

John Stuart Mill on Truth, Liberty, Democracy
Frederick Rosen

The object of this paper is to relate truth, liberty, and democracy in J.S. Mill's thought, initially by criticizing a passage from Bernard Williams's *Truth and Truthfulness* (2002). Here, Williams adopts a common misinterpretation of Mill by assuming that liberalism depends on a maximum freedom of speech, and that freedom of speech in turn 'must assist' the emergence of truth. I argue that this view omits the emphasis Mill placed on truth in the *System of Logic* (1843), and I contend in opposition to Williams that it is not liberty that assists the emergence of truth, but the pursuit of truth that assists the emergence of liberty.

The paper proceeds by briefly examining the theme of truth in the *Logic* and elsewhere. It particularly relates this to Mill's admiration of Socrates and the Socratic elenchus, showing how important his view of Socrates is to the discussion of truth in *On Liberty* and the important idea of ethology or character in the context of an intellectually active people. This material is further developed in a discussion of Mill's approach to democracy, and, additionally, to liberalism.