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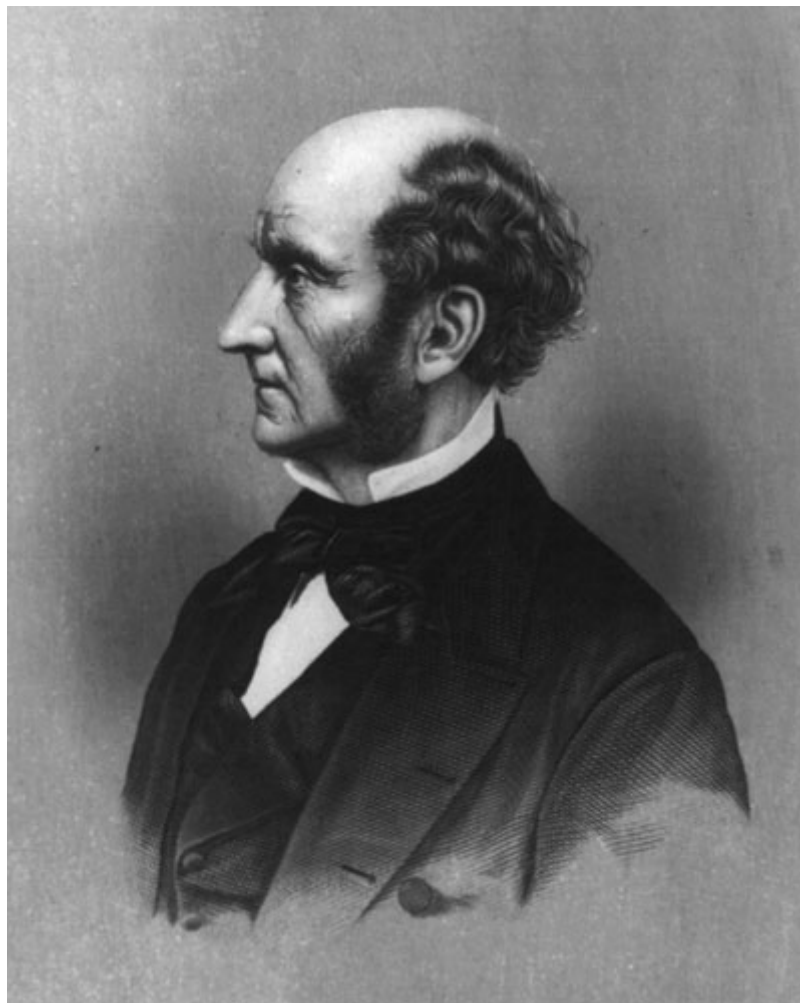
A SHORT GUIDE TO JOHN STUART MILL, HIS MAJOR WORKS, AND THEIR TRANSLATIONS INTO GERMAN

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ABSTRACT

This guide provides a short overview of John Stuart Mill's life, his writings with particular emphasis on his contributions to economics, and his legacy. The guide also includes a comprehensive list of translations of Mill's works into German, including web links to freely accessible digital versions, where available.





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1. INTRODUCTION

This guide aims at providing an introduction to John Stuart Mill's life and the background and main ideas of his seminal contributions to economics, politics and philosophy. It also contains an extensive overview of German translations of his major works, including bilingual editions for *On Liberty* and *Utilitarianism*. Section 2 of the guide will introduce the reader new to John Stuart Mill, or the history of economic thought in general, to the life and works of this great thinker. The section includes a short biography and also an overview of the diverse contributions Mill made throughout his life, as well as their legacy. All of this is backed with useful references to relevant web sources and especially secondary literature. However, none of these reference lists can be, and neither are they intended to be, complete. Nonetheless, the references listed in this guide should provide a good starting point for the interested reader. Following this overview, section 3 then lists plenty of German translations of Mill's work and also provides web references to online sources of these texts, where available, plus archive links on the [EE-T website](#), where you can find additional editorial and publisher information. Some exercises and a short test conclude the guide.

