



## Book Reviews / Buchbesprechungen

**Christopher Macleod,**  
**Dale E. Miller (eds.)**

### **The Blackwell Companion** **to Mill**

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Even though doing “a review” of one (scholarly?) “companion” should be an easy task for a professional philosopher, writing on *The Blackwell Companion to Mill*, a comprehensive collection of articles on John Stuart Mill, was not easy at all. There are two reasons for that. Firstly, this *Companion* is enormous – more than 640 pages in total. Secondly, editors of the *Companion* chose a very unorthodox approach to the composition and structure of the *Companion*. Editors tried to picture both Mill’s very colorful and intensive life and his multiple and comprehensive theoretical activities. The result is a remarkably exciting but colossal book that is not easy to read.

*The Blackwell’s Companion* is not the first “companion” to Mill. In 1998, *The Cambridge Companion to Mill* had been published. Then, in 2006, *The Blackwell Introduction to Mill’s Utilitarianism* has appeared. Now, we have *The Blackwell Companion to Mill*. It seems natural to begin with the question that editors ask themselves at the very beginning of the *Companion*. Why another *Companion*?

“Why another book on Mill”, editors ask themselves. This question is not just rhetorical because the available literature on Mill’s life and philosophy is immense. So, they really should offer their answer. Their answer, in short, is this: a new *Companion* is needed because Mill has been the subject of a lot of various works “lately”. In “just one decade” – from 2006 to 2016 (when the *Companion* has been published), at least a dozen new monographs, a halfdozen edited collections of original papers, and a new biography have appeared. Moreover, articles in academic journals are almost uncountable.

This answer makes sense. However, it must not be forgotten that the *Blackwell Companion* is not the first companion to Mill’s work. *The Cambridge Companion to Mill*, edited by John Skorupski, was published in 1998 (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge). Evidently, editors of the *Blackwell Companion* think that (re?)interpretation of Mill’s work (and other achievements) is an ongoing endeavor that deserves a new overview. They tell us that “interest in him remains both widespread and intense, and this alone constitutes a rationale for another significant contribution to the literature – at least as long as it is of sufficient quality” (C: 16).

It could be admitted that new developments in interpretations of Mill’s philosophy give a rationale for preparing a unique collection of those “new readings”. The question is: to whom those “new readings” are addressed? It is not entirely clear who is the intended reader of the *Companion*. Its heterogeneous structure with numerous (37) chapters suggests that editors had some kind of “catch-all” tactics. If the *Companion* addresses the general public, then some significant parts of it are almost incomprehensible for the readers. If it is a reading for scholars, then it is not clear what is the purpose of the ample space devoted to non-philosophical topics, such as Mill’s biography, *Autobiography* (as a literature?), political disputes, his wife, and so on. And, of course, why are some minor biographical details of any importance for the whole of Mill’s thought?

However, that approach has a double edge and has caused some ambiguities. Firstly, the *Companion* is too big for a single reader. Secondly, the diversity of subjects makes this read not easy to follow. Thirdly, it is not at all obvious how the very chapters of this volume are mutually interconnected, and even worse, how some articles in any single “part” of the *Companion* (six of them) are connected.

Let us get back to some facts. Due to the inevitable heterogeneity of topics and approaches, every comprehensive “companion” must have some troubles with its composition. *The*

*Blackwell Companion to Mill* (C) is no exception. Let us mention just a few. Various articles are partly overlapping and topic-mixed, without apparent reason. Here are some examples: multiple references to the influence of Harriet Taylor on Mill's life and thought are scattered in chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 (the whole chapter), 9, 10, 11, 17, 19, 31, and 33. Though inherently connected (Mill does not discern them), matters of logic, epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of science are treated separately, with unavoidable redundancy and repetitiveness (10, 12, 14, 15, and 16). "Artistic" features of Mill's work and thought are also situated in different parts of the *Companion*. Mill's famous proof of the principle of utility is mentioned in chapters 20, 21, 22, and 26. And so on.

The *Companion* editors in this volume have included contributions of both well-known scholars with an established reputation and several new interpreters. Each essay should be an incentive to go to the source (Mill's text). However, at the very beginning, it is quite clear that the *Companion* is not made for beginners. The number (37) of articles ("chapters") divided into six parts and the length of 640 pages are certainly beyond the capacity of even a professional philosopher who is not familiar with Mill's ideas. So, we can conclude that editors had on their minds a sort of "high-level" *Companion* for those who seek to understand a noticeably significant number of aspects of Mill's thought in its varieties. Also, it is obviously meant to present the global direction of recent debates within scholarship. However, the reader could acquire a powerful impression that editors aimed to make a *book* (or *the book?*) on Mill, not only a "scholarly" companion.

