. They are framed by chance in popular assemblies, or in conquered countries by despotic authority.' The laws created are 'often occasional, often capricious, made always by a few, and sometimes by a single voice.'[271] It is quite clear that Mill's objectives in this regard are the improvement of government via the introduction of sound laws formulated for the interests of the community, and deduced from a sound theoretical rather than experimental basis. As to how this marked him out as a radical, Mill, it seems, remained wholly unsure.

VII.

This chapter began in earnest as a narrative, which commenced at the start of the French Revolution and continued into the early decades of the nineteenth century, which attempted to illustrate the specific context to Mill's political ideas. Elements of this narrative prompted the speculation that political works which appeared radical in nature, and in this group Mill's essay *Government* can be regarded as a specific example, were actually subject to restraint by their authors – the practice of dissimulation – for fear of a reaction from a conservative government and population

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[270] Mill, *CPB* I, 42ᵛ.
[271] Mill, *CPB* I, 58ʳ; Samuel Johnson, *Works* (London: A. Strahan, 1801), 7:41.

which was itself weary of radical political ideas following the upheavals wrought by the French Revolution. As noted in the chapter's opening paragraphs, that *Government* was not an accurate portrayal of Mill's politics has been a long-held scholarly supposition, but with this hypothesis based on contextual reasons in hand, the purposes of the chapter – an attempt to uncover Mill's more radical but unpublished thought in the common place books – became readily discernible.

Depicting the extent of Mill's radicalism was first attempted by investigating his particular philosophical approach to the delineation of political laws in *Government*. His use of deduction from a science of human nature attracted critical attention from a number of Philosophic Whigs associated with the *Edinburgh Review*, who saw Mill's method as mistaken and the content of his ideas as too radical. In turn, this led to questions about Mill's own intellectual heritage from the Scottish Enlightenment which he shared with a number of these Whigs. Mill's theoretical approach preached an interest only in the general, and his deference to the *a priori* seemed to suggest he was interested only in a wholesale interpretation of politics, which seemed fundamentally incompatible with the reform discourse of the period. But in practice, it seemed he could not help but account for particulars. In *Government* specifically, this meant directing his political philosophy towards the specific cause of parliamentary reform. It resulted in his political objectives being portrayed in a rather perplexing state, at once both deeply theoretical in origin and yet seemingly applicable to the realities of the 'Reform Crisis' of nineteenth-century Britain. It confused not just his Whig opponents, but fellow Philosophical Radicals such as his son J.S. Mill as well.

A major difference between *Government* and the common place books resulting from this comparative study is that privately Mill seems entirely convinced by the cause for radical democratic reform of the British political system, and that his published political

writings were merely echoes of such ideas, their full extent kept away from public consumption. How, then, is it possible to reconcile perceptions of Mill's radicalism with a political reality which was unreceptive to such ideas and forced their moderation? Mill is supportive of parliamentary reform, but it came down to a question of definition. His reforms are much more radical in scope than anything proffered by establishment actors such as the Whigs. But his radicalism was always only to a point, and despite attempts by his Whig critics to construe his philosophical approach otherwise, he did not wish to see revolutionary fervour or excess along the lines witnessed in the French Revolution. He appears both fundamentally convinced of the integrity of his deductive basis to this political thought, yet aware of the fact that the damage done to the reputation of philosophy by the French Revolution meant there was little chance of ever achieving what he thought was a theoretically sound legislative process.

Whilst establishing Mill's true political thought can be achieved through a study of his common place books, defining how such thought shaped his political objectives has been a consistently difficult task in this chapter. Whilst the common place books can establish that the political thought he advanced publicly fell short of his actual ideas, the pursuit of what he would have practically advocated, had the restrictions which necessitated the dissimulation he employed in *Government* not existed, still remains a matter of speculation. J.S. Mill observed, in his *Autobiography*, that his father:

> would sometimes say that if life were made what it might be, by good government and good education, it would then be worth having: but he never spoke with anything like enthusiasm even of that possibility.[272]

Whilst it is perhaps too unjust a conclusion to argue that Mill lacked the stomach to advocate the full extent of his political ideas, since an appreciation of his context can

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[272] Mill, *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, 50.

offer many reasons for such reticent behaviour, he certainly seemed to lack enthusiasm for the possibility that he would ever see 'good government'. Whether 'good education' was similarly unattainable is a crucial question of the next chapter.

3. 'Democratical sentiment and indigent orders': James Mill and the essay *Education*

I.

> As evidence of the vast progress which we have made in right thinking upon this subject, we cannot help remarking, that even Milton and Locke, though both men of great benevolence toward the larger family of mankind, and both men whose sentiments were democratical, yet seem, in their writings on education, to have had in view no education but that of the *gentleman*. It had not presented itself, even to their minds, that education was a blessing in which the indigent orders could be made to partake.
>
> James Mill, *Education*[273]

Few areas of James Mill's thought appear as multifaceted as that which encompasses his ideas on education. His interest in the subject ran from involvement in very practical activities, such as his role in attempting to establish cheap schools as a means of educating England's poor – first under the auspices of the Lancasterian movement, which led to the pamphlet *Schools for All* in 1812, and later through Bentham's related plan for the Chrestomathic Day School – to deeply philosophical ruminations, such as those found in his essay *Education*, which highlighted the psychological foundations to his educational ideas, and placed them at the heart of Utilitarian objectives to maximize man's happiness. Whilst it is possible to draw a distinction in Mill's thought pertaining to education between the fact that some of his ideas appear more consistent with the formation of the citizenry, whilst others are better associated with a term such as 'schooling', that is to say concerned with more specific vocational, instructional, or technical matters, an intersection between these two different facets of Mill's thought can be glimpsed in what is also one of the most controversial aspects of his biography:

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[273] James Mill, "Education," in *James Mill on Education*, ed. W.H. Burston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 106.

the education of his own children. The astonishing depth to the tuition he instilled in his eldest son, John Stuart Mill, was indicative of his beliefs – drawn in particular from Helvétius – that education meant total environmental influence, and that the human mind had a potent capacity for intelligence if nurtured correctly.[274] At the same time, he trialled the monitorial system – the 'efficient' method of teaching which defined the Lancasterian and Chrestomathic models – within his own household, which saw John responsible for instructing the younger Mill children.[275]

It is the objective of the following introductory paragraphs, however, to justify why it is towards the more philosophical aspects of Mill's thought, rather than his real-world endeavours, that this chapter is especially drawn. Initial responsibility for such a narrowing of attention can be ascribed to the methodological approach that this chapter inherits from the wider thesis. In the previous two chapters, comparisons were sought between Mill's published and unpublished thought on two pressing contemporary topics of his early nineteenth-century context – the law of libel, and political ideas pertaining to parliamentary reform. This was facilitated in the main by the existence of particularly relevant and accessible source material within the common place books, which could be contrasted with the published essays Mill contributed to the *Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (hereafter *SupEB*). This chapter also proposes to use one of Mill's *SupEB* essays – the slightly earlier *Education* (1819) – but two related factors about such a selection affect the ability to carry out a study as exact in parameters as previous attempts. At the same time, these factors account for the concentration on Mill's more abstract educational ideas, at the expense of a study of those that were more eminently practical, such as those argued for in *Schools for All*.

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[274] Burston, "Introduction," 3–4.
[275] Mill, *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, 13.

The first of these factors concerns the aforementioned nature of the published essay, which is less a treatise advocating specific reforms (it speaks, for example, only briefly and in a very particular way, about Bentham's plans for the Chrestomathic School) and more a philosophical treatment of the general subject couched in distinctly Utilitarian terms and dominated by Mill's interest in associationist psychology. The end of education, states Mill in this essay, was relatively straightforward: *happiness*. The means (or what Mill called 'the *business* of education'), however, were more complicated: it involved the cultivation of the mental successions, sequences, or trains of thought that were most conducive to happiness, an encouragement of their repetition, and an exploration of how best to train the mind for such tasks.[276] The essay does not forge these objectives into any kind of curriculum, or prepare them much for practical expediency, beyond some fleeting remarks in a section devoted to what Mill terms 'technical education'. Whilst Mill's definition of 'technical education' will be seen to be of distinct relevance to this study, it is sufficient at this point to observe that it broadly reflects the ideas found in Bentham's 1817 *Chrestomathia*, which, by contrast, does set out an intricate and extensive curriculum.[277] The sense of practical detachment in *Education* is augmented by its language and style which, whilst entirely befitting of its status as an encyclopaedic article, makes its content difficult to correlate with the more pressing educational concerns of Mill's time. In spite of this assessment, however, some passages, such as the sections relating to the effects of poverty of diet on education, have been interpreted as a nascent form of early nineteenth-century social commentary.[278]

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[276] Mill, *Education*, 11. My emphasis.
[277] Jeremy Bentham, *Chrestomathia*, ed. M. J. Smith and W. H. Burston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).
[278] Burston, "Introduction," 5.

The second factor which makes the source material problematic in this chapter is that the content concerning education in the common place books is also of a particular specificity. It shares with the essay on *Education* the attribute of possessing little practical material beyond a few scattered examples; such as Mill's concerns about the aforementioned poverty on the diet (which may be attributed to a work by Crichton),[279] or the argument for the benefits of gymnastic exercises in a curriculum (seemingly an Ancient Greek concept).[280] Notably, there is nothing in the manuscripts outlining Mill's arguments in support of the monitorial system, either in its Lancasterian or Chrestomathic guises. Meanwhile, in terms of identifying what could be termed the working material for the *SupEB* essay, a process which was fairly straightforward in the previous chapters concerning *Liberty of the Press* or *Government*, significant difficulties are encountered. It is necessary here to rely on Robert Fenn's labours as the editor of Mill's common place books as a guide to the most appropriate manuscript material, because the novel proposition is encountered of published and unpublished work sharing a common title but having relatively little to do with each other in terms of content. Fenn's argument is that the largest section of manuscript material in the common place books found under the head 'Education', in the third volume, is actually more to do with the 'aristocratical' corruption of education, and is by extension an attack on the contemporary British political system.[281] For reasons which will become clear, it is material found later in the same volume under Fenn's editorial title of 'Fallacies', and, to a lesser extent, in a few pages collected under the title 'Education' in the fifth, that pose the most relevance to the purposes of contextualisation here.

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[279] Mill, *CPB* V, 97; Alexander Crichton, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Origin of Mental Derangement: Comprehending a Concise System of the Physiology and Pathology of the Human Mind. And a History of the Passions and Their Effects*, vol. 1 (London: T. Cadell, Jr. & W. Davies, 1798), 274.

[280] Mill, *CPB* V, 54ᵛ. The reference to Ancient Greece in this manuscript note is to Lucian's *Anacharsis, or Athletics*.

[281] See the editorial note to 'Education' in *James Mill's Common Place Books*, ed. Robert A. Fenn; University of Sussex, 2010; online edn [http://intellectualhistory.net/mill/cpb3ch2.html, accessed 10 January 2011]

The factors outlined in the previous two paragraphs explain to some extent why this chapter will not be expressly interested in any of Mill's more practical educational ideas. In articulating what will become this chapter's central argument, however, a practical role *is* found for Mill's more philosophical conception of education: as a distinct component of his political thought. Aspects of Mill's theoretical ideas about education possessed a 'democratical sentiment', which can be strongly linked to the radical nature of Mill's political philosophy outlined in the previous chapter. This term is itself found in the extract from *Education* that forms this section's epigraph. In *Education*, Mill is critical of the likes of John Locke and John Milton for possessing such sentiments in their wider philosophy, being as they were 'men of great benevolence toward the larger family of mankind', but failing to extend them to their conceptions of education. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to highlight material in Mill's public and private writings that can first demonstrate the extent to which Mill's own ideas on education differ from the likes of Locke and Milton because they were applicable to a wider population than gentlemen (i.e., they are applicable to what Mill calls the 'indigent orders'), and, second, can show the distinct relevance such ideas had to his wider political thought, the study of which represents the main objective of the wider thesis. In tracing the intellectual history of these ideas some of Mill's own specific democratic influences are in turn uncovered.

That Mill's ideas on education can shed light on his political thought is not a novel proposition. Indeed, the strong correlation between 'good education' and 'good government' in his philosophy was made very apparent by Mill as a 'key of knowledge' in his 1813 article *Education of the Poor*, as well as by John Stuart Mill.[282] W.H. Burston, meanwhile, in his editorial introduction to the essay *Education*, portrayed

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[282] Mill, *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, 50.

Mill's desire in the text to direct the population to pursue maximum personal pleasure, via a cultivation of the power of self-denial or temperance, as an attempt to inculcate a 'self-realisation theory of ethics' which was key to understanding Mill's political ideas expressed in *Government*. Mill's remarks on the 'exalted and refined human nature' of the middling ranks were explained by this theory. They were cast as the leading lights of society because of their pursuit of long-term and more satisfying pleasures at the expense of short-term 'passing pleasures'.[283] A further instance drawn from Burston's work involves his articulation of the role of Utilitarianism as two-fold – both a statement of an *ideal* and a 'practical criterion for immediate reform'. This meant that the psychological hedonism inherent to Mill's educational philosophy – that all men were selfish – had a very practical application to Mill's ideas on representative government. By ensuring all selfish interests were represented, none could be disregarded, and the foundations for good government could be laid.[284] Whilst this chapter's investigation takes its cues from Burston's latter example, since it too is interested in detailing the democratic dimension of Mill's educational thought, its approach differs on two more general points. The first is in methodology, in that it makes extensive use of the common place books as a major source of contextual material for the essay *Education*. The second is in the scope of its investigation into Mill's philosophy, which goes beyond his psychological hedonism and towards his ideas on the rationality of the human mind, and the progressive nature of human knowledge. In these latter two topics, significant links will be drawn between this chapter and its successor, which details Mill's attitude to established religion.

A final introductory note should be reserved to address a recurrent theme investigated in this thesis, but which also speaks uniquely to this chapter's approach: perceptions of

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[283] Burston, "Introduction," 8–9.
[284] Ibid., 12.

Mill's radicalism. In previous chapters, the fact that exploration of the common place books revealed content that differed greatly from that presented in Mill's published writings was enough to prompt the belief that Mill frequently shielded the more radical aspects of his thought from public view. Regarding Mill's ideas on education, discussion of his implicit or explicit radicalism is a more nuanced question, and it does not command the same attention given to the issue in previous chapters. This chapter's primary argument infers that if Mill's conception of education reinforces or substantiates the democratic nature of his political philosophy, then his ideas were by association politically radical for the context of their time. A separate method for defining Mill's radicalism, and a step removed from his politics, lies in the fact that any application of the more practical ideas he possessed, such as his promotion of monitorial schools, as well as his own experiments with the same method within his own household, mark him out as radical in the sense that he was forward-thinking, or that his approaches to education were novel. This latter point is somewhat undermined, however, by the fact that the monitorial system itself was neither unique to Mill nor to the wider Lancasterian movement he had a role in establishing; the Church of England promoted a similar scheme based on the near-identical ideas of Dr. Andrew Bell. A clear mark of a more serious or involved radicalism can be seen, however, with Mill's promotion of *secular* schools within this context, and this formed the main basis of his opposition to the Bell system. This point is taken up more forcefully in the next chapter, where Mill's radical ideas pertaining to established religion are discussed more comprehensively, with his pamphlet *Schools for All*, which was firmly against religious intervention in the monitorial system, a key text. Elements of Mill's opposition to provision of education by religious establishments, however, does offer distinct illumination to some of his ideas concerning the English Universities, described in part

III below. Finally, in acknowledgement of Mill's relationship to his son John, it is not much of a stretch to describe the former's rigorous and intensive schooling of the latter alluded to in the thesis' introduction as radical in both its theory and application, even if 'zealous' may be a more befitting adjective.

II.

That the presence of a so-called 'democratical sentiment' present in Mill's educational thought can be portrayed as a vital component of his wider political ideas means it is prudent to begin with some brief reflections on the previous chapter, which made inroads in to this latter subject. There, two related concepts – one theoretical, one psychological –underlined Mill's political thought in a way that is of distinct relevance to his conception of education. First, Mill believed sound political laws could only be attained *a priori*, by deducing legislation from a science of human nature, a theoretical framework forged from a widely-sifted array of empirical facts. Second, Mill's psychological argument, which followed that of Bentham's, contended that since man was driven by the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, he was inclined, by his nature, to selfishly follow his own interest. Drawn out to a community-wide level, the amalgamation of personal interests was in the interest of the population *at large*, and good government could be attained by conducting politics for the benefit of this community interest. Mill's philosophical and psychological doctrines, when taken together, can be interpreted as an argument for a system of representation based on democratic principles, with the individual interests of the population at large represented by elected individuals who were subject to various institutional checks on their power. With Mill's belief that the body responsible for electing the representatives – the electorate – should be so vast as to contain nearly the entire population, these ideas

can be deemed very radical for their time and context. Only with all interests represented could government function in the interest of the community, and anything aimed at less than this standard would result in political dominance by a small group with a counter or *sinister* interest. This was the short road to domination of government by an aristocratical body and, therefore, corruption.

An initial link between Mill's political philosophy and his ideas on education is made via his conviction that the coalesced interest of the community could be *misled*, but could never be *mistaken*. A representative democracy, argued Mill in *Government*, could only be evil by mistake, never by design.[285] It could only be misled specifically by the machinations of a subgroup – such as an aristocracy – who may deceive it into acting against its own interest. Education was portrayed as the antidote to such a situation. An educated population would be able to recognize their own interest and defend it against a counter or sinister interest, and was thus crucial to the pursuit of good government. Through a contextualisation of the arguments and ideas present in the *SupEB* essay *Education*, the importance ascribed to education by Mill to his political thought can be greatly expanded. Of particular interest is whether the democratic aspects of Mill's political ideas, found in his writings such as *Government* and in the common place books under 'Reform' in the definition of 'community interest' and language of 'representation', can be seen both reflected and perhaps reinforced by a more detailed investigation into the philosophical arguments he advances in *Education*.

Because this chapter's primary concern is to do with the political application of Mill's ideas on education, the final passages of the essay *Education*, where a paragraph is devoted to the concept of 'political education', appear distinctly relevant. This Mill termed the 'keystone of the arch' for his wider definition: political education was the

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[285] Mill, "Government," 8.

base upon which three other types of education were built upon.[286] The term was described as the inherent responsibility the political machine of the country had for the *type* of behaviour its population adopted, because the 'grand objects of desire' favoured by men were to be found reflected in the actions of such a machine. Thus according to Mill, when the political machine promoted virtuous behaviour ('high services to mankind'), one would see diffused amongst the population an ardour for the 'acquisition of all those admirable qualities' which enabled a man to conduct himself virtuously, such as intelligence, temperance and benevolence. On the contrary, if the actions of the political machine were not virtuous, it in turn promoted in the population a 'subservience to the will' and 'command over the affections' of the ruling class. This resulted in men being interested only in the means of pleasing those above them, and a pursuit of wealth and power. Since the rewards of wealth and power were naturally limited, and thus could only be distributed by the ruling class sparingly and unequally, such behaviour inevitably led to corrupt collective political conduct, characterised by Mill as 'intrigue, flattery, back-biting [and] treachery.'[287]

Mill's concept of political education was, in essence, a restatement of the reality that government was controlled by the landowning aristocracy, and teemed with corruption. Its reference to men seeking to obtain affection from, or act obediently towards, those hierarchically above them resonates in part with ideas expressed in his manuscripts pertaining to fallacies of authority, to be addressed in part III below. Taken on its own, however, political education in the terms described here reveals little about the link between Mill's ideas on education and those on politics. Beyond the notion that the

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[286] These Mill described as social education (i.e. to do with emulative aspects of a society), technical education (i.e. to do with increasing intelligence and sagacity, broadly interpreted as what one might expect to receive in schools) and domestic education (i.e. that received from paternal figures in the family home).

