Human Nature and the Development of Character: The Clash of Descriptive and Normative Elements in John Stuart Mill's Educational Theory

PETER J. MILLER
University of Alberta

KI SU KIM
University of Alberta

John Stuart Mill's ideas concerning character development as a central educational aim expressed a widely held ideal of his age, that through education man could rise above his nature and become a fully developed human being, at one with himself and at the same time committed to the welfare of his fellows. It is an ideal to which politicians and educators, particularly in today's climate of economic difficulty and apparent social disharmony, have continued to cling. For Mill, as indeed for contemporary educational theorists, character development was to be based firmly on a science of man and human development. This paper examines the relationship between Mill's normative goals and his pedagogical science, and, following an analysis of the centrally important issue of freedom versus determinism, concludes that Mill's normative ideals were, in fact, unrelated to and certainly could not be realized within the framework of his descriptive theory of man.

Pour l'ensemble de la pensée éducative de l'ère victorienne, la fin première de l'éducation était la formation du caractère. Par l'éducation, chacun devait s'élever au-dessus de sa nature pour accéder au plein développement humain, c'est-à-dire à vivre en harmonie avec soi-même et avec ses semblables. John Stuart Mill partageait cet idéal de son époque. Mais pour lui, comme d'ailleurs pour la pensée éducative contemporaine, l'intervention pédagogique visant la formation du caractère devait s'appuyer sur une science de l'homme et du développement humain.

Cet article se propose d'examiner la relation entre les buts normatifs de Mill et sa théorie pédagogique. Une analyse de la question centrale de liberté/déterminisme révèle que le discours normatif de Mill n'est pas relié à sa théorie descriptive de l'homme. Son idéal éducatif ne pouvait être réalisé à l'intérieur de la perspective anthropologique qu'il adopte.

Reacting against the mechanistic intellectual inheritance of the Enlightenment and aware of the obvious social injustices caused by self-seeking individualism, 19th century educational theorists sought new metaphors for man, society, and education. Accepting romantic ideals of growth and personality development and rejecting what seemed to be sterile and deterministic metaphors of "man the machine" and "man the tabula rasa," writers like Coleridge, Ruskin, Arnold, Carlyle, and even the utilitarian, John Stuart Mill, grasped hold of the idea of development of character, both as a solution to the social problems of the age and as an educational ideal worthy of pursuit on its own terms. To transcend mundane

and animalistic self-seeking impulses and achieve an authentic, autonomous and noble character — this was the new educational ideal. The duty to rise above one's nature was for the Victorians a secular as well as a religious duty, one preached by the educator and social critic as well as the Evangelical.

This new ideal and the educational theory it carried with it implied a view of man and his powers very different from that contained within orthodox nineteenth century associationist psychology. Generally speaking, however, while the age experienced little difficulty in committing itself to the normative ideal of developing nobility of character, it failed conspicuously to recast its descriptive theory of man, which remained incapable of providing any theoretical framework or intellectual support for the new ideal. The resulting discordance between these descriptive and normative elements haunted 19th century educational theories. It is particularly evident in John Stuart Mill's views of human nature and the power of education to improve and perfect it through the development of "character."

In his posthumous *Three Essays on Religion* (1874), John Stuart Mill once again revealed his lifelong hostility toward "the supposed practical maxim of following Nature" (1965, p. 380). "If the natural course of things were perfectly right and satisfactory," he wrote, "to act at all would be gratuitous meddling, which as it could not make things better, must make them worse" (1965, pp. 380-381). Denying any relevance to nature as a frame of reference for human action, Mill went on to ask: "If the artificial is not better than the natural, to what end are the arts of life? To dig, to plough, to build, to wear clothes, are direct infringements of the injunction to follow nature" (1965, p. 381).

Such an anti-naturalist tone, however, was somewhat altered when he advocated a philosophic radical theory of social and political practice. The starting-point of the philosophic radical reform movement was, as he pointed out in Fonblangue's England" (1837), an understanding that the "present imperfect condition of human nature" must be replaced by a "perfect" one (p. 353). At the center of the reform Mill had in mind was the aim to bring social institutions into a full accord not with some artificial cultural ideal but rather with a potential "perfect" nature of man. What was denied and rejected in one form was thus readmitted and treated in a new form as the core concept of his reformist political ideals.

