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Education, Democracy and Representation in John Stuart Mill's Political Philosophy

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EDUCATION, DEMOCRACY AND REPRESENTATION IN JOHN STUART MILL'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with John Stuart Mill's democratic theory.

In chapter I, I examine the relations between political philosophy and political theory and science before providing a detailed outline of the aims of the dissertation.

In chapter II, I argue that in order to reconcile the concepts of progress and equality within a utilitarian theory, a Millian political system needs to devise institutions that promote general happiness, protect individual autonomy, safeguard society from mediocrity.

Chapter III discusses what different authors have said about Mill and liberty, then explores James Mill's theory of education and Coleridge's influence on John Stuart Mill's thought. I conclude by criticising Richard Arneson's interpretation according to which the *Considerations* and *On Liberty* are inconsistent, and some of Gregory Claeys' conclusions on Mill and paternalism.

Chapter IV explores the methodology of the social sciences and the philosophy of history as found in Mill's writings; then it considers Mill's thought in regard to his father's Radical proposals. I also discuss at some length the idea of the tyranny of the majority.

Chapter V begins with a discussion of Hanna Pitkin's theory of representation. I then provide a critical account of Richard Krouse and Nadia Urbinati's interpretations of Mill. I conclude by arguing that, in a Millian democracy, the higher is the degree of complexity or the need for expertise in dealing with affairs, the greater is the bearing of the principle of competence in assessing whether a representative should act as a trustee or a delegate. I also introduce the idea of rational debate as a sort of 'influence multiplier', arguing that this would help to make a democracy rational and effective along Millian lines.

In the last two chapters, I stress the relevance of Mill's political philosophy as for some contemporary issues (nationalism, European federalism, current social and economic changes) while suggesting some potential further investigations, and summarise my conclusions.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

The main philosophical text on which this thesis is based is John Stuart Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government*[1]. It is a book which brings together many views and ideas that Mill had already expressed during his life[2]. At the same time, it is not just a summary of a lifelong reflection on political philosophical issues; it is also used by Mill to argue in favour of representative democracy and of a free society.

In general, this thesis touches many aspects of Mill's political philosophy, not focusing just on *CRG*, but using it as a starting point for a more general investigation. Some preliminary issues are clarified in this introduction.

Firstly, a number of pages deal with procedural issues, formation of laws, composition of legislative bodies. This prompts the question of whether *CRG* are a purely political-philosophical book, or whether it rather belongs to more practically-oriented fields such political theory or political science.

Secondly, a general overview of main critical literature is given, in order to inform the reader of the different interpretative frameworks in which Mill's political, social and moral philosophy can be understood.

Finally, I describe the aims of this thesis and the reasons for its structure.

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[1] From now on, mentioned as *CRG.* It is worth to point out now that, as regards John Stuart Mill's texts, as a reference I will use his *Collected Works* published by the University of Toronto Press (see the bibliography at the end of this thesis). E.g.: a reference to Mill's *Utilitarianism*, chapter I, will be expressed in the following form: *Utilitarianism*, CW X, pp. 205-208.

[2] As Mill states in the *Preface* of the work (*CRG,* CW XIX, p. 373), "the principles are those to which I have been working up during the greater part of my life, and most of the practical suggestions have been anticipated by others or by myself".

While reading *CRG*, one might wonder – maybe naïvely –which category of writing it falls into. Drawing a sharp line between different subjects such as political philosophy or political theory, or political philosophy and political science, or, in some cases, between any of these and the history of political thought, is obviously not easy, and it is not going to be discussed here. It can even be questioned whether any real distinction among these areas of study actually exists and whether it is not just a form of nominalism, or what are the differences regarding objects of study, approach, relationship with conceptual content, historical development of certain ideas or certain political systems. However, if one had to decide into which category *CRG* should be placed, the answer would not be immediate. These uncertainties may possibly be summarised in one single question: what is the philosophical value of a book whose a number of chapters deal with electoral systems, composition of the parliament, legislative procedures, colonies and so on?

Initially, it can be stated that *CRG* are at the intersection of political philosophy, political theory, and the development of institutional mechanisms and legislation. It is not, therefore, merely a philosophical text. First of all, then, it is necessary to emphasise that the issues Mill discusses are a cross-over of political philosophy and political science, and that therefore these two domains provide, together, a reasonable basis from which to approach his political writings. On the one hand, the description of the way the political institutional process ought to be remains at the heart of Mill's political proposal; he accepts typical liberal features such as the separation of powers and the representative democracy framework, of which he describes characteristics, composition, modalities of operation. On the other hand, however, Mill retains his interest in fundamental questions about the form of government, the way rulers are chosen, how to define their appropriate qualities, the role of intellectuals, philosophers, skilled and educated people in politics. So, to what extent is Mill's *CRG* philosophical and to what degree does it cover fundamental and general issues about political values and aims?

Recently, such problems related to the *status* of political sciences, theory and philosophy have been very synthetically but clearly illustrated by Jeremy Waldron (2013). Scholars (and students) of political issues must be aware of the manifold aspects they involve, Waldron warns: indeed, one may consider politics simply in a legal, or procedural, way, and in general by means of the institutions of political process; on the other hand, one

may investigate moral qualities and virtues of the ruler and, in general, of the individuals involved in politics, and so on. Furthermore, people interested in political issues may direct their attention to the aims of society in terms of the values such a society should pursue and to which institutional means should be used in order to espouse such values. In other words: "The question now is whether we should direct our theoretical energy to questions about (1) the individual virtues that good governance requires, or (2) the political institutions that are needed in a good society formed of humans rather than angels, or (3) the ends and ideals that a good society should be seeking to promote" (p. 5). Of course, political and legal institutions in which political processes occur must not be underestimated; the point is that any form of study or reflection on any aspect of politics cannot just be empirical. Indeed, justice, individual liberty, fairness, humanity, respect and dignity are not just vague or highly theoretical philosophical concepts but are also everyday practical, legal, political and institutional concerns. Hence, the questions of which values we ground our political model and which kind of goals we seek to achieve when we establish a legal code or a political institution, are not just empirical or descriptive concerns. They require higher level reflection, and need to concretely face society, history, even symbolism of some political processes.

It is not to be ignored that Mill is well aware of such a contrast: at the beginning of *CRG* he examines to what extent forms of government are a matter of choice or not (*CRG*, CW XIX, pp. 374-382) or, in other words, whether philosophical speculations on political institutions should be descriptive (since any form of government is just a sort of natural product of a living, social organism) or normative (as a nation's government is just a matter of choice, or at least the result of premeditated political and social engineering which can be theorised beforehand, and consequently modelled, accordingly to human wishes, purposes, values etc., the core issue is how a government ought to be). Mill affirms that any of these theories considered individually is absurd, and that both of them contain partial truth: it is true that political institutions are theorised and then forged by men, but, also, no form of government can be imposed or be successful in achieving its purposes in the long run if its citizens are unable to fulfil the condition it requires, if they have not arrived at an adequate stage of civilisation, or if they are not interested in political participation (particularly in representative government). So, when it comes to political investigation, both views must be taken into consideration, and it is quite hard (or sterile) to separate philosophical research on political values and

aims from the institutional and legal tools they need to be achieved and satisfied[3]. Mill's project may somehow resemble Aristotle's plans in *Politics* in which certain elements regarding the ideal city are specified (e.g. they must reflect the right size in terms of territory, wealth, number of rulers and magistracies): indeed, Mill carries out an examination of the forms of the existing constitutions and their degenerations, with a focus on the analysis of the *polis* and their genealogy as well, quite far from proposing purely utopian projects, but still addressing a number of philosophical issues.

A final element gives further insight to the 'philosophical status' of this book: as will be illustrated in this thesis, *CRG* contains many assumptions and implications related to Mill's ethics and to his view of the human being as a *progressive being*. According to Mill, political institutions need and, at the same time, promote both social and individual improvement; they work in a manner to lead to a process of personal, political and cultural *Bildung* which, in turn, is necessary to strengthen democratic institutions.

This is how *CRG* ought to be a considered from a philosophical perspective.

I.II. THE AIMS OF THIS STUDY

This work aims, at first, to illustrate Mill's political philosophy and to offer a discussion of leading interpretations of some other contributors to the study of John Stuart Mill's political thought. It does not offer new or unused sources, but it rather is an attempt to analyse the plausibility of some interpretations of Mill. The goal of such attempt is to give an hopefully comprehensive view of Mill's political theory and to subsequently focus on some specific points which may constitute a Millian theory. Therefore, the discussion regarding some of the many scholars who have contributed to the study of Mill's thought and provided different interpretations is used as a means within this thesis, rather than as its end; it aims to provide a lense, or a filter, for:

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[3] This is an example of Mill's "half-truths theory" (*Coleridge*, CW X, p. 122), which is illustrated and discussed *infra*, chapter III, section II.

- a discussion on the relevance of a Millian democracy today (see Chapter VI, on Mill's place in a "liquid" world, and on the role of the nation-states and European federalism),
- some hints on potential new research (such as in political ethics, see section IV.VI),
- a discussion on political problems (such as the role of "technocrats" in a representative democracy, see section IV.V.) which have, for example, arisen in recent years in Europe.

However, another way to describe and explain the aims of this thesis may be to consider the path which led to it. When my research began, its main purpose was to look for a comprehensive description of Mill's theory of democracy, his political theory and his links with other intellectuals, among whom it is worth mentioning the Philosophical Radicals (James Mill, Jeremy Bentham), Alexis de Tocqueville, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and François Guizot. In other words, it started as a plan of readings within the attempt to collect, analyse and investigate the philosophical roots of Mill's *CRG*. It was more a scholarly work on history of philosophy than a genuine philosophical investigation. In fact, at the beginning of my work the focus was on the intellectual influences of James Mill and Jeremy Bentham on John Stuart Mill, as the latter was exposed to philosophical radicalism from his youth, and his intellectual activity and his newspapers writings had the goal of supporting and promoting the Radical political agenda, primarily concerned with institutional reform. At that stage of research, the existence of several key differences between the democratic proposals of Bentham and James Mill became clearer and clearer[4]. For example, aside from some practical and institutional issues, a relevant difference emerged between the two thinkers regarding the role and degree of independence granted to the representatives of the people: Bentham expected the MP, or the politician in general, to be independent in representing his electorate, because there is no coincidence of interests between the rulers and the ruled in a democracy. Instead, the elder Mill claimed in his famous *Essay on Government* such coincidence does exist, granted that a limit to the duration of the term as a representative is established (Mill, James, 1992 (1819-1823), pp. 22-26). So, Bentham could use American democracy

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[4] In this sense, I have found a number of relevant considerations in Rosen, 1983, as they sketch a comparison of Bentham's *Constitutional Code* with James Mill's political doctrine (which was the "official" doctrine of the philosophical radicalism) and with *CRG*.

as an example and he at least avoided a part of Macaulay's criticism of the Radical democratic model and of the *a priori* model applied to social and political sciences.

Regarding the differences between Bentham and John Stuart Mill on the role of the people, during my research it has emerged how John Stuart Mill is deeply influenced by concerns regarding individual development, and the educative argument is probably the most relevant swerve from the typical utilitarian political philosophy: Mill's aim is to find a counterweight to mass voting in order to create a well-functioning representative system in which everyone's voice is heard (included that of the intellectuals), the dangers of democratic government are hindered and a process of civic and moral education takes place; this problem in some sense was already considered by Bentham, who feared abuses of the rulers (and not of the people somehow unfit for democracy, as Mill did) and searched institutional and educational tools in order to solve problems posed by the principle of competence; however, differences exist at the level of practical institutional solutions, such as the electoral law and the role of government[5]. So, with respect to Mill's political proposals, the first questions I have tried to answer during the initial stages of my research are: *What are the differences between Mill's theory and Philosophical Radicals' political thought? Why did Mill change his political proposal during his life?*

It may be worthwhile to remember here that the radical legislative and political proposals were: adoption of universal suffrage, reform of the electoral constituencies (that over-represented aristocracy and landowners), abolition of slavery, systematic reorganisation of British legislation and of the common law system, along with a set of economic reforms according to free trade and *laissez-faire* principles.

However, although Mill kept supporting most of the radical political proposals, the ideas on which they were grounded faced a change (sometimes a deep change) throughout his life; Mill's interest in defending the intellectual and rational *élite* of society from the

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[5] It is interesting to notice that Rosen tries to answer – in Bentham's stead – to John Stuart Mill's criticism on the tyranny of the majority without taking into account other problems raised by Mill himself, such as the danger of mediocrity (which is a consequence of the tyranny of majority) and excessive homogeneity of democratic societies – a matter strictly connected to Mill's theory of liberty.

more and more important role in public life obtained by low-skilled people became one of the most relevant aspects of this research.

I have also been looking, at the beginning of my study, for a relationship between Mill's theory of development and some nineteenth century British institutional problems (i.e. suffrage, electoral reform, role of the parliament, role of the government, social problems, etc.); this study, indeed, initially tried to understand how his contemporary historical and political situation influenced Mill's political theory, how such theory was inspired by several different currents of thought and intellectuals, and how it differs from Radical politics. Alongside the importance of some elitist (or, at least, apparently elitist) elements that Mill introduced gradually in his political thinking, the study of the political, historical and intellectual processes from which *CRG* have originated has also highlighted how John Stuart Mill was intellectually born as a democrat – and he describes himself in his *Autobiography* as a democrat in the later stage of his life (*Autobiography*, CW I, p. 239) – how he supports until the end of his life the extension of suffrage to the working class as well as to women, and, finally, how contamination of his thought by some apparently non-democratic elements is, therefore, all aimed to protect the core and essence of his democratic political thought.

When it comes to Mill's description (and self-description) as a democrat, however, some debate may arise. Indeed, one of the traditional interpretations of Mill's political philosophy suggests that he was not a genuine democrat. J. H. Burns (1968 (1957)), for example, highlights Mill's distinction between true and false democracy, being the latter, according to Burns' interpretation, a "travesty of democracy", a distortion of the representative system "in favour of the majority" which can only be corrected by proportional allocation of seats and representation of minorities (p. 327), and assumes another differentiation, i.e. the one between democracy and representative government[6]. According to Burns, Mill would prefer the latter, and therefore any critical position towards Mill's democratic government is simply a misunderstanding, as it would wrongly include the English philosopher in the group of the supporters of democracy. Other mainstream interpretations of Mill's political theory, anyway, consider it still anchored to democratic solutions. Thompson (1976), for example, includes Mill within the democratic tradition of thought; furthermore, he identifies two

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[6] For a longer account on Burns and on this distinction, see *infra*, chapter IV, section IV.

basic (but rich in their assumptions and implications) conflicting principles within Mill's political and social philosophy: the principle of participation and the principle of competence. They are to some extent antagonistic: according to Thompson's interpretation of Mill's democratic theory, for example, the participation of a large number of voters, or even universal suffrage, are likely to influence the political life of a country or of a parliament in a poorly informed way. The solution to this antagonism is the principle of education, which covers both school-based, academic, cultural education in the broadest sense, and civic education; in other words, political participation is a means to increase policy expertise and civil, moral and intellectual qualities of citizens, and to reduce the dangers of bureaucratic routine and of, as evidenced by Tocqueville, the tyranny of the majority. There is also another different perspective (Urbinati, 2002) according to which Mill would be the advocate of a social and political philosophy in which free and rational discussion is the central point of the political system. In *CRG*, e.g., the legislative assembly is meant as the centre of political debate, the technical aspects of legislative activity would be largely left in the hands of experts while the deliberative activity and more broadly political discussion would remain in the hands of the elected representatives. According to this view, Mill proposes a kind of deliberative democracy based on the model of the Athenian *polis*, with emphasis on its deliberative aspects.

The different interpretations regarding both *On Liberty* and *CRG* have a different weight in this thesis, and, of course, issues such as individual freedom, political ethics, links between John Stuart Mill's political philosophy and classical utilitarianism are topics covered and discussed as necessary. However, Mill's moral thought will always remain in the background. In fact, a global view of Mill's works is to be taken into consideration: e.g., *On Liberty* suggests the limits of government action, and examination and understanding of the moral and social principles supported by John Stuart Mill have been preliminary steps of this research. At the same time, as the central point of this thesis is concerned with the most purely political aspects of Mill's philosophical production, a straightforward approach towards political and social issues and closely regarded political and legal institutions has been required. One of the aims of this work is to investigate and underline both principles and practical proposals which were thought in order to protect best competences and skills from what Alexis de Tocqueville called "tyranny of the majority", and it has perhaps to be remarked here that a further stage of my research, indeed, dealt with Tocqueville, and with other thinkers such as Guizot and Coleridge: Mill has in his mind and shares the views expressed in

Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, according to which the transition process towards democracy in developed countries is almost unavoidable and one can discuss only the kind of democracy that one wants to set up. Another element of philosophical influence on Mill is Coleridge's ideas on the importance of the so-called clerisy in education, as well as the role of traditional forces in society. In other words, the first part of my work tried to identify at least a substantial and relevant part of the philosophical, cultural, historical and political frame in which the author was involved.

After this, my research has also considered what model of democracy Mill has in his mind: among the most important research topics related to Mill's democratic theory and to his social and historical views, there are Mill's interpretation of the Athenian *agora* against liberal and conservative points of view of the ancient world, and his reading of the works of the French historian François Guizot – whose aim to find general laws or tendencies during the process of civilisation influenced Mill – and of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*.

However, this thesis will not simply focus on the historical and philosophical background of *CRG* and on its critical reception and assessments, although the initial idea for this study, as I already said, was to track the formation of the main concepts behind Mill's political philosophy. In this sense it gradually became clearer and clearer during my research that a more challenging task would have been to study and describe and then critically assess, at least on some of its points, the ideal, theoretical foundation of a certain social and political order – in this case, of Mill's political proposals. A number of concepts, a certain conceptual background, a precise point of view emerged over and over again while reading Mill: for instance, are not both the adoption of Coleridge's clerisy and the worry for an adequate level of civilisation in a society a reflection of Mill's interest in the intellectual development of individuals as well as of society as a whole?

From here, then, the idea of focusing not on the intellectual itinerary that led Mill to write *CRG*, but on the political-philosophical core of Mill's democratic thought, which assumes a form of democracy in which the civil and intellectual progress of society is both cause and consequence of the democratic process and of political participation. Education (or civilisation) and democracy, therefore, are closely interrelated. Mill's democracy also requires representative institutions; so, in order to understand what we are dealing with, the concept of representation assumes a clear relevance: starting from this point of view, I then redirected and reshaped the work to which my study was intended to lead and I focused, therefore, on considering some cardinal elements of *CRG*.

Three fundamental ideas will thus comprise the main object of discussion of this thesis: education, democracy, and representation. The overall aim is to describe and question these concepts, as they are basic pillars of Mill's political thought.

Chapter II introduces the utilitarian political philosophy and chapter III considers education and its fundamental role for a democracy to succeed in accomplishing its goals.

Chapter IV is on democracy and illustrates which form of government John Stuart Mill has in his mind; it will be, in part, a description of the institutional system of course, but also an investigation of its philosophical roots and meaning. Democracy, as a stand-alone term, is too vague to be fully understood without proper contextual expansion. It therefore requires proper specification and illustration: is it just a form of classical representative government, or does it involve and imply more sophisticated social and political interactions? The final section of chapter IV deals with Mill's political ethics: what are (if there are any) the moral obligations of citizens/members of a representative democracy?

In chapter V attention is finally drawn to political representation and on how should an MP or an elected ruler should behave in relation to his or her constituents' will, values and needs.

Chapter VI contains two points of possible relevance for a Millian approach to today's social and political practical and theoretical problems:

a) I employ Zygmunt Bauman's theory of liquid modernity in order to show that perhaps Mill's political and social philosophy today may show some problems if happiness and freedom depart from each other. I argue, on the one hand, that a number of elements (the weakening of common class, political or group sentiment; the possibility, over one's life, to be on different rungs on the social ladder; the increasing power of multinational/supranational economic and/or financial powers; the decline of the effective political power of nation-states) may lessen the strength of Mill's argument in favour of a representative government or, at least, the efficacy of a representative democracy devised in the way he describes in *CRG*. Yet, on the other hand, the ever-increasing possibility of networking and the 'liquid' structure of society may assist intellectuals and the well-educated to play a useful role and, perhaps, discharge

more fully their moral obligations to participate in political life. Therefore, how to deal politically with the possible detachment of liberty from consequent happiness (i.e., what if liberty turns out not to be very effective in promoting the pursuit of pleasures, satisfaction and happiness?)?

b) Another issue arises from the outcome of this work, i.e. how Mill's political ideas can be practically applied with special reference to the case for and against European federalism. I argue in favour of a federalist view of Mill's thought, which leaves room for supranational political federations, despite stressing the importance of protecting different national cultures.

Chapter VII deals with my conclusions, mostly based on the discussion on Mill's relevance and on the possible inadequacies and weaknesses of existing accounts presented in the previous chapters of this thesis, mainly those that see Mill as strongly paternalistic.

II. A NOTE ON THE UTILITARIAN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

In this chapter, I provide a description of the assumptions which underlie John Stuart Mill's political philosophy. Even though it would definitely take too much space to discuss at length and in detail the intellectual background and philosophical grounds of Mill's thought, a summary must first be provided in order to put Mill's ideas in context and give them proper foundation. Hence, the aim of this chapter is not to provide justification or criticism or assessment of utilitarianism and philosophical radicalism, or even liberalism and progressivism in general, but rather to summarize and describe for the purpose of the argument what utilitarianism is, on which assumptions it lies, what are its core concepts – mainly with reference to Mill's re-elaboration of it.

In the first section, I summarise John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*, trying to simply clarify what its main arguments are.

In the second section I assess the political-philosophical relevance of utilitarian ethics within Mill's thought: I stress the relevance of progress and equality, since everyone's happiness has to be maximised, and how these concepts may not seem, at least at first sight, perfectly consistent when we look at the rest of Mill's political philosophy.

This is an introductory chapter (perhaps a second introduction), and the attempt here is to give an overview of Mill's utilitarianism and to conclude on its consequences, implications and features in the field of social and political philosophy, and to provide at least a substantial part of the background of Mill's take on democracy.

II.I. MILL'S UTILITARIANISM

Printed in its first edition in 1863, and subject to further revisions in its fourth edition (1871), *Utilitarianism* is the text which best summarises Mill's views in the field of utilitarian ethics.

Utilitarianism is defined by Mill as follows:

> The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of

happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure (*Utilitarianism*, CW X, p. 210)

Mill, however, does not rely solely on this formulation of the utilitarian moral principle; he also admits that there are consistency and compatibility between the greatest happiness principle and "the fact, that some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others" (p. 211). Mill introduces the figure of the competent judge, from whose verdict "there can be no appeal" (p. 213). In order to decide which is the object or experience, between two available, which causes more happiness (either presence of pleasure or at least absence of pain), both have to be tested. In other words, competent moral judgement is provided by the experience of different forms and qualities of pleasure and pain[7]. Furthermore, the concept of dignity may be included in

[7] However, this is quite a controversial or at least not obvious point. What happens, for examples, if judges disagree? In terms of pleasure, moreover, some may find allegedly lower pleasures better than allegedly higher pleasures, even if they have experienced and are acquainted with both. For instance, not all football-playing philosophers would say that philosophy is better than football in terms of pleasure (Scarre, 2002, pp. 56-57). However, a football-playing philosopher may still maintain that philosophy is better than football because it helps investigating and hopefully attaining some truths which may help us to have a more enjoyable life (if you are an optimistic philosopher). Another one may even sensibly say that doing sports is *actually* better than philosophy on a consequentialist basis, at least under some circumstances, because it is good for health, and being in good health provides some form of pleasure or at least of pain avoidance. Much can be said on this topic, and as this a sort of foundational chapter where some principles are introduced as if they were reasonably valid at least in a large number of circumstances, I will just point out here the fact that the figure of the competent judge may be object of discussion and what matters for my purposes (i.e. a research mostly and primarily on political matters rather than moral ones) is rather the relevance of competence as a means to *usually* bring about some form of pleasure both at an individual and a more general social level, even if it may occur to competent people to suggest things not so clearly enjoyable. I am assuming, in other words, the idea that *most*, although perhaps not all, forms of competence are, although not always

such view: if we consider satisfaction of our higher faculties as included in our sense of human dignity, we can conclude that it may become a source of happiness in itself and, hence, the sense of human dignity may turn itself into an object of desire. The point is that the preference for higher pleasures in spite of lower pleasures does not sacrifice happiness: actually those who have experienced both would normally favour the former rather than the latter, because only those who have experienced higher pleasures – i.e., those that commit the highest intellectual faculties – may prefer (in the sense that they may both think better and choose more frequently) them to lower pleasures. It is clear, therefore, that, from this point of view, different experiences of life and an empirical attitude become important within Mill's philosophy, since it is from experience (not just of a single event, but rather of a set of facts and of a whole lifestyle in its moral, social, cultural and intellectual aspects), and not from a given, ideal, theoretical system of thought, that Mill's ethical reflection arises.

Mill's utilitarian ethics is not devoid of elements which have become object of criticism, even from the same philosophical utilitarian field to which Mill himself belongs. For instance, T. H. Green, in his *Prolegomena to Ethics* (pp. 170-173 and pp. 178-179), has pointed out that including dignity in such a system of morals could undermine hedonism, as the reason for which we would get pleasure from the activity of higher faculties would be their intrinsic value and not because of the pleasure it provides, while, vice versa, we should attach greater value to an object or an activity stimulating our higher faculties because of the amount and quality of pleasure they give. Also, the problem with the competent judges of the higher pleasures doctrine has been extensively discussed by many scholars[8]. Treating it properly and at length in this thesis – which aims to address social and political topics rather than moral ones – might take up too much space. The central point I wish to make here is Mill's emphasis on the difference of pleasures and pains, which are anything but homogeneous, and which differ according to their characteristics and (this is an important Millian distinction) in quantity and quality. Another key point he makes is the need for experimenting with

and not under any circumstances, *generally inclined* to cause good in society and, as it will be clearer later in this thesis, that they have both a moral and a political importance.

[8] For a brief overview on this topic: Skorupski, 1989, pp. 303-307; E. S. Anderson in Lyons (ed.), 1997, pp. 126-130; F. Wilson, in Skorupski (ed.), 1998, pp. 255-292.

different kinds of happiness: what makes the wise man competent is not an intrinsic quality or his alleged virtues, but the fact that while experiencing various forms of pleasures, he also knows that a lifestyle marked by the use and development of the higher faculties is what fulfils the principle of utility. In Mill's example, the choice between two forms of pleasure, a high and a low pleasure, is made on the basis of a sort of direct knowledge (empirical) of both, and anyway Mill – as Fred Wilson says – "does not regard only the quantity as normative; he regards both quantity and quality of pleasures and satisfactions as normative or productive of good. He also regards both as "empirical" (Fred Wilson, in Skorupski (ed.), 1998, p. 263). In any case, even if one may wish to maintain the utilitarian ethics and philosophy simply as a doctrine of regulative and perfectionist nature, which would see the validity of moral actions in terms of human self-development and maybe just consider their long-term outcome and our lifestyle as a whole (see Brink, 2013, pp. 46-78), the most important implication of the higher pleasures doctrine is not that there is something else greater than pleasure guiding our moral choices, but rather that higher pleasures are attached to greater satisfaction, improved quality and quantity of pleasure, and that – as we shall see in *On Liberty* – everything is connected to the need to experiment with different lifestyles. Human beings are not just animal beings, so they are able to appreciate and enjoy a sort of non-hedonistic happiness, which does not directly derive from the enjoyment of physical pleasures or fulfilment of animal appetites or similar things. Humans can enjoy feelings, imagination, intellect - in this sense, they do not have only animal faculties. When we achieve excellence, we get gratified in our higher faculties – i.e., we have a higher pleasure. In addition to this, Mill points out that the utilitarian moral standard is not just the individual greatest happiness, but the general greatest happiness: basically, as A's happiness is good, B's happiness is good, and C's happiness is good, then A's happiness plus B's happiness plus C's happiness (i.e. general happiness) is good overall (H. R. West, in Lyons (ed.), 1997, p. 94). So, we may also conclude that while Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism considered attaining the greatest happiness of the greatest number as the end of morals and legislation, Mill, re-elaborating the same principle, also proposes to contemplate the fact that individual happiness cannot be reduced in the mere search of individual well-being in the strict sense, and actually one should devote himself to purposes which only apparently are not utilitarian (for example, contributing to other people's happiness, cultivating the higher human faculties) but actually help to achieve more easily the individual happiness.

The second part of *Utilitarianism* (CW X, pp. 209-226) deals with possible criticisms and objections to the utilitarian system, as well as misunderstandings and misconceptions concerning its fundamental concepts and the way it works. For now, we should perhaps enquire as to the foundations of the ethical system just described. Next in the exposition of his arguments in *Utilitarianism*, Mill expounds on a form of psychological hedonism, which, however, is not just about the direct experience of pleasure, but also includes the objects that we find pleasing (and effectively provide pleasure) and the pleasing representation we make of an object. Among other things, this pleasure comes from a group of objects: e.g., the book is not in itself a cause of pleasure, but the exercise of reading and all that it entails.

When it comes to the proof of the principle of utility (pp. 234-239), Mill affirms, at first, that evidence shows that utility is an ultimate end of conduct and a criterion of morality – and this is indisputable if we look at the facts. However, a proper foundation of utilitarian ethics would require utility to be the sole ultimate end of human conduct, and that other ends (e.g. financial wealth, virtue) are somehow connected to utility, part of it or derived from it. Indeed, this is what Mill states in chapter IV of *Utilitarianism*: the association of means to ends has caused the means to become parts of the ends:

> What was once desired as an instrument for the attainment of happiness
> has come to be desired for its own sake. In being desired for its own sake it
> is, however, desired as *part* of happiness (p. 236).

Hence, what was originally a means, a way, a source or a cause originating happiness or satisfaction of our primitive desires, has become, because of such association, an end in itself. This applies to virtue as well: originally, according to Mill, virtue is not an end in itself, but, through the association with utility, it has progressively been considered has a moral end in itself. That is why, basically, the sole ultimate desire driving human moral action is happiness, as it is an ultimate end and other ends are a part of or a derivation from it, desired in association with happiness and not in themselves.

This passage is relevant because it shows that whatever the relevance of virtue in Mill's moral (and social and political) system is, it is in any case subordinate to the utilitarian principle. Some scholars have, instead, argued that in Mill's moral thought virtue acquires prominence and becomes an end in itself. Semmel (1984), for instance, stresses the importance of virtue over mere material happiness in Mill's ethics and claims that Mill moves away from the theory of the greatest good and from orthodox Benthamism.

Influenced by Thomas Carlyle and from German philosophy, Mill considered "the commercial and increasingly egalitarian society of nineteenth-century England" as "inherently hostile to virtue" (p. 82). Semmel advocated an interpretation of Mill as a supporter of virtue as a moral end in a neo-Stoic, or ideal and intuitive Romantic fashion, even if without recurring to supernatural or religious implications. Semmel interprets *On Liberty* primarily as a "plea for positive liberty, for the sense of participation and self-realization in the idea of freedom associated with the German thinkers" (p. 166); he also writes that in *Utilitarianism* "Virtue, Duty, and Truth became his chief injunctions" (p. 174). Semmel acknowledges that Mill does not consider virtue as a departure from the utilitarian principle, because, actually, virtue is a part of happiness (p. 178). It is true that some non-utilitarian elements enter Mill's philosophy, as we shall also see later in this work; however, Mill's own words in *Utilitarianism* show that the appreciation of virtue as good in itself is valid only if we consider it as a component of happiness, a part of a whole (see the lines quoted above), and also if we maintain that the will of virtue is only a consequence of a habit attached to an utilitarian evaluation of pain and pleasure:

> Those who desire virtue for its own sake, desire it either because the consciousness of it is a pleasure, or because the consciousness of being without it is a pain, or for both reasons united; as in truth the pleasure and pain seldom exist separately, but almost always together, the same person feeling pleasure in the degree of virtue attained, and pain in not having attained more. If one of these gave him no pleasure, and the other no pain, he would not love or desire virtue, or would desire it only for the other benefits which it might produce to himself or to persons whom he cared for (*Utilitarianism*, CW X, p. 237).

In this process of transformation of means to (parts of) ends, indeed, habit plays a relevant role: Mill criticises the fact that every action is moved by a desire and he makes a distinction between the concepts of will and desire, whereas desire is directly connected to an object of desire, while will is a psychological consequence of habit leading, in the long run, to a detachment from desire. "Will is the child of desire, and passes out of the dominion of its parent only to come under that of habit" (p. 239), and virtue (the will to do right) can be cultivated independently from the desire of happiness, however it is not intrinsically a good but it is just a means to happiness or attached to it. Happiness is associated with virtue, money etc. by habit (however it cannot be claimed that only the pleasure component of virtue, money etc. is effectively desired, as Mill

never makes such a strong statement[9]). Moreover, this proves, according to Mill, that ethics based on virtues are not inconsistent with the claim that happiness is the sole ultimate end of moral actions and that it is desirable by itself. What also may help us here are Mill's words in his *Autobiography* about Thomas Carlyle influence on utilitarianism during the period following the mental crisis:

> The experiences of this period had two very decided effects on my opinions and character. In the first place, they led me to adopt a theory of life, very unlike that on which I had before acted, and having much in common with what at that time I had never heard of, the anti-self-consciousness theory of Carlyle. I never, indeed, wavered in the conviction that happiness is the test of all rules of conduct, and the end of life. But I now thought that this end was only to be attained by not making it the direct end. Those only are happy (I thought) who have their attention fixed on something other than their own happiness: on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else, they find happiness by the way (*Autobiography*, CW I, pp. 145-147).

This demonstrates that depicting Mill as a neo-Stoic or a conservative Romantic as Semmel does ("I see Mill as distinctly more conservative than he has generally been depicted", Semmel, 1984, p. ix; "Mill appears to be – in his own well-known dichotomy – more a conservative Coleridgean than a liberal Benthamite", Semmel, 1998, p. 50) is, perhaps, slightly excessive, while the improvement of individual character and of inward conditions surely are amongst the aims we find in Mill's philosophy.

The final chapter of *Utilitarianism* deals with the idea of justice as a quality in itself and not a feature of things. Mill investigates whether justice and injustice are an intrinsically peculiar thing or a combination of other qualities, because "people find it difficult to see, in Justice, only a particular kind or branch of general utility, and think that its superior binding force requires a totally different origin" (*Utilitarianism*, CW X, p. 241). So, Mill tries to find the common attributes of the various definitions of justice: for example, if we had to run together examples of justice, it is common to think that deprivation of

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[9] See on this, for instance, H. R. West, in Lyons (ed.), 1997, p. 91.

liberty is unjust (but this is not a definition of justice), as well as withholding a person of his moral right (nor is this a definition); merit is often considered a standard to define what is just or not; breaking faith and being partial are also commonly believed to be a form of injustice (pp. 241-243). Furthermore, the idea of justice is often linked to the idea of equality (unless it is inexpedient to the pursuit of justice); however, there are different forms of equality, which can be believed to be equality in rights, equality in opportunities, social equality, even income equality (this is the opinion of some Communists, for example) (pp. 243-244). There are, Mill maintains, many different applications of the concept of justice, and what connects them all together is not obvious. Nevertheless, justice as a unified concept is often used, and we do have a sentiment of justice regardless of whether we realise its foundation and what it is based on.

Hence, a further part of Mill's investigation of the concept of justice goes on to deal with the etymology of the term and its historical use: if we look at the meaning of it in Greek, Latin, German and French, or if we take into consideration the use of the idea among the Christians, the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans, we may notice that justice, although in several different ways, is often attached to the concept of law, from which the idea and practice of legal constraint follow (pp. 244-246).

In this sense, the idea of ethics is connected to punishment and duty, which then means that it becomes a conceptual feature of morality itself and it thus transforms our perceptions of utility as advantage or disadvantage to an imperative and absolute idea. The feeling of justice, in fact, was born out of our desire for self-defence substantially expanded later, through sympathy and empathy, to others, in a gradual process of generalisation which has led to the creation of the law.

> To recapitulate: the idea of justice supposes two things; a rule of conduct, and a sentiment which sanctions the rule. The first must be supposed common to all mankind, and intended for their good. The other (the sentiment) is a desire that punishment may be suffered by those who infringe the rule. There is involved, in addition, the conception of some definite person who suffers by the infringement; whose rights (to use the expression appropriated to the case) are violated by it. And the sentiment of justice appears to me to be, the animal desire to repel or retaliate a hurt or damage to oneself, or to those with whom one sympathizes, widened so as to include all persons, by the human capacity of enlarged sympathy, and the human conception of intelligent self-interest. From the latter elements,

the feeling derives its morality; from the former, its peculiar impressiveness, and energy of self-assertion (pp. 249-250).

Mill affirms that justice still remains an ambiguous term and that cases of justice are also cases of expediency – although justice still is an appropriate term and idea for vastly important social utilities, it is just another form of morality related to, or even based on, the ideas of punishment and obligation (p. 259).

II.II. UTILITARIANISM'S CORE POLITICAL CONCEPTS

For the scope of this work, it is relevant to point out the political features and consequences of utilitarianism.

Firstly, it should be stressed that utilitarianism is a form of progressivism[10]: human actions are driven by the pursuit of individual happiness and, as everyone's happiness matters, actions have to be morally assessed according to the greatest happiness principle. That means, politically, that social and political institutions have to be designed in order to maximise and promote general happiness.

Secondly, utilitarianism is also a form of egalitarianism, since everyone's happiness matters equally. Hence, although the higher pleasures theory entails different forms and sources of happiness, everyone is morally entitled, under the same conditions, to (seek to) enjoy the same kind of happiness, and someone's pleasure should not be threatened in order to ensure to someone else the same pleasure.

Recently, the case for strengthening Millian forms of progressivism has been made by David O. Brink (2013), according to whom the idea of secondary principles as

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[10] It may be questioned whether progress is self-evidently the road to happiness. Surely, as I remark in other sections of this thesis, in Mill there is a distinction between the idea of progress and that of improvement. Furthermore, the idea of active character Mill outlines in *CRG* suggests us that there may be changes in society for the better (e.g. in terms of technological advancement, wealth, scientific achievements) and, anyway, what would really matter would still be, instead, the existence of active characters, which would promote and strengthen democracy and all the virtuous process of individual and civic flourishing it stimulates.

temporary substitutes for utility and for the higher pleasures doctrine may somehow safeguard the consistency within Mill's theory in the light of moral perfectionism: indeed, secondary principles may fit as imperfect, although regulative, moral norms to be regularly assessed from time to time in the light of strictly utilitarian ethics. Such a perfectionist approach involves, conceptually, the idea of human development, and, still, is able to save some forms of moral pluralism (pp. 278-279).

When it comes to democracy and liberalism, Brink stresses the importance of equality:

> Utilitarianism says that everyone's interests matter, not just those of a privileged few, and that everyone's interests matter equally, no one's interests mattering more than anyone else's. When Mill defends liberal rights, these are rights that each person has and that protect her from the tyranny of majority preference (Brink, 2013, p. 283).

However, of which kind of equality are we talking? Brink makes the case for considering Mill an egalitarian according to the idea of equal concern rather than equal treatment, "in particular one that assigns great importance to equal opportunity" (p. 284). Although sensible and well-grounded, Brink's stress on equality in Mill's philosophy somehow seems to slightly miss the role of equality in relation to democracy, its constitutional design and the social processes it brings about, and to rather focus on social, economic and political equality *per se*. In chapter IV I expound on Alexis de Tocqueville's influence on Mill's philosophy, and how according to Tocqueville equality is the driving force of democracy, under which everyone seems to feel entitled to express his own opinion on every specific subject, regardless of the level of his actual competence on it.

In other words, although both utilitarianism and liberalism surely entail the notions of progress and equality, as Brink writes, it may be useful to investigate carefully the philosophical consequences within Millian political thought. Indeed, the concept of equality arises from two elements:

a) a philosophical element, i.e. utilitarian ethics[11], according to which – as we have seen before – everyone's happiness equally matters under the same circumstances;

b) according to Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*, equality is the strongest sentiment we can find in a democracy[12], within which it acts as a levelling force – not just socially or economically, but also, and in particular, intellectually and morally.

In the rest of this thesis, one of the things I will try to show is the way Mill attempts to reconcile these two elements, which are *prima facie* a little inconsistent. In utilitarian ethics, the progressive element is the maximisation of the general happiness; in democracy, equality may not be a force of progress in itself, as it may actually lead to uniformity of thought and mediocrity. Where is the room for progress, for experimenting with different lifestyles and exercising the higher faculties in a political system in which such homogenising force is in place? Perhaps this is a way to formulate a possible question to which Millian philosophy may be a reasonable and well-grounded philosophical answer. The solution is formulated in terms of democracy as a political process within which the safeguard of individuality, originality, competence and genius and the protection against class interests are vital elements to make it successful and to promote both individual and general happiness.

Hence, at this point Mill needed a system which would:

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[11] Which, although, in its turn claims to be a consequence of empirical and psychological observations – but for the sake of simplicity I would just name it purely 'philosophical'.

[12] «La première et la plus vive des passions que l'égalité des conditions fait naître, je n'ai pas besoin de le dire, c'est l'amour de cette même égalité (…) Les biens que la liberté procure ne se montrent qu'à la longue, et il est toujours facile de méconnaître la cause qui les fait naître. Les avantages de l'égalité se font sentir dès à présent, et chaque jour on les voit découler de leur source (…). Je pense que les peuples démocratiques ont un goût naturel pour la liberté (…). Mais ils ont pour l'égalité une passion ardente, insatiable, éternelle, invincible; ils veulent l'égalité dans la liberté, et, s'ils ne peuvent l'obtenir, ils la veulent encore dans l'esclavage. Ils souffriront l'asservissement, la barbarie, mais ils ne souffriront pas l'aristocratie». (Tocqueville, 1986 (1840), pp. 137-142).

- promote political and social processes protecting and fostering the general happiness

- protect individual autonomy, in order to let anyone pursue different lifestyles

- safeguard society from the dangers of equality and mediocrity and enhance the positive effects of democracy (and democratic practice) on the population at large.

As we shall see in the following chapters, individual liberty, the refusal of at least a strong and coercive version of paternalism, and education are fundamental elements in this political project. Furthermore, we shall notice that the need for confrontation of different ideas, conceptions, and feelings is relevant for the development of both the individual and the society as a whole – both morals and politics need the same internal rational mechanisms in order to fulfil their aims.

III. EDUCATION

This chapter presents two objects of investigation: the first is the concept of education taken in its broadest sense - education in a cultural, intellectual, moral sense - within a path of learning and self-improvement, while the second concerns the political implications of this concept.

Some aspects of education and of training of the individuals – or, to use a term involving a few more political implications, citizens – directly concern the functions of the modern state, as, for example, in school and academic education. We can also expand the role of the state in the creation or funding of places and institutions such as museums, libraries, cultural organisations. As regards John Stuart Mill's philosophy, however, we find a very complex concept which has widespread ramifications in the context of individual rights on the one hand and in the forms of social organisation on the other.