[287] Mill, "Education," 118.

contemporary political arrangement in Britain was corrupt and encouraged corruptive behaviour in the population, very little is revealed about any democratic dimension existing between the two subjects. An investigation concerned with this latter notion is better guided towards an appreciation of the essay's historical account, spanning its first four sections, which depicts how certain developments in psychology and philosophy have given rise to Mill's general definition of the theory and practice of education. Mill begins this history with Hobbes, crediting him as the first philosopher to clearly mark, in the first discourse of his *Tripos*, the succession of ideas and the succession of sensations. He subsequently introduces, via reference to Locke and then Hume, the concept of the association of ideas, before presenting the thought of Condillac and Hartley, whose thought starts with the notion that all simple ideas were copies of impressions, and all complex ideas were simple ideas united by the principle of association. According to Mill's synthesis up to this point, the character of the human mind consists in the sequence of its ideas, and from this the object of education is ascertained, which he describes as the 'constant production of certain sequences rather than others'.[288]

For Mill, sequences of thought are influenced by two 'grand instruments' – 'custom', and 'pain and pleasure' – which allow the repetition of beneficial sequences over non-beneficial ones, that is to say sequences conducive to happiness. Custom is an idea drawn directly from Hobbes, whilst pain and pleasure is Mill's redefinition, in Utilitarian terms, of Hobbes' concept of appetite. To obtain happiness in a greater degree, however, required further refinement, involving six of what Mill calls 'qualities of the mind': these were knowledge of what natural means are available to attain happiness; an ability to sagaciously choose the most conducive means; the self-restraint

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[288] Ibid., 58.

or temperance necessary to guard against illusions of passions; fortitude to resist pain; abstention from doing harm to others (i.e. justice); and generosity to do positive good for others. What happiness *is* however, Mill acknowledges as a disputed question. He defines two approaches, but leaves the resolution open-ended. The first is an Associationist argument that the elements of happiness can be traced back to the simple sensations which are transformed into ideas and then into combinations. The second is an argument analogous to parts of the philosophy of the likes of Reid and Kant: that there are truths independent of human existence, that is to say objects of pure intellect. Happiness in this latter arrangement may be perceived either by a peculiar sense, a faculty which discerns pure truth, 'Common Sense', or sympathy.[289]

Having demonstrated how education is the pursuit of happiness, that it is a question of mental successions and their repetition, and that there are certain expedients of the mind such as knowledge and temperance which can encourage this, Mill's next topic – and that of most relevance to this section's objective – is an exploration of the best methods advocated by philosophers of bringing this conception of education to bear on the population. Much is devoted here to Helvétius, with Mill's reverence clear, describing him as a man who 'ha[s] done so much towards perfecting the *theory* of education', and whose books are 'pregnant with information of the highest importance.'[290] Helvétius' theory of education was that it should entail everything 'which acts upon the being as it comes from the hand of nature in such a manner as to modify the mind'. This is obviously reflected in certain aspects of Mill's own actions, in particular his direction of the 'hothouse' education of his son John, as well as some of his remarks found in both *Education* and within his manuscripts, concerning the conducive effects of proper diet,

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[289] "Common Sense" is defined here in Scottish Enlightenment terms, as opposed to what John Burrow describes as "literally what every school-boy knows" in *Evolution and Society*, 56; Mill, "Education," 66.
[290] Mill, "Education," 68.

exercise and other environmental factors on education. More importantly, however, is Mill's support here for an argument of Helvétius' which can be read as inherently democratic: all differences between classes of men *depend wholly on education*. This is a position which rejects the idea that an individual is incapable of following their own interest due to an inadequacy based on social or economic grouping. Differences between individuals or groups, therefore, can only ever be due to inadequacies in education.

Mill's belief that differences between classes existed only due to the extent of their education leads to the establishment of a second, related position: that the capacity for intelligence amongst men is fundamentally similar. This is made explicit in the section of his essay he devotes to 'technical education', the main objective of which is to instil intelligence in the population (intelligence being the product of two 'qualities of the mind', knowledge of the means of happiness, and sagacity, that is to say the ability to discern between the different means). Mill's position on technical education is made with particular reference to Bentham's plans for the Chrestomathic School. The focus of Bentham's 1817 work *Chrestomathia* was to fulfil the requirement for a school for the children of the middling ranks. The school was to possess a curriculum as broad as it was deep, leaving 'the elements of hardly any branch of knowledge unprovided for', with particular attention paid to the pursuit of 'useful knowledge' which could assist in the attainment of happiness – an objective synonymous to Mill's definition of technical education.[291] Notwithstanding the clear similarities in the foundations of Bentham's and Mill's definition of education which underlines the extent of their collaboration on the subject, what is of particular note here is Mill's employment of an argument in *Chrestomathia* concerning the *amount* of education a child should receive, made in

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[291] M. J. Smith and W. H. Burston, "Editorial Introduction," in *Chrestomathia*, by Jeremy Bentham (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), xxvii.

particular reference to those destined to perform necessary or what Mill calls 'ordinary' labour.

'It is desirable', writes Mill in *Education*, 'that the animal frame should not be devoted to [labour] before a certain age, before it has approached the point of maturity.' This age was around fifteen or sixteen, and the quandary was what to do with the intervening years between the end of a child's education and this time. Drawing on Bentham's ideas, Mill states that if those years could be 'skilfully employed in the acquisition of knowledge', then pupils would be rewarded with a life of 'mental action… wisdom, and reflection' in spite of their 'most ordinary labour'. What is interesting about this position, however, is its presumption that the degree of intelligence attainable by the 'most numerous class' was actually very high. Just as 'we strive for an equal degree of justice… in the poor and rich,' argues Mill, 'so ought we to strive for an equal degree of intelligence.'[292] This position was in distinct contrast to figures such as Milton and Locke, who Mill suggests possessed 'sentiments [that] were democratical' but took education no further than the view that it was for the 'gentleman'. [293] Whilst acknowledging that there were undoubtedly those capable of more intelligence than the majority, and that special technical education should be provided for them in terms of the Universities or other colleges (of which more later), what is of concern here is Mill's argument that all individuals should be given more education to make use of their mental capacity, regardless of the nature of their work. Whilst ostensibly this is to increase a person's ability to pursue happiness, there are clear democratic elements to such an argument. The first, reflective of the role Mill gives education in *Government*, is an inference that increasing the education of a population would make them more suitable for political participation, not least because they would be able to ascertain and

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[292] Mill, "Education," 107.
[293] Ibid., 106.

defend their own interest. The second is to note that Mill's argument can be read as a general rejection of the 'monarchical' or 'aristocratical' conceptions of government, which advocated oligarchical rule based on a poorly-defined argument that suitability for such a role could be found only in a limited portion of the population, *viz.* the monarchy or the aristocracy. Mill's position is also indicative of his opinion of the *potential* of the human mind, and it is his elaboration on this subject in his common place books, along with a closely-linked argument for the progressive nature of human knowledge, which will be a major focus of the following section.

This section has contended that the importance of Mill's essay *Education* to his political philosophy can be grasped by focusing on so-called democratical sentiments expressed within it. The first, that any difference which exists between classes or bodies of men was the effect of education, showed it was 'wholly [that] which constitutes the remarkable difference between the Turk and the Englishman, and even the still more remarkable difference between the most cultivated European and the wildest savage.'[294] The second, the belief in the equal potential of each individual to increase their intelligence, was formulated into a strong argument − also found in Bentham's *Chrestomathia* − for advocating equality in education throughout the population, for the same reason that there was equality in justice. As well as reinforcing the notion that each individual was eminently capable of perceiving and acting upon their own interest if they had a suitable education, the essay encouraged the cultivation of the mental faculties that would enable such perception and action, justifying such a process as conducive to the pursuit of happiness. Thus whilst at the end of Mill's essay he identifies political education as the 'cornerstone' of his wider definition of education − not least in part because the highlighting and remedying of the political corruption

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[294] Ibid., 52.

existent in the Britain of Mill's time was a clear objective of the Philosophic Radicals –
it seems that an inversion of this phrase, positing education as the cornerstone of
politics, is a rather successful way of summing up the importance of *Education* to an
understanding of the democratic dimension of Mill's political philosophy.

<div align="center">III.</div>

In shifting focus from Mill's published work in the form of the essay *Education* to the
unpublished material of his common place books, a preliminary investigation of the
source material consulted must be conducted before proceeding to an analysis of its
content. The manuscript extracts utilised herein are taken predominantly from a chapter
under the editorial title of 'Fallacies' in the third volume of the common place books.
According to Robert Fenn, this particular chapter is a particularly rich source of
quotations and references for the essay *Education*.[295] In other words, 'Fallacies'
represents some of the working material used by Mill whilst composing his drafts. The
previous section has shown that the essay *Education* itself reveals, by virtue of citations
of various authors, the range of material that appeared to influence Mill's thought,
especially regarding the psychological origins of his conception of education which was
derived from the work of Hobbes, Locke and Hume. On this topic, the common place
books make it possible to show that the net of influences on Mill's ideas can be cast
beyond just those explicitly referenced in his published essay. Whilst demonstrating the
variety of these influences is one aim of this section and takes place throughout it, it is
not the primary objective. That, instead, is formulated from the conclusions of the
preceding section, which identified democratical sentiments to Mill's thought in the
essay *Education*. The main aim is to further illuminate the democratic dimension

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[295] See above or the editorial note to 'Fallacies' in *James Mill's Common Place Books*, ed. Robert A. Fenn; University of Sussex, 2010; online edn [http://intellectualhistory.net/mill/cpb3ch4.html, accessed 10 January 2011]

inherent to Mill's educational philosophy, and explain how in turn this links to Mill's radical political thought, by drawing on the contents of extracts from his common place books.

One way of introducing the relevance of the manuscript material to the essay *Education* is to show how connections can be made between Mill's attitudes toward authority in the former, and hierarchy in the latter. In the essay, the concept of hierarchy is touched upon in the aforementioned section concerning political education. There, Mill claimed that the behaviour of the political machine can be found reflected in that of the population, with non-virtuous behaviour leading to men becoming interested only in the means of pleasing those above them. Mill's criticism in the manuscripts concerning deference to authority follows this argument, and amounts to a specific objection: it is absurd to uncritically follow someone, for reasons pertaining to 'grand objects of desire' such as wealth and power or otherwise at the expense of using one's own reason. Authority is in fact 'a treacherous guide to a searcher after truth', quotes Mill from a work by Conyers Middleton,[296] yet it is unfortunately a guide followed by most men who, according to Lord Clarendon, 'consider more the person that speaks, than the things he says.'[297] This, believes Mill, can lead them along the road to compulsory obedience, which in turn will also bring about corruption. A citation from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* illuminates how this notion might particularly effect the sick, who 'readily [they] call in those who are to prescribe what they must do'. It is, however, also perceptible in other instances, for example regarding political functions such as representation, where '[p]eople are only too glad to obey the man who they believe

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[296] Mill, *CPB* III, 94ᵛ; Conyers Middleton, *Examination of the Bishop of London's Discourses Concerning the Use and Intent of Prophecy* (London: R. Manby & H. S. Cox, 1750), 2.

[297] Mill, *CPB* III, 96ʳ; Edward Hyde Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*, vol. 1 (Oxford: n.p., 1707), 55.

takes wider thought for their interests than they themselves do',[298] and, as the next chapter will show, in the domain of religious belief when it consists of a creed or doctrine articulated to the faithful by priests.

Demonstrating the illogicality of the deference to authority fallacy is critical to Mill for his attempt to show the potential of the human mind to achieve mental excellence, a notion which speaks to his ideas in the essay *Education* concerning the giving of more education to individuals destined for 'ordinary' labour, because they had the mental capacity to absorb it. His argument is that everything done by man that is of merit, has been achieved in spite of authority. Progress is only obtained, he asserts, 'by one age stepping before another'.[299] This is made with particular regard for progress in science and art, Mill believing with regard to the former that 'every man who has advanced the boundaries of science, has advanced it, by despising authority.' Mill is referring here to men such as John Locke and Francis Bacon, as opposed to 'emasculated creatures' such as Edward Copleston (a Provost of Oriel College), who 'teach and preach that there should be no walking but in binding strings.'[300] But beyond the particular pursuit of showing scientific progress as hampered by this fallacy lies a greater, more general danger. Deference to authority, Mill believes, leads to men enslaving their own minds:

> To attempt to make any mind believe any thing, except upon evidence, and as far as that mind sees the force of that evidence, what is it? It is to attempt to make men believe, only because other people believe, or profess to believe.[301]

Mill's argument develops from a specific concern that scientific or artistic progress is hampered by deference to authority, to a broader one suggesting that the population as a

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[298] Mill, *CPB* III, 96ᵛ; Xenaphon, *Cyropaedia*, trans. Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library 51 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1914), 1:107–9.
[299] Mill, *CPB* III, 98ʳ.
[300] Mill, *CPB* III, 96ʳ.
[301] Mill, *CPB* III, 102ʳ.

whole can actually become complicit in the degradation of their own intelligence by such an activity. Mill argues that 'to believe, because others believe, is a very unsure ground'. He is unsympathetic to any motive which there might be to rely on others' beliefs, to be content 'with the alms-basket, and live upon begged opinions', when 'the mind may work, and earn its own subsistence'.[302] To not dare to think for oneself, according to Mill, is to profess not a love for truth, but a sinister motive for something else. From Mill's belief in the potential of the human mind therefore springs a cry for man to actually make use of such potential to achieve progress, and shake off the 'binding strings' of authority. This is clearly a noble appeal, but its emphatic nature leaves Mill open to the accusation of over-reaching, given that the logical endpoint of his argument appears to be a blanket eschewal of all previously accrued opinions, regardless of their individual merit, and a reliance on each individual to form their own positions based on rigorous interpretation of the evidence.

The sketching out of Mill's argument opposing blind or irrational deference to authority is useful when considered alongside two extracts from his manuscript chapter 'Education' in the fifth volume of the common place books, because of the clarity it gives to what Mill perceives as the role for education in man's development. These show in particular that the definition of education introduced in his published *SupEB* essay is derived from the Scottish philosopher Thomas Brown. 'The whole theory and practice of education', reads Mill's extract from Brown's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Human Mind*, is founded 'on the skilful management of the laws which regulate our trains of thought'. The art of education is itself 'the animating spirit of every other art,' and it 'has raised us from the dust, where we slept or trembled in sluggish, yet ferocious

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[302] Mill, *CPB* III, 102ʳ.

ignorance, the victims of each other, and of every element around us.' [303] The intelligence of man increases, therefore, by his use of reason, or, in Brown's terms, the regulation of man's trains of thought. In order to avoid a kind of mental slumber, man is implored to cast off ignorance and think for himself. Such statements strongly support the argument Mill appeared to be embracing in *Education* for the progressive nature of human knowledge.

That Mill detests authority is an idea reinforced by his attitude to particular establishments such as the Church and the Universities (the latter seen as part of the former), who are both regarded as bastions of misguidance. Mill's citation of Tillotson, for example, depicts a 'corrupt and degenerate church' as in possession of rulers 'deeply engaged in the errors and corruption of it.' Their successors, 'bred in the belief and practice of them, are concerned to uphold and maintain them.' This gives a 'kind of sacred stamp' to error, and 'an authority not to be opposed and resisted.'[304] This link between error and corruption is vital for the political considerations of Mill's thought, to be examined in this section's conclusion below. The all-pervading hostility towards the Established Church apparent in Mill's ideas is contextualised in greater detail in the subsequent chapter. With regard to the English Universities, meanwhile, Mill's critique is more stinging even than the treatment he gives on the same subject in the published essay *Education*, where he calls them 'enemies to all innovation.'[305] The doctrine of Oxford University, for example, is:

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[303] Mill, *CPB* V, 61; Thomas Brown, *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (Edinburgh: W. & C. Tait, 1822), 2:193.
[304] Mill, *CPB* III,114^r.
[305] Mill, "Education," 112.

> *Do not think*. On all important points, do not think. Only believe – let credulity guide. Adopt what others tell you. Right or wrong, take it at any rate for right; and curse by your Gods those who shall call it wrong.[306]

Indeed, the 'cry of the Oxonians', that 'philosophy is dry [and] calculating' leads to 'one of the impostrous [*sic*] acts which men possessed of abusive powers employ to hinder the search of truth'. This is an attack by Mill on what he considers the more effete subjects studied at the Universities, which send the human mind in to 'fields of fancy… to gather buttercups, instead of looking for useful propositions.'[307] In an arresting passage from the manuscript chapter entitled 'Education' in volume III, Mill declares Universities as places where 'people go to have their eyes put out.'[308] It is worth considering, at this juncture, whether the strong opinions expressed by Mill here are indicative of a desire to reform higher education, which by 1826 was manifest in his involvement in the foundation of University College (now University College London). The overarching objective of an 'ecclesiastical establishment', meanwhile, is to use their 'fixed creed and fixed forms' to 'keep the human mind where it is'.[309]

Mill's arguments in his manuscripts portray institutions such as the Church and the Universities as unwarranted and limiting checks on both the potential of the human mind to accrue knowledge and the general progress of such knowledge, both of which can only increase by man's use of his reason. A specific vexation seems to be that man, having used his mental faculties to elevate himself out of ignorance and fear, subsequently suspends them by deferring to errors established by figures in authority that have since gone unchallenged. Mill's citation of Condillac is instructive here for the origins of such errors, which arise 'because we reason about principles whose ideas we

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[306] Mill, *CPB* III, 97ᵛ. My emphasis.
[307] Mill, *CPB* III, 113ᵛ.
[308] Mill, *CPB* III, 36ᵛ.
[309] Mill, *CPB* V, 62ʳ.

have not clearly distinguished.' An inadequate employment of the faculties of reason in this way leads to 'falsity of mind'.[310] These errors become established, and can persist for '10,000 years standing,' even though they are 'not preferable to the truth of yesterday.'[311] In counterpoint to this bleak outlook, however, is a sense that such falsehoods can eventually be overcome, as depicted in the grandiose speech Mill cites by William Shippen, the Jacobite MP and critic of Walpole. This proclaims that:

> truth… every day adds to its establishment and… falsehoods, however specious, however supporters by power, or established by confederacies, are unable to stand before the stroke of time. Against the inconveniences and vexations of long life, may be set the pleasure of discovering truth, perhaps the only pleasure that age affords.[312]

A fitting encapsulation of Mill's overarching sentiment regarding the human mind's capacity to obtain truth and advance knowledge, as well as the requirement or duty to make such a pursuit in spite of statements from (or obstructions by) authority is found in a quotation in volume V of his common place books, from John Barrow's account of the life of the Earl of Macartney: 'The human mind is of a soaring nature, and having once gained the lowest steps of the ascent, struggles incessantly against every difficulty to reach the highest.'[313] These passages are highly evocative of Mill's private attitude towards the liberty of the press in chapter 1, where, he argued, the law of libel should be rescinded since truth, in order to rise above falsehoods, needed to be unfettered from restriction of any kind.

