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Title: J.S. Mill's views on historiography: historical fragments from some neglected essays

1. Introduction

Although at several points in his writings Mill seems to be concerned with the how historical knowledge is developed, his thoughts on this issue were neither systematised nor explicitly presented. Mill's views are partially elaborated in his review of Michelet's *History of France* published in the *Edinburgh Review* on January 1844, and *et passim* in other essays. In discussing Michelet's historical essay, Mill provides a brief but illustrative sketch of how historical knowledge is developed. This sketch is ontologically related to his Comtean idealism according to which scientific thought is subject to perpetual intellectual transformations. Mill believes that historical science and thought is changing thus "always becoming more possible; not solely because it is better studied but because, in every generation, it becomes better adapted for study" (A System of Logic, Book VI, c. xi, § 616).

2. Mill's tripartite approach

According to this fact, we may observe three distinct periods in historical writing. The first stage is characterised by the mere translation of historical sources and is superficial in its epistemology. According to Mill, the historians of this stage:

> [T]ransport present feelings and notions back into the past, and refer all ages and forms of human life to the standard of that in which the writer himself lives. Whatever cannot be translated into the language of their own time, whatever they cannot represent to themselves by some fancied modern equivalent, is nothing to them, calls up no ideas in their minds at all. *They cannot imagine anything different from their own everyday experience. They assume that words mean the same thing to a monkish chronicler as to a modern member of parliament* (EFHH, Michelet's History of France: 223, emphasis added).

Mill criticises this state of historical thought for its crude historical generalisations which are ontologically seated on the contemporaneous beliefs and creeds of the historian. For Mill, the historians of this stage are "near sighted people who can see nothing beyond their own age" (NW, The Spirit of the Age IV: 292). The historians of this camp could not perceive the differences between different historical periods and as such they tended to severely criticise the past (Kawana 2009: 116). According to Mill, their historical analysis is not historically specific as they are prone to crude and a-historical generalisations and "imagine their ancestors to be very like their next neighbours" (EFHH, Michelet's History of France: 223). More specifically, in Mill's own *verba*, if the historians of this phase,

> find the term *rex* applied to Clovis or Clotaire, they already talk of the 'French monarchy' or the 'kingdom of France'. If among a tribe of savages newly escaped from the woods, they find mention of a council of leading men, or an assembled multitude giving its sanction to some matter of general concernment […] *In this manner they antedate not only modern ideas, but the essential characters of the modern mind* (p. 223, emphasis added).

The typical representative of this primitive stage of historical inquiry is Pierre Henri Larcher who is characterised by Mill as the mere 'translator of Herodotus'. Indeed, Larcher could not be further apart from Mill's historiographical views, as his descriptive epistemology moved against Voltaire's *Philosophie de l' historie* (1765), an author characterised by Mill as a great name in historical literature (EPS, De Tocqueville on Democracy in America: 155).

On the other hand, the second stage of historical thought "attempts to regard former ages not with the eye of a modern, but, as far as possible, with that of a 'contemporary'; to realise a true and living picture of the past time, clothed in its circumstances and peculiarities" (EFHH, Michelet's History of France: 224). This stage of historical inquiry is termed by Mill as strictly 'moral and biographic' and is tightly associated with the minutiae gleaning of factual data. For Mill, it

> represents to us the characters and lives of human beings, and calls on us, according to their deservings or to their fortunes, for our sympathy, our admiration, or our censure (EFHH, Alison's History of the French Revolution: 118).

