

***JOHN STUART MILL ON FRENCH THOUGHT, POLITICS, AND NATIONAL  
CHARACTER.***

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BY

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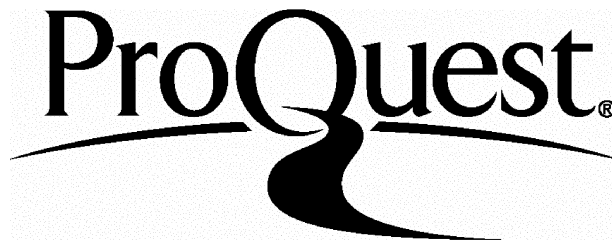
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***ABSTRACT:***

The thesis deals with the impact J.S. Mill's almost life-long involvement with France and the French had on his political thought.

In the first place a re-assessment of Mill's intellectual indebtedness to a number of French thinkers is attempted. Particular attention is paid to Guizot's hitherto overlooked influence on Mill, and Tocqueville's imputed influence on the British thinker is put into context by being studied jointly with that of Guizot. Mill's views on antagonism, diversity, and civilization are examined closer, thanks to the identification of some of the main French sources which had an impact on his thinking on these issues. Some of the major components of Mill's theory of international relations are found to owe a great deal to French thinkers and debates, and are illuminated through an account of their origin and development in his thought.

In the second place Mill's views on French politics as well as foreign policies -from 1830 to 1871-- are examined. His attitude towards French political parties and personalities and the policies they advocated are studied with a view to illuminating some broader issues related to his overall thinking on politics. His views on French foreign-policy objectives and attitudes as well as, more specifically, on the vicissitudes of Franco-British relations are studied next to his views on French internal politics, as the two are found to be closely connected.

In the third place the meaning and importance of the concept of "national character" in Mill's thought is examined through a study of his comments on French national character and his frequent comparisons between the French and English characters.

The thesis concludes with a chapter on Mill's views on the significance of studying a foreign country and his own performance in this respect with regard to France.

***TABLE OF CONTENTS:***

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.	p. 5.
INTRODUCTION.	p.7.
Chapter I: MILL, TOCQUEVILLE, AND GUIZOT.	p. 21.
Part 1: The Principle of Antagonism.	p. 25.
Part 2: Civilization and Democracy.	p. 41.
Part 3: Tocqueville, Guizot, and the Sociological Approach.	p. 44.
Chapter II: CIVILIZATION: ENGLAND AND FRANCE.	p. 50.
Part 1: Definitions, Criteria, and Influences.	p. 51.
Part 2: Is Civilization a Good?	p. 66.
Part 3: England and France.	p. 70.
Chapter III: FRANCE AND MILL'S THOUGHT CONCERNING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.	p. 79.
Part 1: Non-Intervention and Counter-Intervention.	p. 81.
Part 2: 1848.	p. 98.
Part 3: Treaty Obligations.	p. 109.
Chapter IV: FRENCH FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND FRANCO-BRITISH RELATIONS.	p. 111.
Part 1: The 1830s: War, Reform, and the Spectre of Bonaparte.	p. 112.
Part 2: The Eastern Crisis of 1840 and the rest of the 1840s.	p. 120.
Part 3: After 1851.	p. 151.

Chapter V: MILL ON FRENCH POLITICS: 1830-1871.	p. 157.
Part 1: The July Revolution and the 1830s.	p. 158.
Part 2: Armand Carrel in French Politics.	p. 176.
Part 3: Mill and the French Parties in the 1830s.	p. 182.
Part 4: Republicans and Liberals: 1848-1871.	p. 206.
Chapter VI: MILL ON "NATIONAL CHARACTER".	p. 220.
Part 1: What is National Character?	p. 220.
Part 2: Race.	p. 224.
Part 3: Political Ethology: The Science of National Character.	p. 241.
Part 4: National Characters and States of Society.	p. 249.
Chapter VII: FRENCH NATIONAL CHARACTER.	p. 258.
Part 1: Early Newspaper Writings.	p. 259.
Part 2: <i>La Jeune France</i> and the Generation Factor.	p. 263.
Part 3: Positive and Negative Virtues.	p. 269.
Part 4: What could be ascribed to the State of Society?	p. 274.
Part 5: From 1848 to <i>Representative Government</i> .	p. 279.
Part 6: Did Race and Geography matter?	p. 290.
CONCLUSION: MILL'S FRENCH ENTERPRISE.	p. 296.
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	p. 314.

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## INTRODUCTION.

This thesis deals with John Stuart Mill and France from 1830 until his death in 1873. The editors of the *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* have calculated that the one word which appears more times than any other in the author's *oeuvre* is "France".<sup>1</sup> If one adds the number of French names and French titles, the presence of France and French thought in Mill's works and correspondence becomes impressive. This is the first major study of Mill and France to appear since the publication of the *Collected Works*, and has profited immensely by that work, which rendered possible the use of a great range of texts in an attempt to make an original contribution on a number of aspects of Mill's thought and activity. Though this thesis by no means purports to exhaust the examination of Mill's multifaceted and fruitful connection with France, it aspires to be a contribution to a better understanding both of this relationship<sup>2</sup> and of some aspects of his thought more generally. Thus,

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<sup>1</sup> Jean O'Grady, Introduction to the *Indexes of the Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, in: *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, general editor John M. Robson, Toronto and London, 33 vols., 1963-1991 (hereafter referred to as *CW*, followed by volume number in capital Roman numerals, followed by page number), XXXIII, xxix.

<sup>2</sup> Works that deal directly with Mill's relationship with France or French thought are: Iris Wessel Mueller, *John Stuart Mill and French Thought*, Urbana, 1956; Marion Filipiuk, "John Stuart Mill and France", in: Michael Laine (ed.), *A Cultivated Mind: Essays on J.S. Mill Presented to John Robson*, Toronto, 1991, pp. 80-120; M. Apchié, *Les sources françaises de certains aspects de la pensée économique de John Stuart Mill*, Paris, 1931; Charles Chassé, "Stuart Mill et la France", *Bulletin de*



besides the fact that Mill's indebtedness to Guizot's historical works is for the first time extensively studied, the first two chapters also offer a more precise elucidation of the meaning and significance of concepts as central to Mill's thought as antagonism, diversity, and civilization. Similarly, Chapter III, besides identifying the French sources of very important ideas in Mill's thinking on international relations, offers at the same time an analysis of these ideas themselves, and of their development over more than three decades. Chapter IV brings to light significant aspects of Mill's views on foreign affairs, war and peace, and the relation of internal and foreign politics. And Chapter V, through studying Mill's views on French politics from 1830 to the end of his life for the first time, leads to a number of conclusions concerning issues as important as his attitude towards the relationship between liberalism and republicanism, the tension between the desire for equality and the desire for liberty, as well as an account of the development of these ideas through his responses to historical events. Finally, a thesis studying Mill's comments on the foreign country he was most interested in, and which he compared incessantly with Britain, offers the ideal context for an extensive study of the meaning, significance and development of the concept of national character in his thought.

The thesis is organized around three major themes. First, some aspects of Mill's reception of French thought are examined for the first time. This investigation covers the first three chapters. In Chapter I the relevance to the development of Mill's political thought of his reading of Guizot's early historical works is examined jointly with some aspects of Tocqueville's imputed influence on the British thinker. Some ideas that are claimed here to have been Mill's intellectual debts to Guizot,

have been habitually associated with Tocqueville's influence on Mill. This triple relationship is followed as briefly as possible in three different --though interconnected-- respects. In the first place an attempt is made to disentangle as far as possible some of the difficulties related to Mill's reception of *Democracy in America*<sup>3</sup> by placing it in the context of his study of Guizot's historical works and his endorsement of some seminal ideas that he had found in the latter. It is argued here that one of Mill's most cherished ideas, what he called "the principle of systematic antagonism", owes much more to Guizot than to Tocqueville, and that Tocqueville's work simply came to corroborate and give concrete focus to this idea. In the second place some of Mill's views concerning modern civilization and its consequences are shown to have been part of his thought before he came to know of Tocqueville's works, and one of the sources of these views --by no means the only one-- is shown to be Guizot's historical work. In the third place Tocqueville's supposed impact on Mill's methodological approach to the study of politics is placed in a broader context, and Guizot's previously ignored relevance in this respect is considered.

In Chapter II Mill's treatment of the concept of civilization is examined and is found to be related to his study of France in two interconnected ways. The definition of civilization that Mill advanced in the 1830s was directly linked with Guizot's influential definition and treatment of that concept in his *Histoire de la*

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<sup>3</sup> Alexis Clérel de Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, 2 vols., Vol. I, Paris, 1835; Vol. II, Paris, 1840. References here will be to: A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, transl. by George Lawrence, ed. by J.P. Mayer, Hammersmith, London, 1994.

*Civilisation en Europe*.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Guizot's presentation of the different character of the civilization that had developed in France and Britain was, to a great extent, echoed by Mill's comments on the two countries especially in the 1830s and 1840s. Mill's comments on the character of the civilization of the two countries are briefly discussed and the correctives he believed the English could find for their "narrow" civilization by looking to the other side of the English Channel are identified.

Chapter III examines for the first time the connection between Mill's study of French affairs and what could be called his theory of International Relations. Particular attention is paid to Mill's well-known views on the merits and limits of the principle of non-intervention and the extent to which these views were shaped by his having followed the debates of the early 1830s in France and in particular his endorsement of the French opposition's arguments in favour of counter-intervention to enforce non-intervention. Mill's views on nationality and on the conditions of observance of treaty obligations are also examined briefly in so far as they are connected with his French interests.

A second major theme covered in this thesis is Mill's attitude towards and comments on French politics, both internal politics and foreign policy. The reason for studying his comments on French foreign and internal politics next to each other lies in the fact that they were closely connected in his mind. To an extent, Mill's views on French politics and those on French foreign affairs were bound to be

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<sup>4</sup> François P.G. Guizot, *Histoire Générale de la Civilisation en Europe, depuis la Chute de l'Empire Romain jusqu' à la Révolution Française*, Paris, 1828. References here will be to: F. Guizot, *Historical Essays and Lectures*, ed. by Stanley Mellon, Chicago, 1972 --hereafter referred to as *Lectures*.

related, for the simple reason that the two objects studied and commented upon were linked indissolubly with each other. From the first French Revolution to the advent of the Third Republic in the wake of foreign disaster, French politics and French foreign policy were inextricably interconnected.<sup>5</sup> It will be shown that Mill had an acute understanding of the extent to which French foreign policy was bound to affect French politics, as well as European politics more broadly. Fifteen years after Napoleon's final defeat this was bound to be the case, but Mill has to be credited with a deep awareness of the dangers posed by demagoguery in foreign policy and pandering to nationalistic sentiments, and with a pronounced distrust of such concepts as national honour and grandeur. He was alert to the dangers these ideas posed not only to peace, but also to liberty and progress, in the case of France in particular.

Thus, Chapter IV examines Mill's stance towards French debates on foreign policy from the 1830s to the end of his life and his reactions to the positions adopted by various statesmen and thinkers during these debates. Particular notice is taken of his views on Franco-British relations, of the importance he accorded to a close *entente* between the two countries as well as the two peoples, and of his personal efforts to contribute to this latter end. Some of the comments he made in this context show how strongly he felt about these matters. The strategy he adopted in dealing with the relations between the two countries is characteristic of his conception of his role as a public moralist. One of the conclusions that arise from this examination is the identification of the limits to the concessions Mill was prepared to make to ways of thought opposed to those of his upbringing. Regardless of how far he might have

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<sup>5</sup> This is what has been referred to as the *Primat der Aussenpolitik*: see (with particular reference to France) Robert Tombs, "Was there a French *Sonderweg*?", *European Review of History-Revue Européenne d'Histoire*, 1 (1994), 169-77.

gone in his participation in what he called "the revolt of the nineteenth century against the eighteenth" in other respects, as far as questions of foreign affairs and war and peace were concerned he emerges here to have been very close to the Enlightenment, the eighteenth century, and Bentham. No matter how vociferously he might have castigated the exclusive preponderance of the commercial spirit, when it came to choosing between what Benjamin Constant called the "spirit of conquest" and the "spirit of commerce",<sup>6</sup> Mill nonetheless opted decidedly for the latter. Among the aims of Chapter IV is to show the extent to which Mill's views on French internal politics influenced his views on international affairs, as well as, conversely, the extent to which considerations of foreign policy --and in particular the vicissitudes of Franco-British relations-- influenced his overall views and attitudes towards France and French politics.

Chapter V is devoted to some questions concerning Mill's study of French politics. His assessment of the revolution of 1830 is examined with a view to highlighting his main diagnoses of the *malaises* of French political culture as well as the process through which he arrived at these diagnoses. This examination is followed by an analysis of the reasons that led Mill to lend his almost unqualified support to Armand Carrel during the 1830s. These reasons are found to be connected with the conclusions Mill had reached concerning French politics during the years following the July Revolution. It is argued that independently of the factors of a rather personal nature usually invoked to account for Carrel's appeal to Mill, the French journalist's major attraction for Mill, as far as his political views and activism

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Benjamin Constant, *The Spirit of Conquest and Usurpation and their Relation to European Civilization*, in: *Political Writings*, ed. by Biancamaria Fontana, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 43-148.

were concerned, was his profession of a set of principles of liberal fairness and constitutional legality that marked him out as the sole defender of what Mill thought France most urgently needed. This discussion, in turn, leads to the issue of Carrel's republicanism and Mill's attitude towards it as well as more broadly toward republicanism in France. It is argued in the relevant parts of Chapter V (Parts 3 and 4, but also, partly, 2) that the widely held assumption that Mill strongly supported the French republicans needs to be qualified by a consideration of the factions and persons that commanded his sympathies and the reasons behind that sympathy. Such a detailed consideration is undertaken here for the first time, and it is found that though Mill sympathised with a broad range of political factions that were on the side of what was called "the movement" (as opposed to the conservative "resistance" parties), his wholehearted support was reserved only for those persons and groups, who, be they republican or not, gave sufficient priority to the value of liberty and did not compromise or sacrifice it to any other value. That most --though by no means all-- of the people Mill supported were (or ended up being) members of a broadly defined republican camp has more to do with personal factors and other vicissitudes that affected French politics at the time in question than with any decided preference for republicanism as such on behalf of Mill. Though his comments were not as explicit and articulate in the 1830s as they gradually became by the 1860s, there is a degree of continuity in Mill's allegiances --and in the criteria for his allegiances-- in French politics that is rarely recognised to him in other areas of his thought.

The third theme covered in this thesis naturally follows from the second. Mill's comments on both French foreign policy and internal politics were from the beginning connected with comments on national character, and such comments

increased in intensity as time passed. Thus, in Chapter VI an attempt is made to consider the place of the concept of national character in Mill's overall thought. Its precise meaning, its relation to the concept of state of society, and the extent to which racial and other physical factors were considered to be related to it are examined. Mill's attitude towards the scientific theories concerning these issues that were abroad at his time is illustrated and the extent to which he followed the relevant scientific disciplines is assessed. For all his concessions to some of the stereotypes of his time Mill is shown to have been on the whole in the forefront of attempts to discredit the deterministic implications of racial theories and assert the ascendancy of "mind over matter", a view corroborated by the responses of his contemporaries. The abortive science of political ethology is briefly discussed in this same context.

Chapter VII deals with Mill's views on French national character in an attempt to describe the development of his views on the concept and to assess the importance of his study of France in this development. Furthermore, the chapter is directly linked with what is discussed in Chapter V on Mill's views on French politics. It is seen that Mill's views on French politics and on the importance of national character influenced each other considerably, and though it is sometimes difficult to ascertain what he held to be the cause and what the effect, it is arguable that his study of French politics had a significant impact on the role he came to attribute to national character as a factor affecting politics.

The concluding chapter connects Mill's experience with France and the French with his theoretical vindication of the significance of studying foreign cultures and peoples and offers an assessment both of the way in which he applied his views on this matter to his life-long connection with France and of the overall part this

enterprise had in his conception of his role as one of the "moral teachers of England". It is argued that, whatever the merits of Mill's theory of half-truths might be with regard to a number of philosophical or epistemological controversies, his application of it in the realm of the disputes and misunderstandings between nations is defensible and commendable.

There are some broader conclusions to which the examination of the issues raised in this thesis lead. One of them is that the category of national character was not as marginal in Mill's thought as the cursory nature of existing references and the absence of its detailed consideration in existing scholarship would have one believe (to say nothing of statements implying that it amounted to little more than an argumentative weapon). Though the logical and epistemological entanglements of Mill's abortive science of "ethology" have been widely discussed, the precise implications of his astonishingly frequent references to national characters and their differences for his political and social thought receive here a sustained examination for the first time. It is seen that, though Mill never realised his project for a scientific demonstration of the causes of the formation of national character, this category did have an important place in his thought and affected his political conclusions and recommendations.

Another conclusion that comes out as a result of some of the issues discussed here is a corroboration of recent interpretations of Mill stressing the overwhelming significance of his commitment to rationality as a unifying and fundamental



constituent of his conception of virtue and the good life.<sup>7</sup> Part and parcel with this view comes the recognition of the extent to which "Mill was always a child of the enlightenment"<sup>8</sup> in his overall outlook and the underlying purposes of his intellectual and political activity. Though it would be difficult for any one to deny completely Mill's connection with the legacy of the Enlightenment and the eighteenth century, the question of degree is an open debate. The present work comes to support the view that sees Mill as in essence attempting to adapt and translate to the intellectual climate of the nineteenth-century a world-view and aspirations rooted in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century while purging the latter of what he saw as its historical immaturity and naiveté.<sup>9</sup> Mill often presented himself as somehow standing above the dispute between the two centuries and effecting a mature synthesis of what was good in each. Yet, for all the concessions he was prepared to make to opposite viewpoints, when it came to a test he opted for what he would call the eighteenth-century position. Such a test is highlighted in Chapter IV, where Mill's attitudes towards disputes of French foreign policy are discussed. Both his overall attitude towards the issues involved, and his strong reaction in what constitutes the culmination of the relevant disputes, in his exchanges with Tocqueville in 1840-1843, Mill is seen to have stood by the path not so much of peace, but even more emphatically of what he saw as reason and rationality. The deepest cause of his

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<sup>7</sup> See H.S. Jones, "John Stuart Mill as Moralizer", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 53 (1992), 287-308; cf. John Skorupski, *John Stuart Mill*, London, 1989.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5. Cf. Maurice Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, Baltimore, 1971, pp. 198-9, and *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> For a recent version of this view see Skorupski, *John Stuart Mill*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-47 and *passim*.

strong reaction was not simply that there was a threat of war, but that the grounds on which that war was to be undertaken would be most irrational. Irrational passions and "bestial antipathies between nations" were about to be released for the sake of preserving French honour. The same attachment to an eighteenth-century viewpoint is exemplified in Mill's treatment of differences of national character between various "portions of mankind" (Chapter VI). For all his assertions of originality and distance from what he called "the eminent thinkers of fifty years ago", in dealing with differences of national character he consciously declined to follow the directions contemporary discussions were taking, especially from the moment he came to realise the decidedly non-enlightenment implications these directions were bound to have. (He explicitly referred to the emphasis placed on race and physical factors in the formation of national character as a result of the reaction of the nineteenth century to the philosophy of the eighteenth.<sup>10</sup>) Thus, although his discussions of national character strike one as considerably more sophisticated than those of thinkers such as Hume or Montesquieu, it remains the case that the framework within which he conducted such discussions was far closer to Hume and Montesquieu than it was to Gobineau, Robert Knox, Carlyle, Comte, or the spokesmen of the London Anthropological Society in the 1860s. His deliberate effort to concede as little importance as possible to race and other physical factors, even at the risk of being -- as he actually was-- exposed to the criticism that he was not sufficiently scientific, was the result of a strong determination to stand by certain assumptions about rationality and improbability that were dear to him.

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<sup>10</sup> See *CW*, XV, 691. Cf. *ibid.*, XIII, 605; XXI, 263.

Another issue raised in this thesis concerning which a clearer picture of Mill emerges is that of his attitude towards republicanism and liberalism. Though the whole question is fraught with difficulties caused by a number of terminological confusions, the analysis pursued in Chapter V offers considerable evidence to support the view that, while Mill had and retained throughout his life strong sympathies with republican movements and politicians in France, the kind or version of republicanism which he endorsed was always decidedly determined by a most important consideration, the extent to which that republicanism was liberal or not. As long as the two coincided Mill had no difficulty in supporting them both with no need to define what he was most attached to. But on the occasions where republicanism and liberalism seemed to be divorced and opposed to each other he showed himself uncompromising in his demand for a recognition of a modicum of liberty that could not be sacrificed to any other purpose and exigency (as long as it was a "civilized" country that he was talking about). Though in many of his comments on France discussed here terms such as "liberty" or "good government" appear *en gros* and not clearly defined, what the texts in question lack in lucidity and philosophical subtlety (in comparison to texts such as *On Liberty*) is perhaps partly made up for by the historical perspective their analysis comes to add to interpretations based on more elaborate works. While Mill spoke rarely in his comments on France in terms as explicit as would satisfy the analytical standards scholars have been able to apply in discussing works such as *On Liberty*, the cumulative effect of his numerous comments and hints allows the formation of a picture with a certain degree of clarity, which can be particularly useful if it is juxtaposed to the evidence provided by more detailed expositions of his views on the issues involved, in major texts. Thus, with regard to

the relations between liberalism and republicanism, it is seen in this thesis that, despite appearances (perplexed by the multiple meanings and versions that the republic had in the French context as well as by other circumstances peculiar to the specific time and place), if and to the extent that a tension appeared between purely republican and purely liberal values Mill would put the latter first. His discussion of republicanism was connected with that of equality. There is no reason to believe that he would not have held all his life to his assertion in 1849, that he agreed with Bentham that equality "though not the sole end, is one of the ends of good social arrangements".<sup>11</sup> Yet, to the extent that equality appeared to him to clash with liberty and threaten it, he showed himself unprepared to sacrifice liberty. This is why he was consistent in preferring the "hommes de la nouvelle école libérale" to the "démocrates autoritaires de l'école de la Convention" and in demanding "que le parti démocratique par excellence se fût mieux entendu avec ceux qui mènent la liberté de front avec la démocratie." These statements were made during the 1860s. Though his comments from earlier years do not display the same outspokenness and articulateness, his criteria for preferring particular individuals and factions to others betray a very similar attitude from as early as the 1830s.<sup>12</sup> Mill's favourite republicans were those who identified themselves with reference to the memory of the Girondins rather than of the Jacobins. And he divided his sympathies between them and other non-republican liberals who adopted the causes he cherished. Though he showed a degree of sympathy with the idea of the republic as a commendable form

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<sup>11</sup> "Vindication of the French Revolution of February 1848", *ibid.*, XX, 354.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Mill's views on the first French Revolution in: J. Coleman, "John Stuart Mill on the French Revolution", in: John Cunningham Wood (ed.), *John Stuart Mill: Critical Assessments*, London, 1987, Vol. IV, pp. 335-53.

of government in a remote future when mankind would be sufficiently improved, his comments on French politics leave little doubt that the republic in question would be, as he said of Carrel's republic, reminiscent not of the republic of the Convention, but of the United States. It would be a representative government such as that he described in the work bearing this name of 1861. Its head of state would be either hereditary or elected,<sup>13</sup> depending on local circumstances and previous allegiances. And it would make sure that it did not sacrifice a certain irreducible modicum of individual liberty to any demand made by other values. When he thought that a personality or faction stood for this kind of government in France, he supported it.

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<sup>13</sup> He would have the head of state elected by a select body such as the representative assembly, but by no means by the people directly (in this respect his preferred representative government differed markedly from the republic of the United States).

## I. MILL, TOCQUEVILLE, AND GUIZOT.

The question of John Mill's intellectual indebtedness to Alexis de Tocqueville has attracted the attention of scholars concerned with the study of their thought. Titles of relevant articles such as "John Stuart Mill, disciple of de Tocqueville",<sup>1</sup> as well as the inclusion of whole chapters dealing with "[t]he influence of Alexis de Tocqueville"<sup>2</sup> in books on Mill are to some extent indicative of what the prevailing opinion with regard to the nature of this relationship is. It is generally claimed that Mill was profoundly influenced by Tocqueville on a number of issues, and the source of this influence is located in the French thinker's *Democracy in America*. I.W. Mueller's account has been criticized by H.O. Pappé for having overestimated Tocqueville's influence on Mill and thus having failed to offer a balanced account of influences on the British thinker. According to Pappé, Tocqueville is just *one* among many thinkers who had an influence on Mill but not the decisive influence.<sup>3</sup>

It is argued in this chapter that Pappé's suggestion is valid in its main outline and that Tocqueville has been unduly credited with influence on Mill on a number of issues. Closer attention to some of the relevant issues would suggest that other French thinkers had as much or more influence on Mill. One of these other thinkers

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<sup>1</sup> Terence H. Qualter, "John Stuart Mill, disciple of de Tocqueville", *Western Political Quarterly*, 13 (1960), 880-9.

<sup>2</sup> Mueller, *Mill and French Thought*, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-69.

<sup>3</sup> H.O. Pappé, "Mill and Tocqueville", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 25 (1964), 217-34.

who had an important influence on Mill was François Guizot in his capacity as "philosophical historian". The case for tracing Guizot's influence on Mill and that for challenging some of the claims concerning the latter's indebtedness to Tocqueville are closely linked with each other. Many of the ideas that are usually regarded as indicative of Tocqueville's influence on Mill are directly derived from Guizot's historical writings themselves, which Mill had read and quoted with approval before he had come to know of Tocqueville and his work --to say nothing of Guizot's indirect influence through Tocqueville's work itself. This latter remark points to the main reason why Mill's indebtedness to Guizot has been almost entirely ignored by the existing literature on Mill's thought. Due to the fact that Tocqueville himself was deeply influenced by Guizot --he was, literally, Guizot's pupil-- many of the ideas that Mill found in Guizot are usually attributed to Tocqueville.<sup>4</sup> What is argued here is that Mill read Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* through the spectacles already

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<sup>4</sup> There is ample evidence that Tocqueville regularly attended Guizot's lectures (that were later published as *Cours d' Histoire Moderne*) in the years 1828-30, kept notes, and read --more than once-- the published version. The notes have been published in his *Oeuvres Complètes (Oeuvres, Papiers et Correspondances d'Alexis de Tocqueville, édition définitive sous la direction de J.-P. Mayer, Paris, 1951-*, hereafter referred to as *OC*, followed by volume number in Roman numerals and sub-volume number in Arabic numerals), XVI (*Mélanges*), pp. 439-534. See also: Dirk Hoeges, "Guizot und Tocqueville", *Historische Zeitschrift*, 218 (1974), 338-53; Larry Siedentop, "Two Liberal Traditions", in: Alan Ryan (ed.), *The Idea of Freedom, Essays in Honour of Isaiah Berlin*, Oxford, 1979, pp. 153-74 (in particular 156, 157-8, 161, 162, 164-5); Larry Siedentop, *Tocqueville*, Oxford, 1994, pp. 20-1, 23-4, 30; André Jardin, *Tocqueville: A Biography* (transl. from the French), London, 1988, pp. 81-2, 248; James Schleifer, *The Making of Tocqueville's "Democracy in America"*, Chapel Hill, 1980, pp. 26, 234, 276, 340 (n.1), 345 (n.3); Roger Boesche, *The Strange Liberalism of Alexis de Tocqueville*, Ithaca, 1987, pp. 231, 235, 265; Jean-Claude Lamberti, *Tocqueville and the Two Democracies* (transl. from the French), Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989, pp. 6, 56-7, 211; Jack Lively, *The Social and Political Thought of Alexis de Tocqueville*, Oxford, 1962, p. 207. See also Luis Diez del Corral, "Tocqueville et la Pensée Politique des Doctrinaires", in: *Alexis de Tocqueville, Livre du Centenaire 1859-1959*, Paris, 1960, pp. 57-70; Matthew Mancini, *Alexis de Tocqueville*, Toronto, 1994, pp. 88-9.

provided by his acquaintance with Guizot's main historical works of the 1820s and early 1830s. He received Tocqueville's account of the workings of democracy in the United States, and of American society at large, as an interesting and useful contribution to "the philosophy of Government, in [the] extensive sense of the term".<sup>5</sup> But he read it in the context of other preoccupations which were, to a great extent, informed by his studies in history, particularly the French school of philosophical historians, most prominent among whom he considered to be Guizot.

Mill wrote two reviews of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, one in 1835 (for the first volume) and another in 1840 (after he read the second volume of the work).<sup>6</sup> He also wrote two reviews of Guizot's early historical works, the first in 1836 and the second in 1845.<sup>7</sup> Only the second review was written entirely by Mill himself. The first was written initially by Joseph Blanco White for Mill's *London Review*, but Mill was apparently not satisfied with it and exercised his editorial powers to make extensive amendments to the text. As there is ample evidence to suggest that Mill regarded this review as his own work,<sup>8</sup> and as the main ideas

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<sup>5</sup> See Mill, "Rationale of Representation", published in the *London Review* (hereafter: *LR*) in July 1835: *CW*, XVIII, 18.

<sup>6</sup> The first in *LR*, 1 (October 1835), 85-129; now in *CW*, XVIII, 47-90; the second: *Edinburgh Review*, 72 (October 1840), 1-47; reprinted (with parts of the first) in *Dissertations and Discussions*, 2nd edition, 1867 (hereafter: *DD*) II, pp. 1-83; now in *CW*, XX, 155-204.

<sup>7</sup> The first: *LR*, 2 (January 1836), 306-36; reprinted in *CW*, XX, 367-93; the second: *Edinburgh Review*, 82 (October, 1845), 381-421; reprinted in *DD*, II, pp. 218-82; now in *CW*, XX, 257-94. The works reviewed by Mill were: François P.G. Guizot, (I) *Essais sur l'Histoire de France* (1823); (II) *Cours d'Histoire Moderne*; containing: *Histoire Générale de la Civilisation en Europe* (1828); and *Histoire Générale de la Civilisation en France*, 5 vols. (1829-1832).

<sup>8</sup> That Mill regarded this article as basically his own is evident by his letter to Henry S. Chapman: *CW*, XII, 284. The extent of his own contribution can be



expounded in the first review were repeated more elaborately in the second, both of them will be treated here as Mill's own in terms of the views they expressed. Though the first review of Tocqueville's *Democracy* was written some months before the review of Guizot, there can be no doubt that Mill had read --and commended-- the latter's *Cours d'histoire moderne* (published between 1828 and 1832) before he had even heard of Tocqueville.<sup>9</sup> Guizot --in his capacity as a historian-- was also mentioned by Mill in many instances in the years between 1832 and 1845 in a variety of contexts. The French historian influenced Mill's thought in a number of respects, but in this chapter only his relevance with regard to ideas that have usually been claimed to be Tocqueville's will be examined. In this context three different areas of influence can be discerned.

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surmised from his letters to Blanco White of 21 October 1835 (*ibid.*, 280) and 24 November 1835 (*ibid.*, 285). In a letter to R.B. Fox (16 April 1840) Mill told him that of all he had attempted in his reviewing career in the *London and Westminster Review*, he had only three successes: "... **My *third* success is that I have dinned into people's ears that Guizot is a great thinker and writer, till they are, though slowly, beginning to read him -- which I do not believe they would be doing, even yet, in this country but for me.**": *ibid.*, XIII, 427 [where block characters appear they indicate added emphasis; where italics appear in a quoted text the emphasis is in the original].

<sup>9</sup> On 26 February 1835 Mill wrote to Blanco White: "I have not read Tocqueville's book,...": *ibid.*, XII, 249; and on 15 April 1835 he wrote to him again: "I have begun to read Tocqueville.": *ibid.*, 259. As for Guizot, Mill praised his merits with special reference to the *Essais sur l'Histoire de France* (published in 1823) as early as October 1832, in an article on French affairs in the *Examiner*: *ibid.*, XXIII, 513. From another reference to Guizot it is obvious that he had read his *Histoire de la Civilisation en France* (1829-1832) before he wrote "Sedgwick's Discourse" --which was written between 14 October and 26 November 1834 (See *ibid.*, X, 34-5 and Editor's note, *ibid.*, 32). See also Mill's letter to Blanco White of 15 April 1835 (*ibid.*, XII, 259) where, among other things, it is clear that he had read "Guizot's Lectures" before he read "Tocqueville" (more will be said on this letter further on).

## 1. THE PRINCIPLE OF ANTAGONISM.

In the first place, Mill appears to have been impressed by Guizot's analysis of the causes of the extinction or stunted growth of all ancient and oriental civilizations and the corresponding juxtaposition between these conditions and the "continuous" and "steadily progressive" growth of modern European civilization. Guizot attributed the former to the exclusive preponderance of *one* principle or power in those earlier civilizations and accounted for the latter in terms of the existence throughout modern Europe's history --since the fall of the Roman Empire-- of a continuous struggle between different forces, ideas, principles, with each trying to take exclusive hold of society but none of them ever succeeding in doing so. According to Guizot, it was this diversity and the concomitant struggle that had kept European civilization "steadily progressive" throughout fifteen centuries. A detailed account of this view occurs in both reviews, though in the later text (1845) the comments following this account are more elaborately and more explicitly presented. Guizot had adduced the examples of Egypt and India as cases where the eventual preponderance of one principle or class had led to stagnation, and that of Greece as a case where the preponderance of one principle ("the democratic principle"<sup>10</sup>) had led, after a most rapid and wonderful development, to the exhaustion and dissolution of society. Things were very different in modern Europe, whose civilization was "confused, diversified, stormy: all forms, all principles of social organization co-

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<sup>10</sup> In Greece "the sovereignty of the majority, and the equal participation of all male citizens in the administration of the state" were the leading facts by which the whole aspect of society was determined.

exist". And "these forces are in a state of perpetual conflict, nor has any of them ever been able to stifle the others, and establish its exclusive authority".<sup>11</sup>

After having offered extensive quotations of Guizot's views, Mill proceeded to declare his full agreement with them. He stressed the importance of "**systematic antagonism**" as "the only condition under which stability and progressiveness can be permanently reconciled to one another". He endorsed enthusiastically Guizot's account of the European past and his explanation of its salutary peculiarity.<sup>12</sup> He then hastened to set forth the relevance of this lesson to the present, by asserting that the process of social dissolution or stagnation that the French historian had described was not a danger existing only in the past, "but one which may be yet impending in the future": "**If the perpetual antagonism which has kept the human mind alive, were to give place to the complete preponderance of any, even the most salutary element, we might yet find that we have counted too confidently upon the progressiveness which we are so often told is an inherent property of our species.**" An illustration of what this lesson implied for political practice followed: Mill stressed that it applied even to "education" or "mental culture", no less than to any other principle, power or class:

[I]f the lettered and cultivated class, embodied and disciplined under a central organ, could become in Europe, what it is **in China**, the Government -- unchecked by any power residing in the mass of citizens, and permitted to assume a parental tutelage over the operations of life -- the result would probably be a darker despotism, one more opposed to improvement, than even the military monarchies and aristocracies have in fact proved.

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<sup>11</sup> *CW*, XX, 267-8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 269-70.

The same applied to "what is thought to be the tendency of things in the United States": if "the power of numbers -- of the opinions and instincts of the mass --" were allowed to "acquire and retain the absolute government of society, and impose silence upon all voices which dissent from its decisions or dispute its authority", then "in such countries, the condition of human nature would become as stationary as in China, and perhaps at as low a point in the scale."<sup>13</sup>

Mill was not so outspoken on these questions in his earlier writings. His rejection of the claim that education should be entitled "to rule the world with exclusive authority" is by no means a view that he held consistently throughout his life. It is known that he had accepted the idea of the Saint-Simonians, who had asserted the necessity of the leadership of the enlightened, the *pouvoir spirituel*.<sup>14</sup> Statements such as those quoted above from the review of Guizot stand in sharp contrast with Mill's earlier attitude. The question arises as to how this shift came about. Mill himself went a long way towards answering this question in a letter to Comte. Filipiuk, in her brief comments on Mill's 1845 review of Guizot, speaks of Mill's endorsement of the idea that there must continuously exist a condition of antagonism as an early theory of Mill's, but she does not treat Mill as being influenced by Guizot:

Mill is, however, in full agreement on a fundamental principle (an early theory of his own, as he had told Comte): that continuous forward movement depends upon the existence of a condition of "systematic antagonism" or a "co-ordinate action among rival powers

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>14</sup> See Filipiuk, "Mill and France", *op. cit.*, p. 93. Cf. Mill's letter of 7 November 1829 to d'Eichthal: *CW*, XII, 40; and: "The Spirit of the Age": *ibid.*, XXII, 253, 291, 293.

naturally tending in different directions" whose function it is to protect all progressive interests and tendencies.<sup>15</sup>

The letter to Comte, hinted at parenthetically by Filipiuk, was that of 25 February 1842.<sup>16</sup> J.H. Burns speaks of the letter in question in the same way and adds that Mill "found the same insight in Guizot", quoting from Mill's second review of Guizot, written three years after the letter to Comte was written.<sup>17</sup>

It is true that Mill said in that letter that it was an early theory, but he said more than that: he also spoke of how he had formed this doctrine. Thus, in that very letter Mill wrote of how he had come to reject his earlier opinions on the advisability of government by the instructed *élite*. He praised Comte for his enunciation of the *grand principe* of the definitive separation of the two powers, temporal and spiritual, and of the distinct organization of each of them. The avowal that he had earlier fallen under the spell of the Saint-Simonian "utopian doctrines" --of entrusting the government of society to philosophers-- followed in explicit terms. Though he credited Comte with having "delivered" him definitively from this "irrational error", he added that he had come to the same conclusion even before he had read Comte's fifth volume, and this through *common sense* and *history*. Mill's explanation of his reasons for this rejection follows:

Outre l'altération grave que la suprématie politique ne tarderait pas à produire dans les habitudes morales et intellectuelles de la classe spéculative, il me semble que cette domination ne serait nullement

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<sup>15</sup> Filipiuk, "Mill and France", *op. cit.*, pp. 105-6.

<sup>16</sup> See: *CW*, XIII, 502-3 (or in: *Lettres Inédites de John Stuart Mill à Auguste Comte. Publiées avec les réponses de Comte et une introduction, par L.Lévy-Bruhl*, Paris, 1899, pp. 27-9).

<sup>17</sup> J.H. Burns, "J.S. Mill and Democracy, 1829-61", in: J.B. Schneewind (ed.), *Mill: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Garden City, New York, 1968, pp. 309-10.

favorable au progrès intellectuel, en vue duquel, sans doute, elle a été surtout rêvée. Je trouve **dans l'exemple de la Chine** un grand appui à cette opinion. Dans ce pays-là, la constitution du gouvernement se rapproche, autant peut-être que cela se peut, **du principe saint-simonien**, et qu'est-ce qui en est résulté? le gouvernement le plus opposé de tous à toute sorte de progrès.

The outcome would be what one witnessed in China, "c'est-à-dire une pédantocratie". Mill then specified in what his indebtedness to Comte consisted. What Comte had done was to formulate clearly, in his principle of the separation between the two powers, spiritual and temporal --and of the distinct organization of each according to their proper qualities-- **a vaguer doctrine which he himself had drawn from history** and which he had already used, in various discussions, against what he saw as the pernicious one-sidedness of democratic or Benthamite political systems:

Vous voyez donc que nous sommes tous deux en sympathie complète, quant à nos principes généraux sur ce sujet. Ce que je dois, là-dessus, à votre livre, c'est surtout d'avoir formulé dans le principe de la séparation des pouvoirs temporel et spirituel et de l'organisation de chacun sur les bases qui lui sont propres, **une doctrine plus vague que j'avais moi-même tirée de l'histoire** et que j'avais jettée dans les discussions du jour comme réponse décisive à tout système politique démocratique ou Benthamiste.<sup>18</sup>

The subsequent exposition of this "doctrine plus vague" leaves very little doubt as to its source:

Cette doctrine la voici: Que dans toutes les sociétés humaines où l'existence des véritables conditions du progrès continu a été prouvée *a posteriori* par l'ensemble de leur histoire, il y a eu, du moins virtuellement, **un antagonisme organisé**. Puisque dans nulle société

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<sup>18</sup> See Mill's essay "Bentham", for an instance of what he means by this last remark concerning his response to "tout système politique démocratique ou Benthamiste". The language adopted by Mill after he read Guizot's *Lectures* is exemplified there once more: "Wherever some such quarrel has not been going on - - wherever it has been terminated by the complete victory of one of the contending principles, and no new contest has taken the place of the old -- society has either [1838: been] hardened into Chinese stationariness, or fallen into dissolution.": *CW*, X, 108.

le pouvoir dominant n'a pu résumer en soi tous les intérêts progressifs et toutes les tendances dont la réunion est nécessaire à la durabilité indéfinie de la marche ascendante, il a fallu partout aux intérêts et aux tendances plus ou moins antipathiques à ce pouvoir, un point de ralliement assez fortement constitué pour les protéger efficacement contre toute tentative soit réfléchie, soit seulement instinctive, de les comprimer; tentative dont le succès amènerait, après un temps ordinairement très court, soit la **dissolution sociale**, comme à **Athènes**, soit l'**état stationnaire bien caractérisé de l'Égypte et de l'Asie**.<sup>19</sup>

The whole exposition was taken directly from Guizot's Second Lecture in the *Histoire de la Civilisation en Europe*. At this point Mill employed the two examples given by Guizot: Athens as an example of social dissolution (Guizot had used Greece, and democracy in Greece); and Egypt and Asia as exemplars of the stationary state (Guizot had spoken of Egypt and India. Characteristically, Mill used Asia to lump together the common-place example of China with what Guizot had referred to: India).<sup>20</sup> A comparison with Mill's (very different) treatment of the same examples (Athens in particular) in his earlier articles on "The Spirit of the Age" written when he was still under the Saint-Simonian spell, helps confirm that this treatment of these historical periods was found by Mill in Guizot.<sup>21</sup>

Thus far with Mill's rejection of the Saint-Simonian notion of the *pouvoir spirituel*. But now a different though closely connected question arises: why did Mill eventually reject Auguste Comte's political philosophy. In answering this question, Mueller exaggerates Tocqueville's significance for Mill. In her chapter on "[t]he Influence of Alexis de Tocqueville", she asserts:

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII, 502-3.

<sup>20</sup> See Guizot, *Lectures, op. cit.*, pp. 160-5.

<sup>21</sup> See "The Spirit of the Age", III, and IV: *CW*, XXII, 253, 291, 293.

It should...be noted that when Mill began his correspondence with Comte and as he read the later volumes of the *Cours* he had the knowledge of de Tocqueville's analysis behind him and though there was nothing in de Tocqueville to contradict the scientific method in Comte's work, there was much which permitted Mill to question and renounce Comte's social and political program as it developed from that method. Where Comte was to try to demonstrate that sociocracy was the next order in the social series, de Tocqueville had shown that democracy was the form of government and condition of mankind toward which all civilized countries were moving.<sup>22</sup>

And elsewhere she maintains that: "One might well wonder if Mill would have been able to resist Comte's political philosophy as steadfastly as he did if the external authority of de Tocqueville's analysis had not come to the aid of Mill's personal predilections."<sup>23</sup>

Before any comment can be made, a brief account of Mill's own statement concerning his relationship with Comte, and his own reasoning for the eventual break is necessary for the picture to be more complete:

And there was nothing in his great Treatise which I admired more than his remarkable exposition of the benefits which the nations of modern Europe have historically derived from the separation, during the middle ages, of temporal and spiritual power, and the distinct organization of the latter.<sup>24</sup> I agreed with him that the moral and intellectual ascendancy, once exercised by priests, must in time pass into the hands of philosophers, and will naturally do so when they become sufficiently unanimous, and in other respects worthy to possess it. But when he exaggerated this line of thought into a practical system, in which philosophers were to be organized into a kind of corporate hierarchy, invested with almost the same spiritual supremacy (though without any secular power) once possessed by the Catholic church; when I found him relying on this spiritual authority as the only security for good government, the sole bulwark against practical oppression, and expecting that by it a system of despotism in

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<sup>22</sup> Mueller, *Mill and French Thought*, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-8.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>24</sup> Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, Vol. V, Paris, 1841 (Leçon 54), pp. 321ff.



the state and despotism in the family would be rendered innocuous and beneficial; it is not surprising, that while as logicians we were nearly at one, as sociologists we could travel together no further.<sup>25</sup>

A collation between what is said by Mill in his letter to Comte mentioned earlier (of 25 February 1842) and his account in the *Autobiography* with regard to the reasons for his break should leave one in little doubt as to what sustained Mill in resisting Comte's political philosophy. It was not Tocqueville's analysis but rather the discovery, at a later stage, that Comte did in fact pursue the very *pédantocratie* of the *principe Saint-Simonien* which Mill had initially mistaken him for combating (in the fifth volume of his *Cours de Philosophie Positive* of 1841). What comes out if we collate the 1842 letter to Comte with the later passage in the *Autobiography* is that Mill stuck to the vaguer doctrine that he had drawn from his study of history. When he found out that Comte did not really share this doctrine, he parted company with him. Thus it is the conclusions that Mill drew from Guizot rather than Tocqueville's influence that seems to have had more bearing on his rejection of Comte's political teachings.<sup>26</sup>

But Mueller is not alone in over-emphasizing Tocqueville's influence. Filipciuk concludes her comments on Mill's article on "Duveyrier's Political Views of French Affairs" with the following remarks:

The "speculations of more general character" related to the problems inherent in representative government, with which Mill was permanently engaged: the threat posed by "one power in society"

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<sup>25</sup> *Autobiography: CW*, I, 219-21.

<sup>26</sup> A remark by Filipciuk seems apposite here in terms of Mill's tardiness in realizing his differences with Comte: "Yet analysis of Comte's treatment of the new disciple suggests that he was manipulative, confirming what Mill wanted to hear and minimizing or ignoring disagreement that would surely fade on his further initiation into the doctrine.": Filipciuk, "Mill and France", *op. cit.*, p. 102.

whose influences necessarily "become mischievous as soon as it reigns uncontrolled", and the dangers inherent in a "government of numbers.... Want of appreciation of distant objects and remote consequences...and of being ruled by a spirit of intolerant mediocrity." Tocqueville's message remained very much a part of Mill's concerns.<sup>27</sup>

Yet, the message was Guizot's at least as much as it was Tocqueville's, or, more precisely, it is only the latter part of Mill's statement (that referring to the "dangers inherent in a 'government of numbers'") that can be connected with Tocqueville's work on democracy. As for the former part of these "speculations of more general character", these are part of what could be termed "Guizot's historical lesson" rather than "Tocqueville's message". Thus, statements such as

It is not the uncontrolled ascendancy of popular power, but of any power, which is formidable. There is no one power in society, or capable of being constituted in it, of which the influences do not become mischievous as soon as it reigns uncontrolled -- as soon as it becomes exempted from any necessity of being in the right, by being able to make its mere will prevail, without the condition of a previous struggle.

from the very paragraph on which Filipiak comments,<sup>28</sup> are unmistakably reminiscent of Mill's remarks to the same effect in various instances which were made in direct or indirect reference to Guizot's lessons. This is the place to quote one more of these instances: in his very review of the second part of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, in 1840, Mill takes issue with the author's attribution of all the *malaises* of American society to democracy (that is, equality of conditions as well as political democracy)<sup>29</sup>:

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>28</sup> *CW*, XX, 306-7.

<sup>29</sup> Mill may have misunderstood or been unfair to Tocqueville concerning this point, due perhaps to Tocqueville's terminological imprecision: cf. Lively, *The*

The evil is not in the preponderance of a democratic class, but of any class. The defects which M. de Tocqueville points out in the American, and which we see in the modern English mind, are the ordinary ones of a commercial class. ... The one country is affording a complete, and the other a progressive exemplification, that whenever any variety of human nature becomes preponderant in a community, it imposes upon all the rest of society its own type; forcing all, either to submit to it or to imitate it. It is not **in China** only that a homogeneous community is naturally a stationary community. The unlikeness of one man to another is not only a principle of improvement, but would seem almost to be the only principle. **It is profoundly remarked by M. Guizot**, that the short duration or stunted growth of the earlier civilizations arose from this, that in each of them some one element of human improvement existed exclusively, or so preponderatingly as to overpower all the others; whereby the community, after accomplishing rapidly all which that one element could do, either perished for want of what it could not do, or came to a halt, and became immovable. It would be an error to suppose that such could not possibly be our fate. In the generalization which pronounces the "law of progress" to be an inherent attribute of human nature, it is forgotten **that, among the inhabitants of our earth, the European family of nations is the only one which has ever yet shown any capability of spontaneous improvement, beyond a certain low level. Let us beware of supposing that we owe this peculiarity to any necessity of nature, and not rather to combinations of circumstances, which have existed nowhere else, and may not exist for ever among ourselves.**

At this point Mill identifies more explicitly the "one element of human improvement" which was threatening to overpower all others in America and Britain: It was "[t]he **spirit of commerce and industry**" which, for all its beneficial consequences, threatened, if it were left to take hold of society unopposed by other countervailing or "co-ordinate elements of improvement", to usher in "an era either of stationariness or of decline."<sup>30</sup>

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*Social...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-1; Françoise Mélonio, *Tocqueville et les Français*, Paris, 1993, pp. 103-5. Cf. Schleifer, *The Making...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 263-74, where no less than eleven meanings "democracy" had for Tocqueville are identified.

<sup>30</sup> *CW*, XVIII, 196-7.

Thus, "Tocqueville's message" was incorporated into Guizot's "lesson". Democracy was just *one* of the tendencies that should not be left to reign uncontrolled, and, moreover, it was not the most dangerous. Not only is Guizot's authority adduced to corroborate Mill's reservations concerning Tocqueville's conclusions, but, what is much more, the "doctrine plus vague" is once more expounded in the case of Tocqueville's analysis of democracy and Guizot's paternity of the "profound" remark is explicitly acknowledged. The whole text quoted here has a close affinity to Mill's previous and subsequent comments on Guizot's historical analysis of the causes of European civilization's progressiveness.

The need to counterbalance the influences of the commercial spirit had been argued forcefully by Coleridge, and his influence on Mill in this respect is unmistakable.<sup>31</sup> The invocation of Guizot's historical conclusions shows that the belief in the need to counterbalance the influences of the rampant commercialism of Britain was now incorporated into a wider, overarching theory, the principle of systematic antagonism, which seemed to Mill to be an essential prerequisite of both the preservation (permanence, in Coleridgean terms) and the further progress (progression) of any society.<sup>32</sup>

The use made by Mill of the example provided by China deserves particular notice because it is very characteristic of what is described here. Even if Mill had

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<sup>31</sup> On Coleridge's views see: John Morrow, *Coleridge's Political Thought: Property, Morality and the Limits of Traditional Discourse*, London, 1990, pp. 115-21, and *passim*.

<sup>32</sup> For instances where Mill had attacked the dangers arising from the excessive influence of the commercial spirit in Britain, without having connected it with a more general theory of a need for antagonism and struggle, see his early letters to G. d'Eichthal (see, e.g., *CW*, XII, 31-3).

borrowed this common nineteenth-century image from de Tocqueville,<sup>33</sup> it would be interesting to note how he used it, as China is not one of the examples occurring in Guizot's *Lectures*. Tocqueville uses the example of China in the concluding paragraph of Chapter X of Volume II, Part i, of *Democracy in America*.<sup>34</sup> The whole chapter deals with an imputed tendency in democratic peoples to pursue only that kind of knowledge which leads to practical results and to abandon any effort at pursuing truth for its own sake and theoretical speculation *per se*. Tocqueville warned his readers that their civilization could perish through exclusive and excessive attachment to mere applications and practical results at the expense of theoretical studies. He used the example of China in that context. He attributed China's fall into a stationary state to the pursuit of practical ends and the neglect of more theoretical speculation, which incapacitated the Chinese for original creation.<sup>35</sup> This attack on philistinism could hardly fail to recommend itself to Mill who had launched such attacks himself long before he read this text or even Tocqueville's first volume (of 1835).<sup>36</sup> But this treatment of China by Tocqueville had little to do with Mill's

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<sup>33</sup> See: John M. Robson, *The Improvement of Mankind: The Social and Political Thought of John Stuart Mill*, Toronto, 1968, p. 111. On China as a cautionary tale against stagnation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see: J.W. Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals: Continuity and Change in English Political Thought*, Oxford, 1988, pp. 115-24.

<sup>34</sup> "Why the Americans are more concerned with the Applications than with the Theory of Science": *Democracy in America*, *op. cit.*, pp. 459-65.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 464.

<sup>36</sup> Mill had argued to exactly the same effect with regard to England, and with specific reference to Guizot's relevant views, in "Sedgwick's Discourse", which he wrote *before* he read Tocqueville's first part (CW, X, 34-5), as well as in the essay on "Civilization", in 1836: *ibid.*, XVIII, 117-47). These essays and their relevance to the subjects dealt with here are briefly discussed in part 2 of this chapter.

use of the example of China in his discussions of cultural stationariness. There can be adduced at least four such instances from the years that are covered here: three of them were written after Mill had read Tocqueville's second volume --and the reference to China-- while one of them was written before that time ("Bentham", 1838). None of these references antedate Mill's perusal of Guizot's *Lectures*. These references are to be found in the following texts: 1) the essay on "Bentham", published in 1838; 2) the second review on "Tocqueville on Democracy in America" of 1840; 3) the letter to Comte of 25 February 1842; 4) Mill's 1845 review of "Guizot's Essays and Lectures".<sup>37</sup> In all four cases, China's stationariness is treated as *one more* --probably the most striking, in Mill's view-- case of oriental stationariness of the kind described by Guizot (who had mentioned the examples of India and Egypt to this effect but not that of China). In Mill's works China is one of the countries whose civilization had congealed due to the exclusive preponderance of *one principle or power* and the consequent disappearance of the struggle between competing forces and ideas which was "nécessaire au progrès". All that differed was the specific power that was blamed for having gained exclusive preponderance in China --and thus eclipsed progress by eclipsing antagonism: it was the lettered and educated class that had become the Government in China.<sup>38</sup> Thus China exemplified (as Mill wrote to Comte) the "principe Saint-Simonien" of the *pouvoir spirituel* and the results of such a *pédantocratie* in China were a proof of the validity of the principle of *organized antagonism*.<sup>39</sup> In all four cases (but most conspicuously in

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<sup>37</sup> 1) *CW*, X, 108; 2) *ibid.*, XVIII, 197; 3) *ibid.*, XIII, 502; 4) *ibid.*, XX, 270.

<sup>38</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII, 502.

the letter to Comte and in the second review of Guizot) Chinese stationariness was used as a proof of the "*doctrine plus vague*" that Mill had drawn from his reading of Guizot's *Histoire de la Civilisation en Europe*.

The exposition of Mill's use of the example provided by the stationariness of China has been dwelled upon rather extensively, because it affords a characteristic illustration of the way in which he incorporated into the general schema that he found in Guizot, situations that had not been addressed by the French historian. What Mill owed to Guizot was the idea that civilizations perished (or, hardly less deplorable, became stationary) when they came under the exclusive sway of one power or guiding principle and that European civilization owed its continuously progressive march to its having been spared this lot thanks to an accidental concatenation of circumstances, which kept up a struggle of different forces and principles for centuries. Although versions of this idea might be found in other thinkers, it was Guizot who first impressed Mill with the significance and urgency of this lesson of history. That Mill was indebted to Guizot for this idea has been acknowledged by scholars in recent years, though no attempt has been made to follow the connection thoroughly or to examine it together with Tocqueville's influence on Mill.<sup>40</sup> That it should be studied together with Tocqueville's influence is suggested by the fact that this idea, along with so many others, has been attributed to Tocqueville's influence on Mill.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Stefan Collini, Donald Winch and John Burrow, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History*, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 157-8, 204; Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals*, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-3.

<sup>41</sup> See Alan Ryan, "John Stuart Mill", in: David Miller, Janet Coleman, William Connolly, Alan Ryan (eds.), *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*, Oxford, 1987, p. 341: "Under the influence of Tocqueville, Mill came to think that preserving the 'antagonism of opinions' was one crucial need". Cf. Alan Ryan, *J.S. Mill*, London, 1974, p. 191.

What haunted Mill after he read Guizot's work was that these circumstances might cease to exist one day and that one element of human improvement (let that be democracy,<sup>42</sup> or, in other words, "the power of numbers --of the opinions and instincts of the mass--"<sup>43</sup> or "education --mental culture--",<sup>44</sup> or any other) might stifle the resistance of all other elements of improvement. If this were to happen, Mill believed, the outcome would not be less deplorable than in the cases where it was a religious or military caste that preponderated in society. This is Mill's paramount principle, in the late 1830s and throughout the 1840s.<sup>45</sup> In this context his comments on Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* were made and this is the reason why he wavered between resistance to the preponderance of the power of numbers and resistance to the preponderance of the commercial spirit. He abhorred both equally, not out of lack of appreciation of the intrinsic merits of democracy or commerce, but out of a desire to combine the beneficial tendencies of many different things while avoiding their harmful ones. The belief in combining good tendencies while simultaneously stifling detrimental aberrations was a deep-rooted one with Mill; it applied first and foremost to his theory of knowledge, to his eclectic

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<sup>42</sup> *CW*, X, 108.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 270.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*; also: *ibid.*, XIII, 502.

<sup>45</sup> The idea has a prominent place in the later essays, *On Liberty*, and *Considerations on Representative Government* (hereafter: *Representative Government*) as well. For the former work see: *ibid.*, XVIII, 273-4 (cf. Stefan Collini, Introduction to: J.S. Mill, *On Liberty and Other Writings*, Cambridge, 1989, p. xiv). For Mill's assertion of the importance of "the function of antagonism" in *Representative Government* see: *CW*, XIX, 458-9 (cf. *ibid.*, 397).



cosmopolitanism with regard to national or racial characteristics,<sup>46</sup> and to a number of other issues. This belief in the benefits accruing from the combination of different elements he did not owe to Guizot in particular. What Mill did find in Guizot's historical work was that the necessity of the coexistence and combination of different elements applied to power and influence in society as well, and that it involved a certain degree of adversity or even struggle among the different elements. Thus, while he was earlier prepared to assign to the *élite* the role of leading society once they would have reached agreement and consensus among themselves (this was the meaning of the St-Simonians' *pouvoir spirituel*), he changed his mind in this respect some time between the mid-1830s and 1840 and he came to speak of the Saint-Simonian (and, as it turned out later on in the 1840s, Comtean as well) principle of the *pouvoir spirituel* in the way he did in 1842 (letter to Comte) and 1845 (review of Guizot's *Lectures*). The same principle (of systematic antagonism) came to bear at more or less the same time on his discussions of democracy as the predominance of the numerical majority (e.g. in "Bentham" in 1838). What had happened, meanwhile, was that he had read the works of Guizot and Tocqueville. The former warned him in general and rather vaguely --but not the less decisively for this reason-- that the continuous struggle between different forces and principles, and diversity of modes of life and thought as well as multiplicity of centres of power and influence, were indispensable to the preservation of Europe's progressive civilization and to its improvement. It was against this background that Tocqueville came almost

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<sup>46</sup> See, for instance: *ibid.*, 549; also: *ibid.*, XIII, 404, 456, 457, 508-9.

simultaneously to warn him of the "characteristic defects" of "the uncontrolled ascendancy of popular power".<sup>47</sup>

This is probably part of the meaning of Mill's comment --referring to Tocqueville's impact on his views on democracy-- in the *Autobiography*: "I was now well prepared for speculations of this character".<sup>48</sup> One of the factors that had "prepared" Mill "for speculations of this character" was his study of Guizot's *Essays and Lectures*.

## 2. CIVILIZATION AND DEMOCRACY.

It is widely held that Mill was influenced by Tocqueville's description of the effects of democracy on character and, in particular, of the disappearance of moral and intellectual grandeur and the decline of abstract learning and the arts in democratic societies. There is, however, ample evidence which suggests that Mill, besides having been exposed to the influence of the British Romantics, had also been struck by Guizot's observations to the same effect, which he had read and referred to approvingly before he had any contact with Tocqueville's writings. Thus Tocqueville came to corroborate Mill's convictions, to offer ample and conclusive evidence in their support, but this is as far as his contribution to this aspect of Mill's thought goes. It is little wonder that these views have been commonly associated with Tocqueville's appeal to Mill, as there is a close affinity between the pronouncements

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<sup>47</sup> See, for example: *ibid.*, XX, 306, 307. For the timing of Mill's first references to the need to create institutional counterbalances to the power of numbers see: Burns, "J.S. Mill and Democracy", *op. cit.*, pp. 302-3, 312.

<sup>48</sup> *CW*, I, 201.

of the two thinkers on these matters, not totally unconnected, apparently, to their both having read and admired Guizot's historical lectures. According to Mueller:

As de Tocqueville pursued his comparison between the strengths and weaknesses of aristocratic and democratic societies, it was impossible for Mill to deny the justness of much that he had to say. Mill gradually took a far more relative view of the weaknesses that had to be overcome. He admitted, for example, that the spread of civilization, the rise in physical comforts, the softening of manners, the decline of war, and the progressive limitation of tyranny [sic] of the strong over the weak took their toll in the relaxation of individual energy and courage, the loss of proud and self-relying energy resulting in the slavery of much of mankind to artificial wants.<sup>49</sup>

Mueller's statement ignores, as her whole chapter does, Mill's exception to Tocqueville's blurring of the effects of "democracy" with those of modern civilization. Mill did in fact admit that the spread of civilization, the rise of physical comforts, etc. resulted in "the relaxation of individual energy and courage and many other deplorable characteristics of modern men and women. But he insisted that these were not the results of democracy but of broader transformations in the state of society, of which democracy was one of the consequences. As to the results of civilization (or, civilization in the narrow sense, as Mill himself would say<sup>50</sup>), Mill's views were expressed in many instances before and after he read Tocqueville's *Democracy*, and a collation of these instances would indicate that Tocqueville's impact was simply to confirm --by illustrating in the context of a large and advanced nation-- views that the British thinker already held. Moreover, much of what Tocqueville presented as the tendencies of society in America (and therefore, in his view, tendencies of democratic-egalitarian societies in general), Guizot and others had

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<sup>49</sup> Mueller, *Mill and French Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

<sup>50</sup> See next chapter (II).

presented earlier as tendencies of England and the English mind. The traits of American attitudes towards the higher branches of art and science (in other words their alleged philistinism) described by Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*,<sup>51</sup> had been presented by Guizot earlier as English characteristics. Mill had agreed unreservedly with Guizot and had quoted and praised him on this particular account both before and after he had read Tocqueville's book. Thus, it was only natural that he should take issue with Tocqueville's attribution of all these traits to the effects of democracy or equality of conditions, and that he should ascribe them instead to the pernicious effects of the excessive sway that the commercial spirit was gaining over people's minds in the most advanced countries, namely the United States and England.<sup>52</sup>

Consider this remark by J.M. Robson:

To the student of British thought the view has been so closely identified with Mill that it is with some surprise that one reads passages in de Tocqueville which parallel Mill's thought so closely as the following: "It would seem as if the rulers of our time sought only to use men in order to make things great; I wish that they would try a little more to make great men; that they would set less value on the work, and more upon the workman; that they would never forget that a nation cannot long remain strong when every man belonging to it is individually weak, and that no form or combination of social polity has yet been devised, to make an energetic people out of a community of pusillanimous and enfeebled citizens." This opinion, expressed again by Matthew Arnold twenty-five years later, is not borrowed by Mill from de Tocqueville, for it is found in Mill's review of Sedgwick in 1835. But though de Tocqueville is not the source, his empirical

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<sup>51</sup> *Democracy in America, op. cit.*, p. 464.

