

Bentham and Mill on Art and 'Social Science'

From the vantage point of today's social sciences, J.S. Mill's work represents a significant advance over that of Bentham. Mill's *A System of Logic*, after all, concludes with a sophisticated discussion of the "moral sciences" in which twenty-first century researchers—especially those of a positivist persuasion—can find, with only modest differences, many of their own methodological preoccupations and strictures. Such researchers would be disappointed, by contrast, in Bentham's relative lack of concern with method, and with his insistence that science be subservient to art. My paper reverses this assessment of Mill and Bentham with a comparison that reads Mill's "Logic of the Moral Sciences" from a Benthamic point of view. Bentham and Mill are both centrally concerned with the art and science of government, broadly understood (consider Mill's final chapter on "the logic of practice, or art; including morality and policy"). But in the development of Millian science the art of government is transformed. Science comes to dominate art, grounding the rules of the latter in the discovered "laws" of its object (a serious and consequential misnomer, according to Bentham, as these laws are authorless). The primary political-theoretical consequence of Mill's "advance" over Bentham is the conversion of utilitarianism into a biopolitics: into an art that compromises Bentham's Radicalism by converting its vigilant subjects into a population, into an object of scientific management by potentially ungoverned governors.

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