Mill's Principle of Utility

Origins, Proof, and Implications

REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION

By

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BRILL

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To my wife
Banu Beste Başol Alican

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Foreword

An adequate grasp of the origins, substance, and ingredients of anything, whatever it may be, illuminates the essential nature, structure, and characteristics that define that thing as an individual entity with a unique identity. This is true whether the thing in question is physical or mental, natural or artificial, simple or complex. The light of this knowledge enables the mind to comprehend any object of inquiry in the fullness of its being and truth. We may characterize this type of comprehension as holistic, because the subject gains epistemic access not just through the compositional structure of the object's internal features but also through the causal efficacy of its external relations. The internal dimension corresponds to the capacities or powers that inhere in the object, while the external dimension concerns the effect, impact, or influence it has on other objects. We know the object in the fullness of its being and truth only when we comprehend its essential nature and principal function. I know this cat, for example, not merely through my acquaintance with its anatomy, which tells me how it differs in that regard from other animals, including other cats, but also through my understanding of its tendencies and capabilities.

Comprehensive insight of this sort is made possible by a metaphysical process whereby the object derives its being and nature from the source that gives rise to it. This derivation is a complex and dynamic process: complex because a multiplicity of factors contribute to the generation of the object; dynamic because, whether it is viewed in parts or as a whole, reality is constantly changing. Despite the constancy of change, however, the object retains its identity as its succeeding state of being preserves (acquires and assimilates) the essential nature and structure of its preceding state of being. The kind or scope of the process in which this retention takes place depends on the conditions under which the change takes place. But regardless of the kind, complexity, or magnitude of these conditions, the change is always a progressive process. It is indeed a procession. We may reasonably say that, insofar as it is a constitutive element of the fabric of reality, any object, natural or artificial, is always an object-in-the-making. It is endlessly developing, disintegrating, and becoming different than it was just a moment ago. The basis of this process is the inherent capacity of the object to transfer its essential features or elements from the preceding to the succeeding state of its being.

When we construe an object as constantly changing, forever turning into something else without losing its identity, we imply that it is essentially a temporal or historical reality. Its present state of being sums up its life history from its inception onward. The life of a human being, or the history of an object, is a

slice of time as well as a trajectory in time. Every new experience contributes to the emergence of a new state of being, determined by and fashioned out of the one hosted in and by the preceding moment. What it is now, in the specious present, is the result of the experiences it has undergone since the moment it came into being. A human being is its history, and its history is the creative synthesis of its experiences. It is a generally accepted truism that we know a person through her deeds, not through what she thinks, feels, or imagines she is (although what she thinks, feels, or imagines she is may be true).

The essence of the human "I," that is to say, whatever it is that breathes life into the *cogito*, is neither a physical entity nor a mental phenomenon. Nor can it be reduced to one or the other. It is a dynamic reality revealing itself in the unity of its thoughts, feelings, and actions. It is its deeds, more than anything else, and its deeds are its experiences. Although it is constantly changing, its identity endures.

Now, suppose that a philosopher with a psychological bent of mind wants to get to know me as a human being that exists in the world at this particular time. How can she come to know me? She may examine my body, as a start, but I am not my body. My body is merely an aspect, attribute, component, or constituent of the person she wants to know. The "I" that presides over my life is grounded in my body, and it governs the development of my individual identity, but in ontological terms, it is uniquely different from my body. Broadly speaking, the "I" that interacts with itself, with others, and with its environment is different from the body with which it is associated. But what, then, could this curious philosopher possibly know about me? She cannot enter into my mind, or even peek into it, but she can ask me questions whose answers may reveal something about me. Knowledge attained in this way is not knowledge by acquaintance, yet it can still be reliable and truthful. The knowledge she acquires through dialogue will reflect a dynamic reality that has long been growing and developing in various different ways, naturally reaching its latest stage of development during the corresponding interview with the inquiring philosopher. The trajectory that was my being during this stretch of time will no longer exist during the interview. What exists at that point will be the synthesis of the essential nature and structure of my historical being. Significant events, whether they be actions, activities, adventures, achievements, or projects, serve as the building blocks of this existential synthesis.