2. THE AUTHOR: JOHN STUART MILL

2.1. BIOGRAPHY

John Stuart Mill was born on May 20th 1806 in Pentonville, London, as the first of nine children to [James Mill](#), [utilitarian](#) philosopher and political economist, and good friend to both [Jeremy Bentham](#) and [David Ricardo](#), and his wife Harriet Murrow. John Stuart's childhood may be described as an "experiment": In his own words, Mill was raised a "reasoning machine". His father James had been convinced that he could raise his eldest son to a genius by rigid education. At the age of three, guided by his father, John Stuart had to learn Greek, and arithmetic, history, Latin, geometry and algebra soon followed. In each of these subjects, the young John Stuart had to regularly summarize, orally and in written text, what he had learned, and later teach his younger siblings. At the age of thirteen, John Stuart's lessons in political economy began, based on Ricardo's [Principles](#) (1817). John Stuart summarized what he had to learn – and the results of this exercise were then published under James Mill's name as the [Elements of Political Economy](#) (1821).

At the age of 17, following his father's suggestion, John Stuart joined the [East India Company](#), where he would work for 35 years. At the same time, he was also continuously active as a publishing author. Although from the outside, it may have looked as if John Stuart was the successful result of his father's strict education, he had to subsequently and increasingly cope with the feeling of inner emptiness, and began to doubt whether his high political and intellectual goals could truly satisfy him. Subsequently starting a process of emancipation from his father at this time, Mill ultimately had his most creative period after his father's death in 1836, when he wrote on logic, economics, political philosophy and ethics (see the next subsection).

Mill's private life from 1830 onwards was majorly affected by Harriet Taylor, the wife of a rich London merchant, and later, after the merchant's death, Mill's wife. To Mill, their relationship was the dearest experience he had, and he attributed many of the ideas expressed in his writings to her. This latter point, however, is doubtful with regard to many of Mill's writings – safe, of course, for the *Subjection of Women* and other political opinions of Mill's

In 1865, Mill became a delegate to the House of Commons. In this political office, he advocated women's suffrage and the abolishment of slavery. After he was not re-elected in 1868, Mill retreated to Avignon, where he returned to writing in publishing, until his death on May 7th 1873.

The most obvious source for a biography on John Stuart Mill is, of course, his [autobiography](#), which is part of the first volume of his *Collected Works*. Of course, there are also secondary sources available, but due to the excellent primary source available, only two English and two German references each will be named here. The [New Palgrave article](#) on Mill contains a short section on biography. With [John Stuart Mill. A biography](#), Nicholas Capaldi (2004) published a whole book. The German reader will find a short biography in the first section of Aßländer and Nutzinger's article (2008), and a longer one in Jürgen Gaulke's [John Stuart Mill](#) (1996).



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2.2. MAJOR WORKS AND MILL'S LEGACY

To get an impression of the vast amount of philosophical and scientific contributions Mill authored, just start with taking a look at the book titles in his 33-volume [Collected Works](#), which are available online for free at the [Online Library of Liberty](#). These collected works contain texts on political economy, philosophy, history, political theory, and also Mill's correspondence with many of the contemporary leading figures of his day, as well as Mill's newspaper articles and the speeches he gave as a member of the House of Commons.

Among these many contributions, some should be specifically mentioned:

- The *Essays on Some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy* ([1829-30]/1844) are Mill's first "own" contribution to economics, or at least the first which was published under his, not his father's, name. Originally written in about 1829-30, they were not published until 1844, because only then, after the success of the *System of Logic*, a publisher was willing to do so. There are five essays which contain novel and original insights, especially in the second one on "The Influence of Consumption on Production" with regard to Say's Law and the general glut controversy (see Hagemann 1998 on that).
- The extensive epistemological monograph *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive* (1843) initiated Mill's success in the academic literature. In this book, Mill philosophically deals with and analyzes the question of whether and how inferences from observations are possible, i.e. a fundamental question to all scientific research.
- Mill's most-read contribution to economics, his textbook *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) is often regarded as the pinnacle of classical political economy. It became the leading textbook in the United Kingdom for almost half a century, until Alfred Marshall's *Principles* took over this spot in 1890. Mill's *Principles* contain less original novelties than the earlier *Essays*, but are nonetheless sufficiently different from earlier authors such as Ricardo to be considered an important contribution in their own (see the following paragraphs on this section).
- As regards politics, both in practical affairs and in a theoretical perspective, Mill was a convinced liberal who emphasized the importance of individual freedom. In his essay *On Liberty* (1859), he expounded these principles, and argued for important basic liberal ideas, such as the principle that the individual should generally be allowed to pursue any action, as long as it does not interfere with other individuals' interests.
- If there are conflicting interests, however, how is a decision to be made? This links to Mill's major contribution on ethics or moral philosophy, i.e. his essay on *Utilitarianism* (1861), in which, while still arguing for the basic principle greatest good for the greatest lot, Mill systematically expounds a qualitative version of utilitarianism, an extension of the rather quantitative approach he had learned about already in his childhood through his father, and his father's friend Jeremy Bentham. Mill's understanding of utilitarianism bears a clear resemblance and connection to his general liberal position.
- Influenced by his wife Harriet Taylor Mill, but also reflecting his own political opinions, Mill later in his life published the *Subjection of Women* (1869), where he argued that the discrimination women had to deal with in all different areas of private and public life was intolerable, an extraordinarily progressive position at the time.
- In the same year, Mill wrote the *Chapters on Socialism* ([1869]/1879), which were published posthumously a decade later by Harriet's daughter Helen. By quoting from eminent, especially French, socialist writers of the time and responding to their points, Mill neatly summarizes and expounds the classical criticism of socialism based primarily on incentive arguments.

As with other great writers, secondary literature on their works and the intellectual mark they left abounds. Just like in other guides therefore, only an incomplete list of references can be provided here, which at best shows a small sample of some eminent texts you may have a look at. More specifically, the references listed here will primarily relate to Mill's contributions to economics. For a very comprehensive collection of discussions of Mill's writings and their impact, see the four-volume edition [John Stuart Mill: Critical Assessments](#) edited by J. Cunningham Wood (1987), which assembles a total of 99 articles from different journals. The first two parts in Donald Winch's [Wealth and Life](#) (2009) also discuss Mill's *Principles* in some detail, and then proceed to summarize the reception of Mill by writers in the second half of the 19th century. Furthermore, Samuel Hollander (1985) has dedicated two volumes to [The Economics of John Stuart Mill](#). In general, textbooks on the history of



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economic thought, especially classical political economy, always deal with Mill's contributions in some detail. For example, see Mark Blaug's [Economic Theory in Retrospect](#) or Samuel Hollander's [Classical Economics](#). On Mill's part in the transition "From Classical to Post-classical" economics in particular, see Hicks (1983). The [New Palgrave article](#) on Mill of course also contains a short summary of his main contributions. German readers will find a collection of interesting articles in Streissler ([2002](#)) and an overview in Ralph Schumacher's introductory book [John Stuart Mill](#).

While there is little doubt that Mill was a very important philosophical, especially liberal and utilitarian, writer, there is no unanimous verdict on how much influence Mill actually had on economics. If one only follows Mill's own, characteristically modest statements, he appears to be nothing more but a collector of previous, especially Ricardian, ideas, who compiled them to summarize the body of thought which classical political economy was. However, a closer look reveals that Mill not only embraced and integrated Ricardian ideas, but changed them and enriched concepts with his own theoretical insights, partly even introducing completely new considerations. The claim of a lack of originality in Mill's writings therefore has to be refuted, and instead, one may agree with Hicks (1980: 148) who "had come to regard J. S. Mill as the most undervalued economist of the nineteenth century."