At first, I need to justify the use of the word 'education': I could have referred to concepts such as self-improvement, *Bildung*, individual growth, development and so on – words which in any necessary case I will not hesitate to use, of course – but they somehow do not capture what I intend to stress in this work. More clearly: the structure of society and its institutions, the virtuous loop that they cause, and the role, though not patronising, of the *élites* in Mill's thought, imply an active role of political institutions and elaborate lifelong processes in the formation of citizens' characters. With reference to the links between education and life in the polity, one may say, in the first instance and in very general terms, that education has a threefold significance, in the sense that the progressive growth of the individual is at the same time a) cause, b) reason and c) goal of Mill's system of government:

a) it is a *cause*, as we will see later on in detail, because the possibility of establishing a representative government arises only when a society reaches a certain level of progress and civilisation, i.e. when there is no longer the need for the existence of leading and authoritative guide controlling individuals which still are largely in a condition of intellectual minority. The exit from this stage and the entry into one in which citizens – or at least the majority of them – are more or less free, rational, autonomous and responsible subjects, involve a process of individual progress concerning every single person. Democratic government is not possible without such process of civilisation;

b) at the same time, the human as a progressive individual is the *reason* of representative democratic government, for this is, in fact, a system of government based on the interaction of free and rational social and political subjects, and seeking to protect – at least in Mill's model – citizens' individual freedom. For this reason, representative democracy must have the political instruments and institutions to protect itself from any authoritarian and tyrannical degeneration;

c) finally, the progressive aspect of the human being, or rather, the strengthening of the progressive aspects leading to individual self-improvement, is both *consequence* and *purpose* of a democratic society, because active democratic participation leads to and prompts a virtuous process such to develop citizens' personality in a democratic, civic sense, strengthening their sensitivity towards rational debate and general interests.

In this chapter I intend to show two things under a Millian perspective: development of the individual and development of the polity are closely interlinked and feed off each other especially through the use of reason; individual and social development are somewhat similar, i.e. they follow the same dynamics, and thus the political structures and processes are a sort of external revival of the same dynamics that occur, or should occur, within the individual mind.

In order to do this, I will expand on the following arguments:

a) the idea of self-improvement as traced in Mill's inaugural address to the University of St. Andrews in 1867;

b) Mill's idea of liberty and the relevance of Mill's detachment from standard Benthamite utilitarianism;

c) liberty, political participation and their role in the formation of an active character;

d) James Mill's take on the way education should be imparted and what are the effects of Coleridge's writings on John Stuart Mill's ideas on education, civilisation and cultivation;

e) the case in favour of an anti-paternalistic interpretation of John Stuart Mill on education, liberty, and the limits of state action in promoting citizens' individual progress.

III.I. A ROMANTIC SELF-IMPROVEMENT? MILL AND THE IDEA OF EDUCATION

What is the relevance of education in John Stuart Mill's political philosophy? Although a recurring topic in his writings, there is no major work specifically dealing with education, a subject in many ways connected to other fields of knowledge (such as psychology, ethics, politics). Probably Mill's most relevant contribution which may be discussed here is the inaugural address he delivered to the University of St. Andrews (CW XXI, pp. 215-257), in which he expounds on the topic of education, both academic and at large. Mill argues that specialization in education is really useful for professional purposes and, thanks to it, at the end of one's own educational path, one should become a reliable expert in his own field of study or work; however, this is an extremely insufficient form of education, according to Mill, as "(m)en are men before they are lawyers, or physicians, or merchants, or manufacturers; and if you make them capable and sensible men, they will make themselves capable and sensible lawyers or physicians" (p. 218). Indeed, a more general education is needed, although not superficial, and it should include both humanities and natural and mathematical sciences, and, in general, "every useful branch of general, as distinct from professional, knowledge, should be included in the curriculum of school or university studies" (p. 224). In particular, Mill praises the study of classical languages as they would enhance the ability to use logic – by virtue of their peculiar grammatical structures – and because Latin and Greek literature constitute a remarkable example of use of the written word, in which every term is used properly and not for the sake of the beauty of expression, and nonetheless they are still works of great perfection in the sense of clearness, completeness and harmony to which moderns should look and get inspired in order to improve their prose, their style and their reasoning. The relevant element here is the importance of the purposes for which every literary work is written, not for the use of literary stylistic ornaments which attract attention by themselves, but to somehow contribute to the "higher purpose of the human discourse" (p. 231) rather than to regard, to pursue and to accomplish the task of art as if it were for the art's sake. Basically - Mill says - the need for studying foreign (both classical and modern) languages, literature and cultures is grounded on the fact that "it is the habit of mankind to mistake familiarity for accurate knowledge" (p. 225): the only chance to ascertain the truth or, at least, to improve ourselves and to have better informed and well-founded opinions – i.e. based on matter of facts – consists in realising that they are fallible and can be subject to amendment and, secondly, that the only way to do this is somehow to compare different opinions and

beliefs among individuals and, also, to focus on other languages and cultures, not just as a matter of curiosity or a sort of exoticism, but to expand our intellects, to see what other civilised people have achieved and, maybe, to change our mind on a specific topic or habit or belief and make it more adherent to the facts rather than just a consequence of given and unquestioned education and lifestyle – and the best way to get in touch with other cultures is to know their idiom.

More in general, the idea in this address is that education must provide the tools to enhance critical thinking and be able to rationally challenge established beliefs or to defend – still rationally – one's own belief. That is why not just intellectual education, but moral education as well is important in the academic system in particular (the *Inaugural Address* mainly focuses on the university's curriculum) and in the broader lifelong education as a whole. Indeed, according to Mill the concept of education seems to not imply just intelligence, training or the provision of notions, rules and anecdotes: for instance, morals and religion would also actually complete education, as they cover the formation of the will and go beyond what schools and academic institutions can do in this field. Despite this limit, since morals and religion are mainly a matter of family influence and education, universities and schools have still to be aware of the proper way these subjects should be approached, taught and discussed; Mill's fear is that dogmatic lectures will be based on given beliefs and on the principle of authority, while academic spirit – even in the field of religion, characterized by strong and often unquestionable truths – should be totally different:

> not to tell us from authority what we ought to believe, and make us
> accept the belief as a duty, but to give us information and training, and
> help us to form our own belief in a manner worthy of intelligent beings,
> who seek for truth at all hazards, and demand to know all the difficulties,
> in order that they may be better qualified to find, and recognise, the
> most satisfactory mode of resolving them (…). An University ought to be
> a place of free speculation (p. 250).

Another hint of the multifaceted aspects which, according to Mill, mark out education, is the importance he gives to aesthetic and artistic education along with the intellectual and moral one, and to the start of a process of personal cultivation and the influence on individual character that artistic and beautiful objects can cause and provide. More in general, in this inaugural address there seems to be a quite complex idea of what education is: academic education should not be restricted to the major subject in which

the student intends to achieve broad and deep knowledge and specialization mainly for professional purposes, as all knowledge in itself is valuable and it enables us to better judge different opinions and some basic scientific notions as well – in other words, a quite complete ignorance in this or that field may hinder the possibility to have different views, different perspectives on this or that problem, and basically force us (inadvertently) to stick to our given beliefs which would actually turn out to be, if challenged, false beliefs, ungrounded and irrational opinions or even superstitions. Mainly, it is the creation of a critical and rational spirit what really matters for Mill: neither the notions nor the laws or the methodologies in themselves (which, still, maintain their own importance, of course), and neither a radically sceptical attitude towards every form of established knowledge or of every philosophical or religious system, but a more reasoned critical attitude which – and this is fundamental – must, above all, find its roots in a rational and well-informed criticism. Furthermore, education is a process attaining schools and universities, of course, but also individual study and research, the family's influence over the individual in his early age, and, mainly, debate among peers.

Although in some points Mill makes reference to virtues[13], which, as already noted above[14], may apparently seem to contradict the utilitarian foundations of his thought, the aim education should help and allow people to achieve is the research and ascertainment of truth, "(t)he most incessant occupation of the human intellect throughout life" (p. 234). In a minor writing published in 1838, a review of William Ware's *Letters from Palmyra*, he already addresses the theme of education in its broadest sense, arguing that education is, amongst the other things, to waken high aspirations and, in romances and narrative works, to show models of exemplary characters from which youth should take proper inspiration. Books of this sort are of high value for the education of young people, according to Mill, as "(n)ot what a boy or a girl can repeat by rote, but what they have learnt to love and admire, is what forms

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[13] "If we wish men to practise virtue, it is worth while trying to make them love virtue and feel it an object in itself (…) to pursue other objects. It is worth training them to feel (…) the absence of noble aims and endeavours, as not merely blameable but also degrading" (pp. 253-254).

[14] See chapter II, section I.

their character" (*Ware's Letters From Palmyra, CW I,* p. 460); however, he laments that the forms of narration which he maintains so useful and so positively influencing intellectual and moral growth are disappearing, becoming more focused on customary, ordinary characters and events, and the consequence is that "for the first time perhaps in history, the youth of both sexes of the educated classes are universally growing up unromantic" (p. 460). These words show that, although in a different style of language, the issues Mill discusses in his inaugural address delivered to St. Andrews, hence, seem to have old roots, at least about thirty-seven years before his appointment as Lord Rector in 1865.

Another example of Mill's ideas on education is the essay *On Genius*, an article written in 1832, *"*in the height of my Carlyism*"* (letter to George Henry Lewes*,* 1840*, CW XIII,* p. 449), which is probably one of the best expressions of the influence of Romantic spirit and thought on Mill in the years he reacted to his strict radical education and to the Benthamite *forma mentis*. It investigates the characters which constitute a genius and why at the time it is written (the first half of the XIX century) there is, at least according to Mill, a lack of geniuses. As for the definition or the description of genius, Mill affirms that a genius is not who discovers new truths never known before, but who actually is able to be an original thinker - "whoever says Originality says Genius" (*On Genius*, CW I, p. 332) - and originality is meant by Mill as a process of analysis and induction through observation. Mill describes two different sorts of genius: the "creative" genius, for instance the painter, and the "conceptive" genius, the one who understands (and not just feels) the work of the creative genius, and who maybe possesses an even higher mental faculty. Why are there no more geniuses? Mill blames dogmatism and authority in matters of thought: doing an historical-philosophical *excursus*, Mill points his finger at the transformation of Platonism, Aristotelism and Hellenistic philosophies into systematic schools, and at religion as well, as it became a dogmatic belief carried on by authority rather than by thought and reasoning - he does not blame religion in itself, namely Christianity, anyway. Modern education too is "all *cram* – Latin cram, mathematical cram, literary cram, political cram, theological cram, moral cram" and "(a)ny purpose, any idea of training the mind itself, has gone out of the world" (p. 337). The consequences of this are the triumph of classicism and mannerism in the arts, and rarer and rarer original creations. Although Mill will no longer use such Romantic tones in his later writings, this short essay maintains its relevance because it somehow anticipates some later Millian topics: importance of originality, criticism of education superficially based on mere notions, condemnation of dogmatism in religion, in

philosophy and in every field of knowledge and teaching. These themes will constitute a substantial part of the late Mill's opinions on the subject of education.

In the following sections of this chapter, I try to show how and why education for Mill is as good for the individual's self-development as a person, as it is for his development as a member of a polity. Hence, we need to have a look at Mill's essay *On Liberty* (why are individuality and critical thinking important?), at Mill's own education and at the Coleridgean influence on him, with particular reference to the idea of *clerisy*.

III.II. LIBERTY IN INDIVIDUAL ETHICS AND IN POLITICS

In the third chapter of *On Liberty* John Stuart Mill makes his case for individuality as a means stimulating and fostering the genius, the improvement of social, civic and intellectual virtues of the people, and as a justification, along with truth (the main argument of the second chapter of the book), of individual freedom. In his investigation on liberty and individuality, Mill concedes that actions should not be as free as opinions and that, therefore, they can be hindered; actually, he adds, there are cases in which words and opinions have to be stopped too, such as in the event, for instance, that they may bring about an immediate and specific risk for someone. From this it derives that individual liberty "must be thus far limited", but, however, if actions do not harm what concerns others, and a person just "acts according to his own inclination and judgement in things which concern himself", then the same reasons for which freedom of opinion should be granted, apply to the case of freedom of actions (*On Liberty*, CW XVIII, p. 260).

Diversity of opinions is required in order to ascertain the truth, Mill writes in chapter II of *On Liberty*; in the following chapter he states that "different experiments of living" are required too, and "the worth of different modes of life should be proved practically, when any one thinks fit to try them" (p. 261). Traditions and customs may influence people's behaviour, in the sense that they are the result of other people's experience and what such experience has taught them. However, it may be that tradition does not fit everyone and that some people may need to find their own way of life. Moreover, even in the case of good customs and traditions, conforming to them merely as a tradition or as a custom is not advisable, according to Mill, because it would not educate or develop any of the human qualities of the individual.

> The mental and moral, like the muscular powers, are improved only by
> being used. The faculties are called into no exercise by doing a thing merely

because others do it, no more than by believing a thing only because others believe it. If the grounds of an opinion are not conclusive to the person's own reason, his reason cannot be strengthened, but is likely to be weakened, by his adopting it (p. 262).

Mill points out that human nature is not "a machine to be built after a model" (p. 263), and also that feelings and desires should not be tamed or restricted (as some moral and religious theories suggest, e.g. Calvinism), but, actually, accompanied with a strong conscience. A person with no strong feelings and impulses has "no character, no more than a steam-engine has a character" (p. 264), while an energetic character belongs to who owns his own desires along with a strong will. Mill writes that in the past, perhaps, the danger of lack of discipline and control of impulses did exist, but, at his time, the actual danger threatening human nature "is not the excess, but the deficiency, of personal impulses or preferences" (p. 264). Mill wants people to avoid conformity, and, actually, to develop their own individuality: in this context, geniuses can emerge, and "set the example of more enlightened conduct" (p. 267). Mill insists "emphatically on the importance of genius, and the necessity of allowing it to unfold itself freely both in thought and in practice" (p. 268). As different things can help a person or hinder another in achieving his own cultivation and spiritual development, different ways of life should be permitted, and eccentricity and genius should be allowed to abound, Mill says. Sadly, everything seems to lead to uniformity and to the reduction of "variety of situations": new and improved means of communication, politics, education ("because education brings people under common influences, and gives them access to the general stock of facts and sentiments"), and, above all, "the ascendancy of public opinion in the State" (pp. 274-275). As a remedy, "the intelligent part of the public" should be "made to feel its value" (p. 275).

What a government can do in order to foster or deteriorate individuality and character is one of the criteria that should be used in judging whether a form of government is good or not, Mill writes in *CRG* (CW XIX, pp. 383-398). In *CRG* again, Mill make a distinction between passive and active character, and seems to recall what he writes in *On Liberty*:

> The commonplaces of moralists, and the general sympathies of mankind, are in favour of the passive type. Energetic characters may be admired, but the acquiescent and submissive are those which most men personally prefer. The passiveness of our neighbours increases our sense of security,

and plays into the hands of our wilfulness. Passive characters, if we do not happen to need their activity, seem an obstruction the less in our own path. A contented character is not a dangerous rival. Yet nothing is more certain, than that improvement in human affairs is wholly the work of the uncontented characters; and, moreover, that it is much easier for an active mind to acquire the virtues of patience, than for a passive one to assume those of energy (…). The character which improves human life is that which struggles with natural powers and tendencies, not that which gives way to them. (p. 407).

Subjection to the will of other and the virtues of self-government and of a strong and active character are not compatible, Mill states (p. 410). Indeed, Mill's words in *On Liberty* already suggest this: "He who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan of life for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation" (*On Liberty*, CW XVIII, p. 262). In terms of political consequences, it follows from Mill's view that political participation is needed in order to use and improve one's moral and intellectual faculties; so, the plan in *On Liberty* and in *CRG* seem to be the same with respect to individuality, excellence and genius, and a representative government in which forms of political participation are required is a suitable organisation of the polity if a path of improvement of the individuals has to be followed. In other words, it can be said that *On Liberty* and *CRG* are part of the same plan of moral, social and political reform.

In *On Liberty* there are a few traces of elements which were characteristic of the young Mill: although some Romantic traits disappear, here we can read the classical, well known, famous argument stressing individuality and diversity, the need for exemplary characters as well as progressive improvement. Individuality is "one of the elements of human well-being" - as it is defined in the chapter title – and it should be subject to the freedom of experiencing and experimenting different ways of life. What emerges is a multifaceted view of human nature: there are recurring words such as "pleasure", "inclinations", "desires" *ac similia*, which show us two aspects of what Mill thinks human nature is and should as well be: higher pleasures are recommendable, this is true, and the use of reason and good sense are important for our own cultivation, however there is not an ideal rational man to serve as a regulatory example of conduct; in human nature, as well as in society, a number of forces are at play, competing and balancing each other and giving birth to diversity and excellence. Although diversity exists, customary habits inherited from the past should not be totally downplayed: if they are

widely accepted in society, it is very likely that there is a good reason for them, but, still, they may not fit a specific, peculiar inclination of character or personal spirit; even if they fit, they should be not passively embraced because of their wide acceptation, but rather for the reason for which such wide acceptance occurred. Even customary habits have to meet and satisfy the characteristics of individuality. Excellence is what we may otherwise call (and Mill himself calls, indeed) genius, a man able to see what others cannot, or able to create things others have never created before. A genius is a man whose influence on society should hinder the negative effects of the mediocrity so vastly and deeply characterising the middle class and the mass society (*On Liberty*, CW XVIII, pp. 267-270). Custom and liberty, for Mill, are substantially two antagonistic principles:

> The despotism of custom is everywhere the standing hindrance to human advancement, being in unceasing 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. The spirit of improvement is not always a spirit of liberty, for it may aim at forcing improvements on an unwilling people; and the spirit of liberty, in so far as it resists such attempts, may ally itself locally and temporarily with the opponents of improvement; but the only unfailing and permanent source of improvement is liberty, since by it there are as many possible independent centres of improvement as there are individuals. The progressive principle, however, in either shape, whether as the love of liberty or of improvement, is antagonistic to the sway of Custom, involving at least emancipation from that yoke; and the contest between the two constitutes the chief interest of the history of mankind (p. 272).

Liberty is not the only means towards progress and welfare, but it surely is the stronger and more resistant one, able to support an enduring improvement of mankind, thanks to the continuous practise of different lifestyles, to the comparison of different options of life, to the experience of variegated forms of pleasures and to the space left for the influence and the exemplary role of men of genius and excellent individuality (although everyone has got his own form, albeit largely imperfect, of individuality). This influence exercised by the few excellences in society and history is not to be confused with a form of pure paternalism or a way to impart education like a teacher does with his pupils; yes, it is related to human cultural and intellectual growth and development, anyway "it is not only a co-ordinate element with all that is designated by the terms civilization,

instruction, education, culture, but is itself a necessary part and condition of all those things" (p. 261).

Mill's views on liberty have been the subject of several forms of criticisms by various scholars and philosophers, mainly with reference to the relationship between O*n Liberty* and *Utilitarianism*, and on whether Mill is consistently liberal or he instead accepts some non-liberal, paternalistic or even authoritarian views in his moral, social and political philosophy. As concerns the definition of Mill as a liberal, in the nineteenth century James Fitzjames Stephen had already argued that a certain inconsistency or incompatibility between utilitarianism and classical liberalism exists, and that Mill sacrifices too much authority in order to preserve freedom. This view, which is one of the two composing the so-called standard interpretations of Mill's views on liberty and of their consistency or inconsistency with utilitarianism[15], in the twentieth century has been picked up by Isaiah Berlin, Gertrude Himmelfarb and C. L. Ten. Berlin (1969), for example, points out that in *On Liberty* one can find a tension between the individual and social dimensions of the person and a stress on the multiform variety of human nature. Berlin maintains that this is not perfectly consistent with the original utilitarian theory, which instead considers the human being and his nature as stable and observable entities. Berlin states that Mill "is officially committed to the exclusive pursuit of happiness" (p. 178) and that "it is difficult to suppose that it was not liberty and justice (at whatever cost) but utility (which counts the cost) that were uppermost in his mind" (p. 179): indeed – Berlin maintains – if a sort of pill of happiness existed, for Jeremy Bentham swallowing it would have been morally acceptable for all the mankind, while John Stuart Mill would have probably been much more hesitant on such choice.

According to Berlin, the pursuit of the greatest happiness and liberty appear to not have any direct connection with each other (p. 180): of course, liberty is a means to experience new, different lifestyle and thus to maximise happiness (or to reduce pain), however, he maintains the definition of happiness (or utility) seems to be unclear in Mill.

[15] This standard interpretation on Mill, or "consensus view" as formulated by Joseph Hamburger (1999), pp. 3-5, is the one according to which Mill was willing to expand liberty as much as possible, whether consistently or not with his own Utilitarianism.

In this sense, Berlin points out three aspects of Mill's thought: at first, in his opinion, in Mil's writings the meaning of happiness refers to something like relaxation of one's wishes, whatever these wishes may be; second, some secondary principles are attached to the utilitarian principle (an allegedly vague principle, according to Berlin's views); third, truth seems to be always provisional, subject to an ever further assessment and to change. Actually, as regards the vagueness of the utilitarian principle and the fact that some secondary principle may seem attached to it[16], Mill makes clear in *Utilitarianism* that every principle which looks apparently independent from any basic consideration on pleasure or pain is just a consequence of habit applied to the utility principle, as what was once deemed an instrument or a means for the attainment of happiness has become on object desired by itself because of habit: if something looks continuously and consistently desirable in order to attain pleasure, then, at one point, it will start being desired as an end (*Utilitarianism*, CW X, p. 236). The deduction stemming from Berlin's arguments (although, perhaps, one of them appears to provide a partially unclear or untruthful account of Mill on primary and secondary principles) is that the plausibility of Mill's argument in favour of liberty is based on the assumption that human knowledge is incomplete (at least in principle) and infallible (Berlin, 1969, p. 188), and no prediction or rule can be deduced from social sciences:

> Mill's entire view of human nature turns out to rest not on the notion of the repetition of an identical pattern, but on his perception of human lives as subject to perpetual incompleteness, self-transformation, and novelty (p. 189).

This view would contradict, according to Berlin, the utilitarian foundation of Mill's own philosophy: although it makes it more plausible and more human, it becomes less consistent with utilitarianism, and albeit we may concede that we may somehow and sometimes attain the truth, new opinions have to be formulated in order to challenge it and corroborate it (pp. 189-190). Berlin highlights the fact that Mill stresses the many-sidedness of truth and the need to study and "gain illumination" (in Berlin's own words) from different and contrasting doctrines, and this can be noticed in Mill's *Autobiography* and in the essays on Bentham and Coleridge (p. 192). Indeed, if we have a look, for instance, at the latter, a clearer idea of Mill's 'half-truths theory' may emerge. Mill

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[16] And as already discussed earlier in this thesis, see chapter II, section I.

expounds such view in *Coleridge* (CW X, p. 121) and questions Benthamite radicalism and vision of society, history and civilisation; Mill's conclusion is that Benthamism must somehow be integrated with romantic conservative theories. So, given that Coleridge was one of the two great "seminal minds" of nineteenth-century Britain according to Mill, it is relevant to investigate what Mill means when he refers to "half-truths".

This theme is an important point of the essay on Coleridge, because it involves the idea of social and political conflict, or at least the presence of different conflicting philosophical and cultural positions in society, and it describes the way these partial truths influence and complement each other, and, also, the way this dialectical process (certainly far from that of German Idealism) occurs is part of a dynamic social, cultural and political process which differs from what is present in Coleridge's thought, and therefore puts a different light on Mill's appreciation of the idea of the *clerisy*. The description of the theory in *Coleridge*, indeed, highlights the temporal aspect of this process, described as an oscillation between two extremes, whose median point is a complete and complex truth, or something very close to it; this process takes place as a continuous succession of reactions and counter-reactions to philosophical positions and concepts, including the need to point out, to enhance, to bring out any new idea or speculation considered relevant or focal for a new interpretation of reality, and the closer this oscillatory movement is to the centre (i.e. to the understanding that different theories show different aspects of the same reality, and they all describe the truth), the more it brings improvement to mankind and greater understanding of the complexity of truth. As F. E. L. Priestley notices (*Introduction* to CW X, p. xxix), this description already appeared just two years earlier in *Bentham*, when it seemed to be just a sort of incidental corollary, a particular remark in the frame of the overall reflection and assessment of the importance of the thought of Coleridge in the evolution of British philosophy, and of European thought in general too (*Bentham*, CW X, pp. 93-94). Moreover, already in 1832, Mill writes at length about the "half-truths" theory: in a letter to Gustave d'Eichthal there is a long part concerning this theme and closely linked to Saint-Simonian theories for which some ideas may be considered true as a *principe critique*, but false as a *principe organique*, in the frame of the positivist theory of the different epochs of humanity - and of thought and philosophy as well – considered as organic or critical periods. This Saint-Simonian vision, Mill finally writes, is fundamental in the search for "practical political truths" (letter to Gustave d'Eichtal, 7th November 1829, CW XII, pp. 38-43). So, this is a theory that, in few words, describes the existence of opposing forces in society and in different historical ages, during which the

predominance of an idea or a principle makes society stable, but at the same time stops human, social, political, cultural improvement, whereas lively, divided and different positions strongly contribute to the attainment of truth and progress. How such a view is consistent with Coleridge's thought, in which social, cultural and political tensions, and the role of education, culture, philosophy and, in some sense, scientific research (as we would call it today) are managed and resolved in a static and conservative – conservative in strict sense - social vision, is to be questioned.

The "half-truths" theory comes back later in Mill's life, in 1865, when he writes about Auguste Comte's Positivism:

> M. Comte has got hold of half the truth, and the so-called liberal or revolutionary school possesses the other half; each sees what the other does not see, and seeing it exclusively, draws consequences from it which to the other appear mischievously absurd (*Auguste Comte and Positivism*, CW X, p. 313).

In this case, Romanticism is excluded from the two sides of the truth, which is instead composed of Utilitarianism and French Positivism, both of which have a negative attitude towards what Mill maintains to be a metaphysical approach (pp. 300-301).

For Berlin, the 'half-truths theory', along with Millian philosophy of liberty, shows that Mill is well aware of the differences in human circumstances, of their role in society and history, and of the variegated ways of human change and mutations: Mill maintains variety and individuality highly important because he is an empiricist (Berlin, 1969, p. 194). However, at the end of his essay, Berlin also points out Mill's notes on English mentality, usually afraid of general ideas (unlike the French), and he affirms that although not being an original innovator, many of Mill's merits lie in his ability to apply ideas – general ideas – to different fields (p. 203). Mill was a man of an age whose "mass neurosis" - Berlin's words – was claustrophobia, meanwhile our age (or, at least, the age in which Isaiah Berlin writes, i.e. about 60 years ago) is rather an age of agoraphobia – that is why Mill may sometimes be misunderstood: although his psychology is nowadays a bit *démodée*, his philosophy has to be considered in context, i.e. as a reaction to the suffocating spirit of Victorian England (p. 198). Despite his criticism of Mill's theory of liberty, Berlin still believes there is a persuasive core stemming from Mill's own life, from concrete causes, from his rebellion against his father and from 'half-truths'. This core is meant to be a remedy against the unintended and potentially

oppressive and destructive modern democratic societies (pp. 201-202). Although Mill somehow advocates a role for the intellectuals – Berlin affirms – he never proposes the rule by the intellectuals and he cannot be accused of *pedantocracy*[17] (an accusation Mikhail Bakunin made against Karl Marx, for example): Mill is probably just thinking of a form of intellectual authority, a way to give voice to rational people, to the best-skilled, the well-educated and the more experienced. From his multifaceted and complex view of human character, seen as creative, fallible, imperfect, contradictory etc. stems, according to Berlin, Mill's figure as an advocate of freedom, although inconsistent with his own utilitarianism (pp. 202-206).

John C. Rees and Alan Ryan, instead, have framed Mill's liberalism as a substantially consistent part of his utilitarianism: individual liberties are necessary in order to preserve personal moral autonomy, and moral autonomy is in its turn a necessary element to pursue the greatest happiness principle. Ryan (1987), for instance, points out that the major elements of concern for Mill are "diversity, spontaneity and individuality" (p. 253), that these goods have to be safeguarded as "the ultimate goods of individual life, and that we must safeguard them by leaving people the room to experiment and inquire into them" (p. 254). Ryan highlights that, in Mill, action must be motivated by one's own happiness, and what moral rules are for is the pursuit of happiness. So, a moral restriction or permission should be accepted to the extent it pursues the maximisation of happiness (pp. 200-204). In this sense, Ryan argues, the utilitarian account is justified and consistent, and there is no license for coercion on other persons, as the permanent interest of a progressive being is in exploring his nature and the different ways in which he can express himself. Coercion, indeed, would

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[17] The term "pedantocracy" is used by Mill twice in his writings: for the first time in *On Liberty*, CW XVIII, p. 308 ("If we would possess permanently a skilful and efficient body of functionaries—above all, a body able to originate and willing to adopt improvements; if we would not have our bureaucracy degenerate into a pedantocracy, this body must not engross all the occupations which form and cultivate the faculties required for the government of mankind"), and then in *CRG*, CW XIX, p. 439 ("A bureaucracy always tends to become a pedantocracy. When the bureaucracy is the real government, the spirit of the corps (as with the Jesuits) bears down the individuality of its more distinguished members"), What this term entails (*routine*, mediocrity) and how it is related to democracy will be object of investigation later, mostly in section IV.II.

be at odds with a spontaneous, although rational, character in its development, and with acceptance of diversity as a prerequisite for investigating different modes of life (pp. 254-255).

Besides these, there are other original and critical interpretations of Mill's *On Liberty*: Maurice Cowling (1963) gives a politically conservative description of a philosophy that in reality seems rather dogmatic, as - he asserts - Mill's primary aim is to replace aristocracy and Christianity from their pre-eminent place in England and to claim considerable authority and moral leadership for intellectuals, thus replacing one ruling class with another. Mill's advocacy of liberty, according to Cowling (whose work received harsh critical responses, see for instance Rees, 1966), is a means to create a body composed of an intellectual *élite* of competent, liberal opinion-makers. Joseph Hamburger (1999), instead, sketches a sort of illiberal Mill: he highlights Mill's attempts to reconcile freedom and control while morally accepting individual behaviours aimed to influence and improve the self-regarding conducts of others, as "to advise, remonstrate, and persuade, after all, is not to punish" (Hamburger, 1999, p. 185). The main distinction is, probably, that between coercion and persuasion, and, actually, Hamburger writes, Mill's wish of reshaping individual moral characters maybe led him to overlook the coercive aspects of some forms of persuasion. Hamburger traces several passages of Mill's works in which a form of social control, of shaming, of acting censoriously, would have been permitted even towards the so-called self-regarding actions, i.e. those actions which neither harm nor affect others, in a sort of action of pressure targeting the depraved and the less civilised and carried on by those with individuality, those who in the current society are a cultivated and high-minded minority acting for a cultural transformation of society and humanity, thus tackling and altering beliefs and behaviours (pp. 166-202).

Hamburger stresses the importance of Comte's influence on Mill and, particularly, the idea of a religion of humanity, i.e. a religion or a system of beliefs which would not need to appeal to transcendental, supernatural elements, would be based on non-selfish feelings and would serve as a means to the development and improvement of humanity. At this stage, such forms of social/intellectual pressure would no longer be necessary, and an almost totally free society (in which different ways of life and thought can be experimented) would take place. According to Hamburger, "(t)he specific role Mill sought for himself in his religious project was limited by the need to face the fact that the religion of humanity would be in place only in the distant, even remote, future" (p. 148); moreover, he states that, while Mill discovered this project in Comte's writings, in

which altruism and a sense of duty were held as the final goal of changes in habits and motives, he actually had similar ideas as early as the late 1820s, when he first read Comte's *Système de politique positive*. Even later on, in his *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, Mill seems to see Comte's philosophical system as a natural ally of Utilitarianism, as remarked earlier in this section.

In Comte's writings, Mill finds an interesting theory as for historical and social laws, while he thinks Benthamism is still useful as regards psychological, individual and moral aspects. Indeed, Mill maintains that Comte's position in the field of psychology as a "grave aberration" in the French philosopher's "view of the method of positive science" (*Auguste Comte and Positivism*, CW X, p. 296). In the first edition of the *System of Logic* Mill highly regards Comte's work, praising it and quoting it at length. In the following editions, instead, positive and laudatory comments on Comte are less frequent and the relevance of his work in Mill's text becomes marginal[18]. Mill, hence, is just partially and not totally convincingly inspired by Comte as regards the role of the intellectuals; as concerns their very relevant role in the creation or at least the inspiration of a religion of humanity, Mill differs under two aspects. The first one is the institutionalisation of the intellectual class, which Comte favours while Mill rejects:

> "in order that this salutary ascendancy over opinion should be exercised by the most eminent thinkers, it is not necessary that they should be associated and organized (…). It is because astronomers agree in their teaching that astronomy is trusted, and not because there is an academy of Sciences or a Royal Society issuing decrees or passing resolutions" (p. 314).

Hamburger maintains that the idea of a religion of humanity was already latently present in Mill, who had a sort of an illumination when he encountered this idea in Comte (Hamburger, 1999, pp. 121-124). However, Mill rejects Comte's version of this religion, for a number of reasons: personal reasons (Comte basically wanted Mill to be his disciple across the Channel), authoritarian aspects of the Comtean project (in particular in his practical details), Comte's opinion on women (he was much less prone to accept gender equality than Mill was). An analysis of minor writings, posthumous publications, and letters reveal, at least according to Hamburger, Mill's real intentions:

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[18] See John M. Robson, *Textual Introduction*, in CW VII, pp. lxxxii-lxxxiii.

such religion would be a perfect substitute of supernaturalism, accepting Comte's general idea that the religion of humanity would help in achieving the objective of making compliance with altruism a habitual routine (pp. 124-139). Unlike Comte, Mill does not think that altruism should be forced; it should rather be encouraged if it does not emerge spontaneously (p. 137). According to Hamburger's interpretation, then, *On Liberty* is just a proposal of a set of means whose aim is the destruction of social norms and values, in order to instil new and altruistic ones.

The second aspect on which Mill differs from Comte has been neglected by Hamburger, whose argument on the religion of humanity partially lies on an interpretation of Mill's acceptance of the Positivist theory of natural and transitional states, the former being a society characterised by unity, harmony and stability, and the latter being an antagonistic society, where conflict and disagreement among opinions and beliefs towards the establishment of new institutions are common. According to Hamburger, Mill, in a sort of utopic fashion, hoped the establishment of a new natural state in which his religion of humanity would have substituted old moral norms and systems of values (pp. 108-113, mainly with reference to Mill's *The Spirit of the Age*, published in 1831 and in which Mill depicts the transition from old natural states of society to new one, and the emergence of new moral and intellectual authorities replacing the old ones). This is at odds, however, with what Mill maintains in his review of Guizot's historical writings[19].

While Cowling's work is a form of politically conservative criticism directed against liberal and allegedly dogmatic thought, Hamburger hesitates in placing Mill in the liberal field: Mill tries to balance both liberal and non-liberal elements, as he thinks that no doctrine represents the whole truth regarding a particular subject or issue. So, according to Hamburger, Mill may be a sort of communitarian liberal. Basically, in Hamburger's opinion Mill would concede a large degree of freedom only to people of genius or of remarkable individuality, interested in higher pleasures after a process a social control - however, this seems to be a process, perhaps antagonistic, taking place among individuals, as it is not carried on by society as a whole, by the masses against the few (actually, in Hamburger's interpretation, it is an action conducted by the

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[19] See *infra*, section IV.III.

elevated few), by the political body through legislation. Hence, even though Hamburger may still be criticized (he maybe overestimates what in some points may just be loose language; Mill seems to recognise different personal models of perfection and individuality, and virtually everyone has his, or her, own individuality to enhance and defend[20]), the form of social pressure he describes and investigates does not seem to take place at a political and legislative level, in which, as I will try to suggest in the next chapter, wider room for freedom is allowed, and Mill seeks to devise an institutional system and a democratic polity in which every voice is heard, and where moral character is influenced not in a pervasive way, as Hamburger argues - for instance, he says, this pervasiveness is demonstrated Mill's will in reducing opportunities for the satisfaction of selfish attitudes (Hamburger, 1999, p. 226) - but rather persuasively and rationally.

More recently, in order to find reasons for which we should read Mill today, Skorupski (2006) has looked at some typical elements of Mill's philosophy, such as free thought, the concept of the good of humanity, freedom, modernity. Mill belongs to a tradition - Skorupski reminds us – according to which free thought is not based on the mere rejection of any sort of assumption in our reasoning or from any given idea or belief, but it rather concerns an attitude of constant open-mindedness towards what we already believe to know without any type of exception (pp. 8-11): Skorupski calls this attitude "constructive empiricism" (p. 8), which is naturalistic, because it puts us in the world that we study, and holistic as well, because it concerns the whole of our knowledge, and calls into question all our beliefs, even those which we initially take for granted or proved (such an attitude does not mean, in fact, that we have no beliefs to start with). In Mill there is an idea of collaboration with others in the service of humanity and of the common good – that is why he sympathises with Comte's religion of humanity - and the way to judge an idea with reference to the general good is to see if it contributes to the good of humanity or not. No one's happiness matters more than that of any other individual, and the pursuit of happiness in general, not only one's own happiness is important (in the terms that we have seen previously): the general rule is that each individual seeks to achieve his or her own happiness in his or her own way, within the limits established by the fact that everyone must be able to do the same, i.e. the pursuit

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[20] See *On Liberty*, CW XVIII, pp. 267-270.

of pleasures and the avoidance of pain. Skorupski traces the development of these ideas and reminds us that happiness is also a justification, a method of monitoring the course of our actions. There are behind this reasoning some truths and convictions about human beings, what they are, their stories, their condition, the fact that they discover what makes them happy by making mistakes and by exercising their freedom within their personal sphere, their relationships with their family or with friends, their social and political relations, and so on (pp. 15-38). So, the state of liberal society is not based, for Mill, on concepts such as natural rights or social contract, it is rather based on considerations regarding the fallacy of human belief, the human condition itself, the fact that human beings make mistakes , they learn from them, and in this way they come close to happiness. Human action is the foundation of Millian liberal theory: humans, therefore, need freedom to be happy. Skorupski in his text explores at length this subject, and what he emphasises is that nothing is more important to understand the ethical vision of Mill that his conception of human being as a dynamic and developing individual, "man as a progressive being", and there is a kind of potential released during the course of human life and, also, during the process of development of humanity. The fullest self-development, then, gives access to the highest forms of happiness. The possibility of development within society is fundamental, and that is, according to Skorupski, one of the main elements why we should read Mill today.

Another point that Skorupski examines is the concept of freedom, and the analysis of human development and of the human condition is the foundation of freedom according to Mill, Skorupski emphasises. A liberal accepts that the authority comes from the people, but also that popular sovereignty has limits of principle (p. 40), while a collectivist deems that popular sovereignty has no limits and that all the power is in the hands of the people, thus attacking the individual will in order to favour the collective will. Here we go to the core of the problem, which concerns the relationship between individual freedom and collective democratic decision, so much so that Skorupski emphasises the Millian concept of backward states of society and the idea of progress towards more freedom as a mental process that takes place at both a moral and individual level, and a collective one: freedom makes its appearance and prevails in a society in which barbarism and its oppressive and violent elements have been expelled or at least substantially weakened. Freedom of discussion and the fact that we should not harm other people's feelings occur only at a certain level of development. Morality and freedom concern the individual who must be not only encouraged but almost driven to take a path of personal, individual and even original development - at a social level,

what does this mean? That we must have a society in which there is a wide variety of characters and lifestyles - this is what emerges from Mill's theory. What might be called the liberal elitism of Mill is the opposite of an authoritarian populism, because on the one hand, Skorupski argues (p. 55), Mill mixes his liberalism with a certain civic and political egalitarianism, on the other hand there is a certain hierarchy of values, and there are differences in what we consider good and beautiful, as well as the creativity of some people respect to the masses, and Mill is looking for some intellectual and moral recognition of those who deserve it.

Skorupski makes a list of propositions of Mill's philosophy:

> 1 The greatest fullness of life comes through developing one's nature – in all aspects of feeling, reason and will.
> 2 Aesthetic, intellectual and moral self-development is open to all.
> 3 Open and universal culture requires unchecked diversity and dissent
> 4 It requires contributions of the highest order of greatness. These can only be made by a creative few, and are most favoured in an atmosphere of freedom.
> 5 Democracy without an entrenched Liberty Principle threatens mediocre conformism, and even a political despotism of the majority. (pp. 55-56)

Despite providing a good summary of Mill's moral and political philosophy, these propositions perhaps lack some elements. The fifth one, for instance, could mention the fact that the liberty principle is necessary in and for the polity, of course (at least from a Millian point of view), but that perhaps it is not sufficient (not evidently, at least) and that further considerations regarding cultivation and competence have to be made when it comes to a democratic polity. Although the fourth proposition mentions "contributions of the highest order of greatness", whether it is just a matter of liberty that these are not ignored thanks to "an atmosphere of freedom" against "mediocre conformism" and "a political despotism of the majority" is not obvious. As I will try to show in the rest of this work, competence, even in the sense of a proper political competence/*technē*, play an important role alongside liberty. As Skorupski maintains, freedom of thought and discussion triggers a mechanism in a liberal and democratic society through which some opinions and individuals will emerge. Despite the tension between the liberty principle and the intellectual and moral authority that Mill faces, this authority, thanks to freedom itself, gains some influence which will have to take place in the implementation of democratic representative activities. Skorupski

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emphasises the objections regarding the fact that Mill unrealistically assumes high standards of integrity and selfless action of many - too many - people on many - too many - topics or issues (p. 60). Yet, Skorupski also states that any *élite* in itself is just another group of fallible and corruptible humans, dialogue is actually what really appeals to reason, which is a faculty common to all human beings, and leaving it in the hands of a group means failing in providing a mechanism to eliminate particular distorting perspectives from that specific group (pp. 60-61). So rationality and responsibility are qualities developed by education and practice of dialogue in the polity - this is the point that Skorupski makes. However, it is not just the "atmosphere of freedom" what helps. The way political institutions and representation are devised and work may or may not help in fostering the advantages of liberty.

As for the modernity of Mill's thought, and going back to Skorupski's question (*Why read Mill today?)*, we must not forget the cultural-philosophical context of the time, in Europe and in Britain, the communitarian tendencies (Hegel and Marx, for example), as well as the influence French positivism has had on Mill, although Mill, as seen in the essays on Bentham and Coleridge and in his *Autobiography*, has never supported a complete and total criticism of Enlightenment and rationalist tendencies, but he has rather carried out a critical and complex process of re-thinking and re-elaboration. In this regard, and also in regard to the way a Millian political and social theory may come useful to us in the XXI century, it could be stressed that our cultural life and self-conceptions are still heavily influenced by Enlightenment and Romanticism, and this is why, for example, Victorians are so close to us (see Taylor, 2003, pp. 393-418), and indeed, when it comes to social sciences

> Even more strikingly, the very picture of history as moral progress, as a
> going beyond our forebears, which underlies our own sense of superiority,
> is very much a Victorian idea (p. 394).

The idea of reducing suffering too came to us from the Enlightenment and some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thinkers (of course Bentham and the Utilitarians, but also Cesare Beccaria and his proposal of penal reform, for instance). Another idea of the age was the subject as self-determining, stemming from the decline of cosmic ideas on a determined universal order and from reflections on the internal powers residing inside the subject, i.e., typically, reason and imagination (pp. 394-395).