Our knowledge of any human being thus comes from the deeds that make up her life. Do we not identify people—farmers, soldiers, teachers, lawyers, engineers—by what they do and what they achieve? Such knowledge is adequate inasmuch as it is derived from an analytical, critical, and objective examination of the natural, social, and cultural environment in which the subject

lives her life. I assume here that a human being is an integral part of the natural and social environment providing the material conditions of her growth and development as an existential reality. The kind of environment in which the individual flourishes plays a significant role in the kind of person that she becomes. Do we not come to know people in general through the kind of life that they lead and the conditions under which they thrive? Does the psychoanalyst not probe the early history of her patient in an effort to understand her present situation? Why indeed do philosophers such as Plato, Spinoza, Hegel, and Whitehead, to name a few of the brightest minds in the history of philosophy, inquire into the source, origin, cause, or initial state of the universe? Was the supreme passion of a cosmologist such as Stephen Hawking not directed at the source of the cosmos as he tried to understand its nature, structure, purpose, and processes? Was this passion any different from the mission of Thales to discover the arche underlying the existence and meaning of the universe? Do counselors, lawyers, parents, and teachers—basically any authority figure seeking a solution to a problem—not begin with an exploration of the cause of the problem? Can we solve any problem rationally if we do not know the facts that make up the whole and the factors that cause it? I do not assume, in this series of questions, that discovering the source of a problem is sufficient for solving it. No, I assume simply that the discovery illuminates the nature and structure of the problem and that such illumination is essential for contemplating and formulating a solution. The book you are about to read meets this condition competently and admirably.

Keeping in mind that knowledge of the source of an object illuminates its essential nature, and that the light of this knowledge enables the mind to comprehend it in the fullness of its being and truth, we can now ask, what is the source of the philosophical work? What is the initial state from which it originates? Again, what is the stuff out of which it is made or fashioned? Perhaps I can be more specific to some benefit: If the essence of philosophical activity is thinking, accordingly, if the philosopher is a thinker, and as a thinker she is a seeker of knowledge, what does she think about and what does she seek to know? We can say that she constructs ideas, propositions, arguments, theories, and systems of thought. But what does she communicate in these and similar constructions? What is their stuff?

I would not be mistaken if I say that, as a thinker, the philosopher is a seeker of knowledge. Otherwise, the ancient claim that she is a lover of wisdom would be either spurious or misleading. But what kind of knowledge does she love and seek? She loves all types of knowledge, yet she cannot seek all of them. It has been clear for some time now, perhaps since the turn of the previous century, that identifying and verifying the facts that make up the scheme of

nature is the task of the empirical scientist, while uncovering and interpreting the meaning of these facts, and consequently of the universe as a whole, is the task of the philosopher.

Let me state at once that the realm of meaning is the realm of human values: goodness, truth, beauty, and their derivatives. Each of these concepts stands for a type or category of value. For example, goodness includes values such as justice, courage, love, and toleration; truth includes values such as wisdom, erudition, deliberation, and understanding; and beauty includes values such as grace, elegance, sublimity, and tragedy. These values exist as ideals—as schemas or plans of action. They are "objects" of desire and aspiration. We prize them because they originate as responses to the essential needs of human nature. Such values come to life as goals and problems, typically expressed in the form of questions. They revolve specifically around three pivotal questions: How should we live? How should we love? How should we die? Whether directly or indirectly, an answer to at least one of these questions underlies our every pursuit in terms of what we desire, what we hope for, and what we enjoy, in short, in connection with our quest for happiness. If I am to express this point more succinctly, I can say that these values center on, and are founded upon, the category of importance: That which is valuable is important, and therefore worth seeking, because it creates a deep feeling of satisfaction, fulfillment, completion, and inner growth.