What, then, remained of Mill in subsequent economic thought, and what remains until today? First of all, the *Principles* as a textbook influenced at least two generations of British economists in the second half of the 19th century. The longest-lasting influence was probably achieved by Mill's fundamental distinction between production (governed by the laws of nature) and distribution (a question of justice and moral). Mill is also sometimes said to have been the first to properly distinguish between movements *of* and *on* a curve (e.g. supply and demand schedules). In the second of his *Essays*, Mill provided the first theoretically sound description of a complete business cycle with an up- and subsequent downswing. Both in the first of the *Essays*, and later in the *Principles*, Mill picked up Ricardo's considerations on international trade, and formulated the theory of comparative advantages in the way most textbooks use it today. In the area of social reform, too, Mill's suggestions were very progressive at the time, and are still reflected upon today. To get an impression of all these important ideas, see the textbooks cited earlier, or, if you can read German, have a look at the articles in Ulrich and Abländer (2006).

3. TRANSLATIONS OF MILL'S MAJOR WORKS INTO GERMAN

This section lists a few references to German translations of Mill's writings, primarily his two major contributions to economics, the *Essays* and the *Principles*, and two of his seminal contributions to liberal utilitarian philosophy, *On Liberty* and *Utilitarianism*. The latter two, as the second subsection shows, are available in bilingual editions, which constitute a particularly useful source for comparative studies between the base text and the translation. Interestingly, already in 1869-1880, i.e. partly still during Mill's lifetime, Fues in Leipzig published *John Stuart Mill's Gesammelte Werke* (Mill's collected works) in twelve volumes of German translations edited by Theodor Gomperz. All of these twelve volumes are freely available online (see the following subsections on which major writings are contained therein):

- I. [Die Freiheit](#) (1869)
- II. [System der deductiven und inductiven Logik](#) (1872)
- III. [System der deductiven und inductiven Logik](#) (1872)
- IV. [System der deductiven und inductiven Logik](#) (1873)
- V. [Grundsätze der politischen Oekonomie](#) (1869)
- VI. [Grundsätze der politischen Oekonomie](#) (1869)
- VII. [Grundsätze der politischen Oekonomie](#) (1869)
- VIII. [Betrachtungen über Repräsentativ-Regierung](#) (1873)
- IX. [August Comte und der Positivismus](#) (1874)
- X. [Vermischte Schriften politischen, philosophischen und historischen Inhalts](#) (1874)
- XI. [Vermischte Schriften politischen, philosophischen und historischen Inhalts](#) (1875)
- XII. [Vermischte Schriften](#) (1880)



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This edition, which was reissued by the Scientia-Verlag in Aalen in 1968, however, does not contain *all* writings (although, as you can see, it also includes three volumes, X-XII, on various writings). Furthermore, five volumes of selected writings (*Ausgewählte Werke*), edited by Ulrike Ackermann and Hans Jörg Schmidt, are scheduled to be published in 2012-2015 by Murmann in Hamburg.

3.1. STANDARD TRANSLATIONS OF THE MAJOR ECONOMIC WORKS

John Stuart Mill's primary economic writings, the early *Essays* and the later *Principles*, were both translated into German, independently of the *Gesammelte Werke*.

- Just like in the English literature, the *Essays* went fairly unnoticed to the German speaking audience for a long time as well. Only in 1976, a book containing the first German translations of all five essays, edited by Hans G. Nutzinger (who also provided a preface and an introduction), was published under the title [Einige ungelöste Probleme der politischen Ökonomie](#). Originally published by the Campus-Verlag in Frankfurt, the same edition of the book has been [reissued by Metropolis](#) in 2008.
- The lag between the original English publication and the German translation was far shorter for the *Principles*. Indeed, already in 1852, the [Grundsätze der politischen Oekonomie](#) were published by Perthes-Besser und Mauke in Hamburg. The translation was conducted by Adolph Soetbeer. The introductory parts of this translation, taken from the 2nd German edition published in 1864, are [available on the EE-T website](#). A three-volume edition from the 1869 *Gesammelte Werke*, which constitutes the 3rd edition of this translation, is also fully available online at the Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek of the Heinrich-Heine-University of Düsseldorf ([I](#), [II](#), [III](#)). The usual reference when citing a German edition of Mill's *Principles* today is the edition by Heinrich Waentig, [Grundsätze der politischen Ökonomie \(1913/1921\)](#).

