

CHAPTER 5.1

Mill: Commentary

John Stuart Mill

Groomed from the very beginning of his life to become a politically radical 'utilitarian messiah',¹ John Stuart Mill was the recipient of one of the most extraordinary educations on record. By the age of three he was learning Greek, and was already reading fluently in both Greek and English by the time he turned four. By the age of eight he had digested several Platonic dialogues and had read a staggering number of classical authors: Herodotus, Xenophon, Diogenes Laertius, Isocrates, Lucian, and, in a bow to his tender years, Aesop. The quantity and quality of authors in English is equally extraordinary, including histories by Hume, Gibbon, Hooke, and Plutarch, various works in politics, and a smattering of light novels such as *Robinson Crusoe*, the *Arabian Nights*, and *Don Quixote*.

Mill started learning Latin at eight, and over the next few years added to his extensive list Virgil, Horace, Phaedrus, Livy, Sallust, Ovid, Cicero, Terence, and Lucretius. His mathematical education was not neglected, and by the age of 12 he had mastered algebra, geometry, and differential calculus. He also had a passion for reading works in experimental science, and made his way through several advanced works in chemistry and experimental physics.²

Mill was also engaged in various political and social causes. He wrote extensively for several radical periodicals such as the *Westminster Review* (which he edited for a number of years) and wrote widely for the popular press. It is amazing to note that all of Mill's

-
- [1] This particularly apt expression is from the editor's introduction to Mill's *Autobiography*, ed. J. M. Robson, London, Penguin Books, 1989, p. 4.
- [2] These details are gathered from Mill's *Autobiography*. The list of books and authors mentioned here is far from complete; for a survey that attempts to identify everything Mill read up until the age of 16, see his *Collected Works*, vol. 1, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1981, Appendix B.

major contributions were made in what was essentially his spare time, since he served for more than 30 years as a senior officer of the British East India Company, overseeing all correspondence and non-military policy implementation for British India. It might be said, with only slight exaggeration, that Mill governed India at a distance while carrying on his various political, philosophical, and scientific researches. Upon the dissolution of the East India Company, Mill retired to an even more active public life, and served as a member of parliament from 1865 to 1868.

It is unsurprising that a life lived at such pace and pitch would bring its share of personal challenges. By his own assessment the watershed event in Mill's intellectual development was a mental crisis that he experienced beginning in 1826.³ Depression overwhelmed the young Mill when he suddenly realised that the utilitarian causes for which he had worked with such assiduity were meaningless to him.⁴ He felt no emotional attachment to the projects and causes which had heretofore given shape to every aspect of his existence.

Mill attributes his crisis to an educational regime which emphasised impersonal analysis to the detriment of the cultivation of the sentiments. To motivate a person to care, it is first necessary to teach them how to feel. For Mill, schooling in the sentiments took the form of an extensive reading of the poet Wordsworth, and by dint of such reading Mill gradually emerged from his depression by 1828. This insight, echoes of which occur within the *Inaugural Address* selected below, became a central pillar of Mill's educational philosophy. He expresses the point with characteristic eloquence:

I, for the first time, gave its proper place, among the prime necessities of human well-being, to the internal culture of the individual. I ceased to attach almost exclusive importance to the ordering of outward circumstances, and the training of the human being for speculation and for action. I had now learnt by

[3] Mill devotes an entire chapter in his *Autobiography* documenting his falling into and eventual emergence from depression. See *ibid.*, ch. 5.

[4] In his own words: 'Suppose that all your objects in life were realised; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected at this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you? And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, 'No!' At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. All my happiness was to have been found in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seem to have nothing left to live for.' (*Ibid.*, p. 112.)

experience that the passive susceptibilities needed to be cultivated as well as the active capacities, and required to be nourished and enriched as well as guided....The cultivation of the feelings became one of the cardinal points in my ethical and philosophical creed.⁵

Mill made significant contributions to numerous disciplines. His *System of Logic*⁶ contains one of the fullest treatments of inductive logic to date, and supplies an empiricist account of how it is possible to learn through experience without the aid of any innate or infused ideas. (Mill therefore occupies an extreme position opposed to Augustine on the question of how learning occurs, since Augustine defends the notion of innate and infused ideas. Aquinas and Newman occupy intermediate positions since they think that there are principles of understanding innate to us given our natures as human beings created by God. However, they both accept that the content of our knowing is built on empirical experience.) Mill's contributions to ethics and social philosophy include his classic essays *On Liberty*, *Utilitarianism*, and *Considerations on Representative Government*.⁷ Among other prominent social causes, Mill was an abolitionist and one of the earliest and most influential voices in favour of women's rights, advocating full gender equality in all political, legal, social, and domestic relations. (These latter views are argued at length in *The Subjection of Women*,⁸ and the political context is perhaps best exemplified in *On Liberty*.)