<sup>52</sup> See *CW*, XVIII, 196-7. As has already been noted earlier, a similar attitude towards the commercial spirit and its effects on British society had been adopted by thinkers such as Coleridge and his followers, and Mill had been sufficiently impressed by them on this point before he read Tocqueville's work. Of course, foreign corroboration was always useful for Mill, and thus he did not fail to notice both Guizot's and Tocqueville's comments on this question.

observations, and the deductions from them, gave urgency to the discussion, while his argument reinforced Mill's own message.<sup>53</sup>

Robson correctly points to the close similarity of the statements by Tocqueville to Mill's statements to the same effect, and he is right in maintaining that the view is not "borrowed" by Mill from Tocqueville. Though he does not say anything more on this matter and does not give a specific reference to the passage in Mill's article on "Sedgwick's Discourse", he refers to remarks made in the introduction to the article.<sup>54</sup> Not only does Mill's whole presentation there bear the marks of Guizot's analysis of the march of civilization in England (in his first lecture on *Civilization in France*),<sup>55</sup> but Guizot's name and authority are also used to make the argument plausible.<sup>56</sup> The whole account given there repeats Guizot's point.

### 3. TOCQUEVILLE, GUIZOT, AND THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH.

There is one more kind of major influence on Mill's thought with which Tocqueville is credited: the French thinker is acclaimed as having been instrumental in initiating Mill into the use of sociological method and a sociological approach to political theory. But Tocqueville was just one of the many --French in particular-- thinkers who were praised by Mill for using such a method and was by no means the

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<sup>53</sup> Robson, *The Improvement of Mankind*, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>54</sup> This article was written before Mill had heard of Tocqueville: on its timing see: *CW*, X, 32 (Editor's note).

<sup>55</sup> See *Lectures*, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-3; also Mill's exposition of Guizot's views about England in: *CW*, XX, 374-5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 33-5. Cf. *infra*, Chapter II, Part 3.

first.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, it is argued here that with regard to the sociological approach, one of the thinkers praised by Mill almost as much as Tocqueville was Guizot.

Mueller credited Tocqueville with having prepared Mill for Comte's sociology:

What de Tocqueville did in his study of America was related to the work of Comte in showing, as Mill pointed out in reference to yet another political analyst, that beneath all political philosophy there must be a social philosophy, "a study of agencies lying deeper than forms of government, which, working through forms of government, produce in the long run most of what these seem to produce, and which sap and destroy all forms of government that lie across their path."<sup>58</sup>

Now the introduction of this sociological approach to political theory has been ascribed by Larry Siedentop to the French thinkers collectively known as the *Doctrinaires* (a group including Royer-Collard, Barante, and Guizot).<sup>59</sup> Tocqueville is called by Siedentop a *protégé* of the *Doctrinaires* in this respect. But the copyright is acknowledged to be held by Guizot (in his *Essais sur l' Histoire de France* of 1823) and Royer-Collard. A passage from Guizot's early *Essais* is cited by Siedentop as representative of the new approach. The same passage is noted by Dirk Hoeges as an instance of Guizot's influence on Tocqueville.<sup>60</sup> This passage is so similar to Mill's remark quoted by Mueller that it is worth quoting here:

It is by the study of political institutions that most writers...have sought to understand the state of a society, the degree or type of its civilization. It would have been wiser to study first the society itself

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Pappé, "Mill and Tocqueville", *op. cit.*, 231-2.

<sup>58</sup> Mueller, *Mill and French Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 139. The text quoted by Mueller is from Mill's article "Armand Carrel": *CW*, XX, 183-4.

<sup>59</sup> Siedentop, "Two Liberal Traditions", *op. cit.*, pp. 156-8.

<sup>60</sup> Hoeges, "Guizot und Tocqueville", *op. cit.*, 352.

in order to understand its political institutions. Before becoming a cause, political institutions are an effect; a society produces them before being modified by them. Thus, instead of looking to the system or forms of government in order to understand the state of the people, it is the state of the people that must be examined first in order to know what must have been, what could have been its government.<sup>61</sup>

This would not in itself be evidence that Mill could have been influenced in this regard by Guizot before he read Tocqueville, had it not been for the fact that it is certain that Mill had read and praised the *Essais* at least by 1832, when he mentioned this work in an article on French affairs in the *Examiner*.<sup>62</sup> But there is more conclusive evidence of another kind to suggest that Mill did not consider himself to be influenced by Tocqueville in particular in this respect. The very passage from Mill's article "Armand Carrel" that Mueller quotes is taken from a context which makes clear that Tocqueville was far from being unique in this capacity. Of course Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* is singled out, but Mill is adamant that it by no means monopolized the importance of the school. The passage quoted by Mueller referred not to Tocqueville in particular, but to the whole movement of thought in early nineteenth-century France. It was immediately followed by the statement:

Thus arose the new political philosophy of the present generation in France; ...**a philosophy rather scattered among many minds than concentrated in one, but furnishing a storehouse of ideas to all who meditate on politics, such as all ages and nations could not furnish previously;**.... It would be idle to hold up any particular book as a complete specimen of this philosophy: different minds, according to their capacities or their tendencies, have struck out or appropriated to themselves different portions of it, which as yet have only been partially harmonized and fitted into one another. But if we were asked for the book which up to the present time embodies the largest portion of the spirit, and is, in the French phrase, the highest expression, of

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<sup>61</sup> Quoted in: Siedentop, "Two Liberal Traditions", *op. cit.*, pp. 157-8.

<sup>62</sup> *CW*, XXIII, 513.

this new political philosophy, we should point to the Democracy in America, by M. de Tocqueville.<sup>63</sup>

That Guizot had a prominent place in that storehouse comes out clearly from Mill's remark that immediately follows: "It was above all, however, in history, and historical disquisition, that the new tendencies of the national mind made themselves way."<sup>64</sup> The historians Barante and Thierry and their main works are mentioned, and then comes the most important member of the group: "and M. Guizot, a man of a greater range of ideas and greater historical impartiality than all these, gave to the world those immortal Essays and Lectures, for which posterity will forgive him his despicable political career."<sup>65</sup>

In his 1844 review of the first five volumes of Michelet's *Histoire de France*<sup>66</sup> Mill described the achievements of the French historical school, which culminated with Guizot. He gave Guizot ample praise on account of his historical method, and winded up by declaring that "before astronomy had its Newton, there

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 184. Cf. Collini, Winch and Burrow, *That Noble Science...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-3: Collini calls Mill's claim that in the scientific study of politics the French school found its "highest expression" in the work of Tocqueville an "oddity", in view of Tocqueville's lack of interest in methodological questions. Collini argues that many of the elements of what Mill boasted as methodological novelties were not far removed from the method of the Scottish historical school. (On this last point cf. Duncan Forbes, "'Scientific' Whiggism: Adam Smith and John Millar", *The Cambridge Journal*, 7 (1953), 670).

<sup>64</sup> *CW*, XX, 184.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 185-6. Where there are textual variations, it is the 1837 original version that is used here.

<sup>66</sup> In *Edinburgh Review*, 79 (January 1844), 1-39; reprinted in *DD*, II, 120-80; now in *CW*, XX, 217-55.



was place, and an honourable one, for not only the observer Tycho, but the theorizer, Kepler. M. Guizot is the Kepler, and something more, of his particular subject."<sup>67</sup>

What is more, in a letter to Comte Mill praised Guizot's positivist tendencies and broad speculations, and stressed the significance of Guizot's historical *Cours* as an introduction to Comte's "positivité sociologique":

[J]e croie que si vous aviez pris connaissance de son Cours d'Histoire, vous y auriez reconnu, avec les mêmes intentions de positivité que dans son premier ouvrage, une capacité spéculative plus générale. **Si mes compatriotes avaient une connaissance réelle de ce Cours, ils seraient beacoup mieux préparés qu'ils ne le sont à la positivité sociologique.**<sup>68</sup>

By way of conclusion one more piece of evidence from Mill's correspondence is relevant here. The 1835 review of Tocqueville's book for the first number of the *London Review* was initially undertaken by Blanco White. Eventually this scheme was abandoned and Blanco White then wrote the first draft of the review of Guizot, published in the second number (in January the following year), while the review of Tocqueville's book was written by Mill himself.<sup>69</sup> At the time Blanco White was expected to write the review of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* for the *London*

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 228-9.

<sup>68</sup> Letter to Comte, 6 May, 1842: *ibid.*, XIII, 519. Cf. *ibid.*, 639.

<sup>69</sup> Though the details of what happened are not clear, due to the fact that Blanco-White's relevant letters to Mill are missing, Mill's letter to Blanco White of 19 May 1835 --answering to a missing letter by the latter-- gives some inkling: see *ibid.*, XII, 263. On Blanco White's extant letters see: *The Life of the Rev. Joseph Blanco White, Written by Himself; with Portions of his Correspondence*, ed. by John Hamilton Thom, 3 vols., London, 1845. White's reply to Mill was written on 10 June 1835, and is to be found at: II, p. 135.

*Review*, on 15 April 1835, Mill, to all intents and purposes the editor of the *Review*, concluded a letter to him as follows:

I have begun to read Tocqueville. It seems an excellent book: uniting considerable graphic power, with the capacity of generalizing on the history of society, **which distinguishes the best French philosophers of the present day**, and above all, *bringing out* the peculiarities of American society, and making the whole stand before the reader as a powerful picture. -- **Did you ever read Guizot's Lectures? If not, pray do.**<sup>70</sup>

The association of the two works in Mill's mind was by no means accidental. Mill regarded Guizot's *Lectures* as providing an indispensable background for the study of Tocqueville's *Democracy* and recommended them as such to the prospective reviewer of the latter book. It has been claimed here that this was the case with his own reading of Tocqueville's work.

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<sup>70</sup> *CW*, XII, 259. Cf. *ibid.*, XVIII, 94.



## II. CIVILIZATION: ENGLAND AND FRANCE.

Mill's insistence on the importance of culture or mental cultivation as a necessary accompaniment and counter-balancing element to the influence of the commercial civilization is usually associated with the influence on his thought of what he called the Germano-Coleridgean school. It was probably Coleridge who most forcibly had made a distinction between civilization and cultivation and insisted on the importance of the latter.<sup>1</sup> However, there is one more source for Mill's thinking about civilization which deserves more attention than it has received. Guizot's definition of civilization and his historical illustration of this definition (in the works whose impact on Mill has already been discussed in chapter I) was also an important component of Mill's conception of civilization. In the first place, it will be shown that Mill adopted Guizot's definition of civilization, which probably constituted the closest approximation to precision that the term had received in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the second place, moreover, what makes the significance of Guizot's definition of civilization and its impact on Mill more relevant to what is discussed in this thesis, is the fact that Guizot had used a comparison between England and France in order to illustrate the distinction that constitutes the most novel aspect of his definition. That historico-ethnological illustration was no less favourably received by Mill than the definition itself, and was used by him in the context of his

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<sup>1</sup> See: Christopher Turk, *Coleridge and Mill: A Study of Influence*, Aldershot, 1988, pp. 172, 178-9.

attacks on what he saw as the narrowness of his own country's civilization. France and England exemplified two different conceptions of civilization, two different versions of what constituted a highly civilized country. Many of Mill's statements concerning civilization were made in the context of comparisons between the two countries and his verdicts on most related issues were the result of his study of the nature and march of civilization in each of them.

### 1. DEFINITIONS, CRITERIA, AND INFLUENCES.

The meaning that Mill gave to the term, civilization, can be traced in a number of writings. He came closest to offering a definition in an article he published in 1836 under the title "Civilization".<sup>2</sup> The article began as follows:

The word civilization...is a word of double meaning. It sometimes stands for *human improvement* in general, and sometimes for *certain kinds* of improvement in particular.

We are accustomed to call a country more civilized if we think it more improved; more eminent in the best characteristics of **Man and Society**; farther advanced in the road to perfection; happier, nobler, wiser. This is one sense of the word civilization. But in another sense it stands for that kind of improvement only, which distinguishes a wealthy and powerful<sup>3</sup> nation from savages or barbarians. It is in this sense that we may speak of the vices or the miseries of civilization; and that the question has been seriously propounded, whether civilization is on the whole a good or an evil? Assuredly, we entertain no doubt on this point; we hold that civilization is a good, that it is the cause of much good, and not incompatible with any; but we think there is other good, much even of the highest good, which **civilization in this sense** does not provide for, and some which it has a tendency (though that tendency may be counteracted) to impede.

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<sup>2</sup> In *London and Westminster Review* (hereafter: *LWR*), 3 (April 1836), 1-28; reprinted in *DD*, I, pp. 160-205; now in *CW*, XVIII, 117-47.

<sup>3</sup> In the 1836 version the text reads: "populous".

The inquiry into which these considerations would lead, is calculated to throw light upon many of the characteristic features of our time. **The present era is pre-eminently the era of civilization in the narrow sense**; whether we consider what has already been achieved, or the rapid advances making towards still greater achievements. **We do not regard the age as either equally advanced or equally progressive in many of the other kinds of improvement. In some it appears to us stationary, in some even retrograde.**<sup>4</sup>

He then proceeded to use the word "only in the restricted sense"<sup>5</sup>:

not that in which it is **synonymous with improvement**, but that in which it is **the direct converse or contrary of rudeness or barbarism**. Whatever be the characteristics of what we call savage life, the contrary of these, or the qualities which society puts on as it throws off these, constitute civilization.

Mill identified these features as being dense populations dwelling in fixed habitations; development of agriculture, commerce, and manufactures; combined action of large bodies of human beings for common purposes and desire for social intercourse; and, finally, arrangements in society to protect persons and property and maintain peace.<sup>6</sup> He then suggested that the main characteristics of "civilization in the narrow sense" appeared more or less simultaneously and were interrelated. He then asserted that:

These elements exist in modern Europe, **and especially in Great Britain**,<sup>7</sup> in a more eminent degree, and in a state of more rapid progression, than at any other place or time. We propose to consider some of the consequences which that high and progressive state of civilization has already produced, and of the further ones which it is

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 119-20.

<sup>5</sup> 1836: "in the narrow sense".

<sup>6</sup> Cf., on Guizot's account of these elements of civilization: Mancini, *Alexis de Tocqueville, op. cit.*, pp. 88-9.

<sup>7</sup> It can hardly be over-stressed how forcibly this theme of England being the country most advanced in what he meant by "civilization in the narrow sense" (though the term itself is not always used) recurs in Mill's miscellaneous writings: see, for example, *CW*, XXIII, 589, 721; XII, 37; XIII, 622; and *infra*, Part 3.

hastening to produce.<sup>8</sup>

Alexander Bain found Mill's definition of civilization in this article "inadequate".<sup>9</sup> The reason why Bain took exception to Mill's definition and overall treatment of the concept may be that Mill had linked the idea of civilization with topics that were not considered relevant to it in contemporary British thought. The definition of civilization given at the outset must have been the result of Mill having recently reviewed Guizot's *Histoire de la Civilisation en Europe* and *Histoire de la Civilisation en France*.

Mill's definition has to be related to his two reviews of Guizot's early historical works, where one more attempt at a definition of civilization occurs (by way of presenting and commenting upon Guizot's definition). The definition given in the two reviews of the French historian's work was Guizot's own, but Mill endorsed it --in the first (1836) review more fully and unreservedly than in the second (1845) as will be seen further on. The distinction Mill drew in the opening paragraphs of "Civilization" between civilization as "human improvement in general" and "civilization in the narrow sense" was his way of accommodating the narrow sense in which the term civilization was used in Britain (and in which he was, in the main, to use it himself in that particular article) with the broader sense it was accorded by Guizot, which Mill had approved and elaborated upon in his review of the French historian some months earlier.<sup>10</sup> The short definition given at the outset

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<sup>8</sup> CW, XVIII, 120-1.

<sup>9</sup> Alexander Bain, *John Stuart Mill: A Criticism with Personal Recollections*, London, 1882, p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> On the concept of civilization in Britain cf.: R.A. Lochoe, *History of the Idea of Civilization in France (1830-1870)*, Bonn, 1935, pp. 2-3. Cf. also Richard

of the article --which Bain complained about-- was Mill's reckoning with Guizot's pronouncements on the subject and with his own endorsement of those pronouncements in the earlier review of the Frenchman's works. In this sense, the definition in "Civilization" presupposes the remarks made on that earlier occasion and can only be understood in their light.

Before examining Guizot's contribution, it should be noted that the link between the 1836 review of Guizot's *Lectures* and the essay on "Civilization" has been pointed out by H.O. Pappé in the context of his criticisms of Mueller's overestimation of Tocqueville's influence on Mill at the expense of other influences.<sup>11</sup> Though Pappé must be credited with having pointed to the general significance of Mill's early review of Guizot,<sup>12</sup> and to its relevance to the essay on "Civilization" in particular, it must also be said that due to his eagerness to dispel one

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Cobden's views in: David Thomson, *England in the Nineteenth Century (1815-1914)*, London, 1950, p. 32; on T.B. Macaulay's complacency over civilization see: see Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, New Haven and London, 1985, pp. 39-40, 44, 123, 269. According to Forbes, "Macaulay glories in an England leading the nations in material civilization, England in the van of progress.": Duncan Forbes, "James Mill and India", *The Cambridge Journal*, 5 (October 1951-September 1952), 21 --cf. J.S. Mill's letter of 27 January 1849 to Harriet Taylor (CW, XIV, 5-6) containing his comments on Macaulay's *History of England*. Cf. also J.W. Burrow, *Gibbon*, Oxford, 1985, pp. 80-93.

<sup>11</sup> Pappé, "Mill and Tocqueville", *op. cit.*, 231-2.

<sup>12</sup> However, to a certain extent, Pappé misses the point in saying that Guizot's thesis was "that the ancient world had declined because of its suppression of individuality". Enough has been said in Chapter I to show that "the important theme" of Guizot's work that struck Mill was not directly concerned with individuality. Guizot's thesis was that the ancient world had declined, and the oriental world had stagnated, because of their elimination of the struggle between different competing forces and ideas --which resulted from the absolute preponderance of one of these forces. It was as a consequence of the existence of such struggle and diversity of centres of power and influence that individuality would flourish. The two ideas are interconnected, but not identical.

more "myth" in Mill scholarship<sup>13</sup> he comes close to committing what Mill called the error of "substituting one half-truth for another". While he is right in pointing to the similarities of the opening remarks of "Civilization" with Mill's earlier observations arising from his study of Guizot's work, he does not do justice to Tocqueville's contribution to the ideas expressed in the essay on "Civilization" by denying that his work had any significant bearing on them and proclaiming the essay "a tribute to Guizot and Carlyle".<sup>14</sup> It would be more correct to say that the essay in question is an example of the pattern described in the previous chapter of Mill receiving favourably Tocqueville's ideas and using them in the context of a broader argument that he had already received from Guizot and others. In the case in question, Mill subscribes to a broad and all-comprehensive definition of civilization that he had found in Guizot and then proceeds to describe the concrete effects of one aspect of what he has called civilization, namely, of "civilization in the narrow sense"; this was the kind of civilization that he believed was ascendant particularly in England and America. In this latter enterprise (covering by far the greatest part of the article) many of the views expressed do have a direct connection with Mill's reading of the first part of *Democracy in America* and the lucid delineation of some aspects and trends of contemporary society that he found in that book. Much of what

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<sup>13</sup> Pappé maintained that: "The fashionable contention that Mill was Tocqueville's pupil has the obsessive character of a myth." And: "the emergence of the Tocqueville myth...is becoming a fashion in Mill scholarship": *ibid.*, 230-1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 232. On the other hand, cf. what Alexander Brady has to say on the same essay in the Introduction to Mill's *Essays on Politics and Society*: "Mill's long essay, 'Civilization', is closely related to those on America and the ideas of Tocqueville. It reflects the same concern over certain profound changes then occurring or about to occur in society and their significance for the individual and his government.": *CW*, XVIII, xxv. Cf. J.W. Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals*, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-8.



he read in Tocqueville's book came more as a corroboration of views he had already arrived at himself through various channels (Guizot's and Carlyle's, as well as Coleridge's --whom Pappé strangely overlooks here-- influence being among the most important), but recognising this is one thing and deleting Tocqueville's significance in the formation of these views altogether is another.

As for Guizot's contribution to Mill's understanding of civilization, it should be noted first of all that Mill was by no means alone in grappling with Guizot's treatment of this concept --though he may have been alone in doing so in Britain. In an exhaustive study of the history of the idea of civilization in France in the period 1830-1870, R.A. Lochore commences his account by remarking:

François Guizot is in our period the great authority on the idea of civilization. Whenever a writer asks what civilization is, his first care is to make a judgment, usually respectful, of Guizot's conception of it.<sup>15</sup>

The same centrality has been accorded to Guizot by Lucien Febvre in his famous study on "Civilisation",<sup>16</sup> as well as by Georges Gusdorf in a more recent contribution to this subject.<sup>17</sup>

An analysis of the French historian's conception of civilization and of its originality cannot be attempted here, but some idea of it will be given by quoting

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<sup>15</sup> Lochore, *The Idea of Civilization...*, *op. cit.*, p. 9. Characteristically, Chapter I of the book is entitled "Before and after Guizot" (pp. 9-17).

<sup>16</sup> See: "Civilisation: evolution of a word and a group of ideas", in: *A New Kind of History: from The Writings of Febvre*, ed. by Peter Burke, London, 1973, pp. 219-57 (translation of Febvre's contribution in: Centre international de synthèse, *Civilisation, le mot et l'idée*, Paris, 1930). On Guizot see especially 240-7.

<sup>17</sup> Georges Gusdorf, "Civilisation", in: *Les Principes de la Pensée au siècle des Lumières*, Paris, 1971, pp. 333-48. Cf. Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le Moment Guizot*, Paris, 1985, pp. 191-3.

from Mill's (and Blanco-White's) 1836 review of Guizot's *Histoire de la Civilisation en Europe* and *Histoire de la Civilisation en France*.<sup>18</sup> Guizot's definition of civilization is presented as follows:

Two things (says M. Guizot) present themselves to the mind, when we assert that a country is highly civilized: an organization of the national body, which makes the advantages of union greatly preponderate over the inconveniences and necessary evils of social restraints; and a free and vigorous development of the mental powers and moral faculties in individuals.

When we say that a country advances in civilization, we may mean that external life is becoming more secure and more agreeable - - that mankind are improving their physical condition, subduing the powers of nature more and more to their use, and so improving their social arrangements, that all the conjunct operations which constitute social life are better performed than before: Or we may mean that the mental faculties of mankind are unfolding themselves -- that a **higher spiritual culture** is introducing itself -- that **the individuals of whom society is made up**, are advancing more and more towards the perfection of their nature -- that the national mind is becoming wiser, nobler, more humane, or more refined, and that more numerous or more admirable **individual examples of genius, talent, or heroism** are manifesting themselves.<sup>19</sup>

For a country to be regarded as progressing in civilization, it must progress in both these respects, and the two elements must advance in parallel:

**When we use the word civilization in its largest sense,**<sup>20</sup> we, according to M. Guizot, include in it both these requisites: the improvement of society and outward life, and that of the inward nature of man. If either improves and the other does not improve along with it, we have no confidence in the reality, or in the durability of the improvement; we do not consider it as a permanent advance in civilization. The two elements do not always keep pace with each other; but when either of them advances, it surely paves the way for

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<sup>18</sup> The reasons for treating the 1836 review of Guizot that Mill co-authored with Blanco-White as expressing Mill's views have been presented in the previous chapter.

<sup>19</sup> *CW*, XX, 374. Guizot's definition is taken from the French historian's Second Lecture on *The History of Civilization in Europe*: see Guizot, *Lectures*, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-59.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Mill, "Civilization": *CW*, XVIII, 119.

the other. When either gets the start, it is soon arrested till the other has overtaken it; **and for the healthy and rapid advancement of both, it is of great importance that their development should take place *pari passu*.**<sup>21</sup>

Guizot asserted that, while other countries had advanced more rapidly than France in either of these two constituents of civilization, it was in France alone that they had advanced harmoniously together.

In the later (1845) review of Guizot, Mill offered a brief exposition of the Frenchman's definition:

The subject of the Lectures being the history of European Civilization, M. Guizot begins with a dissertation on the different meanings of that indefinite term; and announces that he intends to use it as an equivalent to a state of improvement and progression, **in the physical condition and social relations of mankind**, on the one hand, and **in their inward spiritual development on the other**. We have not space to follow him into this discussion, with which, were we disposed to criticize, we might find some fault; but which ought, assuredly, to have exempted him from the imputation of looking upon the improvement of mankind as consisting in the progress of social institutions alone.<sup>22</sup>

The hint that he "might find some fault" with Guizot's discussion of the different

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 374.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 266. Mill must have been referring here to reviews such as that by Anon., "Guizot's *Lectures on European Civilization*, Translated by Priscilla Beckwith," *The Times*, 21 August 1837, p. 6. (Cf. Arthur de Gobineau's critique of Guizot to the same effect, later, in his *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, Paris, 1967 --first published 1853-55-- pp. 100-2. See also Febvre, "Civilisation", *op. cit.*, pp. 245-6.) Given Mill's comment it is strange to read Filipiuk maintaining, in reference to this very review of Guizot, that "Mill has some reservations about the work: for example, Guizot's stress upon the development of social institutions as the primary test of 'the improvement of mankind', given his definition of civilization, which purportedly assigned equal weight to the state of institutions and to the degree of 'inward spiritual development'": Filipiuk, "Mill and France", *op. cit.*, p. 105. Mill, far from having reservations about the work on account of Guizot's exclusive stress upon the development of social improvement, had tried, both in the text quoted above and a year earlier to defend Guizot from such accusations: see his "Michelet's History of France": *CW*, XX, 229-30.

meanings of that indefinite term seems puzzling. One might think that Mill had changed his mind as far as Guizot's conception of civilization was concerned and that he became more critical of it over the years. But this is not the case. The fact that he continued to speak of civilization in the same terms throughout his writings is evidence that there was no major shift between 1836 and 1845. Furthermore, a careful reading of the relevant passages in Mill's two reviews of Guizot would suggest that it was not the French historian's description of civilization as consisting of material and social progress as well as the intellectual and moral development of individuals that Mill "might find some fault" with. Most probably, what he had reservations about, in 1845, was the assertion that civilization, in this extended sense that Guizot had given the term, was a linear movement forward. A comparison of the passage immediately following the above-quoted text with the manner these same remarks had been presented and commented upon in the earlier review will explain the basis of Mill's misgivings. The sequel to the text quoted above from the 1845 review reads:

We shall quote a passage near the conclusion of the same Lecture, as a specimen of the moral and philosophical spirit which pervades the work, and because it contains a truth for which we are glad to cite M. Guizot as an authority:

"I think that in the course of our survey we shall speedily become convinced that civilization is still very young; that the world is very far from having measured the extent of the career which is before it. Assuredly, human conception is far from being, as yet, all that it is capable of becoming; we are far from being able to embrace in imagination the whole future of humanity. Nevertheless, let each of us descend into his own thoughts, let him question himself as to the possible good which he comprehends and hopes for, and then confront his idea with what is realized in the world; he will be satisfied that society and civilization are in a very early stage of their progress; that in spite of all they have accomplished, they have incomparably more

still to achieve."<sup>23</sup>

This is all Mill said of Guizot's discussion of the concept of civilization (in the First Lecture) in his second review. He then passed immediately to the Second Lecture that dealt with European Civilization.

Now, in the first review of Guizot (1836), the above quotation from the French historian was presented as follows:

One truth, of which M. Guizot manifests a strong sense, and which cannot be too often enforced, is, **that civilization (in the extended meaning in which he uses the word, to denote all kinds of improvement) is at present in its infancy.**<sup>24</sup>

The same quotation from Guizot's work followed.<sup>25</sup> It was further commented upon:

Imperfect, however, as is our present state, a comparison of it with all those which have preceded leaves in M. Guizot's mind no doubt of its superiority to them on the whole; and proves, too, that during all the time which has succeeded the destruction of the Roman empire, **both society and human nature** have been steadily, though slowly advancing.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, it can be argued that had Mill more space to "follow him into this discussion", in the 1845 review, he would have found some fault with Guizot's assertion that "civilization (in the extended meaning in which he uses the word, to denote all kinds of improvement)" had been steadily advancing "during all the time which has

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 266-7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 392.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* There are many differences in the translation of the text, but they are differences of style rather than substantial ones.

<sup>26</sup> These remarks are considered by John Robson to be safely attributable to Mill himself who added them to the initial text written by J. Blanco-White: see *ibid.*, Textual Introduction, xcvi-xcix.

succeeded the destruction of the Roman empire". This assertion, which he endorsed in 1836, he had more misgivings about endorsing in 1845. Mill believed that it was only "civilization in the narrow sense" that had been steadily advancing since the fall of the Roman empire. In "many of the other kinds of improvement" he did not recognize the same advancement, as he put it bluntly in "Civilization". Why did Mill agree with Guizot's assertion on this point in the first review while he preferred to refrain from commenting on it in the second? It is a question that one cannot answer with any certainty. It can be suggested that in considering the theme of civilization in the article bearing this title, which he wrote some months after the first review of Guizot, he came to this conclusion.<sup>27</sup> The main point Mill tried to make in "Civilization" was that there was a discrepancy between the two kinds of improvement, at least as far as England was concerned. This point would have been undermined by the assertion that civilization (in the broad, ideal sense) had been steadily progressing throughout the centuries --and the almost inevitable implication that it would continue to do so by some kind of law of history.

In other words, Mill's hint at a disagreement with Guizot's general discussion of civilization in the First Lecture appears to have been referring to Guizot's quasi-identification of ideal civilization with historical civilization as manifested in European history, rather than to the French historian's definition of what an ideal civilization was. Guizot had connected the ideal civilization with historical

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Mill's statement in "Civilization": "The present era is preeminently the era of civilization in the narrow sense;... We do not regard the age as either equally advanced or equally progressive in many of the other kinds of improvement. In some it appears to us stationary, in some even retrograde.": *ibid.*, XVIII, 119.

civilization<sup>28</sup> and had asserted that they both converged in French history. Mill did not see ideal civilization (civilization in the sense of "human improvement in general") unfolding itself in European history. What he saw as historical civilization was "civilization in the narrow sense", most advanced in England and America. He did not share Guizot's complacent identification of the actual march of European history with the ideal of civilization.<sup>29</sup> Mill came to be increasingly convinced that the world was advancing in the direction of England and America rather than in the direction of realizing the ideal combination of progress in the conquest of nature (material progress) and in social arrangements with the progress in the inner nature of man that Guizot had presented as the true image of European history, exemplified *par excellence* in French history. In 1836 Mill did not expressly disagree with Guizot. But his pronouncements from then onwards testify to a more complex conception of historical civilization than Guizot's rather complacent and Francocentric account.

The impact of Guizot's comprehensive definition of civilization on Mill's treatment of this concept is manifested in the fact that the distinction between civilization in the narrow sense and civilization as human improvement in general (and the implicit or explicit higher evaluation of the latter) is retained in important later writings such as the second review of Tocqueville (1840) and the *Political*

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Lochore: "[A]ll the elements of [Guizot's] civilization-idea existed already in the publicism of the Restoration. With Constant and others civilization had lost its etymological moral value, and **had come to represent the historical process**: it is represented by phrases such as 'les progrès de la civilisation', 'la marche de la civilisation': Lochore, *The Idea of Civilization...*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> On Guizot's thought in this respect cf. Ceri Crossley, *French Historians and Romanticism: Thierry, Guizot, The Saint-Simonians, Quinet, Michelet*, London, 1993, p. 87.

*Economy* (1848, last edition 1871). In the latter work Mill drew a distinction between the relative merits of certain kinds of progress of the social body as a whole and the progress of man as an individual.<sup>30</sup> Civilization in the narrow sense meant better co-operation between individuals, and Mill thought this was a positive development. But it affected at the same time the character of individual man in a negative manner, and means should be found by which these "points of inferiority" of modern men and women might be compensated. He wrote that this latter question belonged to a different enquiry and could not be further discussed in that part of the *Political Economy*. This question was addressed in the bulk of the essay on "Civilization", "Sedgwick's Discourse", and the latter part of the second (1840) review of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. What Mill proposed, very briefly, was the creation, reinforcement, and preservation, by artificial means (by means, that is, not arising of themselves, automatically, from the tendencies of modern commercial civilization), of institutions, bodies, classes, and influences that would counteract the overwhelming tendencies of civilization in the narrow sense. As such, he described endowed universities that would teach the classics, history, and other subjects **properly**, in order to "send forth minds capable of maintaining a victorious struggle with the debilitating influences of the age, and strengthening the weak side of Civilization by the support of a higher cultivation";<sup>31</sup> the preservation of a leisured class, an agricultural class, and a learned class,<sup>32</sup> as well as various other

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<sup>30</sup> *Principles of Political Economy with Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy* (hereafter: *Political Economy*): CW, III, 707-8.

<sup>31</sup> "Civilization": *ibid.*, XVIII, 143; see also *ibid.*, 138-46; and "Sedgwick's Discourse": *ibid.*, X, 31-74 (especially 33-5).

<sup>32</sup> See "Tocqueville on Democracy in America [II]", *ibid.*, XVIII, 197-200.



devices, were proposed in the years between 1835 and 1840, as means by which some of these tendencies could be resisted. In all these devices there was plenty that betrayed the influence of Coleridge and the Coleridgeans.

Another example of Mill's continued employment of the distinction between two different kinds of improvement occurs in his second review of Tocqueville. It has been seen already that there he voiced his disagreement with Tocqueville's attribution of most of the main characteristics of American society to democracy (in the sense of equality of conditions) and retorted that what Tocqueville had presented as results of democracy were in fact "the tendencies of modern commercial society".<sup>33</sup> In the following paragraphs Mill illustrated this assertion and alerted his readers to the dangers of "the commercial spirit" becoming the exclusively preponderant value and passion in society and eclipsing all others. He repeated the distinction between civilization in the narrowest sense and another, wider kind of improvement, when he asserted that "[t]he spirit of commerce and industry is one of the greatest instruments **not only of civilization in the narrowest, but of improvement and culture in the widest sense**". Mill went on to stress that it should not, nevertheless be allowed to preponderate completely.<sup>34</sup>

Guizot's particular contribution to Mill's civilization-idea will be more obvious through a comparison of the younger Mill's conception of civilization with that of the man who first taught him on the subject, namely his father James Mill.<sup>35</sup> Besides the obvious relevance of James Mill's views an additional factor that renders a brief

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 191-2 (see *supra*, Chapter I, Part 1).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>35</sup> See *Autobiography, ibid.*, I, 11 (10).

consideration of his opinions on the question important is that he was apparently fond of the term civilization and used it very extensively in the *History of British India*. He also lamented the imprecision that surrounded the use of the term.<sup>36</sup> Though he did not go far towards offering anything like a definition of civilization the elder Mill did pronounce on his paramount criterion and test of civilization:

In looking at the pursuits of any nation, with a view to draw from them indications of the state of civilization, no mark is so important, as the nature of the *End* to which they are directed.

Exactly in proportion as *Utility* is the object of every pursuit, may we regard a nation as civilized. Exactly in proportion as its ingenuity is wasted on contemptible or mischievous objects, though it may be, in itself, an ingenuity of no ordinary kind, the nation may safely be denominated barbarous.

According to this rule, the astronomical and mathematical sciences afford conclusive evidence against the Hindus. They have been cultivated exclusively for the purposes of astrology; one of the most irrational of all imaginable pursuits; one of those which most infallibly denote a nation barbarous; and one of those which it is the most sure to renounce, in proportion as knowledge and civilization are attained.<sup>37</sup>

And further on, after lamenting the imprecise and indiscriminate use made of the term civilization "by most men", the elder Mill remarks:

It is not easy to describe the characteristics of the different stages of **social progress**. It is not from one feature, or from two, that a just conclusion can be drawn. In these it sometimes happens that nations resemble which are placed at stages considerably remote. It is from a joint view of all the great circumstances taken together, that their progress can be ascertained; and it is from an accurate comparison, grounded on these general views, that a **scale of civilization** can be formed, on which the relative position of nations may be accurately marked.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> James Mill, *The History of British India* (abridged and with an introduction by William Thomas), Chicago, 1975, pp. 228-9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

Here James Mill equates civilization with social progress. It is obvious from what has been said so far that his son added one more dimension to civilization, the cultural-moral.

## 2. IS CIVILIZATION A GOOD?

The question of Mill's stance towards civilization has given rise to a number of misunderstandings, partly due to the general imprecision surrounding the use of the term. Bernard Semmel writes that "In 1836, Mill wrote an article entitled 'Civilization', in which he discussed the defects of modern commercial society." He then describes some of the themes of that essay and goes on a bit further to assert:

Four years later, in his essay on Coleridge, Mill wrote that while he was cheered by the increase of physical comforts and knowledge in the new civilization, nonetheless, in the authentic Christian-Stoic vein, **he preferred the position of Coleridge, Carlyle, and the German philosophers, whom he called "worshippers of independence."** To these thinkers, the advantages of civilization had been purchased by the repression of the virtues of individual courage and "self-relying independence." **Mill agreed that this was too high a price to pay and joined the conservatives in denouncing** the "effeminate shrinking from the shadow of pain," the subordination of the denizens of mass civilization to artificial, monotonous, passionless lives, the destruction of any clear individuality, and the demoralization produced by the "great inequalities in wealth and social rank" of commercial society.<sup>39</sup>

This is not what Mill said. In the passage to which Semmel referred, Mill spoke of differing views of civilization as an instance of an issue concerning which both sides had a portion of truth in what they supported, but ignored the portion of truth their opponents put forward. Both were right to this extent, and both were wrong, in

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<sup>39</sup> Bernard Semmel, *John Stuart Mill and the Pursuit of Virtue*, New Haven and London, 1984, pp. 90-1 [reference is given to: Mill, "Coleridge", (1840), *CW*, X, 123-5].

missing the other side of the question. The existence of such different modes of thought was useful because, in questions concerning man and society, "the besetting danger is not so much of embracing falsehood for truth, as of mistaking part of the truth for the whole". He continued:

It might be plausibly maintained that in almost every one of the leading controversies, past or present, in social philosophy, both sides were in the right in what they affirmed, though wrong in what they denied; and that if either could have been made to take the other's views in addition to its own, little more would have been needed to make its doctrine correct.<sup>40</sup>

At this point the discussion of the two opposite views of civilization was introduced as an illustration of the opinion just stated:

Take for instance the question how far mankind have gained by civilization. One observer is forcibly stuck [sic] by the multiplication of physical comforts; the advancement and diffusion of knowledge; the decay of superstition; the facilities of mutual intercourse; the softening of manners; the decline of war and personal conflict; the progressive limitation of the tyranny of the strong over the weak; the great works accomplished throughout the globe by the co-operation of multitudes: and he becomes that very common character, **the worshipper of "our enlightened age."** Another fixes his attention, not upon the value of these advantages, but upon the high price which is paid for them; the relaxation of individual energy and courage; the loss of proud and self-relying independence; the slavery of so large a portion of mankind to artificial wants; their effeminate shrinking from even the shadow of pain; the dull unexciting monotony of their lives, and the passionless insipidity, and absence of any marked individuality, in their characters; the contrast between the narrow mechanical understanding, produced by a life spent in executing by fixed rules a fixed task, and the varied powers of the man of the woods, whose subsistence and safety depend at each instant upon his capacity of extemporarily adapting means to ends; the demoralizing effect of great inequalities in wealth and social rank; and the sufferings of the great mass of the people of civilized countries, whose wants are scarcely better provided for than those of the savage, while they are bound by a thousand fetters in lieu of the freedom and excitement which are his compensations. **The man who attends to these things, and to these exclusively, will necessarily infer that the savage life is the perfection of human nature; that**

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<sup>40</sup> In 1840 "perfect" read instead of "correct": *CW*, X, 122-3.

**the work of civilization should as far as possible be undone; and from the premises of Rousseau, he will not improbably be led to the practical conclusions of Rousseau's disciple, Robespierre.** No two thinkers can be more entirely at variance than the two we have supposed -- the worshippers of Civilization and of Independence, of the present and of the remote past. Yet all that is positive in the opinions of either of them is true; and we see how easy it would be to choose one's path, if either half of the truth were the whole of it, and how great may be the difficulty of framing, as it is necessary to do, a set of practical maxims which combine both.<sup>41</sup>

Nowhere in the text is there any indication that Mill "preferred the position of 'the worshippers of independence'". On the contrary he was adamant that their contentions represented half of what was true. He was also very explicit in saying that "the worshippers of independence" would end up advocating Robespierre's destructive feats if they were not prevented from acting upon their incomplete views.<sup>42</sup>

It is clear that in this text, intended not as an analysis of the concept of civilization but as an illustration of the merits of many-sidedness, Mill was referring to what was talked of in Britain as civilization (that is, civilization in the narrow sense). This passage, thanks to its limited length and its density, helps illustrate Mill's position with regard to this civilization, as it states concisely both the relative merits and the defects that he considered to be the results of this process. In fact, Mill said no less than the same things in the essay on "Civilization", with the only difference being that there he chose to elaborate extensively on the details of what he

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>42</sup> Mill had made remarks to the same effect on Rousseau's critique of "what is called civilization" in *On Liberty*: see *ibid.*, XVIII, 253. Cf. *Autobiography, ibid.*, I, 171 (170), where Mill wrote that he "applied to...Coleridge himself, many of Coleridge's sayings about half-truths". Cf. the discussion of the concept of half-truths in Turk, *Coleridge and Mill, op. cit.*, pp. 213-32.

saw as the negative results of civilization in the narrow sense, as well as to propose ways of counteracting and counterbalancing these negative tendencies in order to attain to a better civilization. But Mill was no less explicit in "Civilization" than he was in "Coleridge" that he did not consider civilization in the narrow sense to be an evil, any more than he considered it to be an ideal.<sup>43</sup> In both cases ("Civilization" and "Coleridge") he has been misunderstood as attempting "to extol the past at the cost of the present",<sup>44</sup> as offering an "indictment of contemporary civilization",<sup>45</sup> or as joining the conservatives in denouncing the characteristics of the civilization of a commercial society (Semmel). The misunderstandings to which Mill's pronouncements on civilization have led are symptomatic of the complexity of his approach to this concept. In later writings he kept the same attitude in his views on civilization in the narrow sense: he found it incomplete, a poor ideal in itself if it did not lead any further, but by no means a negative development. He even came to speak of it, more explicitly in later years, as probably a necessary stage on the road to a superior, higher, fuller improvement of mankind.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See: *CW*, XVIII, 119.

<sup>44</sup> Bain, *J.S. Mill, op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>45</sup> Gertrude Himmelfarb, Introduction of her edition of Mill, *Essays on Politics and Culture*, Gloucester, Mass., 1973, p. xvi.

<sup>46</sup> See: *Political Economy*, *CW*, III, 754-5 (note the changes in later editions); *Representative Government*, *ibid.*, XIX, 409-10; "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" (December, 1859), *ibid.*, XXI, 116. Cf. *ibid.*, XV, 778.

### 3. ENGLAND AND FRANCE.

In his early writings Mill started reflecting on the march of civilization and it was his observation of the differences between England and France that had led him to his first conclusions. In a letter to d'Eichthal in 1829 he articulated his objections to the early essay of Comte, *Système de Politique Positive*, which d'Eichthal had sent and recommended to him. One of Mill's major objections was that Comte had allowed for "only one law of the development of human civilisation". Mill invited d'Eichthal, who had been to England, to reflect whether this was true: "**Is it not clear that these two nations, England and France, are examples of the *advance of civilisation* by two different roads, and that neither of them has, nor probably ever will, pass through the state which the other is in?**"<sup>47</sup> Mill studied the different "roads" by which civilization had been --and was-- advancing in the two countries and a great part of this study was devoted to history, to the historical development of the two nations and their characteristics. One of his favourite historians, and, moreover, one who affected his views on the character of the civilizations of England and France considerably was Guizot.

It has been seen that Guizot had claimed for France a primacy in civilization on the grounds of its being the only country in which the two major components of civilization, the progress of society and the progress of man, had, throughout its history, advanced in parallel and kept abreast of each other. He asserted that, although other countries had advanced more rapidly than France in either of these two

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, XII, 37: letter of 8 October 1829.

constituents of civilization, in no other country had they developed so harmoniously **together**. In order to prove this point the French historian resorted to a brief survey of what he considered to have been the march of civilization in England, Germany, Italy, and Spain.<sup>48</sup> His account was reproduced by Mill (and Blanco-White) in the review of 1836.<sup>49</sup>

On England Guizot remarked that the direction of English civilization had been towards the improvement of the social arrangements, and of everything relating to external life: "its physical comfort -- its freedom -- and even its morality; but still, external well-being, and such inward culture only as has a direct and evident bearing on external well-being". And: "Society, in England has developed itself more nobly and more brilliantly than *man*: immediate and narrow applications have been more thought of than principles: the *nation* makes a greater figure in history, than the individuals who compose it." An "absence of interest in general and commanding views" had been "at all periods" characteristic of the nation.

The spirit of England is *practical*. The nation has had, and still possesses, great minds; but neither in number nor power (though the latter is unquestionably great) do they bear a due proportion to the colossal growth of the external, the **social** civilization of the country.<sup>50</sup>

From this comparison Guizot concluded that France was "the best suited to illustrate the general character and growth of European civilization". The reviewer goes to

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<sup>48</sup> Guizot, *Histoire de la Civilisation en France* (First Lecture): see *Lectures, op. cit.*, pp. 266-80.

<sup>49</sup> *CW*, XX, 374-7.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 374-5. Germany, Italy, and Spain were also discussed in this context.



some length to justify the French historian's claim.<sup>51</sup> It is maintained that Guizot's choice was not due to national vanity. He chose to study in more detail the march of civilization in France because, "in that remarkable country, the advance of the two elements of civilization --the internal and the external development-- has always been more parallel and harmonious than either in England, Germany, or Italy." The reviewer cited Guizot's contentions about the parallel development of man and society in France at length and then commented: "This description, which, as applied to the present French character, is strikingly just, M. Guizot proves to have been true in all former periods, by a most able general view of his country's history."<sup>52</sup>

These views were not repeated in the second review of Guizot's works. There Mill concentrated on the historical lesson concerning the causes of stationariness or extinction of oriental or ancient civilizations, on Guizot's historiographical merits, and on his exposition of the historical causes that accounted for the differences in the development of civilization in England from those of the continental countries, in particular, France. But the specific and explicit claim articulated by Guizot that France was the country where "civilization has appeared in its most complete form",<sup>53</sup> the country whose civilization had "reproduced more faithfully than any other the general type and fundamental idea of civilization" and "[i]t is the most complete, the most veritable, and, so to speak, the most civilized of civilizations",<sup>54</sup> was not mentioned by Mill in the second review --nor, indeed, anywhere else. He

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 378.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Guizot, *Lectures, op. cit.*, p. 269.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 279.

had spoken of "the civilization of continental Europe" depending on France, but no grounds for this opinion were given.<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, in the review of Michelet's *Histoire de France* (1844), Mill devoted one third of the review's pages to an introduction to French historiography in general, almost half of which was covered by his eulogy of Guizot's merit. One of the themes was Mill's vindication of Guizot's account of the history of civilization in France as the most representative specimen of the general movement of civilization in the whole of Europe. Mill asserted that "[t]o any European...the history of France is not a foreign subject, but part of his national history", since "the history of civilization in France *is* that of civilization in Europe."<sup>56</sup> However, he justified this claim in terms different from those Guizot had used, and Mill (and Blanco-White) had apparently endorsed in the review of 1836. Mill asserted in 1844 that the history of civilization in France was worth studying because European history was best reflected in French history (due to the absence of modifying circumstances that applied only to one European country, such as the double conquest, for example, was in English history). He did not argue, as Guizot did, that France was the most civilized European country because of its unique combination and more or less parallel development of both man and society.<sup>57</sup>

Thus it is doubtful if Mill fully shared Guizot's value-judgement concerning France's superiority or primacy in civilization. But even if he did accept this view

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<sup>55</sup> *CW*, XIII, 536.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 230.

<sup>57</sup> Comte's influence may have had something to do with this difference: see Raymonde Vaysset-Boutbien, *Stuart Mill et la Sociologie Française Contemporaine*, Paris, 1941, pp. 86-7.

in 1836, he came to speak in subsequent years in a manner that manifested his belief that the country most advanced in civilization was England. The only problem was that this civilization was civilization in the narrow sense and had to be enriched and completed by the cultivation of the individuals composing the community. What Mill did retain from Guizot in this context was his description of the historical development and the main characteristics of civilization in England. The historical sketch, referring to the circumstances of the conquest of England and the differences from the French experience cannot be followed here.<sup>58</sup> But a recurring theme in Mill's writings was a description of the main characteristics of English civilization which corresponded with Guizot's comments to the same effect (in his First Lecture in *Civilisation en France*) and on at least one occasion Guizot's authority was adduced to corroborate Mill's argument.

Reference has already been made to Mill's article on "Sedgwick's Discourse" (1835),<sup>59</sup> where he took to task the English universities. The end for which endowed universities existed, "or ought to exist", said Mill, was "to keep alive philosophy". They should provide "the education by which great minds are formed" and aspire "[t]o rear up minds with aspirations and faculties above the herd, capable of leading on their countrymen to greater achievements in virtue, intelligence, and social well-being". He challenged the performance of the English universities with regard to these purposes. His argument focused on what he saw as England's very poor record in individual eminence in the field of intellect and "higher pursuits", which contrasted sharply with its indisputable progress and world primacy in

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<sup>58</sup> See *CW*, XX, 290-4.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 31-74.

whatever concerned the conquest of nature as well as the best combination of the forces of society for the achievement of common ends --in other words, what Guizot had called external or social civilization. Thus Mill complained that, according to "the general opinion of Europe", the celebrity of England, "in the present day", rested upon "her docks, her canals, her railroads".

In intellect she is distinguished only for a kind of sober good sense, free from extravagance, but also void of lofty aspirations; **and for doing all those things which are best done where man most resembles a machine, with the precision of a machine.** Valuable qualities, doubtless; but **not precisely those by which man raises himself to the perfection of his nature,** or achieves greater and greater conquests over the difficulties which encumber his social arrangements. Ask any reflecting person in France or Germany his opinion of England;... the feature which always strikes him in the English mind is the absence of enlarged and commanding views.<sup>60</sup> ... Instead of the ardour of research, the eagerness for large and comprehensive inquiry, of the educated part of the French and German youth, what find we? ...not a vestige of a reading and thinking public engaged in the investigation of truth *as truth*, in the prosecution of thought for the sake of thought. ... **Guizot, the greatest admirer of England among the Continental philosophers, nevertheless remarks that, in England, even great events do not, as they do everywhere else, inspire great ideas. Things, in England, are greater than the men who accomplished them.**

But what seemed to Mill most unnatural was the discrepancy between this poor state of affairs in one aspect of life in England, and prodigious advances in other respects, such as in wealth, the humanization of the manners of the people, the refinement of tastes, the power of co-operating for a common object, "the diffusion of reading, of philanthropy, of interest in public affairs" and so on.<sup>61</sup>

It is obvious that Mill agreed with Guizot's account of English civilization as being developed only as far as the conquest of nature and the arrangements of social

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Guizot, *Lectures*, pp. 271-3; also Mill, *CW*, XX, 374-5.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 34-5.

life were concerned with no corresponding development of the intellectual capacities of individuals (beyond what was required for the success of their every-day operations, that is, common sense).

Though Mill's comments on French life and civilization will not be explored in this chapter in detail, a broad outline of the nature of these comments may be useful in the context of his comparisons between the kind of civilization that had taken hold of England, and the state of affairs in France. Though he did not speak again of France as being the most "civilized" country as he had done in the 1836 review of Guizot, he did speak, repeatedly, of things that he found commendable and worth imitating in the civilization and life of France.

The relevant comments fall into three main categories. In the first place, Mill thought that intellect and intellectual eminence were much more valued in France than they were in England. People of cultivation and superior education were, firstly, more likely to be met with in France --thanks to its being spared the curse of the "sabbathless pursuit of wealth" that had taken possession of all minds in Britain--, and secondly, were more deferred to. In particular the significance and influence of men of intellect through the medium of the press (best exemplified in his role-model, Armand Carrel) was a French peculiarity that he found well worthy of praise.<sup>62</sup>

In the second place, Mill believed that people enjoyed life more in France. They were happier, because they were not obsessed with "getting on in the world", an obsession that was the principal fault of the English people. The "commercial spirit" was not so preponderant in France, where there were many other values and

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<sup>62</sup> See, for instance, "The English National Character" (1834): *ibid.*, XXIII, 717-27; and: *ibid.*, XII, 38-9, 192; XIV, 95; XXIII, 443-7, 527-8.

passions in currency --some of them more commendable than others of course.<sup>63</sup>

A third theme, closely connected with the previous two, was the French openness and receptivity to enlarged views and generalized conceptions, which contrasted favourably with the English tendency to attend only to narrow applications and to reject anything that did not admit of immediate proof or did not lead to immediate practical results.

Thus, it can be seen that Mill observed and highlighted in France some characteristics opposed to those that he considered to be the worst deficiencies of his own country's civilization. In fact, he would say himself that he came to the awareness of these deficiencies (and to the awareness that they were deficiencies) thanks to his focus on a foreign country,<sup>64</sup> and moreover, a country best suited to function as a foil to England, France. Whether he believed, with Guizot, that France was the most civilized country or not, Mill certainly did believe that France was the country best suited to correct --through example and influence-- some of the worst defects of England's narrow civilization.

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<sup>63</sup> See *ibid.*, 721. Cf. *ibid.*, 375. And in a letter to Sarah Austin (26 February 1844) Mill had written about Samuel Laing's latest book on the continental countries: "It is strange to find a man recognizing as he does that the Norwegian, and German, and French state of society are much better for the happiness of all concerned than the struggling, go-ahead English and American state, and yet always measuring the merit of all things by their tendency to increase the number of steam engines, and to make human beings as good machines and therefore as mere machines as those.": *ibid.*, XIII, 622. The work Mill talked about was: Samuel Laing, *Notes of a Traveller on the Social and Political State of France, Prussia, Switzerland, Italy, and Other Parts of Europe, during the Present Century*, London, 1842. Laing has been called "one of the few overt *defenders* of philistinism in Victorian times", who rejected "culture and learning entirely" and had concluded "that there is a fundamental antagonism, no less, between capitalism and culture": Bernard Porter, "'Monstrous Vandalism': Capitalism and Philistinism in the Works of Samuel Laing (1780-1868)", *Albion*, 23 (1991), 255.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. "State of Society in America", *CW*, XVIII, 93-4.

This role of Mill's interest in and references to France, in connection with England's civilization, was noticed by a French reviewer of an article written by Mill in 1859. That a Frenchman associated these efforts of Mill with civilization may not be totally unconnected with what has been discussed in this chapter. E. Forcade wrote of Mill that he wanted to enhance the civilization of his country by comparing it to different civilizations, and that in this attempt he did not hesitate to apprise his compatriots of those assets of other countries, especially France, which he wanted his country to acquire.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> E. Forcade, "Chronique de la quinzaine", *Revue des Deux Mondes* (seconde période), 24 (1859), 989 (reviewing Mill's "A Few Words on Non-Intervention"). On Forcade's review cf. *infra*, Conclusion.

### III. FRANCE AND MILL'S THOUGHT CONCERNING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

Students of J.S. Mill's thought have paid little attention to his views on international relations and Britain's foreign affairs, while specialists in international relations have, to some extent, taken notice of Mill's contribution. Thus there are some short accounts of his views on international politics, or references to them in more general works.<sup>1</sup> As the author of the most ambitious such account put it:

Although his principal writings were not in the field of international relations, an examination of [Mill's] works indicates that he had a more than cursory interest in foreign affairs and a rather consistent set of beliefs that can, without stretching the meaning of the term, be considered a theory of international relations.<sup>2</sup>

Miller begins his examination of Mill's theory by stating that he "rejected the idea of

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<sup>1</sup> See., e.g., Kenneth E. Miller, "John Stuart Mill's Theory of International Relations", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 22 (1961), 493-514; Sheila Grader, "John Stuart Mill's Theory of Nationality: A Liberal Dilemma in the Field of International Relations", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 14 (1985), 207-16; Anthony Ellis, "Utilitarianism and International Ethics", in: Terry Nardin and David R. Mapel (eds.), *Traditions of International Ethics*, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 158-79; Eileen P. Sullivan, "Liberalism and Imperialism: J.S. Mill's Defence of the British Empire", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 44 (1983), 599-617; Charles R. Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, Princeton, 1979, pp. 82, 84n, 85-7, 112-4; R.J. Vincent, *Nonintervention and International Order*, Princeton, 1974, pp. 54-6, 61-3, and *passim*; Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, New York, 1992 (first published 1977), pp. 87-97, 101; Carsten Holbraad, *The Concert of Europe: A Study in German and British International Theory 1815-1914*, London, 1970, pp. 162-5, 168, 170, 176; Hans Kohn, *Prophets and Peoples: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Nationalism*, New York, 1946, pp. 11-42; Alfred Cobban, *The Nation State and National Self-Determination*, London, 1969, pp. 131-2.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, "J.S. Mill's Theory...", *op. cit.*, p. 495.



intense and exclusive patriotism". In this context he remarks that "[h]is life-long sympathy with France and his interest in French affairs...contributed to his rejection of a narrowly national position".<sup>3</sup>

It will be the aim of this chapter to show that Mill's thought on international relations displayed a considerable debt to his connection with France and French affairs. Thus, what follows is an attempt to trace the connection between some aspects of what could be termed Mill's theory of international relations --as well as, more narrowly, of his views on foreign affairs<sup>4</sup>-- and his study of French affairs and authors. This connection has a twofold character.

In the first place, some ideas that were developed by Mill in later years and have been associated with his name, most notably his views on non-intervention, seem to have been derived from the debates on the meaning of non-intervention that took place in the early 1830s in France.

In the second place, much of what Mill had to say in the field of international relations more generally, throughout his life, was shaped by his early interest in international affairs which was focused on France at least as much as on Britain during the 1830s and 1840s. This focus shifted to Britain and its role in the international arena only after Louis-Napoleon's election and subsequent coup.

Most of this chapter will be dedicated to non-intervention, because Mill wrote incomparably more on this subject than he did on any of the other issues discussed

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 496.

<sup>4</sup> For the implied distinction between the "foreign affairs" of one's own country and a theory of international relations or "international theory", see Martin Wight, "Why is there no International Theory?", in: Herbert Butterfield and Martin Wight (eds.), *Diplomatic Investigations: Essays in the Theory of International Politics*, London, 1966, p. 21.

here.

## 1. NON-INTERVENTION AND COUNTER-INTERVENTION.

The main idea that can be discussed in terms of Mill's indebtedness to French debates and thinkers is that of the limits of the principle of non-intervention in the affairs of other states. The closest Mill came to formulating a general theory on this question was in his article "A Few Words on Non-Intervention", written in 1859.<sup>5</sup> It is of no trivial importance to discuss the development of this idea in his thought, as students of international theory in recent decades have tended to regard Mill as the originator and *par excellence* exponent of one of the main versions of the theory of non-intervention. He is held to have made one of the most significant contributions to the discussions on this subject, and his arguments are considered to be relevant to contemporary debates.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, R.J. Vincent treats most subsequent debates on intervention --most notably during the Cold War-- as so much repetition of the arguments put forward by Richard Cobden and J.S. Mill respectively, the former espousing "a near-absolute

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<sup>5</sup> First published in *Fraser's Magazine*, 60 (December 1859), 766-76; reprinted in *DD*, III, pp. 153-78. Now in *CW*, XXI, 109-24. This article has been the focus of attention for existing accounts of Mill's views on non-intervention; some of them also looked at the "Vindication of the French Revolution of February 1848", written in 1849, and at the earlier article "The Spanish Question", written in 1837, to which Mill had contributed the theoretical part (*ibid.*, XXXI, 359-88). None of the existing accounts has referred to the early newspaper writings of 1830-31.

<sup>6</sup> For this latter point, see, for instance, James Mayall, "Non-intervention, self-determination and the 'New World Order'", *International Affairs*, 67 (1991), 421-9.

doctrine of nonintervention",<sup>7</sup> while the latter asserted the right to counter-intervention in cases where a foreign power had already intervened. Vincent concludes his chapter entitled "Theory" as follows: "In the Cold War, Mill's **doctrine of counterintervention to enforce nonintervention** has seen service on both sides of the battle, and Cobden's doctrine has survived as a protest against it. The recurrence of these different themes will be apparent in the chapters that follow."<sup>8</sup> And Vincent does make good his promise.<sup>9</sup>

Holbraad too considers Mill's position to be central to the development of what he calls the "humanitarian" branch of the "progressive theory" in the context of British discussions about the Concert of Europe. He writes that:

**The progressive thinkers introduced a new doctrine of intervention. ...the earlier progressive writers and statesmen advocated intervention for humanitarian ends. Deeply disturbed by the suffering of suppressed peoples, they saw in the Concert of Europe a means either of reforming the oppressor or of liberating the oppressed. ... The latter [view], which was a product of a more ideological and radical attitude, originated in the writings of John Stuart Mill.**<sup>10</sup>

Holbraad also speaks of Mill's views on the subject of intervention as having "influenced Gladstone's theory of the Concert of Europe".<sup>11</sup> And he says that

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<sup>7</sup> Vincent, *Nonintervention...*, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>9</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 112, 173, 225, 230, 245, 314, 314n, 318, 388-9. See also: Ian Forbes and Mark Hoffman (eds.), *Political Theory, International Relations, and the Ethics of Intervention*, London, 1993, pp. 66-7, 69, 70, 82; and Beitz, *Political Theory...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 85-7.

<sup>10</sup> Holbraad, *The Concert of Europe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-3. Further on he writes that Mill went "a step further than the Whigs of the previous generation. Whereas they merely had inverted the conservative doctrine of revolutionary conspiracy, he inverted the conservative doctrine of anti-revolutionary intervention.": *ibid.*, p. 165.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

Mill's was the dominant influence "during the great crisis in the Eastern question and in the following years" until the time of the crisis over Armenia and Crete.<sup>12</sup>

Even accounts of the "right of counterintervention" in purely legal terms recognize Mill's "A Few Words..." as the starting point of discussion on the matter.<sup>13</sup>

Mill himself was no less convinced of the novelty of his ideas in British debates. He started discussing the theoretical part of "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" by stating emphatically that "[t]here seems to be no little need that the whole doctrine of non-interference with foreign nations should be reconsidered, if it can be said to have as yet been considered as a really moral question at all".<sup>14</sup>

In that article Mill stated that the answer to the question, whether one country was justified in "helping the people of another in a struggle against their government for free institutions", was bound to be different, "according as the yoke which the people are attempting to throw off is that of a purely native government, or of foreigners", considering as one of foreigners, "every government which maintains itself by foreign support".<sup>15</sup> Thus, when the contest was only with native rulers, "and with such native strength as those rulers can enlist in their defence", intervention

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 175-6.

<sup>13</sup> See: John A. Perkins, "The Right of Counterintervention", *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 17 (1987), 172.

<sup>14</sup> *CW*, XXI, 118. A quotation of this sentence has served as the *motto* with which James Mayall introduced his own discussion of non-intervention: see Mayall, "Non-intervention...", *op. cit.*, p. 421.

