Autobiography

John Stuart Mill

1873

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis . . . . indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type. —Unnumbered section-headings are not in the original.

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Glossary

amanuensis: Bentham's amanuensis was the person to whom Bentham dictated his works.

the ballot: The system under which only the individual voter knows which way he has voted.

borné: 'Limited in scope, intellect, outlook, etc.' (OED)

casual: As used on page 50 it means something like 'non-essential'; a casual association of idea x with thing y is one that has been brought about by education, indoctrination etc., and doesn't involve any intrinsic link between x and y.

centralisation: The concentration of executive power in some central authority.

Coercion bill: Legislation authorising the government to use extra-judicial force in a (supposed) emergency.

connive: Mill uses this word in its original sense (from Latin *connivere* = 'to wink'), in which to 'connive at' bad conduct is to pretend not to see it, to turn a blind eye to it. Since we have no other word with this meaning, it is sad that illiterate journalists have abolished it and made 'connive' mean 'conspire or plot'.

the Continent: Europe minus the UK.

demoralising: In Mill's usage to demoralise someone is to corrupt his morals, not (as in our sense) to lower his morale.

entail: A legal restriction preventing an item of property from being bequeathed to anyone but a designated class of descendants.

evidence: On page 83 the 'evidence of mathematics' is the *evidentness*, the obvious truth, of mathematical truths.

fact: On page 102 Mill (twice) uses this word in its old sense of 'a thing assumed or alleged as a basis of argument'.

Fenians: Irish revolutionaries aiming to end, if necessary by violence, British rule in Ireland.

Girondist: A moderate participant in the French Revolution, eventually overthrown by the more radical Jacobins.

the Holy Alliance: 'An alliance formed between Russia, Austria and Prussia in 1815 on the basis of proposed Christian principles of government' (OED).

inimacy: Nowhere in this work do 'intimate' or 'intimacy' imply anything sexual. This is important on page 84.

jejune: Thin, unnourishing. Neither the word nor its meaning has anything to do with the French word *jeune*.

jobbing: 'Using a public office for private or party advantage' (OED).

Malthus's population principle: The thesis that unchecked increases in population inevitably outstrip increases in food, making it essential for mankind to find some way of holding down population.

Owenites: Followers of Robert Owen's utopian socialist philosophy.

political economy: Economics.

popular: Having to do with *the people*; not necessarily being liked by them.

primogeniture: Legal requirement that an item of property be bequeathed to the present owner's oldest child (or oldest son).

reticence: Mill uses the word in its proper sense of 'reluctance to speak'.

sentiment: This can mean 'belief' or 'feeling'; it is for you to decide which in each case.

sympathy: Fellow-feeling; you can sympathise with my joy as well as with my sorrow.

Thirty-nine articles: Doctrinal statement of the position of the Church of England in relation to Calvinism (on one side) and Roman Catholicism (on the other).

vulgar: Pertaining to people who are not much educated and (the suggestion often is) not very intelligent.

Part 1
Childhood and early education

It seems proper that before embarking on the following biographical sketch I should explain why I think it desirable that I should leave behind me such a memorial of a life as uneventful as mine. I do not for a moment imagine that any part of it can be interesting to the public as a narrative, or as being connected with myself. But I have thought that in an age in which education, and its improvement, are subjected to more (if not deeper) study than at any former period of English history, it may be useful to have some record of an education which was unusual and remarkable, and which—whatever else it may have done—has proved how much more than is commonly supposed may be taught, and well taught, in those early years, years that are little better than wasted in the common modes of what is called instruction. It has also seemed to me that in an age of transition in opinions there may be some interest and some benefit in noting the successive phases of any mind that was always pressing forward, equally ready to learn and to unlearn either from its own thoughts or from those of others. But a motive that weighs more with me than either of these is a desire to acknowledge the debts that my intellectual and moral development owes to other persons; •some of recognised eminence, •others less known than they deserve to be, and •the one to whom most of all is due, one whom the world had no opportunity of knowing. The reader whom these things do not interest has only himself to blame if he reads on; I ask him to do me the kindness of bearing in mind that these pages were not written for him.

* * * * * *

My father

I was born in London on 20.v.1806, and was the oldest son of James Mill, the author of the *History of British India*. My father, the son of a petty tradesman and (I believe) small farmer at Northwater Bridge in the county of Angus was, when a boy, recommended by his abilities to the notice of Sir John Stuart of Fettercairn, one of the Barons of the Exchequer in Scotland, and was in consequence sent to the University of Edinburgh at the expense of a fund established by Lady Jane Stuart (the wife of Sir John Stuart) and some other ladies for educating young men for the Scottish Church. He there went through the usual course of study and was licensed as a preacher; but he never followed the profession, having satisfied himself that he could not believe the doctrines of that or any other Church. For a few years he was a private tutor in various families in Scotland, including that of the Marquis of Tweeddale; but ended by taking up his residence in London, and devoting himself to authorship. That was his only means of support until 1819 when he obtained an appointment in the India House.

In this period of my father's life there are two things that one must be struck with: one unfortunately a very common circumstance, the other a most uncommon one. The first is that in his position, with no resource but the precarious one of writing in periodicals, he married and had a large family—conduct that was utterly opposed, as a matter of good sense and of duty, to the opinions that he strenuously upheld at least at a later period of life. The other circumstance is the extraordinary energy that was required to lead the life he led, with the disadvantages he laboured under from the first and the ones he brought on himself by his marriage. Given

> •that his opinions in politics and in religion were more odious to all persons of influence and to the common run of prosperous Englishmen in that generation than either before or since; •that he was a man whom nothing would have induced to write against his convictions, and who invariably threw into everything he wrote as much of his convictions as he thought the circumstances would in any way permit; and •that he never did anything negligently, never undertook any literary or other task without conscientiously bestowing on it all the labour necessary for performing it adequately,

it would have been no small thing if he had done no more than to support himself and his family during so many years by writing, without ever being in debt or in any financial difficulty. But with these burdens on him he planned, started, and completed the *History of India*, doing this in the course of about ten years, a shorter time than has been needed (even by writers with no other employment) to produce almost any other historical work of equal size or as much reading and research. And during this whole period a considerable part of almost every day was employed in the instruction of his children. In the case of one of these, myself, he exerted an amount of labour, care, and perseverance rarely if ever employed for a similar purpose, trying to give the highest order of intellectual education according to his own conception of this.

Starting Greek at the age of 3

A man who in his own conduct so vigorously acted up to the principle of *losing no time* was likely to adhere to the same rule in the instruction of his pupil. I have no memory of the time when I began to learn Greek. I have been told that it was when I was three years old. My earliest recollection on the subject is of committing to memory what my father termed 'vocables'—lists of common Greek words with their meanings in English, which he wrote out for me on cards. Until some years later the only ·Greek· grammar that I learned was the inflexions of the nouns and verbs, but after a course of vocables I proceeded at once to translation; and I faintly remember going through Aesop's *Fables*, the first Greek book I read. The *Anabasis* ·of Xenophon·, which I remember better, was the second. I learned no Latin until my eighth year. At that time I had under my father's tuition read a number of Greek prose authors, among whom I remember the whole of Herodotus, and of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and Memorials of Socrates; some of the lives of the philosophers by Diogenes Laertius; part of Lucian, and Isocrates' *ad Demonicum* and *ad Nicoclem*. I also read, in 1813, the first six dialogues (in the common arrangement) of Plato, from *Euthyphro* to *Theaetetus* inclusive. I venture to think that that last dialogue would have been better omitted, as it was totally impossible that I should understand it. But in all his teaching my father demanded of me not only the utmost that I could do but much that I could not possibly have done. What he was himself willing to undergo for the sake of my instruction may be judged from the fact that I went through the whole process of preparing my Greek lessons at the same table at which he was writing: and as in those days Greek-English dictionaries did not exist and I could make no use of a Greek-Latin dictionary because I had not yet begun to learn Latin, I had to appeal to him for the meaning of every word that I did not know. Though one of the most impatient of men, he submitted to this incessant interruption, and wrote under that interruption several volumes of his *History* and everything else that he had to write during those years.

History etc.

The only thing besides Greek that I learned as a lesson in this part of my childhood was arithmetic. This also my father taught me; it was the task of the evenings, and I well remember its disagreeableness. But the *lessons* were only a part of the daily instruction I received. Much of it consisted in the books I read by myself, and my father's discourses to me, chiefly during our walks. From 1810 to the end of 1813 we were living in Newington Green, then an almost rustic neighbourhood. My father's health required considerable and constant exercise, and he walked habitually before breakfast, generally in the green lanes towards Hornsey. In these walks I always accompanied him, and my earliest recollections of green fields and wild flowers are mingled with memories of the account I daily gave him of what I had read the day before. To the best of my recollection this was a voluntary rather than a prescribed exercise. I made notes on slips of paper while reading, and from these in the morning walks I told the story to him. The books were chiefly histories, of which I read a great number in this manner: Robertson's histories, Hume, Gibbon; but my greatest delight, then and for long afterwards, was Watson's *The Reign of Philip II* and *The Reign of Phillip III*. The heroic defence of the Knights of Malta against the Turks, and of the revolted provinces of the Netherlands against Spain, aroused in me an intense and lasting interest. Next to Watson, my favourite historical reading was Hooke's *History of Rome*. At that time I had seen no regular history of Greece except school abridgments and the first two or three volumes of a translation of Rollin's *Ancient History*, beginning with Philip of Macedon. But I read with great delight Langhorne's translation of Plutarch. In English history, beyond the time at which Hume leaves off, I remember reading Burnet's *History of my own Time*, though I cared little for anything in it except the wars and battles; and the historical part of the *Annual Register* from the beginning to about 1788, when the volumes my father borrowed for me from Mr Bentham left off. I felt a lively interest in Frederick of Prussia during his difficulties, and in the Corsican patriot Paoli; but when I came to the American war ·of independence·, until I was set right by my father I took my part—like the child that I was—on the wrong side, because it was called the English side. As opportunity offered in these frequent talks about the books I read, he gave me explanations and ideas concerning civilisation, government, morality, mental cultivation, which he required me afterwards to state back to him in my own words. He also made me read and give him a verbal account of many books that would not have interested me enough for me to read them of myself: among others Millar's *Historical View of the English Government*, a book of great merit for its time, which he highly valued; Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, McCrie's *Life of John Knox*, and even Sewel's and Rutty's histories of the Quakers. He was fond of putting into my hands books that showed men of energy and resource in unusual circumstances, struggling against difficulties and overcoming them: of such works I remember Beaver's *African Memoranda* and Collins's account of the first settlement of New South Wales. Two books that I never wearied of reading were Anson's *Voyage around the World*, so delightful to most young persons, and a collection (Hawkesworth's, I believe) of voyages around the world, in four volumes, beginning with Drake and ending with Cook and Bougainville. I had scarcely any children's books (any more than I had toys) except an occasional gift from a relation or acquaintance; *Robinson Crusoe* was preeminent among those gifts, and continued to delight me through all my boyhood. It was no part of my father's system to *exclude* books of amusement, though he allowed them very sparingly. At that time he

possessed almost no such books, but he borrowed several for me; the ones I remember are the *Arabian Nights*, Cazotte's *Arabian Tales*, *Don Quixote*, Miss Edgeworth's *Popular Tales* and Brooke's *Fool of Quality*, a book of some reputation in its day.

In my eighth year I began learning Latin, along with a younger sister to whom I taught it as I went on, and who afterwards repeated the lessons to my father; and from this time, other sisters and brothers being successively added as pupils, a considerable part of my day's work consisted of this preparatory teaching. It was a part that I greatly disliked, especially because I was held responsible for the lessons of my pupils in almost as full a sense as for my own. However, I derived from this discipline the great advantage of learning more thoroughly, and retaining more lastingly, the things I was set to teach; and the practice it gave me in explaining difficulties to others may even at that age have been useful. In other respects the experience of my boyhood is not favourable to the plan of teaching children by means of one another. I am sure that the teaching is very inefficient as teaching, and I well knew that the relation between teacher and taught is not a good moral discipline for either. I went in this way through the Latin grammar, and a considerable part of Cornelius Nepos and Caesar's *Commentaries*, but afterwards added to the superintendence of these lessons much longer ones of my own.

In the same year in which I began Latin I made my start on the Greek poets with the *Iliad*. After I had made some progress in this, my father put Pope's translation into my hands. It was the first English verse I had cared to read, and it became one of the books in which for many years I most delighted: I think I must have read it through from twenty to thirty times. I would not have thought it worthwhile to mention a taste apparently so natural to boyhood if I had not observed that the keen enjoyment of this brilliant specimen of narrative and versification is *not* as universal with boys as I would have expected both *a priori* and from my individual experience. Soon after this time I commenced Euclid, and somewhat later algebra, still under my father's tuition.

Latin, Greek poets

From my eighth to my twelfth year the Latin books I remember reading were the *Bucolics* of Virgil and the first six books of the *Aeneid*; all of Horace except the *Epodes*; the *Fables* of Phaedrus; the first five books of Livy (to which from my love of the subject I voluntarily added, in my hours of leisure, the next five); all of Sallust; a considerable part of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; some plays of Terence; two or three books by Lucretius; several of Cicero's Orations and of his writings on oratory; also his letters to Atticus, my father taking the trouble to translate to me from the French the historical explanations in Mongault's notes. In Greek I read the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* through; one or two plays of Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes, though by these I profited little; all of Thucydides; the *Hellenics* of Xenophon; a great part of Demosthenes, Aeschines, and Lysias; Theocritus; Anacreon; part of the *Greek Anthology*; a little of Dionysius; several books of Polybius; and lastly Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which my father made me study with special care, organising its content into synoptic tables, because it was the first expressly scientific treatise on any moral or psychological subject that I had read, and contained many of the best observations of the ancients on human nature and life. During the same years I learned elementary geometry and algebra thoroughly, and the differential calculus and other parts of higher mathematics far from thoroughly. That is because my father, not having kept up this part of his own

early-acquired knowledge, could not spare time to equip himself to remove my difficulties, and left me to deal with them with little help except from books; while I continually incurred his displeasure by my inability to solve difficult problems for which he did not see that I lacked the necessary previous knowledge.

As for my private reading, I can only speak of what I remember. History continued to be my strongest predilection, and most of all ancient history. I read Mitford's *Greece* continually; my father had put me on my guard against •the Tory prejudices of this writer and •his perversions of facts for the white-washing of despots and the blackening of popular institutions. He talked to me on these points—exemplifying them from the Greek orators and historians—so effectively that in reading Mitford my sympathies [see Glossary] were always on the opposite side to the author's, and I could to some extent have argued the point against him; but this did not diminish the always new pleasure with which I read the book. Roman history continued to delight me—both in my old favourite, Hooke, and in Ferguson. A book I took great pleasure in, despite its reputed 'dryness' of style, was the *Ancient Universal History*, through the incessant reading of which I had my head full of historical details concerning the most obscure ancient people, while I knew and cared comparatively little about modern history except for detached episodes such as the Dutch war of independence. A voluntary exercise to which I was much addicted throughout my boyhood was what I called 'writing histories'. I successively composed a Roman history, picked out of Hooke; an abridgment of the *Ancient Universal History*; a History of Holland, from my favourite Watson and from an anonymous compilation; and in my eleventh and twelfth year I occupied myself with writing what I flattered myself was something serious. This was no less than a history of the Roman Government, compiled (with the assistance of Hooke) from Livy and Dionysius: of which I wrote as much as would have made an octavo volume, extending to the epoch of the Licinian Laws. It was in fact an account of the struggles between the patricians and plebeians that now attracted all the interest I had previously felt in the Romans' mere wars and conquests. I discussed all the institutional points as they arose; although quite ignorant of Niebuhr's researches, I (by such lights as my father had given me) vindicated the agrarian laws on the evidence of Livy, and upheld to the best of my ability the Roman democratic party. A few years later, in my disregard of my childish efforts, I destroyed all these papers, not then expecting that I would ever be curious about my first attempt at writing and reasoning. My father encouraged me in this useful pastime, though (judiciously, I think) he never asked to see what I wrote; so that I did not feel that in writing it I was accountable to anyone, nor had the chilling sensation of being under a critical eye.

Poetry

But though these exercises in history were never a compulsory lesson, there was another kind of composition which was so, namely writing verses, and it was one of the most disagreeable of my tasks. I did not write Greek and Latin verses or learn the prosody [= the laws of metre] of those languages. My father thought this was not worth the time it required, and contented himself with making me read aloud to him, and correcting false quantities. I never composed at all in Greek, even in prose, and not much in Latin. It wasn't that my father was indifferent to the value of this practice in giving a thorough knowledge of those languages, but there really was not time for it. The verses I was required to write were English. When I first read Pope's Homer, I ambitiously

tried to compose something of the same kind, and achieved as much as one book of a continuation of the *Iliad*. The spontaneous promptings of my poetical ambition would have stopped there; but the exercise, begun from choice, was continued by command. In line with my father's usual practice of explaining to me, as far as possible, the reasons for what he required me to do, he gave me two reasons for this that were highly characteristic of him. One was that some things could be better and more forcibly expressed in verse than in prose; this, he said, was a real advantage. The other was that people in general attached more value to verse than it deserved, and the power of writing it was therefore worth acquiring. He generally left me to choose my own subjects, which (as far as I remember) were mostly addresses to some mythological personage or allegorical abstraction; but he made me translate into English verse many of Horace's shorter poems; I also remember his giving me Thomson's *Winter* to read, and afterwards making me attempt (without book) to write something on the same subject. The verses I wrote were of course mere rubbish, and I never achieved any skill in versification; but the practice may have been useful in making it easier for me in later years to acquire readiness of expression.[1] Up to this time I had read very little English poetry. My father had put Shakespeare into my hands, chiefly for the sake of the historical plays, from which I went on to the others. My father never was a great admirer of Shakespeare, the English idolatry of whom he used to attack with some severity. He cared little for any English poetry except Milton (for whom he had the highest admiration), Goldsmith, Burns, and Gray's *Bard*, which he preferred to his *Elegy*; perhaps I may add Cowper and Beattie. He had some value for Spenser, and I remember his reading to me (unlike his usual practice of making me read to him) the first book of the *Fairie Queene*, but I took little pleasure in it. He saw scarcely any merit in the poetry of the present century, and I hardly became acquainted with any of it until my adult years, except the metrical romances of Walter Scott which I read at his recommendation and was intensely delighted with, as I always was with any lively narrative. Dryden's poems were among my father's books, and many of these he made me read, but I never cared for any of them except 'Alexander's Feast', which I used to sing internally to a music of my own. I did the same with many of the songs in Walter Scott, for some of which I went so far as to compose tunes which I still remember. I read Cowper's short poems with some pleasure, but never got far into the longer ones; and nothing in the two volumes interested me like the prose account of his three hares. In my thirteenth year I met with Campbell's poems, some of which gave me sensations I had never before experienced from poetry. I made nothing of the longer poems, except the opening of 'Gertrude of Wyoming', which long kept its place in my feelings as the perfection of pathos.

One of my greatest amusements during this part of my childhood was experimental science, in the theoretical sense of the word, however, not the practical one. I did not try experiments—a kind of discipline that I have often regretted not having had—and did not even see any, but merely read about them. I never remember being so wrapped up in any book as I was in Joyce's *Scientific Dialogues*; and I was

[1] In a subsequent stage of boyhood when these exercises had ceased to be compulsory, like most youthful writers I wrote tragedies; under the inspiration not so much of Shakespeare as of Joanna Baillie, whose *Constantine Paleologus* in particular appeared to me one of the most glorious human compositions. I still think it one of the best dramas of the last two centuries.

rather reluctant to accept my father's criticisms of the bad reasoning about the first principles of physics that abounds in the early part of that work. I devoured treatises on chemistry, especially that of my father's early friend and schoolfellow, Dr Thomson, for years before I attended a lecture or saw an experiment.

Logic

From about the age of twelve I entered into a more advanced stage in my course of instruction, in which the main object was no longer the aids and appliances of thought but the thoughts themselves. This started with logic, in which I began at once with the Organon ·of Aristotle· and read it up to and including the Analytics, but profited little from the Posterior Analytics, which belongs to a branch of speculation I was not yet ripe for. Along with the Organon my father made me read the whole or parts of several of the Latin treatises on the scholastic logic; giving him each day on our walks a minute account of what I had read, and answering his numerous and searching questions. After this I went in a similar way through the *Computatio sive Logica* of Hobbes, a work of a much higher order of thought than the books of the scholastic logicians, and which he estimated very highly—in my opinion beyond its merits, great as these are. It was his invariable practice, whatever studies he required from me, to make me as far as possible understand and feel the utility of them; and he regarded this as especially fitting in the case of the syllogistic logic, the usefulness of which had been challenged by so many writers of authority. I well remember how, and in what particular walk in the neighbourhood of Bagshot Heath (where we were on a visit to his old friend Mr Wallace, then one of the mathematical professors at Sandhurst), he first tried by questions to make me think about this subject and develop some conception of what made syllogistic logic useful, and (when I had failed in this) to make me understand it by explanations. The explanations did not make the matter at all clear to me at the time, but they were not useless; they remained as a nucleus for my observations and reflections to crystallise on, because the import of his general remarks was later interpreted to me by the particular instances that came under my notice. My own consciousness and experience eventually led me to appreciate—quite as highly as he did—the value of an early practical familiarity with scholastic logic. I know nothing in my education to which I think myself more indebted for whatever capacity of thinking I have attained. The first intellectual operation in which I arrived at any proficiency was dissecting a bad argument and finding where in it the fallacy lay; and though whatever ability of this sort I achieved was due to its being an intellectual exercise in which I was perseveringly drilled by my father, it is also true that the scholastic logic, and the mental habits acquired in studying it, were among the principal instruments of this drilling. I am persuaded that nothing in modern education tends so much, when properly used, to form exact thinkers who attach a precise meaning to words and propositions and are not imposed on by vague, loose, or ambiguous terms. The boasted influence of mathematical studies is nothing to it; for in mathematical processes none of the real difficulties of correct reasoning occur. It is also a suitable study for an early stage in the education of philosophical students, because it does not involve the students in the slow process of acquiring by experience and reflection valuable thoughts of their own. They may become capable of disentangling the intricacies of confused and self-contradictory thought before their own thinking faculties are much advanced; a capability that many otherwise able men altogether lack because they

were never subjected to some such discipline. When such men have to answer opponents they try by such argument as they can command to support their own side, scarcely even trying to confute the reasonings of their antagonists; so that at best they leave the question, as far as it depends on argument, a balanced one.