One of the characteristic concerns of Mill is embedded in the social conditions of his time and is directly related to his social agenda and his utilitarian perspective. More than any of our other authors, Mill is keenly aware of the changing economic forces that impact the material conditions of education and this plays a central role in the position he takes in his *Inaugural Address*. Thus, in the social sciences, particularly worthy of mention is Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*. Synoptic in its coverage, this became the standard work in eco-

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[6] J.S. Mill, *System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive*, Charleston, Nabu Press, 2010.

[7] Here we use the following convenient editions of these texts: *On Liberty*, Buffalo, Prometheus Books, 1986; *Utilitarianism*, Buffalo, Prometheus Books, 1987; *Considerations on Representative Government*, Rockville, Serenity Publishers, 2008. (The Prometheus edition of this last should be avoided as a significant amount of text has been omitted.)

[8] J. S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, Buffalo, Prometheus Books, 1986.

nomics for more than a generation and is acknowledged as the definitive culmination of classical economics.⁹

The lasting contribution of the *Principles of Political Economy* is that, contrary to preceding economists, Mill identified the proper focus of economics with the laws of economic production, not the laws of economic distribution. According to Mill, production is governed by laws that operate in a scientifically regular way whereas how any society distributes its goods is determined entirely at the discretion of human free choice.¹⁰ This move had profound implications for the way economics developed as a science. One upshot of the shift of perspective is that, post Mill, economists have largely considered themselves exempt from examining the normative dimensions of their discipline. It became the economist's job to chart out the most efficient path to allow consumers to realise their pre-given desires. This led to an intense focus on private goods and a somewhat grudging acceptance of public goods. Other sorts of economic goods, which might conceivably have an explicitly normative dimension insofar as their provision was expected to involve a critique of prevailing levels of consumer desire, are *a priori* excluded from economic analysis.¹¹ In short, it might be argued that Mill did for the science of economics what Newman did for university education: drain it of its explicit ethical content.¹²

The major forces dominating the debates on educational theory and practice in the 19th century, as we have seen in our discussion of Newman, were the antagonisms between traditional elites and more egalitarian social activists. The former defended an exclusive liberal (versus manual or servile) education based upon the Greek and Roman classics, and more broadly literature, while the egalitarians advocated a utilitarian approach oriented toward broad social reform. In terms of education, the mainstream utilitarian approach

-
- [9] Classical economics is that style of economic analysis and presentation prior to the introduction of explanatory graphs and mathematical analysis which became common with the work of Alfred Marshall. See Marshall, *Principles of Economics*, Amherst, Prometheus Press, 1997.
- [10] Mill was explicit about the distinction: see *Principles of Political Economy*, Amherst, Prometheus Books, 2004, Book II, Ch. 1.
- [11] A clear example of economic goods of this type are *merit goods*. For discussion see *An Anthology Regarding Merit Goods: The Unfinished Ethical Revolution in Economic Theory*, ed. W. Ver Eecke, Indiana, Purdue University Press, 2007.
- [12] R. L. Heilbroner, in *The Worldly Philosophers*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1961, pp. 107-109, correctly identifies the momentous impact of Mill's new focus on the laws of production, but misconstrues the ethical implications of this shift.

was concerned with providing an immediately useful pragmatic education focused upon the sciences and mechanical arts, and saw little use for the conservative focus on the liberal arts.¹³ In this debate Mill adopts a middle position. He rejects as a false dichotomy the exclusive claims to teaching either the classical curriculum or the modern scientific-oriented one. Instead, he advocates a more efficient teaching method that does away with the time-consuming composition of verses in dead languages. This would, he claims, open up sufficient time within the curriculum to teach both.

There is one other broad feature of Mill's educational philosophy that deserves a brief comment. Mill, unlike all our other authors, is an agnostic. Thus the debates that exercised so much of Newman's reflections on the role of theology in the university are scarcely addressed by Mill. It is his general position that religious matters should be the concern of the private, not public, domain, except that he will allow a place for the descriptive study of religion in the university. By an ironic twist of fate, this is what Newman's programme led to in practice as well.