Six different parts of this volume are meant to represent six various aspects of Mill's life and work, covering: his biography and the historical influences, his theoretical, moral, and social philosophy, and his relation to contemporary movements. It is not straightforward how this *Companion* should be read – as a collection of articles of various authors, or as a book as a whole. However, despite the unusual (even for a *Companion*) size and structure, it could be detected that its principal aims are, in the end, Mill's (widely taken) moral philosophy. It also provides insight in other areas of his lesser-known work, such as his epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of language. Surprisingly, the whole two opening parts of the *Companion* do *not* deal much with Mill's philosophy.

Part I covers Mill's life, his posthumous reputation, and *his* story of his life (*Autobiography*). It deals with biographical facts and Mill's various interests and activities.

Of course, his life has always been a source of notable interest. Presented biographical details are numerous and colorful. We can find a variety of stories on Mill's very unorthodox education, his famous "mental crises" followed by the discovery of poetry, his relationship with Harriet Taylor and political engagement in the Parliament, etc. All those aspects of Mill's life are fascinating. However, behind these tales lie questions about Mill's relationship to his intellectual and philosophical inheritance and whether Mill is a reliable interpreter of his own life.

Part II brings together a comprehensive summary of the various influences on Mill's thought. It is well known that Mill's education was tremendously broad. So, this account, as editors admit, must be partial. Editors say that we still know little of the influences coming from Germany, the place of the Medievals in his philosophy, and his relation to Scottish thought of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. However, it is almost impossible not to notice that in Part II, devoted to the influences on Mills' ideas, Jeremy Bentham's theoretical influence on his moral philosophy was not separated and presented systematically. This approach looks rather unusual. Bentham was not only Mill's mentor. Together with Mill, he is an acknowledged "founding father" of utilitarianism. Also, it is not entirely clear why Mill's youthful disappointment in his teacher is elaborated almost in detail and not the circumstances that preceded that disappointment. Some articles at the beginning of the *Companion* are more likely material for Mill's biography than a theoretical analysis expected in this kind of publication. For example, Elijah Millgram, not for the first time, focused his interest on Mill's "mental crisis" and problematic aspects of his relationship with his teacher Jeremy Bentham (cf. Elijah Millgram, "Mill's Incubus", in: Ben Eggleston, Dale Miller, and David Weinstein (eds.), *John Stuart Mill and the Art of Life*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011). Millgram's elaborated story on "two epiphanies" mounts to only one true revelation: Bentham was not a genius. Millgram's "Two epiphanies" (C: 12–29) shows not only Mill's ambiguity towards Bentham's intellectual achievements but also a disappointment in his intellectual capacities. "Young Mill", the story goes, had not been aware of Bentham's limitations. But, after the famous "mental crisis", he had a revelation. Moreover, Bentham is almost accused of causing Mill's famous "mental crises":

"[Mill's] teenage emotional commitment to the utilitarian political enterprise was threatened by the low intellectual quality of Bentham's thought and writing." (C: 14.)

Maybe this personalized approach has its own merits. However, discussions on Mill's *Autobiography* as literature (C: 45–57), his “after-life” (C: 30–44), a separate article on Harriet Taylor (C: 112–125), and so on, take two of six parts of the whole *Companion* – 143 pages in total. It is not easy for a philosophically uneducated reader, and even for knowledgeable professionals, to understand why so voluminous introduction is needed to get to “the real thing” – Mill's *philosophy*.

Part III (“Foundations of Mill's Thought”) finally gets to Mill's philosophy. It aims to give an account of the foundations of Mill's philosophy and his thought on key philosophical topics. Mill follows the growth of the physical, biological, and social sciences in his own time. It is explained why he thinks that a new account of humans' knowledge of the world was necessary. However, in his theoretical attempt, Mill runs into some of the most challenging problems. The question is: how should we reconcile the mind as a natural object in the world and the mind as the condition for the cognition of that same world? This question leads him to struggle with the nature of our cognition of the world and the relativity of knowledge. This part also deals with Mill's view on some other subjects, such as aesthetics, history, and religion. These fields, although sometimes not thought of as philosophical or theoretical, are closely related to those issues.