However, it is not enough to say that human values arise as a response to the basic needs of human nature. It is, moreover, critically important to know the dynamics that underlie the mode of existence of human nature as well as the conditions under which it exists and flourishes. We are temporal beings. We do not choose our existence. Our humanity is not given as a ready-made reality but as a potentiality awaiting realization under certain conditions in a certain environment. We do not live in a friendly habitat. Life is neither convenient nor meaningful. It can certainly become convenient or meaningful, sometimes even both, but the point is that neither convenience nor meaning is a natural part of life on earth. We typically have to create either one, or at least actively seek it out, rather than accidentally stumbling upon it. We do not even know why we exist. We understand the mechanics, of course, of how we come into being, but we do not know why we are here. Why do we exist at all? Why, in fact, does the universe exist? The realm of nature is a realm of brute fact, wholly devoid of value, yet it exhibits some type of order, a rational and comprehensible order, perhaps even a cosmic order pointing to the possibility of an ultimate force or creator. Suppose that such a cosmic creator exists. Why would it create this and not some other cosmic order? Why would it create anything at all? Why indeed is there something rather than nothing? Can we really answer such

questions unless we proceed with an adequate understanding of the source of the scheme of nature and the place of humanity in that scheme?

The purpose of the preceding remarks is not to advance a theory of value, nor to answer any of the questions it raises, but only to emphasize that, while the task of the scientist is to discover the facts of nature, the task of the philosopher is to understand the facts that make up the realm of meaning, namely human values. This realm provides the datum of philosophical inquiry. I do not exaggerate if I say that the most important element of the schools and systems of thought that constitute the world of philosophy is their approach to value: ethics, aesthetics, and social and political theory, all drawing on a common account of the meaning of existence in general and the existence of humanity in particular. This claim is based on the fundamental assumption that any theory of goodness, justice, or beauty presupposes a certain understanding of human nature and the universe. Can the metaphysician theorize about the purpose or meaning of existence without some understanding of the universe? What is the source or basis of this understanding if not the knowledge provided by the scientist? Can the ethicist theorize about the nature of goodness without some understanding of human nature?

Now, if the task of the scientist is to discover the facts of nature, and the task of the philosopher is to uncover the meaning of these facts, what is the task of the artist? What is the datum of her reflection? When she creates a work of art, what is it that she creates? Creation is an activity in which a new reality comes into being. What, then, does the artist bring into being? It is clear that she does not bring into being the corresponding medium of expression, for example, the words, the sounds, or the marble that she uses. She does not create any of those things; she simply shapes and combines them in a certain way. Our greatest clue for an answer is in the works of art standing the test of time and persisting as monuments of the human spirit. We know that masterpieces in the realm of music, painting, sculpture, film, dance, theater, and literature are all uniquely valuable. But what makes them so? Why do we prize them so much that we end up erecting majestic buildings in their honor—museums, art centers, galleries, opera houses, dance halls, theaters—the way the ancient Greeks and Romans built temples for their gods? The ancients knew why they honored their gods. Why do we, indeed why should we, honor the arts? Are our museums, art centers, galleries, opera houses, and so on, temples of Beauty?

I think the majority of artists and philosophers would agree with me if I proposed that human meaning is not only the datum of reflection in artistic creation but also the stuff out of which any work of art is created. If we were to cast an investigative look at artistic masterpieces in various cultures, whether in the West or in the East, we would invariably find that they revolve around

the values of goodness, truth, and beauty, together with their derivatives, and more directly around the questions of life, love, and death. The fountain of inspiration motivating the artist and the philosopher alike is one and the same fountain. Accordingly, the stuff out of which both the work of art and the work of philosophy are made is meaning. Did Plato not ban the artist from the ideal state because he viewed art as imitation and therefore as lacking in reality and truth? The realm of values nourishing the mind of the artist and the philosopher as a wealth of potentiality, on the one hand, and the way that people understand and assimilate these values in their endeavor to fulfill themselves as individuals, on the other, is the source of both art and philosophy.

