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The Religious Views of John Stuart Mill

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The Religious Views of John Stuart Mill

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THE RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF JOHN STUART MILL

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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THE RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF JOHN STUART MILL

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The University of New Mexico, 1972

The main problem I undertake to solve is the proper interpretation of what Mill's religious views were. A large number of conflicting and contradictory interpretations has appeared since the publication of Mill's Three Essays on Religion in 1874. And the many publications attending the recent revival of interest in Mill have contained little substantial help respecting this problem. My procedure is first to delineate the dominant modes of thought that influenced Mill during the first thirty years or so of his life. Turning next to Mill's writings specifically on the subject of religion, I discuss his conception of the general problem of religion. This discussion, together with the preceding one, reveal three strands of thought in Mill's religious philosophy: the theistic or rationalistic, the emotive or aesthetic, and the moral. In the third part of the study I concentrate upon the first of these motifs, upon Mill's analysis of the rational grounds for theism. This discussion centers in the design argument for God's existence. In the last part of the study I discuss all three components of Mill's philosophy of religion, criticizing his conclusion that he has shown the design argument possesses sufficient strength satisfactorily to serve as rational grounds for supernatural hopes. I conclude that, in strictness, Mill does not advocate a religion of imaginative hope, as is frequently thought, but a religion of imaginative wish. Finally I argue that Mill's religious views are properly designated as theistic humanism, and that this is their only proper designation.

CONTENTS

KEY TO ABBREVIATED REFERENCES

WORKS BY MILL

A The Autobiography of John Stuart Mill. John Jacob Coss edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 1924.

ACP Auguste Comte and Positivism. 4th edition. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., 1891.

E An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy. 5th edition. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1878.

Elliot The Letters of John Stuart Mill. Edited by Hugh S. R. Elliot. 2 vols. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910.

L A System of Logic. 8th edition. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1952.

N "Nature" in Nature and Utility of Religion. Edited by George Nakhnikian. New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958.

T Theism. Edited by Richard Taylor. New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957.

U "Utility of Religion" in Nature and Utility of Religion. Edited by George Nakhnikian. New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958.

Works Collected Works of John Stuart Mill. John M. Robson, gen. ed., 7 vols. to date. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963--.

OTHER WORKS

GVP Comte, Auguste. A General View of Positivism. Translated by J. H. Bridges. New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1957.

JSM Bain, Alexander. John Stuart Mill, A Criticism with Personal Recollections. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1882.

Packe Packe, Michael St. John. The Life of John Stuart Mill. London: Secker and Warburg, 1954.

INTRODUCTION

The thought of John Stuart Mill has been more intensely studied during the last two decades than at any other time during the present century. In 1951 Professor Hayek complained about the "present eclipse" of Mill's reputation,[1] and predicted this state of affairs would not last. It certainly hasn't. Fresh studies on many aspects of Mill's thought have since appeared. At least four of these have been on Mill's philosophy as a whole[2] and a fifth such study has just been printed.[3] His collected works are now in the process of being published--for the first time in English.[4] And an adequate biography appeared in 1954 (also for the first time), over eighty years after Mill's death. The disparagement of Mill as an inconsistent thinker is of long standing and well-known.[5] But, as the author of a recent article on Mill has suggested, it is now no longer fashionable "to indulge in the familiar pastime of ferreting out inconsistencies and fallacies in the thought of one of the keenest, noblest, and least expendable thinkers and doers of the XIXth century."[6] J. O. Urmson's remarks in this respect are classic:[7]

> His [Mill's] Utilitarianism is a work which every undergraduate is set to read and which one would therefore expect Mill's critics to have read at least once. But this, apparently, is not so; and instead of Mill's own doctrines a travesty is discussed, so that the most common criticisms of him are simply irrelevant. It will not be the thesis of this paper that Mill's views are immune to criticism, or that they are of impeccable clarity and verbal consistency; it will be maintained that, if interpreted with, say, half the sympathy automatically accorded to Plato, Leibniz, and Kant, an essentially consistent thesis can be discovered which is very superior to that usually attributed to Mill and immune to the common run of criticisms.

But I need not give extended attention to this rather remarkable resurgence of interest in Mill during the midyears of our century. The

complete record is contained in The Mill News Letter.[8] What I wish to point out is that this stepped-up attention to Mill has not, in any very substantial way at all, extended to the subject of the present study: his religious views. As the author of one of the very few articles on these views to be published in recent years says: "Mill's posthumously published Three Essays on Religion warrant [even from the viewpoint of the history of ideas] far more than the merely casual interest scholars have generally accorded them."[9] Several of Mill's writings, and correspondence, contain passages important for understanding his opinions about religion. But his Three Essays, published (1874) the year following his death, is the principal source for any study of these opinions. It is his only book devoted specifically to religion. The three essays are: Nature, Utility of Religion, and Theism. The first two essays were written between 1854 and 1858; the last, between 1868 and 1870. Theism was his last major work and his only work on the question of religious truth. Due to his sudden death he was unable to complete Theism in the manner he would have desired. Despite its limitations, however, it must be considered his definitive work on philosophical theology.

The main problem that occupies Mill in Theism is the problem of God's existence. He discusses, in a rather cursory manner, several of the classical proofs for the existence of God, but the only one he defends is the design argument. And it is upon this argument that I wish to focus attention in that portion of this study concerned with the foundations of Mill's theological speculations. I realize that many philosophers, and other thinkers, do not now take this proof from design very seriously. And much indeed can be said against it; take, for just one instance, the following argument. Is not the term God a religious term? It is

certainly not regarded as a term of science. Yet doesn't every discussion of the design argument, if pressed, lead us inevitably into the maze of often-conflicting opinions among the experts in science, attenuating itself there to a point of no return? But even if it were to be admitted that the argument is convincing, there is still the question of the utility of a merely probable God to the man of religion. (In this study I use the terms religion and God as they are most commonly used in the West, in theism and Christianity in particular.) And the best the design argument can do is show the existence of God to be more probable than not. This "proof" would seem to be of important religious utility only if the existence of God is already believed in upon grounds other than design, in which case the argument from teleology is not needed as a proof. Mill became aware early in life that a merely probable God is tantamount to no God at all to men like Carlyle who, in Mill's judgment, possessed a firm "faith" in God. Mill wrote Carlyle in 1834: ". . . I have only what appears to you much the same thing as, or even worse than, no God at all, namely, a merely probable God" (Elliot 1.90). It can be argued that men like Hocking are right when they insist that "God can be of any [religious] worth to man only in so far as he is a known God."[10] If there is, say, a fifty percent probability that God exists, there is also a fifty percent probability that he does not exist. It is hard to see how religion, as ordinarily understood, could ever get off the ground from this sort of foundation. Such arguments as this one suggest why the proof from teleology does not have anything like the respect today that the ontological has; at least this latter argument receives exceedingly more attention.[11]

But, first, "fashions" vary in philosophy. The design argument is likely to be around indefinitely. It may be more highly regarded in the

future. Evidence of this sort of thing is to be found in the writings of Mill himself. Speaking in the general context of the problem of universals, he says that Platonic realism "is now universally abandoned," nor is it "likely to be revived" (E 382). But Bertrand Russell, Mill's godson (see Packe 439), made a Herculean effort to revive a Platonic sort of realism—in the guise of logical atomism—in the next generation after Mill.[12] Again: Mill couldn't conceive of the ontological argument being taken seriously by candid truth-seekers at the time he wrote Theism. He considered the examination of this argument largely a "waste of time" (T 24). But the whole philosophical world is now familiar with the unprecedented attention recently given to this "many-faced argument."[13]

Second, the design argument is not dead.[14] Although there are those who hear its death rattle or pronounce it dead,[15] its ghost ever escapes the grave. Third, many philosophers would deem a "probable God" (the only kind of God the design argument can establish) neither an absurdity nor religiously useless. William James, for instance, considered such a God very far indeed from useless.[16] But this is not to say there aren't problems connected with the concept of a probable God, and I must carefully consider these in the proper place. Fourth, although Mill's treatment of the proof in question is crucial, there is, besides his examination and evaluation of it, the interesting additional consideration of what he does with the argument; that is, the place he gives it in his religious philosophy as a whole. This point is worth emphasizing at the outset. Mill is not interested in whether or not the teleological argument conclusively proves God's existence. This sort of proof, which is presumably appropriate only to the ontological argument, is irrelevant to the discussion for him. The question is, What degree of cogency, what proper

weight of persuasiveness, does the design argument merit? He argues that it possesses sufficient strength satisfactorily to serve as rational grounds for supernatural hopes--for something like what is called today, in some circles, a theology of hope.[17]

But, of course, Mill's religious views are not coterminous with the argument from design. There are three strands of thought in these views: the theistic, the emotive, and the moral. I shall consider all these components, but concentrate upon the rationalistic or theological motif; and the design argument is central here. This concentration will not preclude the scope of the present work from encompassing all that is essential in Mill's religious philosophy, but it will preclude a full treatment of all phases of this philosophy.

Finally, as concerns the aim and scope of the present study, there is the "vexed question"--to use a Millian phrase--of interpretation. There has never been agreement as to what Mill's religious views are. Interpreters of almost every philosopher disagree, but I think this is true respecting Mill to an unusual degree. The number of conflicting and contradictory interpretations expressed in books and journals since the appearance of Three Essays are far too numerous to mention. But I shall note a few contemporary ones. Theism was reprinted in 1957, edited by Richard Taylor; Nature and Utility of Religion was reprinted in 1958, edited by George Nakhnikian. Taylor affirms (T ix) that "Mill did believe that there does exist a God or Demiurge." Nakhnikian, however, says in his Introduction to Nature and Utility of Religion that the conclusion of Theism is that "knowledge [of God] is not accessible to men" (p. xix). Whereas McCloskey says, in one of the most recent books on Mill to be published, that Nature and Utility of Religion "are unsympathetic to

religion" but "Theism is sympathetic and verges on the tendentious in its arriving at a theistic conclusion."[18] Ellery, speaking of Three Essays, not just Theism, writes that "much can be said to support them [Three Essays] as a convincing, intellectual endorsement of religion."[19] But F. E. L. Priestley is confident that the real "lasting confession of faith" of Mill is a "purely human . . . Religion of Humanity."[20] Apparently Priestley does not take Mill's theological speculations very seriously, and does not believe they occupy a place of much importance in Mill's religious position. I am confident Priestley's interpretation should, at the very least, be qualified. I would also qualify some of the other varying interpretations in a manner the sequel of this study will suggest.

In view of these disagreements concerning Mill's attitude toward religion in general and theism in particular, my main purpose in this study is to reexamine Mill's own statements and to discover, if possible, what is essential in the religious views of "the saint of rationalism."[21]

NOTES

[1]F. A. Hayek, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor: Their Correspondence and Subsequent Marriage (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 16. Prof. Hayek has been a leader in reviving interest in Mill. He is one of the best examples, since the death of John Morley in 1923, of the fact that Mill has not lost his power to make disciples. The present leader of the renaissance of scholarly attention to Mill is Prof. John M. Robson of the University of Toronto, general editor of the Collected Works of John Stuart Mill and editor, with Michael Laine, of The Mill News Letter.

[2]Richard P. Anschutz, The Philosophy of J. S. Mill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953). Karl Britton, John Stuart Mill (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1953); a 2d ed. is now published by Dover Publications. John B. Ellery, John Stuart Mill (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1964). Alan Ryan, John Stuart Mill (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

[3]H. J. McCloskey, The Philosophy of J. S. Mill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971).

[4]Collected Works of John Stuart Mill, John M. Robson, gen. ed., 7 vols. to date (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963--). In the first issue of The Mill News Letter (vol. 1, no. 1; fall, 1965), Robson says the Collected Works will eventually reach "at least twenty-two volumes" (p. 20).

[5]See, e.g., W. Stanley Jevons, Pure Logic and Other Minor Works (London, 1890), esp. p. 201 where he concludes that Mill's intellect was "essentially illogical." Cf. D. M. MacKinnon, Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: An Historic Revaluation of the Victorian Age (London, 1949), p. 143: It is "unfortunate that his [Mill's] writings are so often regarded by the student simply as sourcebooks for the most vulgar kind of fallacy."

[6]Herbert Spiegelberg, "'Accident of Birth': A Non-Utilitarian Motif in Mill's Philosophy," Journal of the History of Ideas 22 (1961): 475.

[7]J. O. Urmson, "The Interpretation of the Moral Philosophy of J. S. Mill," Philosophical Quarterly 3 (1953): 33.

[8]Among the many valuable features of this publication is an exhaustive bibliography of writings on Mill.

[9]Robert Carr, "The Religious Thought of John Stuart Mill: A Study in Reluctant Scepticism," Journal of the History of Ideas 23 (1962): 475.

[10]William Ernest Hocking, The Meaning of God in Human Experience (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963 [first pub. 1912]), pp. 214-15.

[11]See, e.g., Alvin Plantinga, ed., The Ontological Argument: From St. Anselm to Contemporary Philosophers (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday

and Co., 1965). Also see John Hick and Arthur C. McGill, eds., The Many-faced Argument: Recent Studies on the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God (New York: Macmillan Co., 1967); and Charles Hartshorne, Anselm's Discovery (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing Co., 1965).

[12]For a concise exposition of the realism of the early Russell, see the article in Encyc. of Phil. (7.235-58) by Edwards, Alston, and Prior. This "extreme realism" of Russell is represented best in his The Principles of Mathematics (1903) and Problems of Philosophy (1912).

[13]See Hick's and McGill's preface to their The Many-faced Argument.

[14]One of the most notable efforts to reconstruct the teleological argument is that of Frederick R. Tennant, Philosophical Theology, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930). Peter A. Bertocci, Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1951), chaps. 13-15, has elaborated what he calls the "wider teleological argument." He says (p. 331) his argument rests "not on the surface harmonies, but on the ultimate conditions which make harmonies possible." Richard Taylor, in his Metaphysics, Foundations of Philosophy Series (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), sets forth a novel form of the design argument based upon our sensory and cognitive faculties. As of a couple of years ago Prof. Taylor told me the philosophical community had ignored his argument. But now see E. D. Klemke, "The Argument from Design," Ratio 11 (1969): 102-6. Finally, R. G. Swinburne, in his "The Argument from Design," Philosophy 43 (1968): 199-212, argues that the proof, when carefully articulated, contains no formal fallacies such as men like Hempel, Braithwaite, or Popper might object to (see p. 212, n. 3).

[15]See the excellent study by Robert H. Hurlbutt III, Hume, Newton, and the Design Argument (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1965). He entitles his tenth chapter "The Curtain Call": "I have named this chapter 'The Curtain Call' because, with Hume's Dialogues, the cognitive or rational part of the drama of the design argument is over and done with" (p. 170).

[16]See William James, The Will to Believe, Dover ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1956). James supports the probability of God's existence by an appeal to hope, certainly at least in "The Will to Believe." He ends the essay (p. 31) on this note of hope. See also the pivotal point of his argument (p. 27): "Dupery for dupery, what proof is there that dupery through hope is so much worse than dupery through fear?" On James' religious views see Robert J. Roth, S.J., American Religious Philosophy (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967), pp. 27-62.

[17]Also called futurism. See Jürgen Moltmann, "The Future as Threat and as Opportunity," The Religious Situation: 1969, ed. Donald R. Cutler (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 921-41. According to Louis Weeks III Moltmann's Theology of Hope, trans. J. W. Leitch (New York: Harper, 1967) is a "totally representative example" of the "school" of thought designated as the theology of hope. See Weeks' "Can Saint Thomas's Summa Theologiae Speak to Moltmann's Theology of Hope?" The Thomist 33 (1969): 216. For an excellent account of the whole movement, see

Gerald G. O'Collins, S.J., "Spes Quaerens Intellectum," Interpretation 22 (1968): 35-54. On p. 38 O'Collins says: "Moltmann agrees with [Ernst] Bloch that the future, the horizon of hope, must take primacy. Hence the motto he [Moltmann] proposes for contemporary theology: Spes quaerens intellectum or Spero ut intelligam." (Trans.: "Hope seeking understanding" or "I hope in order that I may understand.")

[18]H. J. McCloskey, John Stuart Mill: A Critical Study (New York: Macmillan; St. Martin's Press, 1971), p. 161.

[19]John B. Ellery, John Stuart Mill (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1964), p. 104. Ellery's view is not far from that of John Morley. In his article "Mr. Mill's Three Essays on Religion," Fortnightly Review 16 n.s., (1874): 634, Morley writes: "I am not sure that Mill does not leave them [orthodox theologians] as much as they want."

[20]Mill's Collected Works, vol. 10, Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society, with introd. by F. E. L. Priestley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p. lviii. Cf. John M. Robson, "J. S. Mill's Theory of Poetry," University of Toronto Quarterly 22 (1960): 436: "Lacking the supernatural sanctions, he accepts a Religion of Humanity which bolsters moral conduct with natural sanctions."

[21]See Wilfrid Ward, "John Stuart Mill," Quarterly Review 213 (1910): 264-92 where he, in considering the strength and limitations of Mill, contrasts this sobriquet (Gladstone's; see Packe 455) with that of Disraeli. The latter dubbed Mill the priggish "finishing governess."

PART ONE. HERITAGE

CHAPTER I

THE INFLUENCE OF BENTHAM AND COMTE

In his Autobiography Mill indicates that the first period of his life dates from birth (1806) to his mental crisis in the fall of 1826. He characterizes this period as his years of Benthamism (A 152) or "sectarian Benthamism" (A 79). The second period dates from 1826 to about 1840 (cf., e.g., A 133, 161). Mill refers to this period as his years of reaction against "what was untenable in the doctrines of Bentham and [the negative philosophy] of the eighteenth century" (A 153). The third period dates from about 1840 to the death of his wife in 1858. He refers to this period as years of "counter-reaction . . . towards what is good in Benthamism" as "an instrument of progress" (A 153): "In this third period (as it may be termed) of my mental progress . . . I had now completely turned back from what there had been of excess in my reaction against Benthamism" (A 161).

Mill does not refer to the years following 1858 as another period of his life, but they may be so considered. With the exception of his career in the House of Commons (1865-68) this final period (1858-73) was, according to Mill, years of "tranquil and retired existence as a writer of books" (A 196). He makes only one reference to Benthamism in his account of these years, and in this reference he speaks incidentally of his "old days of Benthamism" (A 190). And, indeed, Benthamism or philosophical radicalism had largely "died out"[1] or "spent its strength"[2]

by the time Mill published his well-known articles on Bentham (1838) and Coleridge (1840). Mill now, in his fourth period, refers to himself as a liberal[3] or "advanced" liberal (A 201, 205, 211). Yet, as has been truly remarked, "the sentiment of a faith is a far stronger thing than its mere doctrines, and Mill never really cast off the sentiment of Benthamism."[4] "Sentiment of a faith" is quite accurately used here. Mill tells us (A 47) that Benthamism was his first "religion"—"in one among the best senses of the word."[5] In Mill's own opinion (at least as of the mid-1850s),[6] then, the general character of his thought was, as it were, "variations upon a theme of Benthamism." Before discussing the most important individuals who influenced the development of Mill's religious thought, it might be useful to give some attention to what is meant by Benthamism.

The connotations of the term are of several kinds: moral, social, political, legislative. Benthamism, utilitarianism, and philosophical radicalism are used more or less synonymously.[7] But perhaps in the main Benthamism suggests the teachings of Bentham; utilitarianism, the leading ethical doctrine[8] of the powerful philosophical and political movement in which Mill was born and reared; philosophical radicalism, the political movement itself. Mill refers to the "Benthamic type of radicalism" (A 68) as an effort to co-rect the abuses of political power on the part of aristocratic ruling classes "by means (among other things) of giving more political power to the majority . . . by means of universal suffrage without king or house of lords" (Works 10.107). Halévy, having in mind the theoretical or philosophical grounds of Benthamism, writes: "What is known as utilitarianism or philosophical radicalism can be defined as nothing but an attempt to apply the principles of Newton to

the affairs of politics and of morals" (Halévy 6). Stephen (1.179) writes similarly: "Bentham hoped for no less an achievement than to become the Newton of the moral world." But the most obvious reference of Benthamism is to the fundamental principles of the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham. And, in Mill's view, the "first principle" of Bentham's philosophy and the principle from which followed "all his other doctrines as logical consequences," was "the 'principle of utility', or . . . 'the greatest-happiness principle'" (Works 10.110-11).

Bentham defines the "all-comprehensive and all-directing principle" of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" (Bentham's Works 4.537, 10.79)[9] as that principle which states that "the greatest happiness of all those whose interest is in question" is "the right and proper, and only right and proper and universally desirable, end of human action: of human action in every situation . . . ." (Bentham's Works 1.1). Bentham's pronouncements in the opening sections of his Principles of Morals and Legislation are well-known; they need not detain us. But the sweeping, dogmatic character of these pronouncements should be noted. They are not made in the spirit of a philosophical inquiry. Bentham's Principles is a manifesto, an assertion of what Bentham was convinced is absolutely the case. His "gospel" was fully competent to make converts. Mill, speaking of how Bentham's doctrine made him "a different being" (A 47) when a lad of fifteen, writes:

> The 'principle of utility' understood as Bentham understood it, and applied in the manner in which he applied it . . . fell exactly into its place as the keystone which held together the detached and fragmentary component parts of my knowledge and beliefs. It gave unity to my conceptions of things. I now had opinions; a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy; in one among the best senses of the word, a religion; the inculcation and diffusion of which could be made the principal outward purpose of a life. And I had a grand conception laid before me of changes to be effected in the condition of mankind through that doctrine (A 47).

The principle of utility gave unity to Mill's conception of things in a manner not altogether unlike God commonly gives unity to the conceptions of believers in ordinary religion. In any case Bentham considered the "theological principle" the most pernicious ("Mischievous") rival to his happiness principle.

The "theological principle"--"that principle which professes to recur for the standard of right and wrong to the will of God"[10]--is "not in fact a distinct principle," writes Bentham. The assurance that whatever is right conforms to the will of God does not tell us what is right: "it is necessary to know first whether a thing is right, in order to know from thence whether it is conformable to the will of God." Therefore, revelation apart, "no light can ever be thrown upon the standard of right and wrong, by any thing that can be said upon the question, what is God's will." The "only right ground of action that can possibly subsist, is, after all, the consideration of utility." It is "the sole and all-sufficient reason for every point of practice whatsoever" (Bentham's Works 1.10-11, 271-2). This is the heart of Benthamism.[11]

We may then think of Benthamism, in the general context of the religious dimension of Mill's thought, as having a negative and a positive meaning. In its negative sense it means antireligion; that is, antagonism toward the established church, popular supernaturalism in general, and even so-called "natural religion" or deism--all such being considered inimical to the general happiness and progressiveness of mankind. And, in its positive sense, we may think of Benthamism as being similar in meaning to a humanism; that is, a system and mode of thought centering upon distinctively and exclusively human interests, capacities, and ideals, and dedicated to the ameliorism of, or the general welfare of,

humanity: dedicated to the "practical improvements in human affairs," as Mill puts it (A 46). It is Benthamism in this positive sense, of course, that appealed to the young Mill as a "religion"--the negative sense existing only because considered a threat to the positive sense:

> My previous education had been [writes Mill, A 45-6], in a certain sense, already a course of Benthamism. . . . Yet in the first pages of Bentham it burst upon me with all the force of novelty. . . . The feeling rushed upon me, that all previous moralists were superseded, and that here indeed was the commensement of a new era in thought. . . . I felt taken up to an eminence from which I could survey a vast mental domain, and see stretching out into the distance intellectual results beyond all computation. . . . [and] there seemed to be added to this intellectual clearness, the most inspiring prospects of practical improvements in human affairs.

Mill adds (A 48) that the "vista of improvement" that "Bentham's doctrines" opened to him "was sufficiently large and brilliant to light up my life, as well as to give a definite shape to my aspirations." In Utility of Religion (U 68-9), Mill associates such "grandeur of aspiration" with poetic imagination--a quality eminently unBenthamic.[12]

And the association of Benthamism with "a religion" or "the sentiment of a faith" is also unBenthamic. In U 71-2 Mill defines the essence of religion as "the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires toward an ideal object, recognized as of the highest excellence. . . ." The association of Benthamism with emotions and desires would have deeply grieved Mill's teachers during the first period of his life, that is, Bentham and James Mill. Benthamism as the sentiment of a faith would have been quite heretical.[13] In this light Halévy's frequently-cited assessment of John Mill can be well appreciated.

> . . . truly, no one gives the impression of a manufactured personality more than he [John Mill] does. Stuart Mill was indeed the work of James Mill, working on the model suggested by Bentham. Nevertheless, although James Mill succeeded in making of his son a citizen and a thinker, who if not eminent was at least eminently useful, there are hints in Stuart Mill of an original nature, which was sentimental and

> almost religious, and which was not made for the purely intellectual and abstract system imposed on it since childhood, and which was all the time trying to react against it (284-5).

Benthamism, in one of its meanings, connotes antireligion. Yet, to Mill, being emotionally constituted as he was, Benthamism was something like the very opposite: it was his first "religion." I turn now to the main individuals who helped form the general character of Mill's religious thought.

James Mill and Bentham were, of course, the dominant influences during the first period of his life. After 1828 Mill was strongly influenced by Wordsworth. And Comte's influence became increasingly substantial after 1830, reaching its height between the years 1837 and 1845;[14] and, as far as the religion of humanity is concerned,[15] continuing to the end of his life. I do not treat these influences in the order they occurred in Mill's life, but according to their dominant character. Bentham and Comte are similar; Mill himself classes the two together as "skeptical" writers (U 49-50). I consider these positivist thinkers in the present chapter. They tended to influence Mill in a theistically negative way. I consider James Mill and Wordsworth in the next chapter: these make strange bedfellows indeed in many ways. Yet, as we shall see, both seem to have influenced Mill in a theistically positive way. Each of these individuals is actually the representative of a cluster of other like-minded thinkers and writers who influenced Mill in the same general direction.[16] A more detailed treatment than I here undertake would include these "second-order" influences.

In 1822 Bentham's The Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind was published, under the pseudonym of Philip Beauchamp. Mill read the book in this year (1822,

aetat. 16) and reports (A 50) that "next to the Traité de Législation [of Bentham], it ["Beauchamp"] was one of the books which by the searching character of its analysis produced the greatest effect upon me." Bentham singled out natural religion for scrutiny because, according to Mill, "those who reject revelation very generally take refuge in an optimistic Deism, a worship of the order of Nature, and the supposed course of Providence."[17] And this belief and practice is, Mill is convinced, "at least as full of contradictions, and perverting to the moral sentiments, as any of the forms of Christianity, if only it is as completely realized."

Bentham's thesis in "Beauchamp" is that religion "has produced a large balance of temporal evil [pain] above temporal good [pleasure]," and is, therefore, "the foe and not the benefactor of mankind" (v).[18] Most of the arguments Bentham uses to support this thesis ultimately rest upon his theory of knowledge. He does not, however, formulate his epistemological position in "Beauchamp" in any very satisfactory way at all. But elsewhere (Bentham's Works 1.238-9)[19] he writes: "Experience, Observation, Experiment, Reflection, or the results of each and of all together; these are the means, these are the instruments by which knowledge--such as is within the power of man--is picked up, put together, and treasured up. . . ." I shall cite, without critique, three of the more important and representative arguments of "Beauchamp." This, plus what has already been said about Bentham and Benthamism, should make fairly clear the general character of the antireligious diet of the young Mill. The first argument makes direct use of the epistemological stance just cited. The second argument impugns James Mill's "Omnipotent Author of Hell" (see p. 36 below). The third argument is leveled against the afterlife in general and posthumous rewards in particular. Recall (see

notes 17 and 19 at the end of this chapter) that, for Bentham, "natural religion" really means the popular, institutionalized religion such as Anglicanism (above all Anglicanism!)--but not excluding deism or natural religion.

First argument: (1) The fundamental tenet of "natural religion" is the conviction there "exists a Being unseen, unheard, untouched, untasted, and unsmelt—his place of residence unknown--his shape and dimensions unknown--his original beginning undiscovered." (2) Now this "obviously" shows that "no one can ever have had any experience of his existence." For the experiencing of any external existent "supposes certain concomitant circumstances--the exercise of one of our senses--the definite time and place of existence—a particular size and figure." (3) The "very basis, therefore, of natural religion is an article of extra-experimental belief, or of belief altogether unconformable to experience." (4) Hence this fundamental tenet "has a tendency, in the very outset, to introduce . . . mental depravation" (96). That is, it encourages commitment of the sin of believing without evidence, as James Mill would put it. Bentham's empiricism specifies, of course, what is permitted to count as evidence. And James Mill was as sublimely certain in this matter as was Bentham--as was John Mill. The younger Mill affirms:

> The truth, on this much-debated [epistemological] question. lies with the school of Locke and of Bentham. The nature of laws of Things in Themselves, or of the hidden causes of the phenomena which are the objects of experience, appear to us radically inaccessible to the human faculties. We see no ground for believing that anything can be the object of our knowledge except our experience, and what can be inferred from our experience by the analogies of experience itself; nor that there is any idea, feeling, or power in the human mind, which, in order to account for it [knowledge], requires that its origin should be referred to any other source (Works 10.29).

Second argument: (1) "The epithets capricious, insane, incomprehensible, are perfectly convertible and synonymous." (2) The "Deity

is an unknown and incomprehensible agency." (3) Therefore "I have assimilated the God of natural religion, on the ground of his attribute of incomprehensibility, to a madman." (4) Men regard a madman, that is, an incomprehensible man, with trembling and terror. But let us arm this madman "with a naked sword!" We now have a picture which "constitutes the Deity, as pourtrayed by natural religion." "Can the utmost stretch of fancy produce any picture so appalling, as that of a mad, capricious, and incomprehensible Being exalted to this overwhelming sway?" (5) "So complete is this identity between incomprehensible conduct and madness, that amongst early nations, the madman is supposed to be under the immediate inspiration and controul of the Deity, whose agency is always believed to commence where coherent and rational behaviour terminates" (17-19, 117-8). Happiness is, it scarcely need be said, wholly out of the question in the "thraldom" (129) of this cosmic maniac.

Third argument: In the early pages of "Beauchamp," Bentham addresses himself to the question of whether or not "the belief of posthumous pains and pleasures, then to be administered by an omnipotent Being, is useful to mankind--that is, productive of happiness or misery in the present life" (3). In the first place if natural religion does contribute to human happiness, either it must, according to Bentham, "provide a <u>directive rule</u>, communicating the knowledge of the <u>right path</u>--or it must furnish <u>a sanction</u> or inducement for the observance of some directive rule, supposed to be known from other sources." (2) But it is "obvious at first sight that natural religion communicates to mankind no rule of guidance." Indeed it cannot do so: "Independent of revelation, it cannot be pretended that there exists any standard": "Experience imparts no information upon the subject, not a glimmering of light to

guide us. The darkness is desperate and unfathomable." (3) Now "fear is the never-failing companion and offspring of ignorance." And the form of pain called fear is "a far stronger, more pungent, and more distinct sensation than pleasure"; it "lays hold of the imagination with greater mastery and permanence." (4) Hence "a posthumous existence, if really anticipated, is far more likely to be conceived as a state of suffering, than of enjoyment," which "will assuredly occasion more misery than happiness to those who entertain it" (3-7).

Mill followed Bentham in holding that nature is not able to provide a directive rule for morality. His main effort in Nature is an attempt to establish this very point: "that which is in accordance with nature is right" cannot be an acceptable rule for morality because, for one thing, nature is "red in tooth and claw"--to use Tennyson's phrase. In Utility of Religion Mill argues that the religion of humanity is, in several important respects, superior to any form of supernaturalism, and makes limited use of some of the arguments in "Beauchamp"--aware, however, that Bentham pressed his arguments "too hard" (U 50). Bentham's influence is not at all prominent in Theism. But, as concerns the popular theology, especially as literally interpreted, Mill remained in fundamental agreement with Bentham. As Bain says (JSM 140): "In everything characteristic of the creed of Christendom [viewed literally], he [Mill] was a thorough-going negationist." I now turn to Comte.

Mill himself, in ACP, has given us the classical exposition of Comte's philosophy. According to Mill this philosophy rests on three basic doctrines: the relativity of human knowledge, the law of the three stages, and Comte's classification of the sciences. The second doctrine is, in Mill's judgment, "the key to M. Comte's other generalizations" and

"forms the backbone" of his philosophy (ACP 13). This "general theorem" of the three stages

> is [Mill explains] that every distinct class of human conceptions passes through all these stages, beginning with the theological, and proceeding through the metaphysical to the positive: the metaphysical being a mere state of transition, but an indispensable one, from the theological mode of thought to the positive, which is destined finally to prevail, by the universal recognition that all phenomena without exception are governed by invariable laws, with which no volitions, either natural or supernatural, interfere. This general theorem is completed by the addition, that the theological mode of thought has three stages, Fetishism, Polytheism, and Monotheism. . . (ACP 12).

Mill says (A 116): "This doctrine harmonized well with my existing notions,[20] to which it seemed to give a scientific shape." And indeed Auguste Comte and positivism--both the man and his doctrine--seemed ready-made for the next stage in Mill's mental progress, the stage after Benthamism.[21] I shall not detail how the whole doctrine and program of Comte, and Comte as a thinker and as a person, seemed ready-made for the next rung in Mill's ladder. There are studies now in print which do this.[22] But the following references, which bear upon relatively minor points, may illustrate why I have employed the term "ready-made" here. Comte writes (GVP 18): "Indeed, so feeble is our intellect, that the impulse of some passion is necessary to direct and sustain it in almost every effort." Although in the end Comte's anti-intellectualism became too much for Mill,[23] nevertheless it can be appreciated that Comte's position on the limitations of the intellect would appeal to one who, as a young man, had been a rabid intellectual; and had experienced a cruel mental crisis brought on largely through the overexercise of the mind to the neglect of "the feelings" (A 105). Mill's mental crisis (see pp. 46-8 below) brought on a distressful collapse of motivation: "I was . . . left stranded [Mill tells us, A 98] at the commencement of my voyage [when

twenty years of age], with a well-equipped ship and a rudder, but no sail; without any real desire for the ends which I had been so carefully fitted out to work for." And, as will become quite obvious when we consider Wordsworth's influence (pp. 46-9 below), Mill would heartily agree with Comte that there "are numberless instances to prove that the heart of Man is capable of emotions which have no outward basis, except what Imagination has supplied" (GVP 291).

On a different subject, but a most important one for Mill, Comte writes (GVP 287-8) that in the "new religion" of Positivism or the religion of humanity

> tenderness of heart is looked upon as the first of Woman's attributes. . . . Positivism . . . encourages . . . full and systematic expression of the feeling of veneration for Women. . . . Born to love and to be loved, relieved from the burdens of practical life, free in the sacred retirement of their homes, the women of the West will receive from Positivists the tribute of deep and sincere admiration which their life inspires. They will feel no scrupple in accepting their position as spontaneous priestesses of Humanity; they will fear no longer the rivalry of a vindictive Deity.

Although in the end, again, Mill came strongly to dissent from Comte on the "female question,"[24] nevertheless it can be appreciated that these words of Comte, directed toward the "spontaneous priestesses of Humanity," would likely have a strong appeal to one (Mill) who came very close to worshipping Harriet Taylor.[25] She was esteemed by Mill in a manner not unlike Clotilde de Vaux was venerated by Comte.[26] Mill may not have prayed to the memory of Harriet as he says Comte prayed "to the memory of his Clotilde" (ACP 151), but Mill says (A 169) that he now, after Harriet's death, works "on for her purposes" with strength "derived from thoughts of her, and communion with her memory": "Her memory is to me a religion, and her approbation the standard by which, summing up as it does all worthiness, I endeavour to regulate my life" (A 170).