The typical representatives of this stage attempt to see the past as an inextricable whole. For doing so, what was required "was an ability to imagine what was unknown to the present, an ability that poets usually possessed" (Kawana 2009: 116-117). Mill himself recognises the stiffness of the project and observes that the historian of this phase has the epistemological difficulty of turning an individual fact, which some monument hands down or some chronicler testifies, into a general historical proposition, or, in other words, of converting it into its abstract form, as Comte observes. It follows naturally that this epistemological shortcoming is the *prima causa* of the fact that this stage is tightly associated with the exhaustive filtration of historical evidence. In effect, the absence of theory gives way to thorough narration and description. According to Mill, this absence is the true lacuna of the second type of historical inquiry which is subsequently known as narrative history. Mill notes that this stage of historical scholarship produced works of great reputation, like Carlyle's *French Revolution* or Niebuhr's *The History of Rome*, but is not associated with an explicit philosophy of history or a cause and effect relationship in Thucydidean terms. Mill praises Carlyle's *magnum opus* but notes that Carlyle was too light in theoretical reasoning: "Without a hypothesis to commence with, we do not even know what end to begin at, what points to enquire into" (EFHH, Carlyle's French Revolution: 163). However, apart from its monumental intellectual products, this stage is also connected with historiographical figures which were far from being 'scientific'. For instance, in reviewing Alison's *History of the French Revolution* (1833), he notes with his usual virulence that he would offer: "a few pages on a stupid book lately published by a man named Alison, and pretending to be a history of the French Revolution" (Cairns 1985: xlviii).

On the other hand, the third stage of historical thought has as its aim "not simply to compose histories, but to construct a science of history" (EFHH, Michelet's History of France: 225). Mill observes that this mode of historical thinking is connected with the 'Thucydidean' cause and effect relationship and is philosophically grounded on the ontological motif of 'the continuity of history'. The higher stage of historical thought is characterised as the 'scientific' stage of historical scholarship as it is largely disassociated from the first stage of historical inquiry, of judging past events by the standards of the present (p. 222). However, the third stage of historical inquiry is not absolutely independent from the second, as it reproduces many of its

epistemological motifs. However, what differentiates it is its explicit philosophy of history. For Mill, it is in this stage of historical scholarship in which:

> the whole of the events which have befallen the human race, and the states through which it has passed, are regarded as a series of phenomena, produced by causes, and susceptible of explanation. *All history is conceived as a progressive chain of causes and effects*; or (by an apter metaphor) as a gradually unfolding web, in which every fresh part that comes to view is a prolongation of the part previously unrolled, whether we can trace the separate threads from the one into the other, or not (p. 225, emphasis added).

Substantially, the aforementioned interesting historiographical tripartition resembles Comte's classification of scientific thought, according to which every subject of intellectual (scientific) inquiry is developed through three successive stages: the theological, the metaphysical and the positive. For Mill, the first stage of historical inquiry, which is connected with the treatment of historical events through modern and familiar to the historian, is compatible with the theological mode of thought.[1] The second, the more narrative one, is associated with the metaphysical form of thinking, while the third is explicitly connected with a pre-positive way of historical theorising.

Ipso facto, Mill's analysis is methodologically consistent with the Comtean ontology since he has the firm belief that the final stage of historical thought is the *sum summarum* of all previous stages. Evidently therefore, the theoretical history *per se*, is partially grounded on narrative conclusions and premises. For instance, Michelet, who is perceived as an early figure of the third mode of historical thought, is highly influenced by Niebuhr who represents the heyday of the metaphysical stage of historical inquiry. According to Mill's narration, Michelet "availed himself largely, as all writers on Roman history now do, of the new views opened by the profound sagacity of Niebuhr" (p. 232). However, Michelet did not make frequent incursions to the 'third stage of historical thought' but remained hesitant about rejecting the subjective character of the second stage, and as his purposes "became increasingly nationalist, his views narrowed, his mystic sense of himself embodying the past

[1] It has to be remembered that Mill preferred the term 'Volitional or Personal' instead of the term Theological in order to illustrate the importance of personal views in this primitive stage of thought (Auguste Comte and Positivism, Part I: 10).

dithyrambic" (Cairns 1985: lxxi).[2] Guizot is regarded by Mill as the true founder of the third stage and is named as the great historian of the age or "the one best adapted to this country" (EFHH, Guizot's Essays and Lectures on History: 227). For instance, Mill regards Guizot's analysis of modern European history "as among the best attempts to discern laws of historical causation" (Marwah 2011: 360).[3]

In reality, in Mill's historiographical approach, the difference between Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788) and Guizot's *Essays on the History of France* (1828-1830) illustrates the transition from the metaphysical to the positive mode of historical thinking. For him, their different assessment of the 'fall of the Roman Empire' is illustrative of this intellectual passage. In Mill's own words:

> The difference between what we learn from Gibbon on this subject, and what we learn from Guizot, is a measure of the progress of historical inquiry in the intervening period […] It is not in the chronicles, but in the laws, that M. Guizot finds the clue to the immediate agency in the 'decline and fall' of the Roman empire. In the legislation of the period M. Guizot discovers, under the name of curiales, the middle class of the Empire, and the recorded evidences of its progressive annihilation (p. 264).