For Mill, then, opposition to authority was a key to improvement in human affairs. Such innovation was eminently achievable by a mind that could think without limitation. This

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[310] Mill, *CPB* V, 64^r; Condillac, "A Treatise on Systems," 122.
[311] Mill, *CPB* III, 107^v.
[312] Mill, *CPB* III, 109^v. Mill is quoting from Shippen's speech in Samuel Johnson, *Debates in Parliament*, vol. 2 (London: J. Stockdale, 1787), 64.
[313] Mill, *CPB* V, 152^r; John Barrow, *Some Account of the Public Life, and a Selection from the Unpublished Writings of the Earl of Macartney*, vol. 2 (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1807), 365.

underlined Mill's confidence in man's ability to use his own reason, and also set the goal of education as facilitating the use of such ability. Meanwhile, the imploring to mental action by Mill suggests a belief that man appeared to have an inherent duty or obligation to think for himself, a practice which had originally elevated humanity out of its savage origins and, if utilised again, would enable further progress. This practice was encouraged to advance knowledge, but at its foundation lies an undeniable democratical sentiment. Faulty reasoning led to error, and maintenance of error by authority led to corruption. Thinking for oneself – *viz.* rejecting authority – was thus both a way to attain truth and eliminate error, and an obvious precursor to thinking about one's own *interest* as opposed to being misled by another's *sinister* interest.

Introducing a democratic reading of Mill's ideas on the role of reason and innovation of the kind advanced above acts as a bridge towards considerations of Mill's approach to questions concerning the practical expediency of such innovations in government – that is to say political reform. Towards an initial question in this regard, 'is innovation good or bad?', Mill's answer is succinct, but puzzlingly noncommittal: 'Both – and neither.'[314] This is, however, down to a matter of precision of language. There is actually nothing in innovation itself, Mill argues, which is good or bad, it is in its *end* where judgement can be made on its utility.[315] With specific reference to political innovation, then, Mill states that it 'is not whether the state to be reformed is more good, or whether it is less good; but whether the proposed attempt to reform offers a greater chance for good or for evil.'[316] The question of improvement in legislation is, in Mill's words, simply whether the proposed attempt promises greater good or evil. If it

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[314] Mill, *CPB* III, 98ᵛ.
[315] Mill, *CPB* III, 98ᵛ.
[316] Mill, *CPB* III, 103ᵛ.

offers a greater chance of good, it should be approved. Correspondingly, a greater chance of evil means the measure should be refused.

Attached to Mill's arguments *for* innovation based on creating good can be set his opposition to those preaching 'no innovation' on any account. Mill believes a response to this is 'well handled' by Madame de Staël, who questions:

> What human being, gifted with good sense, can pretend that a change in manners and opinion ought not to be productive of a corresponding change in our institutions? Must government then always be three hundred years in arrears?[317]

In essence, this appears to be an argument for innovation on the grounds that if a government is the reflection of a historical interpretation of a culture, rather than its contemporary actuality, it is less likely to produce good if innovation is discouraged. Indeed, a later portion of the same quotation from Madame de Staël is illuminating for the precedent it gives to 'national feeling' – public opinion – over history, the latter of which is seen as much less important to the justification for institutions:

> Can men coolly discuss whether the form of the governments of the present time ought to be in correspondence with the wants of the existing generation, or of those which are no more? Whether it is in the dark and disputed antiquity of history that a statesman ought to look for his rule of conduct; or whether that statesman should know where power resides, whither opinion tends, and where he can take his stand to act on the national feeling? For without the nation, nothing is to be done.[318]

This passage seems to closely reflect Mill's own belief in the role of history to the formulation of his science of human nature, as depicted in the section in the previous chapter detailing Mill's philosophical approach to knowledge. It is also reminiscent of a

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[317] Mill, *CPB* III, 104ʳ; Anne Louise Germaine de Staël, *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution Française* (London: Baldwin, Cradock, & Joy, 1818), 3:8–9; Mill's citation is in French. The translation given is from *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution*, 3:7–8.
[318] Ibid.

line in Mill's 1826 essay *Ecclesiastical Establishments*, a text of notable interest in the following chapter, where Mill lauds public opinion as 'daily approaching to the condition of a match' for the 'once gigantic foe' of 'persecution'.[319] Here, meanwhile, Mill develops Madame de Staël's point by drawing upon an extract from Rousseau's *Julie, or the New Héloïse* to show that if men are happier now than they were three hundred years ago, then by the same logic those men were themselves happier than our savage ancestors in the woods. [320] Any argument for resisting improvement now, therefore, could easily be transposed to an argument to have resisted improvement in the past. This, of course, is nonsensical, since it would 'deprive us of all the happiness by which our present state is happier than theirs.' The allusions between this point and the argument against the 'fixed creeds and fixed forms' of ecclesiastical establishments which attempt to restrict or suspend progress of the human mind are clear. Resistance to change, in particular that engendered by authorities of church and state, and based on the idea that current arrangements are acceptable, or that it is preferable to resist upheaval and enjoy 'tranquillity', simply runs counter to the principles of utility. 'If we successfully resist improvement now,' argues Mill, 'the effect would be to deprive posterity of a still greater portion of happiness.'[321] This is an entirely separate argument, however, to one advocating innovation for its own sake. In the words of Madame de Staël, any innovation which would 'tend to degrade' the existing system should, of course, not be taken up.[322]

Whilst Mill places confidence in Madame de Staël's riposte to those who object to innovation and reform, which shows the effect such opposition has on utility, he also

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[319] James Mill, "Ecclesiastical Establishments," *Westminster Review* 5, no. 10 (April 1826): 505.

[320] Mill quotes '*Pour profiter d'un état aimable, faut-il en négliger un meilleur … Ne perd-on pas tout le temps qu'on peut mieux employer?*' 'To take advantage of a pleasant state, must one renounce a better one, and prefer tranquillity to supreme felicity?' Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes: La nouvelle Héloïse* (Paris: Lefèvre, 1839), 40.

[321] Mill, *CPB* III, 107ʳ.

[322] Mill, *CPB* III, 104ʳ.

delivers his own specific rebuttals to two arguments which reinforce his views on the capability of the rational human mind to innovate, and its potential adoption for use in a democratic political system. The first argument Mill seeks to counter is the notion that the general population lack suitability (or in Mill's terms 'fitness') to participate in government. Mill demonstrates that since the people already possess a degree of power in the existing constitution, and indeed have done for some time, such influence could be safely extended. This is, in fact, a position Mill also takes up in his more explicitly political manuscript material.[323] A further response links directly to his views on education, and argues that if the intelligence of the population is found wanting, to the extent that it makes their participation in government impossible, the obvious solution is to increase such intelligence, thereby eliminating such a problem. Mill also rejects the accusation of the people being unfit for participation by asking what it is in the rich that make them so much more intelligent. What is the difference, he asks in one example, between 'the peasant [and]… the fox-hunter, or [the peasant and] the Bond street lounger?'[324] Mill sees the inclusion of more people in the share as providing a distinct political advantage, since it improves the 'means of judging of the conduct of their representatives', and such conduct, by extension, might also be improved.[325]

A second concern, found often repeated by Mill throughout his common place books, regards the effects of the French Revolution on the progress of reform, or more specifically the disinclination of governments to allow any reform for fear of a repetition of the events of the Terror. This was a political observation often repeated by Mill in his common place books. He dismissed it as ridiculous fallacy: 'All would-be retrenchers of abuse are revolutionizers; all revolutions are French revolution; therefore

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[323] Mill, *CPB* I, 31ʳ.
[324] Mill, *CPB* III, 98ʳ.
[325] Mill, *CPB* III, 98ʳ.

all reformers are pests.'[326] But the inclination of public men to abuse their positions was, for Mill, inherently obvious in the corrupt political system of his day. Regardless of the fact that '[p]ublic men cannot find breath to vent the indignation which labours within them upon such a violation on to their moral frame' and that to distrust public men is akin to 'murder', 'sodomy', or, crucially, 'Jacobinism', philosophy – and here Mill cites from the physiocrat Mercier de La Rivière's *L'ordre naturel et essentiel des societies politiques* – argues that such corruption is inevitable:

> The desire for pleasure and the aversion to pain are the common motives which belong to our constitution, and which are the principles of all our movements. To wish that man acts in a sense contrary to the force of these motives, is to pretend to change the unalterable order of nature: it is to propose to render effects independent of their causes, it is to undertake to make a river rise to its source.[327]

Mill employs this argument to show that whilst corruption of public men is a direct consequence of their selfish nature, it is also, in fact, a psychological trait common to all. By dismissing the political figures seeking moral recompense for being portrayed as abusers, Mill is arguing for a realisation in the wider population of these 'common motives', which at their most basic are the desire for pleasure and the aversion to pain, or in other words the means to attain *happiness*. Awareness of these means was, of course, one of Mill's stated objectives for the overall goal of education, but the effects of educating the population in the attainment of happiness had clear political repercussions. With a population educated to make use of their own reason, and thus identify their own interest, they could more readily choose the representatives of that interest in government, and oppose those who they perceive as working under the

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[326] Mill, *CPB* III, 98ᵛ.
[327] Mill, *CPB* III, 109ᵛ; Pierre-Paul Le Mercier de La Rivière, *L'ordre Naturel et Essentiel Des Sociétés Politiques*, vol. 1 (London: Jean Nourse, 1767), 222. Mill's quotation is in French; the translation has been editorially supplied by Fenn.

machinations of a corrupt or sinister interest. In effect, this is a return to the premise fundamental to Mill's ideas expressed in *Government* and highlighted by Burston's editorial introduction of *Education* which states education as key to the practical criterion of reform advanced by the Philosophic Radicals: with all selfish interests represented, none could be disregarded, and the foundations for good government could be achieved.

The study of Mill's manuscript material conducted in this section reveals two related notions about the importance of his conception of education to the democratic nature of his political thought, the restating of which can serve as closing remarks. The first concerns Mill's belief that if man could be educated to use his reason, it would prevent him deferring to mistaken or mischievous authority, and thus impact upon the maintenance of errors that were typically held up by political 'establishments' such as the aristocracy, or religious ones such as the Church of England or the English Universities. Education in this sense had an inherently democratic dimension, since it allowed man to rise above a blind adherence to misguided authority, to order his thoughts rationally, and subsequently act in his own interest. Authority was an important fallacy to explode for Mill because it also hindered the progression of human knowledge, which was attained only by man's use of his reason. This leads to a second concluding notion, which concerns the role of education in innovation in human affairs. By rejecting authority and innovating, as opposed to deferring to it and allowing both the human mind and therefore progress in knowledge to stagnate, Mill's educational philosophy can be seen as supportive of changes to the political system which would make it more reflective of contemporary public opinion. This was obviously in direct contrast to the maintained political institutions of his day, which were historical relics beset by corruption. Opposition to such innovation, characterised by Mill as typically

either the disinclined nature of an obdurate and rattled aristocracy to give way to more democratic forms of government for fear of Jacobinism, or as the stubbornness of the related institutions of the Church and the Universities to keep the mind's progress fixed and human knowledge littered with errors, was inevitable. The remedy to this situation, framed in psychological terms which showed that those in power and authority were corrupted by a natural disposition to seek out pleasure and avoid pain, also revolved around the concepts of education and democracy. Educating the population would enable it to realise these dispositions in both those in authority and themselves, and subsequently recognise, protect and advance their own interest.

IV.

This chapter began by defending its proposed method of investigation, and argued that, despite the fact that many facets of Mill's ideas on education possessed a concrete link to the realities of the early nineteenth century, such as the poor provision of schooling for children in England, the nature of his published essay *Education* for the *SupEB*, as well as the contents of his manuscripts, dictated that most attention should be cast on Mill's more theoretical interpretation of the subject. Whilst the very abstract nature of Mill's thought is eminently demonstrable in both published and private guises, however, the main argument of the chapter was that a distinctly practical element could be glimpsed amongst Mill's language of psychology, sequences, the rational human mind, and mental trains. This practical element was not so much as to do with Mill's ideas concerning education, but rather the particular democratical sentiments found in his writing which spoke volumes about the nature of his wider political philosophy. What followed from this premise was less a thorough demarcation of the meaning and provenance of Mill's educational philosophy – a task which has been handled admirably

by the work of W. H. Burston[328] – but more an attempt to illuminate the existence of these sentiments, firstly in *Education*, and second in the manuscript material deemed to be that essay's working material.

In Mill's essay, he initially defined the term education as the means man utilises to obtain happiness. A more rigorous explanation of the concept, however, was that it was a psychological process which highlighted the rationality of the human mind, and guided this ability towards independent and critical reasoning, which allowed man, amongst other things, to recognise and defend his own interest. The intellectual history of Mill's position concerning education showed that he owed much to the philosophy of Helvétius, who argued that it was only levels of education which differentiated both between members of a society and between different societies. Mill's thought was also closely aligned closely to Bentham's, whose own arguments had suggested the capacity for mental intelligence amongst the population was similar, and that a sense of equality should apply to the provision of education, much as it did to justice. Taking these two standpoints together led to a reading of Mill's educational philosophy as at its foundation democratic, because it advocated a representation of each individual's interest in the machinery of government as a way of remedying the corruption wrought by the sinister interests of an aristocracy.

The democratical sentiments apparent in *Education* were greatly expanded upon by an investigation into Mill's manuscript material, in particular that devoted to countering several different fallacies, such as that concerning arguments from authority. Mill's thoughts pertaining to authority in particular – that it was as Dugald Stewart had argued essentially a 'blind guide' in the 'search for truth' – meant that he saw the only route to obtaining truth as via the use of man's reason. This faculty – which Thomas Brown

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[328] Burston, "Introduction."

argued had delivered man from the doldrums of a simplistic origin and savage existence – was then hindered in its operation by sinister interests such as those of the political machine appropriated by the aristocracy, or by the Church of England and the English Universities, who were bastions of errors derived from false reasoning, motivated by their nature to pursue and maintain power and privilege. Corruption or error, meanwhile, had led to the impediment of the progress of human knowledge; it prevented man from exercising free thought; and it made for resistance to innovation in human affairs such as politics. The remedy to such behaviour was to educate the population to rely on their own reason, thereby inculcating an ability to identify their own interest, and strengthen it against the sinister machinations of authority figures. That Mill saw the entire population as typically capable of such enlightenment was clearly an inherently democratical sentiment. In addition, it was the employment of this reason which led to innovations such as the introduction of democratic forms of representation in politics. Such reforms – rejected by the authorities as akin to Jacobinism – were merely the reflections of the public opinion of a modern society, and could highlight the fact that government institutions, typically, conducted themselves 'three hundred years in arrears.'

Despite this chapter being ostensibly tasked with a discussion of Mill's educational philosophy, it is at length an extension of the discussion of his political thought attempted in the previous chapter, and in particular the origins of the democratic dimension to this philosophy. As a final remark, it is worth acknowledging how this chapter links to its successor, which, paradoxically, contains more context of Mill's practical educational reforms – specifically the 1812 pamphlet *Schools for All* – than is given here. Mill's conception of education played a particularly important part in his pursuit of 'good government', because it prepared the population for its role in a

government representative of the community interest. Ultimately, this comes across in Mill's faith in the rationality of the human mind and the ability of man to use such reason. The problems caused by the Church of England's opposition to Mill's expressly defined role for education were in particular its encouragement or maintenance of opinions formulated from errors, and its stifling of progress in human affairs. This was made apparent in the so-called 'Lancasterian Controversy' of the early 1810s, a topic where the subjects of established religion and education met head on. It is towards an analysis of Mill's thought on established religion, and in particular the Church of England, which both he and Bentham nicknamed the 'juggernaut', to which focus now turns.

4. 'A Monopoly of Spiritual Domination': Secularism and the role of ecclesiastical establishments in James Mill's religious thought

I.

In the course of his life, James Mill was, at varying points, the recipient of a scholarship intended to prepare him for a career in the Kirk, a divinity student at Edinburgh University, a travelling or 'itinerant' preacher, a candidate to be the minister for the parish of Craig near Montrose, a 'moderate' Presbyterian,[329] a secularist, an agnostic, and the architect of a plan for a rather esoteric form of state religion based on Utilitarian principles. Such a diverse array of religious attributions and appointments means it is no overstatement to describe Mill's religious thought as one of the more complicated facets of his intellectual history. This description, in turn, poses questions about how such a history should be explored. A precursory glance at Mill's biography hints at his departure from Scotland for England in 1802 as an event of great significance in the specific evolution of his religious beliefs. Before this point, Mill's upbringing and education near Aberdeen and at Edinburgh destined him for a religious career. Afterwards, when Mill was in London, he became an agnostic, his religious scepticism (defined as 'negation, pure and simple') possibly accelerated once he became acquainted with another noted sceptic, Jeremy Bentham.[330] But whilst this chapter uses Mill's major change of location to frame his ideas about religion in their Scottish and English contexts respectively, a teleological interpretation of Mill's faith is problematic, since its nature cannot be neatly compartmentalized into two discrete sections of belief and scepticism.

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[329] Bain, *James Mill*, 22, 88.
[330] Ibid., 88, 90.

The attempt to divide and then contrast Mill's religious views in this way creates a number of suppositions about his earlier Scottish period which do not stand up to contextual scrutiny. Mill's pursuit of a career as a preacher, for example, did not necessarily mean he held particularly strong religious convictions. By extension, there does not seem to be some abrupt religious *volte-face* which led him to reject his preaching career and come to London; other less spiritual reasons can account for such a decision. The first objective of this chapter, encompassing part II below, investigates the nature of Mill's upbringing and education in Scotland in order to bring these issues of context to light.

Meanwhile, accounting for Mill's later sceptical position poses rather different challenges, primarily because of the degree of circumspection which surrounds it. The concept of dissimulation has already been encountered in the previous chapters of this thesis, where it was argued that the hostile atmosphere towards radical thought in early nineteenth-century England prevented Mill from publicly stating the extent of his thought for fear of reproach, although the true magnitude of his ideas could be revealed by a close reading of his common place books. At first look, the tenets of Mill's agnosticism appear to also be open to such a treatment. Mill's biographer, Alexander Bain, described them as 'very strong meat even to the most liberal of the young men that became his disciples', even highlighting the distress such views caused the radical George Grote when he first heard Mill 'declare that we could know nothing whatever of the origin of the world.'[331] But examples of Mill being explicit about the intellectual origins of his agnosticism, or even his arguments in support of it, are difficult to find amongst his private manuscripts, and a different approach must be sought.

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[331] Ibid., 90–1. This anecdote about Grote is very revealing, given that he would later help Bentham write the highly irreligious *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion, on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind*.

Our knowledge of the alleged influences of Mill's agnosticism are in fact limited to two secondary sources, Bain's aforementioned monograph and John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*. The former speculates upon the importance of General Francisco de Miranda, the Venezuelan revolutionary and admirer of Bentham's philosophy, but can provide nothing substantial in terms of evidence for such a claim of influence upon Mill's agnosticism.[332] The latter posits that it was Mill's meditations upon Joseph Butler's *Analogy of Religion* which led to a defined 'turning point' in his mind, but the contemporary hostile political situation stopped any public exposition of such ideas.[333] This situation had already seen the likes of Richard Carlile imprisoned for publishing Thomas Paine's theological works, and even Bentham had been urged against publishing *Church-of-Englandism and its Catechism Examined* by Sir Samuel Romilly.[334] There is no reference, however, to Butler's *Analogy* in the common place books, which seems puzzling given the influence on Mill's religious beliefs his son ascribes to that work. Whilst this is not to dispute the opinion of J.S. Mill, it signifies a methodological problem with the use of the common place books for the purposes of contextualising Mill's later religious views. This problem is compounded by the fact that the tenets of Mill's agnosticism are rarely discussed in the manuscripts, and on the rare occasion Mill does address them, it is only either to reassert the position he relayed to Grote, i.e. that it is a logical absurdity to affirm or reject the existence of God (Mill writing in one instance that it is 'just as mysterious' to him 'that something should be made out of nothing, as that something should begin to exist without a cause'),[335] or it is to reinforce said position with a quotation from another author (such as Joseph

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[332] Ibid., 89. There are a few references to Miranda's politics in Mill's common place books, but nothing about his religious thought.

