

JOHN STAURT MILL'S CONCEPT OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY VIS-A-VIS THE COMMON GOOD: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

Tobenna B. Ikwuamaeze, PhD

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Tansian University, Umuaya,
Anambra State, Nigeria

Email: tobebright4greatness@gmail.com

Abstract

Democracy is seen as a system of government in which the supreme power is vested on the people and exercise by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free and fair elections. This paper critically examines the concept of liberal democracy in the political philosophy of John Stuart Mill, with particular emphasis on its relationship to man's common good which would lead to society's growth and betterment. Mill's ideology of liberal democracy built on some major ideas like; first, on the issue of representative government and second on the question of individual liberty and also on Utilitarian ethics, seeks to reconcile individual freedom with collective social welfare. Hence, in his work on Liberty, he advocated the rights of all human beings especially for those of women which demonstrate an attempt to balance democratic inclusion of all in the society. With this, he was recorded in 1866 to be the first person to call on women being given the right to vote. Central to his theory is the idea of political participation as an educative process, together with his controversial stands and proposal for plural voting, which allocates more electoral weight to greater educated persons. The study employs the method of analysis in exploring Mill's idea on democratic governance in the human society. The research reveals Mill's argument that political institutions should not merely secure political order rather should also promote the moral, civic and intellectual advancement of individuals within the confine of the society. His theory on liberal democracy therefore views the common good as the harmonious integration of public welfare, social progress and the individual's personal liberty. The paper evaluates as well the contemporary relevance of Mill's liberal democratic ideals to human rights, modern civic engagement, social justice and democratic accountability. Therefore, not minding that some aspects of his theory requires urgent and critical reinterpretation to address total inclusivity, participatory governance and equality in today's increasing pluralistic societies, we, however, see a democrat and an ardent defender of democracy at all cost, who stood for peace, equality, harmony, individual's rights and freedom, minorities adequate representation and for a better future for all.

Keywords: Democracy, Liberal Democracy, Common Good, Equality, Justice, Women Subjugation, Weighted Voting

Introduction

Democracy presumably involves rule by the will of the people. We might say that a political system is democratic insofar as the content of its political decisions reflect the will of the people in all ramifications. In his work *Considerations on Representative Government*, Mill argues that a form of representative democracy is the best ideal form of government. Of course, it is not an invariant ideal that must hold regardless of historical or social circumstances, but Mill does think that it is the best form of government for societies with sufficient resources, security, and culture of self-reliance. In particular, Mill thinks that representative democracy is best, when it ought to be best, because it best satisfies two criteria of all good government which is that government is good insofar as it promotes the common good, and this is conceived of as promoting the moral, intellectual, and active traits of its citizens and secondly that government is good insofar as it makes effective use of institutions and

the resources of its citizens to promote the common good. As far as the two above is really a component of one combined for the good of the citizens, Mill's ultimate criterion may stand because it projects that good government should promote the common good of its citizens.

Consequently, Mill does not explicitly invoke his version of utilitarianism, but only portrays what he thinks is far much better for all in the human society. Perhaps Mill may have wanted his defense of representative democracy to rest on more ecumenical premises, but still clearly understands this political criterion of the common good in broadly consequentialist and result-oriented terms looking at it critically. Though, Mill may not have mentioned the higher pleasures doctrine explicitly, but it is also clear that he understands the good of each in broadly perfectionist terms that emphasize the importance of an active and autonomous form of life that exercises deliberative, creative and intellectual capacities and abilities.