But what, then, is the creative difference between the philosopher and the artist? I tend to think that the difference is in their means and modes of articulating and communicating meaning. All human expression and communication is symbolic in nature. The philosopher thinks and communicates her insight, knowledge, and understanding by means of concepts, which are units of meaning expressed in words. Every word and every syntactical formation of words—be it a sentence, a paragraph, or a line of reasoning—is a way of shaping meaning in accordance with established rules, conventions, and practices. The philosopher thus communicates meaning conceptually in the medium of thinking. The artist, in contrast, communicates meaning symbolically in the medium of imagination, thinking as she does in terms of images representing her insight, knowledge, and understanding. An image can be visible, audible, literal, allegorical, iconic, dynamic, or static. The painter thinks in terms of lines and colors, the sculptor in terms of marble or bronze, the musician in terms of sounds, the dancer in terms of movement, the novelist in terms of depiction, and the dramatist in terms of action. The philosopher analyzes, argues, demonstrates, clarifies, and evaluates. The artist, on the other hand, presents an image serving as a luminous insight into a slice of human meaning. I do not deduce, ponder, or contemplate the truth that the image reveals. I perceive it directly in the fullness of its being. The artistic image does not have interior or exterior dimensions. We see it and we feel it as a reality in itself. For example, I do not think (of or about) alienation when I read Camus's *The Stranger*. I simply see it and feel it directly in the work. Yet I do think (of or about) alienation when I read Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Our acquaintance with truth and reality is not just a matter of comprehension but also a process of perception through the mind's eye.

I proposed at the beginning that an adequate understanding of the source of any object, natural or artificial, illuminates its essential nature and structure, and that the light of this knowledge enables the mind to comprehend it in the fullness of its being and truth. I can now add another proposal: A work of philosophy can be artistic and a work of art can be philosophical. The

reasonableness of this assertion is based on the fact that both philosophy and art aim at and originate from the same source: reflection on a dimension of human meaning, either a human value or a spectrum of such values. The philosopher articulates the content of her reflection in one symbolic form, namely concepts, while the artist articulates the content of her reflection in another symbolic form, namely musical, dynamical, or theatrical form. This does not mean that every work of philosophy is artistic and that every work of art is philosophical. It means only that it is, in principle, possible for a philosophical work to be artistic and for artwork to be philosophical. Some of the greatest works of literature, which are consequently magnificent works of art, for example, Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilych* or Melville's *Moby Dick*, are indeed philosophical, and some of the greatest works of philosophy, for example, Plato's *Republic* or Spinoza's *Ethics*, are truly artistic.

This assertion is based on the twofold assumption that artwork can communicate philosophical insight and that philosophical work can possess aesthetic qualities, including beauty, charm, elegance, harmony, majesty, and wisdom. It may seem strange to say that a conceptual construct, such as a philosophical idea, analysis, theory, or line of reasoning, can possess aesthetic qualities, but it is quite natural that it should, and rather delightful when it does. Is the novel, the poem, the play, or the short story not a conceptual construct? Do we not ascribe aesthetic qualities to literary works? Does the novel as a world of meaning not inhere in a story as a conceptual construct? Again, does the work of art *qua* art not come to life in the aesthetic experience as a spiritual object? The reality of art, pace Plato, who rejected art but was himself an artist, easily rivals that of the mountains, rivers, trees, and animals that populate the scheme of nature.

I shall not comment on the philosophical and artistic dimensions of the book that will soon enough be unfolding before your eyes, but please allow me to conclude my testimony with the following remark: When a work of philosophy is also a work of art, it is no longer strictly philosophy or purely art. The concept becomes an image as the image becomes a concept. Truth streams into the mind on the wings of beauty. And when truth and beauty thus come together in a human creation, they blend into each other so that truth becomes beautiful and beauty truthful. This kind of merger is one of the mind's highest aspirations, and the resulting union, one of its greatest achievements. That is what awaits readers in *Mill's Principle of Utility*.

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Preface

This book is a critical analysis of the third paragraph of the fourth chapter of John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*. That is not all that it is, to be sure, but that is indeed the center of attention. Such a precise description may constitute an exaggeration of the level of specificity to be found here, perhaps even a caricature of the intensity of concentration likely to be seen or tolerated anywhere. And it may consequently remain too vague to accommodate the time-honored intellectual ritual of inspecting the preface for signs of promise in the rest of the book. But it does provide the most accurate orientation toward what to expect between the covers.