[333] Mill, *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, 41; Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed* (Dublin: J. Jones, 1736).

[334] Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism*, 294–5.

[335] Mill, *CPB* III, 209ᵛ.

Priestley: 'Of the beginning of motion or action we must sit down with acknowledging that we have in reality no conception at all').[336]

In order to interpret Mill's later religious ideas, therefore, an approach not expressly centred on his scepticism needs to be adopted. Parts III and IV of this chapter instead focus on Mill's attitude to established religion, or in terms he himself used as the title of an 1826 essay, 'ecclesiastical establishments'. In other words, Mill's intellectual history is attempted not through a study of his beliefs (or non-beliefs), but through his secularism. Secularism, for Mill, meant the liberating of religion from its capture as an engine of the state; it also involved strong arguments in favour of religious toleration. A wealth of textual sources pertaining to these ideas exist in both public and private forms. As in the previous three chapters of the thesis, extensive use is made of the common place books. The religious material in these manuscripts identified as most conducive to our purposes spans about a decade, from the mid-to-late 1810s until the late 1820s, and is found in the third volume of Mill's common place books. The nature of its composition suggests it was added to over a considerable length of time. The published instances of Mill's writing which provides the most significant context to this time are Mill's attack on the interference of the Church of England on the provision of education for the poor in *Schools for All* (1812), and his scathing indictment of clericalism for the *Westminster Review* in an article entitled *Ecclesiastical Establishments* (1826). *The Church and Its Reform*, Mill's essay for the *London Review* published in 1834, appears to fall outside the period corresponding to the material in the common place books. This particular essay, which advocated the removal of Christian theology from the notion of a religious service and its replacement with a Utilitarian programme of worship based on the promotion of good social conduct, is much less of a practical critique of existing

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[336] Mill, *CPB* III, 215ʳ; Joseph Priestley, *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit*, vol. 1 (Birmingham: J. Johnson, 1782), 146.

ecclesiastical establishments than the earlier articles. Its occasionally fantastical content also readily brings to mind the verdict of Leslie Stephen on the general religious plans of the Utilitarians, which he argued were illustrative of 'the incapacity of an isolated clique to understand the real tone of public opinion'.[337]

Mention of Mill's published material on religion necessitates the addressing of a further methodological issue: how the chapter compares and contrasts in approach from its predecessors. Whilst the use of the common place books in this chapter naturally evokes a resemblance to its siblings, it does not elevate one of Mill's published essays to a position where it can be compared in detail with the sentiments Mill expressed privately within his manuscripts. A few reasons can account for this discrepancy. *Schools for All* is unlike Mill's published essays on *Government* or *Liberty of the Press* because its working material cannot be found within the common place books. The latter portions of that work, however, do rely extensively on William Paley's *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, a book from which long extracts can be found throughout Mill's manuscript volumes, especially in the chapters concerning Mill's ideas on the liberty of the press analysed in chapter 1. *Ecclesiastical Establishments,* on the other hand, does have some resemblance to the manuscript material on religion used most prominently by this chapter. The primary difference between the published and unpublished material is that whilst the article relies on historical examples (such as that of Hume's *History of England* and Campbell's *Lectures on Ecclesiastical History*) to build its case for the hypocrisy and illiberal nature exhibited by the Church of England and its clergy, the manuscripts constitute a much more philosophical interpretation of Mill's ideas concerning the rejection of established religion, and in many cases this mimics the general arguments exhibited in favour of reason over authority cited in the previous

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[337] Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, 2:62.

chapter's analysis of the essay *Education*. As such, published (part III) and unpublished (part IV) material is considered in serial rather than parallel. Finally, whilst the above-mentioned *The Church and Its Reform* has initially been dismissed as too late in its composition to feature in the common place books, it should be noted that some points from manuscripts written in 1813–15, on clerical salaries, do appear in that article, although said manuscripts generally appear to be a recension of Bentham's arguments in *Church-of-Englandism and its Catechism Examined*.[338]

The investigation in parts III and IV of this chapter concerning Mill's secular attitudes is of particular importance to the wider thesis for the connection that it makes between his religious thought and his political ideas. This is shown most obviously by Mill's involvement with the establishment of schools for the poor, an activity which links to the notions of happiness and democratic sentiment he established as conducive to good government in his essay *Education*, as seen in the previous chapter. But the exploration of Mill's attitude towards the Church of England specifically – what he and Bentham often referred to as the 'Juggernaut', an allusion to the Hindu chariot which crushed members of the faithful under its wheels, depicted in Southey's epic poem *The Curse of Kehama* – unveils the very specific opposition he exhibited to the political union between church and state. Bentham argued, in his *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion, on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind* published under the pseudonym Philip Beauchamp and with the assistance of George Grote, that both these bodies held an interest 'incurably at variance with that of the community', because they had a natural tendency to combine together and co-operate.[339] Mill is very close to Bentham on this issue, a fact not especially surprising given a summary of the Beauchamp work

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[338] Mill, *CPB* II, 54ᵛ.
[339] Phillip Beauchamp, *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion, On the Temporal Happiness of Mankind* (London: R. Carlile, 1822), 137–8.

is found in the common place books.[340] He perceived a government's reliance on a church establishment as indicative of its failure to uphold the principle of utility. Not only did this lead to bad government, it was a profanation of religion which lead to its own corruption. The alliance of church and state, for Mill, was 'the alliance of religious abuse and corruption with political abuse and corruption.' [341] Such a position demonstrates that Mill's attitude to established religion rested not just on conceptions of toleration, logic, education and reason, but also on his strong and persistent political objective to rid government of sinister interest.

<div align="center">II.</div>

The brief biographical account of Mill's education and upbringing in Scotland given in this section serves to describe the events, achievements and interactions which led to a seemingly significant religious occasion in his life: his licencing as a preacher in the Presbyterian Church of Scotland (the Kirk) in 1798. An evaluation of the intellectual context of these early years, however, advances what appears at face-value to be a rather counter-intuitive claim: that Mill's pursuance of a career in the Kirk did not necessarily reflect strong personal religious beliefs. These contextual questions relate both directly to the nature of Mill's studies in particular, and also to the wider influence of the Scottish Enlightenment on religion in Scotland more generally. They help to reinforce the rejection of the suppositions about Mill's beliefs made in this chapter's introduction: that it is incorrect, for example, to speak of Mill as having some kind of a crisis of religious faith during the period in Scotland where his career prospects were in

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[340] Mill, *CPB* II, 77ᵛ.

[341] James Mill, *Schools for All, in Preference to Schools for Churchmen Only, Or, The State of the Controversy between the Advocates for the Lancasterian System of Universal Education, and Those Who Have Set up an Exclusive and Partial System under the Name of the Church and Dr. Bell.* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1812), 16.

flux and that, by extension, Mill's decision to abandon his fledging preaching career and remove to London in 1802 was not centred around him losing his faith.

Not enough primary material exists either to fully reconstruct the events of Mill's early years, or to conceptualize his early religious thought. Only one scrap in the common place books volumes definitely comes from the 1790s, which is a note on a lecture on moral philosophy given by Dugald Stewart found in volume IV. There are significant gaps, for example, in the knowledge of the time between him leaving Montrose Grammar School and attending Edinburgh University, or why his *viva voce* examinations for becoming a licensed preacher took place in 1797, but the licence itself was granted nearly 20 months later. In order to relay the established specifics of Mill's life, a reliance on Bain's 1882 biography of Mill is a somewhat unfortunate necessity. The contents of that particular account, which is predominantly based on testimony (which is of course unverifiable), and partly based on Mill's correspondence (the majority of which has been lost), can however be enriched by reference to Lazenby's much later study, which provides further insight into the nature of Mill's education. In one regard this is achieved by examining what would have been the fairly 'typical' education and intellectual context for a man of Mill's background and location (i.e. in proximity to Aberdeen) in late eighteenth-century Scotland; in another, by evaluating Mill's reconstructed university library lending record whilst he was studying divinity at Edinburgh.

Initial focus on the early events of Mill's life reveals the centrality of his mother Isabel to his education, who 'nurtured and petted' her son, and 'exempted [him] from all distracting occupation' so that his concentration was devoted to scholarship.[342] It is slightly unclear whether Isabel had noticed her son's scholarly prowess early and

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[342] Bain, *James Mill*, 6.

resolved to railroad the young James into a childhood focused solely on its development, or whether she had designs on him becoming a scholar from the outset and simply acted accordingly. Regardless, she established for her son a programme of study, made arrangements for him to work and eat away from the rest of the family, and relieved him of all domestic chores (Mill also never assisted in his father's shoemaking business, nor took part in any agricultural labour in what was a very rural parish).[343] Lazenby posits that Mill's early intellectual talent, whether enabled or expedited by the interventions of his mother, would have been noticed in the parish school at Logie Pert in Forfarshire where he grew up. He also speculates that the first person in an official capacity to recognise his ability may have been the minister for said parish, Daniel Bryce, also known as a distinguished teacher.[344] Mill went on to attend Montrose Grammar School, where boys with gifts similar to his would normally be expected to go up to Aberdeen (such as to Marischal College, of which Bain was himself an alumnus) at the age of 14 or 15.[345]

Mill's education diverges from the norm at this point, and instead of attending Aberdeen, he went up to Edinburgh in 1790 at the more 'advanced' age of 17½. Two reasons appear to account for this divergence, but since both revolve around the aristocratic Belsches family, it is not much of a stretch to assume that one begat the other. Sir John Belsches had succeeded to the Wishart baronetcy on his mother's side in 1777, and had purchased, with the money inherited from his uncle Sir William Stuart, the estate of Fettercairn in Kincardineshire, which became the Belsches family's summer residence. It lay approximately six miles north of the Mill family home in

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[343] Ibid., 7.
[344] Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer," 355.
[345] Ibid., 6.

North Water Bridge, just over the border in Forfarshire.[346] Mill's involvement with the Belsches family arose when he was recommended to Sir John's wife, Lady Jane, who was involved in a fund for educating 'one or two' young men from the area for the Church, as a potential scholar by the minister of Fettercairn. The Belsches family also required a tutor and companion for their daughter, Willamina (born 1776), and Mill took up this role from about 1787, probably until she was eighteen. Arrangements were made for Mill to tutor Willamina at the same time as he underwent the university training necessary for his expected career in the Kirk. Since the Belsches family's winter residence was at Edinburgh, it was resolved that his studies would be taken up there rather than at Aberdeen. But given that Mill began his tutoring duties in 1787 yet is only found on the admission rolls at Edinburgh in 1790, one must assume he spent this time either tutoring Willamina or in study, possibly whilst still attending Montrose Grammar School (as argued by Terence Ball) or perhaps back home in Logie Pert (which was significantly closer to the Belsches residence at Fettercairn House than Montrose).[347] The success of such preparatory work may be indicated by the fact that, upon Mill's arrival at Edinburgh, he was deemed proficient enough in the Classics to skip over the junior Latin and Greek classes, progressing directly to the senior classes.[348]

Mill attended Edinburgh for three years as an undergraduate, from 1790, although according to Bain, nobody (by which he means the men who would go on to be the Edinburgh Reviewers or Whig lawyers) recalled him during those years. The university records detailing Mill's attendance are patchy, although he certainly took classes in

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[346] Sir John Belsches would eventually take up his uncle Sir William Stuart's surname in lieu of his own, and Mill would later name his first son John Stuart for him.

[347] Terence Ball, 'Mill, James (1773–1836)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2007 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18709, accessed 21 Jan 2011]

[348] Bain, *James Mill*, 13–15.

Classics, Logic and Natural Philosophy. Bain assumes that, since Mill was taking an Arts degree, he most probably took Mathematics and Moral Philosophy, the latter confirmed by the presence of the aforementioned scrap of notes from one of these lectures. Lazenby attributes Mill's absence from attendance rolls for Dugald Stewart's lectures as possibly symptomatic of the Jacobin-fearing political climate in Scotland of the 1790s.[349] Mill completed his undergraduate studies in three years, and subsequently commenced his divinity training, also at Edinburgh, in 1794, which lasted nearly 'four winters', or until January 1797. After questioning trials in February 1797 Mill was licenced as a preacher in October of the following year. There is evidence that, once licensed, he preached at the church in his home parish, and the existence of a 'saddle bag' in the attic at his residence in Queen's Square, London, which contained his written sermons, suggests his initial work was as an 'itinerant' preacher. The saddle bag was the traditional equipment of a 'probationer' – a preacher who rode on horseback from parish to parish as temporary cover for absent ministers. These sermons would naturally provide much insight into Mill's early religious thought, but the only glimpses obtainable of their content is found in Bain's biography, which describes their moderate nature. Mill was a 'severely reasoned' preacher, as is to be expected but he was 'wanting in the unction of the popular evangelical.'[350]

Mill appears to have continued this roaming type of preaching work until 1802, but it may have been supplanted or at least supplemented by further tutoring, perhaps for the Burnet family of Elrick, near Aberdeen, or the family of the Marquis of Tweeddale in East Lothian. Indeed, it is an incident regarding the termination of Mill's tutoring appointment which Bain relays as one of two possible events that ignited, or at least

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[349] Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer," 9. Mill also appears to confirm his attendance at such lectures in a letter to Macvey Napier in 1821 when he states that 'I doubt not he would know me if he saw me.' See letter quoted in Bain, *James Mill*, 194.
[350] Bain, *James Mill*, 22.

accelerated, Mill's desire to remove to London. This tale – of dubious provenance – depicts Mill either being insulted by or causing offence to his employer during a dinner, which led to him resigning from his position.[351] The second incident Bain suggests – altogether much more plausible – concerns Mill's apparent later failure to be appointed to a more permanent Kirk position, as minister for Craig, a parish just south of Montrose. Whilst this appointment was made in 1803, the year after he left for London, the competition for it may have been held in advance and Mill, knowing he had missed out, resolved to pursue other avenues.[352] The importance of this decision will be revisited at this section's conclusion.

Two issues about the intellectual context to the actualities of Mill's early education described above revolve around considerations of geography. The first is that the proximity of Mill's upbringing in Forfarshire to Aberdeen, approximately forty miles north, has led both Bain and Lazenby to consider the intellectual influence on Mill of the 'metaphysicians of the neighbourhood' such as Thomas Reid, James Beattie, and George Campbell. These men, members of the Aberdeen Literary Society, were considered to be progenitors of the 'Scottish' critical views which became a dominant feature of the *Edinburgh Review*, the Whig journal founded in 1802 by Francis Jeffrey, Sydney Smith and Henry Brougham which would come to publish Macaulay's famous attack on Mill's essay *Government*. However, since Mill would before that time become a reviewer for the *Edinburgh* himself, it is possible that his affinity for this particular type of criticism was a product of geographical influences.[353] It has also been previously argued in this thesis that the 'objectivist moral theory' found in the Common Sense philosophy of the Reidian school can be found in Mill's later published work, which

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[351] Ibid., 27, 29. The details of this story are extremely hazy in Bain's work, given that he is unable to ascertain whether the events took place at the Burnet or Tweeddale households.
[352] Ibid., 32.
[353] Ibid., 25; Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer," 5.

suggests that if the intellectual influence of Aberdeen on Mill took hold in his early years it certainly also had longevity.[354] Mill certainly came to rely in particular on Campbell's *Lectures on Ecclesiastical History* in his 1826 essay on religion *Ecclesiastical Establishments*.[355] The second, related geographical point is that although Mill was in attendance at Edinburgh University, his borrowing record seemed more characteristic of a course of study at Aberdeen. This was largely based on the presence of the aforementioned Reid et al. in the list of books he borrowed from the Theological Library, a reconstruction from the records of which is found in Bain's work and is described below.[356] A further link to Aberdeen may be ascertained in Mill's borrowing of the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth's *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality*, given that group's Arminian influence on Aberdeen's Episcopalian tradition.[357]

More striking than the notion that Mill followed an Aberdeen-influenced curriculum rather than one more of Edinburgh in his divinity studies, however, is Bain's contention that such a curriculum was not even that theological. The list of Mill's library books is 'very unlike the lists of the other Divinity students', as the majority of it is given over to the study of works of philosophy rather than theology.[358] Indeed, the book most frequently borrowed by Mill in the course of his divinity studies was Plato's *Works*, whilst the second was Adam Ferguson's *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*. In addition, Mill reads several of the Aberdeen-based writers, such as Archibald Alison (*Essays on*

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[354] Haakonssen, "James Mill and Scottish Moral Philosophy," 628–9.

[355] George Campbell, *Lectures on Ecclesiastical History* (London: J. Johnson, 1800); see for example Mill, "Ecclesiastical Establishments," 514.

[356] Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer," 9, 18–19. It should be noted that Lazenby mistakes the period that Mill's reading record covers, believing it to commence in 1791, i.e. in the second year of his undergraduate study. In fact, the records only cover the period of Mill's divinity studies undertaken after his undergraduate degree, the so-called 'four winters' period from 1794 until 1797.

[357] Ralph Cudworth, *A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable Morality* (London: James & John Knapton, 1731); M.A. Stewart, "Religion and Rational Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. Alexander Broadie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 32.

[358] Bain, *James Mill*, 19.

the Nature and Principles of Taste), the aforementioned Campbell (*The Philosophy of Rhetoric*) and Reid (*Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*); other Scottish authors such as Hume (*Essays*), Smith (*The Theory of Moral Sentiments*) and Lord Kames (*Sketches of the History of Man*), and also works by Bolingbroke, Locke and Rousseau. Theological items were not entirely absent from Mill's studies, but they seem firmly in the minority. Notably in this regard, Mill consulted the sermons of French authors such as Fenelon and Massillon, thereby implying he was by this time already a 'fair French scholar'.[359] He also consulted the sermons of the Irish Presbyterian church leader John Abernethy and those of the Anglican preacher George Gregory,[360] both of whom, coincidentally, were also Edinburgh alumni.

Whilst many of the books Mill read seem more philosophical than theological, at the time these subjects were not rigidly separated. Reid's *Intellectual Powers*, for example, was designed to refute the sceptical doctrines of Hume, whose challenge to religion in his *Dialogues* and *Natural History of Religion* had undermined the nature of all belief.[361] A significant number of the books borrowed were also written by purportedly religious men. Reid, Ferguson and Campbell were all licensed as preachers by the Kirk. Gregory and Alison both took orders in the Anglican Church. Even Locke had given serious thought to ordination whilst at Christ College early in his scholarly career.[362] Such observations give rise to a more salient point regarding the nature and strength of Mill's early religious convictions, for it seems not that Mill saw the Christian ministry

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[359] Ibid.

[360] This is in dispute to the assertion by Lazenby that Mill is reading the works of James Gregory. Although James Gregory was a noted Aberdeen mathematician (and designer of the Gregorian telescope), the titles of the works by a "Gregory" which Mill borrowed from the library ('Essays' and 'Sermons' respectively) correspond with those published by George Gregory. See Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer," 9.

[361] Stewart, "Religion and Rational Theology," 48.

[362] J. R. Milton, 'Locke, John (1632–1704)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16885, accessed 29 Jun 2012]

as a calling, but instead as an opportunity for a man of his origins (which were definitely humble) and talent (which was undoubtedly substantial) to forge a scholarly career for himself. To try to comprehend his divinity studies as a religious question, therefore, is to take Mill's actions out of context. Strong religious convictions appeared not to be such a prerequisite for a Kirk career so much as intellectual ability was. This is not to suggest that Mill was ambivalent about his religious faith whilst at Edinburgh. But if he had resolved to be a scholar, as his mother had intended for him whilst he was still a young boy in the parish of Logie Pert, then in the books he consulted in the Theological Library at Edinburgh he found evidence that a Church career offered a clear pathway to men of intellectual talent who were possessed of similar resolve.

