

**THE CONCEPTS OF LIBERTY, FEMINISM AND DEMOCRACY IN MILL'S
POLITICAL THOUGHT: AN EXAMINATION OF A NEW
ENLIGHTENMENT AGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

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Abstract

The problem of equality and the idea of the good in a normative human society has always been a perennial one. Mill's theory of utilitarian principle is characterized by some fundamental flaws about the ultimate goal of man's happiness. How can we measure a certain amount of pleasure? How do we know when a man is happy? Is the issue of happiness relative? These are some fundamental questions posed by Mill's calculus principle. It has been argued from the Mill's philosophical perspective represents representative democracy. His ethics and politics in the state are built on the solid bedrock of public sphere of law and the private sphere of morality. Mill's principle of utilitarianism is embedded in democratic principle and the equality of the sexes. It demonstrates the importance of mutual sympathy or cooperation. He believes women are relegated to the background and they are treated like slaves. His moral and political philosophy is grounded on the common interests of the people. Mill's conceptualization of moral education is aimed at human psychology or moral virtue. His summation is that morality and justice remain the normative foundation of democratic society and his utilitarian principle is an explanatory model. This paper will be analytic in its approach by dovetailing into the concepts of liberty, feminism and democracy in Mill's moral and political philosophy. This paper therefore, concludes that Mill's philosophy demonstrates a shared common interest of all in normative society. His feminist ideal best represents the formation and the transformation of human character.

Keywords: Society, Utilitarianism, Democracy, Equality, Liberty

Introduction

Mill (1806-1873) was highly influenced by his father, James Mill and the political philosophies of Bentham, Plato, Rousseau and Kant. His principle of utilitarianism is hedonistic and moral philosophy. He was a naturalist, a utilitarian, and a liberal thinker, whose theoretical construction sought to explore the implications of the thoroughgoing empiricist outlook. He attempts to combine the best of eighteenth-century Enlightenment thinking with newly emerging currents of nineteenth century philosophy. His thoroughgoing theoretical consideration has great relevance in Rawls's theory of justice as fairness and even in our 21st contemporary socio-political and material world where the whole conception of politics which is aimed at the common good of democratic society has been seriously misconstrued. For Lawhead, "in developing his moral philosophy, Mill accepts the main outlines of Bentham's hedonism. Happiness (the experience of pleasure and the absence of pain) is the only thing desirable in itself. Consequently, the total sum of happiness or the greatest good of the greatest number is the criterion of morality".¹ Mill's governing conviction reveals that the ultimate human end is happiness. His idea of induction is founded on reflective agreement or reasoning dispositions. Mill appeals to moral education as that built on human psychology. He posits that people can reach a deeper understanding of happiness through education and experience. He advocates for prioritizing human happiness and argues that some happiness should be preferred as better by those able to experience them fully. Mill's view on the happiness of all, considered impartially, is the standard of conduct. His account of how this standard of moral conduct reflects in the fabric of everyday norms. Mill holds that justice remains the very groundwork of human everyday existence. His doctrine of liberty relates with his account of justice. This theoretical discourse shall streamline the meaning of freedom, feminism democracy, justice, morality and utilitarianism from Mill's philosophical point of view. Mill's conceptualizations of utilitarianism, representative government, the idea of freedom and justice in the state reveal the basis of the common good in contemporary human society. This theoretical discourse shall make its critique and its concluding considerations on Mill's concepts of liberty, representative government and his feminist movement and his concept of utilitarianism as the highest good of the highest number. Mill's concepts of the principle of utilitarianism, freedom and representative government reflects in moral philosophy that comprehends the grand system of human knowledge. Mill's ethics is deeply rooted in his conceptualization and contextualization of politics.

Mill's Concept Of Liberty

Mill's deeper utilitarian understanding or principle of pleasure, desire, character and will is imperative and illuminating. He has not adequately reexamined the principle of utility itself. His utilitarian understanding considered happiness as the most desirable and the only thing desirable, as human personal end. Mill's utilitarian doctrine demonstrates the truth of hedonism. He argues that 'the general happiness must be a good to the collective interests of all individuals. He has demonstrated that individual happiness is a good to that all individual must have in society. Mill demonstrates that everyone has reason to promote the happiness of anyone. His principle of utilitarianism reflects on 'perfect impartiality'. This 'perfect impartiality' reflects on rational persons to be part of the very meaning of the greatest happiness principle. The utilitarian principle is distributive principle and the distributive principle is impartial in nature. Mill's conceptualization of perfect impartiality reveals that 'equal amounts of happiness are equally desirable'. The principle of utilitarianism reveals "rational signification". Mill appeals to individual right is grounded in the utilitarian principle. Mill is of the view that right is grounded in the permanent interests of man as a progressive being.² However, in his essay, *On Liberty* (1859), the principle of liberty safeguards people's freedom to pursue their personal end or individual goals, so long as they do not infringe on the legitimate interests of others. Mill argues that political power should not be exercised over people for their own selfish or personal end. He defends the utility principle on two grounds. It enables individuals to realize their personal potentials in their own distinctive manner. Secondly, by liberating talents, creativity and energy, it enables the social conditions to be very glaring for the moral development of culture and human character. The happiness of man is grounded in utility maximization. Mill's moral and political philosophy is rights-based liberalism. According to Hoffman and Graham:

Utilitarians hold that political institutions function to increase the overall level of welfare-or utility-of a society. At first sight, this appears fundamentally opposed to rights-based liberalism and indeed to contractarianism: utility maximization implies that there is a thing called 'society'. Which has aims over and above those of individuals, or that the aims and interests of individuals are subsumed in 'society'. Utilitarians still hold to the liberal 'presumption in favour of freedom' and the 'presumption of natural equality'. People are free to express their preferences and coercion is

only justified in order to bring about the greatest good, and people are equally 'generators' of utility.³

Furthermore, the idea of freedom has become a highly contested or debated concept in the history of political philosophy. Mill, just like Hobbes and Hume argued that the beneficial scheme of social cooperation among human beings is based on universal human reason. Mill and Hobbes argued that moral philosophy is an applied political philosophy. For Hoffman and Graham: Most important of all, utilitarianism grew in parallel with the development of democracy. Utilitarianism seems to provide a much more convincing method of normative justification in democratic societies: the calculation of utility dovetails with the counting of votes, although it was only in the twentieth century with the development of preference satisfaction as the definition of utility that a more direct link between utilitarianism and democracy was established.⁴ Mill's ethical principle presupposes mutual sympathy. Accordingly, Hoffman and Graham argued that politics and mutual sympathy are important.⁵ His principle of utilitarianism demonstrates democratic principles and feminist fervour. Moral philosophy forms the normative foundation for his political philosophy. Mill claims that a virtuous person is one who has tendency to promote the happiness of others, and for this reason alone we value virtue.⁶ Mill's thesis presupposes that the state ought to be governed by ethical principles. Accordingly, Lawhead further argues that the contents of moral philosophy according to both the old tradition and our own view of the matter are, after all, precisely such things as "justice and all the other virtues" which is assigned to the domain of civil philosophy, whereas ethics was conversant instead with the passions and manners of men. To see what we understood by this, we should first look carefully at the structure and argument of freedom since only there we specifically and exclusively address the issue of ethics as distinct from politics.⁷ Mill thinks he can provide proof that general happiness is the supreme good. According to Mill, each person's happiness is a good to that person and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons.⁸ However, the state in its normative structure ought to enjoy relative peace, human flourishing, politico-economic stabilization, solidarity, stability, accommodation and protection of all the individuals. Political leaders ought to abide by the rules governing stability, solidarity and accommodation. The idea of the fundamental principles of stability, solidarity, bargaining or dialogue and accommodation presupposes to use the words of Thomas "moral realism and the entire category of value is anthropocentric".⁹ The

idea of the state is mainly governed by “the fair value of political liberty”.¹⁰The liberal principle presupposes social stability and “the fact of objective moral pluralism”.¹¹Mill’s principle of law and morality is the politicization of justice in normative human society.¹²Mill’s political philosophy “exhibits, under conditions of freedom, a plurality of reasonable comprehensive conceptions of the good and the overlapping consensus which is central to his politicization of justice and freedom.”¹³The state must ensure every measure of political accountability and formation and the transformation of character.¹⁴The scale of human interdependence in the modern world; all these, and more, erode the conditions under which 'the people' can effectively rule over their own lives.¹⁵ The idea of the state is synonymous with Mill’s idea of man's freedom and self-interest gravitating into that of the public interest. Gert, for instance, ends by considering the way in which passion and reason can interact to produce the human behaviour.¹⁶ However, self-interest is crucial to the rational control of the passion Gert argues that passion provides the sole motivation for doing anything.¹⁷Moral philosophy then hits upon a good that is likely to be universally acknowledged as such self-preservation and virtuous character means self- preservation.¹⁸ Moral laws can be objective in the sense of commanding universal assent and leading to a condition [normative peace] that everyone will find subjectively preferable to its absence [war] without there being an independent existing rightness that they conform.¹⁹ Mill’s concepts of freedom and representative government have to do with the idea of moral philosophy as objective values.²⁰ In the Kantian philosophy, the state is not demanded by prudence and utility, but it calls for reason itself and thus equipped with the property of juridical necessity.²¹Mill’s conception of human freedom is based on the prevailing moral sentiment of mankind. It has to do with the common interests of men in society. His notion of liberty is based on the most unequivocal cases of moral feeling and emotion. The human being, it has been asserted, has the freedom of conscience, belief and expression. These are inalienable right and the human being is accountable to others for his duty to others in normative ideal society. Furthermore, Mill’s political theory calls for the duty of toleration, and the duty of toleration is admitted with tacit reserve. He argues that individual liberty will probably be as much exposed to invasion from government as it already is from public opinion. He rules out the paternalistic tendencies of law and society. He encourages eccentricity. In other words, eccentricity means the refusal to bow down to customs. His conceptual analysis of normative society is reflected within the legitimate sphere of legal and social control. Mill argues that peoples’ decisions should be based according to their personal preferences. Equality serves as the ordering principle of men in