In denying nature as a valid criterion for assessing the value of human action, Mill (and the other philosophic radicals) abandoned one of the most powerful elements of the Enlightenment, the concept of natural law, which contained, in the Rousseauist camp in particular, a strong anti-rationalist element. But in maintaining an ideal of a perfected nature of man, Mill rescued this important constituent of Enlightenment thought. In the term "perfected human nature" were contained values which could serve to regulate the artificial. In giving an exceptional status to this concept of "perfected human nature," Mill engulfed himself in the legacy of the eighteenth century from which he strove so hard to escape.

A major difficulty in understanding Mill's concept of human nature is that, in spite of his frequent reference to it as the basis of social reform, he never defined

it in clear terms. As John M. Robson complained, Mill never insisted that "human nature is precisely this, that and so, to the definite exclusion of this, that and the other so" (1976, p. 143). But a lack of definition does not necessarily imply a lack of clarity in the way a term is used by a writer on particular occasions. For example, in his enormously bulky work *Capital*, Karl Marx never provided a clear definition of capital. Has any "Marxologist" complained of his failure to define the term? Robson attempted to find in the bulk of Mill's writings certain consistent elements in the term human nature. His primary concern, however, was to establish what elements are contained in the word human in contradistinction to the word animal. As categories for the analysis he settled on three elements — needs, constitutions and capacities. As an animal, man has the physical needs of an animal; the human being, however, has needs of a higher order — for freedom of thought, for freedom to choose his own mode of life, and to maintain satisfying relationships with his fellow creatures. As an animal, man is constitutionally possessed of biological drives and ruled by instinctual desires for self-preservation and self-gratification. Yet as a human being, his constitution is made up of other noble elements, such as the love of justice, a sense of personal honor and dignity, and feelings of sympathy. Consequently, man as a human being has qualitatively superior capacities to man as an animal. Mill's direct comments, gleaned with reference to such criteria, confirmed, to Robson's satisfaction, Mill's methodologically preconceived notion of man.

These radically differing images of man as a human being and as an animal were, of course, not exclusively Mill's. Jeremy Bentham, whose view of man Mill had supposedly gone beyond, had enunciated similar views when he defined the business of government as the promotion of general utility. In *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1948), Bentham pointed out "a means of producing other consequences" other than those implied by the intentions to gain pleasure and avoid pain, and added that "in this lies the difference between rational agency and irrational" (p. 71). As an irrational animal, man pursued his own pleasure and sought to avoid pain; as a rational human being, man possessed and could exercise power to curb such pursuits. Thus, the man under good government was distinguished from man the animal, or the man under a bad or no government. John Stuart Mill had certainly not abandoned utilitarianism when he shared this view and found in man the same capacity.

As a utilitarian John Stuart Mill never gave up the view that man was an animal; yet, he never ceased to project certain distinctively "human" elements into his concept of man. To understand fully Mill's concept of the nature of man, however, it is necessary to view his ideas in terms other than Robson's simple distinction between these two aspects of man's nature.

In Mill's 1833 criticism of Bentham, he pointed out that Bentham had "confounded the principle of utility with the principle of specific consequences" (1833, p. 8). Focussing his attention on the direct consequences of actions, Bentham had failed to see that such actions presupposed certain dispositions and habits of mind and heart. Thus in assessing the worth of a person's particular act,

such as stealing or lying, Bentham took into account only its evil effects, and did not consider "whether the act . . . in question . . . may not form part of a *character* essentially pernicious, or at least essentially deficient in some quality eminently conducive to the 'greatest happiness'" (p. 8). Mill's subsequent denial of consequentialism and his proposal to consider not only consequences but also the factors that contributed to an act's taking place caused him to demand not only punishment for the undesirable act but that an attempt be made to prevent it by modifying the causal factors. This demand, further developed in the *Inaugural Address* into a theory of character cultivation, was based on an assumption that the human personality factors which cause an act were modifiable and artificially rearrangeable. To prevent harmful acts was clearly more efficient and more economical than discovering and punishing their perpetrators.