Turning now to the concept of education in itself, we shall see some of Mill's ideas at the time of his anti-Utilitarian reaction (during which he developed some of the convictions on the individual genius I have mentioned and discussed earlier in this chapter) and the idea of education proper (school and academic) and at large, and how it is strongly woven with political matters according to Mill.

III.III. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, COMPETENCE AND EDUCATION

Why is education relevant to Mill's democratic theory? Because in it, as we shall see, we have a two-fold argument: on one side, the importance of competence deriving from education and experience is a relevant element in representative government – in any form of government, actually. This is quite obvious, in very truth; however, a class of competent rulers and bureaucracy might somehow endanger liberty. On the other side, political participation has educative consequences.

As in Jeremy Bentham's philosophy, in Mill's theory we find the basic principle that every man is, at least *prima facie*, the only sure guardian of his rights and interests. So, Mill thinks that the exclusion of individuals or groups from any political activity can lead to ignoring, misunderstanding or underestimating their interests. However, the justification of the principle of participation is incomplete on the basis of this first argument: unlike Bentham, John Stuart Mill has learned that the public interest is not the full satisfaction of particular interests. The interests that individuals pursue may not be their true interests, and the same goes for the general interest. We have seen in *On Liberty* that people know what their interest is, but, also, that there are higher and lower pleasures, and that the experience of different lifestyles and the challenge to established truths are important.

There is a second reason for defending political participation: its influence on education and character education. It favours the creation of an "active and energetic"[21] character. What, in particular, are the consequences of democratic participation? Indeed, when we mention education with reference to Mill's political thought we are actually talking about something more than school, academic, professional or technical education. We

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[21] *CRG*, CW XIX, p. 407.

are also talking of elevation of character and of the creation of a polity which would lead to the creation of characters as described in *On Liberty*, where, indeed, he sketches the link existing between the number of people exercising some form of political power and the need for informed judgements:

> No government by a democracy or a numerous aristocracy, either in its political acts or in the opinions, qualities, and tone of mind which it fosters, ever did or could rise above mediocrity, except in so far as the sovereign Many have let themselves be guided (which in their best times they always have done) by the counsels and influence of a more highly gifted and instructed One or Few (*On Liberty*, *CW XVIII*, p. 249).

There are three concepts I will try to single out in the subsequent sections of this thesis and in its particular interpretation of John Stuart Mill's political thought. First of all, political participation enforces a sense of citizenship, matures the spirit of independence and critical reasoning, it leads so to express publicly any disagreement with political decisions and take action to change them. Secondly, it broadens the views of individual interests and ensures that every citizen tends to satisfy their desires even beyond those that are short-term interests. Finally, participation leads citizens to better understand what is the interest of the community, and then to act on the basis of such general interest, and not in view of one's exclusive individual, partial, private interest. Those who engage actively in politics, in short, have more elaborate opinions, possess better information, and are able to better understand the differences between parties and candidates. Political participation is not reduced, for Mill, to the mere action of the vote, since it also affects education of the citizens, interest in the problems of national politics and, above all, direct business in local government, as this, on a smaller scale compared to national government, gives more opportunities for anyone to take part in political decisions, providing an excellent training for government activity, and allows to acquire a greater sense of responsibility.

The principle of participation as described in Thompson (1976, pp. 13-53), however, seems insufficient to justify a form of representative government without any particular provision to prevent undesired consequences of the democratic rule. On the one hand the democratic participation makes every citizen, even poorly qualified intellectually and culturally, more and more suited to political life; on the other side, the condition of many individuals, ill-prepared and uneducated, is a reason to keep them away from political and administrative life, precluding any possibility of their individual moral and

civil progress. In some of his writings Mill argues, however, that, along the current lines of progress and civilisation, democracy may be an inevitable fact of life and history (*De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (I)*, CW XVIII, p. 158), although not an "absolute principle" but rather a "question of time, place and circumstance" (*Autobiography*, CW I, p. 177), and there is a need for preparing and educating individuals who belong to the lowest classes to participate in politics; it is extremely likely, also, that in every society, however, there will always be individuals or classes, with greater moral and intellectual qualities, more educated, more prepared than others to the government of public affairs. At the beginning of participation is necessary, therefore, a support provided by the expertise and the quality of the best on the other side; the principle of competence indicates that in a democratic society as much space as possible must be granted to those *élites* who have the most in-depth knowledge of the most important skills and the highest intellectual qualities.

It is possible to identify two arguments for this principle: the first argument points out the dangers of incompetence; the second emphasises the importance of educated minorities in the process of political education of the majority of the population. The competence of bureaucracy, which is technical and not moral or intellectual, can certainly be considered high due to the experience accumulated over time, but it suffers from a serious flaw: *routine* (*CRG*, *CW XIX*, pp. 439-440). Mill affirms that rules and procedures cause bureaucracy to become rigid and inappropriate to any change or reform. He is afraid of the fact that bureaucratic governments perish by the immutability of their rules. A popular government, according to Mill, requires men of genius and original people to obstruct the spirit of mediocrity. A government of experienced officials would not be able to do things for a nation that can be made from a free government (even though, Mill concedes, we can still assume that government officials may be able to perform those tasks that a free government would not be able to achieve by itself). In other words: an external element of freedom is effectively and permanently indispensable to ensure the government officials are able to achieve the objectives of a democratic society. Competence of technical sort, therefore, must necessarily be accompanied by the presence of intellectuals, geniuses, I would even say, philosophers, otherwise it may probably turn into a regime that depresses moral and intellectual qualities, and would, therefore, hinder the chances to have a good government, which, instead, would need those qualities, and which, therefore, must be able to stimulate them. Furthermore, an excessive power of bureaucracy may transform the public political sphere in a private matter, because it would be structured according

to decisions of technical nature with respect to which the many have no skills to assess and judge. A democratic and free government is therefore not only fairer but also more useful and effective. This is not simply because it fits the character of modern society, but also because it contains in itself the antidote against *pedantocracy*[22].

Finally, a representative democracy is a government based on the criterion of accountability, according to which governments are accountable to their citizens and selected through public and open electoral competition. John Stuart Mill appeals to competence in matters of government, but at the same time he points out that the accountability of the governors to the governed is a guarantee of good government (Urbinati, 2002, p. 45 and p. 59).

Looking at these potential dangers, therefore, it becomes clear, as we shall see in the following pages and chapters, the role the intellectual minority (i.e. that section of population composed of intellectuals, competent people, highly educated citizens and so on) should have in society, a minority whose superior competence – moral as well as technical – justifies their influence within society.

It can be assumed that just keeping in mind the need for a solution to the tension between these two principles (participation and competence, see Thompson, 1976, pp. 13-90) Mill comes to state that if the constitution of representation does not favour the presence of competent and educated people in the parliamentary assembly, the dangers faced by representative government become significant.

III.IV. EDUCATION, SOCIETY AND STATE

A focus on John Stuart Mill's ideas on education requires not only a study of his writings on the subject (for instance, his inaugural speech at St. Andrews and other minor contributions outlined in the previous sections of this work) and a reflection on his philosophy and on its emphasis on the relevance of individual human development, but also a look at his own early education: indeed, a substantial part of his *Autobiography* (more precisely, the first chapter) regards his own education and the way it was

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[22] The way intellectuals can make their mark will be shown in the next chapters of this work, in particular in section IV.VI.

conducted by his father, James. The young John Stuart went through a quite rigorous and dense *curriculum studiorum* during his childhood: he started learning ancient Greek at the age of three, and he proceeded reading Aesop's *Fables* and other works by several classical authors such as Xenophon, Herodotus, Diogenes Laertius, Lucian, Isocrates and, at the age of seven, Plato (*Autobiography*, CW I, p. 8); then, he went on learning arithmetic, reading some history books and, when he was eight-years-old, studying Latin and approaching Greek poetry. However, at this age, he was not just a pupil, he was a teacher as well: indeed, he started giving lessons to his brothers and sisters, consistently with the plan of monitorial system of education set out by his father James in order to maximise the efficiency of education and, more generally, to increase the number of educated and literate children and to improve the educational system nationwide. In this sense, John Stuart was raised in a way reflecting his father's pedagogic ideas – a sort of direct application of utilitarian ideas in the field of education. However, later on, such education proved to be less effective than it was supposed to be by James Mill: although John Stuart revealed himself to be an acute thinker already at a young age, this caused him some discomfort due to overwork and to want of affection during his childhood, later leading him to his 'mental crisis' and to review some utilitarian ideas; these changes in John Stuart Mill's thought, however, occurred not just because of his personal feelings and experience, but also because he later realised that the teaching method he and his siblings experimented was "very inefficient as teaching" and that "the relation between teacher and taught is not a good moral discipline to either" (p. 13). Furthermore, Mill's education seems to have been based on a quite different view from what he himself will have held later in *On Liberty*:

> Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develope itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing (*On Liberty*, CW XVIII, p. 263)

So, what was the theory that John Stuart Mill rejected in the field of education? James Mill's theory was based on the theories of associationist psychology: according to the associationist school, ideas are formed and stabilized, leaving physical and material traces (like grooves or furrows) in the nervous system, thanks to the repetition of experiences: there is not such a thing as purely abstract and/or innate ideas, rather there are experiences and phenomena that recur together, and from there the forms, even the most complex, of our rational and intellectual world are originated, as the phenomena recur in the same order. Such psychological theory, of course, has

implications for the debate over human character, whether it is innate or whether it is the result of the surrounding environment. According to Helvétius and to the Philosophical Radicals in England, education can contribute to the achievement of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, through an educational tool based on the association of ideas – and James Mill grounds his son's education precisely on this pattern. Furthermore, James Mill adopts the Benthamite principle according to which the individual character is the product of education as much as a nation's character is the result of its laws; however, "(h)ad not nature triumphed over nurture (John Stuart Mill) would either have lost his reason or at any rate have been unable to accomplish the noble work of his life", because the "bookish" education he was put through was useless even for the aims it was devised to, i.e. the construction of a sort of Utilitarian robot, and because, at the very end, "education is not all-powerful" (Cavenagh, 1931, p. x).

John Stuart Mill affirms that among his father's theories, the one on education is the most important, although it later became contradictory with the following developments in psychology and pedagogy. The first version of James Mill's essay on education was published in the *Supplement to the Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1819-23): a new, enlarged and corrected edition was then printed in 1825 in an autonomous volume along with other essays previously included in the *Supplement* and reprinted in 1828. In this work there are a number of occurrences showing James Mill using the word 'education' in a wide sense, i.e. environment or nature, as distinguished from nurture – but even when he uses the word in the narrow sense, education still remains as what creates differences among men, classes, etc. (see also Cavenagh, 1931, p. viii).

James Mill's essay is composed of four sections, each of which expounds a different part of the subject: the first section deals with the psychological theoretical foundation of Mill's theory of education; the subject of the second section still is a psychological theory of mind, although applied to the subject of education; then, James Mill turns his attention to the end of education (happiness, as we shall see); the fourth and final section focuses on some practical aspects of education.

Although it is the specific subject of investigation in section III, James Mill makes clear from the very beginning of his essay what the end of education is:

> The end of education is to render the individual, as much as possible, an
> instrument of happiness, first to himself, and next to other beings (...)

Education, then, in the sense in which we are now using the term, may be defined, the best employment of all the means which can be made use of, by man, for rendering the human mind to the greatest possible degree the cause of human happiness. (James Mill, 1992 (1828), p. 139)

The way we can make education fruitful, rather than useless or even detrimental to the pursuit of a utilitarian end, is to ground it on a correct theory of mind. James Mill's theory of education is a psychologically-founded pedagogy, as it is based on a theory of functioning of the human mind. James Mill pays tribute to David Hartley's (the founder of the associationist school of psychology) and the Abbé de Condillac's theories, in opposition to Thomas Reid and his followers in Britain, Immanuel Kant and the "school of metaphysicians in general on the Continent" (p. 144). In James Mill's psychology, there is a distinction between matter of experience (which is real knowledge) and what constitutes "matter of guess" (p. 142). When it comes to the experience of our mind, it is included under all to which we apply the expression *I feel*. Hence, we have feelings and, then, we have memory; feelings may get closer and become complex feelings, while, simple feelings may just be impressions (from the senses) and ideas of sense (i.e. copies of sensations from the sense) [23]. These two forms of knowledge apply to events regarding both our body and our mind – but why is a psychological investigation of the way our mind works relevant? James Mill affirms that feelings or thoughts produce all the actions of a person, and happiness, which is the end of education, depends upon these actions, and therefore "the business of education is, to make certain feelings or thoughts take place instead of others. The business of education, then, is to work upon the mental successions" (p. 147). Hence, the elder Mill is interested in the qualities of mind education should promote: at first, it should provide knowledge and sagacity, the latter being the ability to use the former, and they would be constitutive elements of intelligence. Furthermore, a second power is required, and it is the power of resisting pain and pleasure, what – James Mill affirms – the ancient philosophers would have called temperance. These qualities would be able to promote individual happiness to the highest degree – but, what about general happiness? In this case, two further

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[23] Here comes James Mill's criticism of Kant and Reid, as they would be part of a "class of philosophers who think that there are original feelings beside impressions and ideas; as those which correspond to the words *remember*, *believe*, *judge*, *space*, *time*, &c.".

qualities are required: justice, in order to avoid harm to others, and generosity, in order to do good to the others.

In his essay, James Mill lists and describes four forms of education: domestic, technical, social and political education. Domestic and technical education occur in young age: the former is constituted by "all that the child hears and sees" (p. 175) and is already decisive in the formation of the character and for the future education, as "(i)t seems to be a law of human nature, that the first sensations experienced produced the greatest effects" (p. 175). In this stage of education the child has to be surrounded by all those impressions which would foster in him the qualities of intelligence, temperance, justice and generosity, and this has to be done by associating, with words or other signs, the proper impressions to thoughts of happiness or pleasure or, if it is the case, of pain and misery. These moral qualities are necessary to people of every social background: indeed, as for technical education, James Mill distinguishes between specific, class qualities, and general, non-class qualities. Intelligence, for example, is a fundamental requirement for the working classes as it would constitute an obstacle to their oppression – and the issue whether one should be happy or unhappy equally concerns all the mankind. Problems arise when dealing with the degree of knowledge and, therefore, intelligence attainable by the working classes, as they do not have much time to spend in the acquisition of thoughts or of ideas which would elevate their level of intelligence. However, whether we are talking of future labourers[24] who undertake a specific educational path, as "there are branches of knowledge and art, which they cannot all acquire, and, in respect to which, education must undergo a corresponding variety" (p. 187) or of those who are, by virtue of their social and wealth conditions, to seek a more complete and deep education in the academic system, "there ought to be a provision for perpetual improvement" as "(t)hat he is a *progressive* being is the grand distinction of Man" (p. 189): this is why James Mill attacks the forces of conservatism in universities, the "old and opulent establishments for education" and the "old practices"

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[24] As regards young labourers and their education, James Mill points out that they should be kept out of labour until the age of fifteen or sixteen, and that a good method for the low classes to be properly educated is what Jeremy Bentham had called *Chrestomathia*, i.e. 'useful learning' in ancient Greek, with a predominant use of senses and perception, visual aid and diagrams, regrouping the different subjects according to logical 'priorities'. For an interesting account of Bentham's *Chrestomathia*, see Itzkin (1978).

(p. 189), as they would not foster the progressive aspects of humanity and would not lead people towards happiness – while we have seen that, according to James Mill, education in the early stages of life has to operate in order to impress on human minds those ideas which would better promote individual and general happiness.

The other two forms of education, social and political, operate later in the life of people. Social education is based on the power of imitation and on the influence society can exercise over feelings such as happiness and grief. Mill remarks that people feel an intense desire of being considered with favour by their fellows and by mankind in general, and that it is hard for people to live as members excluded by the rest of society. If both domestic and technical systems of education are properly conducted, then social influence upon us will enhance those ideas calculated to be impressed upon us during our childhood. Political education is defined by James Mill as the key-stone of the arch (p. 193), as the political machinery influences the way our mind sees objects of desire and how to achieve them:

> When the political machine is such, that the grand objects of desire are seen to be the natural prizes of great and virtuous conduct – of high services to mankind, and of the generous and amiable sentiments from which great endeavours in the service of mankind proceed – it is natural to see diffused among mankind a generous ardour in the acquisition of all those admirable qualities which prepare a man for admirable actions; great intelligence, self-command, and over-ruling benevolence (p. 193).

On the contrary, if in a society what matters is subservience to the will of few people, and not personal qualities, skills or virtues, most citizens will begin pursuing all the means of pleasing these few people in command or above them. This state of things would consequently lead to "intrigue, flattery, back-biting, treachery, &c." (p. 194) as the outcome of a society based on the interests and happiness of the few rather than of mankind (o, at least, of the many), unleashing all the negative forces and habits to which the previous stages of education had attempted to attach and impress pain and contempt.

James Mill's theory of education, as just outlined, does appear to make room for the cultivation of at least some feelings. Actually, it may also be noted, if we go and trace the philosophical and psychological roots of such theory, we can see that, for instance, Helvétius – who influenced James Mill's psychological convictions and pedagogic

proposals – used to admit that some natural aptitude or innate abilities might influence a man's growth, education, skills and achievements (the ability to become a violinist depends on, e.g., "du gout plus ou moins vif que l'élève prend our son instrument"[25]). However, as already remarked previously, the effects of James Mill's methods of education on his son did not exactly go as planned; furthermore, John Stuart Mill's criticism mainly lies on the ground of his father lack of comprehension of the complexity of the human mind. Alexander Bain also noted that the mistake the elder Mill makes in designing his theory and plan for education[26] is the same mistake he makes in his essay on government: lack of empirical evidence[27].

This is, in short, the pedagogic theory which James Mill supported and of which, as all the other areas of his father's philosophy, John Stuart Mill was an advocate in his youth – however, as the young Mill would have later maintained, such theory considered the human mind a machinery which, if set on the right path, would have automatically worked out its own development. John Stuart Mill's fundamental idea on education, with reference to his father's theory, is that pedagogic theories have to be grounded on the knowledge we have of the functioning of the human mind. John Stuart Mill's criticism of his father psychologically-founded pedagogy regards the lack of understanding of the complexity of the human mind, in the same fashion in which he criticises Bentham's philosophy in 1835 (see Cavenagh, pp. xi-xxiv). James Mill's mistake in his treaty on education is the same he makes in his essay on government, Cavenagh says with a behaviourist approach. On the other side, James Mill's modernity was clear in his will to extend education to everyone.

As an example of the consequences of his reaction to his father's pure form of utilitarianism, John Stuart Mill's essay on Samuel Taylor Coleridge may look like a perfect counterpoint, both in the field of education in society and in that of the analysis

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[25] Helvétius, *De l'Homme, de ses Facultés intellectuelles et de son Education* (a posthumous work), sect. x, chap. vi, cit. in Cavenagh 1931, p. xiii

[26] It is a plan which – it has to be said – under aspects other than its psychological premises looks really modern, mainly for being a system of universal education.

[27] Alexander Bain, *James Mill*, London: 1882, p, 247, cit. in Cavenagh, 1931, p, xi.

of the social and political forces at play in the modern nations. Indeed, after his father's death Mill finds a new inspiration in Coleridge's romantic theories: the need for an educational system that brings discipline and intellectual maturation into society had already been remarked by the Philosophical Radicals; it is new, or more relevant than before, the fact that society must not only meet the needs of the utilitarian greatest happiness principle, but also take into account national internal dynamics - Coleridge would call them forces of Permanence and Progression (Coleridge, 1976 (1830), p. 24) - and support educational tools for the people, as well as economic measures aimed to strengthen social cohesion. Moreover, the importance of the historical, social or ideal reasons that structured British political and social institutions gradually assume increasing importance in the thought of Mill, more than in Jeremy Bentham's original radicalism; indeed, many years later, in *CRG*, Mill writes: "In treating of representative government, it is above all necessary to keep in view the distinction between its idea or essence, and the particular forms in which the idea has been clothed by accidental historical developments, or by the notions current at some particular period" (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 422), and this seems to recall what Coleridge states about the *Idea* and the *Conception* of a Constitution:

> By an *idea*, I mean, (in this instance) that conception of a thing, which is not abstracted from any particular state, form or mode, in which the thing may happen to exist at this or that time; nor yet generalized from any number or succession of such forms or modes; but which is given by the knowledge of *its ultimate aim*. (…) The latter, *i.e.* a conception, *consists* in a conscious act of understanding, bringing any given object or impression into the same class with any number of other objects, or impressions, by means of some character or characters common to them all (Coleridge, 1976 (1830), pp. 12-13).

So, the fact that this original *Idea* of the English Constitution has spread its influence for centuries (p. 19) seems consistent with Mill's purpose to save the original reasons which led to the birth of many of the British social, political, cultural and religious institutions: for instance, as regards the church, the feudal state and religion, in his essay *Coleridge* Mill writes that in these realities there was something good, even if at his time there is little left of their original purpose and function in society; so, the reformers should look at what these systems, these entities, these institutions are still supposed to do and whether it justifies their continuation and it still fulfils the purposes for which a specific political or social institution was established. So, at some point, faced with the demands

of political reform, John Stuart Mill joins Coleridge's conservatism in this regard - both Coleridge and Mill were really disappointed about the *status quo*, and they both adopted the view that considers history and politics as a process of conflictual antagonism of forces. Mill makes particular reference to the case of England, whose government was born under a set of guiding principles and specific aims (identified by Coleridge in state's unity, social cohesion and protection of property – the so-called *Idea*) which have, in modern times, to be reshaped. In this essay, Mill seems to agree with Coleridge, despite his theory's "manifest insufficiency" (*Coleridge,* CW X¸ p. 155), on the fact that in every civilised country the antagonistic forces or the conflicting interests under which all the other interests of the polity can be included are those of conservation and progress (pp. 151-152). The interests of conservation would be defended by landowners, while those of progress would instead be pursued by the merchant and manufacturing classes. Particular, or sinister, interest (i.e. that class interest which exerts a sort of undue influence on government decisions and tends to subvert the public interest) and general interest were already key concepts in Bentham's social and political theory, and they are based on the utilitarian idea of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. In fact, the notion of general interest – which should be the end of every government – refers to a concept that regards a quite complex state of things; it requires, for instance, a sophisticated classification of what interests are at stake in a particular field, and government can only partially be able to meet the general interest. Coleridge supports an almost similar theory: according to him, the *Idea* of a Constitution consists in the unity of the polity by concentration as well as by balance and interdependence of the forces operating in society: antagonistic forces in Britain, as Mill also reports in his review (as we have just seen) are *Permanence* (landed property) and *Progression* (mercantile, manufacturing, professional classes). So, for both Mill and Coleridge social composition is the feature which has shaped British society, and considering its relevance is part of the foundation of a good political proposal: e.g., Mill mentions Jeremy Bentham and his idea according to which representative democracy is the best form of government in any place and at any time in history [28], whose applicability is, therefore, universal (pp. 153-154); however, following Coleridge, Mill also argues that the correct method of State reform is not the one suggested by Bentham, because a government must be composed of the elements already existing in society

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[28] We have already seen that this is not exactly what Mill will maintain in successive writings.

and the distribution of powers within the constitution cannot change very much with respect to their distribution in society (p. 154) – and here once again one of the main ideas of this writing appears, i.e. polarity of opposing forces of conservation and progress that interact with each other and may be contaminated by each other. On the other side, it is to be noted[29] that a general idea of history as a process of conflicting stationary and progressive forces is rather due to the great influence during the 1830s and the 1840s of some French thinkers on Mill, such as Guizot and Tocqueville (Varouxakis, 1999).

However, even though Mill and Coleridge seem to agree on this point (i.e. the conflictual view of historical processes), they actually draw different conclusions from it. With regards to politics and the way it works in England, we have also to consider – as pointed out by John M. Robson (1968, pp. 64-65) – that, at least in a further stage of his political thought's evolution, Mill seems to share in many aspects Coleridge's opinion about the existence of two different forces, i.e. parties, in English politics - repeating them again: one of permanence, i.e. the landed property, and one of progression, i.e. the mercantile, manufacturing, distributive and professional class – but not completely, as in *On* Liberty he writes: "In politics (…) it is almost a commonplace, that a party of order or stability, and a party of progress or reform, are both necessary elements of a healthy state of political life: until the one or the other shall have so enlarged its mental grasp as to be a party, equally, of order and of progress, knowing and distinguishing what is fit to be preserved from what ought to be swept away" (*On Liberty*, CW XVIII, p. 253). So, not everything is about antagonism, although it may be a healthy, constructive, dynamic force if driven through open debate and aimed to a rational choice following an open confrontation of these interests as well as of different opinions*.*

Actually, in one of his later works Mill directly quotes Coleridge as concerns the two forces that act - or would act – in society: in the second chapter of *CRG* he takes the concepts of Permanence (or as he prefers to call it, Order) and Progress, whereas the first is, in general, the conservation of what already exists, while the latter is its growth and improvement. The point, however, is that in Coleridge's thought these forces are in a play of balances which, while leading to the cohesion of society and its improvement (in Coleridge's terms, of course) - because they altogether respect the *Idea* on which the

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[29] See also section IV.III. of this thesis.

State is established – they nevertheless remain conceptually separate. On the other hand, in Mill's philosophy Order is an assumption of Progress, in the sense that Order or Permanence (i.e. the preservation of wealth and a form of stability of the current state of things) is a prerequisite for progressive actions and forces: "Progress is Permanence and something more, and it is no answer to this, to say that Progress in one thing does not imply permanence in everything" (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 387)*.* First of all, there are not necessary or obvious contradictions between the conservation of the existing and its growth; secondly, the only difference regards the quantity and the scale of force and effects: prudence, justice, industry, protection of property are virtues and basis of both Order and Progress, while intellectual reflection, courage, spirit of enterprise, originality are conditions – especially intellectuals – typical of Progress. At the end, this *particular* antagonism, seemingly consistent with Coleridge's social philosophy, disappears because Mill considers the concept of Progress as not satisfactory to give a criterion of a good form of government; in Mill's words, more than twenty years after the publication of his essay on Coleridge, "this division is plausible and seductive (…). But I apprehend that (however admissible for purposes of popular discourse), the distinction between Order, or Permanence, and Progress, employed to define the qualities necessary in a government, is unscientific and incorrect" (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 384) for the relevant cause is the character of individuals, and that is why Order and Progress are maintained by John Stuart Mill as misleading concepts at the time he writes *CRG*.

In his 1840 essay on Coleridge – an essay which is a review of the *Constitution of the Church and State* – Mill describes the Coleridgean contribution to political thought as sort of anti-Enlightenment reaction seeking to catch the genesis of those principles of society and institutions that *les philosophes* had – according to Mill – instead ignored (*Coleridge*, CW X, p. 131-133), rediscovering those basic principles which over time have shaped society along with the national character of each country, and hence becoming the basis of political obligation to the government and of social cohesion. Mill writes that these basic principles covered by such anti-Enlightenment reaction are three. First of all, Mill highlights that obedience to the state has to be consolidated through education since childhood. Its most important ingredient is restraining discipline, i.e. education of the human habits and then the ability to turn one's own impulses and desires to those which are considered the ends of society, and to control all those feelings that could possibly collide with such purposes and to encourage those tending to their achievement. This sort of educational system (along with its purposes) was at the centre of the ancient communities, while in modern nations it is devised in order to

preserve religious education (*Coleridge*, CW X, p. 133). The second principle at the foundation of obedience to the government and to the law is loyalty to something sacred or considered as such (for instance, to a god, to a monarch, to laws and ancient liberties, to the principles of individual freedom and political and social equality), a kind of fixed point contestable in theory but never challenged in practice: questioning this point would mean, for any community, the possibility of civil war (p. 133). The third principle is national sentiment, which, however, is not to be meant as mere nationalism, but rather as a strong union among the members of a polity, driven by sympathy among the members of such polity and by a desire for cohesion and commonality of interests within the same territorial boundaries (pp. 134-135).

In particular, the first factor highlights the role of civil and ecclesiastical institutions in education and training of the individuals and, therefore, of the people; Mill points out the way Coleridge re-evaluates past institutions, e.g. the Church of England and feudal religious institutions, which had, as a *ratio* for their own establishment and existence, the role of forging a class of leaders and educators, to be patron of the arts and of peace. According to Coleridge, the Church also has an educative function: the clerisy should be a sort of a national church dealing with education and cultural and moral training. So, this national religious institution should promote growth of knowledge, civilisation and education of the community; the clerisy, according to Coleridge, must be composed of professors, researchers, scholars, unlike the past in which the role of religious education was given to priests and religious people (mainly because theology was considered on the top of the hierarchical order of all disciplines). How, however, should this system of education be supported financially? There must be provisions for the use of state land and ownerships, called by Coleridge "nationality", i.e. an endowment of properties to be used for the moral and intellectual improvement of the people. They should be given in usufruct to the institutions making up the clerisy, and, moreover, the state may even reserve itself the right to intervene directly in the upbringing and education of citizens, through subsidizing and sending professors and teachers all over the country - thus making a national church of priests unnecessary for this purpose.

Something similar as regards the high importance of the role of the educated classes emerges from another source of Mill's partial rejection of Benthamism, Thomas Carlyle, who suggested that those possessing higher intellectual qualities should also, therefore, possess a higher authority. This would offer a solution to the question: who should rule the new, modern, commercial and industrial world? Carlyle proposed a literary and intellectual class of rulers and was worried about the influence of the working classes

on society as a whole (see Clayes, 2013, pp. 26-28). Labour, therefore, should be restricted and perhaps coerced (on this point, see Packe, 1954, p. 405). Such an authoritarian approach would not have suited Mill's views: indeed, during his life, Mill also rejects Comte's plan for the same reasons. Moreover, Carlyle's views imply a strong leadership exercised by a narrow circle of men: in *On Liberty* Mill writes that he is not "countenancing the sort of "hero-worship" which applauds the strong man of genius for forcibly seizing on the government of the world and making it do his bidding in spite of itself. All he can claim is, freedom to point out the way. The power of compelling others into it, is not only inconsistent with the freedom and development of all the rest, but corrupting to the strong man himself" (*On Liberty*, CW X, p. 269). This is a clear reference to Carlyle[30].

As regards Mill on Bentham and Coleridge, it seems that in his eyes they are two counterparts that complement each other and greatly influence the English thought of their time. But the question is: is Coleridge's thought a real counterpart? In other words: does Mill's account really show Coleridge's social thought as a "half-truth" of his rethinking of radical political thought? The point is that the clerisy's role, and school and academic education in general, have two different functions in Mill and Coleridge's philosophies: according to Mill, it is part of a broader philosophical purpose, a social and political reform which, preserving the democratic character of the state, finds a remedy to the danger of mediocrity of the electorate, of the elected representatives, and of that technical knowledge typical of modern states' bureaucracies, which are always likely to become *routine*. In this context, the democratic participation educational role (i.e. the fact that a successful democratic participation and political involvement promote a sort of civic training and education) is clearly important in John Stuart Mill's political philosophy, in association with what has been called the principle of competence (Thompson, 1946, pp. 54-90), indicating the idea according to which in a democratic society as much room as possible must be allowed to those *élites* possessing the most in-depth knowledge, the higher skills and the most significant intellectual qualities. It is possible to identify two arguments for this principle: the first argument is the one pointing the finger at the dangers of the lack of competence; the second stresses the importance of educated minorities educated in the process of political education of the majority of the population as a matter of efficiency of political affairs, since, thanks to

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[30] See J. M. Robson's note to Mill's text just quoted.

their involvement, a rational element would be included within the political arena. Competence, anyway, is not just technical, but it must necessarily be associated with what might be called moral competence, that is possessed by men of culture or genius, or by people well skilled and engaged in politics. In some of his later writings (for instance, *CRG*) John Stuart Mill deals at length with the issues related to a substantially bureaucratic government (indicating as bureaucracy as a form of state itself, and substantially setting aside the issue of bureaucracy within a democratic regime). Bureaucratic technical competence is neither moral nor purely intellectual, and although it can certainly be considered as a high form of competence because it is the product of experience over time, it suffers from a serious defect: *routine* – so far this seems to be like Coleridge, but let us proceed a bit further and see how this idea of competence develops.

Moral competence is necessary to counteract the special class – and therefore potentially sinister – needs and interests and, in general, the tyranny of the majority (as described Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*), as regards both the political decisions of the majority of representatives and the concerns regarding the influence of conformist public opinion over society as a whole and over individuals. Looking at these dangers, therefore, the role the intellectual minority must have in society, whose influence in society is justified superior competence – moral but also technical – becomes more evident. This role must be exemplary, e.g. through speeches and parliamentary election campaigns, public debates, in order to stimulate a dialectic in society leading opposing points of view to somehow meet and fostering critical thought about means and ends of government, as in the way it took place in the Athenian democratic *polis*[31]. It is worth noting that such dialectical reflection is not just a means to give a sort of public political education, but it is also supposed to influence the decisions that the government takes. Since those possessing moral and intellectual authority are just a minority, this often is the only way they can influence the government. Through these reflections, public debate, engagement, etc., their influence is greater than their numbers. It can be assumed that only keeping in mind the need for a solution to the tension between participation and responsibility is possible to understand completely what Mill writes many years after *Coleridge*: "Such are among

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[31] See Urbinati, 2002.

the dangers of representative government, arising from a constitution of the representation which does not secure an adequate amount of intelligence and knowledge in the representative assembly" (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 441).

An educational view like the one just described is part of a dynamic and progressive vision of society and of a philosophical system which in many aspects is very different from that in which the idea of clerisy initially originates. Indeed, Coleridge strongly fears popularisation of science, and the clerisy finds its moral foundation in the Bible - and then, more than moral, we could call it a religious, almost prophetic, foundation - and its deep political and social meaning lies in a completely static social vision. Ben Knights' description is very interesting:

> we have a theory of mind and of education of a wonderful fruitful sort, a psychological intelligence of enormous power which becomes committed to a limiting desire to separate the faculties of mind. In weighting the proposed dialectic in favour of the so-called 'higher' faculty, it impoverishes intellect, and (while appropriating the higher form of intellectual health for the few) sustains class society by proposing a merely partial and dutiful notion of intellectual health for the many. Dialectical interplay resolves into the subordination of one faculty to another, and the dynamic philosophy ends up supporting an organic and largely static idea of the state (Knights, p. 69).

This is an Idealistic conception of the state, above all if we consider that Coleridge describes a State as a "synonymous with a *constituted* Realm, Kingdom, Commonwealth, or Nation, *i.e.* where the integral parts, classes, or orders are so balanced, or interdependent, as to constitute, more or less, a moral unit, an organic whole; and as arising out of the Idea of a State I have added the Idea of a Constitution, as the informing principle of its coherence and unity" (Coleridge, 1976 (1830), p. 107) and he states that a Constitution must dwell on the idea of unity in itself by concentration of its forces, and on the idea of unity in itself by balance and interdependence of forces. Coleridge considers them to be respected by the British Constitution, event though not perfectly. Among the other things, this kind of vision seems to show also some light Platonic trait when Coleridge, in the seventh chapter of *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, criticizes the so-called plebification of science and culture, maintains right to make everybody moderately religious through a moderate amount of education, because, regardless of whether a true or false religion is taught, the unity of the State is best

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preserved by providing its citizens with a sort of immutable idea, by instilling an attitude of simplicity, since religion is the centre of stability of every kingdom; one of the aims of the State is to provide knowledge and develop intellectual faculties so that everyone may be an adequate member of the state, growing and living in a condition of *civilization* and not in a barbarian one. It must be noted that Coleridge uses the word *civilization*, a quite different idea from *cultivation*: "civilization is itself but a mixed good, if not far more corrupting influence, the hectic of disease, not the bloom of health, and a nation so distinguished more fitly to be called a varnished than a polished people; where this civilization is not grounded in *cultivation*, in the harmonious development of those qualities and faculties that characterise our *humanity*. We must be men in order to be citizens" (p. 107). True philosophy, instead, or a certain habit of contemplating the Idea in its unity, is essential for only two categories: rulers and teachers. The way this system of ideas can be reconciled with Mill's philosophy - even in its elements of review of philosophical radicalism, in the interest in conservative and romantic philosophies, in the growing scepticism and criticism of Bentham's thought and even under the theory of half-truths – raises some problems, if one considers what Mill writes about universities more than twenty years after *Coleridge*: "At least there is a tolerably general agreement about what a University is not. It is not a place of professional education. Universities are not intended to teach the knowledge required to fit men for some special mode of gaining their livelihood. Their object is not to make skilful lawyers, or physicians, or engineers, but capable and cultivated human beings" (*Inaugural Address Delivered to the University of St. Andrews*, CW XXI, p. 218). Actually, John Stuart Mill view on education seems still to maintain the radical philosophical and political point of view[32]. If we enlarge these remarks to the whole educational system imagined by Mill, one point seems clear: its aims are both *civilisation* and *cultivation* to the greatest

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[32] In particular, see James Mill's *Education*. One sentence by the elder Mill seems to be a sort of anticipated reply to Coleridge's remarks on civilisation and cultivation: "That he is a *progressive* being is the grand distinction of Man. He is the only progressive being upon this globe. When he is he most rapidly progressive, then he most completely fulfils his destiny. An institution for *education* which is hostile to progression, is, therefore, the most preposterous, and vicious thing, which the mind of man can conceive" (James Mill, 1992 (1828), p. 189).

possible extent, while Coleridge educational proposal's target is just *civilisation* for some people and *cultivation* for everyone – actually, Coleridge fears 'over-*civilisation*'.

It is necessary to be clear on this point: taking into account only the field of social and political philosophy, the proposal of a clerisy, i.e. a class of highly educated people largely financed by the nationality, is widely accepted by Mill. From the standpoint of purely philosophical significance of the proposal, however (even though Mill recognises large merits to Coleridge's "seminal mind") this must be calibrated in a direction which argues that the opinion according to which the role of clerisy's education is limited solely to providing support for the maintenance and improvement of the material conditions of the masses is not wholly in accordance either with the idea of the individual as a "progressive being" exposed in *On Liberty*, or with the democratic project whose dangers Mill captures in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and which he shows years later in his *CRG*, i.e. a society led by democratic government where the reason for the very existence of a government, in order to protect the general interest against the partial interests, is free and rational debate. It might be in accordance if the idea is that the clerisy works hard to substantially promote critical thought, urging people to become more reflective and autonomous (as befits the citizens of a democratic state)[33], but this would be a further departure from Coleridge's original proposal, according to which the state provides an education whose goal is people's cultural development and improvement only to a certain extent, promoting *cultivation* (in Coleridge's meaning of the term) while, e.g., feeding people with religious ideas which they are not supposed to criticize but just meekly accept.

III.V. PATERNALISM AND ANTI-PATERNALISM, INDIVIDUAL IMPROVEMENT AND POLITICAL PROCESS: ANALOGIES AND CONSISTENCIES

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[33] As for what Mill thinks about funding of education and choice of educators, Mill was at first inclined to a system based on endowments, and only later he supported a full state intervention in education, although distinguishing the attainment of a minimum level of education, from full government control of direction and provision of education (Garforth, 1980, p. 140).

An important point on which this chapter is aiming to focus is the affinity, or the analogy, existing between the principles advocated in *On Liberty* and the assumptions and the objectives that guide the design of *CRG*. In order to explain this point better, I refer to an article by Richard Arneson (1982) regarding both books.

Arneson claims, in short, that there is a substantial inconsistency between *On Liberty* and *CRG*: while the first is an anti-paternalistic text, he says, the second would propose solutions of a paternalistic sort, because of the involvement of the *élites* and because of a kind of real lack of confidence in popular participation. According to Arneson the very educative element in itself is a main source of paternalism in Mill's political doctrine in the attempt to improve the citizenry and the quality of the interests that the members of the polity seek to protect, promote and pursue, a sort of "Coleridgean, clerisy-seeking side of Mill's thought" which would constitute "its dark Victorian underside" (p. 48). Furthermore, according to Arneson, Mill's argument linking education and representative government is substantially weak: Mill would claim in *CRG* that an enlightened *régime* would not fulfil its duties towards the education of the citizens because it would not foster the active character of the people, Arneson writes. Basically, he criticises the view according to which Mill would have proposed a sort of participatory democracy: passivity of character would not automatically mean political powerlessness and activity would not imply a continuous, almost uninterrupted daily involvement in practical political business. "The essence of democracy is collective control, not collective involvement" (p. 53), and popular sovereignty, popular representation and popular participation are not synonyms, Arneson claims, thus participation is not so obvious to occur under a representative government, and the only things which would be assured in Mill's proposal are popular sovereignty and representation: the first would be limited by non-popular bodies and constitutional provisions, the second by a system of voting reducing the power of the working classes in favour of the educated *élites*. Arneson concludes on this suggesting that in *CRG* there are strong paternalistic features, in clear contrast with *On Liberty* and its strong anti-paternalism.

I argue that this view is flawed for at least three reasons:

a) Arneson does not consider the changes of Mill's opinion about electoral reform;
b) his argument is based on a misunderstanding of what Mill writes about political participation in *CRG*;

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c) Arneson overestimates Mill's paternalism as regards the role of the educated class.

More in detail, as regards the voting system, in some parts of his article Arneson overvalues the role of the electoral law in Mill's political system or, more in general, what the limits to the rule of majority are for: while it is true that the purpose for which such electoral law should be adopted is the representation of minorities, in particular, of the educated, Arneson excessively focuses on plural voting. In fact, in just two years Mill changes his mind twice about the electoral model to be adopted: in 1859, just over two months, after proposing plural voting in *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform*, he enthusiastically adopts the electoral system proposed by Thomas Hare; later, in 1861, he re-introduces plural voting in *CRG*. It is true that Arneson bases its reflection on only two texts (as already mentioned, *On Liberty* and *CRG*), but it is equally true that appealing to a theoretical point on which Mill, in a short time, has proved himself to be hesitant, may seem exaggerated, and as we shall see later[34] Mill's conclusions are not rarely guided by principles of practical realism rather than aimed to draw an ideal model of government.

The second point concerns the criticism of Thompson's theory of participation; my claim is that such criticism is largely based on a misunderstanding of the following quotation from *CRG*:

> From these accumulated considerations it is evident, that the only government which can fully satisfy all the exigencies of the social state, is one in which the whole people participate; that any participation, even in the smallest public function, is useful; that the participation should everywhere be as great as the general degree of improvement of the community will allow; and that nothing less can be ultimately desirable, than the admission of all to a share in the sovereign power of the state. But since all cannot, in a community exceeding a single small town, participate personally in any but some very minor portions of the public business, it

[34] Chapter V.

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follows that the ideal type of a perfect government must be representative.
(*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 412)

Arneson argues that, according to Mill, participation should be maximised up to a minimum level necessary for a representative government to operate. Perhaps, actually, in this case, Mill is supporting a rather classical liberal argument: although participation is good in itself, in a numerically and geographically wide society a maximum level of participation in the management of public affairs is not possible, so this should be reduced and must leave room for representative institutions. Implications of any sort regarding the minimization of political participation are a *non sequitur*.