To elaborate, then, this book is a defense of Mill's proof of the principle of utility. Its coverage is not, strictly speaking, limited to a single paragraph in *Utilitarianism*. It also includes several other paragraphs in that essay, as well as some in Mill's other works, not to mention a few others by other people. However, since the proof is laid out in its entirety in the fourth chapter of *Utilitarianism*, never to be repeated, revised, or revisited elsewhere, it would not be grossly misleading to describe the present volume as a commentary on the fourth chapter of Mill's *Utilitarianism*. And considering that proponents and opponents alike tend to confine the proof to the third paragraph of that chapter, it would not be entirely hyperbolic to say that this book is largely about the third paragraph of the fourth chapter of Mill's *Utilitarianism*.

The last thing I wrote on a subject of such limited scope was my first term paper in college. It was a report on the planetary ring system of Saturn, bearing a descriptive title communicating the subject matter: "The Rings of Saturn." I wrote that piece rather reluctantly and turned it in as the final assignment in English 101, the basic course introducing college students to formal writing. The requirement was to prepare a research paper of standard length on any topic so long as the plan met with the instructor's prior approval. My reluctance was grounded in a profound frustration with the approval mechanism. And it grew in proportion to the instructor's relentless opposition to my various proposals revolving around a central theme that otherwise seemed perfectly reasonable to me.

My first choice, a paper on the universe, was rejected out of hand, despite an ambitious yet feasible plan accompanied by a promising outline, both of which were concerned specifically with what is in the universe rather than with what the universe is, why it exists at all, or how it actually works. The instructor, viewing the assignment as the first step of an initiation process in the art and craft of writing, did not seem to have high expectations regarding

content and was pushing instead for good craftsmanship with as narrow a focus as possible. I, on the other hand, was willing to accept tips on how best to say what I had to say, but not on what I had to say. I may have had a few things to learn about good writing and proper composition, but the pedagogical process would surely be the same, I thought, regardless of the subject matter.

Moreover, I was convinced that the topic of my choice was already focused, exactly as instructed, on a sensible project of manageable proportions. I was not, after all, contemplating a study of the universe in the broadest sense, requiring the aid of philosophy in combination with the entire spectrum of the physical sciences. I was interested merely in celestial objects, including groups and systems of such, in "space, the final frontier," as it was called on my favorite show on television. I had prudently ruled out research into anything that was not already verified to be in the universe. I knew my limitations. I was not out to make discoveries. I just wanted to report the facts.

Having developed a fascination with astronomy and space exploration ever since the first episode of *Star Trek* in its original run, having watched the live broadcast of the Apollo 11 mission promising to turn the moon into our own backyard, at least in my own mind, and having gained such vast experience while still in elementary school, I felt well prepared, as a freshman in college, to write about the universe. Yet my confidence and my enthusiasm far exceeded the instructor's expectations, which were aligned instead with my skills and my wisdom, or rather, with my obvious lack of both. Gently urged to reconsider my focus, I was ready, by way of compromise, to settle for coverage of our own galaxy, the Milky Way. Asked immediately to try again, I made further concessions, offering to restrict my study to our solar system. As it turned out, that, too, was unacceptable. I eventually ended up with a project concerning only one feature of only one planet. I quickly lost interest and completed the assignment with apathy and resentment rather than with the enthusiasm I had originally cultivated.

My indignation was anchored to my conviction that, compared to a study of the rings of Saturn, a study of the universe as a whole held far stronger potential for far greater relevance to far more people. Although a paper of ten double-spaced pages on the universe at large would have had to be cast at a level of generality avoiding any discussion of meaningful details, such as the rings of Saturn, a sacrifice of that magnitude seemed insignificant to me, especially in comparison with the insufferable prospect of studying the rings of Saturn while leaving out everything else in the universe.