There can be little doubt that the most pervasive influence on Mill's philosophy of education was utilitarianism, though, as we shall see, Mill's version of utilitarianism deviates in certain important respects from its classic statement in Jeremy Bentham. Mill describes *utilitarianism* thus: 'The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals *utility*, or the *greatest happiness principle*, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to promote the reverse of happiness. By 'happiness' is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by 'unhappiness', pain, and the privation of pleasure.'¹⁴

Mill is clear that motives and intentions do not count when we assess ethical appropriateness. As he puts it: 'the motive has nothing to do with the morality of the action, though much with the worth of the agent.'¹⁵ In taking this view, Mill departs from the moral schemas presented by Augustine, Aquinas, and Newman who take motivation to be central to moral evaluation.

In Bentham's version of utilitarianism, all pleasures and pains are considered to be homogenous. According to this model, one could in

[13] For observations on Mill's specific educational milieu, see E. Anderson, 'John Stuart Mill: Democracy as Sentimental Education', *Philosophers on Education*, ed. A. O. Rorty, London, Routledge, 1998, p. 335.

[14] J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Buffalo, Prometheus Books, 1987, pp. 16-17.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

principle scientifically measure the pleasure afforded by different actions by studying human physiology. Indeed, Bentham proposed a 'hedonic calculus' – a quasi-scientific procedure for determining amounts of pleasure and pain. This position has the attractive feature of holding out hope that we may one day discover through scientific advancement those actions that lead to the maximisation of human happiness, and so we might place ethics on a firm scientific footing.¹⁶

Mill's account of pleasure departs from this model in that he admits the existence of higher and lower pleasures that are not only heterogeneous but incommensurable.¹⁷ Higher pleasures, which are often intellectual in nature and embody ideals constitutive of human dignity, such as sympathy and autonomy, trump any quantity of qualitatively baser pleasures. In distinguishing higher and lower pleasures Mill interestingly undercuts one of the central platforms of Bentham's utilitarianism. Bentham had thought the pleasure of the intellectual aesthete counts equally with that of the lady who drinks gin. In denying this, Mill allows for a dimension of elitism in his thinking which squares well with the notion of self-cultivation elaborated in the *Inaugural Address*.

To determine which pleasures are higher and which lower, the procedure Mill advocates is to survey those individuals who have experienced both sorts of pleasure. 'It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides.'¹⁸

While there is much that is attractive in Mill's view, in accepting the existence of incommensurable pleasures he has deprived utilitarianism of any obvious scientific foundation because the subjective dimension of the procedure for weighing respective pleasures

[16] For a well-known objection to this understanding of utilitarianism, see R. Nozick's thought experiment involving the 'experience machine' in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, New York, Basic Books, 1974, pp. 42–45.

[17] In *Utilitarianism* Mill writes that 'It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact, that some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others. It would be absurd that while, in estimating all other things, quality is considered as well as quantity, the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone.' *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 20. There are many objections to this position. For instance, there may be value to an integrated life that is chaste, and it would be odd to say that only those who have lost their chastity are in a position to judge its relative superiority.

undercuts the possibility of Bentham's hedonic calculus. What is more, the existence of incommensurable pleasures creates conceptual difficulties for those social sciences, economics in particular, that rely upon utilitarian calculations to express consumer preferences for various goods on the same scale. How many ice cream cones are worth either learning to play the piano or coming to appreciate poetry? What basket of goods should we prefer to maximise the happiness of the greatest number?

The connection between Mill's utilitarianism and his ambitions for educational reform are clear. He writes: 'Next to selfishness, the principal cause which makes life unsatisfactory is want of mental cultivation.'¹⁹ The capacity of education to open up students to the higher pleasures of the intellect and, in doing so, groom an intellectual elite capable of fostering and carrying through appropriate social reforms, is a defining note of Mill's educational agenda. It may be noted that there is an implicit tension in Mill's advocacy of broadly egalitarian social and educational reform and his staunch elitism and commitment to the traditional liberal arts framework. This tension can partly be overcome by observing that Mill is an egalitarian with respect to the capacities all human beings have available for cultivation, but he is an elitist with respect to the individual capacities within a person to be actualised.²⁰

While Mill in the literary form of the *Inaugural Address* is not explicitly committed to the dialectical model adopted by Augustine and Aquinas, he is nonetheless deeply concerned with bringing out the powers latent in learners and with the critical and evaluative dimensions of understanding, teaching, and learning. The value of dialectic and Socratic-style education is discussed at length in various works by Mill,²¹ though it does not occupy as explicit a role in the *Inaugural Address*; however the assumption of full freedom of intel-