Third point: in regards to the role of the intellectual and most competent *élites* in which Arneson distinguishes a clear paternalistic element, Mill is actually just trying to find a space for the most qualified people within a parliamentary system; this does not give them any explicit leadership post or a role aimed at protecting or substituting other representatives. The role of the intellectual seems instead to be – as we shall see in detail in the next chapters – an influencing role, i.e. being the person capable of intervening in the debate, of introducing elements of rationality in the political discourse and thus triggering the process of seeking the truth described earlier in this thesis. Indeed, as we shall see in the next chapter, Mill dismisses the idea of a pure and perfectly even balance of powers and affirms that in a democracy (whether representative or not), although limits and boundaries to the exercise of political powers may be included in the constitution, there always is a strongest power able to, if pushed to its limits, overwhelm the others, and such power is the popular power (pp. 422-423).

Actually, I maintain that a sort of analogy between *On Liberty* and *CRG* may be traced: in both books discussion and exchange of opinions and different backgrounds and experiences bring people closer to the truth and to ways of life (in the case of individuals) and to political decisions (in the case of the government) which can be helpful in promoting the utilitarian principle of the greatest happiness. While those who have experienced different lifestyles, especially the higher and more sophisticated ones, are able to identify the best solutions and to enjoy higher (i.e. intellectual) pleasures, finding satisfaction in activities exercising and involving the higher human faculties and not just in those related to our lower instincts, in the same way the intellectually most gifted and most competent may help to kick-start or give a positive, well-argued and substantial contribution to a free and rational discussion leading to wise political decisions respecting and pursuing the general interest.

Furthermore, Mill seems to have thought that an utilitarian morality could be applied only if human nature satisfies certain conditions and has reached a sufficient degree of sophistication, rationality, self-consciousness - "in the maturity of their faculties", as Mill said (*On Liberty*, CW XVIII, p. 244). So, there seems to be a double social policy in Mill's thought (Wollheim, 1973): a policy or strategy for people who have reached a certain level of self-development and another policy or strategy for those who have not reached such a level yet. At the same time, in chapter IV of *CRG* Mill states that society needs a certain degree of civilisation to be fit for a representative government.

This analysis of Arneson's article – despite being such article a minor contribution in the field of the comparisons between *On Liberty* and *CRG*, and of Mill on paternalism and elitism – helps us in setting aside some arguments according to which these two books show a different degree of paternalism. So, are these books paternalistic or anti-paternalistic? It can be accepted, in theory, that *On Liberty* is a paternalistic text, as well as *CRG*. Hamburger, as we have seen, excessively stresses some aspects, on which, then, an argument in favour of paternalism is founded. There are some elements, though, that may lead us to maintain that, if paternalism exists in both books, it is a form of soft, elaborated and nuanced paternalism. If Mill is really so concerned with the creation a coercive moral system why does not he address directly the issue and write a book advocating social coercion? On the other side, it is also true, however, that *On Liberty* describes limits to self-regarding and non-self-regarding actions, and in general the boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate interference[35]. An important aspect, however, may be that in *On Liberty* the educative element is pointed out with reference to an active contribution or participation by the uneducated few:

> No government by a democracy or a numerous aristocracy, either in its political acts or in the opinions, qualities, and tone of mind which it fosters, ever did or could rise above mediocrity, except in so far as the sovereign Many have let themselves be guided (which in their best times they always have done) by the counsels and influence of a more highly gifted and instructed One or Few. The initiation of all wise or noble things, comes and must come from individuals; generally at first from some one individual. The honour and glory of the average man is that he is capable of following

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[35] See also Kumar, 2005, pp. 28-30.

that initiative; that he can respond internally to wise and noble things, and
be led to them with his eyes open (*On Liberty*, CW XVIII, p. 269).

The many should "let themselves be guided", and this indicates an active predisposition by the masses, not a strong elitist view in which values are imposed or opinions are spread thanks to some persuasive action towards the otherwise inactive and lazy populace. A sphere of active freedom of the many is left untouched by Mill, the guiding role and the best judgement of the educated few are not substantial elements fostering the moral and intellectual elevation of individuals in society, but not the main. Mill's argument for the organisation and management of the polity finds its strength chiefly when the institutional political system is considered as a whole, and not if the focus is just on a specific set of citizens. In other pieces of Mill's works there are some unquestionably elitist references (as, for instance, in *The Spirit of the* Age), but, as we shall see later in this thesis[36], it is the existence of a parliamentary arena, of a rational debate, of individual freedom, of a specific voting system etc., and basically of the relational elements of the system of government devised in *CRG* (as well as in other political writings), that helps and introduce an influence multiplier with regards to the intellectual class, and that lets the less educated participate in politics and actively take part in a process which elevates civic spirit[37].

An important contribution on Mill and paternalism has been given by Gregory Claeys (2013), who illustrates some interesting aspects of Mill's paternalism and offers an argument based on the fact that most accounts unhistorically overestimate the weight of *On Liberty* within Mill's thought and according to which a contextual and historical

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[36] Section IV.VI.

[37] However, again, what "elitist" means is a matter of definition. Hamilton (2008), collects some useful definitions: while the Shorter OED defines elitism as "advocacy of or reliance on the leadership or dominance of a select group" (cit. in Hamilton, 2008, p. 54), Hamilton also mentions John Skorupski, who says that elitism is the denial of populism, and therefore elitism bears the weight of philosophical analysis (Skorupski, 1999, cit. in Hamilton, 2008, p. 54), and Wendy Donner, according to whom the contrast is actually between elitism and egalitarianism (Donner, 1991, cit. in Hamilton, 2008, p. 54). After distancing himself from Benthamism, Mill starts following Comte and Coleridge's strong illiberal elitism, which proposes the creation of an educated and vanguard class in society, but then comes back to more liberal positions, as we shall see later in this thesis. Hamilton defines Mill's position, as a "moderate elitism", "anti-autoritharian but not anti-elitist" (p. 56), which just accepts the existence of an influential role of the educated. As we shall see, the picture is a bit more sophisticated.

reading of Mill's work shows support for some substantial intervention by the state. Such intervention would affect the lives of the poor and of the less civilised (p. 14). According to Claeys, three elements are to be factored in assessing Mill's leaning, under some circumstances, towards an interventionist stance: social justice, Malthusianism and feminism.

As regards social justice and the lines along which authoritative state intervention may be justified according to Mill, Claeys analyses a number of political and social issues, such as the scope of government, taxation and inheritance, poor relief, franchise regulations, education, foreign intervention with reference to the cases of India and Ireland, plus a number of other minor and miscellaneous matters. As for the scope of government, Claeys relies mostly on Mill's concession in *Centralisation* about the limits of the state intervention: "the function of the State naturally does widen with the advance of civilisation" (CW XIX, p. 602). What Claeys points out is the distance between Mill's principles regarding government activity and interference with the individual, and some pure form of *laissez-faire* principles. Despite what Mill claims in the *Principles of Political Economy*, i.e. that *laissez-faire* is the general set of rules to which government conduct should conform apart from some exceptions, the number and the extension of these exceptions are quite wide and therefore state intervention in a number of areas in order to provide a higher degree of equality, liberty and happiness is justified (Claeys, 2013, pp. 118-123). However, although it is true that in a number of matters Mill can be regarded as paternalistic to some extent, it might seem an exaggeration to claim that "Mill shared with the Tory paternalists a sense of the guiding role of educated elites", although the aims were different, as he "sought no more hierarchy but less, not more unthinking forelock-tugging, but an end to deference on any other but intellectual and moral grounds" (p. 122). Mill in *On Liberty* justifies despotism as "a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement" (CW XVIII, p. 224) and in many of his writings, such as *Civilization* and *CRG* he distinguishes among different stages of evolution of mankind and argues that under a certain degree of civilisation and education a despotic rule is acceptable[38].

[38] An hint, however, of the state of civilisation during his age according to Mill is provided by what he writes in 1869: "In the less advanced states of society, people hardly recognise any relation with their equals (…). Existing moralities, accordingly, are mainly fitted to a relation

Claeys correctly highlights "the absolutely crucial importance of free, open, balanced, unprejudiced and well-informed debate" along with education and "a leading role for educated elites" (Claeys, 2013, pp. 214-215), since Mill "left no road open but persuasion" in order to achieve his goals (p. 215) and intellectuals should not compel others to pursue some particular end, but only the power to persuade and to point out the way (p. 220). Indeed, how far this goes in order to justify the fact that the most educated have a "guiding role" might be disputed, at least if such role is intended in a strong sense. More than guiding and leading, the intellectual class should rather persuade and foster a rational debate in society and within the political arena; it is a more subtle action than guiding that is indirectly triggered by the participation of the most educated in politics, to whom Mill does not confer a role of direct political leadership. Even in the case an intellectual is directly involved in politics, he is still confined within some limits as regards independence from his constituents' will[39]. As regards democracy, however, the educative power does not lie in the persuasion and the discussion led or promoted by the educated class; it rather lies in the democratic process in itself, of which the intellectuals are an important part. Without democratic participation, the guiding and persuasive role of the educated would just be an excessively paternalistic imposition over the uneducated.

Claeys in his book points out that under many aspects (birth control, marriage, taxation, private property) the government should intervene or to be at least somehow softly paternalistic (even though this is a label whose significance and extension might be controversial). Benthamism may have already played a role in inspiring the young Mill and providing him some paternalistic idea, mostly on the side of social control (see Claeys, 2013, pp. 16-21); Bentham also thought that MPs had to be strongly independent, not guided by the will of their voters[40]. However, Mill's essay on Jeremy Bentham shows a partial rejection of the sharpest aspects of Benthamism, and how Mill is influenced on this may be open to debate. Moreover, on the economic side, James Mill supported *laissez-faire* principles, while his son did not: at least on this, John Stuart Mill's alleged

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of command and obedience (…). Already in modern life, and more and more as it progressively improves, command and obedience become exceptional facts in life, equal association its general rule" (*The Subjection of Women*, CW XXI, p. 294).

[39] See *infra*, chapter V.

[40] See *supra*, p. 11.

paternalism (indeed, he is at least softly paternalistic, this has to be at least conceded here) does not derive from his Utilitarian and Radical education.

The point is that impositions on many important bits of legislation and on some basic aspects of social order and structure is democratically debated and consented in order to promote individual freedom, equality and happiness, and therefore not strictly speaking paternalistic, or, anyway, an example of positive paternalism, "which may promote both individual and social well-being, including autonomy and deliberative capacity" (p. 221). The educational side is non-coercive too. Besides this, Claeys maintains that Mill's views on democracy are weak, as they do not predict the fact the "widespread manipulation of opinion in democracies might undermine and possibly negate the educative role elites, 'the aristocracy of scribblers', had necessarily to play in reforming society" and that in politics "emotion, style and image often take precedence over substance and programme" (p. 224). It is true that Mill has not foreseen many of the problematic aspects of representative democracy. Claeys, however, identifies the core of the educative argument in the exemplary moral and intellectual guidance of the educated few, and not in the democratic process in itself, in the mechanism in which intellectuals do have an important place, but that would not activate beneficial consequences in term of education without active participation of the citizens.

What the next chapters will try to illustrate, indeed, is that democratic institutions as a whole, their organisation and the sort of rational debate that takes place in them, and not simply the example of the intellectuals or their virtues and moral guidance, are the means thanks to which elevation of the individuals is attained. This could be linked with what Mill says about nurturing education and the present civilisation in less developed societies, one of the issues that will emerge over the next pages, along with the way the political debate in the legislative assembly should occur, the antagonistic aspects of politics and history according to Mill, and what are the founding principles of democracy and the evils which it has to avoid.

IV. DEMOCRACY

In the previous chapter we have seen the positive impact of liberty on society according to John Stuart Mill – mainly in terms of civic and social education - and how the progressive education of the citizens can let democratic institutions and political participation flourish, and vice versa. In other words, we have seen how Mill's approach to the matter involves or at least assumes a sort of self-feeding virtuous loop: a certain level of education, individual liberty and civic self-consciousness are necessary requirements for democracy, which, in its turn, fosters individual characters, political participation and a possibly wider, better informed and more rational debate; such 'democratic consequences' increase cultivation and education in society, and so on.

The purpose of the present chapter (which will be mostly descriptive of Mill's political proposal) is to extend the account of such an approach and also to provide a more specific view of John Stuart Mill's theory of representative democracy.

The first section introduces the methodology of the social sciences, as expounded in the *System of Logic*, and reasons and conditions to establish a representative government (chapters I-IV of *CRG*), sketching a possible philosophy of history; then a section on democratic institutions and elections (chapters V-XIV of *CRG*, excluding chapter XII, which will be object of investigation in the following chapter of this thesis) follows. The third section deals with Alexis de Tocqueville and François Guizot's influence on Mill, which will eventually reveal itself to be fundamental to the deeper understanding of Mill's political thought in conceptual and theoretical terms, as it introduces the concepts of the tyranny of the majority and of systematic antagonism in society.

Finally, I try to investigate and assess whether Mill's theory of government is really democratic or if, actually, it hides some forms of elitist rule, and whether there is room for technocrats in a representative democracy. Hence, I argue that there are some specific moral obligations for representatives.

IV.I. METHODOLOGY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

Mill's ideas on the way an investigation on the forms of government should be conducted can be obtained from *CRG*; however, many issues are already considered in the *System of Logic*, at least as regards the methodology of the social sciences.

CRG are introduced by introducing and discussing two alternative approaches to political theory:

a) political systems are an almost natural product of a society and influenced by people's existing social, cultural and character conditions (if not their direct consequence);

b) such political systems may be reduced to merely abstract elaboration, a set of pre-defined institutions suitable to every kind of society or a consequence of a nation's characteristics and therefore, once the best form of government is identified and characterized, it has to be applied in every state, without any particular concern for existing and contingent situations.

Mill rejects both theories. According to the theory which would see the government merely as a mechanism to be put in motion in any case and under any conditions, the first step would be to identify the hypothetical best form of government, and those who adopt this method look to a constitution in the same way they look at a steam engine or a threshing machine, Mill writes. When it comes to the point of view according to which institutions are just the inevitable result of history, traditions and character of a people, Mill does reckon that political institutions derive from human will, and the organisation is decided by individuals, and that therefore men did not wake up one morning in the summer and found them to have blossomed; however, at the same time, we must not forget that no machine - including the political - moves on its own (*CRG*, CW XIX, pp. 374-382). Mill honestly recognises that nobody is a supporter of any of these theories in their pure form: both the supporters of the naturalistic version (institutions as products of traditions, habits, circumstances) and those of what we may somehow call idealistic (as it moves from a theoretical political reflection applicable to any concrete situation) or mechanistic (for it sees the political machinery, namely the government, as a sort of complex system of gears whose mechanisms have to be investigated in order to refine their functioning) use elements of the opposite theory. In other terms, the fundamental concept that we find in this preliminary examination of the subject is that both theories just show and represent a partial view: neither of these two theories about the birth of the government is completely accurate, and both, at the same time, contain elements of truth.

For a good and effective government – Mill continues – an active participation of individuals is necessary, not just their acquiescence. He identifies three conditions for a representative government:

> The people for whom the form of government is intended must be willing
> to accept it; or at least not so unwilling, as to oppose an insurmountable
> obstacle to its establishment. They must be willing and able to do what is
> necessary to keep it standing. And they must be willing and able to do what
> it requires of them to enable it to fulfil its purposes (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 376).

Although relevant, conditions such as numerical strength, social status and financial wealth can be contained and overwhelmed, i.e. they can be prevented from becoming the decisive factor in establishing a political power in society, mainly because the choice of the form of government is a fact of persuasion, "a great part of political power consists in will" (p. 381) and "(i)t is what men think that determines how they act" (p. 382); in other words, the polity is a space of practically exercised will (or will with practical consequences)[41], which is not necessarily bound to or driven by social and economic powers. Indeed, a good form of government depends on "the qualities of the human beings composing the society over which the government is exercised" (p. 389), or, still in Mill's own words, "the virtue and the intelligence of the human beings composing the community" (p. 390). On the other hand, the role of government, or, more properly, of its institutions – the machinery – consists in being able to promote such qualities in the governed, leading to a general elevation of moral, civic, intellectual, mental qualities within a society, which, in their turn, make government wiser, more effective in pursuing the general interest and, last but not least, increasing the aforementioned qualities, and so on. In this sense, a basic feature of a good government has to be *progressiveness*.

It has to be remarked, however, that, according to Mill, different stages of society's evolution require different forms of government for the reasons mentioned above: a government whose existence and purposes its citizens are unable or unwilling to actively protect, pursue and accept is unfit for the specific conditions of that specific community. Hence, backwards stages of human civilisation require a form of rule fit for less cultivated and civically engaged citizens and able, somehow, to let them reach the next step of civilisation. The second feature of good government, so, is *adaption* to the

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[41] Which, as we shall see, in the Millian form of democracy becomes a political space of rationally exercised freedom.

existing conditions within society. Two years before the publication of *CRG* Mill already affirms:

> Despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end. Liberty, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion. Until then, there is nothing for them but implicit obedience to an Akbar or a Charlemagne, if they are so fortunate as to find one. But as soon as mankind have attained the capacity of being guided to their own improvement by conviction or persuasion (a period long since reached in all nations with whom we need here concern ourselves), compulsion, either in the direct form or in that of pains and penalties for non-compliance, is no longer admissible as a means to their own good, and justifiable only for the security of others (*On Liberty*, CW XVIII, p. 224).

Given these principles, Mill reckons that the best form of government is representative government, and the main reason is that it both requires and fosters an active character, i.e. an individual character that, when the circumstances in society are favourable, tries to improve the current conditions of society and to prevent evils to occur, without merely and passively accepting them, and that, in virtue of this activity, improves itself morally and intellectually, and is a force towards social and moral progress. Furthermore "more salutary is the moral part of the instruction afforded by the participation of the private citizen, if even rarely, in public functions" (p. 412), as he is required to take into consideration not just his own interest, but all the different and conflicting interests or claims in society. This would hopefully associate him with more trained and experienced people in the work of government (and, somehow, I would dare to say, in the work of a sort of political and social conflict resolution), lead him to a better comprehension of the general interest of society as a whole, and let him feel part of a larger community. Even though in some stages of history an authoritarian and despotic ruler is needed, because of the uncultivated qualities of the population in general, it requires citizens with a passive character and substantially hinders both individual and collective improvement.

Book VI of Mill's *System of Logic* is relevant as well, as it deals with social sciences. With regards to our topic, we see that according to Mill character is the source of volition, and

the task of science is to ascertain its laws. Ethology, therefore, studies the formation of individual characters, which arises from the general laws of psychology operating in specific circumstances. For example, Mill introduces the notion of collective character; it is possible to speak of national character, something that manifests itself in what is typical of the nation, such as popular maxims, acclaimed literary works, institutions when they are accepted and supported, and so on (*System of Logic*, CW VIII, p. 867). As regards sociology, Mill believes that the correct approach is deductive, taking into account the co-occurrence of a multitude of causes that act together; he checks the outcome of deductive reasoning comparing it with the actual phenomena or, when possible, with their empirical laws. Also, the inverse deductive method (pp. 911-930) is to be used for historical research in order to get and draw generalisations from specific experiences, such as historical events, and these generalisations are to be verified comparing them with the general laws of human nature. Although these methods have their limits, the interesting aspect is the fact that society is a product of a variety and convergence of multiple aspects, similar to that which takes place in the various organs and functions of the physical structure of the animals, so we cannot ever say that a certain cause is responsible for a given effect. Also, even more important is the fact that individual characters have, in the manner just described, social and collective effects. Individuality, then, is a focal point of political analysis and action.

With regard to the idea of and the role of history and the need for reform in order to foster rational elements, we may find substantial bits of strong interest in Mill's thought and its potential relevance and impact on today's social and political dynamics: Skorupski (2006) points out that perhaps at that time – and in Mill too - sociology had gone too far and that there are no historical laws in the strict sense, in spite also of some expectations in this regard by Mill; yet this does not mean that there are no historical instruments that may help explain or understand certain trends, certain events and the functioning of societies (pp. 64-65). Skorupski also interestingly stresses, although in few lines, that we may feel the need to use history to understand the present during times of crisis, as, for instance, in the case of the early nineteenth century, and that there might be less need for it in more stable periods, as, for example, in the decades immediately following the Second World War, in which social forms begin to appear, to the protagonists of that time, essential and definitive. So, having these caveats in mind, going back to *CRG* and in an attempt of abstraction from the text, I would stress the importance of the notions of history and progress. Indeed, Mill's political theory may lead a hypothetical reader to ask: did Mill think there are general laws in the history of

mankind? And did he think that the history of mankind has a direction, follows a path? Another question would follow: does Mill's philosophy of history somehow affect or influence his views on democracy? It surely does, at least in terms of the time and conditions (under determined stages of society, as we have seen) of the establishment of a representative government. Following Tocqueville, Mill seems to affirm that democracy is an inevitable event for western societies. Indeed, one of the political and philosophical works Mill recognises as a major contributor to the development and gradual changes of his own political thought is Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*. Indeed, in his *Autobiography* he states that, of the two substantial changes of opinion in politics occurred in his life, namely a shift towards a sort of "qualified Socialism" and a "modified" form of democracy ("which is set forth in my Considerations on Representative Government"), the latter stemmed from his reading ("or rather study") of what can be considered Tocqueville's master work or at least his greatest contribution to political theory:

> In that remarkable work, the excellencies of Democracy were pointed out in a more conclusive, because a more specific manner than I had ever known them to be even by the most enthusiastic democrats; while the specific dangers which beset Democracy, considered as the government of numerical majority, were brought into equally strong light, and subjected to a masterly analysis, not as reasons for resisting what the author considered as an inevitable result of human progress, but as indications of the weak points of popular government, the defences by which it needs to be guarded, and the correctives which must be added to it in order that while full play is given to its beneficial tendencies, those which are of different nature may be neutralized or mitigated (*Autobiography,* CW I, p. 199).

So, does Mill support democracy just because he cannot stop it "as an inevitable result of human progress", or also because he believes in it? In order to give a proper answer to this question we need, at least, to have a look at the way the Millian version of representative government should work and on the principles it should be grounded on. It is not just a matter of political machinery, but also of social and political dynamics occurring in a context where multifarious interests, ideas and power coexist. A well-structured representative government, indeed, may foster more goods than evils and make democracy a good in itself, rather than the result (no matter whether inevitable,

probable or just possible) of a historical process which we have to deal with and possibly harness.

IV.II. PARLIAMENT AND GOVERNMENT

The institutional design Mill describes in *CRG* resembles the typical liberal separation of state powers and assignation of duties: a legislative body, an executive body and a judiciary whose members should not be subject to popular approval (*CRG*, CW XIX, pp. 526-528). In *CRG* Mill does not discuss the matter of separation of powers explicitly and at length, although he appears, as we shall see, implicitly to accept it. He does not even explicitly refer to Montesquieu, whose ideas, actually, are not even a frequent object of discussion in Mill's writings: indeed, the longest piece we have about the French philosopher is the speech Mill held at the London Debating Society on the 3rd of April 1829 (*Montesquieu,* CW XXVI, pp. 443-453) against John Sterling and in defence of the Benthamite political model and of Montesquieu's investigation on the "the pervading principle of the laws of any country: his object was to enquire what are the circumstances which give to the whole body of the institutions of any country that peculiar character, which distinguishes them from the institutions of other countries. In doing this he of course had frequent occasion to shew not only why an institution had been established, but why it should be by adducing the reasons of expediency which had led to its establishment in different states: but what I wish to point out is that by the very nature of his design he was confined to the circumstances of difference in the situation of different nations, from which it by no means follows that he was insensible to the more numerous and far more important circumstances of agreement" (pp. 450-451), and this is a piece of work which informs us of Mill's early views on legislation and national character rather than on the matter of powers and their separation.

If we focus back to *CRG* and to the form of democratic institutions it illustrates, we may notice some peculiarities in Mill's plan for a representative government: at first, the rationally deliberative and debate-orientated – more than purely decisional – feature characterizing the parliament and the legislative process; second, the strong need for a balance between participation and competence; third, the dangers entailed by the so-called *pedantocracy*, i.e. a bureaucratic body ruling a nation without any form of effective popular or democratic influence. The parliament has substantially two tasks: to control rather than to directly administer state affairs, and "to be at once the nation's Committee of Grievances, and its Congress of Opinions" (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 432). The direct intervention into public affairs is delegated to two other political bodies: the cabinet,

appointed by the head of state and whose prime minister only needs to win assent by the parliament, and what Mill calls Legislative Commissions (p. 430). The assembly at a whole still has to vote on legislation, i.e. to approve or reject bills; according to Mill, however, the legislation drafting process has to be carried on by the Legislative Commissions, permanent bodies composed of experts whose task is to write bills in detail, by virtue of their professional competence, and provide organic and well-devised legislation. Indeed, according to Mill, regular MPs could hardly achieve this objective, because it is very likely that many of them may not be into a specific subject to such an extent of experience and knowledge to be able to handle it properly in detail and accordingly write legislative proposals – giving way to political manoeuvres by few members of the assembly who, driven by particular interest, may be under such circumstances able to introduce pieces of legislation noxious to the general good. Furthermore, a numerous assembly is not fit, in terms of efficiency, to such a laborious task as the drafting of large pieces of legislation. However, the legislative body should still retain the power to approve, reject, and propose changes to the draft, and to give a general political address to the work of the Legislative Commission – in other words, the popular element, the strongest power in the British Constitution (p. 423), in Mill's proposal still stands as the element which, ultimately, approves or rejects legislation, and, indeed, the Commission should not have any power to enact laws, as it "would only embody the element of intelligence in their construction; Parliament would represent the will" (p. 430).

There seems to be a sort of balance of powers and constitutive elements (popular will and intelligence); however before introducing the description of the function of the representative body, Mill clarifies that a "perfectly balanced constitution is impossible" and that "the scales never hang exactly even" (p. 422). This argument on the lack of balance of powers resembles that of his father, James Mill, who, in his famous essay *Government* (published in its first edition in 1823 and, then, in his final and corrected edition, in 1828) discusses and indicates the means by which to reach the end for which the government is constituted and responsible. The elder Mill grounds his reflection on the typical utilitarian concept of the greatest good of the greatest number: according to him, the task of the government is to ensure that each citizen draws the maximum benefit and to avoid that the weakest is overwhelmed or exploited by the strongest subject in society – basically, to prevent that sinister interests (i.e. the interests of a particular social class in spite of the general interest) from excessively influence the conduct of parliament and government at the expense of the community. Since, then,

every man tends to seize the largest possible amount of "objects of desire", what is the form of government more suited to the pursuit of the utilitarian goal in society according to James Mill?

A democracy articulated in the legislative, in the executive and, finally, in the judiciary body, may be fit for such purpose, but it has necessarily to organize itself in the form of a representative democracy: discussions and decisions delegated to all citizens would inevitably be long and unfruitful, and eventually lead to a chaotic situation. James Mill also write that the government of the few over the many, i.e. aristocracy (or, even, oligarchy, when the number is small), unlike democracy, in which the rulers pursue the general interest and who generally can deviate from such task only by virtue of error and not on purpose of the rulers, would rather protect the interests of just a specific class or portion of society. According to James Mill, each group in power, without any restriction or control, usually tends to care mostly about their own interest and not about the collective good, as well as every man tends to abuse when he has uncontrolled power over the others. Furthermore, James Mill points out that aristocratic government also shows its limits mainly when it comes to the exercise of intellectual abilities in political offices, as power is passed by inheritance: it is not true what supporters of aristocratic government claim (i.e. that it would facilitate the use of more developed skills and better understanding of the purpose and the arts of government), because intelligence and knowledge are not elements of heritage, and it is not granted that descendants of a good ruler are in their turn wise, competent and aiming to pursue the public interest. The same objections are valid for monarchy – actually, for it is the government of only one person, such objections are even stronger.

The elder Mill also rejects the theory of mixed government and balance of power, as the establishment of a mixed form of government would put at risk the ultimate goal of government itself. He affirms that, in a mixed state, pro-aristocracy and pro-monarchy sections of the state would easily subvert the democratic element, being in a position of majority (two against one, with the same force for any power), and the hypothesis of a balance between only two powers is essentially either non-realistic or just a temporary solution. Both aristocracy and monarchy require full power to be attributed to a single body or a simple section of society – power which cannot be split or diluted or limited by another, although different, form of political power (a democratic political body, for example), and even if it were possible, the pure idea of a perfect balance of power is simply infeasible (James Mill, 1992 (1819-23), pp. 3-20). These objections against monarchy and aristocracy, based on both the competence argument (it is not true that

aristocracy and democracy can assure a certain degree of competence in government) and the general interest argument (as opposed to the sinister interests pursued by the aristocratic class and by the monarch), are points on which John Stuart Mill seem to not depart from his father's lessons. On other points, there are differences instead. Indeed, while James Mill stresses the importance of representation of interests, his son would also intend to make the legislative body a place where different voices and ideas as well, not just interests, find their place. According to John Stuart Mill, the parliament has to be the place where, as far as possible, a sort of representation of opinions takes place: every view held by a section of society must be heard, challenged, scrutinised, assessed and accepted or rejected in such political arena, which, then becomes also a place of rational debate. Indeed, if any opinion is rejected, it is not because of any form of authority, i.e., by virtue of alleged intelligence or by the mere power of the majority, but because it has been rationally and with intellectual honesty discussed and properly debated. Mill affirms that, thanks to this, "where those whose opinion is overruled, feel satisfied that it is heard" (p. 432) and not because they simply recognise the authority and the force of the number, but because of "what are thought superior reasons". There is no legitimacy argument here; rather there is a process of well-argued rational persuasion that lets the minorities accept the opinion of the majority. Before I have mentioned two elements needed by democratic institutions: they have to be *progressive* and they have to *adapt* to the reality of society; as we have just seen, a *rational process* has to take place within democratic institutions, as a mere parliamentary representation of classes, interests, etc. is not sufficient. Why is such rational element needed, according to Mill? And how does this process take place?

A proper democracy does not just need an element of 'intelligence' counterbalancing that of 'popular will'. The opposite is also true, i.e. that the popular element is a proper counterweight to bureaucratic despotism. While reading *CRG* and moving from the description of the functioning of the legislative body (chapter V) to chapter VI, titled *'Of the Infirmities and Dangers to which Representative Government is Liable'* (pp. 435-447), one has the impression that these two forces or powers, i.e. intelligence or competence on one side and popular will or representation on the other side, actually counterbalance each other in a reciprocal movement. The degeneration of bureaucracy – i.e. a form of government uniquely based on the intellectual, moral and professional skills of the rulers and of the officers – into what John Stuart Mill calls *pedantocracy* is the effect of a state where the element of popular will is substantially missing: the lack of individuality and genius let *routine* be the dominant force in managing public affairs

and create an "obstructive spirit of trained mediocrity" (p. 439). These themes also emerge when it comes to government, as for Mill the distinction between the executive body (the cabinet) and the bureaucratic administration assumes relevance not just from a functional point of view, but also in the light of the different principles at work within his political theory. Mill has in mind Continental governments rather than the English one when he discusses the problems of bureaucracy, which he appears to treat as a form of government in itself where the work of ruling a nation is "in the hands of governors by profession; which is the essence and meaning of bureaucracy" (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 438; see also Thompson, 1976, p. 66) and "(t)he comparison, therefore, as to the intellectual attributes of a government, as to be made between a representative democracy and a bureaucracy" (*CRG*, CW XIX, pp. 438-439); however, at least in principle, it seems of almost no relevance if we are considering bureaucracy as a part of a representative government or as distinct form of government in itself: such a characteristic phenomenon of modern societies cannot be ignored when it comes to representative government. Furthermore, the fact that the issues of competence related to bureaucratic administration are treated in a book on *representative* government shows their relevance in a quite unequivocally obvious way, and, indeed, civil service is one of the institutions or of the parts of government where the so-called principle of competence (Thompson, 1976, pp. 54-90) must find its place. We just need to rely on Mill's *CRG*, without the authority of any scholarly interpretations, if we want to include the considerations on bureaucracy within the larger set of considerations on representative democracy: chapter XIV of *CRG*, titled '*Of the Executive in a Representative Government'* (*CRG*, CW XIX, pp. 520-533), exactly deals with the problems of skilled employment and professionalism in civil service.

As regards Thompson's analysis of competence, it has to be stressed the distinction he makes between *instrumental competence* and *moral competence* (p. 55), and civil servants are expected to possess only the first kind of competence. The idea that Mill is just working towards a balance of the two elements (competence and popular will and participation) has also been highlighted in an article by Beth E. Warner on Mill and public administration. According to her interpretation, this balance tends to be reached thanks to a "somewhat antagonistic relationship" (Warner, 2001, p. 410) in a sort of dynamic process halting the degeneration of both bureaucracy and the popular element. Although antagonistic elements exist in the Millian form of democracy, saying they exist even in the relationship between skilled public officers and the legislative body may perhaps mean going too far. It may be true, as Warner affirms, that bureaucracy

(although being non-neutral) has to be filtered through the parliamentary system (characterized by political partisanship) and that many people, unlike many civil servants, are substantially unable for a number of reasons to make informed decisions (p. 410), but, still, democracy may also be described as a sort of process of mutual compensation, in which every element positively influences the other, preventing its bad effects to be displayed in the polity, as well as incrementing its beneficial effects in society. Conceptually, the fact that we are talking of either balance or antagonism of principles means, in any of the two cases, that popular will is as important as competence.

As we will see later in this work (although I have already mentioned it in the introduction) there is at least one interpretation, Burns' article on Mill and democracy (Burns, 1968 (1957)), which stresses the prevalence of elitist elements over popular ones. However, if instead we prove that in Mill the popular element is at least as relevant as the one regarding competence, intelligence, education etc., then this interpretation of Mill as an anti-democratic thinker could be somehow dismissed. So far, for instance, there have been recurring references in this thesis to the problem of conciliating participation and competence as addressed by Dennis F. Thompson (1976), who has stressed the fact that the tensions inside Mill's political works are intended to be resolved by education. According to him, Mill seeks to formulate a balanced and comprehensive political theory (Thompson, 1976, p. 3) invoking two principles – participation and competence, indeed – which would be realised at any particular time simultaneously through political institutions and in the long term and over time thanks to the gradual improvement of the qualities of the citizens (p. 11). As regards the principle of participation, Thompson identifies two arguments in his favour within Mill's thought. The first one is what he calls "the protective argument", which would basically be the defence of one's interests against other particular interests, which would be potentially harmful to the others; anyway, as the mere sum of particular interests does not constitute the general interest *per se*, the individual interests have to become closer to the general interest through education (pp. 25-26). The second argument, then, is the "educative argument", which would affect the national character of the polity as a whole, fostering an active attitude in public affairs and, accordingly, civic spirit (pp. 36-53). Thompson outlines a similar structure for the argument underlying the principle of competence: there is an instrumental competence, i.e. those forms of professional competence, technical knowledge and specific skills which are necessary to fulfil administrative and – as we have seen in the bill drafting process –

legislative tasks. However, the danger of *pedantocracy*[42] requires a further form of competence, i.e. moral competence, or what we have seen to be the competence of the man of genius and of peculiar and cultivated individuality, and of those who look after the general interest. Fostering the influence of the cultivated few would not just be a way for balancing the power of mediocrity, but also for educating the less cultivated (or competent) majority:

> Just as the educative benefits of participation partly justify the extension of
> participation, so the educative value of superior competence partly justifies
> the influence of a competent minority. Here the argument refers primarily
> to moral competence (a concern for the general interest), though it also
> includes the ability to reason about the means and ends of broad courses of
> governmental action. Mill does not think that the instrumental competence
> that experts and administrators can ever be widely taught. Civic education
> does not occur spontaneously. Mill's "school of public spirit" requires
> teachers as well as scholars (p. 79)

Hence, these two principles are reconciled within Mill's theory of representative government as well as within his theory of development: Thompson stresses Mill's remarks made at the beginning of *CRG* regarding the naturalist and the a priori views of political models (they would only show half of the truth) and also the fact that a good government would promote virtue and intelligence of its citizens, not only their material welfare. Furthermore, understanding how political institutions affect the creation of active and progressive characters means being able to prevent the degeneration of democracy into stagnation and decay and making it a force of change in the future stages of humanity (see pp. 137-141).

Going back to Mill's work, another example of the mix of competence and popular power can be traced in the proposal of an unelected Senate. Indeed, chapter XIII ('*Of a Second Chamber*', whose topic is whether the parliament should be composed of two branches

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[42] Thompson correctly points out that in *CRG* Mill considers bureaucracy as a form of government in itself, rather than a part of a state of any sort (democratic or not) – however, as we have already seen, Mill always associates it with the state, not with other forms of organization (i.e. private associations, companies etc.). See Thompson, pp. 66-68.

and what should be the nature of the hypothetical second chamber) shows again the dangers Mill sees in a representative democracy and of the solutions he seeks to devise. On the issue whether there should be a bicameral system, the relevant element which should be taken into account is competence (a force against class interests) along with the respect of popular will (which may pave the way for legislation favourable to the interests of the majority). Although Mill opposes, at least in principle, the need for what he defines "a wisely conservative body" (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 516), since "(t)he really moderating power in a democratic constitution, must act in and through the democratic House" (p. 515), and states that the issue of the accordance between competence and popular will can be properly addressed and solved only thanks to the system of distribution of seats and the legislative process described beforehand in *CRG*[43], he concedes that it may still occur that, for some reason, a second chamber is maintained or believed to be a necessary body to exist and there may still be good reasons to establish a second chamber as a form of counterweight to the power of the democratically elected part of the legislative body, in particular of its majority, which may happen, under certain circumstances, to act despotically. Mill outlines two different options:

- the Roman Senate model, i.e. a non-elective house composed of people who have had a remarkable legal, military, naval, political, scientific or literary career;
- a model which may be called the 'American model'[44], i.e. a Senate indirectly elected by the body expressing the popular will (in the British case, the House of Commons).

[43] See chapters VIII-X of *CRG*.

[44] It is an '*American* model' as it possesses the same political advantages of the United States Senate in the XIX century as described by Alexis de Tocqueville: as an effect of the indirect elections by the States' legislatures, it used to be composed of brilliant and eminent people, willing to contrast the particular interests without opposing popular influence and legitimacy in themselves. Even though any explicit reference to Tocqueville is missing in this short section of *CRG*, an analogy can be somehow traced as Mill's argument in favour of an

Both these options would fit the purpose of conciliating competence and popular power.

Traces of these counterbalancing, competing and perhaps contrasting forces are also present in Mill's plan of electoral reform. In *CRG* Mill proposes a system of plural voting (each person is entitled to a number of votes according to his school, academic and professional qualification (too vague)), but this is the final outcome of a reflection which led Mill to endorse publicly different solutions between the late '50s and the publication of the *CRG* in 1861. In a pamphlet titled *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform* and published in 1859 Mill sets out the principles of a complete reform of the voting system. The first one is universal suffrage, because those who have no voice in government (or in the choice of the representative) can hardly be heard and taken into account by those who, instead, would have the right to vote, and mainly because voting is "one of the means of national education" then someone who is deprived of his right to vote and participate in the political process "has not the feelings of a citizen" (*Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform*, CW XIX, p. 322). The educative element is fundamental here, as the possession of political rights allows the less educated to possess "one of the chief instruments both of moral and of intellectual training for the popular mind" (p. 323).

Along with the universal suffrage, two more principles are required in order to constitute a good representative government: representation of the educated and representation of the minorities. Everyone should be given voice in political business, nonetheless not all the people are *equal* and, hence, not everyone should have an *equal* voice. The reason for breaking a principle of pure equality in voting is the difference in people's mental, intellectual and moral qualifications, "one person is *not* as good as another; and it is reversing all the rules of rational conduct, to attempt to raise a political fabric on a supposition which is at variance with fact" (p. 323). The variance in competence and education within the population does not justify, anyway, a voting system in which some individuals are excluded from the suffrage, as it would make a class subject to the others' will, as "the suffrage for a member of Parliament is power over the others, and that to power over others no *right* can possibly exist" (p. 326). Plural voting is the way to fulfil the need for the representation of the educated: an unskilled labourer would have one vote, a skilled labourer two, a superintendent of

indirectly elected Senate substantially runs along the same lines of Tocqueville's description of the Senate of the United States.

labour three and so on, up to those of highest intellectual rank such as clergymen, lawyers, artists, physicians, etc. who should be entitled, Mill writes, to cast five or six votes. In such a way the more educated cannot be easily outvoted and the labour class (or, at least, the least skilled citizens) can still affect politics and legislation by virtue of their number and receive the educative benefits provided by civic and political participation. Representation of the minorities is the other element aimed to be protected in Mill's proposal for electoral reform; although rule by majority is a basically constitutive element of democracy, it should not be excluded or substantially reduced in representation, "(i)f the numbers are to be the rule" (p. 329). This is an argument in support of both an extension of suffrage and of a reform of the allocation of seats, granting three members for every constituency.

However, just two months after the publication of his *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform*, John Stuart Mill changes his mind and adopts Thomas Hare's system of proportional representation in a short essay titled *Recent Writers on Reform* (CW XIX, pp. 341-370). Hare's plan would have been able, according to Mill, to face the issues related to representation of minorities in Parliament, as "that minorities in the nation *ought* in principle, if it be possible, to be represented by corresponding minorities in the legislative assembly, is a necessary consequence from all premises on which any representation at all can be defended" (p. 358). Thomas Hare's plan, as illustrated in his book *The Election of Representatives, Parliamentary and Municipal* (published in 1859), would consist in the creation of a single national constituency where a quota of votes is needed in order to be elected. Such quota is obtained by dividing the number of voters by the number of seats available in the House of Commons. Moreover, votes are transferable: that means that each voter ranks his favourite candidates. In this way further votes can be attributed until the amount needed for the quota is reached (Hare, 1857, pp. 16-25; Hare, 1873) [45]..

In *The Distribution of Seats in Parliament*, a paper read at the Manchester Congress of the Social Science Association in 1879, Hare summarises the goal his proposal would seek to achieve: "real political power" would be handed to voters thanks to electoral

[45] On this specific point of moving to the second choices, Mill actually disagrees and thinks a better and less complicated solution should have been found (*Recent Writers on Reform*, CW XIX, p. 361).

reform, and this would increase the participation of "more thoughtful voters, and persons of public and philanthropic spirit" and "the sense that it is a personal duty not to stand aside in the business of selecting those by whom this great nation and so much of the world is to be governed" (Hare, 1879, p. 3). Many years before this, in another article, Hare already outlines the objectives his proposal of electoral reform is designed to pursue:

> "First, to give every elector the power of voting for any qualified candidate throughout the kingdom with whom his views are most in accordance; and, secondly, to enable every elector – with the exception of an ultimate fractional number – to participate in the choice of some representatives" (Hare, 1857, p. 16).

Many years later Hare still thinks that, thanks to his system, these voters, even if they failed to form a majority, would still be able to associate their views with those of other voters in the country, and therefore be represented (p. 4).

One of the elements of this voting system. working as an incentive to electoral participation, would consist in the fact that the share of MPs given to every city or borough or administrative subdivision would be in relation to the number of actual voters, and not on the numbers of merely registered voters (p. 4). Moreover, one of the consequences would be an increase of the independence of every MP (Hare, 1857, p. 31) and on a wider range of choices for every voter (p. 34). This would help in "bringing out every form and shadow of political opinion" (Hare, 1873, p. 127).

As for the intellectual qualities of the electorate, Hare warns that "the greater number must not be the least instructed" (Hare, 1857, p. 44); from this, however, he does not conclude that the will of the majority should be disregarded or disrespected, *au contraire*, "it does follow that means should be provided for giving the minority its full weight" (p. 46). Indeed, in his *The Election of Representatives, Parliamentary and Municipal*, Hare provides for the illiterates to be assisted when voting (Hare, 1873, p. 126).