Bain perceives Mill's aforementioned failure to become minister for Craig parish, a hamlet near Montrose, as a major turning point in his life, but this should not be viewed only in the sense that it seemed to precipitate his move to London, in alleged concordance with the abrupt termination of his prospects for tutoring the children of the aristocracy. Had Mill obtained this post, Bain argues, he would have had time to continue his 'favourite studies', publish his work, and, in all likelihood, would one day have attained a chair at one of the universities.[363] In this regard, it is possible to envisage Mill's outlook in Scotland in the late 1790s as proportionally commensurate to that of Reid or Campbell before him, since both of these men were licenced by the Kirk but had made major contributions to philosophy. Focusing on why Mill became a preacher, given that his course of studies seemed to reflect a person much more interested in philosophy, is therefore a question which fails to understand Mill's situation: a person with designs on being a scholar would quite obviously consider this career, given that such employment could provide time for such scholarship. Lazenby

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[363] Bain, *James Mill*, 32.

appears to be alluding to this point, somewhat opaquely, when he claims that the Scottish experience Mill underwent was a 'mixing of education and religion, each a means of the other, [where] one finds that the same persons are frequently involved in both spheres of influence.'[364]

Despite being unable to shed much light on the nature of Mill's early religious thought, the suggestion in this section that Mill's intellectual context was one significantly influenced by the thought of Aberdeen-based thinkers such as Reid and Campbell is one worth keeping in mind when considering Mill's later religious scepticism. More specifically, since Reid was Hume's 'most gifted antagonist',[365] and had attacked the sceptical foundations of the latter's philosophy, it seems very unlikely that the roots of Mill's agnosticism lay in an early reading of Hume's works on religion. Bain theorizes that, were Mill to have read such works whilst at Edinburgh, it was highly possible that he would have been 'carried away by the style of reasoning there employed, and have taken in the seeds of his ultimate scepticism'. What works against such a hypothesis is the fact that Mill was the product of an intellectual movement which was itself proof against Hume.[366] His agnosticism, therefore, had to have been developed later, it was not a direct product of his Scottish education.

What this biographical account does illustrate, however, is the extent of Mill's scholarly prowess and ambition. The assumption that Mill would be devoutly religious because he was pursuing a course of divinity at Edinburgh is faulty, ignoring as it does some rather vital questions of context. In turn, the realisations wrought by such contextualisation also moderate any bewilderment about Mill's later agnosticism,

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[364] Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer," 5.
[365] Paul Wood, 'Reid, Thomas (1710–1796)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2006 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23342, accessed 28 Nov 2012]
[366] Bain, *James Mill*, 90.

because it no longer jars awkwardly with preconceptions about the strength of his earlier religious belief. Since Mill was ready to abandon any 'calling' (now a rather imprecise term to describe his career choice) to the Christian ministry as early as 1802 and take his chances in London, it becomes difficult to suggest that his more emphatic turn away from religion in the second half of that decade was particularly tortuous. Religion and education went hand-in-hand in the late eighteenth-century Scottish context Mill was raised and educated in, with the former providing distinct opportunities in the latter. It is of particular and relevant interest, however, that such a pairing, when manifested as a partnership between the Church of England and schools for the poor in the early nineteenth century, would come to animate Mill greatly in another section of his religious thought: his secularism. It is to an exploration of this period, and the intellectual history of these ideas which bestride both political and religious domains, that the chapter now turns.

III.

The account of Mill's experience of early formal schooling in Scotland given in the preceding section, which took place first at the local parish school in Logie Pert and subsequently at the Montrose Grammar School, is a fairly typical example of the Scottish approach to education at the time. Since the Education Act of 1696, all Scottish parishes had been required to provide for the lodging and salary of a schoolmaster. These parochial schools fell under the supervision of the church presbyteries, and whilst attendance was not free, the children of the poor were educated at the expense of the parish, and others paid a small fee.[367] Mill's familiarity with the Scottish system meant he could argue quite convincingly that, in 1812, the English version was of no

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[367] Élie Halévy, *A History of the English People in 1815* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), 458.

comparison, since it had 'no general provision… for the education of the poor.'[368] If it appears somewhat unusual, however, to give over a portion of this chapter (which is ostensibly on religion) to matters of education or schooling, when the previous chapter (supposedly on education) provided very little practical detail about such subjects, this peculiarity can be assuaged by stating that it is the particular involvement of religious institutions in the attempts to correct the disparity in educational provision between Scotland and England which is of significant importance to this section. This phenomenon greatly contributes to the contextual understanding of Mill's hostile attitude towards ecclesiastical establishments and, more specifically, towards the Church of England. The intertwinement of religion and education was used in the previous section to clarify why Mill's abandonment of his preaching career could occur seemingly without much consternation. In its incarnation here, it is used as a route into explaining the nature of Mill's ardent secularism developed in both his public and private writings.

Mill's assessment of the provision of education for the poor in England was entirely accurate; the collection of English schools in existence at the start of the nineteenth century was woefully inadequate for the purposes of mass education. The great public schools, which prepared the aristocracy for high office, were out of reach for all but the elite. Grammar schools of various iterations existed, some of the oldest of which had been founded in the Tudor era, but they typically served only their immediate locality, and a conservative curriculum was taught in all but those schools located in the larger cities, which contained a large number of families of merchants and tradesmen. The provision of so-called charity schools, which Mill felt provided only the 'rudiments of

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[368] Mill, *Schools for All*, 1.

learning',[369] was primarily the domain of the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, in existence since 1699. The first Sunday school, meanwhile, had been founded in 1780 in Gloucester by Robert Raikes and the concept had been readily imitated elsewhere. Despite their popularity, the restrictions of time (one day per week) and teaching material (the main objective obviously being to inculcate a religious creed) limited the overall educational contribution of these schools. In summarising this landscape, Mill felt that the formation of the minds of the poor in England was the result of 'mere chance'.[370]

Alongside a meagre capacity for educating the poor in England were attendant economic and moral arguments which attacked the very notion that such education was actually beneficial. The growth of the industrial revolution, reliant as it was on child labour, had precipitated a decline in the standard of popular education, and the number of illiterates was greatest in the counties of Middlesex and Lancashire, unsurprisingly also the country's major industrial areas.[371] An incident in Gloucestershire, meanwhile, saw the criticising of the Sunday schools by a combination of local gentry, farmers and the Tory press, who labelled them as subversive to the social order, given that they enabled the lower classes to think for themselves, a sure route to political and religious sedition.[372] Mill would come to attack a reformulation of this very common argument, based on the idea that knowledge (as opposed to ignorance) was inimical to the Church of England (a sentiment encapsulated in his mockery of the cry that 'The Church is in danger!') in the 1812 polemical essay for *The Philanthropist* entitled *Schools for All*.[373]

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[369] Ibid., 3.
[370] Ibid.
[371] Halévy, *History of the English People*, 465.
[372] Ibid., 461.
[373] Mill, *Schools for All*, 1, 14–15.

Whilst the state would eventually intervene in the delivery of basic instruction for the masses, officially with the introduction of the 1833 Factory Act, which required two hours of education to be given to child workers aged between 9 and 13, several institutions stepped into the breach before it. Despite the aforementioned reservations about promoting sedition amongst the lower classes, many of these interested bodies were actually religious, from both established and dissenting creeds, who were motivated by the philanthropic nature of the activity. The National Society for Promoting Education of the Poor, established in 1811 under the auspices of the Church of England, was one such example. It sought to teach children not the three Rs, but four: reading, writing, arithmetic and religion, which would take the form of study of the Bible, catechism and prayer-book services.

Another organisation concerned with educating the poor was the Royal Lancasterian Institution, founded two years before the National Society in 1809. Its objective was to advance the radical education ideas of Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker who had established the free Borough Road School in London. Lancaster was an educational pioneer, reforming methods for both disciplining and teaching pupils. The problem of ever-increasing numbers at his school, however, had drawn him towards the ideas of Dr Andrew Bell, whose Madras System introduced the monitorial concept of education, which was essentially the use of the older pupils to instruct the younger ones. Lancaster's success at using monitors in his school led to his desire to establish an entire national system of monitorial schools, in each of which a thousand children could receive instruction, by way of standard repetitive exercises, from a hundred monitors, who were themselves drawn from the pupil body. It is through Lancaster that Mill is explicitly introduced to this narrative. Since 1811 Mill had written for *The Philanthropist*, the journal of another Quaker, William Allen, who had persuaded him

to participate in advancing Lancaster's scheme, initially by serving on the Institution's financial committee. By 1813, the organisation had been renamed the British and Foreign School Society (Lancaster was dropped not just from the organisation's title but from its day-to-day operations as well) and, under the guidance of Mill, Francis Place, Henry Brougham and Edward Wakefield, a plan of a complete system of primary and secondary education for London was devised. The idea of applying the Society's economical methods to secondary schools became the foundation for Bentham's work *Chrestomathia*.[374]

Despite Mill's assertion that the Lancasterian plan was cheap and easy, its implementation was beset by both financial and other administrative problems. Analysis is focused here, however, on a distinctively religious issue, more specifically how religion was to be taught within the schools. Since Lancaster could not teach merely the children of dissenters, the need for his schools to appeal to the greatest proportion of the population meant there were two potential avenues for religious education. The first, as recounted by Mill in *Schools for All*, was to 'teach no Christianity at all in reading and writing, like with mathematics [or] painting.' The second was to teach 'only the parts of Christianity which all Christians were agreed about.'[375] The Bible would therefore be studied to encourage literacy and general Christian principles would be taught, but these principles would be expressly non-sectarian. Even though Mill felt that this second idea was 'seemingly unobjectionable', its application had resulted in Lancaster being accused of 'scheming to extirpate Christianity'.[376] Lancaster was no stranger to criticism, and his approach to religious education had been attacked as early as 1805, when the philanthropist and education reformer Sarah Trimmer called him the 'Goliath

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[374] Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism*, 286.
[375] Mill, *Schools for All*, 6–7.
[376] Ibid., 7.

of Schismatics', describing his methods as inimical to the Established Church, whilst in a public lecture, Samuel Coleridge had compared the Lancasterian schools to prisons or convict stations.[377] By 1811 this opposition had solidified into a concerted, competing Church-led movement for the education of the poor, in the shape of the aforementioned National Society. It too proposed teaching via the monitorial system, and claimed Bell as one of their own, but given that the specifics of the Church of England creed were added to the curriculum. For Mill, this competing system was at once expensive ('instead of one school in a populous city, you [would] need as many schools as there are denominations of Christians'),[378] divisive (the children of dissenting parents would be excluded) and a hindrance to the work already being carried out by the Lancasterians. *Schools for All* was penned as a fierce riposte to one of the opposing scheme's champions, the high church bishop Herbert Marsh.

A commentary on *Schools for All* is key to introducing how pervasive the concept of secularism was to Mill's political and religious ideas as early as 1812, but the article is also a classic example of his abilities as a sharp polemicist and, initially, it is towards his repeated and ruthless exploitation of the logical inconsistencies of the position of the Church of England *contra* the Lancasterian schools that attention is drawn. Amongst these more specific rebuttals to the Church's protestations against the Lancasterian plan, however, can certainly be seen the emergence of more general secular ideas, which are fleshed out considerably in Mill's later anti-clerical essay *Ecclesiastical Establishments* for the *Westminster Review*. Mill begins *Schools for All* by describing the problem with the Church's objection to the idea of the non-inculcation of a creed alongside the teaching of the Bible: without the education offered by the Lancasterian schools,

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[377] G. F. Bartle, "Lancaster, Joseph (1778–1838)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15963, accessed 31 Jan 2012]; Halévy, *History of the English People*, 462.

[378] Mill, *Schools for All*, 10.

children would simply not be educated at all. Creeds had to be treated with absolute equality; the teaching of both literacy and a creed was incompatible with the overriding economical objective of the plan – its cheapness. In this light, the question, therefore, was actually whether the Church preferred the 'non-inculcation of a creed accompanied with total ignorance', or the 'non-inculcation of a creed accompanied with the talent of reading and the knowledge of the Bible'. More pointedly, Mill's question was whether the Church of England thought 'knowledge or ignorance [to] be most favourable to the belief of Christianity?'[379]

Such a choice was made even plainer by Mill showing the ridiculousness behind Marsh's contention that to teach children literacy without teaching them the creed would actually make them renounce the Church of England. This argument is recast by Mill to demonstrate that, at its foundation, the point is essentially that to '*not* to give a bias to the Church of England creed, *is* to give a bias to other creeds.'[380] The implication here is that the Church of England cannot compete on an even ground with other creeds, and 'if pains are not taken to give it the earliest advantages over other creeds, men will in general disdain and reject it.'[381] Taking this sentiment to its logical conclusion, Mill finds that the Church of England clergy would

> rather see… the children of the poor belonging to their church brought up in the streets and in the fields, where no creed it taught, but ignorance is retained and vice engendered; than see them in the schools of Lancaster, where no creed indeed is taught, but where reading and writing are taught, and where those habits are acquired, of industry, attention, orderliness, &c. on which good conduct in life depends.[382]

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[379] Ibid., 8.
[380] Ibid., 12, Mill's emphasis.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid., 15.

Whilst Mill's hostility towards the Church of England in *Schools for All* is palpable, with an attendant exasperation frequently brought to the fore ('Church opposition… is so counter-intuitive as to beggar belief'),[383] his diatribe never verges on the irreligious. Indeed, many ostensibly moderating sentiments are expressed, such as the claim that the Lancasterians do not recommended 'teaching without religion', or that they count amongst their number some of the most zealous and effectual supporters of the Church of England.[384] This was probably a sop to head off accusations of non-belief on the part of the Lancasterians, given that they were composed of dissenters, liberals, and free-thinkers. Mill's primary concern, however, was with demonstrating the flawed position of the Church and its defenders, and the fact that such a position was inimical to the Church's existence. When Mill mocks the cry of 'the Church is in danger', for example, he does so to show the absurdity of the reality behind such a statement: that ignorance is not dangerous to the Church, and knowledge is. This projection of Mill as a protector of the Church can be seen in particular in his argument that the failure to embrace the Lancaster plan will lead to the Church's own downfall. He posited that a withdrawal of public support for the Lancasterian schools which the Church so craved, and the bestowing of responsibility for education provision on the National Society, would lead to the establishment of schools where the children of dissenters are excluded. This would force dissenters to set up their own schools teaching their own creeds, and their work would most likely 'surpass the establishment in zeal, industry, [and] attention'. Since the clergy often failed to carry out even the basic teaching of the catechism to parish children on Sundays, it was obvious to Mill that a 'a large proportion of the population, [upon] seeing Dissenter children better educated, [would] send their children to these [dissenting] schools'. Mill failed to see a situation more detrimental to

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[383] Ibid., 33.
[384] Ibid., 10, 2.

the Church than this, but his position was also a reconfirmation of his own secular objective: to exclude all creeds, both established and dissenting, from being taught to the children of the poor.[385]

Despite Mill's demonstrations of support for the survival of the Church of England, his objection to its status as the established religion was already unshakeable and emphatic in *Schools for All*. His summary of the position he sought to demolish is useful as a commentary for demonstrating the dimensions of his argument:

> It is asserted… that the Church of England is necessary for the support of the British Constitution; that the British Constitution, though the best, and for that reason the most steadfast, of all forms of government, could not stand without the support of the Church of England; that, therefore, in order to support the constitution, Church of England creed, though attended with worthlessness, ought to be preferred to Dissenters' creed, though accompanied with merit.[386]

Thus at the heart of Mill's secularism was both an appeal for religious equality, and a rejection of the capture of religion and its deployment as an engine of the state. Whilst Christianity was undoubtedly the religion of the nation, Mill felt no particularly section of it could claim the title of national religion 'when they are only part of the nation'.[387] This was an explicit rejection of Marsh's attempt to redefine Christianity as Church-of-Englandism. But Mill felt this stance should not necessarily be constituted as an attack on the Church itself. Since religion was founded on scripture and reason, any creed inferior in its conformity to these fundamentals would eventually be abandoned by its supporters. The Church, therefore, should have nothing to fear from disestablishment, to profess otherwise was to express a distinct lack of confidence in its foundations.

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[385] Ibid., 51–2. The secular Lancasterian plan was objectively the best, argued Mill earlier in the essay, because out of the thousands of children already educated, not one had adopted Lancaster's religion of Quakerism.

[386] Ibid., 16.

[387] Ibid., 35.

Meanwhile, for religion to support government, for it to be 'modelled and fashioned for the purposes of statesmen', was a perversion which led to its corruption. An ecclesiastical establishment was to be founded solely on its utility to religion; its conversion to any other purpose, political included, served only to debase it and to introduce numerous abuses. Similarly, a government which was dependent on religion was inherently bad because 'as far as government is grounded on the principle of utility, it supports itself'.[388] Mill uses the historical example of James I's famous utterance, 'no bishop, no king', to reinforce this point. By rewording the statement as 'no bishop, no despot', Mill highlighted the fact that political abuse – despotism – often found support in the form of religion. Established religion was therefore simply 'the alliance of religious abuse and corruption with political abuse and corruption.'[389] This opposition to the alliance of politics and religion continued apace in Mill's later essay *Ecclesiastical Establishments*. Whilst this article retains the polemical nature of *Schools for All*, it also reads as a more general exposition of Mill's secular thought because it does not have the strong root in contemporary events which the earlier essay possessed in the form of the Lancasterian controversy. In the years between their publication, both the Lancasterian and Chrestomathic schemes had failed to establish schools. But Mill is still particularly forthright about the contemporary nature of his target in *Ecclesiastical Establishments* – the Church of England, and especially its 'corporate clergy' – paying by comparison only slight attention to previous or historical instances of established religion (the most prominent being the Catholic Church, who created 'the greatest monster which the world ever beheld', the Holy Inquisition).[390] Both articles also share the taking up of two lines of argument in their critiques of established religion. In *Ecclesiastical Establishments*, the first attacks the Church's hostility to toleration, the

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[388] Ibid., 16–20.
[389] Ibid., 16.
[390] Mill, "Ecclesiastical Establishments," 514.

second the restrictions the Church enacted upon the press – a topic of significant personal importance to Mill – which impacted upon religious and by extension political freedoms.