Essentially therefore, the historian has to possess a *holistic* view of things in order to perceive the inner meaning of historical facts.[4] This view is compatible with the Comtean belief that in the study of history "we must proceed from the *ensemble* to the details, and not conversely" (p. 228). This process is connected with the third stage of historical inquiry. For instance, Mill praises Guizot for not remaining in the second stage of historical inquiry and for making frequent and long incursions into the third by proceeding into generalizations from factual data. He notes that Guizot:

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[2] After his 1844 review of Michelet, Mill "wrote nothing further of Michelet" and on the later volumes of his "*Histoire de France* he made no comment, and of the *Histoire de la revolution francaise*, written 1846-1853, he said nothing" (Cairns 1985: lxxi). According to Cairns "By then, Michelet had left 'the second stage' for some subjective realm of history outside Mill's scheme of things" (p. lxxi).

[3] Though Guizot is regarded by Mill as the truest representative of the early phase of the positive stage, Michelet's name appears three times in his *Principles*. For instance, he calls the reader of his *Politica*l *Economy* to read the graphic description by Michelet of the feelings of a peasant proprietor toward his land (Principles, Book II, c. vii, § 1: 284) and he cites Michelet's *Le Peuple* (1846) to illustrate the agricultural conditions during the era of Louis XII (Principles, Book II, c. vii, § 5: 300).

[4] Mill accepts the necessity of a holistic view of historical circumstances. It has to be kept in mind that he had frequently praised Michelet, who was the historian of 'universal history' through his celebrated *Introduction à la histoire universalle* (1831).

> not only inquires what our ancestors were, but what made them so; what gave rise to the peculiar state of society of the middle ages, and by what causes this state was progressively transformed into what we see around us […] *He has a real talent for the explanation and generalisation of historical facts*. He unfolds at least the proximate causes of social phenomena, with rare discernment, and much knowledge of human nature (p. 228-229, emphasis added).

Mill notes that Guizot incorporates historical facts from French circumstances and subsequently typifies cause and effect relations:

> The social conditions and changes which he delineates were not French, but European. The intellectual progress which he traces, was the progress of the European mind (p. 231).

Mill also points out that Guizot is cautious of universal historical generalisations and praises him for attempting to derive historical laws as empirical ones. According to Mill, Guizot:

> seeks, not the ultimate, but the proximate causes of the facts of modern history: he inquires in what manner each successive condition of modern Europe grew out of that which next preceded it; and how modern society altogether, and the modern mind, shaped themselves from the elements which had been transmitted to them from the ancient world. To have done this with any degree of success, is not trifling achievement (EFHH, Guizot's Essays and Lectures on History: 262).

Mill observes that the same methodological attitude is followed by Guizot's pupil, Michelet, whose first volume of his *History of France*, accorded to him an eminent place in the historical discipline. He notes that Michelet was concerned with the consciousness of the collective mind:

> the everyday plebeian mind of humanity-its enthusiasms, its collapses, its strivings, its strivings, its attainments and failures […] The great value of the book is, that it does, to some extent, make us understand what was really passing in the collective mind of each generation (p. 231-232, 233).

According to Mill, Michelet is sketching out the 'State of Society' of Middle Ages by showing the varieties of spatial peculiarities, character, culture and races in different medieval societies.[5] Michelet, by anatomising and distilling the Spirit of Middle Ages, illustrates the differences among seemingly similar medieval regimes:

> For, in assuming distinctness, the life of the past assumes also variety under M. Michelet's hands. With him, each period has a physiognomy and a character of its own. It is in reading him that we are made to feel distinctly, how many successive conditions of humanity, and states of human mind, are habitually confounded under the appellation of the Middle Ages. To common perception, those times are like a distant range of mountains, all melted together into one cloudlike barrier. To M. Michelet, they are like the same range on a nearer approach, resolved into its separate mountain masses, with slopping sides overlapping one another, and gorges opening between them (p. 233).

