



J.S. MILL & LIFE WRITING

Welcome to our August 2020 edition of *Liberty Matters*. In this essay and discussion forum Ruth Scurr, a fellow and director of Studies in Human, Social and Political Sciences at Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge discusses [John Stuart Mill](#) and the concept of what she calls “life writing,”

According to Scurr, life writing is an area of scholarship that involves biography, autobiography and memoir. Her essay focuses on [Mill's Autobiography](#) and the approach that Mill took to crafting what he believed would become the main narrative of his life. Her essay, and the three splendid response essays from our other contributors, raise interesting questions about the outside forces that influence how we view historical figures as well as the caveats we should use while reading “life writing”. As liberalism is increasingly under attack in the modern world, discussing Mill, arguably the 19th century's most famous English liberal, is particularly relevant.

J.S. MILL AND LIFE WRITING

by Ruth Scurr

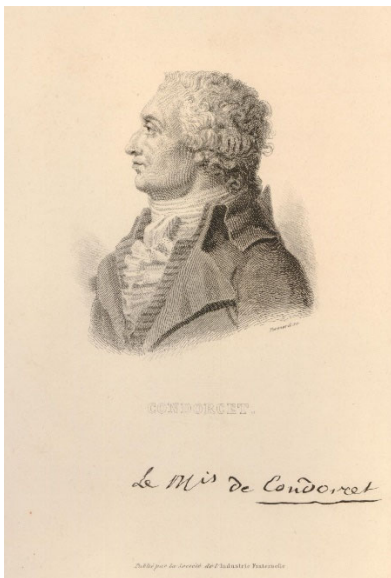
John Stuart Mill's interest in what is today termed “life-writing” – biography, autobiography and memoir – merits more attention. His carefully crafted *Autobiography*, written and revised in three stages (1853-4, 1861, 1869-70), was a pre-emptive strike against the “pretended biographies” he imagined would be written for commercial reasons after his death.^[1] In the introduction, Mill explicitly states that he is not undertaking “to tell everything,” and this is a further pre-emptive strike against anyone “being able to suppose or to pretend, that we undertake to keep nothing back.”^[2] Other people's pretense was a major preoccupation for Mill when contemplating how to write and edit his *Autobiography*. The resulting text has often been criticised for being cold and unfeeling. After it was first published in 1873, the year of Mill's death, Thomas Carlyle, dubbed it “the life of a logic-chopping machine.”^[3] But there is evidence in the text and elsewhere that Mill thought and felt deeply about life-writing.

Mill emphasises poetry, Wordsworth's especially, as the genre which, alongside music, brought him emotional relief from the habits of rigorous analysis instilled in him

by his “unusual and remarkable” education, organised by his father James Mill, who “regarded as an aberration of the moral standard of modern times, compared with that of the ancients, the great stress laid on feeling.”^[4] Aesthetic speculation, as John Robson and Jack Stillinger write in the introduction to Volume 1 of the collected works, “helped clarify for Mill both the place of emotion in individual lives and in the human sciences.”^[5] He never questioned that his own role in the “Art and Science of Life” was as “Scientist” or “Logician,” not as “Artist” or “Poet.”^[6] But when he decided to write his *Autobiography* at the age of 47 he had to reckon with his own emotions, both past and present. It helped him to recall the solace he had found in the Marquis de Condorcet's *Vie de M. Turgot* (1786) and Jean-François Marmontel's *Memoires d'un père* (1804). When characterizing in retrospect the most turbulent time in his “bookish” life, it was to these texts, not to poetry or music, that Mill turned.^[7]

Mill claims that his first access to “poetic culture” was “by means of reverential admiration for the lives and characters of heroic persons; especially the heroes of philosophy.”^[8] He fleetingly mentions Plutarch's *Lives* and Plato's depiction of Socrates (both of which he read aged 6), before moving on to modern

biographies and singling out Condorcet's life of the French economist and statesman Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot.^[9] Turgot was Comptroller General of Finances under Louis XVI from 1774-6 and an early advocate of economic liberalism. He died in 1781. Condorcet's biography was a panegyric celebration of his late friend's contributions to public administration and free trade. According to Mill, the book is "well calculated to excite the best sort of enthusiasm, since it contains one of the noblest and wisest of lives, described by one of the noblest and wisest of men."^[10] It is not clear when Mill first read the *Vie de M. Turgot*, perhaps in 1820 when he first visited France, or soon afterwards, but he says that he often returned to the book "as others do to a favourite poet" when needing to elevate his feelings and thoughts.^[11] He also says that the book cured him of his "sectarian tastes."^[12] As he started to free himself from the Utilitarian mindset into which he had been born, as he began to question the doctrines of his father and his father's friend, Jeremy Bentham, he felt inspired by Turgot's insistence on keeping himself "distinct" from the Encyclopédistes. "I left off designating myself and others as Utilitarians, or by the pronoun "we", or any other collective denomination: I ceased to *afficher* sectarianism: but my real, inward sectarianism I got rid of later and much more gradually."^[13]



**Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de
Condorcet**

Mill's distinction between ceasing to outwardly identify himself as a Utilitarian and getting rid of his "inward sectarianism" is subtle and self-knowing. Turgot's view, reported by Condorcet, that "all sects are harmful" gave Mill the confidence to reject the label he himself created for his father's world-view. He found the word in John Galt's novel, *Annals of the Parish* (1821). "The Scotch clergyman of whom it is the supposed autobiography, finding heretical doctrines creeping into his parish about the time of the French Revolution, warns some parishioner not to leave the gospel and become an utilitarian."^[14] With what he later described as "a boy's fondness for a name and a banner", Mill, aged 15, seized on the word as a badge of belonging and allegiance.^[15] Five years later he suffered a mental crisis, a prolonged period of depression, after which he ceased to describe himself as a utilitarian and followed a free and individual path of thought and feeling.

Mill records that the two or three pages in which Condorcet explains Turgot's anathema for sects "sank deeply into me". Condorcet writes:

He [Turgot] thought every species of sect pernicious, whether it were the ambition of dominating over the minds of the men that formed it, or, as in the present case (where the appellation of the sect *Encyclopédique* was given) it owed its origin to a persecution which obliges men to make a common cause; still, from the moment a party exists, all the individuals that compose it are made answerable for the faults and errors of the rest. ... They are obliged in a manner to form a system of doctrines, and the opinions which belong to this system being adopted without examination, in the end become mere prejudices.^[16]

On this account, the danger was even greater if the sect in question was composed of the most enlightened men in a nation, intent on defending truths important for public happiness. Their defense of truth would be unthinkingly dismissed by opponents of their sect, and for this reason Turgot was convinced that "a more fatal blow could not be aimed at truth, than to compel those

who love her to form a party.”^[17] In the depths of his depression, Mill found in Condorcet’s *Vie de M. Turgot* a powerful argument for distancing himself from utilitarianism, without rejecting all or any of its truths. Turgot’s example set Mill free intellectually.