Most of the Latin and Greek books that I continued to read with my father at this time were worth studying not merely for the language but also for the thoughts. This included much of the orators, and especially Demosthenes, some of whose principal orations I read several times over and wrote out (by way of exercise) a full analysis of them. My father's comments on these orations when I read them to him were very instructive to me. He not only drew my attention to the insight they afforded into Athenian institutions, and the principles of legislation and government they often illustrated, but pointed out the skill and art of the orator—how everything important to his purpose was said at the exact moment when he had brought his audience's minds into the state most fitted to receive it; how he made steal into their minds, gradually and by insinuation, thoughts that would have aroused their opposition if expressed more directly. I could not fully grasp many of these reflections at the time, but they left seed which germinated in due season. At this time I also read the whole of Tacitus, Juvenal, and Quintilian. The latter, owing to his obscure style and to the scholarly details of which many parts of his treatise are made up, is little read and seldom sufficiently appreciated. His book is a kind of encyclopedia of the thoughts of the ancients on the whole field of education and culture; and I have retained through life many valuable ideas which I can distinctly trace to my reading of him, even at that early age. This was when I read for the first time some of Plato's most important dialogues, in particular the Gorgias, the Protagoras, and the Republic. There is no author to whom my father thought himself more indebted for his own mental culture than Plato, or whom he more frequently recommended to young students. I can bear similar testimony in regard to myself. The Socratic method of which the Platonic dialogues are the chief example is unsurpassed as a discipline for correcting the errors and clearing up the confusions created by the intellect left to itself, i.e. by the understanding that has made up all its bundles of associations under the guidance of popular phraseology.

- The searching question-and-answer procedure by which the man of vague generalities is made to express his meaning to himself in definite terms or else admit that he doesn't know what he is talking about;
- the perpetual testing of all general statements by particular instances;
- the formal attack on the meaning of a large abstract term M by fixing on some even broader class-name that includes M and more, and *dividing* down to M, marking out its limits and definition by a series careful distinctions between it and each of the cognate objects that are successively cut away from it

—all this is an inestimable education for precise thinking, and it took such a hold of me even at that age that it became part of my own mind. Ever since then I have felt that the label 'Platonist' belongs by far better right to •those who have been nourished in and tried to practise Plato's mode of investigation than to •those who are distinguished only by having adopted certain dogmatic conclusions, drawn mostly from the least intelligible of his works—ones that Plato himself may (the character of his mind and writings makes it uncertain) have regarded as mere poetic fancies or philosophical conjectures.

Elocution

In going through Plato and Demosthenes, since I could now read these authors (as far as the language was concerned) with perfect ease, I was not required to construe them sentence by sentence, but to read them aloud to my father, answering questions when asked. But his particular attention to elocution (in which his own excellence was remarkable) made this reading aloud to him a most painful task. Of all the things he required me to do there was none that I so constantly did badly or in which he so perpetually lost his temper with me. He had thought much about the principles of the art of reading, especially the most neglected part of it, namely the inflections of the voice—what writers on elocution call *modulation* (in contrast with *articulation* on one side and *expression* on the other)—and had reduced it to rules based on the logical analysis of a sentence. He strongly impressed these rules upon me, and took me severely to task for every violation of them; but even then I noticed (though I did not venture to say so to him) that though he reproached me when I read a sentence badly and *told* me how I ought to have read it, he never by reading it himself *showed* me how it ought to be read. A defect running through his otherwise admirable modes of instruction, as through all his modes of thought, was that of trusting too much to the intelligibleness of the abstract when not embodied in the concrete. It was much later in my youth, when practising elocution by myself or with companions of my own age, that I eventually understood the purpose of his rules and saw the psychological grounds of them. At that time I and others followed out the subject into its ramifications and could have composed a very useful treatise based on my father's principles. He himself left those principles and rules unwritten. I regret that when systematic practice had filled my mind with the subject I did not put them, and our improvements of them, into a formal shape.

The *History of India*

A book that contributed largely to my education, in the best sense of the term, was my father's *History of India*. It was published at the beginning of 1818. During the preceding year when it was passing through the press I used to read the proof-sheets to him; or rather I read the manuscript to him while he corrected the proofs. The number of new ideas I received from this remarkable book, and the impulse and stimulus as well as guidance given to my thoughts by its criticisms and discussions of society and civilisation in the Hindu part, on institutions and the acts of governments in the English part, made my early familiarity with it enormously useful to my subsequent progress. And though I can now see deficiencies in it as compared with a perfect standard, I still think it one of the most instructive histories ever written—if not *the* most—and one of the books from which most benefit can be derived by a mind engaged in making up its opinions.

The Preface, one of my father's most characteristic writings as well as the richest in materials of thought, gives a picture that can be entirely depended on of the beliefs and expectations with which he wrote the *History*. Saturated as the book is with the opinions and modes of judgment of a democratic radicalism then regarded as extreme; and treating English constitution, English law, and all parties and classes with any considerable influence in the country with a severity that was at that time most unusual; he may have expected reputation, but certainly not advancement in life, from its publication. Nor could he have supposed that it would raise up anything but enemies for him in powerful quarters; least of all could he have expected favour from

the East India Company, to whose commercial privileges he was absolutely hostile and on the acts of whose government he had made so many severe comments; though in various parts of his book he testified in their favour (as he felt to be their just due) that no government had on the whole given so much proof of good intention towards its subjects, and that if the light of publicity were focused on the acts of any other government they would probably look even worse.

However, when my father learned—in the spring of 1819, about a year after the publication of the *History*—that the East India directors wanted to strengthen the part of their home establishment that was employed in carrying on the correspondence with India, he declared himself a candidate for that employment and, to the credit of the directors, he succeeded. He was appointed one of the assistants of the Examiner of India Correspondence—officers whose duty it was to prepare drafts of despatches to India, for consideration by the directors, in the principal departments of administration. In this office, and in that of Examiner which he subsequently attained, the influence which his talents, his reputation, and his decision of character gave him with superiors who really desired the good government of India, enabled him to a great extent to throw his real opinions on Indian subjects into his drafts of despatches, and to carry through the ordeal of the Court of Directors and Board of Control without having the opinions' force much weakened. In his *History* he had set forth for the first time many of the true principles of Indian administration; and his despatches, following his *History*, did more than had ever been done before to promote the improvement of India and teach Indian officials to understand their business. If a selection of them were published, they would, I am convinced, place his character as a practical statesman fully on a level with his eminence as a speculative writer.

Economics

This new employment of his time did not make him relax his attention to my education. It was in this same year, 1819, that he took me through a complete course of political economy [see Glossary]. His loved and intimate friend ·David· Ricardo [1773–1823] had shortly before published the book that created so great an epoch in political economy. This book would never have been written but for the entreaty and strong encouragement of my father; for Ricardo, the most modest of men, though firmly convinced of the truth of his doctrines, shrank from the idea of publicity because he regarded himself as so little capable of doing them justice in exposition and expression. The same friendly encouragement induced Ricardo to become a member of the House of Commons a year or two later. There, during the few remaining years of his life (unhappily cut short in the full vigour of his intellect) he rendered much service to his and my father's opinions on political economy and on other subjects.

Though Ricardo's great work was already in print, there was no textbook presenting its doctrines in a manner fit for learners. So my father started instructing me in the science ·of economics· by a sort of lectures that he delivered to me during our walks. He expounded a portion of the subject each day, and I gave him next day a written account of it, which he made me rewrite over and over again until it was clear, precise, and tolerably complete. I went through the whole extent of the science in this way; and the written outline of it that resulted from my daily reports served him afterwards as notes from which to write his *Elements of Political Economy*. After this I read Ricardo, giving an account daily of what I read, and discussing as best I could the collateral points that came up in our progress.

On *money*, as the most intricate part of the subject, he

made me read in the same manner Ricardo's admirable pamphlets written during the so-called 'bullion controversy'. These were followed by Adam Smith; and one of my father's main objects in this reading was to make me apply to Smith's more superficial view of political economy the superior lights of Ricardo, and to detect what was fallacious in Smith's arguments or erroneous in any of his conclusions. Such a method of instruction was excellently calculated to form a thinker; but it had to be done by a thinker as close and vigorous as my father. The path was a thorny one, even to him, and I am sure it was so to me despite my strong interest in the subject. He was often unreasonably annoyed by my failures in cases where success could not have been expected; but in the main his method was right, and it succeeded. I do not believe that any scientific teaching ever was more thorough, or better fitted for training the faculties, than the mode in which logic and political economy were taught to me by my father. Trying (perhaps too hard) to call forth the activity of my faculties by making me find out everything for myself, he gave his explanations only *after* I had felt the full force of the difficulties; and he not only gave me an accurate knowledge of these two great subjects, as far as they were then understood, but made me a thinker in both. I thought for myself almost from the first, and occasionally thought differently from him, though for a long time only on minor points and making his opinion the ultimate standard. At a later period I occasionally even *altered* his opinion on points of detail, which I state to his honour, not my own. It shows both his perfect candour and the real worth of his method of teaching.

At this point concluded my *lessons*, strictly so-called; when I was about 14 I left England for more than a year; and after my return, though my studies went on under my father's general direction, he was no longer my schoolmaster. So I shall pause here and turn back to matters of a more general nature connected with the part of my life and education I have been talking about.

General points about early education

The most obvious feature of the course of instruction that I have partly retraced is the great effort to give during the years of childhood an amount of knowledge in what are considered the higher branches of education—knowledge that is seldom acquired until the age of manhood, if then. The result of the experiment is to show how easily this can be done, and shines a strong light on the wretched waste of the precious years that are spent in acquiring the modicum of Latin and Greek commonly taught to schoolboys; a waste that has led so many educational reformers to entertain the ill-judged proposal of discarding these languages altogether from general education. If by nature

- I had been extremely quick of apprehension, or
- had had a very accurate and retentive memory, or
- were of a remarkably active and energetic character,

the trial would not be conclusive; but in all these natural gifts I am below rather than above par—what I could do could assuredly be done by any boy or girl of average capacity and healthy physical constitution. If I have accomplished anything ·in my life· I owe it, among other fortunate circumstances, to the fact that because of the early training my father gave me I started, I may fairly say, with an advantage of a quarter of a century over my contemporaries.

Whatever good this training achieved was due to something of which I have already given some indication. Most boys or youths who have had much knowledge drilled into them have their mental capacities not •strengthened but •over-laid by it. They are crammed with mere facts and

with the opinions or phrases of other people, and these are accepted as a substitute for the power to form opinions of their own: and thus the sons of eminent fathers who have spared no pains in their education so often grow up mere parroters of what they have learned, incapable of using their minds except along the grooves prepared for them. Mine was not an education of *cram*. My father never permitted anything that I learned to degenerate into a mere exercise of memory. He tried to make the understanding not only go along with every step of the teaching but if possible to *precede* it. If something could be found out by thinking, I never was told it until I had exhausted my efforts to find it out for myself. As far as I can trust my memory I acquitted myself very lamely in this; my recollection of such matters is almost wholly of failures, hardly ever of success. The failures were indeed often in things in which success was almost impossible at that early stage in my progress. At some time in my thirteenth year I happened to use the word 'idea'; and he asked me what an idea was, and expressed some displeasure at my ineffectual efforts to define the word. I remember also his indignation at my using the common expression that something was true 'in theory' but required correction 'in practice'; and how—after making me vainly try to define the word 'theory'—he explained its meaning and showed the fallacy of the vulgar [see Glossary] form of speech I had used; leaving me fully convinced that I had shown unparalleled ignorance in being unable define 'theory' correctly while speaking of theory as something that might be at variance with practice. In this he seems very unreasonable; I think that perhaps he was, but only in being angry at my failure. A pupil from whom nothing is ever demanded that he cannot do never does all he can.

Self-conceit

My father anxiously guarded against one of the evils most likely to accompany any sort of early proficiency, an evil that often fatally blights its promise. This was *self-conceit*. He vigilantly kept me out of the way of hearing myself praised, or of being led to make self-flattering comparisons between myself and others. From his own conversations with me I could derive only a very humble opinion of myself; and the standard of comparison he always held up to me was not •what other people did but •what a man could and ought to do. He completely succeeded in preserving me from the sort of influences he so much dreaded. I was not at all aware that my attainments were anything unusual at my age. If I accidentally had my attention drawn to the fact that some other boy knew less than I did—which happened less often than might be imagined—I concluded not that I knew much but that he for some reason knew little, or that his knowledge was of a different kind from mine. My state of mind was not humility, but neither was it arrogance. I never thought of saying to myself 'I am such and such' or 'I can do so and so'. I did not estimate myself highly or lowly; I did not estimate myself at all. If I thought anything about myself it was that I was rather backward in my studies, since I always found myself to be so in comparison with what my father expected from me. I say this with confidence, though it was not the impression of various persons who saw me in my childhood. They, as I have since found, thought me greatly and disagreeably self-conceited; probably because I was argumentative and did not hesitate to flatly contradict things I heard said. I suppose I acquired this bad habit from having been greatly encouraged to talk with grown persons on matters beyond my age, and never having inculcated in me the usual respect for them. My father did not correct

this ill-breeding and impertinence, probably from not being aware of it, for I was always too much in awe of him to be otherwise than extremely subdued and quiet in his presence. Yet with all this I had no notion of any superiority in myself; and it was just as well for me that I had not. I remember the very place in Hyde Park where in my fourteenth year, on the eve of leaving my father's house for a long absence, he told me that I would find that I had been taught many things that youths of my age did not commonly know; and that many persons would talk to me about this and compliment me on it. I do not well remember what other things he said about this, but he wound up by saying that whatever I knew more than others could not be ascribed to any merit in me, but to my unusual advantage of having a father who was able to teach me, and willing to give the necessary trouble and time; that it was no matter of praise to me if I knew more than those who had not had a similar advantage, but the deepest disgrace to me if I did not. I distinctly remember that the information (learned on that occasion) that I knew more than other youths who were considered well educated did not at all impress me as a personal matter. I felt no disposition to glorify myself on the fact that there were other persons who did not know what I knew; nor had I ever flattered myself that my acquirements, whatever they might be, were any merit of mine. Now that my attention was called to the subject, I felt that what my father had said about my special advantages was exactly the truth and common sense of the matter, and it fixed my opinion and feeling from that time forward.

My solitary childhood

This could not have been accomplished if my father had not carefully kept me from having much interaction with other boys (and the same is true of many of the other purposes of his scheme of education). He was earnestly bent upon my escaping not only •the ordinary corrupting influence that boys exercise over boys, but also •the contagion of vulgar modes of thought and feeling; and he was willing that for this I should pay the price of inferiority in the accomplishments which schoolboys in all countries chiefly cultivate. The deficiencies in my education were principally in the things that boys learn through being turned out to shift for themselves, and through being brought together in large numbers. From temperance and much walking, I grew up healthy and hardy though not muscular; but I could perform no feats of skill or physical strength, and knew none of the ordinary bodily exercises. I was not denied play or time for it. Though no holidays were allowed, lest the habit of work should be broken and a taste for idleness acquired, I had ample leisure in every day to amuse myself; but as I had no boy companions and the animal need of physical activity was satisfied by walking, my (mostly solitary) amusements were in general of a quiet kind that gave little stimulus to any kind of activity—even mental activity—other than what was already called forth by my studies. So for a long time I was inexpert in anything requiring manual dexterity, and have always been somewhat so. Not only my hands but also my mind did its work very lamely when it was or ought to have been applied to the practical details which, being the chief interest of life to the majority of men, are also the things in which their mental capacity chiefly shows itself. I was constantly meriting reproof for my inattention and general slackness of mind in matters of daily life. My father was the extreme opposite in these respects; his senses and mental faculties were always on the alert; he carried decision and energy of character in his whole manner and into every action of life; and this contributed as much as his talents did to the strong impression he made on all those with

whom he came into personal contact. But the children of energetic parents frequently grow up unenergetic, because they lean on their parents, and the parents are energetic for them. The education my father gave me was in itself much more fitted for training me to *know* than to *do*. Not that he was unaware of my deficiencies; both as a boy and as a youth I was incessantly smarting under his severe scoldings on the subject. He was anything but unaware of such shortcomings, or tolerant of them; but, while he saved me from the demoralising [see Glossary] effects of school life he made no effort to provide me with an adequate substitute for its practicalising influences. Whatever qualities he himself had probably acquired without difficulty or special training, he seems to have supposed that I ought to acquire equally easily. He had not, I think, given as much thought and attention to this as to most other branches of education; and here, as well as in some other points of my tuition, he seems to have expected effects without causes.

Part 2
Moral influences in early youth. My father's character and opinions

In my education, as in everyone's, the moral influences that are so much more important than all others are also the most complicated and the most difficult to specify with any approach to completeness. Without attempting the hopeless task of *detailing* the circumstances by which my early character may have been shaped in this respect, I shall confine myself to a few leading points that form an indispensable part of any true account of my education.

My father and religion

I was brought up from the first without any *religious belief*, in the ordinary meaning of that phrase. My father, educated in the creed of Scotch presbyterianism, had by his own studies and reflections been early led to reject not only the belief in revelation but the foundations of what is commonly called *natural religion*. I have heard him say that the turning point of his mind on the subject was reading Butler's ·*The· Analogy ·of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*·. That work, which he always spoke of with respect, kept him (he said) for some considerable time a believer in the divine authority of Christianity. It did this by proving to him that whatever are the difficulties in believing

- that the Old and New Testaments proceed from, or record the acts of, a perfectly wise and good being,

the same and still greater difficulties stand in the way of the belief

- that a being of such a character can have been the maker of the universe.

He considered Butler's argument as conclusive against the only opponents for whom it was intended. Those who admit an omnipotent as well as perfectly just and benevolent maker and ruler of such a world as this, ·namely deists·, can say little against Christianity except what can with at least equal force be retorted against themselves. Finding therefore no halting place in deism, he remained in a state of perplexity until (doubtless after many struggles) he yielded to the conviction that nothing whatever can be known concerning the origin of things. This is the only correct statement of his opinion; for he looked on dogmatic atheism as absurd; as most of those whom the world has considered atheists have always done. These details are important because they show that my father's rejection of all that is called religious

belief was not, as many might suppose, primarily a matter of logic and evidence; the grounds of it were moral more than intellectual. He found it impossible to believe that a world so full of evil was the work of an Author combining infinite power with perfect goodness and righteousness. His intellect spurned the subtleties [here = 'logical tricks'] by which men attempt to blind themselves to this open contradiction. He would not have equally condemned the Manichaean theory of good and evil forces struggling against each other for the government of the universe, and I have heard him express surprise that no one revived it in our time. He would have regarded it as a mere hypothesis, but would not have ascribed to it any depraving influence. As it was, his aversion to *religion* (in the usual sense of the word) was like that of Lucretius: he regarded it with the feelings appropriate not to a mere mental delusion but to a great moral evil. He looked on it as the greatest enemy of morality by

- setting up factitious excellencies, belief in creeds, devotional feelings, and ceremonies not connected with the good of human kind; by
- causing these to be accepted as substitutes for genuine virtues; and and above all by
- radically spoiling the standard of morals, making it consist in doing the will of a being on whom it lavishes all the phrases of adulation but whom in sober truth it depicts as utterly dreadful.

I have a hundred times heard him say that all ages and nations have represented their gods as wicked in a constantly increasing progression, that mankind have gone on adding trait after trait till they reached the most perfect conception of wickedness that the human mind can devise, and have called this *God* and prostrated themselves before it. This *ne plus ultra* of wickedness he considered to be embodied in what is commonly presented to mankind as the creed of Christianity. Think (he used to say) of a being who would make a hell—who would create the human race with the infallible foreknowledge (and therefore with the intention) that the great majority of them were to be consigned to horrible and everlasting torment. The time, I believe, is drawing near when this dreadful conception of an object of worship will be no longer identified with Christianity, and when everyone with *any* sense of moral good and evil will look on it with the same indignation as my father did. He knew as well as anyone that Christians do not in general undergo, in the manner or to the extent that might have been expected, the demoralising consequences that seem inherent in such a creed. The same slovenliness of thought and subjection of reason to fears, wishes, and affections that •enable them to accept a theory involving a contradiction in terms also •prevent them from perceiving the logical consequences of the theory. So easy it is for mankind to believe at one and the same time things inconsistent with one another, and so few are those who draw from what they receive as truths any consequences but those recommended to them by their feelings, that multitudes have held the undoubting belief in an **omnipotent author of hell**, and have nevertheless identified that being with the best conception they could form of **perfect goodness**. Their worship was addressed not to the demon that such a being as they imagined would really be, but to their own idea of excellence. The evil is that such a belief keeps the ideal wretchedly low, and creates the most obstinate resistance to any thought that has a tendency to raise it higher. Believers shrink from every line of thought that would lead the mind to a clear conception and an elevated standard of excellence, because they *feel* (even when they do not clearly *see*) that such a standard would conflict with many of the dispensations of nature and with much of what they are accustomed to consider as the

Christian creed. Thus morality continues to be a matter of blind tradition, with no consistent principle or even any consistent feeling to guide it.

Myself and religion

It would have been wholly inconsistent with my father's ideas of duty to allow me to acquire impressions regarding religion that were contrary to his own convictions and feelings; and he impressed upon me from the first that how the world came into existence was a subject on which nothing was known; that the question 'Who made me?' cannot be answered because we have no experience or authentic information on which to base an answer, and that any answer only throws the difficulty a step further back, since the question 'Who made God?' immediately arises. At the same time he took care that I should be acquainted with what had been thought by mankind on these impenetrable problems. I have mentioned that at an early age he made me read ecclesiastical history, and he taught me to take the strongest interest in the Reformation, as the great and decisive contest against priestly tyranny for liberty of thought.

I am thus one of the very few examples in this country of one who has not thrown off religious belief but never had it; I grew up in a negative state with regard to it. I looked upon the modern religion exactly as I did on the ancient ones, as something that in no way concerned me. It did not seem to me more strange that English people should believe what I did not than that the men I read of in Herodotus should have done so. History had made the variety of opinions among mankind a fact familiar to me, and this was merely a prolongation of that fact. This aspect of my early education did however have one bad consequence that I ought to mention. In giving me an opinion contrary to that of the world, my father thought it necessary to give it as something that could not prudently be avowed to the world. This early lesson of keeping my thoughts to myself brought some moral disadvantages, though my limited contact with strangers—especially ones who were likely to speak to me about religion—prevented me from being confronted by the choice between avowal and hypocrisy. I remember two boyhood occasions when I felt myself faced with this choice, and each time I avowed my disbelief and defended it. My opponents were boys considerably older than myself; one of them I certainly staggered at the time, but the subject was never renewed between us; the other did his best to convince me for some time, without effect.

The silence of 'unbelievers'

The great advance in liberty of discussion that is one of the most important differences between the present time and that of my childhood has greatly altered the moralities of this question; and I think that few men of my father's intellect and public spirit, holding with such intensity of moral conviction as he did unpopular opinions on religion or on any other of the great subjects of thought, would now practise or recommend withholding them from the world; except in cases (becoming fewer every day) where frankness on these subjects would •risk the loss of livelihood or •amount to exclusion from some sphere of usefulness especially suitable to the person's capacities. On religion in particular the time appears to me to have come when all those who are qualified in point of knowledge, and have on mature consideration concluded that the current opinions are not only false but harmful, have a duty to make their dissent known; at least if they are among those whose standing or reputation gives their opinion a chance of being attended to. Such an avowal

would *finally* put an end to the vulgar prejudice that what is very improperly called 'unbelief' is connected with any bad qualities of mind or heart. The world would be astonished if it knew how great a proportion of its brightest ornaments—of those most distinguished even in popular estimation for wisdom and virtue—are complete sceptics in religion. Many of them refrain from openly avowing this not so much from personal considerations as from a conscientious fear (*now*, I think, a most mistaken one) that they would do harm instead of good by saying things that would tend to weaken existing beliefs and thus (they think) weaken existing restraints.