normative society. He believes in the equality of the sexes. He advocates that human interests should be amenable to governmental control. His philosophy is anchored on the dealings of society with the individual. He believes that coercion or compulsion is more dangerous to progressive men. This could either be physical force in the form of legal penalty or the moral coercion of public opinion. He sees law to be in the domain of the public sphere while morality is within the domain of the private sphere. Man is governed by his moral conscience. Man has mastery over himself, mind and body. Mill holds that the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized society, against his own will is to prevent him from harming others. This remains the normative basis of his utility principle. Utility could be regarded as the ultimate appeal to all ethical questions. Mill's contextualization of utility is grounded in the permanent interests of man as a progressive being. Mill argued that if anyone does an act harmful to others, there is a *prima facie* case for punishing him by law and where legal penalties are not applicable there should be general disapprobation. A person may cause injury to others not only by his deliberate actions but by his inactions, and in either case he is justly accountable to them for the injury. Whatever may affect the individual may affect others through the individual himself. The appropriate region of human liberty is grounded in the inner domain of moral consciousness which demands liberty of moral conscience. In the most comprehensive sense, Mill's conception of liberty of thought and feeling, presupposes human opinions and moral sentiments. However, no society can survive in an atmosphere where liberties are not respected on the whole whatever may be its form of government. Mill argues that the only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of their liberty or impede their effort to obtain freedom. Each individual is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily or mental and spiritual. The political state has had a deep interest in the whole bodily and mental discipline of every one of its citizens. Mill's philosophy is actually aimed at strengthening the need for normative society and diminished the power of the individual. The idea of religious toleration and free institution remains the normative basis of society. Man is governed by rational opinions and rational conduct. He is an intellectual and a moral being and he is capable of rectifying his mistakes by the cultivation of character and legal discussions. Man should keep his mind open to constructive criticism of his opinions and conduct. Mill's political ethics is based on the need to uphold true moral values, beliefs and it is the duty of government to uphold those beliefs and values in order to protect the common interests of the society. His political philosophy is anchored on the normative

justification of moral restraints. For Mill, restraint seems to be evil to man. His utilitarianism is based on the doctrine of truth, dialogue and the freedom of opinion. In my most solemn convictions, Mill's utilitarianism reflects in the need for mankind to respect the freedom of others in normative society. The lofty inspiration of his utilitarianism is that it has a theoretical affinity with Greek philosophers such as Plato and the judicious utilitarianism of Aristotle. Mill and Rawls have so many things in common in terms of their political liberalism. Mill's utilitarianism reflects in the moral writings of the Christian ideal society. Christianity was seen to be good and not an evil to the world. Every society was to be prevented from a deplorable state and ought to be characterized by the common good of all in society. Men are not more zealous for truth than they are often more zealous for error and a sufficient application of legal or even of social penalties will generally succeed in stopping the propagation of social vices in normative society. The revival of religion is often characterized by religious toleration. Toleration is used to strengthen the social activities of human ethical conduct and toleration remains the greatest cornerstone of the religious liberties of any well-ordered society. Mill's utilitarianism is founded on the normative justification of truth and ethical conduct. The general affairs of mankind is illuminated or ever lightened up by the doctrine of truth and the good. Ethical conduct is aimed at maintaining a convenient plan for having normative peace in the intellectual world. Mill's utilitarianism is grounded in morals, religion, politics, socio-political relations and the business of life. His socio-ethical and political philosophy is the real understanding of human conduct. Philosophy is essentially aimed at the understanding of truth and action.