What is of note in this version of utilitarianism is the fact that Mill, in pinpointing Bentham's shortcomings, chastised him for having failed to reach a "deeper insight into the formation of character, and knowledge of the internal workings of human nature" (1833, p. 8). The reason Bentham maintained a fixed view of an animal man and thus proposed punishment and reward as the only measures of government was, in Mill's view, his failure to recognize the existence of man's "human nature;" the animal in man, in fact, could be controlled by means of an appropriate character cultivation of man to a "human being." As Robson noted, man can be encouraged to add to his physical needs higher quality needs such as freedom of thought, freedom to choose his own life and so on. Constitutionally, man can be upgraded from a slave of instincts to a noble creature capable of desiring justice, personal honor and feelings of sympathy. Thus construed, the major difference between Mill and Bentham appears to be that the latter viewed man in a natural situation and characterized him simply as an animal while the former found the essence of natural man in his plasticity, which enabled him to be ennobled to a human being. Consequently, one appeared to rely on penal laws in order to control and correct the original "nature" of man, while the other recommended positive educational measures to supplement and eventually perhaps obviate the need for the negative measure of the law.

But did Mill, in fact, as Robson implied, differ significantly from Bentham in this regard? Important in answering this question is an analysis of the theoretical framework within which both writers developed their views of man. Bentham's theory of punishment and reward was evidently derived from Lockean anthropology, which, regarding human nature as entirely moulded by circumstances, concluded that character itself could be modified by the discipline of punishment and reward. Locke, in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* took pain and pleasure as "the hinges on which our passions turn" (Garforth, 1964, p. 160). Man evaded pain while pursuing pleasure. Such a view of human nature led him to rely, like Bentham later, on punishment and reward as the *wise* way to "keep children in order" (p. 83). That Bentham's utilitarianism was based on a Lockean environmentalism is most clearly shown in his *Theory of Fictions* (1814), in which he pointed out, "All our psychological ideas are derived from physical

ones — all mental from corporeal ones'' (quoted in Stern and Robison, 1983, p. 204). An idea in our understanding is a name ascribed to a particular object which is perceived by one or more of our five senses. The correspondence of our sensory impressions with external objects as the starting point of our psychological processes implies as a key factor in our behavior the primacy of the initial response of taking or rejecting objects according as they are felt to be pleasant or painful.

Born into an intellectual milieu in which the dominant anthropology was Lockean, Mill inherited a view of man which was both Lockean and Benthamite. Perhaps the most convincing evidence for the Locke-Bentham legacy is to be found in the essay ''Nature,'' in which he characterized the natural man as ''selfish'' and declared, ''so completely is it the verdict of all experience that selfishness is natural [to man]'' (1965, p. 394). According to Mill, therefore, it is the nature of man to avoid unhappiness or pain, seeking happiness or pleasure regardless of what is incurred to others by his actions. Mill, like Bentham, recognized the ''necessity of general laws'' (Warnock, 1979, p. 253) as an ''ultimate standard'' of human actions, that is as the basis of the principle of utility and the implied artificial restriction of natural actions for the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

The practical idea of controlling the activities of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain thus constituted the backbone of both Mill's and Bentham's prescriptions for social justice. Differences, however, arise in their reflections on the effects of such controlled human actions. In Bentham's view, the restriction of certain pleasure-seeking activities occurred naturally, at an animal level, when circumstances were arranged so that more or less pleasure or pain occurred than would otherwise be the case. By appealing to nothing more than man's selfishness, the legislator will cause everyone to act in the general interest. Thus when man engages in an impulsive action which results in painful consequences, he will ''learn'' to restrain his impulse and avoid the action. What develops as a result of this experience is not a disposition to do what is in the general interest but a practice of subjectively calculating which action will result in more or less benefits. For Bentham, a disposition is merely ''a kind of fictitious entity, feigned for the convenience of discourse'' (Bentham, 1948, p. 131); it cannot play any role in the determination of actions. Only the subjective felicity calculation is in operation; the ''social motives'' come to ''regulate and determine the general tenor of [one's] life'' only when the self-regarding ones are not involved (1948, p. 150).