<sup>15</sup> Another "fundamental distinction" that Mill had already made in that article was that between "civilized" and "barbarian" peoples. The principles that are presented here are those he held to apply in the relations between "civilized" countries. See *CW*, XXI, 118-20.

was not justified. The reason was, that it was almost certain that intervention, even if successful, would not be "for the good of the people themselves". He elaborated:

The only test possessing any real value, of a people's having become fit for popular institutions, is that they, or a sufficient portion of them to prevail in the contest, are willing to brave labour and danger for their liberation. ... No people ever was and remained free, but because it was determined to be so; because neither its rulers nor any other party in the nation could compel it to be otherwise.<sup>16</sup>

Things had to be different, however, when the struggle in question was against a foreign yoke, or against "a native tyranny upheld by foreign arms". No matter how attached to freedom a people was, and even if they were "the most capable of defending and making a good use of free institutions", they might be unable "to contend successfully for them against the military strength of another nation much more powerful". It followed that "[t]o assist a people thus kept down, is not to disturb the balance of forces on which the permanent maintenance of freedom in a country depends, but to redress that balance when it is already unfairly and violently disturbed". For the doctrine of non-intervention to be "a legitimate principle of morality", it must be accepted by all governments and bind the despots as much as the free states. If the despots did not consent to be equally bound by it, all that its profession by free states came to, was "that the wrong side may help the wrong, but the right must not help the right". Thus, Mill concluded:

**Intervention to enforce non-intervention is always rightful, always moral, if not always prudent.** Though it be a mistake to *give* freedom to a people who do not value the boon, it cannot but be right to insist that if they do value it, they shall not be hindered from the

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<sup>16</sup> So far, Mill agreed with Cobden who also used this argument --among others-- against intervention. But this is as far as their agreement went. See Vincent, *Nonintervention...*, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

pursuit of it by foreign coercion.<sup>17</sup>

No attempt has been made to follow the development of this idea in Mill's thought, nor to identify any possible influences. Holbraad asserts that the idea of what he calls "intervention for humanitarian ends" "originated in the writings of John Stuart Mill". He adds that "[i]t was the struggle of the Italian subjects of the Austrian Emperor...which inspired Mill to formulate his doctrine of intervention. The February Revolution of 1848 in Paris had revived the old debate on the right to interfere...".<sup>18</sup> Vincent seems to imply that Mill's advocacy of counterintervention was anticipated by Mazzini in 1851: "This interpretation of the function of the nonintervention doctrine after 1815 allowed Mazzini to assert his view of the real meaning of the doctrine in words which were to be echoed by John Stuart Mill eight years later."<sup>19</sup>

In fact, the views associated with Mill's name were anticipated by some French politicians and publicists two decades before Mazzini adopted them. Mill's argumentation is strikingly reminiscent of that used by Lafayette, Armand Carrel and other representatives of the so-called *parti du mouvement* in the early months of the Orleans monarchy to urge the French government that had resulted from the July revolution to intervene in favour of suppressed nationalities that had revolted in the aftermath of the French "Three Glorious Days". The revolts in Belgium and Poland,

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<sup>17</sup> CW, XXI, 123-4. This is where Mill's position differed from that put forward by Cobden. See Vincent, *Nonintervention...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-54, especially 52-4.

<sup>18</sup> Holbraad, *The Concert of Europe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 163-4.

<sup>19</sup> Vincent, *Nonintervention...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60. The above statement is followed by a footnote referring the reader to p. 56 of Vincent's book, which is where he had dealt with Mill's advocacy of "the case for counterintervention", basing his discussion exclusively on "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" (1859).

as well as in Italy, were regarded by most of those opposing Louis Philippe's peace at any price policies as sister revolutions that should be supported by France.<sup>20</sup> These views were put forward in the Chamber of Deputies most vocally by Lafayette, and in the press by Armand Carrel, chief editor of *Le National*, which, according to Jeremy Jennings, "was, in a sense, *the* paper of the July Revolution".<sup>21</sup> These arguments are to be found in many an article written by Carrel, in particular during the first months of 1831.<sup>22</sup> But there is no need to quote Lafayette or Carrel here, nor to resort to speculation, as the gist of the argument put forward by the French opposition, was presented to the British public by Mill himself in an article in the *Examiner* (10 April 1831).<sup>23</sup>

It has to be stressed that Mill was not happy at all with the war fervour of the

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<sup>20</sup> See H.A.C. Collingham, *The July Monarchy: A Political History of France: 1830-1848*, London, 1988, pp. 186-93; Jeremy Jennings, "Nationalist Ideas in the Early Years of the July Monarchy: Armand Carrel and *Le National*", *History of Political Thought*, 12 (1991), 497-514 (particularly 507-10). Cf. Jan Andrej Betley, *Belgium and Poland in International Relations, 1830-1831*, New York, 1960.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 498.

<sup>22</sup> See, especially, Armand Carrel, *Oeuvres Politiques et Littéraires*, 5 Vols., Paris, 1857-9 (not to be confused with *Oeuvres Littéraires et économiques d'Armand Carrel*, Paris, 1854. All articles in volumes I to IV were first published in *Le National*. Carrel's works will be hereafter referred to as *Oeuvres*), I, pp. 150-1, 220, 230-1, 320-1, 338-41, 379-434; II, pp. 5-12, 52-7 (especially p. 56), 176-83, 184-90. Given Mill's pronounced admiration and affection for Carrel, there is a *prima facie* case for suspecting and investigating some connection. Significantly, Carrel, who played an active role in the July revolution and initially supported the government of the July monarchy, passed gradually to the ranks of the opposition exactly because of frustration at the government's foreign policy, which he saw as pusillanimous and dishonourable for France: see Jennings, "Nationalist Ideas...", *op. cit.*, pp. 497-514, especially 507-10. See also Angus G. McLaren, "The *National* under the editorship of Armand Carrel" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis), Harvard University, 1971, pp. 246-78.

<sup>23</sup> *CW*, XII, 299-301; see *infra*.

French opposition. He considered it a dangerous distraction from what was more important than any national liberation movement, the progress of political reform in France. His first references to the issue betray a deep-seated fear that a war in which France would be involved would halt the march of civilization, corrupt the French national character, and result in a repetition of the Napoleonic experience, imperiling France's own liberty, and reawakening painful and destructive national antipathies.

On 19 December 1830, Mill condemned forcefully the war-like spirit that was abroad in France and censured the French for what he saw as their abandonment of the principle of non-intervention. After remarking that discussions in the French Chambers were almost monopolised by the questions of the organization of the National Guard<sup>24</sup> and the arrangements for putting the army on the war establishment, Mill observed that the French seemed to "desire nothing so much as an opportunity for showing their neighbours" how well "prepared for war" they were. A month earlier they had been "as quiet, as could reasonably be required", on the affairs of Belgium. But "now the insurrection in Poland has kindled them into a perfect flame; so great is the difference in the feelings, either of a man or of a nation, according as their red coat is on or off". And he went on to comment: "We have been shocked and disgusted by the language of the leading French papers on the subject of the Polish revolution. **The principle of non-intervention, on which they insisted so strongly a few weeks ago, is now scattered to the winds.**"<sup>25</sup> He seemed then, in December 1830, to subscribe to a traditional and absolute version of the doctrine of non-intervention, and, at any rate, to have no understanding of, or

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Carrel, *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 409-14.

<sup>25</sup> *CW*, XXII, 214-5.



sympathy for, the French opposition's stance.

Again, on 23 January 1831, Mill wrote disapprovingly that "General Lamarque made another of his vehement exhortations to war".<sup>26</sup> He went on to report that:

M. Mauguin followed with a speech of considerable ability, full of just observations on the character of foreign governments, particularly of the English, the Aristocratical character of which he perfectly understands; but too much in the same warlike tone.<sup>27</sup> That able and highly-principled paper, the *Courrier Français*, has answered both speeches in an article, which, we trust, will be read in every corner of France.<sup>28</sup>

In his next reference to French reactions to the affairs of Belgium and Poland, on 6 February 1831, Mill implied again his regret that the agitation was distracting the French from more relevant concerns, but this time in a less critical strain:

The unsettled state of Belgium, and the approaching struggle in Poland, appear to occupy and agitate the French people far more than that which is of greater importance to human kind than the very existence of Belgium and Poland taken together -- their own struggle for good institutions.

And he went on to enumerate the negative results he apprehended a war in Europe would bring in its wake.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Mill commented on the General: "He appears to resemble the other Bonapartist officers in their military mania, though not in their baser attributes": *ibid.*, 247-8. For the speech see: *Moniteur*, 1831, pp. 109-10 (15 January 1831).

<sup>27</sup> See: *Moniteur*, 1831, p. 111.

<sup>28</sup> *CW*, XXII, 248. The article Mill referred to was: "De la paix et de la guerre", *Courrier Français*, 17 January, pp. 1-2. Lamarque and Mauguin were members of the opposition, and they were the two politicians for whom the *National* reserved its most unqualified support, due exactly to the aspect of their policies Mill was critical of in this article, namely their intensely nationalistic speeches and pleas for war. See McLaren, "The *National*...", *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>29</sup> *CW*, XXII, 258-9.

On 13 March 1831 Mill wrote that:

The probabilities of war seem, in the general apprehension, to have increased: in ours they are diminishing. **The French may be assured, that the English people will approve of their *enforcing* the principle of non-intervention against the despotic powers, but will disapprove of their *violating* that principle, in order to crusade in support of the subjects of other states against their governments, however just the resistance of such subjects may be, or however certain their destruction, if not aided from abroad.**<sup>30</sup>

On 10 April 1831 he wrote, in the same strain as he had done in December and February, that it was

unfortunate in a thousand ways for all Europe, that the question of peace and war should have come at this moment to complicate the difficulties of the present position of France, to place the popular party, in the estimation of many who would otherwise have sympathized with them, manifestly in the wrong, and to expose all that has been gained, and all that might hereafter have been gained, to new and countless hazards.<sup>31</sup>

The defeat of France, in case war did come, would "stop the march of civilization for another half century".

But, having said as much, he now proceeded to present the French opposition's case, and this time he seemed to have both digested and accepted the validity of their main arguments. The similarity of the following argumentation with what Mill was to write on the subject of intervention in 1859 (in "A Few Words...") is indicative of the impact that his reading of French newspapers and debates during the preceding months (between December 1830 and April 1831) had on his thought

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<sup>30</sup> He went on: "The French have their character for moderation and pacific inclinations still to acquire; and should they go to war on grounds in any respect doubtful, those grounds are sure to be interpreted to their disadvantage.": *ibid.*, 284 (it is obvious that "character" here means reputation).

<sup>31</sup> *CW*, XXII, 299. Cf. Pamela M. Pilbeam, *The 1830 Revolution in France*, London, 1991, pp. 158-9.

with regard to this question.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the expression of his grief at the fact that the question of war had perplexed the situation of France was accompanied by the following comments:

**We must be just, however, to what is called (incorrectly) the war party in France.** They do *not* advocate a crusade for liberty, or a war of propagandism. They know well that the improvement of a nation is not advanced, but retarded, by popular institutions imposed upon it by foreign force.

It was not for foreigners to judge, Mill wrote, whether a nation would be benefitted by a constitutional government, before it had put forth its strength and seized such a government. Because, no matter what the forms of a government were, unless it were "vigorously upheld by a preponderance of the physical and intellectual strength of the nation itself, sufficient to overmatch all domestic attempts at its overthrow", it would have to be carried on "in the spirit and with the machinery of a despotism".

For this reason,

The so-called war party have not the folly to think of quixotizing through all Europe, giving liberty to nations by the sword.<sup>33</sup> But they say that when a nation *has* put itself in motion -- when it *has* shown itself eager for liberal institutions, and ripe for them, by subverting all domestic opposition, vanquishing the strength of an established Government, and giving itself, by its own strength, without foreign aid, a constitution more favourable to the progress of civilization, -- that then no one ought to be permitted to rush down upon it with the overpowering strength of another nation not equally advanced, not equally prepared for an improvement in its government, and overwhelm a united people by superiority of brute force. They say that non-intervention by one nation in the affairs of another should be

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<sup>32</sup> That Mill was reading the *National* before he met its chief editor personally in 1833 can be surmised, for example from *CW*, XXIII, 466-7, 525-30; and *ibid.*, XII, 194-5, 220.

<sup>33</sup> Some of those who championed intervention did advocate a "mission libératrice" on the Napoleonic model: see Lochore, *The Idea of Civilization...*, *op. cit.*, p. 79. Mill apparently was not referring to them, but, most notably, to Lafayette, who had based his argument on the grounds Mill goes on to present.

laid down by France as an inflexible rule, which she should herself observe, and of which she should enforce the observance on all other Governments.<sup>34</sup>

Mill went on to say that the party in question asserted **that this policy "is the true interest of France herself"**, and he added that "it is in this view mainly, we may say solely, that they contend for it". Proceeding to explain their argument, he informed the reader that they believed that the existence in France of "a government founded on popular will, and established on the ruins of legitimacy and divine right" was bound to "give an impulse to the democratic spirit throughout Europe", by which impulse, if not restrained, "the thrones of all absolute monarchs will be every year more and more undermined, and, in no long period, certainly overthrown". They were therefore convinced that the monarchs would regard it as "the sole chance of saving their existence as despots", to "extinguish the spirit of liberalism in France". The French were aware, that the consequent struggle would be hard and perilous: "but those, at least, who are called the war-party, believe it to be as inevitable as was the still more terrific struggle in 1792". In that contest they expected and wished to have for their "natural allies" the people of all countries in Europe aspiring to free institutions.

But what, they ask, will be our situation, if we allow all to whom we might appeal in the hour of need to be crushed, one after another, not by their own governments, but by the armies of foreign despots; who will then have no enemy but us, and who, after keeping us for an indefinite period in perpetual agitation, and a state of habitual preparation for war, implying most of the evils of actual war, without its advantages, will seize the first favourable moment for pouring their troops across our frontiers, and reducing us to the necessity of fighting for our very existence at our own doors, and on our own soil? It is therefore that **Lafayette, and the numerous body whose opinions he represents, contend for the enforcement, by arms, if necessary, of**

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<sup>34</sup> CW, XXII, 299-300.

the principle of non-intervention.<sup>35</sup>

Then Mill judged the argument:

And if France had been a united nation, headed by a government which could trust the people, which the people trusted, and which was able and dared to call forth the national enthusiasm, this would have been the true policy of France, and its almost infallible result would have been not war but peace. When France declared that the entry of foreign troops into Belgium would be considered a declaration of war, all Europe applauded, and the Cabinets reluctantly acquiesced. Yet France was then almost without an army, and many of her frontier fortresses were in a state almost incapable of defence. But the imposing unanimity which reigned in the July revolution, struck terror into the Powers, and they feared to stir.

It was Louis Philippe and his Chambers, that had "marred this glorious position". They did so by "placing themselves in a state of hostility against the spirit of the nation", and thus destroying "the *prestiges* of its power". The result was that they gave the despotic governments the impression that they were too busy fighting internal squabbles for them to be credible and formidable abroad.<sup>36</sup>

It follows from the above that, first of all, Mill's advocacy of some qualifications to the principle of non-intervention (in 1859, but also earlier, in 1837<sup>37</sup>), which he presented as a re-interpretation (or rather, as a stricter

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 300. Cf. Lafayette's speech of 28 January in: *Moniteur*, 1831, pp. 193-4.

<sup>36</sup> He concluded: "This being the melancholy fact, the attempt to enforce non-intervention against Austria in the case of the Papal states would probably lead to war; and the co-operation of such a spiritless people as that of Romagna, in case of future hostilities, is so little worth, that it would be unwise in France to accelerate such a calamity in order to save them. Her policy now is to throw her shield over Belgium and Switzerland; leave events in other countries to take their course; and, if war is coming, wait till it comes.": *CW*, XXII, 300-301.

<sup>37</sup> In "The Spanish Question": *ibid.*, XXXI, 373-4. There Mill had taken issue with Roebuck's complete condemnation of interference.

interpretation) of the principle,<sup>38</sup> was very much in line with the arguments adduced by the French opposition in the early 1830s.

What may require further comment is the apparent shift in Mill's attitude vis-à-vis the advocacy of an energetic foreign policy by the French opposition. While he started off by declaring that he was "disgusted" by the tone of the French papers, he came very close indeed to vindicating their cause. The period from December 1830 (when he wrote, on the 19th, expressing his "disgust") until April 1831 --when he came to the defence of "what is called (incorrectly) the war party"-- is crucial here. Unfortunately, there is no clue in Mill's extant letters from these months concerning questions of international relations. But there is an indication of another kind: It was exactly during the months in question that Carrel and other members of the opposition elaborated their interpretation of the "principe de la non-intervention". A look at the contents of Carrel's articles in *Le National* is revealing. One needs only to read the headings of the articles to see that non-intervention had come under scrutiny. On 8 January 1831 he wrote: "Qu'est-ce que la non-intervention?";<sup>39</sup> on 29 January Carrel reported extensively the "Discussion à la Chambre sur la Pologne", with particular references to different interpretations of the principle of non-intervention, and to the speeches of Bignon, Lafayette, and others;<sup>40</sup> Mill must have read Lafayette's entire speech in the governmental organ, the *Moniteur Universel*, of

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<sup>38</sup> In other words, his advocacy of counter-intervention in order to enforce non-intervention.

<sup>39</sup> See Carrel, *Oeuvres*, II, pp. 5-12.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-7 (especially p. 56).

29 January,<sup>41</sup> if one is to judge by the resemblance of the arguments put forward by the veteran French politician on that occasion and Mill's presentation of the cause of the opposition --and his particular reference to Lafayette-- in the text quoted above;<sup>42</sup> and, just a couple of weeks before Mill wrote his defence of the opposition's views, Carrel had written (on 20 March), "De l'interprétation que donne le nouveau ministère au principe de la non-intervention".<sup>43</sup> It should be stressed, however, that Carrel and his paper had gone further than just advocating the principle in the way Mill presented it. Though making use of the same argument (of counterintervention) Carrel, the former soldier, did not conceal that his aim was, in fact, a crusade for liberty. Thus, Mill did not follow him entirely on this issue, but rather presented in the *Examiner* the arguments that had been put forward by Lafayette, which were considerably milder. This is also why Mill mentioned only Lafayette by name.

In his later writings about international affairs, besides the theoretical justification, on moral grounds, of counter-intervention in cases where the despotic powers had already tampered with a people, Mill employed also the same argument (as the French opposition had done) grounded on expediency and national security. Thus, it was not only fair but also necessary for constitutionally governed France, in the 1830s, to aid nationalities which revolted against the despots, in order to have the former as allies against the latter. Similarly, it would be equally necessary and wise for Britain to do exactly the same in the 1840s and 1850s. In 1859, in "A Few

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<sup>41</sup> See Lafayette's speech on external affairs of 28 January in: *Moniteur*, 1831, pp. 193-4.

<sup>42</sup> *CW*, XXII, 299-301.

<sup>43</sup> *Oeuvres*, II, pp. 176-83; see also *ibid.*, 184-90.

Words...", the moral argument about the legitimacy of counter-intervention already quoted was followed by an illustration of the advisability for Britain to follow the principle proposed:

It might not have been right for England (even apart from the question of prudence) to have taken part with Hungary in its noble struggle against Austria;<sup>44</sup> although the Austrian Government in Hungary was in some sense a foreign yoke. **But when, the Hungarians having shown themselves likely to prevail in this struggle, the Russian despot interposed, and joining his force to that of Austria, delivered back the Hungarians, bound hand and foot, to their exasperated oppressors, it would have been an honourable and virtuous act on the part of England to have declared that this should not be, and that if Russia gave assistance to the wrong side, England would aid the right.**

He conceded that England might have been prevented from taking this position single-handed by considerations of prudence --"the regard which every nation is bound to pay to its own safety". But "England and France together could have done it". And had they done so, the Russian armed intervention "would never have taken place, or would have been disastrous to Russia alone". While all that England and France gained by not doing it, was "that they had to fight Russia five years afterwards, under more difficult circumstances, and without Hungary for an ally".<sup>45</sup> Mill's recommendation for the future followed:

The first nation which, being powerful enough to make its voice effectual, has the spirit and courage to say **that not a gun shall be fired in Europe by the soldiers of one Power against the revolted subjects of another**, will be the idol of the friends of freedom throughout Europe. That declaration alone will ensure the almost immediate emancipation of every people which desires liberty sufficiently to be capable of maintaining it: **and the nation which gives the word will soon find itself at the head of an alliance of free**

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<sup>44</sup> In 1849.

<sup>45</sup> *CW*, XXI, 124. He alluded to the Crimean War. Cf. the above with what Carrel had written in the *National* in 1831 (22 January): Carrel, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 51.



**peoples, so strong as to defy the efforts of any number of confederated despots to bring it down. The prize is too glorious not to be snatched sooner or later by some free country; and the time may not be distant when England, if she does not take this heroic part because of its heroism, will be compelled to take it from consideration for her own safety.**<sup>46</sup>

Mill allocated to England after 1849 the international role that he, along with the French radicals themselves, earlier believed France was rightfully aspiring to, before France herself had become --in his eyes at any rate-- a despotic power.<sup>47</sup>

Mill repeated the version of the principle of non-intervention discussed above during what could be termed his electoral campaign. In 1865, having to state his basic principles on some key questions, he asserted, when it came to discussing foreign policy:

Every civilized country is entitled to settle its internal affairs in its own [way] and no other country ought to interfere with its discretion, because one country, even with the best intentions, has no chance of properly understanding the internal affairs of another: but when this indefeasible liberty of an independent country has already been interfered with; when it is kept in subjection by a foreign power, either directly, or by assistance given to its native tyrants, I hold that any nation whatever may rightfully interfere to protect the country against this wrongful interference. **I therefore approve the interposition of France in 1859 to free Italy from the Austrian yoke, but disapprove the intervention of the same country in 1849 to compel the Pope's subjects to take back the bad government they had cast off.**

It was not, however, a necessary consequence "that because a thing might rightfully be done, it is always expedient to do it". Thus, he wrote that he would not have

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<sup>46</sup> CW, XXI, 124.

<sup>47</sup> In this switch of his hopes Mill was not alone of course. Tocqueville, by no means favourable to Britain's international ambitions before Bonaparte's accession and subsequent coup, became, after the latter event, an ardent supporter of Britain's international greatness as the only guarantee for the survival of liberty. See Seymour Drescher, *Tocqueville and England*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1964, pp. 170-92.

voted for a war on behalf of Poland (in 1863) or Denmark (in 1864), because "on any probable view of consequences I should have expected more evil than good from our doing what, nevertheless, if done would not have been, in my opinion, any violation of international duty".<sup>48</sup>

It should be noted that in this statement he declared that he approved of the French intervention in Italy in 1859, on the grounds that it was undertaken in order to help a people struggling against a foreign yoke, notwithstanding its being carried out by a government he sympathised least with, that of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte. This can go some way towards indicating that he did not advocate this principle earlier (in the early 1830s and since) only in order to vindicate a congenial party's (the French Left's) policies.<sup>49</sup>

One could be tempted to argue that Mill's attempt to defend the French opposition's stance should be interpreted in terms of strategy. Wishing to see reform succeeding at home Mill was bound to vindicate everything the French "parti du mouvement" stood for, including a foreign policy that was hardly destined to commend this party to the British public. However, relegating Mill's comments on this issue to the status of mere attempts of a British radical to justify his French counterparts at a moment when radical reform was at stake in both countries, would

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<sup>48</sup> Letter to James Beal, on 17 April, 1865: *CW*, XVI, 1033. Cf. Mill's reported reply to the question "*What are your principles of non-intervention?*" during one of the meetings before the Westminster election, on 8 July, 1865, in: *ibid.*, XXVIII, 39. Cf. also his reply to the same effect on 3 July, 1865: *ibid.*, 17.

<sup>49</sup> The French intervention in Italy in 1849, of which Mill said he disapproved, was directed, in its crucial phase (from June to October 1849) by the foreign minister of the Second Republic at that time, Alexis de Tocqueville. See Françoise Mélonio, "Tocqueville et la restauration du pouvoir temporel du pape (juin-octobre 1849)", *Revue Historique*, 271 (1984), 109-23.

fail to account for the fact that Mill went on advocating the principles and arguments first put forward in his early newspaper articles on France throughout his life, and on very different occasions. His statement that he approved Louis Napoleon's intervention in Italy is one of the occasions that prove that he was consistent in the interpretation of non-intervention he first adopted in 1831.

Yet, there can be discerned a shift of emphasis in Mill's statement of 1865 which can best be understood through a discussion of his pronouncements in the aftermath of 1848.

## 2. 1848.

There is one occasion on which Mill might be taken to have modified the principle he set forth, in the sense that he seems to have asserted a right for liberal Powers "to assist struggling liberalism" with no particular reference as to whether or not the struggling country in question had already been interfered with. Though there is a certain ambiguity about what exactly Mill asserted in the 1830s and in "A Few Words..." (1859), his statements on these two occasions were circumspect enough for him to be understood as advocating counter-intervention only as a response to prior intervention. And although his statement in 1859, that helping a people kept down by a foreign yoke was justified, could be taken to imply that liberal powers had a right to aid struggles for national liberation from multi-ethnic empires indiscriminately, his exposition of what he meant, in the concrete example of the Austrian Empire, shows that this interpretation cannot be taken for granted. The statement that "[i]t might not have been right for England (even apart from the

question of prudence) to have taken part with Hungary in its noble struggle against Austria; although the Austrian Government in Hungary was in some sense a foreign yoke",<sup>50</sup> leaves one baffled and confused. Was Mill advocating intervention in all cases where an ethnic group claimed national status and statehood against a "foreign" power that was keeping it down (as was the case with the Hungarians and the rest of the subject ethnic groups of the Austrian and Ottoman Empires), or was he asserting that such intervention was warranted only in cases where a third foreign power had already intervened to aid the oppressors in keeping their hold over the revolted nation?<sup>51</sup> Mill had been more explicit a decade earlier. In April 1849 he had published in the *Westminster Review*<sup>52</sup> an article intended to be a "Vindication of the French Revolution of February 1848", in reply, in particular, to Lord Brougham's attack on almost everything the Provisional Government of France had done.<sup>53</sup> One of Brougham's targets had been the new French government's declaration of intent with regard to foreign policy, in the shape of Lamartine's "Manifeste aux Puissances". The two main issues were the French repudiation of the treaties of 1815,<sup>54</sup> and the assertion of France's right, in Mill's own words, "to afford military

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<sup>50</sup> *CW*, XXI, 124.

<sup>51</sup> This latter seems to be the case in the example Mill employed, that of Russia's intervention to aid Austria in keeping down the Hungarians. Cf. also his statement in the same text "that not a gun shall be fired in Europe by the soldiers of one Power against the revolted subjects of another...": *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Westminster Review*, 51 (April 1849), 1-47; reprinted in *DD*, II, pp. 335-410; now in *CW*, XX, 317-63 (the part of the article dealing with international relations is: *ibid.*, 340-8).

<sup>53</sup> Henry Peter, Lord Brougham, *Letter to the Marquess of Lansdowne, K.G., Lord President of the Council, on the late Revolution in France*, London, 1848.

<sup>54</sup> See *infra*, Part 3.

aid to nations attempting to free themselves from a foreign yoke".<sup>55</sup> When it came to discussing the latter issue, "the doctrine, that one government may make war upon another to assist an oppressed nationality in delivering itself from the yoke", Mill admitted that Brougham was by no means alone in his indignation against "such a breach of received principles, such defiance of the law of nations", but was, rather, "backed by a large body of English opinion".<sup>56</sup> Mill's reply was outspoken, and with radical overtones: "May we venture, once for all, to deny the whole basis of this edifying moral argumentation?" It was true, he conceded, that "[t]o assist a people struggling for liberty is contrary to the law of nations", and Puffendorf [sic], Burlamaqui, or Vattel would not have approved of such action. And yet: "So be it. But what is the law of nations? Something, which to call a law at all, is a misapplication of terms. The law of nations is simply the custom of nations." It was "a set of international usages".<sup>57</sup> And international usages were, "in an age of progress", as subject to improvement and as changeable as any human institution. There being no legislature, no Congress of nations, to alter any part of "that falsely-called law, the law of nations", the improvement of international morality could only take place "by a series of violations of existing rules". Accordingly, new principles and practices were being introduced into the conduct of nations towards one another.

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<sup>55</sup> *CW*, XX, 343.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 344. He went on to remark that: "Men who profess to be liberal, are shocked at the idea that the King of Sardinia should assist the Milanese in effecting their emancipation. That they should assert their own liberty might be endured; but that any one should help them to do it, is insupportable. It is classed with any unprovoked invasion of a foreign country: **the Piedmontese, it would seem, not being fellow-countrymen of the people of Venice and Milan, while the Croats and the Bohemians are.**" : *ibid.*, 344-5.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 345.

Thus, one "entirely new principle was for the first time established in Europe, amidst general approbation, within the last thirty years".

It is, that whenever two countries, or two parts of the same country, are engaged in war, and the war either continues long undecided, or threatens to be decided in a way involving consequences repugnant to humanity or to the general interest, other countries have a right to step in; to settle among themselves what they consider reasonable terms of accommodation, and if these are not accepted, to interfere by force, and compel the recusant party to submit to the mandate.<sup>58</sup>

This "new doctrine" had been already acted on by a combination of the great powers of Europe "in three celebrated instances".<sup>59</sup> "It is too late in the day", he exclaimed, "after these precedents, to tell us that nations may not forcibly interfere with one another for the sole purpose of stopping mischief and benefiting humanity."

The cases he had adduced appeared to Mill to establish sufficient precedents to justify the practice of such intervention as part of the new "international morality". It can be argued that it is the case for what could be called "humanitarian intervention" that Mill was defending in the above text.<sup>60</sup>

Now, having established the "new principle" that nations were allowed to

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 346.

<sup>59</sup> The cases he refers to are: the interference between Greece and Turkey at Navarino; between Holland and Belgium at Antwerp; and between Turkey and Egypt at St. Jean d'Acree: *ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> See Vincent, *Nonintervention...*, *op. cit.*, p. 56. See also Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, *op. cit.*: in p. 90 Walzer discerns three different cases in which non-intervention can be abandoned. The third case is what he calls, further on, "humanitarian intervention": see *ibid.*, pp. 101-108. In view of the description he gives of cases under this head (pp. 90, 101-108), Walzer is wrong in asserting that Mill did not discuss "humanitarian intervention" (p. 90). Both in the 1849 "Vindication..." and in "A Few Words..." a decade later, Mill vindicated the case for foreign intervention when "the war either continues long undecided, or threatens to be decided in a way involving consequences repugnant to humanity or to the general interest" (1849): *CW*, XX, 346. Cf. *ibid.*, XXI, 121.

"forcibly interfere with one another for the sole purpose of stopping mischief and benefiting humanity", Mill proceeded to present a specific case where such interference was most justified:

Can any exigency of this sort be stronger -- is any motive to such interference of a more binding character -- than that of preventing the liberty of a nation, which cares sufficiently for liberty to have risen in arms for its assertion, from being crushed and trampled out by tyrannical oppressors, and these not even of its own name and blood, but foreign conquerors?<sup>61</sup>

There are two distinct, if interconnected, ideas being advanced here. In the first place, Mill asserted that arguments based on "the law of nations" advocating as a rule complete and strict non-intervention were untenable, if for no other reason, because the European Powers themselves had established a **precedent**, "within the last thirty years", of interfering for "stopping mischief and benefiting humanity".<sup>62</sup>

Having established this, he came, in the second place, to assert, that no "exigency of this sort" (i.e. in the direction of "stopping mischief and benefiting humanity") could be stronger than the case of a revolted nation "which cares sufficiently for liberty to have risen in arms for its assertion", and whose liberty was in danger of being crushed and trampled out by tyrannical oppressors who were also foreign conquerors.

It is on the "Vindication..." that Holbraad focuses his discussion of Mill's views. According to Holbraad:

**He based his case on precedents.** An entirely new principle of international law had been established within the last thirty years, he observed. ... Every liberal government or people, he declared, "has a

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<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 346.

<sup>62</sup> This is what modern commentators (such as Vincent and Walzer) call "humanitarian intervention".

right to assist struggling liberalism, by mediation, by money, or by arms, wherever it can prudently do so; as every despotic government, when its aid is needed or asked for, never scruples to aid despotic governments".

The above text is followed by a footnote:

In 1859, when the fate of Italy was being decided, he again took up the subject of intervention. Repeating the argument set forth in 1849, he added a new rule: "Intervention to enforce non-intervention is always rightful, always moral, if not always prudent."<sup>63</sup>

The rule was not new; Mill had advocated it in 1831 (*Examiner* articles) and in 1837 ("The Spanish Question"). But Holbraad's remark is important because it draws attention to the fact that Mill did not actually refer to the principle of counter-intervention aiming at enforcing non-intervention, explicitly at any rate, in 1849. One may suggest that this principle was implied at various points, as for example in the proviso: "as every despotic government...never scruples to aid despotic governments". Though this might well be so, it remains true that there was no clear assertion of the right to intervene in order to enforce non-intervention; the justification Mill offered in 1849 was not grounded on the right to enforce non-intervention in cases where "the despots" had already intervened. Rather, there was an assertion that at times "when...the most important interests of nations...[are] interests of opinion", no one paid the least regard to "the pretended principle of non-interference".<sup>64</sup> Thus, there is a certain departure from his earlier (1831, 1837), as

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<sup>63</sup> Holbraad, *The Concert of Europe*, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-5n.

<sup>64</sup> Mill asserted that the era of the Reformation was such a time --when "sympathy of religion [was] held to be a perfectly sufficient warrant for assisting anybody". The same applied "at present", with regard to **political** sympathies: "What religious sympathies were then, political ones are now; and every liberal government or people has a right to assist struggling liberalism...; as every despotic government...never scruples to aid despotic governments.": *CW*, XX, 346.



well as later (1859) position. He seems to have adopted a more radical position in 1849. Whether this was due to an eagerness to vindicate Lamartine, or it reflected a genuine radicalisation of his attitude at a moment of revolutionary exuberance may have to remain a matter of speculation.<sup>65</sup> This divergence between the 1849 text and that written in 1859 has not been noticed by scholars<sup>66</sup> and Mill's views are taken to be consistent and identical throughout his writings. Usually, one of the two texts (1849 or 1859) forms the basis of the discussion.

All that can be said in the direction of fitting the stance adopted in the "Vindication..." with the rest of Mill's writings on the subject of intervention is to suggest that he took for granted that the despots would and did intervene, and that therefore he went out of his way to vindicate the French Provisional Government's *Manifeste* with its pro-nationalities overtones in terms of a liberal power's duty to assist struggles for national liberation.

What is more important in accounting for the apparent difference of emphasis is to stress that Mill's focus in 1849 was not the question of intervention or non-intervention itself and *in abstracto*, but rather the merits of the principle of **nationality**. He concluded the section of the "Vindication..." in which he had dealt

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<sup>65</sup> In the *Autobiography* Mill wrote, with reference to the *Political Economy*, that he promulgated there his views on socialism "less clearly in the first edition, rather more so in the second, and quite unequivocally in the third". His explanation of the differences may be relevant to the promulgation of his views on intervention in 1849: "The difference arose partly from the change of times, the first edition having been written and sent to the press before the French Revolution of 1848, after which the public mind became more open to the reception of novelties in opinion, and doctrines appeared moderate which would have been thought very startling a short time before.": *ibid.*, I, 241.

<sup>66</sup> A partial exception is Holbraad's footnote, which implies that a new principle was added in 1859 that was not there in 1849.

with Lamartine's *Manifeste* and Brougham's assault on it with "[a] few observations...on the extreme contempt with which Lord Brougham denounced" this principle. Given that Brougham's venom was particularly directed against "[t]hat new-fangled principle, that new speculation in the rights of independent states, the security of neighbouring governments, and indeed the happiness of all nations, which is termed *Nationality*, adopted as a kind of rule for the distribution of dominion" that was advocated "by the Paris school of the Law of Nations and their foreign disciples",<sup>67</sup> Mill felt obliged to concentrate on showing why the claims of nationalities deserved satisfaction, rather than in discussing the merits of intervention or non-intervention in the abstract. By so doing, Mill somehow answered the complicated question of whether a country was allowed to interfere to help a minority ethnic group that had revolted in a foreign country against their own government, by giving (implicitly) the national --or ethnic-- group in revolt the status of a nation that was fighting with foreigners. The extent to which he was bolder in the "Vindication..." becomes apparent if one compares his statements there with his more qualified and reluctant statement in 1859 concerning Hungary and "its noble struggle against Austria".<sup>68</sup> It is obvious that in 1859 Mill was not that clear and outspoken about what to recommend in such a case, as the expressions "might...although...in some sense" indicate. The main difference between the "Vindication..." and the other texts in which the subject of intervention was discussed is that in 1849 Mill took the radical step of maintaining openly and unequivocally that liberal countries had a right and perhaps a duty to intervene and assist struggles of national liberation, no matter

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<sup>67</sup> Quotations from Brougham's essay cited by Mill: *ibid.*, XX, 347.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI, 124.

whether a "despotic" power had already intervened to assist the state whose integrity was threatened by the national revolt. In this case (1849) Mill seems to be implying that the very fact of a "foreign" occupation (the fact that a nation's "liberty" is "tramped out by tyrannical oppressors...not...of its own name and blood, but foreign conquerors") constitutes a form of intervention with a nation's political development. In terms of this notion, the Italians' attempts at unification were considered by Mill (as well as by Lamartine<sup>69</sup>) to be their own affair and Austria's attempts to obstruct them for the sake of retaining its own Italian territories were to be considered interference by foreigners. The difference is one of criteria of legitimacy, and it is revolutionary in its implications. In 1849 Mill implied, to all intents and purposes, that the legitimate unit in international politics was the nation, not the state: or, to put it differently, that national allegiances might be more important than existing territorial arrangements.

The reference to these questions in the "Vindication..." is important for our understanding of Mill's later, and much better known, statements about nationality in *Representative Government* (1861). In the latter work he had come to state more carefully many of the bold statements he formulated in 1849. But there is at least one major idea in the 1849 essay to which Mill held with little, if any, qualification in Chapter XVI of *Representative Government*, but rather elaborated on it: the idea that the main justification for "nationality" and its aims was its potential conduciveness to free representative government.

First, for all his concessions to the nationalists, Mill was not blind to the

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. his reference to the Italians in the *Manifeste*, in Mill's translation: *ibid.*, XX, 341.

contradictions and dangers involved in many nationalist movements. He condemned categorically and in the strongest terms what is often called today "tribalism". It was far from his intention, he hastened to declare, to "defend or apologise for the feelings which make men reckless of, or at least indifferent to, the rights and interests of any portion of the human species, save that which is called by the same name and speaks the same language as themselves". These feelings, he wrote, "are characteristic of barbarians".<sup>70</sup>

But it was exactly because of these deplorable characteristics of nationalist sentiment that the latter should be humoured, wherever possible, if the damage it could do to the cause of free government was to be prevented:

But grievous as are these things, yet so long as they exist, the question of nationality is practically of the very first importance. When portions of mankind, living under the same government, cherish these barbarous feelings...they are scarcely capable of merging into one and the same free people. They have not the fellow-feeling which would enable them to unite in maintaining their liberties, or in forming a paramount public opinion.<sup>71</sup>

The government would be able, "by playing off one race and people against another, to suppress the liberties of all".<sup>72</sup> The example of the Austrian Empire was adduced.<sup>73</sup> Therefore:

**Nationality is desirable, as a means to the attainment of liberty;**  
and this is reason enough for sympathizing in the attempts of Italians

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> In the 1849 --original-- version Mill had written "both" instead of "all".

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 347-8.

to re-constitute<sup>74</sup> an Italy, and in those of the people of Posen to become a Poland. So long, indeed, as a people are incapable of<sup>75</sup> self-government, it is often better for them to be under the despotism of foreigners than of natives, when these foreigners are more advanced in civilization and cultivation than themselves. But when their hour of freedom, to use M. de Lamartine's metaphor, has struck, without their having become merged and blended in the nationality of their conquerors, the re-conquest of their own is often an indispensable condition either to obtaining free institutions, or to the possibility, were they even obtained, of working them in the spirit of freedom.<sup>76</sup>

Mill has been often criticised for his profession of this doctrine, in the shape it took in *Representative Government*.<sup>77</sup> It is not within the scope of the present work to assess the merits of his views on nationality. It suffices that these views were first formulated in the context of Mill's discussion of French attitudes towards the nationalities of Europe and his assessment and endorsement of these attitudes and the principles underpinning them.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Apparently he shared the Italian nationalists' unhistorical assumptions, or, at any rate, their rhetoric: when was there such "an Italy" for it to be re-constituted? Strictly speaking, he should say "to constitute an Italy".

<sup>75</sup> In 1849: "unfit for".

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>77</sup> See John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, First Baron Acton, "Nationality", in: *The History of Freedom and Other Essays*, London, 1909, pp. 270-300 (the reference to Mill is at p. 285); Alfred Cobban, *The Nation State...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-2; Kohn, *Prophets and Peoples*, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-8; Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, London, 1960, pp. 131-3 (Kedourie's criticism is only implicit).

<sup>78</sup> What may need to be stressed is that Mill did not, as is sometimes assumed, confound national liberation (the attainment of "nationality" in the language of the time) with liberty. The reason why he was favourably disposed towards movements of national liberation was his belief that, in the conjuncture of mid-nineteenth-century Europe, the specific nation states that were likely to arise from the success of such movements were more likely to conduce to the attainment of freedom than the multi-ethnic empires of Austria, Russia and Turkey (see, e.g., *CW*, XXV, 1203). But he had a very clear idea of the difference between nationality and liberty and endorsed the former only in so far as it seemed to be a necessary prerequisite for the latter in the particular cases in question. This is clearly stated in a letter to an Italian patriot

### 3. TREATY OBLIGATIONS.

There is one more aspect of Mill's thought on international relations which can be said to have been to a considerable extent influenced by his having followed closely French debates and having come to accept the validity of many of the arguments put forward by French publicists. In December 1870 Mill wrote for the *Fortnightly Review* an article entitled "Treaty Obligations".<sup>79</sup> The question of whether treaty obligations imposed by force on a defeated people were entitled to be binding in perpetuity, or whether the people who felt handicapped by these obligations were justified in throwing them off as soon as they felt that the changed balance of power allowed them to do so safely, had been discussed extensively in France in the context of debates concerning the 1815 settlement and whether it was binding on France after the overthrow of the Bourbons in 1830.<sup>80</sup> This issue came to be discussed by Mill in 1849, in the "Vindication...", since one of the two controversial issues about Lamartine's *Manifeste* had been its repudiation of the treaties of 1815.<sup>81</sup>

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(28 March 1859): "Je comprendrais qu'à telle époque donné, on mît la **nationalité** avant la **liberté**, je pourrais même le pardonner, parceque la liberté a **souvent** besoin de la nationalité pour exister.": *ibid.*, XV, 610-1 (for more on this letter see *infra*, Chapter IV, Part 3).

<sup>79</sup> *CW*, XXI, 341-8.

<sup>80</sup> See, for instance, Carrel, *Oeuvres*, I, 320-1, 340, 397; II, 186; see also Jennings, "Nationalist Ideas...", *op. cit.*, pp. 507-8; and Lafayette's speech in the Chamber, *Le Moniteur*, 1831 (I), pp. 193-4 (29 January). See also: James Chastain, *The Liberation of Sovereign Peoples: The French Foreign Policy of 1848*, Athens, Ohio, 1988, pp. 15-30, and *passim*.

<sup>81</sup> See Mill's translation of the relevant passage of the *Manifeste* in: *CW*, XX, 341.

A comparison between Mill's arguments in 1849 in defence of the French Republic's declaration<sup>82</sup> and those he employed in 1870 to the effect that treaties should not be concluded in such a manner as to last in perpetuity, but should rather be concluded for a limited amount of years, gives a good measure of the relevance of French debates for Mill's conception and formulation of this view.<sup>83</sup>

As for the main subject of the preceding account, the principle of non-intervention, it can be argued that both Mill's main theory on this subject (as expressed, most clearly, in "A Few Words...") and what appears to be, to a certain extent, his bolder assertion of it, in the "Vindication..." in 1849, were formulated through his discussing --and endorsing, more or less fully-- French ideas on the question.

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 343-4.

<sup>83</sup> See in particular *ibid.*, XXI, 343-4, 348. Mill's main example was that of France after 1815. Cf. *ibid.*, XVII, 1779.

## CHAPTER IV: FRENCH FOREIGN POLICY AND FRANCO-BRITISH RELATIONS.

In the following pages an examination of Mill's comments on French attitudes to foreign policy in general, and Franco-British relations in particular, throughout his life, will be attempted. The aim of this account will be to highlight the place of France in what could be termed --following Lochore-- Mill's "geopolitics of civilization",<sup>1</sup> the place he allocated France in his overall conception of the international scene. A major part of any such account is, as one could expect, covered by Mill's conception of --and attitude towards-- the relationship between France and Britain in the political as well as in other fields.

Mill's stance in Franco-British disputes has been judged as somewhat ethnocentric: John C. Cairns has observed in his Introduction to Mill's *Essays on French History and Historians*, when writing on Mill's disagreement with Tocqueville on an issue of Franco-British relations that will be discussed in the following pages, that:

Clearly Mill never understood Tocqueville's concept of national prestige, or his fears for the health of the French national spirit; across more than a century thereafter, few Englishmen did: it remained an impenetrable mystery for most of them, and Mill, for all his francophilism, appeared scarcely better equipped to penetrate it.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Lochore, *The Idea of Civilization...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-7.

<sup>2</sup> *CW*, XX, xx. Cairns had also written, earlier on, that the crisis of 1839-41 "revealed clearly that [Mill] had by no means lost his native bearings.": *ibid.*, xviii.



Mill's position in the present account is found to be subtler and more sympathetic to -  
-and understanding of-- French susceptibilities than such statements would have one  
believe.

### 1. THE 1830s: WAR, REFORM, AND THE SPECTRE OF BONAPARTE.

That the preservation of peace in Western Europe and of a good atmosphere in the relations between "the two greatest nations in the world"<sup>3</sup> was of paramount importance to Mill from very early on is clear from his writings in the *Examiner* on French affairs in the early 1830s. Though it could be said that his aim there was to vindicate the policies of the French left<sup>4</sup> rather than to criticise them, he did show himself impatient with what he saw as their excessive concern with the affairs of Belgium and Poland and the danger that this attitude posed for the cause of reform in Europe --in Britain no less than in France. Thus, he wrote on 19 December 1830, criticizing the French for discussing in the Chambers nothing but military preparations. It has been seen that he declared that he had been "shocked and disgusted" by the language of the French press concerning the Polish revolution. And he went on:

If a war, unhappily for France and for Europe, were shortly to break out, though undertaken by that country, as it probably would be, for no selfish object, we greatly fear that, under its influence, **in less than a twelvemonth, the national character would again be perverted,**<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 303; cf. *ibid.*, XXIII, 644; XX, 125.

<sup>4</sup> The so-called "parti du mouvement".

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Carrel's --very different-- attitude towards war and its effects on national character: See Carrel, "Mémoires sur les campagnes des armées de Rhin et de Rhin

as it was by Napoleon,<sup>6</sup> -- the rage for victory and conquest would become again the dominant passion in the breasts of Frenchmen; and the national feeling once turned in that direction, we know the barefaced profligacy, the systematic and unheard-of disregard of every principle of international morality, and of the most sacred rights of independent nations, which made the foreign policy of the directory, and of the empire, a disgrace to civilisation. *That* war began with as much purity of purpose, on the part of the French nation, as the present one will do, if the French government accepts the invitation; which, while we now write, is probably under its consideration, to assist the Poles against the three Robber-powers.<sup>7</sup>

In the same strain, he wrote some months later, in the very article where he was to vindicate the so-called war-party's preoccupations with intervention abroad in the interests of the defence of their own revolution, that it was "unfortunate in a thousand ways for all Europe", that "the question of peace and war" should have come at that moment to complicate the problems of France and, among other things, "to expose all that has been gained, and all that might hereafter have been gained, to new and countless hazards". In his opinion:

**The defeat of France would stop the march of civilization for another half century: successful she could not be, in less than three or four campaigns; in that time, the ignominy of invasion, and the inevitable horrors of war and devastation, would again rouse the national antipathies which a peace of unusual length has so greatly mitigated; while, instead of soldier-citizens, five hundred thousand military ruffians, demoralized and brutalized like those of Napoleon,<sup>8</sup> might once more overspread Europe, and after enslaving foreign countries under the forms of liberty, might return prepared to be the tools of any new usurper in inflicting still worse**

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et Moselle", *Oeuvres*, V, p. 134. See also Jennings, "Nationalist Ideas..." *op. cit.*, 504.

<sup>6</sup> This is the first (direct) reference to Napoleon in this context.

<sup>7</sup> *CW*, XXII, 214-5.

<sup>8</sup> This is the second (direct) reference to Napoleon.

slavery upon their own.<sup>9</sup>

But even more telling had been his comments of 6 February 1831, when he deplored the fact that the French people were more preoccupied with the affairs of Belgium and Poland than with what was "of greater importance to human kind than the very existence of Belgium and Poland taken together --their own struggle for good institutions". His first direct public reference to the attitude of the French towards war follows:

**The French are not, as is sometimes asserted, fond of war, but they have not the deep-rooted abhorrence of it, which so large a proportion of ourselves have; it is one of our few points of natural superiority. The French are kept out of unjust war, not by a proper sense of its evils, but by a sentiment of national morality, which forbids infringement upon the rights of other nations. But it is obvious, that they would be ready, at the present instant, to seize hold of any just or plausible ground of quarrel, however trivial, for taking part with the Poles, whom they consider as engaged in the same cause with themselves; and as in reality, defending their own frontiers.**<sup>10</sup>

Then, the evils of a prospective war are once more depicted: When "the five hundred thousand French soldiers" then under arms, would, "**with a successful general at their head,**<sup>11</sup> be overrunning Europe", the "progress of civilization, and that of good institutions all over the world" would be stopped, or even be thrown back, for a period hard to foresee.<sup>12</sup>

But besides the earnest desire to see peace preserved, Mill also made concerted efforts during the early 1830s --as he did throughout his life-- to contribute

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 299-300 (10 April 1831).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 259 (6 February 1831); cf. *ibid.*, XIII, 701.

<sup>11</sup> This is one more allusion to the Napoleonic experience.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 258-9. Cf. *ibid.*, 284. Cf. also *ibid.*, XXIII, 665.

to the easing of the tensions between British and French public opinion. In 1843 he said that he would like to see crucified the first man who would dare use in the tribunal of a people abusive language against another people.<sup>13</sup> He showed himself no less solicitous of the preservation as well as cultivation of friendly dispositions between the two peoples in his early newspaper writings. His first aim was to commend the French opposition, the *parti du mouvement*, to the British.<sup>14</sup>

It has been seen that he defended the so-called war party in April 1831.<sup>15</sup> And he went out of his way to stress in his newspaper writings that *The Times* and the rest of the English press were wrong in attributing anti-English feelings to the French liberals.<sup>16</sup> In this spirit, writing in the *Examiner* on 3 June 1832 Mill censured the *Times* for having asserted, some days earlier, that the internal affairs of France were of no concern of the British public, because they were not connected with "English interests."<sup>17</sup> He deplored the implications of such an assertion for the morality of the nation, and then commented:

**This is but a poor sample of English feeling from the "leading journal," on the very day which brings us the news of a patriotic banquet at Paris, whereat M. Armand Carrel, the Editor of the only influential Paris newspaper in which there lingered some remains of anti-English feeling, was selected, perhaps for that very reason, to give, as a toast, "The People of England," with expression of the warmest sympathy and congratulation upon our late glorious**

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<sup>13</sup> In a letter to Tocqueville (20 February 1843): *ibid.*, XIII, 571.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *infra*, Chapter V.

<sup>15</sup> See *supra*, Chapter III.

<sup>16</sup> See *CW*, XXII, 182-4; cf. *ibid.*, XII, 115.

<sup>17</sup> *The Times*, 1 June 1832, p. 2.

though pacific Three Days."<sup>18</sup>

But there was one more dimension to Mill's enterprise with regard to France. In his attempts to bring like-minded Frenchmen and Englishmen closer many of his articles seem to have been written in order for them to be read on both sides of the Channel.<sup>19</sup> One such article was that for the *Examiner* of 2 December 1832 ("French and English Journals"). It was addressed at least as much to Carrel and the French "popular party" as to the British readers of the *Examiner*. Mill was commenting on an article written by Carrel in *Le National* on 31 October 1832 entitled "Des correspondances des journaux anglais". In that article the French journalist had complained about what he saw as the unfair treatment of his own paper --and of French news more generally-- by some British newspapers and their Paris correspondents. Carrel's first target had been the London *Globe and Traveller*, which had apparently mis-presented what Carrel had written in an earlier article, and accompanied its version with an anti-Gallican gibe. Carrel's comment was: "This is but one example among a thousand of the dishonesty and levity with which all French affairs are treated in the *juste-milieu* Papers of London, while their brethren here are

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<sup>18</sup> *CW*, XXIII, 466-7. See "Banquet allemand à Paris", *Le National*, 28 May, 1832, p. 3. Thus, apparently, Mill was not blind to Carrel's anti-English tone (cf. McLaren, "The *National*...", *op. cit.*, p. 265).

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, *CW*, XXIII, 388: "But we solemnly assure our friends in France,...". In fact, the article, in which this phrase appears, published on 8 January 1832 in the *Examiner* (pp. 24-5), was, within all probability, actually sent to French political activists, as Mill wrote to d'Eichthal, on 28 January: "Would it be inconvenient to you to take with you to Paris some numbers of the *Examiner* for Marchais and for M. de Lasteyrie?": *ibid.*, XII, 95. Cf., on Marchais, *ibid.*, 121-2. Some of Mill's articles were actually published in France as well as in Britain (*ibid.*, XXIII, 691-7). Cf. *ibid.*, XII, 197, 281-2, 343-4; XXII, 173; XXIII, 442-7, 717-27.

preaching about the possibility of an alliance with England."<sup>20</sup> A similar complaint followed about an anti-French comment in the *Courier*.

This was a serious situation, requiring Mill's intervention. An influential French liberal was criticizing the anti-French tone of British papers, which were ostensibly liberal, in order to prove that some French politicians'<sup>21</sup> advocacy of an alliance with England was chimerical. Mill's answer was that "the above strictures on the English Journalists" were just, but that the journalists "must not be confounded with the English people". The truth was, "(and our friends of the *National* must not allow themselves to forget it)", that while the French journals represented "the most generous and high-minded portion of the French public", their English counterparts represented "the baser and more sordid part of ours". Mill explained why the French should not be misled into regarding the two journals Carrel had referred to as in any way representative of or influential on the English people. He proceeded to offer a complex sociological explanation of the reasons why the English press should not be taken to represent the feelings of the English public at large.<sup>22</sup> And he concluded:

M. Carrel compliments the *Times* on its occasional relaxations of anti-French spirit:<sup>23</sup> we can assure him that the "touches of generosity" which he speaks of, find a responding chord in every English bosom which Toryism has not petrified; while the spirit to which those touches are exceptions is very generally regarded as an instance of the

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<sup>20</sup> Translated by Mill in his article of 2 December 1832 (as was the whole article from the *National*): *ibid.*, 525-7. Then Mill proceeded to comment on Carrel's article: *ibid.*, 527-30.

<sup>21</sup> The *juste-milieu*, the *Doctrinaires* in particular. See: André Jardin and André-Jean Tudesq, *Restoration and Reaction, 1815-1848* (transl. from the French), Cambridge, 1983, pp. 147-8.

<sup>22</sup> *CW*, XXIII, 529.

<sup>23</sup> Carrel had excepted *The Times* from his complaints (see: *ibid.*, 527).

antiquated John-Bullism, which, in many other things besides this, distinguishes that Journal. **We can assure him [M. Carrel], moreover, that the close union between France and England, which he seems to think chimerical, is earnestly desired by all parties in this country except the Tories;** for our *juste-milieu* feels its cause bound up with the French *juste-milieu*, and our *mouvement* with the French *mouvement*.<sup>24</sup>

And Mill went on to assure the Frenchman of the sympathy and identification of the "popular party" in England with their counterpart in France. The declarations of solidarity with his "friends and brothers the French patriots" that follow border on the melodramatic.<sup>25</sup>

Not long before Mill had this article published in the *Examiner* he had written to W.J. Fox (18 October 1832), that his friend André Marchais,<sup>26</sup> **"who pays me the compliment of making me the depository and instrument of all the plans he forms for bringing about a good understanding between the patriotic party in France and the best of the English radicals"**, had suggested something which appeared to Mill "highly important" and for which he was asking for Fox's support. He explained to him that an association had been formed at Paris, of which his "excellent friend" Marchais was the secretary, aiming at promoting the liberty of the press, and especially raising subscriptions to pay the fines imposed on newspapers as a result of Louis-Philippe's persecution against the liberal press. He went on to inform Fox that those among the French patriots who knew enough of the English

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 529-30.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 530. It should be noted that throughout this article Mill translated the word "confrères" as "brothers". This text was written before Mill met Carrel personally.

<sup>26</sup> According to Weill, Marchais was "le bras droit de Lafayette": Georges Weill, *Histoire du parti républicain en France (1814-1870)*, Paris, 1928, p. 109.

radicals "to desire their cooperation and sympathy" were anxious to obtain subscribers in England for their association, "and above all they wish that the Political Unions should bear some **public testimony of sympathy and fraternity**" on that important occasion. Mill asked Fox to do all he could in order to bring both these things about. He commented further:

**The more you see and converse with French people, the more importance you will attach to things of this kind. Every such mark of sympathy produces a great momentary effect; but they require to be, again and again, repeated: for so few Frenchmen ever come here, that they do not learn, except from such public occurrences, that the English people, all but the Tories, esteem, and wish well to, the French.**<sup>27</sup>

In November 1833 Mill took the failure of the Reform Ministry to respond positively to what he saw as a French friendly overture deeply to heart. The French government had proposed to the British a measure that would allow the newspapers of each country to be distributed by the mails of the other on the same terms with its own, free of postal charges. It was "a proposal which a Ministry with enlarged views and a liberal spirit would have grasped at with the utmost avidity"; and "**an opportunity of facilitating** the circulation of knowledge, the interchange of ideas, and **the increase of friendly feeling between the two leading nations of Europe**". And he went on to stress the importance of the opportunity and to lament its having been missed. But what really incensed Mill was that the British government had thus condoned the perpetuation of "**the peculiar and odious mischief of a monopoly in favour of national prejudices and antipathies**, and against the most valuable of all

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<sup>27</sup> *CW*, XII, 121-2. Cf. Mill's letter to John Taylor (1 September 1832): *ibid.*, 115. Mill had given one more such "public testimony of sympathy and fraternity" the previous April, when he had sent his "Lettre à Ch. Duveyrier" to be published in *Le Globe*: see *ibid.*, XXIII, 442 (and *infra.*, Chapter VII).



intercourse, that of human thoughts and feelings".<sup>28</sup>

## 2. THE EASTERN CRISIS OF 1840 AND THE REST OF THE 1840s.

But it was the crisis of 1840 that led to Mill's most outspoken statements concerning Franco-British relations, French attitudes towards foreign affairs, and, more precisely, the respective attitudes of various politicians on both sides of the channel towards the possibility of war between Britain and France.

Professor Cairns has commented that "[t]he intense diplomatic crisis of 1839-41...marked the beginning of a profound difference between himself and Tocqueville which never was resolved" and that "it showed a very real limitation to Mill's capacity for evaluating the rights and wrongs of the old Anglo-French antagonism".<sup>29</sup> Raymond Aron has also paid considerable attention to the exchanges between Mill and Tocqueville on this crisis, regarding them as characteristic of broader and recurring attitudes in the two countries with regard to their relationship with each other.<sup>30</sup> While Cairns seems rather critical of Mill's attitude, Aron appears to side, though tacitly, with Mill against Tocqueville.<sup>31</sup> It

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 643-6. Cf. *ibid.*, XXII, 182-3.

<sup>29</sup> Cairns, Introduction to *CW*, XX, xviii.

<sup>30</sup> Raymond Aron, *Auguste Comte et Alexis de Tocqueville Juges de l'Angleterre*, Oxford, 1965, pp. 17-20.

<sup>31</sup> See in particular *ibid.*, p. 19, where he wrote that "probablement, la réponse de J.S. Mill...n'a-t-elle pas encore perdu toute signification". See also Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought* (transl. from the French), Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1993, pp. 191-207, especially 195-7; Todorov is more overtly critical of Tocqueville's stance.

will be shown in the following pages that Cairns's statements about Mill's inability to understand the French point of view<sup>32</sup> may need to be qualified, because Mill did show both considerable understanding and receptiveness to French arguments. That this did not prevent him from criticizing the excesses of French reactions to the crisis of 1840 may not mean that he "never understood" Tocqueville's point: it would be fairer to say that Mill understood but did not agree with it. What is more, an examination of Mill's correspondence at the time in question shows a steady pattern. He was more critical of the French when writing to Tocqueville or d'Eichthal, than he was when writing to British correspondents.

The crisis was over the Near East, where France's *protégé*, the Pasha of Egypt, Mehemet Ali, had made moves which --particularly after he conquered Syria-- put in danger the integrity or even the very existence of the Ottoman Empire (under whose suzerainty he held his Egyptian dominions). What brought matters to a head and sparked off a crisis that threatened a war between France and Britain, was the treaty of 15 July 1840 concluded between Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia, stipulating that the Pasha should evacuate Syria or face concerted action against him by these powers. The exclusion of France from this treaty, which was not known in Paris before 26 July, was received by the French press as a humiliating act against France and there was an outcry for war. The main players in all this diplomatic drama between Britain and France had been Palmerston and Thiers.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> CW, XX, xviii-xx.

<sup>33</sup> See: Jardin and Tudesq, *Restoration and Reaction*, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-6; Douglas Johnson, *Guizot: Aspects of French History 1787-1874*, London, 1963, pp. 268-72; Roger Bullen, *Palmerston, Guizot and the Collapse of the Entente Cordiale*, London, 1974, pp. 17-24; Mary Lawlor, *Alexis de Tocqueville in the Chamber of Deputies: His Views on Foreign and Colonial Policy*, Washington, D.C., 1959, pp. 43-9;

Mill's opinions on Franco-British relations influenced his estimation of personalities and parties. Guizot's role in averting war and helping to forge a Franco-British *entente cordiale*<sup>34</sup> led Mill to an impressive reversal in his attitude towards Guizot as a politician and to his going out of his way to praise the French minister. On the other hand, Tocqueville's very different attitude towards the English alliance led to a cooling of Mill's relations --or, at any rate, to a serious disagreement-- with a man whose overall political views he found very congenial, certainly more so than those of Guizot. This example reveals the importance Mill accorded the Franco-British *entente* and what he hoped could be its concomitants, peace in Europe, friendly feelings and co-operation between the two peoples, and consequently, the progress of civilization in Europe and the world.

In a letter to John Sterling (1 October 1840), Mill expressed his resentment at the "antigallican tone" in the latest number of "Blackwood"<sup>35</sup> as well as at the apparent pretension of all the writers to "know", each of them, "the whole French people, intus et in cute".<sup>36</sup> He went on to say, in the same context, that there was much more danger of war than people were aware of. "More than one credible testimony of Frenchmen" had assured him that the war feeling in Paris was "universal", and had for the time "silenced all others", that even those whose

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Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-39.

<sup>34</sup> Guizot was called from the London Embassy back to Paris in order to become Foreign Minister as well as virtual head of the new French government, after Thiers's fall, in October 1840.