Mill found emotional freedom from his state of depression whilst “accidentally” reading Marmontel’s *Memoires*. The historian and critic Marmontel was part of the Encyclopédique movement, contributing articles on French literature to the *Encyclopédie*. Unlike Condorcet, who died in prison, Marmontel survived the revolutionary Terror and retired to Couvicourt in Normandy, where he wrote *Memoires d’un père*. The passage that struck Mill like “a small ray of light” breaking in on his gloom, described Marmontel’s reaction to the early death of his father.^[18] Aged only eighteen, he promised his distressed family that he would assume the role of their protector, telling them: “you have lost a father and you have found one.”^[19] Afterwards, Marmontel retired to his dead father’s bed, as that was the only one free in the house, but could not sleep: “All night I saw the image of my father, as alive, as strongly imprinted on my mind as if he had been present. Sometimes I thought I really did see him. I was not afraid, I held out my arms and spoke to him.”^[20] This scene moved Mill to tears and lightened his mental burden: “I was no longer hopeless. I was not a stock or a stone. I had still, it seemed, some of the material out of which all worth of character and all capacity of happiness are made.”^[21] Mill refers directly to Marmontel’s noble speech to his family but does not explicitly mention the author’s sleepless night and visions of his father. James Mill died in 1836, ten years after Mill’s breakdown and seventeen years before Mill began his *Autobiography*. Intending to leave a textual record of the major influences on his life, Mill begins with an account of his father’s life. He never directly criticises his father, but in a passage later deleted from the first draft he writes: “Personally I believe my father to have had much greater capacities of feeling than were ever developed in him. He resembled almost all Englishmen in being ashamed of the signs of feeling, and by the absence of demonstration, starving the feelings themselves... It was one of the most

unfavourable of the moral agencies which acted on me in my boyhood, that mine was not an education of love but of fear.”^[22]



John Stuart Mill

The personal revolution Mill experienced during his mental crisis of 1826 coincided with his growing interest in the French Revolution. Marmontel’s *Memoires* includes not a history but a personal account of the Revolution: “If the life of Man is a voyage, I cannot tell you about mine without mentioning certain events, upheavals, tears and places peopled by tigers and serpents that I have passed by.”^[23] One of the characters that Marmontel discusses in his description of the causes of the Revolution is Turgot, whom he presents as incorruptible, but easy to misrepresent as the leader of a sect of economists, the Physiocrats. According to Marmontel, Turgot’s rigid commitment to freeing the grain trade, regardless of political consequences, caused him to lose his credibility with Louis XVI. Turgot was dismissed as Comptroller General of Finances in 1776 after a failed experiment with economic liberalism. Marmontel’s portrait of Turgot was more dispassionate than Condorcet’s but would have been no less fascinating to Mill, who considered the example of Turgot’s life as a lodestar for his own.

Marmontel’s *Memoires* ends with a short account of the Terror, the death of Robespierre, and the aftermath of chaos and uncertainty. As Mill recovered from his breakdown, experiencing several short relapses, but

nothing like the desperation and numbness of the first episode, he contemplated writing a history of the French Revolution. He explains in his *Autobiography* that: “the subject took an immense hold of my feelings. It allied itself with all my juvenile aspirations to the character of a democratic champion.”^[24] In 1828 he published a negative review of the first two volumes of Walter Scott’s *Life of Napoleon Buonaparte*, in which he concentrated almost exclusively on Scott’s introduction and short summary of the French Revolution. “The reign of Napoleon affords little or nothing to the historian except ordinary characters and ordinary events,” Mill declared.^[25] He believed that Napoleon was a despot with a vulgar character, and for this reason, a biographer with skills far inferior to Scott’s would have been able to write his life. The characters central to the extraordinary French Revolution, however, required a historian with skills exceeding Scott’s. According to Mill, only a philosophical historian would be able to show how individual characters and causes were caught up in “that force which converts a whole people into heroes, which binds an entire nation together as one man.”^[26] He criticises Scott for failing to understand the context within which the principal actors in the Revolution made their decisions:

His complete ignorance of the position in which individuals and parties were placed, leads him [Scott] regularly to ascribe their actions to other than the true causes. He blames men who did the best they could, for not doing better; treats men who had only a choice of inconveniences, as if they were the masters of events, and could regulate them as they pleased; reproaches men who were beset by dangers on both sides, because they did not, to avoid the dangers on one side, precipitate themselves into those on the other; goes to search for discreditable motives at an immense distance, when the most creditable ones were obviously afforded by the state of affairs; and judges of the conduct of men in the crisis of a revolution, by the same standard which he would have applied to persons securely in

possession of the governing power in peaceable times.^[27]

Scott’s brief summary of Turgot’s failed economic reforms in the early years of Louis XVI’s reign, and the later failure of reforms to political representation in 1781, cannot have been what Mill so strongly objected to. Instead, it was Scott’s dismissal of the Girondins, a loose grouping of republicans including Condorcet, that angered him. Scott characterized the Girondins as vain and unrealistic for hoping to erect “a pure republic in a state so disturbed as that of France” and reproached them for using insurrection and violence to further their aims.^[28] Mill was sympathetic to the Girondins and even imagined himself “figuring, successful or unsuccessful, as a Girondist in an English Convention.”^[29] He would have been irritated by Scott’s sneering at Condorcet’s “philosophic humanity.”^[30] Mill undertook original research, some of which he included in his review, to show that Scott’s account of the Girondins was ignorant and flawed.

“GLOSSING THIS, MILL IMMEDIATELY POINTS OUT THAT THE BIOGRAPHIC IS NOT THE ONLY ASPECT UNDER WHICH “HISTORY MAY PROFITABLY AND PLEASANTLY BE CONTEMPLATED.””