3.2. ON LIBERTY AND UTILITARIANISM: BILINGUAL EDITIONS AS VALUABLE SOURCES

The translations of *On Liberty* and *Utilitarianism* are worth a special mention, because of both of these books, handy paperback bilingual editions published by Reclam in Stuttgart are available which contain the translation and additionally the revolving original on adjacent pages. Such bilingual editions are especially useful sources for the linguistic study of translations and how they relate to the base text. However, these are not the only available German translations of *On Liberty* and *Utilitarianism*.

- *On Liberty* was first translated as [Die Freiheit](#), and published in 1869 as the first part in the [first volume](#) of the German *Gesammelte Werke*. [A new translation](#) by Bruno Lemke as [Über die Freiheit](#), first published in 1974 by Reclam in Stuttgart, more recently appeared in a bilingual edition of the same publisher in 2009. This version features, on each pair of adjacent pages, the English original on the left, and the translated German version on the right page.
- *Utilitarianism* was also first translated [in vol. 1, Die Freiheit](#), of Gomperz's *Gesammelte Werke*. The translator, Adolf Wahrmund, titled his translated text with [Das Nützlichkeits-Princip](#), which may be somewhat misleading, since this more literally means "the principle of utility". [The later translation](#) by Dieter Birnbacher, published at Reclam in Stuttgart in 1976 and 2006, which in a few parts referred to this earlier one, at least indirectly addressed this issue, by providing the German version of the essay with the more appropriate title [Der Utilitarismus](#). Like the newer version of *On Liberty* published by Reclam, this one is also bilingual and has the same structure. [Yet another translation](#) as [Utilitarismus](#) by Manfred Kühn was published in a monolingual version by Meiner Verlag in Hamburg in 2009.

3.3. SOME TRANSLATIONS OF MILL'S OTHER WRITINGS

This subsection provides references to some of the available German translations of Mill's works which were not previously mentioned.

- The *System of Logic* was part of the German *Gesammelte Werke*, therein translated by the editor Theodor Gomperz and featured in volumes [II](#) (1872), [III](#) (1872) and [IV](#) (1873) as [System der deductiven und inductiven Logik: eine Darlegung der Grundsätze der Beweislehre und der Methoden wissenschaftlicher Forschung](#). This version is not identical with the earlier [1868 translation by J. Schiel](#) (also see the [entry in the EE-T database](#)), using the 5th edition of the *System of Logic*, published in Braunschweig, which had built on the first German translation by J. Schiel from 1849. Both of these



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editions, especially the first one, contain some modifications, which were, however, all approved by Mill himself.

- Mill's essay on *Auguste Comte and Positivism* was translated by Elise Gomperz and published as *Auguste Comte und der Positivismus*, volume IX of the *Gesammelte Werke*, in 1874.
- The 1865 *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* was translated into German by Hilmar Wilmanns as *Eine Prüfung der Philosophie Sir William Hamiltons* in 1908 by Max Niemeyer in Halle a. d. Saale.
- Mill's progressive pamphlet *Subjection of Women* from 1869 was already translated into German in the same year, not – even though Mill had indirectly asked him for it – by Theodor Gomperz who had published the *Gesammelte Werke* (where the essay was subsequently never included), but by Jenny Hirsch as *Die Hörigkeit der Frau*. In 1872, she updated this translation for a 2nd edition, based on the 2nd edition of the original which appeared in the same year. This version was published again in a 1976 book by Syndikat in Frankfurt a. M., edited and introduced by Hannelore Schröder, which also contained translations of related texts by Mill, Harriet Taylor, and her daughter Helen. It was published once more by Berggold in Berlin in 1991. The German title of both translation is somewhat misleading though, since "Hörigkeit" implies an attitude of giving in to and embracing the authority, a connotation which the English "subjection" alone does not carry. In this respect, translating the term by "Unterwerfung" or "Abhängigkeit" would have been more suitable.

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