Additionally, Michelet's methodology is of assistance to him in order to illustrate even the slight differences in transition periods. He notes that Michelet:

> has not only understood […] the character of the age of transition, in which the various races, conquered and conquering, were mixed on French soil without being blended; but he has endeavoured to assign to the several elements of that confused mixture, the share of influence which belongs to them over the subsequent destinies of his country (p. 234-235).

Summarising according to Mill, Thierry, Guizot, and Michelet, the early representatives of the third stage of historical inquiry, despite being "the three great historical minds of France" (EFHH, Michelet's History of France: 221), erred in many of their views as they elaborated a historical analysis that is frequently rapidly composed and offhand. Mill believes that their analytical shortcomings are the natural crystallisation of being the early heralds of the third stage of historical inquiry. According to Mill's historiographical analysis, they were the intellectual products of the critical period between the 'metaphysical' and the positive stage of historical

[5] Mill's ethological concern impels him to regard differences in race as decisive for historical understanding. He notes that "of the great influence of Race in the production of national character, no reasonable inquirer can now doubt" (EFHH, Michelet's History of France: 235).

thought. More specifically, he openly acknowledges the usefulness of the French school of historians but he sees it as based on a fundamental (epistemic) misconception which supposes:

> That the order of succession which we may be able to trace among the different states of society and civilisation which history presents to us, even if that order were more rigidly uniform than it has yet been proved to be, could ever amount to a law of nature. It can only be an empirical law (A System of Logic, Book VI, c. x, § 4: 597).

According to Mill, the French school of historians did not provide an integral linkage between 'philosophical' and 'critical' history, which is the distinctive feature of the third stage of historical inquiry, but remained largely confined, like the Scottish Historical school, to philosophical historicising. *Ipso facto,* he characterises Guizot, the most charismatic of them, as the Kepler and more of historical scholarship, "a subject which had not yet had its Newton" (p. 228).[6] Cairns (1985: lxxvi) rightly notes that, for Mill, "Guizot saw himself engaged in the task of philosophical history, investigating not its 'anatomy', or its 'physiognomy', but its 'physiology'".

3. The Millian choice

Evidently, Mill, despite describing all stages, is tightly associated with the third stage of historical inquiry as his political philosophy and his economic analysis are animated by the epistemic features of this state of historical thought. Truly, Mill's interest in history was, especially after 1826, drawn away from narrative history and "shifted steadily toward the philosophy of history and discovery of the laws governing

[6] Mill criticises Guizot's explanation of why European feudalism declined. According to Mill, Guizot's analytical deficiencies deterred him from ascertaining the causal laws which governed the decay of feudalism. Mill scourges Guizot for his claim that feudalism declined due to its own contradictions. For Mill, such an explanation "is an easy solution which accounts for the destruction of institutions from their own defects" (EFHH, Guizot's Essays and Lectures on History: 288). Mill proposes a theory of the decline of feudalism by noting that "experience proves, that it forms of government and social arrangements do not fall, merely because they deserve to fall" (p. 288). For Mill, feudalism declined due to its inability to promote human development. He is explicit in his view that feudal restrictions were decisive for the improvement of human mankind but had its limitations. As he puts it: "the fall of the system was not really owing to its vices, but to its good qualities- to the improvement which had been found possible under it, and by which mankind had become desirous of obtaining, and capable of realizing, a better form of society than it afforded […] the feudal system, with all its deficiencies, was sufficiently a government, contained within itself a sufficient mixture of authority and liberty, afforded sufficient protection to industry, and encouragement and scope to the development of the human faculties, to enable the natural causes of social improvement to resume their course" (p. 289).

human progress" (Cairns 1985: xxvii).[7] His primal concern after the 1830s was that history ought to formulate 'scientific' cause and effect relationships based on critically delineated facts. According to Mill's attitude towards social reform, the historian, whatever his historical subject is, must be a *philosopher* able to render historical evidence useful in deducing principles and applying them to present circumstances (EFHH, Scott's Life of Napoleon: 56). He notes that history, as a typical scientific inquiry, exhibits,

> the general laws of the moral universe acting in circumstances of complexity, *and enables us to trace the connexion between great effects and their causes* (EFHH, Alison's History of the French Revolution: 117-118, emphasis added).