It is still an open question if Mill's theoretical philosophy is only a groundwork of his moral philosophy. In the *Companion*, some authors express their surprise that it has received little attention, especially when compared to that of Locke and Hume. Now we should mention that “revision” as an interpretative approach is present in the whole *Companion*, not only in parts that broadly deal with moral philosophy (we shall deal with that kind of revisionism in a separate section). For example, the reader can find some extraordinary (revisionist) claims, such as “Mill qualifies as an advocate of Copernican metaphysics” (C: 227), or “The so-called empiricist-rationalist debate is not the context of Mill's thought” (C: 227). Of course, new interpretations and “revision” are legitimate in philosophy. However, it should be noted that these particular claims belong to Nicholas Capaldi, who is, as the writer of Mill's newest biography, the author with considerable authority. It is quite unusual for a biographer to offer a “revision”.

Parts IV and V deal with Mill's moral and social philosophy that we will discuss more in the following paragraphs, and that will be the scope of interest of this review. Part VI concludes with an outline of the broader aspects of Mill's thought, attempting to identify

his relation to significant developments in the history of philosophy. It includes an analysis of Mill's relationship to contemporary movements in various fields of philosophy: to modern liberalism, modern utilitarianism, and the Analytic/Continental divide.

We can say that parts IV and V are the core of the *Companion*. Those two parts deal with Mill's ethics and social philosophy, which are usually taken as the most influential part of Mill's thought. As we have already noted, editors of the *Companion* take an unusual interpretative route. For a philosophically uneducated reader, in the *Preface* they put the following instruction:

“It is now generally accepted that any full understanding of Mill's ethics must place his account of morality within the broader context of his account of ‘the art of life’.” (C: xviii.)

This clear announcement needs elucidation because we are now dealing with the idea (the *Art of Life*) that colors the whole *Companion*. Let us put it simply. The editors and authors of the *Companion* presume that the *Art of Life* is the key to Mill's moral philosophy. What does it exactly mean?

First: what is the *Art of Life*? An unusual fact is that this expression is not explicitly used in *Utilitarianism*, which is usually supposed to be a general exposition of Mill's moral philosophy (in *Utilitarianism*, Mill mentions only “the theory of life”, not the *Art of Life*; cf. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, in: John Stuart Mill, *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, John M. Robson (ed.), University of Toronto Press – Routledge and Kegan Paul, Toronto 1963 – 1991, (CW) 10.210). It appears in the *third* edition of *A System of Logic* and has been elaborated in only a few pages. In *Logic*, at first glance, it looks like the *Art of Life* contains only *morality*. However, Mill quickly adds that the *Art of Life* has three different departments: Morality, Prudence (or Policy), and Aesthetics – “the right, the expedient, and the beautiful or noble” (John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, CW 8.949). A usual revisionist claim based on this observation is that the *Art of Life* is the practical reason itself. The whole practical reason is based on the “utility” that governs three different “departments”. In that picture, moral has a characteristic of “enforceability”, unlike two other “departments”. However, “utility” encompasses all three departments and is not a distinctive feature of morality.

Here is a proper place to emphasise that, despite the global tendency to “revise” Mill's moral philosophy, still no one claims that he was not a “utilitarian”. Main revisionists' claims mount to the repetitive assertion that “utility” is not “the supreme principle” of mo-

rality but the principle of the whole *Art of Life*. That means that utility as a criterion cannot be *directly* applied to the morality of an action. Revisionists are not entirely clear what precise criteria we have to use in the process of moral deciding, but they are all unanimous: it should *not* be a method of direct maximizing utility (happiness, pleasure, etc.).

In recent literature, Mill's moral theory is characterised by various and colorful labels, such as "non-maximizing" or "extraordinary" utilitarianism (cf. Jonathan Riley, "Mill's extraordinary utilitarian moral theory", *Politics, Philosophy and Economics* 9 (2010) 1, pp. 67–116). That is, of course, confusing but not inexplicable. In the use of such terms and the context of overall revisionism, it is the meaning of the term "utilitarianism" that suffers the change. Let us see how.

It is safe to say that the *Companion's* presentation of Mill's moral philosophy is based on a revisionistic approach conceived by D. G. Brown. This claim should not be surprising at all because the *Companion* is devoted to him – he has sadly passed away just before the publishing of the volume. Moreover, D. G. Brown had been actively involved in the preparation of the *Companion* – he is one of its contributors.

