

**MA Ethics Seminar
Spring Semester 1999
Mill and Utilitarianism**

Primary reading:

John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism and On Liberty

Both are available in many editions, but the Oxford Classics selection edited by John Gray is cheap, readily available, and includes On the Subjection of Women and Articles on Representative Government as well.

Recommended

For a useful succinct summary of recent work on Mill's moral philosophy, see

Ross Harrison, "Bentham, Mill and Sidgwick", in The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy, eds. Nicholas Bunnin and E.P. Tsui-James (Blackwell 1996)

Several of the articles in

John Skorupski, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Mill (CUP 1998)

are useful, especially those by Robson, Ten, Irwin, and Ryan, together with Skorupski's introduction. A superb discussion of the whole of Mill's philosophy is

John Skorupski, John Stuart Mill (Routledge 1989), esp. chapters 9 ("Utilitarianism") and 10 ("Liberty").

For Utilitarianism in particular, see

Roger Crisp, A Guidebook to J. S. Mill's "Utilitarianism" (Routledge 1997)

Influential recent discussions of Mill's moral philosophy include

David Lyons, Rights, Welfare, and Mill's Moral Theory (OUP 1994)

Fred Berger, Happiness, Justice, and Freedom: The Moral and Political Philosophy of John Stuart Mill (Uni. of California Press 1984)

David Brink, "Mill's deliberative Utilitarianism", Philosophy and Public Affairs 21 (1992) 67-103.

For a detailed recent version of utilitarianism with many points of contact with Mill, see

James Griffin, Well-Being: its Meaning, Measurement, and Moral Importance (Oxford 1986)

Contemporary versions of utilitarianism are discussed by all the participants in

Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams, eds. Utilitarianism and Beyond (CUP 1982)

Influential attacks on the utilitarian tradition are to be found in

Bernard Williams: Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy (Fontana Press/Collins 1985)

and in Williams' contributions to Sen and Williams eds. above, and to

J. J. C. Smart and Bernard Williams, Utilitarianism: For and Against (CUP 1973)

It is an interesting question which, if any, of Williams' criticisms are effective against Mill.