I was well aware that a report on the rings of Saturn would support our understanding of the planet, a better understanding of which would enhance our knowledge of the solar system, more extensive and reliable information

on which would expand what we knew about our galaxy, and so on, with the implication that I would indeed be taking part thereby in an ongoing study of the universe. That, however, was not satisfactory. I wanted to be engaged in that process directly at the universal level. I felt both entitled and qualified to skip all the minor details better left to those who had not yet mastered the big picture.

Several years later, Stephen Hawking proved the feasibility of my original plan, when he managed to produce a popular book on the universe without ever mentioning the rings of Saturn, the polar ice caps of Mars, that red spot on Jupiter, or any of the other countless details making up the whole. Notwithstanding Hawking's predilection for devoting too much space to time and too little time to space—a prejudice coloring his comparably popular sequels as well—I still believe that a good report on the universe would appeal to a greater number of people than would a good one on the rings of Saturn. Yet I no longer believe that the quantitative difference would necessarily make it more valuable.

This confession may seem oddly out of place in a positive commentary on utilitarianism, but the confession in question doubles as a recognition that value measured along utilitarian lines depends as much on the consequences as it does on the number of people affected by those consequences. Universal and specific studies need not be compared in terms of merit, but even when they are so compared, each one can be valuable in its own right. A common measure of value in that sense is the strength of the contribution made to the field. The proper comparison is not between generalist and specialist studies, as if they were mutual substitutes, but between each approach and its own alternatives.

A scholarly work must first meet the minimally acceptable standards of adequacy relevant to any study conceived in a formal academic context and carried out with a combination of facts and arguments. Its unique contribution to the state of scholarship peculiar to its domain carries and confers additional value, independently of the extent to which it satisfies the general conditions that make any such study technically adequate. Academic studies are often said to be produced in isolation, which is an allusion to the final stage of production where the author is alone with a keyboard and monitor. Yet any academic project is actually an outgrowth of endless interaction with the repository of knowledge already available on the subject. It is contemplated and developed in reaction to existing work, just as it is subsequently evaluated in reference to such work. No matter how good a scholarly study may be in itself, it becomes all the more valuable if it fills an unmet need or offers greater satisfaction of one that has so far been met only partially.

The most memorable expression of this scholarly symbiosis is Alfred North Whitehead's reflection on the whole of Western intellectual thought as a unitary process. Drawing on what he found to be its safest general characterization, Whitehead famously described the European philosophical tradition as a series of footnotes to Plato. This would have been a more felicitous generalization had Plato's most celebrated pupil not been so quick to establish a competing system of comparable influence. Nevertheless, the emphasis on Plato is not so much on the value or validity of his specific ideas as it is on the significance of his general contribution to the germination, institution, and orientation of philosophical thought as a mode of inquiry. As for sheer brilliance and accomplishment, a historical assessment of that sort might have worked just as well if it were cast in terms of a sequence of meditations anticipating Descartes, or a succession of prolegomena preceding Kant, instead of, or in addition to, a series of footnotes following Plato. With some sacrifice in modesty, even a protracted preface to Whitehead himself would have been a fairly meaningful metaphor.

Regardless of his true intentions, however, Whitehead's original statement represents the strongest praise imaginable for anyone in any field of study. And the proposition rings true even after the exaggeration is filtered out to recognize other pivotal figures in the history of Western thought. The present volume, then, is my footnote to John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*. Or from a different perspective, still in reference to Whitehead's metaphor, it is a demonstration of the significance of one of Mill's footnotes to Plato.

I was as eager to undertake this project as I was reluctant to write about the rings of Saturn. This may seem inconsistent, both logically and psychologically, if Mill's proof is to ethics what the rings of Saturn are to the universe. Yet the decades going by between the composition of "The Rings of Saturn" and the publication of *Mill's Principle of Utility* confirm that any such inconsistency is, in fact, a reflection of the author's gradual development of an appreciation for specialized research and analysis.