Five years later, Mill’s review of Alison’s *History of the French Revolution* began with a long quote from Carlyle on the place of biography in history: “Of history, the most honoured, if not honourable species of composition, is not the whole purport *biographic*? History, it has been said, is the essence of innumerable biographies. Such, at least, it should be: whether it is, might admit of question.”^[31] Glossing this, Mill immediately points out that the biographic is not the only aspect under which “history may profitably and pleasantly be contemplated.”^[32] But, Mill argues, the biographic is the primary aspect, the necessary condition, for all other history: “If what purports to be the history of any portion of mankind, keep not its promise of making us

understand and represent to ourselves what manner of men those were whose story it pretends to be, let it undertake what else it may, it will assuredly perform nothing.”^[33] Properly undertaken, biography provides the building blocks for a history of a whole nation or age.

In the second part of his review of Alison’s book, Mill sets out a distinction between the scientific and the biographic aspect of history. The scientific, he argues, concerns general laws and “the connection between great effects and their causes,” whereas the biographic involves our feelings of admiration, sympathy, or censure for “the characters and lives of human beings.”^[34] According to Mill, Alison’s book fell short on both aspects, offering neither an account of the great causes of the Revolution, nor an accurate reconstruction of what went on in the minds of the men who planned and perpetrated the enormities of the Terror in order to save the new republic.



Mill never wrote a history of the French Revolution. Instead he passed his considerable body of research and his book collection to Carlyle. When Carlyle’s *The French Revolution* was published in 1837 Mill wrote an early, favourable review. He thought Carlyle had captured “the morality of the great catastrophe.”^[35] He admired both the “characters drawn with a few touches,” revealing Carlyle’s remarkable insight into “the obscurest regions of human nature,” and the philosophy, “disguised though it often be in a poetico-metaphysical vesture of a most questionable kind.”^[36] Whilst Mill praised Carlyle’s originality and extraordinary realisation of the biographic aspect of history, he thought Carlyle had a tendency “to undervalue general principles” and found the scientific aspect of his book less impressive.^[37] Carlyle, he

concluded, was an artist, not a man of science. For Mill, a balance between the biographic and scientific aspects was absolutely necessary, and much as he admired what Carlyle had achieved, *The French Revolution* was not the book Mill himself would have written.

Reviewing the poet Alfred de Vigny’s writings in 1838, the year after he had reviewed Carlyle, Mill compared Vigny’s contribution in literature to Alexis de Tocqueville’s in philosophy.^[38] He was particularly impressed by Vigny’s hatred of exaggeration which caused him to draw Robespierre and Saint Just realistically in his philosophical novel *Stello* (1832):

[T]he terrorist chiefs do not figure in his pages as monsters thirsting for blood, nor as hypocrites and impostors with merely the low aims of selfish ambition: either of these representations would have been false to history. He shows us these men as they were, as such men could not but have been; men distinguished, morally, chiefly by two qualities, entire hardness of heart, and the most overweening and bloated self-conceit: for nothing less, assuredly, could lead any man to believe that his individual judgement respecting the public good is a warrant to him for exterminating all who are suspected of forming any other judgement, and for setting up a machine to cut off heads, sixty or seventy every day, till some unknown futurity be accomplished, some Utopia realised.^[39]

The value Mill placed on biographic history is evident in this review. *Stello* was a novel, and yet it provided what Mill took to be an accurate picture of Robespierre and Saint Just, caught up in the revolutionary Terror and led astray by their individual judgements regarding the public good. His perception that Carlyle’s *The French Revolution* was “not so much a history, as an epic poem; and notwithstanding, or even in consequence of this, the truest of histories” had broadened Mill’s understanding of the genres within which biography could be written by breaking down the rigid distinction between fiction and non-fiction.^[40]

Nevertheless, the distinction between fact and non-fact remained robust for Mill. Mill wrote to the Edinburgh Review in 1844 objecting to the portrayal of his father in Dr Bowring’s “Life of Bentham”.^[41] Both the book and the review of it “gave a most false impression of the character” of James Mill, according to his son. “I know not how a biographer is to be justified in giving publicity and permanence to every idle word which may have been said to the prejudice of others, under some passing impression or momentary irritation”, Mill complained.^[42] There were bound to be inaccuracies, he argued, “when things carelessly stated by one person, are afterwards noted down from memory by another.”^[43] Beyond this, Bentham was, in Mill’s view, a poor judge of character, lacking real knowledge of even his closest friends and admirers. He particularly objected to the reviewer quoting uncritically from Bentham’s “Memoirs”:

Bentham said of [James] Mill that his willingness to do good to others depended too much on his power of making the good done to them subservient to good done to himself. His creed of politics results less from love for the many than from hatred of the few. It is too much under the influence of social and dissocial affection.^[44]

Mill wrote fiercely in defense of his father, questioning the reliability of memoirs and the motives of biographers. His subsequent drafting and reworking of his *Autobiography* was informed by his understanding of biography’s crucial contribution to history, and his awareness of how easy it is to misrepresent a person’s life.

Endnotes

[1.] John Stuart Mill, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Volume 1, *Autobiography and Literary Essays* [1824], ed. J.M. Robson, J. Stillinger, [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_118](#)↵

[2.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_95](#)↵

[3.] Thomas Carlyle, *A History of his Life in London, 1834-1881*, J.A. Froude, p.420

[4.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_254](#)↵

[5.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_77](#)↵

[6.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_77](#)↵

[7.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_3023](#)↵

[8.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_283](#)↵

[9.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_283](#) Mill first read Plutarch in Langhorne’s English translation, see: [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_364](#)↵

[10.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_283](#)↵

[11.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_283](#)↵

[12.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_283](#)↵

[13.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_283](#)↵

[14.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_268](#)↵

[15.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_268](#)↵

[16.] *The Life of M. Turgot, Comptroller General of the Finances of France in the years 1774, 1775 and 1776, translated from the French*, printed for J. Johnson: London, 1787, p.37, <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=C5ZCAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q=sect%20pernicious&f=false>

[17.] Ibid p.39.↵

[18.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_306](#)↵

[19.] *Œuvres choisies de Marmontel, Mémoires d’un père*, vol.1, Etienne Ledoux: Paris 1827, p.60.↵

[20.] Ibid, p.61.↵

[21.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_307](#)↵

[22.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_255](#)↵

[23.] *Mémoires d’un père*, vol.3, book 12, p.84.↵

[24.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_259](#)↵

[25.] [/titles/235#Mill_0223-20_445](#)↵

[26.] [/titles/235#Mill_0223-20_446](#)↵

[27.] [/titles/235#Mill_0223-20_449](#)↵

[28.] [/titles/235#Mill_0223-20_544](#)↵

[29.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_259↵](#)

[30.] *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French, with a Preliminary View of the French Revolution*, W. Scott [1827], vol.1, Chapter 13.↵

