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INDUCTION, DEDUCTION, AND JAMES MILL'S "GOVERNMENT"*

ANTIS LOIZIDES
Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Cyprus
E-mail: loizides.antis@ucy.ac.cy

INTRODUCTION

In his biography of James Mill, Alexander Bain made a number of claims with regard to Mill's essay "Government" (1820). First, the essay was a catalyst in the movement for reform, making "in all probability ... our political history very different from what it might otherwise have been." Second, the essay provided a unique opportunity for Mill to expound on "the whole theory of Government in a compact shape." Third, as far as his "Logic of Politics" was concerned, Mill depended on the deductive method—the method of geometry—having quickly discarded the applicability of inductive logic in politics.[1] In this article, I take issue with the last claim.[2]

In short, I explore James Mill's background in logic and in rhetoric, paying particular attention to Dugald Stewart, Plato, and Aristotle, to argue that the charges against Mill's method in the essay "Government" may have been ultimately beside the point. The use of demonstration in "Government" was not intended to delineate a complete science of politics. In this "didactic" essay, Mill used rhetorical demonstration to disarm the critics of reform without giving it

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1 Alexander Bain, *James Mill: A Biography* (London, 1882), 215–17.

2 For an examination of the first claim see William Thomas, "The 'Essay on Government' and the Movement for Reform," *Historical Journal*, 12/2 (1969), 249–84; and Thomas , *The Philosophic Radicals: Nine Studies in Theory and Practice 1817–1841* (Oxford, 1979), chap. 3. For the second see Robert A. Fenn, *James Mill's Political Thought* (New York, 1987), chap. 4; Kristopher Grint, "James Mill's Commonplace Books and Their Intellectual Context, 1773–1836" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Sussex, 2013), chap. 2.

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"the appearance of an essay on Reform of Parliament."[3] Not only was this essay a skilful exercise in dissimulation, as Robert A. Fenn and Kristopher Grint have argued; but also the use of enthymematic reasoning in "Government" suggests that Mill counted on "a communicative interaction" with his audience rather than discounting it beforehand.

Thomas Babington Macaulay's reading of Mill's "Government" has been greatly influential, having set the terms of its examination. Commentators, as William Thomas has put it, have been reading "their Mill in Macaulay's critique rather than the original."[4] In his "master-piece of demonstration"—the irony was unmistakable—not only had James Mill "synthetically deduced" the "whole science of Politics," Macaulay argued, from few laws of human nature; but also these laws lacked sufficient inductive foundation (i.e. "an enlarged collection of facts").[5] Macaulay, championing the "Method of Induction," did not seem to deny the possibility of a science of politics, but he did seem to deny the possibility of it being established with Mill's method.[6]

Macaulay managed to shift the attention from Mill's specific political argument to the suitableness of the deductive, a priori method for the study of politics in general. For example, John Stuart Mill, Alexander Bain, and Henry Sidgwick took for granted that James Mill employed the deductive method. According to Bain, John Stuart Mill pinpointed a serious methodological error on the part of his father: in political analysis "no trustworthy conclusions can be drawn without at least a concurrence" of the deductive and the inductive method. Hence John Stuart Mill came to consider his father's method in "Government" to be wholly inappropriate—being deficient both in the discovery of causes of phenomena and in inductive justification of its claims. In short, James Mill's essay on government, according to John Stuart, employed a deductive method modelled after "pure geometry"—it was "purely ratiocinative." To this effect, John Mill argued, "not being a science of causation at all," the method of geometry did "not require or admit of any summing-up of effects." For this reason, the younger Mill argued that the geometrical method of the "interest-philosophy of the Bentham school" had

3 D. Ricardo to J. Mill, 27 July 1820, in *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, ed. P. Sraffa, 11 vols. (Indianapolis, 2004; first published 1951–77), 8: 211. See also D. Ricardo to J. Mill, 30 Aug. 1823, in ibid., 9: 375; J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 13 Nov. 1820, in ibid., 8: 291.

4 Thomas, "Essay on Government," 250.

5 Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Mill's Essay on Government: Utilitarian Logic and Politics," *Edinburgh Review*, 49/97 (1828), 159–89, at 160, 162. Unless otherwise stated, references to Mill's "Government" are to the edition used in *James Mill's Political Writings*, ed. T. Ball (Cambridge, 1992), 1–42.

6 See e.g. Macaulay, "Mill on Government," 168, 187. See further Jack Lively and John Rees, "Introduction," in John Rees Lively, *Utilitarian Logic and Politics* (Oxford, 1978), 1–51.

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to give way to an analytical, inductive and "historical," i.e. "inverse deductive," method in the study of complex political phenomena.[7]

James Mill's deductive reasoning, converting "dreams into demonstrations,"[8] has given rise to a second, related criticism: it has been seen as providing evidence of dogmatism. The elder Mill, Nadia Urbinati has argued, was a "dogmatic polemicist and expert in the use of diatribe." Focused on "propagating a creed and attacking antagonists," Mill directed his intellectual weapons towards errors, opinions and prejudices; he was engaged in a "project of indoctrination." For Benthamite radicals, Urbinati argues, victory was the sole aim of discussion, not "a communicative interaction among individuals who are well disposed to understand each other and want to be convinced by reason."[9] Mill's caricature as "the rationalist, the maker of syllogisms, the geometrician,"[10] persists to this day.

The "theory" of "Government" is thus typically viewed as a narrow, dogmatic and ultimately unscientific theory of utilitarian politics. However, for one, John Stuart Mill wondered, how could his father make so "large allowance in practice for considerations which seemed to have no place in his theory"?[11] For another, commentators agree that James Mill was "deliberatively or tactically ambiguous" with his aims in the said essay, even though some do doubt his radical credentials.[12] How could James Mill demonstrate the science of politics and remain tactically ambiguous at the same time? Thus I try to show that Mill's method calls for a reconsideration.

In the second section, I examine the claim that the deductive cast of "Government" was due to a "distrust" on Mill's part towards induction *tout court*. I argue that Mill thought induction to be an essential part of any theory. First, I show that he perceived the distinction between theory and experience as a false dichotomy—theory needed to be based on experience and experience to be informed by theory. Then, I distinguish between scientific induction

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7 Bain, *James Mill*, 217. See John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (1873), *Collected Works of J. S. Mill*, gen. ed. J. M. Robson, 33 vols. (Toronto, 1963–91), 1: 211, 167–9 (hereafter *CW*, followed by volume and page number); J. S. Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive* (1843), *CW*, 8: 889–94 (see further *Logic*, Book 6, chaps. 7–11). See also Henry Sidgwick, *The Elements of Politics*, 4th edn (London, 1919; first published 1891), 11, 11 n.

8 See F. D. Maurice, *Eustace Conway: A Novel*, 3 vols. (London, 1834), 1: 84.

9 Nadia Urbinati, "John Stuart Mill, Romantics' Socrates and the Public Role of the Intellectual," in K. N. Demetriou and A. Loizides, eds., *John Stuart Mill: A British Socrates* (Basingstoke, 2013), 49–74, at 53–4, 57–8.

10 See Mary P. Mack, *Jeremy Bentham: An Odyssey of Ideas* (London, 1962), 19.

11 J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, 211.

12 Fenn, *Mill's Political Thought*, 142. For a summary of interpretations of Mill's "Government" see Grint, "Mill's Commonplace Books," chap. 2.

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and empirical induction; I argue that Mill did not deviate from established practice in rejecting the latter type of induction. For this reason, I turn to Mill's views on proper philosophical method through the distinction between the "Philosopher" and the "Empiric" as regards political analysis. I suggest that Mill was familiar with and actually employed Dugald Stewart's "logic of induction," i.e. analysis and synthesis, in his manuscript writings on government. But then a question presents itself: why was Mill's "Government" devoid of "analysis"?

To answer this question, in the third section I discuss "synthesis" as the method both of instruction and of persuasion. I argue that Mill's background in rhetoric offers an opening in revisiting Mill's use of the deductive method in "Government." First, I try to show that Mill associated empirical induction with the use of induction in rhetorical arguments; he thought rhetorical induction to be a poor choice as a "scheme of persuasion." After showing that Mill once again followed established practice by using synthesis as the method of instruction, I argue that coming from the perspective of rhetoric allows us to differentiate between apodictic syllogism (demonstration) and rhetorical syllogism (enthymeme). I do not doubt that Mill's "Government" did indeed employ demonstration, but I try to show that it was rhetorical demonstration; the missing "proofs" and implicit warrants of Mill's conclusions were already accounted for in the views of his intended audience.

THE METHOD OF PHILOSOPHY: ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS

William Thomas has argued that James Mill held to deductively derived political views "with a tenacity which avoided and abbreviated empirical enquiry." The elder Mill's cast of mind, Thomas added, "led him to trust to rules and principles and not to empirical evidence," consistently preferring "the schematic and dogmatic to the empirical and inductive."[13] Likewise, focusing on the section on "Speculation & Practice" from Mill's Commonplace Books, Kris Grint has recently argued that "the inductive approach ... was anathema to Mill." Examining Mill's intellectual and political context, Grint suggests that Mill's views on induction may have represented a break from the Scottish Enlightenment, though he concedes that no conclusion can be drawn safely.[14] However, as I try to show, care should be taken in distinguishing between scientific and empirical induction. Mill's criticism of the latter takes him closer to, rather than farther away from, his Scottish Enlightenment heritage.