Brown's revisionism passed a long way from being a sole voice in a (utilitarian) desert to become (shall we say) a "new orthodoxy". But, what does "revisionism" mean? In short, "Millian revisionism" (our term) is best described by the following D. G. Brown's words:

"To those who continue to see Mill as firmly at home in a continuous utilitarian tradition, the most scandalous aspect of revisionist thinking is probably its progress from the enforceability in principle of moral requirement, in conjunction with the liberty principle, to the outright rejection of maximizing consequentialism. This, however, seems to me to be the heart of revisionism and to be fundamentally sound, even while plenty of difficulties remain." (D. G. Brown, "Mill's Moral Theory: Ongoing Revisionism", *Politics, Policy and Economics* 9 (2010) 1, pp. 5–45, p. 6.)

The critical thesis of Millian revisionism is that it is questionable if Mill has ever endorsed the so-called "maximizing utilitarianism" of any kind. This claim, the story goes on, is opposed to "standard" or "classical interpretation". But what is "the standard interpretation"? That question has never been answered explicitly in revisionists' literature. However, here is one interpretation that probably covers the main features of a standard view on utilitarianism:

"In its standard form it [utilitarianism] can be expressed as the combination of two principles: (1) *the consequentialist principle* that the rightness, or

wrongness, of an action is determined by the goodness, or badness, of the results that flow from it and (2) *the hedonist principle* that the only thing that is good in itself is pleasure and the only thing bad in itself is pain. Utilitarians have generally taken it for granted, and have made trouble for themselves by doing so, that happiness is a sum of pleasures. Given this assumption, the doctrine can be expressed in the form of a single principle, the greatest happiness principle: *the rightness of an action is determined by its contribution to the happiness of everyone affected by it.*" (Antony Quinton, *Utilitarian Ethics*, Macmillan, London and Basingstoke 1973, p. 1.)

This simple characterization of utilitarianism might be especially important. It suggests that a "theory of right" is *an integral part* of utilitarianism. According to this view, "maximization" is not a contingent feature of some particular interpretation, but an essential part of the utilitarian "theory of right". Now, it is quite clear: if the "rightness" is determined by "contribution" to the "intrinsic good", then the *maximal* contribution is – (the?) right. That is the point of (classical?) "maximizing utilitarianism". On the other side, contemporary Millian revisionism invests much effort in making a simple point: that maximization is not only possible moral "decision procedure".

Moreover, revisionists think that the so-called "criteria of good" ("rightness", sometimes) could be, and even *should* be, sharply distinguished from (moral) "decision procedure". That is, either the procedure must be somehow "indirect" or, more extreme, there is no final "procedure" for making moral decisions and judgments. Or, as D. G. Brown says:

"In Mill, the principle of utility is the principle that the only thing which is desirable as an end in itself is happiness. So, far from being a moral principle of the rightness and wrongness of actions, it does not mention action or conduct at all, and what it ascribes to an end is desirability. He calls it, in distinction from his theory of morality, a theory of life. Indeed, it is the ultimate principle governing the Art of life, the all-inclusive Art (each Art being defined by the end which it pursues). Of course, the end it specifies is an end of *action*, and he says that 'the promotion of happiness is the ultimate principle of Teleology,' or the doctrine of ends. He remarks that the general principles of teleology, 'borrowing the language of the German metaphysicians, may also be termed, not improperly, the principles of Practical Reason.'" (D. G. Brown, "Mill's Moral Theory", p. 7.)

It seems that revisionists suspect that "classical interpreters" (Anthony Quinton or Roger Crisp, for example) of Mill's utilitarianism do not understand what "utility" in Mill's *Utilitarianism* means. Why "the principle of utility" is "far from being a moral principle", as D. G. Brown suggests? Only because all revisionists, with wide variations, think that "utilitarianism" should *not* be "maximizing"? Of course, they could be right, but then they

must explain what “utilitarianism” means if somehow *forbids* “maximization”.

However, it seems that the very expression “non-maximizing utility” sounds very odd. How to acquire “utility” if not by “maximizing” it?