Of unbelievers (so-called) as well as of believers there are many species, including almost every variety of moral type. But the best among them, as anyone who has had (as believers rarely do) opportunities of really knowing them will agree, are more genuinely *religious* in the best sense of that word than those who claim the title as exclusively belonging to them. The liberality of the age—i.e. the weakening of the obstinate prejudice that makes men unable to see what is before their eyes because it is contrary to their expectations—has caused it to be very commonly admitted that a deist may be truly religious; but if 'religion' stands for any graces of character and not for mere dogma, the assertion may equally be made of many whose belief is far short of deism. Though they may think the proof incomplete that the universe is a work of design, and though they assuredly *disbelieve* that it can have an author and governor who is absolute in power as well as perfect in goodness, they have something that constitutes the principal worth of all religions whatever, namely an ideal conception of a Perfect Being, to which they habitually refer as the guide of their conscience; and this ideal of Good is usually far nearer to perfection than the fictional Deity of those who think themselves obliged to find absolute goodness in the author of a world as crowded with suffering and as deformed by injustice as ours is.

My father and the Greeks

My father's moral convictions, wholly separated from religion, were very like those of the Greek philosophers, and were delivered with the force and decision that characterised all that came from him. Even at the very early age at which I read with him the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon, I imbibed from that work and from his comments a deep respect for the character of Socrates, who stood in my mind as a model of ideal excellence; and I well remember how my father at that time impressed upon me the lesson of the 'Choice of Hercules' ·between virtue and vice·. At a somewhat later period the lofty moral standard exhibited in the writings of Plato operated on me with great force. My father's moral inculcations were at all times mainly those of Socrates' followers, namely

- justice,
- temperance (to which he gave a very extended application),
- veracity,
- perseverance,
- readiness to encounter pain and especially labour;
- regard for the public good;
- estimation of persons according to their merits, and of things according to their intrinsic usefulness;
- a life of exertion in contradiction to one of self-indulgent sloth.

These and other moralities he conveyed in brief sentences, uttered as grave exhortation or stern reprobation and contempt, as occasion arose.

But though direct moral teaching does much, indirect does more; and the effect my father produced on my

character depended less on what he said or did with that direct purpose than on what manner of man he was.

In his views of life he partook of the character of the Stoic, the Epicurean, and—not in the modern but the ancient sense of the word—the Cynic. In his personal qualities the Stoic predominated. His standard of morals was Epicurean in that it was utilitarian, taking as the exclusive test of right and wrong the tendency of actions to produce pleasure or pain. But he had (and this was the Cynic element) scarcely any belief in pleasure—at least in his later years, the only ones about which I can speak confidently on this topic. He was not insensible to pleasures, but he regarded few of them as worth the price that must be paid for them, at least in the present state of society. Most things that go wrong in life he considered to be due to the overvaluing of pleasures. Accordingly, temperance—in the broad sense intended by the Greek philosophers, stretching out to moderation in *all* indulgences—was for him almost the central point of educational precept, as it was for them. His inculcations of this virtue fill a large place in my memories of childhood. He thought that human life, after the freshness of youth and of unsatisfied curiosity had gone by, is a poor thing at best. He did not often speak about this, especially (it may be supposed) in the presence of young persons; but when he did, it was with an air of settled and profound conviction. He would sometimes say that life would be worth having if good government and good education made it what it *could* be; but he never spoke of that possibility with anything like enthusiasm. He always rated intellectual enjoyments above all others—even in their value as pleasures—independently of their ulterior benefits. The pleasures of the benevolent affections he placed high in the scale; and he used to say that he had never known a happy old man except those who were able to re-live the pleasures of the young.

Feelings and morality

For passionate emotions of all sorts, and for everything said or written in exaltation of them, he professed the greatest contempt. He regarded them as a form of madness. Calling something 'intense' was for him a by-word of scornful disapproval. He regarded the great stress laid on *feeling* as an aberration of the moral standard of modern times, compared with that of the ancients. He considered feelings as such to be no proper subjects of praise or blame. Right and wrong, good and bad, he regarded as qualities solely of conduct, of acts and omissions; because any feeling may lead either to good or to bad actions, and even conscience itself—the very desire to act rightly—often leads people to act wrongly. Consistently with the doctrine that the purpose of praise and blame should be to discourage wrong conduct and encourage right, he refused to let his praise or blame be influenced by the agent's motive. If he thought an action to be bad he blamed it as severely when the motive was a feeling of duty as if the agents had been consciously evil-doers. He would not have accepted as a plea in mitigation for inquisitors that they sincerely believed burning heretics to be an obligation of conscience. But though he did not allow honesty of purpose to soften his disapproval of •actions, it had its full effect on his estimation of •characters. No-one prized conscientiousness and rightness of intention more highly, or was more incapable of valuing any person in whom he did not feel assurance of it. But he disliked people quite as much for any other deficiency—·i.e. any lack of something other than conscientiousness·—if he thought it equally likely to make them act badly. For example, he disliked a fanatic in a bad cause even more than one who adopted the same cause from self-interest, because he thought him even more likely to be practically harmful. So his aversion to many intellectual

errors, or what he regarded as such, had something of the character of a moral feeling. This is merely to say that he, to a degree once common but now unusual, threw his feelings into his opinions; and it really is hard to understand how anyone who possesses much of both can fail to do this. Only those who do not care about opinions will confuse it with intolerance. Those who have a deep regard for the general good, and have opinions that they hold to be immensely important and their contraries to be prodigiously harmful, will inevitably dislike as a class those who think wrong what they think right, and right what they think wrong. But they need not be—and my father was not—unaware of an opponent's good qualities, or governed in their estimation of individuals by one general presumption instead of by their whole character. I admit that an earnest person (being fallible like everyone else) is liable to dislike people on account of opinions that do not merit dislike; but if he doesn't himself do them any harm or connive [see Glossary] at his being harmed by others, he is not intolerant. The only tolerance that is commendable, or to the highest moral order of minds *possible*, is the forbearance that flows from a conscientious sense of the importance to mankind of the equal freedom of all opinions.

Tenderness

It will be admitted that a man with the opinions and the character I have described my father as having was likely to leave a strong moral impression on any mind principally formed by him, and that his moral teaching was not likely to err on the side of laxity or indulgence! The element that was chiefly lacking in his moral relation with his children was *tenderness*. I do not believe that this deficiency lay in his own nature. I believe him to have had much more feeling than he habitually showed, and much greater capacities of feeling than were ever developed. He resembled most Englishmen in being ashamed of the signs of feeling, and starving the feelings themselves by not demonstrating them. Given that he was in the demanding position of sole teacher, and that his temperament was constitutionally irritable, one must feel true pity for a father who did—and worked to do—so much for his children, who would have so valued their affection, yet who must have constantly felt that fear of him was drying it up at its source. This was no longer the case later in life, and with his younger children. They loved him tenderly, and if I cannot say so much of myself I was always loyally devoted to him. As regards my own education, I hesitate to pronounce whether I was more a loser or gainer by his severity. It did not prevent me from having a happy childhood. And I do not believe that boys can be induced to apply themselves with vigour and (much more difficult) perseverance to dry and irksome studies solely by persuasion and soft words. There is much that children must do, and much that they must learn, that they will not do and learn without rigid discipline and known liability to punishment. No doubt it is a very laudable effort in modern teaching to make easy and interesting to the young as much as possible of what they are required to learn. But when this principle is pushed to the length of not requiring them to learn anything but what has been made easy and interesting, one of the chief aims of education is sacrificed. I rejoice in the decline of the old brutal and tyrannical system of teaching, though it did succeed in enforcing habits of application; but the new system seems to me to be training a race of men who will be incapable of doing anything that is disagreeable to them. So I do not believe that fear can be dispensed with as an element in education; but I am sure that it ought not to be the main element; and when it predominates so much as

to •preclude love and confidence on the part of the child to those who should be the unreservedly trusted advisers in later years, and perhaps to •seal up the fountains of frank and spontaneous communicativeness in the child's nature, it is an evil that constitutes a large deduction from the moral and intellectual benefits that may flow from any other part of the education.

Jeremy Bentham and others

During this first period of my life the habitual visitors to my father's house were limited to a very few persons, most of them little known to the world, but whom personal worth, and some congeniality with at least his political opinions (not so common then as since) inclined him to cultivate; and I listened with interest and instruction to his conversations with them. My being an habitual occupant of my father's study made me acquainted with the dearest of his friends, David **Ricardo**, whose benevolent countenance and kindliness of manner made him very attractive to young persons, and who (after I became a student of political economy) invited me to his house and to walk with him in order to have conversations on that subject. I was a more frequent visitor (from about 1817 or 1818) to Mr ·Joseph· **Hume**. He was born in the same part of Scotland as my father and was (I think) a younger schoolfellow or college companion of his; on returning from India he renewed their youthful acquaintance, and (like many others) came to be much influenced by my father's intellect and energy of character. That was a part of what induced him to go into Parliament, and there adopt the line of conduct that has given him an honourable place in the history of his country. I saw much more of Mr **Bentham**, because of his close intimacy with my father. I do not know how soon after my father's first arrival in England they became acquainted. But my father was the earliest Englishman of any great mark who thoroughly understood and mainly adopted Bentham's general views of ethics, government and law; and this was a natural basis for sympathy between them, and made them familiar companions at a time in Bentham's life when which he admitted far fewer visitors than he did subsequently. At this time Mr Bentham passed some part of every year at Barrow Green House, in a beautiful part of the Surrey hills, where each summer I accompanied my father in a long visit. In 1813 I went with Mr Bentham and my father on an excursion that included Oxford, Bath and Bristol, Exeter, Plymouth, and Portsmouth. On this journey I saw many things that were instructive to me, and acquired my first taste for natural scenery in the elementary form of fondness for a 'view'. In the succeeding winter we moved into a house very near Mr Bentham's, which my father rented from him, in Queen Square, Westminster. From 1814 to 1817 Mr Bentham lived during half of each year at Ford Abbey in a part of Devonshire surrounded by Somersetshire, and I had the advantage of spending those times at that place. This was, I think, an important factor in my education. Nothing contributes more to encourage elevation of sentiments [see Glossary] in a people than the large and free character of their homes. This fine old place's medieval architecture, baronial hall, and spacious and lofty rooms—so unlike the mean and cramped externals of English middle class life—gave one the feeling of a larger and freer existence, and were to me a sort of poetic cultivation, aided also by the character of the grounds in which the Abbey stood. These were cheerful, shady, and full of the sound of falling waters.

Another fortunate factor in my education was a year's residence in France, which I owed to Mr Bentham's brother, General Sir Samuel Bentham. I had seen him and his family at their house near Gosport in the course of the tour already

mentioned (he being then Superintendent of the Dockyard at Portsmouth), and during a stay of a few days which they made at Ford Abbey shortly after the peace ·of 1815·, before going to live on the Continent [see Glossary]. In 1820 they invited me for a six months' visit to them in the south of France, which their kindness eventually prolonged to nearly a year. Sir Samuel Bentham, though of a character of mind different from that of his illustrious brother, was a man of very considerable attainments and general powers, with a decided genius for mechanical art. His wife, a daughter of the celebrated chemist Dr Fordyce, was a woman of strong will and decided character, much general knowledge, and great practical good sense of the Edgeworth kind, [i.e. of the kind emphasised and encouraged by the writings of Maria Edgeworth]. She was the ruling spirit of the household, as she deserved to be and was well qualified to be. Their family consisted of one son (the eminent botanist) and three daughters, the youngest about two years my senior [JSM was 14 at this time]. I am indebted to them for much and various instruction, and for an almost parental interest in my welfare. When I first joined them, in May 1820, they occupied the Château of Pompignan (still belonging to a descendant of Voltaire's enemy ·Jean-Jacques Lefranc, Marquis de Pompignan·) on the heights overlooking the plain of the Garonne between Montauban and Toulouse. I accompanied them in an excursion to the Pyrenees, including a stay at Bagnères de Bigorre, a journey to Pau, Bayonne, and Bagnères de Luchon, and an ascent of the Pic du Midi de Bigorre.

Notes on France

This first introduction to the highest order of mountain scenery made the deepest impression on me, and gave a colour to my tastes through life. In October we proceeded by the beautiful mountain route of Castres and St Pons, from Toulouse to Montpellier, in which last neighbourhood Sir Samuel had just bought the estate of Restinclière, near the foot of the singular mountain of St Loup. During this residence in France I acquired a familiar knowledge of the French language, and acquaintance with the ordinary French literature; I took lessons in various bodily exercises, without becoming proficient in any of them; and at Montpellier I attended the excellent winter courses of lectures at the Faculté des Sciences, those of M. Anglada on chemistry, of M. Provençal on zoology, and of a very accomplished representative of 18th century metaphysics, M. Gergonne, on logic, under the name of 'philosophy of the sciences'. I also went through a course of higher mathematics under the private tuition of M. Lenthéric, a professor at the Lycée of Montpellier. But perhaps the greatest of the many advantages I owed to this episode in my education was that of having for a whole year breathed the free and genial atmosphere of Continental life. I could not then estimate this advantage, or even consciously feel it, but it was nonetheless real. Having so little experience of English life, and the few people I knew being mostly ones who had at heart public objectives of a large and personally disinterested kind, I was ignorant of the low moral tone of 'society', as it is called in England: •the habit of taking for granted—implying it in every possible way without actually saying it—that conduct is of course always directed towards low and trivial goals; •the absence of high feelings, which shows itself by sneering depreciation of all demonstrations of them and by general abstinence (except among a few of the stricter religionists) from professing any high principles of action at all—except in the preordained cases where such profession is put on as part of the costume and formalities of the occasion. I could not then know or estimate the difference between this manner of existence

and that of a people like the French, whose faults, if equally real, are *different*. Among them, elevated sentiments (or at least comparatively elevated ones) are the current coin of human conversation, both in books and in private life; and, though often turning gassy when they are *announced*, they are kept alive in the nation at large by constant exercise, and stimulated by sympathy [see Glossary], so as to form a living and active part of the existence of very many persons and to be recognised and understood by all. Nor could I then appreciate the general development of the understanding that results from the habitual exercise of the feelings, and is thus carried down into the most uneducated classes in several European countries in a degree not equalled in England among the so-called educated, except where an unusual sensitivity of conscience leads to an habitual exercise of the intellect on questions of right and wrong. I did not know the way in which, among the ordinary English,

> •the absence of interest in things of an unselfish kind except occasionally in a special thing here and there, and •the habit of not speaking to others (nor much even to themselves) about the things in which they *do* feel interest,

causes their feelings and their intellectual faculties to remain undeveloped, or to develop only in some single and very limited direction—reducing them, considered as spiritual beings, to a kind of negative existence. I did not perceive these things till long afterwards; but even back then I felt, though without stating it clearly to myself, the contrast between the frank sociability and amiability of French personal conversation and the English mode of existence in which everybody acts as if almost everybody else was either an enemy or a bore. In France, it is true, the bad as well as the good points of individual and of national character come more to the surface, and break out more fearlessly in ordinary conversation, than in England; but the general habit of the people is to show, as well as to expect, friendly feeling in everyone towards everyone except where there is some positive cause for the opposite. In England nothing like this can be said except about the best bred people in the upper or upper-middle ranks.

In my way through Paris, both going and returning, I passed some time in the house of M. Say, the eminent political economist, who was a friend and correspondent of my father, having become acquainted with him on a visit to England a year or two after the peace. He was a man of the later period of the French Revolution, a fine specimen of the best kind of French Republican, one of those who had never bent the knee to Bonaparte though courted by him to do so; a truly upright, brave, and enlightened man. He lived a quiet and studious life, made happy by warm public and private affections. He was acquainted with many of the chiefs of the Liberal party, and I saw various noteworthy persons while staying at his house. I enjoy the memory of having once seen Saint-Simon, not yet the founder of a philosophy or of a religion, and considered only as a clever eccentric. What I mainly carried away from the society I saw was a strong and permanent interest in Continental Liberalism, on which I ever afterwards kept myself up to date as much as on English politics, a very unusual thing with Englishmen in those days. It had a very salutary influence on my development, keeping me free from the error—always prevalent in England, even my father being guilty of it—of judging universal questions by a merely English standard. After passing a few weeks at Caen with an old friend of my father's I returned to England in July 1821; and my education resumed its ordinary course.

Part 3
Last stage of education and first of self-education

For the first year or two after my visit to France I continued my old studies, with the addition of some new ones. When I returned, my father was just finishing for the press his *Elements of Political Economy*, and he made me perform on the manuscript an exercise that Mr Bentham practised on all his own writings, making what he called 'marginal contents', namely a short abstract of every paragraph, to enable the writer more easily to evaluate and improve the order of the ideas and the general character of the exposition. Soon after that my father put into my hands Condillac's *Traité des Sensations*, and the logical and metaphysical volumes of his *Cours d'études*. Despite the superficial resemblance between Condillac's psychological system and my father's, the *Traité* was given to me quite as much for a warning as for an example. I am not sure whether it was in this winter or the next that I first read a history of the French Revolution. I learned with astonishment that the principles of democracy, then apparently in so insignificant and hopeless a minority everywhere in Europe, had carried all before them in France thirty years earlier, and had been the creed of the nation. I had previously had only a very vague idea of that great commotion. I knew only that the French had thrown off the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV and XV, had put the King and Queen to death, guillotined many persons including Lavoisier, and had eventually fallen under the despotism of Bonaparte. From this time, naturally, the subject took an immense hold of my feelings. It allied itself with all my juvenile aspirations to the character of a democratic champion. What had happened so recently seemed as if it might easily happen again: and the most transcendent glory I could conceive was that of figuring—whether or not with success—as a Girondist[see Glossary] in an English ·revolutionary· Convention.

Absorbing Benthamism

During the winter of 1821–2 Mr John Austin kindly allowed me to read Roman law with him. (My father had become acquainted with him at the time of my visit to France.) Despite my father's abhorrence of the chaos of barbarism called English Law, he had turned his thoughts towards the bar as on the whole less ineligible for me than any other profession; and these readings with Mr Austin—who had made Bentham's best ideas his own, and added much to them from other sources and from his own mind—were a valuable introduction to legal studies as well as an important portion of general education. With Mr Austin I read Heineccius on the Institutes, his Roman Antiquities, and part of his exposition of the Pandects; to which was added a considerable portion of Blackstone. It was at the start of these studies that my father put into my hands, as a needed accompaniment to them, Bentham's principal speculations as interpreted to the Continent (and indeed to all the world) by Dumont in his *Traité de Législation*. The reading of this book was an epoch in my life, one of the turning points in my mental history.

My previous education had already been in a certain sense a course of Benthamism. The Benthamic standard of 'the greatest happiness' was what I had always been taught to apply; I was even familiar with an abstract discussion of it, namely an episode in an unpublished dialogue on government, written by my father on the Platonic model. Yet in the first pages of Bentham it burst on me with all the

force of novelty. What thus impressed me was the chapter in which Bentham passed judgment on

> the common modes of reasoning in morals and legislation, deduced from phrases like 'law of nature', 'right reason', 'the moral sense', 'natural rectitude' and the like,

and characterised them as dogmatism in disguise, imposing its sentiments on others under cover of high-sounding expressions that convey no reason for the sentiment but set up the sentiment as its own reason. It had not struck me before that Bentham's principle put an end to all this. The feeling rushed upon me that all previous moralists were superseded, and that here indeed was the start of a new era in thought. This impression was strengthened by Bentham's way of putting into scientific form the application of the happiness principle to the morality of actions, by analysing the various classes and orders of their consequences. But what struck me at the time most of all, was the Classification of Offences, which is much more clear, compact and imposing in Dumont's edition than in the original work of Bentham from which it was taken. Logic and the dialectics of Plato, which had formed so large a part of my previous training, had given me a strong liking for accurate classification. This taste had been strengthened and enlightened by the study of botany on the principles of the so-called 'natural method', which I had taken up with great zeal (though only as an amusement) during my stay in France; and when I found scientific classification applied to the great and complex subject of *punishable acts* under the guidance of the ethical principle of *pleasurable and painful consequences*, followed out into the level of detail introduced into these subjects by Bentham, I felt taken up to a height from which I could survey a vast mental domain and see stretching out into the distance intellectual results beyond all computation. As I went further there seemed to be added to this •intellectual clearness the most inspiring prospects of •practical improvements in human affairs. I was not altogether a stranger to Bentham's general view of the construction of a body of law, having read with attention my father's article 'Jurisprudence', which is an admirable compendium of it; but I had read it with little profit and scarcely any interest, no doubt because of its extremely general and abstract character, and also because it concerned the form more than the substance of the body of the law, the •logic rather than the •ethics of law. But Bentham's subject was legislation, of which jurisprudence is only the formal part; and on every page he seemed to open a clearer and broader conception of what human opinions and institutions ought to be, how they might be made what they ought to be, and how far removed from it they now are. When I laid down the last volume of the *Traité* I had become a different being. The 'principle of utility', understood as Bentham understood it and applied as he applied it through these three volumes, fell exactly into its place as the keystone that held together the detached and fragmentary component parts of my knowledge and beliefs. It gave unity to my conceptions of things. I now had opinions—a creed, a doctrine, a philosophy, in one of the best senses of the word a *religion*—the teaching and spreading of which could be made the principal outward purpose of a life. And I had a grand conception laid before me of how that doctrine would change the condition of mankind. The *Traité de Législation* wound up with a picture—to me a most impressive one—of human life as it would be made by opinions and laws such as were recommended in the treatise. Its predictions of practicable improvement were carefully moderate, writing off as day-dreams of vague enthusiasm many things that will one day seem so natural to human beings that injustice will probably be done to those who

once thought them chimerical. But in my state of mind this appearance of *superiority to illusion* added to the effect that Bentham's doctrines produced on me by heightening the impression of mental power; and the vista of improvement which he did open was sufficiently large and brilliant to light up my life and to give a definite shape to my aspirations.

