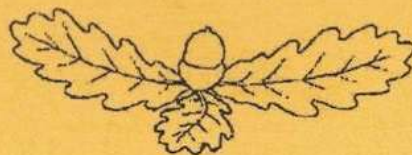


John Stuart Mill
and
Modern Liberalism

Alan Butt Philip



John Stuart Mill Institute

Biographical Note

Alan Butt Philip

Alan Butt Philip is Jean Monnet Reader in European Integration in the School of Management at the University of Bath. He has written extensively about EU institutions and policy-making. He was also specialist adviser to the House of Lords Select Committee on European Affairs for nine years concerning EU regional policy and the structural funds. He has lectured in forty universities over four continents, and has been a visiting professor at the Universities of Virginia and of Richmond (USA), and more recently at the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Paris-EAP.

After winning scholarships to Eton College and Oxford University, He graduated from St John's College with first class honours in Politics, Philosophy and Economics, and completed his D.Phil on contemporary Welsh politics at Nuffield College. He then joined ICFC Ltd (now part of the 3i Group) as a long term investment banker specialising in supplying capital to small and medium-sized firms. In 1975 he changed career and joined Bath University as an academic member of staff.

A founding trustee of the John Stuart Mill Institute, he was appointed Convenor of the trustees in succession to the late Dame Penelope Jessel in 1996. He fought five general elections in the Wells constituency as a Liberal, and also contested the 1979 and 1999 European elections, the latter as a Liberal Democrat.

John Stuart Mill and Modern Liberalism

Few philosophers have exercised such an influence over the whole political class of the United Kingdom as John Stuart Mill. Mill was the leading nineteenth century exponent of liberalism in politics, whose thinking on liberty and on the role of government served as a platform upon which much of the social liberalism of later authors was built. It is nevertheless true that in the twenty-first century politicians of each of the Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative parties can and do happily refer back to J.S. Mill's views as the touchstone of their own political philosophies. Mill is still on the curriculum of political sciences courses at most of Britain's leading universities, and is also to be found on A-level politics syllabi. As political philosophies go, his ideas continue to have a wide currency, and it has often been observed that Labour's leaders in the twentieth century owed more of their thinking to J.S. Mill than to Karl Marx. Mill's work is very evidently still in print and easily accessed in libraries.

In this monograph I will refer to J.S. Mill on occasion to distinguish from his eminent father, James Mill one of the founders of utilitarianism and an Edinburgh-trained scholar and journalist. Mill junior was a radical individualist and utilitarian revisionist who was brought up in London and influenced the

political mainstream. Indeed Mill junior was briefly elected as Liberal MP for Westminster from 1865 to 1868, winning twice, but then being defeated, despite a national surge of votes towards Mr Gladstone's Liberals, because of his advanced views. Mill would not compromise his principles even if electoral defeat was the likely consequence.

Mill was born in London in May 1806 and his early life still occasions some wonderment. He learned ancient Greek before he learned English (at the age of three), and had read Aesop's fables, Xenophon's Anabasis and the whole of Herodotus before he was eight. He mastered Latin at the age of nine, and was reading economics and Aristotle at the age of twelve. Alan Ryan, a leading authority on Mill, suggested recently that J S Mill's IQ had been estimated at 192! By the age of fifteen JS Mill was so well read in the classics, history, and sociology that he had huge advantage in learning over any contemporary philosophers. James Mill clearly took a very hands-on approach to the education of his talented son and, although a disciplinarian, he was keen that John Stuart Mill should search his own conclusions in his own way. (James Mill is believed to have been the model on whom Charles Dickens based the character of Mr Gradgrind in 'Hard Times'). The Mill family were friends with other leading intellectual figures of the time such as David Ricardo. At the age of fourteen

J S Mill went to stay for over a year in France with the family of Sir Samuel Bentham, brother of the noted utilitarian philosopher and economist Jeremy Bentham. J S Mill perfected his French at this time which gave him access to writing and philosophers such as Alexis de Tocqueville and Auguste Comte. By sixteen J S Mill and a few friends were setting up a Utilitarian Society, and he was contributing to newspapers like the Morning Chronicle and other contemporary reviews.