Now, the question is: “Why revisionists think that any ‘indirect’ approach is central to Mill’s position?” Why must the utility be pursued *indirectly*? Is it so just because the direct calculation is *untenable*? That is not persuasive at all, because even calculative oriented utilitarians are aware that the estimation of utility should include all relevant and “indirect” factors in the form of approximation. That does not mean that the goal – “maximal utility” (=happiness) – should be forgotten. Besides, in some situations, the direct calculation *could be* the self-evident method. Why, in such an occasion, we have an obligation *not to* pursue (maximal) utility directly?

It is well known that utilitarianism received many criticisms because the method of maximisation by direct calculation of consequences of a specific action is complicated and practically impossible to accomplish. These criticisms open the door for “indirect utilitarianism”. The main form of “indirect utilitarianism is the so-called “rule-utilitarianism” – a procedure that tells us that “rules”, not the “actions”, should be vindicated by the utility principle. Revisionists have gone further, and now they are insisting that we must not be constrained even by this procedure. For them, *any* “indirect” approach (whatever it means) is welcome.

How are these ideas connected with an interpretation of Mill’s word? The very possibility that utilitarianism allows different or multiple decision procedures does not imply that Mill ever thought about technical “procedures”. Discussion on any “procedure” is not explicit in *Utilitarianism*, and anybody can read into it whatever they wish. Of course, some passages suggest an indirect approach. On the other hand, some famous quotes directly connect right and utility. So, why do revisionists insist on the claim that their reading is a genuine one? Mill’s text is sometimes ambiguous and blurry. It certainly opens a room for different approaches to the task of interpretation. However, it seems that revisionists are making *new* utilitarianism, based on the *Art of Life*. Of course, to think of a new form of utilitarianism is one thing, but to interpret Mill’s theory only in that “new light” is something quite different.

Even nowadays, it seems that Bentham and Mill assume that the presence of the “intrinsic good” (utility, pleasure, happiness – all those are interconnected) is the feature that *makes*

an action right or wrong. The problem with the “right” for revisionists’ approach is now straightforward. Even though we can think of “degrees of good”, it seems (semantically, not only morally) odd or almost unintelligible to talk about “degree of rightness”. For, we usually think of some action as either “right” or “wrong” but seldom as “right to some extent”. Now, if the utilitarian “right” *implies* “the maximum of good”, then “maximization” is an inevitable consequence of the utilitarian theory, not an arbitrary interpretation. The standard interpretation would imply that “non-maximizing” utilitarianism is not a utilitarianism at all.

How does a revisionist explain why Mill is a non-maximizing utilitarian? In the *Companion*, D. G. Brown writes:

“He [Mill] has no such [utility] maximizing principle of moral requirement. This position remains controversial but seems the inescapable outcome of the Revisionist reading of Mill. His Principle of Utility, to the effect that happiness is the only thing desirable as an ultimate end, is foundational for the whole *Art of Life*. It grounds prudence and social expediency and nobility of character as much as it grounds moral requirement. Once its role as foundation is properly understood, we cannot assume that Mill has any single basic principle of moral requirement. What is morally basic proves to depend on how he perceives the pro tanto general utilities (in the largest sense) of various kinds of social compulsion. One bit of jargon has obscured the relevance here of commendable attention to just which utilities Mill assesses, of acts, rules, or whatever, namely: the variously defined, or undefined, term ‘indirect utilitarianism.’ It misleads by suggesting that he justifies a particular moral judgment as flowing from the best decision procedure for estimating conformity to an underlying standard of what makes something required, namely that it in some sense maximize aggregate utility. Actually, it is no help to offer Mill ultimate ends when they may be indeterminate, and when calculating the chance of contributing to them is intractable. If ultimate outcomes are out of sight, no support for ‘indirect strategies’ flows from formulating ultimate ends. Mill’s actual practice is the route to finding the classes of factual consideration he takes to be morally relevant. He starts from real states of affairs, or realistically conceivable ones, and considers what reasons they provide for individual or collective decision. The content of the decision is constrained by the situation, the information available, the abilities of the individual or collective agent, the needs of those affected, and so on. Each of his rules of thumb accepts the frames in which the specific questions are raised. Balancing the consequences of decisions for the utilities of those affected, impartially weighed, is the very thing Mill calls promoting the general welfare. The policy, when faced with options, of preferring a greater utility to a lesser, makes Mill in one sense an optimizer. So are we all.” (C: 418.)