Psychology

From time to time after this I read the most important of Bentham's other works that had then appeared, either as written by himself or as edited by Dumont. This was my private reading; while under my father's direction my studies were carried into the higher branches of analytic psychology. I now read Locke's *Essay* and wrote out an account of it, consisting of a complete abstract of every chapter together with such remarks as occurred to me; this was read by or (I think) *to* my father, and discussed throughout. I did the same thing with Helvetius' *De l'Esprit*, which I read of my own choice. This preparation of abstracts subject to my father's censorship was of great service to me, by compelling precision in conceiving and expressing psychological doctrines, whether accepted as truths or only regarded as the opinion of others. After Helvetius my father made me study what he regarded as the really master-production in the philosophy of mind, Hartley's *Observations on Man*. This book did not give a new colour to my existence as the *Traité de Législation* did, but it made a very similar impression on me in regard to its immediate subject. Hartley's use of the law of association to explain the more complex mental phenomena, though incomplete, commended itself to me at once as a •real analysis, and made me feel by contrast the inadequacy of the merely •verbal generalisations of Condillac, and even of Locke's instructive gropings for psychological explanations. It was at this very time that my father started writing his *Analysis of the Mind*, which carried Hartley's way of explaining mental phenomena to so much greater length and depth. The concentration of thought necessary for this work was something he could manage only during the complete leisure of his annnual holiday of a month or six weeks; and he started it in the summer of 1822 in his first holiday at Dorking—a neighbourhood in which he lived, as far as his official duties permitted, for six months of every year but two for the rest of his life. He worked at the *Analysis* during several successive vacations up to 1829 when it was published, and allowed me to read the manuscript piecemeal as it advanced. The other principal English writers on mental philosophy I read as I felt inclined, particularly Berkeley, Hume's Essays, Reid, Dugald Stewart and Brown on cause and effect. I did not read Brown's Lectures until two or three years later, nor at that time had my father himself read them.

The usefulness of religion

Among the works that I read during this year, and that contributed materially to my development, I ought to mention a book (written on the basis of some of Bentham's manuscripts and published under the pseudonym Philip Beauchamp) entitled *Analysis of the Influence of Natural Religion on the Temporal Happiness of Mankind*. This was an examination not of the •truth but of the •usefulness of *religious belief*, in the most general sense of that phrase, apart from the details of any special revelation. In all the discussion concerning religion the question of its usefulness is the most important in this age, •when real belief in any religious doctrine is feeble and precarious but the opinion of its necessity for moral and social purposes almost universal; and •when those who reject revelation usually take refuge

in an optimistic deism—a worship of the order of nature and of the supposed course of providence—which, when it is worked out in detail, is at least as full of contradictions and as perverting to the moral sentiments as any of the forms of Christianity. Yet very little with any claim to a philosophical character has been written by sceptics against the usefulness of this form of belief. The volume by 'Philip Beauchamp' had this as its special topic. Having been shown it in manuscript, my father put it into my hands, and I made a marginal analysis of it as I had done of the *Elements of Political Economy*. Next to the *Traité de Législation*, it was one of the books that produced the greatest effect on me by the searching character of its analysis. On reading it recently after an interval of many years, I find it to have some of the defects as well as the merits of the Benthamic modes of thought, and to contain (I now think) many weak arguments, but with a great overbalance of sound ones and much good material for a more completely philosophical and conclusive treatment of the subject.

Writing essays

I have now, I believe, mentioned all the books that had any considerable effect on my early mental development. From this point I began to carry on my intellectual cultivation by writing even more than by reading. In the summer of 1822 ·at the age of 16· I wrote my first argumentative essay. I remember very little about it except that it was an attack on what I regarded as the *aristocratic prejudice* that the rich were likely to be superior in moral qualities to the poor. My performance was entirely argumentative, without any of the declamation that the subject •would admit of and •might be expected to suggest to a young writer. But in that department ·of rhetoric· I was incompetent, and remain so. Dry argument was the only thing I could manage, or willingly tried, though passively I was very susceptible to the effect of all composition—whether poetry or oratory—which appealed to the feelings on any basis of reason. My father knew nothing of this essay until it was finished. He was well satisfied with it and (as I learned from others) even pleased with it; but, perhaps from a desire to promote the exercise of mental faculties other than the purely logical one, he advised me to make my next exercise in composition one of the oratorical kind. On that suggestion, availing myself of my familiarity with Greek history and ideas and with the Athenian orators, I wrote two speeches, one an accusation of Pericles and the other a defence of him, on a supposed impeachment for not fighting the Lacedaemonians when they invaded Attica. After this I continued to write papers on subjects that were often far beyond my capacity, but with great benefit from the exercise itself and from the discussions with my father that it led to.

Three important contacts

I had now also begun to converse on general subjects with the educated men with whom I came in contact, and the opportunities for such contact naturally became more numerous. The two friends of my father from whom I derived most, and with whom I most associated, were Mr **George Grote** and Mr John Austin. The acquaintance of both with my father was recent, but had ripened rapidly into intimacy. Mr Grote was introduced to my father by Mr Ricardo, I think in 1819 (when Grote was about 25 years old), and sought assiduously his society and conversation. Already a highly educated man, he was by comparison with my father a mere beginner on the great subjects of human opinion; but he rapidly seized on my father's best ideas; and in political-opinion circles he made

himself known as early as 1820 by a pamphlet in defence of Radical Reform, in reply to a celebrated article by Sir James Mackintosh recently published in the *Edinburgh Review*. Mr Grote's banker father was a thorough Tory, I believe, and his mother was intensely evangelical; so that he was in no way indebted to home influences for his liberal opinions. But, unlike most persons who have the prospect of being rich by inheritance, he had while actively engaged in the business of banking also devoted much time to philosophical studies; and his intimacy with my father did much to decide the character of the next stage in his mental progress. I often visited him, and my conversations with him on political, moral, and philosophical subjects gave me, in addition to much valuable instruction, all the pleasure and benefit of sympathetic communion with a man of the high intellectual and moral eminence that his life and writings have since shown to the world.

John Austin, who was four or five years older than Mr Grote, was the eldest son of a retired Suffolk miller who had made money by contracts during the war, and who must have been a man of remarkable qualities, as I infer from the fact that all his sons were of more than common ability and all eminently gentlemen. The one with whom we are now concerned, and whose writings on jurisprudence have made him celebrated, was for some time in the army, and served in Sicily under Lord William Bentinck. After the peace he sold his commission and studied for the bar, to which he had been called for some time before my father knew him. Unlike Mr Grote, he was not to any extent a pupil of my father, but his own reading and thought had brought him to many of the same opinions, modified by his own decided individuality of character. He was a man of great intellectual powers which appeared at their very best in conversation; •from the vigour and richness of expression with which, under the excitement of discussion, he was accustomed to maintain some view of most general subjects; and •from an appearance of strong, deliberate and collected *will* mixed with a certain bitterness derived partly from temperament and partly from the general cast of his feelings and reflections. The dissatisfaction with life and the world that is, in the present state of society and intellect, somewhat felt by every discerning and highly conscientious mind gave in his case a rather melancholy tinge to the character, this being very natural to someone whose passive moral susceptibilities are more vigorous than his active energies. For it must be said that the strength of will of which his manner seemed to give such strong assurance expended itself principally in *manner*. With great zeal for human improvement, a strong sense of duty, and capacities and acquirements the extent of which is proved by the writings he has left, he hardly ever completed any sizeable intellectual task. He had

- •such a high standard of what ought to be done,
- •such an exaggerated a sense of deficiencies in his own works, and
- •so little ability to content himself with the amount of detail sufficient for the occasion and for the ·immediate· purpose,

that he not only spoilt much of his work for ordinary use by over-working it, but spent so much time and exertion in superfluous study and thought that when his task ought to have been completed he had generally worked himself into an illness without having half finished what he undertook. He is not the sole example of this mental infirmity among the accomplished and able men I have known. In John Austin's case it was combined with a liability to frequent attacks of disabling though not dangerous ill-health, so that throughout his life he accomplished little in comparison with what he seemed capable of; but what he did produce

is greatly admired by the most competent judges; and like Coleridge he could plead in extenuation that through his conversation he had been to many persons a source of much instruction and of great elevation of character. His influence on me was most salutary. It was *moral* in the best sense. He took a sincere and kind interest in me, far beyond what could have been expected towards a mere youth from a man of his age, standing, and apparent austerity of character. His conversation and demeanour had a tone of high-mindedness that did not show itself so much—if indeed the quality existed as much—in anyone else I associated with at that time. My contacts with him were the more beneficial because he was of a different mental type from all other intellectual men whom I met often, and from the first set he himself decidedly against the prejudices and narrownesses that are almost sure to be found in a young man formed by a particular mode of thought or a particular social circle.

His younger brother **Charles Austin**, whom I saw much of at this time and for the next year or two, also had a great effect on me, though of a very different kind. He was only a few years older than myself, and had just left the University, where he had shone with great éclat as a man of intellect and a brilliant orator and converser. The effect he produced on his Cambridge contemporaries deserves to counted as an historical event, because it is one cause of the tendency towards liberalism in general, and the Benthamic and politico-economic form of it in particular, that appeared in some of the more active-minded young men of the higher classes from this time to 1830. The Union Debating Society, at that time at the height of its reputation, was an arena where political and philosophical opinions that were then thought extreme were weekly asserted, face to face with their opposites, before audiences consisting of the élite of the Cambridge youth: and though many noteworthy persons (of whom Lord Macaulay is the most celebrated) later gained their first oratorical laurels in those debates, the really influential mind among these intellectual gladiators was Charles Austin. After he left the University his conversation and personal ascendancy continued to make him a leader among the same class of young men who had been his associates there; and he attached me among others to his chariot. Through him I became acquainted with Macaulay, Hyde and Charles Villiers, Strutt (now Lord Belper), Romilly (now Lord Romilly and Master of the Rolls), and various others who subsequently figured in literature or politics, and among whom I heard discussions on many topics that were still somewhat new to me. The influence of Charles Austin over me differed from that of the other persons I have mentioned in being the influence of an older contemporary rather than of a man over a boy. It was through him that I first felt myself to be not a pupil under teachers but a man among men. He was the first person of intellect whom I met on a ground of equality, though still much his inferior on that common ground. He always greatly impressed those he came in contact with, even when their opinions were the opposite of his. The impression he gave was that of boundless strength, together with talents which—combined with such apparent force of will and character—seemed capable of dominating the world. Those who knew him, whether friendly to him or not, always expected him to play a conspicuous part in public life. It is seldom that men produce such an immediate effect by speech unless they in some degree prepare to do so; and he did this in no ordinary degree. He loved to strike, and even to startle. He knew that decision is the greatest element of effect, and he uttered his opinions with all the decision he could throw into them, never so well pleased as when he astonished anyone by their audacity. Very unlike his brother, who made war against the narrower interpretations

and applications of the principles they both professed, he presented the Benthamic doctrines in the most startling possible form, exaggerating everything in them that tended to consequences offensive to anyone's preconceived feelings. All of which he defended with such verve and vivacity, and carried off by a manner so agreeable as well as forcible, that he always either came off victor or divided the honours of the field. I believe that much of the notion popularly entertained of the tenets and sentiments of 'Benthamites' or 'utilitarians' had its origin in paradoxes thrown out by Charles Austin. It must be said, however, that his example was followed in an inferior way by younger converts, and that to parade anything that anyone considered offensive in the doctrines and maxims of Benthanism became at one time the badge of a small coterie of youths. All of these who had anything in them, myself among others, quickly outgrew this boyish vanity; and those who didn't outgrow it became tired of differing from other people and gave up both the good and the bad part of the heterodox opinions they had professed.

The Utilitarian Society

In the winter of 1822–3, ·at the age of 17·, I formed the plan of a little society, to be composed of young men agreeing in fundamental principles—acknowledging *utility* as their standard in ethics and politics, and a certain number of the principal corollaries drawn from it in the philosophy I had accepted—and meeting once a fortnight to read essays and discuss questions in line with the premises thus agreed on. The fact would hardly be worth mentioning if it weren't for the fact that the name I gave to the society I had planned was the 'Utilitarian Society'. It was the first time anyone had taken the title 'utilitarian', and the word made its way into the language from this humble source. I did not invent the word, but found it in Galt's novel *Annals of the Parish*, in which the Scotch clergyman of whom the book is a supposed autobiography warns his parishioners not to leave the Gospel and become utilitarians. With a boy's fondness for a name and a banner I seized on the word, and for some years called myself and others by it as a sectarian label; and it came to be occasionally used by some others holding the opinions it was intended to designate. As those opinions attracted more notice the term was repeated by strangers and opponents, and came into rather common use just about the time when those who had originally taken it up laid it down, along with other sectarian characteristics. The so-called 'Society' consisted at first of no more than three members, one of whom, being Mr Bentham's amanuensis [see Glossary], obtained for us permission to hold our meetings in his [Bentham's] house. The number of members never reached ten, and the society was broken up in 1826. It had thus an existence of about three and a half years. Its chief effect on me, apart from the benefit of practice in oral discussion, was bringing me into contact with several young men who were at that time less advanced than myself. As they professed the same opinions as I had, I was for some time a sort of leader among them, and had considerable influence on their mental progress. I tried to press into its service any young man of education whose path crossed mine and whose opinions were compatible with those of the Society; and there were others whom I probably would never have known if they had not joined it. Those of the members who became my intimate companions—not one of whom was in any sense a *disciple*, all of them standing on their own feet as independent thinkers—were William Eyton Tooke [1806–1830], son of the eminent political economist, a young man of singular worth both moral and intellectual, lost to the world by an early death; his friend William Ellis, an original

thinker in the field of political economy, now honourably known by his apostolic exertions for the improvement of education; George Graham, afterwards an official assignee of the Bankruptcy Court, a thinker of originality and power on most abstract subjects; and (from when he came first to England to study for the bar in 1824 or 1825) a man who has made more noise in the world than any of these, John Arthur Roebuck.

Earning a living

In May 1823 my professional occupation and status for the next 35 years of my life were decided by my father's obtaining for me an appointment from the East India Company, immediately under himself in the office of the Examiner of India Correspondence. I was appointed in the usual manner at the bottom of the list of clerks, to rise at first by seniority; but with the understanding that I would be employed from the beginning in preparing drafts of despatches, thus being trained as a successor to those who then filled the higher departments of the office. For some time my drafts of course required much revision from my immediate superiors, but I soon became well acquainted with the business, and by my father's instructions and the general growth of my own powers I was in a few years qualified to be—and practically *was*—the chief conductor of the correspondence with India in one of the leading departments, that of the Native States. This continued to be my official duty until I was appointed Examiner, only two years before my retirement was brought about by the abolition of the East India Company as a political body. Of all the occupations by which one can now earn a living, I do not know any more suitable than this for someone who does not have an independent income and wants to devote a part of each 24 hours to private intellectual pursuits. Writing for the press cannot be recommended as a permanent resource to anyone qualified to accomplish anything in the higher reaches of literature or thought, because of

- the uncertainty of this means of livelihood, especially if the writer has a conscience, and will not consent to serve any opinions except his own, and also because
- the writings by which one can live are not the writings which themselves live, and are never those in which the writer does his best.

Books destined to form future thinkers take too much time to write, and usually when written come too slowly into notice and repute, to be relied on for a livelihood. Those who have to support themselves by their pen must depend on literary drudgery, or at best on writings addressed to the multitude; and they can employ in the pursuits •of their own choice only such time as they can spare from those •of necessity; which is generally less than the leisure allowed by office occupations, while the effect on the mind is far more enervating and fatiguing. For my own part I have always found office duties an actual rest from the other mental occupations that I have carried on simultaneously with them. They were sufficiently intellectual not to be a distasteful drudgery, without being such as to cause any strain on the mental powers of a person used to abstract thought or careful literary composition. Every mode of life has its drawbacks, and I was conscious of some of the drawbacks of mine. I cared little for the loss of the chances of riches and honours held out by some of the professions, particularly the bar, which had been the profession thought of for me. But I was not indifferent to exclusion from Parliament and public life: and I felt very strongly the more immediate unpleasantness of confinement to London. My India-house employment allowed at most a month's holiday each year, while my taste

was strong for a country life, and my time in France had given me an ardent desire to travel. But though these tastes could not be freely indulged, they were never entirely sacrificed. I passed most Sundays in the country, taking long rural walks on that day even when residing in London. For a few years the month's holiday was spent at my father's house in the country; afterwards some or all of each holiday was spent in tours, chiefly on foot, with one or more of the young men who were my chosen companions; and at a later period in longer journeys or excursions, alone or with other friends. France, Belgium, and Rhenish Germany were within easy reach of the annual holiday; and two longer absences under medical advice—one of three months, one of six—added Switzerland, the Tyrol, and Italy to my list. Both these journeys occurred rather early, so as to give the benefit and charm of the remembrance to a large portion of life.

I am inclined to agree with what has been surmised by others, that the opportunity my official position gave me of learning by personal observation the necessary conditions of the •practical conduct of public affairs has been of considerable value to me as a •theoretical reformer of the opinions and institutions of my time. Not that public business transacted on paper, to take effect on the other side of the globe, was in itself apt to give much practical knowledge of life! But the occupation accustomed me to see and hear the difficulties of every course and the means of meeting them stated and discussed deliberately with a view to *action*; it gave me opportunities to see when public measures and other political facts did not produce the effects that had been expected of them, and from what causes; above all, it was valuable to me by making me in this activity merely one wheel in a machine that had to work together as a whole. As a purely theoretical writer I would have had no-one to consult but myself, and my thinking would not have presented any of the obstacles that would have started up whenever my theories came to be applied in practice. But as a Secretary conducting political correspondence, I could not issue an order or express an opinion without satisfying various persons very unlike myself that the thing was fit to be done. I was thus in a good position for finding out by practice the formulation of a thought that gives it easiest admittance into minds not prepared for it by habit; while I became practically familiar with the difficulties of moving bodies of men, the need for compromise, the art of sacrificing the non-essential to preserve the essential. I learned, when I could not obtain everything, **(i)** how to obtain the best I could; **(ii)** to be pleased and encouraged when I could have the smallest part of what I wanted, instead of being indignant or dispirited because I could not have it all; and **(iii)** to bear with complete equanimity being overruled altogether when that happened. Throughout my life I have found these acquisitions to be of the greatest possible importance for personal happiness, and they are also needed for anyone to bring about, either as theorist or as practical man, the greatest amount of good compatible with his opportunities.

Part 4
Youthful propagandism.
The *Westminster Review*

The *Morning Chronicle*

The occupation of so much of my time by office work did not relax my attention to my own pursuits, which were never carried on more vigorously. It was about this time that I began to write in newspapers. The first writings of mine that went into print were two letters published towards

the end of 1822, in the *Traveller* evening newspaper (which afterwards grew into the *Globe and Traveller* by the purchase and incorporation of the *Globe*). It was then the property of the well-known political economist Colonel Torrens. Under the editorship of the able Mr Walter Coulson (who was an amanuensis of Mr Bentham, then a reporter, then an editor, then a barrister and conveyancer, and died Counsel to the Home Office) it had become one of the most important newspaper organs of liberal politics. Colonel Torrens himself wrote much of the political economy of his paper; and had at this time attacked some opinion of Ricardo and my father, to which (at my father's instigation) I attempted an answer; and Coulson, out of consideration for my father and goodwill to me, published it. There was a reply by Torrens, to which I responded. Soon after that I attempted something considerably more ambitious. The prosecutions of Richard Carlile and his wife and sister for publications hostile to Christianity were then exciting much attention, and nowhere more than among the people in my circle. Back then freedom of discussion in religion or even in politics was far from being the conceded point that it seems to be now, at least in theory; and the holders of obnoxious opinions had to be always ready to argue and re-argue for the liberty of expressing them. I wrote a series of five letters, signed 'Wickliffe', going over the whole length and breadth of the question of free publication of all opinions on religion, and offered them to the *Morning Chronicle*. Three of them were published early in 1823; the other two, containing things too outspoken for that journal, never appeared at all. But a paper that I wrote soon after on the same subject, apropos of a debate in the House of Commons, was published as a leading article; and during the whole of 1823 a good number of my contributions were printed in the *Chronicle* and *Traveller*—sometimes notices of books, but more often letters commenting on some nonsense talked in Parliament or some defect of the law or misdoings of the magistracy or the courts of justice. In this last department the *Chronicle* was now doing important service. After the death of Mr Perry, the editorship and management of the paper had come to Mr John Black, long a reporter on the paper, a man of most extensive reading and information, great honesty and simplicity of mind, a particular friend of my father's, imbued with many of his and Bentham's ideas, which he reproduced in his articles—among other valuable thoughts—with great facility and skill. From this time the *Chronicle* ceased to be the merely Whig organ it had been, and during the next ten years became to a considerable extent a vehicle of the opinions of the utilitarian radicals. This was mainly through what Black himself wrote, with some assistance from Fonblanque, who first showed his eminent qualities as a writer by articles and *jeux d'esprit* in the *Chronicle*. That paper rendered most service to improvement in connection with the defects of •the law and of •the administration of justice. Up to that time hardly a word had been said, except by Bentham and my father, against that most defective part of English institutions and of their administration. It was the almost universal creed of Englishmen that the law of England, the judicature of England, the unpaid magistracy of England, were models of excellence. After Bentham, who supplied the principal materials, the greatest share of the merit of breaking down this wretched superstition belongs to Black as editor of the *Morning Chronicle*. He kept up an incessant fire against it, exposing the absurdities and vices of the law and the courts of justice, paid and unpaid, until he forced some sense of them into people's minds. On many other questions he became the organ of opinions that were much in advance of any that had ever before been regularly advocated in the newspaper press. Black was a

frequent visitor of my father, and Mr Grote used to say that he always knew by the Monday morning's article whether Black had been with my father on the Sunday! Black was one of the most influential of the many channels through which my father's conversation and personal influence made his opinions tell on the world, cooperating with the effect of his writings in making him a power in the country such as an individual in a private station has seldom managed to be through the mere force of intellect and character—a power that was often acting the most efficiently where it was least seen and suspected. I have already noted how much of what was done by Ricardo, Hume, and Grote resulted partly from his prompting and persuasion. He was the good genius by the side of Brougham in most of what he did for the public on education, law reform, or any other subject. And his influence flowed in minor streams too numerous to be specified. This influence was now about to receive a great extension by the foundation of the *Westminster Review*.

The Westminster Review

Contrary to what may have been supposed, my father played no part in setting up the *Westminster Review*. The need for a Radical organ to make head against the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* (then in the period of their greatest reputation and influence) had been a topic of conversation between him and Mr Bentham many years earlier, and it had been a part of their 'castles in the air' that my father should be the editor; but the idea had never taken any practical shape. In 1823 Mr Bentham decided to establish the review at his own cost, and offered the editorship to my father, who declined it as incompatible with his India House appointment. It was then entrusted to Mr (now Sir John) Bowring, at that time a merchant in the City. For two or three years Mr Bowring had been an assiduous frequenter of Mr Bentham, who was drawn to him by •many personal good qualities, •an ardent admiration for Bentham, •a zealous adoption of many, though not all, of his opinions, and •an extensive acquaintanceship and correspondence with liberals of all countries, which seemed to qualify him for being a powerful agent in spreading Bentham's fame and doctrines throughout the world. My father had seen little of Bowring, but knew enough of him to have formed a strong opinion that he was not at all what my father considered suitable for running a political and philosophical review; and he was so pessimistic about the enterprise that he regretted it altogether, feeling convinced that Mr Bentham would lose his money *and* that discredit would probably be brought on radical principles. But he could not desert Mr Bentham, and he consented to write an article for the first number. As it had been a favourite part of the original scheme that part of the work should be devoted to reviewing the other Reviews, this article of my father's was to be a general criticism of the *Edinburgh Review* from its commencement. Before writing it he made me read through all the volumes of the *Review*, or as much of each as seemed of any importance (which was an easier task in 1823 than it would be now), and make notes for him on the articles I thought he would want to examine, whether because of their good or their bad qualities.