Furthermore, in his philosophical writings and in his service as a liberal member of parliament for Westminster from 1865 to 1868, Mill was a vigorous advocate for extending the franchise beyond where it is. Though he recognized some limits in the scope of the franchise, he was a consistent, though not always successful advocate for its *extension* beyond its then current scope. He adequately supported extending the franchise to previously disenfranchised members of the working class, and he was a staunch advocate for female suffrage. To many, such views about the appropriate scope of the franchise seemed quite radical when viewed critically. Though Mill did support weighted voting, he may have seen this, at least in part, as a necessary concession to succeed in securing his primary objective of universal suffrage. This context is worth bearing in mind when evaluating Mill's proposals for the scope and weight of the franchise. John Stuart Mill was trained up by his father, James Mill and John Austin. In his earlier days, Mill was very considerably influenced by Bentham's philosophy and its reforming programme. But with the passage of time, many of the evils against which the early utilitarians laboured hard ceased to exist and Benthamism began yielding place to other philosophic systems. Hence, for Mill, a direct democracy, in which every citizen votes on legislation, is one way for political decisions to reflect the will of the people. But direct democracy is impractical in anything but a small community like the Ancient Greek city state. Mill, therefore, in contrast defended *representative democracy* rather than direct democracy as the best form of government for the common good of all in the society.

Liberal Democracy and the Common Good

Mill in his democratic theory believes that representatives are charged with the task of voting after free and open discussions on their own considered views about what would promote the common good. Here Mill expresses doubts about an interest group model of democracy, according to which representatives are advocates of the sectarian interests of their constituents and democracy is seen as an impartial aggregation and set of compromises among sectarian interests. Instead, Mill regards representatives as fiduciaries in a public trust, in which each representative aims at a genuinely common good, and in which individual and collective deliberations are shaped by a diversity of experiences and perspectives. Many needs are local in nature and even when the needs are general; their satisfaction may depend heavily on local conditions. For this reason, Mill advocates a federal system in which a central representative body has more limited functions and local or municipal representative bodies govern in matters involving local affairs or local detail, such as the creation and maintenance of local infrastructures, including roads, courts, jails, and schools etc. In this sense, Park Jin-gon opined that Mill believed educated and morally responsible leaders should guide public deliberation. Their role is to elevate public reasoning so democratic decisions promote the common welfare, not merely majority preferences.¹ For Lederman Shmuel:

Mill viewed representative democracy as the best system for advancing the general welfare in societies capable of self-government. At the same time, highlights the tension between Mill's commitment to democratic government and his views on colonial administration, questioning whether Mill consistently applied his own ideals of the common good.²

Consequently, one important function of a central government, Mill believes, is the need to protect local political minorities from being systematically sidetracked and disadvantaged by local political majorities. Here he shows his concern with individual rights against the tyranny of the majority, which was a focus of *On Liberty*, and suggests that constitutional guarantees may be better preserved by central, rather than local, authorities. Unfortunately, he does not devote much attention to exactly which individual rights should be recognized constitutionally.

Mill, in his thoughts on parliamentary reforms insists that a representative democracy, either local or federal, should employ *proportional*, rather than winner-take-all, representation.³ We can see how proportional representation fits with the epistemic argument for democracy. Winner-take-all representation may eliminate or reduce effective expression of minority points of view so essential for free and informed inquiry about the common good and respecting the interests of political minorities. Mill does not defend representative democracy as ideal under all historical and social circumstances. There are some social circumstances, he thinks, in which democracy will not promote the common good. These are backward states of society in which most citizens are unfit to rule, because they lack necessary ingredients of the culture of autonomy to exercise decision-making authority responsibly. For him, they lack discipline, education and/or an active and independent character and stated that different forms of government are appropriate for such backward states for advancement. This is why Kitcher Philip stated that Mill understood democracy as an institution for promoting both individual development and the common good. Democratic participation helps citizens cultivate reason, moral responsibility, and concern for the welfare of the community.⁴ In particular, Mill thinks that benevolent rule by an enlightened one or few, which aimed at the common good, would be better suited for such societies. Here, Mill is introducing a scope limitation on the defense of political rights that he recognized explicitly in his defense of basic liberties in *On Liberty*.

More so, Mill is also prepared to exclude those adults who are not literate. This is a failure of normative competence for which society is to blame and which it is society's duty to correct. Mill as well excludes from the franchise those adults who do not pay taxes and are on public assistance. Here, he expresses the concern that voting gives one a say not only over one's own life but also over the lives of others and that without contributing to the production of an economic surplus, one has no right to help determine how this surplus is distributed. Mill, hence, portrays clear doubts about the normative competence of those on public assistance. Elsewhere, he insisted that charities make beneficiaries dependent on benefactors in ways that compromise their autonomy and independence in decision making process and voting. Insofar as this is true, it provides an additional ground and rationale for excluding dependents from the franchise.