This brings to mind one of Mill's pronouncements in ACP: "If a person has an ideal object, his attachment and sense of duty towards which are able to control and discipline all his other sentiments and propensities, and prescribe to him a rule of life, that person has a religion (134). Perhaps it is in this sense that Harriet's memory was "a religion" to Mill--a sense he is careful to distinguish from customary parlance (ACP 134). In ordinary religion the sentiments crystallize around, not a mere idea of course, but a "concrete object," "a really existing one," a Supreme Being such as "Theism and Christianity offer to the believer" (ACP 133). Conventional religion believes its "conceptions have realities answering to them in some other world than ours" (U 68). Mill was always aware of the "great advantage" of belief in the real existence of God and immortality over that of mere ideal existence (ACP 133, U 77, Elliot 1.127). And it is, of course, the supposed real existence of God Mill gives attention to in Theism, that is, a concept purporting to reflect a reality in some other world than ours.

Finally, the confluence of the modes of thought and feeling of Comte and Mill was remarkably extensive[27]--up to a point as always--on the function of what Comte called (GVP 423, e.g.) the "philosophic priesthood," that is, the priesthood of the Religion of Humanity. Mill writes (A 148):

> There was nothing in his [Comte's] great Treatise [Cours de Philosophie Positive] which I admired more than his remarkable exposition of the benefits which the nations of modern Europe have historically derived from the separation, during the middle ages, of temporal and spiritual power, and the distinct organization of the latter. I agreed with him that the moral and intellectual ascendancy, once exercised by priests, must in time pass into the hands of philosophers, and will naturally do so when they become sufficiently unanimous, and in other respects worthy to possess it.

Such statements indicate that the author of On Liberty, "the godfather

of English liberalism," may not have been so liberal after all.[28] In any case, however, Mill in the end concludes that Comte

> . . . in his last work, the 'Système de Politique Positive,' [set forth] the completest system of spiritual and temporal despotism which ever yet emanated from a human brain, unless possibly that of Ignatius Loyola: a system by which the yoke of general opinion, wielded by an organized body of spiritual teachers and rulers, would be made supreme over every action . . . of every member of the community. . . . The book stands a monumental warning to thinkers on society and politics, of what happens when once men lose sight in their speculations, of the value of Liberty and of Individuality (A 149).

Thus, characteristically, the minds of the two men proceed asymtotically, then diverge sharply. And this trait can also be seen in connection with the doctrine of the three stages. Having shown how Comte's positivism was, for Mill, a kind of advanced Benthamism in some important respects, I now return to Comte's "general theorem" regarding the evolution of human thought.

The doctrine of the three stages "condemns all theological explanations" (ACP 13). When men advance, as inevitably they will, into the positive mode of thought, they will "cease to refer the constitution of Nature to an intelligent will, or to believe at all in a Creator and supreme Governor of the world" (ACP 14). Yet Comte himself had affirmed that

> <u>if</u> [italics mine] we insist upon penetrating the unattainable mystery of the essential Cause that produces phenomena, there is no hypothesis more satisfactory than that they proceed from Wills dwelling in them or outside them; an hypothesis which assimilates them to the effect produced by the desires which exist within ourselves. . . . The Order of Nature is doubtless very imperfect in every respect; but its production is far more compatible with the hypothesis of an intelligent Will than with that of blind mechanism (GVP 51).

As Mill puts it: Comte "even says" that "the hypothesis of design has much greater verisimilitude than that of blind mechanism." Comte's position was, according to Mill, that "conjecture, founded on analogy" is

not a proper "basis to rest a theory on, in a mature state of human intelligence." But Mill says the positive philosopher, and Mill himself writes as such a philosopher in Auguste Comte and Positivism, need not follow the master in this matter: "The Positive mode of thought is not necessarily a denial of the supernatural" (ACP 14). The doctrine which defines Comte's positive philosophy is the doctrine of the relativity of human knowledge, as Mill calls it:

> We have no knowledge of anything but Phenomena; and our knowledge of phenomena is relative, not absolute. We know not the essence, nor the real mode of production, of any fact, but only its relations to other facts in the way of succession or of similitude. . . . ultimate causes, either efficient or final, are unknown and inscrutable to us (ACP 6).

Positive knowledge is indeed unattainable respecting ultimate causes or origins. All the same the "Positive philosopher is free," Mill insists (ACP 14), "to form his opinion on the subject, according to the weight he attaches to the analogies which are called marks of design. . . . Positive philosophers must [not] necessarily be agreed. It is one of M. Comte's mistakes that he never allows of open questions." It is, according to Mill, compatible with the doctrine of the relativity of human knowledge "to believe that the universe was created, and even that it is continuously governed, by an Intelligence," providing "we admit that the intelligent Governor adheres to fixed laws" (ACP 15).

Actually Comte should not have disagreed with Mill here. In any case he himself "lapsed" (as Mill came to believe) into fetishism in the end. And fetishism is the name, according to Comte's own system, of one kind of a supernatural orientation. In the childhood of the race, men explained phenomena in terms of will. This is the theological stage of (as we have already seen), which itself "has three stages, Fetishism,

Polytheism, and Monotheism" (ACP 12). Fetishism is thus man's most primitive mode of thought, that proper to the early infancy of the race--the fartherest removed from positive thinking. Nevertheless Comte prescribed, in his last work (Système de Politique Positive), that his followers view the earth as "the Grand Fétiche," including it "and [indeed] all concrete existence, in our adoration along with the Grand Etre [Humanity]." Space also becomes, for Comte, "an object of adoration, under the name of the Grand Milieu . . . possessing feeling, but not activity or intelligence" (ACP 193-4). This is one of the most interesting developments in Comte's speculations.

But Mill was far too entrenched in the mechanistic and atomistic Newtonian physics--"the great model to which the school of Locke paid homage"[29]--to have much sympathy with Comte's vitalistic grand milieu of sentience. Then, too, the grand error of the metaphysical stage of speculation was commited, according to positivism, when men spoke of "'Nature' and other abstractions [such as "vital force" and the like] as if they were active forces, producing effects." In the metaphysical stage of speculation "qualities of things were mistaken for real entities dwelling in things" (L 606/6.10.8). It doubtless seemed to Mill that Comte, in his fancies about the "dance of the planets" (ACP 193), was flirting with error or positively espousing it. This is suggested when Mill says that Comte extended "Positivist Fetishism to purely abstract existence" (ACP 193). Yet is is hard to see how the God Mill has told us positivism does not necessarily exclude differs radically from Comte's animism. Both are, in any case, supernatural theories. Hence one might think the one as probable as the other. But Mill would deny that the one is as probable as the other. Comte endowed the physical universe with sentience, but not

with intelligence. But what, Mill would ask, of the appearances of design in nature? What weight should be given "to the analogies which are called marks of design" (ACP 14)? In Theism Mill concludes that these marks do in fact evidence an Intelligence in nature.

One of Mill's objects in writing Utility of Religion was to demonstrate the superiority, utilitywise, of the religion of humanity over supernaturalism: "The sense of unity with mankind and a deep feeling for the general good may be cultivated into a sentiment and a principle capable of fulfilling every important function of religion and itself justly entitled to the name" (U 72). Five pages later, however, we find Mill suggesting that theistic finitism (see p. 58 below) can be "held in conjunction" (U 77) with the religion of humanity. And, on the same page, we find him advocating "the theism of the imagination and feelings." Mill probably at no time subscribed to Comte's religion of humanity straight across the board; he only seems at times to do so. He avers, for instance, that "the idealization of our earthly life" (U 68) and the identification of our "feelings with the entire life of the human race" (U 70)--the human race is, of course, Comte's Grand Being--are "better calculated to ennoble the conduct than any belief respecting the unseen powers" (U 69). Yet, characteristically, we soon find him being also drawn toward the opposite direction of supernaturalism. He doesn't relish the idea of giving up "the hope of reunion" in another life with dear ones gone on before. And it isn't clear to him why this hope must be given up. The hope "will always suffice to keep alive in the more sensitive natures, the imaginative hope of a futurity which, if there is nothing to prove, there is as little in our knowledge and experience to contradict" (U 79). And Theism reveals that Mill retained this attitude to the end

of life: "The truth that life is short and art is long is from of old one of the most discouraging parts of our condition; this hope [in a future life] admits the possibility that the art employed in improving and beautifying the soul itself may avail for good in some other life. . . . (T 82).

The towering figure of Harriet Taylor in Mill's consciousness, or subconsciousness, may be presiding over most of this (see Packe 443). But, even so, Mill has a point. It is something like this: When it can be shown that an afterlife is not a real possibility, we will then be obliged rationally to abandon hope with respect to it. But this has not been shown, nor is it apparent how it can be shown. We, then, have a right to hope for immortality. This can be denied only from a stance of something like omniscience, not to mention inhumanity. If it be said the hope is gratuitous, the reply is that it is far from being so to many. If it be said the hope of heaven is mere credulousness, Mill can reply that hope is not belief. As we shall see in a later part of this study, the distinction between hope and belief is important for Mill.

NOTES

[1]Leslie Stephen, The English Utilitarians, 3 vols. (London: Duckworth and Co., 1900), 3:38--hereafter cited as "Stephen 3.38." Mill indicates (A 70) that the height of the influence of "the so-called Bentham school in philosophy and politics" was about 1835; similarly Stephen 2.41. Stephen says (2.42) that the utilitarians began to be "a political force in the concluding years of the [Napoleonic] war struggle."

[2]Elie Halévy, The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism, trans. Mary Morris (1928; paper reprint ed., Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 514--hereafter cited as "Halévy 514."

[3]A 188, 189, 190, 200, 210, 212, 219, 220.

[4]"John Stuart Mill," The Nation 34 (8 June 1882): 483.

[5]Mill is thinking that Benthamism is a "religion" as Comte's religion of humanity is a "religion." This latter "religion" has no God. And Mill admits (ACP 132) to "have no God, and to talk of religion, is to their [most people's] feelings at once an absurdity and an impiety."

[6]Mill wrote most of his Autobiography, the "early draft," between 1853 and 1854. See Jack Stillinger, ed. The Early Draft of John Stuart Mill's Autobiography (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1961), pp. 10-11. Also see Albert William Levi, "The Writing of Mill's Autobiography," Ethics 61 (1951): 293-5. Mill was, in the mid-1850s, strongly under the influence of his wife. And he tells us that her "wise scepticism" (A 133) turned him away from his romantic (Mill himself very rarely used this term) reaction against Benthamism during the second period of his life. Had Mill written all his Autobiography after his wife's death (1858), say in 1870 at about the time he wrote Theism, Benthamism might not have been portrayed so clearly as the basic thread running through Mill's mental development. At one place (U 49-50) Mill explicitly places his Utility of Religion, written in the mid-1850s, in the tradition of the "skeptical writers," Bentham and Comte. Whereas Mill writes Theism almost as if these writers had never existed.

[7]Cf., e.g., "Benthamites or Utilitarians" (A 55), "Benthamic or utilitarian propagandism" (A 72).

[8]See Ernest Albee, A History of English Utilitarianism (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1902), pp. xi-xvi for a useful discussion of the distinction between utilitarianism as a "practical movement" and utilitarianism as an "ethical theory."

[9]Jeremy Bentham, The Works of Jeremy Bentham, ed. John Bowring, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1838-43), 4:547, 10:79. Cf. Mill (Utilitarianism, chap. 2): "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 produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure."

[10]Cf. Auguste Comte (GVP 51, 20): "The principle of Theology is to explain everything by supernatural Wills. . . . no important step in the progress of Humanity can now be made without totally abandoning the theological principle."

[11]The principle of utility was not original with Bentham, as he knew; see his Works 1.19-20. According to Mill's estimation Bentham's only originality consisted in his "habits of thought and modes of investigation, which are essential to the idea of science" (Works 10.83-88).

[12]Cf. Mill's Works 10.91: "With Imagination in the popular sense, command of imagery and metaphorical expression, Bentham was, to a certain degree, endowed. For want, indeed, of poetical culture, the images with which his fancy supplied him were seldom beautiful . . . ." And cf. Mill's Works 10.113: Bentham "says, somewhere in his works, that 'quantity of pleasure being equal, push-pin is as good as poetry;' but this is only a paradoxical way of stating what he would equally have said of the things which he most valued and admired. Another aphorism is attributed to him, which is much more characteristic of his view of this subject: 'All poetry is misrepresentation.' Poetry, he thought, consisted essentially in exaggeration for effect . . . . This trait of character seems to us a curious example of what Mr. Carlyle strikingly calls 'the completeness of limited men.'"

[13]Cf. Halévy: "The aim of Bentham, as of all Utilitarian philosophers, was to establish morals as an exact science" (p. 15). The "end which Bentham had in view was to found, for the first time, the art of morals and legislation on an objective science of behaviour. The principle of utility differs from the other moral precepts which have been successively put forward, in that it is the expression not of a subjective preference of the moralist, but of an objective law of human nature" (p. 27). Cf. also Mill's pronouncement (A 34) concerning his father's view of intense feelings: "He [James Mill] never varied in rating intellectual enjoyments above all others. . . . passionate emotions of all sorts, and for everything which has been said or written in exaltation of them, he professed the greatest contempt. He regarded them as a form of madness. 'The intense' was with him a bye-word of scornful disapprobation."

[14]Mill first became acquainted with some of the writings of the Saint-Simonians and Comte in 1829-30 (A 115-6). But Mill was probably under maximum sway of Comte about the year 1843. In a letter to Comte dated 30 August 1843, Mill writes: "Nous avons fait pour notre philosophie commune une conquête de premier ordre: c'est celui (sic) du jeune Bain. . . ." Lettres Inédites de John Stuart Mill à Auguste Comte Publiees Avec les Réponses de Comte et une Introduction, par L. Levy-Bruhl (Paris, 1899), p. 240.

[15]Cf. Mill's diary entry of Jan. 24, 1854 (Elliot 2.362): "The best, indeed the only good thing (details excepted) in Comte's second treatise [Système de Politique Positive], is the thoroughness with which he has endorced and illustrated the possibility of making le culte de l'humanité perform the functions and supply the place of a religion."

[16]Mill's relationship with Carlyle, for instance, was sufficiently rich to warrant a special study; see, e.g., Emery Neff, Carlyle and Mill: An Introduction to Victorian Thought, 2d ed. rev., (New York: Octagon Books, 1964). And the same can be said respecting the Saint-Simonians; see, e.g., Frank E. Manuel, The New World of Henri Saint-Simon (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956).

[17]But cf. Stephen 2.340: The "phrase 'natural religion' is part of the disguise. It enables the author to avoid an explicit attack upon revelation." Stephen (2.339) characterized the whole book as "probably as forcible an attack as has often been written upon the popular theology."

[18]Philip Beauchamp [Jeremy Bentham], The Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind (London: R. Carlile, 1822), p. v. As Stephen says (2.339) the "name of 'Philip Beauchamp' covered a combination of Bentham and George Grote."

[19]John Quincy Adams conversed with Bentham on religion in 1817 and "feared" Bentham was an atheist: "His [Bentham's] position was, that all human knowledge was either positive or inferential. . . . that our knowledge of the physical world was positive, while that of a Creator of it was inferential. . . . that God was . . . a mere probability. . . . I consider him as entertaining inveterate prejudices against all religions, and that he is probably preparing a book against religious establishments." John Quincy Adams, Memoirs of John Quincy Adams Comprising Portions of his Diary from 1795 to 1848, Charles Francis Adams, ed. 12 vols. (Philadelphia, 1874-78), 3:563-5.

[20]Cf. GVP 440: "The grand object of human existence is the constant improvement of the natural Order that surrounds us: of our material condition first; subsequently of our physical, intellectual, and moral nature. And the highest of these objects is moral progress. . . . Political art . . . [is] the most essential of all arts. It consists in concentration of all human effort upon the service of Humanity. . . ." And cf. GVP 444: "Placing our highest happiness in universal Love, we live, as far as it is possible, for others; and this is public life as well as in private; for the two are closely linked together in our religion; a religion clothed in all the beauty of Art, and yet never inconsistent with Science." These sentiments are precisely those that pervade Mill's Utilitarianism.

[21]Cf. Mill to Comte (8 Nov., 1841): "Quoique le Benthamisme soit resté, sans doute, très loin du véritable esprit de la méthode positive, cette doctrine me paraît encoure à présent la meilleure préparation qui existe aujourd'hui à la vraie positivité, appliquée aux doctrines sociales. . . ." And cf. Comte to Mill (20 Nov., 1841): "Le Benthamisme . . . [est] one preparation immédiate a la positivité sociologique. . . ." L. Levy-Bruhl, ed., Lettres Inédites de John Stuart Mill à Auguste Comte (Paris: Alcan, 1899), pp. 2, 7.

[22]See, e.g., Richard K. P. Pankhurst, The Saint Simonians Mill and Carlyle (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, n.d.), chapter two: "The Wooing

of John Stuart Mill"; and esp. Iris Wessel Mueller, John Stuart Mill and French Thought, chapter four: "The Influence of Auguste Comte." Packe (273-83) gives us an excellent synopsis of Mill's adventure with Comte and positivism.

[23]See n. 51, p. below.

[24]See Mueller, Mill and French Thought, pp. 112-15.

[25]Cf. the inscription that Mill had placed upon her tomb at Avignon: "Her great and loving heart, her noble soul, her clear, powerful, original, and comprehensive intellect, made her the guide and support, the instructor in wisdom, and the example in goodness, as she was the sole earthly delight of those who had the happiness to belong to her. . . . Were there even a few hearts and intellects like hers, this earth would already become the hoped-for heaven." Bain (JSM 171) speaks of Mill's "extraordinary hallucination as to the personal qualities of his wife. The influence of overweening passion is most conspicuous and irrefragable in this particular."

[26]So Bain suggests (JSM 173). As to Comte's adoration of Clotilda, see his lengthy dedication to his four-volume System of Positive Polity. Comte himself was the self-designated first "Grand Pontiff of Humanity" (ACP 168-70). In the dedication mentioned Comte speaks of the "angel influence" of his "changeless friend," "Saint Clotilda," as follows: "It will be granted perhaps that thy name shall remain ever joined with mine in the most distant memories of grateful Humanity." Auguste Comte, System of Positive Polity, 4 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875-77 [first pub., 1851-54]), 1:xliv-xlv. Obviously Comte desired her to occupy a place in his religion comparable to that of the Virgin Mary in Catholicism. See also Comte's preface to his Catechism where he pays homage to his "new Beatrice." He here calls her "my sainted hearer," by which he apparently means "hearer" of his prayers. Yet Comte's "angelic disciple" is supposed to have an ideal existence only. Mill himself seems a bit puzzled about the ontological status of Comte's "hearer"; see ACP 151.

[27]Discussing Comte's "pourvoir spirituel," Mueller (Mill and French Thought, p. 125) writes: "It is almost a shock to discover the extent to which Mill was influenced by this [authoritarian] approach to the perfect society. . . ."

[28]See Maurice Cowling, Mill and Liberalism (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1963), p. xii. "Liberalism, no less than Marxism, is intolerant of competition [with Christianity]: jealousy, and a carefully disguised intolerance, are important features of Mill's intellectual personality." Cf. Gertrude Himmelfarb, Victorian Minds (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 113: Mill "is thought of today as the archetype of the liberal. . . . But there was another John Stuart Mill, who was anything but the perfect liberal. . . .

[29]Alan Ryan, John Stuart Mill (New York: Random House, Inc., 1970), p. 51. Ryan admits that Mill's metaphysical beliefs about the ultimate constitution of the material universe are "rarely stated very

explicitly" (p. xvi) by Mill. But Ryan is sure it "is a Newtonian metaphysics" (p. 67). Mill's "idea that we might decompose the world into single facts . . . is plainly based on an analogy with the atomic structure of matter. . . ." Ryan may tend to make Mill more mechanical than he in fact was. Cf. L 245/3.6.2: "The Laws of Life will never be deducible from the mere laws of the ingredients. . . ." C. Lloyd Morgan, in his Emergent Evolution, Gifford Lectures, 1922 (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1931), p. 2, says: "The concept of emergence was dealt with (to go no further back) by J. S. Mill in his Logic (Bk. III. ch. vi. sec. 2) under the discussion of 'heteropathic laws' in causation." Emergence and mechanistic causality are not contradictory conceptions. But, as will become plain when we give direct attention to Theism, Mill in the end favored a volitional or theistic theory.

CHAPTER II

THE INFLUENCE OF JAMES MILL AND WORDSWORTH

Mill's famous education[1] was, as concerns instruction and guidance, "wholly" (A 95) the work of James Mill.[2] This latter made one of the most intense efforts on record to educate another individual; John Mill was brought up, in the words of James Mill to Jeremy Bentham, to be "a successor worthy of both of us."[3] And Mill tells us (A 30) that it "would have been wholly inconsistent with my father's ideas of duty, to allow me to acquire impressions contrary to his convictions and feelings respecting religion." It is thus obvious that the religious views of James Mill are very important for our subject.

The elder Mill was trained in divinity at Edinburgh and licensed as preacher in the creed of Scotch Presbyterianism in 1798. But he did little preaching, and that with little success (see Bain's James Mill, p. 22).[4] In any case he failed to receive a call from a parish, and came to London to seek his livlihood in journalism in 1802--at the time "undoubtedly a believer in Christianity," says Bain (James Mill, p. 88). But about the year 1808, after relations with Bentham had become intimate, James stopped attending church. "There is reason for supposing," writes Bain (James Mill, p. 88), "that Mill's views on Religion took their final shape between 1808 and 1810"---when John Stuart was between two and four years of age.[5]

In his Autobiography Mill sketches (A 27-8) his father's transition from Calvinism to agnosticism. The first stage of the transition was from orthodoxy to a minimal belief "in the divine authority of Christianity"

which Butler's Analogy of Religion enabled him to sustain for a time. Yet he "found it impossible to believe that a world so full of evil was the work of an Author combining infinite power with perfect goodness and righteousness" (A 28). So he rejected deism and the "foundations of Natural Religion," and arrived at a state of perplexity.

> Finding, therefore, no halting place in Deism, he remained in a state of perplexity, until, doubtless after many struggles, he yielded to the conviction, that, concerning the origin of things nothing whatever can be known. This is the only correct statement of his opinion; for dogmatic atheism he looked upon as absurd. . . . (A 28).

In Mill's judgment, then, he was raised an agnostic.[6]

> . . . he [James Mill] impressed upon me from the first, that the manner in which the world came into existence was a subject on which nothing was known: that the question, 'Who made me?' cannot be answered, because we have no experience or authentic information from which to answer it; and that any answer only throws the difficulty a step further back, since the question immediately presents itself, Who made God (A 30)?[7]

But Mill is careful to point out that his father did not condemn all theological speculation as utterly futile, as did Comte.[8] The hypothesis of Manichaeism, the "theory of a Good and Evil Principle, struggling against each other for the government of the universe," seemed to James Mill to possess a certain degree of plausibility: "I have heard him express surprise, that no one revived it in our time" (A 28). In Utility of Religion Mill uses even stronger language. Here he says his father "devoutly held" a "creed" like that of Manichaeism. Mill is almost certainly referring to James Mill when he writes:[9]

> A creed like this [Manichaeism], which I have known to be devoutly held by at least one cultivated and conscientious person of our own day, allows it to be believed that all the mass of evil which exists was undesigned by, and exists, not by the appointment of, but in spite of the Being whom we are called upon to worship (U 76).

Bentham, as an individual person and as a thinker, had no positive interest in theology of any kind.[10] It is obvious that we cannot say this

about the elder Mill, he who "principally formed" (A 36) the mind of John Stuart Mill. This latter really gives us his own conviction and that of his father-teacher when he writes:

> One only form of belief in the supernatural--one only theory respecting the origin and government of the universe--stands wholly clear both of intellectual contradiction and of moral obliquity. It is that which, resigning irrevocably the idea of an omnipotent creator, regards Nature and Life not as the expression throughout of the moral character and purpose of the Deity, but as the product of a struggle between contriving goodness and an intractable material, as was believed by Plato, or a Principle of Evil, as was the doctrine of the Manichaeans (U 76).

These two citations from Utility of Religion may be considered illustrations of the truth of Russell's judgment that "in the purely intellectual realm" James Mill "continued [throught John Mill's life] to reign supreme over his son's subconscious."[11] In discussing the religious views of James Mill, we are, in large measure, discussing those of his son.

Mill has told us that his father was an agnostic "concerning the origin of things." Yet Mill has no sooner told us that what we would call agnosticism is "the only correct statement of his [James'] opinion" than Mill tells us his father was sympathetic toward a Manichaean-like interpretation of things. How should a view thus characterized be designated? I think it can be called "not quite agnosticism." This term may not be a particularly happy one, but perhaps not incorrect. It comes to mind because John Mill's religious position was so characterized by a French protestant minister in 1913: "An interesting study could be made of the religious development of [John] Mill beginning with the absolute unbelief of the father, through its various stages, till he arrived at--not quite agnosticism, but a scepticism which might be called religious."[12] The father's "absolute unbelief" should doubtless be qualified in some way in light of what has been said above, and the "scepticism which might be

called religious" does not quite fit James Mill as, strangely enough, it does somehow fit John Mill. James Mill was not a religious man; John Mill was--in a certain sense. But, as stated, "not quite agnosticism" is perhaps not altogether incorrect as a description of the elder Mill's theological views.

Two points may be made before turning to James Mill's views on religion as a social institution, as distinguished from philosophical theology. First, John Mill's teacher was not averse to speculative theology. He must have attached some utility (capacity to engender happiness) to a hypothesis such as that of Manichaeism. Second, and more important, James Mill would never have been sympathetic toward Manichaeism unless he was convinced the hypothesis could be supported by empirical evidence. Of this we can be certain. But it is Stuart Mill in Theism, not James Mill, who scrutinizes this supposed evidence.

The elder Mill's opinion of conventional religion and its theology is quite simple to state: aversion, pretty much right across the board.

> . . . his [James'] aversion to religion, in the sense usually attached to the term, was of the same kind with that of Lucretius: he regarded it with the feelings due not to a mere mental delusion, but to a great moral evil. He looked upon it as the greatest enemy of morality: first, by setting up factitious excellencies,--belief in creeds, devotional feelings, and ceremonies, not connected with the good of human kind,--and causing these to be accepted as substitutes for genuine virtues: but above all, by radically vitiating the standard of morals. . . . Think (he used to say) of a being who would make a Hell--who would create the human race with the infallible foreknowledge, and therefore with the intention, that the great majority of them were to be consigned to horrible and everlasting torment (A 29).

This "Omnipotent Author of Hell"--this "ne plus ultra of wickedness"--James Mill "considered to be embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity" (A 29). (This surely approaches the ne plus ultra of reaction against Calvinism.)[13] "Omnipotence" meant, for

the elder Mill, absolutely unlimited power. Even contradictions could be no obstacle to a being armed with such power. And John Mill assiduously followed his father in this matter. The younger Mill has this definition of omnipotence in mind when he affirms (N 26) that if the "maker of the world can all that he will, he wills misery, and there is no escape from the conclusion." The problem Mill has neatly stated here is probably the main upon upon which James Mill's "ship of faith" foundered. It is, of course, the problem of evil.

But Mill is anxious to tell us that his father did not believe individual Christians were so immoral as the object of their worship.

> My father was as well aware as anyone that Christians do not, in general, undergo the demoralizing consequences which seem inherent in such a creed [including as it does such a dreadful conception of an object of worship], in the manner or to the extent which might have been expected from it. . . . [because the multitudes have] identified that being [Omnipotent Author of Hell] with the best conception they were able to form of perfect goodness. Their worship was not paid to the demon which such a being as they imagined would really be, but to their own idea of excellence (A 29).

And Mill is certainly stating his own opinion and that of his teacher when he says that the evil in all this is "that such a belief keeps the ideal wretchedly low." The moral character of God--the ultimate standard of excellence--is of "infinite importance" as James Mill insisted in his important article, "The Church, and its Reform." For "exactly [affirms James] in proportion as the model which men set up for imitation is perfect or imperfect, will be the performance which takes place in consequence" (267).[14] The grounds of -he elder Mill's rejection of all "that is called" religion were, according to his son, "moral still more than intellectual" (A 28). Here is the main source of John Mill's abiding interest in God as the "ideally perfect Being" (A 32, ACP 135, E 129, etc.). This conception is absolutely fundamental to Mill's

theistic speculations--as is quite apparent, incidentally, in the two citations from Utility of Religion on pages 34 and 35 above.

Mill affirms (A 30) that he is "one of the very few examples, in this country, of one who has, not thrown off religious belief, but never had it: I grew up in a negative state with regard to it." The character of this negativism was the character of James Mill's religious views: not-quite-agnosticism (we said) respecting the origin and government of the world; and, as we now see, rejection of the popular religious cultus along with its theology. But just as James Mill's negativism did not extend to every sort of theology so did his negativism not reach completeness respecting conventional, institutionalized religion. It seems he did not want to abolish the Church of England but reform it. At any rate he says (274)[15] that "by changes--far from violent, the Church of England might be converted from an instrument of evil into an instrument of much good. . . ." As a final phase of my exposition of James Mill on religion, I now turn to his article, "The Church, and its Reform."

The article has two parts. He first details, and fulminates against, the evils of the present state of the church. In the second part he describes the reformed "church" he would substitute for the established organization. While the first half of the article contains some important passages for my subject, I am mainly interested in the last half. Huxley denominated Comte's religion of humanity "Catholicism minus Christianity."[16] Something similar--as, for instance, "Anglicanism minus Christianity"--can be said with regard to the "church" James Mill thought should replace the existent one. There can be little doubt that John Mill discerned in religion of positivism, that is Comte's religion, some resemblances (though only some) to the new "religion" his father-teacher envisioned.

The dominant note of James Mill's article on church reform is the moral perfection of the Supreme Being; not note is sounded early in the composition: "The most important, by far, of all the religious sentiments is--the distinct, and steady, and perpetually operative conception of what is implied in the words, Almighty Being of perfect wisdom and goodness. Without this, there is no religion"(262). But praying to God "implies the belief that God is imperfect both in wisdom and goodness. Telling God unceasingly of our wants, implies that he needs to be told of them. . . ." Hence there would, presumably, be no prayers in the reformed church of James Mill. Indeed there would be no ceremonies (recitation of creeds, baptisms, and the like) whatever. Nor would there be any dogmas. Ceremonies and dogmas were the grand evils of the Church of England. To James Mill, a ceremony meant meaninglessness (262). But, to return to the dominant note of the moral perfection of God:

> . . . the idea of the Divine Being, as a being of perfect wisdom and goodness, so steadily and luminously fixed in the mind, as to be a principle of action, is the very essence of religion, and the sole source of all the good impressions we derive from it [religion]. . . . [this being the case] every idea instilled into us, which implies imperfection in the Divine Being, is a perversion of the religious principle, and so far as it goes, converts it into a principle of evil (263-4).

The religious principle is, in this way, converted into a principle of evil because, "exactly in so far as men set up for the object of their worship a being who falls short of perfect wisdom and goodness, so far they manufacture to themselves a motive for the practice of what is contrary to wisdom and goodness"(264). At one place (265) the elder Mill designates the Supreme Being as "He who is perfection." In another place (264) he speaks, in Leibnizian fashion, of the Perfect One being He who "ordered [everything] for the best."

Finally, as concerns the first part of the article, James Mill severely criticizes the Church of England clergy for holding "out rewards for believing one way, punishment for believing another way, [which] is to hold out inducements to resist the force of evidence" (266). This is tantamount to suborning belief.[17] To believe something simply because it is agreeable to one's interest or wishes, with no serious thought as to whether it is founded on empirical evidence or not, "is nearly [James asserts] the most immoral state of mind which can have existence in a human being. No other cause of criminal actions is of equal potency with this" (267). (See p. 159 below where I suggest that this is the very "crime" that, in the end, James Mill's son commits.) James' war against this "atrocity" (281) was vehement and lifelong. Bain (James Mill, p. 304) characterizes an article James Mill published in 1826 as "a lay sermon on the Sin of Believing without Evidence." The "habit of forming opinions [James writes in this article], and acting upon them without evidence, is one of the most immoral habits of the mind" (cited by Bain, James Mill, pp. 305-6). This teaching was, of course, instilled in John Mill from childhood, and it is basic to his whole philosophy--not excluding his phenomenalism. In Theism (T 27) Mill exlaims: "Surely it is not legitimate to assume that in the order of the universe whatever is desirable is true." No. But we can hope that it is true. This is Mill's strategy in Theism, a strategy which he seems to feel enables him to enjoy the fruits of sin (the sin of believing without evidence or upon insufficient evidence) and yet somehow not actually commit the sin. But of this, more later.

James Mill, in the second half of his article on church reform, begins his discussion by indicating that the cardinal instrument of reform is the clergy. Indeed what he calls a "parochial clergy" (275) seems to be

the sole agency of the reform he contemplates.

> We consider a local clergy, distributed everywhere among the people, as the fundamental part of an [improved] institute really intended for moulding the character of the people, and shaping their actions, according to the spirit of pure religion (274). We have now supposed, that a well-selected person from the class of educated men has been placed as the minister of religion in every conveniently-sized district, called a parish. This we consider as the fundamental part of a religious establishment (280).

What are the duties of these ministers? James has just told us they are to shape the actions of the people according to the spirit of pure religion. (Presumably the people would embrace "pure religion" to the extent their lives conformed to the model of "He who is perfection" and to the extent they were "instruments of happiness to others" [269].)[18] But how are the ministers to promote the good life "according to the spirit of pure religion"? Mainly by teaching, but also by preaching.

> Though a man [parochial clergyman] of the proper stamp, residing among his fellow parishioners, would have other and still more effectual means of making the impressions on their minds which lead to good conduct, we do not dispute that a discourse of the proper kind, delivered to them when assembled on the day of rest, would have happy effects. In the first place, it would establish in their minds pure ideas of the moral character of God; and would root out of them every notion which implies imperfection in the Divine Mind. This is a matter of infinite importance. . . . (267).

Yet these clergymen are to pursue this high calling, this noble effort to "improve" mankind, without the use of dogmas: "We do not mean that our parochial clergy should trouble their parishioners with dogmas. Their business will be to train them in the habits of a good life. . . ."

> To preach the importance of dogmas, is to teach men to impute imperfection to the Divine nature. It is according to the perfections of the Divine nature to approve in his rational creatures the love of truth. But the love of truth leads a man to search for evidence, and to place his belief on that side, whatsoever it be, on which the evidence appears to him to preponderate. The clergyman who tells him that God likes best belief on one side, declares to him that God does not like the honest search of truth (280-1).

This is indeed a most unconventional notion of a clergyman, especially in

James Mill's time. These parochial clergymen are really philosophers; they are men like James Mill. A clergyman, while indeed a truth-seeker, is ordinarily assumed to have found some truth about God, and to minister to others from the sure foundation of what he has full assurance is absolutely the case. But, at all events, the subject of evidence was one about which James Mill was extremely sensitive. Bain informs us (James Mill, p. 304) that the elder Mill held, with characteristic tenacity, that "if evidence is laid fully before the mind, the impression produced by it is independent of the will, just as a man must see what is before his open eyes."

James Mill's new church is to have Sunday services: "We think it of great importance, that all the families of a parish should be got to assumble on the Sunday--clean, and so dressed, as to make a favourable appearance in the eyes of one another. This alone is ameliorating" (289). And the people will hear sermons at this time, the good ministers pursuing the "pure purpose of making the people conform to the designs of a Being of perfect wisdom and goodness" (288). The utility these ministers of the new church of human amelioration could generate--being as they are completely liberated from dogmas and ceremonies--is very great. And dogmas and ceremonies are mere "pseudo worship" (288) anyway. Were they eliminated, "there would be no schism": men would have "nothing to scind about" (288).

