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REFERENCES

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- 1 Jeremy Bentham's aesthetic thought has been given very little attention by scholars. The reason lies in two statements made by John Stuart Mill, which have been widely circulated as the final construction of Bentham's utilitarian hedonism, especially in F.R. Leavis's reading.¹ In the first, Mill refers to the passage on push-pin and poetry, and has been understood as encapsulating Bentham's stand on literature:

Prejudice apart, the game of push-pin is of equal value with the arts and sciences of music and poetry. If the game of push-pin furnish more pleasure, it is more valuable than either. Everybody can play at push-pin: poetry and music are relished only by a few. (17)
- 2 In the second, Mill accused Bentham of disparaging "all poetry (as) misrepresentation" (47). Mill fully condemned Bentham's critique of taste, re-instating in the process a distinction between higher and lower pleasure, and claiming that it was "better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied".²
- 3 Thanks to the continued publication of the scientific edition of the *Collected Works*, the Bentham Project, under the guidance of its director, Philip Schofield, has been providing material for over more than half a century to rethink received interpretations of Bentham's thought. While the present volume of essays originates in the lecture series on Bentham and the Arts at University College London in 2018 where scholars from history, philosophy, psychology, literary studies and the arts were

convened, it feeds into the recent publication of volumes of Bentham in the *Collected Works* series, such as *On Sexual irregularities*³ and *Not Paul but Jesus*.⁴ The first substantial reassessment of the relationship between utilitarianism and the arts took shape in Malcolm Quinn's 2013 publication of *Utilitarianism and the Art School in Nineteenth-century Britain*.⁵ Lately, Anthony Julius's appointment as the first professor of law and the arts at UCL in 2017 has provided the decisive impetus to reconsider the way in which Bentham's utilitarianism was pitted against romanticism and literature. The resulting volume offers a fascinating read that takes our understanding of the "Bentham vs Coleridge" debate beyond the arguments on taste to embrace a wider discussion on the history and contemporary nature of art, literature and aesthetics.

- 4 *Bentham and the Arts* has 11 chapters which are divided into three parts: I. Philosophy and Sexuality; II. Intellectual History and Literature; III. Aesthetics, Taste and Art.
- 5 Philip Schofield's first chapter on "The epicurean universe of Jeremy Bentham: Taste, beauty and reality" looks at Bentham's thought in relation to its materialist ontology and provides historical context for the rest of the volume. Schofield traces Bentham's materialism back to his forced subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England catechism. This led Bentham to conceive of the physical world as the only realm which could be known, thus referring to the non-physical world as nonsense. Therefore, any stand on taste could not be a statement of fact, but a claim to political superiority. Schofield concludes: "there was no independent value of beauty to which the 'person of taste' could claim privileged access; all that taste reflected was the pleasure that one gained from a particular object or state of affairs. Once this was recognized, since no one person's pleasure was more important than that of another person's equal pleasure, no one person's 'taste' could be regarded as superior to that of any other person's" (40).
- 6 In chapter 2 entitled "Not Kant, but Bentham: On taste", Frances Ferguson describes the cultural environment shared by Kant and Bentham, where claims for the individual to be acknowledged as such were emerging. In that context, taste was a disinterested personal experience for Kant – thus making it possible to recognize the inherent beauty of an object –, whereas for Bentham, taste was to be understood in terms of pleasure and pain. Ferguson explores the implication of this distinction in attitudes to homosexuality, especially as they appear in Bentham's religious writings. This, she posits, has significant social consequences: "While Kant has made confidence in one's own (non-sexual) tastes central to aesthetic experience, and Bentham has argued that individuals can trust their own sexual tastes, Bentham asserts that priestly evangelism for asceticism has thrown individuals into self-doubt and, more importantly, suspicion of others" (65).
- 7 Chapter 3 expands on the question of sexuality, by comparing Bentham and Sigmund Freud's writings. In a piece entitled "'Envy accompanied with antipathy': Bentham on the psychology of sexual *ressentiment*", Stella Stanford explains that Bentham goes further than Freud in his account of sexual freedom, as he views it as a positive good. It is not homosexuality that needs justifying, but its rejection, that Bentham identifies as originating from the principles of asceticism. However, as Bentham's theory of motivation is grounded on desire for pleasure and aversion for pain, how can he account for the ascetic principle? Bentham identifies envy as the main motive. In so doing, Bentham foreshadows Nietzsche's "*ressentiment*" and Freud's unconscious. In the

process, Stanford shows that “Bentham’s conception of sexuality is surprisingly radical” (72).