The consistency between Mill's method and his philosophy of history is more than apparent. In his own terminology:

> To find on what principles, derived from the nature of man and the laws of the outward world, each state of society and of the human mind produced that which came after it; and whether there can be traced any order of production sufficiently definite, to show what future states of society may be expected to emanate from the circumstances which exist at present (EFHH, Michelet's History of France: 225).

More specifically, Mill, in his more mature writings, like his posthumously published text *Chapters of Socialism* (1879), extends the horizon of his historical thought. He develops a proto-annalist historical view which resembles Braudel's approach to historical transformation, while at the same time he elaborates an ontological view which was later crystallised in the famous concept of *longue durée*. Mill believes that the understanding of historical changes depends on the apprehension of deeper structural transitions and not on the simplistic narration of historical circumstances as the practitioners of the a-theoretical second stage proposed. He criticises, as Annalistes later also, '*histoire evenementielle*' and observes that:

[7] According to Mill, the English historiography is still far from the third stage of historical thinking. However, he notes that some of its representatives are connected with it. He cites as a typical example George Grote, author of the *History of Greece* (1846-1856) whom he calls as 'the great historian of Greece' (Considerations, c. iii: 411).

> *Sudden effects in history are generally superficial*. Causes which go deep into the roots of future events produce the most serious parts of their effect only slowly, and have, therefore, time to become a part of the familiar order of things before general attention is called to the changes they are producing (EES, Chapters on Socialism: 707, emphasis added).[8]

Naturally therefore, Mill believes that the British historiography was as narrative as descriptive since it was imprisoned in the premises of 'narrative historiographical paradigm'. He criticises it as being confined to crude empiricism and unscientific surmise and observes that in England "history cannot yet be said to be at all cultivated as a science" (A System of Logic, Book VI, c. x, § 3: 598). Mill anticipates Hobsbawm's aphorism that although scientific reasoning *per se* was fired up in the mid-nineteenth century Britain, historical inquiry remained surprisingly underdeveloped. Mill believes that as China is imprisoned in the farming stage of economic development, so historical scholarship in Britain is on the peg of the metaphysical mode of historical thought. His lengthy comment is historiographically worth citing in full:

> But the interest which historical studies in this country inspire, is not as yet of scientific character. *History with us has not passed that stage in which its cultivation is an affair of mere literature or of erudition, not of science*. It is studied for the facts, not for the explanation of facts. It excites an imaginative, or a biographical, or an antiquarian, but not a philosophical interest. Historical facts are hardly yet felt to be, like other natural phenomena, amenable to scientific laws […] And hence we remain in contented ignorance of the best writings which the nations of the Continent have in our time produced; because we have no faith in, and no curiosity about, the kind of speculations to which the philosophic minds of those nations have lately devoted themselves; even when distinguished, as in the case before us, by a sobriety and a judicious reserve, borrowed from the safer and most cautious school of inductive inquirers (EFHH, Guizot's Essays and Lectures on History: 260, emphasis added).

[8] For similarities, see Braudel (1987: 20).

For Mill, England seems to be the last nation to enter into the general European movement "for the construction of a Philosophy of History" (A System of Logic, Book VI, c. x, § 8: 606). According to him, in England any pretension of general law in history "was almost a novelty" and "the prevailing habits of thought on historical subjects were the very reverse of a preparation for" a philosophy of history (A System of Logic, Book VI, c. xi, § 1: 607). In his 1844 review of Michelet's *History of France* he is more than virulent:

> It has of late been a frequent remark among Continental thinkers, that the tendencies of the age set strongly in the direction of historical inquiry, and that history is destined to assume a new aspect from the genius and labours of the minds now devoted to its improvement. The anticipation must appear at least premature to an observer in England, confining his observation to his own country. Whatever may be the merits, in some subordinate respects, of such histories as the last twenty years have produced among us, they are in general distinguished by no essential character from the historical writings of the last century. No signs of a new school have been manifested in them (EFHH, Michelet's History of France: 219).