J S Mill was an agnostic which meant that he was not eligible to attend English or Scottish universities (it was not until the 1871 that a Liberal government changed this discrimination which excluded all who were not members of the Church of England). Instead he found employment with the British East India Company, with which he continued to be associated until it was abolished in 1858. John Stuart Mill's relations with and marriage to Harriet Taylor were one of the most significant elements in his life. Although the marriage was only to last seven years until Harriet's death in 1858, it was Harriet who sharpened her husband's awareness of the oppression of women. J S Mill in his Autobiography makes little mention of his mother but he recognises that she was made into a drudge by virtue of her social role. Harriet argued strongly (and persuaded JS Mill) that individuals have to make the best of their own lives and have

sufficient autonomy to take control of their own lives, even though society is constantly pressuring individuals to fit into certain social roles. Mill also attributes to Harriet in his preface to *On Liberty* its inspiration and joint authorship. One underestimated aspect of John Stuart Mill is his lifelong interest in France and his contact with French intellectuals. It is hard to know what he would have made of European integration and growing international governance structures, but he was clearly very well read and open to good ideas whatever or wherever their contemporary source. J S Mill spent most of his time after 1858 until his death in 1873 in France at Saint-Veran, close to Avignon, even while he was MP for Westminster! He wrote extensively about French historians of his day (Guizot and Michelet) and French philosophers such as Comte, de Tocqueville and others. J S Mill's hallmark, lucidity of expression and exposition – a key to his accessibility to successive generations of readers, probably owes a great deal to the French intellectual tradition.

John Stuart Mill two centuries on seems to many a formidable, but remote and austere figure. He certainly represents many of the best Victorian values but his intellectual capacity and imagination would be rated exceptional in any age. A nervous breakdown when he was 20 years old provided the occasion for him to become more aware of his own emotions and to build this side of

human life into his own understanding of society. He greatly enjoyed walking and the study of botany. He was a devotee of classical music and an accomplished pianist. He did not greatly enjoy being an MP, although he engaged himself fully in public debates while in the Commons, as well as when outside Westminster.

John Stuart Mill remains a nineteenth century giant both as a moral philosopher and a political economist. As a philosopher he followed in the empirical tradition of Hume and Berkeley, and he was always willing to modify his views in the light of experience. He sought to blend together the insights of the enlightenment and those of the romantic movement. Attitudes and beliefs he held to be the products of psychological laws of association while there is no knowledge independent of experience.¹ In his *System of Logic* Mill advances the case for 'enumerative induction' by which he means that all reasoning is generalisation from experience rather than the result of intuition. When applied to mathematics and logic this approach has great merit but it does not carry across well to the methodology of science, where the use of hypotheses which are then tested is a well-regarded approach. Critics were to regard his phenomenalist and naturalistic approaches to the theory of knowledge as incoherent.

John Stuart Mill's work in the fields of ethics and politics have proved more enduring. Here his utilitarianism and his humanism come into play, but it is in a revisionist form in comparison to Bentham's. The pursuit of happiness is the ultimate human end. Even when human actions are inspired by altruism rather than personal motives the pursuit of happiness collectively can be shown to be the basis of such action. The ideal society is that which achieves the greatest happiness of the greatest number. So human actions should be judged according to their consequences. Happiness is most effectively achieved when society leaves people free to pursue their own ends subject to rules established for the general good.

On the basis of his utilitarianism J S Mill sets out to prescribe the rights of the individual as well as the rights of justice. Similarly his liberalism stands in stark contrast to that of John Locke because he bases it on the principle of "utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being" rather than upon natural rights.² The principle of liberty enables individuals to realise their potential in their own way and, by liberating talents, creativity and dynamism it provides the essential preconditions for moral and intellectual progress.³ *On Liberty* was published in 1859 and *Utilitarianism* in 1863. J S Mill also wrote about economics, notably the two

volumes on *The Principles of Political Economy* published in 1848 (but later revised), in which he shows himself to be very much a disciple of David Ricardo. He wrote about the distribution of the gains from international trade, the influence of consumption upon production, the relations between profits and wages as well as on issues posed by land ownership and land reform in Ireland. He could not accept the inequitable distribution of the gains from economic activity which left the working classes impoverished and sometimes starving. Although familiar with early socialist writings he was never seduced by collectivism, leading to the overuse of the state's power.