[31.] [/titles/235#Mill_0223-20_555↵](#)

[32.] [/titles/235#Mill_0223-20_556↵](#)

[33.] Ibid.↵

[34.] [/titles/235#Mill_0223-20_566↵](#)

[35.] [/titles/235#Mill_0223-20_712↵](#)

[36.] [/titles/235#Mill_0223-20_710↵](#)

[37.] [/titles/235#Mill_0223-20_708↵](#)

[38.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_1556↵](#)

[39.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_1590↵](#)

[40.] [/titles/235#Mill_0223-20_596↵](#)

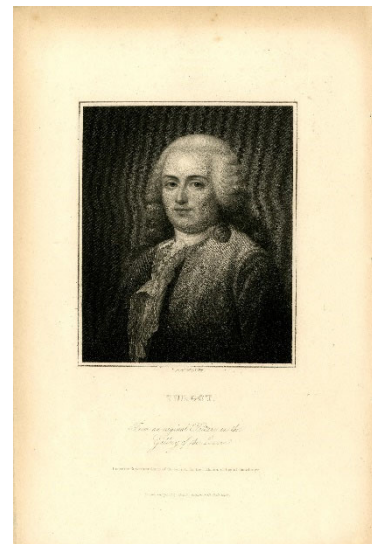
[41.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_2356↵](#)

[42.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_2360↵](#)

[43.] Ibid.↵

[44.] [/titles/242#Mill_0223-01_2358↵](#)

It is therefore a felicitous choice on the part of Ruth Scurr to draw attention to a crucial remark by that child in his *Autobiography*. J.S. Mill wrote that, even before his "mental crisis" made him re-think his education and try to rectify what he came to see as the "neglect...of the cultivation of feeling" (and the "undervaluing of poetry and of Imagination generally"), he "had obtained...poetic culture of the most valuable kind, by means of reverential admiration for the lives and characters of heroic persons; especially the heroes of philosophy." He went on: "The same inspiring effect which so many of the benefactors of mankind have left on record that they had experienced from Plutarch's *Lives*, was produced on me by Plato's pictures of Socrates, and by some modern biographies, above all by Condorcet's *Life of Turgot*".^[2]



Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot

Given that Scurr goes on to focus on Mill's comments on what Condorcet's biography of Turgot offered him, it is worth recalling here that the other major source of "poetic culture," that he noted he had imbibed through his father's education, consisted of "Plato's pictures of Socrates". The importance of that source has been compellingly highlighted by recent scholarship.^[3]

Mill gave as the primary reason why he wrote an autobiography his desire to pay tribute to the people who most affected his life. But another reason must have been a need he felt to explain the struggle through which he himself eventually played a role in the shaping of his

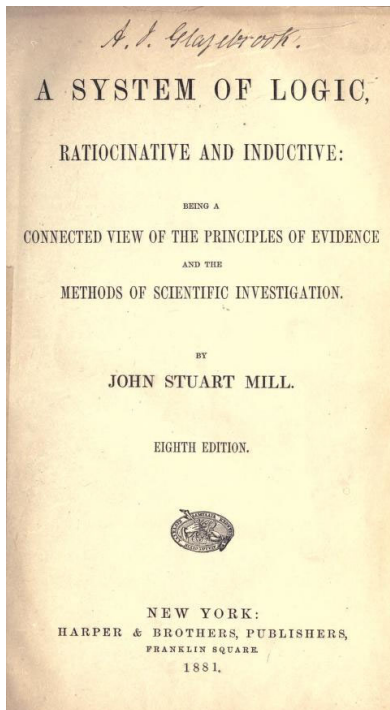
ON J.S. MILL & LIFE WRITING

by Georgios Varouxakis

Two years before the birth of his first child, James Mill explained why biographies of "speculative men" were more interesting than those of soldiers or politicians. He added that: "The ancients were fully sensible of the advantages of this species of biography; and were in consequence more anxious to treasure up the opinions of Socrates than the exploits of Alexander."^[1] No wonder, then, that when the child was born, a rich diet of biographical reading on speculative men in general and on Socrates in particular was in store.

character. The formation of character was a key preoccupation for Mill. It led to his ambition to establish "ethology", the science of the formation of character.^[4]

The idea that he was seen by others as having been "manufactured" by his father was oppressive to him. By writing his version of the story Mill could give an account both of the results of that manufacturing enterprise and of his own reaction to it: the ways in which he took over ownership of the formation of his character once he became conscious of a problem with the way the operation had gone up to then. According to Mill, if you cannot change the way circumstances affect you, you can try to change the circumstances to which you are exposed. One of the things coming out of his *Autobiography* is that, when he became despondent about how the circumstances of his education had affected him, he began consciously to alter and diversify the influences and circumstances he was exposed to.



Mill gave us clues as to all this in *A System of Logic*. There he criticised those who insisted that a person's character "is formed *for* him, and not *by* him; therefore his wishing that it had been formed differently is of no use; he has no power to alter it." For Mill, "this is a grand error": "His character is formed by his circumstances...; but his own desire to mould it in a particular way, is one of those

circumstances, and by no means one of the least influential." We cannot shape ourselves directly as we wish, but neither can "those who are supposed to have formed our characters". To the extent that those latter have formed us, it is "by willing...the requisite means". By the same token we "can, by similarly willing the requisite means, make ourselves different. If they could place us under the influence of certain circumstances, we, in like manner, can place ourselves under the influence of other circumstances. We are exactly as capable of making our own character, *if we will*, as others are of making it for us." What is more,

"Our character is formed by us as well as for us; but the wish which induces us to attempt to form it is formed for us; and how? Not, in general, by our organization, not wholly by our education, but by our experience; experience of the painful consequences of the character we previously had: or by some strong feeling of admiration or aspiration, accidentally aroused."^[5]

It is difficult to read this and not think of what Mill wrote in his *Autobiography* regarding his dejection at what he realised about the traits of his earlier self, and the felicitous experiences and accidents related to people he came to meet and admire (Harriet Taylor not least).