<sup>35</sup> *Blackwood's*, 48 (October 1840).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Collini's remark to the same effect about Mill himself: Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930*, Oxford, 1991, p. 133.

personal interests were opposed to it shared the feeling. They had also assured him,

that this is not from love of war, for they dislike it, but because they feel themselves *blessé* and humiliated as a nation. **This is foolish, but who can wonder at it in a people whose country has within this generation been twice occupied by foreign armies? If that were our case we should have plenty of the same feeling.** But it is melancholy to see the rapid revival of hatred on their side and jealous dislike on ours.<sup>37</sup>

On 19 November 1840 Mill wrote to Sir William Molesworth, congratulating him for his speech to his constituents at Leeds, during which Molesworth had attacked Palmerston's policies and deplored the possibility of any rupture of peace with France.<sup>38</sup> It was, according to Mill, "a very proper thing, done in the very best way", and he thought that it had done, and would do, "good both in France and here". In the same letter Mill went on to praise Fonblanque's stance towards the whole affair, in the *Examiner*: he had "been doing admirably on this war question".<sup>39</sup> *The Times* also had "been rendering good service of late".<sup>40</sup>

A few days later (25 November 1840) Mill wrote to Robert Barclay Fox:

We have all of us been in great trepidation about the state of affairs in Europe. It would have been too bad if the two most lightheaded men in Europe, Palmerston and Thiers, had been suffered to embroil the whole world and do mischief which no one now living would have

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<sup>37</sup> *CW*, XIII, 445-6.

<sup>38</sup> See: *Examiner*, 15 November 1840, p. 721.

<sup>39</sup> Mill must have been referring to the leading articles in the *Examiner* of 8 November (p. 705) and of 15 November (p. 721). Cf. Mill's letter to Albany Fonblanque himself, on 17 June 1841, where he took the opportunity "to express the great admiration I have felt for the writing and conduct of the *Examiner* during the last year **and especially on the Eastern question** on which it alone resisted an almost universal madness, and did so with an ability and in a spirit which seemed to me quite perfect": *CW*, XIII, 478-9.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, XVII, 1995-6. Cf., on the stance of *The Times*, A.J.P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792-1939*, London, 1993, p. 48.

seen repaired. I do not know which of the two I feel most indignant with. The immediate danger is I hope over, but the evil already done is incalculable -- the confidence which all Europe felt in the preservation of peace will not for many years be re-established and **the bestial antipathies between nations and especially between France and England** have been rekindled to a deplorable extent.

He grounded whatever hope there was on the French character "which as it is excitable by small causes may also be calmed by slight things -- and accordingly alternates between resentment against England and Anglomania."<sup>41</sup>

But by far the most interesting exchanges on the crisis over the Eastern Question were those between Mill and Tocqueville. Tocqueville had delivered a speech in the Chamber of Deputies on 30 November 1840, which had caused surprise and consternation to his friends and admirers in Britain, as did his overall stance towards Franco-British relations during the early 1840s.<sup>42</sup> As Drescher put it: "His participation in the general policy debate of the Address to the Throne on November 30, 1840, was **the most belligerent moment of his parliamentary career.**"<sup>43</sup> Drescher also observed that "the Eastern crisis was the occasion for, rather than the cause of, Tocqueville's appeal for a bold foreign policy".<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *CW*, XIII, 448.

<sup>42</sup> See Tocqueville's speech in: *OC*, III, 2 (*Écrits et Discours Politiques*), pp. 288-301. The speech had been reported at length in *The Times* on 2 and 3 December, 1840. See also: Lawlor, *Alexis de Tocqueville...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-66; Drescher, *Tocqueville and England*, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-61; Aron, *Auguste Comte...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-20; Boesche, *The Strange Liberalism...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-5, 212. It had been the accession of the Guizot ministry "under the shadow of French capitulation to Palmerston in the Eastern crisis and 'in defiance of the national sentiment'" that had led Tocqueville to enter into the ranks of the opposition: Drescher, *Tocqueville and England*, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155-6.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

On 18 December 1840 Tocqueville wrote to Mill, expressing his grief at the rupture of the intimate alliance between their two countries, but also laying the blame for the situation exclusively on the British side as well as stressing the need for a people such as the French to have their *orgueil national* kept alive and encouraged at any price.<sup>45</sup>

Mill answered on 30 December 1840. He expressed his joy at having had from Tocqueville himself his view of "the unhappy embroilment between our two countries" and informed the Frenchman that he had shown that part of his letter to several people in England who had received a "painful impression" from his speech in the French Chamber. He agreed with Tocqueville in thinking the British ministry "very culpable", but maintained that "our people are not to blame". Tocqueville should know that "the English public think little and care little about foreign affairs"<sup>46</sup> and a ministry may commit them beyond redemption before they are aware".<sup>47</sup> If the Tories had been in power "they would have been suspected of anti-French predilections, they would have been watched, and would never have dared as these men have", or if they had, they would have been "gloriously" turned out on this question. But as the ministry was liberal, the public trusted them and thought "that Palmerston knew more about the matter than they did, never dreaming that they had

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<sup>45</sup> Tocqueville, *OC*, VI, 1, pp. 330-1.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. what Nassau Senior had written to Tocqueville (27 February 1841), to exactly the same effect, in: Tocqueville, *Correspondence and Conversations with Nassau William Senior from 1834 to 1859*, 2 vols. (ed. by M.C.M. Simpson), London, 1872, I, pp. 22-4; also to be found in: Tocqueville, *OC*, VI, 2, (*Correspondance Anglaise: Correspondance et Conversations d'Alexis de Tocqueville et Nassau William Senior*), pp. 90-1.

<sup>47</sup> Cf.: "A Few Words on Non-Intervention": *CW*, XXI, 117; and *Inaugural Address...*: *ibid.*, 246-7.

been brought to the brink of a war until it was revealed to them by the manifestations of feeling in France". As for Tocqueville's complaint at the failure of the British public to react in favour of the French alliance,<sup>48</sup> Mill assured him that a reaction of that kind would have taken place, "if there had not been such a lamentable want both of dignity and of common sense on the part of the journalists and public speakers in France". He asserted emphatically that "the whole of the feeling" which had arisen since in Britain, had arisen "from the demonstrations since made in France":

from the signs of rabid eagerness for war, the reckless hurling down of the gauntlet to all Europe, the explosion of Napoleonism and of hatred to England, together with the confession of Thiers and his party that they were playing a double game, a thing which no English statesman could have avowed without entire loss of caste as a politician.

All this had led "the most sober people" in Britain to believe and declare "that from the feeling which has shown itself in France, Palmerston must have had stronger grounds for his conduct than appear on the surface",<sup>49</sup> failing to consider that it was Palmerston's conduct that had "revivified morbid feelings that were dying away". "You know how repugnant to the English character is anything like bluster", Mill wrote; instead of intimidating them, "its effect...is to raise a dogged determination in them not to be bullied". All these feelings were "decidedly beginning to abate since the peace party has so strong a majority in the chamber of deputies", but the mischief was that the distrust would continue for a long time on the British side as well as the resentment on the French side. As for Palmerston, Mill declared that, for

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<sup>48</sup> See Tocqueville's letter, *OC*, VI, 1, p. 331.

<sup>49</sup> This is exactly what Sterling had written to Mill on 9 December: see Anne Kimball Tuell, *John Sterling: A Representative Victorian*, New York, 1941, p. 131.

his part, he "would walk twenty miles to see him hanged, especially if Thiers were to be strung up along with him". He concluded by asking Tocqueville to write to him again and at more length about this matter as he was "most anxious to know [Tocqueville's] whole mind upon it".<sup>50</sup>

Tocqueville did write back on 18 March 1841. He told Mill that the circumstances had given birth to two extreme and equally dangerous parties in his country. One of them was dreaming of conquests and loved war either for its own sake or for the revolutions to which it could give birth. The other one "has a love of peace that I would not fear to call dishonest, since it has as its sole principle not the public interest, but the taste for material well-being and softness of heart; this party would sacrifice everything for peace."<sup>51</sup> He --as well as the bulk of the nation-- was placed "between these two extreme parties": He could not approve the revolutionary and propagandist language of most of the champions of war, "but to chime in with those who were loudly asking for peace, at any price, was even more dangerous." Tocqueville then went on to expand on one of his familiar subjects, saying that the great dangers menacing democratic-egalitarian societies were "the gradual softening of mores, the abasement of the mind, the mediocrity of tastes".<sup>52</sup> There is no need to expand on Tocqueville's analysis, as its gist will be obvious through Mill's answer.

After a long interval, and only when Tocqueville apparently took the initiative

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<sup>50</sup> *CW*, XIII, 459-60.

<sup>51</sup> *OC*, VI, 1, pp. 334-6. The letter was written in French. The quotation here is from a translation in Alexis de Tocqueville, *Selected Letters on Politics and Society*, ed. by Roger Boesche, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1985, pp. 149-52.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 150-1.



again by sending him his discourse to the Académie Française,<sup>53</sup> Mill wrote back on 9 August 1842 to thank him, and returned to the subject of the Franco-British rift:

I have often, of late, remembered the reason you gave in justification of the conduct of the liberal party in the late quarrel between England and France -- **that the feeling of orgueil national is the only feeling of a public-spirited and elevating kind which remains and that it ought not therefore to be permitted to go down.** How true this is, every day makes painfully evident -- one now sees **that the love of liberty, of progress, even of material prosperity, are in France mere passing unsubstantial, superficial movements on the outside of the national mind and that the only appeal which really goes to the heart of France is one of defiance to l'étranger** -- and that whoever would offer to her satisfaction to that one want, would find the whole of her wealth, the blood of her citizens and every guarantee of liberty and social security flung down at his feet like worthless things. Most heartily do I agree with you that this one and only feeling of a public, and therefore, so far, of a disinterested character which remains in France must not be suffered to decay. **The desire to shine in the eyes of foreigners and to be highly esteemed by them<sup>54</sup> must be cultivated and encouraged in France, at all costs.**

Having said this, however, he proceeded to lecture Tocqueville on more commendable ways of having his compatriots esteemed abroad:

But, in the name of France and civilization, posterity have a right to expect from such men as you, from the nobler and more enlightened spirits of the time, that you **should teach to your countrymen better ideas of what it is which constitutes national glory and national importance, than the low and grovelling ones which they seem to have at present....** Here, for instance, the most stupid and ignorant person knows perfectly well that the real importance of a country in the eyes of foreigners does not depend upon the loud and boisterous *assertion* of importance, the effect of which is an impression of angry

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<sup>53</sup> Mill observed, with regard to the discourse, that what he at least regarded as its pessimistic tone had "added greatly to the strength of the misgivings which I myself felt about that country, to which by tastes and predilections I am more attached than to my own...": *CW*, XIII, 536. See Tocqueville's "Discours de M. de Tocqueville prononcé dans la séance publique du 21 avril 1842, en venant prendre séance à la place de M. le Comte de Cessac": *OC*, XVI (*Mélanges*), pp. 251-69.

<sup>54</sup> Notice how he transforms the "defiance to l'étranger" --which he deploras-- into "the desire to shine in the eyes of foreigners..." --which he finds more acceptable.

weakness, not strength. It really depends upon **the industry, instruction, morality, and good government of a country:**<sup>55</sup> by which alone it can make itself respected, or even feared, by its neighbours; **and it is cruel to think and see as I do every day, to how sad an extent France has sunk in estimation on all these points (the three last at least) by the events of the last two or three years.**

The attitude of the French seemed puerile on Mill's side of the Channel. Their apparent unwillingness to come to an open breach while at the same time their ill humour was "breaking out on all petty second-rate occasions", was not understood by the English: "it makes them feel the French to be a nation of sulky schoolboys". Mill then laid claim to peculiar impartiality: "I myself make, I hope, all due allowances, certainly very great ones, for all this", but there were not, he was convinced, "half a dozen other persons in England" who did so, "or in Germany either" according to the best information he could obtain.<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, on 19 December 1840, Mill had written to John Sterling: "I think and feel very much as you do on the subject of the bad spirit manifested in France

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. Bentham: "national honour consists in justice"; and: "the glory of being able to hit the hardest blow ought to be left to schoolboys": quoted in: Stephen Conway, "Bentham on Peace and War", *Utilitas*, 1 (1989), 93.

<sup>56</sup> *CW*, XIII, 536-7. Pappé has argued that it was the dispute over the crisis of 1840, culminating in this letter, that led to the almost complete interruption of the correspondence between the two men: see Pappé, "Mill and Tocqueville", *op. cit.*, 222-4. However, this hypothesis needs to be at least qualified by the suggestion that there might have been further letters which are now lost or not known to Mill scholars: for an example of this latter case, see *Alexis de Tocqueville als Abgeordneter: Briefe an seinen Wahlagenten Paul Clamorgan 1837-1851 aus dem Besitz der Staats-und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg*, edited by Joachim Kühn, Hamburg, 1972, pp. 172-3. A letter has been published in that collection which was not included in either Tocqueville's *Correspondance Anglaise* of the *OC*, or in Mill's *CW*. The letter is dated 26 April 1847 and was sent from India House. In it Mill answered to Tocqueville's request that Mill send him information about the formation of British administrators of India (see Tocqueville's letter of 23 April 1847: *OC*, VI, 1, p. 348). The casual tone of both letters goes some way towards suggesting that there might have been further letters between 1843 and 1847 which are not known to scholars.

by so many politicians and writers **and unhappily by some from whom better things were to be expected**".<sup>57</sup> But "this does not appear to me to strengthen Palmerston's justification", he stressed.<sup>58</sup> He did not believe that Thiers would have acted, in power, in the manner he did afterwards, "when he knew that he had only the turbulent part of the population to throw himself upon, and no watchword to use but the old ones about making the Mediterranean a French lake, getting rid of the treaties of 1815, etc.". Mill had no doubt that Thiers would have attempted "to make such an arrangement as should leave a powerful state at that end of the Mediterranean under French influence",<sup>59</sup> but he found nothing wrong with this:

I think he had a good right to attempt this, and we no right at all to hinder it if the arrangement was not objectionable on any other account. **It appears to me very provoking treatment of France that England and Russia should be extending their influence every year till it embraces all Asia and that we should be so indignant at the bare supposition that France wishes to do a little of what we do on so much larger a scale.**<sup>60</sup> It is true we do it almost in spite of ourselves, and rather wish to keep others out than to get ourselves in; but we cannot expect France to think so, or to regard our professing it as anything but attempting to humbug them and not doing it well.

He believed that "no harm whatever to Europe would have resulted from French

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<sup>57</sup> For part of Sterling's letter of 9 December to which this is an answer, see Tuell, *John Sterling, op. cit.*, pp. 131-2. Sterling had written: "I had no conception that there could be a number of able men in an important public position in a great civilized country showing themselves such knaves and fools as the war Party at Paris." (p. 131).

<sup>58</sup> Sterling's remarks deploring French reactions to the events of 1840 had been followed by the comment: "Lord Palmerston went on much stronger grounds than I supposed in his bellicose policy." Sterling proceeded to denounce what he supposed Thiers's plans to have been: *ibid.*, pp. 131-2.

<sup>59</sup> Sterling had argued to this effect in his letter of 9 December: *ibid.*, pp. 131-2.

<sup>60</sup> Cobden had denounced English hypocrisy in the same vein with regard to attitudes towards Russia's aggrandizement. See: *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden*, 2 vols., London, 1903, I, p. 153.

influence with Mehemet Ali", and that it would have been easy "to *bind* France against any future occupation of the country for herself". Had the British acted more wisely, they would have avoided "raising this mischievous spirit in France".<sup>61</sup> No one seemed to him to have raised himself by this but **Guizot**, who had "done what perhaps no other man could have done and almost certainly none so well."<sup>62</sup>

Mill wrote to Sterling again, on 5 January 1841, and to his correspondent's remarks challenging his earlier assertions about England's provocative treatment of France,<sup>63</sup> Mill replied:

[T]he aggressions I meant are the proceedings by which we are gradually conquering all Asia, from Peking to Herat -- I did not mean that they were either aggressions in any bad sense, or provoking to France in themselves, but I do think it provoking that France should see England and Russia adding every year on a large scale to their territory and dependent alliances in the East and then crying out at the suspicion of her wishing to do something of the same kind as if it were an enormity never before heard of among the nations of Europe.

However, he felt obliged to warn Sterling against misunderstanding his position. He was not defending France or excusing her conduct "except so far as attacked by people themselves liable to the same accusations in all respects, except (so far as

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<sup>61</sup> Mill thought that the least evil of that "mischievous spirit" would be "what Lord P.'s supporters no doubt think a great one, viz. that in another year France will be in strict alliance as to all Eastern matters with Russia as the only power who will give her anything for her support and moreover as her only means of retaliating upon England."

<sup>62</sup> *CW*, XIII, 451-2. Mill did not exaggerate the difficulties of the task Guizot had set himself in trying to avert war and revitalize the Anglo-French alliance. See Bullen, *Palmerston, Guizot...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 23, 26-8 and *passim*; Roger Bullen, "La politique étrangère de Guizot", in: Marina Valensise (ed.), *François Guizot et la Culture Politique de son Temps* (Colloque de la Fondation Guizot-Val Richer), Paris, 1991, pp. 187-201; Johnson, *Guizot*, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-73.

<sup>63</sup> In Sterling's letter of 4 January 1841; partly in: Tuell, *John Sterling*, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

Thiers is concerned) that of duplicity".

Mill then informed his correspondent that he had received a letter from Tocqueville,<sup>64</sup> which he enclosed along with his own letter to Sterling, as the latter might like to see what the French thinker had to say "for the part he has taken in this matter **and how he connects it with his philosophic ideas.**" He went on to say that he had written a long letter to Tocqueville<sup>65</sup> in reply to which he expected "a long and controversial answer".<sup>66</sup> Mill wrote that he had thought it right to try to do some good with Tocqueville "by speaking out with entire frankness, which his personally kind feelings towards me **and his knowledge of my sentiments about France both in itself and in relation to England,** gave me the power of doing without offence".<sup>67</sup>

Concerning the same letter (of 18 December) he had received from Tocqueville, Mill wrote to R.B. Fox, on 23 December 1840:

He touches on politics, mourning over the rupture of the Anglo-French alliance **and as the part he took in debate has excited much surprise and disapproval here it is right to make known what he professes as his creed on the matter,** viz. that if you wish to keep any people, especially so mobile a people as the French, in the disposition of mind which enables them to do great things you must by no means teach them to be reconciled to other people's making no account of them. They were treated, he thinks, with so great a degree of slight (to say the least) by our government that for their public men not to shew a feeling of *blessure* would have been to lower the standard of national

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<sup>64</sup> Tocqueville's letter of 18 December 1840: in *OC*, VI, 1, pp. 329-31.

<sup>65</sup> Mill was referring to his letter of 30 December 1840: *CW*, XIII, 457-60.

<sup>66</sup> Tocqueville answered on 18 March 1841: *OC*, VI, 1, pp. 334-36. The dating of this letter is according to the editors of Tocqueville's *OC*. The date on the original letter (now at Johns Hopkins University) is 28 March 1841: see *CW*, XXXII, Appendix D, 272.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII, 462-3.

pride which in the present state of the world he thinks almost the only elevated sentiment that remains in considerable strength.

Mill's comment was that "[t]here is really a great deal in this" although it did not justify the revival of the old national animosity or the warlike demonstrations and preparations. A nation could show itself offended, he observed, "without threatening a vengeance out of proportion to the affront and which would involve millions that never offended them with units that did, besides ruining themselves in the end, or rather in the beginning". And "the tricky policy of Thiers", which was "like the whole character of the man" was "not in the least palliated by the offence given". However, he then came to the British position, to say that he thought it "quite contemptible in England to treat the bare suspicion of France seeking for influence in the East as something too horrible to be thought of" while England was "meanwhile progressively embracing the whole of Asia in her own grasp".<sup>68</sup> He said that he could not find words to express his contempt of the whole conduct of the British government and his admiration for "the man who has conjured away as much as was possible of the evil done and has attained the noblest end, in a degree no one else could, by the noblest means", namely Guizot, "who now stands before the world as immeasurably the greatest public man living". He could not think without "humiliation" of some things he had written in the past "of such a man as this", when he had thought him a dishonest politician.

I confounded the prudence of a wise man who lets some of his maxims go to sleep while the time is unpropitious for asserting them, with the laxity of principle which resigns them for personal advancement. Thank God I did not wait to know him personally in order to do him

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<sup>68</sup> And Mill continued in the same strain as in the two letters to Sterling (of 19 December and of 5 January: *ibid.*, 451, 462).

justice,<sup>69</sup> for in 1838 and 1839 I saw that he had reasserted all his old principles at the first time at which he could do so with success and without compromising what in his view were more important principles still. I ought to have known better than to have imputed dishonourable inconsistency to a man whom I now see to have been consistent beyond any statesman of our time and altogether a model of the consistency of a statesman as distinguished from that of a fanatic.<sup>70</sup>

Besides his British friends and Tocqueville, Mill discussed the developments in Franco-British relations with one more Frenchman, Gustave d'Eichthal. On 25 December 1840, Mill wrote to the former Saint-Simonian that he was "out of heart about public affairs": "I never thought that in our day one man had the power of doing so much mischief as that shallow and senseless coxcomb Palmerston has done". "Half the Liberal party", including many of the old Whigs, were against him,<sup>71</sup> and

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<sup>69</sup> Mill had dined with Guizot more than once whilst the latter was ambassador in London: see *ibid.*, I, 128 (early draft of the *Autobiography*); XIII, 438, 442 (letters of 17 June and 3 August 1840, to d'Eichthal and R.B. Fox respectively).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 454-5. Cf. what Mill had said, parenthetically, concerning Guizot's political career in two instances where Guizot's historical work was the main subject. In the first instance, in 1837, in the article "Armand Carrel" the comment was as negative as it could be (though, characteristically, it was considerably attenuated when Mill re-edited the text in *DD*, in the 1850s and 1860s): in 1837 he had referred to "those immortal Essays and Lectures, for which posterity will forgive him [M. Guizot] his despicable political career" (in the version of the same text published in *DD*, posterity would have to forgive Guizot only "the grave errors of his political career"): *ibid.*, XX, 185-6. In 1845 --after the events that followed the Eastern crisis-- Mill introduced "Guizot's Essays and Lectures on History" by informing the reader that they were but fragments, due to Guizot's having been lured to politics before he completed them. But he went on to comment: "It would be unreasonable to lament that the exigencies or the temptations of politics have called from authorship and the Professor's chair to the Chamber of Deputies and the Cabinet, **the man to whom perhaps more than to any other it is owing that Europe is now at peace.**": *ibid.*, 259. For the oscillations of Mill's estimation of Guizot as a politician, see: *ibid.*, XII, 61; XIII, 654, 714. Significantly, it was again a question of foreign policy and Franco-British relations, the Spanish Marriages, that modified, to an extent, Mill's favourable view of Guizot (letter to J. Austin, *ibid.*, XIII, 714).

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers*, *op. cit.*, p. 48; Bullen, *Palmerston, Guizot...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 22, 24.

it was "most mortifying to think if the Tories had been in power and had done this (which they never would have dared) how gloriously we should have turned them out upon it and thereby cemented the friendship of France and England for generations to come".<sup>72</sup> But ten years of Whig administration had "entirely demoralized" the Liberal party. But the worst part was that "**with all the good will in the world**" Mill could "**only palliate, not excuse the conduct of France and the spirit displayed by the French press and much of the French public**". He assured his correspondent that "this display" had made many of the "best and most thinking persons" on Mill's side of the Channel think that Palmerston was in the right, people who would otherwise have been indignant against their foreign secretary.<sup>73</sup> This was what had done the mischief in Britain. He feared that:

the present generation of English will never again feel confidence in the French people. They are now convinced that the spirit of military and Bonapartist aggression and the bitterness of resentment against England are still alive -- that France *cannot* be conciliated to England and that the only chance for peace is in a strong conservative government which shall keep the democracy and the public feeling for its own sake.

And he once more assured D'Eichthal "that until the French journalists and orators irritated and alarmed our public there was not a particle of feeling here against France or of interest one way or the other in the Egyptian question".<sup>74</sup> The whole thing had been "a wretched freak of Palmerston for which God reward him instead of us".<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Cf. what Mill had written to Tocqueville to the same effect: see *supra*.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. what he had written to Tocqueville: see *supra*.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Mill's comments to Tocqueville on the English public's indifference to foreign affairs and the Eastern Question: see *supra*.

<sup>75</sup> Thus, there are three main themes which emerge as the message Mill wanted to bring home to his French correspondents: I). The fact that a Liberal government



Mill then indulged in one of his pet generalizations about national character: "It is impossible not to love the French people and at the same time not to admit that they are children -- whereas with us even children are carehardened men of fifty. **It is as I have long thought a clear case for the *croisement des races*.**" He concluded by asking d'Eichthal to write soon and tell him "whether Guizot is likely to stand and what you now think of him". As for himself, he declared: "I honour and venerate him, (it is but little to say) before all living statesmen though I differ from many of his opinions."<sup>76</sup>

After having received the issue of the *Journal des Débats* which contained a review article dealing with d'Eichthal's pamphlet *De l'unité européenne*,<sup>77</sup> Mill wrote to his friend, on 23 February 1841, that the idea of his pamphlet was "so appropriate to the present time that it could not fail to excite attention". Yet, he was not very optimistic about the feasibility of d'Eichthal's proposals, because the public mind could not be drawn to the settlement of the affair of Syria before the apprehension of a European war was over, "and that apprehension is now, in England, much more serious than it has ever yet been". The fortifications and the

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was in power had prevented reactions against its policy, which would have certainly taken place had the Tories been in power, the Tories being considered anti-Gallican, while the Liberals were not (On the Liberal party's Francophiles or "Foxites", see Bullen, *Palmerston, Guizot...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-4, 20-24). II). Palmerston was able to get away with his policy towards France because of the excessive French reactions that followed, which alienated those who would otherwise have stood up for the French alliance against the Foreign Secretary. III). The English public were not interested in the Eastern Question or foreign affairs in general, and this was one more reason why they failed to react (a view shared by Senior, who also tried to make it clear to Tocqueville).

<sup>76</sup> *CW*, XIII, 456-7.

<sup>77</sup> Paris, 1840.

armaments on the part of the French appeared, he said, to most people in Britain "impossible to be accounted for except by aggressive designs on the part of France".

**[I]t is in vain to say as those who know the state of the French mind do, that the purpose is merely defensive, because to every Englishman the idea that there is the least disposition anywhere to commit aggression against France appears so utterly senseless that no one can believe such an idea to be sincerely entertained in France. There is something exceedingly strange and lamentable in the utter incapacity of our two nations to understand or believe the real character and springs of action of each other. I am tempted to write a pamphlet or a review article on that very subject, but that I fear it would produce no effect.<sup>78</sup>**

Mill wrote again to D'Eichthal, on 9 March 1841, upon receiving his pamphlet itself --his earlier comments having been based on reviews. He praised "the comprehensive and decided views taken in the pamphlet", and remarked that it was "admirably suited to the moment and nothing could be better calculated to do good in France". It was "much to be hoped and...in itself probable", Mill wrote, that the French Government would try to "reenter into the association of European nations and reassert its just influence in their deliberations" by some such means as d'Eichthal had suggested in *De l'unité européenne*.<sup>79</sup> The danger was, he feared, that it would be the British government that would "not be prompt to seize this mode of reestablishing friendship and calming irritated susceptibilities". He explained the

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<sup>78</sup> CW, XIII, 465.

<sup>79</sup> D'Eichthal had proposed in *De l'unité européenne* that France take initiatives in the direction of a joint pan-european solution to the Syrian question, as opposed to an independent national-interest foreign policy. This course of action seemed to the old Saint-Simonist necessary in the context of what he saw as the inevitable process of history towards closer European association and unity.

reason for his pessimism in this respect,<sup>80</sup> but added that there was still hope:

Wait a little and the Porte will get into such terrible embarrassments and will prove itself so utterly incapable of bringing the country into order and tranquillity that the necessity of a joint intervention of the European powers will become apparent to everybody, **and then France will be able if she chuses to gain the well merited credit of intervening on a basis of enlightened philanthropy and enlarged views of futurity instead of leaving all to the other powers who would certainly continue to drag in the *ornières* of the old notions of government and international relations.**<sup>81</sup>

He went on to say that what d'Eichthal had written to him about "the character of the present feeling in France" agreed with what he himself had thought of it, but that in Britain everybody imagined that the French were at that moment "far more warlike than they were in the time of M. Thiers".<sup>82</sup> It was, he thought, hopeless to try to persuade the British of the falsehood of their perception. It had to "be left to time and events to correct the error".<sup>83</sup> There were further exchanges along the same lines on the issue of the fortification of Paris.<sup>84</sup>

Meanwhile, Mill's exchanges with Tocqueville concerning relations between their two countries were not yet over. The occasion that led them to discuss foreign affairs once more had been Tocqueville's position on the question of the Right of

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<sup>80</sup> "By most stupid and *grossier* mismanagement our Government has got itself committed to treating the affair of Syria as a mere question between a sovereign and a rebel governor, and has made all manner of unnecessary declarations, which will preclude it from entering, I fear into any proposition for superseding the authority of the Porte in what is absurdly called our territory."

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Mill, "Duveyrier's Political Views...": *CW*, XX, 313-4. See *infra*.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Bullen, *Palmerston, Guizot...*, *op. cit.*, p. 24. A way of allowing France to re-enter the European concert on the Near East was found later that year, when the French were invited and signed the Straits Convention of July 1841: *ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>83</sup> *CW*, XIII, 467-8.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 472.

Search and the new Treaty on the Right of Search that Guizot had signed in December 1841, which infuriated the majority of the French deputies.<sup>85</sup>

On 9 February 1843 Tocqueville wrote to Mill asking for his help. He had delivered a speech in the House of Deputies on the question of the Right of Search.<sup>86</sup> He had been very critical of the Guizot government, but this was on account of its handling of the affair which had caused --or at least increased--, he asserted, the renewed tension in Anglo-French relations, rather than on account of the professed aim of its policy --peace and good relations with England.<sup>87</sup> The speech was misinterpreted and distorted in England, as was much of the debate in the French Chamber.<sup>88</sup> None of the distortions of his speech had angered Tocqueville more than that by Lord Brougham, who had attributed to him --in a speech to the House of Lords (2 February 1843)-- "marvellous ignorance of the whole question", as well

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<sup>85</sup> See Lawlor, *Alexis de Tocqueville...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-8. On the question of the Right of Search in general and on Tocqueville's stance there is a detailed account, *ibid.*, pp. 67-97, which is, however, flawed as far as Mill's contribution is concerned (see *infra*).

<sup>86</sup> Tocqueville's speech of 28 January 1843 was published in the *Moniteur* of 29 January; now in: *OC*, III, 2, pp. 338-52.

<sup>87</sup> Though there were some hints at Tocqueville's themes from 1840, the speech was by no means bellicose; it sought the best way out of the new impasse into which relations between the two countries had been led, and the best way in which the danger of war could be avoided. Tocqueville had also clearly and unequivocally expressed his sorrow at this state of things: "Je ne sais si l'union intime et permanente de l'Angleterre et de la France n'était qu'une chimère, mais c'était une belle chimère." (*ibid.*, p. 341). This speech should be seen as the first step in the process suggested by Drescher, of Tocqueville's imperceptibly moving from calls for great acts in foreign affairs towards "vehement pleas for the salvation of political action at home": see Drescher, *Tocqueville and England*, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-2. Though Tocqueville was to attack once more the notion of the Anglo-French alliance in the future (in 1845: see *ibid.*, pp. 162-6), he had by no means done so on the occasion in question, in 1843.

<sup>88</sup> See Lawlor, *Alexis de Tocqueville...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-4, 89.

as accused him of having tried, moved by party spirit, to exasperate the quarrel between the two countries. "Ceci est une insinuation odieuse" protested Tocqueville: "Mon discours qui a été violent contre le Ministère a été au contraire le plus *modéré* de tous ceux qui ont été prononcés quant au fond de la question. Tout le monde y a vu l'intention évidente de calmer et non d'aigrir l'irritation mutuelle."<sup>89</sup> A perusal of the speech leaves little doubt that this was actually the case. Tocqueville sent the speech to Mill, and asked him to set the record straight in England.<sup>90</sup> Mill responded to the call and wrote a letter that was published in the *Morning Chronicle* (20 February), in which he defended Tocqueville against the accusations raised against him by Brougham. Mill's treatment of the whole question was fair.<sup>91</sup> Having thus discharged his friendly task to Tocqueville, he did not miss the opportunity to return to the broader question of Anglo-French relations and to assess once more the whole situation since 1840. He wrote to Tocqueville on 20 February 1843, sending him the letter he had had inserted in the *Morning Chronicle*.<sup>92</sup> He

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<sup>89</sup> Tocqueville to Mill, 9 February 1843, *OC*, VI, 1, pp. 339-40.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> As far as the question of Tocqueville's failure to mention the precedent of the unratified treaty between the United States and England was concerned, Mill did not go very far towards defending Tocqueville in the manner the French thinker had indicated that he should: see *CW*, XXIV, 843; and Tocqueville, *OC*, VI, 1, pp. 339. This was a rather minor point though.

<sup>92</sup> "Lord Brougham and M. de Tocqueville," published on 20 February 1843, p. 3. Lawlor mistakenly asserts that Mill was referring to the letter published in the *Morning Chronicle* on 16 February 1843 under the title "Tocqueville to Lord Brougham", which she claims to have been written by Mill, and on which she bases her account of Mill's intervention in the whole affair. As the editors of Mill's "Newspaper Writings" have since published the article "Lord Brougham and M. de Tocqueville", from the *Morning Chronicle* of 20 February (signed: "A") as written by Mill (*CW*, XXIV, 841-4), it is clear that the letter he referred to while writing to Tocqueville on 20 February was one published on that same day rather than that of

observed that the letter was necessary, because in Britain people believed that Brougham was right and Tocqueville wrong. This was the result of the peak to which passions had risen, not leaving scope for distinctions and differentiations among those on the other side. He confided to Tocqueville that he had suffered at the manner in which his [Tocqueville's] conduct on those unfortunate<sup>93</sup> questions of foreign policy had been regarded in England. "On ne veut rien voir", he said, "sinon que vous vous êtes rangé du côté du 'war party', et comme on s'attendait à autre chose de votre part, on se venge sur vous de sa propre incapacité de comprendre les idées et les principes qui vous ont inspiré". This remark suggests that Mill believed that he himself understood the ideas and principles that had inspired Tocqueville's stance.

And here Mill commented:

Cela ne m'étonne point; il est très naturel que les Anglais ne comprennent pas la France, pas plus que les Français ne comprennent l'Angleterre. **Vous même n'avez vous pas dit, dans le discours en question, que les Anglais ont trouvé le moyen de chasser la France de l'Espagne?**<sup>94</sup> **Ne dirait-on pas que comme la plupart de vos compatriotes vous croyez les Anglais tout occupés d'étendre leur territoire et leur importance au dehors?**<sup>95</sup>

He swore that there were not two Englishmen who were sufficiently preoccupied with

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16 February (see in particular Mill's reference to Tocqueville's earlier letter: *ibid.*, 842). Obviously Lawlor was misled into basing her whole discussion of Mill's contribution to the debate on the Right of Search (Lawlor, *Alexis de Tocqueville...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-7) on a letter written by Tocqueville himself by the editors of Tocqueville's *Correspondance anglaise* (J.-P. Mayer and Gustave Rudler) who published a French version of Tocqueville's letter ("Tocqueville à Brougham") immediately following Mill's letter of 20 February, counting it as letter XXVIII *bis* (Mill's letter of 20 February being letter XVIII): *OC*, VI, 1, pp. 340-2.

<sup>93</sup> "[S]ur ces malheureuses questions de politique extérieure": *CW*, XIII, 570.

<sup>94</sup> See Tocqueville, *OC*, III, 2, p. 346.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. "A Few Words...": *CW*, XXI, 114-5.

Spain for them to have for a single moment any idea of competing with France for influence in that country. All that was written in English newspapers on that subject was "une affaire d'amour-propre entre Palmerston et Peel, à quoi le public hausse les épaules." He continues, poignantly:

Heureusement notre public ne s'occupe jamais d'affaires étrangères. Sans cela l'Europe serait toujours en feu: voyez ce qui est advenu de ce que nous avons eu, un seul instant, un homme à caractère français à notre Foreign Office.<sup>96</sup> Vous savez que j'aime la France, mais j'avoue qu'il en est assez d'une seule en Europe.

Mill then comes to the discussion of the merits of the concrete issue in question, Tocqueville's speech which had incurred Brougham's attack. He assures him that, as he spoke to him frankly about the whole situation, without fear of offending him, "je vous dirai avec la même sincérité que je trouve votre discours admirable et que je ne suis pas éloigné de votre opinion sur la question elle-même". He thought that, if the French government had adopted in the beginning the tone which Tocqueville had recommended,<sup>97</sup> it would have succeeded, but at the time he was writing this would be impossible. England would not be prepared to yield to the provocations and the threats of the "forcenés" of the Chamber or of journalism, be they liberal or conservative, the *Presse*, or the *National*. The statement that follows is characteristic of how strongly he felt about the issues involved:

Je voudrais qu'on crucifiât le premier homme qui osât dire à la tribune d'un peuple des injures contre un autre peuple. Il faut des générations entières pour guérir le mal que cela peut faire dans un jour. Cela est bien méprisable dans un siècle qui a tant besoin du concours des hommes énergiques et éclairés de tous les pays

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<sup>96</sup> Mill meant of course Palmerston.

<sup>97</sup> See *OC*, III, 2, pp. 346-51.

avancés pour l'oeuvre difficile de réorganiser la société européenne.<sup>98</sup>

Mill's correspondence during the crisis of 1840 and its aftermath suggests that he did understand the resentment felt by the French and that he was strongly opposed to Palmerston's handling of the affair. But at the same time he disapproved strongly of the direction French reactions took, and was infuriated by the prospect that France and Britain could go to war because of what he had referred to once as "the stupid affairs of Russia and Turkey",<sup>99</sup> in other words, the Eastern Question. What he objected to most strongly was the notion that French "honour" was worth starting a Franco-British war that would take European society back to the situation of 1815.

Mill recognised the need for the French to aspire to more than Guizot's notorious injunction "enrichissez vous"; he himself castigated the July Monarchy's "culte des intérêts matériels".<sup>100</sup> Thus far he went along with Tocqueville. It has been seen already<sup>101</sup> that Mill was far from content with a society whose members

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<sup>98</sup> *CW*, XIII, 570-1.

<sup>99</sup> Letter to d'Eichthal, 15 May 1829: *ibid.*, XII, 31.

<sup>100</sup> See "Vindication...", *ibid.*, XX, 325: In his analysis of the causes of the fall of the July monarchy, Mill wrote that the second great characteristic of the government of Louis Philippe, "discreditable" and "fatal to the government", had been that: "It wrought almost exclusively through the meaner and more selfish impulses of mankind. Its sole instrument of government consisted in a direct appeal to men's immediate personal interests or interested fears. It never appealed to, or endeavoured to put on its side, any noble, elevated, or generous principle of action. It repressed and discouraged all such, as being dangerous to it." Louis Philippe had striven "to immerse all France in the *culte des intérêts matériels*, in the worship of the cash-box and of the ledger. **It is not, or [1849: 'at least'] it has not hitherto been, in the character of Frenchmen to be content with being thus governed. Some idea of grandeur, at least some feeling of national self-importance, must be associated with that which they will voluntarily follow and obey.**"

<sup>101</sup> See Chapters I and II.



cared about nothing but their economic and social advancement and the satisfaction of their material needs. But his reaction to the crisis of 1840 revealed the limit to how far he was prepared to go in this direction. He wanted the French --and, of course, the British-- to aspire to unselfish goals, to something higher than their own material well-being. But his advocacy of selfless aspiration fell short of endorsing pandering to either aristocratic or chauvinistic nationalist feelings and instincts as means to this end.<sup>102</sup>

Mill adopted a middle position between what he saw as French extremism and irrationality on the one hand and English failure to understand the French on the other. He saw himself in a dual role.<sup>103</sup> When addressing the French (Tocqueville and d'Eichthal) he emphasised the irresponsibility, puerility, and irrationality of their compatriots. In the case of Tocqueville, Mill tactfully indicated to his French correspondent what he regarded as his own failings and misunderstandings. On the

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<sup>102</sup> Cf., on Bentham's denunciation of "honour", and "glory" as causes for war, Conway, "Bentham on Peace and War", *op. cit.*, 92, 93-4. On Bentham's views in this respect see also Kohn, *Prophets and Peoples*, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-19. Cf. Ryuji Yasukawa, "James Mill on Peace and War", *Utilitas*, 3 (1991), 179-97. It might need to be stressed that J.S. Mill was not a "pacifist". The American Civil War induced him, in later years, to declare that he could not "join with those who cry Peace, peace", since "war, in a good cause, is not the greatest evil which a nation can suffer. War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things: the decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks nothing *worth* a war, is worse." But what counted was the "good cause": the American Civil War was, to a great extent, for the North, a "war to protect other human beings against tyrannical injustice": "The Contest in America" (1862): *CW*, XXI, 141-2.

<sup>103</sup> It is characteristic in this respect, that he wrote to Tocqueville, on 30 December 1840, presenting to him the view of the recent events taken by Sterling -- who had asserted that his was the viewpoint of "the average [man] of the upper classes" in England (see Sterling's letter of 9 December, in Tuell, *John Sterling*, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-2). And at the same time, one finds Mill sending Sterling Tocqueville's letter itself, that he might understand Tocqueville's rationale behind his stance. In both cases, Mill did not agree with either completely, but tried to make them do justice to each other's point of view.

other hand, when writing to his British friends (R.B. Fox and Sterling), he stressed the untenableness of the British position, Palmerston's provocative treatment of France, etc. and did his best to minimize the negative impression Tocqueville's speeches in the Chamber had made on them, by passing on to them the Frenchman's explanations for his position. In each case Mill tried to assist that half of truth which was most in need of assistance.<sup>104</sup>

There was no further mention of the foreign affairs of France either in the subsequent letters exchanged between Mill and Tocqueville or by Mill on other occasions until 1846, when he came to review two books that had been published in 1842 and 1843 by an old acquaintance of his, the former Saint-Simonian Charles Duveyrier. The second of these books included an extensive exposition of its author's views and proposals concerning France's foreign policy.<sup>105</sup>

Cairns has commented, with reference to Mill's article on "Duveyrier's Political Views of French Affairs"<sup>106</sup>:

To Duveyrier's...argument that, since the old foreign policies were as defunct as the old régimes, France must abandon territorial ambitions and the revanchism dating from 1815 and join with the other great powers to bring about political and economic peace through arbitration and mediation, Mill was not receptive. He thought such interventionism unwise, though superior to war. He gave no hint of anticipating the trend of international co-operation that was to gather

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<sup>104</sup> Cf. what Mill had written to d'Eichthal on 7 November 1829 about half truths: "The great instrument of improvement in men, is to supply them with the other half of the truth, one side of which only they have ever seen...": *CW*, XII, 42. Cf. *Autobiography*, *ibid.*, I, 169-71. More will be said on this issue in the Conclusion.

<sup>105</sup> See Charles Duveyrier, *Lettres Politiques*, 2 vols., Paris, 1843, I, pp. 57-68, 101-32, 133-64, 175-96, 197-243, 245-76, 301-38, 339-78, 379-418.

<sup>106</sup> First published in the *Edinburgh Review*, 83 (April 1846), 453-74; now in: *CW*, XX, 295-316.

strength through the second half of the century.<sup>107</sup>

This statement does not represent accurately Mill's assessment of Duveyrier's views, which was in fact quite positive. Mill had some reservations about the extent to which other countries were likely to trust France's mediation, given her bad record, rather than about the commendability of Duveyrier's argument. He wrote in "Duveyrier's Political Views of French Affairs" (1846):

As is natural to a French political writer, M. Duveyrier devotes a large part of his attention to external affairs. **But he does so in a different spirit from that of the writers and orators whose tone has lately rekindled in foreign nations, against France, much of the jealousy and suspicion of former years.** Those who best know France, have been most inclined to believe, that the spirit of these orators and writers was far less widely diffused than superficial appearances indicated; and that even in the assailants themselves it was of a less inveterate character than it seemed to be.<sup>108</sup>

There is evidence that a part of Mill's text was rejected by the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, Macvey Napier. It is not known what exactly Mill had written there, but the general spirit of the excised text can be surmised from a letter he later sent to Napier. From what Mill wrote in that letter, it seems likely that the omitted text must have followed the above introductory remarks, as it was intended to challenge the widespread belief that the French were warlike. Mill wrote to the editor of the Review, referring to this article, shortly after its publication:

I cannot complain of **your having left out the passage controverting the warlike propensity of the French**, though I should have been glad if it had been consistent with your judgment to have retained it. **The opinion is a very old and firm one with me, founded on a good deal of personal observation....** And I am sure you will admit **that national importance, and consideration among other nations, may be very strongly desired and sought by people who would rather**

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<sup>107</sup> Cairns, Introduction to *CW*, XX, lxxxii.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

have it in any other way than by war. I venture to say thus much because I think the Edin.[burgh Review] has lately been sometimes very unjust to the French -- I allude to Senior's otherwise excellent articles which he and I have sometimes had disputes about.<sup>109</sup>

No matter where the rejected text was intended by Mill to appear, he went on to write, in the text that was published:

**M. Duveyrier has no notion of suppressing the national *amour propre*;.... But he endeavours to divert it into a rational and a pacific channel.** It is not war, he says, it is not territorial extension, by which national greatness and glory are now acquired. By the arts of peace France must henceforth render herself famous. The sufferings and struggles of half a century, and the social and mental advantages which she has bought at so dear a price, have made it her part to assume the initiative in perfecting the machinery and the principles of civil government.<sup>110</sup>

He cited Duveyrier, who had written, in words that were echoed by Mill in the beginning of that very article, that France "forme à cet égard comme un atelier d'essai au profit du globe entier".<sup>111</sup> Mill proceeded to comment that the author was "faithful to his programme":

He advises France to renounce, once for all, the popular object of the Rhenish frontier. He calls it a "misérable intérêt de vanité". He

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<sup>109</sup> Letter of 1 May 1846, *ibid.*, XIII, 701. Mill must have been referring here in particular to Senior's article "France, America, and Britain", in the *Edinburgh Review* for April 1842, 75, 1-48; the particular reference to France is in pp. 4-10 (reprinted in Nassau W. Senior, *Historical and Philosophical Essays*, London, 1865, pp. 1-90; with reference to France see pp. 6-17). Also, Mill might have been alluding here to Senior's review article "The Law of Nations", in *Edinburgh Review*, 77 (April 1843), 303-73; Senior was no more indulgent with regard to French foreign policy in that article: see especially p. 366. For a scarcely less critical comment on the state of French opinion regarding war, see the article on "Parisian Morals and Manners" in *Edinburgh Review*, 78 (July 1843), 156; this article does not seem to have been written by Senior (it is not included in Senior's biographer's list of his contributions to the *Edinburgh*: see S. Leon Levy, *Nassau W. Senior: The Prophet of Modern Capitalism*, Boston, 1943, pp. 415-6).

<sup>110</sup> *CW*, XX, 313.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 314; from *Lettres Politiques*, I, pp. 127, 129.

recommends an alliance with Germany for peaceful, rather than with Russia, for warlike purposes. To acquire the respect of Europe, her Foreign policy, he says, must be not war and aggrandizement, nor propagandism, but Arbitration and mediation. He would have her combine with Prussia and Austria for the protection of the secondary Powers. He would have international differences decided, not by the coarse expedient of fighting, but by the impartial intervention of friendly powers;... In none of these things does he see insuperable difficulties, if a great nation, like France, would identify herself with them, and make them the leading aim of her external policy.

Mill's disagreement referred to the feasibility of the proposed strategy of France leading this campaign, given the distrust she had incurred abroad, rather than to the commendability or desirability of the overall direction of Duveyrier's proposals. There is no sign that "Mill was not receptive" to "Duveyrier's...argument that...France must abandon territorial ambitions and the revanchism dating from 1815 and join with the other great powers to bring about political and economic peace through arbitration and mediation".<sup>112</sup> What Mill said was that:

**These are worthy objects;** but it may be doubted whether a nation, to which it is necessary to recommend them as means of regaining that importance in the world, which can no longer be successfully sought by war and conquest, is the most likely to render them acceptable to other nations. Plato says, that a people ought to search out and impress as its Governors the persons who most dislike and avoid the office. It is certain, that those who eagerly thrust themselves into other people's disputes, though it be only as arbitrators, are seldom very cordially welcomed; and that those are rarely the best managers of other people's affairs, who have most taste for the bustle and self-importance of management. **If, however, men have a taste for meddling, it is better that they should meddle to befriend others, than to oppress and domineer over them; and M. Duveyrier is doing a useful thing, in inculcating upon his countrymen the**

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<sup>112</sup> Cairns, Introduction, *op. cit.*, lxxxii. Cf. what Mill had written to d'Eichthal on 9 March 1841 (*CW*, XIII, 467, already quoted). As for Cairns's assertion that Mill "gave no hint of anticipating the trend of international co-operation that was to gather strength through the second half of the century", cf. what he had written on 20 October 1833: *ibid.*, XXIII, 632 (cf. *ibid.*, XXXI, 374-5).

superiority of the more philanthropic mode of indulging the propensity.<sup>113</sup>

Mueller, after having cited Mill's complaints and recommendations to Tocqueville in his letter of 9 August 1842,<sup>114</sup> commented:

Undoubtedly, Mill was writing with some heat in this passage and exaggerated his own feelings, as is apparent from a letter written later expressing chagrin that Napier had deleted a passage from Mill's article on Duveyrier's political views controverting the notions about the warlike propensity of the French.<sup>115</sup>

But it seems more plausible to say that Mill stressed and emphasised his strictures about the French when addressing French correspondents, while he tended to combat what he saw as his compatriots' prejudices or misconceptions against the French when addressing British correspondents or readers, especially when he wrote for the press. The great difference between what Mill wrote to Tocqueville and what he intended to have published in the *Edinburgh Review*, was that, in the former instance he was addressing a Frenchman, and addressing him in a private letter, while in the latter instance he was writing publicly for the readers of a **British** periodical.

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<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 314. Besides the above, there is a further indication that Mill agreed with Duveyrier's proposals on external affairs: After having referred to these views, followed by a brief reference to Duveyrier's suggestions on the subject of the "Organization of Labour" (*ibid.*, 315), Mill commented: "We have exhibited, we think, enough of the contents of these volumes to justify our favourable opinion of them. On the unfavourable side there is little that we think it important to notice, except a degree of flattery to some of the Chiefs of the ruling party, and especially to the present King of the French;" (*ibid.*, 315). Clearly, Mill considered Duveyrier's proposals on external affairs to be among the commendable parts of his work.

<sup>114</sup> See *supra*.

<sup>115</sup> Mueller, *Mill and French Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

If, as Mill was convinced by now,<sup>116</sup> it was an ingredient of the French national character to seek national grandeur and to desire "to shine in the eyes of foreigners" (and, moreover, an ingredient that ought to be "cultivated and encouraged...at all costs", as he had conceded to Tocqueville), then he would like to see the national *amour propre* diverted "into a rational and pacific channel", as Duveyrier had proposed. What Mill found least commendable in Tocqueville's stance in 1840 was that he had not offered his compatriots better ideas of what constitutes national importance. Duveyrier was trying to do this, and Mill praised him for doing so. A few months after he had reviewed Duveyrier Mill reiterated his wish to see the French channel their national *amour propre* in peaceful directions (in Constant's language, to "the spirit of commerce" rather than to "the spirit of conquest").<sup>117</sup> Discussing "the unimproved agriculture and scanty application of capital to the soil of France" Mill identified as its principal cause "the exclusive taste of the wealthy and middle classes for town life and town pursuits, combined with **the general want of enterprise of the French nation with respect to industrial improvements**". Mill suggested what would be advisable in the situation of France and concluded: "**The thing would be soon done if the love of industrial progress should ever supplant in the French mind the love of national glory, or if the desire of national**

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<sup>116</sup> Cf. his statement in 1849 in "Vindication...": "Some idea of grandeur, at least some feeling of national self-importance, must be associated with that which [Frenchmen] will voluntarily follow and obey.": *CW*, XX, 325.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Mill's comments on A. de Vigny's *Souvenirs de Servitude et de Grandeur Militaires* in: "Writings of Alfred de Vigny" (1838): *CW*, I, 488-93. Cf. Nancy L. Rosenblum, "Romantic Militarism", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 43 (1982), 249-68 (especially 263-8).

glorification should take that direction."<sup>118</sup>

Mill discussed French foreign policy again in the aftermath of the revolution of February 1848. His attitude has been described in Chapter III. What might be mentioned here is that he went out of his way in 1849 to vindicate every act or declaration of the Provisional Government of 1848 with regard to foreign policy.<sup>119</sup>

### 3. AFTER 1851.

Alexander Bain has written of Mill that "up to the fatality of December, 1851, he had a sanguine belief in the political future of France".<sup>120</sup> The comment is made in the context of French politics, rather than of French foreign affairs, but the two are intimately linked for Mill, as has been observed already, and few instances prove this more strikingly than his position with regard to French foreign policy and ambitions after 1851. After Louis-Napoleon's coup, Mill shifted his interest, and, especially, his hopes, away from France. Stefan Collini has remarked that in respect of the fate of popular government, it is "possible that America was coming to replace France in Mill's thinking, especially once France was saddled with the despotism of Napoleon III, which he so abhorred."<sup>121</sup> Though this seems to be true, as far as matters of international politics were concerned, it was mainly to Britain that Mill

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIV, 1050-1 ("The Quarterly Review on French Agriculture [2]", *Morning Chronicle*, 11 January 1847).

<sup>119</sup> See "Vindication...": *CW*, XX, 340-8.

<sup>120</sup> Bain, *J.S. Mill, op. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>121</sup> Collini, *Public Moralists, op. cit.*, pp. 139-40.



turned. It is not without interest that Tocqueville, the old opponent of France's alliance with Britain, now came to regard Britain and the strengthening of its role in the world as the only hope for the survival of liberty.<sup>122</sup>

That Mill detested Louis-Napoleon is well known. What is interesting in the context of international politics is the extent to which this detestation affected Mill's views on the international role of France. Perhaps the most characteristic indication of this extent is the letter Mill wrote to the Italian patriot, Pasquale Villari, on 28 March 1859. He told his correspondent, with regard to the affairs of Italy, that he was not surprised at "l'illusion où semble être pour le moment chez vous l'esprit national".<sup>123</sup> He feared, however, that it could prove fatal. "Soyez bien persuadé", he asserted, "**que le plus dangereux ennemi qu'ait en ce moment l'avenir de l'humanité c'est celui dont vous invoquez l'appui**". The Italians should not hope that they could be liberated by such a man. Mill reminded Villari the frustration of the hopes of the Italians by the French emperor's uncle, the first Napoleon. It was surely not generous sentiments that would incline him to wage war against Austria for the sake of Italy. Being under the servile dependence on a foreign despot was not achieving nationality. Then he remarked:

**La France, même libre, veut beaucoup trop imposer son joug aux autres peuples; et son maître actuel, en flattant ce défaut national, désire faire usage des Français pour asservir les Italiens afin de les tenir tous deux subjugués les uns par les autres, tout comme en use l'Autriche à l'égard des divers peuples qu'elle domine.**

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<sup>122</sup> See Drescher, *Tocqueville and England*, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-92. While chapter VIII of the book, describing mainly Tocqueville's attitude before 1848, is entitled "Tocqueville versus England", chapter IX is characteristically entitled "England versus Despotism".

<sup>123</sup> The Italians were expecting to be liberated and united thanks to the aid of France.

And he confides with regard to his own feelings: "C'est navrant pour un ami de la liberté d'être forcé de souhaiter le succès même de l'Autriche contre une puissance plus retrograde encore et plus malfaisante qu'elle." Yet, he would not like England to assist Austria actively if the latter were attacked by Louis-Napoleon, "à moins d'une renonciation préalable à l'Italie". He would like to see on the part of England no more than a mediation and an armed peace. And he concluded that what the "tyran perfide de la France" wanted, was nothing but "l'accroissement et l'affermissement de son pouvoir, et il n'y a pas de plus grand mal sur la terre."<sup>124</sup>

This letter shows clearly the extent of his abhorrence of Bonapartism (as represented by both Napoleon I and Napoleon III); this abhorrence was such as to lead Mill to confess to wishing the victory of Austria, because he considered Louis-Napoleon's France even more retrograde and mischievous than even Austria.<sup>125</sup> And during the Crimean War he wrote to his wife that "there is one great evil which is happening from all this -- the complete rehabilitation of Louis Napoleon" in the esteem of English opinion. Due to the alliance of the two countries Bonaparte was becoming popular in England, to Mill's consternation: "To destroy the power and prestige of Russia is a great thing, but it is dearly bought at that price".<sup>126</sup> In 1859 Mill also believed (according to what he wrote to Villari) in the existence of a "défaut national" in the French character, a desire to impose French rule on other peoples.

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<sup>124</sup> CW, XV, 610-11.

<sup>125</sup> But, cf. *ibid.*, XVI, 1033 (discussed *supra*, Chapter III): Apparently then, in 1865, Mill was talking about the principle involved, rather than about his personal feelings at the time the events were taking place.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV, 164.

He was adamant that this applied to the French even when they were free.

And on 24 September 1862 Mill wrote to J. Chapman that, though he agreed entirely with him "as a matter of feeling" in the case of Italy, yet,

I cannot think the immediate incorporation of Rome with the Kingdom of Italy of such vital importance to Italy or to the cause of freedom and progress, as to be worth a war between England and France, while there would be nothing so likely to turn the French nation against all we wish for, and make them identify themselves with their present ruler, as any attempt by a foreign power to act upon them by intimidation. Italy has already our moral support and events have proved that this is much. L[ouis] N[apoleon] is *detested* in Italy; and the longer he remains at Rome, the more certain it becomes that he will have no influence over the destinies of the country but what force, or intrigue and corruption, may give him. **This is not a thing of small importance: for it was a great question whether Italy would form its character as a selfgoverning nation on French ideas or on English, and this question is now rapidly deciding itself in favour of English.**<sup>127</sup>

Quite an impressive statement for a man who had spent so much of his energy in the 1830s and 1840s in attempting to teach "French ideas" to the English themselves!<sup>128</sup>

It appears that Mill came to assume a more optimistic view of the attitude of the French towards war and peace, during the 1860s. This development accompanied a more positive view of the prospects of French thought in general and French politics, with the gradual liberalization of the French regime and the election results of 1863, that had resuscitated the opposition to the Empire. Thus, he wrote to John Elliot Cairnes, on 24 January 1864, that one was "consoled for the madness of all Germany"<sup>129</sup> by the progress of freedom in America, and by **the wonderful**

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, XV, 798.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Walter Bagehot, "France or England" (1863), *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, ed. by Norman St John-Stevan, 15 vols., London, 1965-86 (hereafter: *Works*), IV, pp. 89-94.

<sup>129</sup> He referred to the events that led to the crisis over Schleswig-Holstein.

resurrection of the spirit of liberty in France, combined with a love of peace which even sympathy with Poland does not prevail over."<sup>130</sup> His interest in the progress of the desire for liberty in France went hand in hand with his interest in the desire for peace. For Mill, these two goals were closely connected, and he believed that liberty would remain precarious in France without peace and a desire for peace.

On 4 July 1867 Mill concluded his letter to G. d'Eichthal by congratulating him for the "noble protestation" which he had published against the "recrudescence de l'esprit guerrier et des haines nationales dont la France naguère semblait menacée".<sup>131</sup> D'Eichthal was, he said, almost the first to pronounce himself on that critical moment and it was a great pleasure for Mill to witness the energetic response of a great part of the nation to his friend's appeal. As a result, he thought:

On ne pourra plus désormais accuser la nation française de velléités guerrières et perturbatrices. **Quoique dans beaucoup d'esprits l'honneur national reste encore trop attaché à la réputation d'être puissant pour nuire aux autres peuples,**<sup>132</sup> **il y a évidemment très peu de Français qui désirent se servir de cette puissance.**<sup>133</sup>

Yet, this optimism that the French penchant for *l'orgueil national* could take peaceful directions and forms was to be tested in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war, when Mill spoke once more of "de très grands défauts" in the French character, which were always there, in the so called "plus beaux jours de la France" no less than

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<sup>130</sup> CW, XV, 917.

<sup>131</sup> D'Eichthal had written in protest against what he saw as the aggressiveness of France on the occasion of its dispute with Prussia over Luxembourg: see *Le Temps*, 26 April 1867, p. 1.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. CW, XXII, 214.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, XVI, 1288.

in 1871.<sup>134</sup> He went out of his way to criticize the French with regard to that war. He admitted that the mass of the common people were not responsible for it, yet he believed that Bonaparte was not alone to blame. "The whole writing, thinking, and talking portion of the people", he wrote to John Morley, "undoubtedly share the guilt of L. Napoleon, the moral guilt of the war, and feel neither shame nor contrition at anything but the unlucky results to themselves".<sup>135</sup> As he wrote to d'Eichthal, France should content herself in the future with being one of the great powers of Europe, without pretensions to be the only one, or even the first; she would have to apply to international relations the maxim that she had taught the world in respect of the relations of civil life, "le règle [sic] de l'égalité".<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> See letter to Charles Dupont-White, 6 December 1871: *ibid.*, XVII, 1864.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 1774-5. Cf. *ibid.*, 1764-5, 1769, 1799-1800. For reactions in Britain -including Mill's-- see: Dora Neill Raymond, *British Policy and Opinion during the Franco-Prussian War*, New York, 1967. Mill failed to mention that there was some opposition to the war from the beginning among a part of the political class. This may be accounted for by the fact that those opposed to the war were headed by Thiers (see Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France*, 3 vols., Harmondsworth, 1961, II, pp. 199-202). Mill was apparently not prepared to give any credit for love of peace to the man he would like to have seen hanged or crucified in the 1840s for being a warmonger!

<sup>136</sup> CW, XVII, 1762. Further on Mill's reactions to the war see *infra*, Chapter V, Part 4.

## V. MILL ON FRENCH POLITICS: 1830-1871.

The present chapter deals with a number of issues related to Mill's study of, and attitudes respecting, French politics, from the time he started writing extensively on them, in 1830, until his last comments on the subject, mostly to be found in the correspondence of the last years of his life.

First (Part 1), an attempt will be made to illustrate some aspects of the development of Mill's earlier views on French politics and, more precisely, on the significance and the results of the revolution of July 1830, both in his articles in the *Examiner* (1830-1834) and in his overall assessment of the political situation of France in those years, in "Armand Carrel".

Secondly (Part 2), an assessment will be offered of Mill's attitude towards Armand Carrel, the personality in whom he was most interested, as far as the French political scene of the 1830s was concerned. Some of the reasons that attracted him to Carrel will be made more obvious through a parallel examination of Mill's views on the issues examined in Part 1.

In turn, the examination of Mill's views on Carrel's politics will lead to a consideration (in Part 3) of his overall attitude towards the personalities and factions active in French politics at the time in question. This study will involve an attempt to identify the concrete political parties or factions that commanded Mill's support or sympathy and the reasons that determined his allegiances. The question of his attitude towards republicanism in France will be addressed at some length.

This investigation will then be pursued (in Part 4) to the period covering the

rest of his life, from his views on the persons and factions active in the aftermath of the revolution of 1848 to his last comments on French politics in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War.

### 1. THE JULY REVOLUTION AND THE 1830'S.

Mill's assessment of the effects of the July Revolution was not totally free from ambiguity. While it started by rousing his "utmost enthusiasm, and gave [him], as it were, a new existence",<sup>1</sup> he ended up, in "Armand Carrel" (1837), calling the events that led to it "a misfortune to France" and "an evil hour for France".<sup>2</sup>

Probably the salient feature of Mill's initial comments on the July Revolution, recorded in four letters he sent to his father from Paris, was his astonishment at what he saw as the exemplary behaviour of the people and "the more exhilarating views which it [opened] of human nature".<sup>3</sup> Given his initial serious misgivings about the wisdom and the ability of French newspapers to lead the popular cause and propose constructive measures,<sup>4</sup> and also his critique of the old politicians (including the majority of the Restoration "liberals" with the exception of very few such as Lafayette

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<sup>1</sup> *Autobiography: CW*, I, 179.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 192.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, XII, 55-6, 60. See Mueller, *Mill and French Thought, op. cit.*, pp. 19-20; and Ann P. Robson and John M. Robson, "'Impetuous eagerness': the young Mill's radical journalism", in: Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (eds.), *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, Leicester, 1982, pp. 64-5.