Generally speaking, human beings as rational beings ought to be governed by prudence and knowledge of life as well as of moral precepts. Mill's conception of utilitarianism is equally of order and of progress of a well-ordered society. Human beings are constrained by the limits of their reasoning and sanity. Mill's conception of utilitarianism is predicated on the practical concerns of life such as sociality and individuality, liberty and discipline. For Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, individuality, to Mill, meant the power or capacity for critical enquiry and responsible thought; it was not mere non-conformism but signified the act of questioning, and the right to choose.²² Mill's philosophy reflects representative democracy, equality, and social cooperation. All these practical concerns of life are expressed with equal force and enforced and defended with equal talents. Mill's socio-ethical and political philosophy reflects in the Christian ethics that produce the moral regeneration of mankind. Mill's utilitarianism argues that the individual has a rightful limit to his sovereignty. Every individual receives the protection of

society. Mill observes that the fact of living in normative society renders it indispensable that each individual should be bound to observe a certain line of rational conduct toward the other. As soon as any part of a person's conduct affects prejudicially the interests of others, society has jurisdiction over such as person's conduct that may be injurious to others rights or freedom. Mill argues that each person should have a perfect freedom, legal and social, to do the action and face the consequences of their deliberate choices and actions. There is the great need of disinterestedness to promote the good of others in society. Society is referred to as a protector of all its members. No individual person is entirely an isolated rational being. Mill's contextualization of law and society is aimed at the greater good of human freedom. His utilitarianism is aimed at the ordinary standard of rational conduct. Society has had absolute power over the individual members, politically, legally or morally. Society is aimed at ensuring the rational conduct of human life. It has the power to issue commands and enforce obedience in the personal concerns of the individual person.

Moreover, freedom is power and it is generally and rhythmically defined as the absence of constraint or impediment; and it presupposes self-determination. Freedom is not the only basis for the rational principles underlying the state. For Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, freedom was the most important requirement in the life of a rational person. Man is subject to the litmus test of reason. Freedom is not just absence of restraints, but also an ability to cultivate some desirable qualities.²³ Furthermore, freedom simply means the autonomous rights of every individual in the state. Freedom defines the political structure of every state. The state is justified by the freedom of actions of every individual. Freedom of action experienced by individuals in a state of nature without legal control and moral precedence would lead to chaos or anarchy. The idea of individual autonomy and self-determination or actualization dominates civilized society. For Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, liberty and self-determination were two themes that figured prominently in Mill's writings. True liberty was concerned with the full development of independence, self-development and self-control.²⁴ The concept of individual autonomy is fundamental and foundational largely by the procedural and distributive principles of the state. The state comprises the presuppositions of individual self-determination and self-actualization. Freedom is the guiding principle of the state formation. It is seen as the normative basis for mutual recognition. Freedom is the reciprocal recognition of the normative structure of social interaction. The idea of individual freedom is reflected in social engagements. The individual person is only free to the extent that he can only succeed in identifying and articulating his authentic needs, goals and aspirations.

The achievement of freedom is bound by the normative presupposition of political participation. Freedom is the metaphysical legitimacy of every individual person. The freedom of the individual human person is guaranteed by the state protection and the civil society. Mill's idea of utility principle reflects in the idea of the common good. His optimistic political liberalism is aimed at the principle of maximizing the greatest happiness of the greatest number.²⁵ Mill's concept of liberty and self-determination leads to his thorough going consideration on democracy.

Mill's Concept Of Feminism

Mill believes that the human lot may be improved upon by the judicious exercise of critical reason and his theoretical reconstruction qualifies him as a paradigmatic liberal thinker.²⁶ He asserts that every civilized society is grounded in democratic institution and nascent feminist movement. Mill's feminist thinking reveals that he is a liberal thinker par excellence. He champions women's rights seeing sexual inequality as ethically and legally untenable.²⁷ He asserts that there should be the equality of the sexes. In his work, "*The Subjection of Women*" (1869), he believes women are relegated to the background in society. The subjection of women in society becomes possible because society allows it to be so. He stresses that there should be women's rights to vote, rights to equal opportunities and employment. Women's dilemma is like that of the status of slaves. Their position in society is worse than that of slaves and their masters. He supports women's right to education. He believes in the individual's capacity for education. For Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, education, to Mill, does not reflect only intellectual training or cultivation of critical enquiry, but also the training of individual character.²⁸ Mill asserts that men subject women to perpetual domination or subjugation. Sometimes women have decided to consent to this perpetual or continuous domination by men. Mill believes that the continual subjugation of women demeans men in their socio-political and economic world. For him, equality remains the ordering principle of socio-existential, political and personal relationship. For him, marriage or the rearing of children should not be the ultimate aim of womanhood. The glory of womanhood lies in her innate abilities to make deliberate and rational choices that would lead to the upliftment or betterment of the society at large. Women should be given equal opportunities just like their male counterparts. Mill's feminist ideals share the same theoretical affinity with Mary Wollstonecraft. He holds that the cultivation of character should be the most paramount objective of the state. He asserted that the chief deficiency of Benthamite ethics was the neglect of individual character, and hence