Bentham's claim apparently conflicts with Mill's contention that ''certain dispositions and habits of mind and heart,'' or, as he prefers, a character, underlie a particular action. Nonetheless, as one delves a little deeper into Mill's anthropological theory, itself based on associationist psychology, one finds that the word ''character'' contains hardly more than what Bentham referred to as ''sensibility to the force of the social motives,'' (1948, p. 148) or the habit of being powerfully affected by the social environment. Mill's concept of character lacks, in effect, the vital elements which enable individual man to act independently

of external conditions.

Mill inherited the associationist legacy of utilitarianism not directly from Bentham but from his father James Mill. Most notable among the various elements of this legacy was James' application of associationist psychology to his social philosophy, which thus tended to be educational rather than juridical. This legacy was evident in Mill's summary of his father's psychology:

> . . . the formation of all human character by circumstances, through the universal Principle of Association, and the consequent unlimited possibility of improving the moral and intellectual condition of mankind by education. (Stillinger, 1969, pp. 65-66)

Mill declared, "Of all his doctrines none were more important than this, or needs more to be insisted on" (p. 66). It should be noted that Mill identified these two points of the "fundamental doctrines" of his father's psychology not in the earlier but in the later period of Mill's life. Whatever filial piety he might have demonstrated, the point of view he took of associationist psychology was his own and not necessarily that of his father. Adopting from his father the educational possibilities of associationism, Mill jumped at once toward a concept of "moral and intellectual" character. What had concerned James Mill in the educational use of associationist psychology was the establishment of desirable modes of association. As man's natural propensities, such as desires and appetites, were sometimes too selfish to enable him to exist in harmony with his fellows, education based on forming appropriate associations would cause him to develop a "power of restraining them whenever they lead in a hurtful direction" (Mill, 1969, p. 67). The idea of character, as an integrated set of unique and idiosyncratic elements of personality, was certainly not implied by such a view.

In seeing in associationist psychology, principles by which human propensities could be modified, Mill shared the educational approach of his father. Yet in escalating the normative goal of this modification to character cultivation, he went beyond the boundary of his father's methodological framework. His idea of character cultivation, proposed as a remedy for the selfishness of human nature, was illustrated clearly in *A System of Logic*:

> There are many virtuous actions, and even virtuous modes of action . . . by which happiness in the particular instance is sacrificed, more pain being produced than pleasure. But conduct of which this can be truly asserted, admits of justification only because it can be shown that on the whole more happiness will exist in the world, if feelings are cultivated which will make people [act], in certain cases, regardless of happiness. I fully admit that this is true: that the cultivation of an ideal nobleness of will and conduct, should be to individual human beings an end, to which the specific pursuit either of their own happiness or of that of others . . . should, in any case of conflict, give way. (Robson, 1965, p. 952)

What is claimed here is the possibility of the abandonment of man's natural tendency to pursue pleasure and avoid pain when others' interests are at stake. While his father aimed to employ trains of association in bringing men to curb their selfish pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain, John Stuart Mill started

out from a normative goal to produce a virtuous character, one who acted "regardless of happiness." When educated, man would be "denaturalized" and in full control of his natural propensities. He would no longer be an animal but a totally different being with totally different needs, constitutions, and capacities. But could such a transformation be effected within the anthropology Mill developed from his father's associationist psychology?