The analogy, of course, is not perfect, given that there is no particular measure of the relative importance of the apparent analogues. Perhaps the universal setting corresponding to Mill's proof should be taken as the entire field of philosophy instead of just as moral philosophy. Or it might plausibly be expanded even further to include the full range of scientific inquiry. Or it might best be restricted to the history of philosophy, or possibly to the history of ethical thought. While it is indeed difficult to choose between size and significance in placing the objects of comparison in their respective settings, none of that really matters, because the story on which the analogy is based is true. It is an autobiographical anecdote rather than a literary tool employed to embellish or

emphasize a relevant similitude, which could have otherwise been expressed in a single sentence in the first place.

However that may be, Mill's proof is more important to ethical theory, at least in the sense of enriching it rather than merely taking part in it, than the rings of Saturn are to the universe. Fortunately, in more or less the same proportion, what I have to say about Mill's proof is more interesting than what I had to say about the rings of Saturn. This might not have been a good reason to offer a book on the subject if what I had to say about either one were not very interesting to begin with, but I believe what I have to say about Mill's proof enhances what has been said to date on the subject. This still might not have been a sufficient motivation or justification for writing a book if the subject itself were not philosophically important, but the timeline of bibliography on the proof confirms the importance of the subject. Secondary literature dealing with or related to the proof starts in Mill's own lifetime and continues without interruption to the present day. The longevity of powerful reactions by prominent scholars, most of them opposing the proof as a logical and philosophical abomination, has been instrumental in convincing me of the need for critical intervention and comprehensive reconsideration.

As for what is actually in the book, the introduction that follows the front matter offers a more traditional overview, providing a properly informative breakdown of the various goals and strategies as well as the particular contents, in contrast to the playfully allegorical expression of the same concerns serving the same end in the present preface.

Acknowledgments

I am indebted first and foremost to Gary E. Varner for fruitful discussions on various aspects of Mill's ethics, particularly on his proof of the principle of utility, which helped shape my initial thoughts on a comprehensive analysis and defense, eventually leading to the inception of this project. I am also grateful to Carl P. Wellman, Larry May, and Roger F. Gibson Jr. for their generosity with their time and effort in supporting the subsequent course of development. Wellman was instrumental in the evolution of the central thesis and main arguments, which steadily benefited from his felicitous interventions with a comprehensive command of the material and meticulous attention to detail. May was generously forthcoming with ideas drawing on his proven expertise in herd mentality, group morality, and collective responsibility, both stimulating and facilitating my investigation of Mill's position on the ontological and moral status of groups. Gibson was indispensable in an advisory capacity on a broader scale and more permanent basis, not only in connection with this particular project but also in contribution to my overall progress as a professional philosopher.

My earlier intellectual debt is to some of the best teachers anyone has ever had: Feridun Baydar, Michael H. Mitias, and Robert E. Bergmark. Baydar was the primary impetus behind my early education, also playing a central role in the establishment of my character, especially in my formative years. Fully transcending his official role and contractual responsibilities as a teacher of mathematics, he provided profound insight on a diverse range of subjects through years of Socratic discussion, all the while demonstrating a philosophy of life with a wit and wisdom that has always been my ambition to emulate. He was easily the greatest inspiration in my youth and his memory continues to be a guiding light in my life. Mitias and Bergmark, in turn, were responsible for my formal introduction to philosophy in college. They supervised my first encounter with the philosophical classics and equipped me with the tools of the trade for recognizing and analyzing philosophical problems. Both as my teacher and as my mentor, in either case as the personification of Aristotelian excellence, Mitias ignited and nurtured my passion for the study of philosophy, immediately influencing my major in college and ultimately motivating my transition to graduate school. As my friend—friendship being a relationship he values above everything else, so much so as to publish a compelling monograph on the subject—Mitias later traveled halfway around the world to stand with me as the best man at my wedding. He remains, to this day, a definitive benchmark for my endeavors as a philosopher and my journey as a human being.