The main limitations on the scope of the franchise that Mill recognizes track this threshold of normative competence. Mill thinks that the reasons for favouring democracy apply to all those above this normative threshold. He stated that the literate manual labourers have the same claim to the franchise as anyone else. They need to stand up for their own interests and make sure they are properly reckoned in political decision-making. Moreover, they stand to benefit from political

participation, because of the way it develops their deliberative capacities and abilities, and of course, there are differences in normative competence among those above this threshold. However, Mill's account of representative democracy tracks these further differences in terms of the *weight*, rather than the *scope*, of the franchise. Differences in normative competence above this threshold should affect the comparative weight of one's vote. This scheme of weighted voting takes the form of a system of plural votes. Mill emphatically rejects property qualifications as suitable proxies for normative competence and insists on educational qualifications.

The most direct mode of effecting this would be to establish the plurality of votes, in favour of those who could afford a reasonable presumption of superior knowledge and cultivation. For Mill, ... the perfection, then, of an electoral system would be that every person should have one vote, but that every well-educated person in the community should have more than one, on a scale corresponding as far as practicable to their amount of education.⁵ In addendum to this, he argues that education and competence are important. Electoral procedures should improve the quality of representatives while maintaining public accountability.⁶ There is an upper limit on the system of plural votes such that the weighted votes of the educational elite will not give them a majority coalition that could advance its class interests at the expense of the uneducated minority. In Turner Jonathan's argument, Mill regarded voting as a public trust rather than a private right. Citizens should vote to advance the common good instead of personal or sectional interests. Democracy succeeds only when electoral participation is guided by civic responsibility and concern for society as a whole.⁷ Mill's commitment to weighted voting reflects his views about the backward state of the working classes. According to him:

The opinions and wishes of the poorest and rudest class of labourers may be very useful as one influence among others on the minds of the voters, as well as on those of the Legislature; and yet it may be highly mischievous to give them the preponderant influence, but admitting them, in their present state of morals and intelligence, to the full exercise of the suffrage.⁸

Despite these doubts about the working classes, Mill regarded himself as their friend. Mill did not blame the working classes for their comparative inferiority, and he did not regard their inferiority as a natural or permanent condition. He thought that improved access to quality primary and secondary education and greater scope for civic participation would gradually improve normative competence in the working classes. Insofar as this is true, the qualification to Mill's commitment to political equality, represented by his scheme of weighted voting, is temporary and transitional. In this sense, weighted voting is not part of ideal political theory in the way that universal suffrage and proportional representation are. And even if weighted voting tracks the epistemic reasons for democracy and differences in underlying normative competence, it violates norms of political equality. Mill seems not to recognize the potentially corrosive effects of weighted voting in terms of the message it sends of second-class citizenship to the working classes. He thinks that self-respect requires only that one have the vote, not that one have an equal vote, regardless of normative competence. According to his view:

There is not, in this arrangement (weighted voting), anything necessarily invidious to those to whom it assigns the lower degrees of influence. Entire exclusion from a voice in the common concerns is one thing; the concession to others of a more potential voice, on the ground of greater capacity for the management of the joint interests, is another. The two things are not merely different, they are incommensurable. Everyone has a right to feel insulted by being made a nobody, and stamped as of no account at all. No one but a fool ... feels offended by the acknowledgment that there are others whose opinion ... is entitled to a greater

amount of consideration than his.⁹

One might well want to harness the resources and expertise of an educated elite, perhaps, as Mill already imagines, by giving them special roles in the drafting of legislation or in setting the agenda for public deliberations. But this does not require giving the educated elite plural votes. Doing that seems to have significant symbolic value, saying that working classes should have less political standing and say. From this perspective, Mill displays something of a tin ear for such concerns about weighted voting.