On the subject of toleration, Mill was astonished by the hypocrisy of the Church of England concerning their right to separate from the Catholic Church on the 'inference of error', whilst denying others a similar right, on the same inference, to separate from them. This amounted to persecution. But whilst Catholic priests, for example, engaged in persecution of dissenters because they believed themselves to be infallible and it was damnable to dissent, the clergy of the Church of England persecuted them to preserve uniformity, which they could not bear to see violated. Mill could perceive at least the rudiments of a sense of duty in the activity of the Catholic priest (the desire to save individuals), but in the proceedings of the English priests he found 'nothing in human conduct more atrocious'.[391] This persecution also had a long history, particularly under the auspices of various Archbishops of Canterbury, such as John Whitgift or William Laud. It had a particular political manifestation in the Test and Corporation acts which limited the holding of office to those who did not take Anglican communion. Even if the 'spirit of the age' had meant an annual act of indemnity was passed to temper these laws, the 'highest dignitaries' of the Church were still adamant to enforce the sinfulness of schism, or what Mill sarcastically called the 'sinfulness of following one's own convictions in matters of religion, whenever they are not accordant with those which churchmen profess.'[392] This was, according to William Blackstone, an 'offence of reviling the ordinances of the church', a crime which was 'much grosser [in] nature than the other of mere non-conformity.'[393] Mill however called such a description 'one of the

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[391] Ibid., 517–8.
[392] Ibid., 530.
[393] Ibid., 532–3.

most shameful passages in any book of authority in the English language', attacking as it does the right of private judgement as a crime of 'peculiar grossness' and the 'utmost indecency, arrogance, and ingratitude.'[394]

To his condemnation of the array of the Church's political influence via legislative acts Mill also added its power to impinge upon the liberty of the press, which the clergy used to circumscribe all reasonable debate. As the first chapter of this thesis has shown, Mill felt the liberty of the press was only a 'vain sound', unless it could be applied to two subjects of importance: government and religion. The Church of England, having already influenced the retaining of printing under license 'until four years after the Revolution', maintained such restrictions afterwards, and Mill accused the clergy of being the 'most strenuous and furious opponents' of the giving of any additional portion of beneficial freedom to the press.[395] Because Christianity (in the form of the Church of England's creed) had been taken as 'part and parcel of the law of England', it inhabited a privileged position whereby any criticism of it could not be tolerated, and was subject to prosecution as seditious or blasphemous libel. Mill saw the verdict of *Rex v Woolston* as confirmation of this, with the claim that the 'root' of Christianity had to be protected, meaning prosecutions for such libels constituted a destruction of religious freedom which involved all other freedom as well.[396]

Schools for All and *Ecclesiastical Establishments* reveal the extent of Mill's thought pertaining to established religion that he was willing to advance publicly, and demonstrate the potency of his arguments for dismantling the Church of England's established status on grounds of toleration, freedom, rationality and, critically, the attainment of good government. The former work possessed a reserved if undeniable

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[394] Ibid.
[395] Ibid., 536.
[396] Ibid., 540–1.

secularist streak as it played out its main argument in support of a secular vision for schools for the poor, its arguments for cheapness and efficiency compounded by affirmations that the state could not rely on a religious establishment for support without instigating corruption in both institutions. In the latter work, Mill's arguments against established religion were much more pronounced, in particular his condemnation of the corporate clergy, whose interests could not help but coalesce with those of the ruling political class, resulting in corruption at the expense of the population.

In establishing the intellectual context to these secular ideas, however, relatively little can be confidently asserted at face-value about the influence to the published pieces discussed in this section. In *Schools for All,* Mill's contention that a state's reliance on established religion controverted the principle of utility initially appears to be derived from Bentham. It is, however, to William Paley's *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* which Mill makes the most explicit reference in the article concerning this notion. Paley was lauded by Mill as not just 'the greatest ornament of the last age of the church', but 'the most eloquent defence of religion not used as a political engine'.[397] Since Bentham would come to employ similar language in his description of the 'governing aristocracy' and the 'sacerdotal class' as 'each wielding the precise engine which the other wants' in his 1822 work *Analysis of Natural Religion, on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind*, it is not unreasonable to claim that Mill's use of Paley served to make his argument more acceptable to defenders of the Church, a technique he also employed in the advancement of other arguments explored in this thesis.[398] In *Ecclesiastical Establishments*, meanwhile, the conception of human nature given in the essay's initial display of anti-clericalism does appear Benthamic in origin. Mill asserts

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[397] Mill, *Schools for All*, 42, 17.
[398] Beauchamp, *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion*, 137.

here that the clergy had a long history of usurpation and of 'establishing a sort of right to call themselves and their interests, by the most sacred of names'. This was the natural product of the concatenation of interests, because when 'a number of men, one by one, all virtuous and honourable' where brought together they act in a body that appears to 'have renounced every principle of virtue'.[399] Mill posits that since man is allured by power and pleasure and abhorred by weakness, privation and pain, a corporation of priests will by their very nature 'labour for the extinction of [their] rivals.'[400] The priestly incorporation of the Church of England was but one instance in a long history of the pursuit of such persecution; ever since the 'first sovereign who protected the Christians was scarcely seated on his throne' (Mill is referring here to Constantine and the Arian controversy), a conflict has raged competing creeds for 'possession of his ear.'[401] Whether Bentham's purported influence on Mill's religious ideas about secularism can be maintained in an analysis of Mill's arguments against established religion found in the common place books forms one of the principal objectives of the next section, to which this chapter now turns.

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[399] Mill, "Ecclesiastical Establishments," 505–6.
[400] Ibid., 508.
[401] Ibid.

IV.

In the opening paragraphs of *Ecclesiastical Establishments*, Mill thought it proper to commence his article by stating unequivocally his opinion, that

> an ecclesiastical establishment is essentially antichristian; that religion can never be safe or sound, unless where it is left free to every man's choice, wholly uninfluenced by the operation either of punishment or reward on the part of the magistrate.[402]

The tenets of this statement function as a useful introduction to the study of his manuscript material on religion. They reflect in particular two major concepts that are illuminated in a chapter entitled 'Religion' in volume III of Mill's common place books: the importance of reason (and a correspondent hazard of authority) to the habit of man's religious inquiry, and the corruptive influence of rewards and punishments on the holding of certain religious beliefs, typically propagated by the clergy. It is the purpose of this section to investigate the intellectual context to these two concepts, in addition to an important third: the superiority of what Mill describes as the 'moral' or 'popular' sanction in comparison to the 'religious' sanction.

The supremacy of reason is the first plank of Mill's hostility to established religion, and is a position he expresses via a critique of man's 'habit' of inquiry when faced with religious questions. The essence of this critique is derived from the principle that answers to such questions must be a very personal experience, originating from within a person's conscience; beliefs could never be forced upon someone by external factors. But it also clearly has origins in Mill's ideas about education, which were emphatic about the requirement for individuals to throw off the influence of authority when searching for truth. Whilst many illustrative quotations can be found which reflect this

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[402] Ibid., 505.

kind of sentiment within this chapter of the common place books, two items are offered here because they also bookend the particular material that is of concern. The first or earlier one comes from Church of England clergyman Conyers Middleton's *Defence of the Letter to Dr. Waterland*, stating that 'whatever my reason declares to be true, I cannot help believing.' [403] The second or later one is from Samuel Clarke, the philosopher and associate of Isaac Newton, in his *Answer to the First Letter from a Gentleman of the University of Cambridge*, which equated the use of reason with the use of sight. Since reason is a passive sense like sight, one need only to open it up in order to 'see[s] the object necessarily. … Neither God nor man can avoid seeing that to be true, which they see is true; or judging that to be fit and reasonable, which they see is fit and reasonable.'[404]

Mill's initial suggestion is that whilst only a rational approach to religious belief is valid, man's attention to his faculty of reason can be susceptible to lapses and, thus, it is likely he will commit errors. Responsibility for this can in part be attributed to the nature of human passions. '[T]he very best intentions are not sufficient to guard a man against fatal mistakes', Mill quotes approvingly from Cardinal de Retz, who is described as 'a profound judge of human nature'.[405] But it is reasoning pertaining to religion – a subject which 'inflames every passion of the human mind' – which is the most likely to cause such incidents of faulty thought, since it is a subject exposed to 'all kinds of imaginations.'[406] Such imaginations might be restrained if man left alone 'whatever the scripture has left indeterminate', an argument advanced by Jeremy Taylor

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[403] Mill, *CPB* III, 198ʳ; Conyers Middleton, *The Miscellaneous Works of the Late Reverend Conyers Middleton*, vol. 2 (London: R. Manby, 1752), 302–3.

[404] Mill, *CPB* III, 198ʳ, 215ʳ; Samuel Clarke, *The Works of Samuel Clarke, D.D. Late Rector of St. James's Westminster*, vol. 4 (London: John & Paul Knapton, 1738), 714.

[405] Mill, *CPB* III, 198ᵛ; Jean François Paul de Gondi de Retz, *Memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz,: Containing All the Great Events During the Minority of Lewis XIV, and Administration of Cardinal Mazarin* (London: J. Brotherton, 1723), 3.

[406] Mill, *CPB* III, 198ᵛ, 205ʳ.

in the preface to his *Liberty of Prophesying*, which also states that 'peremptory creeds' should 'never attempt to define what the scripture has left undefined'.[407] But it is also the work of Taylor that Mill resorts to when trying to describe in greater detail the problems man encounters with his nature in his pursuit of religious truth. The first of these is that man seemed incapable of discernment, of choosing correctly between wholesome and corrupted opinions he finds influencing him. Man's natural iniquity means he 'suck[s] in opinions as wild asses do the wind'. Confidence in an opinion that is built on zeal and mistake rather than humility and rationality led to a second source of criticism: man possessed an impatience of contradiction, an arrogance where he was unwilling to correct an erroneous opinion. Not only would this compound the effects of any earlier established faulty reasoning, but it also suggests insincerity, since man may end up resolving not to believe, even if he sees reason to believe.[408] Thirdly, a growth in man's zeal for religious opinions resulted in a correspondent decline in his other religious qualities and activities, such as his piety or temperance.[409] Yet whilst Taylor's criticisms are extensive, Mill is quick to suggest that external factors bear at least as much responsibility for the position man finds himself in concerning matters of religious belief. Man is attracted, for instance, to the security perceived from the fact that knowledge of his beliefs comes from 'very admirable men', which is sufficient ground 'for a zealous adherence to the belief.'[410] This constitutes Mill's first, albeit partially disguised, shot against an object of much of his loathing in his published work: the clergy.

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[407] Mill, *CPB* III, 198ᵛ; Jeremy Taylor, *The Whole Works of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor, D.D. Lord Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore* (London: C. & J. Rivington, 1828), 8:400–1.
[408] Mill, *CPB* III, 199ᵛ; Ibid., 8:409.
[409] Mill, *CPB* III, 199ᵛ; Ibid., 8:427.
[410] Mill, *CPB* III, 211ʳ.

From the condemnation of man's own incorrect application of his faculty of reason to religious matters, Mill's attention is next drawn to the objection that the mind can at once be governed by religious prejudices derived from such faulty logic, whilst this faculty of reason (the mind's 'power of pursuing and discerning other truth') can go on in other domains without being undermined or weakened.[411] In short, Mill is pondering here why the culture of religious belief inhibits reason, yet reason can seemingly continue unabated in other domains. This objection further underlines Mill's belief in a lack of sincerity in the minds of men, or what he interprets as the position of Montesquieu in his *Lettres persanes*, that 'men may profess a religion, and with a sort of good faith without believing it.'[412] Logically, for Mill, reason dictates that one cannot simply separate out religious views from others, exploring evidence for the latter whilst being simultaneously in the habit of receiving opinions for the former. Whilst Mill agrees that there is a noble, agreeable tradition amongst men of 'vigilant, indefatigable inquiry,' which is 'the habit of taking nothing upon trust, the habit of looking only to evidence, as the sole ground of its belief', attachment to religion in a person corrupts such a habit, because religion 'requires that the mind should be governed by authority, that it should believe, not because it sees reason to believe, after a fair and impartial examination of evidence, but because it has been told that it is right to believe.'[413] At face value this appears a rather interesting stance for Mill to adopt because it contrasts greatly with, say, David Hume's scepticism over the applicability of the powers of reason to matters of religious belief.[414] In fact, it appears that Mill is not rejecting the

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[411] Mill, *CPB* III, 208ʳ.

[412] Mill, *CPB* III, 202ʳ. The comment precedes a quotation from letter 73 in *Lettres persanes* (incorrectly attributed by Mill to letter 75): 'Il faut que je te l'avoue, je n'ai point remarqué chez les chrétiens cette persuasion vive de leur religion qui se trouve parmi les musulmans; il y a bien loin chez eux de la profession à la croyance, de la croyance à la conviction, de la conviction à la pratique.' Charles-Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes* (Amsterdam: Pierre Brunel, 1721), 2:7.

[413] Mill, *CPB* III, 208ᵛ.

[414] Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2007), 136.

notion of religious belief based on faith, rather, he is rejecting the validity of any belief taken up because it comes from an authority that has gone unchallenged. By not looking at the evidence, by looking with 'a disposition not to explore and detect, but… to acquiesce', man develops a habit of 'mental partiality' or 'mental unfairness'. The strength of Mill's objection to this negative, destructive habit is conveyed by the explosiveness of his indictment of those who practice it. To uncritically assent to authority makes men not only 'bad reasoners [*sic*]', but 'bad husbands, bad fathers, bad judges, bad legislators, *bad every thing*.'[415] At its foundation, Mill sees the departure of reason from matters of religion as the very source of injustice.

Mill likened the process of decoupling the mind's habit of 'indefatigable inquiry' from matters of religion whilst retaining it in other domains as akin to having a weakened limb, which will always impair the strength of the whole body: 'if you cultivate in religion, a habit, the very reverse of that wherein strength of mind consists, you cannot but impair the force of that habit.' His conception of the use of reason as a 'habit' is developed into an argument that such a faculty needed to be exercised often and uniformly. Practice of a contrary habit, *viz.* uncritical observance and belief in opinions accepted blindly of indifferently from a religious authority, interfered with and eventually destroyed the original habit: 'Do you think it possible', asks Mill, 'for a man to have a confirmed habit of leaning upon others for his opinions in religion, and not to have, on account of that habit, a tendency to lean upon them for other opinions: To effeminate his mind in one thing, without affecting its manliness in all?' This point is extremely similar to Mill's assessment of 'emasculated creatures' such as Edward Coplestone and the associated 'binding strings' analogy highlighted in the previous

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[415] Mill, *CPB* III, 208ᵛ. My emphasis.

chapter.[416] It is also very close to Bentham's opinion that any reliance on '*extra-experimental belief*' – belief unconformable to experience – was a sign of intellectual weakness, given that such belief was altogether useless, since it could not contribute in any degree to the removal of unhappiness, the main objective of humanity.[417] Mill attaches to this idea a series of further rhetorical questions, from '[i]s [this] a thing which can be put off, or put on at pleasure?' to '[i]s this the nature of attention?' and finally, '[d]o we not endeavour to create in our children habits of attention, by preventing them from contracting inattentive habits, in any department?' In considering the importance Mill held man's use of reason to the attainment of progress, the strength of his concerns regarding the ability of religious authority to fatally undermine this faculty can begin to be understood. A further passage is striking for the sense of foreboding it signals on this very topic:

> If a mind is capable of practising habitually the neglect of evidence, the reliance on others, the fear to trust himself, the hearing of only one side, the shutting of his ears to the other; can I form any other conclusion, than that this man has no confirmed habits of looking to evidence, of trusting to that only for his opinions, of accurately, and unintermittingly weighing that, on all other subjects?[418]

As much as Mill's argument thus far has consisted of a critique of man's incorrect use of his reason, a second target has quite clearly been the concept of religious authority itself or, more accurately, established religion. This is seen in Mill's assertion that whilst uncritical assent to religious authority was dangerous, it was compounded by the fact that such an authority also precluded man from ever changing his opinion if he ever were to 'list'. Such inflexibility only created hypocrites which, in the words of Taylor, was equivalent to building a monument to the Devil '[i]nstead of erecting a trophy to

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[416] Mill, *CPB* III, 96ʳ.
[417] Beauchamp, *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion*, 93–4.
[418] Mill, *CPB* III, 208ᵛ.

God and true religion.'[419] But Mill also extended his allegations of hypocrisy to manifestations of religious authorities themselves, by harnessing an argument advanced by the theologian William Chillingworth in his *The Religion of Protestants*, that Catholics 'refer people to reason, when they are endeavouring to gain a man from another religion'. Mill saw such 'abuse [of] the use of reason' to be reflected in the exact temper of the Church of England, a point he also made in *Ecclesiastical Establishments*.[420] But Mill thought that whilst the sacred writers used ridicule against the religion of their opponents, such 'professors of piety' were remarkably afraid of ridicule themselves.[421]

Taken in a broad view, Mill's attitude to established religion seemed to reflect both ideas derived from Enlightenment figures such as Montesquieu, *and* those associated with some Evangelical or Dissenting traditions, who shared his views on private judgement and freedom of individual conscience. When Mill claims that '[n]othing must be done for the good of mankind for fear of fetching down the church of England', which he describes as 'that fabric which its upholders represent as so rotten and rickety that every breath is sufficient to blow it down', he is arguing against established religion in two ways. First, that its existence within a state which also practices religious toleration is a clear contradiction, because indifference was the main driver of participation in the established religion. Simply put, if one excites men religiously, the consequence is that 'every man's particular mind, gives him then particular views.'[422] As religious sects grow in number, only a few would actually hold views which coincided with the established religion, and Mill states many concordant opinions to

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[419] Mill, *CPB* III, 200ʳ; Taylor, *Works*, 8:128.
[420] Mill, *CPB* III, 211ᵛ; Mill, "Ecclesiastical Establishments," 517; William Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants A Safe Way to Salvation* (Oxford: L. Lichfield, 1638), 95–6.
[421] Mill, *CPB* III, 206ʳ.
[422] Mill, *CPB* III, 200ʳ.

this point, such as again from Montesquieu, who observed in the *Lettres persanes* that the lively faith in the religion of Muslims greatly exceeds that shown by Christians, and also from Jonathan Swift, who 'never saw, heard, nor read, that the clergy were beloved in any nation where Christianity was the religion of the country.'[423]

Second, Mill is advancing a statement which at its core is anti-clerical. 'The true religion never ought to have a priest', argued Mill, because the existence of a paid clergymen is in direct opposition to any hope of sincerity. This too was obvious. 'To have faith in God is to believe on the word of God', but if the priest tells you that something is the word of God and you take his word for it, 'your belief is solely bottomed on his word.' Mill portrayed belief 'in the interpretation of the Church, i.e. the priests' as a major tenet of the Church of England's creed. It is not a belief in God, merely a belief 'in the interpreter.'[424] There is a resonance here with a sentiment of Rousseau's that Mill notes from *Letters Written from the Mountain*: 'If I am convinced to-day that I ought to submit to the decisions of others, I should to-morrow become a Catholick, and every honest and consistent man would do the same.'[425] Mill viewed the general concept of an established religious authority with disdain because belief in such an authority required suspension of man's use of reason. The conclusion of Mill's argument is an indictment of established religions such as the Church of England as false. 'False religions stand in need of [a] priesthood, and cannot do without one.'[426] This is a highly controversial statement, and it would have been very difficult for Mill to espouse it publicly.

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[423] Mill, *CPB* III, 202ʳ; Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, 2:7; Jonathan Swift, *The Works of Dr Jonathan Swift, Dean of St Patrick's, Dublin*, vol. 10 (Edinburgh: J. Balfour, 1766), 152.
[424] Mill, *CPB* III, 207ʳ.
[425] Mill, *CPB* III, 214ᵛ; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Miscellaneous Works of Mr. J. J. Rousseau*, vol. 4 (London: T. Becket & P. A. De Hondt, 1767), 42.
[426] Mill, *CPB* III, 207ʳ.