John Stuart Mill had some highly pertinent views on taxation. He was well aware of the limits to direct taxation, too high a level leading to evasion. But he nevertheless supported taxation of land rents, a house tax, and taxation of legacies and inheritances at a progressive rate. On indirect taxes, Mill's view was that taxes on consumption should be impartial if assigned solely to raise revenue, but the necessities of life should be free of tax. Objects of conspicuous consumption, where consideration of status rather than need or utility was the main reason for expenditure, as well as other luxuries could be heavily taxed if the state of the public finances merited this.⁴

POLITICAL QUESTIONS

Without question John Stuart Mill was both a liberal and a democrat, but his democratic credentials carried some Victorian baggage which does not chime well with the twenty first century. Democracy provides the means to put an end to autocratic monarchies and to aristocracy, so he supports universal suffrage. As a radical individualist J S Mill fears that democracy will become over-dependent upon public opinion. Following arguments from de Tocqueville and Nietzsche he fears that people will all tend to think the same thing, so the views of the individual who dissents needs protection in a democracy. Even many Victorian Liberals were afraid that civilised values would be swamped under conditions of universal suffrage. So J S Mill proposed a system of weighted votes which would give the educated classes extra votes at elections and thus more influence. He also took the view that people living on poor relief (the equivalent of today's social security benefits) should not have the vote as they did not have an independent stake in society.

A significant part of *Consideration on Representative Government* (1861) is taken up with discussion of the possibilities of electoral reform. Mill was a strong supporter of Thomas Hare's treatise on proportional representation, published in 1859,

which was an early proposal in favour of the single transferable vote. Mill writes;

“Of all modes in which national representation can possibly be constituted, this one affords the best security for the intellectual qualifications desirable in the representatives. In no other way which it seems possible to suggest would parliament be so certain of containing the very elite of the country.”⁵

Mill was concerned to ensure the representation of minorities, but he was opposed to the secret ballot as he was afraid that the electors' private interests would govern the way they voted in secrecy, while voters would be more likely to give priority to their view of the public interest if they had to vote in public.⁶

Although elected MP for Westminster on two occasions, John Stuart Mill did not share the modern Liberal Democrat's approach to constituency-dominated politics. He refused to canvass for votes or to pay agents to do so for him. He saw himself as elected to play a national role as an MP rather than to serve constituency interests, in keeping with Edmund Burke a century earlier. He opposed the payment of a salary to MPs. J S Mill was always a keen public advocate of votes for women. He also defended the right of Charles Bradlaugh, an atheist Liberal MP from

Northampton, to serve as an MP without swearing an oath of allegiance to the crown on the Bible. He was very active in the debates leading up to the 1867 Reform Act which significantly broadened the franchise and secured amendments to reduce the possibility of corruption, although the secret ballot was not introduced until 1872. J S Mill also sought as an MP the reduction of the national debt, Irish land reform and a reform of the government of London. He believed in strong local government and also championed the civil rights of prostitutes and asylum-seekers.

The Bradlaugh case demonstrates how J S Mill was prepared to campaign publicly for Liberal principles to be applied in practice no matter how unpopular this made him: this particular cause played a major part in his losing his seat at Westminster. In *On Liberty* he was very clear on the point that the state had no right to suppress or penalise those with unpopular opinions as long as they were not harming others - a principle of action that modern British governments and their collaborators in the mass media find difficult to accept.

John Stuart Mill was equally forthright and uncompromising on the rights of women. He was a feminist. His classic text *On the Subjection of Women* was published in 1869, although written in

1861 and strongly influenced by Harriet Taylor who had died in 1858. He did not accept arguments about men and women based on nature: they were individual human beings entitled to the same rights and consideration. So women should be able to vote and to work in the same way as men. He did not support the confinement of women to prescribed social roles: his radical individualism argued for every individual to seek to make the best of their lives in any way they chose. It is a pity that the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s lost sight of this liberal perspective, even though it is more appreciated in the 21st century! J S Mill likened the position of women in British society to that of slaves tied to the house. So he was a keen campaigner for legal reform to improve the rights of women, and of mothers in respect of their children. In mid-Victorian society and law women did not own property they might have brought to a marriage and only fathers had rights over children. The first change to this state of affairs came with the Married Women's Property Act 1882 enacted by Gladstone's second administration after a long campaign. However, Mill's espousal of the cause of female suffrage and improved legal rights for women was another reason for his rejection by the electors of Westminster in 1868.