<sup>4</sup> His comments on the level of political discourse in these papers were very negative. See *CW*, XII, 58, 61-2, 62-3.

and Constant),<sup>5</sup> it is obvious that Mill's apparent optimism was based heavily on "the people" ("the common people", "the workmen of Paris") whose wisdom, maturity, and virtue he went out of his way to praise.<sup>6</sup> He claimed that he mixed and conversed extensively with many of them, as indeed with "persons of all classes".<sup>7</sup> To what extent the conduct of the people warranted such optimism is a moot issue, to be debated by specialists in French history.<sup>8</sup> But it is more than likely that Mill was carried away by his enthusiasm.<sup>9</sup> However this might be, he took a more sober view as early as the beginning of October 1830. In "Prospects of France, III",<sup>10</sup> he asserted that a contest was commencing "between the majority of the Chamber of Deputies and the majority of the French nation". But he felt obliged to become more precise with his terminology:

**By the majority of the nation we do not here mean the absolute majority, but the most numerous portion of those who as yet take**

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<sup>5</sup> See *ibid.*, XII, 54; *ibid.*, XXII, 156, 214, 227.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Bain, *J.S. Mill, op. cit.*, p. 42: "Young men and *ouvriers* were Mill's hopes." For the extent to which Mill became infatuated with the generation of young men, "*la jeune France*", and the degree to which he placed his highest hopes on them, see Chapter VII.

<sup>7</sup> Letter to James Mill from Paris, 20 August 1830: *CW*, XII, 55.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Pilbeam, *The 1830 Revolution...*, *op. cit.*, chapter 1: "Historians and the Revolution", pp. 1-12.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, Edgar Leon Newman, "What the Crowd Wanted in the French Revolution of 1830", in: John M. Merriman (ed.), *1830 in France*, New York, 1975, pp. 17-40. A possible answer may be Newman's conclusion that for the artisans and skilled workers who dominated the Paris crowd of July "Liberty" had a different meaning than the one it had for the liberals of the bourgeoisie. According to Newman the immediate goals of the crowds were practical and they were not yet republicans or socialists.

<sup>10</sup> *CW*, XXII, 142-6 (3 October 1830).



any part or concern in the struggle.<sup>11</sup> A numerical majority of the entire population are undoubtedly quiescent. The agitation has not yet penetrated so deep. Among the working...classes, there is, or was very lately, but one feeling: satisfaction at having achieved the overthrow of a bad government, and confidence, that without their intervention, and by persons more instructed, and having better means of judging than themselves, the constitution will be resettled....<sup>12</sup>

The realization of the limits of the people's demands and political awareness led him to focus his hopes more and more on the press and the progressive circles of "young men" rather than on immediate pressure by "the common people" themselves.<sup>13</sup>

In the series of articles entitled "Prospects of France" which he wrote for the *Examiner* during the second half of 1830, Mill tried to defuse the alarm at the state of France caused by articles in the British press and most notably in *The Times*. In the first of these articles on 19 September 1830 he predicted that there would not be another insurrection. However, there was another danger, more serious than "excessive political excitement": if the people were to leave politics to the Ministry and the Chambers, "they would speedily find that all they had gained by the revolution was, to exchange a feeble despotism for a strong and durable oligarchy".<sup>14</sup>

The salient feature of Mill's argument in support of an extension of the

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, XXIII, 407-8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 143. The reasons why there was such a pronounced disparity between the Chambers and the nation were explained by Mill in "Prospects of France II" (26 September 1830): *ibid.*, 134-40.

<sup>13</sup> One of the reasons for Mill's initial optimism must have been the optimism -- unfounded and naive, as he was himself to admit some weeks later-- of "several leading men of the popular party" that he had conversed with during the time he spent in Paris shortly after the revolution: see, e.g., his "Use and Abuse of the Ballot" (28 November 1830): *ibid.*, 194.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-30.

suffrage was his emphasis on what he saw as the fundamental difference between the situation before the July Revolution and that afterwards. This difference consisted in the fact that under the Bourbon 5 government the electors were not yet the governing body, whereas after the revolution of July the monied class had "stepped into the place both of the King and of his allies, the emigrants and clergy." When it was itself excluded from government, this class had made common cause with the people. Now that it composed the governing body, and being "a narrow Oligarchy", it had the same interests as any other oligarchy and saw the revolution as little more than "a mere change of masters".<sup>15</sup>

In "Prospects of France, III" (3 October 1830),<sup>16</sup> after having described "the disputants" as being the Deputies, on the one hand, and "the majority of the French nation", on the other, Mill proceeded to explain what was "the point at issue". There was, he asserted, "a fundamental difference, pregnant with important consequences, between the practical principles of the persons now in power, and those of their opponents".<sup>17</sup> The doctrine of the majority of the Chamber and of the Ministry of its choice was that the revolution had been made in order to protect the Charter, which was threatened by the usurpations of the Bourbons, and that once the Charter had been restored, and some minor modifications in it had been effected, the people

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<sup>15</sup> Commenting on comparisons of the revolution of 1830 in France with the English revolution of 1688, Mill found that "there has in fact been up to the present time a striking similitude between the two events." Yet, he added: "We earnestly hope that they will not resemble each other in their final result", namely in giving all substantial powers to a "monied oligarchy": *ibid.*, 130-3. Cf. *ibid.*, XII, 59.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 142-6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

had obtained all they wanted, and ought to be satisfied.<sup>18</sup> Mill's answer was that **"[w]hat the people wanted was securities for good government"**.<sup>19</sup> He challenged one of the main arguments of "the partisans of the Chamber", namely "that it is desirable the revolution should stop". The main thrust of his argument (derived from the arguments of the French "popular party") was to the effect that the Chamber and the Ministry, in trying to block all further change, showed that they failed to understand the meaning of the revolution that had taken place. The Chamber mistook the *grande semaine* for a mere change of ministry, and thought that it did enough if it gave France in 1830, "all that France called for in 1829": **"forgetting"**, he observed, **"that a revolution carries society farther on its course, and makes greater changes in the popular mind, than half a century of untroubled tranquillity."** The demands of the people were moderate in 1829, because a revolution had not occurred, and might have been avoided. The case was totally different, however, once the revolution had occurred and its avoidance was not a counter-incentive to greater demands.<sup>20</sup>

Mill continued to report on French affairs almost on a weekly basis. His enthusiasm of the first weeks was increasingly qualified. Though gravely disappointed by the actions and failures of those who had come to power since July (and having good reasons to expect much worse developments after the appointment of the "stationary" Casimir-Périer ministry in March 1831), he did not want another

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<sup>18</sup> He was apparently referring to recent speeches to this effect made by the duc de Broglie and Guizot.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 144-6.

revolution to occur. He wrote, on 20 March 1831, after having informed the readers of the *Examiner* about the change that had taken place in the French ministry with Laffitte's resignation and Casimir-Périer's assumption of the premiership, that it would be seen from the letter of the paper's Paris correspondent (Maillefer) "what the popular party think of this ministry". Briefly commenting on their view, he wrote that they conceived and publicly declared that the new (far more conservative) ministry was going to be "the Polignac ministry of the new government", and would bring the new régime to the same abrupt termination as that of the restored Bourbons. Mill's own comment was: **"We trust not; for as it is the second blow which makes the quarrel, so it is the second convulsion which annihilates future stability."**<sup>21</sup>

In his perception of the developments in France one of the turning points seems to have been the insurrection of 5-6 June 1832. In an article of 24 June 1832 he gave vent to his frustration both with the French government's way of suppressing the uprising that started in Paris during General Lamarque's funeral, but also, implicitly at least, with the stance of some extreme republican activists and secret societies.<sup>22</sup> The measures taken by the French Government (which had placed Paris under a state of siege) appeared to him a blow to any notion of a government of law.

He commented:

How many years, rather how many ages, of legal protection seem necessary to engender that habitual reverence for law which is so deeply rooted in the minds of all classes of Englishmen, from the prince to the pauper! ...the first and fundamental condition of good government, and without which any people, however civilized they imagine themselves, are little other than savages.

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>22</sup> Cf., on Carrel's --quite similar-- stance: McLaren, "The *National*...", *op. cit.*, pp. 154-5.

It was "the vainest of fancies to look for any improvement in the government or in the condition of the people", when "even honest men are apt to consider any misconduct on the part of the Government a full justification for civil war, and when every King, every minister, considers every act of resistance to Government a justification for suspending the constitution and assuming dictatorial power". But of the two parties who were guilty "of the present and of the impending mischief", Mill considered the government "incomparably the most guilty".<sup>23</sup> France had now no constitution, because "a constitution which is violated is destroyed".<sup>24</sup>

The polemical nature of most of these articles in the *Examiner*, and the multiplicity of aims that Mill apparently had in mind in writing them, involved him in frequent shifts of emphasis on a number of occasions, to such an extent that some of his assertions could be taken as contradictory, though they may be due to changing perceptions of the situation. Examples may be found in articles he wrote in September 1833 and the following March. On 1 September 1833 Mill wrote in the *Examiner* an article in answer to some assertions he had read in the *Quarterly Review*. In addressing the overall political problem of France at the end of the article he wrote:

While we are on the subject, we will pause to ask, what considerable improvement of the public mind is to be looked for under governors whom every patriotic citizen who mingles in public affairs, must not only be perpetually *watching* with both his eyes, but perpetually *holding* with both his hands, to hinder them from seizing on absolute

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<sup>23</sup> The outrage provoked by the arbitrary way in which the French government dealt with the situation was such, that even the *Times*, to Mill's infinite gratification, "is now furious against the French Government": see *CW*, XXIII, 483-4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 485-6. The importance Mill ascribed to this uprising and its aftermath can be ascertained by what he wrote concerning this time in "Armand Carrel": *ibid.*, XX, 200-1.

power?

During the time spent "in repelling encroachments on the ground which has been already gained, no progress is made towards gaining more." Mill applied here to the politics of the first three years of the July monarchy an explanation he had put forward (earlier as well as later) to account for the lack of progress of "the public mind" of France before the July Revolution, during the Restoration.<sup>25</sup> This is more obvious in the comments that follow:

While the public mind must be kept by its leaders and instructors perpetually *en garde*, for the purpose of parrying some expected or unexpected thrust at the very vitals of its freedom, it cannot find time or attention for literature or philosophy, or social morals, or education, or the best part of politics -- the *improvement* of the spirit and details of its institutions. **It is this which keeps back France.**<sup>26</sup>

Now, on 30 March 1834 Mill wrote in the *Examiner* an article entitled "State of Opinion in France",<sup>27</sup> which he also sent to his friends, the French republicans, to publish in the newly established *Revue Républicaine*.<sup>28</sup> In this article Mill felt called upon --once more-- to defend the achievements of the Revolution of 1830 against its conservative critics, the "Tory publications", which had "frequently of late indulged in long-winded lamentations on the state of France", affirming, in substance,

that the second French Revolution...instead of producing any advances in freedom or good government, has substituted for the mild, legal,

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, XXIII, 453-9.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 594-5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 691-7.

<sup>28</sup> "Opinion d'un Anglais sur l'esprit public en France", *Revue Républicaine*, 10 July 1834, pp. 82-8. On the *Revue Républicaine* see Gabriel Perreux, *Au temps des sociétés secrètes: la propagande républicaine au début de la Monarchie de juillet*, Paris, 1931, pp. 225-6. On Carrel's relations with it see McLaren, "The *National...*", *op. cit.*, p. 126.

and constitutional rule (as they term it) of the elder Bourbons, a most oppressive though an unstable despotism. **Which proves the folly and wickedness of all revolutions, and of all attempts of the people to control the management of their affairs.**

Mill argued that criticising Louis Philippe and his ministry was one thing, and concluding that the July revolution produced no good was another:

Yet we are firmly convinced that even now, under a government as arbitrary, as encroaching, and as much the enemy of popular institutions and social reforms as ever ruled in France with the forms of a constitution, **the French nation is making advances in all the most important elements of good government and political improvement, unparalleled at any former period of history; and that for the rapidity of this progress she is wholly indebted to the late Revolution.**

No doubt in terms of immediate improvements in the institutions of the country, or in the spirit which pervaded the government, the revolution of 1830 had achieved too little. But governments and their acts "are in themselves no good, but merely the means of good; and not the only, far even from being the principal, means". In any case, "[t]hat the French people, having the power, did not, in July 1830, establish a better government, proves that the national mind was not ripe for a better;<sup>29</sup> it has been ripening since with wonderful rapidity, and its time will come". Besides, he added:

**Improvement in the government** is so sure to *follow*, and of so little avail and so little likely to be durable if it *precedes*, **improvement in the national mind**, that no government, however bad in spirit, which allows *that* to go on, gives much cause for regret or apprehension.<sup>30</sup>

The public mind of France was at that moment (1834) "in a state of such rapid

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Mill's letter to Carlyle of 9 March 1833, where he expressed himself to exactly the same effect with regard to British politics after the passage of the Reform Bill: CW, XII, 145.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, 692.

progress" as any settlement of the government in August 1830 could have given it. The whole character of public discussion had changed. The Revolution and its consequences had "carried discussion onward into another field". During the fifteen years of the Restoration "the popular party" had been "altogether on the defensive". For one thing the Charter imposed limits to political improvement; but, what was more, the Charter itself was constantly violated by those in power, so that "to defend it against the ruling power...was sufficient occupation for the friends of popular government." This unremitting struggle around the Charter impoverished political discussion, which was reduced to discussing the question whether the Charter had been observed. Though these discussions were "not altogether unfruitful", they went a very little way towards educating the public mind. Moreover,

No progress was made in familiarizing the public mind even with the real essentials of a representative constitution; and the Three Days found the nation so unfurnished with any distinct conceptions on the subject, that months elapsed before it occurred to any one to think what an opportunity had been lost for securing to thirty-three millions of people a larger body of electors than eighty thousand.<sup>31</sup>

This backwardness of both "the popular mind" and the "superior intellects" was true both with regard to constitutional subjects, and --even more-- with regard to questions of detail.<sup>32</sup> But the Revolution of the Three Days had marked the commencement of a new era. "It set free the national mind. Since then, the question has been, not how to defend what was already gained, but how to gain more." Thanks to July, the French dispensed for ever with the questions of a Hereditary Aristocracy and a Dominant Church. That a Government may be very detestable even without these

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 693-4.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Mill's statement in "Armand Carrel": *ibid.*, XX, 192-3; also: *ibid.*, XII, 63-4; XXIII, 453.



two appendices of the restored Bourbons' system, "was a lesson which the French people, for want of sufficient experience, had yet to learn, and in which Louis Philippe has proved himself an apt instructor." Mill forcefully asserted the value of the experience, claiming that nothing but the experiment the French were then making could have convinced them "that the mischiefs of an Oligarchy do not depend upon its being this or that particular kind of Oligarchy, but upon its being an Oligarchy at all". They were "strangely ignorant" of that reality "some few years ago", but they were now seeing it every day more clearly, and "the more active and intelligent portion of the French public" were beginning to perceive, "that the first fundamental principle of good government in a civilized country, is **protection against the sinister interests of the few by periodical accountability to the many.**"<sup>33</sup>

In the September 1833 article, in response to the *Quarterly Review*, Mill was trying to lay all the blame for the lack of political progress in France on the King and his government and exculpate the opposition, who were doing their best, given the circumstances. It was the executive's fault that progress was not being made. Now, in the March 1834 article, Mill felt obliged to refute allegations that the revolution of 1830 had brought no good to France at all. Thus, instead of blaming the government for "[keeping] back France", he denied the very premise of conservative commentators (which could be taken to have been his own premise some months earlier), namely, that France was being "[kept] back" for whatever reason, and instead asserted that, despite appearances, great improvement was being made since the July revolution where it really mattered, namely "in the national mind". But the apparent difference may not necessarily be due to the necessities of the case. What

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 694-5. Cf. *ibid.*, 662-3 (12 January 1834).

had happened in between may have affected Mill's outlook. He had, from 10 October until about 20 November 1833 visited Paris, where he had made Carrel's acquaintance, and attended meetings of the republicans.<sup>34</sup>

No matter whether that experience had affected his views on the state of France (and, consequently, on the outcome of the July Revolution) or not, it remains the case that, in his more sober later assessment of the whole period in "Armand Carrel" (1837)<sup>35</sup> Mill seems to renege, to a considerable extent, on his assertions of March 1834, by saying that the July revolution (or rather, the events that led to it) had been a misfortune after all, because it stopped the progress the French national mind was making towards developing the constitutional mores that France desperately lacked.<sup>36</sup>

His attitude towards the July Revolution has to be seen in the broader context of his attitude towards revolutions in general --which, in turn, seems to have been influenced by the results of the July Revolution. In an article investigating Mill's

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. Ann Robson's remarks on the impact that Mill's acquaintance with Carrel must have had on his coverage of French affairs in the first half of 1834 in: Introduction, *Newspaper Writings*, CW, XXII, lxix. For Mill's impressions gained during this stay in the French capital concerning Carrel, Godefroy Cavaignac, and the rest of the republican movement see his letters to Carlyle of 25 November 1833 and 2 March 1834: *ibid.*, XII, 194-7 and 218-9 respectively. For his overall impressions from that stay in France, see *ibid.*, 191-4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 167-215. It is stated here that this was a more sober assessment, not only because Mill might be said to have had by then, to an extent, the benefit of hindsight, but also because the context in which he was writing, in Britain, was not the same as that surrounding the Reform Bill agitation. For an account that connects adeptly Mill's journalistic coverage of French affairs in the early 1830s with the reform agitation at home see Ann Robson's Introduction to the *Newspaper Writings*, *op. cit.*, xlv-lxxi.

<sup>36</sup> It will be seen in Part 2 that it must have been the April 1834 insurrections and their aftermath that shuttered any hopes Mill might still have retained for progress in France as a result of the July Revolution.

views on "political violence" Geraint Williams sought to establish "whether he developed any general principles whereby such violence could be shown to be legitimate."<sup>37</sup> The author identified two main dimensions in Mill's discussion of the advisability of political violence: firstly, the moral dimension, referring to the justice of the cause and secondly, the political dimension, referring to the likelihood of success.<sup>38</sup> The second criterion, "the political question", had in turn two aspects. Besides the likelihood of what Williams calls "military success" (referring to the ability of the aspiring insurgents to prevail in the eventual contest in physical terms), there was a second aspect to the success-criterion that had to be taken into account, referring to the chances a violent revolution had of effecting the "long term structural changes" that would move society forward. Williams uses the example of the French Revolution of 1830 to illustrate the importance of this second aspect of the political question:

His growing disillusionment with the 1830 revolution was based on its failure to establish securities for future good government. A revolution in itself gains little unless it uses its success to reform the system so as to prevent future oppression. At this time Mill believed that the chief means of achieving this was through the extension of the suffrage. ...though the violence was admirably controlled the revolution was a failure, lacking any long-term demands. Its military success was not converted into the desired political success.<sup>39</sup>

In terms of Williams's second sub-criterion (that of the long-term political success), it would appear from the article of September 1833 that Mill thought that France was hardly making any progress; she was kept back, due to the encroachments of the

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<sup>37</sup> Geraint Williams, "J.S. Mill and Political Violence", *Utilitas*, 1 (1989), 102-11.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 106, 110.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

executive, which continued to keep the national mind occupied, in more or less the same way as it was before the revolution of 1830, with guarding what was supposed to have been already gained. In March 1834, however, Mill argued that France was making progress in terms of the improvement of her national mind, thanks to the revolution of 1830, which had "set free the national mind". Perhaps the most plausible of Mill's arguments in that latter article was the one concerning the importance of the experience afforded by the regime that resulted from the July revolution in teaching the French people an unmistakable lesson about the nature of all oligarchies, and that "the first fundamental principle of good government...is protection against the sinister interests of the few by periodical accountability to the many". In 1834, Mill declared that he thought this lesson worth the revolution of July 1830. It seems that by 1837 he no longer held this view and he considered the meagre fruits that could be expected in that respect not worth the price paid. What should be stressed is that the price he referred to in "Armand Carrel" was not only the violence of the revolution itself, or the deaths it caused, but also longer-term developments. Though the revolution had justice on its side and had become inevitable (thus meeting the moral criterion, in Williams's terms), he deplored the circumstances that had made it inevitable, namely the reactionary turn taken by the government with the dismissal of the Martignac ministry and the appointment of that headed by Polignac. His misgivings about the revolution's effects did not derive from any failure of the insurgents to succeed militarily (on the contrary, the uprising had been very successful in that respect). The reason why the whole development had been a "misfortune for France" was that it interrupted the progress that was being made during Martignac's tenure of office and that it apparently prevented the

resumption of progress, because of the precedent it established to resort to insurrection whenever there were abuses. Mill regretted the interruption of the Martignac experiment, because he became aware by 1837 that what had started then was the only way to achieve durable, steady progress. The account of this period that he offered in "Armand Carrel" is revealing of some important views on French politics which he came to hold by the time he wrote that article. He asserted that the short interval of eighteen months, during which the moderate Martignac ministry lasted, **"was the brightest period which France has known since the Revolution"**.<sup>40</sup> This was so "for a reason which well merits attention": "those who had the real power in the country, the men of property and the men of talent, had not the power at the Tuileries, nor any near prospect of having it."<sup>41</sup> In this context, Mill embarked upon an analysis of what he thought by now was one of the most serious deficiencies afflicting French political culture (or, as he put it later in his *Representative Government*, French "national character"<sup>42</sup>):

It is the grievous misfortune of France, that being still new to constitutional ideas and institutions, she has never known what it is to have a fair government, in which there is not one law for the party in power, and another law for its opponents. ...whatever party can get the executive into its hands, and induce a majority of the Chamber to support it, does practically whatever it pleases; hardly anything that it can be guilty of towards its opponents alienates its supporters, unless they fear that they are themselves marked out to be the next victims; **and even the trampled-on minority fixes its hopes not upon limiting arbitrary power, but upon becoming the stronger party and**

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Louis Girard, *Les libéraux français 1814-1875*, Paris, 1985, pp. 104-6: characteristically, Girard entitles the part of his account which covers the period Mill referred to "Le ministère Martignac: une occasion manquée?".

<sup>41</sup> *CW*, XX, 190-1. Cf. "Centralisation", *ibid.*, XIX, 582.

<sup>42</sup> See *ibid.*, 420; and: *infra*, Chapter VII, Part 5.

tyrannizing in its turn.<sup>43</sup>

It was "to the eternal honour of **Carrel**", Mill went on, "that **he, and he almost alone**", in a subsequent period far less favourable than that of the Martignac Ministry, "recognised the great principle of which all parties had more than ever lost sight; -- saw that this, above all, was what his country wanted" and "**unfurled the banner of equal justice and equal protection to all opinions**". Yet, "[i]t was too late. A revolution had intervened; and even those who suffered from tyranny, had learnt to hope for relief from revolution, and not from law or opinion." The revolution that had intervened was, of course, the July Revolution of 1830. Things could have been different, however, had it not intervened, because during the Martignac Ministry, "all parties were equally afraid of, and would have made equal sacrifices to avert, a convulsion."<sup>44</sup> The idea gained ground, and appeared to be becoming general, **of building up in France for the first time a government of law.**" As the King was wedded to the reactionary party, and the powers of the executive were thus beyond the ambition of "the new aristocracy of wealth, or of the men of talent who had put themselves at the head of it", and as, at the same time, these latter had the command of the legislature, "they used the power which they had, to reduce within bounds that which by peaceable means they could not hope to have".

Thus,

**For the first time it became the object of the first speculative and practical politicians in France, to limit the power of the executive; to**

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<sup>43</sup> "Armand Carrel": *ibid.*, XX, 191. Cf. Mill's "Centralisation": *ibid.*, XIX, 582. Cf. also Tocqueville's remark on French attitudes to centralisation quoted in J.P. Mayer, *Prophet of the Mass Age: A Study of Alexis de Tocqueville*, London, 1939, p. 20.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *CW*, XXII, 146.

**erect barriers of opinion, and barriers of law, which it should not be able to overpass, and which should give the citizen that protection which he had never yet had in France, against the tyranny of the magistrate: to form...*les mœurs constitutionnelles*, the habits and feelings of a free government, and establish in France, what is the greatest political blessing enjoyed in England, the national feeling of respect and obedience to the law. Nothing could seem more hopeful than the progress which France was making, under the Martignac Ministry, towards this great improvement.**

Mill pointed to the discussions of the press, and the teachings of "the Doctrinaires...<sup>45</sup>who then occupied the front rank of the popular party", as "by degrees working the salutary feelings of a constitutional government into the public mind". Yet, "[i]n an evil hour for France...the promise of this auspicious moment was blighted". Charles X dismissed the Martignac Ministry and appointed "a set of furious *émigrés*", and when these latter fared abysmally in the new general election, "the famous Ordonnances were issued, and the Bourbon Monarchy was swept from the face of the earth." Mill then proceeded to comment on the outcome of the July Revolution:

We have called the event which necessitated the Revolution of July, a misfortune to France. We wish earnestly to think it otherwise. But if in some forms that Revolution has brought immense<sup>46</sup> good to France, in many it has brought unspeakable<sup>47</sup> ill. Among the evils which it has done we select two of the greatest [and most permanent]<sup>48</sup>: it stopped the progress of the French people towards recognising the necessity of equal law, and a strict definition of the powers of the magistrate; and it put a stop...to the literary and

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<sup>45</sup> Royer Collard, the Duc de Broglie, Guizot, and their followers.

<sup>46</sup> In quoting the text from this point onwards, I have opted for keeping the original version of 1837 in the main text, and Mill's corrections in *DD* are given in footnotes: in this case "considerable" was substituted for "immense" in *DD*.

<sup>47</sup> In *DD* "serious" was substituted for "unspeakable".

<sup>48</sup> The words in square brackets were omitted in *DD*.

philosophic movement which had commenced.<sup>49</sup>

It was not the July Revolution itself that he said he regretted, but rather, the events that necessitated it. That a revolution was justifiable and inevitable since Polignac and Charles X had taken the course they took, Mill did not contradict for a moment. Yet, a change took place, during the course of the 1830s, in his views on the July Revolution and its results, in that his elation at its outbreak, which would, he hoped, bring rapid progress, evaporated to such an extent, that he came to contemplate wistfully how unfortunate it was that the hoped for progress was not allowed by Charles X and his faction to be achieved gradually and steadily, without the need for a revolution.<sup>50</sup>

It was the cultivation of the "moeurs constitutionnelles" that Mill came to regard as the main need of France, and the experience of the 1830s taught him that these took more than a revolution to develop and take root.<sup>51</sup> It will be seen in Part 2 that one of Carrel's main recommendations to Mill was the French journalist's commitment to the set of principles and practices that Mill had come by the mid-1830s to consider all-important for France.

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<sup>49</sup> CW, XX, 191-2.

<sup>50</sup> Mill, in a more radical phase ten years later, was to speak more favourably of revolution again, in a French context; but he was referring to the first French Revolution and focused on "the great changes in the state of property" which it had produced: He wrote to John Austin, on 13 April 1847, attributing the ills of France Austin had complained of to Bonaparte and most of her advantages to the Great French Revolution: *ibid.*, XIII, 713-4.

<sup>51</sup> It is characteristic that in "Centralisation" (1862) he came to stress, in a French context, "that a people are not and cannot be free, unless they have learnt to dare and do for themselves, **not fitfully, at intervals of a generation, by turning out one set of masters and putting in another, but in the practice of daily life**": *ibid.*, XIX, 583.



## 2. ARMAND CARREL IN FRENCH POLITICS.

Referring to the article "Armand Carrel" that he was about to publish, Mill wrote to Molesworth: "I never admired any man as I did Carrel; he was to my mind the type of a philosophic radical *man of action* in this epoch. I have endeavoured to bring out **this idea and many others**".<sup>52</sup> In existing Mill scholarship the emphasis given to "this idea" has overshadowed and led to the neglect of the "many others". As a "*man of action*", through his influential journalism, his pronounced character, and his ascendancy over a section of the republican movement through the mere medium of his journalism, Carrel was attractive to Mill.<sup>53</sup> But there were also other aspects, equally important, to the British thinker's admiration for Carrel, which have not been examined or analysed by scholars.

One of the other ideas Mill endeavoured to "bring out" in his article of 1837 was that Carrel's political position was best suited to the circumstances of France, accompanied by the assertion that Carrel was unique --and lonely-- in the path he followed. It has been seen (in Part 1) that Mill claimed that "it is to the eternal honour of Carrel that he, and he almost alone" recognised that what his country needed more than anything else was "equal justice and equal protection to all

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<sup>52</sup> Letter of 22 September 1837: *ibid.*, XVII, 1977-8. The article was published in *LWR*, 38 (October 1837), 66-111.

<sup>53</sup> In particular with regard to Carrel's impact on Mill's editorial ventures, see Ann P. Robson and John M. Robson, "Private and Public Goals: John Stuart Mill and the *London and Westminster*", in: Joel H. Wiener (ed.), *Innovators and Preachers: The Role of the Editor in Victorian England*, Westport, Connecticut and London, 1985, pp. 235-8, 240-1, 248. Mill seems to have given Carrel no less credit for his qualities as a commentator of the French political scene. As he wrote to Tocqueville, about Carrel, "**him I conceive to be, next to you [the] best authority I know on the state of France.**": letter of September 1835, *CW*, XII, 272. Cf. *ibid.*, 309.

opinions".<sup>54</sup> It has also been seen that Mill, by the time he wrote "Armand Carrel", had come to consider the set of principles he described alternatively as "equal justice and equal protection to all opinions", "a government of law", or "*les moeurs constitutionnelles*", to be of paramount importance to France's political progress.

It was in 1837 that Mill first stressed this aspect of Carrel's contribution to French politics. In his earlier references to the French journalist's political views and position Mill had simply focused on Carrel's moderation and soberness, and his ability to steer between the two extremes that dominated French political life.<sup>55</sup> In "Armand Carrel" Mill did not fail to commend Carrel's soberness and his capacity to moderate the excesses of his fellow republicans. But he went further than that, to highlight the French journalist's position as the sole defender of the liberal political mores of which France was most deficient. Towards the end of the article, after having described Carrel's stance during the events that followed the publication of the manifesto of the *Société des Droits de l'Homme*, in 1833, and explained that Carrel "had from the first disapproved" the conduct of the extreme republicans of that society, "by which [conduct] the prospects of the popular party were thus compromised",<sup>56</sup> Mill wrote:

Against the other peculiar views of this revolutionary party he had combated both in private and in the *National*. He had taken no part in their projects for arriving at a republic by an insurrection. He had set his face against their notion of governing by an active minority, for the good of the majority, but if necessary in opposition to its will, and

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 191.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. an earlier account of Carrel's political views which he gave in a letter to Carlyle: *ibid.*, XII, 195; also Mill's comment in the *Examiner* of 19 January 1834: *ibid.*, XXIII, 669.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 203-5.

by a provisional despotism that was to terminate some day in a free government. A free, full, and fair representation of the people was his object;.... And without condemning the Republic of the Convention...he preferred to cite as an example **the Republic of the United States; ...because it presented to France an example of what she most wanted -- protection to all parties alike, limitation of the power of the magistrate, and fairness as between the majority and the minority.**<sup>57</sup>

Mill referred his readers to Carrel's *Extrait du dossier d'un prévenu de complicité morale dans l'attentat du 28 Juillet*,<sup>58</sup> in which the editor of the *National* had attempted to combat the extreme views and watchwords of the *Société des Droits de l'Homme* and to unite all republican factions in a more moderate programme for a conservative republic, which would not frighten the bourgeoisie.

From accounts of Carrel's life and ideas, the one stressing most the aspect of his politics Mill chose to emphasise in 1837 was Nisard's, from which Mill quoted extensively in his own article on Carrel.<sup>59</sup> The longest quotation from Nisard's text was that introduced with the comment:

**But the greatest disappointment which Carrel suffered was the defeat not of republicanism, but of what M. Nisard calls his "théorie du droit commun"; those ideas of moderation in victory, of respect for the law, and for the rights of the weaker party, so much more wanted in France than any political improvements which are**

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>58</sup> Paris, 1835. Carrel had published then as a pamphlet the report he had presented in 1833 to the all-republican *Association pour la liberté de la presse*.

<sup>59</sup> See, in particular on the dimension referred to here, *CW*, XX, 209-10, where Mill quotes from J.M.N. Désiré Nisard, "Armand Carrel", *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 12 (October 1837), 14-15, 16. It seems that Mill was planning to translate this article by Nisard (along with an introduction by Emile Littré) in the form of a pamphlet, published at his own expenses, as *Armand Carrel, his Life and Character*. Thus, Mill's "Armand Carrel" was a review article on that would-be English translation of Nisard's work. This theory has been put forward in: A. Robson and J. Robson, "Private and Public Goals...", *op. cit.*, 236-7; and: John Robson, Textual Introduction to Mill's *Essays on French History and Historians*, *CW*, XX, cii.

possible where those ideas are not.<sup>60</sup>

Nisard affirmed in the text quoted by Mill that he had never seen Carrel as distressed and frustrated as he was as a result of the failure of this idea to take root in France, and "nothing could console him for seeing **that noble scheme of reciprocal forbearance** compromised...-- by all parties equally; by the government, by the country, and by his own friends." Carrel had defended "**the idea of a government offering securities to all parties against its own lawful and necessary instinct of self-preservation.**" The powerlessness of such principles had been for him "a severe shock":

Carrel had faith in these generous views; **he had adopted them with stronger conviction perhaps than his republican theories, to which he had committed himself hastily, and under the influence of temporary events rather than of quiet and deliberate meditations.** ... The affliction of Carrel was irreparable from the moment when he remained **the sole defender of the common rights of all**, between the nation which from fear made a sacrifice of them to the government, and his own party, which cherished secretly thoughts inconsistent with them.<sup>61</sup>

The quotation from Nisard went on to present the extent of Carrel's disappointment on this account shortly before the end of his life (1836). Whereupon Mill commented:

We can conceive few things more melancholy than the spectacle of one of the noblest men in France...dying convinced against his will, **that his country is incapable of freedom**; and under whatsoever institutions, has only the choice, what man or what party it will be under the despotism of.<sup>62</sup>

Here Mill equated the set of ideas and principles that he had described as being

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<sup>60</sup> *CW*, XX, 209.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 209-10.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 210-1.

Carrel's with "freedom" and lamented their failure to take root in France during Carrel's life-time. A precise identification of the content of Carrel's liberalism is not easy, in the sense in which it may be for political philosophers, because Carrel, according to Mill's own admission, was not a systematic thinker. But both Mill's comments on him and those of many contemporaries --as well as later historians-- portray Carrel as a political activist faithfully attached to a set of ideas that were regarded, in the context of France in the 1830s, as quintessentially liberal and also as marking Carrel out from the majority of his fellow republicans who had other priorities. In attempting to define the sense in which he considered Carrel a liberal Jeremy Jennings wrote that "in Carrel we undoubtedly have an example of...what in France around 1830 was regarded as a liberal. He believed in representative and responsible government and in such eminently liberal causes as the independence of the judiciary and freedom of the press".<sup>63</sup> Moreover, to these causes should be added the aspect of Carrel's politics stressed by Mill and Nisard, and discussed above, what Nisard called Carrel's "théorie du droit commun". In the same vein, in a review article he dedicated to the publication of the *Oeuvres politiques et littéraires d'Armand Carrel*,<sup>64</sup> the Orleanist liberal Albert de Broglie wrote that what was most remarkable about the writings of the editor of the *National* was "l'accent généreux et

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<sup>63</sup> Jennings, "Nationalist Ideas...", *op. cit.*, p. 513. Cf., on Carrel's "genuine and idealistic devotion to liberty": Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, *op. cit.*, p. 181. And according to Jardin and Tudesq, Carrel was "deeply attached to liberalism", unlike most of the even younger republicans who set themselves apart from liberal republicans like Carrel, and "returned to the Jacobin tradition": Jardin and Tudesq, *Restoration and Reaction*, *op. cit.*, p. 113. Cf. also: McLaren, "The *National*...", *op. cit.*, pp. 324-5.

<sup>64</sup> Albert de Broglie, "Armand Carrel et les controverses politiques avant et après 1848", *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 21 (1859), 5-44.

sincèrement libéral qui anime toute la polémique de Carrel." And, he went on:

**C'est par là, c'est par un goût cordial et un respect véritable pour la liberté que Carrel était vraiment novateur et s'écartait des habitudes de la doctrine républicaine.** La république, on le sait en effet, n'avait jamais mis parmi nous **la liberté** en première ligne de ses préoccupations: sans lui refuser un culte nominal, elle lui faisait toujours prendre le pas derrière d'autres divinités plus exigeantes, derrière **l'égalité** d'abord, première passion d'un peuple démocratique, et ensuite derrière cette puissance mystérieuse et fatale..., **la révolution**.<sup>65</sup>

As Theodore Zeldin has put it, Carrel "declared that he would prefer a monarchy with a little liberty to a republic with none".<sup>66</sup> This brings us to the minimal possible definition and common denominator of French liberalism in the early nineteenth century. George Armstrong Kelly has pointed to "a kind of fissure in the culture of liberalism" and he used Constant and Tocqueville to illustrate the existence of different aspects of liberalism in France at the time in question. But he recognized as a common overarching thread their determination to "put liberty first".<sup>67</sup> Though they may not have meant exactly the same things by "liberty" or "freedom", de Broglie, Nisard, Mill and many later historians saw Carrel as putting liberty first. It will be further seen in Part 3 that it was this quality, rather than Carrel's half-hearted republicanism, that appealed to Mill.

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<sup>65</sup> According to de Broglie, Carrel was immune to his fellow republicans' advocacy of administrative centralisation, and stood for communal liberties and "le gouvernement du pays par lui-même à tous les degrés". And he "réservait avec soin et même avec une sorte de jalousie la liberté légitime de l'individu contre le despotisme anonyme et collectif de la foule.": *ibid.*, 24-5.

<sup>66</sup> Theodore Zeldin, *Ambition, Love and Politics* (Volume I of: *France 1848-1945*), Oxford, 1973, p. 500. Cf. B. Constant's views to this effect as presented by Rémusat, quoted in: George Armstrong Kelly, *The Humane Comedy: Constant, Tocqueville, and French Liberalism*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 5.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-6.

It is noteworthy that in 1833-1834 Mill praised Carrel (as far as his political views were concerned) for his moderation and sobriety as well as his struggles for freedom of the press. It was only in 1837 that he came to stress Carrel's "théorie du droit commun", his concern for the rule of law, for securities against the encroachments of the executive, protection of all parties alike, etc. Though the two aspects are not unconnected, there was more in the later essay than in those of 1833-1834. This development (besides showing perhaps some influence from Nisard's work on Carrel) must reflect Mill's overall appreciation of the outcome of the July Revolution and the deficiency it showed in French political attitudes and culture. His most acute disappointment must have come after the insurrections of April 1834 in Lyons and Paris and their aftermath.<sup>68</sup> In the articles on French politics in the early 1830s Mill emphasised accountability, the recognition of the need for an extension of the suffrage, liberty of the press and so on.<sup>69</sup> In 1837 ("Armand Carrel") he seems to be more preoccupied with some deeper traits of "the national mind" that had to be altered if any measures were to give fruit. These preoccupations were to increase as frustrations disillusioned Mill about the chances of rapid progress.

### 3. MILL AND THE FRENCH PARTIES IN THE 1830s.

No attempt has been made by scholars to identify which parties and personalities Mill supported at different stages (beyond the references to his

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<sup>68</sup> Note in this context that the relatively sanguine article "State of Opinion in France", referred to in Part 1, had been written before the uprisings, in March 1834: *CW*, XXIII, 691-7.

<sup>69</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, 694-5.

infatuation with Carrel) and how far he went in support of each.

In his *Autobiography* Mill wrote that the July Revolution prompted him to go to Paris, where he "was introduced to Lafayette, and laid the groundwork of the intercourse I afterwards kept up with several of the active chiefs of the extreme popular party".<sup>70</sup> In 1864, he wrote to Edwin Chadwick, with regard to an invitation which would have resulted in his meeting Louis Philippe's fourth son, who lived in England:

I have...declined the invitation of the Duc d'Aumale. The fact is, **my sympathies with the Republican party in France are so strong** that I cannot willingly place myself under an obligation to a conspicuous person of any other party, however high a respect I may have for him individually, and however glad I should be to meet him at any other person's house.<sup>71</sup>

These two statements can serve to introduce the problems of what exactly was the popular party Mill sympathised with in the early 1830s, how extreme it was, how far he went in support for its more extreme wing, and what he meant in 1864 by "the Republican party in France".<sup>72</sup>

It will be shown in the following pages that Mill fell short of supporting the most extreme wing of what he called the "popular party", although he often felt called upon to defend even it against exaggerated reproaches. He reserved his wholehearted

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<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 179. See Ann Robson, Introduction to *Newspaper writings, op. cit.*, xlix: "Mill used 'popular' not to mean representing majority opinion among the people, but being on the side of the people, on the side of history."

<sup>71</sup> Letter of 18 March 1864: *CW*, XV, 929.

<sup>72</sup> The last enquiry will be pursued in Part 4. It is clear that the term "party" is used rather loosely here and by no means implies any coherent party organization in a contemporary sense. Cf. Mill's comment: *ibid.*, XXIII, 662; cf. also: Claude Nicolet, *L'Idée Républicaine en France (1789-1924): Essai d'Histoire Critique*, Paris, 1982, p. 135.



support for those persons and factions of the French *mouvement* who, in Kelly's terms, "put liberty first". That most of Mill's favourites were republicans was more a result of accidental circumstances than of his having any pronounced preference for republicanism *per se* in France.

Thus, the examination of Mill's views concerning the political groupings existing in France can illuminate his attitude towards republicanism in France. Such an enquiry is all the more significant, as what is taken to be Mill's unqualified support for the French republicans has been adduced as one of the points that prove his alleged latent "republicanism".<sup>73</sup> It is argued in the following account that Mill's attitude towards the French republicans fails to substantiate such contentions. In Constant's terminology, Mill was not prepared to sacrifice a certain irreducible degree of "liberty of the moderns" to the liberty of the ancient republics;<sup>74</sup> in fact, in his final verdict on the failure of freedom and progress in France, he came close to suggesting that the French had been confusing the two to their detriment.<sup>75</sup> Thus,

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<sup>73</sup> Stewart Justman, *The Hidden Text of Mill's Liberty*, Savage, Maryland, 1991, pp. 5, 8, 25-6, 30-1, 35, 43, 50, 51-2, 55, 56.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. the reviews of Guizot's historical works, where Mill agreed unreservedly with Guizot's assertion that "the spirit of liberty...as it exists in the modern world", in the sense of independence, was a phenomenon that first appeared in modern Europe and was absent in the ancient republics: "The liberty of the ancient commonwealths did not mean individual freedom of action; it meant a certain form of political organization; and instead of asserting the private freedom of each citizen, it was compatible with a more complete subjection of every individual to the State, and a more active interference of the ruling powers with private conduct, than is the practice of what are now deemed the most despotic governments. The modern spirit of liberty, on the contrary, is love of individual independence; the claim for freedom of action, with as little interference as is compatible with the necessities of society, from any authority other than the conscience of the individual.": *CW*, XX, 274. The statement of the same view in the earlier review (1836) was even more boldly formulated: see *ibid.*, 383-4.

<sup>75</sup> See *infra*, Part 4; also Chapter VII, Part 5.

Mill's support for a section of the French republicans should not be interpreted as support for classical republicanism,<sup>76</sup> since it should be clear by now that he did not support Carrel primarily because he was a republican, but rather supported the republicans because liberals such as Carrel had joined them. One of the ideas Mill stressed in "Armand Carrel" was Carrel's exceptional role within the republican movement in that he accorded priority to individual liberty, free expression, liberty of the press, genuinely representative government, the protection of and justice to minorities, and the limitation of the powers of the executive. These ideas were not part of the French republican agenda as such<sup>77</sup> but were engrafted onto it by a minority of liberals who adopted the cause of the republic in the early years of the July Monarchy, when they became disillusioned with the conservatism of their former allies, particularly the *Doctrinaires*. In supporting Carrel and his followers Mill was simply opting for the *mouvement* liberals as opposed to the *résistance* liberals (the *Doctrinaires*),<sup>78</sup> rather than making a choice between liberalism and republicanism

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<sup>76</sup> The first thing to be borne in mind in any discussion of Mill's attitude to French republicanism is that "the republic", in France, meant different things to different people at different periods. As Claude Nicolet has put it, it was one of the "mot voyageurs" of French political discourse: see Nicolet, *L'Idée Républicaine...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-34.

<sup>77</sup> Cf., on the last point: *ibid.*, p. 141: "Les républicains, depuis Saint-Juste jusqu'à François Dupont, n'avaient cessé de réclamer -- contre les libéraux -- un 'pouvoir d'État fort', pourvu que ce pouvoir gouvernât 'dans l'intérêt social' et pour le peuple." Enough has been said in Parts 1 and 2 to show that one of the things that Mill regarded as most urgently needed in France was the limitation of the powers of the executive. This was a view on which he insisted already in "Armand Carrel" (*CW*, XX, 191-2, 206) and which was to be one of the points he stressed most pointedly in the 1860s in both *Representative Government* (*ibid.*, XIX, 420-1) and "Centralisation" (*ibid.*, 581-613).

<sup>78</sup> It was the *résistance* liberals' reluctance to condone any extension of the suffrage that most alienated Mill.

(or civic humanism) or choosing between the monarchical and the republican forms of government.<sup>79</sup>

In the third of the letters the young Mill sent to his father from Paris he noted that the decision of the Chamber of Deputies to give the crown to the Duke of Orleans "was perhaps a matter politically wise, or at least necessary".<sup>80</sup>

In "Prospects of France, IV",<sup>81</sup> before explaining to his readers the demands of "the popular party", he deemed it necessary, in order to controvert what he saw as the misconceptions and misinformation disseminated by the British press, to state what the "popular party" did not demand or stand for. The first thing he disavowed on their behalf was a demand for a republic: "**The popular party does not demand a republican government.**" The reason why the British press thought most of the opposition was republican was that they were "so ignorant...as not to know that **the sovereignty of the people**<sup>82</sup> does not mean republicanism": "So far as kingship is concerned, it means simply this -- that kings shall be first magistrates, and nothing more". This was "the admitted doctrine" and actual practice of the British

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<sup>79</sup> What is said here does not mean either to imply that Mill was an exponent purely and simply of "negative liberty" in Isaiah Berlin's sense, or to deny the presence in his thought and vocabulary of themes connected with republicanism (cf. Skorupski, *J.S. Mill, op. cit.*, pp. 20, 45-6; Semmel, *John Stuart Mill and the Pursuit of Virtue, op. cit., passim*; Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals, op. cit.*, pp. 79-81, 92, and *passim*; Justman, *The Hidden Text..., op. cit., passim*). It is argued, however, that, in the first place, Mill's attitude to French politics does not provide the kind of proofs of Mill's flirting with republicanism that it is sometimes held to provide, and, in the second place, that an analysis of his attitude to French political factions brings into relief the limits of his sympathies with these ideals.

<sup>80</sup> *CW*, XII, 60-1 (The letter was sent on 21 August and printed in the *Examiner* on 29 August 1830).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 149-58 (10 October 1830).

<sup>82</sup> Which was what the French "popular party" spokesmen kept invoking.

government, and could therefore be exculpated from any suspicion of being a republican principle.

On the other hand, Mill himself objected to the notion of popular sovereignty for different reasons. Though it expressed no more than the Whig maxim "that the people are the source of all legitimate power", Mill regretted "as much as it is possible for any one to do, **the habit which still prevails in France, of founding political philosophy on this and similar abstractions**".<sup>83</sup> The "cause of popular governments" stood in no need of such abstractions, while it sustained "great injury" from their misapplications. All that was required in order to establish convincingly "that the people ought to have the control" was "[t]he demonstrable impossibility of practical good government without the control of the people".<sup>84</sup>

Mill was even more worried about the "mischievous interpretation" of which "the sovereignty of the people" was susceptible, when it came to practice. It was in this article that, as he was to tell Tocqueville five years later, he first put forward the distinction between delegation and representation.<sup>85</sup> The sovereignty of the people "[countenanced] the notion" that the representatives of the people were "servants" of the people, whose will the representatives were merely to ascertain and execute. To this metaphor Mill preferred that of "a guardian".<sup>86</sup> Yet, he asserted that the French of his day did not misapply the notion of the sovereignty of the people in that

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<sup>83</sup> Justman invoked as one of the proofs of Mill's republican leanings his endorsement of "popular sovereignty", propagated by the French republicans: see Justman, *The Hidden Text...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 55.

<sup>84</sup> *CW*, XXII, 149-50.

<sup>85</sup> See letter of 11 December 1835: *ibid.*, XII, 288.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 150-1.

manner, though "their predecessors, the Jacobins" did. In contemporary debates the phrase was used simply "as an equivalent expression to the negation of divine right."<sup>87</sup> The "popular party" had no wish to overturn the throne. He spoke, he asserted, "from considerable opportunities of observation, both among **the more active and influential of the young men who now head the popular party, and among the patriots of more established character and more mature years.**" From the latter he had heard "nothing but eulogiums on the personal character and public inclinations" of both Louis Philippe and his heir apparent. As for the former, the younger men, "even those in active hostility to the present ministry", declared "that if it had depended solely upon them, **they would have raised Louis Philippe to the throne, not before, indeed, but after, the reform of the constitution.**" Having said this, Mill had no intention of making secret of the young men's inclinations as a matter of principle: they were "speculative republicans". "**They think, -- how should they help thinking? that the progress of events, and of the human mind, is leading irresistibly towards republicanism.**" Yet, they were aware that their country was not sufficiently advanced to be capable of such a government.<sup>88</sup> This was why "the speculative republicans" had sacrificed their republican opinions, and cooperated readily in giving effect to the wish of the majority. Besides, the

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<sup>87</sup> This was actually true of Carrel: see Jennings, "Nationalist Ideas...", *op. cit.*, p. 506.

<sup>88</sup> Mill stressed that they knew that the transition would be too sudden and that "[t]he habits of obedience, formed under a kingly government, could not be all at once transferred to a republican one".

republicans formed "a very small fraction of the party opposed to the ministry".<sup>89</sup>

Mill had started by being hostile to the majority of the Chamber and most of the members of the ministry of its choice<sup>90</sup> and on 7 November he announced with obvious satisfaction that the "**fraction of the old administration, which was opposed to popular measures**" had resigned.<sup>91</sup> The vacancies in the Cabinet had been "filled by new appointments, said to be made under the auspices of **M. Laffitte** and **M. Dupont de l'Eure**", and Mill was hopeful that the new ministry would be much more progressive.<sup>92</sup> But by 5 December he had come to make no secret of his increasing disillusionment with the Laffitte ministry which he accused of "a pitiful attempt to compromise with the majority of the Chamber" (on account of the reports concerning the election law that the government intended to propose, which fell far short of his expectations). He added that "the disgust occasioned by the acts and evident purposes of the men who [had] got the powers of government into their hands" had "**resuscitated the republican party**". The elevation of Louis Philippe to the throne "without first calling together a Congress like that of Belgium, and remodelling the Constitution", had "long been regretted". But now, more and more

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<sup>89</sup> CW, XXII, 151-2. After having explained what the popular party did not demand, Mill came to state what their demands really were. They were "comprised under the four following heads: 1. The conditions of eligibility. 2. Those of the elective franchise. 3. Municipal institutions. 4. The peerage.": *ibid.*, 153. Mill devoted the remainder of the articles of the "Prospects of France" series to presenting and commenting on these demands.

<sup>90</sup> See *ibid.*, XII, 59-60.

<sup>91</sup> He was referring obviously to the resignations of Guizot, Broglie, Périer, Molé and Dupin.

<sup>92</sup> On 14 November 1830 he expressed high expectations based on rumours of what the provisions of the Election Law that the Laffitte ministry was going to introduce were expected to be: *ibid.*, XXII, 190-1.

people were coming to regret "that a King and a Court were re-established at all".<sup>93</sup>

On 2 January 1831 Mill came to criticize Louis Philippe himself. He noted that it had been "distinctly notified to the King, that he must now choose between the new oligarchy and the people": "He has chosen the oligarchy; and Lafayette, Odilon Barrot, and Dupont de l'Eure, are consequently no longer in office".<sup>94</sup> And on 13 February 1831 he launched a direct and explicit onslaught on Louis Philippe, saying that the King had "taken off the mask" and had "adopted the cant of the stationary or stagnation party."<sup>95</sup> On 10 April 1831 he gave vent to increasing frustration with the French King and government and attacked the ferocity of these self-styled "*moderates*", stressing the moderation exhibited by the opposition.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 208. On 23 January 1831 in introducing Martin Maillefer, a republican journalist, who was to be the correspondent of the *Examiner* in France, Mill wrote that the latter was to offer the readers a fair specimen of the views "**of the younger and more ardent portion of the popular party**". He felt obliged to add: "We are not responsible for all the opinions of our correspondent, nor do we expect that he will never express any sentiments in which we should disagree." : *ibid.*, 246-7.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 224. In the same article he went on to observe with satisfaction that "[t]here are now symptoms of a strenuous and united opposition, both in the Chamber and without it. We may hope that now at least the scabbard will be thrown away." He went on to envisage "**an opposition party headed by Lafayette**, and comprising such men as **Dupont [de l'Eure], de Tracy, de Cormenin, Voyer d'Argenson, de Salverte, Isambert, and Odilon Barrot**...and backed by almost every man in France under five-and-thirty", which he thought was to be "a power which no one dares despise; and, by earnest and well-directed exertions, is sure of ultimate victory.": *ibid.*, 227.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 259-63. Thus, Mill started attacking openly Louis Philippe earlier than Carrel, who did not start warning the King before the beginning of March, and came to attack him directly in the summer of 1831: See McLaren, "The *National*...", *op. cit.*, pp. 110-2. Cf. *CW*, XXII, 275.

<sup>96</sup> He adduced as examples of that moderation "**the speeches of MM. Mauguin and Odilon Barrot**, in the recent debate on the Patriotic Associations." It was at this point that Mill proceeded to explain the so-called war party's position on foreign affairs, by maintaining that what they were contending for was not intervention, but rather the enforcement of non-intervention through counter-intervention, if necessary:

In a long article on the "State of Parties in France" (28 August 1831)<sup>97</sup> Mill commented with satisfaction on the results of the elections to the Chamber of Deputies that had taken place in July. The renovation of the Chamber's personnel was far more favourable to the popular cause than what had been anticipated from the very limited franchise (even under the new electoral law). The "**Liberal party**"<sup>98</sup> had, he wrote, "sufficiently increased in strength, to influence, though not to govern, the decisions of the entire body", and consequently he expected that "all propositions, tending to the removal of defects, and the introduction of progressive improvements in the institutions and social condition of France", would meet with a far more favourable reception from the new Chamber than from its predecessor. He undertook to make the "people of England" understand "the real character of the two great parties between whom the political public of France is at present divided", implying that most existing reports of the subject were highly flawed. Thus, he ridiculed the notion, widely held in England, "that the whole of the opposition to the present Ministry of France consists of **Republicans and Bonapartists**." His retort was that the Bonapartists rather than oppose any government had accepted the places and honours that Louis Philippe had lavished upon them. As for the Republicans, "(though a great noise is kept up about them by the King and the Ministry, in order

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see *supra*, chapter III. On 17 April 1831 Mill reported on the trial of the pretended Republican conspirators of December (*ibid.*, 302); and on 24 April 1831 he translated for the readers of the *Examiner* G. Cavaignac's defence in court: *ibid.*, 303.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, 336-41.

<sup>98</sup> In this article Mill referred interchangeably to "the Liberal party" (336), "the popular party" (336), and "the party of the movement" (337). As to their opponents, he referred to them as "the Ministerial, or stationary party" (337) and "the *statu quo* party" (338).



to make a bulwark for themselves of the superstitious terror which that word excites in the minds of the French nation), **they are really very few in number**". Besides, they were "not accustomed to act in concert", and were "confined almost entirely to Paris, consisting principally of very young men, and not likely, unless aided by some grievous blunder of the Government, to have any echo in France for many years to come." While this was the case with the republicans:

**The Opposition party, on the contrary**, is powerful and united, strong in the fame and abilities of its Parliamentary leaders, strong in its alliance with the prevailing tendencies of the national mind: long since predominant in the press and in the nation;<sup>99</sup> already of equal strength, and certain to be soon a majority, in the strong-hold of its adversaries, the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>100</sup>

There was a "fundamental difference between the Ministerial party and the Opposition", which proceeded "from the difference in their habitual feelings". Though there was not among the numerous body of the deputies of the two parties such a clarity of "fixed principles, and systematically consistent opinions" as there was among their leaders, what counted was the difference in character and instincts of the members of the two groups. Thus, "the ministerial party" was "governed by the instinct of conservation", while "the opposition by the instinct of progression". Hence their happy characterization as "**the party of Resistance**", and that of "**Movement**" respectively. The progressive party, thanks to the recent elections, were "barely not a majority in the Chamber of Deputies" and "are now sure of ultimate preponderance". This being the case, he stressed:

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<sup>99</sup> Carrel was, by the summer of 1831, decidedly in the ranks of the large Opposition party Mill was referring to and did not make his declaration of republicanism before 3 January 1832: see the *National* of that date (or: Carrel, *Oeuvres*, III, pp. 3-9; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 10-14).

<sup>100</sup> *CW*, XXIII, 338-9.

More rapid progress than this we do not desire for them; ... Great changes should not be made at the first moment when a bare majority can be obtained for them. The idlest fears, the most unfounded dislikes, must have some time allowed them to wear off. Nothing which can be gained by a slight acceleration of the improvement of institutions, is an equivalent for the danger incurred when they improve faster than the minds of a large and powerful part of the nation.

He added, in a tone indicating his identification with the French "Opposition party", that he perceived "with pleasure, and if the phrase may be permitted us, with pride", that while those who called themselves "the moderate party" had shown themselves to be far from moderate in the debates, "the popular leaders" had maintained a commendable "dignity...calmness...and...forbearance". He pointed to two recent speeches of "their principal orator, M. Odilon Barrot", in which "this wise and eloquent patriot" had exemplified their moderation and abstention from "violent sentiments or exaggeratedly democratic opinions."<sup>101</sup>

However, as much as he identified with the progressive feelings of the "Opposition party", Mill did not agree with all of their policies; nor did he refrain from giving public expression to his dissent from them. Thus, in "The Peerage question in France" (4 September 1831), he found himself obliged to disagree with their proposals and agree with those of Casimir-Périer.<sup>102</sup> He was also critical of

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 340-1.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 344-5. The heredity of the peerage was to be abolished and Périer wanted the new Peers to be named for life by the King. Mill opposed to the opposition's proposal for a partial introduction of the principle of popular election of the Peers. He retorted that "no functionary who holds his place for life, ought to be chosen by popular election" on account of the impossibility of there existing the necessary "sense of undivided responsibility" in as numerous a body as the whole electorate. Again, concerning the same issue, on 23 October 1831, he expressed disagreement with the opposition's schemes, which appeared to him to be "bad": *ibid.*, 358. See *ibid.*, 359, for Mill's own proposals.

some arguments used by the opposition to advocate retrenchment, though he favoured their demand for retrenchment itself.<sup>103</sup>

As republican activity (and, along with it, government repression) increased, Mill came more and more to address the issue of republican agitation in its various forms --and its varying degrees of legality. On 29 January 1832 he attacked the government because, "[n]ot content with prosecuting the republicans for publishing their speculative opinions, M. Périer has now instituted a prosecution of a similar kind against the chiefs of the St. Simonians." He remarked, in this context: **"The republicans have often been intemperate in addressing the public, and have shown that they would at least not be sorry if the consequence of their writings were an insurrection;** but the St. Simonians are as mild and pacific in their opinions and in their language as the Quakers themselves".<sup>104</sup>

Not long after this he delivered an attack on conspirators, while at the same time asserting that most Frenchmen (including, he believed, most of the republicans) had "long outgrown" that "juvenile folly". Through experience they had found **"that it is not possible to carry a great nation by a *coup de main*".** The only conspiracy which was not absurd, was "a conspiracy of the public itself, in the face of day".

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 401-2 (29 January 1832). Cf. *ibid.*, 402: "It is remarkable, how far the French public is behind ours on some questions of finance." Even "such men as M. Laffitte" "who, undoubtedly, among French financiers, must be deemed a highly instructed man", held some untenable views. Cf. *ibid.*, 405-6. He also was to write on 8 April 1832 that "on the great questions of commercial legislation, the Périer ministry, though not coming up to several of the leading members of the Opposition, is far ahead of the great bulk of either party": *ibid.*, 439.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 403. Mill had, a week earlier, criticized the government's prosecution and handling of the trial of "several young men, members of the Société des Amis du Peuple" who had been tried "for circulating some republican pamphlets": *ibid.*, 396-7 (these republicans were: Auguste Blanqui, Henri Bonnias, de Caen, Raspail, and Thouret). Cf. *ibid.*, XXII, 303.

And most of the French had realized this amply "after the memorable lesson of the three days", during which the overthrow of a régime "came to pass as it were in a moment, almost without difficulty or resistance, when the hour had come, and the silent march of events had prepared the nation". And:

The few...raw and hot-headed young men, who look with favour upon schemes for subverting the present French government by force, have yet to learn, that any attempt on the part of a minority, to impose upon a nation institutions not called for by a **majority of those who habitually take part in public affairs**, is a crime...and that such an attempt, if it could be successful, is **almost the only event which could now seriously retard the progress of political reform**. It is the merest illusion to suppose that a government, established against the will of an **active majority**, whatever may be its name or forms, can be a free government.

Consequently, "every person in France of the slightest pretensions to sense or talents", directed their exertions "to one only end, that of influencing the public mind".<sup>105</sup>

By the spring of 1832 he was growing weary of the unproductive debates and the procrastination in the French Chambers, while the prospects of reform seemed far more promising at home.<sup>106</sup> Then came the insurrection of June 1832. Mill's reaction to the events of June has been discussed already.<sup>107</sup> The June days coincided with an attempt of the parliamentary opposition to assert some influence, manifested with the so-called *compte rendu*.<sup>108</sup> Mill was happy to be able to scold

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, 407-8 (12 February 1832).

<sup>106</sup> See *ibid.*, 453-9, 461-2.

<sup>107</sup> See Part 1; and: *CW*, XXIII, 485-7 (24 June 1832).

<sup>108</sup> The opposition or *compte rendu* party, headed by non-republican liberals like Laffitte and Odilon-Barrot, included the republican deputies such as Lafayette and Arago. On the *compte rendu* of June 1832 see Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-4.

the *Times* for its past failure to notice the very existence of this large opposition party, which represented the majority of the nation, and was at the same time content that such an influential newspaper did justice to that party at long last.<sup>109</sup>

He continued reporting, in the fall of 1832, the increase in parliamentary strength of the "intermediate party" (*le tiers parti*), headed by Dupin. On 2 December 1832 he wrote that Dupin had been elected President of the Chamber of Deputies by an overwhelming majority. The Opposition candidate (Laffitte) had been "completely defeated". The strength of the Opposition in the Chamber amounted to "about 150 members, being ten more than the number who signed the *compte rendu*".<sup>110</sup> Thus:

The Chamber, as at present constituted, is for the *status quo*; it approves all that has been done hitherto, but is for doing nothing more. It is thus distinguished equally from the *mouvement* party, who advocate the further extension of popular rights, and from the *doctrinaires*, who advised the recent violation of the Constitution,<sup>111</sup> who supported the hereditary peerage, and would restore it to-morrow if they could, who regret the downfall of the exiled dynasty, and accept the Revolution of 1830 only as an unavoidable misfortune. The *bourgeois* oligarchy, who have enthroned themselves in the yet warm seats of the feudal aristocracy, have that very common taste which makes men desire to level down to themselves, but not an inch lower.