Furthermore, he criticises sub-disciplines of historical scholarship and notes that the history of towns, for example, is limited to histories of buildings and not of men (EFHH, Modern French Historical Works: 18). Mill's critique is based on an ethologically elaborated epistemological context. He notes that 'scientific history', contrary to 'narrative history', has to assess "how men were governed and how they lived and behaved" (p. 18). Mill believes that history has to investigate the deeper causes of historical phenomena and glean out their effects. For him, the British (narrative) historiography by drawing away from the epistemic premises of the Scottish Historical school had limited its analytical depth. On the contrary, Mill although associated with the intellectual tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment, is fiercely critical of its highly abstract character. For instance, he notes that Hume and Robertson, the true historians of the Scottish Historical school, were great writers and produced works of extraordinary talent, but their essays do not represent scientific history *par excellence*, but 'mere shadows and dim abstractions' (EFHH, Carlyle's

French Revolution: 134).[9] He characterises them as comprising the 'Old School of Historians' which treats events "as matters insulated and abstract" (EFHH, Guizot's Essays and Lectures on History: 290).[10] Mill directs the same criticism to Edward Gibbon who, although recognised as a celebrated historian, is criticised as not being concerned with human life (p. 136). According to Mill, Hume and Gibbon presented men not as real (historical) 'human beings' but as 'stuffed figures' who are not living in their historical time. For Mill, the historian has to investigate historical causations (concerning human nature) which have to be based on critically assessed historical evidence. According to the Millian philosophy of history, the historian has to sketch his men as real historical figures and not as ideal types *in abstractum*.[11] In Hegelian fashion, Mill believes that the historian has to delineate human characters as the historical embodiment of the general spirit of a particular period.

According to Mill, it was otherwise with the French literature and historical scholarship. He notes in 1826 that French "are at present making a much greater figure in the world of literature than ourselves" (EFHH, Modern French Historical Works: 17).[12] Specifically for history, he held the firm belief that the renovation of

[9] Hallem (cited in Coleman 1987: 19) illustrates Mill's view by noting that the work of Scottish scholars "however pleasing from its liberal spirit, displays a fault too common among the philosophers of his country, that of theorizing upon an imperfect induction, and very often upon a total misapprehension of particular facts". However, it must be noted that Mill had read avidly Robertson's work as a child and reproduces a variety of his epistemic motifs in his works. For instance, Mill's view, that the aversion of innovation is 'an unfailing feature of popular assemblies' is explicitly illustrated in Robertson's *The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V* (1769). Essentially, Mill's criticism was centred on Hume: "Take, for example, Hume's history; certainly, in its own way, one of the most skilful specimens of narrative in modern literature, and with some pretensions also to philosophy. Does Hume throw his own mind into the mind of an Anglo-Saxon, or an Anglo-Norman? Does any reader feel, after having read Hume's history that he can now picture to himself what human life was, among the Anglo-Saxons? How an Anglo-Saxon would have acted in any supposable case? What were his joys, his sorrows, his hopes and fears, his ideas and opinions on any of the great and small matters of human interest?" (EFHH, Carlyle's French Revolution: 135).

[10] Evidently, there are affinities between Mill's views on history and those of the philosophical historians of the Scottish Enlightenment. Mill became familiarised with them through his father's influence. As Kawana (2009: 109) observes, "this awareness led Mill to recognise the significance of his father's historical work, *History of British India*. Although he continued to regard James Mill's method of reasoning in politics as inadequate, in the mid-1840s he came to see James Mill as 'the last survivor of that great school' and as 'the philosophical historian of India'".

[11] *Ipso facto*, Mill praises Shakespeare for painting a world of realities since his leading characters are human faces "and not mere rudiments of such, or exaggerations of single features" (EFHH, Carlyle's French Revolution: 135).

