

### **J. F. Stephen's on fraternity**

In his book "Liberty, equality, fraternity", J. F. S. has strongly criticized some ideas of Mill about the last and final *sanction* of political morality: what Stephen (but not Mill) calls "fraternity", and what would ultimately consist in "the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures".

The point of the critic of Stephen is that Mill's idea of natural feeling for oneself and one's friends gradually developing into a sublimated and general love for the human race, is fundamentally wrong and leads to a perverted interpretation of utilitarianism. Stephen defends a "common" version of utilitarianism against the "transcendental" interpretation that he attributes to Mill. While in this interpretation (the "transcendental" one), love to humanity (or, in other words, fraternity) should be the fundamental moral motivation, the common interpretation (inspired by Hobbes and Hume, and decanted in Bentham), rests in the denial of any moral monism and the statement that, while obviously right can only mean the tendency of an action to produce happiness, the question for *the* general reason to behave rightly could very well be empty: the reasons why different persons should act or refrain from acting are different and nevertheless many of them are acceptable from a moral point of view.

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