Mill was equally opposed to both the *Doctrinaires* and the "intermediate party", on account of their desire to block progress.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *CW*, XXIII, 484 (17 June 1832).

<sup>110</sup> See *ibid.*, 466.

<sup>111</sup> He was referring to the repressive measures following the insurrection of 5 June, which included the placing of Paris in a "state of siege".

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 531. Cf. what he was to write on these two parties on 17 August 1834: *ibid.*, 746. Meanwhile, on 9 December 1832 he reported that "[t]he Intermediates, or M. Dupin's party, have for the present thrown their entire weight into the Ministerial scale.": *ibid.*, 532. The "ministerial scale" was that of the *Doctrinaires*,

His reporting of French politics then became less frequent, and on 31 March 1833, when he wrote again on French news, he felt obliged to explain that he had discontinued his usual notices of French affairs, because of the paltriness of all that was going on in the country.<sup>113</sup> He reported (5 January 1834) the continued strength of the ministerial side and the growing weakness of the "non-republican opposition" or "*opposition dynastique*".<sup>114</sup>

On 12 January 1834 Mill announced that he was to present, in the next number of the *Examiner*, the exact principles and objects of the *Société des Droits de l'Homme*, in order to expose the "false impressions" that "some English journals" were propagating respecting it, "for the purpose of discrediting its intentions" in the same manner as the Government papers in France had already done. He hastened to stress "that the *Société des Droits de l'Homme* represents only a fraction of the **Republican party, if party it can be called**". This fraction carried its views of innovation "further than even what are considered the most violent of the Republican newspapers". And though it held "the entire insurrectional strength of the party in its hands", or rather was "the only Republican party which any person in his senses believes to meditate insurrection", it was the case that "**the Republican cause for purposes of discussion and popular enlightenment is in far more efficient as well**

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who dominated the ministry that had been appointed in October 1832 (cf. Mill's article on that government, which he described as "a Tory Ministry", on 21 October 1832: *ibid.*, 512-6).

<sup>113</sup> The article in September 1833, in response to the *Quarterly Review* (see Part 1) had been written in the context of this pessimistic outlook on the prospects of French politics: *ibid.*, 593-5.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 658.

as more temperate hands."<sup>115</sup> Mill meant Carrel's hands apparently.

This presentation of the differences within the republican camp was followed by a comment that suggests that the republicans did not monopolize Mill's interest or hopes:

**In separating itself avowedly from Republicanism, the opposition in the Chamber has taken the only means by which it could have a chance of recovering some political importance.** The Chamber is no place for advocating doctrines in advance of the existing charter; for such the press is the proper organ;... **There is still room in the Chamber for a Constitutional or Monarchical opposition;** but the men whose opinions fitted them for composing such a party, by merely carping at the measures of Government in detail, without wedding themselves to any principle, had allowed all popular influence to pass out of their hands into those of the bolder, more consistent, and, we must add, abler men who form the Republican opposition out of doors. **They are now making an effort, and of the right kind, to redeem themselves from the insignificance into which they have sunk; they have declared unequivocally their political creed.** They are adverse to a new revolution, adverse to the abolition of hereditary Monarchy; but they contend strongly for a large extension of the suffrage in the election of members of the Chamber of Deputies.

The French people were "at last awakening to the truth...**that the constitution of the representative body is the really vital question of Government; and that their own rests on far too narrow a basis.**"<sup>116</sup>

This article has been given extensive notice here, because it epitomizes Mill's attitude towards the parties and factions that existed in France at the time in question. It is clear, in the first place, that between the republicans of the *Société des Droits*

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<sup>115</sup> For Mill's full description of the character of the society see his article of 26 January 1834: *ibid.*, 670-4. There he asserted that their anti-property doctrines, if such there be, had a good effect in making the upper classes "uneasy", which was the best way to convince them that they had to do something to ameliorate the lot of the lower classes. Cf. *Autobiography: ibid.*, I, 179 (178) (cf. also: *ibid.*, XVII, 1875).

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, 661-3.

*de l'Homme* and the moderate republicans such as Carrel<sup>117</sup> Mill was decidedly in favour of the latter, while at the same time trying to defend the former from some of the accusations that had been raised against them (which he knew could not fail to cause damage to the whole movement).<sup>118</sup>

In the second place, with regard to **republican** as opposed to **non-republican** ("dynastic", "Constitutional or Monarchical") opposition, Mill did not have strong opinions. But his support for the non-republican opposition party was qualified, due to what he saw as the incompetence of the leaders of that party. As he put it in the text quoted above, "the men whose opinions fitted them for composing such a party", had lost "popular influence" because they had been, in the past, "merely carping at the measures of Government in detail, without wedding themselves to any principle".<sup>119</sup> What attracted Mill to "the Republican opposition out of doors" was that they were "bolder, more consistent, and...abler men" than Odilon Barrot and his followers.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Cf. his identification of two different kinds of republicans in his letter to Carlyle of 25 November 1833, shortly after he returned from France. There Mill had spoken of "[t]he revolutionary part of the republicans" and of "the other republicans" (*ibid.*, XII, 193) and he had referred to Godefroy Cavaignac and Carrel as "leaders of two very different sorts of republicans": *ibid.*, 194. On the divisions among the republicans see: Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-9; John Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement in France 1815-71*, London, 1952, pp. 38-48 (especially p. 48).

<sup>118</sup> Cf. "Armand Carrel": *CW*, XX, 203-7.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Mill's numerous statements during the early 1830s to the effect that progressive parties should profess boldly their **principles**, even if they were to accept to compromise on specific measures: see, for instance, *ibid.*, XXIII, 589-90; also: *Autobiography*, *ibid.*, I, 203.

<sup>120</sup> Mill's attitude to the dynastic opposition and its leaders (in particular Odilon Barrot and Mauguin) can be traced through some comments he made in his correspondence: see *ibid.*, XII, 256, 281-2.



On 20 April 1834 he remarked, with reference to the uprisings of that month in Lyons and in Paris that **"[t]hat portion of the more hot-headed political malcontents** who, without having premeditated an insurrection, are always ready to join in one, attempted to form barricades, but were speedily overpowered"; the result would be that **"the penalty of their folly will now be borne by the French people, on whose necks they have helped to rivet the yoke of an iron despotism."**<sup>121</sup> The repression that followed confirmed Mill's predictions.<sup>122</sup>

One of the most interesting issues arising from Mill's comments on Carrel's political views was that concerning Carrel's republicanism. Towards the end of "Armand Carrel" Mill wrote that though "Carrel never abandoned republicanism, it necessarily, after the laws of September [1835], ceased to be so prominent" in the *National*. Instead:

He felt the necessity of rallying under one standard all who were agreed in the essential point, opposition to the oligarchy; and he was one of the most earnest in demanding **an extension of the suffrage; that vital point**, the all-importance of which France has been so slow to recognise, and **which it is so much to be regretted that he had not chosen from the first, instead of republicanism, to be the**

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, 705. On the April uprisings and their repercussions see Collingham, *The July Monarchy, op. cit.*, pp. 157-67. The "portion of the more hot-headed political malcontents" Mill referred to in this article were republicans, members of the *Société des Droits de l'Homme*, but acting without the approval of the leader Cavaignac and the majority of the committee; they represented "about a third of the membership of the organisation": see *ibid.*, 157, 159-60.

<sup>122</sup> And, certainly, the involvement of the most "hot-headed" republicans in the insurrections did the republican movement no good in the next elections. Nor did "the liberal opposition" (as he now called the non-republican opposition party) fare much better, in comparison to its previous strength. Thus, on 6 July 1834, Mill reported that the strength of the liberal opposition had "diminished from about 140 to about 100", and that: "Every avowed Republican has been eliminated from the Chamber": *CW*, XXIII, 737-8.

immediate aim of his political life.<sup>123</sup>

In his answer to Carrel's complaints about the treatment of French affairs by the British press<sup>124</sup> Mill assured the French journalist (who had, by that time, declared himself in favour of a republic) that "[t]he popular party in England" thought "as ill of the...French Government as M. Carrel himself", and that they were "anxious...that republican institutions, whether with an elective or hereditary chief, should be firmly established in France".<sup>125</sup> The English popular party supported their "friends and brothers the French patriots", because they had the same cause: "it is the cause of improvement against stagnation, of public spirit and virtue against corruption and intrigue".<sup>126</sup> Thus, he tried in this statement to express solidarity with the *mouvement* or "popular party" (which included the republicans), while at the same time remaining ultimately uncommitted as to the form of government (republic or constitutional monarchy).

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 209. Cf. Mill's letter to Tocqueville in September 1835: *ibid.*, XII, 272. Cf. McLaren, "The *National*...", *op. cit.*, pp. 98, 101-2, 132 (n. 69). Cf. also Mill's statement in his letter (29 February 1848) to Chapman, concerning the French Revolution of 1848: *CW*, XIII, 731; cf. this with Carrel, *Extrait du dossier...*, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>124</sup> See *supra*, Chapter IV, Part 1.

<sup>125</sup> Ann Robson, commenting on the passage referred to above (*CW*, XXIII, 530) wrote that: "Mill's sense of 'republican' is fifty years earlier than that cited by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which gives a quotation from the *Quarterly Review* of 1885: 'Republic lately came to mean a government resting on a widely extended suffrage': A. Robson, Introduction to *Newspaper Writings*, *op. cit.*, lxii (n.78). The meaning Mill attributed to "republican institutions with...[a] hereditary chief" must be more or less what Carrel had been campaigning for before his declaration of adherence to the republican form: see Carrel's article in the *National* of 16 February 1831, where he clamoured most forcibly for "une monarchie populaire entourée d'institutions républicaines": *Oeuvres*, II, pp. 110-5; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 119-23 (*Le National*, 20 February 1831).

<sup>126</sup> *CW*, XXIII, 530.

In "Armand Carrel" Mill wrote on the question of the form of government that "[w]hatever may have been Carrel's individual opinions, he did not, in the *National*, begin by being a republican". He had given the new king a fair trial, and it was not until the latter had "quarrelled with Lafayette, driven Dupont de l'Eure and Laffitte from office, and called Casimir Périer to his councils for the avowed purpose of turning back the movement", that Carrel turned to republicanism. It had been "the position which the King assumed as the head of the oligarchy", which had made Carrel a republican. Mill's own relative indifference to the form of government is reflected in the way in which he presented Carrel's attitude: **"He was no fanatic, to care about a name, and was too essentially practical in his turn of mind to fight for a mere abstract principle."**<sup>127</sup> Rather, the object of his declaration of republicanism had been "a thoroughly practical one -- to strike at the ringleader of the opposite party; and, if it were impossible to overthrow him, to do what was possible -- to deprive him of the support of opinion." Assessing Carrel's advocacy of a republic Mill resorted to ambiguous language:

Events have decided against Carrel, and it is easy, judging after the fact, to pronounce that the position he took up was not a wise one. We do not contend that it was so; but we do contend, that he might think it so, with very little disparagement to his judgment.<sup>128</sup>

In explaining the Frenchman's position, Mill reminded his readers that "kingly government" or "constitutional royalty" was being recommended by its supporters on the condition that a constitutional monarch does not himself govern but "confines himself to appointing responsible ministers, and even in that, does but ascertain and

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<sup>127</sup> Cf. *National*, 14 August 1832; and *ibid.*, 27 March 1833 (for this latter see also: *Oeuvres*, II, pp. 374-82..

<sup>128</sup> *CW*, XX, 198-9.

give effect to the national will." When that condition was observed (as it was, "on the whole, faithfully observed" in Britain, Mill remarked) it was asked, "and very reasonably, what more could be expected from a republic?" There was no benefit in "opening the highest office in the State...as a prize to be scrambled for by every ambitious and turbulent spirit, who is willing to keep the community, for his benefit, in the mean turmoil of a perpetual canvass". Mill went on to remark:

**These are the arguments used: they are, in the present state of society, unanswerable; and we should not say a word for Carrel, if the French government bore, or ever had borne, the most distant resemblance to this idea of constitutional royalty. But it never did.**

No French king had ever confined himself within the limits that the theory of constitutional monarchy designated. Carrel was therefore justified in demanding that, "if the chief functionary was to be his own minister...he should be a responsible one." Thus, in opting for a republic, Carrel was simply defending the "principle of a responsible executive".

Now, as far as "the *dangers* of a republic" were concerned, Mill's answer was that one had to remember the "impression made on all Europe by the bravery, the integrity and chivalrous generosity", displayed during and immediately after the Three Days of July 1830 by the populace of Paris. One could be excused "to have hoped everything from a people, of whom the very lowest ranks" had acted in such a manner. Moreover, to the exemplary behaviour of the people of Paris in July, Mill added the circumstance that there was relatively little indigence in France and so many proprietors of a "piece of land" that "the respect for the right of property amounts to a superstition". It was for these reasons that Carrel's choice of

advocating a republic could not be blamed.<sup>129</sup>

It is only in the end, and very briefly, that Mill comes to what other commentators have referred to as probably Carrel's main reason for gradually passing to the ranks of the republicans:<sup>130</sup>

If among such a people there could be danger in republicanism, Carrel saw greater dangers, which could only be averted by republicanism. He saw the whole Continent armed, and ready at a moment's notice to pour into France from all sides. **He thought, and this was the principal mistake which he committed, that this collision could not be averted;**<sup>131</sup> and he thought, which was no mistake, that if it came, nothing would enable France to bear the brunt of it but that which had carried her through it before, intense popular enthusiasm. This was impossible with Louis Philippe: and if a levy *en masse* was to be again required of all citizens, it must be in a cause which should be worth fighting for, a cause in which all should feel that they had an equal stake.<sup>132</sup>

Mill then resorted to ambiguous language in order to prove that there was no contradiction between his belief that Carrel was justified in siding with the republicans and his belief that it would have been much better had he not done so.<sup>133</sup> While trying to convince his readers that Carrel's political acumen should not suffer any disparagement because of the failure of republicanism, Mill at the same time could not conceal his regret that Carrel expended his valuable gifts in advocating

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<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 199-200.

<sup>130</sup> See Collingham, *The July Monarchy*, *op. cit.*, p. 181: "What he regarded as a pusillanimous foreign policy had persuaded Armand Carrel...to take [the *National*] from its liberal Orleanism into republicanism"; cf. Jennings, "Nationalist Ideas...", *op. cit.*, 506-8; A. de Broglie, "Armand Carrel et les controverses...", *op. cit.*, 36.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. *CW*, XXII, 284.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 200 (Mill tried here to make Carrel's stance in this respect more attractive and acceptable than it actually was: cf. McLaren, "The *National*...", *op. cit.*, pp. 134-6).

<sup>133</sup> *CW*, XX, 200-1.

a republic. Mill would have preferred him to have joined forces from the beginning with the most progressive liberal elements of the non-republican ("dynastic") opposition to demand the extension of the franchise in a way that would not frighten the bourgeoisie --as any association with republicanism did, due to the memories of the first Republic.<sup>134</sup> Thus, Carrel's advocacy of republicanism was not wholeheartedly endorsed by his British admirer.

Though Mill accepted the republic as an ultimate end in the future, he was reluctant to endorse agitation for the republican form of government in the 1830s, while the popular mind was as unprepared as he had described it as being on numerous occasions.<sup>135</sup> Thus, his support for the republicans had more to do with his conviction that they were on the right side of the divide (*mouvement* versus *résistance*) and had their hearts in the right place, than with any immediate participation in their plans. He preferred them to the dynastic opposition, because at least they had clear principles. But he would prefer them to have adopted such aims as the extension of the suffrage and the **gradual** education of the national mind in principles of good government. It is characteristic that he wrote in 1848 that the republicans had succeeded because at last they had adopted the extension of the

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<sup>134</sup> It should be noted that in his newspaper writings (e.g. "State of Opinion in France, *ibid.*, XXIII, 694-5), Mill, unlike Carrel, did not put his main emphasis on the flaws of monarchy, but rather on the flaws of oligarchy: this was the lesson Louis-Philippe and his government had been teaching the French. Cf. this with Carrel's attempts (once he had declared for a republic) to show that French history had proved that monarchy did not work: see McLaren, "The *National...*", *op. cit.*, pp. 138-42.

<sup>135</sup> It has to be remembered that by "republic" Mill seems to have meant a constitution with an extended democratic franchise rather than the republic S. Justman would have one believe that Mill flirted with.

franchise rather than the establishment of a republic as their aim.<sup>136</sup> Mill praised them for having contended, during the banquets campaign, not for a republic, but rather for electoral reform. But he supported wholeheartedly only the moderate republicans best represented by Armand Carrel and whose main organ was the *National* newspaper.

#### 4. REPUBLICANS AND LIBERALS: 1848-1871.

Mill reacted to the revolution of February 1848 with enthusiasm, which was qualified by an awareness of the dangers and problems ahead. He welcomed the republic since it had been established.<sup>137</sup> Yet, he argued in 1849, in the "Vindication of the French Revolution of February 1848" that though "a republic, for France, was the most natural and congenial of all forms of free government",<sup>138</sup> "it had two great hindrances to contend with", namely "the political indifference of the majority" and "the dread inspired by the remembrance of 1793 and 1794". These two causes had "prevented the French nation in general from demanding or wishing for a republican government" and "will render its existence, even now when it is established, more or less precarious".<sup>139</sup>

On 29 February 1848 Mill had written to Henry S. Chapman to tell him "of

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<sup>136</sup> *CW*, XIII, 731.

<sup>137</sup> See, in particular, *ibid.*, XX, 330-1.

<sup>138</sup> Mill asserted that this was so because of the traits of the French national character: see *infra*, Chapter VII, Part 5.

<sup>139</sup> *CW*, XX, 332.

the extraordinary events of the last week at Paris". He was "hardly yet out of breath from reading and thinking about it. Nothing can possibly exceed the importance of it to the world or the immensity of the interests which are at stake on its success."<sup>140</sup> He lamented the fact that the man best qualified to direct such a movement, Carrel, was dead, adding that "[w]ithout Carrel, or, I fear, any one comparable to him, the futurity of France and of Europe is most doubtful."<sup>141</sup> Besides lamenting Carrel's absence, Mill did not conceal that he saw serious dangers. The first danger was that of war, and the second was the inordinately high expectations raised by the spread of "Communism". Meanwhile a National Assembly was to be called, "elected no doubt by universal suffrage, in which all the sense and all the nonsense of France will be represented, and in which there is pretty sure to be at once a schism between the bourgeois and the operatives -- a Gironde and a Montagne, though probably without any guillotine."<sup>142</sup>

His subsequent correspondence shows that, though increasingly open to experiments aiming at the improvement of the lot of the "operatives", Mill sympathised more strongly with the politics of the "Gironde", faithful to his youthful aspiration to become himself "a Girondist in an English Convention".<sup>143</sup> Around

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<sup>140</sup> It was in this letter that Mill wrote that: "The republicans have succeeded because *at last* they had the good sense to raise the standard not of a republic but of something in which the middle classes could join, viz., electoral reform": *ibid.*, XIII, 731. Cf. Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 57, 59-60.

<sup>141</sup> *CW*, XIII, 731-2; cf. Bain, *J.S. Mill*, *op. cit.*, p. 94. Mill was expressing a view shared by many in France in 1848: see McLaren, "The *National...*", *op. cit.*, pp. 57-8; and J. Robson, Textual Introduction to Mill's *Essays on French History and Historians*, *CW*, XX, cviii (n. 40).

<sup>142</sup> *CW*, XIII, 731-2. Cf. *ibid.*, 733-4, 734.

<sup>143</sup> See *Autobiography*: *ibid.*, I, 67 (66); cf. *ibid.*, XX, 12.



May 1848 he wrote to Armand Marrast, offering his services in the form of articles for the *National*.<sup>144</sup> Taking into account that historians have usually described the distinction between the more moderate republicans and the more radical republicans as exemplified by the differences between the two principal republican newspapers, *Le National* and *La Réforme* respectively,<sup>145</sup> Mill's choice to contribute to the new government's efforts through the *National* is itself an indication of his preference.

Following the June insurrection of 1848 Mill wrote to J.P. Nichol (30 September 1848), first referring to the Provisional Government that was no longer in office:

**I believe that the principal members of the Provisional Government, and many of the party who adhere to them, most purely and disinterestedly desired (and still seek to realize) all of "liberty, equality and fraternity", which is capable of being realized now, and to prepare the way for all which can be realized hereafter. I feel an entireness of sympathy with them which I never expected to have with any political party.**

As if in order to leave no doubt as to which members he was referring to, Mill immediately proceeded to praise Lamartine:

If you have not read it, read Lamartine's beautiful *Histoire des Girondins*. I think his whole conception of the great socialist questions, so far as there stated, and especially of the question of Property, as summed up in his criticism on the measures of the Convention at the end of the fifth volume, everything that can be desired; and the whole book...exactly such as I should have expected from his consistently noble conduct since February.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, XIII, 735-6.

<sup>145</sup> See: Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-9; Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment 1848-1852* (transl. from the French), Cambridge, 1983, pp. 16-8.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Mill's quotation and praise of Lamartine's text in the "Vindication...": *CW*, XX, 355-6. According to Agulhon, Lamartine (along with Ledru-Rollin) stood in the "centre" of the Provisional Government, between the socialists and "the

But though the "entireness" of Mill's sympathy was reserved for Lamartine (and therefore, one can assume, the moderate republicans), he expressed a degree of sympathy also for one of the more radical republicans, though he hinted that it was more his feelings than his opinions with which he sympathised: **"I also sympathise very strongly with such socialists as Louis [Blanc], who seems to be sincere, enthusiastic, straightforward, and with a great foundation of good sense and feeling, though precipitate and raw in his practical views."**<sup>147</sup>

In December 1848 the presidential election took place, and Louis Napoleon Bonaparte was elected with a sweeping majority, defeating the candidacies of the moderate republicans, Eugène Cavaignac<sup>148</sup> and Lamartine, as well as the more radical republicans Ledru-Rollin and Raspail. Two months after the presidential election, on 21 February 1849, Mill wrote to Harriet Taylor that he was "in hopes that parties in France are taking a more republican turn than they seemed likely to do

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'National' men" (Marie, Crémieux, Arago, Garnier-Pagès and Marrast), who were "liberal republicans decidedly opposed to socialism and resolved to make no concessions where the interests of order, property and what was at the time regarded as economic orthodoxy were concerned": Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-3. According to Zeldin's tripartite distinction of republicans of this period, Lamartine presided over the first form of republicanism, which he called "the utopian, fraternal republicanism", aiming at class and party reconciliation and reflecting a great deal of idealism and generosity. As for Ledru-Rollin, Zeldin classified him as the main leader of the second form, the "republicanism of the democratic socialists, who made republicanism Red": Zeldin, *Ambition, Love and Politics*, *op. cit.*, pp. 484-94. Plamenatz referred to Lamartine as "a moderate republican" and described Ledru-Rollin as the successor of Godefroy Cavaignac in the leadership of what he called "the Jacobins or radicals": John Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-1, 85 (n.1); for Plamenatz's categorization of the republicans during the July Monarchy and the Second Republic see *ibid.*, pp. 38-46, 48, 58-60, 68-9.

<sup>147</sup> CW, XIII, 739-40.

<sup>148</sup> Unlike his deceased brother, Godefroy, Eugène Cavaignac was not one of the radical republicans, but rather one of the moderate republicans.

-- if Napoleon Bonaparte coalesces with Lamartine's party for election purposes there will be a much larger body of sincere republicans in the new assembly than was expected."<sup>149</sup> No matter what the reasons for Mill's optimism,<sup>150</sup> Bonaparte did not coalesce with "Lamartine's party", but aligned himself with the conservatives, the "party of order". The elections were disastrous for "Lamartine's party", though many republicans were elected under a more radical banner, as Mill was to explain to H.S. Chapman in a letter of 28 May 1849. Commenting first on "the extraordinary election of Louis Bonaparte as President of the Republic",<sup>151</sup> he told his correspondent:

The result is that France having had the rare good fortune of finding two men in succession of perfectly upright intentions, enlightened principles and good sense, **Lamartine** and **Cavaignac**, has chosen to reject both and be governed by a stupid, ignorant adventurer who has thrown himself entirely into the hands of the reactionary party....

Yet, the legislative elections that had just ended had much disappointed the "reactionary" party, for though they were to have a majority in the new assembly, "the number of **the Montagne or red republican party (who are now all socialists)** have increased fourfold,<sup>152</sup> while **the moderate republican party** also musters a considerable number, though many of its chiefs have been turned out." There is little in the above statements to show Mill's preferences as between these two republican parties, except that he praised Lamartine and Eugène Cavaignac, and ignored Ledru-

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, XIV, 12.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Agulhon, *The Republican Experiment*, *op. cit.*, p. 73: Louis Napoleon Bonaparte "initially played his part with some discretion..."

<sup>151</sup> The presidential election had taken place on 10 December 1848 and that of the Legislative Assembly had taken place on 13 May 1849.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement...*, *op. cit.*, p. 84-5.

Rollin and Raspail. But the comments that followed leave no doubt that the faction he favoured was "the moderate republican party". He remarked that the French people were at the moment "divided into two violent parties": on the one hand there were **"the furious friends of 'order'"**, and on the other, **"the Socialists, who have generally very wild and silly notions and little that one can sympathize with except the spirit and feelings which actuate them."** Unlike these two parties, he said that:

**The party who attempt to mediate between these two extremes as the Provisional Government strove to do, is weak, and is disliked by both parties, though there are some signs that all sections of republicans intend to pull together now that they are all in opposition. The chance for France and Europe entirely depends now on the respite which has been obtained and on the possibility of the maturing by this middle party, of rational principles on which to construct an order of society which, retaining the institution of private property (but facilitating all possible experiments for dispensing with it by means of association) shall studiously hurl all inequalities out necessarily inherent in that institution.**

He gave an example of what he meant by the last phrase.<sup>153</sup> Then he added that:

**A great source of hope for France lies in the fact that the most powerful and active section of the Socialists are the Fourierists headed by Considérant, who are much the most sensible and enlightened both in the destructive, and in the constructive parts of their system, and are eminently pacific. On the other hand there is the great danger of having a firebrand like Proudhon, the most mischievous man in Europe, and who has *nothing* whatever of all that I like and respect in the Socialists to whom he in no way belongs.**<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> "As an example I may mention the grand idea of the Provisional Government, that of making all education, even professional, gratuitous...."

<sup>154</sup> *CW*, XIV, 32-4. Cf. what Mill had written to Harriet Taylor on Proudhon (ca. 31 March 1849): *ibid.*, 21 (he started by stating "I heartily wish Proudhon dead"). The subject of Mill's views on socialism, though very much connected with the revolution of 1848, is not part of the present enquiry, which is meant to confine itself to Mill's attitudes towards *political* parties or factions in the strictest possible sense of the word. A discussion of the importance of the revolution of 1848 and its aftermath, and of France more generally, for the development of Mill's views on

By the summer of 1851 Mill was to write to Bain that he was "for the first time downhearted about French affairs." And this was some months before "the fatality of December, 1851" came to verify his worst fears.

He had scarcely anything to say about French politics for more than a decade, at least in his extant correspondence.<sup>155</sup> But in the early 1860s things seemed to be stirring in France, and along with them Mill's attention. It was in 1862 that he reviewed the works of Dupont-White and Odilon Barrot in "Centralisation".<sup>156</sup> He praised a new and hopeful generation of liberal writers, "libéraux" of the opposition, most of whom were not republicans.<sup>157</sup> Mill's statement that his sympathy with the "republican party in France" was too strong for him to accept the invitation of the Duc d'Aumale<sup>158</sup> was made in March 1864. In fact, it would have been difficult for him to speak of a republican party some years earlier. But after the election of May 1863 the republicans were resuscitated. As Plamenatz put it: "[Republican]

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socialism is offered in: Mueller, *Mill and French Thought*, *op. cit.*, pp. 170-259. The latter part of this discussion is flawed, however, by the fact that Mueller treated the essay *On Social Freedom* as having been written by Mill. J.C. Rees has argued conclusively (in 1956) that it was not Mill's: see John C. Rees, *John Stuart Mill's On Liberty*, ed. by G.L. Williams, Oxford, 1985, pp. 175-85. On the development of Mill's views on socialism and their connection with his theory of freedom see: Gregory Claeys, "Justice, Independence, and Industrial Democracy: The Development of John Stuart Mill's Views on Socialism", *The Journal of Politics*, 49 (1987), 122-47.

<sup>155</sup> See *CW*, XV, 534 (30 June 1857).

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX, 581-613.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 584. And on 17 September 1862, Mill wrote to T. Gomperz: "In Europe things appear to be going on well, as far at least, as mental progress is concerned. This is very visible in the higher order of writers in France": *ibid.*, XV, 795. Cf. *ibid.*, 952. Cf. Girard, *Les libéraux français*, *op. cit.*, pp. 188-9.

<sup>158</sup> See *supra*, introduction of Part 2.

opposition became primarily political only in 1863, when the republicans, in spite of the system of official candidatures, triumphed in Paris at the general election."<sup>159</sup> Mill commented with delight on that election result.<sup>160</sup>

He came to discuss French politics more extensively on the occasion of the election of May 1869. He was living in Avignon, from whence he wrote to G. d'Eichthal, on 8 May 1869, that he was following with the greatest interest the "mouvement électoral du moment". One of the things he remarked about the political situation was that "[d]es hommes intelligents d'ici" were complaining that the opposition men who reappeared in the political scene were for the most part "**des démocrates autoritaires de l'école de la Convention, et non des hommes de la nouvelle école libérale.**"<sup>161</sup>

The legislative elections took place (23-24 May 1869) and they resulted in a very spectacular increase in the power of the opposition, in which the republicans had a big share.<sup>162</sup> A few days after the elections, Mill wrote to Louis Blanc (30 May 1869), accompanying the expression of his joy at the "renaissance si remarquable de

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<sup>159</sup> They had won eight of the nine seats in the capital, and the tenth had been won by Thiers, who was also in the opposition. See Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement...*, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

<sup>160</sup> He wrote to J.E.T. Rogers that he agreed with him that both American and French affairs looked "more hopeful". He added: "The French elections must startle the wise journalists and others who have been affirming for years that the French like and demand despotism, though they knew all the while that the French had no means (except a general election) of publicly shewing dislike to it.": *CW*, XXXII, 141. Cf. letter to J.E. Cairns (24 January 1864) where Mill expresses his joy at "the wonderful resurrection of the spirit of liberty in France": *ibid.*, XV, 917.

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*, XVII, 1597. Cf. letter of 18 May 1869: *ibid.*, 1604.

<sup>162</sup> See Plessis, *The Rise and Fall of the Second Empire 1852-1871* (transl. from the French), Cambridge, 1985, pp. 164-5; Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement...*, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

l'esprit public en France" with the statement: **"Je voudrais pourtant plus de concorde dans l'opposition démocratique et libérale, et que les électeurs ne préférassent pas un Rochefort à un Jules Favre."**<sup>163</sup> The same day Mill wrote to d'Eichthal that the electoral result was a sign of immense progress. However, he added: **"mais il eût été à désirer que le parti démocratique par excellence se fût mieux entendu avec ceux qui mènent la liberté de front avec la démocratie. Il est fâcheux que Jules Favre risque de n'être élu nulle part, et qu'un homme comme Carnot soit rejeté."**<sup>164</sup>

An examination of the politics of the persons mentioned seems necessary. Rochefort was one of what Plamenatz has called "the Jacobins",<sup>165</sup> a *clubiste*, writing in the newspaper *La Lanterne*.<sup>166</sup> As for the two men whose apparent failure to be elected Mill seems to have regretted so much, they were what Louis Girard called "républicains libéraux", who, during the 1869 election "étaient en difficulté devant des adversaires qui les qualifiaient d'orléanistes".<sup>167</sup> The adversaries Girard referred to were the more radical republicans (Plamenatz's "Jacobins") such as Rochefort. According to Plessis: "The republicans carried all the larger cities, but at the same time they split into radical democrats...and moderates;

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<sup>163</sup> *CW*, XVII, 1609.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, 1611.

<sup>165</sup> Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement...*, *op. cit.*, p. 130-1.

<sup>166</sup> See Plessis, *The Rise and Fall...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 164, 169.

<sup>167</sup> Girard, *Les libéraux français*, *op. cit.*, p. 201. Girard was referring to J. Favre, H. Carnot, and Garnier-Pagès. Cf. Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement...*, *op. cit.*, p. 115, where Favre and Simon are referred to as being among the leaders of the "moderate republicans". For the author's full classification of republicans during the late 1860s see *ibid.*, pp. 128-32.

the former did not hesitate to stand, often successfully,...against prominent republicans".<sup>168</sup> Thus, what emerges from Mill's comments both before and after the election is that he was not in favour of republicans indiscriminately, but of those of them who combined their desire for democracy with a desire for liberty, the "républicains libéraux", in Girard's terms. It is characteristic that three years earlier he had referred to some of the republicans of the moderate variety as "the French liberals".<sup>169</sup>

As a result of the impressive increase in the votes of the opposition, Louis-Napoleon further liberalized his regime with decrees that "virtually re-established parliamentary government".<sup>170</sup> In December 1869 he invited Emile Ollivier to form a government (of mixed affiliations), which the latter did on 2 January 1870. As Plamenatz put it: "On January 2nd, 1870, France became the only democratic parliamentary monarchy among the great powers."<sup>171</sup> These events can account for Mill's exuberance on 12 January 1870, when he wrote to d'Eichthal in an evidently sanguine vein concerning the political situation in France and the prospects for the future.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> The author went on to refer, as an example, to Carnot's defeat by a fellow republican: Plessis, *The Rise and Fall...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-5.

<sup>169</sup> Writing to E. Chadwick on a paper the latter had sent him to read and comment upon, Mill suggested that Chadwick's arguments could be of great avail "to the French and Prussian liberals to use, against their governments". Hence "copies might usefully be sent to the Temps newspaper, to Jules Favre, Jules Simon, Carnot, Garnier Pagès, Lanjuinais...and any other of the best liberals in the French and Prussian chambers.": *CW*, XVI, 1224-5 (29 December 1866).

<sup>170</sup> Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement...*, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Nicolet, *L' Idée Républicaine...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-9.

<sup>172</sup> *CW*, XVII, 1683. Cf. *ibid.*, 1718, 1726, 1730.



But then, in July 1870, following the Ems telegram, France declared war on Prussia. Mill's outlook concerning France became more bleak than ever. He was confirmed in his fear that the French were more concerned with national aggrandizement than with liberty. He wrote to a French correspondent (who had written to solicit British mediation) that the impending punishment of the defeated French was not unreasonable and that it should be hoped that if it would teach "les classes lettrés de la nation à voir dans les sacrifices qui sont devenus inévitables, **une leçon pour ne plus jamais se laisser aller à préférer des rêves d'agrandissement au dehors, à la recherche de la liberté et du progrès moral et social au dedans**", and if it could convince "l'immense majorité de la nation à ne se laisser gouverner que par eux-mêmes", then it could be hoped, that the sad events of that year, whatever their "dénouement", could become the date of "une véritable régénération pour la France."<sup>173</sup>

In September 1870 the Empire fell and the Third Republic was proclaimed. A new "government of national defence" was formed, among whose six members, all but one (Rocheport) were moderate republicans. It included such favourites of Mill's as J. Favre and J. Simon.<sup>174</sup> Yet, this was not enough for him to forgive the republican government its continuation of a war Mill regarded as immoral. On 6 January 1871 he wrote to John Morley:

I greatly regret to see the political leaders of the working classes led away by the Comtists and by **the mere name of a republic** into wishing to drag England into fighting for a government which dreads

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<sup>173</sup> Letter to F.B. Arlès-Dufour (29 October 1870): *ibid.*, 1769. Cf. *ibid.*, 1774-5.

<sup>174</sup> See Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement...*, *op. cit.*, p. 133; Plessis, *The Rise and Fall...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-70.

to face any popular representation<sup>175</sup> and is forcing the French peasantry by the fear of being shot, into going up against their will to place themselves under the fire of the German armies.<sup>176</sup>

On 4 October 1872 Mill wrote to Thomas Smith, Secretary of the International Working Men's Association of Nottingham, who had sent him a copy of his pamphlet *The Law of the Revolution*. Though he "warmly" approved much in the principles of the Association, he took issue with their phraseology. Phrases, such as "the principles of the political and social revolution", had no meaning. And: "**The Revolution**' as a name for any set of principles or opinions, is not English." What they meant by "the principles of the Revolution" could only be guessed at from a knowledge of French "in which language it seems to mean the political ideal of any person of democratic opinions who happens to be using it."<sup>177</sup> It was no good "to adopt this mode of speech from the French": "**It proceeds from an infirmity of the French mind which has been one main cause of the miscarriages of the French nation in its pursuit of liberty and progress; that of being led away by phrases and treating abstractions as if they were realities which have a will and exert active power.**"<sup>178</sup>

Hindsight based on more than forty years of close attention to French politics (and intellect) had led Mill to believe that this tendency of "the French mind" to be

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<sup>175</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 169-70. Eventually elections took place the next February and they resulted in the victory of the defenders of order under Thiers, a man Mill "detested" (on this last point see Bain, *J.S. Mill, op. cit.*, p. 42).

<sup>176</sup> *CW*, XVII, 1795.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. Claeys, "Justice, Independence, and Industrial Democracy", *op. cit.*, pp. 143-4, on Mill's worries about the popularity of "the essentially 'Continental' doctrine of revolution" during these years.

<sup>178</sup> *CW*, XVII, 1911. Cf. *ibid.*, XXII, 150; XX, 255; XIX, 595.

led away by abstractions was one of the main causes for the failure of liberty and progress in France. He identified others as well. One was the French people's propensity to give national glory and aggrandizement precedence over liberty at home, and to entrust to whoever promised them to lead them to grandeur abroad unlimited powers. More has been said on this question in chapter IV.

A third reason was that there was a failure in the French "national character" to appreciate the value of liberty.<sup>179</sup> An example of this deficiency was to desire to govern others more than not to be governed by them, and therefore to allow any degree of concentration of power in the government and its organs, provided that everyone had a chance of wielding some share of power over his fellow-citizens or receiving the government's favours. As Mill put it bluntly in *Representative Government*, this was a characteristic of a people who cared more about equality than liberty.<sup>180</sup> It was his firm conviction that liberty had to take precedence over equality or at the very least to go hand in hand with it<sup>181</sup> that guided Mill in his attitude towards the various political factions or parties that contended for influence

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<sup>179</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, XVI, 1304.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX, 420-1 (see *infra*, Chapter VII, Part 5). In "Centralisation" he spoke of "**this confounding of the love of liberty with the love of power, the desire not to be improperly controlled with the ambition of exercising control**", as being "both a psychological error, and the worst possible moral lesson.": *CW*, XIX, 610.

<sup>181</sup> In "Centralisation" Mill wrote that Louis Napoleon's despotism had taught "the chief representatives of French intellect" a lesson about what it was "in the social system and national habits of their country, which made it possible for them, in the sixty-second year of their struggle for freedom, to be thrown back for an indeterminate period into a political servitude no less complete than before its commencement. Since that time [Louis-Napoleon's coup] it has become the habitual theme of the principal leaders of opinion in France **that liberty is a more precious thing than equality; that equality in slavery makes slavery still more slavish;...**": *ibid.*, 583.

in France. No matter how many shifts one can detect in his attitude in other respects, he was consistent in opting for the "progressive" forces that did not sacrifice liberty to equality, the republic, "the Revolution", or to any other value or "abstraction".

## VI. MILL ON NATIONAL CHARACTER.

### 1. WHAT IS NATIONAL CHARACTER?

"National character" is a term more often employed than defined,<sup>1</sup> and Mill is no exception to this rule; nor are subsequent commentators of his thought. Thus, the first question to be asked is what exactly he meant by the term. The closest he came to defining national character was when he spoke in the *Logic*, of "the character, that is, the opinions, feelings, and habits of the people".<sup>2</sup> As this does not go very far, what he meant by national character will have to be traced through a great number of writings in this and the following chapter. But it has to be clarified from the beginning that he talked of national character in two different --though interconnected-- senses. In the first place, he spoke of the importance of national character as an end of legislation and social reform. Institutions could not be considered advisable if they did not provide for the improvement of the collective character of the people who were to live under them. In the second place, he spoke of differences of national character between different portions of mankind as an existing fact and of the need for legislators or social reformers to take them into

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<sup>1</sup> See, for a discussion of the way "national character" has been treated by historians and social scientists: David M. Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character*, Chicago, 1954, pp. 3-72 ("The Study of National Character").

<sup>2</sup> *CW*, VIII, 905.

account in the calculation of the means they were to employ in order to achieve their goals (attaining to a better collective or "national" character being one of the main goals).

These two senses in which Mill employed the term are not always sufficiently differentiated. An instance where the two senses in which the term was used by Mill need to be discerned from each other occurs in F.E.L. Priestley's comments on Mill's "Whewell on Moral Philosophy".<sup>3</sup> Priestley presents Mill's defence of Bentham against Whewell's reproach that Bentham had not sufficiently recognized "what Dr. Whewell calls the historical element of legislation" as somewhat contradictory in view of Mill's own censure that Bentham had ignored national character. The instances in which Mill complained of Bentham's ignoring national character Priestley alludes to were those in his "Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy" (1833) and in "Bentham" (1838). But the two criticisms (Mill's in the 1830s and Whewell's later) were not identical. Mill's main quarrel with Bentham had been that by taking "next to no account of national character and the causes which form and maintain it, he was precluded from **considering...the laws of a country as an instrument of national culture**"<sup>4</sup> or, as he put it elsewhere, "as the great instruments of forming the national character; of carrying the members of the community towards perfection, or preserving them from degeneracy".<sup>5</sup> He reproached Bentham that he had not

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<sup>3</sup> Introduction to Mill's *Essays on Ethics, Religion and Society*, *CW*, X, xxxvi-xxxvii --introducing Mill's review article "Whewell on Moral Philosophy"; first published in *Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review*, 58 (October 1852), 349-85 and reprinted in *DD*, II, pp. 450-509. Now in *CW*, X, 165-201.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 105 ("Bentham").

<sup>5</sup> "Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy" (1833): *ibid.*, 9. This early essay was published (anonymously) as an Appendix to Edward Lytton Bulwer's book *England*

sufficiently attended to the educative function of institutions and laws, their potential use as instruments of national education and culture, as vehicles for the promotion of the national character from the point where it was to the next possible point. Bentham had taken great pains to "teach the means of organizing and regulating the merely *business* part of the social arrangements", but had not proposed any means of ameliorating the character of the people who would live under the institutions in question. This is the meaning of his complaint about national character in his essays on Bentham. It was only as a means to this goal that the existing differences of national character or stage of civilization counted. In order for the legislator to be able to prescribe institutions appropriate for the improvement of the national character of a people, he had to know the stage of civilization at which they found themselves and their character. Given that these differed among different nations, the means through which the improvement would be pursued could not be the same for all cases. But Mill conceded that Bentham did recognise the need for the existing differences to be taken into account. He had come to the defence of Bentham against accusations that he ignored existing differences already in 1838 ("Bentham") by pointing to Bentham's essay "On the Influence of Time and Place in Matters of Legislation" (1782).<sup>6</sup> The main problem with Bentham's approach was not that he did not

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*and the English* (now in *CW*, X, 3-18). This essay constituted the apogee of J.S. Mill's apostasy from Bentham and James Mill. On Mill's "seesaw" with regard to his attitudes towards Bentham see: John M. Robson, "John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, with some Observations on James Mill", in: M. MacLure and F.W. Watt (eds.), *Essays in English Literature from the Renaissance to the Victorian Age presented to A.S.P. Woodhouse*, Toronto, 1964, pp. 259-60.

<sup>6</sup> See *CW*, X, 104-5. The essay in question was published in: *The Works of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. by John Bowring, 11 vols., Edinburgh, 1838-43, I, pp. 169-94. Mill had read it (and defended it in a debating speech in 1829): see John M. Robson, "Which Bentham was Mill's Bentham?", *The Bentham Newsletter*, 7 (May 1983), 17.

recognize the need to modify his means in order to achieve his goals, but that his goals were insufficient and poor in Mill's opinion. He recognized the need for adjustments according to differences of time and place in order to promote "the merely business part of the social arrangements".

In his essays on Bentham Mill spoke of national character as the aim to be promoted, its improvement being the goal legislation should have in view. This use of the concept of national character is quite different from what Whewell and conservative critics of legislative reformers like Bentham meant by the term. National character was for such people the constant in legislation. Legislation had to be determined by the character, it should not contradict it. The sense in which Mill spoke of national character in the essays on Bentham was that national character was, or rather, should be, the malleable element in legislation. He did, of course, as has already been noted, speak of differences of existing national characters as a factor that had to be taken into account, but only in the choice of the means through which the major consideration, the improvement of the national character, would be achieved.

Both senses in which Mill employed the term, national character, appear in the very text where he put forward his plan for the creation of a science that would

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J.W. Burrow has argued that the importance of Bentham's essay on the influence of time and place should not be overestimated and that though it may show that Bentham was aware of the possible significance of differences of circumstances he did not translate such awareness into any modification of his basic theories. See J.W. Burrow, *Evolution and Society: A Study in Victorian Social Theory*, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 24-42. Cf. Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason*, *op. cit.*, pp. 419-30 (n.5).



study national character, the science of Political Ethology.<sup>7</sup> In this and the following chapter the concept will be examined mainly in the sense of differences of character among different nations and the significance Mill thought they had for politics.

## 2. RACE.

Discussions about national and --what would be called today-- cultural characteristics were, in Victorian Britain, inextricably associated with discussions about "race", and the term, race, was often substituted for nation, nationhood, or national character.<sup>8</sup> Even more attention was attached to the role of race in France at the same time<sup>9</sup> and Tocqueville came to examine the possible significance of racial

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<sup>7</sup> See *infra*, Part 3.

<sup>8</sup> See George Watson, *The English Ideology: Studies in the Language of Victorian Politics*, London, 1973, pp. 198-212; Paul B. Rich, "Social Darwinism, Anthropology and English Perspectives of the Irish, 1867-1900", *History of European Ideas*, 19 (1994), 779; Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, London, 1971, *passim*. A methodological difficulty that can perplex the examination of discussions on race during the nineteenth century arises from the fact that some times race was used in the sense that the term, culture, has today, without, that is, necessarily implying any belief in the doctrine of biological and hereditary transmission of mental and cultural traits (see, for instance, Stocking's remarks on Leslie Stephen's use of race in: George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology*, New York, 1987, pp. 138-9). For the confusion and imprecision characterising the use of the type of race not just in common discourse, but also among specialists, see Michael Banton, *Racial Theories*, Cambridge, 1987, pp. xii-xv, 29-32. Here race will be discussed inasmuch as it assumed a biological sense.

<sup>9</sup> See Jacques Barzun, *Race: A Study in Superstition*, New York, 1965, p. 6, and *passim*; M. Seliger, "Race-thinking during the Restoration", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 19 (1958), 273-82. On the question of race in French historiography at this time cf. Jacques Barzun, *The French Race: Theories of its Origins and their Social and Political Implications*, New York, 1932; Crossley, *French Historians...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-7, 90-2.

origin during his first stay in America.<sup>10</sup> Mill was thus bound to address the question of the extent to which national character was formed or influenced by race or other physical factors such as climate.<sup>11</sup> E.D. Steele did less than justice to Mill when he wrote that "[h]is writings furnish examples of judgements on the basis of **race or national character**".<sup>12</sup> Though it is very much the case that he often made pronouncements on the basis of national character, Mill was far from equating or confusing the latter with race and discredited the usual association of the two during the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> More generally, criticisms by later scholars sometimes fail to place Mill in the context of his time and thus find his references to race unacceptable. Thus Bruce Mazlish wrote that "Mill even flirted with a kind of racial theory of character." Mazlish proceeded to substantiate this assertion by citing what Mill wrote to Gustave d'Eichthal on 14 September 1839, after having received the latter's latest work which dealt with the relations between the black and the white races:

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<sup>10</sup> See Schleifer, *The Making...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-72; also Seymour Drescher, *Dilemmas of Democracy: Tocqueville and Modernization*, Pittsburgh, 1968, pp. 274-6.

<sup>11</sup> Bentham had mentioned "*race or lineage*" as one of the many "circumstances influencing sensibility": see Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, ed. by J.H. Burns and H.L.A. Hart, London, 1970, p. 67. Another of these circumstances was climate: *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> E.D. Steele, "IV. J.S. Mill and the Irish Question: Reform, and the Integrity of the Empire, 1865-1870", *The Historical Journal*, 13 (1970), 435.

<sup>13</sup> Steele's statement quoted above was preceded by the remark that "Mill was some times critical of the doctrine, common in his day, that certain races or peoples were inferior to others in their aptitude for free and progressive institutions: but only when he thought it was being strained, and used in too deterministic a fashion.": *ibid.* It will be shown in the following pages that, both with regard to Mill's reaction to racial theories in general and to their application to the case of the Irish in particular, Steele's concession is an understatement.

I have long been convinced that not only the East as compared with the West, but the black race as compared with the European, is distinguished by characteristics something like those which you assign to them; that the improvement which may be looked for, from a more intimate and sympathetic familiarity between the two, will not be solely on their side, but greatly also on ours; that if our intelligence is more developed and our activity more intense, *they* possess exactly what is most needful to us as a qualifying counterpoise, in their love of repose and in the superior capacity of animal enjoyment and consequently of sympathetic sensibility, which is characteristic of the negro race.

I have even long thought that the same distinction holds, though in a less *prononcé* manner, between the nations of the north and south of Europe; that the north is destined to be the workshop, material and intellectual, of Europe; the south, its "stately pleasure-house" -- and that neither will fulfil its destination until it has made its peculiar function available for the benefit of both -- until our *work* is done for their benefit, and until we, in the measure of our nature, are made susceptible of their luxury and sensuous enjoyment.<sup>14</sup>

The above text is not sufficient proof that Mill "flirted with a kind of racial theory of character". The term, race, was used quite loosely at the time this letter was written, and various characteristics were attributed to "races" as a matter of course, without reference as to whether they were biologically inherited or simply cultural traits occurring in these groups.<sup>15</sup> D'Eichthal's short work Mill was referring to was based on the assertion that the two races, the white and the black, were possessed of biologically inherited mental and social characteristics peculiar to each.<sup>16</sup> Of course, d'Eichthal's work drew implications very different from those characterising

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<sup>14</sup> Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill, op. cit.*, p. 407; the passage quoted is to be found in *CW*, XIII, 404.

<sup>15</sup> The fact that Mill went on to ascribe to the peoples of the south of Europe (as opposed to those of the north) characteristics similar to those he agreed with d'Eichthal in attributing to the black race (as opposed to the whole of the white race) goes some way towards suggesting that he was not speaking in strictly biological terms.

<sup>16</sup> Gustave d'Eichthal and Ismayl Urbain, *Lettres sur la Race Noire et la Race Blanche*, Paris, 1839, pp. 14-19.

the racial theories of the second half of the nineteenth century. Far from exalting racial purity, the whole point d'Eichthal was making was that the two races should associate with each other and produce the "race mulâtre". Yet, it remains the case that d'Eichthal's premises were based on theories asserting that the differences between whites and blacks were constitutional differences and that these physical differences resulted in the two races having different geniuses, habits, religious propensities, and so on.<sup>17</sup> What is not clear is how far Mill shared the premises behind d'Eichthal's benign theories.<sup>18</sup> But even if he did not object to them in 1839, his thought on the subject developed considerably during the following decades and the Mill who wrote *The Subjection of Women* had moved a long way from any tacit acceptance of such premises and theories.

During the earlier years, Mill's most direct and explicit public reference to the subject of race --to which he himself drew attention in later instances<sup>19</sup>-- was made in his review of the five first volumes of Michelet's *Histoire de France*, written in

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<sup>17</sup> D'Eichthal had adduced the researches of W.-F. Edwards and E. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (*ibid.*, p. 15). Both were well known scientists. Edwards was one of the major exponents of theories asserting the importance of race in history and society: see Banton, *Racial Theories*, *op. cit.*, pp. xiii, 31.

<sup>18</sup> On 25 December 1840, after having received one more of d'Eichthal's ethnological works, Mill wrote to him: "You are very usefully employed in throwing light on these dark subjects -- the whole subject of the races of man, their characteristics and the laws of their fusion is more important than it was ever considered till late and it is now quite a [*sic*] *l'ordre du jour* and labour bestowed upon it is therefore not lost even for immediate practical ends.": *CW*, XIII, 456. By this time d'Eichthal had become a leading member of the *Société ethnologique* which was presided over by W.-F. Edwards: see Barrie M. Ratcliffe, "Gustave d'Eichthal (1802-1886): An Intellectual Portrait", in: *A French Sociologist looks at Britain: Gustave d'Eichthal and British Society in 1828*, transl. and ed. by Barrie M. Ratcliffe and W.H. Chaloner, Manchester, 1977, p. 151.

<sup>19</sup> See *CW*, XV, 691.

1844. After praising Michelet for having endeavoured to assign to the several races that were mixed on French soil "the share of influence which belongs to them over the subsequent destinies of his country", Mill observed:

It was natural that a subjective historian, one who looks, above all, to the internal moving forces of human affairs, should attach great historical importance to the consideration of Races. This subject, on British soil, has usually fallen into hands little competent to treat it soberly, or on true principles of induction; but of the **great influence of Race in the production of national character, no reasonable inquirer can now doubt.** As far as **history, and social circumstances** generally, are concerned, how little resemblance can be traced between the French and the Irish -- **in national character**, how much! The same ready excitability; the same impetuosity when excited, yet the same readiness under excitement to submit to the severest discipline -- a quality which at first might seem to contradict impetuosity, but which arises from that very vehemence of character with which it appears to conflict, and is equally conspicuous in Revolutions of Three Days, temperance movements, and meetings on the Hill of Tara. The same sociability and demonstrativeness -- the same natural refinement of manners, down to the lowest rank -- in both, the characteristic weakness an inordinate vanity, their more serious moral deficiency the absence of a sensitive regard for truth. Their ready susceptibility to influences, while it makes them less steady in right, makes them also less pertinacious in wrong, and renders them, under favourable circumstances of culture, reclaimable and improvable (especially through their more generous feelings) in a degree to which the more obstinate races are strangers. To what, except **their Gaelic blood**, can we ascribe all this similarity between populations, the whole course of whose national history has been so different?<sup>20</sup>

A little further on Mill disagreed with a specific instance of Michelet's application of the racial model of explanation. The French historian had attributed to race (the Germanic race in this case) what he called "that voluntary loyalty of man to man, that free adherence, founded on confiding attachment, which was characteristic of the German tribes, and of which, in his opinion, the feudal relation was the natural result". Michelet had asserted that this "personal devotedness and

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 235.

faith in one another" of the Germans was missing in the case of the Gauls, who were already possessed by "that passion for equality which distinguishes modern France".<sup>21</sup> Mill's comment follows: "We think that M. Michelet has here carried the influence of Race too far, and that the difference is better explained by diversity of position, than by diversity of character in the Races." Mill accounted for the difference by the circumstance of the conquerors being a small body scattered over a large territory, which prevented them from relaxing the bonds which held them together.<sup>22</sup> "Similar circumstances would have produced similar results among the Gauls themselves" was Mill's retort to Michelet.<sup>23</sup>

The above qualification notwithstanding, Mill's adherence to some of the views that were abroad in his time, concerning the significance of race in the formation of national character, was part of his approach to the subject.<sup>24</sup> And when, sixteen years later, he was criticized by Charles Dupon-White that he had denied the influence of races, Mill replied that he had "pleinement" admitted this influence in his article on Michelet. This having been said, however, and as far as theoretical discussion is concerned, it is the limit of his adherence to the common-

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Crossley, *French Historians...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-6.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Guizot's explanation of the peculiarities of English history in terms of the circumstances of the conquest, translated and endorsed by Mill: *CW*, XX, 291-2; see also: Crossley, *French Historians...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-3; Barzun, "Romantic Historiography...", *op. cit.*, 318-29.

<sup>23</sup> *CW*, XX, 237.

<sup>24</sup> Some commentators tend to notice the qualification, but to disregard the agreement in principle. Thus, all Filipkiuk had to say on Mill's reference to race in "Michelet" was that "Mill warned his English readers...and that Michelet had overemphasised the effect of race in the course of history": Filipkiuk, "Mill and France", *op. cit.*, 104.

place views on the significance of race that is more remarkable than the fact of the adherence itself. In that same letter Mill proceeded to explain to Dupon-White that, though he did not deny the significance of the racial factor, what he disagreed with was the tendency, which was most conspicuous in the nineteenth century (as a result of that century's reaction against the eighteenth century), "celle d'attribuer toutes les variétés dans le caractère des peuples et des individus à des différences indélébiles de la nature, sans se demander si **les influences de l'éducation et du milieu social et politique** n'en donnent pas une explication suffisante." It was, he said, like the habit of primitive peoples to attribute whatever they were doing to direct inspiration from a god. Thus, in the case Dupon-White had referred to, that of the differences of character between "les peuples celtiques" and "les peuples anglo-saxons", Mill's comment was that he agreed with his French correspondent that "la race y entre beaucoup". Yet, he hastened to add: "mais quant à leur goût pour ou contre la centralisation, je vous demanderai si la diversité dans le développement historique de la France et de l'Angleterre dont vous avez fait une esquisse si vraie et si instructive, ne suffisait pas à elle seule comme explication."<sup>25</sup>

Thus, while accepting vaguely that racial origin is one of the factors influencing the formation of national character, Mill went further to establish that racial predisposition in itself could prove nothing and was liable to be modified out of any recognition through the agency of circumstances such as institutions, historical accidents, and human effort. An instance of Mill's careful depreciation of the role of both race and, more generally, physical causes occurs in the very article on Michelet, closely following the theoretical discussion of the significance of race.

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<sup>25</sup> Letter of 6 April 1860: *CW*, XV, 691.

There, after having admitted the importance of the influence of "geographical peculiarities" in the formation of national character,<sup>26</sup> he proceeded to praise Michelet for not being unaware of the tendency of provincial and local peculiarities to disappear:

A strenuous asserter of the power of mind over matter, of will over spontaneous propensities, culture over nature, he holds that local characteristics lose their importance as history advances. In a rude age the "fatalities" of race and geographical position are absolute. In the progress of society, human forethought and purpose, acting by means of uniform institutions and modes of culture, tend more and more to efface the pristine differences. And he attributes, in no small degree, the greatness of France to the absence of any marked local peculiarities in the predominant part of the population.<sup>27</sup>

Many other instances occur --in Mill's correspondence in particular-- where he protested against the inordinate importance that he thought most of his contemporaries accorded to race.<sup>28</sup>

In 1850 he attacked his erstwhile friend Carlyle for having asserted that negroes were born servants to the whites who were "born *wiser*". Mill reprobated

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 237.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>28</sup> In a letter to Charles Wentworth Dilke, referring to the latter's book *Greater Britain: a Record of Travel in English-speaking countries during 1866 and 1867* (1868) Mill's only criticism "of a somewhat broader character" was "that (in speaking of the physical and moral characteristics of the populations descended from the English) you sometimes express yourself almost as if there were no sources of national character but **race and climate**", while Mill himself believed "the good and bad influences of education, legislation, and social circumstances...to be of **prodigiously greater efficacy than either race or climate or the two combined.**": *CW*, XVII, 1563 (Dilke's book was "very successful": see Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, *op. cit.*, p. 38; cf. *ibid.*, p. 103). Also, in a letter to John Boyd Kinnear (referring to Kinnear's *Principles of Reform: Political and Legal*, London 1865), Mill stated as one of the chief points on which he differed from the author that the latter ascribed "too great influence to differences of race and too little to historical differences and to accidents as causes of the diversities of character and usage existing among mankind.": *ibid.*, XVI, 1093.



Carlyle for his disrespect of "the analytical examination of human nature"; his failure to apply the mode of analytical examination "to the laws of the formation of character" had led Carlyle to "the vulgar error of imputing every difference which he finds among human beings to an original difference of nature."<sup>29</sup> Some lines further on Mill spoke his mind with regard to the theoretical issues involved:

What the original differences are among human beings, I know no more than your contributor, and no less; it is one of the questions not yet satisfactorily answered in the natural history of the species. This, however, is well known -- that spontaneous improvement, beyond a very low grade, -- improvement by internal development, without aid from other individuals or peoples -- is one of the rarest phenomena in history; and whenever known to have occurred, was the result of an extraordinary combination of advantages;<sup>30</sup> in addition doubtless to many accidents of which all trace is now lost. No argument against the capacity of negroes for improvement, could be drawn from their not being one of these rare exceptions.<sup>31</sup>

And in a statement antedating "Black Athena"<sup>32</sup> by more than a century, Mill concluded: "It is curious withal, that the earliest known civilization was...a negro civilization. The original Egyptians are inferred, from the evidence of their

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<sup>29</sup> "The Negro Question": *ibid.*, XXI, 93 --first published in *Fraser's Magazine*, 41 (January 1850), 25-31.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, XVIII, 196-7; XX, 269-70.

<sup>31</sup> This statement could be a direct retort also to Hume's statement (1748): "I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men...to be **naturally inferior** to the whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual, eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences.": David Hume, "Of National Characters", *Political Essays*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen, Cambridge, 1994, p. 86n. Cf. John Immerwahr, "Hume's Revised Racism", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 53 (1992), 481-6.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Martin Bernal, *Black Athena*, 2 vols., New Brunswick, 1987-91.

sculptures, to have been a negro race: it was from negroes, therefore, that the Greeks learnt their first lessons in civilization".<sup>33</sup>

In his writings on Ireland, it was one of Mill's main aims to show that the alleged failings of the Irish were not "natural" to them, but were due to misgovernment. In his *Political Economy*, he wrote, concerning the Irish, that it was a "bitter satire on the mode in which opinions are formed on the most important problems of human nature and life", to find people "imputing the backwardness of Irish industry, and the want of energy of the Irish people in improving their condition, to a peculiar indolence and *insouciance* in the Celtic race". He commented that: **"Of all vulgar modes of escaping from the consideration of the effect of social and moral influences on the human mind, the most vulgar is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences."** Any race would be indolent and idle, he stressed, if the arrangements under which they lived and worked resulted in their deriving no advantage from forethought or exertion. The certain degree of concessions that Mill did make to stereotypes concerning primordial racial (or geographical) characteristics, is no less apparent in this very passage, as is his way of drawing from these premises he shared with his contemporaries different conclusions than the conclusions most of them did:

It is very natural that a **pleasure-loving and sensitively organized people like the Irish**, should be less addicted to steady routine labour than the English, because life has more excitements for them independent of it; but they are not less fitted for it than their Celtic brethren the French, nor less so than the Tuscans, or the ancient Greeks. An excitable organization is precisely that in which, by adequate inducements, it is easier to kindle a spirit of animated exertion. It speaks nothing against the capacities of industry in human beings, that they will not exert themselves without motive. No

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<sup>33</sup> *CW*, XXI, 93.

labourers work harder, in England or America, than the Irish; but not under a cottier system.<sup>34</sup>

Another important instance of Mill's pronouncing on race occurs in *The Subjection of Women*. In his attempt to discard theories of women's inferiority founded on alleged physical differences between men and women and inferences thereof, he enlisted the example of national characters and their alleged racial determination. His mode of arguing in this respect was by admitting the existence of some primordial physical differences between different human groups (races, sexes), and subsequently trying to prove that social circumstances, human will-power and self-discipline ("mind over matter" as he had said à propos of Michelet) could lead such physical predispositions to directions opposite to those they were supposed to be destined to take. Among his examples were, of course, the omni-present French, as well as other groups such as the Irish, the Greeks, the Romans, and the English. Mill protested against **"the unspeakable ignorance and inattention of mankind in respect to the influences which form human character"**, which was, he asserted, the greatest of the difficulties which impeded "the progress of thought, and the formation of well-grounded opinions on life and social arrangements". He developed this subject as follows:

**Whatever any portion of the human species now are, or seem to be, such, it is supposed, they have a natural tendency to be: even when the most elementary knowledge of the circumstances in which they have been placed, clearly points out the causes that made them what they are. Because a cottier deeply in arrears to his landlord is not industrious, there are people who think that the Irish are naturally idle. Because constitutions can be overthrown when the authorities appointed to execute them turn their arms against**

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 319.

them, there are people who think the French incapable of free government.<sup>35</sup> Because the Greeks cheated the Turks, and the Turks only plundered the Greeks, there are persons who think that the Turks are naturally more sincere;<sup>36</sup>....