Whilst Mill's concern for the lack of sincerity in man's belief in religion can be seen as derived in one sense from his aforementioned reading of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, it also appears to have origins in Bentham's work, or more specifically his *Traités de législation civile et pénale* (1802), which was translated and edited by Étienne Dumont. 'The state of most men's minds with regards to religion', paraphrases Mill from this work in his manuscripts, 'is that they rather do not disbelieve, than they believe.' This state of mind is referred to as a 'half-belief', and is regarded as the foundation upon which men's great interests depend. Bentham's argument is that when these interests are threatened, men are rendered 'fearful for their faith, alarmed at objections, hostile to objectors, persecuting, etc.'[427] In addition to reinforcing the understanding of Mill's critique of man's failure to exercise his faculty of reason, the reference to Bentham is also a useful way to introduce a change of focus for this study, away from matters concerning the habit of inquiry and towards Mill's specific use of the terms 'reward' and 'punishment' in the manuscripts. These terms naturally evoke a further link to Bentham's thought, given their inclusion in the title of his *Théorie des peines et des récompenses* (published 1811, also under the editorship of Dumont and republished in part in 1830, in English, as *The Rationale of Reward*) and also their prominence in *Analysis of Natural Religion* (the work Bentham published with Grote under the pseudonym Phillip Beauchamp). In the former work, the obtainment of the greatest happiness for the greatest number was Bentham's objective for the political legislator, he regarded punishment and reward as the two 'instruments' or means to such an end.[428] In the latter, Bentham argued that rewards and punishments constituted 'a lateral and extraneous force' which disturbed the influence of proof on man's holding of opinions. Reward enticed someone to believe upon inadequate proof and disbelieve

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[427] Mill, *CPB* III, 202ᵛ; Jeremy Bentham, *Traités de législation civile et pénale*, ed. Étienne Dumont (Paris: Bossange, Masson & Besson, 1802), 3:137–8.
[428] Jeremy Bentham, *The Rationale of Reward* (London: R. Heward, 1830), 1.

upon adequate disproof.[429] Mill, however, does not acknowledge the origin of this material that is judged to have come from Bentham. This cannot be considered that peculiar, given the depth and breadth of the material collated in the common place books and the faulty referencing that pervades it, but highlighting these particular instances does show the apparent level of intellectual debt Mill owes to Bentham regarding how the conception of rewards and punishments in matters of religion contributes to the understanding of his anti-clerical and anti-establishment stance.

A further principle in this regard which Mill adopts from his manuscripts is that any opinions to the belief of which 'any thing that can be called reward', or 'to the disbelief of which any thing that can be called punishment' are always, at first sight, to be presumed to be false.[430] In Bentham's view, if it was necessary to encourage relief by an artificial bounty, it would be useless to offer it to any doctrine which 'would of itself command the assent of mankind.'[431] In addition to this presumption, Mill is also highly critical of those that persecute disagreeing opinions, an activity which, in the thought of both Taylor and Chillingworth, is both unnatural and unreasonable. For Taylor, spiritual matters could not be restrained nor punished by corporal inflictions. This was akin to 'cur[ing] the colic by brushing a man's clothes,' or filling his belly 'with a syllogism.'[432] For Chillingworth, worldly terror might make a man profess a religion which he does not believe in, but this could never compel his conscience to actually consent.[433] Punishment was thus a largely useless endeavour. Rewards and punishments taken together – what Mill and Bentham termed 'inducements' – were most likely in a religious context to be calculated more in favour of error than of truth. A love of truth

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[429] Beauchamp, *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion*, 110.
[430] Mill, *CPB* III, 207^r.
[431] Beauchamp, *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion*, 110.
[432] Mill, *CPB* III, 199^v–200^r.
[433] Mill, *CPB* III, 210^v.

'could never be the motive for the attaching of [them]', because if the 'true truth' did not lead to the formation of such inducements, they were most likely employed in advancing falsehoods, that which was 'incapable of being supported by reason.'[434]

Mill's explanation for this stance is that the giving of inducements to hold certain opinions is akin to extortion: '[i]f you put another man in fear, in order to extort money from him, you are hanged. If you put him in fear, in order to extort from him the use of his reason, do you represent yourself as entitled to reward?' Similarly, if one was to give pecuniary reward to a man giving evidence to any particular side in the courts, the act is punished as subornation of evidence. 'If reason would lead him to those opinions', Mill asks, '[then] your penalties are useless; if reason would not lead him to those opinions, your penalties lead him to embrace falsehood.'[435] These are all arguments that appear to be drawn from Bentham.[436] The second argument, concerning the entitlement to reward for the holding of certain opinions, also has a very clear resonance with the position outlined above which implicitly questioned the scrupulousness of priests who were members of an established church and whose salary may be regarded as an inducement for holding a certain opinion on religious matters, and promoting the taking up of the same opinion by their congregation.

A belief that there is any merit in believing was, for Mill, 'wholly immoral'. This did not however mean Mill was critical of the holding of certain opinions as *ends*; his censure was reserved for the *means* employed to arrive at such ends. He conceives merit as being only that which is earned by man exercising his reason by diligently collecting evidence with 'all the attention and fairness of the mind, in ascertaining its value or

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[434] Mill, *CPB* III, 207ʳ.
[435] Mill, *CPB* III, 207ʳ.
[436] See for example equivalent positions in Bentham, *The Rationale of Reward*, 54–55; as well as a similar analogy to judicial process in Beauchamp, *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion*, 110.

weight in the scale of proof.' 'In this alone', argues Mill, '*all virtue* in believing [is] included.' [437] His opposition, instead, is towards the holding out of rewards and punishments to 'turn away from evidence', or to 'believe on account of the rewards without any regard to evidence.'[438] It is, in effect, a combination of his concerns for the health of man's habit of inquiry, which must always depend on his reason, and the subterfuge produced by the offering of inducements to suspend such a habit and draw down beliefs from an authority. Mill sees such a combination as leading not to opinions or ends that rewards are attached to, but to those which pains are instead.

The act of distributing rewards and punishments for the holding of certain opinions in religious matters, the effect of which typically produced either hypocrites or persecuted consciences, was for Mill an undeniably barbarous one. It was an act which, having taken root in a similarly barbarous age, was then protected and extended into the comparatively enlightened one of his own time, where the government still supported the holding of 'certain opinions' of many centuries standing by the act of rewarding or punishing the people for 'professing this or that opinion.'[439] Mill goes on to argue, in a similar vein to the arguments of Madame de Staël in the previous chapter concerning government being conducted in 'arrears', that since nineteenth-century Britain was a country with the capacity to devise new *good* opinions, there was no reason these could not now be implemented, supported by the proffering of rewards and the threat of punishments. In Mill's consideration of why the longevity of bad opinions was so, he finds concordance with the rather despondent analysis of human nature derived from John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Locke's argument, that '[s]ome men, out of fear that an impartial enquiry would not favour those opinions

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[437] Mill, *CPB* III, 209ʳ. My emphasis.
[438] Mill, *CPB* III, 209ʳ.
[439] Mill, *CPB* III, 206ᵛ.

which best suit their prejudices, lives, and designs, content themselves, without examination, to take upon trust what they find convenient and in fashion',[440] is of course very similar in sentiment to the aforementioned notion of Bentham's, found in his *Traités de législation*, that men, rather than believe, simply 'do not disbelieve' in order to protect what is in their own interest, and that of Montesquieu's, who argued that men professed a religion with 'a sort of good faith' but without fully believing it.[441]

Mention of Locke's concept of fashion, described here as a method to judge the merit or favourability of holding certain opinions, as well as the idea that man's belief in religious authority served in the main as a device to protect their own interests, forms a convenient way of bridging from a discussion of Mill's thought on the corrosive effect of rewards and punishments, towards an exploration of an altogether different argument, which concerns his understanding of the term 'moral sanction'. Mill uses the term 'fashion' as part of the foundation of this type of sanction, which he believed possessed a far greater weight of authority than a religious equivalent. The language of Mill's position here is very similar to that employed by Bentham in his *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion*, who argued that the efficacy of posthumous inducements (a more-or-less equivalent term for religion sanction) is in reality 'referable to their alliance with public opinion.'[442]

That Mill perceived the effects of religious sanction as rarely a source of animation for man's behaviour has obvious consequences for the analysis of his argument concerning inducements heretofore outlined. There, it was argued that such a practice was immoral. Here, Mill's argument seems to suggest that anything which could be regarded as part

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[440] Mill, *CPB* III, 210ʳ; John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* (London: Thomas Basset, 1690), 354.
[441] Mill, *CPB* III, 202ʳ–202ᵛ; Bentham, *Traités de législation civile et pénale*, 3:137–8; Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, 2:7.
[442] Beauchamp, *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion*, 64.

of a religious sanction actually had no substantial effect on man's action. Instead, it was the underlining moral sanction which dictated how man interacted with his political and social context. It is important to separate the understanding of the moral sanction from the notion that it necessarily promoted, by some objective measure, actions that one might consider moral, virtuous or intrinsically good. In this regard, a more accurate term may be 'popular' sanction, or conformity to public opinion, which in *Ecclesiastical Establishments* Mill believed capable of overturning clerical influence, a 'once gigantic foe'.[443] An example employed by Mill which clarifies this distinction is in fact one of his most pointed: his portrayal of young women who 'murder their bastard children'.[444] This strain of infanticide was a practice not driven by any religious sanction, but by a moral one which was concerned with social values such as reputation. Mill is thus only interested here in whether the motivation for such an activity (or, indeed, motivation to *not* conduct such an activity) had originated from a religious authority. In his opinion, infanticide did not. Mill attributes his belief in the decline of the importance of religious sanction to the thought of Montesquieu and Adam Smith, who he calls precursors of the doctrine that the multiplication of religious sects increased the force of the moral sanction. This appears to be because of the undermining such multiplication gave to the original religious authority.[445] It is developed into a position held by Mill which eschews religious laws completely, labelling them as inadequate for the governing of men, in one simple sense demonstrated by the fact that penal laws are directed chiefly against the 'unprincipled' or the 'irreligious', upon whom a religious sanction would clearly have no effect.[446]

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[443] Mill, "Ecclesiastical Establishments," 505.
[444] Mill, *CPB* III, 203[r].
[445] Mill, *CPB* III, 202[r].
[446] Mill, *CPB* III, 202[v]; Bentham would also reflect on the inefficacy of religious laws when he argued that anyone who entertains confident hopes of perpetrating a misdeed without detection, would pay no regard to the popular voice and posthumous apprehensions would have no applicability either. But the

Mill subsequently expands upon the ideas of Smith, with particular attention drawn to the coverage in the *Wealth of Nations* regarding the subject of fashion. Mill's conception of fashion here is that it is one of several social virtues which constitute the 'powerful efficacies' of the moral sanction. Other such virtues include dignity, respect, and 'the whole advantage of what is called birth'. Moral sanction is so powerful that it also appears to supersede much legal sanction, since there are, in the words of Henry Fielding, 'laws which, though not written, are perhaps better understood, and, though established by no coercive power, much better obeyed within the circle where they are received, than any of those laws which are recorded in books, or enforced by public authority.'[447] Mill also quotes with agreement a similar position found in Edmund Burke's *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, which defines the moral sanction as society's most treasured manners. 'Manners are of more importance than laws', argues Burke, because whilst the 'law touches us but here and there, and now and then', manners 'vex or soothe, corrupt or pacify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation.'[448]

A comparison can be drawn between Mill's consideration of the moral or popular sanction and its dominance over the religious version to the previous discussion which concerned the use of a threat of religious punishment – which, at its most obvious, is condemnation to an afterlife of suffering – as an inducement to encourage attendance to certain religious beliefs. Following Plato, Mill felt this latter application was very weak, and that 'the talk of horrid things in the future life ought not to be permitted', because they only made men fearful of death, and cowardly.[449] Conversely, Mill considered the

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only way to correct for such behaviour was to reform civil laws, not introduce religious laws in their place. See Beauchamp, *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion*, 64.

[447] Mill, *CPB* III, 203ʳ; Henry Fielding, *The Works of Henry Fielding* (London: Richards and Co., 1824), 12:275.

[448] Mill, *CPB* III, 205ᵛ; Burke, *The Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 5:310.

[449] Mill, *CPB* III, 213ʳ.

moral sanction to be categorically much stronger. 'The reason that religion does not command stealing', he posits in one instance of this argument, 'is because thieves have not the making of it – but [rather] men who know it is their interest there should be no thieves.'[450] Thus it is religion that is made good by the moral sanction, not the other way round. Mill sees the effects of the moral sanction, moreover, as underpinning two key aspects of society which the religious sanction cannot hope to emulate. The first is that the moral sanction ensures 'people are not all perpetual liars'. The second is that the power of adulation and flattery by others is at the heart of the moral sanction, and such power is so immense that it is the 'very aim of riches' and 'for which all men toil'.[451]

Two final extracts from Mill's manuscripts serve to underline unequivocally his rejection of the religious sanction, and show his belief in the superiority of the popular or moral one. The first concerns Mill's consideration of religious martyrs. 'That men should go to death… in support of religious impostures, is nothing wonderful', argues Mill, because '[p]raise is the motive… which sends the solider to the mouth of a cannon [and] the duellist to that of a pistol.'[452] Martyrdom, for Mill, was not proof of a deep or sincere religious belief but a love of praise. Many a man of religious contradictions had willingly suffered martyrdom for what they professed to believe. There was no set of opinions, however absurd but 'made the badge of a party', and sanctioned by the applause of said party (read: encouraged by a form of moral sanction), which Mill felt someone could be found willing enough to martyr themselves for. In this light, Mill felt such martyrs could be compared to criminals brought to the gallows.[453] The second consists of Mill's rejection of antinomianism, found in his references to Helvétius' *Treatise on Man* concerning the clear 'destructive morality' of the 'speculative dogmas'

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[450] Mill, *CPB* III, 200$^{\text{v}}$.
[451] Mill, *CPB* III, 203$^{\text{r}}$.
[452] Mill, *CPB* III, 200$^{\text{v}}$–201$^{\text{r}}$.
[453] Mill, *CPB* III, 214$^{\text{v}}$–215$^{\text{r}}$.

of certain faiths. Helvétius posits that the Stoic doctrine of fatalism, the doctrine of predestination in Calvinism, or the Catholic doctrine of atonement had not caused the followers of those creeds to act immorally or suffer destruction of their tribes. Had religious sanction been more important than the popular sanction, however, the logical and amoral endpoints of these doctrines would have been enacted wholesale. Helvétius in fact felt in reality the opposite was true, citing the Stoics, for example, as being the most moral amongst their contemporaries.[454]

It was argued at the beginning of this section that three particular concepts are advanced by Mill on the subject of religion in his common place books, all of which contribute to an understanding of his attitude to established religion and the intellectual context to such ideas. The first consisted of Mill's well-rehearsed attack on the perversion or suppression of man's use of his own reason. In the religious context of these particular manuscripts, the attack was applied to those in thrall to a religious authority, and who adopted a 'half-belief', invariably based on their own interest, which legitimised such an authority. This outlook of 'not disbelieving' was criticized by Mill because it required the suspension of one's own faculty of reason, which could seemingly seek out truth in any subject except that concerning religion. But religious authority did not itself escape from censure by Mill, and this came particularly to the fore in his second line of argument, which accused the clergy of causing the population at large to hold false positions or use faulty reasoning in religious matters, particularly via their use of rewards and punishments. The sacerdotal class were also unreliable because they themselves received inducements for maintaining certain beliefs derived from an established church. Mill, in tandem with Bentham, believed the use of rewards and punishments for the holding of certain opinions meant that such opinions were almost

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[454] Mill, *CPB* III, 207ᵛ; Claude Adrien Helvétius, *A Treatise on Man: His Intellectual Faculties and His Education*, vol. 2 (London: Albion Press, 1810), 146–7.

certainly false. No one had the right to force a man from any religion, or to restrain him from declaring any opinions in regard to religion. This, Mill believed, had been proved by Locke's *Third Letter on Toleration*.[455] The only true reward garnered from following truth was the merit earned by being rigorous in the habit of inquiry. The 'religious system', in Mill's view, had 'destroy[ed] all proportion, between the rewards allotted to the actions of men, and their usefulness to the public.'[456] Mill's third argument belittled the effects of the religious sanction on society as a whole, by showing that the popular or moral equivalent was felt much more keenly, more so perhaps than even the laws of the land, and that 'posthumous inducements' – to borrow a phrase from Bentham's *Analysis of Natural Religion* – actually had little effect on unscrupulous behaviour. A connection can be discerned here to Mill's first and second lines of reasoning, because when men were invited to use their reason in matters of religion, which meant it was likely most would come to reject the conventional religious views of the established church, the number of religious sects multiplied and the power of the moral sanction increased in proportion, reinforcing the notion that a religious sanction was limited in its scope, power and application.

V.

An intellectual history of Mill's religious thought sheds significant light on both his early, seemingly more devout upbringing in Scotland and his later, secular existence in London. With regards to the former, the most important details gleaned from a study of his Scottish education is the argument that Mill's religious belief – that is to say, the Presbyterian faith he was brought up in – was actually of minimal importance to his early career choice as a preacher in the Kirk. Instead, Mill viewed the prospect of

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[455] Mill, *CPB* III, 213ᵛ; John Locke, *A Third Letter for Toleration, to the Author of the Third Letter Concerning Toleration* (London: John Churchill, 1692), 196.
[456] Mill, *CPB* III, 208ʳ.

preaching as a potential route to a life of scholarship, one that was befitting of three separate factors: his intellectual prowess, the efforts of important figures in his biography (such as his mother Isabel and his patrons in the Belsches family) and, perhaps most importantly, the taste for philosophy he had developed in the course of his studies at Edinburgh under the tutelage of figures such as Dugald Stewart. This appetite for philosophical works was made apparent by Bain's attempt to reconstruct Mill's library borrowings, which was used to determine what Mill read whilst at Edinburgh. Such a lending record has, in turn, been used by Lazenby to support his more general thesis that Mill's philosophical ideas were formed largely before he met Bentham.[457] Two problems arise with Lazenby's conclusion as a result of this chapter. The first is that knowledge of what Mill borrowed pales significantly in comparison to knowledge of the specific parts of works that he found engaging or particularly illuminating, and this latter form, of course, can only be found in his common place books. The second is that, when the contents of Mill's manuscripts are taken into account, it is clearly Bentham, rather than any Scottish philosopher, that Mill draws the most influence from when developing his religious thought.

The particular nature of Mill's religious belief, meanwhile, continued to be problematic in the second half of this chapter concerned with his later life, hampered as it was by a distinct lack of primary material with which to work with. Speculation about the provenance of Mill's religious scepticism, such as that it came from General Miranda or through a detailed reading of Butler's *Analogy of Religion*, cannot be confirmed by reference to material in the common place books. For this reason, an approach to examining Mill's religious ideas that was not centred on his belief (or lack thereof) had to be devised, one that professed to study the tenets and influences of his attitude to

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[457] Lazenby, "James Mill: The Formation of a Scottish Émigré Writer," 1.

established religion. The only link that could be ascertained between his Scottish and English contexts in this light was in the fact that Mill's experiences of primary schooling whilst a young boy in Scotland meant he could offer insightful criticism to the diametrically opposed arrangements for such education offered in England. The involvement of Mill in a scheme to correct this – the Lancasterian system of the British and Foreign School Society – led to one of the first major public expositions of his secular thought in the form of the 1812 essay *Schools for All*.

It is Mill's secular or anti-clerical ideas pertaining to established religion and especially the Church of England which are the overarching theme to the study of his religious thought in its later London context. Whilst these were displayed in his published writings such as *Ecclesiastical Establishments*, they took on a highly controversial form in sections of his private manuscript writings. Mill's arguments against established religion were based on a well-known admiration for the powers of human reason, a characteristic trait of his well established in the previous chapter concerning his ideas on education. In the form of an established church, and more specifically in the Church of England, he saw a distinct and clear threat to the exercise of this reason and, by extension, the notion of progress in human knowledge. But Mill's secularism was also an inherently political notion. He perceived the reliance of the state on an established church as contravening the principle of utility upon which governments were to be judged. A church in this position also possessed unwarranted statutory powers, such as the ability to impinge upon the freedoms of the press by stifling debate which it deemed seditious or blasphemous libels, and on religious freedoms by dictating the creeds which were to be taught in schools provided for the education of the poor.

Within the common place books, Mill developed three specific arguments for his rejection of established religion, all of which possess varying intellectual provenance.