My father's attack on the Whigs

This paper of my father's was the chief cause of the sensation that the *Westminster Review* produced at its first appearance, and is in conception and execution one of the most striking of all his writings. He began with an analysis of the tendencies of periodical literature in general; pointing out that it cannot wait for success, as books can, but must

succeed immediately or not at all, so that it is almost certain to profess and inculcate opinions already held by the public to which it addresses itself, instead of attempting to rectify or improve those opinions. Next, in order to characterise the position of the *Edinburgh Review* as a political organ he entered into a complete analysis, from the radical point of view, of the British constitution. He called attention to its thoroughly aristocratic character:

- the nomination of a majority of the House of Commons by a few hundred families;
- the entire identification of the more independent part, the county members, with the great landholders;
- the different classes whom this narrow oligarchy found it convenient to admit to a share of power; and finally,
- what he called the constitution's two props, the Church, and the legal profession.

He pointed out the natural tendency of an aristocratic body of this type to group itself into two parties, one possessing the executive, the other trying to supplant the former and become the predominant section with the aid of public opinion, without any essential sacrifice of the aristocratic predominance. He described the course likely to be pursued, and the political ground occupied, by an aristocratic party in opposition, coquetting with popular principles for the sake of popular support. He showed how this idea was put to work in the conduct of the Whig party and of the *Edinburgh Review* as its chief literary organ. He described as their main characteristic what he termed 'seesaw', writing alternately on both sides of every question which touched the power or interest of the governing classes—sometimes in different articles, sometimes in different parts of the same article—and he illustrated this with many examples. Such a formidable attack on the Whig party and policy had never before been made; and in this country such a great blow had never been struck for radicalism; and I don't think there was any living person other than my father who could have written that article.[1]

Other doings of the *Westminster Review*

In the meantime the newborn *Review* had joined with a project for a purely literary periodical, to be edited by Mr Henry Southern, a literary man by profession and afterwards a diplomat. The two editors agreed to unite their forces and divide the editorship, Bowring taking the political department and Southern the literary one. Southern's review was to have been published by Longman, and that firm, though part proprietors of the *Edinburgh Review*, were willing to be the publishers of the new journal. But when all the arrangements had been made and the prospectuses sent out, the Longmans saw my father's attack on the *Edinburgh*, and withdrew. My father was now appealed to for his influence on his own publisher, Baldwin, which was exerted with a successful result. And so in April 1824, amidst anything but hope on the part of my father and of most of those who afterwards aided in carrying on the review, the first number made its appearance.

That number was an agreeable surprise to most of us. The average of the articles was of much better quality than had been expected. The literary and artistic department had rested chiefly on Mr Bingham, a barrister (subsequently a

[1] The continuation of this article in the second number of the review was written by me under my father's eye, and it was of little or no value except as practice in composition, in which respect I found it more useful than anything else I ever wrote .

police magistrate), who had been for some years a frequenter of Bentham, was a friend of both the Austins, and had adopted Mr Bentham's philosophical opinions with great ardour. Partly from accident, there were in the first number as many as five articles by Bingham; and we were extremely pleased with them. I well remember the mixed feeling I myself had about the *Review*; •the joy at finding—as we did not at all expect—that it was good enough to be capable of being made a creditable organ of those who held the opinions it professed; and •extreme vexation, since it was so good on the whole, at what we thought to be its blemishes. But when in addition to our generally favourable opinion of it we learned that it had an extraordinarily large sale for a first number, and found that the appearance of a radical review with claims equal to those of the established organs of parties had aroused much attention, there could be no room for hesitation, and we all became eager to do everything we could to strengthen and improve it.

My father continued to write occasional articles. The *Quarterly Review* received its exposure, as a sequel to that of the *Edinburgh*. The most important of his other contributions were an attack on Southey's *Book of the Church* in the fifth number, and a political article in the twelfth. Mr Austin contributed only one paper, but one of great merit, an argument against primogeniture, in reply to an article recently published in the *Edinburgh Review* by McCulloch. Grote also was a contributor only once; all the time he could spare being already taken up with his *History of Greece*. The article he wrote was on his own subject, and was a very complete exposure and castigation of ·the *History of Greece* by William· Mitford. Bingham and Charles Austin continued to write for some time; Fonblanque was a frequent contributor from the third number. Of my particular associates, Ellis was a regular writer up to the ninth number; and at about the time when he left off, others of the set began—Eyton Tooke, Graham, and Roebuck. I was myself the most frequent writer of all, having contributed, from the second number to the eighteenth, thirteen articles; reviews of books on history and political economy, or discussions on special political topics, such as corn laws, game laws, laws of libel. Occasional articles of merit came in from other acquaintances of my father's and later on of mine; and some of Mr Bowring's writers turned out well. On the whole, however, the conduct of the *Westminster Review* was never satisfactory to any of the persons strongly interested in its principles with whom I came in contact. Almost every number contained several things extremely offensive to us, either in point of opinion, of taste, or by mere want lack ability. The unfavourable judgments passed by my father, Grote, the two Austins, and others, were re-echoed with exaggeration by us younger people; and as our youthful zeal made us by no means backward in making complaints, we led the two editors a sad life. From my knowledge of what I then was, I have no doubt that we were at least as often wrong as right; and I am certain that if the *Review* had been carried on according to our notions (I mean those of the juniors) it would have been no better than it was and perhaps worse. But it is worth noting as a fact in the history of Benthamism that the periodical by which it was best known was from the first extremely unsatisfactory to those whose opinions on all subjects it was supposed specially to represent.

The spread of Benthamism

Meanwhile, however, the *Westminster Review* made considerable noise in the world and gave to the Benthamic type of radicalism a recognised status out of all proportion to the number of its adherents and to the personal merits

and abilities, at that time, of most of them. It was a time, as is known, of rapidly rising liberalism. When the fears and animosities accompanying the war with France had been brought to an end, and people again had a place in their thoughts for home politics, the tide began to set towards reform. The renewed oppression of the Continent [see Glossary] by the old reigning families, the English Government's apparent acceptance of the conspiracy against liberty called the Holy Alliance [see Glossary], and the enormous weight of the national debt and taxation caused by that long and costly war, made the government and parliament very unpopular. Radicalism, under the leadership of the Burdetts and Cobbetts, had acquired a character and importance that seriously alarmed the administration; and no sooner had their alarm been temporarily assuaged by the celebrated Six Acts [which in effect equated radicalism with treason] than the trial of Queen Caroline ·for adultery· aroused a still wider and deeper feeling of hatred. The outward signs of this hatred passed away with its cause, but there arose on all sides a spirit that had never appeared before, of *detailed* opposition to abuses. Mr Hume's persevering scrutiny of the public expenditure, forcing the House of Commons to a division on every objectionable item in the estimates, had begun to have a great effect on public opinion and had extorted many minor retrenchments from an unwilling administration. Political economy had asserted itself with great vigour in public affairs by the Petition of the Merchants of London for free trade, drawn up in 1820 by Mr Tooke and presented by Mr Alexander Baring; and by the noble exertions of Ricardo during the few years of his parliamentary life. His writings. . . .had drawn general attention to the subject, making at least partial converts in the Cabinet itself; and Huskisson, supported by Canning, had started that gradual demolition of the protective system that one of their colleagues virtually completed in 1846, though the last vestiges were not swept away until Mr Gladstone did it in 1860. Mr Peel, then Home Secretary, was entering cautiously into the untrodden and especially Benthamic path of *law reform*. At this period, when

- liberalism seemed to be becoming the tone of the time,
- improvement of institutions was preached from the highest places, and
- a complete change of the constitution of Parliament was loudly demanded in the lowest,

it is not surprising that attention should have been aroused by the regular appearance in controversy of what seemed to be a new school of writers claiming to be the legislators and theorists of this new tendency. Because of

- the air of strong conviction with which they wrote, when scarcely anyone else seemed to have an equally strong faith in any creed as definite as theirs;
- the boldness of their head-on assaults on both the existing political parties;
- their uncompromising announcement of opposition to many of the generally accepted opinions, and the general suspicion that they held others still more heterodox than the ones they announced;
- the talent and verve of (at least) my father's articles, and the appearance of a corps behind him sufficient to carry on a review; and finally
- the fact that the *Westminster Review* was bought and read,

the so-called Bentham school in philosophy and politics came to fill a greater place in the public mind than it had held before, or has ever held again since other equally earnest schools of thought have arisen in England. As I was in the headquarters of it, knew what it was composed of, and as one of the most active of its very small number might fairly

claim that I was a great part of it, it belongs to me more than to most others to give some account of it.

My father's role in the life of Benthamism

This supposed school had no other existence than what was constituted by the fact that my father's writings and conversation drew round him a certain number of young men who had already imbibed, or who imbibed from him, some portion of his very decided political and philosophical opinions. The notion that Bentham was surrounded by a band of disciples who received their opinions from his lips is a fable to which my father did justice in his 'Fragment on Mackintosh', and which is simply ridiculous to all who knew Mr Bentham's habits of life and manner of conversation. The influence Bentham exercised was through his writings. Through them he has produced, and is producing, effects on the condition of mankind that are doubtless wider and deeper than any that can be attributed to my father. He is a much greater name in history. But my father exercised a far greater personal ascendancy. He was sought for the vigour and instructiveness of his conversation, and did use that largely as an instrument for the diffusion of his opinions. I have never known any man who could do such ample justice to his best thoughts in colloquial discussion. His perfect command over his great mental resources, the terseness and expressiveness of his language, and the moral earnestness as well as intellectual force of his delivery, made him one of the most striking of all argumentative talkers; and he was full of anecdote, a hearty laugher, and a most lively and amusing companion when he was with people whom he liked. His power did not show itself solely, or even chiefly, in the spread of his merely intellectual convictions; it operated still more through the influence of

- his exalted public spirit and concern above all things for the good of the whole, which warmed into life and activity every germ of similar virtue that existed in the minds he came in contact with;
- the desire he made them feel for his approval, the shame at his disapproval;
- the moral support that his conversation and his very existence gave to those who were aiming at the same goals, and
- the encouragement he gave to the fainthearted or gloomy among them, by the firm confidence he always felt in the power of reason, the general progress of improvement, and the good that individuals could do by judicious effort (though he was pessimistic about the results to be expected in any one particular case).

I have only since learned to appreciate the extreme rarity of this ·four-part· quality.

It was my father's *opinions* that gave the Benthamic or utilitarian propagandism of that time its distinguishing character. They fell singly, scattered from him in many directions, but they flowed from him in a continuous stream principally in three channels. •One was through me, the only mind directly formed by his instructions, and through whom considerable influence was exercised over various young men who became propagandists in their turn. •A second was through some of Charles Austin's Cambridge contemporaries, who—initiated by him or under the general mental impulse he gave—had adopted many opinions allied to my father's. (Some of the more considerable of these later sought my father's acquaintance and frequently visited his house. They included Strutt, afterwards Lord Belper, and the present Lord Romilly, whose eminent father, Sir Samuel, was a long-term friend of my father's.) •The third channel was that of a younger generation of Cambridge undergraduates,

contemporary not with Austin but with Eyton Tooke, who were drawn to that estimable person by affinity of opinions, and introduced by him to my father; the most notable of these was Charles Buller. Various other persons individually received and passed on a considerable amount of my father's influence—for example, Black (as before mentioned) and Fonblanque. But we regarded most of these as only partial allies; Fonblanque, for instance, always diverged from us on many important points. But there was in fact by no means complete unanimity among any sub-group of us, nor had any of us confidently adopted all my father's opinions. For example, although his *Essay on Government* was regarded probably by all of us as a masterpiece of political wisdom, our acceptance did not extend to the paragraph in which he maintains that consistently with good government women can be excluded from the suffrage because their interests are the same as men's. I most positively dissented from this doctrine, as did all my chosen associates. To be fair to my father: he denied having intended to affirm that women should be excluded, any more than should men under the age of 40, concerning whom he said the same thing in the next paragraph. He was, as he truly said, not discussing whether the suffrage ought to be restricted, but only (assuming that it is to be restricted) how much it could be restricted without interfering with the requirements for good government. But I thought then (and still do) that the opinion that he acknowledged, just as much as the one he disclaimed, is as great an error as any of those against which the *Essay* was directed; that the interests of •women are included in those of •men exactly as much as the interests of •subjects are included in those of •kings; and that every reason for giving the suffrage to anyone demands that it not be withheld from women. This was also the general opinion of the younger converts, and it is pleasant to be able to say that Mr Bentham was wholly on our side on this important point.

Philosophic radicalism

But though none of us agreed in every respect with my father, his opinions were the principal element that gave colour and character to the little group of young men who were the first propagators of what was afterwards called 'philosophic radicalism'. Their way of thinking was not characterised by *Benthamism* in any sense implying that Bentham was their chief or guide, but rather by a combination of

- •Bentham's point of view,
- •the point of view of modern political economy, and
- •Hartley's metaphysics.

Malthus's population principle [see Glossary] was quite as much a banner and point of union among us as any opinion specially belonging to Bentham. This great doctrine was originally advanced as an argument against the indefinite improvability of human affairs; but we took it up with ardent zeal in the opposite direction, as showing the sole means of realising that improvability, namely by securing full employment at high wages to the whole labouring population through a voluntary restriction in the increase of their numbers. The other leading characteristics of the creed that we held in common with my father may be stated as follows. **[1]** In politics, an almost unbounded confidence in the efficacy of two things: representative government, and complete freedom of discussion. So complete was my father's reliance on the influence of reason over the minds of mankind, whenever it is allowed to reach them, that he felt that all would be gained if

- •the whole population were taught to read,
- •all sorts of opinions were allowed to be addressed to

them by orally and in writing, and

- by means of the suffrage they could nominate a legislature to give effect to the opinions they adopted.

He thought that when the legislature no longer represented a class interest it would aim at the general interest, honestly and with adequate wisdom, because the people would be sufficiently guided by educated intelligence to make generally good choices of persons to represent them and then to leave their chosen representatives a liberal discretion. He held that aristocratic rule—government of *the Few* in any of its shapes—was the only thing that stood between mankind and an administration of their affairs by the best wisdom to be found among them; and it was the object of his sternest disapproval. The principal article of his political creed was *democratic suffrage*, not on the grounds of liberty, 'rights of man', or any of the more or less meaningful phrases by which democracy had usually been defended, but as the most essential of 'securities for good government'. In this too he held fast only to what he regarded as essentials; he was comparatively indifferent to monarchical or republican forms of government (far more so than Bentham, to whom a king—a 'corrupter-general'—appeared necessarily very noxious). Second only to aristocracy, he detested an established church or corporation of priests, as being by position the great depravers of religion and interested in opposing the progress of the human mind. But he did not personally dislike any clergyman who did not deserve it, and was on terms of sincere friendship with several. **[2]** In ethics, his moral feelings were energetic and rigid on everything that he thought important to human well being, while he was supremely indifferent to all the doctrines of common morality that he thought were based solely on asceticism and priest-craft. (This indifference was theoretical; it did not show itself in his personal conduct.) He looked forward, for example, to a considerable increase of freedom in the relations between the sexes, though without claiming to define exactly what would or should be the precise conditions of that freedom. This opinion was not connected in him with sensuality of either a theoretical or a practical kind. On the contrary, he expected that one of the beneficial effects of increased freedom would be that the imagination would no longer dwell on the physical relation ·between the sexes· and swell this into one of the principal objects of life; a perversion of the imagination and feelings that he regarded as one of the deepest seated and most pervading evils in the human mind. **[3]** In psychology, his basic doctrine was the formation of all human character by circumstances through the universal Principle of Association, and the consequent unlimited possibility of improving the moral and intellectual condition of mankind by education. Of all his doctrines none was more important than this, or needs more to be insisted on: unfortunately there is none more contradictory to the dominant theoretical tendencies in his time and since.

These various opinions were seized on with youthful fanaticism by the little knot of young men of whom I was one; and we put into them a sectarian spirit from which my father was, in intention at least, wholly free. It was a ridiculous exaggeration when we (or rather a phantom substitute for us) were sometimes called by others a 'school', but that is what some of us for a time really hoped to become. The French *philosophes* of the 18th century were the example we sought to imitate, and we hoped to accomplish no less results. No-one in the set went to such great excesses in this boyish ambition as I did. . . .

What I was as a human being

But all this is really only the outside of our existence, or at least it is only the intellectual part, and only one side of that. In trying to penetrate inward and give some indication of what we were as human beings, I must be understood to be speaking only of myself, the only one I can speak about from sufficient knowledge. The picture would have to be greatly modified, I believe, to fit any of my companions.

The description so often given of a 'Benthamite' as a *mere reasoning machine* was extremely inapplicable to most of those who have borne that label, but for two or three years of my life it was not altogether untrue of me. It was perhaps as applicable to me as it can be to anyone just entering into life, to whom the ordinary objects of desire must in general have at least the attraction of novelty. There is nothing very extraordinary in this fact: no youth of the age I then was can be expected to be more than *one thing*, and this was the thing I happened to be. I had plenty of ambition and desire for distinction, and zeal for what I thought the good of mankind was my strongest sentiment, mixing with and colouring all others. But at that period of my life my zeal was nothing much but zeal for theoretical opinions. It was not rooted in genuine •benevolence or •sympathy [see Glossary] with mankind, though these qualities had their due place in my ·theoretical· ethical standard. Nor was it connected with any high enthusiasm for ideal nobleness. I was imaginatively very susceptible to this feeling; but there was ·in my life· at that time a shortage of

- •its natural food, poetical culture,

while there was a superabundance of

- •the discipline antagonistic to it, that of mere logic and analysis.

Add to this that my father's teachings tended to under-value feeling. It was not that he was himself cold-hearted or insensible; I believe it was rather from the contrary quality: he thought that •feeling could take care of itself, that there was sure to be enough of it if •actions were properly cared about. Offended by how often in ethical and philosophical controversy

- •feeling is made the ultimate reason and justification of conduct, instead of being itself called on for a justification,

while, in practice

- •actions that are harmful to human happiness are defended as being required by feeling, and the •character of a person of feeling is regarded as meritorious in a way that my father thought appropriate only for •actions,

he had a real impatience with •attributing praise to feeling or •any but the most sparing reference to it in the estimation of persons or in the discussion of things. In addition to the influence this characteristic of his had on me and others, we found all the opinions to which we attached most importance being constantly attacked on the ground of feeling. Utility was denounced as cold calculation; political economy as hard-hearted; anti-population doctrines as repulsive to the natural feelings of mankind. We retorted by the word 'sentimentality' which, along with 'declamation' and 'vague generalities', served us as common terms of opprobrium. Although we were generally in the right, as against those who were opposed to us, the effect was that the cultivation of feeling (except the feelings of public and private duty) was not in much esteem among us and had very little place in the thoughts of most of us, myself in particular. What we principally thought about was altering people's opinions—making them believe according to evidence, and know what was their real interest. Once they knew *that*, we

thought, they would enforce a regard for it on one another through the instrument of opinion. While fully recognising the superior excellence of unselfish benevolence and love of justice, we did not expect the regeneration of mankind from any direct action on those sentiments, but from the effect of educated intellect, enlightening the selfish feelings. Although this last is prodigiously important as a means of improvement in the hands of those who are themselves impelled by nobler principles of action, I do not believe that any of the survivors of the Benthamites or utilitarians of that day now relies mainly on it for the general amendment of human conduct.

Poetry

This neglect in theory and in practice of the cultivation of feeling naturally led to, among other things, an under-valuing of poetry and of imagination generally as an element of human nature. It is or was part of the common notion of Benthamites that they are enemies of poetry: this was partly true of Bentham himself; he used to say that 'all poetry is misrepresentation'; but in the sense in which he said it, the same might have been said of all impressive speech, all representation or inculcation more oratorical in its character than a sum in arithmetic. An article of Bingham's in the first number of the *Westminster Review*, in which he offered as an explanation of something he disliked in Moore that 'Mr Moore is a poet, and therefore is not a reasoner', did a good deal to attach the notion of hating poetry to the writers in the *Review*. But the truth was that many of us were great readers of poetry; Bingham himself had been a writer of it; and the correct statement about me (as about my father) would be not that I disliked poetry but that I was *theoretically* indifferent to it. I disliked any sentiments in poetry that I would have disliked in prose; and that included a great deal. And I was wholly blind to its place in human culture as a means of educating the feelings. But I was always personally very susceptible to some kinds of it. In the most sectarian period of my Benthamism I happened to look into Pope's *Essay on Man*, and though every opinion in it was contrary to mine, I well remember how powerfully it acted on my imagination. Perhaps at that time poetical composition of any higher type than *eloquent discussion in verse* might not have produced a similar effect on me; anyway I seldom gave it an opportunity. But this was a mere passive state. Long before I had enlarged much the basis of my intellectual creed, I had obtained—in the natural course of my mental progress—poetic culture of the most valuable kind through reverential admiration for the lives and characters of heroic persons, especially the heroes of philosophy. The same inspiring effect that so many of mankind's benefactors reported experiencing from Plutarch's *Lives* was produced on me by Plato's pictures of Socrates, and by some modern biographies, above all by Condorcet's *Vie de M. Turgot*, a book well calculated to rouse the best sort of enthusiasm because it contains one of the wisest and noblest of lives depicted by one of the wisest and noblest of men. The heroic virtue of these glorious representatives of the opinions with which I sympathised deeply affected me, and I perpetually recurred to them as others do to a favourite poet when needing to be carried up into the more elevated regions of feeling and thought. I may observe by the way that this book cured me of my sectarian follies. The two or three pages beginning *Il regardait toute secte comme nuisible. . .*', and explaining why Turgot always kept himself perfectly distinct from the Encyclopedists, sank deeply into my mind. I left off designating myself and others as 'utilitarians', and stopped exhibiting sectarianism by the pronoun 'we' or any

other collective designation. My real inward sectarianism I did not get rid of till later, and much more gradually.

Preparing the *Rationale of Judicial Evidence*

About the end of 1824 or beginning of 1825, Mr Bentham, having recently got back his papers on Evidence from M. Dumont (whose *Traité des Preuves Judiciaires*, based on them, had just been completed and published), decided to have them printed in the original ·language·, and thought of me as capable of preparing them for the press; just as his *Book of Fallacies* had recently been edited by Bingham. I gladly undertook this task, and it occupied nearly all my spare time for about a year, and then there was the time afterwards spent in seeing the five large volumes through the press. Mr Bentham had begun this treatise three times, at considerable intervals, each time in a different manner and without reference to what had gone before. Two of the three times he had gone over nearly the whole subject. It was my business to condense these three masses of manuscript into a single treatise; adopting the third as the groundwork, and incorporating with it as much of the other two as it had not completely superseded. I had also to unroll such of Bentham's involved and parenthetical sentences as seemed too complex for readers to be likely to take the trouble to understand. Mr Bentham also wanted me to try by my own efforts to fill any gaps he had left; and for this purpose I read the most authoritative treatises on the English law of evidence, and commented on a few of the objectionable features of the English rules that had escaped Bentham's notice. I also •replied to the objections to some of his doctrines that had been made by reviewers of Dumont's book, and •added a few supplementary remarks on some of the more abstract parts of the subject, such as the theory of improbability and impossibility. The controversial part of these editorial additions was written in a more arrogant tone than was becoming in one so young and inexperienced as I was [he was 18 years old]; but indeed I had never contemplated coming forward in my own person; and as an anonymous editor of Bentham I fell into the tone of my author, not thinking it unsuitable to him or to the subject, however unsuitable it might be to me. My name as editor was put to the book after it was printed, at Mr Bentham's positive desire, which I tried and failed to persuade him to forgo.