But History taught another lesson, by showing "the extraordinary susceptibility of human nature to external influences, and the extreme variableness of those of its manifestations which are supposed to be most universal and uniform."<sup>37</sup> And in an attempt to refute the arguments to the effect that the alleged "greater nervous susceptibility of women is a disqualification for practice",<sup>38</sup> Mill employed the example of races to assert that experience of races did not show those of excitable temperament "to be less fit, on the average, either for speculation or practice, than the more unexcitable". His examples were, the French and the Italians, compared with the Teutonic races, and especially with the English, the Greeks and Romans compared with the northern races, and so on.<sup>39</sup> Statements such as these made in

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<sup>35</sup> Here Mill seems to be criticizing an allegation he more or less had himself made on the French in *Representative Government!* See *infra*, Chapter VII, Part 3.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Hume, "Of national characters", *op. cit.*, p. 84.

<sup>37</sup> *CW*, XXI, 277.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>39</sup> "The French, and the Italians, are undoubtedly by nature more nervously excitable than the Teutonic races, and, compared at least with the English, they have a much greater habitual and daily emotional life: but have they been less great in science, in public business, in legal and judicial eminence, or in war? There is abundant evidence that the Greeks were of old, as their descendants and successors still are, one of the most excitable of the races of mankind. It is superfluous to ask, what among the achievements of men they did not excel in. The Romans, probably, as an equally southern people, had the same original temperament: but the stern character of their national discipline, like that of the Spartans, made them an example of the opposite type of national character; **the greater strength of their national feelings being chiefly apparent in the intensity which the same original temperament made it possible to give to the artificial.**": *ibid.*, 309-10.

*The Subjection*, written in Mill's maturity, offer not only a theoretical rejection of racial determinism, but also would suggest an unequivocal belief in the malleability of human nature and therefore in the improvability of the national character of the various nations.<sup>40</sup> But, while declaring his rejection of physical determinism, Mill spoke in a way that betrays his use of many of the stereotypes of his contemporaries based on race, climate or geography. Where he differed is in that he asserted that the alleged natural predispositions in question could lead to results very different than those they seemed to lead to at present, if they were appropriately guided by institutions and human will.<sup>41</sup>

If one compares Mill's letters to d'Eichthal (1839, 1840) and his review of Michelet (1844) with all his later pronouncements on race, there seems to be a shift in his statements around the middle of the nineteenth century. In the early 1840s he asserted that race was one of the factors that influenced national character and should therefore be studied and taken into account. From the end of that decade onwards, and with increasing intensity, he went out of his way to stress how little importance race had. This shift was probably due to his growing realisation of the uses to which racial theories were being put. Historians of anthropological or racial theories have stressed the increasing occurrence during the second half of the century of overtly

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<sup>40</sup> Many instances in Mill's other writings would suggest that he was not always as sanguine as he appears to be here about the prospects of various nations, particularly the French, by the time he wrote *The Subjection*. But one has to distinguish between the short term prospects of various nations and states and the potentialities that there were theoretically. In addition, of course, the exigencies of the case he wanted to defend in this work may go some way towards accounting for the unequivocal stress on human malleability.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Logic*, Book VI, Chapter iv, section 4 ("Relation of mental facts to physical conditions"): *CW*, VIII, 856-60.

racist theories which --unlike d'Eichthal's orientalist ethnological ventures of Saint-Simonist<sup>42</sup> inspiration-- led to conclusions disturbing to Mill with regard to issues such as slavery, international relations, the government of dependencies as well as women's rights.<sup>43</sup> The worst consequence of the growing popularity of racial theories was the determinism (or, as Mill would put it, the fatalism) that followed as the main implication of the acceptance of such theories. Another factor that, during the 1840s, must have brought home to Mill the full implications of the attribution of mental and moral characteristics to physiological differences was Comte's insistence on the inferiority of women, on the grounds afforded by Gall's phrenological studies.<sup>44</sup>

Mill's attitude towards race and its influence in the formation of national character was, in the main, similar to that of Tocqueville.<sup>45</sup> While conceding that physical factors such as race must have some part in the formation of national character, he rejected any practical conclusion that would be based exclusively or

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. Magali Morsy (ed.), *Les Saint-Simoniens et l'Orient: vers la modernité*, Aix-en-Provence, 1990.

<sup>43</sup> See Banton, *Racial Theories*, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-60, and *passim*; Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-9, and *passim*. Cf. Zeev Sternhell, "Racism", David Miller *et al.* (eds.), *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Political Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 413: "As a political theory and as the basis for a theory of history, racism became a factor in European history in the second half of the nineteenth century."

<sup>44</sup> See, in particular, Mill's letter to Comte of 30 October 1843: *CW*, XIII, 604-11. On Mill's disagreement with Comte cf. Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason*, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-9; Mueller, *Mill and French Thought*, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-15.

<sup>45</sup> On Tocqueville's attitude to race see: Melvin Richter, "Debate on Race. Tocqueville-Gobineau Correspondence", *Commentary*, 25 (1958), 151-60; Schleifer, *The Making...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-72; Todorov, *On Human Diversity*, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-9; and: Tocqueville, *Correspondance d'Alexis de Tocqueville avec Arthur de Gobineau*, in: *OC*, IX.

even mainly on the influence of race, and sought to discredit any deterministic inferences that could be drawn from observable racial differences. Apparently it was not accidental that Mill was singled out as the target of an article written by one of the major exponents of racial determinism in Britain. James Hunt was the founder (1863) and President of the Anthropological Society of London. He was "an ardent racialist" and strongly in favour of slavery.<sup>46</sup> He was a follower of the Edinburgh anatomist Robert Knox. Knox has been called Gobineau's British counterpart,<sup>47</sup> "an almost hysterical racialist", who had asserted, in *The Races of Man* (1850), that "race is everything; literature, science, art -- in a word, civilization, depends on it".<sup>48</sup> Hunt dedicated an entire article to an attack on Mill's explicit rejection of racial explanations in the *Political Economy* and his failure to take any account of the racial factor in his other major works, *Representative Government* and *On Liberty*.<sup>49</sup> Hunt did not fail to pay ample lip-service to Mill's qualities as a thinker and logician, and maintained that he wrote the article on "Race in Legislation and Political Economy"

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<sup>46</sup> Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-36 (especially pp. 121, 130). Cf. Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, *op. cit.*, pp. 4, 6-7, 15, 18-19; Banton, *Racial Theories*, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60; Ronald Rainger, "Race, Politics, and Science: The Anthropological Society of London in the 1860s", *Victorian Studies*, 22 (1978), 51-70.

<sup>47</sup> Sternhell, "Racism", *op. cit.*, p. 414. See *ibid.* on Hunt's racism.

<sup>48</sup> Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>49</sup> [James Hunt], "Race in Legislation and Political Economy", *The Anthropological Review*, 4 (1866), 113-35. Hunt began his article by quoting Mill's forceful statement about the vulgarity of "attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences": *ibid.*, 113 (*CW*, II, 319). Hunt had earlier written an article entitled "Race in History" in which he had attacked directly the historian H.T. Buckle (who professed to be influenced by Mill's *Logic*) and also extended his criticisms to J.S. Mill and Bentham: see Rainger, "Race, Politics, and Science...", *op. cit.*, 63-4. Hunt's 1867 presidential address to the Anthropological Society was "another attack on Mill": *ibid.*, 64.

in order to induce Mill and his followers to cease neglecting what Hunt regarded as the scientifically proven all-importance of the racial factor. There is no evidence of Mill's having read Hunt's article or the rest of his writings.<sup>50</sup> But, if he did, they do not seem to have convinced him at all, if one is to judge from Mill's even more outspoken denunciation of racial determinism in *The Subjection of Women*.<sup>51</sup>

For all his exhortations for the scientific study of differences among societies Mill does not seem to have followed closely developments in the new disciplines of ethnology and anthropology. Besides his failure to refer to most of the main figures in the field and their work, there is also his own admission to the same effect. When, in 1863, the Anthropological Society was founded by Hunt and his followers who had broken away from the Ethnological Society,<sup>52</sup> Mill wrote to Max Kyllmann (who had apparently referred to that Society in his previous letter to Mill):

The Anthropological Society I hear of for the first time from your letter. I should suppose from the publications it announces that its objects must be very much the same as those of the Ethnological Society which already existed. The names mentioned are all new to me except two: Capt. Burton...and Mr Luke Burke.... It is possible that some of the others may be distinguished names, **for I am very little acquainted with the present state of this class of studies.**<sup>53</sup>

Though Mill knew and even corresponded with a number of scientists whose work was related to the issues involved in the study of races, he did not regard studies in

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<sup>50</sup> Hunt is not mentioned anywhere in Mill's works or extant correspondence; nor is Knox.

<sup>51</sup> See *supra*. In fact, Mill's almost tedious invocation of a great number of historical examples that seemed to serve his argument in *The Subjection* may have something to do with the intensification of debates about racial and physical determinism after around 1850.

<sup>52</sup> See Rainger, "Race, Politics, and Science...", *op. cit.*, 51-70.

<sup>53</sup> *CW*, XV, 840-1.



the fields of natural sciences as relevant to his interests in character. He found more congenial the approach of scientists such as his acquaintance, Thomas Henry Huxley, who "considered a subject such as human heredity to be a scientific matter from which he personally would draw no political or nonscientific conclusions."<sup>54</sup> Referring to an article written by Huxley in 1865 Mill wrote to J.E. Cairnes that it was particularly good, "notwithstanding what I venture to think heretical physiology, which, however, he clearly sees, and as clearly shews, not to affect in the smallest degree the moral, political, or educational questions, either as regards negroes or women."<sup>55</sup>

It has to be remarked though that Mill's failure to develop his projected science of "ethology", in combination with his pre-Darwinian approach to the natural sciences<sup>56</sup> must be held to account for the fact that he did find himself obliged to accord race a certain --unclear-- role (simply because he had not gone as far as he had

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<sup>54</sup> Rainger, "Race, Politics, and Science...", *op. cit.*, p. 65. According to Rainger: "In the British scientific community of the 1860s, Huxley was among the best known for his work in government and political affairs, but, unlike Hunt or others who espoused an applied anthropology, his political beliefs were not rooted in, nor apparently related to, his scientific research.": *ibid.* Cf. *ibid.*, p. 64. Hunt's was what scholars have called "the anthropological approach", while that adopted by scientists like Huxley and the members that remained in the Ethnological Society of London after Hunt's defection (and establishment of the breakaway Anthropological Society) was "the ethnological approach" (see Banton, *Racial Theories*, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-1).

<sup>55</sup> CW, XVI, 1057-8. Mill was referring to T.H.H.[uxley], "Emancipation--Black and White", *Reader*, 5 (20 May 1865), 561-2. Huxley did accept a biological basis for differences of character (which is apparently why Mill found his physiology "heretical"), but did not want to draw the usual implications from that acceptance. See Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason*, *op. cit.*, pp. 207, 455 (n.69).

<sup>56</sup> On the state of Mill's knowledge about Darwin see: Robson, *The Improvement of Mankind*, *op. cit.*, pp. 273-5; Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill*, *op. cit.*, pp. 423-4.

hoped in developing the science that would demonstrate beyond doubt the way in which character was formed by circumstances).

### 3. POLITICAL ETHOLOGY: THE SCIENCE OF NATIONAL CHARACTER.

It is well known that Mill had envisaged in chapter v of Book VI of his *Logic* the creation of a new branch of science. The title of that chapter was: "*Of Ethology, or the Science of the Formation of Character*". Further on in the same Book (VI) he spoke of the appropriate methods of the overall "social science" and of the different branches of sociological speculation that could with advantage be studied separately (one of these branches being Political Economy).<sup>57</sup> Among the "hypothetical or abstract sciences similar to Political Economy" which could profitably be "carved out of the general body of the social science" there was one, "which cannot be passed over in silence, being of a more comprehensive and commanding character than any of the other branches into which the social science may admit of being divided." He referred to "what may be termed Political Ethology, or the theory<sup>58</sup> of the causes

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<sup>57</sup> *CW*, VIII, 900-7.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 904-5. In the manuscript and in the two first editions (1843, 1846) he had written "science".

which determine the type of character belonging to a people or to an age". Of all the "subordinate branches" of the social science, this was "the most completely in its infancy". The causes of national character were "scarcely at all understood, and the effect of institutions or social arrangements upon the character of the people"<sup>59</sup> is generally that portion of their effects which is least attended to, and least comprehended." Yet, he asserted, "the laws of national (or collective)"<sup>60</sup> character" were "by far the most important class of sociological laws".

In the first place, the character which is formed by any state of social circumstances is in itself the most interesting phenomenon which that state of society can possibly present. Secondly, it is also a fact which enters largely into the production of all the other phenomena. And above all, the character, that is, the opinions, feelings, and habits, of the people, though greatly the results of the state of society which precedes them, are also greatly the causes of the state of society which follows them; and are the power by which all those of the circumstances of society which are artificial, laws and customs for instance, are altogether moulded.<sup>61</sup>

Here Mill spoke in a vein reminiscent of his criticisms of Bentham (in the 1830s) on account of what he saw as the latter's neglect of the educative function of institutions.

Further on he observed that those branches of social science, such as Political Economy for instance, which had been cultivated as separate sciences, were hopelessly deficient with regard to what he called "the theory of the manner in which their conclusions are affected by ethological considerations". He offered a telling example:

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<sup>59</sup> In the manuscript and the 1843 and 1846 editions the text reads "national character" instead of "the character of the people".

<sup>60</sup> The parenthesis was added in the later editions, from 1851 onwards.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 905.

**In political economy** for instance, empirical laws of human nature are tacitly assumed by **English thinkers**, which are calculated only for Great Britain and the United States. Among other things, an intensity of competition is constantly supposed, which, as a general mercantile fact, exists in no country in the world except those two. **An English political economist, like his countrymen in general**, has seldom learned that it is possible that men, in conducting the business of selling their goods over a counter, should care more about their ease or their vanity than about their pecuniary gain. **Yet those who know the habits of the Continent of Europe** are aware how apparently small a motive often outweighs the desire of money-getting, even in the operations which have money-getting for their direct object. **The more highly the science of ethology is cultivated, and the better the diversities of...national character are understood, the smaller, probably, will the number of propositions become, which it will be considered safe to build on as universal principles of human nature.**

Here he talked more in terms of differences of national character, that had to be taken into account in any calculation and arrangement (which is the sense in which Whewell had blamed Bentham of neglecting national character and in which Mill had asserted - rightly or wrongly-- that Bentham had not in fact neglected it).<sup>62</sup>

It is well known that Mill did not go very far beyond stating the project of founding the science of ethology, stipulating its aims and general principles, and asserting its urgency and importance. Subsequent commentators have never tired of criticising Mill on this account, and some times he has been presented as more sanguine or more inconsistent than his words show him to have been. In a recent study of his thought focusing on the concept of "character", Janice Carlisle, among many fair criticisms of Mill's failure to formulate cogently his proposed science of ethology, raises also some criticisms which are not justified. The difficulty arises when the account comes to the discussion of the study of the character of groups, such as nations:

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 905-6.

[I]n this context...Mill raises the problem...of describing any given character in ways that will win general acceptance. Here Mill seems to involve himself in contradictions and confusions from which there is no escape. The first sections of the chapter refer to "familiar maxims," the "common wisdom of common life," as the knowledge of human nature that needs to be tested against the "really scientific truths" constituted by causal laws,<sup>63</sup> but in his footnote on groups, "current popular maxims" become the evidence of "the character of a nation [as it] is shown in its acts as a nation":<sup>64</sup> **popular wisdom serves as both the raw data and the analytical conclusions of the science of ethology....** Such common maxims are, as well, the fallacies that Mill has worked so hard to debunk.<sup>65</sup>

The "footnote on groups" Carlisle refers to is in Book VI, chapter v of the *Logic*.

There Mill wrote:

The most favourable cases for making such approximate generalizations are what may be termed **collective instances**;.... **Thus the character of a nation is shown in its acts as a nation**; not so much in the acts of its government, for those are much influenced by other causes; but **in the current popular maxims, and other marks of the general direction of public opinion; in the character of the persons or writings that are held in permanent esteem or admiration; in laws and institutions, so far as they are the work of the nation itself, or are acknowledged and supported by it; and so forth.** But even here there is a large margin of doubt and uncertainty. These things are liable to be influenced by many circumstances: they are partly determined by the distinctive qualities of that nation or body of persons, but partly also by external causes which would influence any other body of persons in the same manner. In order, therefore, to make the experiment really complete, we ought to be able to try it without variation upon other nations: **to try how Englishmen would act or feel if placed in the same circumstances in which we have supposed Frenchmen to be placed; to apply, in short, the Method of Difference as well as of Agreement.** Now these experiments we cannot try, nor even approximate to.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Reference is given to: *CW*, VIII, 861, 864, 862.

<sup>64</sup> Reference is given to: *ibid.*, 867n.

<sup>65</sup> Janice Carlisle, *John Stuart Mill and the Writing of Character*, Athens, Georgia, 1991, p. 141.

<sup>66</sup> *CW*, VIII, 867n.

It is difficult to see any "contradictions and confusions" as far as the above statements are concerned. It is not accurate that, in this footnote, "popular wisdom" serves as "the analytical conclusions of the science of ethology". What Mill says is that popular maxims are part of the raw data that the scientific observer, the "ethologist" in this case, has to take into consideration and to study. To say that popular wisdom serves as the analytical conclusions of the science of ethology is to say that Mill takes the various popular maxims, sayings, national and local stereotypes for incontestable truths of the science of ethology. Carlisle's criticism would be well-founded for instance if Mill had said or implied that what the English populace think of the French should be part of "the analytical conclusions of the science of ethology" on the subject of **the French** character. But this is not what Mill said in the footnote in question. What he did say about popular sayings, maxims, or stereotypes of this kind is that they should be part of the material that the ethologist should study in order to reach conclusions about the national character of those who hold these maxims and stereotypes --rather than about the objects of these maxims and stereotypes.<sup>67</sup> Thus such "popular wisdom" is as far from being part of "the analytical conclusions of the science of ethology" as the popular customs, sayings, or proverbs of a given tribe or region are from being part of the "analytical conclusions" of the contemporary science of social anthropology for instance.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> In the example given above, of English stereotypes on the French, Mill would invite the ethologist to take them into account and study them as manifestations of **the English** national character.

<sup>68</sup> What is said here does not mean to exculpate Mill from the criticism that he indulged in national stereotyping through many of his writings. All that is asserted in the above comments is that he does not sanction such stereotyping here, in the "footnote on groups" in the *Logic*, with the kind and degree of "scientific" status that Carlisle would have one believe he does. For an instance where Mill did take what

In discussing the overall role of the projected science of ethology and of Mill's focus on national characters in his *oeuvre* Carlisle asserts that "[a]lthough Mill never wrote a theoretical treatise on ethology, during the mid-1840s and into the 1850s and the 1860s, he worked to put into practice the claims he made for it in his *System of Logic*." She singles out the *Political Economy*, the long series of articles on Ireland in the *Morning Chronicle*, and *The Subjection of Women*. According to Carlisle "[a] consistent definition of ethology emerges from these essays as well as consistent proof that the science became, for Mill, less a powerful tool of inquiry than a powerful mode of persuasion." The author proceeds to assert:

Whenever Mill chose a subject for sustained ethological analysis during the last three decades of his career, he **invariably chose groups remarkable for their common status as marginal, dispossessed, or disenfranchised**: the geographically and politically marginal Irish, the socially and economically disadvantaged working classes, and the politically and professionally dispossessed group constituted by all women, in England and Ireland, in all classes. Such choices again reveal the political nature of the inquiry. **These were the groups whose circumstances were most in need of change.**

She goes on to write that Mill's comments "on middle-class, male-dominated, English commercial society emerge, by contrast, only apropos of some other topic." And:

Mill's analysis of the English is fairly specific; he remarks on the provincialism that allows ignorance of French thought and French politics and French history, the toadying of the English classes to their betters, the stultifying narrowness of English manners and morals, and the rampant commercialism that saps energy for all pursuits and values

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people thought of a foreign nation as a valid description of its national character, in an early article (1832), more than a decade prior to his enunciation of the principles of ethology in the *Logic*, see *ibid.*, XXIII, 397 ("our evidence is public notoriety"). Of course, instead of considering this statement to be an indication of inconsistency, one could suggest that it shows the distance Mill had covered in his speculations on national characters in the course of a decade, his substitution of scientific methods for idle national stereotypes. It remains to be seen of course to what extent he lived up to the methods he stipulated since he wrote the *Logic*. Cf. Robson, *The Improvement of Mankind*, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-2.

other than the monetary and the material. **Such comments, however, and the consistent portrait of English national shortcomings that they draw are usually elicited by more sustained discussions of topics not English, not middle-class, and not male. ... Ethology, the science whose laws will guide the reformer's methods, is to be practised on the dispossessed.**<sup>69</sup>

But it is debatable whether "Mill's analysis of the English is fairly specific" and whether he remarked only on the issues mentioned above with regard to the English character. Mill also discussed manifestations of the English character with regard to virtue, veracity, the passion not to have arbitrary power exercised over oneself, the "struggling, go-ahead" and self-helping character of "the Anglosaxons", the English nation's tenderness of conscience, their aversion to war, etc. These comments on the English character were made in key points of key texts as diverse as the *Political Economy*, the *Logic*, *Representative Government*, the *Inaugural Address*, *The Subjection of Women*, and an impressive number of newspaper articles, to say nothing of his exchanges on the differences of national characters with d'Eichthal, Comte, and many others in his correspondence with them. What Mill called "ethological" considerations and concerns are amply present in all these writings, and the English character is far from being marginal. Besides, there are texts which go some way towards indicating that it was the study of the peculiarities of the English character that was in the centre of these concerns. Besides his general theoretical assertion that one can never get to know a foreign country as well as one's own,<sup>70</sup> there is also

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<sup>69</sup> Carlisle, *J.S. Mill and the Writing of Character*, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-5.

<sup>70</sup> In "State of Society in America" (1836) he asserted that one could never know a foreign country as well as one could hope to know one's own country, but rather could be aided by the study of foreign countries in understanding --and aiming at improving-- one's own. And he added: "and the wisdom acquired by the study of ourselves, and of the circumstances which surround us, can alone teach us to interpret the comparatively little which we know of other persons and other modes of



his emphatic statement in a letter to Comte that since his early youth he had been occupied in the study of the English character, accompanied by the complaint that Continental observers were falling into gross misunderstandings of the character of their insular neighbour.<sup>71</sup>

Thus, in the first place, besides the character of the "dispossessed", that of the English was at least of equal interest to Mill, and was extensively discussed by him, in what he would call ethological terms. In the second place, any discussion of Mill's ethological ventures should not fail to take into account his repeated comments on the character of one more group. His comments on this group, throughout his life, abound with remarks of an "ethological" nature, by no means less than his comments on the Irish, the labouring classes, and women. The group alluded to are the French. Besides, through a study of Mill's ethological observations on the French (in Chapter VII of this thesis), a better estimation of the status of his comments on the English national character can also be achieved, as the observations on the character of the French were most often given in the form of comparisons between them and the English. It is characteristic that, whenever Mill spoke of differences of national character in the abstract, theoretically, in his various attempts to demonstrate the significance of ethological enquiry, in works such as the *Logic*, *The Subjection of Women*, or the *Political Economy*, all the examples he used either were exclusively,

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existence; to make a faithful picture of them in our own minds, and to assign effects to their right causes.": *CW*, XVIII, 93.

<sup>71</sup> Letter of 26 March, 1846: *ibid.*, XIII, 696-7. Cf. *ibid.*, XV, 656.

or included --in a central position, along with other examples-- that of the differences between the English and French characters with regard to the issue in question.<sup>72</sup>

The importance that Ethology had for Mill has been captured by Alexander Bain. With reference to Mill's review article of 1844 on Michelet (which has been seen in Part 2 to abound with remarks on the character of the French), Bain, after commenting that "Mill had worked himself into sympathy with everything French, and echoed the importance of France from the French historians", went on to note that while writing that article, he was "projecting in his mind his next book, which was to be on the new science, first sketched in the *Logic*, and there called 'Ethology'". Bain added that "[w]ith parental fondness, he cherished this subject for a considerable time; regarding it as the foundation and cornerstone of Sociology."

After describing Mill's failure with this project Bain concluded that:

He was all his life possessed of the idea that differences of character, individual and national, were due to accidents and circumstances that might possibly be, in part, controlled; **on this doctrine rested his chief hope in the future.** He would not allow that human beings at birth are so very different as they afterwards turn out.<sup>73</sup>

#### 4. NATIONAL CHARACTERS AND STATES OF SOCIETY.

In Mill's argument in the *Logic* on the significance of the study of national character quoted earlier, the phrase "state of society" appears in connection with

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<sup>72</sup> See, e.g.: *CW*, VIII, 867n; XIX, 410, 420-1; XXI, 309-10. Cf. Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill, op. cit.*, p. 406: "England and France, and their respective national characters, lived in perpetual tension and dialectic in Mill's soul. He alone, he felt, understood the two countries."

<sup>73</sup> Bain, *J.S. Mill, op. cit.*, 78-9.

"national character".<sup>74</sup> In the account of his conversation with Mill on centralization that Tocqueville has left, he reports that Mill, though he had acknowledged the existence of a tendency towards centralization in Britain at that time (1835), had at the same time reassured the Frenchman that he did not believe there was any real danger of that tendency going too far on his side of the Channel. Mill had accounted for his confidence by pointing to the foreignness of centralization to "the english spirit".<sup>75</sup> Tocqueville then asked whether what Mill called the "esprit anglais" was not the "esprit aristocratique". Whether, that is, the attitude Mill had described was not inherent in the spirit of aristocracy, of an aristocratic state of society.<sup>76</sup> Mill's answer, though politely accepting that Tocqueville's point was worth consideration, was not the less explicit on the point in question. Tocqueville's view needed to be modified by what Mill had said of "l'esprit anglais", "car l'esprit anglais me paraît autre chose encore que l'esprit aristocratique."<sup>77</sup> This conversation demonstrates that, as early as in 1835, Mill distinguished between "national character" (which is what the English "esprit national" amounts to) and "state of society" (which is what

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<sup>74</sup> *CW*, VIII, 905 (Book VI, chapter ix, section 4).

<sup>75</sup> "La centralisation est, jusqu'à present, ce qui a été le plus étranger à l'esprit anglais".

<sup>76</sup> "Ne serait-il pas dans l'esprit aristocratique de s'isoler et, comme la part individuelle de chacun est belle, de *plus* craindre d'être troublé dans sa jouissance *que* désirer de s'étendre sur les autres? L'instinct de la démocratie ne serait-il pas tout contraire et la pente actuelle que vous considérez comme un accident ne serait-elle pas une conséquence presque nécessaire de la *grande cause*?"

<sup>77</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Voyages en Angleterre et en Irlande*, ed. by J.P. Mayer, Paris, 1957, pp. 132-133.

he considered his interlocutor's remark to be more relevant to), and accorded the former much more importance than Tocqueville did.<sup>78</sup>

Though Mill's interest in differences of national characters has not gone entirely unnoticed, it is still the case that his relativism --in comparison to his father and Bentham-- has been acknowledged and discussed mainly in terms of his insistence that different stages (or states) of society required different institutional arrangements.<sup>79</sup> Yet, Mill himself stressed the importance of another kind of relativism in his thought. He concluded his assessment of the significance of his boyhood stay in France in the *Autobiography* as follows:

The chief fruit which I carried away from the society I saw, was a strong and permanent interest in Continental Liberalism, of which I ever afterwards kept myself *au courant*, as much as of English politics: a thing not at all usual in those days with Englishmen, and which had a very salutary influence on my development, keeping me free from the error always prevalent in England, **and from which even my father with all his superiority to prejudice was not exempt, of judging universal questions by a merely English standard.**<sup>80</sup>

The emphasis in this statement is on J.S. Mill's superiority to other "English" thinkers including his father not on account of his historical relativism and comprehension of the differences between different stages of civilization, but rather, on account of the alertness he believed he acquired, thanks to his interest in France

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<sup>78</sup> See on critiques of Tocqueville's "blindness" to national differences ("la cécité de Tocqueville aux différences nationales") by some of his contemporaries: Mélonio, *Tocqueville et les Français, op. cit.*, pp. 106-7.

<sup>79</sup> See, for instance, Robson, *The Improvement of Mankind, op. cit.*, p. 223: "When discussing Mill's theory of government it should be borne in mind that the relativity of institutions to the state of society for which they are intended is fundamental to his thought." Cf. Mandelbaum, *History, Man, and Reason, op. cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>80</sup> *CW*, I, 63.

and French thought, to differences between nations and national viewpoints with no reference to their being nations belonging to different stages of civilization. In other words, his acquaintance with France alerted Mill to the importance of one more dimension where relativity had to be applied, that of differences of national character.<sup>81</sup>

In an early letter to Gustave d'Eichthal Mill censured the Saint-Simonians for thinking "that the mind of man, by a sort of fatality or necessity, grows and unfolds its different faculties always in one particular order, like the body; and that therefore we must be always either standing still, or advancing, or retrograding". To this Mill retorted that he believed "that different nations, indeed different minds, may and do advance to improvement by different roads; **that nations, and men, nearly in an equally advanced stage of civilization, may yet be very different in character,** and that changes may take place in a man or a nation, which are neither steps forward nor backward, but steps to one side".<sup>82</sup>

Coming back to what has been discussed in the beginning of this chapter, it is obvious that the problem of the reformer-legislator is quite complicated, since he has to ascertain both the stage of civilization and the character of a nation if he is to

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<sup>81</sup> It has been pointed out by J.W. Burrow that James Mill, for all the criticism his *Essay on Government* has received, did insert a qualification to his generalizations, when, in the *Fragment on Mackintosh*, he wrote that there was a set of circumstances --the most important circumstances in his opinion-- "which nations have in common; **at least nations which are on the same level in point of civilization**": Burrow, *Evolution and Society*, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60. To the extent that James Mill was not blind to differences between different states of civilization, John Stuart Mill's presentation of his own relativism as an improvement on his father's thought must be seen as more emphatically focused on his appreciation of differences of national character and their significance for politics.

<sup>82</sup> *CW*, XII, 43 (letter of 7 November 1829).

heed Mill's injunction that he should adapt his means --institutions-- to these two elements in order to carry both forward. In the "Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy" (1833) Mill wrote that:

[T]he same institutions will no more suit two nations in different stages of civilization, than the same lessons will suit children of different ages. As the degree of civilization already attained varies, so does the kind of social influence necessary for carrying the community forward to the next stage of its progress. For a tribe of North American Indians, improvement means, taming down their proud and solitary self-dependence; for a body of emancipated negroes, it means accustoming them to be self-dependent, instead of being merely obedient to orders; for our semi-barbarous ancestors it would have meant, softening them; for a race of enervated Asiatics it would mean hardening them. How can the same social organization be fitted for producing so many contrary effects?<sup>83</sup>

This seems less problematic than other statements of Mill on these questions in that it speaks of stages of civilization in rather familiar nineteenth-century terms, and could be taken to imply the existence of one, more or less linear trajectory of civilization, with different nations having covered different lengths of the trajectory.<sup>84</sup> Yet, the letter to d'Eichthal should alert one against reaching such conclusions. And later, in "Bentham" (1838), Mill introduces examples which can leave no doubt that he recommends that there should be different institutional provisions between nations which he regarded as being "nearly in an equally advanced stage of civilization" and yet "very different in character": there can be no doubt that he regarded England and France as cases in point, and apparently the same applied

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 16.

<sup>84</sup> This view would be reinforced by Mill's statement in *Representative Government* that a slave (as "emancipated negroes" were) had already acquired "the first lesson of political society": "He has learnt to obey" and was therefore on a "stage of civilization" superior to that in which "a people in a state of savage independence" (as "a tribe of North American Indians" were) found themselves --they had, first of all, to learn to obey: see *ibid.*, XIX, 394-5.

to the case of the Germans and "the people of Northern and Central Italy". In such cases it was not so much the difference in the degree (or "stage") of "civilization" already attained that rendered differences in legislation advisable, but rather differences of "character". Thus, Mill wrote in "Bentham":

The same laws would not have suited our wild ancestors, accustomed to rude independence, and a people of Asiatics bowed down by military despotism: the slave needs to be trained to govern himself, the savage to submit to the government of others. **The same laws will not suit the English, who distrust everything which emanates from general principles, and the French, who distrust whatever does not so emanate.**<sup>85</sup> Very different institutions are needed to train to the perfection of their nature, or to constitute into a united nation and social polity...the Germans, and...people like those of Northern and Central Italy;....<sup>86</sup>

In this text, both stage of civilization and national character (though none of them are mentioned by name) seem to be factors that may necessitate modifications in the legislation appropriate for each particular people. The first example can be taken to refer to differences in the stage of civilization, while the two last examples can be assumed to have more to do with what Mill had referred to as "nations...nearly in an equally advanced stage of civilization" and "yet...very different in character". But there are many instances in Mill's writings where "state of civilization"<sup>87</sup> and "national character" are mentioned together as factors to be taken into consideration with little or no comment as to the degree of attention due to each and the concrete

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<sup>85</sup> In the first (1838) edition of this text Mill had written: "the English, who place their habitual reliance in themselves, and the French, who place theirs in leaders".

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 104-5.

<sup>87</sup> "Stage of civilization" was interchangeable in his writings with "state of civilization" or "state of society". See more on this issue in Chapter VII, Part 4.

significance of each. At times they seem hardly separable and yet in other instances Mill spoke of them in terms that indicate that he considered them to be distinct.

Thus in 1836, in "State of Society in America" he remarked that there were "in the present age" four great nations, England, France, Germany, and the United States, and that each of these possessed, "either in its **social condition**, in its **national character**, or in **both**, some points of indisputable and pre-eminent superiority over all the others." At the same time each of them had "some deep-seated and grievous defects from which the others are comparatively exempt." Hence, **the "state of society" in each**, and **"the type of human nature which it exhibits"**, were "subjects of most instructive study to the others".<sup>88</sup>

It was in the *Logic* that Mill attempted to give a definition of what he meant by "state of society" or "state of civilization". He wrote there that in order "to conceive correctly the scope of this general science [of Society], and distinguish it from the subordinate departments of sociological speculation", it was necessary to define what was meant by the phrase, **"a State of Society"**:

What is called a state of society, is **the simultaneous state of all the greater social facts or phenomena**. Such are, the degree of knowledge, and of intellectual and moral culture, existing in the community, and in every class of it; the state of industry, of wealth and its distribution; the habitual occupations of the community; their division into classes, and the relations of those classes to one another; the common beliefs which they entertain on all the subjects most important to mankind, and the degree of assurance with which those beliefs are held; their tastes, and the character and degree of their aesthetic development; their form of government, and the more important of their laws and customs. The condition of all these things,

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII, 94.



and of many more which will readily suggest themselves, constitute the state of society or the state of civilization at any given time.<sup>89</sup>

It has already been seen that in arguing for the importance of Political Ethology Mill had spoken of "the character which is formed by any state of social circumstances" as being "in itself the most interesting phenomenon which that state of society can possibly present". And "above all, the character, that is, the opinions, feelings, and habits, of the people, though greatly the result of the state of society which precedes them, are also greatly the causes of the state of society which follows them".<sup>90</sup> If the relative status of state of society and national character can be inferred from the relative status of the sciences that were designed by Mill to study each of them --"the general Science of Society" (or Social Science, or Sociology) and "Political Ethology" respectively-- it is the "state of society" that emerges as the most important consideration. As has been seen, Political Ethology was supposed to be a branch of the broader Social Science. This having been said, however, Mill is adamant that "ethological considerations" (arising from the findings of the study of national characters, the causes of their formation and their differences) were to be the most indispensable considerations. His remarks concerning the importance of Political Ethology for Social Science, and the statement that national character is at the same time the result of the preceding state of society and to a very great extent the cause of the following state of society, go some way towards pointing to the complexity of the considerations involved and the difficulty of always attributing the results in question to either exclusively. Some examples from Mill's comments on French

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<sup>89</sup> Mill then stresses that "there exist Uniformities of Coexistence between the states of the various social phenomena.": *ibid.*, VIII, 911-12.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 905.

affairs and character (in Chapter VII) may shed some more light on the relevant concepts.

## VII. FRENCH NATIONAL CHARACTER.

On 18 April 1832, the Saint-Simonian journal *Le Globe* published an article written by Mill entitled "Lettre à Ch. Duveyrier", which was intended to be the first of a series of letters to the Editor of the paper.<sup>1</sup> This first instalment was also published in English more than a year later in the *Monthly Repository* (November 1833).<sup>2</sup> Mill informed his Saint-Simonian friends from the *Globe* that, in undertaking to write for their paper, his first motive was his desire to contribute towards what they were labouring for "with so much success", namely, "to enable two nations, each of which possesses so many of the elements of greatness and goodness, but developed in an unequal degree, to understand each other"; and, he goes on,

to make them do justice mutually to each other's merits, and acquiesce in the necessary results of those laws of human and of external nature which have made **the characters of the two nations** different, and in so doing have marked out to each of them a different vocation, and commanded each to pursue the end of our common existence by separate, yet not by opposite, roads. An arrangement which...is a subject of rejoicing; for it furnishes the philosopher with *varied* experiments on the education of the human race; and affords the only mode by which all the parts of our nature are enabled to move forward at once, none of them being choked (as some must be in every attempt to reduce all characters to a single invariable type) by the

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<sup>1</sup> As the *Globe* ceased publication two days after this article appeared, the series did not materialize.

<sup>2</sup> "Comparison of the Tendencies of French and English Intellect": CW, XXIII, 442-7; for the French version see *ibid.*, XXV, 1251-5.

disproportionate growth of the remainder.<sup>3</sup>

And he went on to inform them that they were "not wrong in supposing that I have this object deeply at heart". That this was actually the case is shown by the impressive volume of his writings on France and the French, which were aimed at imparting to his compatriots what he saw as his peculiarly close conversance with the "character" of the French. No less eager was he to discover --for himself, as well as for his readers-- **"the laws of human and of external nature which [had] made the characters of the two nations different"**. It was this search that constituted his principal "ethological" enquiry throughout his life. The first exercises of this search were given scope in the newspaper writings of the early 1830s, the greatest number of which (in the early years of the decade especially) dealt with France, its politics and its prospects after the revolution of July 1830.<sup>4</sup> His last public comments on the French character were made in the major works of the 1860s, among which *Representative Government* will receive attention here.

### 1. EARLY NEWSPAPER WRITINGS.

The newspaper articles on French news (and the "Prospects of France" series) that Mill contributed to the *Examiner* in the years 1830-1834 offer a number of insights into his opinions of French "character", as well as some hints as to what he thought had made that character what it was, and what could improve it. The term

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, 443.

<sup>4</sup> On the proportion of his article on France to his overall output see: A. Robson and J. Robson, "'Impetuous Eagerness'...", *op. cit.*, pp. 76-7 (n.12).

itself does not appear in these writings before December 1830,<sup>5</sup> but what could be considered to be its ingredients (on the basis of Mill's own use of the term later) were commented on from July onwards. In these writings it is the term "state of society" which is frequently used with regard to France.<sup>6</sup> It is obvious that Mill was sanguine about the prospects of France in the months immediately following the revolution, and believed that the fact of the July revolution itself would help carry the state of society of France forward.<sup>7</sup>

Some of the tendencies, habits, or feelings of the French people, or the French mind, that seem to correspond to what Mill called national character, discussed in these articles are worth noting. He wrote that "almost all Frenchmen resemble republicans in their habits and feelings";<sup>8</sup> that they were "an eminently place-hunting people";<sup>9</sup> he noted "the generosity of their national character";<sup>10</sup> and, with regard to the forbearance shown by the workers during an insurrection at Lyon, he wrote of "that extraordinary power of extemporaneous organization, which belongs to the superior quickness and readiness of the French character, and to the military habits of a large proportion of the people".<sup>11</sup> The tendency to over-government in France is described as a development of recent decades, "from the reign of Napoleon to the

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<sup>5</sup> See *CW*, XXII, 215.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, 130, 136.

<sup>7</sup> See *ibid.*, 146, 177, 247.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, 560.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 368 (4 December, 1831).

present time".<sup>12</sup>

One of the issues that offer some scope for examining Mill's views on subjects related to the peculiarities of the French nation was the question of the hereditary peerage, which was discussed at that time by the French Chamber of Deputies. A hereditary peerage, he wrote, was "an institution radically incompatible with the circumstances of France, and of which nothing can ever exist in that country except the forms and the name."<sup>13</sup> It was an institution "radically incompatible with the feelings and habits of the French people".<sup>14</sup> The French despised hereditary distinctions and valued highly personal ones.<sup>15</sup> Birth and wealth conferred no moral ascendancy in France.<sup>16</sup> He noted that those English people who had never lived out of England imagined that the respect of mankind attached itself to riches and genealogy "by an inherent virtue", and could not even conceive that these "extrinsic advantages" could exist without conferring to their possessors "unbounded deference and homage".

Frenchmen, on the other hand, are no less astonished at finding that in this country the Duke of Northumberland is a greater man than Sir Humphrey Davy, and Mr. Baring than Sir Walter Scott. **This is one of those broad and all-pervading differences between nations, which render it absurd to transfer institutions ready-made from one country to the other.** The only moral ascendancy in France is

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 184-5.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, 342.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

that of personal qualities; and personal qualities are not hereditary.<sup>17</sup>

On the passing of the Bill on the abolition of entails (*majorats*) in the French Chamber of Deputies, Mill wrote that the adoption of that measure, "entirely unopposed by an assembly so anti-popular in its general policy", was "a striking illustration of the peculiar character of the democratic feeling in France." He commented that:

It is not true, as is often asserted, that the French are lovers of "equality," in the true sense of the term. There is not a people in Europe more greedy of distinction than themselves; or more ready to do homage to it in others, so long as it is merely *personal* distinction. But they cannot endure the shadow of a *hereditary* privilege; an advantage marked out for a particular caste, and not accessible to the remainder of the community. In studying French affairs, this observation will be found a necessary key to much. In *this* latter sense the passion for equality so pervades the nation, that even the *bourgeois* oligarchs of the Chamber of Deputies are as completely possessed by it as other people. Hence the abolition of the hereditary peerage, the abolition of *majorats*, and much else.<sup>18</sup>

The first mention of the term national character itself is in a text on foreign affairs. In case war were to come, "under its influence, in less than a twelvemonth, the national character would again be perverted, as it was by Napoleon".<sup>19</sup>

Another theme in these early newspaper writings was the frequent reference to the "excitability" and "mobility" of the French character.<sup>20</sup> The French were "a

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 343. One of Mill's main complaints against Guizot was the latter's support for a hereditary peerage in France. For a perceptive analysis of Guizot's position on this issue see Rosanvallon, *Le Moment Guizot*, *op. cit.*, pp. 285-90.

<sup>18</sup> *CW*, XXIII, 682 (2 February, 1834).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 215. Cf. *ibid.*, 258-9.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the reference to the "excitability" and "impetuosity" of the French and Irish ("Gaelic") characters in the article on Michelet: *ibid.*, XX, 235.

people...susceptible of strong emotions"<sup>21</sup> and "an excitable and confiding people".<sup>22</sup> In introducing a Paris correspondent of the *Examiner* (Maillefer), Mill wrote in that paper in January 1831, that he was convinced that in the letters of the French correspondent "both the faults and the virtues of the French character" would be exhibited, "with the utmost fidelity and *naïveté*". The very first letter, with the picture which it exhibited of public opinion in France, "exemplifies at once the virtues and the failings most natural to the French people, those connected with **great susceptibility and mobility of character.**":

In the most sanguinary excesses of the first revolution, as a word would rouse the popular fury, so a word would calm it: **and now, with manners and habits infinitely softened and improved, the French retain the same excitability of spirit:** the most lively gratitude and affection towards public men who wish, or seem to wish, their good; suspicion and distrust, easily conceived, and easily renounced;<sup>23</sup> political tergiversation punished for a time by bitter resentment, but very slender and inadequate services accepted as a full atonement.<sup>24</sup>

## 2. LA JEUNE FRANCE AND THE GENERATION FACTOR.

Not long after he wrote this, in May 1831, Mill came to the defence of the French character against the imputation (by *The Times*) that the French were volatile. *The Times* had, he wrote, once more demonstrated that it was "not only utterly ignorant of, but utterly incapable of comprehending, the national character of the

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 226.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 283. See also *ibid.*, XXIII, 335.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 440-1.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 246-7 (23 January, 1831, p. 55). Cf. *ibid.*, XIII, 448; cf. also: Tocqueville, *The Ancien Régime*, London, 1988, p. 168.



French":

The last of our public writers who still holds fast to the idle phrases of "our lively neighbours," "our volatile neighbours," has great need of putting himself to school before he gives lectures to a people who, as all mankind know, except himself, **have undergone some rather remarkable metamorphoses since the days of their grandfathers.** Is it necessary to repeat, once more, **that the French of the present day are a far more serious people than the English; that their national character is grave, earnest, and enthusiastic;**<sup>25</sup> that frivolity has fled from them with its parent aristocracy, and that the gibes of forty years ago might now, with far greater justice, be retorted by "our volatile neighbours" against ourselves?<sup>26</sup>

Mill went on to present to his readers some of the characteristics of the generation of young men, "*la jeune France*", which distinguished them from their predecessors and justified his reliance on them. It has already been mentioned that Mill had set high hopes on the "young men" in the aftermath of the July Revolution. His reliance on the generation factor deserves some attention here.

In the last (fourth) letter he sent James Mill from Paris, on 27 August 1830, the younger Mill informed his father that he had been "exceedingly fortunate" during his stay in the French capital in terms of the number and quality of persons he had been brought into contact with. But he considered himself "particularly fortunate in having formed an acquaintance with M. Tanneguy Duchâtel, and with the principal members of the society Aide-toi." He expanded on his conversations with Duchâtel, who seemed to him to "unite in an extraordinary degree **the best qualities of a young**

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<sup>25</sup> On the widespread belief, in France, in the gravity and seriousness of the generation Mill was referring to, see: Alan B. Spitzer, *The French Generation of 1820*, Princeton, 1987, p. 174.

<sup>26</sup> *CW*, XXII, 308-9 (the article criticized was in *The Times*, 11 May, 1831, p. 2). By the last remark (concerning aristocracy) Mill was reversing one of the most common-place anti-French stereotypes of past decades and using it to defend the French of his own day: cf. Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830*, London, 1987, pp. 21-44, 78, 82-4, 146-8, 228-40.

**Frenchman (for he seems to be under thirty)**<sup>27</sup> with the acquirements of an instructed Englishman, and especially with a knowledge of details and a habit of reflection on important practical questions", which few Frenchmen possessed, due to the fact that "the events of the last fifteen years" had called into exercise "few valuable qualities except those of a party pamphleteer, or at most a writer on the first principles of government". He added: "If there were many **young men** like Duchâtel, you would soon see a great difference in the character of their newspapers and of their parliamentary debates."<sup>28</sup>

The subject of the young men was to be pursued by Mill some weeks later, in his fourth article of the "Prospects of France" series (10 October 1830). In the context of his desire to present to the British public what the demands of the French "popular party" were, he started by the question of the conditions of eligibility. He informed his readers that the popular party demanded the entire abrogation of all restrictions on eligibility, and proceeded to offer arguments in favour of their position. In the first place he employed some general arguments of universal applicability against restrictions on eligibility. But besides "these general considerations", there were others, "**more specially applicable to the present situation of France**". Thus, in the case of France in 1830, "the adjustment of the qualification of candidates involves **the entire question between the gerontocracy and the young men**":

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<sup>27</sup> The remark in parenthesis leaves little doubt that the stress was on "young" rather than on "Frenchman".

<sup>28</sup> *CW*, XII, 63-4. Duchâtel was one of the members of the *Société Aide toi le Ciel t'aidera*. Mill wrote that: "**They are all young men**, and most of them have been engaged in active hostility to the government from very early youth": *ibid.*, 64-5.

The youngest of the present deputies must have been in his twenty-fifth year, at the first return of the Bourbons. **There probably is not another example in history of so marked and memorable a disparity between one generation and that immediately succeeding it, as exists between the generation to which the deputies belong, and that which has risen to manhood during the last sixteen years.**<sup>29</sup>

The government under which the majority of the deputies had received their early impressions (that of Napoleon), "was not merely a despotism": "no other despotism which we have known applied so great a power, or applied it so systematically, to the purpose of degrading the human mind." The press and every other channel of discussion had been suppressed; all scientific pursuits which were not related with the military art were positively discouraged. And "[i]n particular, all enquiries into the first principles of the moral sciences, as well as all preference of political opinion to personal interest, were, under the name of *idéologie*, the object of avowed contempt and aversion to **the low-minded adventurer to whom circumstances had given unlimited power over the French people**". Hence:

Putting aside the selfishness, the paltry ambition, the rage of place-hunting, the pliability of conscience, which were the natural outgrowth of such a government; it is not very surprising that men who were trained, and passed the best years of their lives, at a time when the human intellect was chained up, should be **a puny race**. To read their debates is all that is required in order to be satisfied of the prodigious inferiority of their best men to the best men of the generation which preceded them.

There were in the French Chamber of Deputies no more men such as the members of "that constellation of remarkable men, by which the early period of the first French Revolution was rendered illustrious." Unlike those revolutionary luminaries, the men who succeeded them were "taken unprepared" by July and "found without

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 154.

a single fixed idea, by events which laid open before them a wider field for legislative improvement than they had expected".<sup>30</sup>

But if "the men of forty and upwards, speaking of them as a class", were "as poor in intellect and attainments as fifteen years of training under the despotism of Bonaparte could make them", the case was far different with "that *jeune France*, of which, as long ago as 1820, Benjamin Constant and other orators of the *côté gauche*<sup>31</sup> boasted as of a generation who would far surpass their fathers." More precisely:

**The men who are now between twenty and thirty-five years of age, have received the strongest and most durable of their early impressions under comparatively free institutions. During the period in which they were educated, political discussion has been free, and books have multiplied.... The young men have also enjoyed the advantage (it is no trifling one) of living under a government from which they could not, without becoming infamous, accept of place. Being excluded, therefore, from all means of obtaining distinction without the trouble of deserving it, they devoted themselves to serious studies; and (to say nothing of their immense superiority in the higher virtues, above the generation which preceded them), it is among them alone that fit successors will be found in point of intellect, to the best men whom France has produced in the former periods of its history.**<sup>32</sup>

Such an explanation of differences between human groups was consistent with Mill's

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 155-6.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Spitzer, *The French Generation...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 4, 270 (n.3).

<sup>32</sup> *CW*, XXII, 156. Notwithstanding the lowering of the limit from forty to thirty years the young men were still excluded, because "the **pecuniary** qualification operates as effectually in excluding the young, as in excluding the poor." It was because, by the existing conditions of eligibility, those men were excluded from the chamber, that Mill tried to bring home to his readers the loss that the perpetuation of that arrangement would mean for France. Cf. Bain's summary of the now missing parts of Mill's letter to his father of 13 August 1830: "Of the new measures he praises most the lowering of the age-qualification to the Chamber from 40 to 30: **he has seen no one that attaches due importance to this change.**": Bain, *J.S. Mill, op. cit.*, p. 42 (reprinted in *CW*, XII, 54-5).

belief in the influence of circumstances upon the formation of character. It was a sort of "ethological" analysis *avant la lettre* that he applied here.<sup>33</sup> Mill was by no means alone in attributing importance to the generation factor in France at the period in question. As one of the most recent contributors to the relevant discussions has observed: "The assumption that a cohort coming of age in the Restoration's first decade did exist for history is one that has a long history."<sup>34</sup>

What is remarkable about Mill's portrayal of this generation is his total failure to refer to one of its main characteristics, namely its intensely nationalistic attitude, generated by its having been born to Napoleonic glories and suddenly thrown to the Restoration's humiliating --in their eyes-- settlement, imposed by the victorious foreign powers.<sup>35</sup> At this point Mill read their disenchantment in purely constitutional terms and not at all in terms of the relations of France with Europe and the settlement of 1815. Many, in fact some of the most important, of Mill's frustrations with regard to France and the French were to arise by his having underestimated the degree to which national grandeur (as well as the attainment of what they called France's "natural frontiers") was valued by the generation which he expected to renew France's and Europe's politics and society. It has already been seen (Chapter III) that

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<sup>33</sup> Mill stressed the difference of his own generation from the "eminent thinkers of fifty years ago" in a British context as well, rather overplaying the differences: see Collini, Winch and Burrow, *That Noble Science...*, *op. cit.*, p. 133. And a lot has been written on Mill's youthful rebellion towards his father and his "Oedipal conflict": see Bruce Mazlish, *James and John Stuart Mill: Father and Son in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1975, pp. 15-43, 279, and *passim*.

<sup>34</sup> Spitzer, *The French Generation...*, *op. cit.*, p. 3. And: "There is no doubt that the generation existed in the perceptions of its contemporaries.": *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>35</sup> Spitzer observed on this generation: "Its collective trauma was not the Revolution but the collapse of the Empire.": Spitzer, *The French Generation...*, *op. cit.*, p. 10, and *passim*. Cf. McLaren, "The National...", *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

he came, before the end of the year, to admit that he was no less than "shocked and disgusted" by the eagerness for war in which the French belonging to that generation were all but unanimous.

Aside from the young men's nationalism, the frustration of his hopes for rapid progress in the early 1830s was to be an important factor that led Mill to attribute more and more importance to durable elements in the national character and rely comparatively less on what a change of generation could effect.

### 3. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE VIRTUES.

Among the traits of national character which Mill had found to be shared by the French and the Irish in his article on Michelet, one of the most prominent was "their more serious moral deficiency", which was "**the absence of a sensitive regard for truth**".<sup>36</sup> The same theme had been developed by him in more detail in his early newspaper articles on France, and the same comparison with the Irish had been drawn and amplified there. In the *Examiner* of 8 January 1832, on the occasion of a dispute between the prime minister Périer and du Molart, prefect of the region of Lyons, about which of them had falsified some facts respecting a revolt in Lyons, Mill commented that whichever of the two parties had falsified the truth, the exhibition was "a curious one, and little creditable to the French character". There were "a hundred points on which the tone both of public and private morality" was "far higher" among the French than among the English. But this was not the case "in the important point of personal veracity". He elaborated:

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<sup>36</sup> *CW*, XX, 235.

England is the classic land of cant; the hypocritical pretence of feelings and opinions utterly foreign to the character of the person professing them, is...a matter of course in our Parliament.... But we solemnly assure our friends in France, of our firm belief that no man, Whig or Tory, who has been a Cabinet Minister of England within the present generation, was ever suspected, by his worst enemies, of deliberately denying, in the face of the public, any act of his own individually; and that no man who has held office within the same period would have been capable of the falsehood which, if M. P  rier is innocent, must be imputed to M. du Molart: **unless indeed, he is an Irishman: for *that* nation, also superior to ourselves in *some* highly valuable qualities, is well understood to be, in all ranks of society, considerably below the English and Scotch in adherence to truth.**<sup>37</sup>

These statements did not go down well with at least one of the readers of the *Examiner*, who wrote a letter accusing the author of the article on French news of 8 January 1832 of having "taken advantage of the...controversy to fling a deliberate and wanton insult on the Irish character", as well as enquiring "from what sources of authority" he had derived his ideas of the Irish character.<sup>38</sup> Mill tried to explain why he mentioned the Irish character in the article in question:

We were laying claim, in behalf of our countrymen, to a superiority in private veracity over the French. Now, as the Irish, though they do not consider themselves our countrymen, are considered such by foreigners, we thought it right, in order not to make a false impression, to state that we meant the assertion only of the English and Scotch.

As for his "'sources of authority' in regard to the Irish character", the answer was: "we have none that are peculiar to ourselves: **our evidence is public notoriety**": "To go no further", he had reason to believe that "most tradesmen of respectability" would inform his correspondent, "that they will give credit to an Englishman or a Scotchman, but not to an Irishman."

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, 388.

<sup>38</sup> See *ibid.*, 397.

Mill then proceeded to amplify his discussion of national flaws. He asserted that, as he never hesitated to denounce "the national faults and vices" of his own country, "often at a great sacrifice of our interest as journalists", he thought it fair that he should "use as little reserve in speaking of other nations and races of men". He assured the correspondent who had taken issue with him that the feeling with which he wrote was "any thing but one of reproach or of triumph". He was "but too grievously sensible of the load of guilt which lies upon the conscience of England for the vices of Irishmen. Would misgovernment be the crying and dreadful evil that it is, if ages of it were not sufficient to leave any visible stain upon the national character?" The only wonder was, "that *any* virtue should survive, in a society the most wretchedly constituted which has existed in Europe since the commencement of modern civilization." The virtue of Englishmen would have become "utterly extinct under such treatment" in a few generations. A distinction apparently dear to Mill followed:

What has preserved Ireland from the lowest stage of moral debasement, has been that susceptibility of ardent and generous emotion, **which is common to her people with the French**, and in which **the inhabitants of our own island** are, in comparison with either, **most conspicuously deficient**. But this noble quality, the foundation of so many virtues, is the characteristic excellence of an *impressible* people -- a people all alive to the sensation of the moment, little addicted to calm reflection, and on whom distant motives have comparatively little influence. The virtues of spontaneous growth among such a people, can never be the virtues of self-control: if these are found in such a soil, they must be the fruit of sedulous moral culture. Such a people will be generous, brave, hospitable, keenly alive both to kindness and to unkindness, ardent in their private attachments, in their humanity, in their patriotism. But it requires highly favourable circumstances to render them equally remarkable for the virtues which consist in curbing impulse, and resisting temptation; stern integrity, justice, forethought, self-denial, *veracity*. **In many of the positive virtues, the Irish are probably, the French certainly, our superiors. In many of the negative ones, both, we fear, have**



**much to learn even from so imperfect an example as ours.**<sup>39</sup>

Mill drew a similar distinction between English "negative" virtues and "Continental" positive or "active" qualities in what could be taken to have been the mature statement of his opinion on the matter, in his *Inaugural Address delivered to the University of St. Andrews* (1867). There he had attributed "the radical difference of feeling" between the British people and "those of France, Germany, and the Continent generally" to the two influences which had "chiefly shaped the British character since the days of the Stuarts: commercial money-getting business, and religious Puritanism".<sup>40</sup>

**Different causes have produced different effects in the Continental nations;** among whom it is even now observable that virtue and goodness are generally for the most part an affair of the sentiments, while with us they are almost exclusively an affair of duty. Accordingly, the kind of advantage which we have had over many other countries in point of morals -- I am not sure that we are not losing it -- has consisted **in greater tenderness of conscience. In this we have had on the whole a real superiority, though one principally negative;** for conscience is with most men a power chiefly in the way of restraint -- a power which acts rather in staying our hands from any great wickedness, than by the direction it gives to the general course of our desires and sentiments.

One of "the commonest types of character" among the British was that of "a man all whose ambition is self-regarding", who "has no higher purpose in life than to enrich or raise in the world himself and his family". That man could not conceive of making "the good of his fellow-creatures or of his country" an object of his exertions. But, says Mill, this man "has a conscience sincerely alive to whatever is generally

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 397-8 (22 January 1832).

<sup>40</sup> Cf. John M. Robson, "Mill and Arnold: Liberty and Culture--Friends or Enemies?", in: G.S. McCaughey (ed.), *Of Several Branches: Studies from the Humanities Association Bulletin 1954-65*, Toronto, 1968, p. 130.

considered wrong, and would scruple to use any very illegitimate means for attaining his self-interested objects."<sup>41</sup> The picture of the Continental type follows:

While it will often happen in other countries that men whose feelings and whose active energies point strongly in an unselfish direction, who have the love of their country, of human improvement, of human freedom, even of virtue, in great strength, and of whose thoughts and activity a large share is devoted to disinterested objects, will yet, in the pursuit of these or of any other objects that they strongly desire, permit themselves to do wrong things which **the other man, though intrinsically, and taking the whole of his character, farther removed from what a human being ought to be, could not bring himself to commit.**<sup>42</sup>

Then the moral assessment comes:

It is of no use to debate which of these two states of mind is the best, or rather the least bad. It is quite possible to cultivate the conscience and the sentiments too. Nothing hinders us from so training a man that he will not, even for a disinterested purpose, violate the moral law, and also feeding and encouraging those high feelings, on which we mainly rely for lifting men above low and sordid objects, and giving them a higher conception of what constitutes success in life.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, it can be said that Mill meant his assertion of the necessity for the "croisement des races" quite seriously.<sup>44</sup>

There is a striking correspondence between the qualities Mill ascribed to the Continental character in 1867 and those he had ascribed to the "Gaelic blood" in the 1830s (in the article in the *Examiner* of 22 January 1832)<sup>45</sup> and 1840s (article on

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<sup>41</sup> *CW*, XXI, 252-3. Cf. *ibid.*, XV, 700.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, XIII, 714.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, XXI, 253.

<sup>44</sup> See letter to d'Eichthal, 25 December 1840: *ibid.*, XIII, 457. In accordance with what has been said in Chapter VI, "races" may be taken to mean nations and not necessarily races in a biological sense.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, 398; see *supra*.

Michelet). And the qualities he described as inherent in the character of "southern" peoples in *The Subjection of Women* can be said to correspond more or less closely to those of the Celtic or Continental nations. In short, Mill believed that, on the one hand the English needed an infusion of elevated moral enthusiasm and feeling, of "active" virtues (be they called Continental, Celtic, or southern), and on the other hand the Continental, Celtic, and southern nations should take some lessons in restraint, forbearance, and the rest of the "negative" virtues, from the English. A parallel with Matthew Arnold's "Hebraism" and "Hellenism" cannot fail to suggest itself here, although the two distinctions cannot be said to correspond exactly.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4. WHAT COULD BE ASCRIBED TO THE STATE OF SOCIETY?

It has been said in Chapter VI that Mill considered France and Britain to be at the same stage of civilization. It has also been seen that he used the terms "stage of civilization", "state of civilization", and "state of society" interchangeably. In consequence, if one were to take Mill's word in these matters literally one would have to proceed reluctantly to any reference to differences in the states of society of France and Britain, given that Mill regarded the two countries as being at the same level of civilization. But Mill was not always strictly consistent in his use of these terms. He spoke of "the state of society or the state of civilization" as being one and the same thing in the definition he gave in the *Logic*,<sup>47</sup> and he also used "state of

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<sup>46</sup> On the meaning of Arnold's binary categories of "Hebraism" and "Hellenism" see: Stefan Collini, "Arnold", in: Keith Thomas (series editor), *Victorian Thinkers*, Oxford, 1993, pp. 284-5.