stressed on the cultivation of feelings and imaginations as part of the good life.²⁹He tries to reconcile the interest between the individual and society. For society, is natural and habitual, for the individual was a social person. Mill saw social feelings and consciences as part of the psychological attributes of a person.³⁰Mill's principle of equality of the sexes presupposed the normative possibility of ethical order. For Odimegwu, the ethical order is a universal self-consciousness perceived by the individual himself as possessing distinct existence and yet not alien to him but as constituting his own essence.³¹Mill's feminist movement originates from his paradigmatic liberal thinking. His conception of liberty and feminism presupposed the liberal democratic tradition. For Murkherjee and Ramaswamy:

Mill's thought and activism could be distinguished from those of his predecessors within the liberal tradition, because of his application of the principles of liberalism to the question of women. For Mill, improving women's position by giving them suffrage, education and employment opportunities was a stepping stone to progress and civility. Mill rightly regarded improvement in the position of women as a concern not restricted to women alone, but of entire humankind. The subjection therefore made a strong claim for equal status in three key areas; women's right to vote, right to equal opportunities in education and employment. In this context, women were the subjugated sex denied access to their own potential, and subjugated to the unquestioned prejudices and biases of society. Mill pointed out that opposition to sexual equality was not based on reason. To dismiss equality of sexes as a mere theoretical proposition did not lend credibility to the argument that women were weaker, and have subordinate. A just family would nurture feelings of sympathy in equality and love.³²

Nevertheless, Mill's feminism is a form of a social movement that aims at women's emancipation. Mill's feminist movement is a form of social activism that regard the improvement of the position of women as an application of the principles of the liberal tradition even in our contemporary times where the question of women's rights has been a source of concern to our socio-political world. For Mill, the equality of the sexes is a stepping stone to our democratic society, human progress and civilization.

Mill's Concept Of Democracy And Representative Government

Democratic government means the administering of justice and it aims at ensuring the betterment and the happiness of the people. His liberal democracy represents a guiding theoretical insight of a new philosophy called 'utilitarianism'. Utilitarianism has become, as much as anything, the founding principle of Western liberal democracy. Mill's version of utilitarian theory or liberal democracy guarantees the liberty of thought, speech, association and it represents the goal of sound social policy.³³ Mill argues that the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the goal of "sound socio-democratic policy. It is, however, worth noting that his political philosophy represents the common interests of all individual persons in society. Mill advocates for a radical political and social agenda. His political economy is inseparable with many other branches of social philosophy.³⁴ Mill's abstract investigation of political economy is aimed at the progress of democracy. He distinguished between the study of individual behaviour which would be largely psychological and the study of collective behaviour which would be largely economic and political. His optimistic and liberal democracy is aimed at the security of persons and property.³⁵ Mill was optimistic that the people would also become better protected against the arbitrary exercise of the power of government.³⁷ He makes his most distinctive contribution to political philosophy by turning his mind to the setting out of the limits of government.³⁸ Mill ends up stating explicitly the dispassionate calculation of wants and needs. He argues that even if the government were to be superior in intelligence and knowledge to the most intelligent and knowledgeable individual or group in society, it would still be inferior to all the individuals or group in society.³⁹ Mill holds that apart from security, liberty of persons and property right, education, therefore, is one of those things the government should provide for the people.⁴⁰ For Mill, government could be referred to as generally beneficial and not injurious to the overall common interests of the people in liberal democracies. In liberal democracies, welfare is increasingly provided to the people, the children and even animals. Mill argues that the political state or government ought to make punishment indispensable in order to deter would-be criminals from committing crimes against humanity.

Moreover, he is of the view that there should be the legitimate employment of the human faculties and the need for the moral good. He is one of the founding figures of liberalism.⁴¹ His brand of utilitarian ethics is grounded in the fact that the state formally recognized the importance of all its citizens, bestowing upon them important powers and rights.⁴² Liberalism is essentially freedom from and not freedom to.⁴³ Mill argues that the correct attitude of the liberal towards society should be more like that of a good gardener towards their plant: tend them

carefully and try to create the conditions in which they can flourish. Mill's liberal democracy is characterized by the social conditions and the normative framework of individual rights and freedom.⁴² His optimistic liberal democracy has a normative framework. Mill invariably aimed at both quantitative and qualitative dimension of pleasure. His dialectical assessment and thoroughgoing consideration of utility maximization is actually aimed at man as a progressive being; the defense of the liberty of man; and the security of man's original socio-political and economic programmes. His defense of liberty is a dialectical assessment of political and social phenomenon in human society. For Monk:

Mill's reformulations involved acknowledging a qualitative dimension of pleasure, limiting utility's potential for eroding moral codes- especially justice- by developing a distinction between rule- and act utility and placing the utilitarian assessment of political phenomena and institutions within a historical and developmental schema. In this way- and by a famous defense of the liberty needed to innovate- he sought to increase as well as use the 'good qualities' present in society and to secure 'utility in the larger sense' grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being'. This extension of utilitarian language nevertheless diminished its original programmatic policy appeal, as well as its original distance from the ideal- regarding criteria to which Mill's successors the 'New Liberals' increasingly turned.⁴⁴

Mill's moral and political philosophy has a great deal of influence on the new liberals such as Rawls. Rawls, for instance, criticizes Mill's political thought as not rigorous enough to addressing contemporary democratic challenges. Rawls's contemporary social contract theory was actually a response to Mill's inadequacies in terms of his utilitarian version of addressing fundamental human challenges. Rawls's contemporary social contract theory was a reworking of Mill's utilitarian version of addressing societal problem and democratic challenges.

Philosophical problems- connected with democracy relate both to its nature and its value. It might seem obvious that democracy has value because it promotes liberty and equality everyone has equal political power and is free from control by a special individual or group. However, at least, on the voting conception of democracy, it is the majority who has the control. We could analyze democracy as a system in which unanimous decisions are reached after a prolonged

discussion which respects the equal autonomy and participation of everyone involved. Democracy is of value because it produces liberty and equality. Everyone has the same (political) power. So, democracy is egalitarian as compared with other forms of government or decision making. Hence, democracy promotes liberty.⁵³

Furthermore, there are several connected terms here; liberty, freedom and autonomy. Democracy means that the people rule themselves.⁵⁴ Politics aims at the common good of all. According to Benjamin Barber (1984), cited by Harrison, the area of politics is taken to be one of action, not truth; and for him, democracy takes over in the area where metaphysics fails, creating its own epistemology; for it is quite possible that the truth about what in general the state should do is the kind of truth about which people have a roughly equal capacity.⁵⁵ Democratic actions are right in as much as they promote the general happiness of all in any normative society. Democratic principles are related with dialogical engagement or discussions and political participation. According to Harrison:

One major defect with modern democracy is that the interest promoted is that of the ruling group not that of the people as a whole. However, if the people as a whole are put in charge, they will promote the interests of the people as a whole. Seeking their own interests, they will produce general happiness. Democracy treats all votes equally; and it is justified as a form of education or development. It is taken to be, however, voting rights and adopting the majority view is an efficient method in any democratic process or democratic decision making. For the majority, decision has a higher probability of being right than the minority view. Discussion rather than voting becomes the central feature of democracy and it is important that people can meet and talk together before decisions are made. Democracy is all about the truth and democracy will not be inferior in discovering of the truth and will have other advantages.⁵⁶

Harrison observes that other normative justifications for democracy are possible. One standard device for justification, for many areas, is utilitarianism. Something is justified if it promotes general happiness or utility.⁵⁷ According to Hayry, the happiness of society at large outweighs the happiness of a few privileged individuals. Democracy is seen as a form of an applied ethics and it is devised as a fully comprehensive model of normative decision making; the greatest happiness principles states that all human efforts ought to be aimed at minimizing

suffering in the world.⁵⁸ Accordingly, Goodin argues that in the utilitarian dimension, there is a legitimate role for state action. The state has the duty to organize and the power to enforce, as necessary, various sorts of coordination schemes and its citizens in discharging their individual (albeit imperfect) moral duties.⁵⁹ Democracy encourages economic dynamism or beneficial economic circumstances. Harrison further argues that:

If people were only to support democracy because they thought that it encourages economic dynamism, then, democracy would not work and so the economic dynamism would not follow either. Democracy should be held as a device in which people develop and discover their views about what is right. And, in thinking about what is right, they should think about what is right for the group as a whole and not just for themselves. People should therefore, participate in a form of decision making in which they share their ideas, discuss together and eventually reach general agreement. Democracy is a political system in which individuals are made to think for themselves and are therefore improved. Democracy can bring about the promotion of vibrant economic system. Democracy is the supposed promotion of dynamic economic activity. Democracy does correlate with beneficial economic circumstances.⁶⁰

The Contemporary Relevance Of Mill's Moral And Political Thought In The 21st Century

