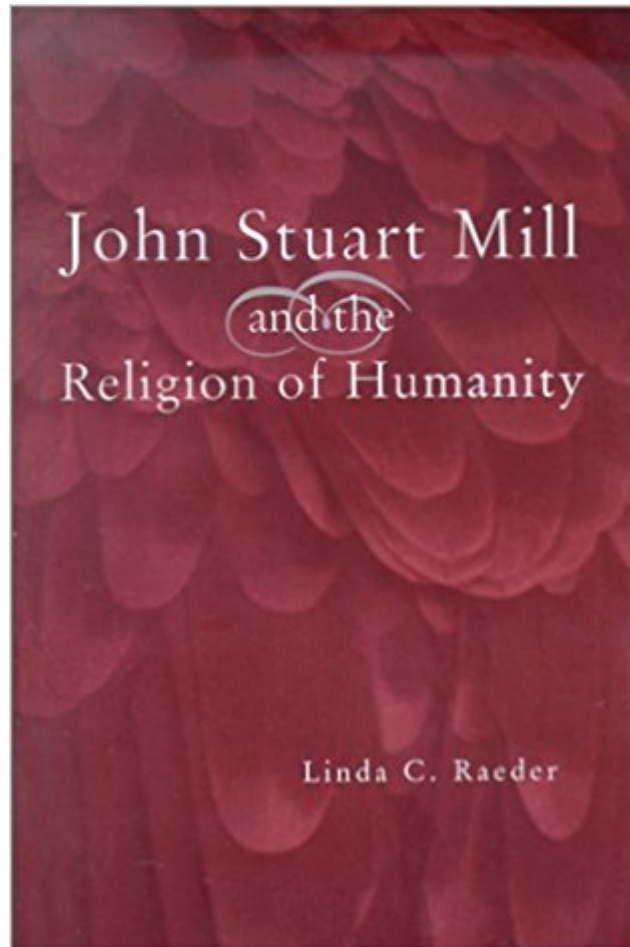




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John Stuart Mill And The Religion Of Humanity



Synopsis

John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity introduces material that requires significant reevaluation of John Stuart Mill's contribution to the development of the liberal tradition. Through his influence, the radical anti-Christianity of the French tradition was incorporated into the Anglo-American political tradition. Mill's nontheological utilitarianism also involved the equally important insinuation of Comtean altruism, with its notion of the superiority of social morality over personal morality, into Anglo-American consciousness. Linda C. Raeder's study carefully examines the nature of modern secular liberalism, the chief political carrier of the Millian form of secular religiosity in the American context. Raeder explores the influence of James Mill, Jeremy Bentham, Claude-Henri Saint-Simon, and Auguste Comte on John Stuart Mill's religious thought and aims. She treats Mill's Three Essays on Religion, discusses his participation in the Mansel controversy, and offers a new interpretation of On Liberty and Utilitarianism, both of which were crucial instruments in the accomplishment of his religious mission. Raeder contends that Mill's religious aim was two-pronged—the undermining of Christian belief and the establishment of the allegedly superior social morality and spirituality embodied in the Religion of Humanity—that he adopted, with revisions, from Comte. Mill intended his philosophical writings to assist in the realization of this aim, and they cannot adequately be comprehended without an awareness of their subterranean religious theme. John Stuart Mill and the Religion of Humanity examines the religious thought and aspirations of the philosopher and shows that, contrary to the conventional view of Mill as the prototypical secular liberal, religious preoccupations dominated his thought and structured his endeavors throughout his life. For a proper appreciation of Mill's thought and legacy, the depth of his animus toward traditional transcendent religion must be recognized, along with the seriousness of his intent to found a nontheological religion to serve as its replacement.

Book Information

Hardcover: 424 pages

Publisher: University of Missouri (June 10, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0826213871

ISBN-13: 978-0826213877

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 1.4 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds

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