So far as my own improvement was concerned, the time occupied in this editorial work was extremely well spent. The *Rationale of Judicial Evidence* is one of the richest in matter of all Bentham's productions. The theory of evidence being in itself one of the most important of his subjects and ramifying into most of the others, the book contains a great proportion of all his best thoughts, very fully developed; while also including the most elaborate exposure of the vices and defects of English law (as it then was) that is to be found in his works. . . . So the direct knowledge I obtained from the book, imprinted on me much more thoroughly than it could have been by mere reading, was itself no small acquisition. But this occupation also did for me something that might seem less to be expected, namely giving a great start to my powers of composition. Everything I wrote after this editorial employment was markedly superior to anything I had written before it. Bentham's later style, as the world knows, was heavy and cumbersome, from the excess of a good quality, the love of precision, which made him introduce clause within clause into the heart of every sentence, so that the reader might receive into his mind all the modifications and qualifications along with the main proposition; and the habit grew on him until his sentences became most laborious reading for those not accustomed to them. But his

earlier style, that of the 'Fragment on Government', 'Plan of a Judicial Establishment' etc. is a model of liveliness and ease combined with fulness of matter, scarcely ever surpassed: and there were many striking specimens of this earlier style in the manuscripts for *Evidence*, all of which I tried to preserve. Such a long course of this admirable writing had a considerable effect on my own; and I added to it by the assiduous reading of other writers, both French and English, who combined ease with force, such as Goldsmith, Fielding, Pascal, Voltaire, and Courier. Through these influences my writing lost the jejuneness[see Glossary] of my early works; the bones and cartilages began to clothe themselves with flesh, and the style became sometimes lively and almost light.

This improvement was first exhibited in a new field. Mr Marshall of Leeds—

- the father of the present generation of Marshalls,
- the same who was brought into Parliament for Yorkshire when the representation forfeited by Grampound ·because of corruption· was transferred to it,
- an earnest parliamentary reformer and
- a man of large fortune of which he made a liberal use,

had been much struck with Bentham's *Book of Fallacies*; and he thought it would be useful to publish annually the Parliamentary Debates, not in the chronological order of Hansard but classified according to subjects, and accompanied by a commentary pointing out the speakers' fallacies. With this intention he naturally addressed himself to the editor of the *Book of Fallacies*; and Bingham, with the assistance of Charles Austin, undertook the editorship. The work was called *Parliamentary History and Review*. Its sale was not sufficient to keep it in existence, and it only lasted three years; but it aroused some attention among parliamentary and political people. The best strength of the party was put forth in it; and its execution did them much more credit than that of the *Westminster Review* had ever done. Bingham and Charles Austin wrote much in it; as did Strutt, Romilly, and several other liberal lawyers. My father wrote one article in his best style; the elder Austin another. Coulson wrote one of great merit. It fell to me to lead off the first number with an article on the principal topic of the session (that of 1825), the Catholic Association and the Catholic disabilities. In the second number I wrote an elaborate essay on the commercial crisis of 1825 and the Currency Debates. In the third I had two articles, one on a minor subject, the other on the Reciprocity principle in commerce, apropos of a celebrated diplomatic correspondence between Canning and Gallatin. These writings were no longer mere reproductions and applications of the doctrines I had been taught; they were original thinking, as far as 'original' can be applied to old ideas in new forms and connections; and I can truthfully say that they had a maturity and a well-digested character that none of my previous performances had had. So they were not at all juvenile in execution; but their subjects have either gone by or have been so much better treated since that they are entirely superseded, and should remain buried in the same oblivion with my contributions to the first dynasty of the *Westminster Review*.

Further learning

While thus engaged in writing for the public, I did not neglect other modes of self-cultivation. It was at this time that I learned **German**; beginning it on the Hamiltonian method—·focusing on translation, ignoring grammar·—for which purpose I and several of my companions formed a class. For several years from this period, our social studies took a form that contributed greatly to my mental progress. The idea occurred to us of carrying on, by reading and

conversation, a joint study of several of the branches of science we wanted to be masters of. We assembled to the number of a dozen or more. Mr Grote lent a room of his house in Threadneedle Street for the purpose, and his partner Prescott—one of the three original members of the Utilitarian Society—made one of our number. We met two mornings in every week, from 8.30 till 10, at which hour most of us were called off to our daily occupations. Our first subject was **political economy**. We chose some systematic treatise as our text-book, my father's *Elements* being our first choice. One of us read aloud a chapter or some smaller portion of the book. The discussion was then opened, and anyone who had an objection or other remark to make made it. Our rule was to discuss thoroughly every point raised, whether great or small, prolonging the discussion until all who took part were satisfied with the conclusion they had individually arrived at; and to follow up every side-issue that the chapter or the conversation suggested, never leaving it until we had untied every knot we found. We repeatedly kept up the discussion of some one point for several weeks, thinking intently on it during the intervals of our meetings, and contriving solutions of the new difficulties that had arisen in the last morning's discussion. When we had finished in this way my father's *Elements*, we went in the same manner through Ricardo's *Principles of Political Economy* and Bailey's *Dissertation on Value*. These close and vigorous discussions were not only highly improving for those who took part in them but brought out new views of some topics in abstract political economy. The theory of international values that I afterwards published came from these conversations, as did also the modified form of Ricardo's theory of profits laid down in my 'Essay on Profits and Interest'. New theorisings from us mainly originated with Ellis, Graham, and myself; though others gave valuable aid to the discussions, especially Prescott (by his knowledge) and Roebuck (by his dialectical acuteness). The theories of international values and of profits were thought up and worked out in about equal proportions by myself and Graham; and if our original project had been carried out my *Essays on some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy* would have been published along with some papers of his under our joint names. But when my exposition came to be written, I found that I had so much over-estimated my agreement with him, and he dissented so much from the most original of the two Essays—the one on international values—that I had to consider the theory as now exclusively mine, and it came out as such when published many years later. I may mention that among the alterations my father made in revising his *Elements* for the third edition, several were based on criticisms arising from these conversations; and in particular he modified his opinions (though not to the extent of our new theories) on both the points I have mentioned.

When we had enough of political economy, we took up **syllogistic logic** in the same manner, Grote now joining us. Our first text-book was Aldrich, but being disgusted with its superficiality we reprinted the *Manuductio ad Logicam* of the Jesuit Du Trieu, one of the most finished among the many manuals of scholastic logic that my father, a great collector of such books, possessed. After finishing this we took up Whately's *Logic*. . . .and finally the *Computatio sive Logica* of Hobbes. When dealt with in our manner, these books provided a wide range for original metaphysical speculation; and most of what has been done in Book I of my *System of Logic* to rationalise and correct the principles and distinctions of the scholastic logicians, and to improve the theory of the import of propositions, had its origin in these discussions; Graham and I originating most of the novelties while Grote and others served as an excellent tribunal or

test. From this time I formed the project of writing a book on logic, though on a much humbler scale than the one I eventually wrote.

Having done with logic, we launched into **analytic psychology**, and having chosen Hartley's *Observations on Man* for our text-book we raised Priestley's edition of it to an extravagant price by searching through London to furnish each of us with a copy. When we had finished Hartley, we suspended our meetings; but when my father's *Analysis of the Mind* was published soon after, we reassembled for the purpose of reading it. With this our exercises ended. I have always dated from these conversations my own real inauguration as an original and independent thinker. It was also through them that I acquired, or very much strengthened, a mental habit to which I attribute all that I ever did or ever shall do in theoretical matters, namely

- never accepting half-solutions of difficulties as complete,
- never abandoning a puzzle, but returning to it again and again until it was cleared up,
- never allowing obscure corners of a subject to remain unexplored because they did not appear important,
- never thinking that I perfectly understood any part of a subject until I understood the whole.

Our doings from 1825 to 1830 in the way of public speaking filled a considerable place in my life during those years, and as they had important effects on my development I ought to say something about them.

Battling the Owenites

There was for some time a society of Owenites [see Glossary] called the Co-operative Society, which met for weekly public discussions in Chancery Lane. Roebuck happened to be in contact with several of its members early in 1825, and attended one or two of the meetings and joined in the debate in opposition to Owenism. Some of us started the notion of going there in a body and having a general battle; and Charles Austin and some of his friends who did not usually take part in our joint exercises entered into the project. It was carried out in collaboration with the principal members of the Society, who naturally preferred a controversy with opponents to a tame discussion among their own members. The question of population was proposed as the subject of debate: Charles Austin led the case on our side with a brilliant speech, and the fight was kept up by adjournment through five or six weekly meetings before crowded audiences including—along with the members of the Society and their friends—many hearers and some speakers from the legal profession. When this debate was ended, another was started on the general merits of Owen's system; and the contest altogether lasted about three months. It was a *lutte corps-à-corps* [= 'a head-on battle'] between Owenites and political economists, whom the Owenites regarded as their most inveterate opponents; but it was a perfectly friendly dispute. We who represented political economy had the same objectives as they had, and took trouble to show it; and the principal champion on their side was a very estimable man with whom I was well acquainted, Mr William Thompson of Cork, author of a book on the distribution of wealth, and of an 'Appeal' on behalf of women against the passage relating to them in my father's *Essay on Government*. Ellis, Roebuck, and I took an active part in the debate, and among those from the legal profession who joined in it I remember Charles Villiers. On the population question the other side also obtained very efficient support from outside. The well-known Gale Jones, then an elderly man, made one of his florid speeches; but the speaker who struck me most, though I

dissented from nearly every word he said, was the historian Thirlwall, since Bishop of St. David's, then a Chancery barrister, unknown except by a high reputation for eloquence acquired at the Cambridge Union before the era of Austin and Macaulay. His speech was in answer to one of mine. Before he had uttered ten sentences I rated him as the best speaker I had ever heard, and I have never heard anyone whom I placed above him.

The new Society

The great interest of these debates predisposed some of those who took part in them to take up a suggestion thrown out by the political economist McCulloch that a society was wanted in London similar to the Speculative Society at Edinburgh, in which Brougham, Horner, and others first cultivated public speaking. Our experience at the Co-operative Society seemed to give cause for optimism about the sort of men who might be brought together in London for such a purpose. McCulloch mentioned the matter to several young men of influence to whom he was then giving private lessons in political economy. Some of these entered warmly into the project, particularly George Villiers (afterwards Earl of Clarendon). He and his brothers Hyde and Charles, Romilly, Charles Austin and I, with some others, met and agreed on a plan. We determined to meet once a fortnight from November to June, at the Freemasons' Tavern, and we had soon a splendid list of members, containing several members of parliament and nearly all the most noted speakers of the Cambridge Union and of the Oxford United Debating Society. It is curiously illustrative of the tendencies of the time that our main difficulty in recruiting for the Society was to find enough Tory speakers. Almost all the people we could press into the service were Liberals of different orders and degrees. Besides those already named, we had Macaulay, Thirlwall, Praed, Lord Howick, Samuel Wilberforce (afterwards Bishop of Oxford), Charles Poulett Thomson (afterwards Lord Sydenham), Edward and Henry Lytton Bulwer, Fonblanque, and many others whom I cannot now recollect but who later made themselves more or less conspicuous in public or literary life. Nothing could seem more promising. But when the time for action drew near and we had to choose a President and find someone to open the first debate, none of our celebrities would consent to perform either office. Of the many who were pressed on the subject the only one who could be prevailed on was a man of whom I knew very little, but who had taken high honours at Oxford and was said to have acquired a great oratorical reputation there; who some time later became a Tory member of parliament. He accordingly was fixed on, both for filling the President's chair *and* for making the first speech. The important day arrived; the benches were crowded; all our great speakers were present, to judge our efforts but not to help them. The Oxford orator's speech was a complete failure. This threw a damp on the whole concern: the speakers who followed were few, and none of them did their best. The affair was a complete fiasco, and the oratorical celebrities we had counted on went away never to return, giving to me at least a lesson in knowledge of the world. This unexpected breakdown altered my whole relation to the project. I had not expected to take a prominent part or to speak much or often, particularly at first, but I now saw that the success of the scheme depended on the new men, and I put my shoulder to the wheel. I opened the second question, and from that time spoke in nearly every debate. It was very uphill work for some time. The three Villiers and Romilly stuck to us for some time longer, but the patience of all the founders of the Society was at last exhausted, except for myself and Roebuck. In the following

season (1826–7) things began to mend. We had acquired two excellent Tory speakers, Hayward and Shee (afterwards Sergeant Shee [i.e. a high-ranking barrister]); the radical side was reinforced by Charles Buller, Cockburn, and others of the second generation of Cambridge Benthamites; and with their help and occasional help from others, and with the two Tories as well as Roebuck and me as regular speakers, almost every debate was a *bataille rangée* between the 'philosophic radicals' and the Tory lawyers; until our conflicts were talked about, and several notable and considerable persons came to hear us. This happened still more in the subsequent seasons (1828 and 1829) when the *Coleridgians*, in the persons of Maurice and Sterling, made their appearance in the Society as a second Liberal and even Radical party, on totally different grounds from Benthamism and vehemently opposed to it; bringing into these discussions the general doctrines and modes of thought of the European reaction against the philosophy of the eighteenth century; and adding a third and very important belligerent party to our contests, which were now a pretty good display of the movement of opinion among the most cultivated part of the new generation. Our debates were very different from those of common debating societies, for they habitually consisted of the strongest arguments and most philosophical principles that either side could produce, often thrown into close confutations of one another. The practice was necessarily very useful to us, especially to me. I never acquired real fluency, and always had a bad and ungraceful delivery, but I could make myself listened to. Also, whenever expression seemed important for a given speech—from the feelings involved, or the nature of the ideas to be developed—I wrote the speech in advance; so I greatly increased my power of effective writing, acquiring not only an ear for smoothness and rhythm but a practical sense for effective sentences and an immediate criterion of their effectiveness by their effect on a mixed audience.

End of connection with the *Westminster Review*

The Society, and the preparation for it, together with the preparation for the morning conversations that were going on at the same time, •took up most of my spare time and •made me feel it a relief when (in the spring of 1828) I stopped writing for the *Westminster Review*. This had fallen into difficulties. Though the sale of the first number had been very encouraging, I don't think the permanent sale was ever enough to pay the expenses on the scale on which the *Review* was carried on. Those expenses had been considerably reduced, but not enough. One of the editors, Southern, had resigned; and several of the writers, including my father and me, who had been paid like other contributors for our earlier articles, had recently written without payment. Nevertheless, the original funds were nearly or quite exhausted, and if the *Review* was to be continued there had to be some new arrangement of its affairs. My father and I had several conferences with Bowring on the subject. We were willing to do our utmost for maintaining the *Review* as an organ of our opinions, but not under Bowring's editorship; while the impossibility of its any longer supporting a paid editor provided a basis on which we could without offence to him propose to dispense with his services. We and some of our friends were prepared to carry on the *Review* as unpaid writers, either finding among ourselves an unpaid editor or sharing the editorship among us. But while this negotiation was proceeding with Bowring's apparent acceptance, he was carrying on another negotiation in a different quarter (with Colonel Perronet Thompson). The first we heard of it was in a letter from Bowring as editor, informing us merely that an arrangement had been made, and proposing to us to

write for the next number with promise of payment. We did not dispute Bowring's right to bring about, if he could, an arrangement more favourable to himself than the one we had proposed; but we thought his concealing it from us while seemingly entering into our own project was an insult; and even had we not thought so, we were not inclined to spend any more time and trouble attempting to preserve the *Review* under his management. So my father excused himself from writing, though two or three years later he was pressured into writing one more political article. As for me, I positively refused. And thus ended my connection with the original *Westminster Review*. The last article I wrote in it had taken more work than any previous one; but it was a labour of love, being a defence of the early French Revolutionists against the Tory misrepresentations of Sir Walter Scott in the introduction to his *Life of Napoleon*. The number of books I read for this purpose, making notes and extracts—even the number I had to buy (for in those days there was no public or subscription library from which books of reference could be taken home)—far exceeded the worth of the immediate purpose; but I had at that time a half-formed intention of writing a history of the French Revolution; and though I never wrote it, my collections afterwards were very useful to Carlyle for a similar purpose.

Part 5
A crisis in my mental history. One stage onward

For some years after this I wrote very little for publication, and nothing regularly; and I got great advantages from this intermission. It was of considerable importance to me at this period to be able to digest and mature my thoughts for my own mind only, without any immediate call for giving them out in print. If I had gone on writing, that would have disturbed the important transformation in my opinions and character that occurred during those years. The origin of this transformation, or at least the process by which I was prepared for it, can only be explained by turning some distance back.

Crucial question, disturbing answer

From the winter of 1821 when I first read Bentham, and especially from the start of the *Westminster Review*, I had what might truly be called an objective in life—to be a reformer of the world. My conception of my own happiness was entirely identified with this objective. The personal sympathies I wished for were those of fellow labourers in this enterprise. I tried to pick up as many flowers as I could along the way; but *this* was all I relied on for serious and permanent personal satisfaction; and I often congratulated myself on how certain I could be of having a happy life by placing my happiness in something •durable and •distant—something in which •some progress might be always making while •it could never be exhausted by complete attainment. This did very well for several years, during which the general improvement going on in the world and the idea of myself as engaged with others in struggling to promote it seemed enough to fill up an interesting and animated existence. But the time came when I awakened from this as from a dream. It was in the autumn of 1826 ·when I was 20 years old·. I was in a dull state of nerves of the sort that everyone is occasionally liable to; incapable of enjoyment or pleasurable excitement; one of those moods when what is pleasure at other times becomes insipid or indifferent; the state (I should think) that converts to Methodism are usually in when they are smitten by their

first 'conviction of sin'. In this frame of mind it occurred to me to put the question directly to myself:

> Suppose that all your objectives in life were realised; that all the changes in institutions and opinions that you are looking forward to were completely effected at this very instant; would this be a great joy and happiness to you?

And there was no way of blocking the clear answer 'No!' At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. All my happiness was to have been found in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, so how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for.

The cloud lingers and thickens

At first I hoped that the cloud would pass away of itself, but it did not. A night's sleep, the sovereign remedy for the smaller vexations of life, had no effect on it. I awoke to a renewed consciousness of the woeful fact. I carried it with me into all companies, into all occupations. Hardly anything had power to cause me to forget it for even a few minutes. For some months the cloud seemed to grow thicker and thicker. The lines in Coleridge's 'Dejection'—I did not then know them—exactly describe my case:

> A grief without a pang, void, dark and drear,
> A drowsy, stifled, unimpassioned grief,
> Which finds no natural outlet or relief
> In word, or sigh, or tear.

In vain I sought relief from my favourite books, those memorials of past nobleness and greatness from which I had always drawn strength and animation. I read them now without feeling, or with the accustomed feeling minus all its charm, and I became convinced that my love of mankind—and of excellence for its own sake—had worn itself out. I did not seek comfort by speaking to others of what I felt. If I had loved anyone enough to make confiding my griefs a necessity, I would not have been in the condition I was. Also, I felt that my distress was not interesting or in any way deserving of respect. There was nothing in it to attract sympathy. Advice, if I had known where to seek it, would have been most precious. The words of Macbeth to the physician often occurred to my thoughts.[1] But there was no one on whom I could build the faintest hope of such assistance. It would have been natural for me to look to my father in any practical difficulties, but he was the last person to whom I would look for help in such a case as this. Everything convinced me that he had no knowledge of any such mental state as I was suffering from, and that even if he could be made to understand it he was not the physician who could heal it. My education, which was wholly his work, had been conducted without any regard to the possibility of its ending in this result; and I saw no use in giving him the pain of thinking that his plans had failed, when the failure was probably irremediable—and anyway beyond the power of his remedies. I had at that time no other friends to whom I had any hope of making my condition intelligible. It was however abundantly intelligible to myself, and the more I dwelt on it the more hopeless it appeared.

[1] [Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased, / Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, / Raze out the written troubles of the brain, / And with some sweet oblivious antidote / Cleanse the charged bosom of that perilous stuff / Which weighs upon the heart? (*Macbeth* V.3)]

My course of study had led me to believe that all mental and moral feelings and qualities, good or bad, were the results of association; that we love one thing and hate another, take pleasure in one sort of action or contemplation and pain in another sort, through the clinging of pleasurable or painful ideas to those things, from the effect of education or of experience. As a consequence of this I had always heard it maintained by my father, and was myself convinced, that the aim of education should be to form the strongest possible *salutary* associations—of pleasure with all things beneficial to the great whole, and of pain with all things hurtful to it. This doctrine appeared to be unconquerable; but looking back it now seemed to me that my teachers' views about how to form and maintain these salutary associations had been superficial. They seemed to have relied entirely on the old familiar instruments—praise and blame, reward and punishment. Now, I did not doubt that by these means, begun early and applied unremittingly, intense associations of pain and pleasure (especially pain) might be created, and might produce desires and aversions capable of lasting undiminished to the end of life. But there must always be something artificial and casual [see Glossary] in associations thus produced. The pains and pleasures thus forcibly associated with things are not connected with them by any natural tie; and so (I thought) it is essential to the durability of these associations that they should become so intense and inveterate as to be practically indissoluble before the habitual exercise of the power of analysis had started. For I now saw, or thought I saw, what I had always before received with incredulity—that the habit of analysis has a tendency to wear away the feelings. And so indeed it has, if no other mental habit is cultivated and the analysing spirit remains without its natural complements and correctives. The very excellence of analysis (I argued) is that it tends to weaken and undermine whatever is the result of prejudice; that it enables us mentally to separate ideas that have only casually clung together; and *no* associations could ultimately resist this dissolving force if it weren't that we owe to analysis our clearest knowledge of the permanent sequences in nature—

- the real connections between things, not dependent on our will and feelings;
- natural laws by virtue of which in many cases one thing is inseparable from another in fact ·and not just in someone's mind·;
- laws which, in proportion as they are clearly perceived and imaginatively realised, cause our ideas of things that are always joined together in nature to cohere more and more closely in our thoughts.