Hare envisaged the end of a system where the geographical location of a candidate was a substantially relevant element in a successful election of MPs. One of the virtues of his new system would consist, according to Hare, in the fact that the minority of every constituency would not be "as now extinguished", but be granted at least some

representation thanks to the association of their votes to those of other voters in the country (Hare, 1857, p. 8), and "the proportional system of election would bring the whole electoral body within reach of one another, and create a new and vigorous and healthy national life" (p. 9). This would also give an impulse for candidacies of people of high mental cultivation and education, who may otherwise feel that their possibility of being elected may be very low (Hare, 1879, pp. 9-10).

As regards the reception of Thomas Hare's voting system and of proportional representation in general, along with his commendation in *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform* (1859), Mill also helps Henry Fawcett (his disciple and assistant during his term as MP) in the preparation of *Mr Hare's Reform Bill, Simplified and Explained* (1860), a pamphlet in which Fawcett presents Hare's scheme as a remedy against the danger of an oppression of minorities (see Packe, 1954, p. 418 and p. 457; Courtney and Lee, 2004). With the aid of Mill, Fawcett, as well as of G. J. Holyoake, and Max Kyllmann, Hare succeeds in spreading his proposal of electoral reform among the working class, and he also founds the Representative Reform Association with George Howell and Edmond Beales (Courtney and Lee, 2004).

Hare's system gained success among thinkers and political theorists not only in Britain with Mill, but also abroad. In Australia, for instance, it started being publicly debated at least as early as 1860 and a voting law partially based on Hare's proposal was approved in the late XIX century (Bennett, 2011). However, this success was mostly restricted to some intellectual circles. In the late 1880s, a few dozens of MPs showed some interest for his system, but Hare was anyway aware that support for his reform was not enough at a political and parliamentary level (Parsons, 2009, pp. 161-185). His proposal, indeed, faced the accusation of excessive mathematical complication[46] and of putting too much faith in the public's intellectual and civic qualities; moreover, some critics also argued that the mandate linking the representative and his voters would be broken under the provisions of Hare's plan, the party system would have been heavily damaged or, vice versa, it would have turned the scheme to the existing parties' own advantage (Packe, 1954, p. 416). In general, Hare's proposal on electoral reform, along with Mill's other proposal (extension of the franchise to the women, the creation of a London County

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[46] "The complex nature of its machinery" was also admitted and pointed pointed out by Mill in his *Autobiography*, CW I, p. 262.

Council, were met by indifference (p. 457), in the sense that they had no immediate practical consequence.

Rather than Hare's proposed electoral mechanism, what raises interest here are the motives which led Mill, although temporarily, to converge on this specific form of proportional representation, because they differ in part from those of Thomas Hare. According to Parsons (2009), for instance, Hare's voting system would seek to encourage the representation of the educated *élite*, of the *clerisy* described by Coleridge: the influence of this class would be threatened by the rise of democracy, and, therefore, an electoral reform protecting it should be carried out (Parsons, 2009, pp. 59-60). In his article investigating and comparing the theoretical foundation of Thomas Hare and John Stuart Mill's advocacy for extension of suffrage and electoral reform overall, Paul Kern (1972) shows that they are both convinced of the need for the representation of minorities, but they have different reasons (or strategies). Hare considers his system of proportional representation[47] as a means for the elevation of character of the legislative body as a whole, as no vote would have been wasted under the form of representation and ballot counting he devised, but "it was not just any minority which concerned Hare but rather the minority of the educated elite which he believed constituted the most valuable part of the nation" (Kern, 1972, p. 309). Under different, non-proportional, systems, these *élites* would have been underrepresented or, in any case, the pure numerical majority would have underwhelmed them, creating a sort of disincentive to the participation of (what he considers being) the best parts of society: why being involved in political business if they could not make their full weight be felt in society and in parliament? Not by the exclusion of the working class, but guaranteeing that the voice of the educated people is heard is the way, according to Hare, to prevent the apathy of the educated *élites* and let them influence the legislative process in parliament.

Mill's support for Hare's plan seems to be more sincerely democratic than Hare's support for his own plan actually is. According to Mill, Hare's voting system would have

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[47] The extension of suffrage does not seem to be a substantial issue, according to Hare. He thought that his system would have proven itself effective under any sort of wide (although not universal) suffrage –in general, he supported minimal educational and property requirements for men and exclusion for women (Kern, 1972, p. 311).

been useful in order to prevent excessive power by the working class, but, also, it would have replied to an objection brought forward by some members of the educated class:

> Why is nearly the whole educated class united in compromising hostility to a purely democratic suffrage? Not so much because it would make the most numerous class, that of manual labour, the *strongest* power; *that* many of the educated class would think only just. It is because it would make them the *sole* power (*Recent Writers on Reform*, CW XIX, p. 363).

Both Mill and Hare aim to reduce the influence of the working class. However, Hare seems to think the problem is the mere fact that the working in class would be a majority, while Mill seeks to find a way to not silence the minorities, since if the smaller number could still be represented, there would no longer be objections to the participation of the working class and to the fact that it may be represented by a majority in parliament. Furthermore, Mill's considerations appear even more inclusive towards the working class if we take the "*moral* efficacy of such a representation of minorities" (p. 364) into account: moral authority and ascendancy of the highest minded and experienced representatives would counterbalance the power of the number and positively influence the opinions of the majority, or at least leave room to advocate the ideas of the minorities. In other words, Hare wants to find a democratic way to keep some form of power in the hands of the educated class and his plan "looked backward, nostalgically trying to preserve a time when politics was an affair between gentlemen, unsullied by the hurly-burly of the hustings and the crass efforts of the have-nots to claim a larger share of the fruits of society" (Kern, 1972, p. 322), while Mill sees Hare's proportional representation as a way to remove objections and barriers to the enfranchisement of the workers and their involvement in political business.

In two years Mill harks back to this argument again: in *CRG* the proportional representation system devised by Thomas Hare plus plural voting accordingly to one's qualifications and even an exam (in order to acquire further votes) is what we may define Mill's final proposal in the field of voting systems. What really seems to care to Mill is the fact that every voice should be heard: "Is it necessary that the minority should not even be heard?" (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 449), "it is a personal injustice to withhold from anyone, unless for the prevention of greater evils, the ordinary privilege of having his voice reckoned in the disposal of affairs in which he has the same interest as other people" (p. 469), "every one ought to have a voice" (p. 473), and a number of other passages suggest that this is probably what a legislative body is intended for, i.e. a place

where every voice is heard, properly considered and assessed with the least possible degree of bias.

However, a problem arises when we consider that a section, although small, of the population is excluded from the franchise: Mill identifies conditions under which participation in the suffrage should not be admitted. At first, those who do not possess literacy and numeracy skills are excluded from voting. Secondly, an assembly – whether national or local – should be elected only by those who pay direct taxes decided and approved by that very assembly; this would be substantially a provision extending the suffrage to everyone, as Mill proposes, at the same time, to extend direct taxation to every grown person in the country. However, third, those who do not earn enough for their own subsistence and, therefore, receive forms of benefit or financial support, should be excluded too. Mill, however, does not regard these conditions as excluding some individuals from the franchise permanently, as he expects that in the long run everyone would meet the conditions granting the vote (except, perhaps, the class of the recipients of parish relief) and the suffrage would be, "with that slight abatement", universal (p. 471-473). Some forms of criticism, maybe, could still be argued in respect of these criteria: even for a limited portion of time or limitedly to the current stage of civilisation, there is a section of society which would be excluded from the exercise of vote and, basically, from a relevant political participatory activity; quite a paradox is, or at lease slightly and *prima facie* contradictory, the fact that those who are excluded from such an activity and its beneficial educative effects on civic spirit are also those who very probably more need to be educated (in the broad sense) to the exercise of civic virtues – illiterates and people in financial struggle are probably on the edge of society and more likely, because of the starting conditions due to their cultural or financial disadvantages, to receive a form of 'educative' benefit from the educative element involved in (and caused by) democratic participation. Perhaps, this is because Mill regards voting not as right but as a form of power exercised over others (*CRG*, *CW XIX*, pp. 488-489).

Claeys (2013) uses the restriction of the franchise as an example of Mill's theory of state intervention, as Mill can hardly be considered – Claeys rightly writes – as an "unqualified advocate of *laissez-faire*" (p. 118). It is included in a list of other examples (Mill's views on Ireland and India, poor relief, education, taxation, state intervention, foreign intervention and despotism) supporting the interpretation according to which "Mill believed that the very great good would be achieved by substantially rejecting the market" and the *laissez-faire* principles (p. 121). According to Claeys, whether Mill's

proposal in *CRG* makes him "more of an 'elitist' than a 'democrat' depends on definitions" (p. 82). Surely, he is right to point out that such proposal was made before the adoption of universal suffrage in Britain, and that therefore it was meant as an extension of rights, rather than a limitation. However, there is also another way to see it, and there are a few other elements to be considered.

First, *CRG* were a comprehensive collection or recollection of reflections of a whole life; in the preface, Mill points out that his work includes the principles on which he has been working up during the greater part of his life (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 373). Hence, it may not be far from truth to affirm that in *CRG* Mill shows us a political and institutional model, a regulative idea, and that it probably is the final settlement of his political reflection, the final rendering of a set of political proposals that evolved and that he developed across several decades, and that as such it should also be considered;

Second: apart from considerations on the estimated amount of people excluded from the electoral franchise (Claeys, 2013, n91), it may be of some help to remember again that Mill describes the conditions proposed in the eighth chapter of *CRG* as a "slight abatement", not a substantial deviation from his main proposal. On the other side, it seems that Mill is aware (before he has seen of heard of Hare's proposal) of the fact that "the largest, or a very large portion of the people, in this and other countries, are not fit for political influence; that they would make use of it" and also that "it is impossible to foresee a time when they could safely be trusted with" (*Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform*, CW XIX, p. 322). However, this indicates that he at least thinks that, in the future, the extension of the franchise could be universal, and that, therefore, its restriction is only a temporary measure. Indeed, he also writes that "everyone of the governed should have a voice in the government" and that participation in the political business "is still more important as one of the means of national education" (p. 322).

As for education (in the sense of school education, or of an education providing knowledge in a number of subjects, such mathematics, literacy, geography etc.), it should aim to reduce the number of people to whom apply many of the voting limitations: it should not be forgotten the philosophy of history in which Mill includes his democratic theory, a philosophy where progress and the establishment of a representative democracy do not necessary take place, but that are likely to occur and that should be favoured. In other words, it is true that here Mill's position is paternalistic, but, again, how much paternalistic is a matter of definition. More specifically, Mill writes that it is a duty of society to render instruction accessible to anyone and, as regards the

right of vote, "universal teaching must precede universal enfranchisement" (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 470).

If we want to answer the question of how far he intends to limit the franchise in *CRG*, we may answer that it was intended as a minor measure, a slight deviation from the main institutional model which, ideally, would instead include an almost universal franchise, restrictions on which as highlighted in *CRG* are a temporary paternalistic measure whose reason lies in the necessity for a society and for its members to reach an adequate level of education and of competence (the need for which is clearly evident in many parts of *CRG*), as well as a degree of cultivation of civilisation which would eliminate the extreme obedience and passiveness (in *CRG*, CW XIX, p. 416, Mill clarifies that this is one of the social conditions which make representative government unapplicable). Such temporary measure will be overcome by education, at first, and very probably will become obsolete when the progressive model of representative democracy as outlined in *CRG* will be established.

As regards again education, how it is intended by Mill to eventually ensure its wider extensions, it stands as a matter of state intervention, although not limited to it: we have seen earlier in this thesis some aspects of Mill's thought on a national endowment; moreover, in the *Autobiography* Mill recalls he "urged strenuously the importance of having a provision for education, not dependent on the mere demand of the market" (CW I, p. 191), despite not advocating a state monopoly[48]. Apart from this, it remains true what has been remarked earlier in this section, i.e. the at least apparent contradiction inherent the exclusion of some portions of society from electoral participation – portions that remain those the need the most political participation and its educative effects on civic spirit.

More in general and apart from specific considerations regarding the electoral system, John Stuart Mill's ideas on the legislative body perhaps show plainly how far he goes

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[48] "One thing must be strenuously insisted on; that the government must claim no monopoly for its education, either in the lower or in the higher branches; must exert neither authority nor influence to induce the people to resort to its teachers in preference to others, and must confer no peculiar advantages on those who have been instructed by them. Though the government teachers will probably be superior to the average of private instructors, they will not embody all the knowledge and sagacity to be found in all instructors taken together, and it is desirable to leave open as many roads as possible to the desired end" (*Principles of Political Economy*, CW III, p. 950).

from the typical utilitarian democratic theory: if we consider his father's *Essay on Government*, we will notice a different conception of the way different interests interact in a democratic society and a more purely theoretical approach to political science. In his essay, after having expounded the objections to monarchy and aristocracy, James Mill (1992 (1819-1823)), affirms that democracy remains the only valid alternative to any other form of government: a popular representative body can be adapted to perform checks on cabinet and administration activities to ensure that they, either ruled by a monarch or by an aristocracy, do not put the ruling class particular interest before the general interest. This chamber should also have a power that can never be topped by that of the members of the executive body.

As for the choice of representative, according to James Mill there must be numerous and frequent elections: the representatives of the people must continuously be aware of the possibility of losing their parliamentary seat and to be part again of the social group they have originally come from; therefore, once elected they would probably keep serving and pursuing the interests of their group, and not their individual interest. Elections are essentially the means by which voters control their representatives: each of them may also be re-elected at the end of the term, as it makes no sense to get rid of a good ruler. The term in office, however, should not be too short: government activities require a certain amount of time to be implemented and tested, and too frequent elections would basically induce the candidates to use much of their time canvassing and campaigning instead of dealing with actual political business in parliament. James Mill also considers the use of recall elections, which would prevent bad representatives of the people to continue their work; however, he is also aware that here the same criticism as in the case of short terms in office applies: MPs would then constantly be in search of electoral support, hence moving away from their core business, which is the parliamentary work.

As for representation and voting, James Mill states that the right to vote should be granted to all men older than forty years: the interests of women and people under forty may well be represented by their husbands and fathers. He also investigates voting rights' limitations according to wealth, and he seems to reject the Benthamite proposal of universal suffrage, even though he does not appear to exclude such option explicitly. The problem, according to James Mill, is the threshold of wealth to choose, for, if it were too low, it would just be reintroducing the problems of an aristocratic government, while, if it were too high, it would mean, in effect, extending the suffrage to all, because it would not be easy for people who have a very small wealth to separate their interests

from those who have nothing. According to James Mill, it can, therefore, be said that although there is no harm in a low level of restrictions based on wealth, there might hardly be any good (James Mill, 1992 (1828), pp. 26-28). There is no danger, however, for the minority excluded from voting: as the number of those allowed to vote would be high, each member of the majority would rather be supportive of a government exercised in the interest of all (including, perhaps a bit optimistically, those who are not entitled to vote, I say), than of a government ignoring or even repressing small and unrepresented minorities, James Mill says. In other words, it is a democracy whose engine and heart seem to be the middle class. While considering the hypothesis of a democratic government based on the representation of professions and classes, James Mill opposes an outright refusal: as classes are driven by special interests, a representative body devised as voice of these social and economic groups, rather than of individuals, could not help but produce a bad government: the *ésprit de corps* guiding and inspiring these social groups shows the same problems occurring in an aristocratic government (see pp. 28-35).

James Mill argues that we notice the advantages of a representative system in two activities: formation of laws and control of the government. He adds that the tasks of a representative body should not go beyond these two areas, and the executive functions should remain in the hands of the king—James Mill argues – and in the hands of a class of officials, including those who would inherit their office. Moreover, the House of Lords should control the laws. Monarch and nobles, on the other hand, would be strongly motivated to comply with the general interest by the fact that the MPs would be strong enough to protect and defend their positions and their powers. The evil of the possibility of bad government in a democracy (which is still possible, as we have seen, by mistake and incompetence, or if rulers pursue their own interest – a thing which in a democracy is just an accidental element, while, in other forms of government, it is a substantial element), in the long term, is prevented by education of the people in exercising democratic freedom and powers, James Mill writes.

James Mill's essay is fundamental for the Radical philosophers, as it summarises the entire democratic radical proposal in a popular style, away from Jeremy Bentham's obscure *Plan of Parliamentary Reform*. This may be one of the reasons for which *Government* becomes the target of the critical attacks, for instance, by Thomas Babington Macaulay. He writes a reply thanks to which, perhaps, James Mill's essay on government is still well remembered today (Ball, 2014), and which later becomes very relevant in the philosophical formation of the younger Mill: Macaulay, indeed, with his

reply contributes to somehow influence John Stuart Mill's reformulation of his father's political proposal. Macaulay basically brings forward two arguments against James Mill: the first regards the method to be applied to the social and political sciences (Macaulay, 1992 (1829), pp. 271-280); the second concerns the institutional form of representative government as designed by James Mill (pp. 280-303).

As for the first argument, Macaulay substantially accuses James Mill of opting for an *a priori* method, ignoring evidence from experience, which would rather lead to different conclusions: for instance, Mill criticises monarchy and aristocracy without taking into account those countries well governed by a monarch (for example, Denmark); this would contradict his theory. In other words, Macaulay's accusation is: James Mill adopts a general law of human behaviour and of the motives of human action (every individual tends to capture the maximum of pleasures and objects of desire, even at the expense of their fellows, without any limit), and, from this, he deductively derives the entire organisation of the polity and his negative opinions on monarchical, aristocratic and oligarchic governments. According to Macaulay, basing a political analysis on individual psychological theories is profoundly wrong, especially because the reasons for actions as well as the consequent behaviour, vary greatly from person to person, and, therefore, deducing political theories from the principles of human nature as James Mill and the utilitarians try to do is, actually, almost impossible. Moreover, the psychological principle of James Mill's political theory is – according to Macaulay – either tautological or based on false assumptions. Arguing that the motive of the action of each is only self-interest is nothing more than a truism, it does not allow us to know what each believes to be his own interest. The point Macaulay makes here is mostly methodological than based on specific political matters: he rejects James Mill's deductive approach and rather defends his historical or inductive one, and, on the subject of self-interest, the accusation against James Mill is of circularity or of even supporting a false statement. According to Macaulay, If the meaning of self-interest is limited to the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain through the exploitation and the oppression of other individuals, the starting point of the theory outlined in *Government* is simply not true:

> There is, we admit, no point of saturation with objects of desire which come under this head. And therefore the argument of Mr. Mill will be just, unless there be something in the nature of the objects of desire themselves which is inconsistent with it. Now, of these objects there is none which men in general seem to desire more than the good opinion of others. The hatred and contempt of the public are generally felt to be intolerable. It is probable

that our regard for the sentiments of our fellow-creatures springs, by association, from a sense of their ability to hurt or to serve us. But, be this as it may, it is notorious that, when the habit of mind of which we speak has once been formed, men feel extremely solicitous about these opinions of those by whom it is most improbable, nay absolutely impossible, that they should ever be in the slightest degree injured or benefited (p. 279).

Moreover, James Mill neglects – Macaulay says – some parts of human nature, and takes into considerations only the reasons for which men oppress each other, as if they were the only ground on which the action of people is based and by which they can be affected, ignoring the fact that the behaviour of man in society may be due to several reasons. Macaulay, indeed, argues that men tend sometimes to take a hostile attitude towards the others, but also to show forms of kindness, courtesy, politeness, helpfulness, just because of things like, for instance, reputation or other social sentiments – and if we drop, as Macaulay does, the assumption according to which everyone pursues his self-interest, the theoretical justification of the superiority of democracy as a system of government results flawed. As a result of these objections, the methodological proposal advanced by Macaulay in his reply to James Mill is that of induction: according to him, the only way in which the study of the principles of human nature can help political theory is to find out the reasons for which a particular form of government would push or influence the rulers to act from time to time for the better or the worse, to compare the effects of these reasons, and to understand which of these are the strongest: in a nutshell, politics is a sort of experimental science, and rather than referring to the mathematical sciences, it should use medicine as a methodological example. In summary, in his first argument Macaulay criticises Mill for having established an *a priori* theory and for failing to take into account experience, observation of the present state of things and history, and for having persevered in supporting a theory of organisation of the polity without a proper empirical foundation.

The second point of divergence between Macaulay and Mill refers to the content of the proposals outlined in *Government*, and not just on methodological matters: even accepting the principles expressed in James Mill's essay, according to Macaulay there still is a problem concerning the formation of the representative body, which should be able to prevent the dangers of a monarchic or aristocratic government. Such dangers, however, according to Macaulay still constitute a substantial element in a democracy as well, because, as soon as they are elected, the MPs become a temporary aristocracy, and, therefore, they no longer have the interests of their constituents in mind. Furthermore,

what would prohibit the MPs to abolish the only limit placed on them, that of the length of their office, in order to keep it for and indeterminate time? In fact, they could change the law at any time, and even the establishment of special provisions and procedures to change fundamental laws such as those regulating the term of office, as is the case of the United States, would do nothing but work around the problem. It is true, Macaulay writes, that as long as candidates are running in an election, campaigning and looking for electoral support, they will keep seeing their interests as corresponding with those of the people; but, once the election has taken place, their interests will start to diverge. According to Macaulay, therefore, a further form of control upon this controlling body is to be found, and the real guarantee against a bad government is rather fear of bad reputation and resistance by the people, in the freest democracy as in the most despotic monarchy.

Going into further detail of Macaulay's second argument, he makes reference to James Mill's criticism of the possibility of existence of a form of mixed government; Macaulay instead maintains that English history disproves this theory according to which, between two institutional political powers, one would turn out to be necessarily stronger than the other and then able to demolish it: the English crown, sometimes, has been able to impose decisions on the parliament and, conversely, in many other occasions, the parliament has been able to prevail over the will of the monarch, as well as in numerous moments in history aristocracies were defeated by alliances between the monarch and the people, and in other periods rulers found themselves in front of a union between the nobility and the popular forces – unlike what is envisaged by James Mill's essay, according to which the presence of a hybrid form of the three forms of government would always be detrimental in respect to the people, which would find themselves in a submissive position. The exclusion of women from voting is also another contradictory element of James Mill's essay, according to Macaulay: the government of the minority cannot but be a bad government, but, at the same time, women should not enjoy the right to vote because, in any case, their interests would be taken care of by their husbands and their fathers. In this way, Macaulay explains, Mill betrays both the principle of majority by excluding half of the population, and that of the pursuit of pleasure and happiness by each individual, as a portion of the population would be excluded from having an effective say (by voting) in political matters. The theme of suffrage and wealth is, for Macaulay, the most substantial issue in *Government*: one has to consider the fact that in such a system the majority of voters choose their representatives, and the majority of the representatives who make the laws, and that

the rule of the majority could have an interest in oppressing the minority. Macaulay affirms that such a situation is prejudicial to the institution of property: the rich minority of the country would risk being oppressed and stripped of their assets by the majority. If in the short term – within a generation – the appropriation by the majority of the assets of the few can seem consistent with the interests of the people, it should be noted, however, that in the long term it would turn out to be harmful and would threaten the well-being of the future generations: Macaulay points out that, unlike the United States, England is a country where many barely live on their own work, and where few other people have accumulated a vast amount of wealth over time, and therefore, there is the risk of arriving at a point in which the destruction of such wealth occurs and, consequently, of the institution of private property, in a sequence of social and political upheavals and revolutions. Macaulay writes:

> It is scarcely necessary to discuss the effects which a general spoliation of the rich would produce. It may indeed happen that, where a legal and political system full of abuses is inseparably bound up with the institution of property, a nation may gain by a single convulsion, in which both perish together. The price is fearful. But, if, when the shock is over, a new order of things should arise under which property may enjoy security, the industry of individuals will soon repair the devastation. Thus was no doubt that the Revolution was, on the whole, a most salutary event for France. But would France have gained if, ever since the year 1793, she had been governed by a democratic convention? If Mr. Mill's principles be sound, we say that almost her whole capital would by this time have been annihilated. As soon as the first explosion was beginning to be forgotten, as soon as wealth again began to germinate, as soon as the poor again began to compare their cottages and salads with the hotels and banquets of the rich, there would have been another scramble for the property, another maximum, another general confiscation, another reign of terror (pp. 296-297)

and so on, until the ruin of the richest and most thriving state in Europe follows.

As I have already briefly mentioned earlier, Macaulay's final criticism of James Mill's essay is about the fact that the political system outlined in *Government* simply constitutes a new form of aristocracy based on wealth, it would fail to represent the interests of all voters, as it basically is a government of the *bourgeoisie* which, at the same time, would put at risk the nation's wealth. James Mill replies to these criticisms;

this does not prevent his son John Stuart Mill to acknowledge that Macaulay's objections are well founded:

> I saw that Macaulay's conception of political reasoning was wrong; that he stood up for the empirical mode of treating political phenomena against the philosophical. At the same time I could not help feeling that there was truth in several of his strictures on my father's treatment of the subject; that my father's premises were really too narrow and included but a small part of the general truths on which, in politics, the important consequences depend. Identity of interest, in any practical sense which can be attached to the term, between the governing body and the community at large, is not the only thing on which good government depends; neither can this identity of interest be secured by the mere conditions of election: I was not at all satisfied with the mode in which my father met the criticisms of Macaulay. He did not, as I thought he ought to have done, justify himself by saying "I was not writing a scientific treatise on politics. I was writing an argument for parliamentary reform." He treated Macaulay's argument as simply irrational; as an attack on the reasoning faculty; an example of the remark of Hobbes that when reason is against a man, a man will be against reason. This made me think that there was really something more fundamentally erroneous in my father's conception of philosophical Method, as applicable to politics, than I had hitherto supposed there was. (*Autobiography*, *CW I*, pp. 165-167)

However, the son could have been a bit more generous with his father, at least in this specific circumstance: as Ball (2014) remarks, "in the first place, James Mill did not, and given his own premises could not, distinguish between a "scientific treatise on politics" and a coherent and compelling argument for "parliamentary reform." For he believed that any reforms that were workable and worth having could be based only on an adequately scientific theory of politics. The *Essay on Government* was intended to be both, if only in brief outline. Moreover, the younger Mill leaves the impression that his father, although angered by the attack, never replied to Macaulay". In his reply to Macaulay, indeed, the elder Mill defended his position on men and their self-interest. However, this did not stop the shift in convictions in John Stuart Mill's mind, not just in politics but also in matters related to education and cultivation of people in a democracy:

(T)hough I no longer accepted the doctrine of the Essay on Government as a scientific theory; though I ceased to consider representative democracy as an absolute principle and regarded it as a question of time, place, and circumstance; though I now looked on the choice of political institutions as a moral and educational question rather than a question of material interest, and thought it should be decided mainly by considering what great improvement in life and culture stood next in order for the people concerned, as the condition of their further progress, and what institutions were most likely to promote that; nevertheless this change in the premises of my political philosophy did not alter my practical political creed as to the requirements of my own time and country. I was as much as ever a radical and democrat for Europe and especially for England. I thought the predominance of the aristocracy and the rich in the English Constitution an evil worth any struggle to get rid of: not on account of taxes or any such comparatively trifling inconvenience but as the great demoralizing influence in the country. Demoralizing, first, because it made the conduct of the government an example of a gross public immorality—the predominance of private over public interest—the abuse of the powers of legislation for the advantage of separate classes. Secondly, and above all, because the respect of the multitude always attaches itself principally to that which is the principal passport to power; for which reason under the English institutions where riches, hereditary or acquired, were the almost exclusive source of political importance, riches and the signs of riches were almost the only things really respected, and to the pursuit of these the life of the people was mainly devoted. Further, I thought that while the higher and richer classes held the power of government, the instruction and improvement of the mass of the people was contrary to the self-interest of those classes, because necessarily tending to raise up dissatisfaction with their monopoly: but if the democracy obtained a share in the supreme power, and still more if they obtained the predominant share, it would become the interest of the opulent classes to promote their education, in order to guard them from really mischievous errors and especially to ward off unjust violations of property. For these reasons I was not only as ardent as ever for democratic institutions, but earnestly hoped that Owenite, St. Simonian, and all other anti-property opinions might spread widely among the poorer classes, not that I thought those doctrines true but in order that

the higher classes might be led to see that they had more to fear from the poor when uneducated, than from the poor when educated (*Autobiography*, CW I, p. 177).

This section has, insofar, mostly outlined other authors' views, without any direct critical appraisal. However, at this stage of this work, a short descriptive part is needed in order to show what a representative democracy should be in John Stuart Mill's terms: its institutions, its justification, and the methodological tools for political enquiry. What is the subject of research here? Mill's democratic proposal. And what is it? How does it work? An answer to this has been given in the current section (and more details will be given in the following ones), as for parliament procedures, form of government, suffrage, etc. Only after the object is clear, a more proper analysis of it can be carried out.

From the political and constitutional view, Mill's proposal differs from the form of representation today we are used to, mostly with reference to the work required by MPs: they have to contribute to the debate, but they cannot go into detail of legislation. Although today in most Western democracies it is customary that many pieces of legislation are drafted or corrected by experts outside politics, the politician still preserves his power to introduce any bill and to go into any sort of technicality. What we have seen is that John Stuart Mill strongly advises against this. Methodologically speaking, Mill recognises empirical limits to the establishment of a democracy (or, at least, of a Millian democracy), in terms of civilisation, of legislation in step with the national character or civilisation. What John Stuart Mill's detachment from his father's project suggests is that any form of organisation of polity has to adapt itself to matters of fact. Among the matters of fact, there are the dangers and the flaws that a form of government carries with itself. As regards democracy and as we are going to investigate, for John Stuart Mill one of the greatest dangers is the tyranny of the majority.

IV.III. THE TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY

In *On Liberty*, Mill summarises the problem of the tyranny of the majority as follows:

> The notion, that the people have no need to limit their power over themselves, might seem axiomatic, when popular government was a thing only dreamed about, or read of as having existed at some distant period of the past (…). In time, however, a democratic republic came to occupy a large portion of the earth's surface and made itself felt as one of the most

powerful members of the community of nations: and elective and responsible government became subject to the observations and criticisms which wait upon a great existing fact. It was now perceived that such phrases as "self-government,'" and "the power of the people over themselves," do not express the true state of the case. The "people" who exercise the power are not always the same people with those over whom it is exercised: and the "self-government" spoken of is not the government of each by himself, but of each by all the rest. The will of the people, moreover, practically means the will of the most numerous or the most active part of the people: the majority, or those who succeed in making themselves accepted as the majority: the people, consequently, *may* desire to oppress a part of their number: and precautions are as much needed against this as against any other abuse of power (*On Liberty*, CW XVIII, p. 219)

Moreover, we have already seen the clear remarks on Tocqueville in Mill's *Autobiography*. It may be worthwhile to point out, anyway, that in the early draft of Mill's autobiography they do not appear and, actually, Tocqueville is considered only in relation to James Mill's favourable review of Tocqueville's work – a quite surprising fact, if one considers that, in the early draft version, John Stuart Mill writes that *Democracy in America* "was at any rate an example of a mode of treating the question of government almost the reverse of his – wholly inductive and analytical instead of purely ratiocinative" (*Autobiography. Early Draft*, CW I, p. 210). This may somehow be a kind of clue which may lead to further scholarly research on the real influence of Tocqueville on Mill's political ideas. This influence has already been investigated by scholars such as Terence Qualter (1956) and Iris Wessel Mueller (1960), who both have emphasised the contributions of Tocqueville's thought in Mill's political theory: the warning about the possibility of leaving government to mediocre rulers (whose hard work, trades and business prevent them from having time and opportunity to devote themselves to the study and to political activity in order to gain 'democratic experience'), as it can be seen in Mill's second review on *Democracy in America*; the tyranny of the majority, not only politically but also socially and intellectually; the role that bureaucracy must have within a democratic government and the need to decentralize political power. Qualter, in particular, decides to emphasise the Tocquevillian elements which are found in both *On Liberty* and *CRG*.

Other scholars (Pappé, 1964; Varouxakis, 1999) suggest that, actually, despite the praise that Mill gives to Tocqueville in his *Autobiography, Democracy in America* has brought little or nothing original to the democratic theory of the English thinker, perhaps providing a further confirmation of the vision of Western societies already emerged in the eyes of Mill after reading the works of the French historian François Guizot, even before the drafting of *Democracy in America* itself. Guizot, but also British Romanticism, and, in general, the process of detachment from Bentham's radicalism, had already influenced Mill on democracy. In other words, the background, the filter through which Mill reads Tocqueville are Guizot's lectures, his theories of conflict among powers in society (according to which, when one principle stands above the others, progress is paralysed and stops), the relationship between civilisation and democracy, and the sociological approach. An appropriate assessment of Mill's intellectual obligations would help to better understand the theoretical framework and the larger philosophical and somehow historiographical implications of the concept of the tyranny of the majority, one of the most relevant political ideas Mill borrows from Tocqueville. Hence, the first question is: what is the tyranny of the majority?

A couple of chapters of *Democracy in America¸* more precisely chapter VII and chapter VIII in the first volume (Tocqueville, 1986 (1835), pp. 369-410), are specifically dedicated to this issue. They do not deal just with the obvious fact that in a democratic republic the majority of the voters choose their representatives and, consequently, the executive body; indeed the tyranny of the majority also affects opinions and habits, based on the idea (a wrong idea, according to Tocqueville) that there is more wisdom in a large number of people than in a single person - *"C'est la théorie de l'égalité appliquée aux intellegences"* (p. 370). Such a thing somehow resembles what occurs in an absolute monarchy, where the king – or the queen – is considered infallible and the reasons for anything wrong has to be found in something else, in a different level of government. Since in a democracy the majority is the ruler, and any power or legislative or government office directly or indirectly stems from it, according to the Americans it is as infallible as the king is for the Europeans of the *Ancien Régime*. The majority employs power in two ways: over facts and over opinions (p. 372). The power of the majority is still more effective as in America the institutional system allows "legislative instability" (p. 373) in the sense of the possibility for the majority to either vote for new representatives at regular intervals or exercise pressure on those in office, so that the legislative body is led to follow the fickle and variable opinions of the majority over any relevant political issue. According to Tocqueville, the Americans have chosen to accept

unstable and changing laws – of which they recognise the flaws, anyway - rather than a system being at risk of upheavals because of long intervals between an election and the following one (pp. 305-307).

As for John Stuart Mill's reviews on Tocqueville, he writes that the tyranny of the majority set out in *Democracy in America* is a "tyranny exercised over opinions, more than over persons" (*De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (I),* CW XVIII, p. 81), so individuality of character, ideas that are shared by small minorities in society and independence of thought are forced to be subdued by the yoke of the public opinion. However, American society, in Tocqueville's opinion, is prepared to recognise and be guided by those who possess talents and by the ablest people on government business, but it is also a society in which there is no leisure class that can deal fully to acquire political and government skills during a spell of many years and - as it happens in aristocracies – accumulate them through generations. Mill affirms that when all the people are in similar economic conditions and when they are engaged in similar activities (industry and trade), and when they have received a similar education, then they get used to thinking in a uniform manner and become intolerant of the few discordant opinions as well as of the experts[49]. Because of this, Mill's democracy is not merely a mechanism of choice and automatic control of the government: it needs, instead, to prepare the minds of the majority to the exercise of power, to educate citizens to democracy in order to limit its defects, to enjoy its advantages, and to ensure the rights of individuals and minorities (including intellectual *élites*).

Democracy, in its inevitability - for Mill, inevitable in the sense that it is a result of the tendencies of progress and civilisation; when these do not occur, democracy is unlikely to follow - may also degenerate and decay in what in *Democracy in America* is called the "tyranny of the majority". Mill reports in his 1835 review excerpts from the work that he is commenting on, and historical inevitability of democracy (apart from great

[49] These are Mill's own considerations (p. 85). As concerns uniformity and similarity of education among Americans, however, it must be emphasised that Mill also makes reference to and quotes Tocqueville's description of the various U.S. states: the French thinker distinguished the well-educated, prosperous and well governed New England from the Southwest, populated by rude people and, therefore, badly governed (p. 77).

historical or natural upheavals) is demonstrated by the gradual levelling of social classes within England and France:

> We do not maintain that the time is drawing near when there will be no distinction of classes; but we do contend that the power of the higher classes, both in government and in society, is diminishing; while that of the middle and even the lower classes is increasing, and likely to increase (*De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (II)*, CW XVIII, p. 163)

The passage is "from an aristocracy with a popular infusion, to the régime of the middle class" (p. 167), through a gradual democratic change that finally makes acceptable the universal suffrage.

According to Tocqueville, democracy shows two advantages, John Stuart Mill writes: first, that democratic institutions and political freedom push people to take care of the society (thus assuming more skills and knowledge in the art of politics and government), and, second, the use of the majority principle in political decisions. The serious flaw inherent American society, as Mill already notes in the first review and as he remarks again in the second review, concerns the danger of the tyranny of the majority: the principle of equality applied to the public opinion does not recognise any other authority outside of the number, and then makes unthinkable the fact that a broad consensus can, nevertheless, be wrong (this is also due to the fact that every citizen has the same title to speak, argue and express a view on every subject and every issue as the expert does). Mill argues that in England as well as in the United States the power of public opinion has been taken by the middle class, and it has become a kind of "dogmatism of common sense" (p. 196) that affects aristocracy, the rulers and the populace. American society is nothing but a sort of exaggerated version of the government of the middle class.

On Tocqueville it can be said, according to Mill, that:

> his fear, both in government and in intellect and morals, is not of too great liberty, but of too ready submission; not of anarchy, but of servility, not of too rapid change, but of Chinese stationariness. As democracy advances, the opinions of mankind on most subjects of general interest will become, he believes, as compared with any former period, more rooted and more difficult to change; and mankind are more and more in danger of losing the

moral courage and pride of independence, which make them deviate from
the beaten path, either in speculation or in conduct (p. 188).

Moreover, the fact that people do not recognise any special skill or quality to any other citizen, but they just accept and submit themselves and their opinions to the power of the number and to the authority of the majority, could lead to increasingly assure control and power to the central government, so that it would ultimately deal more and more with the business of society, putting under a sort of protection and tutelage individuals and their interests, ignoring or even trampling on the individual prerogatives and rights in the name of a supposed public interest. Tocqueville's solutions and correctives to these problems are popular education and spirit of liberty fostered by the dissemination and extension of political rights, and democratic institutions are the remedy to stop and correct evils and mischiefs of the democratic society itself; "as for those to which democratic institutions are themselves liable, these, he holds, society must struggle with, and bear with so much of them as it cannot find the means of conquering" (p. 189). Mill's criticism does not regard just democracy *in se*: he has also concerns regarding the possibility that the ruling majority is not subject to limits and control and does not either possess expertise to govern wisely, to ensure that it is not despotic towards minorities and individual prerogatives:

> the defects to which the government of numbers, whether in the pure
> American or in the mixed English form, is most liable, are precisely those of
> a public, as compared with an administration. Want of appreciation of
> distant objects and remote consequences; where an object is desired, want
> both of an adequate sense of practical difficulties, and of the sagacity
> necessary for eluding them; disregard of traditions, and of maxims
> sanctioned by experience; an undervaluing of the importance of fixed rules,
> when immediate purposes require a departure from them—these are
> among the acknowledged dangers of popular government: and there is the
> still greater, though less recognised, danger, of being ruled by a spirit of
> suspicious and intolerant mediocrity (p. 202).

Democracy – Millian democracy, at least - requires, as a remedy for the problems described above, education and training to democratic citizenship.

From a political and institutional point of view, Mill suggests a further solution and uses a historical example, that of the Roman Senate, composed of the wiser and more

experienced aristocracy, which excluded members who fell into disgrace and included those who had occupied the state highest offices. The English philosopher proposes a senate placed side by side the representative assembly: senators would be chosen by virtue of their career, their services and their achievements in the field of government and administration, and, therefore, the senate would be unquestionably authoritative and reasonably respectful of the traditions of government. As we have already seen, bicameralism is a solution that Mill proposes many years later in *CRG*, though in a more problematic way[50]: the equal democratic origin (which would make it redundant), or, alternatively, the lack of legitimacy of a second chamber of aristocratic kind are both arguments against the existence of a second legislative body. However, Mill states that setting up a parliamentary barrier to the power of the representative assembly could be helpful. In *CRG* Mill makes a proposal of a Senate composed of high skilled and experienced people: heads of government no longer in office, senior military officers, judges who have performed in the highest offices of the judiciary, former ministers would be part of this second parliamentary body, unable to stop the legislative decisions of the first chamber democratically legitimate to ultimately give precedence to their own will, but at the same time, because of the recognised authority and unquestioned expertise of its members, capable of positively influencing activity and proposals of the elected MPs (*CRG*, CW XIX, pp. 513-519). This bicameral system would not have conservative targets (because of the popular component), and while integrating and improving the experience and knowledge of state affairs of the lower house, it would be able to be respectful of the principle of competence.

Instead, leaving aside the institutional and political proposal, and considering the philosophical topics and ideas shown in these reviews, it must be stated that some of them, however, were somehow already present in François Guizot's lectures; as Mill writes in the second review, outlining the problem of the predominance of the middle class in the United States as well as in England: "the evil is not in the preponderance of a democratic class, but of any class" (*De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (II)*¸ CW XIX, p. 196) and the danger of a homogeneous community leading to mediocrity and

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[50] Qualter (1960, pp. 887-889) notices the revival of this institutional proposal in *CRG*, and, linked to the problems related to the extension of suffrage, considers it as a result of reflection on Tocqueville's political tyranny of the majority.

conformity does not exist only in despotic states, e. g. China. Moreover - here it is worth quoting Mill:

> It is profoundly remarked by M. Guizot, that the short duration or stunted growth of the earlier civilizations arose from this, that in each of them some one element of human improvement existed exclusively, or so preponderatingly as to overpower all the others; whereby the community, after accomplishing rapidly all which that one element could do, either perished for want of what it could not do, or came to a halt and became immoveable (p. 197)

Mill recognises a direct connection between François Guizot's historical thought and the problem of a democratic society under the control of a conformist commercial middle-class, as it is set in *Democracy in America*. Mill, therefore, knows Guizot's writings at the time of his second review on Tocqueville; in fact, Mill had known Guizot's historical works for a longer time: although his essay on the French politician and historian dates back to 1845, nine years earlier he had already commissioned a review of Guizot's lectures for the *London & Westminster Review*. Written by Joseph Blanco White[51], it already contained a synthesis of the themes later touched in 1845 and it was amended by Mill before its publication (Varouxakis, 1999, p. 295); in Mill's other writings and letters there are several references to Guizot and his work since 1832[52]. We can then read and analyse 1845 review, knowing that it contains ideas already in Mill's mind for many years - even before the publication of *Democracy in America*. Here Mill shows his appreciation for Guizot's work: comparing the method usually used by French historians with that of British historians, he concludes by recalling that in England the

[51] See Joseph Blanco White, *Guizot's Lectures on European Civilization*, CW XX, pp. 367-393.