> The importance would be immense of constituting a church without dogmas and ceremonies. It would be truly a Catholic church. Its ministers would be ministers of good . . . to men of all religious denominations. All would share in the religious services of such a church, and all would share in the blessings which would result from them. This is the true idea of a State religion. . . .

Laying aside all that divides men religiously, the new church would stress "the true spirit of reverence to the perfect being, and love to one

another." It wouldn't be long, James imagines, before "all would belong to this church, and after a short time would belong to no other."

> There is no class of Christians, who could not join in the labours of love of one [the parochial clergyman] who was going about continually doing good; whose more solemn addresses to his assembled parishioners would never have any other object than to assimilate them more and more in heart and mind to Him who is the author of all good, and the perfection of wisdom and benevolence (288).

But, besides preaching, James' ministers are to give "good lectures to those parochial assemblies" (290). These lectures could be on education, science, politics, political economy, the conditions of good government, even the elements of jurisprudence. The "parochial meetings on the day of rest" (292) would not be very restful! Yet these meetings are not to be entirely oriented toward mental culture. James feels there should also be social amusements as well, such as music and dancing. "Dancing," he affirms, "is a mimetic art, and might be so contrived as to represent all the social affections, which we most desire to implant in the breasts of the people, and to call up the trains of ideas by which they are nourished." For instance: "A dance might be invented which would represent, as far as gestures and movements afford the means, the parental and filial affections; another, the fraternal affections; another, the sorrowing with those that sorrow, and rejoicing with those that rejoice"(293). (Here James Mill, in setting out a scheme for an ideal society, sounds much like Auguste Comte.) The dances must not, however, be "either a representation of profuse merriment, or of lasciviousness. In both shapes, it is altogether unfit for the moral and tranquil amusements of the day of rest." Proper dances "would consist of the quiet and gentle motions, and would rather be an exhibition of grace, than of agility and strength."

There is, finally, the "conjunct meal": "We are sure it would be a thing attended with the happiest effects, if the proper regulations could be enforced, that the people at their Sunday assemblings should partake of meals together." These social meals would be like those of the early Christians "called Agapai: that is, friendship-meals" (294). The early love-feasts took place after instruction by an apostle or other teacher, and was an effective generator of "stronger ties of affection" among the faithful. And James imagines the consequences of his envisioned "conjunct meal" would be equally salubrious.

Now how is this reformed church to be brought into being? "In what [present] parish are the people to be found, who will submit to all this moral drilling?" asks James Mill. The "class of parochial ministers"--"the servants of God and the friends of man" (295)--could do it or at least work assiduously toward instituting the true religion. If such a class of enlightened ministers would work as hard for pure truth and goodness as the many orthodox ministers labor to induce people "to fall in love with propositions incredible," progress toward the goal would be assured. If "there was as many imbued and animated with the spirit of true religion, as there are besotted with dogmas and ceremonies, all the difficulties which present themselves would be overcome" (295). And the goal is the greatest happiness for the greatest number, though James does not actually use this phrase. We should never despair in our efforts to promote "the moral culture of the people," in our efforts to induce "them to do what, at every step, would be delightful, and from which they would derive the greatest of all conceivable pleasures, the consciousness, the heart-felt assurance, of rising higher and higher in the scale of virtue and intelligence every day (295)!

Thus the members of James Mill's "church improving," church of "virtue and intelligence,"[19] are pictured as advancing steadily in everything good--everything, that is, except religion. So the orthodox would say. So the orthodox did say![20] And, with respect to the problem of how James' "true religion" is to be established, Bain (James Mill, pp. 388-9) expresses astonishment that the elder Mill

> . . . could have supposed it possible, in the course of a few years, to unlearn the whole of the Christian traditions, and to re-model the entire ritual upon the basis of a Religion of Natural Theism. . . . The article, with all its ingenuity, will have to be remanded to the list of Utopias, among which it will deserve perusal for its constructive suggestions.

But what is important for our topic is that John Mill apparently took his father seriously on church reform, at least in a general way. In 1868, five years before his death, John Mill wrote:

> I have long thought that what we now want in the present stage of the world is a union among all those men (and women) who are deeply impressed with the fundamental essence of religion, in so far as religion affects this world. . . . Honesty, self-sacrifice, love of our fellow-creatures, and the desire to be of use in the world, constitute the true point of resemblance between those whose religion, however overlaid with dogmas, is genuine, and those who are genuinely religious without any dogmas at all. I have often been amazed that there are not more Christians who perceive that Christianity (I do not myself think, however, that any Christian sect comes up to this ideal) forms a point of union for all men in this point of view (Elliot 2.144-5).

The "union" Mill envisions here is, of course, far from his father's reformed Anglicanism.[21] Yet the general similarity of the attitudes of the two reformers, father and son, is evidenced by this citation.[22] The greatest influence upon the character of John Mill's thought was James Mill. The influence of the father-teacher was not so great in the area of religion as in other branches of learning, as, say, the philosophy of mind. As we shall now see the influence of Wordsworth was crucial to Mill's notion of religion. Yet the influence of Wordsworth did not set

aside entirely the influence of James Mill. The latter's ideal God--"He who is perfection"--was a concept permanently valued by John Mill. James Mill's influence, in religion, outlasted that of Comte.

Nevertheless the Wordsworthian strand in Mill's thought is positively different from anything in Bentham, James Mill, or Comte; and the Wordsworthian influence is very real and permanent. I like to think of the Wordsworthian or aesthetic strain in Mill's thought as culminating (in Theism) in his religion of imaginative hope (wish?), although the rational grounds for this "religion" probably stem from James Mill. There might not have been any religion of imaginative hope, for Mill, had he not been convinced this hope could be grounded in evidence--evidence appropriate to hope. That James Mill was convinced there is evidence for Manichaeism is, as I have said, something we can rest assured about.

Much has been written on Mill's mental crisis.[23] (It was really a series of crises.) It began when he was twenty years of age. In the autumn of 1826, so Mill tells us (A 94), he found himself in a state of mind "in which converts to Methodism usually are, when smitten by their first 'conviction of sin.'" In this frame of mind it occurred to Mill to ask himself: "'Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; 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?'" The answer to this question was as clear and distinct to Mill as it was distressing: "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." It seemed he had "nothing left to live for." And the dejection intensified. He felt he could not "possibly bear it beyond a year" (A 99). He had a "well-equipped ship and a rudder [for life], but no sail"--no desire for virtue or the general good; in fact, no desire for anything (A 98). He couldn't feel! Certainly he didn't feel happiness. To "know that a feeling would make me happy if I had it, did not give me the feeling." His education had not permitted the generation of these feelings "in sufficient strength to resist the dissolving influence of analysis": "The whole course of my intellectual cultivation had made precocious and premature analysis the inveterate habit of my mind" (A 97). Mill informs us (A 98) that "in a later period of the same mental malady" he ran across two lines from Coleridge which accurately described how he felt: "'Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve, / And hope without an object cannot live.'"

Sometime during the spring of 1827, after the "dry heavy dejection of the melancholy winter of 1826-7," it came about that Mill was able to shed a tear! In a famous, and moving, page (A 99) of his Autobiography, he writes:[24]

> I was reading, accidentally, Marmontel's 'Memoires,' and came to the passage which relates his father's death, the distressed position of the family, and the sudden inspiration by which he, then a mere boy, felt and made them feel that he would be everything to them—would supply the place of all that they had lost. A vivid conception of the scene and its feelings came over me, and I was moved to tears.

From this moment his "burthen grew lighter"; he was relieved from his "sense of irremediable wretchedness"; hope stirred: "The oppression of the thought that all feeling was dead within me was gone. I was no longer hopeless: I was not a stock or a stone."

The next year, 1828, Mill read Wordsworth, and the result of this

"important event" was, he relates, "that I gradually, but completely emerged from my habitual depression" (A 105). The "medicine" of Wordsworth's poems "seemed to be the very culture of the feelings which I was in quest of." Their "delight" proved "that with culture of this sort, there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habit of analysis." In these poems Mill "seemed to draw from a source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure": "From them I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness, when all the greater evils of life shall have been removed. And I felt myself at once better and happier as I came under their influence."

Mill emerged from the shadows of a cave, as it were, into a bright, new world. Packe says (81) that Mill "now went after emotion like an addict after drugs."[25] As Benthamism had once made him a "different being" (A 47) so in a somewhat similar fashion he now (1828) was changed again: The "merits of Wordsworth were the occasion of my first public declaration of my new way of thinking, and separation from those of my habitual companions who had not undergone a similar change" (A 105). It is this change Mill has in mind when he writes (A 133) that "the only actual reveolution which has ever taken place in my modes of thinking, was already [before 1830] complete." He informs us (A 106) that his companions discovered that he did not any longer conform to the "vulgar notion of a Benthamite or Utilitarian," this notion being that Benthamites "are supposed to be void of feeling." Mill had been aware, painfully aware evidently,[26] that others looked upon him "as a 'made' or manufactured man" (A 109), having had a certain impress of opinion "stamped" upon him. But he says his companions now discovered "that Wordsworth, and all which that name implies, 'belonged' to me" as much as to anyone.

"Imaginative emotion," as expressed in the fine arts of poetry, music, drama, and painting, is now valued by Mill as an aid "in the formation of character" (A 106).

Thus enters[27] the emotive or aesthetic strand into Mill's personality and into his thought, which I associate with Mill's hope-grounded religion of imagination (to be discussed in detail later). Wordsworth's poetry was the agency, as we have just seen, that put him in contact with "a source of inward joy" (A 104). And this source is the fountainhead of most all of what Mill said about "the enlargement of the general scale of the feelings" (T 82) a religion of supernatural hopes nourishes. This source is the fountainhead of Mill's "theism of the imagination and feelings": The "skepticism of the understanding does not necessarily exclude the theism of the imagination and feelings, and this, again gives opportunity for a hope that the power which has done so much for us may be able and willing to do this also [grant life after death]. . . ." (U 77).

For the next several years after 1828 Mill assiduously pursues "poetical culture," and indeed developed a theory of poetry of his own.[28] But this theory need not detain us. I believe the general character of the influence of the Wordsworthian heritage is fairly obvious in such language as the following: "So long as human life is insufficient to satisfy human aspirations, so long there will be a craving for higher things, which finds its most obvious satisfaction in religion. So long as earthly life is full of sufferings, so long there will be need of consolations, which the hope of heaven affords to the selfish, the love of God to the tender and grateful" (U 68). The association of selfishness with the hope of heaven is not itself, of course, Wordsworthian; otherwise,

however, the "source of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure" (A 104) seems functional.

Incidentally some of the phrases in the passage just cited from U 68 are those of Harriet Taylor, reproduced by Mill word-for-word. They are contained in a letter she wrote Mill in 1854, a letter in which she suggested he write an essay on the utility of religion.[29] This might lead us to suppose her influence upon Mill's religious views was great. Although debatable,[30] I do not believe her influence was organic: it did not form an integral element in Mill's philosophy of religion as, for instance, Wordsworth's influence did. In any case the tone of the passage from U 68 is quite different from that of Bentham or James Mill. And, though Comte stressed sentiment,[31] it was different from that of Wordsworth. In the main the great Lake poet guided Mill's emotions outward toward natural scenery, but not only this: his poems "expressed not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty" (A 104). Still is is apparent that the principal source of this beauty is, for Mill, nature: Wordsworth's "poems addressed themselves powerfully to one of the strongest of my pleasurable susceptibilities, the love of rural objects and natural scenery" (A 103).[32] It was Wordsworth who helped Mill experience the "intensest feeling of the beauty of a cloud lighted by the setting sun" (A 107). Here is the main source of Mill's religion of supernatural hopes; here, and nowhere else.

By and large the orientation of Comte's sentiment or feelings is quite different from that of Wordsworth. Comte's orientation is predominantly--overwhelmingly--social:

To love Humanity may be truly said to constitute the whole duty of

> Man. . . . The victory of Social Feeling over our innate Self-love is rendered possible only by a slow and difficult training of the heart, in which the intellect must co-operate (GVP 394). It is a fundamental doctrine of Positivism . . . that the Heart preponderates over the Intellect (GVP 18). It is the Characteristic principle of Positivism . . . that the Intellect . . . is subordinate to Social Feeling (GVP 200).

The orientation here is similar to that of Mill when he affirms, in a well-known passage in the second chapter of his Utilitarianism: "In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility." To "love your neighbor as yourself" constitutes "the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality." This exemplifies the moral dimension of Mill's religious thought, that having to do with the sphere of action or practice--as distinguished from that having to do with thoughts and feelings (see page 5 above).[33]

The following is another citation from Utility of Religion, besides U 68 discussed above, which may be thought of as flowing from "the Source" (A 104) of feeling and imaginative pleasure which Wordsworth[34] assisted Mill in discovering.

> Apart from all dogmatic belief, there is for those who need it an ample domain in the region of the imagination which may be planted with possibilities, with hypotheses which cannot be known to be false; and when there is anything in the appearances of nature to favor them, as in this case there is (for whatever force we attach to the analogies of nature with the effects of human contrivance, there is no disputing the remark of Paley that what is good in nature exhibits those analogies much oftener than what is evil), the contemplation of these possibilities is a legitimate indulgence. . . . (U 77).

But, as this passage suggests, Mill does not isolate the Wordsworthian "Source"--basically oriented toward the beautiful in nature, not all nature--from the humanistic and moral orientations. Nor does Mill separate the theistic or rationalistic aspect of his religious thought from the moral dimension. On the contrary the moral character of God seems to

be the pivotal point in Mill's theistic finitism (see p. 59 below), as it certainly was for James Mill—assuming he was as serious about Manichaeism as John Mill specifies.[35]

The main influences being as outlined above, I now turn to a discussion of Mill's conception of the general problem of religion and his proposed solutions.

NOTES

[1]Halévy (282-9) has an excellent, concise treatment of Mill's education. See also F. A. Cavenagh, ed., James & John Stuart Mill on Education (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1931); Ian Cumming, James Mill on 'Education,' University of Auckland, bul. no. 54, Educational Series no. 1, 1959 (Auckland: Pelorus Press, 1959); Ian Cumming, A Manufactured Man, University of Auckland, bul. no. 55, Educational Series no. 2, 1960 (Auckland: Pilgraim Press, 1960).

[2]Mill says (A 70) he was reared in the "headquarters" of Benthamism. James Mill was the "authorized lieutenant of Bentham" (Stephen 2.41). As Halévy says: "Bentham gave [James] Mill a doctrine, and Mill gave Bentham a school" (p. 251).

[3]Alexander Bain, James Mill (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1882), pp. 119-20. Cavenagh says (p. x of his introd. to James & John Stuart Mill on Education): If "there be any who still believe in an exclusively rational education they should take warning by John Stuart Mill. Had not nature triumphed over nurture he would either have lost his reason or at any rate have been unable to accomplish the noble work of his later life. Thus even for the specific end that James Mill had in view, to construct a Utilitarian robot, his system failed. Never has an education been more ably directed; it was a test case: education is not all-powerful."

[4]Alexander Bain, James Mill, A Biography (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1882), p. 22.

[5]In Packe's opinion James Mill reached "agnosticism only in 1816, when John was ten" (p. 25).

[6]Thomas Huxley coined this term in 1869; had its usage been common, Mill would doubtless have employed it. On the meaning of "agnostic" see Alfred William Benn, The History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906), 2:200: "Agnostics absolutely disbelieve in the God of popular theology. . . ."

[7]Cf. Bertrand Russell, Why I am Not a Christian, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), p. 6: ". . . I for a long time accepted the argument of the First Cause, until one day, at the age of eighteen, I read John Stuart Mill's Autobiography, and I there found this sentence: 'My father taught me that the question "Who made me?" cannot be answered, since it immediately suggests the further question "Who made God?"' That very simple sentence showed me, as I still think, the fallacy in the argument of the First Cause. If everything must have a cause, then God must have a cause. If there can be anything without a cause, it may just as well be the world as God, so that there cannot be any validity in that argument."

[8]Cf. Auguste Comte, The Catechism of Positive Religion, trans.

Richard Congreve, 3d ed., rev. and corrected (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co., 1891 [first pub., 1852]), p. 41: "The Positive faith . . . . puts aside, as absolutely beyond our reach and essentially idle, all inquiry into causes properly so called, first or final, of any events whatever. In its theoretical conceptions it always explains the how, never the why." Inquiry into ultimate origins is "childish," "as useless as it is chimerical."

[9]Mill does not specifically name his referent, but it could hardly be anyone other than James Mill. Halévy is apparently of this same opinion; see p. 294. See also Elliott 1.240 where Mill repeats the passage I have cited from U 76.

[10]Cf. Stephen 1.315: Bentham "did not believe in any theology and was in the main indifferent to the whole question till it encountered him in political matters. His first interest apparently was roused by . . . educational questions. . . ." Bain, James Mill, p. 88-89, says Bentham was an atheist "in substance." In his anticlerical writings Bentham "made use of the Deity as Napoleon wished to make use of the Pope, for sanctioning whatever he himself chose, in the name of Utility, to prescribe. . . . [but this] course was too disingenuous to suit either of the Mills."

[11]Bertrand Russell, John Stuart Mill, Lecture on a Master Mind, Proceedings of the British Academy, vol. 41 (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 47.

[12]Louis Rey, "The Romance of John Stuart Mill," The Nineteenth Century and After 74 (1913): 524. Cf. Packe 485 and Bain (JSM 133). Rey is said to have "got himself into trouble," according to Bain, for delivering a prayer at Mill's interment, because of "Mill's known scepticism."

[13]A writer in the Quarterly Review 136 (1874): 150-78, assails the "Scottish" and "dour nature of the grim ex-Calvinist [James Mill]" for "predestinating" his son to religious unbelief, and for retaining only the attitudes of "austere fanaticism," "iron logic" and "the rigid but powerful dogmatism with which Calvinism is popularly associated"--yet withholding whatever Christian hope and love Calvinism could give to the "noble-natured son." Cf. Halévy 308: James Mill "became a tyrant everywhere else than with Bentham--a domestic tyrant when he was concerned with the upbringing of his children; a social tyrant when he was concerned to develop, to organise and to create the Benthamite group."

[14]James Mill, "The Church, and its Reform," London Review 1 (1835): 267.

[15]That is, page 274 of "The Church, and its Reform."

[16]Thomas Huxley, "On the Physical Basis of Life," Fortnightly Review, n.s., 5 (1869): 141. See William Irvine, Apes, Angels, & Victorians, Time Reading Program Special ed. (New York: Time Inc., 1955), pp. 304-5. Cf. Thomas Whittaker, Comte and Mill (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1908), p. 47. Whittaker calls Comte's religion of

humanity "theocracy minus theology."

[17]Cf. U 47: "The whole of the prevalent metaphysics of the present century is one tissue of suborned evidence in favor of religion. . . ."

[18]Here is "living for others," the same emphasis as that of Auguste Comte; James just doesn't use Comte's term altruism.

[19]The late eighteenth century Republic of Virtue with its Temples of Reason come to mind, though, politically, the distance between Robespierre and James Mill was very great. Cf. A 143: "As Brutus was called the last of the Romans, so was he [James Mill] the last of the eighteenth century."

[20]Bain (James Mill, p. 389) writes: "The immediate effect of such an outspoken criticism of the Church was to damage the circulation of the Review. . . . [It] could not recover the ground that was lost; and the suspicion of its irreligious tendency was never effaced."

[21]Bain would doubtless judge this "union" Mill has in mind to resemble Unitarianism. But I think it would more resemble a humanist organization, say, the International Humanist and Ethical Union--except that Mill's humanism would be theistic humanism. By and large present-day humanists are not theistic humanists. See Corliss Lamont, The Philosophy of Humanism, 5th ed., rev. and enl. (New York: Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1965), pp. 12-14.

[22]And many others that could be cited. On the Millian "dogma" of no dogmas, cf., e.g., Elliot 2.144: "It has long been a subject of grief to me that those feelings of religion which belong to the best parts of human nature should . . . be turned to mischief by their association with dogmas confusing to the intellect and very often, I am sorry to say, perverting to the moral sense. . . ."

[23]See, e.g., Ruth Borchard, John Stuart Mill the Man (London: Watts, 1957), chap. 4.

[24]Albert William Levi gives us an interesting Freudian interpretation of this passage in his "The Mental Crisis of John Stuart Mill," Psychoanalytic Review 32 (1945).

[25]Packe (79-82) theorizes that Mill now exalts the feelings "beyond a proper balance," and that this practice is a main source of the inconsistent character of Mill's thought: Mill now manufactured "a flawless chain of reasoning to justify" that to which he had strong emotional attachment. This tendency "invaded all his thought" (81). Cf. W. Stanley Jevons, "John Stuart Mill's Philosophy Tested," Pure Logic and Other Minor Works, eds. Robert Adamson and Harriet A. Jevons (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), pp. 199-299: Mill's "intellect was wrecked. The cause of injury may have been the ruthless training which his father imposed upon him . . . it may have been Mill's own lifelong attempt to reconcile a false empirical philosophy with conflicting truth" (p. 201).

[26]This awareness could well have been a part of the cause of Mill's mental crisis. (In Bain opinion [JSM 38] the main cause was overwork.) In 1825, a year before the onset of the crisis, Mill became a charter member of the London Debating Society (see A 88-110), and was one of its most active members for the next four years. Here he came into close association with peers whom he came to respect; he indeed came to love one of them who was a minister and poet, John Sterling (see A 108-9). By contrasting himself with these men, Mill came to realize that he was indeed "a mere reasoning machine" (A 76), as Benthamites were disparagingly called. But this was not the worst part. The really terrifying discovery was that he was powerless to do anything about it.

[27]This word is evidently to be taken quite literally; that is, something is actualized in Mill's life that was potentially existent before. Mill says (A 76) that his father's "teachings tended to the undervaluing of the feelings" while "there was a superabundance of the discipline antagonistic to it, that of mere logic and analysis." But after Wordsworth had linked Mill, through "thought coloured by feeling" (A 104, italics mine), to nature, something new entered Mill's consciousness. Mill now "felt bitterly ashamed," writes Packe (81), "about an essay he had written in his unenlightened youth, cynically attacking all sentiment and emotion." "Later he got it back and destroyed it."

[28]See John M. Robson, "J. S. Mill's Theory of Poetry," University of Toronto Quarterly 29 (1960): 420-38; Walter J. Ong, S.J., "J. S. Mill's Pariah Poet," Philological Quarterly 29 (1950): 333-44; John Robert Hainds, "John Stuart Mill's Views on Art" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1939).

[29]See F. A. Hayek, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor: Their Correspondence and Subsequent Marriage (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 195-6.

[30]Almost all aspects of Harriet's influence are debatable. See H. O. Pappe, John Stuart Mill and the Harriet Taylor Myth (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1960). See esp. John M. Robson, "Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill: Artist and Scientist," Queen's Quarterly 73 (1966). Robson concludes (p. 181) that "a final estimate of her influence" upon Mill was "the perfection of the poetic temperament." She helped him become "more & more attuned to the beautiful & elevated." Perhaps her influence reinforced what I have called the Wordsworthian heritage in Mill's religious thought.

[31]E.g.: "Feeling itself [is] the highest principle of our existence" (GVP 315). ACP 139: "Even the exercise of the intellect is required to obey as an authoritative rule the dominion of the social feelings over the intelligence (du coeur sur l'esprit)." But, in the end, Comte's "reign of sentiment" (ACP 197) became "deplorable" (ACP 179) to Mill: "It is no exaggeration to say that M. Comte gradually acquired a real hatred for scientific and all purely intellectual pursuits. . . ."(ACP 176).

[32]This passage should be kept in mind by all readers of Mill's essay Nature. In this essay Mill depicts nature as a wanton killer (N 22),

But Mill was in fact a life-long lover of nature, that is, the beautiful part of it. He ends the essay (N 44) by referring to the indications "of beneficent design" in nature.

[33]Mill also uses the thought-feeling-action troika in setting forth his views on education. See his "Inaugural Address at St. Andrews" in James & John Stuart Mill on Education, pp. 189, 197, where Mill speaks of the "intellectual," "moral," and "aesthetic" divisions of education.

[34]Wordsworth above all, but also with the assistance of others: Coleridge, Carlyle, Goethe, the "Coleridgians" (A 90, 113, 172) John Sterling and Frederick Maurice. See John M. Robson, "J. S. Mill's Theory of Poetry," University of Toronto Quarterly 29 (1960): 421.

[35]Cf. Elliot 1.240: "It may be that the world is a battlefield between a good and a bad power or powers, and that mankind may be capable by sufficiently strenuous co-operation with the good power of deciding or at least accelerating its final victory. I know one man of great intelligence and high moral principle, who finds satisfaction to his devotional feelings, and support under the evils of life, in the belief of this creed." There can be little doubt that Mill himself was convinced his father took Manichaeism seriously.

PART II. THE PROBLEM

CHAPTER III

THEISTIC FINITISM AND THEISTIC ABSOLUTISM

Mill himself does not use the terms theistic finitism and theistic absolutism. But it will be convenient to use them to designate the sort of view (theistic finitism) Mill argues for, and the view (theistic absolutism) he opposes more than any other. Theistic absolutism is the view that "the will of God faces no conditions within the divine experience which that will did not create (or at least approve), whereas theistic finitism is the opposing view, namely, that the will of God does face conditions within divine experience which that will neither created nor approves."[1] Mill always uses theism in its ordinary sense, in the absolutistic sense; and always objects vehemently against the attribute of omnipotence which this sense prescribes. God, for theism as commonly understood, is the Supreme Being, the Supreme Intelligent Will. He is the omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent creator and omnipresent sustainer of all things. He both transcends and is immanent in the world. This last sentence distinguishes theism from deism (in which God is wholly transcendent) and pantheism (in which God is wholly immanent).[2]

I use theism and theistic absolutism as synonyms, both signifying conventional theism. And I contrast theistic absolutism, thinking particularly of absolute power as Mill would, with theistic finitism. And I further identify theistic finitism with Plato, even though the doctrines of both Plato and the Manichaeans (as Mill Characterizes them) are

specimens of theistic finitism. Mill describes his theistic finitism, his theory of a divine architect or "demiourgos" (T 36), as follows.

> The evidences . . . of natural theology distinctly imply that the author of the cosmos worked under limitations. . . . There is in nature no reason whatever to suppose that either matter or force, or any of their properties, were made by the being [God] who was the author of the collocations by which the world is adapted to what we consider as its purposes. . . . The Deity had on this hypothesis to work out his ends by combining materials of a given nature and properties. . . . [This required wisdom, but] because it required wisdom, it implies limitation of power. . . . (T 34).

The meaning of theistic absolutism as I defined it above is what Mill would, in general, understand by theism. Yet he was familiar with what was, to him anyway, an essentially different meaning of the term: theism as meaning "The Absolute." This term can be thought of as merely a very much shortened form of the definition of ordinary theism; that is, theistic absolutism. But Mill was convinced we should not equate the two terms theism and The Absolute. In Examination he labors strenuously to demonstrate that "The Absolute" is meaningless, "a curiosity of dialectics" (E 57); the kind of nonsense the "later German Transcendentalists" preoccupied themselves with and, in so doing, put "philosophy back to its very incunabula" (E 59). He begins his controversy[3] with the "philosophers of the absolute" by explaining (E 45) that the

> name of God is vailed [by Hamilton] under two extremely abstract phrases, 'The Infinite' and 'The Absolute,' perhaps from a reverential feeling: such, at least, is the reason given by Sir W. Hamilton's disciple, Mr. Mansel, for preferring the more vague expressions. But it is one of the most unquestionable of all logical maxims, that the meaning of the abstract must be sought for in the concrete, and not conversely. . . .

(We would tend to think of this as an epistemological, not a logical, maxim; it is in fact an expression of Mill's empiricism.) For Mill theistic absolutism or ordinary theism is meaningful but immoral. It is immoral because: "If the maker of the world can [because omnipotent] all

that he will, he wills misery. . . . (N 26). But the notion of The Absolute is,[4] as it were, both meaningless and immoral: "'What kind of an Absolute Being is that,' asked Hegel,[5] 'which does not contain in itself all that is actual, even evil included?'"

> Undoubtedly [replies Mill] and it is therefore necessary to admit, either that there is no Absolute Being, or that the law, that contradictory propositions cannot both be true, does not apply to the Absolute. Hegel chose the latter side of the alternative; and by this, among other things, has fairly earned the honour which will probably be awarded to him by posterity, of having logically extinguished transcendental metaphysics by a series of reductiones ad absurdissimum (E 60).

(Mill is writing in 1865, the very year J. H. Stirling's The Secret of Hegel was published, the book that marked the beginning of Hegelianism in Britain.)[6] There was, however, one meaning of The Absolute (the correlative, The Infinite, need not detain us) which seemed to make a certain amount of sense to Mill.

> In this signification it ["Absolute"] is synonymous with uncaused, and is therefore most naturally identified with the First Cause. The meaning of a First Cause is, that all other things exist and are what they are, by reason of it and of its properties, but that it is not itself made to exist, nor to be what it is, by anything else. It does not depend, for its existence or attributes, on other things: there is nothing upon the existence of which its own is conditional: it exists absolutely (E 50; cf. E 116).

(This is, incidentally, Descartes' concept of God as absolute substance.)[7]

When speaking of God in the ordinary sense, Mill seems to prefer "First Cause." In general he agrees with his longtime friend and philosophical collaborator, Alexander Bain, that for the average religious thinker the question of the existence of God is "a question as to the First Cause of the Universe, and . . . the continued exertion of that Cause in providential superintendence" (Bain's Logic 1.107).[8] Mill seems never to have had any interest whatever in pantheism. One reason for this is doubtless because he, with his father, found it impossible to

believe "that a world so full of evil [as ours] was the work of an Author combining infinite power with perfect goodness and righteousness" (A 28); hence a fortiori impossible to believe that the world itself is a being worthy of worship or worthy of the name God. In Theism Mill says that God as first cause, and absolute as such, is the most natural conception for the human mind. Experience teaches us that each individual fact has a definite beginning, and "wherever there is a beginning we find that there was an antecedent fact (called by us a cause), a fact but for which the phenomenon which thus commences would not have been." This rhythm thus pervading experience,

> it was impossible [Mill concludes] that the human mind should not ask itself whether the whole of which these particular phenomena [or individual facts] are a part had not also a beginning . . . whether there was not something [First Cause] antecedent to the whole series of causes and effects that we term 'nature,' and but for which nature itself would not have been. . . . this question has never remained without a hypothetical answer. The only answer which has long continued to afford satisfaction is theism (T 8).

In a reply to Mansel's Philosophy of the Conditioned,[9] Mill complains: "It appears to me that in thus following the old theologians in the mystical metaphysics which is always at the service of mystical theology, he [Mansel] encumbers Theism and Christianity with (to say the least) very unnecessary difficulties" (E 124). Mill objects to Mansel's holding--as Mill imagines--that "the Creator" (the concrete God supposed to possess some given attributes which are infinite) must be The Infinite. Mill objects that God must "be this nonentity." God, as The Infinite, would, Mill supposes, literally annihilate "all plurality in the universe." And this pantheistic notion would, in turn, annihilate theistic finitism.

Mill would doubtless include Aquinas in the, to Mill, objectionable class of "old theologians,"[10] though not necessarily for exactly the same

reasons he opposes The Absolute. In any case Aquinas is in the center of the grand tradition of theistic absolutism in the West. This doctrine may be traced to Aristotle[11] as theistic finitism can be traced to Plato.[12] For Aquinas God's "being is entire all at once":[13] "The divine essence is being itself."[14] God is "the plenitude of all perfection of all being."[15] This theistic absolutism specifies that God's power is perfect, the doctrine upon which virtually the whole negative side of Mill's theistic theory rests. Let us be clear on Mill's understanding of the meaning of the term omnipotence.

Omnipotence means, for Mill, absolutely or unconditionally limitless power. He is absolutely adament about this; it seemed to be a kind of "dogmatic commitment"[16] for him. Any attempt to "explain away" the literal meaning of omnipotence was scorned by Mill. His mind was utterly closed to such pronouncements as, say, those of Aquinas: "Whatever implies contradiction does not fall within the scope of omnipotence. . . ."[17] In Mill settled conviction an omnipotent God possesses power in a mode free from every limitation. This is omnipotence "in the strict sense of the term" (N 27). Mill's view is like that of Descartes when the latter affirms that it cannot "be said of anything whatsoever that it could not have been done by God." God can make a mountain without a valley, and he can make it true "that one and two should not be three."[18] For Descartes God can harmonize contradictories, though assuredly such power is beyond our comprehension.[19] An omnipotent being is, as Mill puts it shortly, "A Being not restricted by conditions of possibility" (T 36)--a position just directly opposite to that of Aquinas.[20]

It is likely, however, that both James Mill and John Stuart Mill were influenced in their notion of omnipotence, not by Descartes but by

Paley. In his Natural Theology Paley faces the question: If God made, say, the human eye so man could see, why did omnipotence use such numerous and circuitous means to attain his purpose? Why was such a complication as the eye necessary to omnipotence in order to bring about sight? Could "not a simple volition of the Creator have communicated the capacity [to see]?" "Why resort to contrivance where power is omnipotent?" Paley considered it self-evident, as did Mill, that "Whatever is done, God could have done without the intervention of instruments or means."[21] Similarly John Mill: "It is almost too obvious to be worth stating that real Omnipotence could have effected its ends totally without means, or could have made any means sufficient" (E 542). But it is surely not all this obvious. Aquinas writes:[22]

> Though some hold that God can do the impossible, while others deny it because of the nonentity of the impossible, in truth it is out of the question for God to produce what would be a self-destructive object. Yet to affirm that God could do it would not be contrary to faith, though I hold that it would be false. For instance, to assert that what has happened has not happened is a contradiction in terms. . . . [It is saying] that some things are true inasmuch as they are false.

But this is "casuistry" (T 35) to Mill: the God of theism and Christianity is omnipotent and omnibenevolent. But if this were the case, it follows from Mill's "real" omnipotence that "every human life would be the playing out of a drama constructed like a perfect moral tale" (N 26). The drama of human life is superabundantly not such a perfect moral tale. Hence, assuming the goodness of God, the power of God must be limited. Paley said that God "has been pleased to prescribe limits to his own power and to work his ends within those limits."[23] But self-limitation would be immoral, in Mill's conviction: If God "can all that he will, he wills misery, and there is no escape from the conclusion" (N 26).

And the God of deism is, for Mill, just as omnipotent as the God

of theistic absolutism. Deism is "a worship of the order of Nature";[24] deists are "those who admit an omnipotent as well as perfectly just and benevolent maker and ruler of such a world as this. . . ." (A 27-8). Mill almost invariably associates deism with Butler and Butler's Analogy, for whom both Mills always had high respect. Writing in the mid-1850s Mill states that Bishop Butler's Analogy kept James Mill

> for some considerable time, a believer in the divine authority of Christianity; by proving to him, that whatever are the difficulties in believing that the Old and New Testaments proceed from, or record the acts of, a perfectly wise and good being, the same and still greater difficulties stand in the way of the belief, that a being of such a character can have been the Maker of the universe. He considered Butler's argument as conclusive against the only opponents [deists] for whom it was intended (A 27).

And, writing in 1870, Mill reiterates: "The argument of Butler's Analogy is, from its own point of view, conclusive: the Christian religion is open to no objections, . . . which do not apply at least equally to the common theory of deism; the morality of the Gospels is far higher and better than that which shows itself in the order of nature. . . ." (T 58).

On one occasion (N 8) Mill makes reference to the "sentimental deism" of Rousseau, whom Mill takes as a sort of representative of deism. The "deistical moralists" are "almost unanimous," Mill states, "in proclaiming the divinity of nature and setting up its fancied dictates as an authoritative rule of action. A reference to that supposed standard is the predominant ingredient in the vein of thought and feeling which was opened by Rousseau. . . ." (N 7). It was in firm opposition to such "deistical moralists" that Mill wrote Nature, an essay he characterizes (N 10) as an inquiry "into the truth of the doctrines which make nature a test of right and wrong, good and evil . . . or attach merit or approval to following, imitating, or obeying nature." Rousseau did just this.