Interestingly, while he does not seem especially sensitive to concerns about the bad effects of second-class citizenship in *Considerations on Representative Government*, he seems much more sensitive to such concerns in *The Subjection of Women*. As we will see further, Mill is acutely aware of the variety of ways in which women's contributions can be discouraged and undervalued and of the individual and social costs of women's second-class status. Had Mill been as mindful of the costs of according workers second-class citizenship as he would later be of the costs of according women second-class status, he might have been more skeptical of weighted voting than he in fact was. Mill applies his liberal principles to issues of sexual equality primarily in *The Subjection of Women*. He denounces existing forms of sexual inequality in clear and unequivocal terms thus:

The principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and ... it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.¹⁰

Hence, to modern ears, Mill's defense of sexual equality may seem obvious, and, to some contemporary feminists, his criticism of sexual inequality may not be deep or consistent enough. But viewed in historical context, Mill's defense of sexual equality is radical, courageous, and sometimes eloquent. Mill rejected sexual inequality in both domestic and social contexts. He discusses domestic equality primarily in Chapter II of his work. There, he focuses on the rights of wives and mothers, recognizing women's equal rights over their bodies or persons to own and control property, to control various aspects of domestic decision-making and household management, to custody and care of children, and to separation and divorce. But Mill is not only concerned with wives and mothers in domestic contexts, he also defended equal rights to education, to professional opportunities, to vote in political elections, and to run for political office. In addition to these rights, Mill presumably also endorses equal rights to freedom of expression, worship, and association. One assumes that he sees the main threats to these rights as occurring in the domestic realm and coming from husbands, fathers, and brothers. At times, Mill defends sexual equality on explicitly consequentialist grounds as a way of making fuller use of people's talents and promoting a culture of equal opportunity, accountability, and genuine meritocracy. But he also defended sexual equality as a matter of individual rights and justice. According to him:

Thus far, the benefits which it has appeared that the world would gain by ceasing to make sex a disqualification for privileges and a badge of subjection, are social rather than individual; consisting in an increase of the general fund of thinking and acting power, and an improvement in the general conditions of the association of men and women. But it would be a grievous understatement of the case to omit the most direct benefit of all, the unspeakable gain in private happiness to the liberated half of the species; the difference to them between a life of subjection to the will of others, and a life of rational freedom. After the primary necessities of food and raiment, freedom is the first and strongest want to human nature.¹¹

In elaborating this claim about women's higher-order interests in liberty, he says that personal independence is an 'element of happiness.' This echoes the arguments in *On Liberty* for claiming that basic liberties are necessary for persons to exercise the deliberative capacities that make them progressive beings.

Consequently, in defending women's rights, Mill, as well appeals to the distinctively modern and progressive commitment to *equal opportunity for welfare*. At several points, he likens the status of women inside and outside of marriage to slavery. Mill is not much impressed by those who would dispute the analogy on the ground that women are treated much better than slaves. For him, gilded cages are still cages that restrict freedom and opportunity, and often the cages are not gilded even because there is no need to do so since it's already a cage with secured protector. Mill insists that husbands can be and often are just as violent and abusive as masters. Indeed, with the demise of slavery in America, he views sexual inequality as the last vestige of slavery in the Western world. The law of servitude in marriage has also been seen in some quarters as a monstrous contradiction to all the principles of the modern world, and to all the experience through which those principles have been slowly and painfully worked out. It is the sole case, now that negro slavery has been abolished, in which a human being in the plenitude of every faculty is delivered up to the tender mercies of another human being in the hope that this other human person will use the power solely given for the good of the person subjected to it. For Mill, marriage is the only actual bondage known to our law. For him, there remain no legal slaves anymore in the contemporary world except the mistress of every household, in this case, a wife.

The restrictions contained in Victorian marriage law that give husbands complete control over the person and property of their wives and that do not allow for unilateral divorce or separation make marriage a form of sexual slavery. For him, slavery is an impermissible restriction of the liberty of another and would remain impermissible even if the wife consented to marriage. Mill might question whether the consent is meaningful given the social pressures to marry and to defer to their husbands, the limited options for those who do not marry, and the adverse effects and consequences to women of expressing dissent within their marriages. But the quality of consent should be in any case irrelevant, because we know that Mill thinks that it is impermissible to contract into slavery and that paternalistic laws that prevent such contracts are not only permissible but obligatory.