[13] William Thomas, "James Mill's Politics: A Rejoinder," *Historical Journal*, 14/4 (1971), 735–50, at 750.

[14] Grint, "Mill's Commonplace Books," 73, 92–3.

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Speculation versus practice: a false dichotomy

In the debate on parliamentary reform, thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham and James Mill were mocked by the opponents of reform as "theorists." For example, in his reply to Francis Burdett's motion for parliamentary reform on 2 June 1818, Henry Brougham remarked that Bentham's *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* (1817) "had shown that he had dealt more with books than with men."[15] Likewise, in his review of Bentham's book, James Mackintosh noted that the radicals had in their midst "ingenious and enlightened men, though none indeed, who have had political experience." Mackintosh supposedly waived "all advantage, which may be supposed to be possessed by those who defend established principles against untried projects," since "experience" alone provided the answer to the question of reform.[16] An earlier review of Bentham's book accused Bentham of trying to "reform our constitution by foreign rules, rules derived *à priori*, rules of general theory, and where the means have an argumentative and philosophical fitness to their ends" and thus proceeded "in an order reverse of that by which . . . learning and science have been promoted."[17]

The "old quarrel" between knowledge geared for theory and knowledge geared for practice goes back to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.[18] Briefly, Aristotle argued that in dealing with formed opinions (*EN* 1140b27), practical wisdom is not "concerned with universals only—it must also recognize the particulars" since "practice is concerned with particulars. This is why some who do not know, and especially those who have experience, are more practical than others who know" (*EN* 1141b8–19). In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle drove this last point home, arguing that "with a view to action, experience seems in no respect inferior to art, and men of experience succeed even better than those who have theory without experience" (*M* 981a12–14).[19] As Stephen Toulmin puts the point, "practitioners

[15] Jeremy Bentham, *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* (London, 1817); Thomas Curson Hansard, ed. *The Parliamentary Debates. Volume XXXVIII; 13 April–10 June 1818* (London, 1820), 1164.

[16] [James Mackintosh], "Universal Suffrage," *Edinburgh Review*, 31/61 (1818), 165–203, at 173–4. See also [James Mackintosh], "Parliamentary Reform," *Edinburgh Review*, 34/68 (1820), 461–501, at 466.

[17] [Anon.], "Parliamentary Reform," *British Review and London Critical Journal*, 11/22 (1818), 287–327, at 314–15. See also [Anon.], "Bentham's Plan of Parliamentary Reform," *Quarterly Review*, 18/35 (1817), 128–35, at 128–30; [Anon.], "Bentham's Parliamentary Reform," *Critical Review or Annals of Literature*, 5/6 (1817), 551–60, at 551, 556–7, 560.

[18] See Edmund Burke, "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents" (1770), in *Select Works of Edmund Burke*, ed. Francis Caravan, 4 vols. (Indianapolis, 1999), 1: 69–156, at 76.

[19] Translation is by W. D. Ross. Drawing on Polus (Plato, *Gorgias* 448c, 462b–c), Aristotle admitted that rules of arts are created through experience, i.e. a correct induction of particulars (*M* 981a1–5).

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do not see how … theories increase our confidence in untying the knots in which our lives enmesh us."[20]

For James Mill, however, the "theoretical man" and "the practical man" differ only in that "the theoretical man generalizes slowly and cautiously; the practical man rashly"; that is, the former "draws his general rules from a full induction of particular cases," whereas the latter "generalizes his own individual case, and makes it a rule for all others."[21] In 1805, Mill had argued that a theory can be founded on either hypothesis or induction; the former, "not drawn from experiment and observation," could not "bear an exact and enlightened analysis."[22] The proper meaning of theory, for Mill, was "*viewing or observing, and correctly recording the matters observed*,"[23] both in the attempt to account for a natural phenomenon and, especially, to guide conduct.[24] Theory referred to "the right ordering of the instances of the past" (i.e. the results of experience) and the subtraction of "just inferences" from history for "the guidance of the future." Unguided by theory, practice generalized individual cases with a "rude glance," a rash or even accidental "inference from one particular case for the guidance of another." Such practice was "[r]andom imitation," "empiricism," "mere mechanism; and had as well be done by inanimate matter."[25] Theory systematized experience in such a way as to lead to good practical rules. According to Mill, since general principles were based on experience, "To recommend the separation of practice from theory is, therefore, simply, to recommend bad practice."[26]

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[20] Stephen Toulmin, *Return to Reason* (Cambridge, 2001), 123.

[21] James Mill, Commonplace Books (hereafter CPB), 5 vols., ed. Robert A. Fenn (vols. 1–4, London Library; vol. 5, LSE Library Archives (Mill–Taylor Collection)), 1: 108v (vols. 1–4, ed. R. A. Fenn and K. Grint, can be accessed at www.intellectualhistory.net/mill).

[22] James Mill, trans. and ed., *Charles Villiers: An Essay on the Spirit and Influence of the Reformation of Luther* (London, 1805), 318 n; cf. [James Mill], "Scott's Elements of Intellectual Philosophy," *Literary Journal*, 2nd series, 1/6 (1806), 561–80, at 561–2. For the distinction see Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, 2 vols., in *Collected Works of Dugald Stewart*, ed. W. Hamilton, 11 vols. (Edinburgh, 1854), 2: 403 (cf. 2: 417).

[23] James Mill, *Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind (1829)*, ed. J. S. Mill, with notes by A. Bain, A. Findlater, G. Grote, 2nd edn, 2 vols. (London, 1878), 2: 402–3, original emphasis.

[24] [James Mill], "Theory and Practice," *London Review*, 3/1 (1836), 223–34, at 227. I follow R. A. Fenn, *James Mill's Political Thought* (Appendix II) in the identification of James Mill's anonymous writings.

[25] Mill, CPB, 1: 106v, 107r, 112r–113v. See also Mill, CPB, 1: 108v, 109r, 114v; 5: 125.

[26] [James Mill], "Belsham's Elements of the Philosophy of the Mind," *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 12/47 (1802), 1–13, at 1–2; [James Mill], "Forsyth's Principles of Moral Science," *Literary Journal*, 5/4 (1805), 381–92, at 383; [James Mill], "Education" (1819), in *Mill, Essays* (London,

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What is most important is that Mill was adverting to a well-known distinction drawn by Dugald Stewart. In 1821 Mill admitted that he owed Stewart the "taste for the studies which have formed my favourite pursuits, and which will be so till the end of my life."[27] His former teacher, Mill claimed reviewing Stewart's *Elements of the Philosophy of Human Mind* (1792–1827), had instructively—and originally—illustrated "the purposes to which the powers of abstraction and generalization are subservient," as well as "the errors to which we are liable in speculation and the conduct of affairs, in consequence of a rash application of general principles."[28] Stewart had brought attention to "two sets of political reasoners": the first "consider the actual institutions of mankind as the only safe foundation for our conclusions, and think every plan of legislation chimerical, which is not copied from one which has already been realized." In contrast, the second "apprehend that, in many cases, we may reason safely *a priori* from the known principles of human nature combined with the particular circumstances of the times." Stewart went on to argue that although the latter "are accused of trusting to theory unsupported by experience ... it ought to be remembered, that the political theorist, if he proceeds cautiously and philosophically, founds his conclusions ultimately on experience, no less than the political empiric."[29]

Scientific and unscientific induction

The difference between "empiricism" and "philosophy," according to James Mill, was well represented by Bacon, who warned against the danger of the "mind's premature and precipitate haste, and its leaping or flying to general statements and the principles of things."[30] Mill had isolated a passage in his copy of one of John Milton's logical treatises—drawing on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* arguing that the senses, observation, induction and experience, all play their part in reaching

1825), 5, 25, 34. See also [James Mill], "Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, by Dugald Stewart," *British Review and London Critical Journal*, 6/11 (1815), 170–200, at 184, 193; [James Mill], "Whether Political Economy Is Useful," *London Review*, 2/4 (1836), 553–71, at 556, 561–2; [James Mill], "Theory and Practice," *London Review*, 3/1 (1836), 223–34. See also Fenn, *James Mill's Political Thought*, 58–9, 97–9, 128. For a discussion of the relevant parts of Mill's MS see Grint, "Mill's Commonplace Books," chap. 4 (section 5).

27 J. Mill to M. Napier, 10 July 1821, in Macvie Napier Jr., ed., *Selection from the Correspondence of the Late Macvey Napier* (London, 1879), 27.

28 Mill, "Stewart's Elements," 181.

29 Stewart, *Elements,* in *Collected Works*, 2: 220. Also see G. Campbell's discussion on "empirics" and "visionaries" in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, new ed. (New York, 1868; first published 1776), 15.