Besides, Rousseau was sympathetic, or half-sympathetic, with the (to Mill) offending doctrine of God's omnipotence.[25] The creed of the priest of Savoy begins with the admonition to "consult your own heart" and do "what nature commands," clearly suggesting that the laws of man, to be right or moral, must conform to the laws of nature or to natural law.

Mill urges that, on the contrary, it is immoral for man to follow nature, that is, "make the spontaneous course of things the model of his voluntary actions." The "scheme of nature regarded in its whole [italics mine] extent" (N 44) cannot possibly be an acceptible guide to right acts, because there is the "Reign of Terror"[26] in "a hurricane and a pestilence" (N 22) and "the odious scene of violence and tyranny" exhibited in "the animal kingdom" (N 39). Hence it is man's "duty" to "amend the course of nature," striving to bring "that part of it over which we can exercise control more nearly into conformity with a high standard of justice and goodness" (N 44). Man can thus "aid the intentions of Providence" (N 38, that is, help a limited God. An omnipotent God could not possibly need our services. This notion of helping God or being a "fellow laborer with the Highest" (U 76) is one of the most influential facets of Mill's religious philosophy.[27]

Mill was aware of the distinction between the deistic view that God created the world as a perfect machine, one requiring no further interference or "repair" on his part, and the theistic view (commonly associated with Newton)[28] that God created the world but finds it necessary at times to interfere with the machine in order to preserve its stability. Mill links the former view particularly with Leibniz. This philosopher, according to Mill, held that "the only supposition worthy of the deity"

is that he created a universe that is self-sustaining in all respects: Leibniz "protested against likening God to a clockmaker whose clock will not go unless he puts his hand to the machinery and keeps it going" (T 10).[29] As to the theistic view of Newton, propounded in the final query of his Opticks,[30] Mill says that such a God, "not being omnipotent," may indeed "have produced a machinery falling short of his intentions, and which may require the occasional interposition of the Maker's hand." The supposition is "not in itself absurd nor impossible"; but there is no evidence that "could possibly prove it; it remains a simple possibility" (T 78).

Mill uses the term Manichaeism in almost every one of his discussions on philosophical theology. And he uses the term in several senses; it may be useful to delineate these. Manichaeism is a species of theistic finitism; although, as I have said (see pp. 58-9 above), I use theistic finitism to connote Platonic religious dualism--as interpreted by Mill.[31]

It should be said, first, that Mill has no interest in Manichaeism as such. He, following James Mill, wished to improve upon the Calvinist concept of God. Mill is interested, predominantly for moral reasons, though certainly not only these, in theological dualism as a theory holding some promise as a solution to the problem of evil. But, keeping this in mind, it can be said that, strictly, Manichaeism means for Mill "the religion of Ormuzd and Ahriman" (T 38, E 542);[32] that is, the two gods are personified. Less strictly, Manichaeism is one species of "the hypothesis of the Two Principles" (E 541). In this less-strict sense, we have a religiometaphysical dualism rather than theological dualism: the two gods of Manichaeism and the demiurge-matter of Plato are now

spoken of as principles. Yet in discussing this "hypothesis of the Two Principles," only Plato's "Matter" is impersonal:

> If the universe was moulded into its present form by a Being who did not make it wholly, and who was impeded by an obstacle which he could only partially overcome--whether that obstacle was a rival intelligence, or, as Plato thought, an inherent incapacity in Matter; it is on that supposition admissible, that the Demiourgos may have always worked by the simplest possible means; the simplest, namely, which were permitted by the opposition of the conflicting Power, or the intractableness of the material (E 541-2).

Mill uses Manichaeism in a third, even less strict, sense. Speaking (E 542) of Leibniz's "famous theory that a world, made by God, must be the best of all possible worlds," Mill says this "doctrine, commonly called Optimism is really Manichaeism": "The word 'possible' assumes the existence of hindrances insurmountable by the divine power, and Leibnitz was only wrong in calling a power limited by obstacles by the name Omnipotence." The obstacles here would seem to be logical or somehow within the nature of things, in any case different from Ahriman or Plato's recalcitrant receptacle of the forms. I shall use Manichaeism in the sense Mill seems to favor: God's foil is personal. Whereas, in the theory of theistic finitism, God's foil is impersonal.

The distinction between theistic finitism and theistic absolutism is, as this chapter has made apparent, fundamental to Mill's conception of the problem of religion. Theistic absolutism is not, but theistic finitism is, an acceptable notion of the deity. But Mill's conception of the problem of religion is broader than his conception of the problem of God, either the proper meaning of God or his existence. His conception of the problem extends beyond theism itself. There is the question of whether or not a purely ideal God might not be preferable to one conceived of as real, as in ordinary theism or even in theistic finitism. And

there is the question of whether or not a nontheistic religion, such as that of the religion of humanity, might not be better (in terms of happiness, of course) than any form of supernaturalism. I state my interpretation of Mill's final answer to these questions only in the last part of the present study, but these questions are relevant to Mill's conception of the general problem of religion--as we shall now see.

NOTES

[1]Edgar Sheffield Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940), p. 282.

[2]Cf. Frederick Ferré, Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 122: For pantheism God is "wholly involved without surplus." For deism God is "wholly removed without remainder." But the God of historical deism, mainly of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was not the so-called "absentee God." See Mossner, Encycl. of Phil. 2.237, and Robert H. Hurlbutt III, Hume, Newton, and the Design Argument, p. 76: "English Deism is not characterized by the commonly accepted view of Deism as a belief in an absentee God."

[3]I have no intention of going into the tangled skein of this controversy. See Packe 444. Bain (JSM 139) says that Mill is "not convincing" in this dispute with the "intuitionists" Hamilton and Mansel. Mill "may puzzle opponents . . . still, he does not meet their difficulties, nor take account of what they feel to be their strength."

[4]Cf. E 73: "Infinite and Absolute are real attributes, abstracted from concrete objects of thought, if not of experience, which are at least believed to possess those attributes. 'The Infinite' and 'The Absolute' are illegitimate abstractions of what never were, nor could without self-contradiction be supposed to be, attributes of any concrete." Charles Hartshorne would agree here. See his "The God of Religion and the God of Philosophy," in Talk of God, Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures, vol. 2, 19678 (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1969), p. 166: "There is no such thing as the absolute, the infinite, the unmoved mover, save as a mere abstraction, but there is an absolute, infinite, unmoved aspect of the personal God of religion. . . ."

[5]Mill, to be sure, is not here directly quoting from Hegel's works, which he never read nor apparently ever had any desire to read. Mill cites Hegel as quoted by Mansel. See Henry Longueville Mansel, The Limits of Religious Thought, Bampton Lectures of 1858, 4th ed. (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1859), pp. xxxvii, 30. Mill read J. H. Stirling's The Secret of Hegel in 1867 and told Bain the book gave him "a sort of sickening feeling" (Elliot 2.93).

[6]See Encycl. of Phil. 3.457: Mill "opposed Stirling's appointment to the chair of moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh in 1868 on the ground that the immature minds of university students should not be exposed to the study of Hegel." Cf. Maurice Cowling, Mill and Liberalism: "Mill was a proselytizer of genius: the ruthless denigrator of existing positions . . . a man of sneers and smears and pervading certainty" (p. 93). He "attempted dogmatically to erode the assumptions on which competing doctrines were based" (p. xiii). Cowling admits he writes from the stance of "hostility to Mill" (p. xi).

[7]See "First Principles," no. 51, in The Philosophical Works of

Descartes, trans. Haldane and Ross, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955), 1.239: "By substance, we can understand nothing else than a thing which so exists that it needs no other thing in order to exist. And in fact only one single substance can be understood which clearly needs nothing else [hence "absolute"], namely, God. We perceive that all other things can exist onnly by the help of the concourse of God."

[8]Alexander Bain, Logic, 2 vols. (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910 [first pub. 1870]), 1:107—hereafter cited as Logic.

[9]Henry Longueville Mansell, The Philosophy of the Conditioned, Comprising some Remarks on Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy and on Mr. J. S. Mill's Examination of that Philosophy (London: Alexander Strahan, Publisher, 1866).

[10]The "old theologians" Mill probably has in mind are those contained in the list of authorities (14 of them) Mansel cites (Philosophy of the Conditioned, pp. 23-28) to prove that his doctrine of the incognostibility of God is far from a novelty. None of these theologians can properly be said to be mystical theologians. As Bain says (JSM 139) Mill "scarcely ever read a Theological book." But Mill is probably using "mystical" as a synonym for mystifying.

[11]As when, e.g., Aristotle speaks (Metaphysics 1072b27, Ross trans.) of God as "self-dependent actuality" who "exists by necessity." Cf. Aquinas: "God is pure act [actuality] without alloy of potentiality." (Opusc. XIII, Compendium Theologiae, II; cited by Thomas Gilby in Saint Thomas Aquinas Philosophical Texts, selected and trans. by Thomas Gilby [New York: Oxford University Press, 1960], p. 82.)

[12]See Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion, pp. 286-301.

[13]Gilby, Saint Thomas Aquinas Philosophical Texts, p. 82.

[14]Ibid., p. 97.

[15]Gilby, Aquinas Phil. Texts, p. 82.

[16]A phrase particularly to the liking of one of Mill's present-day critics. See Maurice Cowling, Mill and Liberalism, p. 158.

[17]Gilby, Aquinas Phil. Texts, p. 120.

[18]Oeuvres de Descartes, ed. Adam and Tannery, 12 vols. (Paris: 1896-1910), 5:223-4; cited and trans. by Norman Kemp Smith in his New Studies in the Philosophy of Descartes (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), pp. 187-8.

[19]Oeuvres de Descartes, ed. Adam and Tannery, 4:119, cited and trans. Norman Kemp Smith, New Studies, p. 186.

[20]Cf. Gilby, Aquinas Phil. Texts, pp. 120-1: Omnipotence "cannot make affirmation and negation to be simultaneously true."

[21]William Paley, Natural Theology, Selections, ed. Frederick Ferré (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1963), p. 18.

[22]Gilby, Aquinas Phil. Texts, pp. 143-4.

[23]Natural Theology, Selections, p. 18.

[24]Cf. Ernest Campbell Mossner, Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1936), p. 23: "Deism was based on the general theory of the Law of Nature."

[25]Actually Rousseau had not the slightest interest in insisting upon any strict meaning of omnipotence. As Mossner says (Encyc. of Phil. 2.332) Rousseau "simply feels God within himself."

[26]Such pronouncements are sometimes quoted as if they represent Mill's comprehensive view of nature. But this is far from the truth. He concludes the essay by suggesting it is "the duty of man" to "co-operate with the beneficent powers" in nature (N 44; cf. n. 32, p. 56 above).

[27]I think of F. C. S. Schiller as Mill's main successor in the area of philosophy of religion, though William James is the more popular expositor of some of the themes in Mill's religious thought. See F. C. S. Schiller, Riddles of the Sphinx, new and rev. ed. (London: Swan Sonnenshein & Co., 1910 [first pub. 1891]), p. 356: We "can ourselves co-operate with God . . . in the inspiriting assurance that no . . . struggle will lack divine support."

[28]On Newton's theism see Hurlbutt III, Hume, Newton, and the Design Argument, p. 3; also E. A. Burtt, The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Physical Science, 2d, rev. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1954), esp. pp. 294-7.

[29]See Gottfried Leibniz, The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings, trans. Robert Latta (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1898; 1951 reprint), pp. 201-2.

[30]See Newton's Philosophy of Nature; Selections from his Writings, ed. H. S. Thayer, introd. John Herman Randall, Jr. (New York: Hafner Pub. Co., 1960), p. 177: God, "being in all places is able by his will to move the bodies within his boundless uniform sensorium, and thereby to form and reform [italics mine] the parts of the universe. . . ."

[31]There is, of course, a great deal more in Plato's religious views than the simple dualistic scheme Mill makes use of. Cf. G. M. A. Grube, Plato's Thought (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 152: The "Ideas of goodness and beauty are the god of Plato." But, for A. E. Taylor, Plato's God is a personal will--as is Mill's conception of Plato's God. See A. E. Taylor, Plato (New York: Humanities Press, 1956), pp. 441-3.

[32]These are in fact names of Zoroastrian gods, not Manichaean gods as Mill seems to suppose. See Richard Taylor's note at T 38.

CHAPTER IV

THE GENERAL PROBLEM

Mill is convinced theistic finitism holds promise as a solution to the problem of evil. But his conception of the general problem of religion is broader than the ancient problem of evil. As stated, page 5, there are three strands of thought in Mill's religious views: the theistic, the emotive, and the moral. This troika corresponds to Comte's "three kinds of phenomena of which our life consists," that is, "Thoughts, Feelings, and Actions."[1] And the three-fold division also brings to mind Kant's famous three questions: "What can I know? What ought I do do? What may I hope" (Critique of Pure Reason, Smith trans., A 805)? Again, and more important, the triad can be discerned in Mill's conception of the problem of religion.

He delineates this problem in Utility of Religion. He affirms (U 68) that religious belief "as a source of personal satisfaction and of elevated feelings is not to be disputed." (Here we have reference to the dimension of feeling: happiness consisting of feeling of very high quality.) But, in Mill's opinion, it is also true that nothing is more useful to man than truth: "Truth, in matters which so deeply affect us [as religion], is our first concernment" (U 45). (Here is reference to the cognitive dimension in Mill's religious thought.) Hence the central tension: "It is a most painful position to a conscientious and cultivated mind to be drawn in contrary directions by the two noblest of all objects of pursuit--truth and the general good" (U 46).[2] (In the pursuit of the

general good, we have reference to actions.) Mill is convinced that "skeptical philosophers," such as Hume[3] and Bentham, however valuable their contributions on particular points, have tended to oversimplify this problem.

> It is not enough [Mill writes] to aver, in general terms, that there never can be any conflict between truth and utility, that if religion be false nothing but good can be the consequence of rejecting it. For, though the knowledge of every positive truth is a useful acquisition, this doctrine cannot without reservation be applied to negative truth. When the only truth ascertainable is that nothing can be known, we do not by this knowledge gain any new fact by which to guide ourselves. . . . (U 47-48).

The problem, as Mill sees it in broad perspective, may be summarized as follows. The doctrines of the "old religions" (U 73), such as the common Christianity, are, if taken literally, morally coarse and logically slovenly--appropriate, at best, to a former crude age. Such doctrines may have been useful as a "former guidemark" (U 47), but what of religious guidemarks for modern and future man? What can be believed that does not, on the negative side, violate intellectual and moral integrity, and, on the positive side, is inclusive and expansive enough to encompass the whole of experience--thoughts, feelings, and actions? Should (Can?) the old be <u>replaced</u> by a new religion? Or, is it possible to <u>improve</u> the old to a point of acceptibility?

In general Mill moves in two directions toward a solution to this problem of a viable religion for modern man, these directions being suggested by the questions just asked. And the grounds (or an important part of them) of this dual effort are linguistic, as becomes apparent in the following discussion of Mill on meanings of the terms God and religion.

Mill commonly uses the term God in its ordinary sense. Yet, in his own mind, God had two distinct meanings. Writing in the mid-1850s,

and speaking of those "whose belief is far short of Deism" (A 32), Mill says:[4]

> Though they may think the proof incomplete that the universe is a work of design, and though they assuredly disbelieve that it can have an Author and Governor who is absolute in power as well as perfect in goodness, they have that which constitutes the principal worth of all religions whatever, the ideal conception of a Perfect Being, to which they habitually refer as the guide of their conscience; and this ideal of God is usually far nearer to perfection than the objective Deity of those, who think themselves obliged to find absolute goodness in the author of a world so crowded with suffering and so deformed by injustice as ours (italics mine).

Mill speaks here very much as if he is sharing his personal religious confession. ("Conception of a Perfect Being" brings to mind James Mill's "He who is perfection." See page 39 above.) And the following citation from Theism also has a personal ring to it. Mill is here offering proof that Kant's supposition that the command of the moral law within "requires a [divine] commander"--that the "conviction of a law includes conviction of a lawgiver"--is not well-founded. Mill reasons (T 26) that the "existence of God as a wise and just lawgiver is not a necessary part of the feelings of morality" because as a matter of fact "the obligation of duty is both theoretically acknowledged and practically felt in the fullest manner by many who have no positive belief in God, though seldom, probably, without habitual and familiar reference to him as an ideal conception" (italics mine). This notion is similar to that of Kant when[5] he speaks in the following vein: Religious

> faith needs merely the idea of God, to which all morally earnest . . . endeavors for the good must inevitably lead; it [religious faith] need not presume that it can certify the objective reality of this idea through theoretical apprehension. Indeed, the minimum of knowledge (it is possible that there may be a God) must suffice, subjectively, for whatever can be made the duty of every man.[6]

The notion of an ideal god is a substantial thread in Mill's religious

thought. I shall return to it later in this study. At the moment I do no more than note that Mill, in the important passage cited at the top of the preceding page, does not offer his "ideal of God" as a possible solution to the problem of religion. He is, in that passage, concerned with his own problem of religion: these two problems are different (see p. 176 below).

Comte's god (the human race) combined the ideal and the real, according to Mill: It is conceived of as "a concrete object at once ideal and real" (ACP 134). It is real because the human race obviously exists, and has been around for a long time. Comte never tires of saying that his "new Supreme Being" is demonstrable,[7] hence something in which we can really believe: The existence of god here is no problem! And, in Mill's interpretation, Comte's "Grand Etre" is an ideal object in two respects. First, devotion is paid not to the world's population at any given time, but to humanity as such, "collective" humanity, the "aggregate" of our fellow creatures (ACP 135). Indeed the object of worship is "all sentient being," including such "humble auxiliaries" as the "noble dog."

And the conception of the positivist god is also an "ideal object" (ACP 137) in that all that is less than morally inspiring in the human race--which is fairly considerable!--is excluded from the concept of the Grand Being. It was, in Mill's view, only Comte who fully realized "all the majesty" of which this notion of idealized humanity is susceptible. Doubtless Mill viewed it as a kind of apotheosis of utilitarianism:[8] it is certain he has himself in mind when he remarks (ACP 136) that "many" have perceived the salubrious "power which may be acquired over the mind by the idea of the general interest of the human race, both as a source of emotion and as a motive to conduct." The idea of humanity

> ascends into the unknown recesses of the past, embraces the manifold present, and descends into the indefinite and unforeseeable future. Forming a collective Existence without assignable beginning or end, it appeals to that [intuitive??] feeling of the Infinite, which is deeply rooted in human nature, and which seems necessary to the imposingness of all our highest conceptions. Of the vast unrolling web of human life, the part best known to us is irrevocably past; this we can no longer serve, but can still lofe: it comprises . . . those who have loved us . . . (ACP 135).

Every age of humanity is connected with every other in the "vast unrolling web." We see "in the earthly destiny of mankind the playing out of a great drama, or the action of a prolonged epic, [and thus] all the generations of mankind become indissolubly united into a single image." And Mill adds that in order for "the ennobling power of this grand conception"[9] to be fully efficacious, "we should, with M. Comte, regard the Grand Etre, Humanity, or Mankind, as composed, in the past, solely of those who, . . . have played their part worthily in life. It is only as thus restricted that the aggregate of our species becomes an object deserving our veneration" (ACP 136).

There are, then, two main conceptions of God for Mill, the ideal and the real. Ordinarily, of course, God is conceived of as real or concrete; but a purely ideal God is a valuable conception, apparently favored by Mill in the passage near the top of page 74 above. And Mill has told us both these conceptions are combined[10] in the object of devotion for the religion of humanity. And we shall now see that Mill's two conceptions of God are paralleled by his two conceptions of religion, these latter probably following from the former.

That the meaning of the term religion is crucial to Mill is apparent from the following citation from Auguste Comte and Positivism, a work in which Mill sides with Comte in holding "that a religion may exist without belief in a God" (ACP 133). Comte's

> religion is without a God. In saying this, we have done enough to induce nine-tenths of all readers, at least in our own country, to avert their faces and close their ears. To have no religion, though scandalous enough, is an idea they are partly used to: but to have no God, and to talk of religion, is to their feelings at once an absurdity and an impiety. Of the remaining tenth, a great proportion, perhaps, will turn away from anything which calls itself by the name of religion at all (ACP 132-3).

All existing, and past, religions of the West are or have been "supernatural religions" (U 72). But must religion always be of this character? Wouldn't a religion such as that of Comte be a better religion--better in light of the defficiencies of supernaturalism. Let us review some of the characteristic defficiencies of ordinary religion. In Theism (T 22) Mill characterizes the "religious belief of savages" as being--Rousseau's "noble" savage notwithstanding--a "crude generalization which ascribes life, consciousness, and will to all natural powers." It is "fetishism of the grossest kind, ascribing animation . . . to individual objects, and seeking to propitiate them by prayer and sacrifice." But there is an integral element in all extant institutionalized religion that is a mere modification of this "Volitional explanation of facts" (ACP 10).

For Mill supernatural religion is experience generalized, via our concept of causality, under the aspect of emotion and imagination. And, in general, the less experience the more emotion, the painful emotion of fear. As Bentham said: "fear is the never-failing companion and offspring of ignorance." (See page 19 above.) The empirical knowledge of man in an "infantile state of reason and experience" (ACP 10) is relatively narrow, hence fear is a dominant note of his religion. This fear is always associated with power, the awesome power at the disposal of the capricious wills of the supposed gods.

But, though fetishism or polytheism seem "gross" to us, they were

not gross to former cultures. But what is a grievous monstrosity, in Mill's lifelong conviction, is the holding of religious views in the present age which are appropriate only to a less-advanced stage in the history of man. There is, for instance, no great harm if a man believes in the real existence of Santa Claus, although such a belief is considered appropriate only for children. But it is quite a different matter if adults of a modern and supposedly sophisticated culture believe in a cosmic tyrant who is an "Omnipotent Author of Hell" (A 29). Mill does not identify this hellmaker God with his father's early Calvinism. He identifies the offensive deity with "the common Christian conception" of God. All religions, insofar as this conception of God is functional in them, are ranked by Mill as the lowest form of conventional supernaturalism.

> The recognition of the object of highest worship in a being who could make a Hell, and who could create countless generations of human beings with the certain foreknowledge that he was creating them for this fate: Is there any moral enormity which might not be justified by imitation of such a Deity? . . . Any other of the outrages of the most ordinary justice and humanity involved in the common Christian conception of the moral character of God sinks into insignificance beside this dreadful idealization of wickedness (U 74).

So "coarse and selfish a social instrument as the fear of hell" (U 62) utterly fails to pass any moral test worthy of the name. And the test for Mill is: Is a given religion or doctrine of religion a "means of elevating and improving human character" (U 73)? The "worship of power only," which the doctrine of an omnipotent God tends to encourage, is the "bowing down to a gigantic image of something not fit for us to imitate."

And yet, after all this (!), Mill admits Christians are not in face demoralized by their God: It is "possible (and there are many instances of it) to worship with the intensest devotion either deity, that of nature or of the Gospel, without any perversion of the moral sentiments."

Why is this? Because, for one main reason, the pious do not actually pay worship to the "demon which such a being as they imagined would really be, but to their own idea of excellence."[11] The "evil is, that such a belief keeps the ideal wretchedly low; and opposes the most obstinate resistence to all thought which has a tendency to raise it higher" (A 29-30).

> Mankind are always growing better than their religion, and leave behind one after another of the more vicious parts of it, dwelling more and more exclusively on those which are better, or admit at least of a better sense. But this holding fast in theory to a standard ever more and more left behind in practice is one great cause why the human intellect has not improved in anything like the same ratio as the sentiments (Elliot 2.374).

And, for another reason, the devotee fixes "attention exclusively on what is beautiful and beneficent in the precepts and spirit of the Gospel [in the case of Christians] and in the dispensations of nature [in the case of deists]," and puts "all that is the reverse as entirely aside as if it did not exist." The only way, then, there can be a simple and innocent Christian faith or deist faith is, according to Mill, to stifle the speculative faculties--keep them in "a torpid and inactive state" (U 75-6). At the bottom of this whole unfortunate state of affairs is the fact that men "are always growing better than their religion." Socrates and Plato would be good examples of such men.

Although Mill sweats at his arguments, he scores points. Many today, when hell is cooler than in Mill's day, would still applaud his attack. It may be true, as Mill insists, that men have made their gods reflect their own human morality irrespective of what the deity is really or officially supposed to be like. But, however this may be, Mill is sensitive to one of the fundamental problems of religion, one that is as critical today as in the nineteenth century. This is the problem of the

worship-worthiness of God; or, as it is sometimes put, the problem of "ultimate images"[12] in religion.

The religious situation must be improved. How can it best be done? It can be improved by emphasizing the ideal perfection of the object of devotion. And, in Mill's view, the religion of humanity offers improvement.

> The essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires toward an ideal object, recognized as of the highest excellence, and as rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire. This condition is fulfilled by the Religion of Humanity in as eminent a degree and in as high a sense as by the supernatural religions even in their best manifestations, and far more so than in any of their others (U 72).

(But Mill suggests [U 77] that a "theism of the imagination and feelings" may "be held in conjunction" with the religion of humanity.)

But when we speak of Comte's religion, "the word religion must not," Mill explains (ACP 132), "be understood in its ordinary sense." For Comte's "religion is without a God." But why, after all, must the ordinary sense of religion hold the field absolutely? "Candid persons" of all creeds should be "willing to admit-[Mill thinks], that if a person has an ideal object, his attachment and sense of duty towards which are able to control and discipline all his other sentiments and propensities, and prescribe to him a rule of life, that person has a religion. . . ." For instance: "It has been said[13] that whoever believes in the Infinite nature of Duty,' even if he believe in nothing else, is religious" (ACP 133-4).

"What, in truth," asks Mill, "are the conditions necessary to constitute a religion" (ACP 133)? There must be a creed, respecting human destiny and duty, which claims authority over the whole of life. And, on the part of the believer, there "must be a sentiment connected with this

creed" which is sufficiently powerful to render the authority of the creed actual in the thoughts, feeling, and action of the believer. But, of course, there is a nucleus (God in ordinary religion) at the center of the creed and toward which the sentiment is specifically oriented; of this Mill remarks (ACP 134): "It is a great advantage (though not absolutely indispensable) that this sentiment should crystallize, as it were, round a concrete object; if possible a really existing one. . . . Such an object Theism and Christianity offer to the believer: but the condition may be fulfilled, if not in a manner strictly equivalent, by another object [duty or humanity, e.g.]."

Mill is here pleading the case for humanism in a sense of the term similar to its most widely-accepted meaning in our own day;[14] that is, as a nontheistic religion[15] dedicated to ethical goals without belief in the supernatural.[16] Mill himself does not use the term humanism. And, as we shall see, he cannot be classed as a humanist in the current most commonly accepted meaning of the term. Mill is arguing, nevertheless, that a "Religion of the Infidel" (ACP 135), such as Comte's, ought to be classed as a religion. The religion of humanity seems to provide for some--certainly for Comte himself--services of guidance, devotion, etc., that are very similar to those ordinary religions provide.

Mill repeatedly[17] expressed his conviction that Comte's "le culte de l'humanité" could "perform the functions and supply the place of a religion":[18]

> If we suppose cultivated to the highest point the sentiments of fraternity with all our fellow beings, past, present, and to come, of veneration for those past and present who have deserved it, and devotion to the good of those to come; universal moral education making the happiness and dignity of this collective body the central point to which all things are to tend and by which all are to be estimated, instead of a pleasure of an unseen and merely imaginary

> Power; the imagination at the same time being fed from youth with representations of all noble things felt and acted heretofore, and with ideal conceptions of still greater to come: there is no worthy office of a religion which this system of cultivation does not seem adequate to fulfill. It would suffice both to alleviate and to guide human life (Elliot 2.363; italics mine).

But all this "is merely supposing that the religion of humanity obtained as firm a hold on mankind, and as great a power of shaping their usages, their institutions, and their education, as other religions. . . ." (Elliot 2.362; diary entry, 1854).

But, while the positivist solution to the problem of a viable religion for modern man seemed to Mill to hold some promise, it was nevertheless a radical solution: It would require very extensive change in an area of thought and feelings which, by its very nature, is peculiarly conservative. It would call for a new conception of what religion is. This might be taught. As Mill says (U 53) the "power of education is almost boundless." But, short of force, how could the new religion effect this "universal moral education"?[19] Besides, Mill never agreed with Comte that everything theological must be neutralized. Characteristic pronouncements of Comte are: "No important step in the progress of Humanity can now be made without totally abandoning the theological principle" (GVP 20). We must "make a distinct choice between Positivism and Theology. For there are now but two camps: the camp of reaction and anarchy, which acknowledges more or less distinctly the direction of God: the camp of construction and progress, which is wholly devoted to Humanity" (GVP 444). But such pronouncements are not characteristic of Mill: The "Positive mode of thought is not necessarily a denial of the supernatural" (ACP 14).

The difficulties attending the new religion ever becoming a living

religion are perhaps insuperable. But we can work to improve what already exists. Perhaps the advantages of such a purely human religion as that of Comte can be incorporated, in time, in what is now the living religion. To move in this direction toward a solution is to work toward a less radical solution, that is, one requiring less change. Or, if extensive change does occur within conventional supernaturalism (conceivably it might change to the point of virtually replacing itself), this change would be far less rapid than Comte's program specified. Comte fixed "the time necessary for the complete political establishment of Positivism at thirty-three years" (ACP 183).

Whatever be the destiny of the religion of humanity or something like it, we can meanwhile continue to improve the religion we have: Improvement has occurred and "it is still proceeding." In Mill's judgment we "ought to suppose religion to have accepted the best human morality which reason and goodness can work out, from philosophical, Christian, or any other elements. . . . it has thus freed itself from the pernicious consequences which result from its identification with any bad moral doctrine. . . . (U 49).[20] Of course this best human morality does not follow literally from the fundamental doctrines of the popular theology. There are "improving forms of religion" because of the widespread practice of "salutary neglect" (not Mill's term in this context) respecting the inelegant and unrefined, nay bloody, moorings of the common Christianity. In Mill's view conventional Christianity can be improved, or improved further, to the extent it can be persuaded to set aside the dogmatism of the Apostle Paul (Christianity's real founder),[21] and emphasize Jesus Christ as the ideal representative of humanity: "Some of the precepts of Christ as exhibited in the Gospels—rising far above Paulism, which is

the foundation of ordinary Christianity--carry some kinds of moral goodness to a greater height than had ever been attained before" (U 64).

Mill seems always[22] to have had a deep respect for Christ. Near the close of Theism he says "religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man [Jesus of Nazareth] as the ideal representative and guide of humanity." What "better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete than to endeavor so to live that Christ would approve our life" (T 85)? "In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility . . . the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality" (Utilitarianism, p. 22).[23] And in Utility of Religion (U 73) he associates "the best supernatural religions" with "the noble and beautiful beneficence toward our fellow creatures which he ["the Christ of the Gospels"] so impressively inculcates."

Evidently the "most improved" forms of extant institutionalized religion are, for Mill, those which stress the golden rule, or at least the spirit of it, and neglect dogmatic theology. And if they stress the golden rule, they stress the essence of Mill's utilitarianism; and this, in turn, is to stress what may be called Mill's own version of the religion of humanity. But this version, if it may be so called, is not confined to ethics; it does not necessarily exclude all theology--not necessarily liberal (very liberal!) theology. In an address to St. Andrews university in 1867, Mill states[24] that the

> tendency of the age, on both sides of the ancient Border [of England and Scotland], is towards the relaxation of [eccleiastical] formularies, and a less rigid construction of articles. This very circumstance, by making the limits of orthodoxy less definite, and obliging every one to draw the line for himself, is an embarrassment to consciences. But I hold entirely with those clergymen who elect to remain in the national church, so long as they are able to accept

> its articles and confessions in any sense or with any interpretation consistent with common honesty, whether it be the generally received interpretation or not. . . . let all who conscientiously can, remain in the church. A church is far more easily improved from within than from without.

Were all "to desert the church who put a large and liberal construction on its terms of communion," then "the national provision for religious teaching and worship would be left utterly to those who take the narrowest, the most literal, and purely textual view of the formularies." And these literalists, though certainly not necessarily themselves bigots, "are under the great disadvantage of having the bigots for their allies."

Apparently Mill views the national churches of England and Scotland as among the "best manifestations" of current (as of 1867) supernatural religion. This must be because he judged them to have a considerable capacity to improve human character (U 73). For Mill the less literal and "textual," and the more ideal, the better as concerns religion. When "the worship of the Deity ceases to be the adoration of abstract moral perfection," there is then a danger of crystallizing our devotional feelings around some image that is "not fit for us to imitate" (U 74). But the image of a finite God, such as that of Plato, could be, Mill thought, fitted out to be one worthy of imitation. He makes this plain in the closing section of Theism. The need is improved mythology it would seem, not complete demythologization.

Mill has said that a church is easier to improve "from within than from without." It would seem that the main direction of Mill's quest for a solution to the problem of a viable religion for modern man is more conservative than Comte could approve. Mill probably thought of Theism as an attempt to improve, from his viewpoint, the theoretical structure of supernatural religion. More correctly: he attempts, in this

essay, to strengthen the theological pole of what I call his theistic humanism.

If his goal in Theism is to support theistic humanism, and I shall argue that it is, then Mill needs a good argument to underpin the effort. He is of the opinion that the design argument may supply this need. Perhaps the evidence, scrutinized in Theism, will enable Mill to feel he has the rational right to believe there is a "really existing" counterpart to his purely subjective ideal God (see page 74 above). The possibilities of attaining, or approaching, this goal are, in any case, highly worth careful exploration: "It cannot be questioned that the undoubting belief of the real existence of a Being who realizes our own best ideas of perfection, and of our being in the hands of that Being as the ruler of the universe, gives an increase of force to these feelings ["aspirations toward goodness"] beyond what they can receive from reference to a merely ideal conception" (T 83). And this goal is not prima facie impossible, in Mill's opinion: "The power of the Creator once recognized as limited, there is nothing to disprove the supposition that his goodness is complete and that the ideally perfect character in whose likeness we should wish to form ourselves and to whose supposed approbation we refer our actions may have a real existence in a Being to whom we owe all such good as we enjoy" (T 84).

But is there anything to prove this supposition? Can such a sublime orientation be rationally substantiated? Let us see. In the next part of this study, I concentrate upon the theoretical side of Mill's religious views, and upon the design argument. For Mill religion is not a matter of utility only: "The truth, in matters which so deeply affect us [as religion], is our first concernment" (U 45).

NOTES

[1]GVP 8; cf. 319 e.g.: "Art is in direct relation with the three orders of phenomena by which human nature is characterized; Feelings, Thoughts, and Actions. It originates in Feeling; . . . It has its basis in Thought, and its end is Action."

[2]As F. E. L. Priestley suggests (Mill's Works 10.lix), Matthew Arnold put the problem similarly when Arnold wrote: "Men have such need of joy! But joy whose grounds are true. . . ." See Edward Alexander, Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), pp. 186, 192, e.g., where Alexander argues that both Arnold and Mill hoped to substitute poetry for religion. But Alexander does not give sufficient attention to Mill's theological views.

[3]In his article on Bentham (Works 10.80), Mill classes Hume among the "destructive philosophers; those who can perceive what is false, but not what is true. . . ." "England (or rather Scotland) had the profoundest negative thinker on record, David Hume. . . ."

[4]Notice that Mill here speaks of the proof of design in the universe being "incomplete." In Theism he calls the design argument "really scientific" in character. But, in the last analysis, his conclusion in Theism is not unlike the opinion expressed here in A 32.

