AN INTRODUCTION TO MILL’S UTILITARIAN ETHICS

John Stuart Mill was the leading British philosopher of the nineteenth century, and his famous essay *Utilitarianism* is the most influential statement of the philosophy of utilitarianism: that actions, laws, policies, and institutions are to be evaluated by their utility or contribution to good or bad consequences.

Henry R. West has written the most up-to-date and user-friendly introduction to Mill’s utilitarianism available. This book serves as both a commentary to and interpretation of the text. It also defends Mill against his critics. The first chapter traces Mill’s life and philosophical background. The second chapter analyzes Mill’s arguments against alternative theories. Succeeding chapters address the theory of qualitative hedonism; the question of whether Mill was an act or rule utilitarian; the theories of sanctions and of the relation between justice and utility; and the “proof” of the principle of utility. An appendix reviews in detail the structure and arguments of *Utilitarianism*.

This book is primarily intended as a textbook for students in philosophy assigned to read *Utilitarianism*, but it should also prove helpful to students and professionals in other fields such as political science, history, and economics.

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HENRY R. WEST
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To Pat, my wife,
for love, support, and patience
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METHOD OF CITATION

All page references to the writings of Mill are to the *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, 33 volumes, John M. Robson, General Editor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963–91). There are many reprints of Mill’s more popular works; for easy reference to them I have included the book and/or chapter, section, or paragraph in parentheses or brackets even if the paragraph is not numbered in Mill’s text.