It is a manner in recent literature to present this revisionist view as new and unmarked. In the *Companion*, Guy Fletcher formulates the essence of usual revisionists’ complaints as follows:

“Despite the comparatively little attention that the *Art of Life* has received in the extensive scholarly literature on Mill, it turns out to be extremely important to understanding his moral philosophy and his practical philosophy more generally. It reveals Mill to be a much subtler philosopher than some presentations of his views would suggest. It also insulates him from many unwarranted criticisms.” (C: 297.)

It is hard to understand these repetitive complaints that go against the available evidence. The *Art of Life* occupies large, not “a little” attention in recent ethical literature on Mill. There is a whole collection on the *Art of Life* published in 2011 (Ben Eggleston, Dale E. Miller, David Weinstein (eds.), *John Stuart Mill and the Art of Life*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011). Historically, D. G. Brown had been a proponent of revisionism for a very long time – since 1973 to the publishing date of the *Companion* (cf. D. G. Brown, “What is Mill’s Principle of Utility”, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1973) 1, pp. 1–12). The term “revisionism” was first explicitly mentioned in 1979 (John N. Gray, “John Stuart Mill: Traditional and Revisionist Interpretation”, *Literature of Liberty* 2 (1979) 2. David Lyons published a whole collection of essays on Mill’s *Utilitarianism* in 1997, which includes D. G. Brown’s already published works (David Lyons, (ed.), *Mill’s Utilitarianism: Critical Essays*, Rowman and Littlefield, Oxford 1997). In the relatively recent *Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Utilitarianism*, the *Art of Life* has undoubtedly not been forgotten. Guy Fletcher himself is one of the contributors (cf. Guy Fletcher, “Act utilitarianism”, in: James E. Crimmins, *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of Utilitarianism*, Bloomsbury, London – New York 2013, pp. 1–5). We could go further, but this list should be illustrative enough. It is evident that revisionism based on the *Art of Life* has not got “a little attention”. The real question is: “What more should be done to satisfy revisionists’ appetites?”

As we have already pointed out, revisionists usually suggest a careful reader could, in Mill’s own words, find clues for “right” or “revisionistic” interpretation. However, besides the phrase *Art of Life*, there are only a few passages in Mill’s original work that revisionists could rely upon. One of them is the following:

“Another of our differences is, that I am still, & am likely to remain, a utilitarian; though not one of ‘the people called utilitarians’; indeed, having scarcely one of my secondary premises in common with them; nor a utilitarian at all, unless in quite another sense from what perhaps any one except myself understands by the word. It would take a whole letter to make it quite clear to you what I mean.” (John Stuart Mill, “Letter to Carlyle”, CW 2.207.)

It is evident that Mill here tries to distance himself from some “utilitarians”. However, it is not clear who they are. Is it Bentham? It does not seem so. Even in his expressed doubts about Bentham’s work, Mill has never openly questioned the central idea that “good” (pleasure) is additive (that can be maximized).

Next revisionists’ “evidence” consists of nine pages on the *Art of Life* from the third edition of Mill’s *A System of Logic*. Essentially, revisionists claim that those nine pages (out of 1251 pages of the final version of *Logic*, which is just one of 33 volumes of Mill’s *Collected works*) are the key to understanding Mill’s conception of value.

Finally, as an indirect proof, revisionists usually suggest that it is doubtful whether Mill’s essential work on moral philosophy – *Utilitarianism* – is a genuine overview of Mill’s ethical theory or a mere popular presentation of the prevalent opinion in Mill’s intellectual circle. The point is that without revisionists’ guidance, *Utilitarianism* could be misleading:

“Mill’s essay [*Utilitarianism*] can be read by itself for the theories it expresses or suggests. To achieve a fuller understanding of Mill’s moral ideas, it should be read with some of his other works, such as the essays on Bentham, On Liberty, and Book VI of *A System of Logic*, “On the Logic of Moral Sciences.” (David Lyons, “Preface”, in: D. Lyons (ed.), *Mill’s Utilitarianism*, p. x.)

Revisionists find the final evidence for Mill’s advocating obligatory “indirect” approach to happiness in his *Autobiography*:

“I’ve never, indeed wavered in the conviction that happiness is the test of all rules of conduct, and the end of life. But I now thought that this end was only to be attained by not making it the direct end. Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not favorite pursuit followed not as a means but as an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way. The enjoyments of life (such was now my theory) are sufficient to make life pleasant when they are taken *en passant*, without being made a principal object.” (John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, CW 1.145–6.)