Friends in general represent the richest resource available in our philosophical adventures. Philosophy is, after all, neither theoretical nor experimental but dialectical. And dialectic best reveals its pedagogical potential when conducted with the natural spontaneity of an unscripted exchange of ideas with the people we deem most worthy of our regard. A scholarly contribution to ethical theory is particularly responsive to, if not outright dependent on, the personal relationships comprising its driving force. It is indeed ethical discourse, more than any other intellectual activity, that thrives on intimate interaction with one's friends, who thus serve not only as dialectical partners but also as a collective moral compass. Our greatest debt thereby is typically to those with whom we disagree the most.

Whether in agreement or in disagreement, my most valuable learning opportunities in moral deliberation, gradually refining my predilections in ethical theory, have come from discussions with Timothy L. Anderson, William Allen Andrews, Frederick Scott Bauer, Mary Frances (Weir) Billups, Wesley Haas Blacksher, James Arnette Bobo, Michael Howard Brunson, David Sylvester Butler Jr., William Jolley Carr III, Collin Creswell Cope, Ned Mims French II, Philip Walter Gaines, Jeffrey Ernest Good, Nancy Kincade (Williams) Green, Stuart Byron Green, John Douglas Hermann, William Thomas Hetrick, Albert Anne Labasse, Cecile Elizabeth (Williams) Leggett, John Clifford Leggett, Paul Owen Martin, Stephen Kelly Martin, William Whitfield McKinley Jr., Tara Lyn McPherson, Jon Garraway Nance, John Thomas Ray III, Frederick Joseph Rein Jr., Charles Allen Scarboro, David Marcus Wilkerson, and Benjamin Ray Wynne.

Learning opportunities become all the more effective when they are close at hand and available on demand. With existential experience constituting an essential ingredient in personal growth, our principal prospects for any kind of enlightenment are, as it happens, conveniently located at home, which is where most of us spend most of our time. It has accordingly been my great fortune to share my life with a veritable fountain of inspiration, my wife, Banu Beste Başol Alican. Regular exposure to the mystical blend of prophetic intuition and sagely wisdom animating her visionary spirit has been the single most important factor in my ongoing development both as a person and as a scholar. Banu also shares creative responsibility for the conception and contemplation of the present volume—a revised and enlarged edition of the original—and consequently for the transformation of the initial effort into a better concept and product. It is through her electrifying originality as a critic and her infectious optimism as an advocate that everything worthwhile in my life inevitably finds its true potential.

A Note on References

References to John Stuart Mill's works are to the standard critical edition: *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*. Thirty-three volumes. General editors: Francis Ethelbert Louis Priestley and John Mercel Robson. Toronto (University of Toronto Press) and London (Routledge and Kegan Paul), 1963–1991.

Page references identify the *Collected Works* edition as "CW," followed by volume and page numbers in Arabic numerals separated by a colon. References to *Utilitarianism* add greater detail to accommodate readers following any of the popular editions. The CW pagination in that case is preceded by a reference to *Utilitarianism*, denoted as "U," followed by chapter and paragraph numbers, again in Arabic numerals separated by a colon. References to *A System of Logic* are also documented in greater detail in reflection of the organizational divisions Mill himself provides in that work: "L" signifies the work, followed by book, chapter, and section numbers, all in Arabic numerals with a colon separator followed by a period separator. Then comes the CW pagination.

Mill's works that are most relevant to the present volume appear as follows in the *Collected Works* edition: *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (CW10:261–368); *Autobiography* (CW1:1–290); "Coleridge" (CW10:117–163); *Letters* (CW12–17 and CW32); *On Liberty* (CW18:213–310); "Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy" (CW10:3–18); "Sedgwick's Discourse" (CW10:31–74); *A System of Logic* (CW7–8); *Three Essays on Religion* (CW10:369–489); "Use and Abuse of Political Terms" (CW18:1–13); *Utilitarianism* (CW10:203–259); "Whewell on Moral Philosophy" (CW10:165–201); "The Works of Jeremy Bentham" (CW10:75–115).

References to sources other than Mill's *Collected Works* follow the author-date system of citation. Footnotes are reserved for information or argumentation that would otherwise disrupt the natural progression of the main text. Unless specified otherwise, quotations omit any and all footnote reference markers (whether asterisks or numerals or letters) present in the original.