Land reform, especially in the context of the Irish question, was another issue he campaigned on. He would have liked to have

seen a major redistribution of land in Ireland to establish a democracy based on widespread peasant proprietorship. This would have been consistent with his views on democracy being based upon individual citizens having an independent stake in the society to which they belong. He published two works on Irish issues in 1868 and 1870, arguing that only social reform rather than repression would produce peace and stability in Ireland.⁷

As regards the decolonisation of the British Empire, John Stuart Mill was favourable in principle - well ahead of his time but he argued that the process needed to wait until societies in those colonies had matured to the point where they could be allowed fully democratic institutions. The education of the electorate would have been a key concern in this context. So he argued that the government of India should be handed over step by step to the native population while the 'imperial government' would gradually disappear from the scene. As early as 1850 J S Mill had been arguing that the intellectual potential of the black population was no different from that of the white population. Any differences had to do with the levels of educational, social, cultural and institutional development.

John Stuart Mill's views on capital punishment are worthy of note. He defended capital punishment on utilitarian grounds,

taking the view that it was to society's benefit to be rid of the worst criminals. He accepted the argument that capital punishment was more of a deterrent than penal servitude, but he also thought that a long period in prison was unkind to the offender than death. Clearly J S Mill had not even considered the possibility of judicial error in his calculations.

Obviously John Stuart Mill had no knowledge of the development of international institutions after 1945 with powers of decision over nation states. There is nothing in his writings to suggest that he would have resisted international governance systems such as the United Nations or the European Union. His perspective on life was international. He glorified in the cultural and social diversity to be found in Europe. He chose to live a significant part of his life in France – a precursor of the large exodus of British people to France today. But the logic of his thoughts on representative government suggest he would be demanding a maximalist interpretation of the concept of 'subsidiarity', and full transparency and accountability in today's European Union.

J S MILL'S INFLUENCE ON BRITISH LIBERALISM

John Stuart Mill was both a product of his time and a man ahead of his time. Mill set Liberalism in Britain on a course which sets it apart from much of the continental European liberal tradition

and which continues to make British liberal democratic thinking in the twenty-first century exceptional in European terms.⁸ Although clearly an economic liberal he was a social liberal as well and it is this side of his liberalism that was later to be developed by philosophers such as L.T.Hobhouse and T.H.Green, and which were to be the hallmarks of Liberal governments from the 1890s onwards. His thinking has also influenced politicians of all the main political traditions and continues to exercise influence today because his writings are widely studied in schools, colleges and universities, especially in Britain. In essence Mill was among the first to grasp that individuals were often unable to exercise their rights in a democracy from a position of social deprivation. Hence social policy issues were the legitimate concern of government if they enhanced this more broadly defined liberty of the individual.

Utilitarianism, even in its revised form propounded by J S Mill, did not long survive him as a coherent and reputable set of philosophical ideas, but as a philosophical approach to ethics and politics it retains, in its Millian version, educational and illustrative value as an honest and intelligible attempt to build a system of political ideas based on logic and a human approach to life and society. Mill's world view continues to provoke

challenge and dispute, a recent example being an article by G.W. Carey in which he describes Mill as an authoritarian secularist.⁹

Long after utilitarianism had been dismissed as an interesting philosophical curiosity, J S Mill's political style of seeking to enunciate a liberal position in relation to issues of the day based upon first principles remains importantly a model for us. In addition, his life provides us with a powerful example of the liberal philosopher-activist, not only living his own life according to his principles but publicly campaigning on contemporary political questions articulating those same principles. Liberal concern with the constitutional arrangements under which democracies operate is not only shared by J S Mill but other notable liberal philosophers. But we owe to Mill important ideas about the way democracy functions, representation, electoral reform and the protection of individual and minority rights. It is John Stuart Mill who coined the phrase 'the tyranny of the majority'. Our own relatively recent political history provides us with a powerful example of just such a tyranny operating under supposedly democratic conditions, namely the systematic suppression of Catholic population of Northern Ireland by the majority Protestant community between 1922 and 1969 under the aegis of the devolved government at Stormont. John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* remains required reading for all serious Liberals, not

least because of its passionate defence of minority and human rights, and the freedom of belief and expression to which all individuals are entitled. His benchmark test of asking whether the exercise of an individual's freedom is harmful to the rest of society remains an essential part of every Liberal politician's toolkit. Mill had few illusions about public opinion and the press, and he was genuinely fearful about the capacity of the majority of newly-enfranchised voters to respect the democratic rights of others, a pessimism about democratic politics which has proved to be well-founded.