[52] As an example, see the letter to Joseph Blanco White, CW XII, p. 259: "I have begun to read Tocqueville. It seems an excellent book: uniting considerable graphic power, with the capacity of generalizing on the history of society, which distinguishes the best French philosophers of the present day, & above all, *bringing out* the peculiarities of American society, & making the whole stand before the reader as a powerful picture. - Did you ever read Guizot's Lectures? If not, pray do".

historical research is not yet a science, or at least it is not used with a scientific approach and with the aim of finding general rules:

> In this particular, the difference between the English and the Continental mind forces itself upon us in every province of their respective literatures. Certain conceptions of history considered as a whole, some notions of a progressive unfolding of the capabilities of humanity - of a tendency of man and society towards some distant result - of a destination, as it were, of humanity - pervade, in its whole extent, the popular literature of France (*Guizot's Essays and Lectures on History*, CW XX, p. 260).

Mill then begins treating the *Histoire de la Civilisation en France*, a text in which Guizot describes the causes of the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Roman law, particularly on taxation and on *curiae*, had destroyed the middle class of the empire, which then, except for a few privileged classes, had gone to ruin. So, barbarians found uncultivated land, depopulated cities, widespread poverty, and no trace of resistance or aversion to invasion (instead, they found strong resistance by the Saxons, who were one of the people less influenced by Roman culture). Then, Mill starts to deal with another work written by Guizot, the *Histoire de la Civilisation en Europe*, briefly showing the definition given by the French historian of the word and concept of civilisation, and Guizot's explanation of what can be called "principle of antagonism" (Varouxakis, 1999, p. 296). As concerns the relationship between antagonism and civilisation, Mill deals with states and societies dominated by one only strong principle, i.e. ancient Egypt, Greece and India. Western Europe, instead, has always had more different forces competing with each other. This condition has made European progress slower but more durable, stronger and more varied:

> No one of the ancient forms of society contained in itself that systematic antagonism, which we believe to be the only condition under which stability and progressiveness can be permanently reconciled to one another (*Guizot's Essays and Lectures on History*, CW XX, p. 269).

It is also interesting to quote Mill's words on the role of the *élites* and the well-educated classes in government of a country such as China[53]:

> Education, for example - mental culture - would seem to have a better title than could be derived from anything else, to rule the world with exclusive authority; yet if the lettered and cultivated class, embodied and disciplined under a central organ, could become in Europe, what it is in China, the Government - unchecked by any power residing in the mass of citizens, and permitted to assume a parental tutelage over all the operations of life - the result would probably be a darker despotism, one more opposed to improvement, than even the military monarchies and aristocracies have in fact proved (p. 270).

So, these multiple and varied forces, fighting and competing during most of European history, found by Guizot and reported by Mill, consist in:

- the legacy left by the Romans about the idea of a universal empire and a body of written law, and liberty of thought;
- Christianity, with its hierarchy, organisation and separation of spiritual and temporal power;.
- the barbarian attitude, which, instead, has brought the spirit of individual liberty and voluntary association, the institution of military patronage and bond between leaders and followers.

So, a history of European nations can be outlined according to these principles, and according to Guizot they first led to a long period of confusion after the fall of the Roman empire, then to a new social organisation in the feudal period.

Considering the Carolingian era, in *Civilisation en France* Guizot writes that the cause of the birth of a new empire is due to the power of a systematic and comprehensive body

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[53] It must be noticed that China is not an example described in Guizot's lectures. The French historian talks about ancient Egypt and India as samples of country dominated by a despotic power, and ancient Greece as a country where a sort of democratic hegemony stopped progress and civilisation. By the way, an interesting description of the different uses of the Chinese example in Mill and Tocqueville can be found in Varouxakis, 1999, pp. 302-303.

of written law, and to the natural ascendancy of Latin civilisation over barbarism. Moreover, Charlemagne's wars are different in nature from those of his predecessors, because they are not caused by disagreements among tribes or by the pursuit of resources, but they are guided by the purpose to put an end to the barbaric invasions and to the instability caused by them. The consequences of the reign of Charlemagne according to Guizot – Mill reports – are thus the creation of stable states in place of unstable and insecure domains, an attempt - albeit partially failed – of creation of a central government based on the work of the *missi dominici* and on vassalage.

On this point Mill and Guizot disagree: according to the French historian, the work of Charlemagne died with him, as proven by written records of many of his contemporaries, while Mill's opinion is that the Frankish king, however, could just follow or to put up with the trends of the time, and at his death, even if his empire did not survive for long period, he left a system of decentralized feudal powers with stable and well-defined territories, as a consequence of the fact that in any case Charlemagne work was set on the only model of society he knew. So, in feudal society, the spirit of independence and autonomy and the importance of the lord (a figure anyway quite different from that of the Roman patrician) emerged. Mill points out that the work of Guizot reveals a new type of relationship between the masses and political and temporal powers, as well as the endemic conflict between central government and landowners, particularly due to the general weakness of the central authority: these set up a sort of right of resistance against the national authority, and even with all its great defects, feudal society had the advantage of introducing or at least strengthening the idea of personal and individual will.

The other point on which Mill differs broadly from Guizot's historical interpretation is the transition from the feudal age to the modern period. Mill is actually quite interested in giving a more detailed and deeper explanation of the phenomenon described by Guizot (1871, p. 94), with the intention to put light on historical events in relation to the development of civilisation; so, while the French historian focuses on the intrinsic weakness of the feudal system, the need of the weakest vassals to submit to the strongest, and the consequent increase of authority of the latter resulting in the establishment of central powers, the English philosopher wants to give a sort of scientific explanation for this phenomenon, and he thus argues that the change of authority is due to a change in attitude and mentality in every part, even the smaller, of feudal society. Not its imperfection, but the qualities of the feudal system caused its end, because, on the contrary, in a steady and static social and political situation, those

defects would still have survived along with that social model as a whole, and not fallen with it below the attack of the commons and of the royal authorities. Mill gives a deeper explanation of this great political and social change: feudal institutions allowed a mix of authority and freedom to give enough protection to the development of intellectual faculties and to material and social progress, which led to a general improvement of society, to surpass those defects and, *ipso facto*, feudal society itself.

At this point, Mill omits the rest of Guizot's work, i.e. those parts regarding the relations between temporal and religious powers, the role of the Church in the Middle Ages, cities' organisation and politics, and so on until the XVIII century in France. Mill notes that the analysis of this historical period is not as insightful as that of the first chapters, and focuses only on the history of England, in particular on its political institutions, as discussed in *Civilisation en Europe* (pp. 352-378). Mill seems interested in the following questions: *What is the origin of the British representative institutions? Why is England an anomaly in Europe?*

Mill reviews the core elements of English history: the Saxon character little affected by the Latin one, the organisation of the Norman invaders who therefore needed a strong leadership, the division of lands among noblemen that prevented any of them to have more power than the crown or the other members of the nobility had, then the important role held by common, non-noble, people with reference to the monarchy-barons dualism, which led continual concessions of collective freedom from the king. Unlike the French and continental history as a whole, English has never had dominant cultural, social, political power or principle:

> to a nation, as to an individual, the consequences of doing everything by halves, of adopting compromise as the universal rule, of never following out a general idea or principle to its utmost results, are by no means exclusively favourable (p. 294).

This long description has been useful to see how, according to Mill, Guizot's theory stems from the analysis of historical facts and can be intended as a general law: where a single principle or a single dominant or hegemonic power exists, a rapid first phase of material, moral, intellectual progress, due to the lack of limits to the domain of that principle or power, can be experienced, but, eventually, such phase is doomed to

stagnation, to a steady state due to the lack of other principles bringing their further contribution – in an antagonistic way - to civilisation[54].

Mill considers the tyranny of the majority in a democracy as a particular case of Guizot's systematic theory of antagonism of powers. So, as Guizot's theory is a general one, and as Tocqueville's interpretation is particularly related to democratic theory and a sort of subset, of particular application of Guizot's view, it may appear - simply and clearly at the same time - that in Mill's struggle for democracy, Alexis de Tocqueville's text

[54] An explanation of the concept of civilisation according to Guizot is due. It is expounded in the first lecture of his *Histoire de la Civilisation en Europe*, where Guizot, at first, makes a general analysis of the common use of the word civilisation, through the use of examples. This is his first conclusion: «Il me semble que le premier fait qui soit compris dans le mot civilisation (et cela résulte des diverse exemples que je viens de faire passer sous vos yeux), c'est le fait de progrès, de développement; il réveille aussitôt l'idée d'un peuple qui marche, non pur changer de place, mais pour changer d'état; d'un peuple dont la condition s'étend e s'améliore. L'idée du progrès, du développement, me paraît être l'idée fondamentale contenue sous le mot de civilisation. Quel est ce progrès? quel est ce développement? Ici réside la plus grande difficulté» (Guizot, 1871, p. 15). The analysis continues considering other different historical matters. Guizot wonders whether this concept of progress that underlies the word Civilisation is linked just to economic and social conditions, or rather to values and culture. The economic and material well-being of France during the XVII and XVIII centuries, for example, was lower than the English or Dutch one at that time; however, it is generally recognised that France was the most civilised country in Europe. On the other hand, according to Guizot we can see the great crises of history are linked not only to economic reasons, but also to cultural factors. A striking example of a 'moral' crisis can be found, he writes, during the early centuries of Christianity: this religious doctrine did not try to set an upheaval of the social and institutional *status quo*, however it deeply influenced Western civilisation because it changed beliefs, feelings, the inner side of men. Therefore, there are material development of society on the one hand, and moral progress of mankind on the other side, and, according to Guizot, every investigation on which of these two factors is a consequence of the other implies a question – which is left unresolved by Guizot - on the general purpose of men on earth, and on the general cause of all the historic events. The fact is that these two sides of the history of humanity, which achieve two different methods of treating history as a discipline, are each a reflection of the other, are closely related, and they can potentially be dealt with as separate subjects of study.

occupies an important position which stems from Guizot's historical reflection, but at the same time it is central and relevant because it is more focused on problems and solutions of contemporary Western European democratic societies, dealing with the federal model of government and the role of education in a democracy mainly composed of middle-class citizens.

The analysis of Mill's reviews of Guizot's historical work, moreover, points out that, perhaps, Hamburger interpretation of Mill's hope for a new natural state of society (Hamburger, 1999, pp. 108-113) is perhaps slightly misleading: indeed, Mill's praise of a new era of stability and harmony is not unequivocal, as we have just seen. Actually, the existence of antagonistic forces in society is under some aspects a positive thing, and the permanence of an established set of powers and beliefs has, at least in the long run, negative effects on society and on individuals. Guizot is cited in Hamburger's *John Stuart Mill on Liberty and Control* just once (p. 67), with reference to Mill's description of Guizot's prudence in asserting his own opinions. (letter to Robert Barclay Fox, 23 December 1840, CW XIII, pp. 454-455). As this interpretation of Mill on the dichotomy between natural and transitional states is one of the foundations of Hamburger's argument supporting his views on Mill as a proponent of a religion of humanity and of a sort of moral regeneration led by the intellectuals, "responsible for originating and disseminating opinions and beliefs" (Hamburger, 1999, p. 109), it may not be excessive to conclude that, at least on this, Hamburger's claims on Mill and his alleged plans for moral reform and control are perhaps to be somehow put into a different perspective.

IV.IV. MILL AS POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER: WAS HE A DEMOCRAT?

As Mill maintains in his theory that representative government both implies and provides a few corrections in the direction of competence and rational debate, one may wonder whether it is actually a democratic theory or rather a moderate form of elitist, although enlightened, government in which, apart from the moment of the general election, ruling a country is just a business for the cultivated few.

Probably, the interpretation of Mill's philosophy provided by J. H. Burns (1968 (1957)) is the clearest, or at least rather exemplary, in criticising Mill's democratic attitude and in claiming that it actually opposes popular power as much as it can. Burns argues, indeed, that political representation, the role of the intellectuals and the possibility of an effective participation of the masses in the public discourse in Mill's theory clearly lead to an undemocratic representative government: even though, according to Burns,

three different stages of Mill's political thought can be identified (1829-40, from the recovery from the 'mental crisis' to the year he gave up the ownership of the *London and Westminster Review*; 1840-49, when Mill's political writing are barely relevant; 1849-1861, from the publication of his defence of the French Revolution of 1848 to that of *CRG*), throughout his life he has consistently had faith in a class of professional administrators and tried to fix the flaws of popular government and find countermeasures to the possible evils of a democratic rule. Basically, Mill's caution towards democracy has led Burns to claim that Mill's political thought is not, according to the very sense Mill himself gives of democracy, the viewpoint of a democrat (p. 328). Actually, Burns' conclusions are quite too extreme. For instance, Burns takes into account (p. 286) the following words, which were written by Mill with reference to the British political situation in July 1833 and to the electoral reform:

> The cause of the evil is one which I foresaw and predicted long before— the anomaly of a democratic constitution in a plutocratically constituted society. Till changes take place which can only be remotely promoted by any Reform Bill, the people will continue from necessity to select their representatives from the same class as before, avoiding only those who are committed to principles which the people abhor (letter to John Pringle Nichol, CW XII, p. 166).

Here Mill says, in bullet points, that:

- democracy is unfit for a plutocratic society (principle of *adaption*, as seen before);
- a Reform Bill will have little effect (as a machinery without power).

This is perfectly consistent with what Mill maintains in *CRG*, however Burns uses this and other quotations from Mill's works to claim that "he is beginning to fear tendencies in the masses which must be offset by some other power in society" (p. 297). Burns affirms that the central section of *CRG* is nothing particularly new if compared to many of Mill's previous political writings, but, as we have just noticed, in 1833 some of the ideas included in the first chapters were already present *in nuce* in Mill's writings. However, Burns misses the progressive aspects of representation: even accepting his interpretation according to which Mill is afraid of the ignorant masses becoming a prevailing force, anyway the progressive influence of representative institutions over these masses will make them more cultivated and intellectually and politically fit to a

more participatory model of representative government – i.e., I dare to say, a democracy. Progress as intrinsic value and practical effect of representative government is a quite clear concept in the early chapters of *CRG*, from which "much of the book's permanent value and interest" derives (p. 325) – Burns' own words.

When we look at Tocqueville and Guizot's influence on Mill, this progressive aspect is included within an antagonistic framework (not just in terms of opposition of political parties, but rather of progressive or 'stagnating' forces), which makes clear that it is not the single constitutional provision (aimed to either increase and reduce the space for popular political participation) to give real value to democracy, but the process within the mechanism as a whole, a process involving the people and with an active popular element.

Still, the role of the intellectuals stands and it may be argued that Mill's political proposal deals with a minor form of elitism, as the role of the intellectuals acquires value within the system and can be effective only with the largest political participation (at least as large as possible). Competence and mental qualities of the rulers do matter, but they are a necessary and non-sufficient condition for individual improvement of the people, since the efficacy of the influence of the competent in society requires adequate political and social conditions and actions through political participation and debate. So, at least, elitist elements coexist with progressive elements.

In general, Burns' criticism of Mill – or, at least, his interpretation of Mill as a non-democrat – depends on the claim that there is a difference between true democracy and representative government: the former would be the power of the majority (although still exercised through representation) and based on the assumptions that all the men are equal; the latter would be the institutional system devised in *CRG* and limiting the popular element. As regards equality, previously we have noticed that everyone is *equally* entitled to have his (or her) opinion taken into consideration, although not every voice is *equal*: dismissing forms of extreme egalitarianism does not imply that in Mill does not exist any form of soft egalitarianism. Secondly, Burns thinks that Mill progressively detaches from the pro-democratic utilitarian stance he holds in his early writings (true), that after his father death's he starts embracing some critical, and even conservative, views (true), but he implies that *CRG* simply continues along this path of anti-democratic reaction or that at least it would not contain the democratic elements which, anyway, had been a feature of Mill's political thought for many years; one of the issues regarding *CRG* Burns investigates is "whether the central chapters, which sum up

Mill's conception of representative government, contain anything of significance which we have not seen emerging in his earlier writing" and the answer is that "the *Considerations* embody elaboration and clarification rather than new departures" (p. 326). Hence, for instance, elements of protection against the rule of the mob and the commercial spirit[55] are substantial; however, it is in the central part of *CRG* that Mill outlines a system of government in which, ultimately, the powers of political decision lie, despite all the limitations Mill devises for them – in the hand of the representatives of the people and no one else. Intellectuals, men of competence and experience, enlightened minorities etc. have a right to be heard, have a sort of obligation in influencing the political debate, have the task (in the case of the Legislative Commission) to draft bills, but, at the very end of the political process, the predominant power still is the popular will.

As I have mentioned earlier, it is worth to point out that it may well be said that the popular element in Mill's proposal of representative government is at least as strong as what Burns maintains to be an elitist one. At this point, however, I may even moreover try and investigate how far elitist elements may go within Mill's democratic theory. Finding an upper limit to Mill's alleged elitism may help to further redirect and refocus investigation, in the attempt to understand and assess the role of competence in a representative democracy for Mill. So, we may see, at first, whether there is room for technocrats in this form of political organisation.

Therefore, in the next section I use Platonic terms to describe what a technocrat is and argue that

   a) although Mill himself cites Plato as an example of intellectual for his project of cultural reform (see Hamburger, 1999), and
   b) even considering politics as a *technē* in itself,

in any case Millian democracy is much less elitist than a Platonic form of government (and here we have found our upper limit: we cannot go any further in describing Mill's elitist elements).

[55] See Burns's remarks on Mill and Tocqueville (Burns, 1968 (1957), pp. 306-307).

Competence, education, democracy, prevention against the rule of the mob and the tyranny of the majority are the elements investigated in the previous sections of this chapter. Also, whether Mill is truly a democrat or not has constituted a subject of attention and investigation: doubt over Mill's political status as a democrat arises due to his words stressing the importance of competence and his recurring doubts related to the majority rule and the dangers of mediocrity in democratic societies. Furthermore, the field of things included in the concepts of education and competence is quite wide and, perhaps, vague: non-elected members of a second chamber should be chosen accordingly to their experience in political or military office, while education of the people, in general, entails something more than simple school and academic education; there is, of course, the need for a sort of enlightened minority in parliament, whose main task would have to be fostering a rational discourse rather than merely stand for particular interests, no matter what others have reasonably to say or whatever the common good (accordingly to the utility principle) is, but meanwhile the legislation drafting process is delegated to a group of highly skilled people who possess the technical knowledge in economics, finance, law and in the various fields affected by the proposed legislation – and all these different forms of competence need still to find their place in democratic arena, they are politically and socially effective when included in the democratic process and strengthening its virtues. Perhaps, there may be a proper political skill, possessed by politicians, which enables them to act within the democratic arena and push through bills and political decisions. In order to describe this, I will use the notion of a technocrat.

What is the definition of a technocrat? A 'technocrat' may be defined in a generic way as an individual who assumes a position of power, a member of a technically skilled *élite* whose position of power draws legitimacy because of his specific technical and scientific knowledge and his recognised expertise in a specific field, totally unrelated, then, from any other kind of political legitimacy, for example election via a democratic process. Actually, the technocrat may also occupy other positions within a democratic society: that of political advisor, a bureaucratic position, or even a policy-making position without any political responsibility which still remains to democratically elected representatives and governments (Barnes, 1968, pp. 29-58). However, over the following pages the subject of analysis will be the technocrat as a ruler with powers of active intervention in matters of political choice. The purpose is, therefore, to deepen

the definition of technocrat in the context of modern representative democracies. Looking at the nature of representative democracy in contemporary Europe, some political events in 2011, brought to power a few governments which have commonly been defined as 'technocratic': both the Greek experience, which saw the appointment of an economist as prime minister, and even more the Italian one, where the whole cabinet has consisted for one and a half year of academics and high officials of the public administration, have seen the removal of professional politicians from key cabinet positions they had occupied by virtue of an electoral result. In this section, an examination of a definition of technocrat arising from Plato's *Republic* will be carried on in order to identify one or more distinctive conceptual nodes of a technocratic system of government (particularly that of *technē*). Such examination, following the issues affecting the need for skilled rulers already arisen during the eighteenth century, brings to light the problem of competence. Two conclusions will be brought to light and used in our research on the role of competence in Millian democracy: aside from the fact that the technocratic principle in itself is inherently weak because of the epistemological status of social sciences, if we have in mind the character of philosopher-king applied to the twenty-first century (and considering bureaucracy as a special case), the criterion of Platonic *technē* favours professionalism in politics, instead of the need for experts in specific areas to cover key positions in a state's cabinet.

A preliminary question arises, anyway: why deal here with Plato? The definition of 'technocrat' rests on that of *technē*, i.e. an art that covers a field of knowledge or a specific subject, and that produces an outcome, a product or consequence. It is reasonable, therefore, to start with a definition of *technē*; Plato's political *technē* implies the idea of a science of sciences, an *epistēmē epistēmōn* (Sprague, 1976, pp. 29-42), and such an idea can be somehow associated with the skills which may be required to rulers in modern democracies, because government activities cover such a range of different areas they cannot be reduced to one or a few disciplines, scientific or unscientific as they might be. The work of R. S. Sprague (1976) on the theoretical background of the king philosophers gives us a description of this political *technē*, linked to the concepts of temperance, justice, and good and evil, but above all depicted as an ability to rule, as statecraft.

Moreover, one of the first theoretical models - if not the first - of a technocratic state in the history of ideas could probably be considered the one outlined by Plato. His model is based on certain fundamental ideas, which are, in a very brief summary, justice as a

unity of an harmonious society and as a condition of the realization of the good of society; the analogy between individual soul and political community; the figure of the philosopher, devoted to true knowledge, reflection, research and pursuit of truth. The philosopher, therefore, appears as an individual who finds his political legitimacy to govern in his knowledge, within his competence, in his art (*technē*) - an art similar to the one that anyone possesses and puts into practice in carry out in his own activities (the carpenter, the sailor, the sculptor and so on).

Rosamond Sprague, in her work on Plato's philosopher-kings, interprets the concept of *technē* in the Platonic dialogues as follows: first, she considers Plato in the *Ion* on the necessary requirements of an art. Plato, analysing the figure of the rhapsode, concludes that every art has its special field, separated from the other fields of the other arts, and if any particular field of judgment - or knowledge – does not exist, then there is no specific art (Sprague, 1976, pp. 1-14); in the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias* Plato operates a very similar argument, with Protagoras claiming that politics, *politikē technē* (pp. 18-19 and p. 21) is not a form of knowledge for a sophist (of course), and therefore – according to Plato - it belongs, rather than to the sophist, to the statesman (pp. 15-22); in the *Gorgias* justice is excluded from the subjects of rhetoric. In other words, those of the rhapsode, the sophist and the rhetorician are not properly defined as art because they do not have a definite purpose (pp. 22-28). In the *Republic* and the *Statesman*, according to Sprague, Plato concludes that statecraft is a real and proper art, owned by the king-philosopher (pp. 57-117). The politician, therefore, is the one who knows the art of governing as an art of organising society according to justice.

This technocratic (if we can define it so) model outlines the idea of a ruler who manages the state for the good of the community by virtue of his skills. It is more than obvious that the Greek *polis* that Plato had in front of him was largely different from the political entities existing today, in the twenty-first century; but this does not mean that we cannot try to see how the idea of the king-philosopher can be applied today. Clearly, in this particular Platonic theory – or in Sprague's interpretation of it - the character of the ruler is greatly out of context when applied to democratic theory, not just because of its inherent anti-democratic spirit or simply for a temporal reason, having been drawn up many centuries before the development of representative democracy, but also for the fact that the institutions and principles of the Greek democratic *poleis* were quite different from those later developed over the last few centuries. The point, however, is that the very definition of technocrat in politics implies the existence of a concept of political *technē*, and Plato comes useful to give a first definition: the statesman has got

a *technē* – statecraft - which somehow specializes him makes him fit for his role, as it happens to anyone who has a practical activity of a certain kind. It is something to start working on.

As in Plato's dialogues the analogies between the art of statecraft and other arts[56] are frequent, and so having the statesman a *technē* as a carpenter, a doctor, a fisher do, there is a correlation between *technē*, political role and social position. All this might somehow justify an application - or at least an attempt at application – of this definition to the thought of Benjamin Constant, according to whom only some citizens have an active role in government activities because of the intrinsic nature of modern societies. In Constant the liberty of the moderns and the need for political representation arise largely from social considerations: abolition of slavery has eliminated time to devote to politics, while commerce permeates the life of nations, therefore individuals prefer to focus on their own activities (in other words, exercise their own *technē*, use it to create products or results, and enjoy the outcome). The liberty of the moderns, then, is freedom of trade, production, employment or professional activity, in general, as they typically exist in a bourgeois society (Constant, 1980, p. 501). In other words, the political status of modern man is related, at least in part, to his social and economic role – as in Plato. Since according to Constant everybody dedicates his time to his own activity, and only a few are involved in particular to politics while most of the others do not, one may say that only some people – for any reason - have got a political *technē*, as described in the previous paragraph.

Actually there may be a possible objection: in the Platonic model, statecraft is what gives legitimacy to the philosopher-king, whereas according to Constant, simply schematizing, we can say that everyone puts into practice his art (in trade, industry, etc.), while just a few citizens practise the art of politics (others do not because they are practising another activity and then do not have a practical and temporal possibility), but not in virtue of their supposed political *technē*, a superior wisdom as in Plato, but rather by the electoral vote; the fact remains that in a society everybody practises or develops his own *technē*, and the majority of people is employed in activities other than politics, which is delegated only to the few. There is, at least apparently, a reversal logic

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[56] And sometimes Socrates' interlocutors are annoyed by these references to common activities – e.g., see Callicles in Plato, 1979, p. 64.

(according to Plato, if you have got the political *technē*, you rule; in Constant, we might say that if you rule, you are practicing the political *technē*), but the relationship between the figure of the ruler and the political *technē* still remains.

Such argument is valid if we consider a strict interpretation of political *technē* as mere statecraft: in its broadest sense it is inapplicable, since in Plato's utopia philosopher-kings only are involved in politics, while the participation of citizens in political life, even considering just the electoral vote, is a prerequisite for representative democracy. The focus of this argument is, in summary, the following: there is no contradiction in saying that even in representative democracy, as well as in the Platonic *utopia*, few possess this kind of political *technē*, as only few rule, while the rest of the citizens do not.

Moreover, there are some examples showing that in the history of representative democracy and of democratic theory in general, the need for some expertise has often been taken into account. During the United States Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, the Federalists (e.g. James Madison) had been trying to outline an electoral and institutional way to let the best citizens emerge, a representative system in which representatives would possess more virtue and talent than their voters, a sort of natural aristocracy, opposite to that of their former English homeland and to the French *Ancien Régime*; the legislative body did not have to simply be a mirror of the voters (Manin, 1996, pp. 135-170).

A few decades later, as we have seen, John Stuart Mill feels the need to introduce elements of competence and knowledge in the context of his democratic political proposal (Thompson, 1976, pp. 54-90), e.g. the need for competent people in the bill drafting process, or the creation of a Senate made up of civil servants who, thanks to their experience, could positively contribute to the political debate and to the parliamentary legislative process, overcoming the danger of mediocrity and lack of expertise. According to Mill, those *élites* who have the deepest knowledge, the best skills and the highest intellectual qualities must have as much space as possible in a democratic society. He points the finger to the dangers of incompetence, stressing the importance of minorities in the process of political education of the rest of population. Furthermore, bureaucratic competence can certainly be considered relevant because of the experience accumulated over the time, but it suffers from a serious defect: *routine*. It will become a rigid bureaucracy, inappropriate to any change or political reform: technical expertise, therefore, must necessarily stare after discretionary political choices still remaining in the hands of democratically elected representatives (*Tocqueville on Democracy in America (I)*, CW XVIII, p. 72), reflecting the fact that any

political decision is discretionary, requiring a wider *technē*, a science of sciences, a general view of things that recognises the need for specific skills and is not limited to owning only one or few specific and well-known subjects. Technocrats of the twenty-first century, or rather, the examples we have seen at work in Europe over the last few years (typically, economists at the head of governments in Greece and Italy) are not exempt from liability for their policies that lie outside their proper competence or field of study and work. And even as regards every other political issue, their liability is exactly the same as that of any professional politician: actually, therefore, there is not any possible separation between the character of the technocrat and political professionalism: if the legitimacy of power based on possession of a *technē* for a specific field of knowledge runs out – as we have supposed so far, trying to use a definition of political *technē* as statecraft – and a more general ability to rule a country as a necessary skill remains, the distinction between political professionalism and technocrat disappears, and the field that can be delegated to experts may be, rather, that of the bureaucracy and the supply of technical support to policies for which the rulers keep their full responsibility.

Hence, once we include statecraft in the principle of competence and as long as we see it is not inconsistent with democracy (as in Benjamin Constant's writings, for instance), then claims of anti-democratic elements in Mill appear less convincing. We establish a democracy, therefore we need competence - this is substantially the relationship between popular sovereignty and competence in Mill. In this scenario, even allegations of Platonism, such as those brought forward by Joseph Hamburger (1999, pp. 36-37) appear in a different perspective. As we have seen earlier in this work, Hamburger's criticism mainly focuses on the notion of Mill's liberty and cultural reform; however, as for the subject of this specific chapter, it seems appearing that accusations of Platonism with reference to the principle of competence cannot be proved on the basis of alleged inconsistencies with the democratic principle. Statecraft as a *technē* in Platonic terms is compatible with a democratic framework.

This chapter has presented the methodology through which investigation in political theory should be carried out according to Mill: political institutions are neither mere theoretical constitutional constructions nor the automatic product of social processes. They actually have to be devised in order to mix the two elements. Historical processes are relevant, indeed, and we must adapt our institutions to them; however, the fact that democracy may be the consequence of social, political and historical processes naturally occurring or that have occurred in society is not in itself the real justification for

establishing a representative government. Actually, what makes it a good choice is the educative element provided by political participation, and the role played by both the popular will[57] and the action of competent people. The importance of the democratic elements is so significant that even including within a democratic context a Platonic notion such as the one of political expertise, we may find it not inconsistent with the establishment of a representative democracy. Expertise and competence are needed – technical expertise and moral expertise, but even a political expertise (which is not explicitly present in Mill's system, and which I have just introduced in this section as a way to show what extent Mill's elitism goes. and which revealed itself to be consistent with a democratic pattern), as we have seen in this section – exactly in order to make the democratic process virtuous and the popular element fruitful of good consequences in terms of liberty, of education and of the fight against the degenerations of democracy such as the tyranny of the masses and mediocrity. After this, I move on to a specific aspect of democratic government: political representation.

IV.VI. POLITICAL ETHICS IN MILL'S THEORY OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

The task of the previous chapters consisted in outlining the general features of the system of representative democracy devised by John Stuart Mill. In chapter II, for the purpose of the argument, I have given a general overview of the utilitarian doctrine which is the substantial ground (although not the only one) from which Mill derives his philosophical and political conclusions. Chapters III, IV and V, instead, have highlighted three aspects of the Millian form of government: education, what it is, what its multifaceted aspects are and in what its links with the individual as well as social development and with the polity in general would consist; democracy in itself, i.e. the particular form of representative government as designed by Mill in *CRG* and in other writings, how it works, its institutions and, mainly, the principles on which it is based and which it should be aimed to foster; political representation, analysed under the particular issue of the so-called mandate/independence controversy. This has been a

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[57] As we have seen earlier in this chapter, this dismisses the view according to which Mill is not a real supporter of democracy.

process of gradual narrowing from a bigger picture regarding education, individuals and society to more specific political issues.

Now, this section rather aims to determine what should be individuals' obligations in such a kind of democracy: when it comes to voting or political participation, or other forms of public activities, some questions may arise in terms of effective decisiveness of an individual's actions or of his moral duties towards society. The importance of the rational element will be stressed then: it gives reasons to participate, mostly to the competent and to the intellectual, and rational debate helps to overcome some problems related to the effective usefulness of participating in elections.

There is a number of issues which can be addressed when dealing with the political participation of the citizens. For example, according to Beerbohm (2013) there are at least three groups of problem:

> *The Ethics of Participation*: Why should I participate in a democracy? What is the root moral idea behind our participatory responsibilities? How does the valence of participation change under unjust political institutions? Am I blameworthy for failing to participate?

> *The Ethics of Belief*: How should I manage my political beliefs? How can I guard against the well-known biases in reasoning – wishful thinking, self-deception, and confirmation bias? When, in short, am I permitted to be *ignorant* about politics and policy?

> *The Ethics of Delegation*: When can I contract out my obligations to a trusted representative? Can I offload all or nearly all of my political reasoning to representative agents? What are the limits of political representation? (p. 7)

In this short section, I do not address all these issues. However, these are democratic issues, i.e. they affect the behaviour of citizens in a democracy and in relation to democratic institutions. Addressing these problems under a Millian perspective would perhaps be an interesting suggestion for further research. For instance, as the utilitarian political philosophy and Mill's as well include a principle of accountability (of representatives), it may be interesting to look for an application of the same principle to the voter. In other words: at what extent should voters be held responsible for the

action of democratically elected MPs, of parliament as a whole and of government?[58] For instance, according to Mill, voting is a form of exercise of power over others (*Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform*, CW XIX, p. 326; *CRG*, CW XIX, p. 470 and p. 488), hence one should be held accountable for his or her electoral choice – therefore, the ballot should be cast in public, and not secretly (*CRG*, CW XIX, pp. 488-500). Mill's theory of public voting may be tested in relation to two other elements: the efficacy of every single vote in modern nation states, large-scale complex pluralistic societies where millions of people vote, and whether the voter should somehow and to some extent bear the responsibility of his MP's or his government's choices. What I aim to do here is to focus just on another detailed aspect, i.e. political participation of the intellectuals with reference to the marginal value of the vote and to public and political life in general. In order to do this, I introduce the notion of rational debate as an influence multiplier.

According to the Millian point of view held in this thesis, the issue of the minimal, almost null, influence of a single vote in modern representative democracies may be overcome if the role and characteristics of rational debate within John Stuart Mill's political philosophy are taken into consideration: acknowledgment of opponents' good reasons, rational debate within the legislative assembly as well as in public and in society at large, the continuous challenge of given opinions and a rational attitude are what may provide the basis to make the single voter more influential than he would be if his only form of political participation were voting. The problem of the marginal vote is the one in which a citizen asks: "What reason do I have to participate in democratic decision making when the chance of making a difference is near zero?" (Beerbohm, 2013, p. 52). There are a number of reasons which have been given in order to argue in favour or against electoral participation: for example, one may argue in favour of electoral participation on the basis of fairness, as if everyone felt to do his part in the democratic play (pp. 55-58); others may argue that, even if voting would seem almost ineffective in its direct consequences as regarded just as a single, individual vote, it still may be useful in order to express at least the convictions of a community with reference to decisions regarding

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[58] In the case such government or at least its head is directly elected, as in the case of the United States and of France, for example; in other cases, the cabinet relies on a confidence vote granted by the parliament – as in Mill's proposal in *CRG*.

the citizenry as a whole (pp. 58-60) – and so on[59]. I wish to appeal here, instead, to voting and elections in general as a process fostering rational debate.

In the view I propose here, rational debate may be a sort of influence multiplier, and the rational and well-informed voter should be able to make his own influence greater and greater thanks to the effects of debate; in other words, on the one hand, ideas will be corroborated if they are object of discussion and investigation by other people, and, on the other side, if one is right and if he is able to convince other citizens, his opinions on a specific topic or on a particular politician may spread and become a wider opinion, influence electoral behaviour and, therefore, it would be as if he had voted multiple times, because other people's votes will be somehow steered or influenced by his ideas and his ability to defend them rationally and find good arguments in their favour. Even dismissing Mill's idea of plural voting, not everyone would cast the same number of votes, even if they would formally do: if the parliament really develops into a Socratic assembly, where political decisions are discussed and assessed in their very own founding principles, and if the same occurs in society at large, who would gain influence over the others? Those who advocate and support rational arguments – or at least the more rational ones – would. And gaining influence over the others – in the case of a parliamentary assembly, over other MPs, while, in the case of society, over other citizen-voters – would not it mean to influence the way others take their decisions and, eventually, vote? It probably would.

Surely, what has just been illustrated is an extremely simplifying model of the political interplay occurring in parliament, across party lines, across social classes and in society in general; however, it shows the multiplying effect of the use of reason on individual vote: the more rational an individual is and the more room for open, frank and intellectually honest debate there is, the more such rational individual (i.e. the intellectual, the philosopher, the person of long, proven and qualified experience, etc.) would be capable of making his opinions spread, accepted and finally effective as for political decisions at every level (although such effectiveness has to be scaled

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[59] For an interesting collection and critical account of the several theories on participation to vote, see Beerbohm, 2013, pp. 51-81).

accordingly to the number of people involved in the political process, the level of political and government hierarchy we are dealing with, etc.).

An electoral process as illustrated in this section would provide a valid motive for political participation to those sectors of society who *think* they have good reasons, reasonable plans, well-designed political agendas and, however, *feel* there is no room for their contribution in the *polis*. I have used the words *think* and *feel*, as it makes a small difference if such groups actually have better proposals than other groups (or parties, or classes, or lobbies, or individuals, and so on) or not; what really makes a difference here is:

- a larger participation, in general, which promotes, in a Millian democracy, both individual and social/collective education;
- a larger participation, in particular, of competent people, of intellectuals, philosophers, highly skilled people, which would increase the quality of public debate and, expectedly, of its outcome (i.e. the quality of political decision, government policies, acts of parliament etc.);
- a larger number of opinions, theories, plans, proposals, beliefs etc. at scrutiny: that means that a larger number of wrong opinions, theories, plans, proposals, beliefs, etc. would be dismissed and that those who are kept as valid would be highly corroborated – at least more highly than it would have been if most of those opinions etc. would not have entered the political arena.

In a very brief summary: one of the models of democracy which would enable the citizens – in particular, the rational, well-informed ones – to be sufficiently influential in providing them with enough incentives for political and electoral participation, is, in the case made here, a form of rational democracy. As for a political obligation to follow the rules of Millian rational democracy, it may be found in the philosophical roots of Millian philosophy: among the reasons for which one should participate in political life (for a list of possible motives of political obligation, see Dagger and Lefkowitz, 2014), surely utilitarian pursuit of happiness is fundamental, and it is hard to see how the rational element of a representative government devised as in Mill's proposal can work as a disincentive. The rational element just described can come in useful in the scenario which I am going to describe in the next chapter, where I mean to propose further stages of research on Mill's political philosophy with reference to contemporary political, philosophical and sociological issues. The way the rational element can spread in society and the obstacles it can meet are to be considered while discussing how a Millian

democracy should be established. Indeed, Millian democracy is not a theoretical political and constitutional system, but, instead, a set of institutions adapting themselves to practical conditions in society (which, in turn, affect the efficacy of political institutions). Therefore, an examination of Mill's political ideas in today's world may help in strengthening their plausibility.

V. REPRESENTATION

Political representation has been over the last decades a quite classical topic in political theory: what degree of independence a representative should keep from his voters' wishes, what is to be represented (voters, interests, parties, opinions and so on) and related questions have been widely investigated by a number of political theorists. The purpose of this chapter is an investigation of John Stuart Mill's theory of representation in the light of some of the most common or well-known theories of representation.

At first, a general theory of representation involving the so-called mandate/independence controversy is expounded: the aim is to provide a theoretical framework within which to include Mill's ideas on representation or, in other words, to have some ideal coordinates which may help us to assess Mill's views on representation.

Second, I have a look at John Stuart Mill's ideas that are strictly related to this area of politics: in chapter XII of *CRG* he discusses whether an MP should make pledges or not; furthermore, I take into consideration Mill's *Rationale of Representation* and his political activity in order to understand what really his position on the subject is.

A third section will involve two interpretations of Mill's theory of representation: Richard Krouse's one, which is a comparison of James and John Stuart Mill's views and which suggests a revision of the common critical interpretation according to which John Stuart Mill was less optimistic and supportive of democracy than the Philosophical Radicals; after expounding on Krouse, Nadia Urbinati's account of Mill's political philosophy will be brought into this enquiry, as it interestingly implies the idea of representation as advocacy. Both these views will be investigated.

The fourth and final section puts forward an interpretation of Mill's position in the light of a more general theory of representation. I try to show how, actually, in Mill's political views we can find different applications of a theory of representation in relation and proportion to the degree of complexity and generality of the political issues involved.

V.I. A GENERAL THEORY OF REPRESENTATION: THE MANDATE/INDEPENDENCE CONTROVERSY

A quite classical but extensive theory of representation is the one provided by Hanna Pitkin (1972 (1967)). In her work, a landmark in political theory, she points out the

complexity of the concept of political representation in terms of its theoretical meaning and implications: beginning with an analysis of Thomas Hobbes' views and describing the multifaceted aspects of political representation, probably the core of Pitkin's theory (or at least the piece of her research more clearly showing or exemplifying the many different, and sometimes conflicting, features of political representation) is the so-called mandate/independence controversy (pp. 144-167).

The main issue involved in this controversy is related to the dilemma about whether a representative should act as a mere delegate of the represented, strictly bound to his constituents' wishes, or as a trustee who can freely take his own decisions regarding legislative and political issues. Such controversy entails other questions, e.g. what is the meaning of political representation? Who or what is actually represented (interests, lobbies, parties and so on)?

Pitkin acknowledges that these are two extreme poles of a range within which many theorists have found their own position and many different moderate or substantially intermediate interpretations of political representation still have room. In other words, each of the two "pure" positions (mandate or independence) involves such a high degree of complexity that neither of them is really tenable without any contradiction in regard to the very operating principles of a representative institution. Since representation is the operation which makes someone or something "present or manifest or present again" (p. 251), it may be argued – Pitkin says - that a representative body should somehow be the mirror or the mouthpiece of the voters, as if they were actually sitting in parliament and deliberating on every specific issue – as if they were present. However - she notes - this kind of view implies some counter-indications: at first, it does not see the difficulty and complexity of political questions, for which technical expertise of ordinary men may not be sufficient; secondly, activity in a legislative body often requires political compromise, which would be made impossible if the MPs were absolutely bound to their voters' will and wishes. Third, it would also be somehow offensive in terms of dignity for a representative to be prevented from any autonomous decision and to be substantially hetero-directed.

Even if we consider the problem of representation in relation to political parties (pp. 147-149) or with the concept of interest (pp. 155-166), it seems to be a sort of insoluble puzzle, according to Pitkin, as, indeed, it may be reasonably argued that the representative is morally bound to the party who supported and possibly funded his candidacy; therefore, as his parliamentary seat is mainly a consequence of his party's

campaign rather than his own, he should pursue his party's program and electoral manifesto[60]. Furthermore, even in a first-past-the-post system, most voters' choices may simply mean that they express a preference for a party's political proposals, rather than for a specific candidate. On the other side, political parties often back proposals differently affecting the parts of which a nation is composed (e.g. some geographic areas may be advantaged from such proposals, while others may be damaged by them) or particular social classes may be the object of specific support and advocacy (for instance, as in the case of a classical Socialist party who could just aim to improve working class' conditions, or of single-issue parties): in such cases, a free and independent[61] candidate may offer a different point of view and somehow protect the general interest or at least the neglected parts of society negatively affected by his party's proposals. Even looking at empirical research (legislators' voting behaviour, public opinion polls, etc.) this ambiguity – Pitkin affirms - does not disappear.