[5]See F. E. England, Kant's Conception of God (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1929), p. 199: From "one point of view" Kant "writes of God as . . . 'not a thing existing outside myself,' while from another point of view he writes freely of God as an actual external reality." How very Millian!

[6]Immanuel Kant, Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 142.

[7]See, e.g., Auguste Comte, The Catechism of Positivism or Summary Exposition of the Universal Religion, trans. Richard Congreve, 3d ed. rev. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, & Co., 1891), p. 49.

[8]See Mill's Utilitarianism, ed. Askar Piest (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), esp. the last two paragraphs of chapter three. Mill argues (pp. 39-40) that there is "a natural basis of sentiment for utilitarian morality," this "firm foundation" being "that of the social feelings of mankind--the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures." And "now suppose," he hypothesizes (p. 42), "this feeling of unity to be taught as a religion, and the whole force of education, of institutions, and of opinion directed, as it once was in the case of religion . . . I think that no one who can realize this conception will feel any misgiving about the sufficiency of the ultimate sanction of the happiness morality." Mill expressly associates his ethical theory with "a religion," and the religion is Comte's religion of humanity: Comte "has superabundantly shown the possibility of giving to the service of humanity, even without the aid of belief in a Providence . . . the social efficacy of a religion" (p. 42).

[9]Mill is obviously quite taken with this "grand conception." It is such language that causes some interpreters to conclude that Mill's religious propensities are virtually all on the side of the religion of humanity. But Mill uses the same language when contemplating "helping God" (T 86) in his fight against evil.

[10]This combination is a very problematical one. The human race, as an object of worship, is and can be a concept only. The Grand Being can't be real like people are, or were, real.

[11]Cf. T 83: "Pious men and women have gone on ascribing to God particular acts and a general course of will and conduct incompatible with even the most ordinary and limited conception of moral goodness, and have had their own ideas of morality, in many important particulars, totally warped and distorted, and notwithstanding this have continued to conceive their God as clothed with all the attributes of the highest ideal goodness which their state of mind enabled them to conceive, and have had their aspirations toward goodness stimulated and encouraged by that conception."

[12]See, e.g., Frederick Ferré, Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), pp. 69, 449-50.

[13]Cf. Elliot 1:91: "I entirely recognise with you [Carlyle] the 'infinite nature of Duty.'" And in the last paragraph of Theism, Mill hints that he would prefer the religion of humanity be designated as the religion of "Duty" (T 86).

[14]By and large present-day humanists are nontheists; most would consider theistic humanism a contradiction. See Corliss Lamont, The Philosophy of Humanism, 5th ed., pp. 12-14. Edwin H. Wilson says in the forward (p. x) to this book that Lamont "demonstrates that belief in a supernatural God, or any God, is not necessary to furnish that unity and significance for the human quest [which gives meaning to life]." The sixth article of the famous Humanist Manifesto of 1933 specifies that "the time has passed for theism," as well as deism. See The New Humanist 6, no. 3 (1933): 2. See n. 21, p. 52 above.

[15]According to Lamont twentieth-century humanists are not particularly happy about being even considered a religion. Humanism "qualifies as a religion. Nonetheless, I prefer to call Humanism a philosophy or way of life" (Phil. of Humanism, p. 144).

[16]In Lamont's ten-point definition of "twentieth-century humanism" (Phil. of Humanism, p. 12), he says the central proposition is that "Humanism believes in a naturalistic metaphysics or attitude toward the universe that considers all forms of the supernatural as myth; and that regards Nature as the totality of being . . . which exists independently of any mind or consciousness" (pp. 12-13).

[17]See, e.g., his Utilitarianism, Liberal Arts ed., p. 42.

[18]Note that Mill distinguishes "le culte de l'humanité" from

"a religion." Ordinary religion means supernaturalism, and usually Mill abides by this usage.

[19]Mill does not, in his diary entury of 1854 cited at the top of the page, sound like the author of On Liberty. Is this "system of cultivation" to be voted in?

[20]If so, why so intense the fulminations against omnipotence?

[21]So he says in Utility of Religion (U 64), but in On Liberty he refers to Christ as "the Founder of Christianity." See Mill's On Liberty, ed. Currin V. Shields (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1956), p. 62.

[22]Cf. Elliot 1.68 (Mill to Carlyle, 1833): "I have never believed Christianity as a religion, consequently have no habitual association of reverence, nor on the other hand any of contempt, like so many who have become sceptics after having been taught to believe; nor have I, like so many, been bored or disgusted with it in my mouth." And the following year (1834) Mill wrote Carlyle: "I have for many years had the very same idea of Christ, and the same unbounded reverence for him as [I have now]. . . . (Elliot 1.93).

[23]But cf. On Liberty, pp. 60-1 where, in a discussion of "Christian morality," he maintains that "the sayings of Christ" contain "only a part of the truth," and that they do not provide for "many essential elements of the highest morality."

[24]"J. S. Mill's Inaugural Address at St. Andrews," in James and John Stuart Mill on Education, ed. F. A. Cavenagh (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1931), p. 188.

PART III. PHYSICOTHEOLOGY

CHAPTER V

THE DESIGN ARGUMENT--I

I shall, in this chapter, consider the place of the design argument in Mill's thought and writings up to the time (ca. 1870) when he wrote Theism, orienting my findings to this essay. The present chapter should facilitate understanding of the contents of this essay, which is brief (in light of its scope and subject) and probably unfinished.[1] The general study in this chapter will be succeeded in the following chapter by a special study on the same subject, the argument from design.

Mill would have us believe he "was brought up from the first without any religious belief" (A 27). It is certain this must be qualified. Bain tells us (James Mill, p. 90) that John Mill was baptized and "as a little boy, went to church; his maiden aunt remembered taking him, and hearing him say . . . 'that the two greatest books were Homer and the Bible.'"[2] James Mill taught that it is "a law of human nature that the first sensations experienced produce the greatest effect." If he is right--and, as he says,[3] "Common language confirms this law, when it speaks of the susceptibility of the tender mind"--then these early "mental trains" of John Stuart are at least worth mentioning in connection with our general subject. John Mill himself says (U 53) that it "is especially characteristic of the impressions of early education that they possess what it is so much more difficult for later convictions to obtain--command over the feelings. We see daily how powerful a hold

these first impressions retain over the feelings even of those who have given up the opinions which they were early taught." But there is no way of finding out how effective, if at all, Mill's very early associations with conventional religion were. What we do find, however, is that several of his earliest articles are on the subject of religion,[4] and almost the very first essay he wrote "was a reply to Paley's Natural Theology."[5]

Mill wrote this essay when sixteen years of age, when his career as an author began.[6] It has not been preserved, but its contents may be guessed. Mill informs us that his father suggested he write the essay. And, in light of James Mill's sympathy toward "Manichaeism" (see pages 34-5 above), chances are the young Mill argued that if Paley proved anything he proved the existence of a finite god, not the omnipotent God of theism and Christianity. Indeed James Mill's "creed" (see page 34 above) could well have been suggested by Paley himself. In the third chapter of his Natural Theology, Paley virtually subscribes to what the Mills would call Manichaeism.

> It is as though one Being should have fixed certain rules [Paley writes], and, if we may so speak, provided certain materials, and afterwards have committed to another Being, out of these materials and in subordination to these rules, the task of drawing forth a creation: a supposition which evidently leaves room and induces indeed a necessity for contrivance. . . . It has been said that the problem of creation was 'attraction and matter being given, to make a world out of them'; and . . . this statement perhaps does not convey a false idea.[7]

In any case Mill's interest in the "argument from marks of design in nature" (T 27) seems to have been lifelong. True, we don't find a large number of references to this classical proof in his writings. But, then, Mill was habitually reticent about expressing his opinions on religion, especially on the truth of religion.[8] Natural theology was not the

dominant interest of his mind; his writings on religion constitute a small percentage of his Collected Works. But when we do find him making reference to the argument, especially after about 1860, it is usually with respect.[9]

In 1833 three of the Bridgewater treatises[10] were published. The first was by Chalmers; the third was by Whewell. Chalmers' volume, or parts of it, made a lasting impression upon Mill. And Whewell's volume may have done so also. There can be no doubt, at any rate, that Mill read Whewell's Bridgewater treatise, although Mill does not so specify. It is highly unlikely indeed that he would read Chalmers on natural theology and not Whewell. This latter author was far more important to Mill than Chalmers. In his Autobiography (A 145-6) he acknowledges that it was Whewell's History of the Inductive Sciences (1837) that enabled, or at least greatly assisted, him to develop his theory of induction,[11] the most important contribution of Mill's Logic.[12]

In his Bridgewater treatise[13] Chalmers stresses the distinction "between the Laws of Matter and the Dispositions of Matter," and insists that the "main evidence for "a Divinity"[14] lies in the latter--in the "collocations" or arrangements of matter. He urges that a much weightier "argument for a God"--an agency of design "rather than of necessity or chance"--is drawn "from the construction of an eye than from the construction of a planetarium." It is the distributions of matter, so that they may be "usefully operated upon by the laws [of matter]," that reveal "the purposes of intelligence": "Insomuch, that though we conceded to the atheist, the eternity of matter, and the essentially inherent character of all its laws--we could still point out to him, in the manifold adjustments of matter, its adjustments of place and figure and magnitude, the most

impressive signatures of a Deity."

In his discussion of causation in Logic, Mill makes use of the term "collocations," which he acknowledges to be "the aptly selected expression of Dr. Chalmers" (L 306/3.12.2). Mill distinguishes "two distinct kinds of elements" in causation, the "one is as essential an ingredient as the other." "Simple" causation or causation proper is invariable sequence of succeeding events. An "invariability of succession is found by observation to obtain between every fact in nature and some other fact which has preceded it." The "invariable antecedent is termed the cause; the invariable consequent the effect" (L 213/3.5.1). And the law of universal causation is the truth that "every fact [event, change] which has a beginning has a cause" (L 212/3.5.1). More strictly, the cause of a phenomenon is "the antecedent, or the concurrence of antecedents, on which it [the phenomenon] is invariably and unconditionally consequent" (L 222/3.5.6). Hence the question of God, as a causal agent, resolves itself, for Mill, into two questions: (1) How stands the evidence, if any, respecting God as the "universal antecedent on which the whole system of nature was originally consequent" (ACP 15)--that is, as first cause or creator? And (2) How stands the evidence, if any, respecting God as collocator? It is God, as collocator, the Psalmist has in mind when he writes: "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see" (Psalms 94:9)? (Compare Mill: "It would be difficult to find a stronger argument in favour of Theism, than that the eye must have been made by one who sees, and the ear by one who hears" [E 567].) The first question directs us toward the cosmological argument for God's existence. The second question involves the design argument; which, in one of its forms,[15] concentrates

upon God as collocator. Let us see how, according to Mill, the evidence stands as concerns the first question.

Mill was taught from youth that the argument for a first cause, or the cosmological argument, is invalid (see page 34 above). We have already seen (page 61 above) that Mill is of the opinion that "First Cause" or "Creator" comes the closest, of all the various names of God, to describing the common notion of God. It is very natural, in his opinion, that the concept of a first cause should have arisen in the human mind. The ordinary mind notes that all we experience "had a cause, and owed its existence to that cause" (T 12). Armed with this truth of experience, the spontaneous query follows: "How then can it but be that the world, which is but a name for the aggregate of all that we know, has a cause [called God] to which it is indebted for its existence." But just because the cause-effect relationship pervades our experience, it does not follow, from this fact alone, that the universe or nature as a whole also exists in a similar relationship to something (God) antecedent to it: "It is a striking example of . . . our tendency to believe, that a relation which subsists between every individual item of our experience and some other item, subsists also between our experience as a whole, and something [God] not within the sphere of experience" (E 237).

Let us test this notion of a transcendent first cause against what Mill calls in Theism the "scientific view of nature." In doing this we follow Mill's mode of procedure in Theism. In this essay he says (T 4) that opposition to religion in the eighteenth century was mainly carried on on grounds of logic (as in the case of Hume); "in the present age, on the ground of science." In Mill's time many were convinced that physical science had "established, by conclusive evidence, matters of fact with which

the religious traditions of mankind are not reconcilable." Is this the case? Let us see. And let us, Mill says in effect, adopt the following method of inquiry.[16] Let us grant that "the legitimate conclusions of science are entitled to prevail over all opinions, however widely held, which conflict with them," and "let us proceed to consider what place there is for religious beliefs on the platform of science, what evidences they can appeal to, such as science can recognize, and what foundation there is for the doctrines of religion considered as scientific theorems" (T 5).

Many would object to Mill's procedure here as irrelevant because religion is not "science" but something else: a sense of the holy, say, God being felt as the "mysterium tremendum" and "fascinans."[17] Such objections have weight. But, as we have amply seen already in this study, Mill defines religion, not in terms of reason and evidence alone but also in terms of "the emotions and desires [being directed] toward an ideal object" (U 71). But Mill's position is that emotions and desires are not the whole of religion, nor these plus our duties toward our fellow creatures. His position is that religion involves these qualities, but it also has a rational element having to do with evidence. In Theism Mill addresses himself to that aspect of religion which supposedly links itself with fact. And if it be said that the question of the existence and attributes of God can be "no question of fact,"[18] Mill would simply deny this. In his view some essential part of all religion is a reflection of man's "scientific" interpretation of nature at any given stage in his history. This "scientific" explanation of natural phenomena is not a systematic interrogation of nature, but it is still an interrogation of nature. The modern "most scientific proceeding [Mill avers] can be no

more than an improved form of that which was primitively pursued by the human understanding while undirected by science [i.e., by modern techniques]" (L 208/3.4.2).

The "scientific view of nature"—to which Mill subscribes in Theism and which he uses as a general criterion—is that the physical world is matter in motion. And matter in actual or potential motion is force (L 230/3.5.10). As Bain States (Logic 2.37): "Matter is known to us merely as exerting force." Force is "the underlying experience, the real signification of Matter." Mill states the "scientific" view of the world, derived from the theory of conservation of force or energy, in an early page (T 8) in Theism. The world is "one connected system, or united whole, united not like a web[19] composed of separate threads in passive juxtaposition with one another, but rather like the human or animal frame, an apparatus kept going by perpetual action and reaction among all its parts."[20] And this view of the world is really Mill's own view as far as the physical world is concerned, that is, apart from any religiometaphysical theory that might be thought to "explain" or account for some or all natural phenomena.

Everything is a form of force, ever being exchanged for other forms: everything is the result of antecedent forces. And "there is not [Mill affirms] the slightest color, derived from experience for supposing Force itself to have been created by a volition [of God]." As "far as anything can be concluded from human experience, force has all the attributes of a thing eternal and uncreated" (T 16). Hence at first blush science does not countenance the first cause of theism or deism, that is a transcendent and absolute first cause; though science may sanction, as we shall see in a moment, a "universal cause" or concause that resembles

a first cause in certain respects.

Our world is one of becoming, one of changing objects. Every object begins to exist and passes away: it is a changing form of energy or force--as "the last great generalization of science, the conservation of force, teaches us" (T 14). Hence the cause of every change is a prior change. In the eighth edition of his Logic (1872), Mill formulates the universal law of causation as follows: The "law of causation is that change can only be produced by change" (L 230/3.5.10). It is "a necessary part of the fact of causation, within the sphere of our experience, that the causes as well as the effects had a beginning in time, and were themselves caused" (T 13). Obviously there cannot be a first cause as far as this "changeable element," as Mill calls it, in nature is concerned.

Yet when we analyze the ever-changing objects, "we find, even in the changes of material nature, a permanent element" (T 14). For instance: the restless sea is one manifestation of the play of ever-changing forces. Individual waves begin to exist, concresce, and perish. But, then, the waves are composed of molecules; and these, of atoms; and these are units of force. We are again at force. But these forms of force, called chemical substances, are permanent, or relatively so with respect to macroscopic change in nature. The "last result of physical inquiry, derived from the converging evidences of all branches of physical science" (T 14)--the conservation theory—teaches us that whenever "a physical phenomenon is traced to its cause, that cause when analyzed is found to be a certain quantum of force combined with certain collocations." The "variety in the effects depends partly upon the amount of the force, and partly upon the diversity of the collocations. The force itself is essentially one and the same; and there exists of it in nature a fixed

quantity, which (if the theory be true) is never increased or diminished" (T 14). Here--in "force itself"--we find, Mill explains, "a permanent element within "the changes of material nature." Force is a "primeval and universal element in all causes," hence "this it is apparently to which if to anything we must assign the character of First Cause." For "all effects may be traced up to it, while it cannot be traced up, by our experience, to anything beyond" (T 14).

Now this notion of force, which physical science has given us, is not compatible with our meaning of an intelligent will; hence it is not compatible with the requirements of theism. For science "there is and must[21] be a First Cause" (T 17), but "it is not necessary" that this cause be "a prior intelligence" (T 20). Therefore insofar "as it [theism] rests on the necessity [italics mine] of a First Cause, [it] has no support from experience" (T 17).

But if we turn our attention away from the abstract "primeval and universal element" in the universe (force), and look at some of the concrete collocations about us, we will find that some of the phenomena resemble human artifacts. Now such a move brings us at once into the arena of human experience where meanings are born. We know artifacts to be the products of contrivance; and contrivance, as experience teaches, implies mind. (Not logically implies mind, of course. For Mill it is just that we have found that marks of contrivance in artifacts are due to human minds, or these minds are always involved, so we constantly associate contrivance with mind.) If "natural facts"--that is, natural objects: plants, animals, etc.--resemble artifacts, the hypothesis of mind to account for this resemblance is suggested and becomes a candidate for verification. And, if it can be verified, and if verification is

a meaningful concept in the context of the design argument; and (further) if no other hypothesis than theism can plausibly account for the indications of contrivance in natural facts, then the argument deserves to be ranked as a viable hypothesis. And, as such, it should be acknowledged that the case for theism is strengthened.

As stated, all effects may be "traced up" to force, though force itself "cannot be traced up, by our experience, to anything beyond." But the "transformations" of force "can be so traced" (T 14), according to Mill. The conservation theory cannot account for some of the remarkable changing forms or collocations of force, such as the human eye. Hence the theory permits us to "trace up" the hypothesis that God may be a collocator or transforming agent (T 16-17) of certain forces. Setting aside the whole mode of thought characteristic of the cosmological argument, a divine architect or collocator may be justly considered as a simple hypothesis to account for certain phenomena not satisfactorily accounted for otherwise. We must then, as Chalmers stressed, look to that other "element" (L 306/ 3.5.2) in causation that centers attention on collocations.

It is at this point that I take up the argument in the next chapter. In that chapter I give attention to the second question asked on page ninety-three above: How stands the evidence respecting God as collocator? But something can be said now by way of clarifying what is meant by collocations as a universal element in all causation, as distinguished from succession.

The propulsion of a golfball is caused not only by the preceding impact of the club, but also by the collocation of parts of the golfball itself (see Bain's Logic 2.31). The cause of the grain being ground is not just a matter of succession (water turns wheel, wheel turns shaft,

shaft turns another wheel, etc.), but the whole complex collocation of parts of the mill. When God is considered under this aspect of causation, and in analogy with the works of man, we can reason to an intelligence; as we cannot do, according to Mill, when we consider God the absolute antecedent of all successions of the changing forms of force in nature.

Mill follows Bain on the whole subject of conservation.[22] And Bain, in his Logic (2.30) states that the law of conservation "exhausts" causation, "viewed as the transfer of Force or Moving Power, but leaves many complicated, and, as yet, unsolved questions of Collocation." For instance many of the arrangements in nature, such as the perplexities surrounding "the collocations for transferring force in Living Bodies," remain just as "inscrutable" and steeped in "obscurity" as before coming under the scrutiny of science. (Bain's Logic 2.32.) But collocation is just as much a part of causation as succession.[23] All this lies behind Mill's assertion (E 567) that "it would be wise in them [defenders of religion] . . . not to part company with the Design argument . . . it is by far the most persuasive."

I have mentioned (page 92 above) that Whewell's Bridgewater treatise may have made some important impression upon Mill. I now turn to this treatise. We shall find Whewell defending a form of the design argument which is sometimes designated as the argument from design,[24] and one against which Mill argues. Whewell fully subscribes to the teleological argument in what may be designated as its usual form: "The study of the adaptations of the human frame is so convincing, that it carries the mind with it [as concerns purpose], in spite of the resistance suggested by speculative systems" (351).[25] The usual form of the design argument is one from analogy: artifacts imply mind; natural facts resemble artifacts; hence natural facts imply Mind. As Hume puts it:[26]

> The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance; of human design, thought, wisdom, and intelligence. Since therefore the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; and that the Author of nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man; though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work, which he has executed.

And as Mill puts it (T 27-28):

> Certain qualities . . . are found to be characteristic of such things as are made by an intelligent mind for a purpose. The order of nature, or some considerable parts of it, exhibit these qualities in a remarkable degree. We are entitled, from this great similarity in the effects, to infer similarity in the cause, and to believe that things which it is beyond the power of man to make, but which resemble the works of man in all put power, must also have been made by Intelligence armed with a power greater than human.

Whewell thought this form of the argument could be strengthened if, in addition to noting the resemblances between artifacts and "natural facts" (as I call them), attention were also paid to the laws which make contrivances possible. This move, Whewell thought, leads the mind directly to the great "First Cause" (207), the "divine Author of the universe, by whom its laws were ordained and established" (302). It is possible to get lost in "the facts." If one were to immerse himself in the whole phantasmagoria of the animal and vegetable kingdom, he might indeed become perplexed as to whether or not all this attests to a supreme intelligence who is a "good, and wise, and perfect Being" (379). But:

> We have shown, we trust [Whewell writes near the end of his treatise], that the notion of design and end is transferred by the researches of science, not from the domain of our knowledge to that of our ignorance, but merely from the region of facts to that of laws. We hold that, in this form, final causes . . . are still to be conceived to obtain . . . and that Newton was right, when he believed that he had established their reality in the solar system. . . . (349).

Whewell considered the "religious views" of "the great Newton" to be like his own in certain crucial respects, and cites (362 e.g.) Newton to support

these views.

Mill shared a good deal of Whewell's respect for Newton.[27] At least Mill, in his physicotheology, includes the cosmos and the solar system in the objects of nature which, by hypothesis, evince design: "The apperances in nature point indeed to an origin of the cosmos or order of nature, and indicate that origin to be design, but do not point to any commencement, still less creation, of the two great elements of the universe, the passive element and the active element, matter and force" (T 34). And Mill admits (T 41) there are ex hypothesi "adaptations" in "the solar system"--though these are far less conspicuous than in animals: "Appearances point to the existence of a Being who has great power over us--all the power implied in the creation of the cosmos, or of its organized beings at least (T 55; italics mine).

But Mill would dispute Whewell's notion that physicotheology "is transferred by the researches of science . . . from the region of facts to that of laws." Whewell is doubtless one author who spurred Mill to "hug the facts" almost with desperation. It is expressly Whewell whom Mill opposes in Logic (3.1.4, e.g.) when Mill insists that if a concept is to convey any knowledge about facts,[28] the conception must be "of something which really is in the facts"; and not, as Whewell, according to Mill, held: "added to the facts" (L 193/3.1.4). And Mill opposes Hamilton similarly: "If we lived till doomsday we should never find the proposition that water rusts iron in our concepts, if we had not first found it in the outward phenomena" (E 426). Now, for Mill, God cannot be in the facts, like an idol. Then is knowledge of God impossible? No. Knowledge of God's existence is not in principle impossible. His existence can be inferred, and the inference becomes subject to possible verification by

further experience. As we shall see Mill very probably conceived the problem of God's existence to be similar in certain respects to the problem of other minds.

But Mill does make one statement in Theism that would have pleased Whewell: "Obedience to law is the note of a settled government and not of a conflict always going on [as on the Manichaean hypothesis]" (T 38). It would have pleased Whewell because of the attention Mill gives to law, the phenomena Whewell is particuarly interested in in his Bridgewater treatise. In the passage cited from Theism, Mill is evidently stating his ground for setting aside Manichaeism in favor of theistic finitism. But see page 171 below.

Whewell's main emphasis, as concerns the design argument, is upon a form of it different from that of the usual form. Whewell states (360) that we "may and must, in our conceptions of the Divine purpose and agency, go beyond the analogy of human contrivances." We "must conceive the Deity, not only as constructing the most refined and vast machinery, with which, as we have already seen, the universe is filled; but we must also imagine him as establishing those properties by which such machinery is possible: as giving to the materials of his structure the qualities by which the material is fitted to its use" (360). Besides noting instances of means-ends in nature, we "are led to consider the Divine Being as the author of the laws" of matter. And "this is a view which no analogy of human inventions, no knowledge of human powers, at all assists us to embody or understand" (361). Hence Whewell can't be talking about the design argument in its usual form, a point he wants appreciated.

The appearances of nature are "reducible to certain fixed and general laws" (295). But "a law supposes an agent, and a power." A

law is not a potency, but "the mode according to which the agent proceeds, the order according to which the power acts" (361). And this active power in nature can be no other than God, the supreme power and the "Supreme Intelligence" (379)--intelligent because law or order implies intelligence. "Without the presence of such an agent . . . conscious of the relations on which the law depends, producing the effects which the law prescribes, the law can have no efficacy. . . ." (361). But the efficacy of law is manifest everywhere. "Hence we infer that the intelligence by which the law is ordained, the power by which it is put in action, must be present at all times and in all places." Thus "the knowledge and the agency of the Divine Being pervade every portion of the universe producing all action and passion, all permanence and change" (361-2).

Now this grand conclusion might follow from all that precedes, if it be true that law or order in fact implies intelligence. (I neglect the question of how Whewell avoids pantheism, if indeed he does.) Law implies intelligence is proved, according to Whewell, by intuition: "To most persons it appears that the mere existence of a law connecting and governing any class of phenomena, implies a presiding intelligence." When "events are regulated by precise rules of time and space, of number and measure, men conceive these rules to be the evidence of thought and mind, even without discovering in the rules any peculiar adaptations, or without supposing their purpose to be known" (296). And in his Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences (1.628),[29] he writes:

> It has appeared to some persons, that the mere aspect of order and symmetry in the works of nature--the contemplation of comprehensive and consistent law--is sufficient to lead us to the conception of a design and intelligence producing the order, and carrying into effect the law. . . . the conception of design arrived at in this manner

> is altogether different from that idea of design which is suggested to us by organized bodies, and which we describe as the doctrine of final causes.

In fact the real foundation of both conceptions of the design argument is, for Whewell, intuition or (as he puts it) "the common apprehension of mankind" (300): When we conclude there is design and purpose in the arrangements of the universe, "we do not arrive at our conclusion by a train of deductive reasoning, but by the conviction which such combinations as we perceive, immediately and directly impress upon the mind." Belief in God is not really derived from the evidence, or so it would seem. You must already believe in God in order to recognize his workings in nature.

> 'Design must have had a designer.' But such a principle can be of no avail to one whom the contemplation or the description of the world does not impress with the perception of design. It is not therefore at the end, but at the beginning of our syllogisms, not among remote conclusions, but among original principles, that we must place the truth, that such arrangements, manifestations, and proceedings as we behold about us imply a Being endowed with consciousness, design, and will, from whom they proceed (344).

Entirely aside from whether or not the mere existence of a law implies an intelligent lawgiver, there are many who would feel that Whewell has expressed more wisdom in this last citation than is to be found in a great deal of physicotheology or a posteriori "proofs"--including Mill's. Many philosophers would feel Whewell expresses wisdom here because he takes cognizance of what the mind <u>brings to</u> the classical proofs.[30] However this may be, Whewell concludes that the "Divine Mind must be conceived by us" as the "seat" of the "laws of nature" (379): "The laws of nature are the laws which he [God], in his wisdom, prescribes to his own acts; his universal presence is the necessary condition of any course of events, his universal agency the only origin of any efficient force"

(362).

This notion--that the universal agency of God is the only origin of any efficient force--is similar to the doctrine Mill attempts to refute in a section of Logic (3.5.11) added in the third edition (1851). This section is entitled: "Doctrine that volition is an efficient cause, examined." Elsewhere he refers to it as the "doctrine that causation is will."[31] Upon what evidence does the doctrine "that Volition is the sole Efficient Cause of all phenomena" (L 232/3.5.11) rest? It is an analogical extension of one interpretation of our subjective volitional experience. It rests on "the inference that because [our human] Volition is [assumed to be] an efficient cause, therefore it is the only cause, and the direct agent in producing even what is apparently produced by something else." And the theory rests on the fallacious assumption, according to Mill, that since we have no other notion of efficient causality than that furnished by our volitional experience, "and ought not to assume one without evidence, there is no other, and volition is the direct cause of all phenomena."

> A more outrageous stretch of inference could hardly be made [Mill concludes]. Because among the infinite variety of the phenomena of nature there is one, namely, a particular mode of action of certain nerves [called volition], which has for . . . its efficient cause, a state of mind; and because this is the only efficient cause of which we are conscious . . . [it is fallaciously concluded] that all other phenomena must have the same kind of efficient cause with that one eminently special, narrow, and peculiarly human or animal phenomenon (L 238/3.5.11).

This theory really belongs to a former "uncultured state" (L 234/3.5.11) of the human mind; that is, as Comte taught, to the theological or volitional mode of thought: The "Volitional explanation of facts" belongs to "the infantile state of reason and experience" (ACP 10).

It is the natural tendency of the mind to be always attempting to

> facilitate its conceptions of unfamiliar facts by assimilating them to others which are familiar. Accordingly, our voluntary acts, being the most familiar to us of all cases of causation, are, in the infancy and early youth of the human race, spontaneously taken as the type of causation in general, and all phenomena are supposed to be directly produced by the will of some sentient being (L 234/3.5.11).[32]

Strong opposition was soon expressed against this apparently antitheistic view.

In 1855 a book, written by John Tulloch, was published. The thesis of this prize-winning book is "The Mind is everywhere the only valid explanation of Order--its necessary correlate" (16).[33] Tulloch endeavors to establish the argument that: "Order universally proves Mind." "The works of Nature discover Order." Hence "The works of Nature prove Mind" (14). This thesis must have pleased Whewell, who was still living in 1855. Perhaps Tulloch's defense of his thesis also pleased Whewell; the work was highly regarded. Mill refers (L 239/3.5.11) to Tulloch as the "author of the Second Burnett Prize." And Whewell was doubtless also pleased with another book that appeared in 1855. This was a book of essays written by Baden Powell of Oxford.[34] About the essay entitled "Philosophy of Creation" included in this book, Mill comments (in a note added in the fourth edition [1856] of his Logic): Mr. Baden Powell

> has returned to the point of view of Aristotle and the ancients, and vigorously reasserts the doctrine that the indication of design in the universe is not special adaptations [Whewell would not say this], but Uniformity and Law, these being the evidences of mind, and not what appears to us to be a provision for our uses (L 241/3.5.11).

To Tulloch Mill is the "able writer" who "so eminently, in the present day, represents the [positivist] school in England" (51)--the school of "materialistic infidelity" (65) of Hume and Comte: "Positivism, if springing directly from the irreverent soil of French scientific

culture, yet traces back its lineage to the Scottish skeptic [Hume]. . . ." (21). Tulloch attacks Mill's "mere physical view" (27) of causation. Mill states this view succinctly in E 377: "I agree . . . with Comte, James Mill, and many others who see nothing in causation but invariable antecedence." Experience does not disclose "any nexus between the cause and the effect, any Sufficient Reason in the cause itself why the effect should follow it." What "experience makes known, is the fact of an invariable sequence between every event and some special combination of antecedent conditions, in such sort that wherever and whenever that union of antecedents exists, the event does not fail to occur" (E 576).

This empiricism or "mere sensational philosophy" (29) cannot give us what we mean by causation, Tulloch insists. It is quite true "that all we perceive of the relation between physical phenomena is a relation of succession" (27). But the question remains: Is "this perception of sequence commensurate with our notion of causation? Is it what we specially mean when we express the relation of cause and effect?" No. The "measure of our observational experience is not the measure of the idea of causation." It is "not the perception of uniform succession merely, but a certain belief regarding the succession, which specially determines it to be a relation of cause and effect" (29). This belief completes our "common sense" (32) notion of causation, and this belief--the product of our "common intellectual consciousness" (33)--has to do with power. A cause is not just what precedes a change, it is what produces a change. "Causation, therefore, implies power. . . . It is peculiarly an Agent" (35). Mill is right in insisting this notion is not derived from sensational experience. Yet our "intellectual common sense insists on recognizing a deeper relation among phenomena than mere

sequence" (34).[35] Hence "we must have the idea of power given us in our own mental experience. . . . It flows from the depths of our self-consciousness . . . it is nothing else than the ideal projection of our self-consciousness" (35).[36] Causation as power being intuitively established, Tulloch soon makes the easy advance to the doctrine of causation as will--"a Supreme Rational Will": "It is only as resting in Mind that power has any meaning, or can have any" (55). Tulloch's goal and strategy are quite Whewellian.

This is precisely the kind of intuitionism that Mill always opposed, or thought he persistently opposed. At least he calls his Logic "a text-book of the opposite doctrine [from intuitionism]--that which derives all knowledge from experience, and associations."

> The notion that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition or consciousness, independently of observation and experience, is, I am persuaded, in these times, the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions. By the aid of this theory, every inveterate belief and every intense feeling, of which the origin is not remembered, is enabled to dispense with the obligation of justifying itself by reason, and is erected into its own all-sufficient voucher and justification. There never was such an instrument devised for consecrating all deep-seated prejudices (A 158).

Nevertheless Mill took Tulloch seriously enough to reply to him in the note Mill added in the fourth edition of his Logic. The following final reference to this note bears directly on Mill's view of the design argument. For Aristotle, according to Mill, chance and spontaneity satisfactorily explain "the variable element" in phenomena, but "their occurring according to a fixed rule can only, to his [Aristotle's] conception, be accounted for by an Intelligent Will."[37] But Mill replies that the common

> religious interpretation of nature, is the reverse of this. The events in which men spontaneously see the hand of a supernatural being are those which cannot, as they think, be reduced to a physical

> law. What they can distinctly connect with physical causes, and especially what they can predict though of course ascribed to an Author of Nature if they already recognise such an author, might be conceived, they think, to arise from a blind fatality, and in any case do not appear to them to bear so obviously the mark of a divine will (L 240/3.5.11).

The "religious" interpretation here is really Mill's view, though he expressly declines to make this known in the note from which I quoted. Indeed his religious views were not revealed to anyone, other than perhaps Harriet Taylor and Helen Taylor, until the publication of Three Essays on Religion. Bain says (JSM 133): "Never, so far as I know, did he give any hint of wishing or attempting to re-construct a system of theism on a scientific basis." And when commenting on Chalmers' position, Mill is really commenting upon his own. He says (L 240/3.5.11) that such "eminent writers on Natural Theology" as Chalmers think

> that though design is present everywhere, the irresistible evidence of it is to be found not in the laws of nature [as Whewell emphasized], but in the collocations, i.e. in the part of nature in which it is impossible to trace any law. A few properties of dead matter might, he thinks, conceivably account for the regular and invariable succession of effects and causes; but that the different kinds of matter have been so placed as to promote beneficent ends, is what he regards as the proof of a Divine Providence.

Most today, though not all,[38] would tend to agree that order, as such, tends to suggest the absence of mind more than the presence of it. Such uniformities as that of gravity, for instance (and considering this uniformity alone), would tend to nourish a view that can be characterized as, say, mehanistic causalism, in contrast with vitalistic teleology. There is no denying, however, if law could be identified with mind, a strong case for theism could be made out--stronger at least than an argument based on adaptations: law is everywhere; contrivances aren't.

The next work of Mill, after Logic, which contains materials of importance to the design argument, is Examination. This work includes

his famous proof of other minds. I shall look into this argument in the following chapter before turning to the design argument itself. The forms of the two arguments are similar. And there is an obvious similarity in the objects (mind-Mind) they endeavor to establish.

