

THE INFLUENCE OF MILL'S EDUCATION  
AND  
EXPERIENCE ON HIS PHILOSOPHY

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John Stuart Mill was a political philosopher and has been acclaimed by many as an architect of our present day democratic societies. At an early age, he began a rigorous and extensive program of study prescribed by his father which prepared him for his lifetime ambition. His knowledge of logic, the Greek philosophers and his close association with the Benthamite School of his father, all combined, prepared him for the future.

Certainly, he was a progressive thinker for his time. He proposed many radical changes of government. Compulsory education, prohibition of improvident marriages, limitation on hours of labor and women's suffrage are only a few of the reforms which Mill had recommended for society. Using the basic premise of the Utilitarian School, "The greatest happiness for the greatest number," he pursued a singular quest for reform in the Victorian Parliament. Relentless in his pursuit of his democratic theories, his education enabled him to form logical arguments with syllogistic proofs in support of his basic premise.

Ironically, the very education which was a basic tool in shaping his philosophy was also, at times, a hindrance to him. His isolated childhood and regimented system of education combined to make him a very analytical thinker, but deprived him of his own basic humanity. He was never able to understand his own emotions or, for that matter, the emotions of others. Much of this caused an incon-

sistency between his structured philosophical doctrines and his erratic personal life. His inconsistency of life and doctrine is a charge that has been leveled at Mill for many years. He was a logical thinker, yet his basic premise of Utilitarianism was based on faulty logic inherited from his predecessors. Even his doctrine, itself, was plagued by inconsistencies and problems of implementation. His desire for liberty and his belief in governmental structure clashed continuously, and the logical proofs to which he subjected his theories were far from accurate. Surveying his career, one finds that he was a welcomed innovator for his times and that he provided many ideas for the 20th century democracies of the world, but one must also remember the imperfections in his work when viewing his philosophy.