Interest in electoral reform is another major point of contact between J S Mill and better representation of public opinion. Mill was very much taken with Hare's argumentation, developed in 1859, which was to form the basis of later arguments for the single transferable vote. He is clear about the inadequacies of single member first past the post elections. He is interested in a variety of alternative voting systems. He stresses the importance of ensuring representation of all shades of opinion through the electoral process, but he is also prepared to give extra weight to the votes of the educated to act as a counterweight to the ill-informed under conditions of universal suffrage. It is worth remembering that extra votes for graduates of British university and for owners of businesses remained part of the UK electoral

system until after the 1945 general election, in line with Mill's thinking.

John Stuart Mill is also notable as one of the earliest male feminists in Europe. His conviction that men and women have equal intelligent potential and deserve equal civil and legal rights is unwavering. He is well aware of the waste of human potential, as well as the drudgery and slavery, of the traditional housekeeping role to which women have been assigned. What is more he was prepared to campaign publicly on this issue, whatever the cost to his embryonic political career, because it was the right, liberal and principled thing to do. Many male Liberal politicians as late as the 1970s were not prepared to do the same.

Part of J S Mill's legacy to contemporary Liberalism is his definition of key principles and philosophical terms with which to conduct political debate. Another part of his legacy is his political style – his clarity of language, his open-ness to other opinions and new knowledge, and his campaigning spirit and uncompromising nature. But above all it is his defence of individual liberty that we should treasure in a world where the power of state over the individual looms ever larger and ever more insidiously:

“the only purpose for which powers can be exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant”

(On Liberty, 1859)

Footnotes

- 1, Ted Honderich (ed), *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (2005), p.600
 2. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1863), Chapter 1
 3. Ted Honderich (ed), *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (2005), p.602
 4. Samuel Hollander, *The Economics of John Stuart Mill* (1985), Vol.2, pp 870-874.
 5. John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) Chapter VII
 6. John Stuart Mill, *Ibidem*, Chapter X.
 7. John Stuart Mill, *England and Ireland* (1868) and *Chapters and Speeches on the Irish Land Question* (1870)
 8. Alan Butt Philip, 'The Development of Liberalism in the United Kingdom: Another Case of British Exceptionalism?' in J. Petitot and P. Nemo (eds), *Histoire du libéralisme en Europe* (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2006)
 9. George W. Carey, 'The Authoritarian Secularism of John Stuart Mill' in *Humanitas* (2002), Vol.XV, No.1.
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Quotations from the works of John Stuart Mill

Extracts from On Liberty

This, then, is the appropriate region of human liberty. It comprises, first, the inward domain of consciousness; demanding liberty of conscience in the most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling; absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral, or theological. The liberty of expressing and publishing opinions may seem to fall under a different principle, since it belongs to that part of the conduct of an individual which concerns other people; but, being almost of as much importance as the liberty of thought itself, and resting in great part on the same reasons, is practically inseparable from it. Secondly, the principle requires liberty of tastes and pursuits; of framing the plan of our life to suit our own character; of doing as we like, subject to such consequences as may follow; without impediment from our fellow-creatures, so long as what we do does not harm them, even though they should think our conduct foolish, perverse or wrong. Thirdly, from this liberty of each individual, follows the liberty, within the same limits, of combination among individuals; freedom to unite, for any purpose not involving harm to others: the persons combining being supposed to be of full age, and not forced or deceived.

No society in which these liberties are not, on the whole, respected, is free, whatever may be its form of government; and none is completely free in which they not exist absolute and unqualified. (Chapter 1)

If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind. Were an opinion a personal possession of no value except to the owner; if to be

obstructed in the enjoyment of it were simply a private injury, it would make some difference whether the injury was inflicted only on a few persons or on many. But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging effort for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error. (Chapter II)

The opinion which it is attempted to suppress by authority may possibly be true. Those who desire to suppress it, of course deny its truth; but they are not infallible. They have no authority to decide the question for all mankind, and exclude every other person from the means of judging. To refuse a hearing to an opinion, because they are sure that it is *absolute* certainty.

All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility... (Chapter II)

Strange it is, that men should admit the validity of the arguments for free discussion, but object to their being "pushed to an extreme;" not seeing that unless the reasons are good for an extreme case, they are not good for any case. (Chapter II)

7But, indeed, the dictum that truth always triumphs over persecution is one of those pleasant falsehoods which men repeat after one another till they pass into commonplace, but which all experience refutes. History teems with instances of truth put down by persecution. If not suppressed for ever, it may be thrown back for centuries.