- 8 Chapter 4 is a study of the context of taste in writings by French authors, and opens up Part II. Emmanuelle de Champs, in a paper entitled “Literature, morals and utility: Bentham, Dumont and de Staël”, looks at how in the 18th century morals was closely connected to taste, and how education was considered to improve taste in both. Bentham breaks with this account in promoting a radically individualistic experience of pleasure, thus undermining the consensus made possible by a common standard of taste in society. De Champs then looks at how Dumont reappropriated Bentham’s stand and how Madame de Staël distanced herself from Bentham’s rationalism and materialism, siding with Kant in advocating for a universal aesthetic sensitivity. And De Champs concludes: “utilitarian writers such as Helvétius, Bentham and Dumont each explored different ways in which utility and aesthetic sentiment could be articulated. Bentham’s position appears to be the most radical – a conclusion that a comparison in the following years with John Stuart Mill’s position seemed to confirm” (110).
- 9 Chapter 5 on “Jeremy Bentham’s imagination and the ethics of prose style: Paraphrase, substitution, translation”, Jan-Melissa Schramm looks into context of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century debates on translation. She posits that Bentham’s techniques of phraseoplerosis and paraphrasis – abstract terms being placed in propositions that were then translated into equivalent propositions that contained terms representing real (physical) objects – were an exact way of relating an element in the physical world with a given linguistic representation. However, literary critics rejected such a reductive approach to form and content. By drawing a connection between the techniques of substitution in language and that of representation and substitution in ethics and politics, Schramm shows what is at stake, beyond the linguistic controversies. Indeed, it is the value of individuals considered as a unit in the utilitarian calculus. As she writes: “the questions posed by the definition of individuality as that which cannot easily be substituted, paraphrased or translated, remain important to us in our quest for the reconciliation of fairness for all and personal fulfilment for each uniquely valuable human being” (136).
- 10 In Chapter 6, entitled “Is it true ? ... what is the meaning of it ? : Bentham, Romanticism and the fictions of reason”, Tim Milnes reassesses the relationship between Bentham’s utilitarianism and romanticism, originating in Mill’s Bentham vs Coleridge discussion. The dichotomy between the two opposite poles of thought in the 19th century had hitherto been appraised through Mill’s account, which set facts and truth against feelings and meanings. By studying the shift from an account of language as a product of social conventions in Hume to Bentham’s endeavor to ground figurative language into real entities that can be gauged in terms of pleasures and pains, Milnes shows how unsatisfactorily incorrect is Mill’s widely received binary judgment and how Bentham can be read as a proto-pragmatist, as “For Bentham, the literal and the figurative, the factual and the fictional, shade into each other” (156).
- 11 Chapter 7, Anthony Julius, in his paper entitled “More Bentham, less Mill”, explores how to shake oneself free of Mill’s reading of Bentham to offer a better defence of free speech, as “Mill’s attack on Bentham has blinded liberals to what is valuable in Bentham, in the matter of a liberal aesthetics, and in reasoned defences of literary free speech” (190-1). Julius contends that Mill’s aesthetic positions were “feeble” (161) and “hostile” (162). Furthermore, he points to the fact that the high/low pleasures

distinction opens the door to censorship. Julius then moves on to reinterpret Bentham's iconic comments on pushpin and poetry before drawing out commonalities between the Romantics – their commitment to pleasure and free speech, as well as to the unity of mind and body – and Bentham. In the process, Julius craves out a space for freedom of expression in the aesthetic field.