As we can see, there is overall too little evidence in favor of a strong thesis that whole Mill’s moral philosophy should (or could) be interpreted in the light of the *Art of Life*. Some other facts also go against revisionist interpretations. Firstly, the expression the *Art of Life* does not even appear in the first and second edition of *A System of Logic*. The first edition of *Logic* was published in 1843, third edition – in 1851, eight years later. Secondly, *Utilitarianism*, still the essential text for understanding Mill’s moral position, appears ten years after that – in 1861. Thirdly, in *Util-*

itarianism, Mill *does not* even mention “the art of life”. In *Utilitarianism*, the reader can find only one expression *resembling* the *Art of life*. That expression is “the theory of life”. Of course, it is unclear why Mill would use different words for the key phrase of his theory or how much it is probable that he has forgotten what the “keywords” are. It is hard to understand why Mill would be so shy about supposedly basic terms of his own moral theory. Why the *Art of Life* was not (in *Utilitarianism*) explicitly and clearly established as a foundation of moral, political, and social philosophy? Why were the most valuable nine pages stayed hidden in a dark corner of the third edition of his forgotten work (*A System of Logic*)? Those are unanswered questions for the revisionist.

Finally, in the *Companion*, the manner of presentation of discussion on Mill’s moral philosophy is strange. For example, there is no separate article on a still present and huge act/rule utilitarianism dispute that has dominated the ethical literature from the middle of the 20th century to the eighties (that debate has started with a question whether Mill was act- or rule-utilitarian). Maybe even stranger is the fact that the term the *Art of life* in the *Companion* is mentioned 98 times, 17 more than “utility principle” (in all variations of its names – 81). However, as a matter of textual evidence (Mill’s *Collected Works*), nobody, not even revisionists, could ever claim that the *Art of Life* is more central than the *utility principle* in Mill’s ethical theory. That is simply not true.

Even some contemporary authors sympathetic to the revisionist’s approach are reluctant to accept the rigid idea that *Art of Life* is the key to the interpretation of Mill’s moral philosophy. One of them reminds us that Mill’s “canonical passages” from *Utilitarianism* cannot be easily circumvented. Those passages point to the so-called “Proportionality Doctrine”, which is directly opposed to the revisionist’s non-maximizing view on Mill’s utilitarianism. Let us remind ourselves how those passages look.

Firstly, Mill clearly says that utilitarians are “those who stand up for utility as the *test of right and wrong*” (John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, CW 10.209). This idea is linked with the Proportionality Doctrine:

“The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.” (J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, CW 10.210.)

These Mill’s words do not fit very well with the revisionists’ idea. Even the idea that mo-

rality is only a “punishable” part of the *Art of Life* might be dubious. Mill repeats himself in chapter 5 of *Utilitarianism*, where he writes on *justice* and begins with the same words: utilitarianism is the doctrine that Utility or Happiness is the *criterion of right and wrong* (J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, CW 10.240).

These quotes naturally raise a question: “Why do D. G. Brown and other revisionists claim that utility is *not* a criterion of rightness actions?” For that question, there are almost none of the direct answers. As we have seen, the central thesis of revisionists’ interpretations of Mill’s utilitarianism is that his concept of the *Art of Life* suggests that the utility principle is the “theory of intrinsic good” instead of the “criterion of (moral) rightness” or “decision procedure”.

The revisionist reasoning here is somewhat odd: the happiness is the sole Good (those are Mill’s words), but we should *not* try to maximise it directly. Of course, Mill does think that sometimes we can, by directly seeking maximal happiness, cause much more damage than “good” consequences. However, this remark does not mean that the technical term “utility” is not semantically connected with the maximizing of the good. Mill’s “canonical passages” suggest that the “maximizing” interpretation has sound grounds in original Mill’s text.

In the *Companion*, Henry West’s analysis of the so-called “proof” of the principle of utility (chapter 4 of *Utilitarianism*) is truly clear and scholarly valuable. Since 1870 to the present-day, Mill has regularly been accused of the “fallacy of equivocation” and other errors in the “proof” (cf. John Grote, *An Examination of the Utilitarian Philosophy*, Deighton Bell, Cambridge 1870). The accusation is that Mill confuses the *actually desired* (descriptive phrase) with the ideally *desirable* (normative expression). Another common charge is the “fallacy of composition”. Also, Mill supposedly uses the word “all” distributively in one place and collectively in another. Finally, the most famous accusation comes from G. E. Moore. In *Principia Ethica*, he accuses Mill of the *naturalistic fallacy* (George Edward Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1903, §12; §43–45). Such criticisms have led to a standard view that the proof offered in Chapter 4 of *Utilitarianism* is wrong.

