'If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.'

John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*

‘*Why Read Mill Today?* is a philosophical gem. John Skorupski answers the question of his title briefly, clearly, and persuasively. More remarkably still, he answers it in a way that illuminates Mill for the reader who has never read him, and yet should interest scholars who know Mill well.’

*Peter Singer, Princeton University*

‘John Skorupski brilliantly describes Mill’s place in the great sweep of ideas from the nineteenth century until the present day, leaving the reader in no doubt as to Mill’s continuing huge significance. This is an engaging, accessible, and exciting book, which anyone seriously interested in ethics, politics, and the history of ideas should read.’

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*David Brink, University of California, San Diego*
Why Read Mill Today?

John Stuart Mill is one of the greatest thinkers of the nineteenth century. But does he have anything to teach us today? His deep concern for freedom of the individual is thought by some to be outdated and inadequate to the cultural and religious complexities of life in the twenty-first century.

In this succinct and shrewd book, John Skorupski argues that Mill is a profound and inspiring social and political thinker from whom we still have much to learn. He reflects on Mill’s central arguments in his most famous works, including Utilitarianism and On Liberty, and traces their implications for democratic politics. With the use of topical and controversial examples, including privacy, religious intolerance, and freedom of speech, he makes Mill’s concerns our own at a time when what liberalism means, and why it matters, is once again in dispute.

He concludes that Mill’s place in the pantheon of ‘great thinkers’ rests not only on his specific political and social doctrines, but above all on his steadfastly generous and liberal vision of human beings, their relations to one another, and what makes life worth living.

Why Read Mill Today?

John Skorupski
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CHRONOLOGY OF MILL’S LIFE


1815–18 Mill family spends summers in Ford Abbey, Devon, a country house leased by Bentham.

1820–21 John visits France, staying with the family of Sir Samuel Bentham (Jeremy Bentham’s brother).

1823 Enters as a clerk at India House (headquarters of the East India Company).

1824 Arrest and detention for distributing birth control literature.

1826–27 ‘Mental crisis’.

1829 James Mill, Analysis of the Phenomena of the Human Mind (edited by John, with the addition of substantial notes, in 1867–69).

1830 Goes to Paris after the 1830 Revolution. Meets Harriet Taylor, wife of John Taylor: ‘commencement of the most valuable friendship of my life’.

1831 Visits Wordsworth and Southey in the Lake District. Meets and forms friendship with Thomas Carlyle.

1832 Bentham dies.

1835 ‘De Tocqueville on Democracy in America’ (I).

1836 James Mill dies.

1838 ‘Bentham’.

1840 ‘Coleridge’.

‘De Tocqueville on Democracy in America’ (II).