It is also relevant to note the connection of biography to the "Religion of Humanity". In *Three Essays on Religion*, Mill explained just how important the inspiration one could draw from admirable past individuals could be: "This exalted morality would not depend for its ascendancy on any hope of reward; but the reward which might be looked for, and the thought of which would be a consolation in suffering...would...be...the approbation...of those whom we respect, and ideally of all those, dead or living, whom we admire or venerate." Thus "the idea that Socrates, or Howard, or Washington, or Antoninus, or Christ, would have sympathized with us, or that we are attempting to do our part in the spirit in which they did theirs, has operated on the very best minds, as a strong incentive to act up to their highest feelings and convictions."^[6]

It is not surprising therefore, to read Mill's reply, in 1868, to a woman who had requested his advice on what to read. One of the most prominent items in his selected list, recommended as part of a crucial "course" among those books whose "every word...should be read steadily through", read: "Plutarch's Lives".^[7]

Decades earlier, this is how Mill had concluded an "Obituary notice of Lafayette": "A biography of Lafayette...would be one of the most inspiring memorials of virtue since Plutarch's *Lives*, and would have much of the same potency with that inestimable work, in forming great and good men."^[8]

But that was nothing compared to what Mill wrote after the French journalist Armand Carrel was killed. In "Armand Carrel" [1837]^[9] Mill seized the opportunity "to contribute what we can...towards a true picture of a man, more *worthy to be known*,^[10] and more *fit to be imitated*,^[11] than any who has occupied a position in European politics for many years." The practical importance of life-writing is explicitly stated. To Mill's mind, knowing such a worthy man was meant to inspire (at least some) readers to imitate him. The man was gone. But, Mill went on, "there are left to us his memory, and his example. ... We can learn from the study of him, what we...must be..."^[12] Near the end, having delivered his long biographical essay, Mill reminded his readers why it mattered:

"The mind needs such examples, to keep alive in it that faith in good, without which nothing worthy the name of good can ever be realised: it needs to be reminded by them that...man is still man. Whatever man has been, man may be; whatever of heroic the heroic ages, whatever of chivalrous the romantic ages have produced, is still possible, nay, still *is*, and a hero of Plutarch may exist amidst all the pettiness of modern civilization, and with all the cultivation and refinement.... The lives of those are not lost, who have lived enough to be an example to the world".^[13]

Mill had an extravagant admiration for Carrel, but his comments on the importance of telling the story of the

lives of inspiring people are of more general applicability. Besides those of "speculative men," the younger Mill had also come to value the life stories of people such as Carrel, whom he valued as "the type" of a "*man of action*".^[14]

Scurr is right that "Mill's interest in...'life-writing'... merits more attention." Reading the life stories of inspiring people was crucial to Mill's emotional and aesthetic diet. The aspiration to the approval of inspirational people from the past provided a substitute for the consolations of an afterlife offered by most religions. And in the pursuit of the endeavour to build a noble character, which Mill recommended, "if unfortunately those by whom we are surrounded do not share our aspirations," he advised "to sustain ourselves by the ideal sympathy of the great characters in history, or even in fiction, and by the contemplation of an idealized posterity".^[15]

Endnotes

^[1.] [James Mill], "Life of W. Jones," *Literary Journal* 4/2 (1804), 168.

^[2.] *CW*, I, 115.

^[3.] Antis Lozides, *John Stuart Mill's Platonic Heritage: Happiness through Character* (Lexington Books, 2013).

^[4.] *CW*, VIII, 861-74.

^[5.] *CW*, VIII, 840-841.

^[6.] *CW*, X, 421-2. See also: *CW*, XXI, 253-4.

^[7.] *CW*, XVI, 1472-75.

^[8.] *CW*, XXIII, 716-717.

^[9.] *CW*, XX, 167-215.

^[10.] Emphasis added.

^[11.] Emphasis added.

^[12.] *CW*, XX, 169-170.

^[13.] *Ibid.*, 214-215.

^[14.] *CW*, XVII, 1978.

^[15.] *CW*, XXI, 253-4.

RESPONSE TO RUTH SCURR

by Jeremy Jennings

It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to read Ruth Scurr's thoughtful essay on J.S. Mill and life-writing and to be able to provide a few remarks by way of response.

I first read Mill's *Autobiography* about 50 years ago as an undergraduate student, and it is a book that I have returned to many times since. Each year I tell my own students to read it, but sadly very few do. The opening paragraph is not one to encourage interest from the passing reader or uninterested student. Indeed, in the opening sentence Mill raises the question of why he should have thought it useful to leave behind "such a memorial of so uneventful a life." Mill tells us in reply that he believed there was merit in providing "some record of an education which was unusual and remarkable," and especially so, he added, "in an age of transition in opinions." More important to Mill, however, was what he described as "a desire to make acknowledgement of the debts which my intellectual and moral development owes to other persons." Nonetheless, he wrote sternly, "the reader whom these things do not interest has only himself to blame if he reads farther, and I do not desire any other indulgence from him than that of bearing in mind, that for him these pages were not written." Take it or leave it, in other words.

Autobiography
and
Literary Essays

by JOHN STUART MILL

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Given this forbidding welcome to the reader it is hardly surprising, as Scurr reminds us, that Thomas Carlyle, a man not unknown for rhetorical excess, should describe Mill's *Autobiography* as "the life of a logic-chopping machine." Yet, as Scurr tells us, "there is evidence in the text and elsewhere that Mill thought and felt deeply about life-writing." It is good to have this stated clearly, for surely Carlyle was wrong. Rather, the *Autobiography* reads as an brutally honest and, at times, deeply painful account of how to escape, with very little help from those around him, such an awful condition--a condition, by Mill's own account, "not altogether untrue" of him for two or three years when he was a young man.

The joy of reading such a well-crafted essay as that presented to us by Ruth Scurr is that it helps the reader to see a well-known text anew, and this certainly is the case here. Anyone who has read the *Autobiography* will be familiar with Mill's truly daunting account of his early education and the prodigious amount of reading involved, all beautifully summarised in Mill's memorable remark that "in my eighth year I commenced learning Latin." Prior to this had come Greek, arithmetic, Hume, Gibbon, ecclesiastical history, a couple of favourite travel books, the occasional lightweight read such as Robinson Crusoe, and much else! One thing that struck me here was that Mill never seemed simply to dip into an author's work. As Mill recounted later in the *Autobiography*, he did not just read occasional bits of Byron but "the whole of Byron" (with little good to him apparently). The same was true of Herodotus and many more of the authors Mill cites.

Ruth Scurr however starts by drawing our attention to a body of reading that I had previously overlooked: what Mill described as his introduction to "poetic culture of the most valuable kind, by means of reverential admiration for the lives and characters of heroic persons.". Interestingly, this passage comes immediately after a page or more where Mill recalls that he and his fellow band of philosophic radicals had found no room for "the cultivation of feeling" and consequently had been characterised by "an undervaluing of poetry, and of the Imagination generally as an element of human nature."