Presumably, this is just the sort of case that Mill has in mind when he suggests that the prohibition of selling oneself into slavery is a principled exception to the usual prohibition on paternalism that has 'wider application.' This norm of equal opportunity for welfare, which is violated by Victorian marriage law, is a demand of justice and grounds a claim of right. Mill considers and replies to various actual and possible defenses of sexual inequality. In most cases, the apologist for inequality alleges that women are naturally inferior in relation to men along some dimensions that is alleged to be relevant to the proper management of personal and public affairs. For the most part, the apologist claims that men possess some trait essential for normative competence that women lack (these might be represented as alleged female *deficits*) or that women possess some trait that men lack that threatens normative competence (these might be represented as alleged female *disqualifiers*). In either case, the proponents argue, it turns out that women are naturally inferior and so do not deserve equal treatment in the state.

Mill considers a large list of potential natural differences, not restricted to deficits and disqualifiers, including claims that women are: more intuitive and practical, less principled and theoretical than men: less accomplished in philosophy, science, and art than men: less original than men: morally superior to men: more susceptible to personal bias than men: they are more focused on particulars,

less capable of abstraction or generalization than men: more nervous and excitable than men: less single-minded than men: more self-sacrificing and self-abnegating than men more pacific and less aggressive than men, and more philanthropic than men etc.

Mill's response to these alleged differences is mixed. Sometimes, he questions whether the traits in question are unevenly distributed. But, for the most part, he seems to concede that the traits are unevenly distributed. He doesn't always agree that the female trait is a deficit or disqualifier. For instance, he thinks that being more intuitive, more practical, more focused on particulars, and less rigid allows women to compensate for deficits in the way that men typically approach decision-making. Women are less likely to follow principle for its own sake and are more likely to test principles by their real world consequences. They are better able to multi-task and intellectually more open-minded. Being morally superior and less aggressive are unqualified goods. However, Mill seems to concede that women are more excitable, less accomplished, and less original than men. He tries to explain these deficits and disqualifiers in ways that do not presuppose women's natural inferiority to men.

Mill's primary response to the apologists is to claim that even if the trait is unevenly distributed and functions as a deficit or disqualifier, there is nonetheless no evidence of natural inferiority. There is no evidence of natural inferiority, because we cannot be sure that the incapacity is the product of nature, rather than nurture. In particular, because the history of sexual relations has been discriminatory, we cannot rule out the possibility that female incapacity is the product of past discriminatory treatment. He states thus:

I consider it a presumption in any one to pretend to decide what women are or are not, can or cannot be, by natural constitution. They have always hitherto been kept, as far as regards spontaneous development, in so unnatural a state, that their nature cannot but have been greatly distorted and disguised; and no one can safely pronounce that if women's nature were left to choose its direction as freely as men's, and if no artificial bent were attempted to be given to it except that required by the conditions of human society, and given to both sexes alike there would be any material difference, or perhaps any difference at all, in the character and capacities that would unfold themselves.¹²

Mill rightly insists that incapacity that is the product of discriminatory treatment cannot be appealed to justify that discrimination, thereby seeing it as circular reasoning. Mill can explain differential accomplishments in philosophy, science, and the arts by appeal to social barriers to women's participation in these fields and to competing domestic demands that are placed on them. In this connection, it is worth noting that Mill can concede not only differential accomplishments of the sexes but differential capacity, in at least one sense. For Mill one can and should distinguish between *actual* capacity and *potential* capacity. Actual capacities determine what an agent is now able to do, whereas potential capacities determine what actual capacities she can develop. For instance, (I have no actual capacity to speak Russian, but presumably I do have a potential capacity to speak Russian. By contrast, I don't have even a potential capacity to fly or run a three-minute mile, as the case may be). Actual capacities are a function of potential capacities and suitable training, opportunities, and responsibilities. If we have not been given a proper education and training with suitable deliberative opportunities and responsibilities at various points in our development, our potential competence may not be actualized. Even if everyone had equal potential capacities, we should expect unequal actual capacities in systems where education and deliberative opportunities and responsibilities have been distributed unequally. If so, then greater actual capacity would not be evidence of greater potential capacity.