The frequent citations of Protestant theologians or clergymen, such as Chillingworth and Taylor, are striking for the degree of concordance Mill claims they have with his own ideas about the habit of man's inquiry, and how such habits were often faulty when applied to religious matters. These citations appear to be an instance of Mill collecting extracts from relatively uncontroversial (and in this case theological) works which he could use to demonstrate the moderate nature of his own argument, a technique he is seen to repeat across all four specific studies that make up this thesis. But Mill is also reliant on ideas associated with evangelical and dissenting traditions, mainly seen in his support of a general argument for toleration and in his specific assertion that religious belief had to originate from a very personal viewpoint, as opposed to being prescribed by an authority. The importance of John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and his *Letters Concerning Toleration* to these notions is also pronounced in the manuscripts.

Locke is of further importance, along with Adam Smith, to Mill's ideas on the concept of fashion and other related sentiments, and their applicability to the strength of what Mill termed the moral sanction. Mill's ideas about the moral sanction and how it was superior in strength to the religious sanction also drew upon the arguments of Madame de Staël and Montesquieu, although the most pronounced influence in this regard is undoubtedly Bentham, where distinct, albeit often unacknowledged, allusions in the manuscript material to Bentham's works demonstrate the degree of intellectual affinity that existed on this subject between him and Mill. Indeed, this degree of affinity between Mill and Bentham is even more emphatic in the arguments advanced by Mill concerning the giving of rewards and punishments for the holding of religious opinions. The tenets of Mill's argument are derived wholesale from Bentham's works such as his

Théorie des peines et des recompenses and his later work published under the pseudonym Philip Beauchamp, *Analysis of Natural Religion.*

The biographical features of this chapter have only been concerned with Mill's early life in Scotland. But it is worth introducing a further point at this late juncture that concerns Mill and Bentham, in order to insinuate an argument for a more pronounced religious influence of Bentham on Mill that went beyond that pertaining to the latter's secular or anti-clerical ideas. Mill had accompanied Bentham to his retreat at Forde Abbey, Somerset, on four long and consecutive occasions between 1814 and 1818, and it was here that Bentham worked upon *Chrestomathia*, a topic of clear personal interest to Mill given his prior involvement with the Lancasterian scheme which had gone before it, and two of his three significant works on religious scepticism, *Not Paul But Jesus* (published only in 1823 under the pseudonym Gamaliel Smith) and *Church-of-Englandism and Its Catechism Examined* (published 1818), with the third being the aforementioned *Influence of Natural Religion*. A speculative remark on Mill's religious thought, therefore, is that if Bentham can be shown as of significant influence to Mill's attitude pertaining to established religion as expounded in the common place books, it is impossible not to discount the assumption of a similar influence of Bentham on Mill's own religious scepticism. This subject has been deemed out of reach by the methodological approach taken by this chapter, but in being able to show how strongly related their ideas were concerning established religion, it is not much of a stretch to speculate that the tenets of Mill's agnosticism also possessed a strong influence from Bentham.

For Mill, established religion damaged man's ability to use his reason and propagated false opinions in its place through inducements. Its ability to affect the behaviour of the population through sanction was however declining inexorably, in opposition to the

growing strength of the moral sanction which was built upon the sturdier foundations of public opinion. Mill thought established religion was highly inimical to the pursuit of good government for these reasons, and the contextualisation of these ideas made possible by reference to this common place book material is inherently valuable for the contribution it makes to the thesis' overarching objective: the study of Mill's political thought. It is to a final conclusion encompassing the four distinct areas examined in this thesis for their relevance to such thought that this thesis now turns to.

Conclusion

The initial argument about the intellectual history of James Mill advanced in the introduction to this thesis was that four specific areas of his thought could be contextualised in detail by examining the contents of his common place books. Since the common place books have hitherto been underused in a scholarly sense, their centrality to the pursuit of the objectives of this thesis, when combined with their privileged nature as sources, means a strong argument can be made for this study having an immediate and significant impact on existing scholarship on James Mill. Whilst these four areas were discrete enough to be subject to individual study (in the form of four chapters), when taken together they contribute significantly to a wider understanding of Mill's political thought. Such an understanding has been the overarching aim of the thesis.

The four specific areas of concern regarded as central tenets to Mill's wider political thought were his ideas on the liberty of the press; on the ability to attain good government through parliamentary reform; on the education of the population at large, which aimed to encourage a reliance on reason rather than authority as a guide to truth; and finally on Mill's secular thought, manifested in his attitude towards established religion. In addition to appraising these four constituent investigations, this conclusion aims to justify the specific methodological approach to Mill's intellectual history taken by this thesis in three significant ways. The first is through the study's contribution to a more sophisticated understanding of Mill's intellectual influences; the second through its ability to recover and reveal the extent of Mill's true ideas; and the third through the analysis the study has provided of Mill's specific political context.

Mill's unpublished manuscripts have opened up the scholarly debate on the precise nature of the influences on his ideas and arguments, and now a much broader array of potential thinkers, writers and political figures than has historically been implied may be seen to be of particular importance to him. Indeed, previous studies of Mill's intellectual history have typically cast the juxtaposition of his two most well-known intellectual contexts as a primary feature. The first of these contexts regards the philosophers representative of the Scottish Enlightenment, such as Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart, who were undoubtedly of influence to Mill during his education and upbringing near Aberdeen and at Edinburgh, but also of significance to his later ideas. The second context is the particular influence of Jeremy Bentham, the philosopher and legal reformer with whom Mill worked closely from about 1808, and whose doctrine of Utilitarianism Mill adopted in his role as propagandist for the group which would become known as the Philosophic Radicals.

The common place books provide ample evidence that the net of influences upon Mill must be cast much wider than just these two contexts. Mill is confirmed as a voracious reader, and his manuscripts are at times archetypical common place books: a daily record of his reading. But it is in Mill's treatment of certain extracts from the works of specific authors that reveals significant and illuminating insights about the nature and provenance of his own arguments. Mill is an avid student, for example, of the speeches and writings of Edmund Burke. Whilst he alternates between approval and dismissal of Burke's ideas within the same manuscript chapter, sometimes in the space of two pages, the intersection between Mill's thought and the arguments of Burke is very important for uncovering the nature of the former's political philosophy. This is particularly manifest in Mill's treatment of Burke's disparagement of radical reform, and this dispute was to be repeated in real-life when Mill took up the same argument against

Macaulay, himself an heir to Burke's legacy of philosophical conservatism.[458] Mill also makes constant references to Plato,[459] and to the ideas of Montesquieu and Madame de Staël, which are notable for their frequent use as reinforcement to many of his own arguments. Significant concordance is also found, for example, between Mill's conception of the philosopher-legislator figure, and the *machiniste* of Condillac's political theory, thereby implying that the impact of continental philosophers on Mill was significant.

That Mill's intellectual influences are much wider than the Scottish and Benthamite contexts traditionally ascribed to him does not mean, however, that this thesis has precluded any investigation of whether their particular influence on Mill can also be seen in the contents of the common place books. Indeed, in the case of Bentham, analysis of Mill's manuscripts only confirms the significance of the former to a range of the latter's positions. This is apparent from general instances such as regarding Mill's thought on the liberty of the press, which is seen as generally analogous to Bentham's theory of rewards and punishments, to the very particular fact that, on the topic of established religion, Mill's secular ideas are virtually inseparable from those Bentham advanced in his own controversial religious work *Analysis of Natural Religion*, the book he published with Grote under the pseudonym Philip Beauchamp.

Mill's Scottish context, however, is much harder to discern from his manuscripts. For whilst Bentham's influence can be read in Mill's private writings even when he is not directly cited, it is more difficult to perceive the presence of works from any Scottish Enlightenment authors that previous studies have perceived as influential to Mill. With

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[458] See for example Mill, *CPB* I, 32ᵛ–34ᵛ.
[459] For the importance of Plato to Mill's intellectual history, see Antis Loizides, "Taking Their Cue from Plato: James and John Stuart Mill," *History of European Ideas* 39, no. 1 (February 6, 2012): 121–140, doi:10.1080/01916599.2011.632255.

regards to Thomas Reid, a key example, only a solitary reference to his work exists in the entire corpus of Mill's manuscripts, a citation from his *An Inquiry into the Human Mind* in volume III of the common place books. This is not to deny the importance of Scottish thinkers specifically and the philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment more generally to an interpretation of Mill's intellectual history, however, since examples of influence do exist, albeit sparingly. The thought of Adam Smith, for instance, is crucial to Mill's conception of the moral sanction in his religious ideas. Similarly, Mill's thought regarding theoretical knowledge and his philosophical approach to legislation also had hallmarks of the Scottish conjectural history tradition, as did his belief in the progress of human knowledge, if, in the words of Thomas Brown, reason could be unshackled from blind authority. But if a bibliographical study of existing scholarship on Mill, such as that given in the introduction to this thesis, suggests a distinct Scottish essence to his ideas, it is certainly curious that relatively few references to such material are made in his common place books, considering their length, breadth and depth.

Evidence for the extent of Mill's intellectual influences has been recovered by examining the contents of the common place books, and the theme of recovery is one that pervades other aspects of the thesis. Primarily through a reliance on the painstaking detective work of Robert Fenn – the original transcriber of the common place books – the manuscripts have unveiled the tenets of the arguments Mill projected in private. Such private composition means they are largely considered to be exempt from the need for any moderation, be that for editorial, legal, religious or any other reason. This reconstruction of arguments was however by no means an exact science. The common place books were not akin to something like Bentham's manuscripts, which frequently feature relatively complete drafts. But through judicious use of their contents, Mill's manuscripts have facilitated a comparative approach undertaken between his published

and unpublished writings, which has salvaged from the latter arguments that were perhaps never intended to be advanced in the former. The thesis has drawn on works from Mill's prodigious literary output – his essays *Government*, *Education* and *Liberty of the Press* for the *SupEB*, and his articles *Schools for All* and *Ecclesiastical Establishments* for *The Philanthropist* and the *Westminster Review*, respectively – and compared the ideas in them to material found in the common place books which is similar in terms of content, theme and date of composition. This has repeatedly pointed towards an important conclusion about Mill worth restating here: he was much more radical in thought than the ideas he advanced in his published works appeared to suggest.

The recovered arguments from the common place books have established much more radical positions than are typically attributed to Mill by previous studies of his thought, which have examined only public expositions of his ideas. But many scholars have long suspected Mill subjected his writings to some kind of moderation or restraint.[460] In summary, his views on libel law, which in published form hesitated over the problem of libels irrecoverably damaging reputations, are much more far-reaching in their unpublished form, where Mill comes down unequivocally on the side of a complete revocation of the law, in part based on the fact that the legal profession was corrupt, and arbitrarily made it 'whatever it pleased'. His objective in this regard was to secure a truly liberal press free from state interference, and for it to be unleashed in search for what he termed 'true truths'. Meanwhile, the extension of the suffrage, which in *Government* is controversially limited to men over 40 with attendant property qualifications, with women completely excluded, is by contrast truly universal in the sections in the common place books pertaining to parliamentary reform. Mill's ideas in

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[460] See for example Terence Ball's argument concerning *Government* in "Introduction," xxxii.

this regard were unequivocal. Only with a representation of the interests of all the population could a government exist for the benefit of the community at large; any dilution of representation, such as that suggested in the Whig reforms which argued for 'virtual' or 'variegated' representation, would deliver only further corruption, and ensure the continued political dominance of an aristocratical body.

The role ascribed by Mill to the subject of education in the common place books had a very similar radically democratic application to Mill's private ideas about the extent of his parliamentary reforms. Rather than being concerned with the specifics of schooling, Mill argued in the working material for the essay *Education* that the population above all had to be instructed in the use of their reason. Only through this ability could they hope to pursue their own interest, which, when collated into the interest of the community at large could be an effective check on the aristocratical body which was intent on profiting from corrupt government. Mill was keen for the nation at large to throw off the shackles of deference to authority, since it was only the exercise of rational thought which could inspire progress in human knowledge. This theme was also very apparent in the final topic of this thesis' interest, concerning Mill's religious ideas and, more specifically, his attitude towards established religion or ecclesiastical establishments. Mill's arguments for disestablishing the Church of England had been strongly hinted at in his 1826 article *Ecclesiastical Establishments*. In his manuscripts, such a position is emphatic, and the philosophical arguments arranged in support of such a motion drawn from a complex array of intellectual influences, from Chillingworth, to Locke, to Bentham. Mill's religious ideas also incorporated a highly controversial critique of the corporate clergy and their corruptive practices in both political and religious domains which, like his earlier material on the conduct of lawyers regarding the law of libel, was simply not publishable in the contemporary context. The

spiritual domination of established religion greatly impinged on the ability of man to exercise his own judgment of truths. This corrupted man's ability to use his reason, an argument which in turn placed the Church of England at the heart of the political corruption of nineteenth-century Britain, where it found employment as a 'prop' of the state.

The extent of Mill's ideas found in his manuscripts and the subsequent comparative study between the public and private versions of his arguments proves beyond doubt that Mill moderated his literary output. This practice of dissimulation, explored in specific reference to the ideas Mill published on libel law, reform, education and established religion, appears to have been a typical approach for radical writers of Mill's kind who wished to not fall foul of contemporary arbitrary and repressive libel laws, of which both an outline of their current state and a brief history were found in chapter 1. Bentham, for example, was strongly advised by Romilly to delay the publication of his *Elements of the Art of Packing* which, though printed in 1809, was only published in 1821.[461] But Mill is also a rather unique case in the sense that he published consistently throughout his lifetime, and he appeared to choose to shield the more radical aspects of his argument from view rather than delay or abandon publication of such work completely. Mill thus appears unwilling to stake his personal and professional reputation on the publication of opinions that would have led to at best considerable intrigue from both government and religious authorities, and at worse prosecution for seditious libel. Evidence from his biography can explain at length the personal reasons as to why this was the case. Mill has eked out a precarious existence as a journalist in the first half of his time in London, and the position as an examiner at the East India Company, which he had attained in part thanks to the scholarly reputation

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[461] Bain, *James Mill*, 102.

garnered from writing the *History of British India*, was a source of much financial stability. It is not difficult to be sympathetic to Mill's behaviour, which we see conveyed in his letters to Macvey Napier, the editor of the *SupEB*, because he had so much to lose.[462] By way of straightforward comparison, an argument can readily be made for Bentham's position, which was independent by virtue of much greater financial means, as being at much less risk.

The notion of dissimulation in Mill's public writings alluded to thus far in this conclusion is important for the links it forms to a third justification for the overarching approach employed by this thesis: the analysis it has provided of the political context just prior to, and during the time Mill was living in London. In establishing the fact that significant discrepancies in strength exist between published and unpublished versions of Mill's arguments which relate to his political thought, an important derivative question to ask is exactly what can account for such differences. Many such reasons are found in the hostile political atmosphere prevalent in Britain in the last decade of the eighteenth and the first three decades of the nineteenth century, a period that has frequently been referred to as the 'Reform Crisis'. The legacy of the French Revolution and its ensuing wars critically influenced this context, where reform efforts were systematically crushed by a combination of conservatism on the part of both Whigs and Tories both in and out of Parliament (to be addressed presently), fear of revolution and the destruction of property amongst the population, and suspicion, intrigue and statutory intervention from the government, which ran from Pitt's 'Reign of Terror' and the treason trials of 1794 to the massacre at Peterloo in 1819 and the subsequent era of the Liverpool government's 'Six Acts'. Mill's attitude to the French Revolution is itself highly revealing. He portrayed it as a 'true gift from heaven' to conservative enemies of

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[462] See for example the letter cited in ibid., 188.

reform, because of the particular damage it did to the reputation of philosophy as a device for establishing sound political laws. Whilst we can certainly read an abhorrence of revolution in Mill's assessment of the violent legacy of 1789, his real frustration lay in what that legacy had bequeathed to philosophy, which was manifested in the obstinacy of the government seemingly towards any matter of political reform.

The political context of Mill's time also saw a need to address certain intellectual opposition to reform ideas. It is in the shape of the Philosophic Whigs associated with the *Edinburgh Review* that this is primarily of relevance to Mill, especially since he too was once a reviewer for that organ. The debate between Mill and notable Whigs such as Mackintosh and Macaulay highlighted the fact that there was a significant mass of philosophical resistance to the political reforms envisaged by the Philosophic Radicals which was not entirely based on a perceived threat of violent insurrection. These Whigs had broadly argued that any reform should be inductive, that is to say experimental, that it should above all be moderate, and that parliamentary reform in particular was a matter of political expediency rather than principle. Whilst Mill's attitude to the French Revolution sees him portrayed as a subscriber to reform as opposed to revolution, this Whig approach was predicated on a distinctly 'Burkean' or gradualist conception of reform, which greatly contrasted against the deductive method of legislation Mill employed at length in his essay *Government*, which was the subject of detailed investigation in chapter 2. Mill stated in his manuscripts that to conduct politics in the method prescribed by the Whigs was disastrous, because legislation 'under the dominion of practice [was] an attempt to put it under that which just so far as it acts upon it, is sure to act wrong.'[463] Unfortunately, Mill's political context, as has been

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[463] Mill, *CPB* I, 108$^{\text{v}}$.

described throughout this thesis, dictated that this type of moderate reform was likely to be the best-case scenario he could envisage.

Epilogue: 'Unbounded Confidence'

> In politics, an almost unbounded confidence in the efficacy of two things: representative government, and complete freedom of discussion. So great was my father's reliance on the influence of reason upon the minds of mankind, whenever it was allowed to reach them, that he felt as if all would be gained if the people could be universally taught to read, if all sorts of opinions were allowed to be preached to them by word and writing, and if through the suffrage they could nominate a legislature to give effect to their opinion when formed.
>
> John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*[464]

In drawing this study to a close, last words must be reserved for a concluding overview of Mill's political thought, the topic of pursuit stated in this thesis' introduction as its overarching objective. Also advanced in that introduction, however, was an at the time rather offhand comment about Mill's intellectual legacy, which asserted that, along with Bentham, the figure of John Stuart Mill often casts a shadow over attempts to recover it. Since Mill's common place books have allowed a recovery of this legacy to be undertaken, it is not without a sense of irony that it is actually from John that the most effective conclusion of his father's political thought is drawn. What is striking about such an analysis, however, is how it too conveys the importance of the constituent areas of ideas that have been explored in this thesis – those of parliamentary reform, freedom of the press, education and reason free from pernicious influence – to what can be considered a conception of Mill's overarching political thought.

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[464] Mill, *Autobiography and Literary Essays*, 108.

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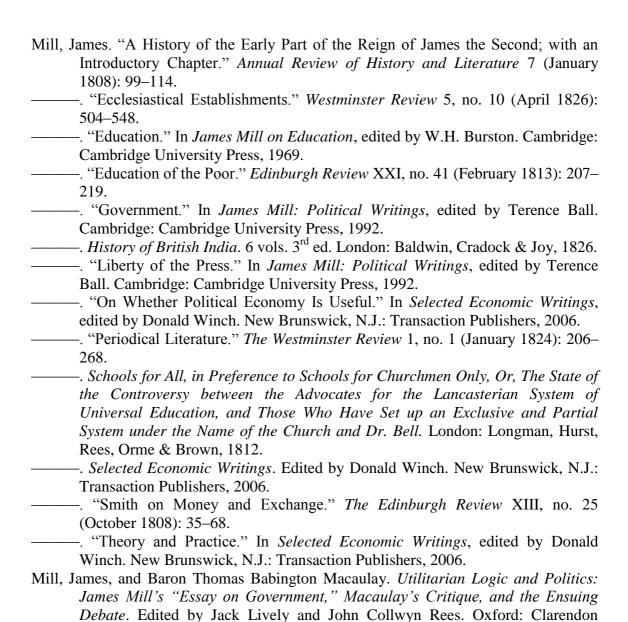
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