Scurr's drawing our attention to this body of work is of considerable importance as, if true, it provides the basis for a very different account of Mill's own intellectual journey during the crucial period when he sought to break free from some, if not all, of the beliefs he had acquired at the feet of his father. In particular, as Scurr states explicitly, "it was to these texts, and not to poetry or music, that Mill turned."

Moreover, thanks to Scurr, one gets a sense of the impact of these texts upon a young man who, by his own account, was in an emotionally febrile state. Earlier in the text, Socrates appears as someone for whose character Mill had a "deep respect" and who "stood in [his] mind as a model of ideal excellence," an opinion, Mill tells us, he had acquired from reading the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon with his father. Indeed, Mill adds that his father's "moral inculcations" were very much those of the *Socratici viri*. Now, with Mill rushing towards a mental crisis of monumental proportions, Socrates, along with Plutarch, figures as an early player in the "enlargement" of his "intellectual creed." So too, Mill tells us, did a reading of "some modern biographies," with pride of place given to Condorcet's *Life of Turgot*.

This section of Ruth Scurr's essay is brilliantly done, expanding at some length on what is no more than half a paragraph in Mill's original text. What Mill tells us there, and what Scurr explains with great lucidity, is that this book cured him of "his sectarian follies" and that, as a consequence of reading it, he "left off designating [himself] and others as Utilitarians." Scurr adds that Mill's distinction between casting off his outer "collective designation" and getting rid of his "real inward sectarianism" (which, according to Mill, came later) is "subtle and self-knowing."

Clearly, something big was going on in Mill's intellectual development. Scurr claims, in my view with some exaggeration, that "Turgot's example set Mill free intellectually." She further argues that, after the crisis, Mill "followed a free intellectual path of thought and feeling." I disagree. My view remains that the tragedy of Mill's life lies in the fact that he could not free himself from the shackles of a utilitarian upbringing. Scurr herself writes:

"Mill found in Condorcet's *Vie de M. Turgot* a powerful argument for distancing himself from utilitarianism, without rejecting all or any of its truths." What sort of distancing is this if it amounts to no more than renouncing the outward name? Numerous examples exist of the way in which Mill failed to escape from the intellectual clutches of his father and the ubiquitous Mr Bentham. One such was the complete absence of any religious belief "in the ordinary acceptance of the term," something his father compared "not to a mere mental delusion but to a great moral evil." More broadly, Mill spent the greater part of his subsequent intellectual career seeking to patch up a philosophy that arguably did not deserve to be saved from its critics. Mill was right: Bentham was "a systematic and accurately logical half-man" who never saw that man was "a being capable of spiritual perfection as an end." Yet, what did we get? Nothing more (in Mill's famous image) than the fabric of old and taught opinions giving way in fresh places, a fabric never allowed to fall to pieces, and one incessantly woven anew. Crucially, Mill adds to this: "I never, in the course of my transition, was content to remain, for ever so short a time, confused and unsettled." There spoke the son of a man of fixed and firm, not to say unbending, opinions.

"YET RUTH SCURR IS SURELY RIGHT
TO CHARACTERISE THIS MOMENT AS
ONE WHERE MILL BEGAN "TO
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FATHER AND HIS FATHER'S FRIEND,
JEREMY BENTHAM.""

Yet Ruth Scurr is surely right to characterise this moment as one where Mill began "to question the doctrines of his father and his father's friend, Jeremy Bentham." One can therefore easily empathise with Mill's tearful reaction to reading Marmontel's *Memoirs* and its account of the early death of his father. Who among us would not feel similarly moved? Yet, for Mill, the scene inspired the lifting of a burden, a relief from a state of irredeemable wretchedness, combined with the realisation that "the

ordinary incidents of life could again give [him]some pleasure." Thus, as Mill put it, "the cloud generally drew off and I again enjoyed life."

Again, Ruth Scurr is right to comment that Mill "never directly criticises his father," and she is right too, in her final paragraph, to indicate how determined he was to defend his father's reputation from unfair misrepresentation. Yet here is the drama and the pain in the life-writing that is Mill's *Autobiography*. Scurr quotes a passage where Mill indicates that his education, and therefore his boyhood (as Mill's boyhood consisted of nothing else) was one not of love but of fear. She could have quoted much more of a similar hue with ease. His father, Mill tells us, was not a man to side with "laxity or indulgence." The element "chiefly deficient in his moral relationship to his children was that of tenderness." His temper was "constitutionally irritable." Many, Mill wrote, were "the effects of this bringing-up in the stunting of my moral growth."



James Mill, father of J.S. Mill

Sadly, Mill concluded (in an early draft of the text) that such an upbringing was not unusual among the English families of his day where, as Mill wrote, "genuine affection is altogether exceptional." That he also lacked another "rarity in England, a really warm hearted mother" must have only added to his childhood misery. No

wonder Harriet Taylor was lavished with such heartfelt and exaggerated praise.

RUTH SCURR ON MILL AND LIFE-WRITING

by David Conway

Ruth Scurr's wide-ranging account of Mill's interest in life-writing portrays him as an apostle of truth in all matters biographical. Not one of the *whole* truth, but one of nothing but the truth. As Scurr notes of Mill:

His carefully crafted *Autobiography*... was a pre-emptive strike against the "pretended biographies", which he imagined would be written for commercial reasons after his death... Mill explicitly states that he is not undertaking "to tell everything", and this is a further pre-emptive strike against anyone "being able to suppose or to pretend, that we undertake to keep nothing back".^[1]

Mill's fear that commercially-driven 'pretended biographies' of him would be written after his demise could have been prompted, in part, by painful recollections of several calumnies Jeremy Bentham was reported as having levelled against Mill's father. Recorded in a volume of *Memoirs* of Bentham, composed and published in 1843 by his literary executor, John Bowring, they were published as an appendix to the *Collected Works of Bentham*. These calumnies were repeated, and thereby disseminated more widely, in a review of the *Memoirs* published in the September 1843 issue of the *Edinburgh Review*.