The moral that Mill draws in essence is that equal rights should prevail in the absence of any good evidence about the way in which natural assets and potential capacities are distributed by gender. Equality is the presumption, even if it is a rebuttable presumption, and the presumption can only be rebutted on the basis as well as for a reason of adequate empirical evidence. Hansson Sven Ove shows support on Mill's equality theory by opining that, Mill's commitment to equality was central to his democratic philosophy. Political and social equality are necessary because they enable institutions to pursue the common good while respecting the dignity of every citizen.¹³ This simply shows that liberty and equality are sine qua non conditions for actual common good to be seen and enthroned in the society for the good of all. In this case, Mill, insists that women should be offered and allowed equality in most matters and stop being subjugated so they can explore their full potentials for their own good and that of the society at large. More so, in rebutting potential defenses of sexual inequality by appeal to various alleged dimensions of natural inferiority, Mill insists that we cannot determine whether traits commonly found in women are the product of nature or nurture without suitable social experimentation, including, the social experiment of sexual equality.

In particular, there is the very real possibility that the traits alleged to justify sexual discrimination are the product of past discriminatory practice. But Mill does not adhere to this point consistently. At several points, he expresses the conviction that most women with a full menu of opportunities will accept a traditional sexual division of labour in which they perform domestic functions while their husbands pursue professions in civil society, and he approves of this traditional division of labour. When the support of the family depends, not on property, but on earning, the common arrangement, by which the man earns the income and the wife superintends the domestic expenditure, seems to me in general the most suitable division of labour between the two persons. For Mill, ... in an otherwise just state of things, it is not, therefore, I think, a desirable custom, that the wife should contribute by her labour to the income of the family.¹⁴

Mill is right that a wife should not *also* have to earn a living outside the home if she is working full time within the home. But he gives no reason for thinking that women should have families or that, if they do, they, rather than their husbands, should be responsible for matters of domestic. Indeed, Mill's view seems to be that for women extra-domestic vocations should be reserved primarily for those without children or whose children are already grown-up. He seems here to assume that the traditional sexual division of labour is natural. Of course, it is possible that the traditional sexual division of labour would emerge in a system of equal opportunity. But this is conjecture. Indeed, one might have thought that his own claims about how the system of unequal opportunity has repressed women's creative and managerial capacities would have suggested that the traditional sexual division of labour was probably not robust. In defending or at least speculating about the robustness of the traditional sexual division of labour, Mill appears to be ignoring his own methodological strictures and sounds contradictory to his initial stands. This is a significant blemish on Mill's feminist credentials. He sometimes assumed that a traditional sexual division of labour was natural in the sense that it was likely to emerge in a culture of equal opportunity for all. Given Mill's recognition that the existing division of labour was produced and sustained in conditions of sexual discrimination and unequal opportunity, there is no basis for supposing that this division of labour would survive a culture of equality. However, it is Mill himself that supplies the resources for criticizing his assumption because his stands sometimes shift from his original stand which is inconsistency.

Mill's feminist credentials are sterling and highly applaudable. He is a keen critic of domestic and

social forms of inequality, recognizing the harm such practices cause women and the ways in which they deform the lives of boys and men too. Victorian marriage law, the denial of the franchise, and lack of social and economic opportunities violate higher-order interests of women. These rights violations are a matter of serious social injustice. The corollary of these criticisms is that Mill is a staunch defender of equal opportunity for women and an eloquent spokesman for the way in which a culture of equality would transform the lives of girls and women, liberating their creative and mental potential and emotional sensibilities, and makes possible more productive social cooperation and friendships among equals.