Pitkin goes on and shows that the same uncertainty is found in the representation of interests. At first, interest in itself, though linked to actual, real people (e.g. consumers) has a degree of abstraction. Furthermore, interest is semantically ambiguous, as it may regard something concretely affecting one person or a group of people (e.g., when a court mentions the "interested parties"), or, in the other case, attention and concern in a psychological (and for this reason subjective) sense. One can also find an unattached interest, i.e. something which may be reasonably understood or interpreted as objectively at stake, but it still involves a range of issues; for instance, Pitkin argues that interests are distributed on a scale where, at one end, there are objective interests, which are in turn unattached interests and therefore not particularly linked to any group of people (e.g. world peace: it is an objective interest to be pursued, it is not a psychological state or a wish limited to a specific number of people, but, still, it cannot

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[60] Pitkin overlooks the fact that a representative – it may be argued – could be somehow morally or politically bound to his party as it may be seen as an association or even community whose members share not just the same political beliefs, but also life experience and background.

[61] Independent in the sense that he is and feels himself to be politically allowed to act freely in a number of cases, not in terms of political affiliation – in this section I am considering parties' candidates, indeed.

be measured in any particular person or group), and at the other end subjective and attached interests, which contain another element of ambiguity: there is no coincidence, Pitkin remarks, between someone's interests and wishes, indeed a voter or a group of people or a social class (and so on) may desire something that, when looked more carefully, may be revealed to be wrong or harmful to their *actual* (social, economic, civil etc.) interests. It may also happen that, in pursuing his constituency's interests, a representative may draw different conclusions from those of the large majority of his voters and a conflict arises. As Pitkin states (p. 165): "the basic question of the mandate-independence controversy is wrongly put. It poses a logically insoluble puzzle, a choice between two elements that are both involved in the concept of representation. In that case, it is not enough to choose between representative's judgement and the constituents' wishes; and there is no rational basis for choosing between them *tout court*. Representation as an idea implies they normally will coincide, and that when they fail to coincide there is a reason". As a consequence, such paradox is not to be solved, as it is inherent in the very nature of the concept of representation, and both the autonomy of voters and that of their representative is to be preserved in order to comply fully with all the different aspects that political representation actually involves.

V.II. MILL ON POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

In *CRG* there is a brief chapter in which Mill investigates whether pledges should be required from representatives. According to Mill, it is more a problem of morality rather than a legal or constitutional issue: indeed, even if a constitution allows an MP to act independently from his own pledges, there still could be a sort of moral obligation for any MP towards them - an obligation which could lead him to pursue and fulfil his electoral promises even though he is no longer sure they are the best decisions he could take.

Earlier in his life Mill had already dealt with the problems concerning political representation. A clear example of him touching upon this topic can be found in his 1835 review of Samuel Bailey's *Rationale of Political Representation* (CW XVIII, pp. 15-46). Here Mill seems to support a strong accountability view of the subject, as the rulers are supposed to be the best-cultivated people of the country, while the precise task of the voters would be judging of representatives' political conduct every three years. Mill at that time was still a supporter of the Radicals' reforms (such as the introduction of the secret ballot, the enlargement of the electoral franchises and the creation of a sort of class of professional politicians) and of their political philosophical assumptions

(mainly, that good government is possible whenever there is coincidence of interests between the rulers and the ruled). However, in this writing he displays his deep worry about the negative influence of an ignorant though publicly and politically engaged mass and he appears convinced that a representative government is, amongst the other things, a government of people's trustees and that elections are a reward/punishment mechanism put in place mainly as an incentive or disincentive for the rulers. Coherently, Mill dismisses the idea of making pledges, as a representative may well be convinced by new facts, at one point, to change his own point of view on a particular subject, and also because government, at this stage of Mill's philosophical evolution, is still the government of the few, although selected through suffrage. This is interesting because, many years later, chapter XII of *CRG* is dedicated to the specific topic of political pledges.

The question this chapter (*CRG*, CW XIX, pp. 504-519) addresses is made clear from the very beginning by his title: "*Ought Pledges to be Required from Members of Parliament?*". As already remarked previously, according to Mill this is not a problem strictly involving the constitution of a state or legal provisions, because even in the case of a law protecting the independent conduct of representatives, voters may anyway require compliance with their wishes if they are asked to confirm their vote in the following election. It is, in fact, a problem of political ethics. As a general principle and in accordance with the principle of competence, Mill argues that pledges are not required from representatives: the voters, indeed, should rather commit themselves to non-ordinary people, who, by virtue of their intellectual capacity and their previous experiences show a substantial degree of excellence and, therefore, are in a way better suited to take care of the interests of all public affairs. However, Mill introduces a couple of exceptions: first, this principle may perhaps be applied to an ideal system of representative government, but in an imperfect society (such as England in the XIX century, for example, where class interest and mass ignorance are still preponderant forces, according to Mill) voters would be morally entitled, for prudential reasons, to ask for guarantees from the candidates; secondly, at the elections there may be candidates with no previous experience in government or political representation, for which, in judging whether they are fit or not to have a seat in parliament, the only elements to be taken into consideration would be their previous activities (professional or generally non-political) and their words alone. In this case, a request of promises and pledges from these candidates may be acceptable. In any case, Mill remarks, voters may reasonably - from a political and moral point of view - choose between candidates closer to them in terms of fundamental firm beliefs; there are two reasons for this: the first

could be defined a realistic reason, i.e. it is very difficult to govern against the deepest beliefs of the electorate; the second reason concerns the fact that primary and essential political opinions are often complex, controversial and somewhat unsolvable. Furthermore, Mill reckons that a pure delegate view of representation implies a sort of self-annihilation of the voters (p. 510). This would be in contrast with the educative purposes of his democratic model and with his views on liberty.

It is interesting to note, therefore, that even though the fundamental principle, as in the review of Bailey's *Rationale of Political Representation*, remains that of competence, Mill leaves room for moral and political obligations of the representatives towards the represented, other than the simple and straightforward commitment to good government. I aim to explain how this is relevant in the analysis of Mill's political thought, through the screen of the dispute between the two views of political representation as a delegate or as trustee, and after discussing, in the next section, two interpretations of Mill on this subject: the first one standing within the theory of Pitkin, the second one going some way to overcome it by introducing the concept of advocacy.

V.III. KROUSE AND URBINATI ON MILL AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

In this section, I plan to give a critical account of two interpretations of Mill's theory. As already partially stated earlier, the first one, by Richard Krouse (1982) is relevant because it deals with Mill's detachment from the radical philosophers and considers Pitkin's theory expounded above. Urbinati's study on Mill, instead, tries to go somehow beyond the general theory of representation and the mandate/independence controversy and introduces the concept of representation as advocacy.

Krouse highlights the process and the changes through which Mill goes during the evolution of his political thought. Indeed, in the '30s Mill is quite close to his father's views on representative democracy, while later (namely in *CRG*) he shows an important difference with respect to the original Radical positions – and against his own earlier views. The core of Krouse's arguments lies in a basic difference existing between the classical Radical democratic theory and the late John Stuart Mill's position: while both stress the importance of the educated classes within a representative democracy, so that mass participation and extension of the electoral suffrage are subordinated to (and in a certain way protected by) a sort of intellectual leadership of the competent *élite*, in *CRG* John Stuart Mill introduces a further element, a main revision of his father's

conception of democracy, i.e. the educative role of representative government. It is interesting to notice an argument reported by Krouse and the analogy he draws from it: according to James Mill, Krouse claims, an enlightened despotism would be acceptable because his aim is a good government; the very abstract case of an almost perfect monarch or ruling class who would ignore his or their particular interests in order to pursue the general welfare while preserving people's liberty, instead, are refused by John Stuart Mill for the mere reason that such a political system would, anyway, totally neglect the educative and moral element of representative government, which, on the contrary, creates and fosters an active character. The analogy following from this argument directly regards Krouse's interpretation of Mill's ideas on political representation: indeed, a representative as a pure trustee may be seen as a benevolent dictator, who, still pursuing what he holds to be good for the society at large, does not involve the citizens within the political process, in this way preventing the development of people's civic virtues; Krouse argues that "Mill apparently seeks to reconcile a strong trustee concept of (national) representation with maximum mass participation in both national elections and local government" (p. 531), but a tension still exists, and John Stuart Mill is perfectly aware of this (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 508). In this view, *CRG* are an attempt or an exercise to reconcile a theory stressing the positive and beneficial consequences of mass participation with the potential abdication by the ordinary citizen to take any part in influencing the decisional process in the legislative body between one election and the other.

The second view I am taking into consideration is Nadia Urbinati's study on Mill and democracy (2002). Mill's democratic theory – she argues - is still relevant today because it involves several dynamic aspects of the political process, one of which is political representation. Mill's views on this topic cannot be framed within the classical distinction between the independence view and the mandate view in representation theory. Indeed, according to Urbinati's interpretation, Mill would go beyond such distinction and would be able to reconcile both general and particular interests in his description of how an MP should be morally and politically obligated to behave in parliament: he should be an intelligent and rational advocate of a cause, leaving aside the abstract general interest (still subject to forms of interpretation in any case) or partisanship. As a consequence, the deliberative process of the legislative body should be a rational and informed debate in which the advocates of each cause should be ready to change their mind if their cause is proven wrong, to be in a disposition of intellectual research of truths – truths which are absolute but still subject to different, and maybe

partial, interpretations, and object of investigation possibly leading to their recognition, classification and identification.

Urbinati's interpretation of Mill, therefore, shows that representation seemingly is not a way to make present what is absent as in Pitkin's classical definition. Representation involves a call for any MP to defend a cause or a demand from citizens, and support it within the legislative body if he is convinced that such cause would promote general welfare throughout society. This means that Mill would not support a view of the representative as a delegate, because the support given by the MP to constituents' will is dependent on considerations regarding the general interest of society, reason and justice. However, although the representative is bound to the pursuit of the nation's welfare rather than of particular interests, the realistic acknowledgement of division of society in different social classes[62] and of public opinion in different political, religious or philosophical groups means that the parliament should be similar to a democratic arena where different points of view are present, and they antagonistically, although rationally, challenge each other.

V.IV. MILL'S THEORY OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN THE LIGHT OF A GENERAL THEORY OF REPRESENTATION

As this assessment of John Stuart Mill on representation stems from Pitkin's description of the mandate/independence controversy, it may be interesting, at first, to remark what she affirms about Mill's political theory. She includes Mill in a category of thinkers supporting what she calls descriptive representation, i.e. "the making present of something absent by resemblance of reflection, as in a mirror or in art" (Pitkin, 1971 (1967), p. 11). Actually she points out that Mill does not use such metaphor, in fact making clear that Mill talks about the representative body as an arena (p. 63). As regards representatives' role, she makes clear that, according to both Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, the legislator does not possess an obviously superior knowledge: the point is that the more the MP's intellectual or moral superiority is doubtful, the more others' opinions become valuable. Of course, educated and informed opinions still exist in

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[62] Urbinati remarks that this does not imply a form of corporatism in Mill's philosophy.

society[63], but Pitkin stresses the theoretical detachment from strong or extreme elitist theories according to which people's opinions are misguided by their interests and representatives should ignore them. Furthermore, Mill thinks – Pitkin argues - that even if a majority of elected representatives would be steered by selfish or class interests (and these interests would conflict and, perhaps, somehow cancel each other in terms of their possible dominant or relevant influence on government decisions), there is a minority of people guided by the will to pursue general interests.

Indeed, representation in Mill is linked to his defence of the deliberative function of parliament, a place of discussion among the various MPs (or groups of MPs) carrying and supporting different opinions. Representation of opinions is extremely important for Mill - and for Bentham as well - firstly because it may well be that the representatives know better what their voters' interest is, and secondly because it may be that a voter or some voters may have a well-educated or informed opinion on one or more specific political issues. This follows from the fact that there is such thing as an objective interest[64]: every citizen can judge the consequences of government actively, precisely because these consequences fall on him, although his knowledge in advance of what his representative precisely ought to do is very doubtful. Representation makes possible for everyone to have his part in government to the extent he can judge government's choices; furthermore it also pushes the MPs to look at their voters' interests because of the need to seek election (or re-election).

If compared to Edmund Burke – Pitkin affirms - in Mill the belief that any individual knows his own interest better than anyone seems to fade and vanish[65], as it cannot be known with absolute certainty, hence the need for a debating parliament, for

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[63] I.e. some people are more informed, more educated, more cultivated than others.

[64] See above in section V.I for a description of what Pitkin intends for objective interest.

[65] Yet this is what Mill appears to contend in *On Liberty*, even if, perhaps, with some caveats (see, for instance, the higher pleasures theory). At least – I would rather remark – in the political field Mill recognises the need for voters to choose candidates of some mental superiority. Furthermore, Mill is afraid that some portions of society may use their right to vote in order to pursue their class interest.

representation of different views and for the deliberative function of the legislature (pp. 202-206). The importance of parliament, and, therefore, its activity lie in the discussion, in the comparison of opinions and in the control of the executive (pp. 63-64).

As representation is the object of the investigation of this chapter, it should also be clear what the context is, i.e. what a representative body should be according to Mill. In his political model, the deliberative role of the parliament is mainly concerned with discussion of bills rather than their drafting, the representatives' task after their election is to join parliamentary as well as public discussion on the possible approval of bills written by bureaucrats and experts and on which the MPs could just vote for or against or give general instructions or guidelines to the legislative committees drafting the bills (*CRG*, CW XIX, pp. 422-434). So, the mandate/independence controversy in Mill's political philosophy is somehow partially defused – not totally anyway, as there still are some aspects regarding the problem whether a representative should follow his voters' wishes and indications or not. It is true and correct to remember that the specific role of a member of the legislative body is not to make decisions but rather to produce discussions and activities to some extent persuasive. The value of democratic decisions, i.e., is in the fact of being the outcome of an activity of persuasion and conciliation of different positions as a result of a discussion (Manin, 1996, pp. 234-245). As regards MPs' role in the assembly, it has been stated and assessed that Mill's democracy is a form of deliberative democracy which tries to balance the ideas of representative both as a delegate and as a trustee: Urbinati's interpretation of Mill's democracy as a modern version of the Athenian *agora* makes clear the fact that Mill dismisses the idea of the parliament as a mirror of society (indeed, being a means towards progress, i.e. the future, cannot at the same time be a sort of certification of the current situation) and he tries to transcend the usual distinction made in the mandate/independence controversy; according to Urbinati, the role of advocacy, rhetoric and the necessity of a Socratic debate in the legislative assembly are clear and important features in Mill's view of representation (Urbinati, 2008, pp. 76-122; Urbinati and Warren 2008, pp. 391-395). Urbinati is right when she points out Mill's opposition to the MP as a delegate[66], but it would maybe be worthwhile to stress the fact that her views of Mill as transcending the

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[66] Mill is very clear on this: even under the most favourable voting system «the delegation theory of representation seems to me false, and its practical operation hurtful, though the mischief would in that case be confined within certain bounds» (*CRG*, CW XIX, 511).

classical opposition in political theory between mandate and independence may seem to be quite more similar to a balance of opposite views or, somehow, to placing John Stuart Mill in the middle of a scale, or a line, on whose top one finds independence and at the bottom a very simple and blunt view of political representation as deference. It is true that this is described as a sort of regulative view, therefore it is not realistically binding, but even in such ideal form of a political deliberative arena that the parliament should be – and in which representatives are the main characters acting according to the spirit of Socratic discussion and rational deliberation – there must be a time at which the MP must take a decision, raise his hand, push a button (in modern times) or state his agreement or disagreement over a bill and not just a cause he has been advocating – and disagreements after such a perfectly rational and intellectually honest discussion there will always be in such an agonistic model of deliberative democracy (Urbinati, 2008, pp. 82-85). Since the moment of the political decision is the core of the mandate/independence controversy, and disagreement between the representatives and, plausibly, between them and their voters will always exist, transcending such controversy can hardly mean that it is put aside – it still arises.

I would moreover not underestimate Mill's philosophy of history, i.e. the claim that over the different stages of humanity there may be the need for a sort of political guardianship over the people. In other words, without any attempt to claim or assess whether Mill is historicist or not, it should be considered that while development and progress take place in mankind, their political institutions change and improve as well. In *CRG* Mill makes clear that, in some stages of their history, some countries may not meet the conditions for a civilised and representative government, because of the lack of individual emancipation and insufficient cultural and social progress (*CRG*, CW XIX, pp. 376-378). On the other side, Mill does not lack realism, indeed transcending (or balancing or re-elaborating, I would rather say) the political dispute I am talking about is just part of a regulative model: this means that, unless we live in a perfect society (and this is impossible for obvious reasons – this is not a perfect world), we are always one step behind Urbinati's model in which the mandate/independence controversy is, although agonistically re-interpreted, solved and decided, i.e. one step behind a model assuming enough rationality, enough emancipation, enough individual liberty and enough education to give life to a legislative institution where each representative could easily act, at the same time, both as a delegate and a trustee.

However, at this point one objection may reasonably arise: we could just need to fulfil sufficient conditions to set a functioning representative democracy, rather than a

perfect one. So it would be a matter of realism which should lead us to read Mill's philosophy as an attempt to conciliate the two different poles of the concept of representation, with a very slight shift towards independence.

Although considerations on the opposite views on representation are "so intimately interwoven with one another" (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 507), Mill stills supports the principle of competence as the main and basic criterion by which the whole process of representation should abide, but the different relevance of the political issues at stake can be traced during such process, as Mill acknowledges when he says: "There are some differences, however, which they (voters) cannot be expected to overlook" (*CRG*, CW XIX, p. 510). In other words, I would categorise these differences in three different groups, each of them influencing in its own way how representation should take place:

- very general and fundamental political beliefs and ideas: these are convictions to which voters or a part of them attach a great importance, for which they think there is no room for compromise, or which are largely rooted in an appreciable portion of people;
- ordinary political ideas or opinions;
- specific or highly technical or very particular political issues.

What does "ordinary" mean in this context? I would define it by exclusion: it may be everything not general/fundamental or technical enough to be included in any other category. So, an ordinary political belief is neither one of those of fundamental ideas characterizing the course of political life and a number of decisions, nor one of those issues requiring high expertise, but rather a range of issues situated, without surely any sharp distinction and with some grey areas, in the middle zone between the two groups I have described. A further hint on this is given by Mill himself, when, for example, he advocates not just international law as part of liberal and academic education, but also popular scrutiny on foreign policy (*Inaugural Address Delivered to the University of St. Andrews*, CW XXI¸ pp. 246-247). Indeed, Mill says: "He is not a good man who, without a protest, allows wrong to be committed in his name, and with the means which he helps to supply, because he will not trouble himself to use his mind on the subject. It depends on the habit of attending to and looking into public transactions, and on the degree of information and solid judgment respecting them that exists in the community, whether the conduct of the nation as a nation, both within itself and towards others, shall be selfish, corrupt, and tyrannical, or rational and enlightened, just and noble" (p. 247). As Varouxakis (2002, pp. 126-127) remarks, there is a demanding conception of citizens'

obligations here, because "it is a gross dereliction of duty if citizens fail to scrutinize their country's foreign policy and international comportment using as an excuse that international law is too complicated to understand" (p. 127). In this case, complexity is bypassed by the fact that we are dealing with a fundamental matter of politics and that there is a need for citizens to influence rulers because of the importance of their country's standing in the world. In other cases, instead, the higher is the degree of complexity or need for expertise, the greater is the influence of the principle of competence (still the basic criterion on which Mill's theory of representation is based) while assessing whether a representative should act as a trustee or as a delegate. It may well be – Mill affirms - that Liberal voters choose a very brilliant Tory candidate, or that Evangelicals may choose a Rationalist for his deep knowledge of Church questions (*CRG*, CW XIX, pp. 506-507)[67], but the general and popular beliefs of society should always be taken into account. In no case, however, representatives should act to benefit only one class or there should be a sort of exclusive rule by a faction.

In the third category of political issues, instead, Mill supports a sort of extreme independence view: actually, the representatives are not to draft bills in detail - as, cultivated and highly competent as they may well be, an even more profound and professional knowledge of all the relevant issues and details regarding specific changes in legal provisions and their possible consequences is needed – but they must just discuss and sketch the principles and the main criteria new legal provisions should fulfil, amend the proposals of the legislative committees of experts, and, at the end of the process, reject or accept the bill. It is hard to see how – in Mill's theory - at this level of complexity of political decisions there is room to act as a delegate. Yes, it may be argued that a representative may explain to his constituents all the details of a bill, what inspired it and ask for a public debate among his voters, but, still, how can all the small

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[67] Perhaps, voters' religion (in the sense of political and moral values implied by one's creed, not in the sense of support to or from people of the same church) has to be included in the group of beliefs which do not allow a large degree of independence for MPs too, alongside foreign policy.

relevant details be consciously assessed? There is no way, and at least in Mill's political philosophy such a public debate involving any single issue is not expected[68].

The first category, instead, may be the object of further investigation: the importance of popularity of basic political opinions and belief may lead us to consider how electoral approval may be relevant in assessing political representation in Mill's philosophy. If we look at Mill's political activity (1865-1868), he seems to point out that he somehow prefers to not feel himself necessarily bound to his voters' wishes. The episode of his meeting (*Autobiography*, CW I, pp. 274-275) attended by members of the working class and his defence of the opinions he stated in *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform* – the working classes are "mostly habitual liars" even though generally ashamed of lying (*Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform*, CW XIX, p. 338) – gave him some praise from those very workers attending the event. Along with the unpopularity of his positions on Ireland and his method of proposing extreme solutions in order to achieve a moderate success (*Autobiography*, CW I, p. 280) – unless we want to scale this to mere political and parliamentary tactics, which could well be – and with his initial refusal to canvass during the 1865 electoral campaign, these are practical examples of his attitude towards his constituents. In other words, far from being paternalistic, we can accept a view of Mill's theory of representation as a whole as leaning, in a mitigated way, towards the pole of independence, as this seems to be fairly consistent with his activity in Westminster and during 1865 and 1868 electoral campaigns.

There is still room for considerations on the importance of popular vote. Roughly, we may try and use it as the cornerstone of an attempt seeking to reconcile the two versions

[68] Of course, Mill would normally consider acceptable and beneficial for all a public debate (on every subject of knowledge, I would remark), but here I am assessing representation theory and the deliberative and decision process it involves, a particular field of political theory – or philosophy – to which Mill dedicates particular attention. "*Ought Pledges to be Required from Members of Parliament*?" – in principle and apart from exceptions, Mill's answer to such question is: no. This does not cover all the issues related to the theories on representation theory but, as I am trying to show, it certainly means that there must be a distance, a beneficial detachment between an MP and his constituents which cannot simply be 'transcended' as in the advocacy interpretation of Mill.

of the MP as trustee and delegate. From Mill's theory we may draw a justification for a system based on an inverse proportion between the election results and the level of deference towards his constituents that a representative is morally obliged to show and to put in practice: where there is an electoral win by a large margin or a vast popular consent, they are acquired along with a high degree of independence for the law-makers; instead, in the cases of an election victory by a very short margin or an unpopular, although reasonable, opinions, a representative morally needs a greater adherence to the will of his constituents – unless he has a high degree of confidence in his own opinion on a particular issue[69].

However – coming back to Mill's philosophy – such a solution would imply an excessive automatism and, furthermore, it requires a more elaborate version when applied to the voting system Mill has in mind. Indeed, Mill supports Thomas Hare's proportional system, a way to ensure parliamentary representation to minorities, to provide people with a seat in parliament because of their moral and intellectual merits (in a first-past-the-post system they would unlikely be elected). I have already discussed in chapter IV the electoral reform proposed by Hare and adopted by Mill. The intentions and the effects of this proposal are what interest us. As I have already remarked earlier, Hare's point of view – misunderstood by Mill – is a conservative (in the general meaning of the word) one in some ways, since the purpose of the introduction of proportional allocation of seats is the reduction of the influence of the working class, while Mill wants, instead, to protect the representation of the minorities, including the working class itself, but also that of the *élites*, as a means for the development of democratic institutions (see Kern, 1972). In other words, the proportional system is a way to give to unpopular – but deserving – people a seat from a minority position. These are the same people who, in addition to exercising control activities and protecting the rights of minorities, would have a duty to act a non-partisan and open-minded role in fuelling the political debate; they have to transform the parliament into a Socratic arena. However, it may well be that a majority of voters would be less progressive than an educated minority. In such a case, the effects of democracy and of proportional representation would be conservative effects. However, other progressive effects would still be in place: the educative element of political participation would have an effect on

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[69] See, as an example, Alexander Guerrero's manifest normative mandate, from which I took inspiration (Guerrero, 2010, pp. 275-277).

voters, according to Mill. Participation is good because people involved in political life along with an educated minority will, over time, receive beneficial effects in terms of civic spirit and active character. As remarked earlier, this is not one of the intentions that Hare has in his mind while designing his plan for electoral reform.

One might object that it may not be the case to use Alexander Guerrero's account on representation I have introduced earlier in order to assess Mill' ideas: indeed, while Guerrero focuses on a first-past-the-post electoral system, Mill appreciates and supports a proportional electoral system, in particular, Thomas Hare's seat allocation method. However, an elaborated and revised version of such account may still be of some use. Furthermore, I am using Guerrero's perspective because it implies a relevant concept in my attempt to critically assess Mill's political philosophy on representation, i.e. guardianship[70], and also for some of its implications: when the idea of popularity is used in such field, it leads to some paradoxical consequences. When we introduce the element of popularity, we should carefully consider it in a double sense: popularity of beliefs and causes as well as popularity of representatives because of the manifold aspects of representation, which cannot be narrowed to just one of them. We have already seen, in the first case, that in Mill's *CRG* deference towards voters' wishes is to be relatively increased (as a general rule; exceptions are still allowed) in proportion to their popularity and universality. However, if, in order to consider all the features implied in representation, we may assume that an MP may be more morally justified in acting as a trustee if he is largely popular amongst the voters and, vice versa, he would feel bound to his voters' wishes if his popularity were low – but this is contrasting with Mill's theory, as it actually aims to accrue the political influence of an elevated minority. In other, words, I am trying to argue that there is a slight difference between the degree of deference Mill allows regarding general political beliefs and the one concerning the way a representative should act. The practical consequences are quite relevant: an MP should pay more attention to widespread opinions (even if those who voted for him or support him do not share them) than those of his actual voters. On the other side, a representative voted by a narrow majority or even by just a plurality or a minority (in proportional representation) would find himself facing a tension between general and his voters' opinions – he should choose whether to act against popular beliefs (unwise

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[70] Or, in other words, paternalism.

and unrealistic according to Mill) or against the minority he should represent (in such case, the element of representation of intellectual *élites* would be lost). Though restricted to the field of general firm beliefs, this application of the principle of competence towards these aspects of representation may seem a bit inconsistent with Mill's declared purposes on the subject, unless we re-introduce a stronger version of the principle of competence, already present elsewhere in Mill's writings.

As regards parties' representation, one might question whether Mill is unrealistic on political parties' involvement in the electoral campaign. Actually, he recognises that "(i)n general, half a dozen local leaders, who may be honest politicians, but who may be jobbing intriguers, select the candidate" (CW XXVIII, p. 178) according to his opinions (which should not diverge from his party's views), his political career and his wealth. Furthermore, it seems that being a good representative of the party the citizens voted for (or of which, in any case, voters know the representative shares most of his ideas) does not mean *ipso facto* being a good representative, even for those MPs who are the expression of the majority will: "But the local majorities are they truly represented? In a certain rough way they are. They have a member or members who are on the same side with themselves in party politics; if they are Conservatives, they have a professed Conservative; if Liberals, a professed Liberal. This is something; it is a great deal, even; but is it everything? Is it of no consequence to an elector who it is that sits in Parliament as his representative, if only he does not sit on the wrong side of the House? Sir, we need more than this. We all desire not only that there should be a sufficient number of Conservatives or of Liberals in the House, but that these should, as far as possible, be the best men of their respective parties; and the elector, for himself, desires to be represented by the man who has most of his confidence in all things, and not merely on the single point of fidelity to a party" (CW XXVIII, p. 178).

Obviously, these remarks are strongly connected to Mill's opinion that the English voting system encouraged local representation at the expenses of expertise, knowledge and even a fair electoral competition based on these principles: indeed, a good candidate, highly regarded nationwide, would find it very difficult to seek election in a constituency where the main opponents are supposed to support the interests of local communities - actually they might not even have a chance to seek election, as the selection of candidates is carried on under different criteria than that of competence. Mill does not underestimate the value of local and party representation: he argues that good local candidates could easily win elections, and candidates strongly connected to the Tories or the Liberals as well. Indeed, he states that the effects of proportional

representation applied throughout the whole nation would increase the quality of such candidates, because voters would have a much wider choice, and he stresses the need for representation of minorities or of a third – different – position apart from the main political groups; this has to be secured via an electoral reform, of course, but also with a rational and critical attitude in parliament: there always is room for a further position needed to be represented in parliament apart from Conservatives, Liberals, Radicals or whatsoever. So, these remarks on the parliament as a whole may give a further clue about how every single MP should behave according to Mill. First, he should keep his intellectual and political independence from his party: even though one could rightfully and earnestly be a member of - say – the Conservative party, he should preserve his autonomy during his parliamentary activity – and this is even truer for those MPs elected by a minority of voters. Second: political credibility about local issues should not overcome general and national interests: again, Mill does not have a totally negative opinion about a locally-oriented vote, but we cannot ignore that his electoral proposal suggests the need for candidates able to keep their credibility high both locally and nationally. In other terms, representatives are not to have a strong deference towards their territorial community[71].

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[71] I have been tempted to use the word 'constituency' here. Actually, in some countries constituencies occupy a very large territory, and, in some cases, there is only one national constituency. I want to point out the fact that Mill wants an electoral system able to give some decent hope to win a seat also to candidates without any strong or relevant local connections or acquaintances, but widely recognised as eminent, skilled or honourable people able to pursue the nation's interest.

In this chapter I illustrate two lines (individuality and happiness; European federalism) along which some issues for further investigation on John Stuart Mill's political philosophy may arise in today's world. There are already examples of scholars, by the way, who have investigated further implications and development of Mill's political ideas, or at least their relevance nowadays. For instance, whether Mill's political thought may still be of our interest today or not has been analysed in a work already mentioned beforehand, John Skorupski's *Why read Mill today?* (Skorupski, 2006), a book in which he addresses the question why we should read and take Mill into account in our own age. In this work, Skorupski points out that with the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe, the convulsions of Islam, the emergence of questions about our post-modern age, methodological and disciplinary tools such as history in a Millian fashion (but more moderately, perhaps) may come useful again (pp. 74-75). Skorupski also stresses the relevance of the fact that Mill's democratic proposals aim to create a representative individual, not a mere delegate of a particular social group, but rather an independent member of a democratic *polis* and a conscious part of the institutional structures that are specially designed for this type of exercise of political practice (p. 91). Furthermore, the rise of unbelief, i.e. the fact that belief in God is challenged and that every belief in general fell victim of scientific rationality and of technological advancements, and, at the same time, the theories regarding natural and internal pulses influencing our moral character (typically, in Romantic thought), are other characteristics which identified the context in which Mill elaborated his philosophical system and whose traces we may find even in his highly rational thought. Most important, is the fact that

> Whereas much nineteenth-century liberalism linked political and civic freedom to an objective ideal of human self-realisation, much twentieth century liberalism sought to unlink it. (Skorupski, 2006, p. 103)

So, coming to Skorupski's conclusions, which – we should not forget – try to answer the question *Why read Mill today?* (as in his book's title), and also "What works?" and "What inspires?" (p. 106), one may probably agree on the fact that "(t)he accent on responsible citizenship is vitally important" and that the political guidelines settled by Mill, although not safe from controversies and criticism, are "informed by intelligent and reliable supporting argument" (p. 106). When it comes to the ethical view concerning Mill's version of liberalism, Skorupski maintains that there is a case for its defence, although

it may somehow be accused of: a) lack of realism with regard to human potential; b) of trust in an objective hierarchy of human values which actually is not there; c) of an ideal which, at the end of the day, just stresses self-assertion and being 'different' (pp. 106-107), as

> Mill's focus on *human* goods - happiness, spontaneity, independence - is civilised and attainable in the world as it is. It does not sacralise suffering or treat enjoyment with suspicion. It is not posited on some wishful thinking that is impossible to discuss. Unlike unattainably over-blown self-images, or still worse, the violent and totalitarian utopian visions that people so depressingly sell out to, it flows not from moral weakness but from moral strength. (p. 107)

However, it might be that the world as it is presents different circumstances on things such as human nature, inter-individual relations and pleasure, what people maintain pleasures are, and the means – political, social, economic, professional means – they possess in order to achieve them. So what is the place for rational forces in this changed and changing world?

Much has been said insofar about Mill's democratic theory, and conclusions have been drawn in terms of political ethics, the role of the politician, of the citizen and of the intellectual, and their moral obligations in participating in a system which, at the very end, would promote general happiness. Of course, from a general Millian point of view, utilitarian moral rules apply to every citizen more or less in the same way; however, in section IV.VI. I tried to identify stricter and more precise rules to be followed: reason is seen as a sort of influence multiplier, therefore rational agents should feel the need, or at least a sort of obligation, for participation. However, there might be a major challenge for the theory[72] I have expounded on: it is based on a constitutional system and on a

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[72] Actually, I would not call it a theory, as it mostly relies on Millian elements and, then, tries to draw a few conclusions on what the correct political behaviour is for different categories of individuals – politicians and the most rational and well-educated among the voters.

view of social and inter-individual relations of a XIX century man – although a man of rare intellect such as John Stuart Mill.

Mill's work on representative government was already in theoretical contrast with other liberal views on democracy in the age of its rise (e.g. compared to Benjamin Constant). Moreover, there are points to be stressed if we have to challenge or strengthen[73] the hypothesis of a Millian way to handle democracy in the XXI century. Even considering Mill as a late-modern thinker (Skorupski, 2006, p. 93), the social structures and technological innovations characterising his age constitute elements of substantial and radical difference in comparison to today's society. Skorupski also compares Mill to Hegel and Marx: he is a much stronger supporter of individual liberty than the two German philosophers, and when Mill thinks of concrete forms of communism, he is worried about the troubles which may come for individual freedom. Some socialist solutions to capitalist contradictions are a non-liberal or anti-liberal alternative to Mill's political proposal. However, Mill's support for some forms of socialism is well known. For instance, in his *Autobiography*, he writes, with reference to himself and to Harriet Taylor as well: "I was a democrat, but not the least of a Socialist", and then he adds that "our ideal of ultimate improvement went far beyond Democracy, and would class us decidedly under the general designation of Socialists" while repudiating, at the same time, «that tyranny of society over the individual which most Socialistic systems are supposed to involve» (*Autobiography*, CW I, p. 239). Indeed, as already cited earlier in this work, one of the two substantial changes of opinion to which Mill makes reference in the *Autobiography* regards a form of qualified Socialism as concerns the ultimate prospects of mankind, being the other the shift in his appreciation and formulation of a model of representative democracy. Depicting a non-socialist or anti-socialist Mill would just fly in the face of Mill's assertions on himself, but also on a number of social and economic proposals he made during his lifetime. Indeed, qualified Socialist tendencies accompany a qualified and elaborated model of democracy in Mill.

What has just been said about extreme socialist illiberal solutions, can be also affirmed about extreme majoritarian illiberal forms of democracy: Mill – the democratic John Stuart Mill – fears them as they may hinder and endanger individual freedom and development. Skorupski shows us a great philosopher who develops a civic ideal and

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[73] Or challenge *and* strengthen.

answers basic moral and political philosophical questions, i.e. how to live and how to live together. In a comparison between Marx and Mill, for instance, we would be considering two different ways of analysing and interpreting society in an age in which – using a Marxist description – the capitalist bourgeoisie, which has been able to emancipate itself from the feudal yoke, immediately afterwards has halted the process of emancipation just before the final step, which is Socialism.

One may wonder how, while appraising the importance of reading Mill today, we should focus on social and political philosophies 'targeted' for XIX century industrial societies, where classes and nations are at play, and the individual must defend himself from forms of aggregation. What if the individual – the Millian individual – has to defend himself from forces of social dissolution, disaggregation and isolation rather than from processes of forced illiberal oppression, be it in the form of hard socialism, mediocre majoritarian rule or of irrational nationalism?

VI.I. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE: WHEN HAPPINESS DEPARTS FROM FREEDOM

As said earlier, this section focuses on whether and how Mill's political philosophy could still be somehow used today in order to address contemporary political issues. Are we sure that Millian philosophy has still contemporary value? What if some of the foundations of Mill's political thought have become deeply flawed after the social and economic transformations occurred during the last one hundred and fifty years? Secondly, I will address a specific issue, that is that of European federalism: would Millian philosophy support or oppose the existence of common European institutions and an European federal project?

The first question arises if one considers the strong connection between liberty, happiness and political institutions in Mill's philosophy. One of the aims of a democratic government is to preserve and to enhance liberty – in the previous pages we have seen how this works, and how this is linked with the utilitarian goal of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. However, what if, under different social and economic conditions, liberty is no longer the privileged means through which achieve happiness? Would a political system protecting liberty receive a blow from such a change in the structures of society?

The idea on which Mill's thought lies is that happiness follows from liberty: individuals can freely express themselves in society and adopt different lifestyles, and this leads, eventually, to self-improvement, to achievements in the search for truth (or truths), and to the acknowledgement of higher pleasures – a progressive process of education in which political participation, as we have seen earlier in this thesis, has an important role. However, this philosophical and political construction may lose its validity if this connection between liberty and happiness would become invalid, in the sense that the latter would no longer be able to follow from freedom but, actually, be somehow in contrast with it. Social, economic, technological and political changes may have, indeed, somehow made freedom a condition for uncontrolled frenzy, social isolation, economic exploitation, rather than a means for personal satisfaction. In assessing Mill's political theory in contemporary society or, at least, in a general and ideal type of what contemporary society in economically and technologically advanced countries may be or may turn out realistically to be, would Mill's theory resist not only a reality check, but also the theoretical check of the main concepts from which his theories on politics and society stem?

We may consider, for the sake of the argument, a contemporary theoretical and sociological elaboration (Zygmunt Bauman's theory of 'liquidity') suggesting, amongst the other things, that, nowadays, the wide range of opportunities offered to each individual leads to the unintended consequence of a perennial state of lack of satisfaction, of substantial unhappiness[74]. Bauman 2000 (2012) provides a description

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[74] What is liquidity? Liquidity is metaphorical liquefaction of what is solid; it is a typically modern concept, a typically modern activity of change and elimination of old social and political incrustations, of the old regime, of old solids, to replace them with new and better 'solids' (Bauman, 2000 (2012), pp. 1-3). An example of this process is the abolition of the old feudal privileges in revolutionary France, and, later, the whole process of dissolution of the estates, of institutional and political systems, of moral chains, of established beliefs, etc. which could have potentially limited individual freedom (p. 5). What was, at least in the intentions of its supporters, a process of emancipation, revealed itself to be a reallocation of loose powers waiting for a new solid arrangement (pp. 6-7), and as individuals had pulled themselves out (or had been pulled out) by the order and by the conventions and rules of the estates, they found themselves in new social-political groups, for example in social

of the social transformation regarding emancipation, individuality, time and space, work, and community. In each of these fields of human existence, liquidity is manifested in many forms; in general, liquidity or fluidity are used as "fitting metaphors when we wish to grasp the nature of the present, in many ways *novel*, phase in the history of modernity" (p. 2). Bauman's description of a socially disintegrating modern society entails a substantial dissolution of individual's ability to affect economic, social and political structure; the subsequent damage to the ability to build and preserve a network of individual and social connections gives way to new tools of power and to new forms of fragility of the individual (p. 14). The place of each person in society becomes volatile, tasks are ever-changing and, possibly, increasingly demanding, capitals flow freely and power – including political power – is no longer bound to a single, territorial entity, and, finally, we are facing "melting powers" (p. 6). Although the claim that "power has become truly *extraterritorial*" (p. 11) might be open to debate, some events in recent years may surely lead to infer that power has somehow become, at least partly, *supranational* or *international.*

John Stuart Mill's world, instead, was a world of nation-states, of imperial powers and of colonies and possessions. The parliament in London had effective power over all Britain and all the British possessions. Political powers today are scattered across different political institutions, all interrelated with each other and binding other states, governments and parliaments settled in a different territory; this may lead us to question how effective Mill's political proposal may be in today's world. It is a problem of efficacy, at first, and, secondly, it is a problem of representation. More in general, it is about making political institutions serve their purpose: progress and improvement.

Today, Bauman writes, the individual acts and lives in this global and liquid totality in which global codes, rules and patterns are dissolving into a whole with which to compare and to which possibly comply. What is lacking is the process of solidification, i.e., when these patterns and codes of conduct are in liquefaction, they do not re-convert

classes, with all that this implies in terms of political significance, living conditions, social rules and choices, inter-individual relationships to which comply (or with respect to which to choose to comply or not) and so on. The liquidity of our era brings us, rather, to lose sight of these social as well as existential references, and puts us in the frame of a global totality that we face solely as individuals (p.7).

themselves in solid form as it was in intent and as it has happened in the past, and they rather keep the "fluid" form, which requires careful and constant vigilance. As for the human condition, the process of re-stabilization of the fluid is not taking place, and actually another, different process occurs, bringing about disintegration of social networks, and collective action becomes less and less powerful because the level of commitment to civic, social, political, public causes is reduced. The relations between the individual and the whole get very fluid from social, economic, political points of view. All this leads to social disintegration, which is not only a state, but it is also a new technique of power: escaping from the political arena and from engagement in tackling social problems is also a way to defend oneself.

Such interpretation of the current world may be, of course, an object of discussion and criticism. It may even be discarded or deemed implausible. However, this description of modernity may come useful in assessing the possible relevance of Mill's political ideas, or at least to suggest further areas of investigation, in order to provide a place of testing for some philosophical and political ideas. It is like having a stage on which our actors (i.e. the aforementioned philosophical and political ideas) try to find their place, have a casting and prove themselves worth for a specific play. So, as this section also aims to provide some suggestions for further research, I would say there are two ways to approach this attempt: a more critical way, in which we criticise a sociological description of reality which do not exactly fit our philosophical and political purposes, or another one, in which we *assume* the context and then exercise and corroborate our theories. In this context of 'dissolving' forms and of new social norms or standards, we can try to figure out how to adapt the tools of Millian democracy, because this kind of world (or at least: this kind of analysis of the world today) touches concepts such as emancipation and individual liberty, and we know that, for example, the development of the individual is an important element in Mill's moral, social, and political thought, and that, for example, Mill advocates "emancipation" from unnecessary custom (*On Liberty*, CW XVIII, p. 272). Furthermore, *supra* in this thesis the importance of the intellectual as a catalyst of rational factors in a representative democracy is pointed out, but if we have a much more liquid society, in which social networks are getting shabby and irrational forces appear stronger, we must address the issue regarding how the intellectual in parliament, in politics, in society can intervene.

Here the intention is to show possible open issues, and a reflection may stem from this, in terms of individuality and of its development in a possible contemporary form of Millian democracy, challenging the liquid status of modernity and contrasting non-

liberal tendencies: while in Mill's political and philosophical thought there is a sort of linear connection between liberty and happiness (thanks to liberty, we may reach pleasure, according to the utilitarian principles), in the world described by Bauman, instead, this connection fails to exist, and, actually, one can have either liberty or satisfaction of a specific pleasure. This is a world, Bauman writes, where the pursuit of pleasure and happiness is deeply endangered, both in his moral and individual aspects (which I consider here in the way they are described in Mill's *On Liberty*), and at a social and political level: if the link between freedom and happiness is eliminated, we get rid of a constitutive element of the Millian political system as well as of the related set of moral values. This is problematic at the very least.