30 Mill, CPB, 1: 106v. See Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, 2nd edn (Amsterdam, 1660), 57–8; Bacon, *New Organon*, ed. L. Jardine and M. Silverthorne (Cambridge, 2000), 52, aphorism 64).

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the general rules of *technai*. "Experience" could very well provide a test for the general rules drawn from an induction from particulars.[31] The issue was thus not whether induction had any part to play in the formation of rules. Rather it had to do with sufficient inductive foundation for universals, either general rules of action or laws of human nature. For example, on a number of occasions Mill noted in his *History of British India* (1818) that he was attempting to reach a general conclusion after surveying a number of instances, i.e. drawing on an "induction of particulars."[32] Likewise, in his earlier writings, Mill praised writers who inductively traced causes and used the laws established to "throw no little light upon the nature of human society."[33]

In his *History*, Mill accused Edmund Burke of habitually drawing "a general rule from the induction of a small and insufficient number of particulars."[34] On one hand, this habit exhibited by Burke brought to the surface a rather "curious law of human nature." On the other hand, as we shall see in the third section, Burke's report on the trial of Warren Hastings highlighted the use of inductive reasoning in attempts to influence public affairs (in Burke's case through a criticism of legislation). Both seem to provide insights into Mill's "distrust" of induction.

In his review of Stewart's *Elements*, James Mill pointed to the great need in logic for "an accurate map of the inductive process" and "a complete system of rules, as complete, for example, as those which Aristotle provided for the business of syllogistic reasoning." Such a "map" would direct "the inquirer in the great business of interpreting nature ... adding to the stock of human instruments and powers."[35] There was an urgent need for such a "map," especially when the "highest abstractions are not the last result of mental culture," but

> some of our most general and comprehensive notions are formed at that very early period, when the mind, with little discriminating power, is apt to lump together things which have but few points of resemblance; and that we break down these genera into species

[31] John Milton, *Artis Logicae Plenior Institutio, ad Petri Rami Methodum concinnata,* in *The Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. C. Symmonds, 7 vols. (London, 1806), 6: 198.

[32] E.g. James Mill, *History of British India*, 3rd edn, 6 vols. (London, 1826; first published 1818), 2: 135–6, 181.

[33] [James Mill], "Malthus's Essay on the Principles of Population," *Literary Journal*, 2/10 (1803), 577–87, at 578–80. See also e.g. [James Mill], "Newenham's Historical Inquiry into the Population of Ireland," *Literary Journal*, 5/3 (1805), 249–58, at 255; [James Mill], "Tooke's Diversions of Purley," *Literary Journal*, 2nd series, 1/1 (1806), 1–16, at 10; [James Mill], "Gentz on the Political Balance of Europe," *Literary Journal*, 2nd series, 2/3 (1806), 286–300, at 298. See further Neil de Marchi, "The Case for James Mill," in A. W. Coats, ed., *Methodological Controversy in Economics* (London, 1983), 155–84, at 160–61.

[34] Mill, *History*, 5: 246.

[35] Mill, "Stewart's Elements," 193; see also Mill, "Scott's Elements," 578.

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more and more minute in proportion as our knowledge becomes more extensive, more particular, and precise.[36]

Induction *per enumerationem simplicem* was thus not without problems. In 1804, Mill via Bacon argued that half of "popular errors" were due to fallacious argument from experience;[37] Mill noted the relevant text in his copy of Bacon's *Novum Organum*:

> For the induction which proceeds by simple enumeration is a childish thing, its conclusions are precarious, and it is exposed to the danger of the contrary instance; it normally bases its judgement on fewer instances than is appropriate, and merely on available instances. But the induction which will be useful for the discovery and proof of sciences and arts should separate out a nature, by appropriate rejections and exclusions; and then, after as many negatives as are required, conclude on the affirmatives. This has not yet been done, nor even certainly tried except only by Plato, who certainly makes use of this form of induction to some extent in settling on definitions and ideas.[38]

Mill alluded to this passage in an 1804 defence of the method of "Newton, Bacon, and all their followers" against Thomas Taylor's remarks in his edition of Plato's works.[39]

Those who practice "philosophic induction," Mill scribbled down in his Commonplace Books, go through particulars, "with a mind that pervades; that separates, and combines; that goes beyond, in short, to something more extensive and noble"; only then is there "sufficient evidence of a law."[40] For Mill, the proper distinction was thus not between theory and experience, but between philosophical induction and empirical induction. In a section on fallacies in his Commonplace Books, Mill referred to Stewart's distinction between philosophical criticism and experimental criticism, criticism based

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36 Mill, *History*, 2: 70. It seems that James Mill found this idea in Condillac (Mill, CPB, 1: 85). The idea was suggested by Bacon and acknowledged by Thomas Brown (cited in Mill, *Analysis*, 1: 233). See also Stewart, *Elements*, in *Collected Works*, 3: 245. But the implications of this idea for scientific method were only drawn out by John Stuart Mill's *A System of Logic* (1843). In short, the younger Mill tried to show that the uniformities existing among phenomena, which people experience, "force themselves upon involuntary recognition." Philosophers or scientists eventually investigate those phenomena, thereby revealing limits to these spontaneous generalizations or showing their truth to be contingent upon other, previously unobserved, circumstances. John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, in *CW*, 7: 312, 318–19.

37 [James Mill], "Anderson on the Scarcity of Grain," *Literary Journal*, 4/4 (1804), 385–402, at 386–7.

38 Bacon, *Novum Organum*, 113–4; Bacon, *New Organon*, 83–4.

39 [James Mill], "Taylor's Translation of Plato," *Literary Journal*, 3/8 and 3/10 (1804), 449–61 and 577–89, at 460–1.

40 Mill, CPB, 1: 112v, 114v.

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on "induction, properly so called," and criticism based on "statements of an empirical and unenlightened experience" (i.e. "accumulation of parallel passages and of critical authorities"), to add to his stock of arguments against the opponents of "theory."[41] For Stewart, the "principles which we obtain from an examination of the human constitution, and of the general laws which regulate the course of human affairs," offer a "much surer foundation" for political reasoning, as these principles are "the result of a much more extensive induction than any of the inferences that can be drawn from the history of actual establishments."[42]

Political theory and the method of analysis and synthesis

In his private notes on fallacies, Mill contrasted Stewart's two sets of political reasoners, the "Philosopher" and the "Empiric," as regards their treatment of the machinery of government. According to Mill, "when they [i.e. the practitioners] tell us we have experience of the machine in the lump, we tell them that this is a gross, and ignorant experience, which yields no salutary guidance; no clear ideas; no lamp to the steps." In contrast to the Empiric's, Mill argued, the Philosopher's experience "accompanies analysis; to the very termination of its progress; it is experience not of the gross lump, in its gross results, but of the elementary powers of which it is composed, which is the really useful experience—the experience which affords a masterly direction, which never misleads." Such analysis offers a "clear and distinct knowledge" of the "powers, one by one, of which the agency of this machine consisted," of all "the various combinations, in which they were calculated to act." This allows the Philosopher to show that "there were in his machine certain powers which counteracted the rest; and that if these were taken away, and others put in their place, the good effects in which ... [the Empiric] now gloried, would be greatly increased."[43] The philosopher does not apply experience "in the gross to the gross, in which mode, exactness is impossible," but "in the elements to the elements":

> It is not by looking at a steam-engine in the gross, that a man becomes qualified to judge of the action of other machines. It is by contemplating its action in its elements, taking its parts one by one, considering first the properties of each, and then the nature of their combinations, that a man becomes qualified to reason from one machine to another.[44]

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41 Mill, CPB, 4: 41vb3. See Dugald Stewart, "On Taste," in *Collected Works*, 5: 352–3.

42 Stewart, *Elements*, in *Collected Works*, 2: 222 (cf. Mill's reference in *Analysis*, 2: 348). See further Knud Haakonssen, "James Mill and Scottish Moral Philosophy," *Political Studies*, 33/4 (1985), 628–36.

43 Mill, CPB, 3: 111v.

44 Mill, CPB, 1: 115r.

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Mill's imagery of a "machine" is quite relevant; it bridges his ideas on philosophical method with those on parliamentary reform, as we shall see in the third section of this essay.

The metaphor of a machine was itself recurrent in methodological discussions. Both Hobbes and Condillac tried to explain the method of analysis and synthesis with such a metaphor: "the matter, figure, and *motion* of the wheels" of a watch or a small engine, Hobbes argued, "cannot well be known, except it be taken insunder and viewed in parts."[45] For Condillac, Stewart reported, analysis meant taking the parts of a machine apart, studying them and then putting them back together.[46]

Mill was thought to be the "first person who saw ... [Thomas Hobbes's] importance as a political thinker, and had the courage to proclaim it."[47] According to Hobbes's *Elements of Philosophy* (1656), the resolutive–compositive method is the most suitable method in moral and political philosophy, by trying to find out "effects by their known causes, or ... causes by their known effects." In short, for Hobbes "the best way to understand a system, process, or event is to resolve it into its components, analyze these components, and then recompose them via a theory that explains their interrelationships and interactions."[48] In his notes on "Speculation & Practice," Mill quoted Hobbes to the effect that "[t]he principles of the politics consist in the knowledge of the motions of the mind,"[49] having also clarified that "[a]ll our knowledge of human nature is experimental."[50]

Mill mentioned the method of analysis and synthesis in his Commonplace Books explicitly in reference to Condillac's "art of induction."[51] For Condillac, analysis referred to "composing and decomposing our ideas to create new

45 Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive* (1642), in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, ed. William Molesworth, 11 vols. (London, 1839) (hereafter *EW*), 2: xiv, italics added.