[12] Mill explains his cynicism in blaming England's *belles lettres*. He notes that "While our *litterateurs*, with the usual fate of those who aim at nothing but the merely ornamental, fall of attaining even that; an entirely new class of writers has arisen in France, altogether free from the frivolousness which characterised French literature under the *ancien regime*, and which characterises the literature of every country where there is an aristocracy" (EFHH, Modern French Historical Works: 17).

historical studies is propelled by German and French historians.[13] However, he is ready to accept in 1844 that "both in historical speculations, and in the importance of her historical writings, France, in the present day, far surpasses Germany" (EFHH, Michelet's History of France: 220).[14] Mill regards French historiography as highly philosophical in its epistemic premises and believes that the French school of history, contrary to British 'narrativism', is at "the highest stage of historical investigation, in which the aim is not simply to compose histories, but to construct a science of history" (p. 225). Mill observes that French historians "have made more hopeful attempts than anyone else, and have more clearly pointed out the path; they are the real harbingers of the dawn of historical science" (p. 226). The path is leading to the closer association of theory and history. Mill points out that the true historian has not only to narrate but also to philosophise: to write history but also write about history (p. 221). For him, the *elite* of French historians are of such an attitude. He believes, as a typical historian of ideas, that the intellectual revolution which followed the French Revolution of 1789, was the most remarkable event in the history of historical scholarship. He notes, in his critical assessment of French historical scholarship, that French historians "have produced many historical works of great importance; more than were ever produced by one nation within the same space of time on" (EFHH, Modern French Historical Works: 18). Mill criticises his countrymen for not paying attention to French historical literature. His comment in the review of Tocqueville's *Democracy* is more than virulent:

> While modern history has been receiving a new aspect from the labours of men who are not only among the profound thinkers […] the clearest and most popular writers of their age, even those of their works which are expressly dedicated to the history of our own country remain mostly untranslated and in almost cases unread (EPS, De Tocqueville on Democracy in America: 155).

[13] Mill, already from his early essay on 'The Spirit of the Age', observes that by the term 'the historical school of politicians', "I mean the really profound and philosophic inquires into history in France and Germany, not the Plausibles, who in our land of shallowness and charlatanerie, babble about induction without having ever considered what it is" (NW, The Spirit of the Age III, Part I: 256).

[14] Mill notes, in a highly heretic fashion, that "France has done more for even English history than England has", since "The very first complete history of England, and to this day not wholly superseded by any other, was the production of a French emigrant, Rapin de Thoyras" (EFHH, Michelet's History of France: 221).

Mill praises the historical thought that was proposed by French historians. He reviewed its chief intellectual products, such as Mignet's *French Revolution* (in 1826), Michelet's *History of France* (in 1844) and Guizot's *Essays and Lectures on History* (in 1845) and "prided himself on his broad reading in the subject as forthrightly as he disapproved of his fellow countrymen who knew nothing of it" (Cairns 1985: xxxii). However, in his *A System of Logic*, although acknowledging "the great services which have been rendered to historical knowledge by this school" (A System of Logic, Book VI, c. x, § 3: 597), Mill was critical of its 'naturalistic' and deterministic views on history:

> I cannot but deem them to be mostly chargeable with a fundamental misconception of the true method of social philosophy. The misconception consists in supposing that the order of succession which we may be able to trace among the different states of society and civilisation which history presents to us, even if that order were more rigidly uniform that it has yet been proved to be, could ever amount to a law of nature […] The succession of states of human mind and of human society cannot have an independent law of its own (p. 597).

Mill's historiographical reviews are confined to French historical literature, which is regarded by him as the *prelude* of the positive mode of thought in historical scholarship. His efforts were directed towards the formation of a philosophy of history and in the search for a science of history. He believed that he was following the trends of positive stage of historical thought which were continentally universal. His comment in 1836 is more than optimistic:

> *The tendency, therefore, now manifesting itself on the continent of Europe, towards the philosophic study of past and of foreign civilisations, is one of the encouraging features of the present time*. It is a tendency not wholly imperceptible even in this country, the most insular of all the provinces of the republic of letters. In France and Germany it has become a characteristic of the national intellect (EPS, State of Society in America: 94, emphasis added).

Mill's historiographical sketch, beyond its interesting historiographical features, is a 'core' tenet of his subsequent views with regard to history and historical scholarship. In reality, Mill's scheme connects his Comtean views on history with his philosophy

of history and his theory of economic development. More specifically, his philosophy of history constitutes the 'atlas vertebra' of the epistemological backbone of his political and economic theory

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