Upon sight of the review, Mill fired off a strong letter of protest to the editor of the journal complaining of its republishing the calumnies and explaining for each why it was false. The letter concluded with a request that it be published in the journal to set the record straight. This duly happened. Mill's letter appeared in the January 1844 issue of the journal, together with a note from the editor explaining he had published it out of deep respect for Mill and his father. The editor did not comment on the veracity or otherwise of the offending statements.^[2]

Scurr seems to agree with Mill that the *Edinburgh Review* had been as remiss as the *Memoirs* in reporting the defamatory statements of Bentham's about Mill's father. Scurr writes:

Both the book and the review of it "gave a most false impression of the character" of James Mill, according to his son... He particularly objected to the reviewer quoting uncritically from Bentham's "Memoirs": 'Bentham said of [James] Mill that his willingness to do good to others depended too much on his power of making the good done to them subservient to good done to himself. His creed of politics... is too much under the influence of social and dissocial affection'.^[3]

Actually, the *Memoirs* report that Bentham claimed James Mill's creed of politics was too much under the influence not of 'social and dissocial affection', but 'selfish and dissocial affection'.^[4]

Empson, or the compositor who prepared his review for publication, seems to have been responsible for this misquotation from the *Memoirs*, which was then repeated by Mill in his letter and by Scurr in faithfully quoting Mill's misquotation.

It is not just this quoted passage of Scurr's that leads me to suppose her in agreement with Mill that the review and the *Memoirs* were equally remiss in reproducing Bentham's false defamatory statements about Mill's father, without at least disavowing their truth. Scurr also remarks:

Mill wrote fiercely in defence of his father, questioning the reliability of memoirs and the motives of biographers. His subsequent drafting and reworking of his *Autobiography* was informed by his understanding of biography's crucial contribution to history, and his awareness of how easy it is to misrepresent a person's life.

I cannot see anything remiss in the *Memoirs* reporting that Bentham had made these defamatory statements about Mill's father without disavowing their truth. Nor can I see the review of the *Memoirs* was remiss in repeating them.

By the time the *Memoirs* reported them, Bentham and James Mill had both been dead for several years. In

Bentham's case, for over a decade; in James Mill's case, over five. Mill did not deny Bentham had made these defamatory remarks about his father. He denied that they had been sufficiently considered remarks to have warranted report in the *Memoirs* and repetition in the review.

“BUT BENTHAM'S DEFAMATORY
STATEMENTS ABOUT MILL'S FATHER
WERE WORTH REPORTING: NOT FOR
WHAT THEY TELL US ABOUT MILL,
BUT FOR WHAT THEY REVEAL ABOUT
BENTHAM.”

But Bentham's defamatory statements about Mill's father were worth reporting: not for what they tell us about Mill, but for what they reveal about Bentham. Bentham is reported in the *Memoirs* as making many similar comments about other close associates with whom he also quarrelled, typically over the most trifling of reasons. These create a portrait of someone who was more than just highly eccentric, even mentally disordered, and to whose derogatory statements little or no credence need or should be attached.

In his review of the *Memoirs*, Empson fully acknowledged this important biographic fact about Bentham. Shortly after beginning his review, Empson remarked: 'Bentham's vanity was so excessive as to stop short, but very little of that which... almost always indicates a disordered mind'.^[5]

Empson then went on to relate a quarrel that Bentham had picked with James Mill during one of the many long summer vacations the Mill family had spent with Bentham at his capacious country seat in Somerset. According to a letter Mill sent Bentham at the height of their quarrel, Bentham's ire was caused by Mill's horse-riding on several mornings with a fellow guest, thereby depriving Bentham of Mill's company should he have sought it.

Given that the duration of their joint summer vacations extended for several months at a time, and that, during

the remainder of the year, the Mill family resided in a London house adjacent to Bentham's, James Mill's conduct hardly seems selfish. Rather, Bentham seems selfish, as Empson duly notes in his review:

This is, no doubt, a poor cause for quarrel. But what is worse is, to have lived with a man for years, and yet speak of him as Bentham speaks of Mill, on more than one occasion, in the present *Memoir*. In a common case we should call this base and treacherous.^[6]



Jeremy Bentham (1760)

I cannot see how Empson was remiss in reporting the derogatory remarks the *Memoirs* recorded, given the wider context in which he framed them and the inferences he drew about Bentham from them and Bentham's other derogatory remarks. Nor can I see the *Memoirs* was remiss in reporting all these remarks of Bentham's in the first place.

Bentham did indeed make the reported assertions about James Mill, something John Mill does not deny. Along with all the other information supplied by Empson, they provide valuable historical insight into just what a truly bizarre and disordered individual Bentham was.^[7]

Scurr seems likewise far too credulous of Mill's claim to have written his *Autobiography* to pre-empt 'pretended biographies.' There was undoubtedly more than an element of pretence on Mill's part in what he there wrote about several figures in his life by whom he claims he was

most greatly influenced. Of these, the most notable is Harriet Taylor.

Many of Mill's contemporaries who at one time were close to the couple, such as Thomas and Jane Carlyle, thought Mill had a grossly inflated opinion of Taylor.^[8]

So too have many others since Mill's day. In their case, some have done so on the basis, not just of what he writes about Taylor in his *Autobiography*, but of their correspondence, edited and published by Friedrich Hayek in 1951.^[9]

Diana Trilling is one such latter-day sceptic about Harriet Taylor. Taylor's correspondence with Mill convinced Trilling that Mill's estimate of Taylor in the *Autobiography* had been ludicrously inflated. In a review of the volume of their letters, published in the January-February 1952 issue of *Partisan Review*, Trilling wrote:

The letters... show Mrs Taylor to have been one of the meanest and dullest ladies in literary history, a nasty monument of self-regard, as lacking in charm as in grandeur... More, they indicate that Mill, exalting her as he did, must have been emotionally disturbed in a fashion that, to my knowledge, is unique in the heavy record of disturbed persons.^[10]

One can understand what Trilling meant from the following sample of extracts from Mill's *Autobiography* describing the impression he formed of Taylor upon first meeting her in the summer of 1830, and the subsequent impact she had on his intellectual development:

I very soon felt her to be the most admirable person I had ever known... To her outer circle she was a beauty and a wit... to the inner, a woman of... penetrating and intuitive intelligence.^[11]

To be admitted into any degree of personal intercourse with a being of these qualities could not but have a most beneficial influence on my development. The benefit I received was far greater than any which I could hope to give... I have learnt more from her than from all other persons taken together.^[12]

Let us set aside how wise Mill could genuinely have supposed the twenty-two year old married mother of two small children -- with a third born a year after their meeting -- to have formed such a close bond with him as Harriet did soon after they met at a dinner party she and her husband held at their home in July 1830 to which Mill had been invited. Regardless of that, it was unquestionably sheer pretence on Mill's part to have claimed, as he did in his *Autobiography*, that it was only 'years after my introduction to Mrs. Taylor before my acquaintance with her became at all intimate or confidential.'[\[13\]](#)