46 See Stewart, *Elements*, in *Collected Works*, 3: 280–81.

47 See George Henry Lewes, *The Biographical History of Philosophy; From Its Origin in Greece down to the Present Day*, Library edn (New York, 1857), 495. G. Grote to W. Molesworth, 28 Oct. 1838, in Harriet Grote, *The Personal Life of George Grote* (London, 1873), 129.

48 Jean Hampton, *Hobbes and the Social Contract Tradition* (Cambridge, 1986), 7. See also A. P. Martinich, *Hobbes* (London and New York, 2005), 170–71; R. A. Talaska, "Analytic and Synthetic Method According to Hobbes," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 26/2 (1988), 207–37. See further Hobbes, *EW*, 1: 66, 73–4. J. W. N. Watkins, *Hobbes's System of Ideas*, 2nd edn (London, 1973), chap. 3, §§9–11, has argued that Hobbes was indebted to Paduan methodology.

49 Mill, CPB, 1: 108v.

50 Mill, CPB, 1: 108r. Here, Mill was defending Stewart against Francis Jeffrey, via Hume, on the difference between observation and experimentation in mental sciences.

51 See, Mill, CPB, 1: 112v, 1: 165r, 5: 84–5. Mill did not ignore Condillac's opposition to Synthesis.

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combinations and to discover, by this means, their mutual relations and the new ideas they can produce."[52] However, according to Stewart, Condillac's metaphor had a serious omission: "there is undoubtedly a sort of mental decomposition of the machine, in as much as all its parts are successively considered in detail; but it is not this decomposition which constitutes the *analysis*. It is the methodical *retrogradation* from the mechanical effect to the mechanical power."[53]

Stewart's *Elements* examined in detail analysis and synthesis in the chapter on the "Logic of Induction." Stewart summarized his conclusions elsewhere, by noting that the first step of the method of philosophy "is to ascertain the simple and general laws on which the complicated phenomena of the universe depend"—Bacon's *scala ascensoria*. Experiments with artificial circumstances and observation of natural circumstances uncover natural conjunctions, which often seem random and irregular. From the general laws of nature one may trace an established order; as Stewart put it, "[h]aving obtained these laws, we may proceed safely to reason concerning the effect resulting from any combination of them"; that is, by reasoning synthetically—Bacon's *scala descensoria*.[54] As Newton put it in *Opticks* (1704):

> By this way of Analysis we may proceed from Compounds to Ingredients, and from Motions to the Forces producing them; and in general, from Effects to their Causes, and from particular Causes to more general ones, till the Argument end in the most general. This is the Method of Analysis: And the Synthesis consists in assuming the Causes discover'd, and establish'd as Principles, and by them explaining the Phaenomena proceeding from them, and proving the Explanations.[55]

In his review of Stewart's *Elements*, Mill argued that utilitarians followed the methodological course "pointed out by Sir Isaac Newton, as the only true mode of philosophizing."[56] In 1835, Mill argued that philosophizing is performed "by analysis or synthesis, syllogism or induction." Assuming the causes discovered, and established as principles, is to state them "nakedly, without the analysis which leads to them"—without the evidence for "referring as many of them [i.e. particular phenomena] as possible to the operation of a single cause." Reasoning synthetically from comprehensive principles to particulars, in order to explain a phenomenon, according to Mill, is "the very business of philosophy."[57]

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52 Etienne Bonnot De Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge (1746)*, trans. and ed. H. Aarsleff (Cambridge, 2001), 49, original emphasis.

53 Stewart, *Elements*, in *Collected Works*, 3: 281.

54 Stewart, *Outlines of Moral Philosophy*, in *Collected Works*, 2: 7.

55 Isaac Newton, *Opticks*, 4th edn (London, 1730), 380–81.

56 Mill, "Stewart's Elements," 195.

57 [James Mill], *Fragment on Mackintosh* (London, 1870; first published 1835), 307, 274, 48, 25–6.

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When Stewart argued that the principles which we obtain from an examination of the human constitution, and the general laws which regulate the course of human affairs, provide a much surer foundation for political reasoning,[58] he was drawing on Bacon himself. But his was not an idiosyncratic reading. George Grote, a close friend and ally of Ricardo, Bentham and the Mills, argued that, for Bacon, in "Sciences which have real truth for their object … the general principles cannot be laid down *à priori*, but must be evolved step by step, & by gradually widening our induction."[59] As regards human action, Bacon recognized the need to combine experience with reason, "drawing back a perverted doctrine to the laws of human nature and experience, and restoring its connection and intimacy with this great paternal roof."[60]

But there is another source for James Mill's use of the method of analysis and synthesis: Plato. As student at the University of Edinburgh, Mill had acquired a strong background in logic and history and in mental and moral philosophy, as well as "a dead set at Plato."[61] Mill would not think it a break with his Edinburgh heritage to draw on Plato's *Gorgias* to distinguish between *knack*, action based on unreflective or unexamined experience, and *art*, action based on reason: "the first [is] without knowledge, save the narrow and confined experience of the particular case; the other [is] founded on the knowledge of causes and effects." As the younger Mill put it, "An art would not be an art, unless it were founded upon a scientific knowledge of the properties of the subject-matter: without this, it would not be philosophy, but empiricism; *ἐμπειρία*, not *τέχνη*, in Plato's sense."[62]

The currency of ancient Greek thought in nineteenth-century Britain, which made Athens, Plato and Aristotle especially relevant in philosophical, educational, social and political debates, is well established.[63] Most importantly, James Mill and John Stuart Mill added to these debates and have been credited, along with George

58 Stewart, *Elements*, in *Collected Works*, 3: chap. 4.

59 University of London Library MS429/3 f. 8 (on Bacon, *Novum Organum*, aphorism 29).

60 University of London Library MS429/3 f. 74 (on Bacon, *Novum Organum*, aphorism 95). See also [George Grote], *Statement of the Question of Parliamentary Reform; with a Reply to the Objections of the Edinburgh Review, No. LXI* (London, 1821), 7.

61 Bain, *James Mill*, 14–15, 18–19. See also Fenn, *James Mill's Political Thought*, chap. 1.

62 Plato, *Gorgias* 463b. See Mill, CPB, 1: 108v, 112v, also 1: 106v, 1: 113r–v, 1: 162v–163r. J. S. Mill, "Definition of Political Economy" (1836), *CW*, 4: 312.

63 See Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1980); Frank M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, 1981). See M. R. Stopper, "Greek Philosophy and the Victorians," *Phronesis*, 26/3 (1981), 267–85, for a corrective to Jenkyns and Turner as regards Aristotle's importance in nineteenth-century Britain.

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Grote, with the revival of Platonic studies in the nineteenth century.[64] The two Mills were "Greece-intoxicated men," fascinated by Plato's thought.[65] However, suffice it to say that theirs was an especially radical reading of Plato, focusing on Plato's dialectic method.[66] For James Mill, Plato attempted to "expose some of the false impressions which are most apt to prevail in the minds of men, and to lead to the most dangerous consequences." The elder Mill was, as Richard Jenkyns has noted, one of the initiators of that "critical spirit of Socratic questioning" which appeared in the search for "a more rational, more democratic, and more secular" Britain.[67]

According to John Stuart Mill, both himself and his father were "Platonists," having "been nourished in, and have endeavoured to practise Plato's mode of investigation." This is important to the argument advanced in this essay because the younger Mill argued that Plato's method was "unsurpassed as a discipline for correcting the errors, and clearing up the confusions incident to ... the understanding which has made up all its bundles of associations under the guidance of popular phraseology." Given the admiration of Plato's method by Bacon, which James Mill had marked out in his copy of Bacon, as we saw, it should not come as a surprise that, according to John Stuart Mill, Plato aimed to "enforce the absolute necessity, as the foundation for all safe practice, of a just and unambiguous definition of the subject-matter." This was achieved through "philosophical analysis ... a process of composition and decomposition, or rather decomposition and recomposition, first distinguishing a whole into its kinds or parts, and then looking at those kinds or parts attentively, in such a manner as to extract from them the idea of the whole." The substance, the younger Mill noted, of Plato's "two-fold process of analysis and synthesis" is that, in moral or political studies, "the desideratum is not so much new facts, as a more comprehensive survey of known facts in their various bearings, all which are sure to be successively forced upon the attention

64 See e.g. Kyriakos N. Demetriou, "The Development of Platonic Studies and the Role of the Utilitarians," *Utilitas*, 8/1 (1996), 15–37.