NOTES

[1]See Bain (JSM 135-6): "Seeing that the only argument for Theism that Mill put any value upon [in Theism], was the argument from Design, it is unfortunate that he should have considered nine pages sufficient for its discussion. The handling is not only short, but extremely unsatisfactory. It is what we might suppose to be the first of the three redactions that all his writings went through; a mere rough note. . . ."

[2]Packe (25) is critical of Mill for blaming his father for his own felt deficiencies in religion.

[3]"James Mill's Article on Education" in James and John Stuart Mill on Education, p. 49.

[4]See John Stuart Mill, Bibliography of the Published Writings of John Stuart Mill, eds. MacMinn, Hainds, and McCrimmon (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University, 1945), p. 1. See also John Stuart Mill, Prefaces to Liberty: Selected Writings of John Stuart Mill, ed. Bernard Wishy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959).

[5]John Stuart Mill, The Early Draft of John Stuart Mill's Autobiography, ed. Jack Stillinger (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1961), p. 79. The MS shows Mill first characterized the essay as "a formal refutation of" Paley.

[6]His first two articles to be printed appeared at this time. They were published in December of 1822. See John Stuart Mill, Two Letters on the Measure of Value, ed. Jacob H. Hollander (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1936).

[7]William Paley, Natural Theology, Selections, p. 19.

[8]See Helen Taylor's Introductory Notice to Mill's Three Essays on Religion (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1874), p. ix.

[9]See Mill's Works 10.127 where he says Coleridge, following Kant, did not hold the design argument to be tenable. Mill appears to dismiss the argument as if he had little respect for it. He would, of course, agree with Kant that the argument cannot yield "apodeictic certainty" (Critique of Pure Reason, Smith trans., A 624). But Kant does not rule out the possibility that the teleological argument might be able to "prove . . . an architect of the world who is always very much hampered by the adaptability of the material in which he works. . . ." (CPR A 627)--the very theory, theistic finitism, Mill favors.

[10]See Ernest Campbell Mossner, Bishop Butler and the Age of Reason, p. 203: "In the realm of constructive theology, a combination of Butler's Analogy with Paley's Natural Theology gave the philosophical impetus to the publication from 1833 to 1836 of the famous Bridgewater Treatises . . . a series of eight works which attempted to do for their age what the first Boyle Lectures had attempted a century earlier. . . .

The Bridgewater Treatises represent the ultimate exploitation of the argument from design."

[11]Mill's theory of induction rests mainly upon the four inductive methods of experimental inquiry (set out in L 3.8), which are still commonly associated with his name. See, e.g., Irving M. Copi, Introduction to Logic, 3d ed. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), chap. 12. That these methods are the heart of Mill's theory of induction is apparent from the following summary statement: "The business of Inductive Logic is to provide rules and models, (such as the Syllogism and its rules are for ratiocination,) to which, if inductive arguments conform, those arguments are conclusive, and not otherwise. This is what the Four Methods profess to be. . . ." (L 283/3.9.6; cf. L 185/3.1.1).

[12]Mill first "formed the project" (A 86) of writing a book on logic in 1825, eighteen years before its publication. He began writing it in 1830 (A 111). After two years the project came to "a halt, which lasted five years. . . . I could make nothing satisfactory of Induction. . . ." (A 128). Then "Dr. Whewell . . . published his History of the Inductive Sciences. I read it with eagerness, and found in it a considerable approximation to what I wanted" (A 145). Mill next "read again Sir J. Herschel's Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy" (A 146), and proceeded to hammer out his theory of induction.

[13]Thomas Chalmers, On the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, as Manifested in the Adaptation of External Nature to the Moral and Intellectual Constitution of Man (London: George Bell & Sons, 1884), pp. 8-13.

[14]Note "a" divinity. This is a fatal stance, according to Tillich. The God of classical theism is "a being, not being-itself." "This is the deepest root of atheism." Paul Tillich, The Courage To Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 184-5.

[15]There are two main forms of the design argument; one argues from order and the other from adaptations. Today these two forms are sometimes referred to as the argument from design and the argument to design. The phenomena upon which the argument from design concentrates are the general laws of nature. These are orderly, even if their operations were not purposive. But order is the note of mind. Hence God is proved from the mere existence of order. Here design means order or harmony. When attention is concentrated upon adaptations, as in the argument to design, design means intention. See Hurlbutt, Hume, Newton, and the Design Argument, pp. 8, 10. And consult Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, ed. Norman Kemp Smith, p. 35.

[16]Judging from the opening pages of Theism, Mill interprets his whole excursion into science in this essay as an effort to supply a deficiency in Comte's philosophy of religion. While "giving its full value to this historical treatment of the religious question [that of Comte], we ought not therefore to let it supersede the dogmatic. The most important quality of an opinion on any momentous subject is its truth or falsity. . . . (T 5).

[17]See Rudolf Otto, The Idea of the Holy, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958).

[18]Charles Hartshorne, "The Standpoint of Panentheism" in Charles Hartshorne and William L. Reese, Philosophers Speak of God (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 8: The "question of a conceptually ultimate form of basic attributes, since it is no question of fact, cannot fall within the province of natural science. . . ."

[19]On Mill's use of the term web, see L 208/3.4.1 and L 213/3.5.2. In L 213 Mill describes the forces of nature as a web "composed of separate fibres." But he changes this language after the establishment of the conservation theory. See L 228/3.5.10.

[20]Then why can't nature be interpreted on analogy with an organism? The author of the "philosophy of organism," as Whitehead called his philosophy, would surely be inclined to ask this question.

[21]Notice "must": Mill does not scruple to associate necessity with scientific theory, although it is quite otherwise as concerns religion.

[22]See Elliot 1.311 where Mill says: "I should like to know your opinion on the whole subject [of "potential energy"]. . . ." See also L 228-232/3.5.10 where Mill acknowledges his indebtedness to Bain.

[23]Cf. Bain's Logic 2:32: "Collocation is a part of the Cause and (by ellipsis) is frequently spoken of and investigated as the Cause."

[24]See n. 15 above.

[25]William Whewell, Astronomy and General Physics Considered with Reference to Natural Theology (London: William Pickering, 1833), p. 351.

[26]David Hume, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, ed. Norman Kemp Smith, 2d ed. (New York: Social Sciences Publishers, 1948), p. 145.

[27]Perhaps the finest passage on Newton in Mill's works appears in E 630-1. Mill criticizes Hamilton for believing that "the scientific study of the laws of Matter" tends to "annihilate Wonder"--and religion along with it. Can't "he find nothing to wonder at in the origin of the system of which Newton discovered the laws?" Mill asks.

[28]For Mill facts are "states of consciousness" (L 44/1.3.11). They are not inferences but feelings. And "Feeling and a State of Consciousness are . . . equivalent expressions: Everything is a feeling of which the mind is conscious." Feeling is "a genus of which Sensation, [volition,] Emotion, and Thought, are subordinate species" (L 32/1.3.2). "A force suspended in its operation, neither manifesting itself by motion nor by pressure, is not an existing fact [italics mine], but a name for our conviction that in appropriate circumstances a fact would take place" (L 231/3.5.10).

[29]William Whewell, The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences, 2d ed., 2 vols. (New York: John Reprint Corp., 1967), 1:628.

[30]Cf., e.g., J. J. C. Smart, "The Existence of God" in New Essays in Philosophical Theology, ed. Antony Flew and Alasdair Macintyre (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 45: The design argument is a "feeble" argument, but "it is a potent instrument in heightening religious emotions" in "the already religious mind."

[31]F. A. Hayek, John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor, p. 192.

[32]Cf. E 377-8: "We naturally, and unavoidably, form our first conception of all the agencies in the universe from the analogy of human volitions."

[33]John Tulloch, Theism: The Witness of Reason and Nature to an All-Wise and Beneficent Creator, Burnett Treatise, 2d prize (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1855), p. 16.

[34]Baden Powell, Essays on the Spirit of the Inductive Philosophy, the Unity of Worlds, and the Philosophy of Creation, reprint ed. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855 [reprinted 1969]), pp. 449-50: In "the natural world the only indications we have of the operations of the Divine mind are those manifestations of order." "Arbitrary intervention" into natural order "might be only irresistible fate, and sudden revolutionary changes and convulsions only atheistic anarchy."

[35]The conservation theory seems to have driven Mill toward the "deeper relation"--one involving "force itself"--Tulloch speaks of here. In L 231/3.5.10 Mill says that the "better understanding," which the conservation theory affords, "enables us, with Mr. Bain, to admit, as one of the tests for distinguishing causation from mere concomitance, the expenditure or transfer of energy." The "transfer of energy" is not "nothing but" sequence.

[36]Mill would tend to be sympathetic with this statement as concerns ideal projection. But, for Tulloch, the existence of this power (God) is made certain by intuition, with which Mill would of course disagree.

[37]This is the whole thrust of Whewell and Tulloch.

[38]Cf. R. G. Swinburne, "The Argument From Design," Philosophy 43 (1968): 202-3: "The most satisfactory premiss for the argument from design is . . . the operation of regularities of succession . . . [in] the operation of natural laws."

CHAPTER VI

THE DESIGN ARGUMENT—II

I do not, in the present work, include a special study of Mill's phenomenalism or system of appearances.[1] But I shall, in this chapter, have to deal with the essentials of his controversial "psychological theory" of mind and matter.[2] Mill expounds this theory within the framework of idealism (the mental exhausts the real). He associates it with Berkeley (E 233). He says in an article on Berkeley published in 1871: "I, with Berkeley, . . . agree with the vulgar [!], for I believe that the things we perceive are the real things, and the only things, except minds, that are real."[3] The theory generates certain problems that are highly relevant to Mill's philosophy of religion. After discussing this theory and some of its attendant problems, I shall turn to Mill's proof of other minds and his proof of the existence of God.

To us mind is "nothing but" a series of feelings. And matter is "nothing but" actual (felt or experienced) groups of sensations and the inferred possibilities of sensations, these latter being based on or "guaranteed" by actual feelings or states of consciousness. And the possibilities of sensation are inferred to be permanent. They are permanent relative to the fleeting or "fugacious" (E 239) actual appearances in the feeling-pile of consciousness. For example: I was a moment ago in the bathroom where actual sensations, appropriately coded as "dripping faucet," were scored upon my mind. I am now in the kitchen at the other end of the house. And I am the only one in the house. (I neglect now

the possibility of the presence of Berkeley's all-perceiving God.) What, epistemologically, is the dripping faucet to me now? It is a group of possible sensations. When not in its presence, its epistemological status can properly be characterized only in terms of potentiality. I believe that were I to return to the bathroom, I would be affected like I was a moment ago: new but similar groups of sensations (that is, objects) would be, as I now believe, born in consciousness. When an object appears in consciousness, then disappears (and past experience has molded the belief that it will again appear), the object lapses into the realm of potentiality.[4] And so it is with the whole of my experience.

My world is a vast edifice of potentiality resting upon relatively few actual pillars of sensation. The picture is something like that which the conservation theory gives us: force is a stupendous empire of potentiality (to me), breaking into the actuality of my consciousness here and there.

When at any rate Mill discusses his psychological theory, he depicts the "outward" world as being a vast inferred structure: "An external world is but an inference" (E 138). His intentions are to withhold the term real from application to the inferred superstructure, and confine it to the indubitable "inward" real facts which support inference: A "real fact of consciousness cannot be doubted or denied" (E 165). And it is these real facts which are "our model of certainty"[5] for what is inferred. But if the external world[6] is but an inference, doesn't the specter of solipsism stir and threaten the conviction that man is a social being? Mill thought not. He was sure he could prove the existence of other minds. In a reply (E 238-9) to a critic who had insisted that Mill, in Examination, had not proved that "objects are

external to us," Mill says that he had had no intention of trying to do this;[7] but was rather attempting to account

> for our conceiving, or representing to ourselves, the Permanent Possibilities as real objects external to us. I do not believe that the real externality to us of anything, except other minds, is capable of proof. But the Permanent Possibilities are external to us in the only sense we need care about; they are not constructed by the mind itself, but merely recognised by it; in Kantian language, they are <u>given</u> to us, and to other beings in common with us.

"The view I take of externality [Mill concludes], in the sense in which I acknowledge it as real, could not be more accurately expressed than. . . ." as follows:

> 'Men cannot act, cannot live . . . without assuming an external world,[8] in some conception of the term external. It is the business of the philosopher to explain what that conception ought to be. For ourselves we can conceive only--(1) An externality to our present and transcient experience in <u>our own</u> possible experience past and future, and (2) An externality to our own conscious experience, in the contemporaneous, as well as in the past or future experience of <u>other minds</u>.'

It may be that a phenomenalism of the type of Mill cannot satisfactorily solve the problem of externality--which it engenders, some would say. But even if it could, Mill certainly doesn't do it. He admits (E 258) that the "real stress" under which his theory labors is that it necessitates speaking "of modifications as taking place in a possibility." (For example: the possible faucet in the next room is dripping possible drops of water, which [possibly] is sensed by a possible God, etc.) He says (E 258) that the inferred conditions, external to consciousness, of a felt phenomenon need "not necessarily be anything positive . . . or objective." The inferred external cause of a modification of consciousness may legitimately be conceived of as "anything, positive or negative, actuality or possibility, without which the phenomenon would not have occurred, and which may therefore be justly inferred from its occurrence."

His usage here of "actuality," if emphasized, is an express admission of failure to prove that body (and "body altogether" is matter) is nothing but "clusters of sensation, supplemented by possibilities of sensation."[9] And he also speaks, with approval, of other minds existing in a "reality beyond the sphere of my consciousness" (E 260). He evidently thought his doctrine of the relativity of human knowledge permitted him to refer to something out of consciousness, hence noumenal, as real. The relativity of human knowledge is the doctrine (as Mill phrases it in Examination) which affirms "that all we can know of anything is its relation to us, composed of, and limited to, the phenomena which it exhibits to our organs" (E 17). But it "is obvious," he says, that "the unknowableness of Things 'in themselves,' [noumena] forms no obstacle to our ascribing attributes or properties to them provided these are always conceived as relative to us." If a thing produces cognized sensual effects, "it follows, and indeed is but the same statement in other words, that the thing has power to produce those effects." And it "is as relative to us, and not as he is in himself, that I suppose myself to know anything of God" (E 125). "It is absurd to assume that our words exhaust the possibilities of Being. There may be innumerable modes of it which are inaccessible to our faculties" (E 13).

It follows from the relativity of human knowledge that when we say that other minds[10] or that God really exist in their own right in a sphere beyond our consciousness, we are in fact "projecting them into objectivity" (E 256). A projected objectivity is the only objectivity that Mill's phenomenalism can give us. And there is a sense in which it cannot give us this as concerns physical objects, conceived of as existing in their own right and independent of any mind. I can infer, so Mill

holds, that an other mental reality would be like--not from the viewpoint of that other mind, of course, but from my viewpoint. I can so infer meaningfully because I know what a mental reality is; I am one. And, in the case of other minds, I am simply projecting my known reality.[11] But the case is different with respect to supposed external objects. I can, it is true, ascribe properties to the supposed cause of my sensations; and these properties are also, as in the case of other minds, projections into objectivity. That is, the properties ascribed are relative to us. But what I consider appropriate to project upon the supposed physical object will be much different and far more restricted than what I consider appropriate as concerns a reality (other mind) supposed to be like mine in all essential respects. As Mill puts the matter in T 50:

> Feeling and thought are not merely different from what we call inanimate matter, but are at the opposite pole of existence [from thought or the mental pole], and analogical inference has <u>little or no</u> validity from the one to the other. Feeling and thought are <u>much more real</u> than anything else; they are the only things which we directly know to be real, all things else being merely the unknown conditions on which these [feelings and thought] . . . depend.

In the phrases I have underlined, Mill's language is somewhat less definite than we would ordinarily associate with the language of "uncompromising Idealism," as Bain characterizes (JSM 120) the language in which Mill expounds his psychological theory. And compare the following answer of Mill[12] to the question: May we believe in the real existence of things which are not objects of sense at all?

> We may. But we cannot believe in the real existence of anything which we do not conceive as capable of acting in some way upon our own or some other being's consciousness; <u>though the state of consciousness it produces may not be called a sensation</u>. The existence of a thing means, to us, merely its capacity of producing an <u>impression of some sort</u> upon some mind, that is, of producing <u>some state of consciousness</u>. The belief, therefore, in its existence, is still a conditional expectation of something which we should, under some supposed circumstances, be capable of feeling (italics mine).

I'm not sure Mill does not here allow to intuitionists and mystics about all they want.[13]

Mill does not solve the problem of externality engendered by, or attending, his phenomenalism. Nor does he give us a clear and unambiguous account of what his view of externality is. He sometimes makes assertions which are subsequently erased by contradictory ones.[14] But there is, of course, no need of emphasizing this characteristic of Mill; it has been done off and on for a century. In Auguste Comte and Positivism (ACP 8), Mill says that Kant maintained "as strenuously as Comte that we know nothing of Things in Themselves, or Noumena, of real Substances and real Causes, yet [Kant] peremptorily asserted their existence. But neither does Comte question this: on the contrary, all his language implies it." And most of Mill's language also implies it. Mill is speaking (E 437) of the inferred realm of "real causes" when he says the objects of our "outward" world depend "on the boundless productive powers of Nature."[15]

At any rate I assume, for my purposes, that Mill assumes the existence of such a "boundless" realm beyond consciousness; and that this realm produces[16] our materials of knowledge. After all the very fact that Theism exists, the very fact he takes theism seriously, would seem to prove these suppositions. Yet, in Theism itself, Mill writes (T 50): "Mind (or whatever name we give to what is implied in consciousness of a continued series of feelings) is in a philosophical point of view the only reality of which we have any evidence, and no analogy can be recognized or comparison made between it and other realities because there are no other realities to compare it with." And, in Examination (E 245), he writes: "Supposing me to believe that the Divine Mind is simply the

series of the Divine thoughts and feelings prolonged through eternity, that would be, at any rate, believing God's existence to be as real [!] as my own." This language, very curious for Mill, is similar to that of the ontological argument.

I assume that Mill will admit to the reality of anything, anywhere, which is supported by evidence of the character used in scientific inquiry, and has a meaning. The divine mind has a meaning on analogy with ours, and the "Design argument is drawn from the analogy of human experience" (E 245).

Physicists today, and others, often stress that they cannot deal directly with ultimate sources. It is probably inconceivable how the human mind could ever know what energy itself is, but it is assumed there is such. Physicists deal with models of what is. These models are composed in large measure of hypotheses more-or-less verified. These hypotheses extend into "noumena," and being verified when returned to experience, become assimilated to what is taken to be known. It is this, or a similar, view of externality (and how "penetrated") that Mill seems to prefer. And we shall soon find him saying as much.

Mill is confident, in Examination, that his psychological theory "forms as vast and variegated a picture of the universe as can be had on the other ["Realistic"] theory; indeed, as I maintain, the very same picture" (E 251). And he defends the viability of the theory against skepticism (regarding "outward" nature[17] or "the given"), solipsism, and atheism. The grounds of his arguments against these threats aare, in all cases, essentially the same--inductive inference from intuitive[18] certainties. Mill feels he can extricate himself from subjective confinement by means of inference. Inference means proceeding from the known to the

unknown. And induction "is a process of inference; it proceeds from the known to the unknown" (L 188/3.2.1). In his defense Mill believes himself to employ scientific method. This method, he states (L 298-9/ 3.10.8), "consists of three operations--the first, one of direct induction; the second, of ratiocination [deduction]; the third of verification." And "verification is proof" (L 325/3.14.14). Let us first consider his defense against skepticism with regard to "outward" nature. This takes us back to what we were saying about Mill's criterion of certainty on page 117 above.

We "mean by knowledge, and by certainty [Mill states], an assurance similar and equal to that afforded by our senses: if the evidence in any other case can be brought up to this, we desire no more." At any rate we need no more: for all practical purposes, "this is the certainty which we call perfect" (E 158). With respect to the "assurance" and "certainty" of the senses, it seems clear to me that intuition is the cement that holds Mill's whole epistemological scheme together. It functions decisively at the ground level of sensuous intuitions, but it must also function when the mind assimilates these intuitions into its general scheme of things. Intuition must also function decisively at the level of comparing and judging of the evidence of the senses. But the arch anti-intuitionist (Mill) wouldn't put it this way. I shall return to his intuitionism.

What "consciousness reveals, together with what can be legitimately inferred from its revelations, composes . . . all that we [can] know" (E 137). But there are many legitimate inferences which experience establishes. For instance Mill says (E 158) that he has never seen icebergs, but is convinced they exist: "My conviction is . . . grounded on testimony, and on inferences from physical laws. When I say I am convinced of it, I

mean that the evidence is equal to that of my senses." So Mill is sure he has as firm a grasp on things as any realistically-oriented philosopher. He is convinced the same evidence is available to both the realist and the phenomenalist.[19] There may be a sense in which Mill is right here--if a substantial world-ground be excluded as evidence and thought of as a "mere" assumption.[20] But we have already seen (page 108-9 above) that Tulloch was convinced there was a very radical difference between his realistic view of causation and Mill's phenomenalistic view of causation. But, without further laboring this particular point at this time, I turn to Mill's proof of other minds.

First, there appears in my thread of consciousness a group of permanent possibilities of sensation (GPPS). The name or mark of this very familiar GPPS is "my body." Experience teaches me that this GPPS is "an universal condition of every part of my thread of consciousness." That is, experience teaches me that if I had no content of consciousness corresponding to my body-GPPS, I would have no sensations; consequently no thread of consciousness: my body is a sine qua non of consciousness as far as everyday physical experience goes. (This is aside from the question of immortality. Mill held that there is "absolutely no proof" that the soul cannot exist after death, but neither is their proof that it will: There "is really a total absence of evidence on either side" [T 50].) There are no ideas, according to Mill, without sensations, and no thought or ratiocination without ideas.

Second, other GsPPS appear in my consciousness which resemble my body-GPPS in many ways. But these "alien"[21] GsPPS are not connected to my thread of consciousness like my body-GPPS is linked to my thread of consciousness. For instance I will my body-GPPS to move and it does,

but no such consequence follows if I, in the same way, will the alien body-GsPPS to move. These latter thus both resemble and are radically different from my body-GPPS. How account for this? Since both memory and expectation are mong Mill's postulates or presuppositions (E 209-10, 225), it is virtually impossible not to project my known rhythms of experience upon what resembles them. The mind is by nature a hypothesis-making "machine" and the mind makes its way in the world because it is also a hypothesis-verifying instrument. My volitional activity is a causal sequence: I will my body to move, and what I will follows, though the bond or links between the antecedent and consequent escapes me.

I become conscious of the movement of "alien" bodies. I form the hypothesis that since the "alien" bodies resemble mine in so many respects, they will resemble it in the further particular of being linked to an "alien" or other thread of consciousness (other mind) as experience has taught me my GPPS called my body is linked to my consciousness. In the main it is the causal sequence attending my volitional activity that is projected in the attempt to assimilate the unknown to the known, in my attempt to account for a phenomenon which is, as "alien" body, only half-complete. It is only half-complete, that is, when compared with its resembling counterpart in my consciousness.

According to Mill we reason to God in a similar way: by hypothetical extension of our notion of causality, presenting it to experience as a candidate for verification: "The signs of contrivance are most conspicuous in the structure and processes of vegetable and animal life. But for these, it is probable that the appearances in nature would never have seemed to the thinking part of mankind to afford any proofs of God"

(T 40). Contrivance in artifacts are caused by human minds. Natural facts resemble artifacts. Hence, by projecting our notion of causality, natural facts are probably caused by a divine mind. We now see how this hypothesis makes out by way of being verified by experience.

Now the probability of a causal connection between resembling phenomena is the measure of both induction and analogy, according to Mill. "In the strictest induction, equally with the faintest analogy, we conclude because A resembles B in one or more properties, that it does so in a certain other property" (L 365/3.20.2). But in analogy the "other property" is not, or cannot be verified; in induction it is verified. Armed with these "scientific" instruments of proof, let us return to the GsPPS: there was my body and the resembling "alien" ones. I form the hypothesis, for reasons already mentioned, that the other GsPPS will further resemble my body-GPPS in being connected to other threads of consciousness. If there were no way of testing this hypothesis, no further pertinent experience available for "fitting" it to the total body of our empirical knowledge, we would then have analogy. We would have no other choice but to conclude that the probability of the existence of other minds is greater than if no resemblances existed at all. This probability is weak, but we should remember that the most august scientific hypotheses were once only analogies. Just because some analogies must ever (apparently) remain such does not justify their disparagement as worthless. Take the design argument for instance: possibly the most this argument can justify is the conclusion that the probability of the existence of God is greater than if no resemblances at all existed between artifacts and natural facts. And perhaps we might be unable to conceive of the argument ever justifying more than this minimal conclusion. Even

so the conclusion is not worthless: or so Mill would argue. The grounds for probability are resemblances; as these vary so does probability from low probability. But low probability is still probability.

But, as it turns out, the inference to other minds does not have to stop with the inference itself; it is verified when brought back into experience.

> Having made the supposition [Mill explains] that real feelings, though not experienced by myself, lie behind those phenomena of my own consciousness which, from their resemblance to my body, I call other human bodies,--I find that my subsequent consciousness presents those very sensations, of speech heard, of movements and other outward demeanor seen, and so forth, which, being the effects or consequents of actual feelings in my own case, I should expect to follow upon those other hypothetical feelings if they really exist: and thus the hypothesis is verified. It is thus proved inductively that there is a sphere beyond my consciousness: i.e., that there are other consciousnesses beyond it. . . . (E 260).

This is Mill's defense of his psychological theory against solipsism (see page 122 above). I shall not undertake to decide whether or not Mill is successful in solving the much-disputed problem of other minds. He does not make specific use of his proof of other minds in his analysis of the design argument. But that he did associate the two proofs (mind-Mind) together is perhaps suggested by a passage in Examination already cited (page 121): "Supposing me to believe that the Divine Mind is simply the series of the Divine thoughts and feelings prolonged through eternity, that would be, at any rate, believing God's existence to be as real as my own" (E 245). In the very next sentence, incidentally, Mill begins to discuss "the argument of Paley's Natural Theology."

Mill does not defend his psychological theory against atheism in Examination; but he suggests that it could be done. If "from the relation which human works bear to human thoughts and feelings, it [the design argument of Paley] infers a corresponding relation between works, more or

less similar but superhuman, and superhuman thoughts and feelings. If it proves these, nobody but a metaphysician needs care whether or not it proves a mysterious substratum for them" (E 246). That is, however effective the cavils of metaphysicians, the design argument could give theoretical strength to practical religious belief. Mill's defense of his psychological theory against atheism occurs in Theism, if at all. He does not expressly mention his psychological theory in this essay, but it is plain (T 50 e.g.) that he still stands by the insights of the theory. I think it is a good guess that Mill probably thought of Theism as being, among other things, a continuation of the defense he initiated in Examination. I now turn to Mill's treatment of the design argument in Theism.

There are, for Mill, three species of evidence for design: evidences "taken at random," evidences of "mere resemblance," and evidences of "conspiring to an end." He does not tell us what he means by evidences "taken at random," but it is likely he has in mind such writers as Whewell who see design everywhere--Whewell and other authors of the Bridgewater treatises. Mill doubtless has in mind those who labor to fit any avidence to their theory rather than fit a theory to the evidence.[22] Evidence of design cannot be gathered everywhere, according to Mill: The "world [he says] does not by its mere existence bear witness to a god . . . these must be given by the special nature of the phenomena . . . adaptation to an end" (T 19). We could discern design everywhere if we could bring ourselves to the position of Whewell and others[23] that uniformities in nature, as such, imply mind. But, to Mill, this is just another intuition gone awry.

And the "mere resemblance" between natural facts and artifacts is

often unable to furnish trustworthy grounds of evidence for inferring further resemblances than those discerned. The resemblances are frequently not so extensive as physicotheologians believe (see note 22 at the end of this chapter). There are, for instance, many dissimilarities as well as similarities between an animal and a machine. Mill is well aware of this. What follows from the fact that dissimilarities accompany similarities? The answer is that we must judge the evidence in light of both, and call the ascertained probability of a supposed further resemblance by an appropriate name--from faint to strong analogy. (Mill thinks of evidences of "mere resemblance" as evidence appropriate to an analogical argument only, not an inductive argument.) Mill comments (L 367/3.20.3) on the topic as follows:

> Since the value of an analogical argument inferring one resemblance from other resemblances without any antecedent evidence of a connection between them, depends on the extent of ascertained resemblance, compared first with the amount of ascertained difference, and next with the extent of the unexplored region of unascertained properties; it follows that where the resemblance is very great, the ascertained difference very small, and our knowledge of the subject-matter tolerably extensive, the argument from analogy may approach in strength very near to a valid induction.

And, as concerns the design argument:

> The resemblances between some of the arrangements [or collocations] in nature and some of those made by man are considerable, and even as mere resemblances afford a certain presumption of similarity of cause, but how great that presumption is it is hard to say. <u>All that can be said with certainty is that these likenesses make creation by intelligence considerably more probable than if the likenesses had been less, or than if there had been no likeness at all</u> (T 29).

The sentence I have underlined seems to be, as we shall see later, virtually the extent, on Mill's showing, of what the design argument can do for theism.

When we have only resemblances to deal with, and not differences, the only one of Mill's canons of induction that can be used as a criterion

of proof is the method of agreement. There are "four inductive methods," Mill states (T 29), "the methods of agreement, of difference, of residues, and of concomitant variations." The design argument "falls within the first of these divisions, the method of agreement." And this method is admittedly "the weakest of the four" (T 30). In Logic Mill speaks (L 255/3.7.2) of this method as the "logical process to which we owe almost all the inductive conclusions we draw in early life." Yet, in scientific strictness and as an instrument of proof, the method of agreement "is not competent to prove causation" (L 277/3.7.4)--not by itself. But this is the only method applicable to the design argument. Hence, if Logic be taken seriously, Mill can't prove God's existence by induction, which (as we shall see in the next step of the argument) is his goal. At any rate he tries to show that the design argument is an inductive argument and not one of mere analogy.

But, if God's existence can't be proved by induction—which seems to be the case if Mill's Logic be taken seriously--then God's existence cannot be proved. For it is induction, not analogy, that is the "operation of . . . proving general propositions" (L 186/3.1.2). A connection between causes and effects is proved with inductive certainty if, "when the causes are present, the effects follow; when the causes are absent, the effects do not take place; and when the causes are altered, the effects are altered."[24] Obviously this kind of proof is wholly out of the question in physicotheology. Mill defines the regulative principle of inductive inquiry called the method of agreement: "If two or more instances of the phenomenon under investigation have only one circumstance in common, the circumstance in which alone all the instances agree is the cause (or effect) of the given phenomenon" (L 255/3.7.1). As we shall

see Mill is going to try to fit the design argument to this formulation of the method of agreement. But this method cannot possibly give him proof.[25] Mill surely knew this before writing Theism. Probably his goal was to show only that the design argument is a good argument--"scientific" in character. What he specifically tries to do is "raise" the argument from analogy to induction.

In Mill's judgment we do not do full justice to the design argument by speaking of it in terms of resemblance only, as the resemblance between, say, a watch and certain phenomena in nature.

> The design argument is not drawn from mere resemblances in nature to the works of human intelligence, but from the special character of those resemblances. The circumstances in which it is alleged that the world resembles the works of man are not circumstances taken at random, but are particular instances of a circumstance which experience shows to have a real connection with an intelligent origin--the fact of conspiring to an end (T 29).

We are, then, to give attention to resembling processes rather than objects, how the objects come into being. Processes of becoming furnish the strongest evidence for design, in Mill's judgment. The resemblances here between artifacts and natural facts are richer; use can be made, so Mill holds, of Aristotle's four causes. We are, that is, to concentrate upon collocations. We are to give attention to the process whereby parts make wholes, which wholes perform some given end. It is the similarity in the collocations of the parts of the eye and the parts of a telescope that Paley has in mind when he writes:[26]

> There is precisely the same proof that the eye was made for vision as there is that the telescope was made for assisting it. They are made upon the same principles, both being adjusted to the laws by which the transmission and refraction of rays of light are regulated. I speak not of the origin of the laws themselves; but such laws being fixed, the contruction in both cases is adapted to them.

In discussing Mill's proof for other minds, I made reference (page 126 above) to his distinction between analogy and induction. He uses a

slightly different, though fundamentally similar, version of this distinction in Theism. He maintains, as usual, that resemblance is the measure of both analogy and induction: "Analogy agrees with induction in this, that they both argue that a thing known to resemble another in certain circumstances (call those circumstances A and B) will resemble it in another circumstance (call it C)." Yet Mill goes on, as usual again, to speak of induction as if it were something quite different from analogy, almost as if it were something different in kind: "But the difference is that in induction A and B are known, by a previous comparison of many instances, to be the very circumstances on which C depends or with which it is in some way connected." But if we are unable to make out what these "very circumstances" are, the "argument amounts only to this, that since it is not known with which of the circumstances existing in the known case C is connected, they may as well be A and B as any others; and therefore there is a greater probability of C in cases where we know that A and B exist than in cases of which we know nothing at all" (T 28). This last would, presumably, be faint analogy. Not that all analogical arguments are weak. On the contrary, when there is much agreement between the resembling entities and little difference, an analogical argument can, according to Mill, be "very strong" (see page 129 above). Yet he insists that, however strong, analogy cannot "equal in validity to a real induction" (T 29).

What raised the proof of other minds from analogy to induction in Examination was that the hypothesis of other minds could be shown to fit experience subsequent to making the hypothesis; no experience clashed with it. Things went off smoothly just as if it were true, hence it is probable that it really is true. The hypothesis of other minds was

verified. And, because verified, the hypothesis of other minds is "proved inductively." Now this "verification is the source of all my reliance on induction," Mill affirms, and it "justifies the same reliance wherever it is found" (E 26). Thus Mill, by using the methods he associates with physical science, endeavors to "penetrate" the supposed noumenal grounds: "There is nothing in the nature of the inductive principle that confines it within the limits of my own consciousness, when it exceptionally happens that an inference surpassing the limits of my consciousness can conform to inductive conditions" (E 259). It is, as is evident, by the same procedure Mill is going to try to "penetrate" to God.

It is, of course, highly debatable whether or not the inference to other minds and to God can, as Mill thinks, strictly conform to scientific inductive condtions.[27] But perhaps this much-labored question need not detain us. I have already indicated (page five above) that Mill's real or ultimate goal in Theism is rationally to justify "indulgence of hope" respecting the supernatural. True, one could never discern this from Part One of Theism where he speaks of reviewing the subject of religion "as a strictly scientific question" (T 5) and the design argument being "of a really scientific character, which does not shrink from scientific tests" (T 27). Yet Mill's "theism of the imagination and feelings" (U 77) is not set aside in Theism. We know from Utility of Religion that Mill subscribed to this theism even before beginning the study which became Examination (1865). And it is this theism, that of imaginative hope, Mill has in mind when he writes (T 79) "that it is a part of wisdom to make the most of any, even small, probabilities . . . which furnish imagination with any footing to support itself upon." He says expressly:

"The whole domain of the supernatural is thus removed from the region of belief into that of simple hope. . . ." (T 78). Hope is not usually included in studies on scientific method and philosophy of science, though hope could be tied in with the whole subject of probability.[28]

If only hope is at stake, why does Mill make all the fuss about evidence? Does not hope mean (as used, for instance, in the phrase "hope against hope") desire without any evidential basis for expecting fulfillment? That is, does not hope mean wish, as when it is said: "All hoped him well"? No; hope usually means for Mill: "Desire combined with expectation."[29] And expectation is belief. And belief has to do with evidence. "In common language, when Belief and Knowledge are distinguished, Knowledge is understood to mean complete conviction, Belief a conviction somewhat short of complete; or else we are said to believe when the evidence is probable (as that of testimony), but to know, when it is intuitive, or demonstrative from intuitive premises" (E 77-8). To believe simply because you want to, or wish to, is to commit the sin of believing without evidence (see page 40 above). This is to be avoided like the plague. And in several places in Theism Mill makes us aware that he is trying to do this. He is, as it were, trying to steer a course somewhere between the Scilla of overbelief (optimism) and the Charybdis of underbelief (atheism).