Mill's concept of character embodied both an ideal for man and a solution for the problems he had been tackling in his life-long commitment to assisting the historical progress of his society. Unlike the elder utilitarians, who advocated reforms to adjust social institutions to further free competition in the marketplace, John Stuart Mill saw the emerging evil consequences of free competion and insisted on reforms to prevent them. Free competition should be taken as the underlying rule of market transactions. In order to prevent evil consequences, however, measures should be adopted to submit the competitive drive to the control of something noble and wise so that harmony would be restored among the competitors. An essential condition for this harmony was that individuals as participants in the market competition should not remain slaves to their natural desires, but, if necessary, become voluntary losers for the sake of a social good. Like the elder utilitarians, Mill took capitalism to be the high point of civilization; unlike them, he foresaw the completion of the reform movement not in the maximum gratification of individual desires but in "the improvement of mankind" in virtue (Robson, 1965, p. 119). The new age of completed social reform would produce prevailing "minds capable of strengthening the weaker side of Civilization by the support of a higher Cultivation" (p. 143). This, Mill concluded, was to be attained by making "the only road open to honor and ascendancy be that of personal qualities" (p. 147). Such an historically derived normative requirement could not be accommodated within the descriptive theoretical framework in Mill's possession. Associationist psychology, as developed by James Mill and adopted by his son, clearly denied the possibility of man acting "regardless of happiness."

The major elements of associationist psychology within which human actions are explained are relatively straightforward. The mind, the determining factor in actions, is formed and reformed by a process which begins at the point where he has contact with "the things by which we are surrounded" (Mill, 1967, p. 3). The activities that occur at this level are named subjectively "sensations" or "experiences" and objectively "impressions." These sensations excite ideas, which in turn excite other ideas. Just as the objects and events experienced by our senses occur synchronically or in successive order, so too do our sensations. In turn, ideas, which are the copies of sensations, "spring up" or "exist" in the order in which the sensations have occurred, thus combining or associating themselves in a given order. This is, in simple terms, the "Association of Ideas." Simple ideas combine with others to become more complex ideas, eventually leading to highly abstract concepts. Throughout this process of association, complex ideas follow the order of simpler ideas and the simpler ideas replicate

the initial sensations which occur in the order of contact with the outside objects. Consequently, the human mind, which consists of complex ideas and associations of complex ideas, reflects ultimately and accurately the natural order of the external world.

Basic to this chain of associations of ideas is the initial contact with the external world with which man always has contact in passive fashion. What he has in his mind comes about as a result of the stimuli of the external world that surrounds him through an intenal process of reflection, itself determined by the external order. Should man receive no stimuli at all from the world, he would not possess any ideas. Man before contact with the external world is, as Locke once put it, "a white paper void of all characters" (Locke, 1894, Vol. 1, 121-122). Mill saw in this psychology certain desirable political implications in contrast to the theory of William Hamilton that man had a certain innate capacity to achieve intuition or consciousness of things in the external world. If the capacity to intuit is innate, individual differences in this capacity largely originate from a prenatal gift of nature, and can easily lead to the kind of Tory theory developed by Edmund Burke.[1] Associationist psychology, however, which compares the original state of the human mind to a "blank tablet," provides an equal ground on which an individual's intellectual and other capacities will be developed according to circumstances. Given similar circumstances, individuals will develop on equal terms, and this was Mill's aspiration. Of course, circumstances are not similar but diverse, and inequalities are thus unavoidable. More importantly, an individual whose mind is formed passively by the stimuli of the external world must remain a mere reflection of the particular social and physical environment of which he is part. The "scientific" theory that the human mind is made up of ideas produced by the sensations or passive experiences of the external stimuli thus downgrades man to a mere receptacle.

In order to avoid this unpleasant implication of associationist psychology and in so doing damaging its central tenet, Mill admitted two *innate* capacities. One was the capacity to receive external stimuli, the other was the instinctive reaction to seek what is pleasant and avoid what is painful. Although contradicting the *tabula rasa* metaphor, these instinctual capacities ironically rescued associationist psychology from self-contradiction. For without these exceptions, associationist psychology was unable to demonstrate why man does not become a mere mishmash of different sensations provoked by different stimuli, nor how he maintains his existence from and in spite of external hazards. The instinctual activities of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain enable man to survive. Furthermore, they provide him with opportunities to interact with his environment and to elevate himself to something more than a mere creature of circumstances. These opportunities, however, appear to have been precluded by what was called the *philosophia prima* of associationist psychology, the passivity of man in the face of circumstances.