65 See Antis Loizides, *John Stuart Mill's Platonic Heritage: Happiness through Character* (Lanham, MD, 2013), Parts I and II; also Loizides, "Taking Their Cue from Plato: James and John Stuart Mill," *History of European Ideas*, 39/1 (2013), 121–40. For the term "Greece-intoxicated" to describe John Stuart Mill and George Grote see Alexander Bain, *John Stuart Mill: A Criticism with Personal Recollections* (London, 1882), 94.

66 Loizides, *Mill's Platonic Heritage*, chaps. 2–3 and 5–6.

67 [James Mill], "Taylor's Plato," *Edinburgh Review*, 14/27 (1809), 187–211, at 199. See M. F. Burnyeat, "Plato," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 111 (2001), 1–22, at 20–21; Jenkyns, *Victorians and Ancient Greece*, 233.

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by a well-conducted and unbiased inquiry into the meaning of established terms."[68]

James Mill directly referred to the method of analysis and synthesis in his *Elements of Political Economy* (1821); he noted that achieving a practical end requires breaking down, analysing complex wholes into their constitutive parts. Synthesis corresponds to rearranging the elements to produce the desired effect. The key to the process was having a distinct conception of the ends—that is, the effects to be produced—only then could one proceed to form those combinations of elements "by which the ends will be most advantageously produced."[69] What is more, Mill's discussion of the two types of political reasoner closely followed Stewart's emphasis on power; that is, on the forces that cause the "motions of the wheels"—the motives that turn the wheels of the machinery of government. James Mill and the other Philosophic Radicals followed thus the "common practice" of philosophers: "when they are discussing means, begin by considering the end, and when they desire to produce effects, think of causes."[70] But if Mill admitted that synthesis without analysis was insufficient as a method of philosophical analysis, why did he follow the method of synthesis in "Government"? To answer this question, we need to take a step back and revisit Mill's criticism of empirical induction.

FROM PHILOSOPHY TO RHETORIC: INSTRUCTION AND PERSUASION

As we saw, missing the connection to Plato's distinction between *empeiria* and *technê*, William Thomas claims that James Mill did not "associate scientific method with experiment or a wide induction."[71] Thomas has thus pointed to an 1809 review on a book on political economy to make a note of Mill's distrust of induction.[72] In said review, Mill argued that the author unsuccessfully employed the method of induction—a method "highly satisfactory in all subjects to which it is applicable." A more careful mode of proceeding must be sought in matters of public policy, Mill thought, since "in order to rise from particular facts to general laws, a multitude of instances must be observed and scrutinized," and since "the train of facts in regard to one nation is, properly speaking, but a single instance; and affords, by no means, a sufficient foundation on which to build inductive conclusions so extremely general and comprehensive." Insufficient

68 J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, 25; J. S. Mill, "Phaedrus," *CW*, 11: 96, 93.

69 James Mill, *Elements of Political Economy*, 3rd edn (London, 1826), 13–15.

70 J. S. Mill, "Fonblanque's England," *CW*, 6: 353.

71 Thomas, *Philosophic Radicals*, 118.

72 See Thomas, "Essay on Government," 256 n 46.

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inductive justification creates problematic general principles; employing these doubtful propositions in attempts to clarify issues of policy, or even some kinds of theoretical question, rather obscures than illuminates.[73]

Mill's advice regarding method when advocating an argument was: ascertain first what the questions are and then employ (inductively derived) general principles to illuminate and explain a series of historical phenomena. Mill thought that such a mode of proceeding "might have been in the highest degree useful, and might, better than almost any other scheme of persuasion, have succeeded in removing prejudices, and gaining converts to rational doctrines."[74] Mill's reference to "schemes of persuasion" and the twin goals of "removing prejudices, and gaining converts to rational doctrines," enables us to examine a hitherto unexplored connection to Mill's method: the role of inductive and syllogistic reasoning in rhetorical arguments.

Traditionally rhetoric was contrasted with logic, often being dismissed as mere ornament and eloquence; however by the late eighteenth century the study of rhetoric and belles-lettres would be rehabilitated to the point of receiving a special place in Scottish university curricula.[75] For Vincent M. Bevilacqua, it was a commonly held assumption in the Scottish Enlightenment that rhetoric and logic were "connate intellectual functions founded on similar mental faculties." In stylistic–belletristic rhetoric, the appropriate domain of rhetoric was the effective expression of already established scientific truth, rather than discovery and jusification, which constituted the province of logic.[76] According to George A. Kennedy, there was a broader Scottish Enlightenment project "to create a new philosophical rhetoric based on the new logic, with the addition to it of a new psychology as developed by the British Empiricist philosophers, paying some lip service to classical rhetoric but differing from it in fundamental ways."[77]

Induction and rhetoric

In his seminal study on British logic and rhetoric in the eighteenth century, Wilbur Samuel Howell pointed out a number of differences between the "old rhetoric," the ornamental rhetoric of the seventeenth century, and the "new rhetoric" of

73 [James Mill], "Comber on National Subsistence," *Eclectic Review*, 5 (Jan. 1809), 50–61, at 52–3.

74 Ibid., 52–3.

75 See Paul G. Bator, "The Formation of the Regius Chair of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at the University of Edinburgh," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 75 (1989), 40–64.

76 Vincent M. Bevilacqua, "Adam Smith and Some Philosophical Origins of Eighteenth-Century Rhetorical Theory," *Modern Language Review*, 63/3 (1968), 559–68, at 564–5.

77 George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 2nd edn (Chapel Hill, 1999) 277, 281–2.

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the eighteenth century. As Barbara Warnick has put it, "the new rhetoric ... focused on expository and didactic discourse, based its proofs on the facts of the matter being discussed, and was couched in a plain, unstudied style." An important difference between the "old rhetoric" and the "new rhetoric" was that the former viewed enthymeme as the basis of rhetorical argument. The inductive method's focus on observation and experiment put example in the centre of rhetorical argument.[78] However, both "new rhetoric" textbooks, such as George Campbell's, and neo classical rhetoric textbooks, such as Richard Whately's,[79] saw problems with some of the uses of inductive evidence in arguments aiming to convince reason, such as testimony and drawing from an insufficient number of examples.[80]

In order to see how Mill's distrust of empirical induction relates to rhetorical practice, I turn to Mill's background in rhetoric as well as in ancient Greek thought. Although it would not have been compulsory for James Mill, as a divinity student, to sit in Hugh Blair's and William Greenfield's lectures at Edinburgh, Mill had a live interest in rhetoric. After borrowing George Campbell's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) from the library and then Plato's *Works*, he asked permission to borrow both Campbell and Plato.[81] Mill's Commonplace Books abound in references to classical rhetorical works, such as those by Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, as well as Plato. In early 1818, Mill considered applying for the Greek chair at the University of Glasgow; around this time, he made his eleven-year-old son study Aristotle's *Rhetoric* "with peculiar care, and throw the matter of it into synoptic tables."[82]

In 1809, James Mill argued that classical studies at the universities had mistaken priorities. The "*Socraticae chartae*," i.e. the practical philosophy of the Academic, Peripatetic, and Stoic schools, "those precious remains so strenuously recommended by Horace and Cicero, as the fountain of genius, to both the orator and the poet," Mill noted, "are abandoned for the Choruses of Euripides." For Mill, "much good ... might be derived from an improvement in the plan of our Greek and Roman studies."[83]

78 Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (Princeton, 1971), 259–60, 441–7. Barbara Warnick, "The Old Rhetoric vs. the New Rhetoric: The Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns," *Communication Monographs*, 49/4 (1982), 263–76, at 263, 263 n 1.

79 Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric*, 285.

80 See Campbell, Rhetoric, 76–8; Arthur E. Walzer, *George Campbell: Rhetoric in the Age of Enlightenment* (New York, 2003), 59. See also Richard Whately, *Elements of Rhetoric*, 5th edn (London, 1836), 74–80.

81 Bain, *James Mill*, 19.

82 Bain, *James Mill*, 166–9. J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, 14.

83 Mill, "Taylor's Plato," *Edinburgh Review*, 188–9.

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Mill's call to improve university education was not accidental. The *Edinburgh Review*, in which Mill's call appeared, was at the time in a bitter dispute with Oxford University, as regards Oxford's recent curriculum reform.[84] In his Commonplace Books, Mill referred to Edward Copleston's 1810 reply to the *Edinburgh Review* "for proving that to teach Aristotle is to teach what is best for the mental culture of Englishmen in the 19th century." Copleston defended the focus on Aristotle at Oxford, arguing Aristotle's logic and rhetoric exposed "all the trick and mystery of false reasoning."[85] Mill thought that "[t]eaching a mind '*l'accoutume insensiblement à ne se payer que de raisons solides*' is a most important point of education." The French passage, from which Mill quoted, went on to suggest that Alexander was indebted to Aristotle for such an education.[86] Likewise, Mill quoted heavily from the pseudo-Aristotelian *Rhetoric to Alexander* as well as Aristotle's *Rhetoric* in his notes on "Speculation & Practice," trying to draw the same "distinction drawn by Bacon, between the empyrical, and the truly inductive philosopher."[87]

Aristotle's advice was that if one has an enthymeme—a syllogism working with premises accepted by the audience (*R* 1355a27–8)—then the example should be used as a supplement, a testimony or a witness. It seems that, for Aristotle, it would actually be more convincing to state the generalization enthymematically (which could have been established by an enumeration of all cases, of all known particular instances[88]) and then provide examples (*R* 1394a9–18). For Aristotle, there are only two kinds of logical argument, two types of proof, which create belief: enthymeme and example—rhetorical syllogism and rhetorical induction (*R* 1356b1–6). The adjectival use of rhetoric is important: syllogism and induction function differently in science, dialectic and rhetoric. A rhetorical induction does not ascend from a particular to a universal but instead moves from a particular to a particular (*R* 1357b26–30). As Myles Burnyeat has put it, rhetorical

84 See Heather Ellis, *Generational Conflict and University Reform: Oxford in the Age of Revolution* (Leiden, 2012), chap. 2.

