

John Stuart Mill

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John Stuart

Mill

John Stuart Mill was born in London, May 20th, 1806. His father James Mill was a Scottish philosopher and Economist, who moved in important intellectual circles. The young Mill was educated by his father and Jeremy Bentham – the leading exponent of Utilitarian philosophy. His father hoped that John would become a leading intellect to advance the course of Utilitarianism, and the precious John exceeded his father's hopes and expectations.

Works

Mill joined the debate over scientific method which followed on from John Herschel's 1830 publication of *A Preliminary Discourse on the study of Natural Philosophy*, which incorporated inductive reasoning from the known to the unknown, discovering general laws in specific facts and verifying these laws empirically. William Whewell expanded on this in his 1837 *History of the Inductive Sciences, from the Earliest to the Present Time* followed in 1840 by *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences, Founded Upon their History*, presenting induction as the mind superimposing concepts on facts.

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Liberty

John Stuart Mill's view on liberty, which was influenced by Joseph Priestley and Josiah Warren, is that the individual ought to be free to do as she/he wishes unless she/he harms others. Individuals are rational enough to make decisions about their well being. Government should interfere when it is for the protection of society. Mill explained:

The sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection.

Colonialism

Mill, an employee for the British East India Company from 1823 to 1858,[39] argued in support of what he called a 'benevolent despotism' with regard to the colonies.[40] Mill argued that "To suppose that the same international customs, and the same rules of international morality, can obtain between one civilized nation and another, and between civilized nations and barbarians, is a grave error....To characterize any conduct whatever towards a barbarous people as a violation of the law of nations, only shows that he who so speaks has never considered the subject

Economic philosophy

Mill's early economic philosophy was one of free markets. However, he accepted interventions in the economy, such as a tax on alcohol, if there were sufficient utilitarian grounds. He also accepted the principle of legislative intervention for the purpose of animal welfare. Mill originally believed that "equality of taxation" meant "equality of sacrifice" and that progressive taxation penalised those who worked harder and saved more and was therefore "a mild form of robbery".

Given an equal tax rate regardless of income, Mill agreed that inheritance should be taxed.