In the *Companion*, Henry West, not for the first time, claims that Mill’s argument in chapter 4 of *Utilitarianism* is convincing (cf. Henry R. West, “Mill’s ‘Proof’ of the Principle of Utility”, in: Harlan B. Miller, William Hatton Williams (eds.), *The Limits of Utilitarianism*, University of Minnesota Press, Min-

neapolis 1982). West argues that the aim of Mill's proof aims only for the conclusion that happiness is desirable and, indeed, the only desirable end. His analysis is also based on Mill's *System of Logic*, but has nothing to do with the rather vague idea of the *Art of Life*. Instead, West uses the distinction between factual and normative propositions, which in Mill's *Logic* is explicit. He concludes that Mill has never claimed that "desirable" or "good" is actually "desired", for he does not regard what is desirable as a matter of fact. It seems that his critics too often forget that Mill is an empiricist. As West rightly points out:

"The significance of the analogy that he is making between 'visible' and 'desirable' is announced in the first paragraph of the chapter: The first premises of our knowledge do not admit of proof by reasoning, but are subject to a direct appeal to the senses; the first premises of conduct are subject to a direct appeal to our desiring faculty (*Utilitarianism*, 10.234). The analogy is that as judgments of matters of facts such as visibility are based on the evidence of the senses and corrected by further evidence of the senses, so judgments of what is desirable are based on what is desired and corrected by further evidence of what is desired." ("The Proof", C: 333.)

The *Companion* is a valuable resource and contribution to scholars interested in the philosophy of John Stuart Mill. The editors have gathered some of the most notable authorities on Mill and have created a great source of information on the most crucial issues of Mill's philosophy. However, the scope of this companion goes even further. It examines sometimes neglected aspects of Mill's life, significant events, and certain people that had contributed to the formation of his thought. Although it is essential to differentiate between the author's biographical details and his theoretical framework, it is enthralling for the reader to get familiar with a somewhat intimate aspect of one's life. Having this in mind, some parts of this *Companion* can be used as an exciting read for non-philosophers. Regarding other parts, the *Companion* is a demanding read – both for its volume and its approach. Despite that fact, it is a valuable contribution and extension of various interpretations of Mill's thought, not only around "moral sciences". Of course, this is not a material for beginners. The volume demands pretty extensive knowledge of Mill's philosophy.

To the prospective reader, we could suggest a piecemeal approach. It is almost impossible to comprise the whole *Companion* at once. For professionals, selective reading should be helpful. For example, there is no need to burden an absorption of Mill's theoretical or moral philosophy with numerous details on his life.

Maybe the most significant value of the *Companion* is in its open call for debate. Its evident "revisionism" is almost tangibly meant to provoke. Beyond any doubt, many articles from the *Companion* will be subject of philosophical discussion for a very long time.

Nenad Cekić

**Марија Тодоровска**  
**[Marija Todorovska]**

**Неискажливата природа на божественото**  
**[The Ineffable Nature of the Divine]**

Филозофски факултет,  
Универзитет "Св. Кирил и  
Методиј" во Скопје, Скопје  
2020 [Faculty of Philosophy, Ss.  
Cyril and Methodius University of  
Skopje, Skopje 2020]

The *Ineffable Nature of the Divine* which deals with *via negativa*, or *negative theology*, gives an important philosophical and historical account on the genesis of the apophatic idea that God's nature cannot in any way be known, or communicated to beings. The peculiar nature of negative theology is most obvious in the fact that those who have dealt with this particular way of thinking have coined many complicated and multi-layered metaphysical systems in order to express the ineffable nature of the Divine, or God's essence. This in its own right makes the subject of *via negativa* all the more obscure and susceptible to certain logical inconsistency, as Marija Todorovska posits in the preface of this book, for we must express the "inexpressible" using words. As she notes, when we use many words to express something ineffable, we are negating the negation of the expressibility – that is – we claim that God's essence is inexpressible by "expressing" its inexpressibility. This clearly makes for a very delicate logical position in the philosophical systems of many authors who wrote on this subject.

Furthermore, it is claimed that God's essence is unknowable, but if that is the case, then