85 As Mill believed the universities, in the way Classics were taught (including Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics*), were trying to thwart rather than develop the ability to think for one's self, he may have meant the comment ironically. He thought the ancient universities to be "excellent schools of *Priggism*," "prone to Toryism," and part of the ecclesiastical establishment, whose "fixed creed and fixed forms" aimed "to keep the human mind where it is." Mill, CPB, 3: 33; 5: 65r, original emphasis; Mill, *Mackintosh*, 31.

86 Mill, CPB, 3: 34. Mill quoted from François Bernier, *Evenemens particuliers dans les etats du grand Mogol* (Claude Barbin, 1671), 64; and referred to Edward Copleston, *A Reply to the calumnies of the Edinburgh Review against Oxford: containing an account of studies pursued in that university* (Oxford, 1810), 23–30.

87 Mill, CPB, 1: 106.

88 See Aristotle, *A Pr* 68b28–29.

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induction is "an induction indeed, but one from which you cannot expect everything you would normally expect from *epagôgê*."[89] Others have made the stronger claim that induction and example "differ in both premises and conclusion: *epagôgê* reasons from all the particulars to a covering generalization, while example from one or two of the particulars to a conclusion about a new particular."[90]

Aristotle had made a special point as regards modes of persuasion in financial matters: arguing from the individual experience of one's own city (a historical example) was insufficient to draw a general conclusion about financial matters in general (*R* 1359b22–31). So when Mill criticized the method of induction in the 1809 review on political economy, he used a particularly Aristotelian argument. In 1803, Mill had recommended such a method to statesmen debating the correct course of action with reference to Britain's war with France—i.e. state general principles first, and then draw examples from history.[91] Mill called this argumentation practice the "didactic art."

Synthesis: removing prejudices

In 1814, James Mill claimed "that the moderns have not so much as attempted an improvement in the didactic art, the art of communicating ideas," leaving it "entirely in the state in which they received if from the ancients." The shape that the didactic art had either in classical logic or in classical rhetoric was *not* "well adapted to the end which we have here in view; the conveying the knowledge of truth and of error to minds unacquainted with them, by such gradations of proof as every sound understanding can pursue." For Mill, the *ars traditiva*, the art of the transmission of ideas, combined rhetoric (persuasion) and the syllogistic art (validity) in "the teaching of truth," i.e. communicating the results of scientific enquiry (logic). In the didactic art

> truth is proved, or error disclosed, by those gradual steps which ensure conviction; in which nothing is misplaced, nothing omitted, and nothing superfluous; where the reader never begins but with a known truth, and never advances to a proposition which is not either proved by what goes before, or is too well known for its proof to be required.

[89] Myles F. Burnyeat, "Enthymeme: Aristotle on the Logic of Persuasion," in D. J. Furley and A. Nehamas, eds., *Aristotle's Rhetoric: Philosophical Essays* (Princeton, 1994), 3–55, at 17.

[90] Burnyeat, "Enthymeme," 17; see William L. Benoit, "Aristotle's Example: The Rhetorical Induction," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 66 (1980), 182–92, at 188.

[91] [James Mill], "Politics," *Literary Journal*, 1/23 (1803) 737–44, at 738.

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Two skills are thus requisite for Mill in the didactic art: first, to pass from known truths to truths desired to be established; second, to persevere "till the effect intended to be accomplished is produced."[92]

In both Adam Smith's and George Campbell's discussions of rhetoric, laying down certain principles known—or having already been proved—and proceeding to account for a number of phenomena—"connecting all together by the same Chain"—was typically called the "didactic" method. Smith argued that

> [i]t gives us a pleasure to see the phaenomena which we reckoned the most unaccountable all deduced from some principle (commonly a well-known one) and all united in one chain, far superior to what we feel from the unconnected method where everything is accounted for by itself without any reference to the others.[93]

According to Campbell, the method which "ought to be pursued in the application of knowledge already acquired," i.e. in the case of instruction, is the synthetic method.[94] Addressing the understanding, Campbell noted, instructors aim either to teach something new or to demonstrate the validity of a controversial position. In the latter case, persuasion and belief are created by arguments, which in turn depend on intuitive or deductive evidence.[95]

Although the method of synthesis offers "the shortest way of communicating the principles of a science," Campbell argued, seldom is it convincing: "there is a necessity of recurring to the tract in which the knowledge we would convey was first attained"—i.e. the method of analysis. Similarly, Smith had argued that "[t]he People, to which ... [rhetorical discourses] are ordinarily directed, have no pleasure in these abstruse deductions; their interest, and the practicability and honourableness of the thing recommended is what alone will sway with them and is seldom to be shewn in a long deduction of arguments."[96] Although Stewart agreed with both Smith and Campbell that "the order of invention is, in most cases, the reverse of that fitted for didactic communication,"[97] and that the

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92 [James Mill], "Schools for All," *Philanthropist*, 4/16 (1814), 323–50, at 326–7, 326 n.

93 Adam Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. J. C. Bryce (Indianapolis, 1985; first published Oxford, 1983), 146.

94 Campbell, *Rhetoric*, 84–5. Campbell, *Rhetoric*, chap. 6, had produced one of the most famous critiques of Aristotelian syllogistic reasoning. See Howell, *British Logic and Rhetoric*, 401.

95 Campbell, *Rhetoric*, 24–5; chap. 5. Intuitive evidence referred to evidence arising from intellection, consciousness and common sense; deductive evidence, to evidence arising from a reasoning process—inductive or demonstrative. The distinction was also employed in Stewart, *Outlines*, in *Collected Works*, 2: 27–31.

96 Campbell, *Rhetoric*, 84–5; Smith, *Lectures*, 146.

97 Dugald Stewart, *Dissertation: Exhibiting the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy since the Revival of Letters in Europe*, in *Collected Works*, 1: 3 n.

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former may be a better plan of instruction when dealing with individuals who will "enter on the career of invention and discovery," Stewart thought that it was "not so practicable to carry into effect" in public instruction. In such a case the synthetic method may be more suited for teaching.[98]

Mill's "Government" was published in the *Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 1820.[99] "[A]ccustomed to wield the authority of a school master," Mill thought that not much could be done in an encyclopedia article: it "should be to a certain degree didactic, and also elementary—as being to be consulted by the ignorant as well as the knowing; but the matter that has been often explained, may be passed over very shortly, to leave more space for that which is less commonly known."[100]

Mill admitted that "the whole science of human nature must be explored to lay a foundation for the science of government." Not being able to undertake such an endeavour in that confined venue,[101] Mill focused on presenting the key elements of government in a didactic way. However, in the correspondence between Mill and David Ricardo, it was obvious that Mill was trying to instruct as well as serve "the good cause," i.e. that of good government.[102] If it was to serve both ends, the essay needed to communicate the principles of a science, while it was trying to change the minds of those who had already settled on the issue of reform. However, beginning with what was already known by his audience brings out another aspect of Mill's method in "Government."

Synthesis: gaining converts

The essay on government offered Mill the opportunity to respond to the critics of "theoretic reform," i.e. the critics of Bentham's *Plan*.[103] Writing in September 1819, Mill proclaimed his confidence both to Macvey Napier

98 Dugald Stewart, *Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers*, in *Collected Works*, 6: 134. Cf. Stewart, *Lectures on Political Economy*, in *Collected Works*, 9: 223.

99 [James Mill], "Government" (1820), in *Supplement to the IV, V, and VI Eds. of the Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ed. Macvey Napier (Edinburgh, 1824), 4: Part 2, 491–505.

100 J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 11 Sept. 1819 and 9 Nov. 1815, in *Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, 8: 67 and 6: 321.

101 Mill, "Government," 4.

102 D. Ricardo to J. Mill, 27 July 1820, in *Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, 8: 211. See also D. Ricardo to J. Mill, 30 Aug. 1823, in ibid., 9: 375; J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 13 Nov. 1820, in ibid., 8: 291.

103 See Joseph Hamburger, "James Mill on Universal Suffrage and the Middle Class," *Journal of Politics*, 24/1 (1962), 167–90; Thomas, "Essay on Government," 264; Stefan Collini, Donald Winch and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge, 1983), 98.