Mill's moral and political thought reveals the Enlightenment period of seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, his theoretical reconstruction has great relevance even in our contemporary socio-political world. Mill's moral and political thought has greatly influenced the tenets of democratic citizenship and political participation. Mill's ethics is deeply rooted in his political thought. He believes in the greatest happiness of the greatest number which remains one of the gains of modern democracy. Politics is aimed at the common good of all in any democratic society. Mill's discourse on "The Subjection of Women" has greatly affected feminist movement where women are agitating for equal rights like their male counterparts. Mill holds that women ought to have equal rights even in marriages. Mill argues that it is degrading or demeaning for men to relegate women to the background. He argues that women should be given equal opportunity, right to vote, the right to educate themselves and they should take

part in employment opportunities. Mill's version of freedom is also commendable. Freedom means the absence of constraint or impediments. Freedom is man's greatest price. Freedom is the most driving force as far as man's psychological being is concerned. Mill's conception of freedom is problematic. Mill's conception of freedom could lead to abstract or excessive individualism but it is essential to assert that every man needs freedom. His conceptualization of freedom has theoretical affinity with Berlin's two concepts of liberty. Berlin's two concepts of liberty are negative liberty and positive liberty. For Berlin, negative liberty means that the individual is free to take certain deliberate choices and actions without any constraint but positive liberty simply states that the state has a role to play whenever the freedom of others is being trampled upon. The state can only intervene when the freedom of the individual could cause harm or injury to others. Freedom is the most powerful thing everyman ought to possess. Human excesses could only be resolved through the application of reason. The Enlightenment thinking is still very much relevant today. The use of reason is very instrumental to man, society and the material/democratic world. We are all governed by the voice of reason. Man, just like law, requires reason. Reason helps in social coordination and order. Society can hardly progress without the application of reason in our everyday life.

Furthermore, Mill's liberal democracy just like Rawls's version of democratic citizenship serves as a template for sound public policy. Africa as a continent could draw its inspiration from Mill's democratic vision whereby the welfare of the masses in African governments should be the top most priorities of present-day African leaders. Today, some African leaders are insensitive to the plight of the African peoples. Nigeria as a country is a prototype example. The contemporary Nigerian society is characterized by inequality, high rate of illiteracy, abject poverty, hunger, religious bigotry, social chaos, farmers-herders clashes, national insecurity, ethno-religious crises, political and economic corruption or massive looting of the national treasury and infrastructural deficits. It is unfortunate the Nigerian masses are groaning in the dark due to economic hardship.

Evaluation

The individual's freedom is not absolute. Man's freedom is a limited one. For Ernest Baker (1950) cited by Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, Mill is a prophet of empty liberty and abstract individualism.⁶¹ democracy was born out of ensuring the modernization and the transformation of man and society. For Mackenzie, democracy was born as the political form of a process of modernization, its roots deep in the social and economic transformation of production. Democratic

government is not simply about the protection of liberty or the promotion of a free state: it is fundamentally about the equality of each person in the state to have a say in government. 'One person, one vote' encapsulates this central egalitarian dimension of the democratic ideal.⁶² Mill is mainly known as a political economist. He also has strong interest in psychology, sociology, taxation, system of property right, democratic principle and the role of moral and intellectual elites. He has a variety of interest in psychological terms such as desire, pleasure, happiness, conscience, justice, will and moral action. Mill argues that mind and society are always in causal processes. He holds that it may be hard for moral science to live up to its normative expectations in view of the complexity of its data, but his explanatory model stands as an ideal one. Mill's explanatory model or theoretical insights of the moral sciences take their fundamental laws and rational principles within the domain of human psychology. He agrees with August Comte that the fundamental and irreducible moral science was sociology. Self-formation or self-determination is the fulcrum of Mill's ideal of moral life. In his ethical writings, he fails to bring to the foreground a connection between freedom and reason. Mill argues that practical reason is the principle of utility. The ethical standard reflects the good of all. He points out that happiness is understood as 'pleasure, and freedom from pain'. He agrees with Bentham that man is a pleasure-seeking animal. His methodological approach is an appeal to reflective practice and liberal thinking. Happiness is the sole human end. The distinction between purpose and desire is central to Mill's conception of the will. The formation of purposes from desires is the evolution of will and that 'a character is a completely fashioned will'. For Mill, the cultivation of character requires the cultivation of feeling as well as the cultivation of the will. His principle of utilitarianism is the domain of normative thinking, happiness and morality. Accordingly, Skorupski posits that morality is a distinct sphere within the domain of normative thinking about action and feeling; the whole domain, however, is the subject of ethics. The state is governed by moral codes. It is plausible that moral codes have a social function, such as that of maintaining beneficial scheme of social cooperation; but it does not seem an a priori truth. Morality is but a part of the whole domain of normative thinking about action and feeling. Moreover, all sustainable societies have spontaneous disciplined system maintaining solidarity and prohibition.⁶³ Furthermore, Mill's liberal ideal is deeply rooted in his conceptualization and contextualization of feminism. Men and women equal irrespective of their biological and physiological makeup. They both have the same innate abilities and potentials. For him, equality is the normative basis of every democratic society. His feminist movement is nothing but a social