Analytic habits may thus even strengthen the associations between causes and effects, means and ends, but tend to weaken those that are, to speak familiarly, a *mere* matter of feeling. So they are (I thought) •favourable to prudence and clear-sightedness but •a perpetual worm at the root of the passions and of the virtues; and, above all, utterly undermine all desires and pleasures that are the effects of association, i.e. (according to the theory I held) all except the purely physical and organic—and no-one had a stronger conviction than I had of the entire insufficiency of *these* to make life desirable. These were the laws of human nature by which (it seemed to me) I had been brought to my present state. All those I looked up to believed that

- the pleasure of sympathy with human beings, and
- the feelings that made the good of others, and especially of mankind on a large scale, the object of existence,

were the greatest and surest sources of happiness. I was convinced of the truth of this, but to know that a feeling would make me happy if I had it did not give me the feeling.

My education, I thought, had failed to create these feelings in sufficient strength to resist the dissolving influence of analysis, while the whole course of my intellectual cultivation had made precocious and premature analysis the unvarying habit of my mind. I was thus (as I said to myself) left stranded at the start of my voyage,

- with a well-equipped ship and a rudder but no sail,
- with no real desire for the ends I had been so carefully fitted out to work for,
- no delight in virtue or the general good, but also
- just as little delight in anything else.

The fountains of vanity and ambition seemed to have dried up within me as completely as those of benevolence. I had had (as I reflected) some gratification of vanity at too early an age; I had obtained some distinction, and felt myself of some importance, before the desire for distinction and importance had grown into a passion; and what I had attained, though it wasn't much, had been attained too early and—like all pleasures enjoyed too soon—it had made me blasé and indifferent to the pursuit. Thus neither selfish nor unselfish pleasures were pleasures to me. And there seemed no power in nature sufficient to begin the formation of my character anew, and create in an irretrievably analytic mind fresh associations of pleasure with any objects of human desire.

These were the thoughts that mingled with the dry heavy dejection of the melancholy winter of 1826–7. During this time I went on with my usual occupations mechanically, by the mere force of habit. I had been so *drilled* in a certain sort of mental exercise that I could still carry it on when all the spirit had gone out of it. I even composed and gave several speeches at the Debating Society—I don't know how, or how successfully. Out of four years of continual speaking at that society, this is the only year of which I remember next to nothing. Two lines of Coleridge, in whom alone of all writers I have found a true description of what I felt, were often in my thoughts, not at this time (for I had never read them), but in a later period of the same mental malady:

> Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve,
> And hope without an object cannot live.

My case was probably not as special to *me* as I fancied it, and I don't doubt that many others have passed through a similar state; but the idiosyncrasies of my education had given to the general phenomenon a special character that made it seem the natural effect of causes that it was hardly possible for time to remove. I often asked myself if I could go on living in this manner. I generally answered that I did not think I could bear it beyond a year.

The cloud starts to lift

After about half a year, however, a small ray of light broke in on my gloom. I happened to be reading Marmontel's *Mémoires*, and came to the passage that relates his father's death, the distressed position of the family, and the sudden inspiration by which he (then a mere boy) felt and made them feel that he would be everything to them—would make up for all they had lost. A vivid conception of the scene and its feelings came over me, and I was moved to tears. From this moment my burden grew lighter. The oppression of the thought that all feeling was dead within me was gone. I was no longer hopeless; I was not a stock or a stone. Apparently I still had some of the material out of which all worth of character and all capacity for happiness are made. Relieved from my ever-present sense of irremediable wretchedness, I gradually found that the ordinary incidents of life could again give me some pleasure; that I could again find enjoyment—not intense, but sufficient for cheerfulness—in sunshine and

sky, in books, in conversation, in public affairs; and that there was again excitement, though of a moderate kind, in exerting myself for my opinions and for the public good. Thus the cloud gradually drew off, and I again enjoyed life: and though I had several relapses, some lasting many months, I was never again as miserable as I had been ·in that winter·.

The experiences of this period had two very marked effects on my opinions and character. **(1)** They led me to adopt a theory of life very unlike the one I had acted on before, a theory with much in common with the anti-self-consciousness theory of Carlyle (which at that time I had never heard of). I never wavered in my belief that happiness is •the test of all rules of conduct and •the goal of life. But I now thought that this goal was to be attained only by not making it the *direct* goal. The only happy people (I thought) are those whose minds are fixed on some objective other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit followed not as a means but as itself an ideal goal. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness along the way. The enjoyments of life (such was now my theory) are sufficient to make it a pleasant thing when they are taken *en passant* without being made a principal objective. Once you make them so, you will immediately feel them to be insufficient. They will not bear a scrutinising examination. Ask yourself whether you are happy, and you cease to be so. The only chance is for you to have as your purpose in life not happiness but something external to it. Let your self-consciousness, your scrutiny, your self-interrogation, exhaust themselves on *that*; and if you are otherwise fortunately circumstanced you will inhale happiness with the air you breathe, without •dwelling on it or thinking about it, •forestalling it in imagination, or •putting it to flight by fatal questioning. This theory now became the basis of my philosophy of life. I still hold to it as the best theory for all those who have only a moderate degree of sensibility and of capacity for enjoyment, i.e. for the great majority of mankind.

(2) The other important change in my opinions was that for the first time I gave the internal culture of the individual its proper place among the prime necessities of human well-being. I ceased to attach almost exclusive importance to the ordering of outward circumstances, and the training of the human being for thought and for action.

Music

I had now learned by experience that the passive susceptibilities needed to be cultivated as well as the active capacities, and required to be nourished and enriched as well as guided. I did not for an instant lose sight of or undervalue the part of the truth I had seen before; I never broke faith with *intellectual* culture or ceased to consider the power and practice of analysis as an essential condition of individual and of social improvement. But I thought that it had consequences which required to be corrected by joining other kinds of cultivation with it. It now seemed to me of primary importance to maintain a proper balance among the faculties. The cultivation of the feelings became one of the chief themes in my ethical and philosophical creed. And my thoughts and inclinations turned increasingly towards whatever seemed capable of serving that objective.

I •now began to find meaning in the things I had read or heard about the importance of poetry and art as instruments of human culture. But it was only •somewhat later that I began to know this by personal experience. Music was the only imaginative art in which I had from childhood taken great pleasure. Its best effect (in which it surpasses perhaps every other art) consists in exciting enthusiasm; in winding

up to a high pitch those feelings of an elevated kind that are already in the character but to which this excitement gives a glow and a fervour which—though transitory at its utmost height—is precious for sustaining them at other times. This effect of music I had often experienced; but like all my pleasurable susceptibilities it was suspended during the gloomy period. I had sought relief again and again from this quarter, but found none. After the tide had turned and I was in the process of recovery, I was helped forward by music but in a much less elevated manner. At this time I first became acquainted with Weber's *Oberon*, and the extreme pleasure I drew from its delicious melodies did me good by showing me a source of pleasure to which I was as susceptible as ever. But the good was much impaired by the thought that the pleasure of music fades with familiarity, and needs to be revived by intermittence or fed by continual novelty. (And that is quite true of such pleasure as I was having, that of mere *tune*.) And it is very characteristic of my state at that time and of the general tone of my mind at this period of my life that I was seriously tormented by the thought of the exhaustibility of musical combinations. The octave consists of only five tones and two semi-tones, which can be put together in only a limited number of ways of which only a small proportion are beautiful; most of these (it seemed to me) must already have been discovered, and there could not be room for a long succession of Mozarts and Webers to strike out entirely new and surpassingly rich veins of musical beauty, as *they* had done. This source of anxiety may be thought to resemble that of the philosophers of Laputa [in *Gulliver's Travels*], who feared that the sun might burn out. But it was **connected** with the best feature in my character, and the only good point to be found in my very unromantic and in no way honourable distress. [He is talking now about the general distress that he began to describe on page 49.] For though my dejection could not be called other than egotistical, produced by the ruin (I thought) of my fabric of happiness, yet the destiny of mankind in general was always in my thoughts and could not be separated from my own. . . . The question was this:

> If the reformers of society and government could succeed in their objectives, and every person in the community were free and in a state of physical comfort, would the pleasures of life—being no longer kept up by struggle and privation—cease to be pleasures?

And I felt that unless I could see my way to some better hope than this for human happiness in general, my dejection must continue; but that if I could see such an outlet I would then look on the world with pleasure, content with my fair share of the general lot. [Music might be such an 'outlet', but the tormenting thought of 'the exhaustibility of musical combinations' seemed to block it off; that is how the two troubles are **connected**.]

Wordsworth

This state of my thoughts and feelings made the fact of my reading Wordsworth for the first time (in the autumn of 1828) an important event in my life. I took up the collection of his poems from curiosity, with no expectation of mental relief from it, though I had before resorted to poetry with that hope. In the worst period of my depression, I had read through the whole of Byron (then new to me), to see whether a poet, whose special department was supposed to be that of the intenser feelings could rouse any feeling in me. As might be expected, I got no good from this reading but the reverse. The poet's state of mind was too like my own. His was the lament of a man who had worn out all pleasures, and who seemed to think that life, to all who possess the good things of it, must necessarily be the vapid and uninteresting thing

which I found it to be. His Harold and Manfred had the same burden on them that I had; and I was not in a frame of mind to derive any comfort from the vehement sensual passion of his Giaours or the sullenness of his Laras. But while Byron was exactly what *did not* suit my condition, Wordsworth was exactly what *did*. I had looked into *The Excursion* two or three years before, and found little in it; and I would probably have found as little if I had read it at this time. But the miscellaneous poems in the two-volume edition of 1815 (to which little of value was added in the latter part of the author's life) proved to be the precise thing for my mental wants at that particular time.

In the first place, these poems addressed themselves powerfully to one of the strongest of my pleasurable susceptibilities, the love of rural objects and natural scenery; to which I had been indebted not only for much of the pleasure of my life but quite recently for relief from one of my longest relapses into depression. This power over me of rural beauty laid a foundation for taking pleasure in Wordsworth's poetry, especially since his scenery lies mostly among mountains, which (because of my early Pyrenean excursion) were my ideal of natural beauty. But Wordsworth would never have had any great effect on me if he had merely placed before me beautiful pictures of natural scenery. Scott does this even better than Wordsworth, and a very second-rate landscape does it more effectively than any poet. What made Wordsworth's poems a medicine for my state of mind was that they expressed not mere •outward beauty but •states of feeling—and of thought coloured by feeling—under the excitement of beauty. They seemed to be the very culture of the feelings that I was looking for. In them I seemed to draw from a spring of inward joy, of sympathetic and imaginative pleasure, which all human beings could share in; which had no connection with struggle or imperfection but would be made richer by every improvement in the physical or social condition of mankind. From those poems I seemed to learn what would be the perennial sources of happiness when all the greater evils of life had been removed; and as I came under their influence I felt myself better and happier. There have certainly been, even in our own time, greater poets than Wordsworth; but poetry of deeper and loftier feeling could not have done for me at that time what his did. I needed to be made to feel that there was real, permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation. Wordsworth taught me this, not only •without turning away from the common feelings and common destiny of human beings but •with a greatly increased interest in them. And the delight these poems gave me proved that with culture of this sort there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habit of analysis. At the conclusion of the Poems came the famous ode, falsely called Platonic, 'Intimations of Immortality', in which—along with more than his usual sweetness of melody and rhythm, and along with the two passages of grand imagery but bad philosophy so often quoted—I found

- •that he too had had experience similar to mine;
- •that he also had felt that the first freshness of youthful enjoyment of life was not lasting; but
- •that he had sought for and found compensation in the way in which he was now teaching me to find it.

The result was that I gradually, but completely, emerged from my habitual depression and was never again subject to it. I long continued to value Wordsworth less according to his intrinsic merits than by the measure of what he had done for me. Compared with the greatest poets he may be said to be the poet of unpoetical natures with quiet and contemplative tastes. But unpoetical natures are precisely those that require poetic cultivation. Wordsworth is more fitted to provide it than poets who are more *poets* than he.

Roebuck and feelings

It so happened that the merits of Wordsworth were the occasion of my first public declaration of my new way of thinking, and my separation from those of my habitual companions who had not undergone a similar change. The person with whom at that time I was most in the habit of comparing notes on such subjects was Roebuck, and I induced him to read Wordsworth, in whom he also at first seemed to find much to admire: but like most Wordsworthians I threw myself into strong antagonism to Byron, both as a poet and as to his influence on the character. Roebuck, whose instincts were all those of action and struggle, had a strong liking and great admiration for Byron. He regarded Byron's writings as the poetry of human life, while Wordsworth's, according to him, was that of flowers and butterflies. We agreed to have the fight out at our Debating Society, where we accordingly spent two evenings discussing the comparative merits of Byron and Wordsworth, propounding our respective theories of poetry and illustrating them by long recitations. Sterling also, in a brilliant speech, put forward his particular theory. This was the first debate on any weighty subject in which Roebuck and I had been on opposite sides. The schism between us widened more and more from this time, though we continued for some years to be companions. In the beginning our chief divergence related to the cultivation of the feelings. Roebuck was in many respects very different from the vulgar [see Glossary] notion of a Benthamite or utilitarian. He was a lover of poetry and of most of the fine arts. He took great pleasure in music, in dramatic performances, especially in painting, and himself drew and designed landscapes with great facility and beauty. But he never could be made to see that these things have any value as aids in the formation of character. Personally he had very quick and strong sensibilities, instead of being void of feeling as Benthamites are supposed to be. But, like most Englishmen who have feelings, he found his feelings standing very much in his way. He was much more susceptible to the painful sympathies [see Glossary] than to the pleasurable, and looking for his happiness elsewhere he wished that his feelings should be deadened rather than enlivened. And indeed the English character and English social circumstances make it so seldom possible to derive happiness from the exercise of the sympathies that it is not surprising if they count for little in an Englishman's scheme of life. In most other countries the paramount importance of the sympathies as a constituent of individual happiness is an axiom, taken for granted rather than needing any formal statement; but most English thinkers almost seem to regard them as necessary evils, required for keeping men's actions benevolent and compassionate. Roebuck was—or appeared to be—this kind of Englishman. He saw little good in any cultivation of the feelings, and none at all in cultivating them through the imagination, which he thought was only cultivating illusions. In vain I urged on him that the imaginative emotion which a vividly conceived idea arouses in us is not an *illusion* but a *fact*, as real as any of the other qualities of objects; and far from implying anything erroneous and delusive in our mental grasp of the object, is quite consistent with the most accurate knowledge and most perfect practical recognition of all its physical and intellectual laws and relations. The intensest feeling of the beauty of a cloud lighted by the setting sun is no hindrance to my knowing that the cloud is water-vapour that falls under all the laws of vapours in a state of suspension; and I am just as likely to act on these physical laws whenever there is occasion to do so as if I had been incapable of distinguishing beauty from ugliness.

Frederick Maurice

While my intimacy with Roebuck diminished, I fell more and more into friendly intercourse with our Coleridgian adversaries in the society—Frederick Maurice and John Sterling, both subsequently so well known, the former by his writings, the latter through the biographies by Hare and Carlyle. Of these two friends Maurice was the thinker and Sterling the orator—the impassioned expositor of thoughts which at this time were almost entirely formed for him by Maurice. I had for some time been acquainted with Maurice through Eyton Tooke, who had known him at Cambridge, and though my discussions with him were almost always disputes, I had carried away from them much that helped me to build up my new fabric of thought, in the same way as I was deriving much from Coleridge and from the writings of Goethe and other German authors which I read during those years. I have so deep a respect for Maurice's character and purposes, as well as for his great mental gifts, that I am reluctant to say anything that may seem to place him on a less high eminence than I would like to be able to grant to him. But I have always thought that more intellectual power was *wasted* in Maurice than in any other of my contemporaries. Few of them certainly have had so much to waste. Great powers of generalisation, rare ingenuity and subtlety, and a wide perception of important and unobvious truths, served him not for

> putting something better into the place of the worthless heap of received opinions on the great subjects of thought,

but for

> proving to his own satisfaction that the Church of England had known everything from the first, and that all the truths on the basis of which the Church and orthodoxy have been attacked (many of which he saw as clearly as anyone) are not only •consistent with the Thirty-nine articles [see Glossary] but are •better understood and expressed in those articles than by anyone who rejects them.

I have never been able to find any explanation of this other than by attributing it to that timidity of conscience, combined with basic sensitiveness of temperament, which has so often driven highly gifted men into Romanism from the need for a firmer support than they can find in the independent conclusions of their own judgment. No-one who knew Maurice would ever think of imputing to him any more vulgar kind of timidity, even if he had not given public proof of his freedom from it by •his ultimate collision with some of the opinions commonly regarded as orthodox and by •his noble origination of the Christian Socialist movement. From a moral point of view the nearest parallel to him is Coleridge, to whom I think him decidedly superior in merely intellectual power, apart from poetical genius. At this time, however, he might be described as a disciple of Coleridge, and Sterling as a disciple of Coleridge and of him. The changes that my old opinions were undergoing gave me some points of contact with them; and both Maurice and Sterling were of considerable use to my development.

Relations with John Sterling (1806–1844)

I soon became very intimate with Sterling, and was more attached to him than I have ever been to any other man. He was indeed one of the most lovable of men.

- •His frank, cordial, affectionate, expansive character,
- •a love of truth alike conspicuous in the highest things and the humblest,
- •a generous and ardent nature which threw itself

impetuously into the opinions it adopted, but was as eager to do justice to the doctrines and the men it was opposed to as to make war on what it thought their errors, and

- an equal devotion to the two cardinal points of *liberty* and *duty*,

formed a combination of qualities as attractive to me as to everyone else who knew him as well as I did. With his open mind and heart he found no difficulty in joining hands with me across the gulf that still divided our opinions. He told me how he and others had (on the basis of hearsay information) looked on me as a 'made' or manufactured man, having had a certain impress of opinion stamped on me which I could only reproduce; and what a change took place in his feelings when he found in the discussion on Wordsworth and Byron that Wordsworth (and everything that names implies) 'belonged' to me as much as to him and his friends! The failure of his health soon scattered all his plans of life and compelled him to live at a distance from London, so that after the first year or two of our acquaintance we saw each other only at distant intervals. But (as he said himself in a letter to Carlyle) when we did meet it was like brothers. Though he was never in the full sense of the word a *profound* thinker, his openness of mind and the moral courage in which he greatly surpassed Maurice made him outgrow the dominance that Maurice and Coleridge had once exercised over his intellect; though he retained to the last a great but discriminating admiration for both, and towards Maurice a warm affection. Except in that short and transitory phase of his life when he made the mistake of becoming a clergyman, his mind was always progressive; and each time I saw him after an interval the advance he seemed to have made since our last meeting made me apply to him what Goethe said of Schiller, *Er hatte eine fürchterliche Fortschreitung* [= 'He has advanced in colossal strides']. He and I started from intellectual points almost as wide apart as the poles, but the distance between us was always diminishing; if I made steps towards some of his opinions, he during his short life was constantly approximating more and more to several of mine; and there is no knowing how much further this spontaneous assimilation might have gone if he had lived and had health and vigour to continue his assiduous self-culture.

Macaulay versus my father

After 1829 I stopped attending meetings of the Debating Society. I had had enough of speech-making, and was glad to carry on my private studies and meditations without any immediate call for outward assertion of their results. I found the fabric of my old *taught* opinions giving way in many fresh places; I never allowed it to fall to pieces, but was constantly occupied in weaving it anew. During this transition I was never content to remain confused and unsettled, even for a moment. When I had taken in any new idea, I could not rest till I had adjusted its relation to my old opinions and ascertained exactly how much it ought to modify or supersede them.

The conflicts I had so often had to sustain in defending the theory of government laid down in Bentham's and my father's writings, and what I had learned of other schools of political thinking, made me aware of many things which that doctrine—professing to be a theory of government in general—ought to have made room for, and did not. But these things had until now remained with me as corrections to be made in applying the theory to practice rather than as defects in the theory. I felt that politics could not be a science of specific experience; and that the accusations against the Benthamic theory of being a *theory*, of proceeding *a priori*

by way of general reasoning instead of Baconian experiment, showed complete ignorance of Bacon's principles and of the necessary conditions of experimental investigation. At this point there appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* Macaulay's famous attack on my father's *Essay on Government*. This gave me much to think about. I saw that Macaulay's conception of the logic of politics was erroneous; that he stood up for the •empirical mode of treating political phenomena against the •philosophical; that even in physical science his notion of philosophising might have recognised Kepler but would have excluded Newton and Laplace. But I could not help feeling that—though the tone was inappropriate (an error for which Macaulay later made the most ample and honourable amends)—there was truth in several of his strictures on my father's treatment of the subject; that my father's premises were really too narrow, including only a small number of the general truths on which the important consequences in politics depend. *Identity of interest between the governing body and the community at large* is not, in any practical sense that can be attached to it, the only thing on which good government depends; nor can this identity of interest be secured merely by having the right electoral system. I was not at all satisfied with my father's way of meeting Macaulay's criticisms. He did not, as I thought he ought to have done, justify himself by saying :'I was not writing a scientific treatise on politics, I was writing an argument for parliamentary reform.' He treated Macaulay's argument as simply irrational, an attack on the reasoning faculty, an example of Hobbes's remark that when reason is against a man, a man will be against reason. This made me think that in my father's conception of philosophical method, as applicable to politics, there was really something more deeply wrong than I had hitherto believed. But I did not at first see clearly what the error might be.

At last it flashed on me all at once in the course of other studies. In the early part of 1830 I had begun to put on paper the ideas on logic (chiefly on the distinctions among terms and the import of propositions) which had been suggested and in part worked out in the morning conversations I spoke of ·on page 44·. Having secured these thoughts from being lost, I pushed on into the other parts of the subject, to see whether I could do anything more towards clearing up the theory of logic generally. I grappled at once with the problem of induction, postponing that of reasoning, on the ground that you can't reason from premises until you have obtained them ·by induction·. Now, induction is mainly a process for finding the causes of effects; and in trying to trying to understand the way of tracing causes and effects in physical science I soon saw that in the more perfect sciences we

- •ascend by generalisation from particulars to the tendencies of causes considered singly, and then
- •reason downward from those separate tendencies to the effect of the same causes when combined.

I then asked myself 'What is the ultimate analysis of this deductive process?', because the common theory of the syllogism obviously throws no light on it. My practice (learned from Hobbes and my father) being to study abstract principles by means of the best concrete instances I could find, I chose *the composition of forces in dynamics* as the most complete example of the logical process I was investigating. So, examining what the mind does when it applies the principle of the composition of forces, I found that it performs a simple act of addition. It adds the separate effect of the one force to the separate effect of the other and puts down the sum of these as the joint effect. But is this a legitimate process? In dynamics and all the mathematical branches of physics it is; but in some other cases, e.g. chemistry, it is not; and I then recollected that something like this was

pointed out as one of the distinctions between chemical and mechanical phenomena in the introduction to that favourite of my boyhood, Thomson's *System of Chemistry*. This distinction at once made my mind clear as to what was puzzling me about the philosophy of politics. I now saw that whether a science is •deductive or •experimental depends on whether in the province it deals with the effects of conjoined causes •are or •are not the sums of the effects that the same causes produce when separate. It followed that politics must be a deductive science. It thus appeared that Macaulay and my father were both wrong: Macaulay had assimilated the method of philosophising in politics to the purely experimental method of chemistry; while my father, though right in adopting a deductive method, had chosen the wrong one,

- •not the appropriate process, that of the deductive branches of natural philosophy, but
- •the inappropriate one of pure geometry, which—not being a science of causation at all—does not involve any summing-up of effects.