- 12 Part III starts with Chapter 8 entitled “Enlightenment unrefined: Bentham’s realism and the analysis of beauty”. In this paper, Malcolm Quinn discusses Bentham’s comments on William Hogarth’s famous series *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* (1751). Bentham praised the engravings not for their beauty, but for their expressiveness and didactic quality (94). Bentham’s analysis thus opens up the possibility to reconsider Hogarth’s aesthetics, contrasting the Hogarth as self-defined in his treatise on the *Analysis of Beauty* (1753), and the Hogarth as described by Bentham. Quinn concludes with “The distinction between the Addisonian and the Benthamite Hogarth that I have made in this chapter also shows us how we can begin to map out a conceptual distance between the role of art in affirming the social power of normative judgments on the beautiful, and a contrasting aim to define the social power of art by marking out its position in the world. Bentham does the latter when he defines Hogarth as an admirable artist who was also ‘one of the best of moralists’” (219).
- 13 Chapter 9 by Benjamin Bourcier is entitled “Jeremy Bentham’s principle of utility and taste: An alternative approach to aesthetics in two stages”. It looks into Bentham’s aesthetic non-interference as opposed to his attitude in the field of ethics where the deontologist aims to educate individuals to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. Indeed, “Bentham places the liberty of taste among the fundamental political liberties that all good government should guarantee”. However, this “liberty of taste is moderated by the educational role of the private deontologist” (227).
- 14 Chapter 10 is co-written by Fran Cottell and Marianne Mueller and entitled “From pain to pleasure: Panopticon dreams and Pentagon petal”. Their purpose is to explain the rationale behind the flower-shaped benches-cum-artwork set up on the site of the Millbank penitentiary in London. Bentham had purchased land at Millbank with the intention to have his panopticon prisons built. When his project definitively floundered in 1803, the land was then used as a building site for a different type of penitentiary from 1813 till 1892. The artwork follows the floorplan of the Millbank prison but at the scale of a panopticon. However, instead of modelling behavior as its namesakes did, it aims to foster social intercourse in an open-ended way, to make it a “a place of leisure rather than oppression” (268).
- 15 The final chapter in the volume deals with the Bentham’s auto-icon. In “Bentham’s image: the corpo-reality check”, Carolyn Shapiro reads Bentham’s mummified body in the auto-icon as the corporeal metaphor of his attempt to ground language and law in the physical entities of pleasures and pain. She writes: “Bentham’s language is infused with signifiers of the body. Although his fundamental measuring units of pleasure and pain may signify beyond literal bodies, both those terms do bear immediate bodily denotations” (276). In an ironical twist of fate, when Bentham’s philistine body was exhibited at “Like Life” at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, it was transformed into a work of art.
- 16 *Bentham and the Art* is a milestone in scholarship on utilitarianism and art history. It addresses the misconceptions surrounding Bentham’s aesthetic judgements, as circulated by JS Mill, to show its unsuspected fecundity. The volume achieves this aim

by a well-informed vision of Bentham's aesthetic thought as it relates to other branches of his theory (utility, sexuality, language, taste, auto-icon, panopticon, deontology, etc.). The book is not only made more enjoyable by the wide range of quality illustrations that come complement a robust discussion of Bentham's aesthetic thought, it most of all provides a revisionist and conclusive analysis of the field, and as such should be read by all.

NOTES

1. Mill, J.S., *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, intro. F.R. Leavis (London, Chatto & Windus, 1950).
 2. Mill, J.S., "Utilitarianism", 1861, in J.M. Robson, F.E.L. Priestley, and D.P. Dryer, *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill: Volume X* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press; London: Routledge, 1969), pp. 203–59 at 212.
 3. Bentham, Jeremy, *Of Sexual Irregularities, and Other Writings on Sexual Morality*, in *The Collected Works of Jeremy Bentham*, eds. Philip Schofield, Catherine Pease-Watkin, and Michael Quinn (Oxford, OUP, 2014). See also Bentham, Jeremy, *Selected Writings of Jeremy Bentham*, ed. S.G. Engelmann (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2011); and Louis Crompton, "Jeremy Bentham's Essay on Paederasty" in *Journal of Homosexuality*, III (1978), 383–405, and IV (1978), 91–107.
 4. Smith, Gamaliel [a.k.a. Bentham, Jeremy], *Not Paul, but Jesus* (London, 1823); and Bentham, Jeremy, *Not Paul, but Jesus* vol. III (Doctrine, the Bentham Project, London, UCL, 2013).
 5. Book reviewed in Bénédicte Coste, "Utilitarianism and the Art School, par Malcolm Quinn", *Revue d'études benthamiennes* [Online], 12 | 2013, Online since 15 January 2014, connection on 24 August 2020. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudes-benthamiennes/701>
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