(Chapter II)

The despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement, being in increasing antagonism to that disposition to aim at something better than customary, which is called, according to circumstances, the spirit of liberty or that of progress or improvement. (Chapter III)

What has made the European family of nations an improving, instead of a stationary portion of mankind? Not any superior excellence in them, which, when it exists, exists as the effect not as the cause; but their remarkable diversity of character and culture. Individuals, classes, nations, have been extremely unlike one another: they have struck out a great variety of paths, each leading to something valuable; and although at every period those who travelled in different paths have been intolerant of one another, and each would have thought it an excellent thing if all the rest could have been compelled to travel his road, their attempts to thwart each other's development have rarely had any permanent success, and each has in time endured to receive the good which the others have offered. Europe is, in my judgement, wholly indebted to this plurality of paths for its progressive and many-sided development. (Chapter III)

Though society is not founded on a contract, and though no good purpose is answered by inventing a contract in order to deduce social obligations from it, every one 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. This conduct consists, first, in not injuring the interests of one another; or rather certain interests, which, either by express legal provision or by tacit understanding, ought to be considered as rights; and secondly, in each person's bearing his share (to be fixed on some equitable principle) of the labours and sacrifices incurred for defending the society or its members from injury and molestation. These conditions society is justified in enforcing, at all costs to those who endeavour to withhold fulfilment. (Chapter IV)

If grown persons are to be punished for not taking proper care of themselves, I would rather it were for their own sake, than under pretence of preventing them from impairing their capacity of rendering to society benefits which society does not pretend it has a right to exact. (Chapter IV)

But the strongest of all the arguments against the interference of the public with purely personal conduct is that, when it does interfere, the odds are that it interferes wrongly, and in the wrong place. On questions of social morality, of duty to others, the opinion of the public, that is, of an overruling majority, though often wrong, is likely to be still oftener right; because on such questions they are not only required to judge of their own interests; of the manner in which some mode of conduct, if allowed to be practised, would affect themselves. But the opinion of a similar majority, imposed as a law on the minority, on

questions of self-regarding conduct, is quite as likely to be wrong as right; for in these cases public opinion means, at the best, some people's opinion of what is good or bad for other people; while very often it does not even mean that; the public, with the most perfect indifference, passing over the pleasure or convenience of those whose conduct they censure, and considering only their own preference. (Chapter IV)

It is now recognised, though not till after a long struggle, that both the cheapness and the good quality of commodities are most effectually provided for by leaving the producers and sellers perfectly free, under the sole check of equal freedom to the buyers for supplying themselves elsewhere. This is the so-called doctrine of Free Trade, which rests on grounds different from, though equally solid with, the principle of individual liberty asserted in this Essay. Restrictions on trade, or on production for purposes of trade, are indeed restraints; and all restraint, *quâ* restraint, is an evil: but the restraints in question affect only that part of conduct which society is competent to restrain, and are wrong solely because they do not really produce the results which it is desired to produce by them. (Chapter IV)

How far liberty may legitimately be invaded for the prevention of crime, or of accident. It is one of the undisputed functions of government to take precautions against crime before it has been committed, as well as to detect and punish it afterwards. The preventive function of government, however, is far more liable to be abused, to the prejudice of liberty, than the punitive function; for there is hardly any part of the legitimate freedom of action of a human being which would not admit of being represented, and

fairly to, as increasing the facilities for some form or other of delinquency. (Chapter V)

A general State education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another: and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government, whether this be a monarch, a priesthood, an aristocracy, or the majority of the existing generation; in proportion as it is efficient and successful, it establishes a despotism over the mind, leading by natural tendency to one over the body. An education established, and controlled by the State should only exist, if it exist at all, as one among many competing experiments, carried on for the purpose of example and stimulus, to keep the others up to a certain standard of excellence. (Chapter V)