More so, Mill's discussion of sexual equality is one place where the perfectionist underpinnings of his liberal principles play an important role and add to the depth of his criticisms of sexual discrimination and his case for sexual equality. In this sense, Mill argues thus:

Sex is not a qualification for political exclusion. If intelligence, morality, and public responsibility are the qualifications for citizenship, then women who possess these qualities should enjoy the same political rights as men. Excluding women merely because they are women contradicts the principles of justice and representative government.¹⁵

Mill's defense of sexual equality highlights the genuinely progressive aspects of his utilitarian and liberal commitments. Mill went beyond his era and advocated for the liberation of women. He claims that those who hold women down are conservatives and stupid, and continued by explaining that, I do not mean to say that the conservatives are generally stupid. I meant to say that stupid people are generally conservatives. I believe this obvious and universally admitted a principle I hardly think any gentleman will deny.¹⁶

In his understanding, he argued that the people of his age should go beyond the confines of conservatism and allow the participation of women in public opinion and lives. He argued that, a man ... giving opportunity to his wife in fact gains from the knowledge worth having on any subject.¹⁷ Although, like his era, he does not approve women working outside their domestic homes but he advocated that they be given political powers. Hence, in 1867, he proposed and supported the reform bill to grant suffrage to women. Although this failed, but later on it held a place in later history as we can see today. He equally wrote a letter to Florence Nightingale noting that education is key to liberation, by stating thus ... political education is key to political liberation.¹⁸ Hence, when people are politically enlightened, it brings brighter hope and a better future to the society in which they live.

Evaluation and Conclusion

From the foregoing, we can see that John Stuart Mill in his liberal democracy theory thinks that there are two particular ways in which liberal democracy is to be understood under right circumstances and best suited to promote the common good. First, he thinks that democracy plays an important *epistemic* role in identifying the common good in all ramifications. For him, proper deliberations about issues affecting the common good requires identifying how different policies would bear on the interests of the affected parties and so requires the proper representation and articulation of the interests of citizens. But failure of imagination and the operation of personal bias present stumbling obstacles to the effective representation of the interests of others.

For Mill, universal suffrage and political participation provide the best hope and assurance that the interests of the governed will be properly appreciated and protected by political decision-makers at

all times. Secondly, Mill thinks that democracy is also the best form of government because of the *constitutive* effects of political participation on the improvement of the moral capacities of citizens to the extent that the governed can participate in public debate and elections and exercise those very deliberative capacities which are the aim of government to develop within them. They learn to gather information about their options, deliberate about their merits, and choose a representative that will give expression to their ideals and preferences. They therefore, deliberately choose with others about a public agenda and in so doing cultivate abilities to form a conception of a common good, to take principled stands, to exchange reasons with others and as well as learn from each other under social cohesion that would lead to arguments for widespread universal direct democracy. More so, unlike many of his contemporaries interested in expanding the franchise, Mill defended the extension of the franchise to women too, thereby, rejecting any restriction on their franchise as baseless and unacceptable under any guise which qualifies this defense of direct democracy in various significant ways.

From the above, one sees a philosopher who presents a dynamic view of democratic setting built on liberty and equal representation including that of women liberation. As a leading historical proponent of two important normative traditions- utilitarianism and liberalism, Mill occupies an unusually important position in the history of western moral and political philosophy. Viewed in historical context, both utilitarianism and liberalism have exerted considerable progressive and pragmatic influence on the scope of moral concerns, the design of public institutions, the responsibilities of government, and the interests and rights of the citizens or the governed.

Mill, however, did much to articulate the justification, contents, and implications of utilitarian and liberal principles in any means possible. Invariably, there are questions about the proper interpretation, adequacy, and consistency of his various claims and assumptions concerning these topics, but amidst all, what is inevitably undeniable is that he has left an enduring legacy in both utilitarian and liberal ideologies and traditions, and both traditions figure centrally in contemporary discussions of analytical, ethical and political theories of the contemporary era and the future to come. Notwithstanding, further progress and study in these traditions, ideologies and directions must always take account of his personal contributions as a matter of fact; no doubt about that, and when all the necessary positive indices in his liberal democratic theory for the common good of man is judiciously applied in governmental leadership, politics and policies; that would obviously and automatically portray a better human society ahead and a glorious future to come for the good and betterment of all and sundry.

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