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 24. He adds: 'A cultivated mind (I do not mean that of a philosopher, but any mind to which the fountains of knowledge have been opened and which has been taught, in any tolerable degree, to exercise its faculties) finds sources of inexhaustible interest in all that surrounds it; in the objects of nature, the achievements of art, the imaginations of poetry, the incidents of history, the ways of mankind, past and present, and their prospects in the future....Now there is absolutely no reason in the nature of things why an amount of mental culture sufficient to give an intelligent interest in these objects of contemplation, should not be the inheritance of everyone born in a civilised country.' *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

[20] See also E. Anderson, *op. cit.*

[21] See e.g. *Autobiography*, pp. 38-39, and *On Liberty*, *passim*.

lectual investigation, discussion, collaborative learning, and self-discovery are certainly presumed.

Understanding the *Inaugural Address*

The occasion of the *Inaugural Address* was Mill's election by the students of the University of St Andrews to the office of Lord Rector in 1866. This is remarkable given that Mill himself had never graduated or for that matter formally attended any university. He delivered his lecture on 1 February 1867 over the course of three hours.²²

It is prudent to acknowledge that there may be some difficulty involved in interpreting Mill's *Inaugural Address*, since, as a committed utilitarian, he was primarily concerned with producing useful effects and only secondarily with the public articulation of abstract truth.²³ Nonetheless, in his own assessment of the *Address* in his *Autobiography*, Mill summarises his contribution in these words:

The position I took up, vindicating the high educational value alike of the old classic and the new scientific studies, on even stronger grounds than are urged by most of their advocates, and insisting that it is only the stupid inefficiency of the usual teaching which makes those studies be regarded as competitors instead of allies, was, I think, calculated, not only to aid and stimulate the improvement which has happily commenced in the national institutions for higher education, but to diffuse juster ideas than we often find even in highly educated men on the conditions of the highest mental cultivation.²⁴

As Mill sees it, he makes two key contributions. First, Mill elevates technical and scientific education to the status of university subjects. There is, in Mill, a typically utilitarian hierarchy of scientific and technical subjects, such that certain disciplines are privileged to the degree that they are made precise by mathematics. The social sciences, including economics, are inferior to more precise subjects like

[22] Apart from Mill's *Autobiography*, on the details of his life we have consulted in particular R. Reeves, *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand*, London, Atlantic Books, 2008, and N. Capaldi, *John Stuart Mill: A Biography*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

[23] Consider this revealing passage from his *Autobiography*: 'I was not only as ardent as ever for democratic institutions, but earnestly hoped that ... anti-property doctrines might spread widely among the poorer classes; not that I thought those doctrines true, or desired that they should be acted on, but in order that the higher classes might be made to see that they had more to fear from the poor when uneducated, than when educated.' *Op. cit.*, pp. 136-137

[24] *Autobiography*, p. 225.

physics; and social sciences should explicitly adopt the methodologies of the positive sciences.²⁵

Mill's second key contribution, which is easy for us to overlook, is the central role he accords to aesthetic education and the role of the fine arts. As a result of the rigours of his own education and the mental crisis he experienced, Mill insists on the value and necessity of educating the sentiments as a counterweight to the exclusive development of analytic intellectual capacities. The heart must be schooled as much as the mind, for education promotes the autonomy of holistic individuals in keeping with the Romantic conception of personal self-actualisation.²⁶

Mill conceives of education in broad terms as the process by which a person is shaped as an individual. The university as an institution has as its goal the production of cultivated individuals. Cultivation extends over the entire range of personal formation from family life through schooling and into society at large, in which individuals are expected to take an active part. One fundamental arena in personal formation is the university.

A university for Mill is not supposed to be a place of professional education because the worth of civilisation does not principally depend on professional education, and because professional education is needed only by a minority. Rather, the university should elicit mental habits that direct the use of professional and scientific knowledge. It ought to systematise and unify knowledge. It does so by imparting a general and liberal education, *general* because it is both literary (including the classical languages) and scientific; and *liberal* because aimed at strengthening, exalting, purifying, and beautifying human nature. The cultivation of habits supportive of these goals entails rejecting the notion that education is primarily rote memorisation. Rather, education is essentially critical and reflective. Mill, like Newman, embraces the universal and unifying role of the university. There is no limit to the variety of subjects one may learn, but one must guard against studying a particular subject to the exclusion of others as this will tend to narrow and pervert the mind.