A foundation was thus laid in my thoughts for the principal chapters of what I afterwards published on the logic of the moral sciences; and my new position's relation to my old political creed now became perfectly definite.

Influences from the Continent. . .

If I am asked what system of political philosophy I substituted for the one which (as a philosopher) I had abandoned, I answer:

> No system; only a conviction •that the true system was much more complex and many-sided than anything I had previously had any idea of, and •that its role was to supply not a set of model *institutions* but *principles* from which the institutions suitable to any given circumstances might be deduced.

The influences of European—i.e. Continental [see Glossary]—thought, and especially those of the reaction of the 19th century against the 18th, were now streaming in on me. They came from various quarters: •from the writings of Coleridge, which I had begun to read with interest even before the change in my opinions; •from the Coleridgians with whom I had personal contact; •from what I had read by Goethe; •from Carlyle's early articles in the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Foreign Review*, though for a long time I saw nothing in these but insane ramblings (my father *never* saw anything in them but that). From these sources, and from the acquaintance I kept up with the French literature of the time, I derived—among other ideas that came to the surface when the opinions of European thinkers turned everything upside-down—the following in particular. **(i)** That the human mind has a certain order of possible progress, in which some things must precede others, an order that governments and public instructors can modify but only within limits. **(ii)** That all questions of political institutions are relative, not absolute, and that different stages of human progress will *and should* have different institutions. **(iii)** That government is always in (or passing into) the hands of whatever is the strongest power in society, and that what this power is doesn't depend on institutions but institutions depend on it. **(iv)** That any general theory or philosophy of politics must rest on a preceding theory of human progress, and that this is the same thing as a philosophy of history. These mainly true opinions were held in an exaggerated and violent manner by the thinkers with whom I was now most accustomed to compare notes, and who—as usual with a reaction—ignored the half of the truth that the 18th century thinkers saw. But though at one period of my progress

I for a while under-valued that great century, I never joined in the reaction against it, but kept as firm a hold on one side of the truth as I had on the other. The fight between the 19th century and the 18th always reminded me of the battle about the shield, one side of which was white and the other black. I marvelled at the blind rage with which the combatants rushed against one another. I applied to them and to Coleridge himself many of Coleridge's sayings about half truths; and Goethe's motto , 'many-sidedness', was one which I then would willingly have taken for mine.

. . . especially from the St. Simonians

The writers of the St. Simonian school in France did more than any others to bring home to me a new mode of political thinking. In 1829 and 1830 I read some of their writings. They were then only in the earlier stages of their theorising. They had not yet dressed up their philosophy as a religion, nor had they organised their scheme of socialism. They were just beginning to question the principle of hereditary property. I was by no means prepared to go with them even this far, but I was greatly struck with the connected view of the natural order of human progress that they for the first time presented to me, and especially with their division of all history into organic periods and critical periods. During the organic periods (they said) mankind accept with firm conviction some positive creed, claiming jurisdiction over all their actions and containing more or less of truth and adaptation to the needs of humanity. Under its influence they make all the progress compatible with the creed, and finally outgrow it. Then follows a period of criticism and negation, in which mankind lose their old convictions without acquiring any new ones of a general or authoritative sort, except the conviction that the old ones are false. The period of Greek and Roman polytheism, so long as this was really believed in by educated Greeks and Romans, was an organic period, succeeded by the critical or sceptical period of the Greek philosophers. Another organic period came in with Christianity. The corresponding critical period began with the Reformation, has lasted ever since, still continues, and cannot altogether cease until a new organic period has been inaugurated by the triumph of a still more advanced creed. I knew that these ideas were not peculiar to the St. Simonians; on the contrary, they were the general property of Europe or at least of Germany and France; but so far as I knew they had never been so completely systematised as by these writers, nor had the distinguishing characteristics of a critical period been so powerfully set forth; for I had not then encountered Fichte's lectures on the *Characteristics of the Present Age*. In Carlyle, indeed, I found bitter denunciations of an 'age of unbelief' and of the present as being such; and like most people at that time I supposed these to be passionate protests in favour of the old modes of belief. But anything true in these denunciations I found more calmly and philosophically stated (I thought) by the St. Simonians.

One of their publications seemed to me far superior to the rest; in it the general idea was matured into something much more definite and instructive. This was an early work of Auguste Comte, who then called himself a pupil of Saint-Simon and even announced himself as such on the title-page. In this tract M. Comte first put forth the doctrine, which he afterwards so copiously illustrated, of the natural succession of three stages in every department of human knowledge: **(a)** the theological, **(b)** the metaphysical, and **(c)** the positive stage. He contended that social science must be subject to the same ·three-stage· law—that **(a)** the feudal and Catholic system was the concluding phase of the theological state of the social science, that **(b)** Protestantism

was the start of the metaphysical state and the doctrines of the French Revolution were its consummation, and that **(c)** its positive state was yet to come. This doctrine harmonised well with my existing notions, to which it seemed to give a scientific shape. I already regarded the methods of physical science as the proper models for political science. But the chief benefit I derived at this time from the trains of thought suggested by the St. Simonians and by Comte was that I obtained a clearer conception than ever before of what was special about an era of *transition* in opinion, and stopped mistaking the moral and intellectual characteristics of such an era for the normal attributes of humanity. I looked forward, through the present age of loud disputes but generally weak convictions, to a future in which the best qualities of the critical period—

> unchecked liberty of thought, unbounded freedom of individual action in all modes not hurtful to others

—would be united with the best quality of the organic period:

> convictions as to what is right and wrong, useful and pernicious, deeply engraven on the feelings by early education and general unanimity of sentiment, and so firmly grounded in reason and in the real demands of life that they won't have to be periodically thrown off and replaced by others, as have all former and present religious, ethical, and political creeds.

M. Comte soon left the St. Simonians, and I lost sight of him and his writings for a number of years. But I continued to cultivate the St. Simonians. I was kept *au courant* of their progress by one of their most enthusiastic disciples, M. Gustave d'Eichthal, who about then spent a considerable time in England. I was introduced to their chiefs, Bazard and Enfantin, in 1830; and as long as their public teachings and proselytism continued I read nearly everything they wrote. Their critical comments on the common doctrines of liberalism seemed to me full of important truth; and their writings helped to open my eyes to the very limited and temporary value of the old political economy, which assumes •private property and inheritance as unchallengeable facts, and •freedom of production and exchange as the peak of social improvement. The scheme gradually unfolded by the St. Simonians,

> under which the labour and capital of society would be managed for the general account of the community, with every individual being required to take a share of labour either as thinker, teacher, artist, or producer, all being classed according to their ability and remunerated according to their works,

appeared to me a far better description of socialism than Owen's. Their aim seemed to me desirable and rational, however ineffective their means to it; and though I did not regard their social machinery as either practicable or beneficial, I felt that the proclamation of such an ideal of human society would surely tend to give a beneficial direction to the efforts of others to bring society as at present constituted nearer to some ideal standard. I honoured them most of all for what they have been most cried down for, namely the boldness and freedom from prejudice with which they treated the subject of *family*. Of all the great social institutions, the family is the most important and the most in need of fundamental alterations, yet scarcely any reformer has the courage to touch it. In proclaiming the perfect equality of men and women, and an entirely new order of things in regard to their inter-relations, the St. Simonians—in common with Owen and Fourier—have entitled themselves to the grateful remembrance of future generations.

My thinking on other subjects

In giving an account of this period of my life, I have specified only such of my new impressions as appeared to me (then and since) to be turning points marking a definite progress in my mode of thought. But these few selected points give a very insufficient idea of the amount of thinking I engaged in on a host of subjects during these years of transition. Much of this, it is true, consisted in rediscovering things known to all the world that I had previously disbelieved or disregarded. But the rediscovery was to me a discovery, giving me full possession of the truths, not as traditional platitudes but fresh from their source; and it usually placed them in some new light by which they were reconciled with—and seemed to confirm while they also modified—the less generally known truths that lay in my early opinions, truths that in their essentials I had unwaveringly held to. All my new thinking only laid the foundation of these more deeply and strongly, while it often removed misapprehension and confusion of ideas that had perverted their effect. For example, during later episodes of dejection the doctrine of 'philosophical necessity' weighed on my existence like an an oppressive nightmare. I felt as if I was scientifically proved to be the helpless slave of antecedent circumstances; as if my character and that of all others had been formed for us by agencies beyond our control, and was wholly out of our own power. I often said to myself 'What a relief it would be if I could disbelieve the doctrine of the formation of character by circumstances!'; and remembering Fox's wish that the doctrine of resistance to governments might never be forgotten by kings nor remembered by subjects, I said that it would be a blessing if the doctrine of necessity could be believed by each person as applied to the characters of others and disbelieved as applied to his own. I pondered painfully on the subject until gradually I saw light through it. I saw that the word 'necessity', as a name for the doctrine of cause and effect, carried with it a misleading association when applied to human action; and that this association was the operative force in the depressing and paralysing influence that I had experienced. I saw that though our character is formed by circumstances, our own desires can do much to shape those circumstances; and that what is really inspiriting and ennobling in the doctrine of free-will is the conviction that we have real power over the formation of our own character; that our will, by influencing some of our circumstances, can modify our future habits or capabilities of willing. All this was entirely consistent with the doctrine of ·the formation of character by· circumstances, or rather it *was* that doctrine properly understood. From that time I clearly distinguished •the doctrine of ·the formation of character by· circumstances from •fatalism, and discarded altogether the misleading word 'necessity'. The doctrine—which I now for the first time rightly grasped—ceased altogether to be discouraging, and besides the relief to my spirits I no longer suffered under the burden of thinking one doctrine to be true and its contrary to be morally beneficial, a heavy burden to one who aims at being a reformer in opinions! The train of thought that had extricated me from this dilemma seemed to me in later years to be fitted to render a similar service to others; and it now forms the chapter on Liberty and Necessity in my *System of Logic*.

Again, in politics, though I

- •no longer accepted the doctrine of my father's *Essay on Government* as a scientific theory,
- •ceased to consider representative democracy as an absolute principle, and regarded it as a question of time, place, and circumstance, and
- •now looked on the choice of political institutions as

> a moral and educational question more than one of material interests, thinking that it ought to be decided mainly by the question 'What great improvement in life and culture stands next in order for the people concerned, as the condition of their further progress, and what institutions are most likely to promote it?',

this change in the premises of my political philosophy did not alter my practical political creed as to the requirements of my own time and country. I was as much as ever a radical and democrat for Europe, and especially for England. I thought the predominance of the aristocratic classes—the noble and the rich—in the English Constitution to be an evil worth any struggle to get rid of; not because of taxes or any such comparatively small inconvenience, but as the great demoralising [see Glossary] agency in the country. Demoralising **(1)** because it made the conduct of the government an example of gross public immorality, through the predominance of private over public interests in the State, and the abuse of the powers of legislation for the advantage of classes; and even more **(2)** because it meant that under English institutions hereditary or acquired riches were the almost exclusive source of political importance, so that riches and the signs of riches were almost the only things really respected (because the respect of the multitude always attaches itself principally to whatever is in the existing state of society the chief passport to power), with the result that the life of the people was mainly devoted to the pursuit of riches. While the higher and richer classes held the power of government (I thought), the instruction and improvement of the mass of the people were contrary to the self-interest of those classes because they would tend to increase the people's power to throw off the yoke: but if the democracy obtained a large share—perhaps the principal share—in the governing power, it would become the interest of the opulent classes to promote their education, in order to ward off really mischievous errors, especially those that would lead to unjust violations of property. On these grounds not only was I as ardent as ever for democratic institutions, but I earnestly hoped that Owenite, St. Simonian, and all other anti-property doctrines might spread widely among the poorer classes. I did not think those doctrines to be true, or want them to be acted on; but I wanted to make the higher classes see that they had more to fear from the poor when uneducated than when educated.

Return to political writing

This is the frame of mind in which the French Revolution of July ·1830· found me. It aroused my utmost enthusiasm, and gave me a new existence, so to speak. I went at once to Paris, was introduced to Lafayette, and laid the groundwork for the contacts I afterwards kept up with several of the active chiefs of the extreme popular party. After my return I entered warmly, as a writer, into the political discussions of the time; which soon became still more exciting by the coming in of Lord Grey's ministry and the proposing of the Reform Bill. For the next few years I wrote copiously in newspapers. It was about this time that Fonblanque, who had for some time written the political articles in the *Examiner*, became that paper's proprietor and editor. People still remember the verve and talent, as well as the fine wit, with which he carried it on during the whole period of Lord Grey's ministry, and what importance it had as the newspaper press's principal representative of radical opinions. The distinguishing character of the *Examiner* was given to it entirely by Fonblanque's own articles, which constituted at least three-fourths of all the original writing contained in it; but of the remaining fourth I contributed during those years a much larger share than anyone else. I wrote nearly all the

articles on French subjects, including a weekly summary—often quite long—of French politics; together with many leading articles on general politics, commercial and financial legislation, and any miscellaneous subjects in which I felt interested and which were suitable for the paper, including occasional reviews of books. Mere newspaper articles on the occurrences or questions of the moment gave no opportunity for the development of any general mode of thought; but I tried at the start of 1831 to embody in a series of articles headed 'The Spirit of the Age' some of my new opinions, and especially to point out in the character of the present age the anomalies and evils characteristic of the transition from a system of worn-out opinions to another still in the process of being formed. These articles were lumbering in style and not lively or striking enough to be acceptable to newspaper readers at any time; but even if they had been far more attractive, they would still have been ill-timed at that particular moment, when great political changes were impending and engrossing all minds; so my discussions missed fire altogether. The only effect that I know to have been produced by them was that Carlyle, then living in a secluded part of Scotland, read them in his solitude, said to himself (as he afterwards told me) 'Here is a new mystic', and on coming to London that autumn asked who wrote them. That inquiry was the immediate cause of our becoming personally acquainted.

Carlyle

I have already [page 59] mentioned Carlyle's earlier writings as one of the channels through which I received the influences that broadened my early narrow creed; but I do not think that those writings by themselves would ever have had any effect on my opinions. What truths they contained, though of the very kind I was already receiving from other quarters, were presented in a form and clothing less suited than any other to give them access to a mind trained as mine had been. They seemed a haze of poetry and German metaphysics, in which almost the only clear thing was a strong animosity to most of the opinions that were the basis of my mode of thought:

- religious scepticism,
- utilitarianism,
- the doctrine of ·the formation of character by· circumstances, and
- the attaching any importance to democracy, logic, or political economy.

Instead of my having been taught anything in the first instance by Carlyle, it was only in proportion as I came to see the same truths through media more suited to my mental constitution that I recognised them in his writings. Then indeed the wonderful power with which he expressed them made a deep impression on me, and for a long period I was one of his most fervent admirers; but the good his writings did me was not as •philosophy to instruct but as •poetry to animate. Even at the time when our acquaintance started I was not advanced enough in my new modes of thought to appreciate him fully; a proof of which is that •when he showed me the manuscript of ·his novel· *Sartor Resartus*, his best and greatest work which he had just then finished, I made little of it, though •when it came out about two years later ·as a serial· in *Fraser's Magazine* I read it with enthusiastic admiration and the keenest delight. Fundamental differences in our philosophies did not lead me to seek and cultivate Carlyle less. He soon found out that I was not 'another mystic', and when for the sake of my own integrity I wrote to him a clear statement of the opinions of mine that I knew he most disliked, he replied

that the chief difference between us was that I 'was as yet consciously nothing of a mystic'. I do not know when he gave up the expectation that I was destined to become one; but though his and my opinions in later years underwent considerable changes, we never came much nearer to each other's modes of thought than we were in the first years of our acquaintance. But I did not regard myself as a competent judge of Carlyle. I felt that he was a poet and I was not; that he was a man of intuition and I was not; and not only that

- as a man of intuition he saw many things long before I did, things that I could see—hobble after and prove—only when they were pointed out to me, but also that
- it was highly probable that he could see many things that were not visible to me even after they were pointed out.

I knew that I could not see *around* him, and could never be certain that I saw *over* him; and I never presumed to judge him with any definiteness until he was interpreted to me by one greatly superior to us both, more a poet than Carlyle and more a thinker than I, whose own mind and nature included his and infinitely more.

Relations with John Austin

Among the persons of intellect whom I had known of old, the one I now had most points of agreement with was the elder Austin. I have mentioned that he always set himself in opposition to our early sectarianism; and latterly he had come under new influences, as had I. Having been appointed Professor of Jurisprudence in the London University (now University College), he had lived for some time at Bonn to study for his lectures; and the influences of German literature and of the German character and state of society had made a very perceptible change in his views of life. His personal disposition was much softened; he was less militant and polemic; his tastes had begun to turn themselves towards the poetic and contemplative. He attached much less importance than formerly to outward changes unless they were accompanied by a better cultivation of the inward nature. He had a strong distaste for the general meanness of English life, the absence of enlarged thoughts and unselfish desires, the low objects on which the faculties of all classes of the English are intent. He held in very little esteem the kind of public interests that Englishmen care for. He thought that • under the Prussian monarchy there was more practical good government and (which is true enough) infinitely more care for the education and mental improvement of all ranks of the people than there is • under the English representative government; and he agreed with the French *économistes* that the real security for good government is *un peuple éclairé*, which is not always the fruit of popular institutions and would do such institutions' work better than they do if it—·i.e. an enlightened populace·—could be had without them. Though he approved of the Reform Bill, he predicted (correctly) that it would not produce the great immediate improvements in government that many expected from it. The men who could do these great things, he said, did not exist in the country. There were many points of sympathy between him and me, both in the new opinions he had adopted and in the old ones he retained. Like me, he never ceased to be an utilitarian, and with all his love of the Germans and enjoyment of their literature he never became in the smallest degree reconciled to the innate-principle metaphysics. He cultivated more and more a kind of German religion, a religion of poetry and feeling with little if any positive dogma; while in politics (which is where I most differed with him) he acquired an indifference bordering on contempt for the progress of popular institutions; though he

rejoiced in the progress of socialism, as the most effective means of compelling the powerful classes •to educate the people and •to impress on them the only real means of permanently improving their material condition, namely a limitation of their numbers. He was not at this time fundamentally opposed to socialism in itself as an ultimate result of improvement. He professed great disrespect for what he called 'the universal principles of human nature of the political economists', and insisted on the evidence that history and daily experience provide of the 'extraordinary pliability of human nature' (a phrase that I have somewhere borrowed from him), nor did he think it possible to set any definite limits to the moral capabilities that might unfold themselves in mankind under an enlightened direction of social and educational influences. Whether he retained all these opinions to the end of his life I do not know. Certainly the modes of thinking of his later years, and especially of his last publication, were much more Tory in their general character than the ones he held at this time.

Relations with my father

I now *felt* myself to be at a great distance from my father's tone of thought and feeling—greater, indeed, than a full and calm explanation and reconsideration on both sides might have shown to exist in reality. But my father was not one with whom calm and full explanations on fundamental points of doctrine could be expected, at least with someone he might regard as (in a way) a deserter from his standard. Fortunately we were almost always in strong agreement on the political questions of the day that engrossed a large part of his interest and conversation. We talked little about the matters of opinion on which we differed. He knew that the habit of thinking for myself, which his mode of education had fostered, sometimes led me to opinions different from his, and he perceived from time to time that I did not always tell him how different. I expected no good from discussing our differences, but only pain to both of us; and I never expressed them except when he gave utterance to some opinion or feeling repugnant to mine in a manner that would have made it dishonest for me to remain silent.

My other writings at that time

It remains to speak of what I wrote during these years, which—independently of my contributions to newspapers—was considerable. In 1830 and 1831 I wrote the five essays since published under the title of *Essays on some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy*, almost as they now stand except that in 1833 I partially rewrote the fifth essay. They were written with no immediate purpose of publication; and when some years later I offered them to a publisher, he declined them. They were not printed until 1844, after the success of the *System of Logic*. I also returned to thinking about logic, and like others before me puzzled over the great paradox of the discovery of new truths by general reasoning. As to the fact ·that new truths *are* discovered in this way· there could be no doubt. As little could it be doubted that all reasoning is resolvable into syllogisms, and that in every syllogism the conclusion is actually contained and implied in the premises. So:

> How could the conclusion, being so contained and implied, be a *new* truth? and how could the theorems of geometry, so different in appearance from the definitions and axioms, be all *contained* in them?

This, I thought, was a difficulty that no-one had sufficiently felt, and that anyway no-one had succeeded in clearing up. The explanations offered by Whately and others, though they

might give a temporary satisfaction, always left in my mind a mist still hanging over the subject. At last, when reading for a second or third time the chapters on reasoning in the volume 2 of Dugald Stewart's *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, interrogating myself on every point and following out as far as I could every topic of thought that the book suggested, I came upon an idea of his about the use of axioms in reasoning which I did not remember having noticed before but which now seemed to me when I meditated on it to be true not only of axioms but of all general propositions whatever, and to be the key of the whole perplexity. From this germ grew the theory of the syllogism propounded in Book II of my *System of Logic*, which I immediately fixed by writing it out. And now, with greatly increased hope of being able to produce a work on logic of some originality and value, I proceeded to write Book I from the rough and imperfect draft I had already made. What I now wrote became the basis of that part of the subsequent treatise, except that it did not contain the theory of *kinds*, which was a later addition suggested by otherwise inextricable difficulties that met me in my first attempt to work out the subject of some of the concluding chapters of Book III. At the point I had now reached I made a halt, which lasted five years. I had come to the end of my tether; I could make nothing satisfactory of *induction* at this time. I continued to read any book that seemed to promise light on the subject, and appropriated the results as well as I could; but for a long time I found nothing that seemed to open to me any important vein of meditation.

In 1832 I wrote several papers for the first series of *Tait's Magazine*, and one for a quarterly periodical called the *Jurist*, which had been founded (and for a short time was carried on) by a set of friends—all lawyers and law reformers—with several of whom I was acquainted. The paper in question is the one on the rights and duties of the State respecting the property of corporations and churches. It now stands first among the collected *Dissertations and Discussions*, where one of my articles in *Tait*, 'The Currency Juggle', also appears. In the whole mass of what I wrote previous to these, there is nothing with enough permanent value to justify reprinting. The paper in the *Jurist*, which I still think a very complete discussion of the rights of the state over foundations, showed both sides of my opinions. It asserted as firmly as I would have done at any time that

> all endowments are national property that the government may and ought to control;

but it did not, as I would once have done,

> condemn endowments as such and propose that they should be *taken* to pay off the national debt.

On the contrary, I urged strenuously the importance of having a provision for education that •doesn't depend on the mere demand of the market, i.e. on the knowledge and discernment of average parents, but •is designed to establish and maintain a higher standard of instruction than is likely to be spontaneously demanded by the buyers of the article. All these opinions have been confirmed and strengthened by the whole course of my subsequent reflections.