In *Utilitarianism* (Warnock, 1979) Mill recognized that the instinctual pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain help secure man's existence. Professing the

ultimate end of human actions to be "an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments," he proposed to take such an end of human action as the basis for "rules and precepts of human conduct, by the observation of which an existence . . . might be . . . secured to all mankind" (pp. 262-263). However useful it might have been in rescuing associationist psychology from the dilemma of human passivity, the postulation of man's instinctual response did not go beyond explaining how man functions as an animal. Mill's justification of it as the basis of "rules and precepts for human conduct" only reinforced the view that man was an animal, for what man does to achieve pleasure and avoid pain is simply to follow what nature or instinct tells him to do. Indeed, Mill went on to argue that such "rules and precepts" should be applied not only to mankind "but as far as the nature of things admits, to the whole sentient creation" (Warnock, 1979, p. 263), to the whole category of animal beings. It is true that in selecting and avoiding environmental stimuli man makes certain choices according to his own and not the environment's needs. It is even arguable that what he has in his mind is the sum of what has been chosen by him instead of what was imposed on him by the environment. Nevertheless, such choices are made naturally or instinctively. One is thus still faced with contradictions of the "fundamental doctrines" of associationist psychology. Circumstances are held to determine human character, yet they cannot influence human character when their stimuli are denied or avoided by man.

In attempting to deal with this contradiction, the best strategy available to Mill was to make as little as possible of the role of instincts, and instead stress external circumstances which themselves promised an "unlimited possibility" of improving mankind. As a result, he violated another key assumption of associationist psychology, namely, that man has by nature the capacity to sense external objects as they actually are. By definition, it is sensation which mediates the external world to the internal mental life of man, the world being meaningless unless it is sensed. What is contained in man's ideas is not the external world but the outcome of sensation — what has been sensed. The world remains as it is and man senses it as it appears to be. Theoretically and practically, therefore, there exists a gulf between man's sensation and the external world, for what man believes the external world to be is, in fact, no more than what he has abstracted from the external world, which still remains unknown. Thus, the best definition of the external world which Mill the associationist could provide was that it was a whole of "permanent possibilities of sensation" (1890, pp. 22ff). "A naked possibility," however, as G.F. Stout pointed out, "is nothing and Mill's possibilities are naked possibilities" (1890, pp. 22-45). What Mill had done, in fact, was to confine his anthropology to a strait-jacket of idealism. It was this idealism that led him dogmatically to exaggerate the "fundamental doctrine" of associationist psychology that circumstances form the human character, and promise an "unlimited possibility" of improving human beings.

The young Mill of 1828 argued that "an extremely high degree of moral and intellectual excellence may be made to prevail among mankind at large, since

causes exist which have confessedly been proved adequate to produce it in many particular instances'' (Laski, 1928, pp. 290-291). ''Causes'' here no doubt refer to the control of circumstances for the purpose of producing desirable ''characters.'' Yet it is not clear whether a man thus formed could embody all the desirable qualities. Even if and when, in spite of all the theoretical difficulties already examined, environmental stimuli are fully mediated by sensation to man's internal mental life, there is no guarantee that a controlled environment will produce the desired character of man as a human being.

According to the descriptive theory, a controlled environment will result in a desired character. The world impresses and man is impressed by it. It is through this mechanism that Mill wished to transform the pleasure-seeking and pain-avoiding creature into a full human being, who will have cultivated ''an ideal nobleness of will and conduct,'' and be prepared to give up pleasure and accept pain for a greater cause. However, all that can occur in this process of transformation is the appeal to a stimulation of instincts to bring about desired responses by cunningly combining in a stimulus varying amounts of pain and pleasure. Like Pavlov's dog, a man can be trained to avoid an immediate pleasure when it is discovered to be attached to a greater pain and accept a pain when it clearly promises a greater pleasure. The principle that governs this change is still one of the primary assumptions of associationist psychology, that man will always seek pleasure and avoid pain. When an individual, for example, avoids stealing for fear of moral sanctions or penal punishments, he does so because the quantity of pleasure that might be incurred by the theft would not, in his judgment, exceed that of sanctions and punishments. Similarly, when a man braves the heat of a burning house in order to rescue a helpless child, he does so because the quantity of pleasure that might be derived from the act is, in his view, greater than that of the possible pain. In neither of the cases is action taken in consideration of a greater happiness for others at the expense of the person concerned. In short, the idea of conditioning by means of a controlled environment does not allow for the transformation of the selfish creature to an altruistic human being.