Mill contends that we should combine a minute knowledge of one subject with a general knowledge of many subjects. To have a general knowledge of a subject is to know thoroughly only its leading truths. It is this combination of depth and breadth that leads to an

[25] As Mill writes: 'I already regarded the methods of physical science as the proper models for political.' *Ibid.*, p. 132.

[26] See Capaldi, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-254, 361-362, and especially 329-330.

enlightened public, capable of appreciating experts and leaders and of distinguishing them from charlatans and demagogues. In forming such judgments we do well to mark the dividing line between what we know accurately and what we do not.

Mill thus thinks that a university education need not address every subject in depth or even every subject. Some subjects, including geography and history, are better learnt independently (though philosophy of history should be taught). Others, especially modern languages, are more readily acquired in a different environment, by spending time in foreign countries. He does think the university should require a mastery of Latin and Greek. Interestingly, this is not primarily because the languages of Greece and Rome constitute the patrimony of Western culture, and in studying them we better understand ourselves (as Newman thought); rather, reading Latin and Greek literature, for Mill, puts us in contact with cultures radically alien to our own.

Mastery of Latin and Greek is needed for many reasons. First, the tendency to mistake words for things (echoing a concern raised by Augustine) is often corrected by translating one language to another. Translation strips idiomatic expressions of their power to deceive. Second, without knowing the language of a people, we never really know their thoughts, their feelings, or their character. Hence, such knowledge is needed to correct our opinions. Mill implicitly acknowledges the homogeneity of modern European culture, and so the study of Latin and Greek is valuable precisely because it puts us in contact with rich cultures possessed of thoughts and assumptions different from the modern European. Third, no modern language is as formally valuable as Latin and Greek because these have the most regular and complicated structures. Their grammar is expressive of logic and thus grounds analysis of the thinking process. Fourth, works in Latin and Greek provide a rich store of experience of human nature and conduct, and thus wisdom. Fifth, their literature is, for socio-cultural reasons, aesthetically superior and lays an admirable model for ethical and philosophical culture. The extant works of ancient authors typically have something important to communicate and they do so with admirable concision.

Partly because of the great advances made in the sciences in the 19th century, including the social sciences, Mill, perhaps more than our other three authors, is sensitive to the role that empirical science plays in advancing wider society. Scientific instruction is important because we should be conversant with the laws of nature—in other

words, the properties of the things which we have to work with, work among, and work upon. Moreover, unless an elementary knowledge of scientific truths is diffused among the public, we would not recognise legitimate authorities and be able to evaluate appropriate practices. Mill thinks scientific instruction is especially valuable because it involves the training and disciplining of the mind. It is, in Mill's opinion, chiefly in regard to our contemporary expertise in empirical reasoning that modern society displays its advantages over the ancients. The study of the sciences thus inculcates habits of mind that are truth-directed and which are unlikely to develop without explicit cultivation, thus rendering the public vulnerable to superstitions.

Truth can be discovered by observation, experimentation, and reasoning, and this is best displayed within the physical sciences. In this regard, Mill points to astronomy and physics as exemplifying the discovery of truth by reasoning and direct observation. Experimental sciences, such as chemistry, provide models for gathering and weighing evidence.

However, it is chiefly from mathematics we come to understand that there is a road to truth by means of abstract reasoning. Our first studies in geometry teach us two invaluable lessons. First, we are enjoined to clearly express all the premises from which we intend to reason. Second, we learn to make each logical step clear, separate, and secure. The success of applied mathematics in the empirical sciences demonstrates the universe's intelligible structure and our capacity to understand it.

Unlike our other three authors, Mill thinks that the social sciences are integral to the university curriculum. Again he emphasises the habits of mind produced by their study. For example, the study of political science requires the union of induction and deduction, and appeals to an abstract understanding of human nature that is in some sense *a priori*.

Empirical sciences, mathematics, and the social sciences provide instances of the application of good reasoning. The art and science of good reasoning is logic. Logic has two parts: ratiocinative (that is, deductive) and inductive logic. Deduction keeps us right in reasoning from premises, and induction guides us to draw appropriate conclusions from observations. Logic, even if confined to the theory of names, propositions, and the syllogism, is of the utmost intellectual value. It enables us to guard against fallacy, is straightforward, and may be learnt quickly. Without logic there is no sure guide to

truth, even in the experimental sciences, for without logic we could not distinguish reliable methods from poor ones. Logic gives form to our truth-seeking virtues and is the means by which they are operationalised.