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and to Ricardo that he could make a Tory "a convert to the principles of good government" sooner than any Whig, who is "more terrified at the principles of good government than the worst of Tories."[104] According to Mill, the Tories considered government to be "a bad machine, which works well."[105] So breaking the "machine" down to its constitutive elements and showing "clear[ly] and distinct[ly]" the "powers, one by one, of which the agency of this machine consisted," and of all "the various combinations, in which they were calculated to act," would allow Mill to show that "certain powers ... counteracted the rest; and that if these were taken away, and others put in their place," the good effects of the machinery of government would be greatly increased.[106]

In the opening paragraphs of "Government," adopting the vocabulary of the method of analysis (e.g. composing, resolving, dissecting),[107] Mill noted that neither the means nor the ends of government had been analysed, notwithstanding the amount of discussion spent on the subject: "it is only a general and undistinguishing conception of them, which is found in the minds of the greatest number of men." In his Commonplace Books, Mill noted that "*Theory* is essentially something more perfect than practice. Words can be made more accurate than things,"[108] but when an argument "merely turns upon words ... it is a mere bit of logomachy." Still, when words "are calculated to mislead and deceive; and to produce, in consequence, mischievous courses of action," they must be exposed.[109]

By stating the "Nature of the Inquiry" in "Government" as an issue of imprecise definitions in the minds of the public, Mill was alluding to the particularly platonic use of the resolutive–compositive method mentioned earlier. Mill's "desideratum" was thus not to discover "new facts," but rather to provide "a more comprehensive survey of known facts in their various bearings." Demonstration would "force" upon the audience all the implications of assuming a number of principles of human nature for the actual function of the British Constitution. Distinguishing between demonstrative syllogism and rhetorical syllogism may

[104] J. Mill to M. Napier, 10 Sept. 1819, in *Correspondence of the Late Macvey Napier*, 24; J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 11 Sept. 1819, in *Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, 8: 68.

[105] Mill, CPB, 1: 178v. See also J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 28 Dec. 1820, in *Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, 8: 328.

[106] Mill, CPB, 3: 111v.

[107] Mill, "Government," 3–4.

[108] Mill, CPB, 1: 113v.

[109] [James Mill], "Marsh and Others against Lancaster," *Philanthropist* 2/5 (1812), 57–108, at 90–91.

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serve to explain how Mill's "Government" made the transition from instruction to persuasion.

According to Aristotle, demonstration is a sort of *sullogismos* (*A Pr* 25b31) which advances teaching,[110] i.e. bringing about understanding of something new through what we already know (*A Pst* 71a5–6, 71b25). Demonstration, Robin Smith argues, is not a method for discovery, even though science must possess demonstrations, i.e. a system of proofs.[111] In contrast to a dialectical syllogism, "someone who is demonstrating does not ask for premises but takes them," i.e. asserts or assumes them (*A Pr* 24a24).[112] In short, according to John Corcoran, for Aristotle, "a demonstration is a discourse or extended argumentation that begins with premises known to be *truths* and that involves a chain of reasoning showing by evident steps that its conclusion is a *consequence* of its premises."[113]

Since we are more easily convinced, Aristotle argued, "when we suppose something to have been demonstrated" (*R* 1355a4–5), the *pistis*—the means to persuasion—to be used is enthymeme—a demonstration for rhetorical purposes (*R* 1355a7–8). Enthymematic arguments "excite more favourable audience reaction" (*R* 1356b25), especially when some learning takes place (*R* 1410b20–25). This makes the rhetorical syllogism the most convincing or most important body of proof. However, a speaker ought to be aware that enthymeme and demonstration differ (*R* 1355a9–12), since it would allow her/him to construct the most persuasive argument as regards her/his audience (*R* 1395b38–1396a4). As Robin Smith puts it, "To the possessor of science, different things are familiar and obvious than what is familiar and obvious to us in our uneducated state."[114]

However, much hinges on what *enthymêmata*, the body, or substance, of persuasion (*R* 1354a15) are, i.e. on what counts as a rhetorical syllogism, as well as on the ability of the speaker to choose the best scheme of persuasion

[110] Jonathan Barnes, "Aristotle's Theory of Demonstration," *Phronesis*, 14/2 (1969), 123–152, at 138 ff. Translation from *Prior Analytics* is Robin Smith's and from *Posterior Analytics* is Jonathan Barnes's.

[111] Smith, "Aristotle's Theory," 52; Smith, "Logic," 47; Barnes, "Aristotle's Demonstration," 138.

[112] Jaakko Hintikka, "On the Ingredients of an Aristotelian Science," in *Hintikka, Analyses of Aristotle* (Dordrecht, 2004), 87–99, at 96. See also Robin Smith, "Aristotle's Theory of Demonstration," in G. Anagnostopoulos, ed., *A Companion to Aristotle* (Oxford, 2009), 51–65, at 53; Robin Smith, "Logic," in J. Barnes, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (Cambridge, 1995), 27–65, at 48.

[113] John Corcoran, "Aristotle's Demonstrative Logic," *History and Philosophy of Logic*, 30/1 (2009), 1–20, at 5, original emphasis.

[114] Smith, "Aristotle's Theory," 54–5.

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(*R* 1354b24–5). Enthymeme draws its conclusions from few premises, "and often less than those of the primary syllogism"—the audience supplies the missing premises (*R* 1357a17–19). Enthymeme is a syllogism from probabilities (*eikota*) or signs (*sêmeia*) (*R* 1357a32–1357b20); but rarely are enthymematic premises necessarily true; usually, they are true for the most part (*R* 1357a32–3).

Since principles pertaining to a particular science are provided by the experience relevant to that science (*A Pr* 46a17–20), it is possible, by fastening to those principles and to *tekmêria* (necessarily true signs) specific to a particular science, to move from the context of rhetoric to the context of demonstration (*R* 1358a10).[115] The argument advanced is rhetorical when premises remain unstated (*R* 1359a11–12)—that is, when they are expected to be supplied by the audience—and when the premises remain true for the most part—that is, "probable as a universal related to a particular" (i.e. a common belief concerning a generalization from experience, not an exhaustive induction of observable facts) (*R* 1357a1).[116] According to Thomas Farrell, "the enthymeme is partisan argument as collaborative utterance, an utterance whose well-foundedness would need to be confirmed or redeemed by the proper audience"; hence enthymeme validates itself by a "necessary discursive move back to an audience who must subscribe to taken-for-granted background suppositions."[117]

But what was Mill's intended audience in "Government," and what were the taken-for-granted background suppositions? As I suggested earlier, James Mill had a general anti-reform—Tory—argument in mind when writing "Government."

In 1793, Robert Jenkinson had argued that, evidently "a question of expediency," the question of reform had to be examined "on the same principle on which all questions of the sort must be examined, viz. by inquiring what was the end that was to be produced; and then considering what were the means likely to produce that end." The question of reform had to take into consideration that "human institutions must be adapted not only to the virtues, but to the weakness and passions of mankind." He did not deny that "there were theoretic defects in the composition of the House of Commons," but he argued that "it was incumbent … on those who proposed a reform, to prove that those defects affected the practice of the constitution.[118]

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[115] According to Aristotle, the full examination of some subjects is best left to the corresponding science itself (*R* 1359b17–20).

[116] See further Sally Raphael, "Rhetoric, Dialectic and Syllogistic Argument: Aristotle's Position in Rhetoric I–II," *Phronesis*, 19/1 (1974) 153–67.

[117] Thomas B. Farrell, "Aristotle's Enthymeme as Tacit Reference," in A. G. Gross and A. E. Walzer, eds., *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric* (Carbondale, 2000), 93–106, at 99.

[118] William Cobbett, *Parliamentary History of England*, vol. 30 (London, 1817), 810, 820.

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In 1818, by means of a review of Bentham's *Plan*, similar arguments reappeared in the *British Review*, reported to be "tory in politics."[119] "[N]o theory," the critic argued, "is worth a thought which does not flow from the facts themselves,—which is not extracted from the bowels of experience." The subject should not be "treated as a question of principle rather than expedience, and as a problem involving a mere abstract truth, rather than as one in which the solution is found in the passions, the wants, and the weaknesses of ordinary humanity." Like Lord Liverpool, the critic was satisfied that the "constitution, in its present form and practical state, *works well*, and that, however irreconcileable [*sic*] it may be to the *à priori* reasonings of the grave men now engaged in proving the necessity of change, it has done its business effectually." What was most important, the critic argued, was not that the British "system of practical polity" failed to produce a "well-adjusted balance of power," in which each part corrects the other "by their opposite tendencies, without intermixture or confusion," but that it had achieved "all advantages at which society aims," carrying society "in a course of unparalleled progression and enlargement." It was the author's view that "we have as good a House of Commons as any system of parliamentary representation could give us," and "it seems very foolish to stir, and undo and discompose what has been established, has been tried and has been found to answer."[120]

In "Government," Mill began by placing the question of government exactly on Lord Liverpool's footing: "The question with respect to Government is a question about the adaptation of means to an end."[121] Government is the means of ensuring the greatest sum of the scanty materials of happiness to the members of the community, taken together. This is achieved by preventing any group of individuals from making any other member, weaker than that group, to have less than one's share of pleasures from one's own labour. Mill referred to one particular law or principle of human nature which made protection through government necessary: individuals, unless prevented from doing so, will take from others, weaker than themselves, any object of their desire.[122] However, since government involves transferring to a number of individuals enough power for the protection of all, by the above law of human nature, the same danger which exists outside the political community persists within the political community. Therefore the (whole) community needs to prevent those who hold government power from

[119] Gerald le Grys Norgate, "Roberts, William (1767–1849)," in Sidney Lee, ed., *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 48 (London, 1896), 395. See Arthur Roberts, *The Life, Letters and Opinions of William Roberts* (London, 1840), 40.