Harriet Taylor Mill (circa 1834)

As Hayek remarks of Mill's claim in his editorial introduction to the volume of the Mill-Taylor correspondence:

'[T]hough we know little about the first two years after the meeting, the connexion seems... to have been closer than these words suggest... There exists a note... by Eliza Flower to Mrs Taylor in which... with reference to an article in [the June 1831 issue of] the *Edinburgh Review*, she asks 'Did you or John do it?'...[S]ince the date of the letter seems to be 30 June 1831, it would appear as if at this early date Mrs Taylor's closest friend was already so familiar with the similarity of her and Mill's views as to believe ... that the article must be by either of them.'[\[14\]](#)

Despite a brief vain attempt by Harriet in August 1831 to sever her relation with Mill, by 1832, a *modus vivendi* had

been struck between Harriet, her husband and Mill whereby she was able to maintain the semblance of her marriage while continuing to see Mill without her husband being present. As John Gray explained in a review of the 2015 republication of Hayek's collection of the Mill-Taylor correspondence as part of Hayek's *Collected Works*: 'By 1832... a new pattern had been established in Mill's and Harriet's lives. Several nights a week they dined at the Taylor home, always in the company of others, while John Taylor went to his club.'[\[15\]](#)

While Mill's efforts to boost Taylor's standing in the eyes of posterity may have been well-intentioned, noble even, they hardly do him much credit as a writer of truthful biography. The high regard in which many of us continue to hold Mill as a liberal thinker should not blind us to his many flaws and foibles. Of these, Mill's willingness to engage in pretended biography in his own life-writing was undoubtedly one.

Endnotes

[\[1.\]](#) Scurr, R., 'J.S.Mill and Life-Writing', p. 1.

[\[2.\]](#) Mill, 'Letter to the Editor of the *Edinburgh Review* on James Mill' in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Volume 1, Autobiography and Literary Essays, ed. J.M.Robson and J.Stillinger, pp. 535-538.

[\[3.\]](#) Scurr, R., 'J.S.Mill and Life-Writing', p.10.

[\[4.\]](#) Bowring, J., 'Memoirs of Jeremy Bentham, Including Autobiographical Conversations and Correspondence', *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham*, Volume 10, p.450.

[\[5.\]](#) Empson, W. 'Memoirs of Jeremy Bentham' *Edinburgh Review* LXXVIII (Oct. 1843), pp 460-516; reproduced in *Campbell's Foreign Semi-Monthly Magazine* Volume 4. From September to December 1843, 451-467, p.452.

[\[6.\]](#) Empson, 'Memoirs of Jeremy Bentham', p.454.

[\[7.\]](#) For details of the extent of Bentham's deep, and possibly pathological, eccentricity, see the assessment of him by two forensic psychologists: Lucas, P. and Sheeran, A., 'Asperger's Syndrome and the Eccentricity and

Genius of Jeremy Bentham', *Journal of Bentham Studies* Volume 8 (2006).

[8.] For Jane Carlyle's low opinion of Harriet Taylor, see Josephine Kamm, *John Stuart Mill in Love* London: Gordon and Cremonesi, 1977, pp. p. 64. For Thomas Carlyle's equally low opinion of her, see J.Kamm, *Mill in Love*, p.67.

[9.] Hayek, F.A., *John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor: Their Friendship and Subsequent Marriage* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.

[10.] Trilling, D., 'Mill's Intellectual Beacon: Review of F.A.Hayek, *John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor*', *Partisan Review* 19(1) 1952, pp. 115-120.

[11.] Mill, 'Autobiography' (1873) in *Collected Works*, Volume 1, p.193.

[12.] Mill, 'Autobiography', p. 196.

[13.] Mill, 'Autobiography', p.196.

[14.] Hayek, F.A., *The Collected Works of Hayek*, Volume 16 'Hayek on Mill, The Mill Taylor Friendship', ed. S.J.Peart (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 38.

[15.] Gray, J., Review of 'Hayek on Mill: The Mill-Taylor Friendship', *New Statesman* 28 May 2015.

COMMENT ON RESPONSES

by Ruth Scurr

First and foremost, I want to express my gratitude for all three of the sensitive and erudite responses to my essay that have been posted here. All raise questions for further discussion that I will attempt to summarise briefly, hoping that this post will encourage more interesting thoughts.

Georgios Varouxakis is right to point out that my discussion of Mill's interest in Turgot's life needs to be balanced by an understanding of his involvement with Plutarch's *Lives*. I would be particularly interested in exploring whether Plutarch's habit of pairing a famous with a more obscure life was important to Mill? It seems

to me that in the two examples Georgios touches on in his response – General Lafayette and Armand Carrel – there is scope for exploring this question. Mill did not, of course, pair these lives. But it is interesting that he has space for both in his firmament of lives that might serve as inspiration to others seeking to shape their own characters.



John Stuart Mill (1873)

Jeremy Jennings draws attention to this crucial component of Mill's philosophy and biographical understanding: the individual's power to shape her or his own life and to escape the "manufacturing" or controlling influences of circumstance. I agree with Jeremy's correction to my essay: Mill was never entirely set free from his upbringing, and his ongoing struggles to escape led to "the drama and the pain in the life-writing that is Mill's *Autobiography*." But my own view is that this was not a failure on Mill's part, any more than his "exaggerated praise" of Harriet Taylor was an objective mistake. When it comes to the content of a relationship between lovers, who are outsiders to judge what counts as exaggeration or truth? No doubt Mill had friends and admirers who thought his feelings for Taylor, and his account of her role in his life, exaggerated. But the question we must ask is: Were they, or are we, really in a better position to decide this question than he was?

This brings me to David Conway's excellent response. I do not, as he suggests, think the Edinburgh Review remiss for reporting Bentham's defamatory statements about Mill's father. Not at all. What I wanted to do was to draw attention to Mill's fierce defence of his father, which reminds me of a common biographical reflex: whilst it seems perfectly acceptable (indeed necessary) for me to criticise my parents to myself and to others, I am immediately moved to defend them if someone else criticises them. I think Mill felt similarly.

I want to end by saying how much I have enjoyed these exchanges. In this time of isolation, when conferences seem a distant dream, it is a great comfort to be able to replicate a Liberty Fund event online. My thanks to all who have made this possible.

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France and the French (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), and *Contemporary France: An Introduction to French Politics and Society* (Arnold, 2003; co-authored with David Howarth). He is currently writing a major study on *The West: The History of an Idea* for Princeton University Press.

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