

**MORAL CAUSATION,  
OR, NOTES ON MR.  
MILL'S NOTES**

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Moral Causation, or, Notes on Mr. Mill's Notes by Patrick Proctor Alexander

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MORAL CAUSATION

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OR

## NOTES ON MR. MILL'S NOTES

TO THE CHAPTER ON 'FREEDOM' IN THE THIRD EDITION OF HIS

'EXAMINATION OF SIR W. HAMILTON'S PHILOSOPHY.'

By PATRICK PROCTOR ALEXANDER, M.A.

AUTHOR OF 'MILL AND CARLYLE,' ETC. ETC.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

IN the third edition, lately issued, of his *Examination of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, Mr. Mill has made a general 'gaol-delivery' of his critics, giving a list of them in his Preface, and in a series of Notes distributed throughout the work, awarding to each—on the *spot*, as it were, at which his crime was committed—such punishment as its measure of atrocity might seem at his hands to deserve. In that list, as author of a little volume entitled *Mill and Carlyle*, I find myself included; and in certain 'Notes' of some length to the chapter 'On the Freedom of the Will'—on which subject it was that I presumed to call Mr. Mill's argument in question—I receive, in reward of my presumption, such stripes as he has deemed due to my offence. Mr. Mill is so great a man, it would almost be a pleasure to be kicked by him; to be criticised by him, I regard as mere honour done me,—and would tender him, very sincerely, my thanks for his little civilities. These I



proceed to reciprocate, in some sort of free-and-easy fashion, by a series of Notes on Mr. Mill's Notes. Mr. Mill having taken the trouble to *write me*, as it were, it is the merest suggestion of courtesy that he should not be left without reply. Whatever comes from Mr. Mill must needs be deserving of every attention, as coming from him, even if not specially otherwise. What has *here* come from him—some trivial points excepted, which I willingly score in his favour—asks only a very little attention, to be answered, as I venture to think, with quite conclusive effect.

Against nothing in Mr. Mill's observations—conceived as they are throughout in that spirit of admirable courtesy which, as exercised to his other assailants, he also extends to me—have I personal cause of complaint. Complimentary, of course, they could not be; and if here and there they are edged with some touch of caustic scorn, this also was merely of course, and, as simply in the nature of the case, cannot possibly have matter of offence in it. Mr. Mill must either have despised *my* reasonings, or conceived some little contempt for *his own*; had he chosen the latter alternative, I should ever after have held him unworthy of the name of Philosopher. To one only remark of Mr. Mill do I feel called upon

to take objection, as having read it with positive pain :—‘ Mr. Alexander’s perpetual insinuations, and ‘ more than insinuations, of *bad faith*, since he makes ‘ a kind of retraction of their *grossest* meaning, in ‘ one line of his essay, I pardon, as one of the incidents ‘ of his rollicking style.’ As to the epithet applied to my style, it seems neither here nor there. Perhaps it is meant by Mr. Mill as complimentary ; and even were the reverse of a compliment intended in it, this I should readily ‘ pardon,’ as, it may be, no more than ‘ one of the incidents’ of Mr. Mill’s extreme distaste for certain of the arguments so conveyed, to which, as it seems, he can reply with no better effect than we shall see him do. What *does* give me real pain is, that Mr. Mill should suppose me capable of supposing *him* capable of anything properly to be termed ‘ bad faith.’ What can I do, in such a case, more than merely reiterate the frank disclaimer already made, to which Mr. Mill alludes ? Not guilty—at least in *intention*—I once more distinctly plead. If this be not enough for Mr. Mill, who holds that ‘ the *motive* has nothing to do with the morality of the action,’ I am helpless, except to suggest, that perhaps his own Utilitarian Theory, which involves that extraordinary *dictum*, is more blamable than I in the matter.

One instance only of this sin alleged against me does Mr. Mill condescend to adduce:—'I venture to express my opinion in words borrowed from Mr. Alexander, that it is not his "veritable consciousness." I will not imitate Mr. Alexander in calling it "a *fraudulent* substitute palmed off upon him" by his philosophical system.' Mr. Mill is at once oversensitive here, and seems a little to sin in misapprehension. In calling 'a substitute' *fraudulent*, as having passed a deceit on Mr. Mill, I could scarcely intend to imply in Mr. Mill *fraud* in his having been deceived by it. Between the thimbligger and his victim, I must seriously impress on Mr. Mill that the logical distinction is clear. It seems odd he should force me to do such a thing.

Mr. Mill (I beg pardon for lingering over this point, but in relation to one or two of my coming criticisms of Mr. Mill it is essential it should be clearly made out) permitted himself to insinuate against Professor Mansel some suspicion of his tampering with his intelligence in the interest of a certain system of belief to which he stood pledged. To Mr. Mansel's slightly indignant rejoinder he now in his turn rejoins that, while 'no imputation was intended, the effect of men's necessities of position on