Typical of this kind of descriptive ''cultivation'' theory is the *Inaugural Address*, in which the whole of Mill's pedagogy revolved around the concepts of environmental differences and modelling. Given an appropriate environment and/or desirable models, he argued, the student would develop aesthetic feelings, intellectual capacities and moral sentiments. Mill was, however, ambiguous throughout in explaining how such circumstances could provoke the students' own active efforts to develop those qualities. If Mill's associationist psychology was correct, imitation of good models, which in fact are part of the environment, could take place only when they involved lessening pain or increasing pleasure. However educationally rich the environment might be, its influence on man was sifted through the ''necessity of general laws'' in which instinctual responses had the decisive say. Even if and when the force of instincts was, according to principles of associationist psychology, suppressed to the minimum by a controlled environment, a man could not develop active intellectual, moral and aesthetic capacities. Thus, the

ideal "capable and sensible" man was permanently detached from any known pedagogical means of realization and indeed could never be realized.

The gap between Mill's descriptive pedagogy, including his social prescriptions, and his normative goals was, in fact, the gap between his views of man as an animal and man as a human being. In an age when free competition in the marketplace was being challenged by the losers, Mill, the preeminent bourgeois thinker, sought to develop an anthropology which would transform the selfish market man to a harmonious social being capable of sacrificing his own interests for a greater cause. However, by confining his new vision of man into another "scientific" theory of and based on the market logic, a theory that justified the egoistic self-seeking of man, Mill betrayed his own ideal. In effect, the emancipatory power of the vision was in conflict with and eventually dissipated by the restrictive power of the descriptive theory. In order to bridge the gap, he needed to go beyond the utilitarian horizon provided by associationist psychology. What he failed to consider was, in fact, what was suggested by Marx and Dewey, that man not only was affected by circumstances but also affected them. The recognition of this fact implied that man must be considered not only in terms of the instinctual rejections and acceptances of external stimuli but rather in terms of his inherent capacity positively to create appropriate circumstances and thus shape himself. It also implied the abandonment of the polarized views of man as an animal and as a human being, and of the formalism which denied in one the qualities of the other. In Mill's self-deceptive use of the term human nature was to be found the futile but desperate venture of a great classical liberal to subdue the oncoming tides of social disharmony by means of already outdated conceptual tools.

It is ironic and perhaps tragic that, in the hundred years or so since Mill's death, the same discordance between the normative ideal of the development of a worthy character and the predominant behaviorist psychological view of man has continued to characterize North American educational theory and practice. Current education rhetoric still holds out as an unquestioned goal the full development of a human being into an autonomous agent capable of identifying and preferring the general good at the expense of his own well-being. Yet, man is still viewed educationally within the 20th century's own version of associationist psychology, behaviorism, which holds man to be a creature of circumstance and explicitly denies to him both freedom and dignity. For Mill, perhaps, seeking to establish new social and personal ideals in a pre-Darwinian, pre-Marxist, and pre-Freudian intellectual environment, there was some excuse for conceptual confusion. For our own age and for our own educators, there can be none.

Notes

1. Mill writes in the *Autobiography*, "The notion that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition or consciousness, independently of observation and experience, is, I am persuaded, . . . the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions" (p. 134). In the same book, he also points out, "I

have long felt that the prevailing tendency to regard all the marked distinctions of human character as innate, and in the main indelible, and to ignore the irresistible proofs that by far the greater part of those differences, whether between individuals, races, or sexes, are such as not only might but naturally would be produced by differences of circumstances, is one of the greatest stumbling blocks to human development'' (p. 162).

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