Other less-developed sciences should be taught as part of a general university education. Physiology, the understanding of the true conditions of health and disease, deserves to be taught because of its potential utility. As a discipline, physiology sheds light upon and is informed by the disciplines it borders. Mill points to its relation to psychology and the range of questions which emerge from their conjunction, as they open up to metaphysics, bringing in questions such as whether the will is free or determined by physical causes. It is a part of liberal education to know that such deeper controversies exist, and, in a general way, what has been said on them. Mill also sees the study of metaphysics as providing the training ground and impetus for those keener intellects who will push forward speculation within the various disciplines. It is interesting to note that despite Mill's egalitarian propensities he remains in some ways elitist in his view of intellectual potential. He thinks that intellectual elites are necessary to leaven society at large and that the university is the primary locus of cultivation for these elites.²⁷

The university should also teach ethics and politics. For Mill these disciplines have value in that they train students in the interpretation and qualitative assessment of facts and stretch the mind to discover associations. Mill is very concerned that subjects like ethics and the philosophy of history should not be delivered as if students were empty vessels waiting to be filled, nor as comprising ready-made truths to be imbibed without critical reflection. The key facts of these disciplines should already be familiar to the student from prior training or private study. At the university level the full active powers of the student must be brought to bear in interpreting and evaluating the facts and theories presented. He remains ada-

[27] As Mill puts it rather bluntly in his *Autobiography*: 'the mass of mankind... must, from the necessity of the case, accept most of their opinions on political and social matters, as they do on physical, from the authority of those who have bestowed more study on those subjects than they generally have it in their power to do.' *Op. cit.*, p. 162. Such elitist language is common in Mill's writings. For instance, he also claims that a 'change of character must take place both in the uncultivated herd who now compose the labouring masses, and in the immense majority of their employers.' *Ibid.*, 176. In his professional capacity as a senior bureaucrat of the British East India Company, Mill the professed radical democrat and author of *On Liberty* was a firm and ardent imperialist.

mant that what matters most in education is cultivating an aptitude for uncovering the meaning of facts, not the facts themselves.

The study of ethics, politics, and the philosophy of history directly relate to the duties of active citizenship. For Mill, politics should include study of political economy, or as we would call it today, economics. These subjects open to the study of jurisprudence and the study of law in its formulation and application more generally. Mill's cosmopolitanism is evident in his suggestion that international law should be taught in all universities. He conceives of international law as codifying the norms governing civilised communities, and thus knowledge of such rules of conduct and the sentiments that give rise to them are essential for informed democratic citizenship.

Like Newman, Mill thinks that neither inculcation of morality nor religious formation are the particular provenance of university education. These are more appropriately connected with our social teachers, primarily the family and broader community. The university teacher, however, should act as a moral exemplar, prompting the students to emulate those habits of refined and elevated sentiment manifested in his or her conduct.

Mill seems to tolerate university-level education in religion. This might be partially explained by the specific occasion of his lecture, for the Church of Scotland was not established in Scottish higher education in the formal sense that the Church of England was in English universities. Mill's preference for religious education in universities is akin to what we would now call religious studies, in which religions are studied not in respect to their truth but rather with regard to their chief doctrines and sociological features set out in a descriptive manner. At all costs the study of religion should, according to Mill, not be confessional. The university must be open to diversity of religious opinion and practice, including freethinking.

Mill's own life experience convinced him of the importance of educating the sentiments because such education is required for the development of a rounded personality. So, inquiry into the nature of Beauty, study of the fine arts, and general aesthetic education should be part of the university curriculum. The university thus has an indirect and supporting role to play in moral education, insofar as it can, by calling forth sympathetic responses along aesthetic lines, provide matter for the development of the morally significant sentiments. Mill takes up a position articulated also by Augustine, Aquinas, and Newman, in holding that cultivation of the whole student must

involve not just knowing truth and virtue, but in coming to love them. While Mill, as an agnostic, lacks a developed doctrine of sin, he replaces it with an education in the Arts, for the high standards of execution in artistic production teach us never to be satisfied with our own imperfections. Beauty bears the mark of perfection.

A university education that addresses the critical, analytic, and sentimental faculties of the student will bring forth a richer and more varied interest in the value of life itself and will pay social dividends. This restless striving for improvement of self and society captures the dynamic personal and social dialectic of the *Inaugural Address*, and displays much of the faith in progress characteristic of the Victorian age. Education is a life-long pursuit, never complete, never an object of complacency. As Mill writes: 'A pupil from whom nothing is ever demanded which he cannot do, never does all he can.'²⁸

Sample Chapter

[28] *Autobiography*, p. 45.