<sup>47</sup> *CW*, VIII, 911-12.

civilization" and "stage of civilization" interchangeably in *Representative Government*,<sup>48</sup> where the countries of western Europe and north America were treated as having reached more or less the same --most advanced-- level of civilization. However, there are other statements in his works which can justify one to introduce a partial distinction between stages of civilization and states of society. While Britain and France were both at the same stage of civilization in terms of Mill's --and his father's-- implied evolutionary scale of civilizations, they might not necessarily have identical states of society. This last remark should follow logically from Mill's definition of a state of society as being "the simultaneous state of all the greater social facts or phenomena". The long list of such social facts or phenomena which follows this statement in the *Logic*<sup>49</sup> renders it legitimate for one to assume that, as some of these facts did differ between countries such as Britain and France, their state of society could not be exactly the same. What confuses things and, to an extent, appears to contradict this assumption, is the fact that Mill proceeded, in the same text, to insist on the existence of what he called "Uniformities of Coexistence between the states of the various social phenomena" and the "*consensus* of the various parts of the social body".<sup>50</sup> Yet it has been seen that Mill had himself, earlier (in

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<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, XIX, 379, 393, 394, 396-7, 404.

<sup>49</sup> See *ibid.*, VIII, 911-12.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 912. Cf. *ibid.*, 899. In this insistence Mill was following Comte (cf. Skorupski, *J.S. Mill, op. cit.*, pp. 267-9). He went on to assert that: "States of society are like different ages in the physical frame; they are conditions not of one or a few organs or functions, but of the whole organism. Accordingly, the information which we possess respecting past ages, and respecting the various states of society now existing in different regions of the earth, does, when duly analysed, exhibit uniformities. It is found that when one of the features of society is in a particular state, a state of many [MS, 1843, 1846: "all the"] other features, more or less precisely determinate, always or usually [MS, 1843, 1846, 1851:

1836), spoken of England, France, Germany, and the United States as countries exhibiting differences in both their national character and their "social condition" or "state of society".<sup>51</sup> It is therefore obvious that in that case (1836) Mill spoke of countries which he considered to be at the same level or stage of civilization as exhibiting different states of society. Thus, Mill's definition of a state of society in the *Logic* should not prevent us from assuming that Mill did not fully identify state of society and stage of civilization. While the stage of civilization reached can be taken to be the same between Britain and France, their respective states of society were not considered by him to be identical. Besides the reference to differences in the state of society of the four countries Mill mentioned, he again spoke of the states of society of various west-European countries and the United States as being different in a letter of 1844, after he had published the *Logic*.<sup>52</sup> Clearly, two countries could be equally advanced in civilization (in terms of the implied linear trajectory of civilization) and yet exhibit a great number of differences. The question to be asked is what part of these differences could be ascribed to what Mill called the national characters of the two nations, and what part of them could be better accounted for by reference to the rest of "the greater social facts or phenomena" which constituted their respective states of society. Such were, for example, according to Mill's definition, "the degree of knowledge...existing in the community, and in every class of it; the

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"spontaneously"] coexists with it.": *CW*, VIII, 912. It is clear that Mill himself had second thoughts, in the later editions of the *Logic*, about the degree of "uniformity" or "consensus" exhibited by such phenomena.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, XVIII, 94.

<sup>52</sup> Letter to Sarah Austin of 26 February 1844 commenting on S. Laing's book on some countries of the Continent of Europe (see *supra*, Chapter II, Part 3): *ibid.*, XIII, 622.

state of industry, of wealth and its distribution; the habitual occupations of the community; their division into classes, and the relations of those classes to one another;...**their form of government, and the more important of their laws and customs.**"<sup>53</sup> One can assume that some of these social facts could be expected to change faster than others. The last one mentioned could be altered with a simple change of regime or constitution. The question to be asked is to what extent changes in such components of the state of society of France were expected by Mill to alter the overall situation in the country. Only thus is it possible to establish the importance he accorded to what he called the national character of the French at different stages.

There are instances in Mill's writings of the 1830s, where various characteristics of French society and the French people were presented as the results of what Tocqueville meant by a "state of society".<sup>54</sup> Thus, in 1833, the interest of the French populace in the arts and their respect for art-works and monuments were accounted for in terms of France's being "an unaristocratic country".<sup>55</sup>

In the article he wrote following the Paris insurrection of June 1832, the failure of the French to show the "habitual reverence for law which is so deeply rooted in the minds of all classes of Englishmen" was described as an historical accident. England was more fortunate in that it had a long history of rule of law, which engendered this salutary habit in the English nation. Though Mill's words

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, VIII, 911-12.

<sup>54</sup> See Lamberti, *Tocqueville and the Two Democracies*, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-39. Cf. *supra*, Chapter VI, Part 4.

<sup>55</sup> *CW*, XXIII, 655 (15 December, 1833). Cf. *ibid.*, XXII, 308-9.

were hardly complimentary for the French, he did not present them as a people inherently deficient in terms of "national character" or "race", but only as a people placed in less favourable circumstances, suffering from bad laws and precedents.<sup>56</sup>

And in 1837, in "Armand Carrel", Mill wrote of a habit he was later (*Representative Government*<sup>57</sup>) to present as a serious defect of the French national character, in terms that would suggest that he hoped, then (1837), that it was only a question of time when the French would be able to form better "constitutional *moeurs*". As has been seen already, he wrote that it was "the grievous misfortune of France, that being still new to constitutional ideas and institutions", she had not yet known what it was to have a fair government. A chance had occurred before the July Revolution, under the moderate Martignac ministry. The July Revolution had "intervened". But there was still hope for France, though probably not in the immediate future.<sup>58</sup>

On 9 February 1834 he had written in the *Examiner*, concerning a bill introduced by the French government aimed at the suppression of cheap political publications:

We shall watch the progress of this Bill. There is no doubt that it will pass; for **public opinion is not yet sufficiently advanced in France**, to maintain any struggle in behalf of freedom of discussion for its own sake, when they take no personal or party interest in those who are the victims of the infringement. The proposed law will be considered a measure against the republican press; and, consequently, nobody who is not a republican, will deem himself concerned in opposing it.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, 485-6 (24 June, 1832).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX, 420-1 (see *infra*, Part 5).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 190-2.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, XXIII, 683.

The statement that public opinion in France was "not yet sufficiently advanced" to struggle for freedom of discussion can be taken to imply that Mill, at the very least, did not exclude the possibility of its becoming "sufficiently advanced" in the future. At any rate, no "positive defects of national character"<sup>60</sup> are here adduced to account for the failure; it is just due to relative political immaturity, lack of experience in constitutional freedom.

### 5. FROM 1848 TO *REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT*.

In the part of her book dealing with Mill's comments on the French Revolution of February 1848 and the acts of the Provisional Government that had been formed following that event, Mueller, after presenting some of Tocqueville's views on that situation, comes to Mill's comments:

In direct contrast to these remarks [by Tocqueville], Mill wrote that Lord Brougham's silliness was demonstrated by the suggestion that France take a constitutional monarch; Mill maintained that a monarchy would be uncongenial to the character and habits of the French just as it was suited to the thought and feelings of the English.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> The phrase is from *Representative Government*, *ibid.*, XIX, 418. See *infra*, Part 5.

<sup>61</sup> Mueller, *Mill and French Thought*, *op. cit.*, p. 179. The text she refers to is from Mill's "Vindication of the French Revolution of February 1848", written in 1849. He had argued there that "**constitutional royalty is in itself a thing as uncongenial to the character and habits of the French, or any other people of the European Continent, as it is suited to the tone of thought and feeling characteristic of England.** From causes which might be traced in the history and development of English society and government, the general habit and practice of the English mind is compromise. No idea is carried out to more than a small portion of its legitimate consequences." Constitutional royalty was congenial to the English relish for "discordance between principle and practice". The English "prefer that their theory should be at variance with their practice.": *CW*, XX, 331-2. On the contrary, the French were impatient of "discrepancy between theory and practice".



The above statement is accompanied by a footnote which seems to imply that there was some discrepancy or shift between Mill's stance here, in 1849, and his earlier remark in the article on Armand Carrel, written in 1837:

In 1837, however, Mill had stated in reference to Armand Carrel's reasons for wanting a republic that "they are, no doubt, refuted by the fact, that the public mind was not ripe for a republic, and would not have it." ... Later, the fact of the revolution seemed to demonstrate for Mill the popular readiness for a republic.<sup>62</sup>

However, it is doubtful whether Mill believed that the French had become ready for a republic in 1848. He stressed in the "Vindication...":

But though a republic, for France, was the most natural and congenial of all the forms of government, it had two great hindrances to contend with. One was, the political indifference of the majority -- the result of want of education, and of absence of habits of discussion and participation in public business. The other was the dread inspired by the remembrance of 1793 and 1794:.... These two causes prevented the French nation in general from demanding or wishing for a republican government; and as long as those causes continue, they will render its existence, even now that it is established, more or less precarious.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, the assertion that the republic was congenial to the French character did not necessarily mean that the French were ready for it. In that same work, Mill took issue with Lord Brougham's reiteration of "the commonplace of essayists and

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"The French had no relish for a system, the forms of which were intended to simulate something at variance with acknowledged fact." Since the constitutional King was not supposed to govern, the French could see no reason why they should pretend to have a sovereign King: "A constitutional monarchy, therefore, was likely in France, as it is likely in every other country in Continental Europe, to be but a brief halt on the road from a despotism to a republic.": *ibid.*, 332. Cf. *ibid.*, XXII, 152.

<sup>62</sup> Mueller, *Mill and French Thought*, p. 179, fn. 35. The remarks Mueller refers to are in: *CW*, XX, 200.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

reviewers, that a Constitution cannot be made".<sup>64</sup> His reply to Brougham's assertions was similar to what he was to say on Whewell's views in 1852 and it also presaged what he was to write in the first chapter of *Representative Government* on the question "*To What Extent Forms of Government are a Matter of Choice*". Mill stipulated, in answer to Brougham, his own conditions of the advisability of a constitution in any given case as follows:

What is necessary is, that [codes and Constitutions] should not violently shock the pre-existing habits and sentiments of the people; and that they should not demand and presuppose qualities in the popular mind, and a degree of interest in, and attachment to, the institutions themselves, which **the character of the people, and their state of civilization**, render unlikely to be really found in them. These two are the rocks on which those usually split, who by means of a temporary ascendancy establish institutions **alien from,**<sup>65</sup> or **too much in advance of,** the condition of the public mind. The founders of the English Commonwealth failed for the first reason. Their republicanism offended the taste for kingship and old institutions, their religious freedom and equality shocked the attachment to prelacy or presbyterianism, which then were prevailing principles in the majority of the nation. Charlemagne's attempt to construct a centralized monarchy amidst the distraction and anarchy of the eighth century, failed for the other of the two reasons specified. Its success would have required, both in the governors and the governed, **a more cultivated intelligence, a greater comprehension of large views and extended interests, than existed or was attainable in that age,** save by eminently exceptional individuals like Charlemagne himself.<sup>66</sup>

His appraisal of the situation in France in 1849 with regard to these matters followed, and it did not betray excessive optimism:

**If the establishment of republicanism in France should turn out to be premature, it will be for the latter reason.** Although no popular sentiment is shocked by it, the event may prove that there is no sufficient attachment to it, or desire to promote its success; but a

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 356.

<sup>65</sup> In the two first (1849) versions of the text "to" read instead of "from".

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 356-7. Cf. "Guizot's Essays and Lectures on History", *ibid.*, 280.

readiness to sacrifice it to any trivial convenience, personal *engouement*, or dream of increased security.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, it would seem that the French national character is averse to (or not fitted for) constitutional monarchy, and rather more prone to a republic or a despotism.<sup>68</sup> However, the French people were not sufficiently advanced on the road most suited to their character as to be "willing" and "able" to do what is required to sustain a republic. As Mill was to put it later in *Representative Government*, "political machinery does not act of itself", but "has to be worked, by men, and even by ordinary men". In this context he enunciated "the three fundamental conditions of the adaptations of forms of government to the people who are to be governed by them":

The people...must be willing to accept it; or at least not so unwilling, as to oppose an insurmountable obstacle to its establishment. They must be willing and able to do what is necessary to keep it standing. And they must be willing and able to do what it requires of them to enable it to fulfil its purposes. ... The failure of any of these conditions renders a form of government, whatever favourable promise it may otherwise hold out, unsuitable to the particular case.<sup>69</sup>

It seems that the first obstacle corresponds to some extent to the first condition of the viability or advisability of a Constitution in the 1849 article, namely that the Constitution "should not violently shock the pre-existing habits and sentiments of the people". If that were to be the case, presumably the people would be unwilling to accept it. The case for drawing a parallel between the 1849 text and *Representative Government* is reinforced when Mill comes to enlarging upon the second condition

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>68</sup> See *ibid.*, 332.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, XIX, 376.

stipulated in the latter essay. With regard to that condition (that the people must be "willing and able to do what is necessary to keep [the political machinery] standing")

Mill says:

**But there are also cases in which, though not averse to a form of government -- possibly even desiring it -- a people may be unwilling or unable to fulfil its conditions.** They may be incapable of fulfilling such of them as are necessary to keep the government even in nominal existence. Thus a people may prefer a free government, but if, from indolence, or carelessness, or cowardice, or want of public spirit, they are unequal to the exertions necessary for preserving it; if they will not fight for it when it is directly attacked; if they can be deluded by the artifices used to cheat them out of it; **if by momentary discouragement, or temporary panic, or a fit of enthusiasm for an individual, they can be induced to lay their liberties at the feet even of a great man, or trust him with powers which enable him to subvert their institutions;**<sup>70</sup> in all these cases they are more or less **unfit for liberty:** and though it may be for their good to have had it even for a short time, they are unlikely long to enjoy it.<sup>71</sup>

It would be tempting then, to draw a distinction between a form of government which offends (and is incompatible with) the deeply-rooted traits of the national character of a people (therefore being inappropriate for them either permanently, or at least for a very long time), and a form of government which could be compatible with the national character of a people in question, but required in addition to be on a level with their state of society. In other words, a form of government could be "the most natural and congenial of all forms of government" for a people (in terms of the deeper traits of their character), and yet the people in question may not be prepared for it. They might be deficient in political education, "habits of discussion and participation in public business", etc., or prevented from supporting a form of

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<sup>70</sup> This case seems to derive from --and allude to-- French experience in the aftermath of the revolution of 1848. Great man Mill never considered Louis Napoleon Bonaparte to be nevertheless!

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 377.

government due to an unfortunate association of that form with an event in their recent history.<sup>72</sup> It can be presumed that such impediments could count only in the short run, that they applied to what Mill called the "stage of civilization" (or "state of society") of that people, which was expected to change and progress. Therefore, the people in question could be expected **to become** ready and fit for the particular form of government sooner or later, if the right course were taken.<sup>73</sup> But new difficulties arise. Though it would be convenient for analysis to distinguish between impediments relating to the national character (which would appear, presumably, to be more durable and relatively more insuperable) and those relating to the state of society (stage of civilization) already reached by the people in question (it being a question of time when they would attain to the required "stage", in most cases<sup>74</sup>), Mill complicated the matter by making "national character" part of the considerations applying to the latter condition. Codes and constitutions "should not demand and presuppose qualities in the popular mind, and a degree of interest in, and attachment to, the institutions themselves, which **the character of the people, and their state of civilization**, render unlikely to be really found in them". The example of the

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<sup>72</sup> Such was "the dread inspired by the remembrance of 1793 and 1794" in France at the time Mill was writing: See *ibid.*, XX, 332.

<sup>73</sup> The phrase "institutions **alien from, or too much in advance of**" would seem to suggest such an understanding of the distinction. If a set of institutions is said to be "too much in advance of the condition of the popular mind" (*ibid.*, 357), it can be expected to be appropriate for the people in question one day, if, and when, "the popular mind" would advance. If, on the other hand, a set of institutions is said to be "alien from" (or "alien to", as the first version of the text read) the particular popular mind, then the difficulty may be assumed to be more insuperable, and to have to do with the deeper traits of the national character of that people, which would be even more difficult to change than their "stage of civilization" or "state of society".

<sup>74</sup> Though not necessarily in all cases.

failure of Charlemagne's venture, which Mill gave, seems to apply more to what he called the "stage of civilization". As to the reasons why he thought the experiment of republicanism could fail in France, they belonged, Mill said, to the second category specified by him (presupposing qualities that are not to be found in the **character** and the **state of civilization** of the people). But, in this particular case, no clear distinction can be drawn between reasons attaching to national character and those attaching to the state of civilization. It may turn out that there is "no sufficient attachment" to the republic, or desire to promote its success, but "a readiness to sacrifice it to any trivial convenience, personal *engouement*, or dream of increased security."<sup>75</sup> Mill was not clear whether it was the state the French were in at the moment he was writing, or something deeper and more ineradicable in their national character, that was most likely to impair the success of the republican experiment.

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<sup>75</sup> Some of the difficulties involved in reconciling Mill's assertion that the republic (or, alternatively, despotism) was better suited to the French character than constitutional monarchy with his admission that "the event may prove that there is no sufficient attachment to [the republic], or desire to promote its success; but a readiness to sacrifice it to any trivial convenience, personal *engouement*, or dream of increased security" can be lifted by a reminder of what has been said in Chapter V about the protean character of the concept of the republic. Mill's first assertion referred to the republican form of government in the strict sense of a constitutional government without a hereditary chief of state. He asserted that, rather than a constitutional monarch who reigned but did not govern, the French character was apt to prefer either an absolute monarch who did actually govern, or an elected head of state. Now, as far as the second assertion is concerned, it has to be remembered that Mill was referring to the specific republic that had recently been established in France. The way he voiced his worries about the French people's preparedness for that government suggests that he was referring not so much to the question of the head of state but rather to what he was to call later (in *Representative Government*) the French people's "attempt at representative government by the whole male population" (*CW*, XIX, 421). Mill was doubtful whether the French were prepared, not for a non-hereditary head of state, but mainly for free representative government under universal manhood suffrage. The proximity of the conditions he laid down for the success of the republic in 1849 and those he stipulated for the success of free representative government in 1861 point to the same assumption.

The whole thing becomes less difficult to grasp, if we bear in mind that still, in 1849, Mill must have meant "national character" to be as malleable as he had presented it in the *Logic*, being at the same time the result of the preceding state of society and the main cause of the state of society that was to follow. In any case, he was not clear as to exactly how durable, or how malleable this character was.

If Mill was vague and possibly undecided in 1849, he seems to have grown more conclusive and to have come to regard the French character as more rigid by 1861, as some references to the French in *Representative Government* indicate. The reference discussed below refer explicitly to the French national character rather than to the state of society the French were in at the time, and is, more or less explicitly, to the effect that this national character of theirs had incapacitated the French from establishing or enjoying a free representative government.

Such a reference to the French character may be found in *Representative Government*, Chapter IV ("*Under What Conditions Representative Government is Inapplicable*"). There Mill spoke of "**positive defects of national character**" as being one of the "infirmities or short-comings in a people...which *pro tanto* disqualify them from making the best use of representative government".<sup>76</sup> In that context he wrote a little further on that:

Among the tendencies which, without absolutely rendering a people unfit for representative government, seriously incapacitate them from reaping the full benefit of it, one deserves particular notice. There are two states of the inclinations, intrinsically very different, but which have something in common, by virtue of which they often coincide in the direction they give to the efforts of individuals and of nations: one is, the desire to exercise power over others; the other is the

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 418. Mill noted that in regard to the "infirmities" he was about to refer to it was "not...obvious that the government of One or a Few would have any tendency to cure or alleviate the evil.": *ibid.*

disinclination to have power exercised over themselves. **The difference between different portions of mankind in the relative strength of these two dispositions, is one of the most important elements in their history.**<sup>77</sup>

It is worth noting that here, instead of pointing to the history of the "different portions of mankind" as accounting for "the relative strength of these two dispositions", Mill focuses on the extent to which it is the latter which has affected the former.<sup>78</sup> He continues:

There are nations in whom **the passion for governing others** is so much stronger than **the desire of personal independence**, that for the mere shadow of the one they are found ready to sacrifice the whole of the other.<sup>79</sup> Each one of their number is willing, like the private soldier in an army, to abdicate his personal freedom of action into the hands of his general, provided the army is triumphant and victorious, and he is able to flatter himself that he is one of a conquering host.... **A government strictly limited in its powers and attributions**, required to hold its hands from overmeddling, and to let most things go on without its assuming the part of guardian or director, **is not to the taste of such a people**. In their eyes the possessors of authority can hardly take too much upon themselves, provided the authority itself is open to general competition. **An average individual among them prefers the chance, however distant or improbable, of wielding some share of power over his fellow-citizens, above the certainty, to himself and others, of having no unnecessary power exercised over them.**

These, Mill went on, were "the elements of a people of place-hunters".<sup>80</sup> By such

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<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 420.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. the review article "Guizot's Essays and Lectures in History" of 1845 (*ibid.*, XX, 290-4), where Mill had exhibited the reverse mode of reasoning. Of course, Mill probably still implied, in *Representative Government*, that national character was formed through history (this is clear in "Centralisation", which he wrote in 1862: see *ibid.*, XIX, 581-613, especially 594, 605). Yet, he now seemed to consider it more durable, less easily changeable.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. "Centralisation" (*ibid.*, 610-1), where Mill spoke of the "confounding of **the love of liberty with the love of power**, the desire not to be improperly controlled with the ambition of exercising control".

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, XXII, 159; and *ibid.*, XX, 193.



a people "equality alone is cared for, but not liberty".<sup>81</sup> And the contests of political parties "are but struggles to decide whether the power of meddling in everything shall belong to one class or another, perhaps merely to one knot of public men or another". The idea such a people entertained of democracy was "merely that of opening offices to the competition of all instead of a few". With them, **"the more popular the institutions, the more innumerable are the places created, and the more monstrous the over-government exercised by all over each, and by the executive over all."** The remark that follows leaves very little doubt as to which national character Mill had in mind throughout this presentation of the tendency in question:

It would be as unjust as it would be ungenerous to offer this, or anything approaching to it, as an unexaggerated picture of **the French people; yet the degree in which they do participate in this type of character,** has caused representative government by a limited class to break down by excess of corruption, and the attempt at representative government by the whole male population to end in giving one man the power of consigning any number of the rest, without trial, to Lambessa or Cayenne, provided he allows all of them to think themselves not excluded from the possibility of sharing his favours.<sup>82</sup>

On the other hand, **"[t]he point of character which, beyond any other, fits the people of this country for representative government, is, that they have almost universally the contrary characteristic."**<sup>83</sup>

Thus, while in the 1830s "public opinion" was "not yet sufficiently advanced in France" to struggle for freedom of discussion for its own sake, and it was "the

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. "Centralisation": *ibid.*, XIX, 583.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 420-1. The French translator of *Representative Government* failed to translate the passage "yet...his favours." See J.S. Mill, *Le Gouvernement Représentatif*, traduit...par M. Dupon White, Paris 1862, pp. 98-100.

<sup>83</sup> They were "very jealous of any attempt to exercise power over them, not sanctioned by long usage and by their own opinion of right". But they cared "very little for the exercise of power over others": *CW*, XIX, 421.

grievous misfortune of France" that, "being still new to constitutional ideas and institutions", she was not alive to the importance of having a fair government, now, in the 1860s, it was a defect of their national character that prevented the French from enjoying a free government. A hardening of Mill's position is discernible. In the early writings, France was faring badly because it had not known better things, because of bad institutions and misgovernment, historical accidents, etc., but Mill was eager to see changes that would enable France to "speedily outstrip all the rest of the world in the career of civilization".<sup>84</sup> In *Representative Government*, on the other hand, one is left with the impression that the character of the French made them more or less unfit for free government.<sup>85</sup> Earlier he relied heavily on the generation factor and the *jeune France*. When he was disappointed he came to attribute more importance to "national character", or rather, what comes to the same thing, he came to consider "national character" more durable and obstinate, less easily and less rapidly changeable than he thought in the 1830s.

To the extent that a turning point should be sought, it seems to have been the aftermath of 1848, the fact that the establishment of a representative government with

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, XXII, 134.

<sup>85</sup> Characteristically, in one of his last comments on France, Mill pointed again to the French character as being primarily responsible for the problems of France. When, after the Franco-Prussian war, Dupont-White asked him whether he thought that France was in decadence (a common-place belief at the time: cf. Koenraad W. Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France*, The Hague, 1964, pp. 123-37), Mill replied: "Qu'il y ait ou non décadence morale en France je n'oserais le dire. Il est certain que le caractère français a des très grands défauts, qui ne sont jamais plus montrés que dans l'année malheureuse qui vient de s'écouler. Mais il n'est rien moins qu'assuré que ces défauts n'ont pas existé au même degré dans ce qu'on appelle les plus beaux jours de la France.": *CW*, XVII, 1864. See *supra*, Chapter V, Part 4, for more comments on Mill's last years' diagnosis of the political malaises of France.

universal manhood suffrage ended up in Louis Napoleon's becoming an emperor almost unopposed.<sup>86</sup>

By the time he wrote his *Representative Government* Mill had abandoned the ambition he had spelt out in earlier writings of establishing a scientific study of differences of national character with the express purpose of thereby identifying the institutions most appropriate to carry each particular society to the next stage of progress of which it was susceptible. What he did, instead, in *Representative Government*, was to focus on representative democratic government as the best government only for the most advanced state of civilization. What is implicit, though, --as can be seen from the remarks quoted above-- is that he had come to believe that the free representative government he was proposing was also the most appropriate form of government only for the best national character, that of the English and the Americans. For the rest he despaired of solutions. All he had to offer were hints.

## 6. DID RACE AND GEOGRAPHY MATTER?

Though Mill made strenuous efforts during the last three decades of his life to depreciate the importance of physical factors in the formation of national character,

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<sup>86</sup> Though Mill would certainly have found many of Walter Bagehot's views on national character crude, it seems that Bagehot's appraisal of the impact of 1848 and its aftermath on explanatory models applies, to a certain extent, to Mill as well. According to Bagehot, the events of 1848 "had...taught thinking persons...that of all...circumstances...affecting political problems, by far and out of all question the most important is *national character*." Bagehot, "On the New Constitution of France, and the Aptitude of the French Character for National Freedom" (20 January 1852), *Works*, IV, p. 49.

it has already been seen that he stopped short of denying them any significance whatsoever. This was less obvious in his theoretical statements on these subjects than in his tacit assumptions and his use of language. The extent to which these tacit assumptions concerning the relation of physical factors to national character could compromise some of his theoretical arguments can be seen in another reference to French national characteristics, which appears in Chapter III of *Representative Government* ("*That the Ideally Best Form of Government is Representative Government*"). Mill asserted that, when it comes to "the influence of the form of government upon character", the superiority of popular government over every other will be found to be "still more decided and indisputable". This question depended upon "a still more fundamental one -- viz. which of two common types of character, for the general good of humanity, is it most desirable should predominate -- the active, or the passive type".<sup>87</sup> In this context Mill came to the subject of the passive character's envy:

In proportion as success in life is seen or believed to be the fruit of fatality or accident and not of exertion, in that same ratio does envy develop itself as a point of national character. The most envious of all mankind are the Orientals. In Oriental moralists, in Oriental tales, the envious man is markedly prominent. ... Next to Orientals in envy...are some of the Southern Europeans. The Spaniards pursued all their great men with it... **With the French, who are essentially a southern people**, the double education of despotism and Catholicism has, in spite of their impulsive temperament, made submission and endurance the common character of the people, and their most received notion of wisdom and excellence:....<sup>88</sup>

It is not entirely clear what Mill held to account for the character traits attributed to the French. Is it the fact that they are "essentially a southern people"? Or is it "the

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<sup>87</sup> *CW*, XIX, 406.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 408.

double education of despotism and Catholicism" that "in spite of their impulsive temperament, made submission and endurance the common character of the people..."? It would indeed make sense, given Mill's aim to convince his readers that "the passive type of character is favoured by the government of one or a few, and the active self-helping type by that of the Many",<sup>89</sup> to assert that it was despotism that made the French passive and envious. But then, what does their being "essentially a southern people" have to do with this argument?<sup>90</sup>

Mill's employment of the concept of national character would not be as ambiguous as it appears to be, had he just wavered between attributing various phenomena to the state of society and ascribing them to national character. In such a case one could take his word for it (*Logic*) and treat national character as one of the elements composing the state of society, as well as treat at the same time the state of society as one of the factors forming national character. What renders some of Mill's arguments ambiguous is his having indulged in discussions involving assumptions related to race or climate and geography more often than he would consciously --or theoretically-- have admitted and condoned. At the same time, in order to do justice to him it should not be lost sight of that, in doing so, he was in good company.

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 410.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Mill's "Michelet", *ibid.*, XX, 235: "yet the same readiness to submit to the severest discipline ...": Was it a Gaelic characteristic, was it a southern characteristic, or was it a result of despotism? Also: *ibid.*, XXIII, 335: "The discussion has been stormy; the natural consequence, among an excitable people, of the arrival of two hundred new deputies unused to the forms of debate, and the violent passions excited by a division of parties so nearly equal as to afford a hope of victory to each and every division.": What is the cause? The excitability of the people, or their being new to the procedures of constitutionalism along with the equal division of parties? The same confounding of different sets of causes appears here. Cf. *ibid.*, XXI, 254-5.

Compared with most of his well known contemporaries<sup>91</sup> Mill can be said to have indulged in the temptation of racial explanation remarkably less than them (except probably Tocqueville, whose position was similar to Mill's). Though he lacked the scientific buttressing he needed, he made strenuous efforts to use what materials he had (mainly consisting of carefully selected historical examples) in order to substantiate his claims concerning man's progressive nature.

Of course, the confounding of sets of causes of different nature is no contradiction in Mill's own terms, given his assertion that race and other physical factors do have some small part in the formation of national character. What causes considerable difficulty is that, by allowing race the part he did, Mill was unable to ever define clearly and unequivocally the exact nature of the concept of national character and its legitimate unit. In other words, for all his talk of national character, he did not define what groups had a "character", what exactly constituted a nation. Most times he spoke of it as a political unit, referring to the inhabitants of what is called today a nation state, but he also often spoke of ethnic, cultural, or "racial" groups as possessing a national character. Thus, while he spoke some times of the

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<sup>91</sup> See, for instance, Matthew Arnold, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), ("which was more an essay in the comparative analysis of national character than about Celtic literature as such": Collini, "Arnold", *op. cit.*, p. 264). See also: Lionel Trilling, *Matthew Arnold*, London, 1974 (first published 1939), pp. 232-43; Mandelbaum, *History...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 199, 451 (n.32); Frederic E. Faverty, *Matthew Arnold the Ethnologist*, Evanston, Illinois, 1951, *passim*; Diane Paul, "'In the Interests of Civilization': Marxist Views of Race and Culture in the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 42 (1981), 115-38; A.L. Le Quesne, "Carlyle", in: Keith Thomas (series editor), *Victorian Thinkers*, *op. cit.*, p. 83-4; Bernard Semmel, *The Governor Eyre Controversy*, London, 1962; Watson, *The English Ideology*, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-212; Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-13; Mark Francis and John Morrow, *A History of English Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1994, pp. 211, 213-18, 219, 229, 231 (n.56); Bagehot, *Works*, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 50.

Scottish and the Welsh characters, it seems that he often included the Scotch and Welsh in what he called the English character. These difficulties are due to the imprecision surrounding the concept of a nation, and Mill was not more imprecise about it than others during his time and since. What may be said to have been a source of tension peculiar to Mill can best be illustrated by some of his comments on the Irish. It has been seen that he spoke of them all too often as possessing many character traits in common with the French, a fact he attributed to the two peoples' racial affinity (their both being Gaelic). But Mill also wrote that "[p]ersons who know both countries, have remarked many points of resemblance between the Irish and the Hindoo character".<sup>92</sup> Yet, in Mill's evaluative scale of civilizations, the Hindoos were at as low a stage as they were in that of his father, whereas the French were "a highly civilized and cultivated people".<sup>93</sup> And there can be little doubt that Mill considered the Irish to be at a stage of civilization much lower than that of the English and the French, notwithstanding his repeated assertion of the affinities between the characters of the Irish and the French. This example shows the entanglements to which Mill's characterology led him and how difficult he must have found it to reconcile his belief in the infinite diversity of characters with his assertion of the existence of uniformities of coexistence between the various social facts.

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<sup>92</sup> *England and Ireland* (1869): *CW*, VI, 519. Cf. Paul Smart, "Mill and Nationalism. National Character, Social Progress and the Spirit of Achievement", *History of European Ideas*, 15 (1992), 530. Drawing parallels between all sorts of backward societies and India was a common occurrence among Britons familiar with India; cf. the case of Leicester Stanhope in: Fred Rosen, *Bentham, Byron, and Greece: Constitutionalism, Nationalism, and Early Liberal Political Thought*, Oxford, 1992, pp. 147-9.

<sup>93</sup> *CW*, XIX, 549.

Much of what has been examined here, both with regard to Mill's attempt to clarify the respective parts played by national character and the state of society and to his attempt to dissociate national character from racial inheritance reminds one of what Alfred Cobban has remarked, in another context, about Mill's "supreme capacity for digging deeper than his own principles, and sometimes, it is true, undermining them".<sup>94</sup> Though Mill's whole project was aimed at demonstrating the malleability of human nature, his study of actual political situations --not least that of France and its differences from Britain-- led him to an ever growing realization and recognition of the resistances that entrenched habits and beliefs opposed to progress. Although one might argue that he did not dig deep enough for him to be able to realise his epistemological and scientific ambitions, it is only fair to concede to Mill that the fault was less with his efforts than with the scale of his ambitions. Mill realized --though he might not have been prepared to admit as much-- that human experience was more elusive than Auguste Comte would have one believe. Thus, his focus on national characters and their differences, for all its problematic areas, was not as fruitless as his failure to meet his own requirements of scientific perfection might suggest.

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<sup>94</sup> Cobban, *The Nation State...*, *op. cit.*, p. 131.



### CONCLUSION: MILL'S FRENCH ENTERPRISE.

Both the extent and the range of Mill's interest in and comments on France were remarkable. His extensive "Francology" cannot be explained simply by assuming that he tried to make use of the evocation of a foreign country (moreover, the foreign country *par excellence*, the anti-England, to paraphrase Michelet<sup>1</sup>) as a rhetorical and argumentative weapon, in his struggles for reforms at home.<sup>2</sup> It is not a matter of Mill asserting that the French were doing these things (or, some of these things at any rate) better, in order to exhort his compatriots to imitate or surpass their neighbours. Though there is an element of that in many of his writings on France, there was much more to the whole affair than a skilful reversal of the anti-French stereotypes which had been used by groups of different shades of opinion in the service of their respective purposes.<sup>3</sup> The uses to which he put his comments on France from time to time and according to the exigencies of the case should not obscure the fact that Mill's interest in France was, at the same time, a result, as well

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<sup>1</sup> See Jules Michelet, *Le Peuple*, ed. by Paul Viallaneix, Paris, 1974, p. 224. He referred to England as being the "anti-France".

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Watson, *The English Ideology*, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-5 (Watson includes Mill only indirectly in speaking of "[t]he superiority of other lands and peoples" as being "a significant tactic" in the arguments of "the sages").

<sup>3</sup> On the anti-French stereotypes and their uses see: Gerald Newman, "Anti-French Propaganda and British Liberal Nationalism in the Early Nineteenth Century: Suggestions toward a General Interpretation", *Victorian Studies*, 18 (1975), 385-418; also: Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-53, 237-44, and *passim*.

as one of the main causes of a broader theory concerning the importance of studying a foreign country, and the related ideas of cultural interchange and mutual influence. It is difficult to overestimate the importance he attributed to cross-national exchanges of ideas, institutions, experiences, books, articles, and political and intellectual movements. His works abound with remarks and arguments to this effect, from the writings of the late 1820s to the major works of the last decades of his life. The study of a foreign country, like the study of history, conduced to the expansion of one's intellectual horizon, and it went some way towards making amends for the "accident of birth" of one's being born in a particular country and epoch. In the introduction to "State of Society in America" (1836), he wrote that "Nations, as well as **individuals**", until they had compared themselves with others, were "apt to mistake their own idiosyncrasies for laws of our common being, and the accidents of their position, for a part of the destiny of our race". As a result, "[t]he type of human nature and of human life with which they are familiar, is the only one which presents itself to their imagination." A few lines further he opined:

**The correction of narrowness is the main benefit derived from the study of various ages and nations:** of narrowness, not only in our conceptions of **what is**, but in our standard of **what ought to be**. The individualities of nations are serviceable to the general improvement, in the same manner as the individualities of persons: since none is perfect, it is a beneficial arrangement that all are not imperfect in the same way. Each nation, and the same nation in every different age, exhibits a portion of mankind, under a set of influences, different from what have been in operation anywhere else: each, consequently, exemplifies a distinct phasis of humanity; in which the elements which meet and temper one another in a perfect human character are combined in a proportion more or less peculiar. ...when each nation beholds in some other a model of the excellencies corresponding to its own deficiencies; **when all are admonished of what they want, by what others have (as well as made to feel the value of what they have by what others want)**, they no longer go on confirming themselves in their defects by the consciousness of their excellencies,

but betake themselves, however tardily, to profiting by each other's example.

Mill then observed that the four great nations whose states of society and national characters were most worth studying in his time were England, France, Germany, and the United States. He asserted that whoever made up his system of opinions from the contemplation of only one of these nations, was "in imminent danger of falling into narrow and one-sided views".<sup>4</sup>

But, though he recommended the study of more than one of these countries, he did not demand, nor practice, the study of all four of them to an equal degree. It has been seen that already in 1832 he had informed his Saint-Simonian friends of the *Globe* that, in undertaking to write for their paper, his first motive was his desire to contribute towards enabling their two nations to understand each other's characters.<sup>5</sup> It was not the least of the attractions that the Saint-Simonians held for Mill that, besides their acute interest in questions related to differences of national character, they were particularly keen to bring as close as possible the two nations Mill was most interested in.

But why France? One instance --out of many indeed-- where he justified the choice of France in particular as a most useful subject of study, occurs in the

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<sup>4</sup> *CW*, XVIII, 94. Three decades later, in his *Inaugural Address...*, he asserted that "unless we...possess this knowledge, of some other people than ourselves, we remain, to the hour of our death, with our intellects only half expanded". Given that "[i]mprovement consists in bringing our opinions into nearer agreement with facts"; and given at the same time that this could not be achieved "while we look at facts only through glasses coloured by those very opinions", his solution was: "**But since we cannot divest ourselves of preconceived notions, there is no known means of eliminating their influence but by frequently using the differently coloured glasses of other people: and those of other nations, as the most different, are the best.**": *ibid.*, XXI, 226. Cf. Filipiuk, "Mill and France", *op. cit.*, 80-4.

<sup>5</sup> *CW*, XXIII, 443.

introductory remarks in the article on "Duveyrier's Political Views of French Affairs" (1846). He asserted there that "the political writings produced at the present time in France" were "an instructive study to intelligent observers in all countries of Europe", because France marched "in the van of the European movement". And to be "foremost" in the road which all were travelling, might or might not be an honourable position, but it certainly was "a position pre-eminently interesting" to those who followed:

And such, in the present period of the world's history, is the situation of France. The two strongest tendencies of the world in these times are towards **Democracy** and **Revolution**; meaning by Democracy social equality, under whatever form of government; and by Revolution -- a general demolition of old institutions and opinions, without reference to its being effected peaceably or violently. In this twofold career, France is the furthest advanced of the European nations.

France had "made a sweep" of her institutions "and left herself a fair stage, clear of rubbish, for beginning to build anew".<sup>6</sup> It was primarily in this sense that Mill regarded France as the laboratory of mankind whose experiments, and the lessons to be learned from them, were of universal and not purely French interest.

Besides the interest of contemporary French politics and political and social thought, French history was the history most worth studying. In endorsing Guizot's choice of presenting a detailed history of the march of civilization in France as an epitome of European civilization as a whole, Mill exclaimed: "A person must need instruction in history very much, who does not know that the history of civilization

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 297-8.

in France *is* that of civilization in Europe".<sup>7</sup> This was an opinion that he held sincerely and consistently throughout his life.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to these reasons, Mill had frequently insisted that it was the French, more than any other people, who possessed the qualities in which the English were most deficient. Consequently, these two peoples were, so to speak, complementary for each other. As he wrote to Auguste Comte:

[J]e retrouve chez vous une autre idée à laquelle j'ai toujours tenu beaucoup, **et peut-être seul parmi mes compatriotes**. Je suis comme vous intimement persuadé que la combinaison de l'esprit français avec l'esprit anglais est un des besoins les plus essentiels de la réorganisation intellectuelle.

The French "spirit" was necessary to this fusion to enable one to arrive at general concepts (the English being averse to any kind of generalization in moral or social matters). On the other hand the English spirit was equally needed in order to prevent conceptions from being too vague, a flaw that was predominant "chez les intelligences secondaires" in France. He concluded: "Je crois que c'est Voltaire qui a dit: 'Quand un français et un anglais s'accordent, il faut qu'ils aient pleinement raison'".<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>8</sup> He wrote to Harriet Taylor, on 27 January 1849: "in itself I think English history one of the least interesting of all histories -- (French perhaps the most and certainly the most instructive in so far as history is ever so).": *ibid.*, XIV, 6. Georg Brandes, who met and had some conversations with Mill in 1870, has reported that, while agreeing with him that a sort of religious revival had been taking place in France, and characterising it as a retrograde step, Mill concluded: "But in spite of all...I cling to my old conviction that the history of France in modern times is the history of all Europe." Brandes criticised this view as one-sided, and explained it away as a result of Mill's ignorance of the German language. See: Georg Brandes, "John Stuart Mill", in: *Creative Spirits of the Nineteenth Century*, transl. from the Danish, London, 1924, p. 199.

<sup>9</sup> Letter of 22 March 1842: *CW*, XIII, 508-9. (Cf. Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2: "Voltaire, commenting admiringly on Pope's writings in a late edition of his *Lettres philosophiques*, characteristically observed that 'when

Contemporaries on both sides of the English Channel had noticed Mill's extraordinary interest in France.<sup>10</sup> Mill himself was by no means less explicit about the extent of his involvement with France. He seems to have believed that no Briton knew France better than he did.<sup>11</sup>

Mill attempted assiduously to bring some of the benefits he believed one could derive from an acquaintance with France (and which he had fully enjoyed himself) to bear upon the intellectual development of his compatriots. He made sustained efforts to educate the "national mind" through a better knowledge of French history, contemporary politics, intellectual movements, and authors. These efforts one could call Mill's "French enterprise", and it is this enterprise that accounts for the impressive volume of his writings on France in the newspaper and periodical press. A great part of his comments on France consists of comparisons of the French with the English national character. Some English deficiencies could be cured by pointing to the corresponding positive traits in the French character. While there was a shift of tone and a disillusionment with the prospects of France over the years, culminating

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a Frenchman and an Englishman think the same, they must certainly be right.' **The remark captured both the dissimilarity of the two national patterns of thought, and the conviction that truth was a province specially shared between them.**") Mill went on, in the same letter to Comte, to complain: "Il est au rest fort à regretter que les penseurs de nos deux pays soient loin d'avoir les uns pour les autres l'estime qu'ils méritent. ... Les Anglais cherchent plus volontiers des idées nouvelles chez les allemands que chez les français".

<sup>10</sup> Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians*, 3 vols., London, 1900, III, pp. 12-13; Bain, *J.S. Mill*, *op. cit.*, pp. 78, 93, 161; Forcade, "Chronique de la semaine", *op. cit.*, 989; [F.T. Palgrave], "Autobiography. By John Stuart Mill", *Quarterly Review*, 136 (1874), 166-7; Brandes, "John Stuart Mill", *op. cit.*, p. 199; Walter Bagehot, "The Late Mr. Mill", *Collected Works*, III, p. 557; cf. John Morley, "The Death of Mr. Mill", *Fortnightly Review*, 13 (June 1873), 670-1.

<sup>11</sup> See, e.g.: *CW*, XII, 78; XIII, 431.

with his dejection at the second Bonaparte's coup d'état, neither his youthful enthusiasm and praise for France nor his critical comments were ever unqualified and one-sided. He took great pains to avoid what he regarded as the all too common error of "substituting one half-truth for another" and he used England as a foil to France as often as he used France as a foil to England.

Alexander Bain said of Mill that "[h]e always dealt gently with [the] faults [of France], and liberally with her virtues"<sup>12</sup> and that "his habitual way of speaking of England, the English people, English society, as compared with other nations, was positively unjust, and served no good end".<sup>13</sup> Though understandable --in view of the harshness of some of Mill's comments on the English-- Bain's criticism misses the point, especially as far as its latter part is concerned: it was Mill's conviction that he **did** serve a very good end by being over-critical of England and the English while extolling liberally the virtues of other countries such as France. He was not a starry-eyed Francophile. But he believed that it would serve no purpose to confirm the English in their anti-Gallican prejudices by adding to the common-place expositions of the faults of the French. What was needed was "to place by [the] side" of these faults "those excellencies which are often the bright side of the same qualities". This attitude constituted a deliberate strategy of a man who considered himself one of "the

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<sup>12</sup> Bain, *J.S. Mill, op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>13</sup> Bain added: "Mill had a great partiality for France, until the usurpation of Louis Napoleon; and his opinion of England was correspondingly low.": *ibid.*, p. 161. Even more critical of Mill's depreciation of the English character and his "one-sided and declamatory counter-eulogy of things foreign" with particular reference to his "perilous assumptions" and "half-truths" about the merits of the French had been F.T. Palgrave in his (anonymous) review of Mill's *Autobiography* in the *Quarterly Review*: see [Palgrave], "Autobiography. By John Stuart Mill", *op. cit.*, 166-7; cf. *ibid.*, 155.

moral teachers of England, those who [were] labouring for the regeneration of England's national character".<sup>14</sup> In the article where the above phrases occur,<sup>15</sup> Mill attacked vehemently a Frenchman, Philarète Chasles, for having criticized in a review of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *England and the English* (1833) the British author's harsh criticisms of some faults in the English national character. The worst of these so-called vices of the English character was, according to Bulwer-Lytton and Mill, "the universal and all-absorbing struggle to be or to appear rich". The French reviewer had taken issue with Bulwer-Lytton's strictures and extolled the beneficial consequences of the English spirit of commerce. But according to Mill, Bulwer's "harshness" was "deserved". He opined that such commendation of England as that attempted by Chasles was "worse than the ancient antipathy" between England and France. His retort to the French reviewer was: "We want you to sympathize in our virtues, not in our faults", adding that "[t]he disposition to hold fast by a favourite vice does not stand in need of any foreign support." It was his belief that the reverse of this statement was true as well, that prompted Mill to write publicly in the way he did: it seemed to him that the eradication of favourite vices **did** stand in need of "foreign support" --in the shape of his use of France as a mirror to England. To use his own terms from a text already quoted concerning "the benefit derived from the study of various...nations", the English nation had to "[behold] in some other

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<sup>14</sup> He had used this phrase while speaking of Bulwer-Lytton, but there can be little doubt that he regarded himself as one of "the moral teachers of England".

<sup>15</sup> "The English National Character" (June 1834): *CW*, XXIII, 717-27.



[nation] a model of the excellencies corresponding to its own deficiencies".<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Mill's connection with France, besides being a very important experience for his own intellectual development, was also an essential part of his strategy for immediate reforms in Britain as well as of his long-term scheme for "the improvement of mankind".

It seems that Mill's enterprise was better understood by at least some French contemporaries than it was by Bain and Palgrave. Introducing his review of Mill's

"A Few Words on Non-Intervention", E. Forcade wrote of Mill:

M. Mill a des facultés philosophiques rares chez ses compatriotes: il a un autre mérite aussi peu commun en Angleterre, c'est une curiosité sympathique des idées, des aspirations et des littératures du continent, et notamment de la France. Peu d'Anglais connaissent la France aussi bien, et ont pour elle autant de goût. Comme tous les esprits élevés, qui veulent accroître la civilisation de leur patrie en la comparant à des civilisations différentes, il dédaigne de flatter son pays, et ne craint point de lui signaler les qualités de ses rivaux, qu'il voudrait lui voir acquérir. S'il a encouru un reproche parmi ses compatriotes, c'est d'être le censeur un peu morose de l'Angleterre et le panégyriste un peu complaisant de la France.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Besides Mill's indirect exposition, in the passages just referred to, of the spirit guiding him in his writings on France, there is an indication of another kind to corroborate the view that there was a deliberate strategy in his commenting on France: there is a certain difference between the public as opposed to the private Mill. While in his correspondence he emerges fairly critical, from very early on, of what he considered to be faults in the French character, he raised his criticisms less often in his public writings, where he chose to set the emphasis on extolling what he regarded as qualities in the French character and exhorting --directly or indirectly-- the English to emulate them. It also appears that Mill was too sensitive to other people in Britain criticising the French, even when he had himself raised the same or similar criticisms earlier. He seems to have believed that his own criticisms were constructive, because he censured France "*en ami*", which was not always the case with others.

<sup>17</sup> Forcade, "Chronique de la quinzaine", *op. cit.*, 988-9. The last remark (written before Bain's and Palgrave's criticisms were voiced) indicates that there had been similar criticisms of Mill's partiality in favour of France earlier as well. When Michelet published the fifth volume of his *Histoire de France*, which he spoke of as "ce volume si peu favorable aux Anglais", he hoped he could enlist for its defence

It has been seen throughout this thesis that Mill allocated himself the role of an intermediary and bridge-maker between the two countries. This role had many dimensions. One was in the domain of foreign affairs, the relations between the two countries, respecting which few men must have desired an *entente cordiale* as strongly as he did. Another was that relating to the communication of intellectual movements not only from France to Britain, but also the other way round. However, talking of "the so-called 'first generation of Romantic Poets', the Lake Poets -- Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey --" as "the chief carriers in this era...of the English nationalist aesthetics" and adding that, "they themselves began as enthusiastic overnight Francophiles", and later "turned from extreme Francophilism to equally extreme anti-Gallic patriotism", Gerald Newman goes on to maintain that the early 1820s was the decade "that saw the final demise in England of the international ideas of the French Enlightenment." In this context he proceeds to assert:

J.S. Mill...was but one of several progressive intellectuals -- Hazlitt, Moore, and Carlyle were others -- who at about that time found themselves drawn over from what their opponents condemned as the ("French") philosophy of cosmopolitanism, universalism, infidelity, protest, scorn, "negativity", and the rest, **towards the system of mystical and nationalist enthusiasm enunciated by Wordsworth.**

And: "the unhappy young Mill...[l]ike Coleridge in the late nineties...was painfully finding his way home; he was making his way from the great broad idea of 'universal benevolence' to the narrower but surer one of 'national improvement'."<sup>18</sup>

Whatever the merits of Newman's study might be, an adequate assessment of John Mill in the context of his enquiry is not one of them. Mill's inclusion in the

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"**la haute impartialité d'un Anglais, de M. Mill**" (quoted --from a letter by Michelet to Gustave d'Eichthal-- in *CW*, XIII, 432-3n).

<sup>18</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism, op. cit.*, pp. 243-4.

group of repentant ex-Francophile cosmopolitans-turned-nationalists winds up the very book which begins its presentation of the state of affairs during the cosmopolitan eighteenth century by quoting Voltaire's dictum (cited by Mill in a letter to Comte) mentioned already and by identifying as a quintessential characteristic of that cosmopolitan mentality the fact that "cultivated Englishmen and Frenchmen disparaged local attachments, openly expressed their Francophilism and Anglomania, and moved easily from these affinities to intellectual ideals which embraced the whole of Europe, indeed the whole of mankind." In the same context Newman had written that "[t]he chief mediator of this Anglo-French accord, as of the philosophic cosmopolitanism connected with it, was Voltaire", who was to France "the foremost exponent and interpreter of English ideas and taste".<sup>19</sup> To any one who has read this thesis, Mill must have appeared much more as a nineteenth-century British counterpart and successor of Voltaire in this respect, than as one of the intellectuals who around the 1820s "found themselves drawn...towards the system of mystical and nationalist enthusiasm enunciated by Wordsworth."<sup>20</sup> To say nothing of his declarations of the importance of studying --and, at times, and on specific issues, imitating-- France throughout the 1830s and 1840s, during the very decade when he is supposed (by Newman) to have abandoned Francophilism and cosmopolitanism, the 1820s, he spent much of his time attacking the *Edinburgh Review's* "offerings both to national antipathies and to national vanity" (on account of its unfavourable

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Mill's letter to Carlyle (5 September 1833) where he wrote that he was then "reading, very sedulously, Voltaire's correspondence". One of the things that he found worth mentioning was that Voltaire "always seems to have despised the French": *CW*, XII, 176-7 .

comments on the French),<sup>21</sup> as well as the *Quarterly Review*'s and Walter Scott's complacency with things English as opposed to everything French.<sup>22</sup> In fact Mill made a title of honour of the accusation of entertaining "un-English feelings".<sup>23</sup>

What has been argued so far about Mill's anti-chauvinist attitude should not be allowed to obscure a development in his thought which may appear, though it is not, inconsistent with it. The development in question has to be stressed here all the more forcibly as it was to a considerable extent connected with Mill's views on, and study of, France. If one examines the tone of his pronouncements on England (and this includes his comparisons between England and France) and its place in the world, one cannot help noticing a certain development and shift of emphasis over the years, particularly in the 1850s and 1860s up to his death in 1873. One may even be tempted to remark with reference to Mill what he himself said of what he saw as the change in Carlyle's attitude around the middle of the century: "Instead of telling of the sins and errors of England, and warning her of 'wrath to come', as he has been

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 307-11.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, XX, 17, 60.

<sup>23</sup> He wrote in 1826 in the review article "Modern French Historical Works": "We own that we are in general predisposed in favour of a man whom we hear accused by a certain class of politicians of being an *enemy to his country*. We at once conclude, that he has either actually rendered, or shown himself disposed to render, some signal service to his country. We conclude, either that he has had **discernment to see, and courage to point out**, something in his own that stands in need of amendment, or something in another country which it would be for the advantage of his own to imitate; or that he loved his country well enough to wish it free from that greatest of misfortunes, the misfortune of being successful in an unjust cause": *ibid.*, 21-2. Earlier in the same text he had written of his compatriots that "[t]hey are more in need of monitors than of adulators": *ibid.*, 17. Two decades later, in a letter to M. Napier (20 October 1845) he wrote: "I do not know how a public writer can be more usefully employed than by telling his countrymen their faults, and if that is considered anti-national I am not at all desirous to avoid the charge.": *ibid.*, XIII, 683.

wont to do, he preaches the divine Messiahship of England, proclaims her the prime minister of Omnipotence on this earth...".<sup>24</sup> To compare Mill with Carlyle in this respect would be grossly unfair, but the difference may need to be recognised as being one of degree rather than of kind. Mill's arguments in defence of the British Empire in the 1850s and 1860s, his panegyric of England's even-handedness in foreign policy in "A Few Words on Non-Intervention", his exaltation of various traits of the English and American character in *Representative Government*<sup>25</sup> and in the alterations he effected to later editions of his *Political Economy*,<sup>26</sup> to say nothing of comments in his correspondence,<sup>27</sup> all testify to an increased appreciation of what he saw as comparative advantages of England and the English, accompanied by a desire to see these advantages valued and consequently preserved (and, if need be, fought for) by his compatriots. The word "comparative" needs to be stressed here. The main comparison was with the French. Mill's belief, after "the fatality" of 1851, that the French did not value liberty sufficiently (and, moreover, that they did not understand and define liberty properly), combined with the belief that one of the things they valued much more was their national aggrandizement and the imposition of their rule on other people, along with a more than ordinary distaste for the ruler of France, led Mill to an alarm that has to be taken into account if the motives behind a great many of his views on foreign affairs during the last two decades of his life are to be fully understood. It was not only that Mill, in common with Tocqueville (and

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, XXV, 1096.

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, XIX, 409-10, 421.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 754-5.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, XVI, 1304.

others with whom he was bound to march hand in hand "sur le terrain de la liberté"<sup>28</sup>), relied on England for the preservation of liberty in the old world. He was convinced that Louis Napoleon was planning to attack Britain. Thus, the tone of urgency of many of his comments on issues related to foreign affairs and defence, his advocacy of citizen militia in *On Liberty*, his endorsement of proposals to introduce military drills at schools,<sup>29</sup> his assertion that the existence of the British Empire "has the advantage, **specially valuable at the present time**, of adding to the moral influence, and weight in the councils of the world, of **the Power which, of all in existence, best understands liberty**",<sup>30</sup> all have to be understood in the context of his vivid fear that the despot of France was planning to subdue England whose liberty was an insult to his despotism.<sup>31</sup> All these views are closely connected with his study of France. Though he might have had fears about the security of England independently of his views on France and the French, and though he was not alone in having such fears, it is difficult to imagine that Mill would have entertained these views with the intensity he did had it not been for the conclusions to which he had arrived concerning the French. He did not fear so much that the despots of Europe would want to attack his country, as he feared the particular kind of despotism that

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Tocqueville's remark in his last letter to Mill (9 February 1859): *OC*, VI, 1, p. 352.

<sup>29</sup> See *CW*, XVI, 1224-5 (letter to E. Chadwick, 29 December 1866).

<sup>30</sup> *Representative Government*, *ibid.*, XIX, 565.

<sup>31</sup> How far Mill's and other people's fears were justified is not a subject for historians of political thought to pronounce upon.

he identified as Bonapartism, with its inherent need for foreign conquests and glory.<sup>32</sup>

Notwithstanding all this, Mill's efforts to mediate between the two peoples in order to promote a better understanding between them, combat prejudices and misconceptions and encourage the exchange of ideas did not diminish. Though he was less optimistic about what such efforts could accomplish, he continued to pursue the same aims as best as he could.<sup>33</sup> But he had become, by the last years of his life, painfully aware of the limits of what could be achieved through such endeavours.<sup>34</sup>

It follows from what has been argued so far that the fact that a great part of Mill's enthusiasm for France waned over the years (and that the things he was prepared to point to as being done better in France were certainly less numerous in

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<sup>32</sup> It is a moot question whether Napoleon III represented the same kind of Bonapartism as his uncle; historians are not agreed on this issue (cf. Zeldin, *Ambition, Love and Politics*, *op. cit.*, pp. 504-10). Yet in Mill's perception of French politics the contemporary Emperor of the French was closely associated with the first Bonaparte (see, e.g., *CW*, XIX, 601, where he spoke of Napoleon III as the first Napoleon's "living imitator and representative").

<sup>33</sup> He sent "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" to French periodicals in order to have it reviewed in France (see his letter to J.W. Parker: *ibid.*, XV, 652). One of his intentions in that article was to dissipate the very wide-spread belief, on the part of Continental thinkers and public, that British policy was quintessentially selfish and hypocritical. Mill's aim was, on the one hand to convince foreigners that this was far from being the case, and on the other hand to caution British statesmen against using a discourse (justification of acts or failures to act purely on grounds of national interest) which gave rise to foreign perceptions about English selfishness. In the same years Mill tried assiduously to promote Hare's plan of representation in France. And, in a manner true to his attitude in earlier decades, he complained in a private letter about the writers in the *Saturday Review*: "The best service they have rendered is by being always strenuous for arming, and against Louis Napoleon, but in doing so they have become anti-French to a degree I do not like": *ibid.*, 667 (letter to Helen Taylor, 2 February 1860).

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, XXXII, 229.

the early 1870s than they were in the early 1830s) should not mislead one into underestimating the significance of his whole experience with regard to France. It should be remembered that, already in 1836, he had identified as one of the benefits to be derived from the study of foreign countries, besides the fact that a people can in that manner be "admonished of what they want, by what others have", that they would at the same time be "made to feel the value of what they have by what others want". This benefit appeared to him to be equally important and it would not be claiming too much to say that his conversance with France was decisive both with regard to his own realization of the positive side of certain aspects of the British experience and to his efforts to bring home to his compatriots the concrete value of these specific areas on which some "English" (or British) traits were worth cherishing and enhancing.

No matter how many disagreements scholars might have in their interpretations of Mill, most would agree that there were few things he held as dear as his struggle against what he called half-truths. But this is where agreement stops. There have been varying views about the compatibility of the different values or systems that Mill attempted to combine by gleaning the part of truth contained in each.<sup>35</sup> It is arguable that there is at least one area of his thought and activity where his near-obsession with combating half truths and attempting to make people see "the other side of the shield" is free from objections and has a lot to recommend it today

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<sup>35</sup> For a recent version of the view challenging "Mill's notion that discordant 'truths' can be made to agree by adding part of one to part of the other (or could be made to agree if not for our narrow-mindedness)" see: Justman, *The Hidden Text...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-20.



no less than during Mill's life-time. The area alluded to is that of international relations --in the extended sense of relations between peoples rather than in the strict sense of diplomatic relations. Mill's handling of the sensitive issues related to the relations between Britain and France, as well as between the two peoples, amounts to no less than a theory of the appropriate role of intellectuals and public moralists in bringing about a better understanding between different nations, averting irrational wars, combating chauvinism and national smugness, and working towards meeting the need of the "concours des hommes énergiques et éclairés de tous les pays avancés pour l'oeuvre difficile de réorganiser la société européenne".<sup>36</sup> No matter what the case might be with regard to other issues (such as the reconcilability of the world-views of Bentham and Coleridge for instance), there is nothing philosophically or politically untenable about applying to international disputes the theory that:

**The great instrument of improvement in men, is to supply them with the other half of the truth, one side of which only they have ever seen: to turn round to them the white side of the shield, of which they seeing only the black side, have cut other men's throats and risked their own to prove that the shield is black.**<sup>37</sup>

What is remarkable about Mill's activity in this field is that he was not a starry-eyed cosmopolitan in the fashion of his Saint-Simonian friends. He was possessed of an acute awareness of the obstacles to be overcome before their plans for European unity could even be discussed.<sup>38</sup> But the alertness to the difficulties only affected his means and strategies, not his aims and vision. His strategy, as it

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<sup>36</sup> *CW*, XIII, 571.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, XII, 42. Cf. *Autobiography*, *ibid.*, I, 169-71, where Mill spoke of "the battle about the shield, one side of which was white and the other black".

<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, XV, 702-3; XVII, 1800-1.

has emerged in Chapter IV, was remarkable for its consistency and for his perseverance. Sensing that in the increasingly democratic societies that were emerging in the world scene international relations were bound to be affected by the feelings and wishes of peoples more than they ever had done in the past, and being aware of the "new style" of international politics that the French Revolution had introduced,<sup>39</sup> Mill believed that the cultivation of friendly dispositions between the peoples themselves was a necessary condition for the preservation of peace.<sup>40</sup> His perception of his role as a public moralist<sup>41</sup> included his adoption of the attitude that has been described in Chapter IV and in the preceding pages. This is an aspect of Mill's thought and public activity that has not been fully appreciated and which could hardly be understood in a better context than that of his involvement with France.

Thus, his claim, in the *Autobiography*, that his close conversance with France and French thought kept him "free from the error...of judging universal questions by a merely English standard" has to be recognized as more than self-advertisement. Whether it was on theories, their applicability to practice, the choice of means to achieve the desired ends, or on international relations and foreign policy, Mill's thought ended up much the richer thanks to his compulsive interest in what was taking place or being contemplated on the other side of the Channel.

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. Kedourie, *Nationalism, op. cit.*, pp. 9-19.

<sup>40</sup> In turn, the preservation of peace was necessary if the repetition of Napoleon's attempt "to uncivilize human nature" (*CW*, XXII, 307) was to be averted.

<sup>41</sup> For Mill as a public moralist see: Collini, *Public Moralists, op. cit.*, pp. 121-69 and *passim*.

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