> That what is called the consoling nature of an opinion--that is, the pleasure we should have in believing it to be true--can be a ground for believing it, is a doctrine irrational in itself and which would sanction half the mischievous illusions recorded in history or which mislead individual life (T 51). Optimism, even when a God is already believed in, is a thorny doctrine to maintain, and had to be taken by Leibniz in the limited sense that the universe, being made by a good being, is the best universe possible--not the best absolutely. . . . But optimism prior to belief in a God, and as the ground of that belief, seems one of the oddest of all speculative delusions . . . . [It is] a naive expression of the tendency of the

human mind to believe what is agreeable to it (T 27).

While hope does not connote so high a degree of expectation as does belief, it yet has to do with expectation; hence has to do with evidence. Mill does not claim the design argument establishes rational grounds for belief, but hope. Let us recall (see page 47 above) the lines of Coleridge that impressed themselves upon Mill during the latter's mental crisis: "Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve, / And hope without an object cannot live." Mill's aim in Theism is to establish an object of hope; in this case, a finite God. But let us return to our former discussion regarding Mill's distinction between analogy and induction.

In Examination the distinction between analogy and induction pivoted on verification. Hypotheses that are "projected" and subsequently verified are said to be "proved inductively." But analogical inferences cannot be verified: as today, we cannot verify the widespread belief among scientists that there are a great many solar systems in the universe besides ours. But, in Theism, the verifying process seems to occur before being applied to a resembling case, in a manner somewhat differently from that depicted in Examination. Let us use Mill's new notation (stated page 132 above) to formulate the proof of other minds.

Let C be my thread of consciousness. Let A be my body as "an universal condition of every part of my thread of consciousness" (E 259). And let B be my living body, or a certain state of health of my body, as the same universal condition. Now experience has established that A and B "are known, by a previous comparison of many instances, to be the very circumstances on which C depends or with which it is in some way connected." Hence C is proved inductively.

But C is my thread of consciousness. And the problem is other

hypothetical threads of consciousness. I now turn to that about the other that resembles the known; I turn to the "alien" bodies. And (having assumed an external world, having assumed that the alien bodies do have counterparts to them out of my consciousness in this external world) I form the hypothesis that a state of affairs proved inductively with respect to my own consciousness also prevails with respect to the alien beings. And this hypothesis receives subsequent verification almost as extensively as what I proved inductively with respect to my thread of consciousness. Hence other minds are proved inductively. That is, a hypothetical state of affairs is found to fit an established induction, and not a mere analogy. Can Mill bring off something similar to this with respect to God? The essence of the design argument is (the form of it which Mill deals with), as I have more than once stated: artifacts evidence mind. Natural facts resemble artifacts. Hence natural facts evidence Mind. The "natural fact" Mill uses is the human eye as "one of the most impressive cases" of supposed design. He does not name an artifact, letting the reader supply this for himself. Let us use Paley's telescope (see bottom of page 131 above).

The telescope is, of course, a collocation of parts. And we have seen that, according to Mill, collocation is just as essential an ingredient in causation as succession. And we have seen (page 100 above) that, for all the explanatory power of the conservation theory, many unsolved questions of collocation remain as perplexing as ever. So, as might be expected, Mill concentrates upon collocations. Of course succession is also coextensive with causation. There is always succession or there couldn't be process. But we now simply assume succession and process, and concentrate upon what may be implied in what develops in the course

of some given process, as that of the coming into being of a human eye.

Now experience teaches us that the telescope is the result or outcome of a "conspiring to an end,"[30] the end or purpose being to assist sight. This final cause presides as a sort of guiding star over the whole process of the telescope's coming into being. This guiding star is a kind of ideal collocator. There is, indeed, a tradition going back to Aristotle that a final cause can be considered an efficient cause.[31] Anyhow, when we attend carefully to the telescope as an arrangement of parts, we note that the property which applies to all the parts is the property of being so combined as to enable the goal to be actualized. The location and function of every part differ in some way from that of every other part. Yet all the parts agree in being parts of one thing, a material object so arranged that it assists sight. And the collocation of its parts reflects the "conspiracy" to bring about the end: each part is where it is, and has the character and function it has, in light of or with reference to the final cause. This presiding aim is the dominant "thread" running through the whole process.

Let C, then, be sight-assistance: the for what of the artifact being considered. Let A be the materials of the telescope. And let B be the collocation of these materials. B is the formal cause, which as suggested reflects the "conspiracy" of the final cause. The parts being arranged as they are, the eye is assisted in sight. Were they arranged differently (without the aid of some more efficient formal cause, efficient that is with respect to the final cause) the eye would either not be assisted in sight or less efficiently assisted. B, as the formal cause, is the what.

If sight is to be assisted by the telescope, we know we must have

materials and they must be arranged in a certain way. Hence we can say that "A and B are known, by a previous comparison of many instances, to be the very circumstances on which C depends or with which it is in some way connected." It is thus proved inductively that there is a relationship of causality existent between the collocation of materials composing the telescope and the fact of sight-assistance. But we know with equal inductive certainty that final causes as they pertain to artifacts are always linked to threads of consciousness.[32] And this is precisely what we do not know as concerns natural facts, and the point to be proved. As to the telescope's analogue, the eye, Mill writes:

> The parts of which the eye is composed, and the collocations which constitute the arrangement of those parts, resemble one another in this very remarkable property, that they all conduce to enabling the animal to see. These things being as they are, the animal sees: if any one of them were different from what it is, the animal, for the most part, would either not see or would not see equally well. And this is the only marked resemblance that we can trace among the different parts of this structure beyond the general likeness of composition and organization which exists among all other parts of the animal (T 30).

All eyes had a beginning in time, hence are caused; and there are far too many of them to be the result of chance. We are, therefore, warranted in supposing "that what brought all these elements [of the eye] together was some cause common to them all." Inasmuch as "the elements agree in the single circumstance of conspiring to produce sight there must be some connection by way of causation between the cause which brought those elements together, and the fact of sight. This I conceive to be a legitimate inductive inference, and the sum and substance of what induction can do for theism" (T 30).

Let us see what it is that Mill conceives to be a legitimate inductive inference. Let us use the formula for induction and analogy

he sets out in Theism. Let C be eyesight. Let A be the organic materials of the eye. And let B be the collocation of these materials. Now "A and B are known, by a previous comparison of many instances, to be the very circumstances on which C depends or with which it is in some way connected." Most would agree that this is a legitimate induction, that is, it is the case that there is some connection by way of causation between the cause of the structure of the eye and the fact of sight. But this cause might be thought of today as, say, deoxyribonucleic acid--in which case Mill's hypothetical God would, presumably, simply recede another step backwards. The cause of sight might be interpreted purely in terms of "materialism" or mechanistic causality. But, in any case, sight follows antecedent circumstances. And these antecedents are the cause, on one meaning of causality. They would be the cause on Mill's "physical view" of causation (see page 108 above).

But now, in Theism, Mill is interested in efficient causality, and not mere "physical or phenomenal causes." Mill says (L 232/3.5.11) that it is these latter causes, and these only, he is concerned with in Logic. But it is now otherwise. Has Mill's legitimate inductive inference proved that God is the efficient cause of eyesight? It would seem not. Granting that he has named an induction most would agree is a legitimate inductive inference, the inference is not that God causes eyesight but that eyesight is caused. God, as the hypothetical link between the structure of the eye and the fact of sight, appears only in the next stage of the argument:

> The natural sequel of the argument would be this: Sight, being a fact not precedent but subsequent to the putting together of the organic structure of the eye, can only be connected with the production of that structure in the character of a final, not an efficient, cause; that is, it is not sight itself but an antecedent idea of it

> that must be the efficient cause. But this at once marks the origin as proceeding from an intelligent will (T 30).

But we can't infer from the sequence alone that the two (eye-formation and sight) can only be linked by a final cause, a point Mill is fully aware of as we shall see. Doubtless Mill means that on analogy with artifacts we are entitled to suppose the two are linked similarly, that is by way of final causation or purpose. Let us assume, at any rate, that Mill has now completed the inferential picture, as far as theism is concerned, by supplying the hypothetical "connecting link" between the origin of the eye and eyesight: He postulates that "Creative forethought" is the "link by which the origin of the wonderful mechanism of the eye" is "connected with the fact of sight" (T 31). Let us review the argument as it now stands.

We may grant, I think, that Mill has given us three certainties, which he likes to call inductive certainties: (1) the collocations of artifacts, such as the telescope, are always linked with sight-assistance by way of final causes, (2) these final causes are always linked to threads of consciousness, and (3) the collocations of some natural facts, such as the eye, are always linked to eyesight by way of causation. And let us grant that the eye and the telescope are, to some degree, analagous cases; that is, they resemble each other to some considerable degree. We now postulate, on authority of the resemblance between artifacts and some natural facts, that the causation respecting the eye is final causation. And this is tantamount to postulating a transcendent personal agency, for in ordinary language purpose implies intelligence. As Mill said final causation "at once marks the origin [of the eye] as proceeding from an intelligent will." Or, as Mill might prefer, the postulation of a final

divine cause is tantamount to postulating an eternal Thread of Consciousness (E 245).

But there is a marked difference between this eternal Thread of Consciousness and the thread of consciousness of our experience. And because they are radically different may be the reason why Mill does not make specific use of the proof of other minds in Theism. What we call body is, Mill has specified (see page 124 above), a sine qua non of what we experience as a thread of consciousness. And, in the design argument, we are projecting what we experience upon a state of affairs that resembles what we experience in some respects for the purpose of explaining that about this other state of affairs that does not resemble what we experience: the eye resembles a telescope in some respects, but does not resemble the telescope as concerns the question of designing agency. This agency, in the case of artifacts, is known to be human intelligence. But this agency, in the case of natural facts, is unknown. So we postulate a disembodied intelligence as the agency of design evinced in natural facts. But Mill would admit we have no experience of disembodied intelligences. Hence I conclude--on this issue alone, without detailing others--[34] that Mill cannot, within the framework of his scheme of proof, raise the design argument from analogy to induction.

But the resemblances remain, the resemblances between artifacts and some natural facts. I think, then, we may grant Mill, for what it is worth, that the connection between the origin of the eye (as a collocation of parts) and the fact of sight may be creative forethought. That is: this hypothetical connecting link is more probable than if no resemblances, of the character named, existed at all between the facts in question.

The postulated disembodied intelligence (God) does agree with our

experience in the property that interests us most in the context of the present discussion: God is conceived of as a thread of consciousness. God is simply Mill's own mind, expanded so as to be proportioned to the "grandeur" of his supposed work, and projected upon the assumed noumenal realm. God is a thread of consciousness because Mill has made him such. Mystics, as they claim, have direct knowledge of God; Berkeley inferred God; Locke proved his existence with mathematical certainty.[35] All this is set aside by Mill. He can only deal with his own mind; he has no direct links with what is beyond it. He can deal with God's mind directly no more than he can so deal with other minds. But, since God is conceived of by Mill on analogy of his own mind or thread of consciousness, it would seem that the term God would be meaningful for him.

Perhaps Mill has shown that it is probable, even if a low probability, that the eye is linked with sign by way of creative forethought--unless some logical difficulties prevent his argument from getting off the ground. There may be such logical difficulties, but I do not see them. That is, I do not see that a logical contradiction is generated by Mill's projecting his own mind into the moumena in the manner and for the reason I have stated. True, we have no experience of disembodied intelligences, but it does not follow from this that there aren't any. But, even if no logical objections stymie the argument at the outset, there is still the possibility that some competing theory, as natural selection, has better "scientific" support from experience.

Mill, in the last stage of his argument, considers the "remarkable speculation" of Darwin.[36] Mill begins (and note <u>how</u> he begins) as follows:

> <u>I regret to say, however</u>, [italics mine] that. . . . Creative forethought is not absolutely the only link by which the origin of the wonderful mechanism of the eye may be connected with the fact

> of sight. There is another connecting link on which attention has been greatly fixed by recent speculations, and the reality of which cannot be called in question, though its adequacy to account for such truly admirable combinations as some of those in nature is still and will probably long remain problematical (T 31).

"There is," Mill remarks, "something very startling, and prima facie improbable in this hypothetical history of nature" which Darwin's and Spencer's theory of organic evolution give us. Yet Mill admits the theory "is not so absurd as it [at first] looks": The "analogies which have been discovered in experience, favorable to its possibility, far exceed what anyone could have supposed beforehand."

The theory of evolution is not, in Mill's opinion, necessarily inconsistent with theism. "But it must be acknowledged," he admits, "that it [natural selection] would greatly attenuate the evidence for it [theism]." So, here again, Mill seems to be left, by virtually his own admission, with little more than the resemblances between artifacts and some natural facts, these resemblances making it more probable that mind is involved in both than if no resemblances existed at all. This last citation about the attenuation of evidence seems, incidentally, to suggest that Mill envisioned the demiurge as a presiding presence, something like a vitalistic force separate from physical force, collocating materials in conformity to his final causation or purposes. As concerns evolution Mill wonders "whether it will ever be possible to say more than this [that it may possibly be true] is at present uncertain" (T 32). And it is still uncertain as a fully adequate explanation of the phenomena the design argument gives special attention to. But, "leaving this remarkable speculation [of evolution] to whatever fate the progress of discovery may have in store for it," Mill expresses (T 32) his conviction "that in the present state of our knowledge the adaptations in nature

afford a large balance of probability in favor of creation by intelligence."

This conclusion rests mainly, I haven't the slightest doubt, upon what may properly be designated as intuition. It rests in large measure upon what has been called[37] the "emotive-intuitive element" that arises in certain minds when they contemplate the "wonderful" and "truly admirable combinations" in nature such as the human eye. Indeed, as I shall argue later, perhaps the whole of Mill's theistic speculations should be classed as an expression of his will to believe.

Bain thought Mill should have "studied the whole cycle of Hume's argumentative treatises" (JSM 139) before writing Theism, presumably so that Mill could answer the arguments of the great skeptic. But both Hume and Kant seem, at least at times, to grant all Mill wants. The conclusion of Hume's Dialogues seems to be "that the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence."[38] And Kant suggests the design argument might be able to prove the existence of "an architect of the world who is always very much hampered by the adaptability of the material in which he works" (Critique of Pure Reason, Smith ed., A 627). Although how this proof would be possible on Kant's principles is as problematical as anything in Mill.

Much could be made, of course, of Mill's failures respecting his analysis of the design argument. But it is perhaps needless to catalogue these deficiencies, especially in light of the fact that Mill seems almost to disparage the value of the design argument as evidence. At one place (T 53) he speaks of "such grounds of conjecture as natural theology affords." He never supposes the argument can support more than hope. And there are problems even here, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Finally, the following may be said, on the positive side, about Mill's treatment of the design argument. Whatever be the strength or weakness of his reasoning, John Stuart Mill, one who greatly influenced his age, makes it plain in Theism that he is not to be included among the ranks of the "science party" or "antireligious party." He seems sympathetic toward religion. And, after all, this was perhaps the most important single impression Three Essays made at the time of their publication, a time when the "warfare between science and religion" was very intense.[39] Secondly, Mill may have shown that the evidence for Mind in nature cannot equal zero--for whatever this showing may be worth. If we admit, on the one hand, that there are some resemblances between artifacts and natural facts; and, on the other hand, are convinced no "scientific" theory satisfactorily explains or accounts for these resemblances, the design argument should be accorded a place as a hypothesis that may be true. Hence, granting all this, some grounds for hope (if these be desired) are not only available now for a rational faith, but are likely to be available indefinitely.

Now it may be true that only a known God can have significance for the ordinary man of religion (see page 3 above). But even St. Paul laid very great emphasis upon hope, so we can certainly conclude that hope is not irrelevant to ordinary religious consciousness. There would seem to be no reason why some evidence couldn't support hope. And this hope, being continually reinforced from various sources in daily life, couldn't develop into the certainty that is religiously significant.

NOTES

[1]Many such studies are, of course, available. Alan Ryan has given us one of the best recent ones. See his chapter "Mind and Matter" in John Stuart Mill (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), pp. 87-102.

[2]Hirst callses it among "radical theories," with those of Berkeley, Hume, and Ayer. See R. J. Hirst, Perception and the External World (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1965).

[3]John Stuart Mill, "Berkeley's Life and Writings," appended to Three Essays on Religion (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1874), p. 278.

[4]Or into the realm of possibility. Mill's theory involves the view that changes occur in possibilities. This was considered a "howler" by the host of critics of Examination. As Bain says: "The stress of Mill's exposition rests on the fixity of order in our sensations, leading to a constancy of recurrence, and a belief in that constancy, which goes the length of assuming independent existence" (JSM 121).

[5]The nucleus of this model is the intuition that a presentation of consciousness is a presentation of consciousness. It "is impossible to doubt a fact of internal consciousness. To feel, and not to know that we feel, is an impossibility" (E 163). This is similar to Descartes' methodological doubt.

[6]By "external world" here he means a supposed world "outside the mind" as is held by "Realistic thinkers" (E 250). The "outward" world of Mill is not this realistic external world; "outward" designates "the given," for Mill. He affirms that "Kant's external and internal were both internal to the mind. Nothing but the noumenon was external to it" (E 37). This is the view Mill tries to maintain, at least when expounding his psychological view. Cf. E 470: "Concepts . . . should agree with the reality of things, meaning by things the phenomena or sensible presentations. . . ."; and E 257: "The whole variety of the facts of nature as we know it, is given in the mere existence of our sensations, and in the laws or order of their occurrence."

[7]On Mill's usual or official view, there can't be any meaningful thing that is strictly an object and strictly external.

[8]This mode of expression certainly varies from that used by Mill in expounding his psychological theory. He specifies that this theory does not require that sensations be referred "to a substance [or "support"] ulterior to all sensation or possibility of sensation" (E 251). And he tries to show that no substratum called mind is required for our thoughts. But he admits to failure here (E 248).

[9]James Mill, Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind, ed. John Stuart Mill, 2d ed., 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1878 [2d ed. first pub. 1869]), 2:62--note by John Mill.

[10]There exists, of course, an extensive literature on the problem of other minds. See Wittgenstein and the Problem of Other Minds, ed. Harold Morick (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967); John Wisdom, Other Minds (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968); Alvin Plantinga, God and Other Minds (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1967). Plantinga's thesis is "that belief in other minds and belief in God are in the same epistemological boat; hence if either is rational, so is the other. But obviously the former is rational; so, therefore, is the latter" (p. viii).

[11]Hence, in logical strictness, Mill cannot deal with an other mind. See A. J. Ayer, "The Concept of a Person" in The Concept of a Person (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1964), pp. 82-128. Ayer defends Mill's argument from analogy against those who interpret the verification principle in too stringent a form (p. 111).

[12]In Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind 1.418; note by John Mill.

[13]See page 109 above for Mill's antipathy toward intuitionism.

[14]Cf. Randall on Mill's "'metaphysics'": "Mill started as a Lockean, with an implicit faith in the Newtonian world as generating human experience. He then went in two different directions. In one, he advanced toward Kantian Idealism. In the other, he tried to work out a radical empiricism and naturalism." John Herman Randall, Jr., The Career of Philosophy, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).

[15]See Richard Paul Anschutz, The Philosophy of J. S. Mill (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1953). Mill's "scientific or metaphysical or realist theory of explanation should be regarded as the central conception of his philosophy" (p. 182), but Mill was also "a subjective idealist" (p. 69). He was "something of a split personality" (p. 178) as regards these opposing views.

[16]Cf. W. H. S. Monck, Sir William Hamilton (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1881), p. 17: Permanent possibility of sensation may "mean either Permanent Possibility of producing the sensations, or a Permanent Possibility of feeling them."

[17]Cf. E 426: "If we lived till doomsday we should never find the proposition that water rusts iron in our concepts, if we had not first found it in the outward [italics mine] phenomena." But the context makes it clear "outward" means presentations of sense, not the external world.

[18]That "we do know some things immediately, or intuitively" must be the case, Mill reasons, for unless "we knew something immediately, we could not know anything mediately, and consequently could not know anything at all" (E 157, cf. L 3/1.14, L 488/5.3.1).

[19]Cf. E. 252: There is, "for every statement which can be made concerning material phenomena in terms of the Realistic theory, an

equivalent meaning in terms of Sensation and Possibilities of Sensation alone. . . ." Not without cheating, insists Berlin. Material-object statements are not translatable into statements about actual and possible sensations without residue of meaning. See I. Berlin, "Empirical Propositions and Hypothetical Statements," Mind 59 (1950): 302. But see A. J. Ayer's "Phenomenalism" in his Philosophical Essays (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1963), pp. 125-66. Ayer is one of the foremost modern exponents of phenomenalism, although he does not claim that statements expressed in terms of his theory are capable of being reproduced exactly as statements about sense-data (p. 165).

[20]Mill is sure both the phenomenalist and the realist have the same evidence with which to reason because substance, either mind or matter, can only be a postulate; cf. E 252.

[21]"Alien" because these GsPPS are "visitors" (as it were) to consciousness: their "home" is not the "home" of my body-GPPS. But "alien" (E 260) does not have a meaning equivalent to "external."

[22]Cf. Hume's well-known caution: Surely the universe does not bear "such a resemblance to a house, that we can with the same certainty infer a similar cause, or that the analogy is here entire and perfect." Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Smith ed., p. 144.

[23]See L. E. Hicks, A Critique of Design-Arguments (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883). Hicks makes one of the most sustained efforts on record to establish the "order-argument," which he calls the "eutaxiological" argument (p. 7).

[24]Mill's "Berkeley's Life and Writings" appended to Three Essays, p. 269.

[25]This is doubtless one reason why it is customary for modern writers to refer to Mill's argument for the existence of other minds as an argument from analogy, not an inductive argument. Yet Mill made much of his argument being an inductive one, and not one "reaching only to the inferior degree of inductive evidence called Analogy" (E 260).

[26]William Paley, Natural Theology, Selections, p. 13.

[27]See Bertrand Russell, Human Knowledge: Its Scope and Limits (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1948), 483: "It is clear that belief in the minds of others requires some postulate that is not required in physics, since physics can be content with a knowledge of structure." That is, physics can be content with its model only. The postulate in question is: "If, whenever we can observe whether A and B are present or absent, we find that every case of B has an A as a causal antecedent, then it is probable that most B's have A's as causal antecedents, even in cases where observation does not enable us to know whether A is present or not. This postulate, if accepted, if accepted, justifies the inference to other minds, as well as many other inferences that are made unreflectingly by common sense" (p. 486).

[28]Mill has something like this tie-in in mind when he says (T 78-9) that the "principles which ought to govern the cultivation and the regulation of the imagination" will become important "in proportion as the weakening of positive beliefs respecting states of existence superior to the human leaves the imagination of higher things less provided with material from the domain of supposed reality."

[29]Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind, 2.194; note by John Mill.

[30]This phrase appears in Berkeley, Works, ed. Fraser 2.160. And Stewart uses it frequently. See The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart, ed. Sir William Hamilton, 9 vols. (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable and Co., 1855), 7.11, 36, 46, 79, 91, 167. It is my guess that when Mill decided to write Theism, he reviewed the third book of Stewart's Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers of Man, and adopted Stewart's procedure in handling the main topics in natural theology. Mill's phraseology, when discussing natural theology, is similar to that of Reid and Stewart.

[31]Cf. John Herman Randall, Jr., Aristotle (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 181: There is a sense in which "'the final cause is the same as the efficient cause,' for Aristotle. Cf. also Aquinas: "The first principle of action is the end, for it moves the agent. . . ." Thomas Aquinas, The Pocket Aquinas: Selections, ed. and trans. Vernon J. Bourke (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1960), p. 174.

[32]Certainly if we assembled a telescope, we would know the whole project to be linked with our threads of consciousness, and a similar argument could be used to transcend my experience as was used in the case of other minds.

[33]Berkeley's Works, Fraser ed., 1.270.

[34]For instance it is the repeated teaching of Mill's Logic that the plurality of causes renders the method of agreement "uncertain" (L 286/3.10.2). On plurality of causes and Mill's theism, see Stephen 3.445 and H. J. McCloskey, John Stuart Mill: A Critical Study (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), p. 168.

[35]John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), p. 306.

[36]Mill read Darwin's The Origin of Species in 1860, and wrote Bain that it far surpassed his expectations. See Elliot 1.236.

[37]See Hurlbutt, Hume, Newton, and the Design Argument, p. 163.

[38]Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Smith ed., p. 227.

[39]See Wilfrid Ward, Men and Matters (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1914), p. 190: "Men like the present Lord Morley and Mr. Leslie

Stephen, who had hitherto stuck to Mill though they recognized in him greater sympathy than they themselves had with the religious party, could no longer feel him to be their leader after these essays [Three Essays] appeared."

PART IV. SOLUTIONS

CHAPTER VII

THEISTIC HUMANISM

I indicated in the first chapter that my aim in this study is (1) to give attention to all that is essential in Mill's religious views, (2) to give special attention to the theological aspect of these views and to the design argument, and (3) to try to arrive at a proper interpretation of what Mill's religious views were. The preceding chapters have been devoted to the first two components of my aim. I now turn to the third.

I have said (pp. 5 and 72 above) that, in my interpretation, there are three motifs in Mill's religious thought. I shall now make use of these three motifs in my general interpretation of Mill on religion. The moral or practical theme is the leitmotif. It is probably the leading motif in all his thought. There is truth in Hayek's observation, made back in 1951 when he was complaining that everyone had forgotten Mill, that

> even if in the final estimate Mill should not be ranked as an original thinker of the first order, I believe . . . he will again be recognized as one of the really great figures of his period, a great moral figure perhaps more than a great thinker, and one in whom even his purely intellectual achievements are mainly due to his profound conviction of the supreme moral value of unrelenting intellectual effort. Not by temperament but out of a deeply ingrained sense that this was his duty did Mill grow to be the 'Saint of Rationalism', as Gladstone once so justly described him.[1]

But when I say the moral or practical theme in Mill's religious philosophy is the dominant one, I am using the term moral in a broad sense, in a

sense that extends beyond, though including, what Mill calls "feelings of duty" (Utilitarianism, pp. 38, 39, e.g.).[2] When discussing "What Utilitarianism Is" in the second chapter of his Utilitarianism, Mill uses the phrase "happiness altogether": similarly[3] I am thinking of "moral" in terms of the happiness of the whole man,[4] satisfaction of his total felt needs: physical, social, and metaphysical or ontological.[5] But while utility of religion is Mill's main concern, it is not his only concern. He begins both Utility of Religion and Theism by emphasizing (U 45, T 5) that the question of religious truth is far more important than the "inferior ground" of utility.

In this chapter I am primarily concerned in showing how Mill's religious views should properly be characterized. I shall argue that the only correct name of Mill's religious views is theistic humanism. And, of course, Mill's solution to the general problem of religion will point in the same direction. But, as we shall see in this chapter and in the final one, there is a difference between the solution Mill advocates generally and the solution to his own problem of religion. I turn first to the rational or theological aspect of Mill's religious thought, specifically to the conclusions Mill draws as a result of researches in Theism.

In the last part of this essay, "General Result," Mill seems highly desirous that we not misunderstand what he conceives his position to be as concerns theism. He calls it "skepticism," which he is careful to distinguish from positive belief. He conceives this "skepticism" to occupy a position midway between belief on the right, say, and agnosticism on the left plus atheism farther on the left. The "rational attitude of a thinking mind toward the supernatural" is, Mill concludes,

> that of skepticism as distinguished from belief on the one hand, and from atheism on the other, including, in the present case, under atheism the negative as well as the positive form of disbelief in a God, viz., not only the dogmatic denial of his existence, but the denial that there is any evidence on either side, which for most practical purposes amounts to the same thing as if the existence of a God had been disproved (T 77).

There is every reason to believe Mill is referring to his own attitude when he speaks of "the rational attitude of a thinking mind toward the supernatural." He has, then, told us plainly that he is a skeptic and not a believer in the evidences of theism. Yet he is not a dogmatic atheist, not even an agnostic. Let us now read what conclusions Mill, the skeptic, draws from his labors in Theism. I continue the foregoing citation.

> If we are right in the conclusion to which we have been led by the preceding inquiry, there is evidence, but insufficient for proof, and amounting only to one of the lower degrees of probability. The indication given by such evidence as there is points to the creation, not indeed of the universe, but of the present order of it by an Intelligent Mind whose power over the materials was not absolute, whose love for his creatures was not his sole actuating inducement, but who nevertheless desired their good (T 77).

Generally speaking this is not the language of skepticism. It might well be considered the language of skepticism to settled orthodoxy or to thinkers to whom theism is a "necessary verity."[6] But it was certainly not considered such language by many of Mill's followers. They took it as the language of credulity, and were "scandalized"[7] by it.

There is one meaning[8] of the term skepticism in our language that approximately fits the sense in which Mill is apparently using the term in the "General Result" of Theism: "doubt concerning but not necessarily denial of the basic religious principles" (Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, 3d ed.). The "mercury" in Mill's "belief thermometer" is, he seems to suggest, somewhere above the mark of agnosticism but below belief.

The "thermometer" has a definite reading. It is not high, but credence is alive: "there is evidence" (T 77) which can serve as a "footing" (T 78) for supernatural hopes. If we think of our hypothetical "credence thermometer" having four divisions--atheism, agnosticism, hope, and belief--Mill scores in hope. And hope is above "zero" as it were. Hope is desire with expectation, and it is evidence that supports the hope (see page 134 above).

If this be the case, what more do we need to justify the conclusion that Mill is a theist? If he wants to call low belief or expectation hope, that's up to him. He has told us that the evidence for theism has generated in his mind a feeling of positive, even if diminutive, credence. Surely, then, we can join interpreters like Richard Taylor in affirming that Mill did believe in the existence of "a God or Demiurge" (T ix).[9] No, I don't think we can; but of this more later. But I think we can conclude that there is a theological dimension to Mill's religious views. And any interpretation of Mill on religion which tends to depict Mill's real interest as wholly on the side of the "purely human" religion of humanity, is too one-sided.

Mill does not, in the rational phase of his religious thought, agree with Kant that the existence of God is, and can be, only a matter of "faith" or "my interest."[10] And, in this same phase of his thought, Mill would not entirely agree with William James' pragmatism, as a theory of truth, in the context of our present subject. William James says near the end of his Pragmatism (which he dedicated to the memory of John Stuart Mill) that on "pragmatistic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true." But "experience shows that it certainly does work." Hence it is true. So

"the problem is to build it [theistic finitism] out and determine it so that it will combine satisfactorily with all the other working truths."[11] Mill affirms there is empirical evidence for theistic finitism. James doesn't.[12] But it does not follow from this conviction of Mill about theistic evidence that we are justified in placing him firmly in the class of theists.[13]

Nevertheless it is understandable why Mill might be thought really to believe in theistic finitism. He says plainly that "It may be possible to believe with Plato that perfect goodness, limited . . . by the intractableness of the material, has done this [made both nature and man as perfect as he could, and capable of improvement] because it could do no better" (N 28). And it is theistic finitism that Mill defends in Theism. There are, moreover, passages in this essay that have caused some to feel, with Leslie Stephen, that "Truly, Mill was nearly qualified for a place among the prophets" (3.449). For instance:

> One elevated feeling this form of religious idea [theistic finitism] admits of, which is not open to those who believe in the omnipotence of the good principle in the universe: the feeling of helping God--of requiting the good he has given by a voluntary co-operation which he, not being omnipotent, really needs, and by which a somewhat nearer approach may be made to the fulfillment of his purposes (T 86).

This doctrine of helping God, a God who really needs our services, has been one of the most influential of Mill's contributions to philosophy of religion.[14] The doctrine is clearly set out in Nature (N 27, 38), and in Utility of Religion (U 76). In one passage in Auguste Comte and Positivism (ACP 134),[15] Mill indicates he got the doctrine from Comte!

It is, as I say, understandable why Mill might be thought really to believe in theistic finitism; that is, in the existence of an anthropomorphic, spiritual God of limited power who "really exists" (ACP 133) in

the supposed noumenal realm. Let us refer, once more, to our hypothetical "credence thermometer" described at the top of page 154 above. Let us put different readings on it. Let us call the highest reading complete assurance or knowledge; the next under this incomplete assurance or belief; the next, incomplete assurance yet more incomplete or hope; and the lowest reading, no assurance or wish. Now it is the clear teaching of Mill that the "domain of the supernatural is . . . removed from the region of belief into that of simple hope" (T 78). But knowledge, belief, and hope, are measures of probability; while wishing or hope-against-hope has to do only with possibility. Real hope involves evidence and falls within the range of probability because it does involve evidence, as wishing (or its equivalent, hope-against-hope) does not. Can we not, then, conclude that it is at least not incorrect to call Mill a theist?

This conclusion is warranted, if at all, only in light of the spirit of Mill's theological speculations, not the letter. Perhaps we might be justified in classing Mill a sentimental theist (see Bain JSM 135), though this would be making reference only to one-half of his theistic humanism. Since the record suggests that the notion of helping God probably became a more-or-less established habit of thought for Mill, there must be some sense in which he felt God. Mill probably possessed a mode of feeling similar to that of William James: a "germ of mysticism." Although William James had "no living sense of commerce with God," yet God was real to him in some sense: "More as a . . . powerful ally of my own ideals" than "as a real existent Being."[16] The reasons for my judgment that Mill can be classed a theist only with a very large qualification, if at all, will become more clear when I discuss Mill's ideal theism. I shall do this shortly. But, at the moment, I wish to turn from the

rationalistic or theological side of Mill's religious thought to what I have called the emotive or aesthetic facet of this thought: Mill's sentimental theism or, as he calls it, "the theism of the imagination and feelings" (U 76). Mill's best exposition of this theism is contained in Utility of Religion. He begins by characterizing man's existential predicament with respect to the disparity between what he wants to know and what he can know.

Man's certain knowledge is very small indeed when measured against "the boundlessness of his desire to know." Human existence "is girt round with mystery: the narrow region of our experience is a small island in the midst of a boundless sea, which at once awes our feelings and stimulates our imagination by its vastness and its obscurity" (U 67). And man's existence is "not only an island in infinite space but also in infinite time": We know neither our origin nor our final destination. Yet we yearn "for any credible tidings from that mysterious region [beyond our experience: the noumenal realm], any glimpse into it which might enable us to see the smallest light through its darkness": "From whence came this nearer world which we inhabit, what cause or agency made it what it is, and on what powers depend its future fate? Who would not desire this more ardently than any other conceivable knowledge, so long as there appeared the slightest hope of attaining it?" But, alas, "we are able to penetrate into that [mysterious] region [beyond our "nearer world"] with the imagination only, assisted by [italics mine] specious but inconclusive analogies derived from human agency and design."

Note that Mill conceives of the imagination being given thrust (as it were) by the design argument in its attempt to penetrate the misty, but fascinating, noumenal realm. And note that Mill does not speak of

boundless farther world, which envelopes our nearer phenomenal island, as a mere assumption. He assumes its real existence. Mill imagines this "farther" world, or overworld, to be a vast domain of powers, one of which (God) may be thought of as a benight creator: "the Being to whom we owe all the benevolent contrivance we behold in nature" (U 76), "the power which has done so much for us" (U 77). Finally, note that Mill refers to the design argument as an inconclusive analogy. (On page 77 of Utility of Religion he speaks of the argument as "shadowy and unsubstantial" evidence. Yet on the same page he says "there is" evidence in nature "to favor" the "theism of the imagination and feelings," and associates these favorable "appearances in nature" with Paley.) We know that in the first part of Theism Mill tries to raise the design argument from analogy to induction. We might suppose, then, that Theism records a marked change in Mill's estimation of the argument. And probably some change did occur between the mid-1850s and 1870. On the other hand we know also that Mill's final estimate of the evidence for theism, in the last part of Theism, reduces to little more than "there is evidence" (T 77). And this position is obviously not very different from that suggested in the parenthetical sentences immediately above.