The third and most cogent reason for restricting the interference of government is the great evil of adding unnecessarily to its power. Every function superadded to those already exercised by the government causes its influence over hopes and fears to be more widely diffused, and converts, more and more, the active and ambitious part of the public into hangers-on of the government, or of some party which aims at becoming the government. If the roads, the railways, the banks, the insurance offices, the great joint-stock companies, the universities, and the public charities, were all of them branches of the government; if, in addition, the municipal corporations and local boards, with all that now devolves on them, became departments of the central administration; if the employés of all these different enterprises were appointed and paid by the government, and looked to the government for every rise in life; not all the freedom of the press

and popular constitution of the legislature would make this or any other country free otherwise than in name. (Chapter V)

To secure as much of the advantages of centralised power and intelligence as can be had without turning into governmental channels too great a proportion of the general activity – is one of the most difficult and complicated questions in the art of government. It is, in a great measure, a question of detail, in which many and various considerations must be kept in view, and no absolute rule can be laid down. But I believe that the practical principle in which safety resides, the ideal to be kept in view, the standard by which to test all arrangements intended for overcoming the difficulty, may be conveyed in these words: the greatest dissemination of power consistent with efficiency; but the greatest possible centralisation of information, and diffusion of it from the centre. (Chapter V)

Extracts from Considerations on Representative Government

Of all modes in which a national representation can possibly be constituted, this one [Thomas Hare's proposed voting system] affords the best security for the intellectual qualifications desirable in the representatives. At present, by universal admission, it is becoming more and more difficult for any one who has only talents and character to gain admission into the House of Commons. The only persons who can get elected are those who possess local influence, or make their way by lavish expenditure, or who, on the invitation of three or four tradesmen or attorneys, are sent down by one of the two great parties from their London clubs, as men whose votes the party can depend on under all circumstances. On Mr Hare's system, those who did not like the local candidates, or who could not succeed in carrying the local candidate they preferred, would have the power to fill up their voting papers by a selection from all the persons of national

reputation, on the list of candidates, with whose general political principles they were in sympathy. Almost every person, therefore, who had made himself in any way honourably distinguished, though devoid of local influence, and having sworn allegiance to no political party, would have a fair chance of making up the quota; and with this encouragement such persons might be expected to offer themselves, in numbers hitherto undreamt of. Hundreds of able men of independent thought, who would have no chance whatever of being chosen by the majority of any existing constituency, have by their writings, or their exertions in some field of public usefulness, made themselves known and approved by a few persons in almost every district of the kingdom; and if every vote that would be given for them in every place could be counted for their election, they might be able to complete the number of the quota. In no other way which it seems possible to suggest would Parliament be so certain of containing the very elite of the country. (Chapter VII)

The natural tendency of representative government, as of modern civilisation, is towards collective mediocrity: and this tendency is increased by all reductions and extensions of the franchise, their effect being to place the principal power in the hands of classes more and more below the highest level of instruction in the community. But though the superior intellects and characters will necessarily be outnumbered, it makes a great difference whether or not they are heard. In the false democracy which, instead of giving representation to all gives it only to the local majorities, the voice of the instructed minority may have no organs at all in the representative body. (Chapter VII)

No arrangement of the suffrage, therefore, can be permanently satisfactory in which any person or class is peremptorily excluded; in which the electoral privilege is not open to all persons of full age who desire to obtain it.

There are, however, certain exclusions, required by positive reasons, which do not conflict with this principle, and which, though an evil themselves, are only to be got rid of by the cessation of the state which requires them. I regard it as wholly inadmissible that any person should participate in the suffrage without being able to read, write, and, I will add, perform the common operations of arithmetic. (Chapter VIII)

It is also important, that the assembly which votes the taxes, either general or local, should be elected exclusively by those who pay something towards the taxes imposed. Those who pay no taxes, disposing by their votes of other people's money, have every motive to be lavish and none to economise. (Chapter VIII)

In the preceding argument for universal, but graduated suffrage, I have taken no account of difference of sex. I consider it to be as entirely irrelevant to political rights as difference in height or in the colour of the hair. All human beings have the same interest in good government; the welfare of all is alike affected by it, and they have equal need of a voice in it to secure their share of its benefits. If there be any difference, women require it more than men, since, being physically weaker, they are more dependent on law and society for protection. (Chapter VIII)

Were it as right, as it is wrong, that they [women] should be a subordinate class, confined to domestic occupations and subject to domestic authority, they would not the less require the protection of the suffrage to secure them from the abuse of that authority. Men, as well as women, do not need political rights in order that they may govern, but in order that they may not be misgoverned. (Chapter VIII)

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Recent Publications of the John Stuart Mill Institute

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