

EARLY MODERN
PHILOSOPHER

JOHN STUART MILL

BRITISH PHILOSOPHER
AND ECONOMIST

QUICK FACTS

Born: May 20, 1806 London, England

Died: May 8, 1873 (aged 66) Avignon, France

Notable Family Members:

James Mill – Father

Harriet Burrow – Mother

Harriet Taylor Mill – Wife

Subjects of Study:

Induction and Utilitarianism

Notable Works:

A System of Logic, Autobiography, Considerations on Representative Government, Principles of Political Economy, The Subjection of Women, etc

EARLY LIFE AND CAREER

In his eighth year he had read in the original Greek Aesop's Fables, Xenophon's Anabasis, and the whole of the historian Herodotus. He had also read a great deal of history in English and began to teach the younger children of the family.

By the age of 10 could read Plato and Athenian statesman Demosthenes. About the age of 12, he began a thorough study of Scholastic logic, at the same time reading Aristotle's logical treatises in the original.

From May 1820 until July 1821, Mill was in France with the family of Sir Samuel Bentham. On his return in 1821 he added to his work the study of psychology and of Roman law, which he read with John Austin.

In 1823, when he had just completed his 17th year, he entered the examiner's office of the India House. After a short probation he was promoted in 1828 to assistant examiner. For 20 years, from 1836 to 1856, Mill had charge of the British East India Company's relations with the Indian states, and in 1856 he became chief of the examiner's office.

Soon after, in 1822–23, Mill established among a few friends the Utilitarian Society, taking the word, as he tells us, from Annals of the Parish, a novel of Scottish country life by John Galt. Another outlet was opened up for him (April 1824) with the founding of the Westminster Review, which was the organ of the philosophical radicals. In 1825 he began work on an edition of Bentham's Rationale of Judicial Evidence (5 vol., 1827).

HIS INFLUENCE

Mill was a person of extreme simplicity in his mode of life. The influence that his works exercised upon contemporary English thought can scarcely be overestimated. Mill's name continually crops up in philosophical discussions. This is partly due to the fact that Mill offers a body of doctrine and a set of technical terms on many subjects that have proved extremely useful especially in philosophy.

"ASK YOURSELF
WHETHER YOU ARE
HAPPY, AND YOU
CEASE TO BE SO"



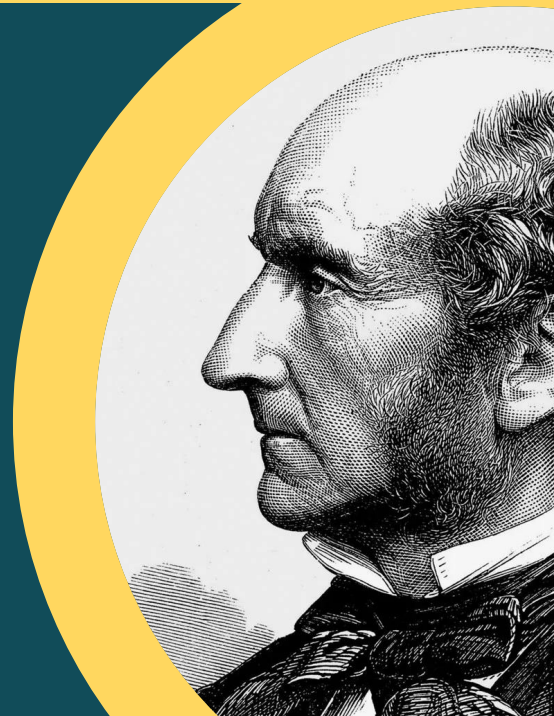
UTILITARIANISM

This is one of his famous ideologies. Mill believed in the philosophy of utilitarianism, which he would describe as the principle that holds "that actions are right in the proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness". Utilitarianism is a **consequentialist ethical theory**, meaning that it holds that acts are justified insofar as they produce a desirable outcome. The overarching goal of utilitarianism—the ideal consequence—is to achieve the "greatest good for the greatest number as the end result of human action."

In Utilitarianism, Mill states that "HAPPINESS is the sole end of human action".

Utilitarianism is thought of by some of its activists to be a more developed and overarching ethical theory of Immanuel Kant's belief in goodwill, and not just some default cognitive process of humans. **By this logic the only valid way to discern what is the proper reason would be to view the consequences of any action and weigh the good and the bad, even if on the surface, the ethical reasoning seems to indicate a different train of thought.**

"THE UTILITARIAN DOCTRINE IS, THAT HAPPINESS IS DESIRABLE, AND THE ONLY THING DESIRABLE, AS AN END; ALL OTHER THINGS BEING ONLY DESIRABLE AS MEAN TO THAT END."



PUBLIC LIFE AND WRITING

He was educated exclusively and exhaustively by his father. In 1823 he cofounded the Utilitarian Society with Jeremy Bentham. In 1826 he and Bentham cofounded London University. From 1828 to 1856 he was an assistant examiner in India House, where from 1836 he was in charge of the East India Company's relations with the Indian states. In the 1840s he published his great systematic works in logic and political economy, chiefly *A System of Logic* (2 vol., 1843) and *Principles of Political Economy* (2 vol., 1848). As head of the examiner's office in India House from 1856 to 1858 he wrote a defense of the company's government of India when the transfer of its powers was proposed. In 1859 he published *On Liberty*, a trenchant defense of individual freedom. **His Utilitarianism (1863) is a closely reasoned attempt to answer objections to his ethical theory and to address misconceptions about it; he was especially insistent that "utility"**. In 1869 he published *The Subjection of Women* (written 1861), now the classical theoretical statement of the case for woman suffrage.