[120] [Anon.], "Parliamentary Reform," *British Review and London Critical Journal*, 11/22 (1818), 287–327, at 307–8, 314–15, original emphasis.

[121] Mill, "Government," 3.

[122] Ibid., 4–6.

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abusing it. Protective measures included extensive suffrage in combination with frequent elections which would identify the interests of the community with the power-holders. Mill believed that he had demonstrated his conclusion from the stated assumptions:

> It is proved, therefore, by the closest deduction from the acknowledged laws of human nature, and by direct and decisive experiments, that the ruling One, or the ruling Few, would, if checks did not operate in the way of prevention, reduce the great mass of the people subject to their power, at least to the condition of negroes in the West Indies.[123]

However, Mill believed that an argument's "agreement or non-agreement with matter of fact, and with the good of human kind," decided its truth, not whether it was strong on syllogistic principles. From a few inductively derived principles, principles which were accepted by his adversaries, Mill managed to demonstrate his conclusions. The talk of demonstration was meant to be "imposing,"[124] but it could be mistaken for what it was not.

First, in 1806, Mill noted that in ordinary-language reasoning—unlike in algebraic reasoning—"the mind perpetually recurs to the thing signified by the general term": "in reasoning about men," the mind recurs to "individual men."[125] So what individuals did the general term "ruler" denote? For Mill, that was clear: writing in 1813, he wondered whether or not it is "according to the experience of human nature that men with the powers of government in their hands are angels and have never any propensity to oppress."[126] The premises Mill used corresponded to ordinary conceptions, *endoxa*, ones that recur to our experience about individual human beings—with all their faults and virtues—not self-evident truths. At the same time, since Mill was aware that even "ample Induction" only established possibilities, not absolute certainties,[127] the premises he used could only be universals which held true for the most part, i.e. *eikota*, probabilistic premises. In 1812, Mill had pointed out that his "chains of proof" (as regarded a debate on educational practice) were only as "close, unbroken and infallible ... as any that contingent affairs admit of."[128] Only in discourse, Mill noted in 1815, can one speak of tendencies as "a general, established fact, in human nature."[129]

Second, Mill's conclusion could only hold if two other, unstated, premises were accepted as well: that "[t]he laws of the phenomena of society are, and can be,

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123 Ibid., 16, also 9, 13, 19.

124 Mill, "Marsh and Others against Lancaster," 90–91.

125 Mill, "Scott's Elements," 572. Cf. Mill, *Analysis*, 1: 267–8.

126 [James Mill], "Grant on the India Trade and Government," *Eclectic Review*, 9 (May 1813), 453–71, at 464.

127 Mill, *Analysis*, 2: 348.

128 Mill, "Marsh and Others against Lancaster," 74.

129 [James Mill], "New System of Education," *Philanthropist*, 5/19 (1815), 177–201, at 186.

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nothing but the laws of the actions and passions of human beings united together in the social state," and that "Men are not, when brought together, converted into another kind of substance, with different properties ... Human beings in society have no properties but those which are derived from, and may be resolved into, the laws of the nature of individual man."[130] Since Mill was arguing from the Tory requirement that the issue of constitutional reform should be treated as one "in which the solution is found in the passions, the wants, and the weaknesses of ordinary humanity,"[131] these two warrants of his conclusions did not need to be stated. Mill was confident that his conclusions were "so conformable to ordinary conceptions" that he could even avoid stating them.[132] Conformable with enthymematic rhetorical practice, neither did Mill state explicitly his radical conclusions in "Government," and for good effect, as Joseph Hamburger, Fenn and Grint have argued.[133]

CONCLUSION

Wilbur Howell has argued that a distinguishing feature of the "old," deductive logic was that it operated both as a method of inquiry and as a model of presentation.[134] This may seem to explain why John Stuart Mill, like his father's critics, mistook the demonstrative appearance of "Government" for trying to present a complete science of utilitarian politics,[135] even though John Stuart was aware of the polemical intent of "Government."[136]

In early 1822, James Mackintosh told Macvey Napier, the editor of the *Supplement*, that Mill's "Government" was "very ably written." Still, from Mackintosh's point of view, Mill had employed Hobbes's erroneous philosophical method.[137] This meant that Mill had failed to consider, first, that causes (i.e. general laws) may counteract each other and, second, that general laws connect to particulars through "a scale of intermediate and secondary laws," i.e. *axiomata media*. A few years later, Macaulay noted that the method of induction had to do with observing the present and studying the past, sifting, comparing

[130] It goes to show that a "complete," scientific theory of politics needed to be explicit with its premises, since both premises were stated by John Stuart Mill in his own discussion of the method of politics. Mill, *A System of Logic*, *CW*, 7: 879, also 7: 371.

[131] Anon., "Parliamentary Reform," 314–15.

[132] Mill, "Government," 16.

[133] Hamburger, "Mill on Universal Suffrage." See further Fenn, *Mill's Political Thought*, Appendix I, Grint, "Mill's Commonplace Books," chap. 2.

[134] Howell, *British Logic and Rhetoric*, 259–60.

[135] J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, 211; J. S. Mill, *A System of Logic*, *CW*, 8: 893–4.

[136] J. S. Mill, *A System of Logic*, *CW*, 8: 893; J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, 165.

[137] J. Mackintosh to M. Napier, 8 Jan. 1822, in *Correspondence of the Late Macvey Napier*, 34.

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and contrasting evidence of facts to ascertain authenticity, "generalizing with judgment and diffidence," and always testing theory against new facts to make corrections (if necessary).[138] However, Macaulay did not describe something different from Mill's ideas about how the philosopher incorporates experience in a theory. And with Stewart's and Grote's discussion of Bacon's method in mind, Mill's principles of human action (e.g. self-interest as a power that may counteract the motive to serve the public good) seem to satisfy Mackintosh's demand for *axiomata media* between the highest generalizations of human nature (e.g. laws of association of ideas) and the actions of particular individuals (e.g. those in power).[139]

I have tried to show that neither did James Mill aim to provide a paradigmatic statement of the deductive logic of politics, nor did he distrust induction as a method for science. The "synthetical" character of the essay on government was supposed to serve two purposes: to be didactic on the subject of government in general and to be persuasive on parliamentary reform, by "forcing" its conclusions on the minds of its audience. Commentators tend to forget that, even though Mill was less pleased with it than with his other *Supplement* essays, the essay was successful on both accounts when it first appeared.[140]

James Mill typically viewed himself as a "schoolmaster," but at the same time he recognized that "eloquence ... is a power—and all power may be turned to good or to bad purposes."[141] So "the first thing to be considered, and clearly defined in our thoughts," in a rhetorical argument, the elder Mill maintained, "is, what do we desire to make out; next what requires to be established by proof; in the third place what must be refuted; in the last place how we shall best accommodate what we have to say to the minds of those whom we address."[142] This did not mean that Mill was insincere on what he considered the best security against abuse of power to be; for him, "The right side of a question [is] the most persuasive."[143]

Although Mill followed Stewart on the method of instruction, perhaps he could have taken Smith's and Campbell's advice seriously: long and abstract

[138] [James Mackintosh], "Stewart's *Introduction to the Encyclopaedia* [II]," *Edinburgh Review*, 36/71 (1821), 220–67, at 241–2. Macaulay, "Mill on Government," 188–9.

[139] For the view that particular varieties may counteract more general laws see Mill, *History*, 1: xviii.

[140] J. Mill to D. Ricardo, 13 Nov. 1820, in *Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, 8: 291; compare with J. Mill to J. R. McCulloch, 18 Aug. 1825, in Bain, *James Mill*, 292.

[141] Mill, CPB, 2: 22r(d); cf. Aristotle, *R* 1355b2–7; and Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. 10. See also [James Mill], "Fox's History of the Reign of James II," *Annual Review and History*, 7 (1809), 101–2.

[142] Mill, CPB, 5: 102v (on Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, III.9.7).

[143] Mill, CPB, 2: 7v(b4) on Aristotle, *R* 1355a38.

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reasoning is often unpersuasive. But it is especially ineffective when drawing on particulars, instances and examples from the audience's experience could have won its attention; in such cases, as in the debate on constitutional reform, the Empiric rather than the Philosopher has the upper hand in "gaining converts," even when—in the mind of the Philosopher—the Empiric achieves that by exploiting rather than by "removing prejudices."[144]

[144] Mill, CPB, 2: 48ar(a3) on Aristotle, *R* 1395b30–39.

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