After characterizing, in Utility of Religion, man's predicament as concerns his desire to penetrate the ultimate mystery, Mill turns to the relation of poetry to the religion of supernatural hopes. He is of the opinion that while religion is not poetry, yet "Religion and poetry address themselves, at least in one of their aspects, to the same part of the human constitution; they both supply the same want, that of ideal conceptions grander and more beautiful than we see realized in the prose of human life" (U 68). As Wordsworth puts it in the first book (lines 401-14)

of his The Prelude:

> Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
> Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought
> That givest to forms and images a breath
> And everlasting motion, not in vain
> By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
> Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
> The passions that build up our human soul;
> Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
> But with high objects, with enduring things--
> With life and nature--purifying thus
> The elements of feeling and of thought,
> And sanctifying, by such discipline,
> Both pain and fear, until we recognize
> A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Religion, "as distinguished from poetry," Mill affirms, "is the product of the craving to know whether these imaginative conceptions have realities [italics mine] answering to them in some other world than ours" (U 68). It is apparent that Mill's theism of the imagination and feelings is to be included in the orbit of real or objective theism where evidence is relevant, and not ideal theism (see page 74 above) where empirical evidence is not relevant but only morality. The difference between poetry, as such, and supernatural religion is the element of reality or objectivity: "To the poetry of the supernatural" is "added a positive belief and expectation" in the mind of the average believer.

And yet there seems to be a sense in which evidence is, and another sense in which evidence can't be, relevant to Mill's religion of imaginative hope.[17] There seems to be two concepts of hope in Mill: hope proper, and hope-against-hope or wish. Let us try to determine if this is in fact the case.

I first cite the main relevant passages in Utility of Religion. I then turn to the corresponding material in Theism. U 77: "Apart from all dogmatic belief, there is for those who need it[18] an ample domain

in the region of the imagination which may be planted with possibilities, with hypotheses which cannot be known to be false. . . ." In my view this is the language of hope-against-hope or wish, which has to do with mere possibility. But, as I now continue the citation, we see Mill turning to evidence (hence, in my interpretation, turning to the realm of probability) and using the term "legitimate" in connection with this evidence; that is, he turns to the sphere of what I call hope proper.

> . . . and when there is anything in the appearances of nature to favor them [the planted possibilities], as in this case there is (for whatever force we attach to the analogies of nature with the effects of human contrivance, there is no disputing the remark of Paley that what is good in nature exhibits those analogies much oftener than what is evil), the contemplation of these possibilities is a legitimate indulgence. . . .

Positive evidence measures probability. It does not, except logically, measure possibility: what is probable cannot be impossible. Mill tends to associate possibility with "there is nothing to disprove." If we believe "there is evidence" for the truth of a given proposition, this tends to neutralize "there is nothing to disprove." But perhaps not necessarily. I suppose the more problematical evidence is taken to be (though positive, how positive? what exactly does it testify to? and the like) the more one would be inclined to think: "Well at least there is nothing to disprove that what I desire to be the case may in fact be the case." And, in one place in Examination, Mill actually expresses sympathy toward the view that the mere "absence of counter-evidence" for the truth of a proposition "raises into proof" the truth of it. The main reason for Mill's apparent sympathy toward this strange kind of "proof" might well have resided in what proposition was trying to be proved; that is, it well may be that Mill is sympathetic toward this curious sort of "proof" because he is sympathetic toward what is trying

to be proved. The general subject, in the passage in Examination under consideration, is the goodness or perfection of God,[19] which is, as we know, Mill's paramount interest in the whole problem of God. (I have only insisted that it is not his only interest.) So doubtless, again (see page 144 above), Mill puts logic into the service of his desires.

Mill's attitude is evidently this: indulge in supernatural hopes I will. If there is evidence to support them, fine. If there isn't, I'll hope anyhow--provided there is nothing to prove my hopes groundless. But I have associated this attitude with hope-against-hope or wishing. And some of Mill's pronouncements seem to justify this association, wish being thought of as desire with no assurance that the object of desire will be realized. We have already looked at some of the pronouncements I believe justify this association (page 160). But notice, in the following additional citation, that Mill uses hope in the sense of a feeling engendered by a "vague possibility" which cannot generate conviction. The

> skepticism of the understanding does not necessarily exclude the theism of the imagination and feelings, and this, again, gives opportunity [italics mine] for a hope that the power which has done so much for us [given us life] may be able and willing to do this also [give us more life after we die], such vague possibility must ever stop far short of a conviction (U 77).

Mill's use of the term opportunity here suggests again that he is talking about a state of mind that would ordinarily be associated with wishing. "Opportunity" is used in the context of being given a chance to do what you want to do. It is a favorable juncture of circumstances--favorable, that is, to the fulfillment of desires. The term has no native affinity with evidence at all, such as hope does when we define it as desire with expectation.

Now we can be sure will would not be at all pleased with our calling his religion of imaginative hope a religion of imaginative wish. Mill had no particularly liking for the word wish; certainly not in the context of religion. Doubtless "wish" suggested something like a wandering cloud, with no empirical moorings. He says (T 45) that "any idea of God more captivating than this [theistic finitism] comes only from human wishes." Yet it must be admitted that Mill does not disparage wishing as such--if desire be taken to be more-or-less synonymous with wishing. For what is perhaps his favored definition of religion is: "The essence of religion is the strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires toward an ideal object. . . . (U 71). His animadversions against mere wishes are always against their being used, as he supposes, as evidence for the existence of the object of the wish. For example:

> The supposition that an idea or a wish or a need, even if native to the mind, proves the reality of a corresponding object derives all its plausibility from the belief already in our minds that we were made by a benignant Being who would not have implanted in us a groundless belief, or a want which he did not afford us the means of satisfying, and is therefore a palpable petitio principii if adduced as an argument to support the very belief which it presupposes (T 11).

But, though Mill would not be pleased with a religion of imaginative wish, I think he may in fact give us such a religion; or rather, he gives us both a religion of imaginative hope and a religion of imaginative wish.

In Theism he insists "there is evidence" for theism sufficient satisfactorily to serve as a "footing" for supernatural hopes (T 77-79). Evidence gives expectation a reason for being. So, in my interpretation, this is hope proper. But Mill also, in the beginning paragraphs of "General Result" of Theism (T 77-79), veers toward a different conception of hope. He says (T 79) that no reason is likely to "be discovered for considering the realization of human hopes on that subject [the supernatural] as beyond the pale of possibility [italics mine]." We thus

shift to wishing, in my opinion. It is obvious Mill does not pay sufficient attention to the difference in meaning between possibility (there is nothing to disprove) and probability (there is something to prove). Mill writes the last part of Theism virtually as if the first part of the essay had never been written.[20] Notice how Mill uses the terms possibility and probability in the following citation, T 79:

> To me it seems that human life, small and confined as it is . . . stands greatly in need of any wider range and greater height of aspiration for itself and its destination which the exercise of imagination can yield to it without running counter to the evidence of fact; and that it is a part of wisdom to make the most of any, even small, probabilities on this subject, which furnish imagination with any footing to support itself upon. And I am satisfied. . . that it is possible to form a perfectly sober estimate of the evidences on both sides of a question and yet to let the imagination dwell by preference on those possibilities which are at once the most comforting and the most improving, without in the least degree overrating the solidity of the grounds for expecting that these rather than any others will be the possibilities actually realized (italics mine).

Notice: solidity of the "grounds for expecting." This is the language of hope proper. But then notice how really unsolid these grounds are, when we follow the letter of Mill's pronouncements. We are, on the one hand, assured that the grounds for expecting, even if weak or thin, are sufficiently solid to permit our indulgence in the cheering possibility that our most comforting and improving dreams (aspirations) may really come true. But, on the other hand, Mill seems to suggest that these grounds are not sufficiently solid for a viable expectation "that these [comforts] rather than any others [italics mine] will be the possibilities actually realized."

This surely must define what Mill means by simple hope! (He uses the phrase "simple hope" at T 78: The domain of the supernatural is removed "from the region of belief into that of simple hope.") For it is quite sheerly nothing at all, as far as hope proper is concerned. It

comes out as little more than pleasant reverie of wish fulfillment; the only thing recognizably religious about it is the subject matter: for example, the wish that "the power which has done so much for us may be able and willing to do this also"--that is, grant "life after death" (U 77). Mill's simple hope, or hope-against-hope, is not a great deal more than an innocent pastime--than which, admittedly, few things can be more important to human existence. I suppose every great "improving" project in science and industry or literature or philosophy was once only a dream. But this sort of thing is not usually associated with religious hopes.

But, if Mill could somehow derive satisfaction to his devotional feelings in the indulgence of simple hope (forlorn hope?), excellent! I join the many who have rejoiced that a little light was able to get through the strained seams of the philosophy imposed upon him from youth--the philosophy, and its attendant attitude, imposed upon him in youth. But let us recognize what this "religion" really is in the main. Let us call it by the name most proper to it: the religion of imaginative wish. Mill criticizes (T 27) optimism as often being no more than "a naive expression of the tendency of the human mind to believe what is agreeable to it." In the last analysis is Mill's will to believe radically different from this tendency? I think the difference is not substantial at bottom.

But, as concerns the emotive or aesthetic aspect of Mill's religious views, he does not give us a religion of imaginative wish only. If my interpretation is right, Mill can have a religion of imaginative hope when he has grounds for expecting—when he has good reasons or evidence for expecting: some good reasons or evidence for expecting. And let us recall that Mill still has his resemblances between artifacts and natural

facts; these remain, unaccounted for in any conclusive manner by scientific inquiry. Now if an individual has a disposition to believe in God (he has the idea of God and there is something within him that spontaneously and sympathetically responds to the idea), the analogy between artifacts and natural facts could really function, in a philosophically defensible manner, as grounds for hope; and grounds of some solidity. But it would seem necessary that this disposition, or something like it, be brought to the evidence. For all such evidence is, of course, capable of being interpreted in light of theories other than a theistic one. I think we cannot escape the truth of Whewell's suggestion (see page 105 above) that, if religion as ordinarily understood be taken seriously, God must be an original principle. Somehow God must be brought to our reasonings. We reason from God as we reason from a premise intuitive true. But Mill didn't have this intuition. Yet he had, in its place, a disposition to believe. This disposition is the leading fact in the theological part of Mill's religious thought.

There can be no doubt Mill possessed this disposition to believe. He was not satisfied to confine his aspirations to the evidence, as we might expect a self-styled skeptic to do.[21] And he indeed wants to "make the most of" (T 79) all evidence that has any chance of serving as grounds for supernatural expectations. Perhaps it is permissible to think of Theism as a fight, doubtless subconscious in the main, against the "tyranny of facts," an effort to slip by the sentinel of evidence, an effort to feel the pleasant fruits of sin and yet somehow avoid the pain of actually committing sin--the sin of believing without evidence.

In Theism Mill begins his discussion of his religion of imaginative hope as follows. "It is now to be considered whether the indulgence of

hope, in a region of imagination merely in which there is no prospect of any probable grounds of expectation will ever be obtained, is irrational and ought to be discouraged as a departure from the rational principle of regulating our feelings as well as opinions strictly by evidence (T 78, italics mine). Were we to judge from this passage alone, Mill can't have anything more than a religion of imaginative wish. But both before and following this citation Mill affirms that there is probable evidence for theism! Perhaps this vacillation becomes understandable, to some degree, in light of the well-known passage with which he ends his discussion (T 78-81) of his so-called religion of imaginative hope.

> All these things are said in mere illustration of the principle that in the regulation of the imagination literal truth of facts is not the only thing to be considered. Truth is the province of reason, and it is by the cultivation of the rational faculty that provision is made for its being known always, and thought of as often as is required by duty and the circumstances of human life. But when the reason is strongly cultivated, the imagination may safely follow its own end and do its best to make life pleasant and lovely inside the castle, in reliance on the fortifications raised and maintained by reason round the outward bounds (T 81, italics mine).

Maybe Mill is more interested in this principle as such than in any problems that might attend its application to religion. The passage just cited is, in any case, the essence of the main argument in William James' influential essay "The Will to Believe."[22]

There is one other facet of Mill's religion of imaginative hope-wish that should receive more than the passing attention I have given it. This is the hope of immortality or life after death. Bain probably would not have considered incredulous the supposition that the main motivation behind Mill's concern with supernaturalism was his desire to be with Harriet "in some other world than ours" (U 68). It is certain, at any rate, that the hope of immortality is integral to Mill's hope-religion;

it appears in every discussion of this religion.[23] In Theism Mill takes up this theme immediately following the passage cited at the top of the preceding page.

> On these principles [of the rational regulation of the imagination] it appears to me that the indulgence of hope with regard to the government of the universe and the destiny of man after death, while we recognize as a clear truth that we have no ground for more than a hope, is legitimate and philosophically defensible. The beneficial effect of such a hope is far from trifling. . . . It allays the sense of that irony of nature which is so painfully felt when we see the exertions and sacrifices of a life culminating in the formation of a wise and noble mind, only to disappear from the world when the time has just arrived at which the world seems about to begin reaping the benefit of it (T 81-2, italics mine).

The language Mill uses in the last sentence here resembles the phraseology of his numerous encomiums of Harriet.[24] In this case, however, he may not have had her particularly in mind. Mill's statement is a general one. And we know that Mill's interest in a life hereafter antedates his close relationship with Harriet Taylor. John Sterling, made famous by Carlyle's biography The Life of John Sterling and by Mill's Autobiography, was possibly the only man Mill ever loved as a friend. Just before Sterling died (1844) at thirty-eight, Mill wrote him:

> I have never so much wished for another life as I do for the sake of meeting you in it. The chief reason for desiring it has always seemed to me to be that the curtain may not drop altogether on those one loves and honours. Every analogy which favours the idea of a future life leads one to expect that if such a life there be, death will no further change our character than as it is liable to be changed by any other important event in our existence--and I feel most acutely what it would be to have a firm faith that the world to which one is in progress was enriching itself with those by the loss of whom this world is impoverished (Elliot 1.127).

This exhibits the influence of Butler.[25] But what Mill adumbrates when referring to the world "enriching itself"--that is, the world toward "which one is in progress" as distinguished from "this world"--is stated more plainly by William James:

> I confess that I do not see why the very existence of an invisible world may not in part depend on the personal response which any one of us may make to the religious appeal. God himself, in short, may draw vital strength and increase of very being from our fidelity. For my own part, I do not know what the sweat and blood and tragedy of this life mean, if they mean anything short of this.[26]

It is quite possible Mill may have found some comfort by imagining himself with his beloved Harriet in a life after death. But Harriet was certainly not responsible for Mill's concern with immortality. I think this concern stemmed from what I have spoken of as a native disposition to respond sympathetically to supersensible possible-reals. Mill told Carlyle in 1834 that he (Mill) had "the strongest wish to believe," but that he was "hopeless" as far as ever being able to attain this wish was concerned. Yet he says there is "no reason to believe" the soul may not be immortal. There isn't "sufficient ground for complete assurance that it survives; but if it does there is every reason to think that it continues in another state such as it has made itself here"—in which case it follows that "in all we do here we are working in our hereafter as well as our 'now'" (Elliot 1.91).

I conclude that Mill did not believe in a God or demiurge, and had no real hope in immortality; but he had some desires oriented toward the supernatural. The skepticism he expressed to Carlyle about his ever being able to believe proved prophetic. Mill wanted to believe, but never did. And I think this will to believe is the potency first activated by Bentham toward humanism or a "religious devotion to the welfare of our fellow creatures" (T 86), which was further stimulated by Comte in the same direction. And it was Wordsworth's poetry that animated this same disposition to believe toward "ideal conceptions grander and more beautiful than we see realized in the prose of human life" (U 68).

If we think of Mill as a sentimental theist, we should mean by this only that he felt for God. Mill's stirrings toward the supernatural, though real, were never more than strivings, not arrivings. And the pleasing notion of helping God could have been a habitual ideal reference, which functioned as if he believed or desired with expectation. Nevertheless Mill did not possess the equipment, whatever this be, to grasp formly what he seemed ever to be reaching for. In the same letter to Carlyle in which Mill confesses the "unspeakable good" a "faith" (like he supposes Carlyle to possess) would do for him, Mill concludes that the reason he does not have faith "is not that the logical understanding invading the province of another faculty will not let that other higher faculty do its office--there is wanting something positive in me which exists in others [who have faith]. . . . (Elliot 1.90, italics mine). Mill wanted to be a poet (see Packe 25), but he learned that he did not possess what it takes to be a poet.[27] The case is similar as concerns religion.[28]

Mill did not believe, but he wanted to. He did hope--some.[29] On the basis of this hope, plus his devotion to the general welfare, his own attitude toward religion was, I conclude, theistic humanism. By Mill's theistic humanism I mean (1) conceiving oneself as a colaborer with God in his perennial and ubiquitous fight against evil plus (2) a religious devotion to the general welfare of the human race and all sentient creatures.

But what about Mill's ideal theism? What about the Kantian theme that appears in almost every one of Mill's discussions of religion? (See page 74 above.) This theme of an ideal God appears near the end of Theism: Mill again expresses his conviction that it "cannot be questioned

that the undoubting belief of the real existence of a Being who realizes our own best ideas of perfection, and of our being in the hands of that Being as the ruler of the universe, gives an increase of force to these feelings [aspirations toward goodness] beyond what they can receive from reference to a merely ideal conception" (T 83). Here real theism is very clearly distinguished from ideal theism. I now continue the citation. What follows is very likely autobiographical.

> This particular advantage [afforded by real theism] is not possible for those to enjoy who take a rational view of the nature and amount of the evidence for the existence and attributes of the Creator. On the other hand, they are not encumbered with the moral contradictions which beset every form of religion which aims at justifying in a moral point of view the whole government of the world. They are, therefore, enabled to form a far truer and more consistent conception of ideal goodness than is possible to anyone who thinks it necessary to find ideal goodness in an omnipotent ruler of the world (T 83-4).

The language here is very similar to that Mill uses in his Autobiography when writing on the same subject (see A 32, page 74 above). Mill now suggests (T 84) how, in his mind, real and ideal theism are combined: "The power of the Creator once recognized as limited, there is nothing to disprove the supposition that his goodness is complete and that the ideally perfect character in whose likeness we should wish to form ourselves and to whose supposed approbation we refer our actions may have a real existence in a Being to whom we owe all such good as we enjoy."

On the side of real theism (God is thought of as real), there is nothing to disprove the real existence of what is, admittedly, advantageous to believe in. Hence the imagination may "safely" follow its own ends. Now the mind possesses an "ideal of God": He who is perfection. And the imagination uses this abstract idea for its own practical purposes. The Perfect One is imposed upon, or linked by association with, the hypothetically

real limited God or demiurge. Thus the theism in Mill's theistic humanism has a composite character, the composition consisting of the supposedly real God who is also the "ideal of God." And the same can be said of the humanism in Mill's theistic humanism. The human race is, of course, real, but our religious devotion is to the best or ideal in humanity, not the worst.

With respect to the thought-feeling-action paradigm I have several times mentioned, the tripartite character of Mill's theistic humanism is as follows. On the side of thought, it is theistic finitism. On the side of action, it is humanism in the sense of religious devotion to the general welfare. On the side of emotion, it is hope. Hope is the link between the natural and the supernatural. We hope (wish) that in helping others we are helping God.

One final note on Mill's "religion": he seems, at the very end of Theism, to revert back to Manichaeism, after expressly setting it aside earlier in the essay (T 38). (By Manichaeism I mean the view that God's foil is personal [see page 67 above].)

> The conditions of human existence are highly favorable to the growth of such a feeling [of helping God], in as much as a battle is constantly going on in which the humblest human creature is not incapable of taking some part, between the powers of good and those of evil, and in which every, even the smallest, help to the right side has its value in promoting the very slow and often almost insensible progress by which good is gradually gaining ground from evil, yet gaining it so visibly at considerable intervals as to promise the very distant but not uncertain, final victory of Good (T 86).

This "fight" fits Manichaeism better than theistic finitism. Perhaps we have another confirmation of Russell's opinion that James Mill always reigned "supreme over his son's subconscious" (see page 35 above). For Mill always describes his father's sympathies toward the supernatural as Manichaeism, never theistic finitism. And, indeed, one interpreter

concludes that John Mill ended in "tepid Manichaeanism."[30] But this is not the best interpretation of Mill's philosophical theology. The foregoing passage is very probably another instance of Mill's emotions lethargizing his critical faculties. Theistic finitism is clearly his favored position.

In this chapter I have been concerned mainly with answering the question of what Mill's religious views were, how they should properly be characterized. We have given considerable attention to how Mill worked out, or worked toward, a solution to his own problem of religion. In the next and final chapter, I turn to the solution that Mill advocates generally as a solution to the general problem of religion, that is, the problem of a viable religion for modern man.

NOTES

[1]F. A. Hayek, John Stuart Mill and Hariet Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 16

[2]John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, ed. Oskar Piest (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1957), pp. 38, 39.

[3]Cf. Utilitarianism, pp. 15-16: The utilitarian "standard is not the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether. . . ." (italics mine).

[4]"Whole man" is a phrase Mill seldom, if ever, uses, but I think Mill did come close to taking the whole man into account, as Benthamism surely did not.

[5]"Ontological" is better here, for Mill, than "metaphysical." Mill tended to think of "metaphysical" as a synonymn of "psychological." See E 138, 167-7. For Mill ontology is "'the science conversant about inferences of unknown being from its known manifestations;' things not manifested in consciousness, but legitimately inferrible from those which are" (E 637).

[6]William George Ward, Essays on the Philosophy of Theism, 2 vols. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1884), 1:309. Ward was a Roman Catholic and a disciple of Newman. Ward was important in the Oxford Movement. He edited the Dublin Review (1863-78), and used this organ to criticize Mill's philosophy. Mill had a high respect for him; see Elliot 2.74.

[7]John Morley, "Mr. Mill's Three Essays on Religion," Fortnightly Review 16 n.s., (1874): 634.

[8]This meaning is to be contrasted with several others, such as: knowledge is unattainable, suspended judgment, systematic doubt, disposition towards incredulity, etc.

[9]Taylor is basing this opinion, not upon any particular passage or passages in Theism but upon the general drift of Mill's mind.

[10]Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, trans. Thomas K. Abbott, 6th ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1967), p. 223: The existence of God is a hypothesis when viewed as a principle of explanation, but as "a requirement for practical purposes, it may be called faith." P. 241: "I will that there be a God" and "that my duration be endless; I firmly abide by this, and will not let this faith be taken from me; for in this instance alone my interest . . . inevitably determines my judgment. . . ."

[11]William James, Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910), p. 299.

[12]Cf. William James, The Will to Believe and Other Essays in

Popular Philosophy (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956), pp. 27, 61: Religion "is a case of maybe"; "maybes are the essence of the situation." Cf. James' The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905), p. 506 where he cites with approval the assertion that "God is not known . . . he is used.'"

[13]The reasons why we are not justified will be detailed later in the chapter; see esp. pp. 169-170.

[14]Cf., e.g., F. C. S. Schiller, Riddles of the Sphinx, p. 356: We "can ourselves co-operate with God in hastening the achievement of the world-process." Schiller virtually quotes Mill; see T 86. And see James' Pragmatism, 290 where James depicts God making man his partner in the "co-operative work genuinely to be done" if the world is to be saved.

[15]Cf. GVP 401: "The Supreme Being of former times had really little need of human services."

[16]William James, The Letters of William James, ed. Henry James, 2 vols. (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920), 2:210, 214.

[17]I equate Mill's "religion of imaginative hope" with Mill's "theism of the imagination and feelings."

[18]The italics in this citation are mine. These four underlined words point to the fundamental fact from which flowed Mill's abiding interest in religion.

[19]The specific subject is the "varacity of God; see E 169-70.

[20]Mill concludes at T 10 that there is "nothing to disprove" theistic finitism, but the question he then asks is "is there anything to prove it?"

[21]Cf. Stephen 2.450-1: "Of Mill's [religious] position it must be frankly admitted that his desire for a religious and even supernatural belief is a proof of dissatisfaction with his own position. He felt here, as elsewhere, that something was wanting in his philosophy." This something, Stephen hints (2.452) was "the need for religion."

[22]Notice the word "safely" in the passage above. Mill is afraid of being duped. Cf. James, The Will to Believe, p. 27: "Dupery for dupery, what proof is there that dupery through hope is so much worse than dupery through fear?" I have "the right to choose my own form of risk."

[23]Cf. U 79: I cannot "perceive that the skeptic loses by his skepticism any real and valuable consolation except one: the hope of reunion with those dear to him who have ended their earthly life before him."

[24]See, e.g., A 156-60, 194-9, 203-10, 225; dedications of Political Economy, On Liberty, Enfranchisement of Women, etc.

[25]Cf. Joseph Butler, The Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed

to the Constitution and Course of Nature in The Works of Bishop Butler, ed. J. H. Bernard, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1900), 2:26: Our "posthumous life. . . may not be entirely beginning anew; but going on. Death may . . . answer to our birth. . . . death may immediately, in the natural course of things, put us into a higher and more enlarged state of life, as our birth does. . . ."

[26]William James, "Is Life Worth Living?" in The Will to Believe, p. 61.

[27]Cf. Elliot 1.55 (Mill to Carlyle, 1833): "I am not in the least a poet in any sense, but I can do homage to poetry."

[28]Cf. Basil Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), p. 177: "All through his life, like some ungifted Moses, he [Mill] had tried to strike water out of dry rocks--altruism out of self-love, liberty out of bondage--and now here [in Theism], in culminating frustration, he tries to draw faith out of reason. The rod taps and taps; the rock yields no drop; while--hidden from his short-sighted eyes--the spring bubbles up close at his back."

[29]Cf. ibid., p. 185: At "the end of his long career, Mill gives us back an attenuated vestage of religious hope."

[30]Crane Brinton, Encyc. of the Social Sciences, 15.199.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

In many respects, of course, Mill's solution to his own problem of religion would be the same solution he would advocate as a solution to the general problem of religion. (I have delineated Mill's conception of this problem on page 73 above.) On the other hand there is really quite a difference. Mill's solution, or half-solution, to his own problem of religion was arrived at outside the framework of conventional religion. Bain is doubtless right in saying (JSM 140) that "in everything characteristic of the creed of Christendom, he [Mill] was a thoroughgoing negationist. He admitted neither its truth nor its utility." Yet it is "Christendom," religion as a social phenomenon, Mill wants to improve (see pages 83-5 above). So he must conceive of a good part of his audience as being ordinary believers in the common religion.[1] The problem of religion for these believers, as Mill conceives it, is very different from his own problem. By and large the ordinarily religious already believe; although, in Mill's view, some of their beliefs generate grave problems for them. Still the average man of religion believes in God, whereas the problem of belief proved insoluble for Mill himself.

What both William James and Mill say in effect is: if you already believe, I can help you. I can help you believe "better," as it were. I offer you an improved theology: theistic finitism. This theology is one that will, because not illogical nor immoral, serve your interests better. I can, moreover, show you that you have the logical

right to believe: there is nothing to prove you wrong. There may even be something to prove you are right, says Mill; but not James. But, at all events, I am on your side. But what neither Mill nor James can do is offer effective help as concerns the problem of belief in the existence of God. Perhaps no philosopher, strictly as a philosopher, can be of much help here. But it might be a point worth noting that what we have, in the case of Mill and James, is those without faith trying to help those who have it. And surely Mill might do this. He very probably has done it. On the other hand there is just as surely the possibility that the well-meaning philosopher may "improve" supernatural religion out of existence, since he is admittedly a stranger to its essence (faith). At least the conventionally religious would deem this point highly worth amking. But, not to labor this point, let us see what Mill advocates as a solution to the general problem of religion.

Although Mill probably never subscribed fully to Comte's religion of humanity,[2] he was yet sure the positive mode of thought was on the wave of the future; hence some sort of humanism probably lies ahead for man as scientific thinking becomes increasingly habitual. Also Darwin, for one, had made the future of the design argument problematical. It reasons like these that probably caused Mill to say near the end of Theism:

> To do something during life, on even the humblest scale if nothing more is within reach, toward bringing this consummation ["final victory of God"] ever so little nearer is the most animating and invigorating thought which can inspire a human creature; and that it is destined, with or without supernatural sanctions, to be the religion of the future I cannot entertain a doubt (T 87, italics mine).

And, since Mill seems fairly desultory about supernaturalism here, perhaps the main thrust of his envisioned solution to the general problem of

religion is virtually all on the side of the religion of humanity. Bain was evidently of this opinion: "It has been said by his opponents, with some show of plausibility, that Mill was at bottom a religious man. Setting aside special dogmas, and looking only to the cheering influence of religion on its most favourable side . . . we may call his aspirations and hopes for a bright future to the race, a religion of humanity (JSM 139-40). On this interpretation the struggle between good and evil which Mill speaks of would be between purely human good and evil, pleasure and pain. And Mill's optimistic faith in the "final victory of Good" would be a faith in something like the ultimate triumph of his utilitarianism. This interpretation is not satisfactory. Mill certainly wants to leave room for humanism of the type of Comte's. But Mill ends Theism on the note of <u>supernatural</u> hopes. The last sentence reads: "It appears to me that supernatural hopes, in the degree and kind in which what I have called rational skepticism does not refuse to sanction them, may still contribute not a little to give to this religion its due ascendancy over the human mind" (T 87). By "this religion" Mill means "devotion to the welfare of our fellow creatures" <u>and</u> "helping God" (T 86). And "this religion" is Mill's religion. The religion Mill advocates is neither humanism nor theism, it is theistic humanism.

But to whom does he offer this religion? Hardly to positivists. He offers it theists by and large. But, since our study has made it quite clear that Mill's estimate of the evidence for theism is not high, and that he probably entertained misgivings even more pronounced as concerns the future welfare of theism evidencewise, should we not conclude that Mill thought of the theistic half of his theistic humanism as <u>interim</u> theism? This is James Collins' interpretation.

To Collins Mill is a sort of protopragmatist. Mill regarded theistic finitism as having at least a certain "temporary validity," in Collins' view: "This recognition of a finite God, on an interim basis, constituted his [Mill's] chief ammendment to the Comtean religion of humanity." Collins cites the passage (U 76) in which Mill says that a "virtuous human being assumes in this theory [theistic finitism] the exalted character of a fellow laborer with the Highest, a fellow combatant in the great strife." Collins then remarks:

> It is by this purely pragmatic measure, in final analysis, that Mill justifies the retention of imaginative hope in God. It accustoms men to the vocation of working with others for the good of humanity. Hope in the finite God has no other pragmatic meaning than dedication to the needs of men, and hence it can be held, alongside a humanistic positivism, until social conditions permit the discarding of any reference beyond the totality of man-in-the-cosmos. . . . the theistic hope will pass away, [but] the positivist hope will be transformed into a firmly established, socially organized belief.[3]

There is considerable in Mill's writings that tends to support an interpretation such as this one. Take, for example, the following excerpt from a letter Mill wrote Bain in 1859: "On that ["the question of religion"], certainly, I am not anxious to bring over any but really superior intellects and characters to the whole of my own opinions--in the case of all others I would much rather, as things now are, try to improve their religion than to destroy it" (Elliot 1.223). And, in an account of a conversation he had with Mill a month before the latter's death, John Morley says that Mill "Thinks theism useful as a provisional belief, because people will identify serviceable ministry to men with service to God. Thinks we cannot with any sort of precision define what will be the next religion, but anticipates that it will undoubtedly rest upon the solidarity of mankind, as Comte said."[4] This is Collins' interpretation quite precisely. And I have already indicated that Bain

would tend to agree with such an interpretation (see top of page 178).

But Bain also says (JSM 134) that Mill, in Theism, united "a destructive and a constructive Theism." The destructive theism would be what Mill said against theistic absoltism; the constructive, theistic finitism. Bain also speaks of Mill trying to "set up a Deity that would replace, in the hearts of men [italics mine], the one that he undertook to destroy" (JSM 135), and soon after seens to class Mill as a "modern sentimental" theist. Also John Morley, when he read Theism--which Mill had written over three years before he visited Morley in April of 1873--reacted in a radically different manner from his response to Mill's conversation at the time of this visit. Morley was "puzzled": "I am not sure that Mill does not leave them [the orthodox] as much as they want."[5] This response from one of Mill's very close friends and followers suggests why Bain says:

> Perhaps, with one exception [probably Mill's Subjection of Women] the most signal example of his courage was the composition of the Essay on Theism. It was a more extraordinary revelation of departure from opinions that he had been known to maintain, than had been his Bentham and Coleridge articles; and, while it might be grateful to some of his friends and the opposite to others, it was certainly hard to reconcile with his former self (JSM 158).

I am not convinced Collins' "interim theism" is the best interpretation of Mill's general religious position. This puts Mill's sympathies essentially all on the side of humanistic positivism. I am not sure Mill envisioned a time when theistic hope would entirely pass away. And, if he did envision such a time, I am not sure (at the time he wrote Theism anyway) he would have considered this the best of all possible developments. I think the notion of helping God was one he felt he could recommend to anyone, at any time, who needs it. It is not clear that Mill was so optimistic about humanistic positivism as to foresee its

complete ascendency over the human mind. What Mill says (T 87) is that he is convinced what I have called theistic humanism is destined to attain ascendency over the human mind. Hence I maintain that what Mill advocates as a solution to the general problem of religion is best designated by the term theistic humanism. If this term be objected to as not conforming to present-day usage, I reply that it is less than self-evident that secular or naturalist humanists should legislate as to what the term humanism should mean. Men like Jacques Maritain,[6] for instance, have been heard in most of the leading universities in the West. These men have argued that Christian humanism is the meaningful humanism. If Christian humanism has an intelligible meaning to some, so can theistic humanism.

With respect to the thought-feeling-action troika (mentioned on page 151 and elsewhere in this study), the religion Mill advocates is as follows. On the side of thought, he offers the improving doctrine of theistic finitism. He offers this to the churches, to people who believe and to people troubled with the age-old problem of evil. On the side of feelings he, not having a firm religious faith, does the best he can. He offers "elevated" feelings to servants of man's welfare and helpers of the hoped-for God. And, to those who already believe, he assures them they have a right to believe--in theistic finitism. On the moral side he offers humanism, a humanism without divine sanctions or a humanism with an ideal god.[7] I think Mill's position, both as to what he believed or was sympathetic toward and what he advocated, was fairly balanced between the supernatural or transcendental and the positivistic or moral.

NOTES

[1]Cf. T 85: It "remains a possibility that Christ actually was what he supposed himself to be--not God . . . but a man charged with a special, express, and unique commission from God to lead mankind to truth and virtue. . . ."

[2]Cf. James Collins, God in Modern Philosophy (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1959), p. 288: Mill disagreed with Comte that the "present condition of intellectual evidence overwhelmingly required one to reject God. . . ."

[3]Ibid., pp. 297-8.

[4]F. W. Hirst, Early Life and Letters of John Morley, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1927), 1:237.

[5]John Morley, "Mr. Mill's Three Essays on Religion," Fortnightly Review 17 n.s. (1875): 634.

[6]See, e.g., Maritain's chapter "Christian Humanism" in his The Range of Reason (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. 185-199.

[7]Cf. Wilfrid Ward, Men and Matters (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1914), p. 171: Mill's "ideal Theism" was a "belief in the duty of conforming one's actions to a rule approved of by an ideal God whose actual existence was at best uncertain."

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