In Mill's political proposal there are (or there should be, at least) people that, thanks to reason and to rational and informed debate in society and parliament, elevate the level of discussion and have a role of catalysis of rational elements. Among the other things, Mill's political system aims to multiply these people's influence. A Millian intellectual living in a liquid society must act within social and political structures that have been put in danger by virtue of that pursuit of happiness whose unity, linearity and causality with respect to liberty might be missing in today's context. If happiness no longer follows freedom, there certainly is a problem for any Millian intellectual. This is clear when we read Bauman on what he calls the "mixed blessings" of freedom [75] .: emancipation may be a good thing or a harm, a curse. Why does he say so? Are ordinary people prepared to operate with their own freedoom? Bauman states that relying on one's own resources also means relying on one's own decisions, and then indecision,

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[75] From now on, some space will be dedicated to the description of Bauman's concept of liquidity. The reader may interrogate himself on why such a long descriptive part has been included here, and this note tries to explain this, even if it may even sound as a sort of *excusatio non petita*. The point is that Bauman's sociological work is so distant and different from the rest of the material used in this thesis (methodologically, by subject and, with respect to part of the bibliography, even chronologically) that I am under the feeling that the reader, perhaps, may not be entirely acquainted with it. As Bauman's sociological views are useful, in relation to this thesis' purposes, for a number of reasons (it provides a context, a stage, for testing Millian theory; it is relevant as it provides insightful reflections on the links between liberty and happiness), perhaps a short descriptive section may not totally be out of place.

the weight of making decisions, the following torment, the fear of risk and the possible following failure may come, without even the possibility of appeal in some cases - and this is a problematic aspect of freedom. On the other hand, *routine* tasks can be a force contrasting with the process of liberation – but, actually, they may also provide a protective sense or role if compared to the bewilderment that emancipation can bring about. If we imagine a life made of constant decisions without *routine*, Bauman says, we see that it is a life, a way of life that lacks the time to reflect on actions and decisions, and *routine* reveals itself to be a protective element with respect to sudden impulsive decisions and to the continuous rush in this kind of society. In other words, what occurs here is "the collapse of long-term thinking, planning and acting, and the disappearance or weakening of social structures" which "leads to a splicing of both political history and individual lives into a series of short-term projects and episodes which are in principle infinite, and do not combine into the kinds of sequences to which concepts like 'development', 'maturation', 'career' or 'progress' (all suggesting a preordained order of succession) could be meaningfully applied" (Bauman, 2007, p. 3). Moreover, contemporary Western society has generally given hospitality to, and sometimes even promoted, criticism and freedom of expression, but it has also accommodated critical thinking and subsequent actions, immunizing potential consequences with respect to social and political decision-making processes and their effects (Bauman, 2000 (2012), p. 23).

Modern world has no power centres that restrict individual freedom and exercise capillary control on social relations, Bauman affirms. What we have is a world without control towers, without centres of command, where there is no focal power to implement oppression on individual freedom, and it is a context in which, however, the freedom of individuals undergoes some other type of problems: a world like this is dangerous for the individual because it abundantly challenges the individual himself or herself. The latest society developments have brought us into "light capitalism" (p. 59), a kind of economic and social organisation of work loosely comparable to a flying plane whose flight deck is empty, and there are an autopilot and no way to know precise information about the direction, while in previous stages of capitalism, such as Fordism, for instance, the organisation of society was based precisely on conceptions of heavy type, solid - solid in the human conception of the world order given by practice and in terms of visual and material experiences given by big factories, big machinery, big industries, huge labour forces, and above all a rather fixed and rigid life from a professional point of view and from that of the division of professions, in a sort of line

or chain between top managers, intermediate employees, the labour force, output consumers and so on.

What has happened, according to Bauman, is that decision-making centres have undergone a process of dissolution and under these new circumstances it is no longer clear what the underlying processes in decision-making are, but also what the objectives, goals, targets to reach are, so now it is up to the individual "to find out what she or he is capable of doing, to stretch that capacity to the utmost, and to pick the ends to which that capacity could be applied best – that is, to the greatest conceivable satisfaction" (p. 63); it is up to the individual, then, to discover his ability, the kind if satisfaction he seeks to obtain, and the best and the more he can achieve in a context of almost endless possibilities, within a state of unfinished-ness associated with risk and anxiety, whose opposite, however, "(t)he state of unfinishedness, incompleteness and underdetermination is full of risk and anxiety; but its opposite brings no unadultered pleasure either, since it forecloses what freedom needs to stay open" (p. 62).

In the midst of endless possibilities, one may have, on the one hand, the illusion and the pleasure of having the opportunity to potentially achieve anything or almost anything, but one may also feel, on the other hand, the bitterness of the fact that we find ourselves in an endless game, where achieving a goal means losing freedom, because by finally reaching a goal one leaves the the world of endless choices. This precludes the achievement of fully and completely satisfactory objectives; if a satisfactory choice is made, freedom is then barred (p. 63), and the existence of many authorities is tantamount to the existence of basically none (pp. 63-64), and what these social, economic, political, legal, commercial authorities try to do is seducing, convincing, but not commanding anymore. So, their leadership role fails and leaves room to those who tell us directly and trivially how to, how to be in a certain way or how to do something in the form of manuals or textbooks, and brings us back to understand what our role is in public sphere.

On the one hand, these changes lead men to seek examples (not leaders *stricto sensu*) and opinion leaders, on the other hand looking for these examples become almost an addiction because

    a) what one does is only his or her own responsibility in a continuous and hectic run;

b) there is no more a stable, rigid chain of command and decision-making regarding the goals;

c) there is no more leadership or point of reference for any specific social body.

A relevant thing in our test of Mill's democratic principles in today's world is related to the possibility of a separation between freedom and happiness (or satisfaction) due to social and economic factors:

- if one is satisfied and achieves pleasure, he loses his freedom because he has reached his goal and then stops
- on the other hand, preserving freedom leads to a compulsive search as consumers and to further lack of satisfaction.

Bauman emphasises the role of the consumer in a race where the finish line is increasingly remote or less delineated, in a sort of never-ending compulsive run (p. 72). The broader freedom is, the more powerful temptations are, the more we will have a sense of impoverishment of ourselves relatively to what is at our disposal, and thus desire, will and power of choice will increase. The more choices the rich will seem to have, the less sustainable a life without choices will be, and so on, and the kind of freedom that our society has elevated to the highest rank has a far more devastating effect on passers-by than on those for whom it apparently seems to be devised, i.e. those who have means and resources.

So, if this is a strongly interconnected world, traditional political and economic centres of power have lost their authority; at the same time, 'liquid' supranational social dynamics have gained strength and influence over the individuals' lives and national political institutions, and a Millian political theoretical construction may be argued against as happiness and liberty have started following two different paths. This may prove to be a problematic point for a Millian philosopher.

VII.II. NATIONALISM, COSMOPOLITANISM, EUROPEAN FEDERALISM

if we focus on political institutions in themselves, we may find useful Mill's ideas in assessing today's democracy in an international context. Previously in this work, while touching upon the notion of technocrat and introducing the idea of a political expertise within a democratic pattern, I have mentioned the formation in the recent years of

technocratic governments in Greece and in Italy: the boundaries between national competences and sovereignty, and supranational bodies have been waning in favour of the latter, as many non-national institutions have been involved in discussing, planning, implementing and checking specific social, economic, fiscal and monetary policies[76]. Hence, at which level democratic government should be established? Can there be supranational governments in a Millian world? Have democrats a sort of moral duty to act with a cosmopolitan outlook, in order to make democratic institutions more and more beneficial to mankind? Varouxakis' research (Varouxakis, 2002; Urbinati and Zakaras (eds.), 2007, pp. 277-297) on John Stuart Mill's take on nationality shines a light on some aspects of concepts such as nationhood, nationalism, patriotism, cosmopolitanism, self-determination, national character and race and might help in at least partially and initially answering these questions.

As for the link between liberal tradition (to which Mill belongs), mainly with reference to XIX century thinkers, and nationalism, Varouxakis shows that an 'historical' justification of the interpretations according to which nationalism and liberalism are somehow interconnected – a justification which claims there has been a longstanding tradition of liberal thinkers supportive, in a way, of some versions of nationalism, or at least substantially sympathetic with the national causes of their time – is not maintainable (Varouxakis, 2002, pp. 26-37): most of these thinkers (Constant, Mill, Tocqueville, for instance) have "different attitudes towards nationalism or patriotism, could still be in fundamental disagreement about the ways in which it was permissible or advisable to pursue the aims they are supposed to have shared" (p. 37) and, therefore, cannot be included in the same category of what may be defined 'liberal nationalism'.

Conclusions may be drawn upon Mill's writings as regards race too, Varouxakis' study shows. In Victorian Britain discussion over national character is inextricably associated

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[76] Out of topic, a note on these remarks: these examples are not meant to imply that non-national powers are undemocratic and, rather, simply technocratic. *Au contraire*, probably the institution most resembling Mill's project of legislative assembly is the European Parliament. The point is that different and farther and farther levels of decision overlap each other and they cannot be held accountable or, if they can, it is in a way we are not accustomed to, and decisions are more and more inextricably connected with other decisions taken somewhere else.

with the idea of race (sometimes even used to mean what we today call culture): in fact, the reason for which, according to Varouxakis, some have misinterpreted Mill's views on the subject, is that in XIX century the term 'race' was used quite loosely with reference to both natural, social and cultural traits, while, as Varouxakis has stressed, Mill distinguishes race in the biological sense from the notion of national character. In his work, after discussing and criticising scholars who claim that Mill confuses these two concepts, Varouxakis turns his attention to Mill's review of Jules Michelet's *Histoire de France* (*Michelet's History of France*, CW XX, pp. 217-256), in which the English philosopher argues that the French historian had gone too far in attributing to race the differences between the German and the Gauls as regards their personal devotedness to the others (Varouxakis, 2002, pp. 42-43). Indeed, "Mill was in the forefront of attempts to discredit the deterministic implications of social theories and assert the ascendancy of "mind over matter"" (p. 53). Four years later (the review of the *Histoire de France* is published in 1844), Mill makes strong remarks on this topic in his *Principles of Political Economy*:

> Of all vulgar modes of escaping from the consideration of the effect of social and moral influences on the human mind, the most vulgar is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences. (*Principles of Political Economy*, CW II, p. 319)

In a letter to Charles Dupont-White (6 April 1860, CW XV, pp. 690-692), Mill just admits a vague influence of racial factors on the formation of the national character, adding, anyway, as he already said in the review of the *Histoire de France*, that racial predisposition could be modified through a number of circumstances. Another proof of this attitude is his attack against Carlyle for having maintained the negroes are servants and the whites born wiser (*The Negro Question*, CW XXI, pp. 85-96). In the same writing, Mill highlights that the civilised people of the ancient Egypt belonged to the "negro race" (p. 93) and that the reason for contemporary Irish failings was mostly due to English misgovernment. Inspired by these references, as regards Mill and his projects of political reform and his moral views, Varouxakis writes:

> His deliberate effort to concede as little importance to race and other physical factors, even at the risk of being – as he actually was – exposed to the criticism that he was not sufficiently scientific, was the result of a strong determination to stand by certain assumptions about rationality and capacity for improvement that were dear to him (Varouxakis, 2002, p. 52)

Having said this about Mill's take on race, we should not forget that Mill wrote extensively on the matter of national character, as described earlier in this work. However, what about the nation-state in itself? What about democratic and liberal issues on the world political stage? Now, we should go back for a moment to Bauman in order to introduce an example of how the concepts just mentioned, along with others, may help us to reproduce and represent Millian liberalism in the face of current political issues.

We have seen that the sense of disorder produced by our actions and by the new social and political order produce irrational reactions and feelings, namely fear (Bauman, 2007, p. 9). State institutions have withdrawn with respect to the individual, who is, then, one more time deprived of a collective dimension; we should not either forget the other process of withdrawal, the one from political participation as a way to defend oneself in a disintegrating or liquefying world. In such an open – too open – society, everything has a global dimension, and everyone gets more and more vulnerable, and here fear arises (for instance, security and safety concerns), people change their attitudes and their activities in order to react to such fear, and then a further problem follows, i.e. "that these activities reaffirm and help produce the sense of disorder that our actions are aimed at preventing" (p. 9), as every pre-emptive or defensive action gives manifest visibility to the fear it intends to fight, and so fear becomes a daily *routine*. Furthermore, a gradual detachment between power and states, because, at first, from a social and economic point of view, flexibility and loosening of social protection networks have substituted the presence of the state occurs; secondly, because safety is no more an individual issue or an issue restricted to a small group, but a world issue (see the war on terrorism, for instance); third, more in general, every issue is now a global issue which cannot usually be, for a number of reasons, tackled by a single nation-state. "Society is no longer protected by the state" (p. 25), and, moreover:

> On a negatively globalized planet, all the most fundamental problems – the metaproblems conditioning the tackling of all other problems – are *global*, and being global they admit of no local solutions (…). The reunion of power and politics may be achieved, if at all, at the planetary level (pp. 25-26).

In this sense, the challenge for the re-constitution of a state form, probably in the supranational sense (since at the national level it has failed or, at least, is currently heavily challenged), might seemingly be the task for new attempts of political democratic representation. The other way could be the restoration of the old order;

however, the current order guarantees individual freedom. The main issue, as remarked earlier, is actually the decoupling of freedom and happiness – and how can we achieve happiness in its highest forms if it is not free activities which lead us to it? From a Millian point of view, freedom is structurally inherent to happiness; if social and political structures make us use our freedom in a sense which does not lead to happiness, there is a problem, and, perhaps, a solution (admitting there is one and not excluding other possibilities) should be reuniting freedom and happiness. If the nation-state has failed, if power has moved somewhere else – and in Bauman's world, it has moved upwards and outwards and now exists at a supranational and non-national level – and if many social, political, economic activities are getting global, the challenge, at least partially, perhaps currently regards the construction of proper supranational institutions. With a closer look to current political problems, for example, one may also use Mill's philosophy in an attempt to approach specifically these sorts of constitutional issues. For instance, let us consider the problems today affecting Europe, its common institutions and the case for or against European federalism[77].

It has been suggested that in Mill's works *Bentham*, *On Liberty* and *Utilitarianism* there is a view according to which we are Europeans because we are not *one* and European greatness stems from cultural and national diversities across the continent and that the danger of stationariness (in Mill's own words, see *De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (II)*, CW XVIII, p. 188) comes from uniformity of thought (Glendenning, 2013). However, if we go and look at *CRG*, we may find further hints on why federalists (for instance, European federalists) should consider a plurality of nationalities as positive and how a proper federation should be built.

As for the ideas of nation, patriotism, federalism, etc., a couple of chapters in *CRG* show Mill's position. Chapter XVI deals with the topic of nationality in relation to the idea of a free and representative government. Mill states that the feeling of nationality may be caused by various elements. Factors such as "race and descent", religion, language and geographical boundaries matter, but political identity and a common national history

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[77] The considerations on John Stuart Mill's take on nationality and federalism hereafter illustrated have already been published, in an earlier and slightly different version, on the London School of Economics' website *EUROPP – European Politics and Policy* (see Morricone, 2013).

often are far more relevant (*CRG*, CW XIX, pp. 546-547). However, none of these factors is either necessary or sufficient by itself. Indeed, as in the case of Belgium or Switzerland, different nationalities may seem to be under the same government, but are, in fact, a single nationality because of their shared political history.

Although Mill thinks, as a general rule, that free institutions are only possible in a country constituted of a single nationality, he leaves room for the possibility of a sort of multinational state. The first reason he gives for this is merely practical and geographical, because, "there are parts even in Europe, in which different nationalities are so locally intermingled, that it is not practicable to be under separate government" (pp. 548-549). Contemporaneous examples would have been Hungary or Eastern Prussia. The second reason derives from the proposition that different populations live at different stages of evolution, so for some nationalities it may be beneficial to be absorbed by another, more advanced, nation (according to Mill, this was the case for the Bretons and the Basques under the French dominion and the assimilation of Scotland and Wales to a common British kingdom).

Although the idea of different stages of civilisation may seem slightly anachronistic today, we can understand its meaning in the context of Mill's entire philosophy, according to which free and rational debate and the liberty to experience and pursue different lifestyles are intellectually, morally and socially advantageous to individuals and to humanity as a whole. In this sense, Mill's philosophy is progressive (Mill is liberal and utilitarian, and generally both liberalism and utilitarianism are forms of progressivism[78]), where progress is the beneficial social outcome of mutual discussion. In his own words:

> Whatever really tends to the admixture of nationalities, and the blending of their attributes and peculiarities in a common union, is a benefit to the human race. Not by extinguishing types, of which, in these cases, sufficient examples are sure to remain, but by softening their extreme forms, and filling up the intervals between them. (p. 549)

[78] See *supra*, pp. 17-27.

There are two ways to achieve this goal, according to Mill. One is the authoritarian rule by advanced nations over less civilised ones which, in the long run, would turn itself into a free government with all nations treated as equal, as they progressively become equally civilised, while the other is a federation of free states. As for this, Mill gives three conditions under which a federal government is possible: a mutual sympathy among the populations, as well as a community of interest; member states must not be so powerful as to rely solely on their individual strength; and there must not be a marked inequality among the member states. In chapter XVII of *CRG*, after having discussed the way the American institutional model works, Mill affirms: "When the conditions exist for the formation of efficient and durable Federal Unions, the multiplication of them is always a benefit to the world" (p. 559), because they make the weaker stronger, and they prevent aggressive and petty policies and wars, while fostering trade and mutual cooperation.

He concludes stressing the fact that under a central government (that is, a closer union than a federal one) constitutional provisions have to be set in order to protect national differences. Put in context, this precise remark apparently seems to imply that excessive centralisation is a danger, as it may lead to involuntary assimilation, while a well-functioning federal system would not really pose such a threat (p. 561).

What might a 'Millian' European federalist conclude from this? Yes, it is true that national peculiarities, as well as individual ones, have to be preserved and protected. However, their blending is not necessarily an evil and, actually, it might prove itself beneficial for the peoples of Europe. The lack of language uniformity is very likely a hindrance for a common European sentiment. Study and work experiences abroad would very probably boost the sense of a sort of European common citizenship – in order to create, in the long run, something similar to an 'admixture of nationalities'.

However, something else is necessary for a European federation to be a success. In the first instance, it is not enough that nations be equal under the law and the treaties. Citizens too must feel that even small or less wealthy nations are treated equally under rules which are beneficial to every country. National governments would have to act in order to achieve mutual benefit in the spirit of cooperation – not just in order to pursue the national interest. A common political identity would also be required for such a federation.

When Mill stresses the importance of national history and identity of political antecedents, he talks of "collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past" (p. 546). From this perspective, European federalists would have to work hard in order to manage to build a common history and the feeling of a single polity – not to create a single European nationality, but a common identity. This would reduce the sense of internal competition among countries in the EU and the lack of more direct democratic accountability and increase the feeling of a common political enterprise.

Stemming from this, when we deal with the concept of supranationalism or even cosmopolitanism, investigating the *prima facie* opposite notions of patriotism and nationalism may be relevant. If the national states' power is for any reason declining, the relevance of foreign relations might somehow be affected by it. On the other side, cosmopolitan citizenship could still be a usable tool in a world where barriers fall and everything is fluid – and in a work as the present, where I am trying a sort of first, though partial, assessment of Millan democratic theories in a postmodern world, Varouxakis's works are of great help.

Varouxakis' study shows that patriotism is, according to Mill, a proof of the possibility of training human beings in order to make them devote themselves to the cause of the good of a larger group – be it the fatherland or mankind as a whole (Varouxakis, 2002, pp. 111-115). However, cosmopolitanism and patriotism may often be seen as antagonistic. The point Varouxakis makes with reference to such apparent contradiction is that Mill has in mind an "enlightened patriotism", i.e. "a strong sense of cohesion and solidarity among its members in order for it to be stable, but that it should by no means take the form of 'nationality in the vulgar sense'" (Varouxakis, in Urbinati and Zarakas (eds.), p. 286). Mill's conception of cosmopolitanism "tried to orientate the "national mind" itself to a cosmopolitan outlook, rather than to detach individuals from their nation-bound lives" (Varouxakis, 2002, p. 123). One may be induced to love mankind either directly or through the means and the incentives of the pursuit of the national good, a principle of nationality which is not

> a senseless antipathy to foreigners; indifference to the general welfare of
> the human race, or an unjust preference of the supposed interests of our
> own country; a cherishing of bad peculiarities because they are national, or
> a refusal to adopt what has been found good by other countries. We mean
> a principle of sympathy, not of hostility; of union, not of separation. We

mean a feeling of common interest among those who live under the same government, and are contained within the same natural or historical boundaries. We mean, that one part of the community do not consider themselves as foreigners with regard to another part; that they set a value on their connexion - feel that they are one people, that their lot is cast together, that evil to any of their fellow-countrymen is evil to themselves, and do not desire selfishly to free themselves from their share of any common inconvenience by severing the connexion. (*System of Logic*, CW VIII, 923; *Coleridge*, CW X, pp. 135-136)

Varouxakis introduces, then, the notion of "cosmopolitan patriotism" (Varouxakis, in Urbinati and Zakaras (eds.), p. 286), compatible with both a sort of 'principle of cohesion' and a cosmopolitan commitment:

It is 'patriotism' (as opposed to 'nationalism') to the extent that mill was very wary of the implications of nationalist sentiment and the tribalism that it could entail and preferred to promote 'a strong and active principle of cohesion among the members of the same community or state'. Now, this patriotism is 'cosmopolitan' in that he consistently defined it in such a way as to equate it with an outward-looking noble emulation among different human communities ('nations' or other) of achievements that would promote the welfare and civilisation of the whole mankind. Moreover, the criteria through which such achievements would be judged, the language that would be used, the arguments that would be appealed to, would have to be impartial and, to that extent, cosmopolitan. (p. 295)

What Mill tries to do, in other words, is to turn the course of the nation towards policies good for humanity at large, and not just for the national community, even using national

pride as leverage for accomplishing this cosmopolitan task (Varouxakis, 2002, pp. 123-125; Varouxakis, in Urbinati and Zakaras (eds.), 2007, p. 296)[79].

[79] We are still in a liberal pattern, however. What if we turn away from the Millian liberal option and try to opt for a communitarian one? Bauman may still provide us a useful sociological framework. In a communitarian case, and with respect to the notions of nationalism and patriotism, he says we may find small differences between the two: in a community imagined along ethnic lines, they are mainly rhetorical, at least conceptually, as "there are reasons to conclude that there is little else to distinguish between nationalism and patriotism, except our enthusiasm for their manifestations or its absence or the degree of shame-facedness or guilty conscience with which we admit or deny them" (Bauman, 2000 (2012), pp. 174-175), but show differences in their concrete application in the form of policy, as patriotism is almost "anthropophagic" (p. 175) in his attempt to include people, while nationalism aims to split from us those who are unfit to be us (p. 176). So, a communitarian solution, with respect to the idea of nation or of *patria*, is a bit contradictory, as communities exist only because of their internal harmony and the exclusion of what is different; either one bows to the communal unity, or becomes an enemy to be expelled: "The inner harmony of the communal world shines and glitters against the background of the obscure and tangled jungle which starts on the other side of the turnpike (...) In Jock Young's words, 'The desire to demonize others is based on the ontological uncertainties' of those inside. An 'inclusive community' would be a contradiction in terms. Communal fraternity would be incomplete, perhaps unthinkable but certainly unviable, without inborn fratricidal inclination" (p. 172). Under some aspects, according to Bauman, it may be plausible to claim that nation-states have been a kind of success story in the history of political entities based on ethnic unity, but, however, comparisons between them and communitarian polities cannot be traced, as nation-states have been suppressing, in many occasions, their internal contradictions, i.e. "self-asserting communities", and promoting a national *Kulturkämpf* (p. 173), rather than assimilating or expelling them. Hence, even in an historically successful case – successful because it has been able to establish itself as a political entity in a solid form – the problem of the existence of differences and of alternative, non-standard, individualities and cultures still exists.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

This work has tried to outline a model of democracy drawing upon John Stuart Mill's *CRG*. After a brief introduction, this thesis has expounded some features of the utilitarian political thought, introducing the main arguments from Mill's *Utilitarianism* and the importance of the ideas of progress and equality in the utilitarian moral and political thought: happiness is the end of moral decisions and political actions, and everyone's happiness matters.

Chapter II, indeed, has provided a description of the assumptions which lie under John Stuart Mill's political philosophy and assessed the political-philosophical relevance of utilitarian ethics in relation to the concepts of progress and equality: in this chapter I argued that in order to reconcile these two concepts, which are not obviously consistent one with the other, within a sort of utilitarian pattern, a Millian political system would need to devise institutions promoting general happiness, protecting individual autonomy and different lifestyles, and safeguarding society from mediocrity. Here I rejected Semmel's interpretation of Mill, which quite clearly overstates some sources of influence on Mill's thought, but dismisses Mill's own words in *Utilitarianism* and in his *Autobiography* as regards the link between the utilitarian principle and virtue. Romantic sources, such as Coleridge and Carlyle, have influenced Mill, but interpretations claiming he departed so much from his initial Benthamism that he became an advocate of the pursuit of an unattached virtue rather than of happiness, really miss some important points, specifically the fact that his acceptance of some Romantic or elitist ideas should not be overstated.

In chapter III, education was the subject of study, specifically Mill's idea of education, presented under two perspectives: the definition of education at large, "taken in its broadest sense – education in a cultural, intellectual, moral sense"[80], and its political implications. In Mill, there is a very complex idea of what education is, and his main concerns are addressed towards the creation of rational spirits able to exercise proper and rational criticism. I have shown several authors' accounts on Mill and liberty (Isaiah Berlin, J. C. Rees, Alan Ryan, Joseph Hamburger, etc.) and touched upon James Mill's

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[80] See *supra*, p. 30.

theory of education and Coleridge's influence on John Stuart Mill in order to stress the importance of the rational discourse both in ethics and in politics, and the strong links between education, freedom, political institutions and society. I have concluded the chapter with a section criticising Richard Arneson's interpretation according to which *CRG* and *On Liberty* are substantially inconsistent and a strong paternalistic element underlies in Mill's philosophy.

This final criticism connects, in part, the concept of education to that of liberty, which is the main means towards progress of both the individual and mankind: thanks to liberty, the men of genius – and, in general, the rational aspects of most of the mankind – are stimulated, and improvement in the achievement of social, civic and political truths is brought about or, at least, followed through and sustained. The strong connection between education, individual flourishing, liberty, social improvements and critical thought lead to a connection between education and the political system – and Mill thinks representative democracy is the proper way to defend and promote proper education. I have argued, analysing both *On Liberty* and *CRG,* that both works are part of the same plan of social, moral and political reform. I also expounded on Coleridge's influence on Mill: it is in part substantial and decisive, as it introduces the idea of a national endowment for education, as well as the idea of the opposition of forces in society. Coleridge, actually, takes also into consideration the need for a special class of cultivated people, while Carlyle (another source influencing Mill during the age of his rejection of Benthamism) proposes a leading role for the literary classes; in Mill these ideas take a different form and are substantially rejected; moreover, problems arise when it comes to competence in government and in public administration. In view of these aspects I analysed remarks by scholars such as Thompson and Arneson[81].

I have concluded the chapter stressing the fact that the role of the intellectuals is a role of support and influence within society at large. Discussion and confrontation – i.e. the use of those critical skills acquired by free, rational and well-educated minds – are the way towards both individual and social improvement, i.e. towards the ability to enjoy higher pleasures and the possibility of establishing a good government, i.e. a government which does not promote private and sinister interests. I also criticised

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[81] Specifically, as the reader has probably noticed, a bit in contrast with Arneson's view on Mill and paternalism, see *supra*, section III.V.

some aspects of Gregory Claeys' work on Mill and paternalism, which overemphasises the "guiding role" of the intellectual class. In this chapter I also pointed out the fact that Joseph Hamburger basically does not take into due account Mill's review of Guizot's work: a careful reading of it would give us a different impression on Mill's view on the stationary and transitional states of society. Hamburger maintains that what Mill aims for is a new natural or stationary state in which his version of the religion of humanity is spread and accepted; actually, what Mill's reviews on Guizot suggest is that Mill supports antagonism of forces and opinions in society, and that, therefore, he wants to avoid the dominance of a single belief, or of a set of beliefs or opinions. As a consequence, claims about Mill's sympathetic opinions on the establishment of a stationary state of society are exaggerated.

At this stage of the argument, the problem of government needed further investigation – indeed, chapter IV has dealt with Mill's democratic theory proper. In detail, its first section has provided a description of the methodology of the social sciences and of the philosophy of history as found in Mill's *System of Logic* and in *CRG*, while the following sections have compared John Stuart Mill's thought to his father's Radical proposal and the subsequent reply by Thomas Macaulay. I also expounded at length the idea of tyranny of the majority, 'borrowed' by Mill from Alexis de Tocqueville and François Guizot. Chapter VI has also included some issues in political ethics in relation with *CRG*: for example, the marginal utility of vote, whether there are moral obligations for citizens as members of a polity organised according to the principles of representative democracy, and the role of intellectuals in such political structure. Millian democracy is a model which can, in particular, allow rational and well-informed citizens to be sufficiently influential in society thanks to the use of rational means: I described rational debate as an influence multiplier and Millian democracy as a system which tries to provide enough incentives for political and electoral participation of the intellectuals and of those who mostly behave rationally and competently.

After the examination of Mill's democracy, I turned my attention to the problem of political representation, and how it can be described in the light of (or subsumed under) one of the major contemporary works on the subject, Hannah Pitkin's *The Concept of Representation*. Chapter V considers the topic of political representation in *CRG*'s chapter XII and in Mill's other minor writings. At first, I introduced a possible general theory of political representation, as described in Pitkin's work. Second, I gave a critical account of Richard Krouse and Nadia Urbinati's interpretations. I concluded showing a Millian theory of political representation and that, in general, the higher is the degree of

complexity or need for expertise, the greater should be the influence of the principle of competence in assessing whether a representative should act as a trustee or a delegate.

In chapter VI, I tried to raise some further issues about the compatibility between Millian democracy and the contemporary world. In this task, I used Zygmunt Bauman's theory of liquid modernity in order to test Mill's political and social philosophy today. I also made to case for European federalism using Mill's *CRG*.

More in general, in this work I have not just tried to condense John Stuart Mill's complete system of political philosophy; instead, I have focused on the three aspects summarized above – education, democracy, representation – in an attempt to draw conclusions in the fields of political ethics and democratic theory, as well as in the analysis of the developments occurred in Mill's mind as regards political theory and democracy. Each of these three concepts is strictly related to the others, and they altogether also involve other aspects of Mill's philosophy such as logic, philosophy of the social sciences, philosophy of history and the idea of progress, ethics, etc. So, what are the conclusions? Or, at least, which are the basic and fundamental ideas we may point out?

The deployment of all the issues linked to representative government seems continuously and persistently to show the concern for a model of society which would foster a process that would let the individual develop accordingly to the criteria Mill outlines, e.g., in *Utilitarianism* and in *On Liberty*. The strong connection between *CRG* and Mill's previous works, and between the theory of government, on the one hand, and moral and social philosophy, on the other hand, in Mill's system of thought is distinctly clear already to his contemporary reviewers (and not just because of the introductory statement at the beginning of *CRG*): e.g. the anonymous author of the review published in *The Athenæum* (Anonymous, 1861a) introduces his remarks outlining the similarity of the ideas expounded in *CRG* with those present in the *Principles of Political Economy*, in *On Liberty* and in the writings on parliamentary reform, claiming that "(t)he volume presents us so abundantly with the peculiarities of the writer, not only in respect to his known opinions, but in the very spirit that pervades the work, that no suppression of the name upon the title-page could have afforded a chance of maintaining a mystery about its authorship" (p. 521); the same can be found in the review appeared on *The Critic* in the same year (Anonymous, 1861b), which confirms that "(m)any of the opinions advocated here are suggested or embodied in his great work on Political Economy and his essays on "liberty" and Parliamentary Reform" (p. 537); moreover, *The Athenæum* reviewer describes Mill's political proposal as a "connected system"

(Anonymous, 1861a), implying manifold aspects, the existence of checks and balance and of different powers and forces which are to be somehow balanced; furthermore, he underlines the distance from the Benthamite political project, as, with Jeremy Bentham, "so fundamental was the principle that the greater number should prevail, that students of his writings generally acquire a habit of regarding the majority, not only as a rightful sovereign but as a sovereign who "can do no wrong"" (p. 521), while, with Mill, the feeling the reader receives is quite the opposite, a fear of ignoring the interests – and the opinion and the expertise – of the small number.

Indeed, investigating the idea of Millian democracy requires an investigation of its background (not just of the partial rejection of Mill's Benthamite roots), of parts of all the other systems of thought it entails (be they logic, ethics, social philosophy, methodology of the social sciences) and of its aims: at first, such investigation shows a theory of society conceived in its progressive development, the principle of utility as presented in *Utilitarianism*, the use of a specific type of scientific method in the field of social sciences, and the philosophical influences from Bentham, Tocqueville, Coleridge, Carlyle, Comte etc. In some cases, one may even dare to say that Mill's system of political thought almost completely lacks originality – and that may even be deemed true, under some aspects. Indeed, it may be hard to locate the original contributions by Mill and what he just borrows from other thinkers. However, it is not the complete originality what may be considered noteworthy in this system, but, rather, the different concepts which are at play in outlining democratic representative institutions. Such as progress, justice, utility, education, liberty, moral development, etc.; the intricate project laid out in *CRG* is an attempt to meet the conditions set accordingly to what these concepts are. Furthermore, it is an individual-oriented political system, as the progress Mill seeks is mainly the progress or development (in utilitarian terms) of the individual.

Although the focus is on the individual, Mill's conception of government is installed as part of a progressive development of both social dynamics and the constitutional structures of the different forms of government: in fact, just as Comte maintained, society has a tendency to move from transient phases to stationary phases, and the development of forms of government, such as described by Mill, is proposed as a rational, progressive and gradual, although sometimes not linear, process in the course of history. However, a distinction has to be done between improvement and progress in Mill's thought: the progressiveness of mankind has been the basis of 'ethology' and psychology, and the idea of progress has been borrowed from Comte's sociology, while Mill's debt towards Bentham is rather related to the idea of improvement (see Rosen,

2013, pp. 44-46). Improvement (in relation to the individual) is not necessarily implied by progress (in relation to society), although a 'general tendency' towards a better state thanks to improvement exists. In this sense, societies may still be capable of progress, in the sense of moving into an age in which "the principal phenomena of society are different from what they were in the age preceding, and still more different from any previous age" (*A System of Logic*, CW VIII, p. 914), and, at the same time, active characters may be rendered ineffective in such a way to hinder the development of a proper democracy (and this would, in turn, make the flourishing of active characters more problematic).

Mill's case for representative democracy – which is also, as we have seen, a rational democracy - might appear, under some aspects, a bit atypical, at least if we take into consideration one of the other classical liberal justifications of representative government, i.e. the fact that modern states are too extended and that industrial societies do not leave time for political engagement or to any form of popular, continuous debate and self-rule. An example of this different, alternative view is Benjamin Constant's theory of ancient and modern freedom.

There are a few relevant theoretical contrasts, indeed, related to these two views which, in the end, still support quite the same form of organisation of the polity. What we may notice and conclude here is that in Millian democracy an expansion of the political space is sought, while in other liberal defences of democracy there is an inverse process. Constant, indeed, stresses the need for less political participation than that guaranteed by ancient liberty: he states that freedom of the ancients – in Sparta, in Rome and even in Athens - was based on active participation and constant collective power, while freedom of the moderns is based on peaceful enjoyment of private independence. The part that each had in the polity, in the process of political decision and in the exercise of power was not an abstract assumption. The will of each had a real and effective influence: the exercise of it was almost a pleasure, Constant says. "*Perdu dans la multitude"*, lost in the crowd, instead, the modern individual does not feel his influence as really effective (Constant, 1980, p. 501). The individual will may very likely never bring about real consequences on the whole; there is no evidence, in the eyes of an individual subject, of the effects of cooperation. The exercise of political rights now only offers a part of the enjoyments that the ancients possessed and, at the same time, the progress of civilisation, the commercial trend of the time, communication between peoples have multiplied and varied the means of endlessly private happiness. Individual independence is the first and foremost of modern needs (p. 506) because of the

particular nature of modern society and states, therefore, according to Constant, individual liberty is the real modern liberty, and political freedom guarantees it (p. 509).

There are four causes, according to the French thinker, which make ancient and modern liberties so different: territorial dimensions, as Greek state-cities, for example, were much smaller than any modern nation; abolition of slavery, as thanks to slavery thousands and thousands of Athenians could find time to discuss and deliberate in the *agora*; commerce, which has taken the place which was occupied by war; individual independence and increased interest for private life, caused by commerce and by decline of war activities (pp. 499-500). Commerce, in particular, makes arbitrary actions on our existence more oppressive than in the past, because our speculations are more varied so that any oppressive force has somehow to 'multiply' itself in order to hit them; but commerce also makes the action of arbitrary power easier to elude, because it changes the nature of property making it more difficult to be seized by any authoritarian power. Commerce gives property a new quality, circulation: property without circulation is just a usufruct, since authority could at any time affect usufruct and would have the power to remove or hinder its enjoyment; but circulation poses an invisible and invincible obstacle to the actions of power. Furthermore, credit makes the authority dependent. Individual existence is so less incorporated in the political sphere. Individuals transfer their treasures and carry with them all the enjoyments of private life; trade has brought harmony among nations and influenced and made more similar their habits (p. 501).

Since modern liberty – Constant says – is different from that of the ancients, it needs a different organisation, one in which the more the exercise of our political rights will leave us time for our private interests, the more freedom will be invaluable. So, even if we are still within a liberal and democratic (in the sense of representative democracy) pattern, there is a totally different attitude towards political participation. Of course, Mill's case for political participation does not aim to foster presence in public life exactly as it was in ancient Greece; actually, it wanted better participation, i.e. participation of higher quality, where competence, sensible arguments, openness and support for the general good would have been increasingly brought into the political arena by skilled, rational and well-educated people; furthermore participation increases the quality of government, and a good government, which is a democracy supporting active characters, would have improved and somehow educated (non-paternalistically, at least in the strong sense) its citizens, which, in turn, would have found a renovated interest in the *res publica*, and so would have found favourable terrain for further

political participation, and so on. In few words, Mill is pro-participation. According to Constant, political participation is not bad *per se*, but it is just a way, at best, to protect our private liberty, or, at worst, a danger to the most precious of liberties, the individual, personal, one: whereas for Mill participating in political life means (I put it simply here) both to educate and to be educated, and taking part in an activity which, in the long term, will have improved society and its individuals and their ability to enjoy pleasures (higher pleasures, accordingly to the utilitarian system), according to Constant's view on the liberty of the ancients and of the moderns political participation is not even valuable as a means, except in the few moments we exercise it when we are requested to participate in those activities fundamental to the functioning of representative democratic institutions. Yes, political freedom is important, but only as far as it grants our other basic liberties. Mill's democratic theory expands individuals' political activities and participation, while Constant's view curbs them within narrower limits.

The account given in this thesis is also substantially based on some specific criticism regarding some interpretations of Mill's political and moral philosophy, and on what Mill says about individuality. We have seen, for instance, several scholars' theories regarding Mill in paternalism, virtue and coercion:

- Semmel provides a strong view of Mill as an advocate of virtue as good desirable in itself: this is an interpretation, as we have seen, that is problematic at the very least, because it goes against what Mill himself asserts in some of his major writings as regards the relation between virtue and happiness and the role of habit, desire and will;

- we have also seen that Hamburger overlooks Mill's review on Guizot, and that, therefore, this leads him to overstress Comte's influence on Mill (which remains substantial anyway): stationary states of society miss the antagonistic element of discussion and competition among different opinions which, according to Mill, are important for individual and collective progress;

- as regards Claeys, I have focused only on some specific points: the limited extension of the franchise, for instance, maybe is just an example of an accidental and temporary provision due to current circumstances, and not substantial and inherent to the form of government and its institutional design.

- Arneson has been criticised here for maintaining that *On Liberty* is not paternalistic, while *CRG* are; Mill's political proposal, actually, is functional to the social and moral theory expounded in *On Liberty*. Mill's democratic theory

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aims to bring about functional relations among the various political institutions, the intellectual, the politicians, and the masses in general, thus creating a system fostering moral, civic and social development.

In conclusion, in this chapter and in the previous one I examined the fact that the existence of irrational elements in society and the detachment of the duo freedom-happiness are main dangers challenging the possibility of the construction of a sort of 'Millian democracy'. Most importantly, if freedom no longer serves utilitarian purposes in terms of education, cultivation and attainment of pleasures, Mill's political system simply collapses. The role of economic forces cannot be underestimated: interestingly, according to Constant these forces are the reason for which private life gets more and more important, in place of public and political activities; in Bauman's sociological analysis, we actually see an expansion of private life, which invades public spaces, and a retreat from political participation and activism, as a form of self-defence, guided by economic and social factors (light capitalism), However, two opportunities arise in this context. There seems to be a line from view in which private life is much bigger than the public (Constant), to one where public participation is fostered (Mill), to another one, Bauman's theory, in which what is private disappears and we live in a context with no substantial landmark. In both Constant and Bauman, economic forces are somehow an obstacle to political participation. Apparently, this does not seem necessarily an evil from a Millian point of view: at least in Constant's cases, staying away from political life is something that causes forms of pleasure and happiness, and minimal forms of political participation are a sort of necessary evil, in order to protect individual autonomy in his other activities. In Bauman as well political participation is irrelevant as regards the pursuit of happiness – actually, *routine* in life helps to achieve some sort of pleasure and satisfaction. This, however, contrasts with Mill's views on *routine* (seen as a form of oppression) and on political participation (which provides at least part of the educative element which makes the representative government the best possible option in terms of organisation of the polity). Above all, the real danger for a possible utilitarian foundation of democratic politics is the fact that, in Bauman's theory, happiness is no longer caused by liberty and, actually, incessant free activities make people more and more unsatisfied with their life.

These last pages, however, have shown that we can still use Millian justifications and investigate Mill's philosophy in order:

a) to build supranational institutions and overcome the liquefaction process: as nation-states are no longer the centre of powers, a new 'solid' form has to be found. The supranational state may be a possible solution, and in Mill's political philosophy we find reasons and even some guidelines which may help in constructing such entities;

b) to review the role of the intellectual: where borders no longer exist, at least in terms of circulation of information and idea, there may be fertile ground for increasing the influence of the most rational people among us. If the construction of democratic supranational institutions in Millian spirit is really achievable, with the purpose of serving liberal and utilitarian ideals of individual freedom, use of reason, and of happiness as the greatest good, then within such institutions intellectuals may find easier to foster discussion, advocate good causes and let their influence be multiplied thanks to the current 'fluidity' (a term which may even imply progressiveness as well as non-stationariness in Mill's terms) along with possibly strengthened democratic representative institutions. It is not a matter of hard, although democratically legitimated, leadership (as we have seen, it would not be consistent with Mill's political theory, and it would not be feasible in Bauman's world) but rather of soft and rational influence activated within and by the democratic infrastructure. Active participation in representative democratic institutions may provide the arena in which this influence can be multiplied and made more effective.

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The *Considerations on Representative Government* are mentioned as *CRG.*

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