movement. His feminist ideal as a social movement makes him a liberal thinker par excellence. For Mill, the ultimate objective of every society is to guarantee the happiness of all. For Murkherjee and Ramaswamy, happiness meant liberty and individuality.⁶⁴ It is germane to assert that Mill visualized society as composed of free, equal, independent and virtuous citizens, who contributed their best towards the common good and would in turn receive fair rewards for their contributions.⁶⁵ He stressed absolute liberty of conscience, belief and expression, for they were crucial to human progress.⁶⁶ Finally, Mill's social and political philosophy demonstrates the fact that equality should be the ordering principle of societal and personal relationships.⁶⁷ Mill's ethics was important for liberalism because in effect it abandoned egoism, assumed that social welfare is a matter of concern to all men of good will, and regarded freedom, integrity, self-respect, and personal distinction as intrinsic goods apart from their contribution to happiness.⁶⁸ Mill followed the more sophisticated utilitarianism of Hume. Mill believes that nurture more than nature played a crucial role in the formation of character.⁶⁹ Freedom is a gift of man. It is undoubtedly a very singular gift, unique in the entire immense realm of nature.⁷⁰ He believes that everyone who receives the protection of society owes a return for the benefit and the fact of living in society renders it indispensable that each should be bound to observe a certain line of conduct towards the rest.⁷¹ Society is deeply rooted in social cooperation. Social cooperation is grounded in the normative possibility of social order. According to Ekong, social order is a concept used in sociology, history, and social sciences as a set of social practices which conserve, maintain and enforce normal ways of relating and behaving.⁷² Mill's utility maximization principle reflects the normative assumption of social order. Mill's democratic project conceives the normative possibility of rational consensus and disagreement. Mackenzie in consonance with Laclau and Mouffe argued that the desire to transcend the limitations of a representative, aggregative and majoritarian model...and the basic nature of social antagonism means consensus.⁷³ For Mackenzie, it is paradoxical...to use the ideal of consensus to regulate democratic processes, because democracy is premised upon disagreement: dissensus is necessary...for the functioning of democracy, and any attempt to remove it (even in theory) is actually striking at the heart of the democratic project itself.⁷⁴ According to Laclau and Mouffe, we maintain that without conflict and division, a pluralist democratic politics would be impossible.⁷⁵ Finally, Mill's theory of liberty elicits an emancipatory and progressive movement: one which sees the task of attaining equality between the sexes as its ultimate goal.⁷⁶

Conclusion

Having taken a cursory look at the socio-political implication, the normative foundation, the utilitarian principle and the conceptual clarifications of Mill's notion of liberty, feminism and representative government, it is germane to assert that his moral and political philosophy is grounded in a shared common interest of all in society. Freedom means responsibility. Our deliberate human actions and choices require reasoning faculty. His political philosophy is also grounded in his moral philosophy, principle of justice and utilitarianism. Mill agrees with Hobbes that politics is heralded by morality. His conviction is that moral education is built on human psychology. His deeper understanding of the principle of utilitarianism is reflected in human experience and moral education. Mill agrees with Plato that the sole objective or ultimate aim of human end is happiness. His utilitarian principle is in tandem with the concept of the good in Plato's Republic and Rawls's concept of justice. Plato argues that the ultimate objective for the establishment of the state is to guarantee the general happiness of all. Mill's principle of utilitarianism reveals the 'rational signification' of impartiality of persons'. His summation is that morality and justice remain the normative framework of liberty and democracy. Mill's utility principle is the principle of liberty. The principle of liberty safeguards people's freedom to pursue their own ends. Mill defends his utility principle on two grounds; it enables individuals to realize their individual potentials in their own distinctive manner; and it is aimed at liberating talents, ensure creativity and energy. Finally, the utility principle reflects in the social conditions of individuals and it is grounded in the moral development of culture and the cultivation of human character in democratic society. Mill's principle of utility is an explanatory model. The central themes of liberty, equality and self-determination are deeply rooted in his feminist movement. His feminist ideal best represents the cultivation or the formation and transformation of human character. The state played a crucial role in the transformation of human character.

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