



AN EXAMINATION OF JOHN STUART MILL'S FREE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN INDIVIDUALITY AND ITS IMPACT ON CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES

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Abstract

The preservation of individual liberty as a fundamental value in democratic society was central to Mill's idea of the free development of individuality. The idea of the free development of individuality as proposed by John Stuart Mill will be examined in this article along with its relevance to modern societies. The underappreciated nature of individual liberty in society can be rectified through the application of Mill's theory. The way Mill feels about the matter illustrates this. In order to address the issue of individual liberty, Mill criticized majority rule and mass mediocrity as grave challenges to liberty and individuality. According to Mill, liberty is advantageous in and of itself because it promotes the growth of an ethnically pure, knowledgeable, and kind individual. A functional democratic framework requires an understanding of the free development of individual liberty necessary for the growth and development of the state. The researcher considered that this study would help our present generation find their potential for self-realization and development, as well as raise our society to a level where people's right to individuality may be respected.

Key Words: Individuality, Development, Human Progress, Liberalism

Introduction

Philosophers have been puzzled by the mystery that has surrounded the struggle for individual liberty throughout history. Throughout history, numerous notable philosophers and intellectuals have attempted to address this enduring issue. Upon briefly examining the development of philosophy from the classical Greeks to the present, many different concepts aimed at resolving the enduring issue of individual liberty become apparent. What is the extent to which society may control and limit the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals? In the 19th century, philosopher John Stuart Mill thought the subject was crucial. In his famous essay *On Liberty*, published more than a century ago, John Stuart Mill predicted that a problem like this "is likely to make itself recognized as the vital question of the future." John Stuart Mill does an excellent job of summarizing this concept of liberty in his books. John Stuart Mill is undoubtedly a liberal. Every aspect that comprises the liberal perspective is expressed in the most straightforward manner in Mill's philosophy. In addition to his



cautious defense of individual liberty as paramount to other political goals, Mill is adamant that critical reason can be applied with caution to better human circumstances on an ongoing basis. "Individual right to freedom" is a term that was credited to Mill.

It has an adverse connotation of implying that society does not have the authority to force someone against their will unless it is necessary for self-defense. It is independence; all limitations are not wanted. It entails granting people as much freedom as is practical to pursue their own creative energy, desires, and personal growth. While Mill recognized the threat governments posed, he also theorized that people's freedoms are also threatened by a more subtle and imperceptible social force. Every culture gradually accepts behaviours, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs that are thought to be the "correct" way of acting or thinking by the majority. It puts pressure on people to conform and adopt the socially acceptable ways of thinking and living because the majority rejects and isolates those who show any indication of deviating from this "right" way of life. This social force, which Mill called the "tyranny of the majority," is the primary source of conformity, according to Mill. To clarify when he thought it was acceptable for society to impose control over individuals and when it was not, Mill made a distinction between two types of behaviour: self-regarding activity and other-regarding action. An act is considered self-regarding if it directly impacts just the one performing it. Being free to think and behave whichever one pleases leads to the capacity to develop one's individuality. To improve society, according to Mill, one must possess the unique and quirky qualities.

John Stuart Mill's Idea of Free Development of Individual Liberty: An Overview

Mill acknowledges and supports the aim as the "free development of individuality." Adhering mindlessly to the norms and conventions of one's group is in opposition to individuality. Customary behaviours may not necessarily reflect what happened in a given range of occurrences, and it's possible that this range was too small for them to have evolved from. Mill defines the goal as the "free development of individuality," and he supports it. Moreover, not all men are in a position to gain from the wisdom and insight ingrained in their society's traditions, even though some may be. It is possible for someone to stand out from the crowd and encounter extremely unusual situations. As stated by Ramaswamy and Mukherjee. Every human activity, according to Mill, consists of three parts: the aesthetic (or beauty) component, the sympathetic (or likeability) component, and the moral component of good and evil. According to him, the main goals, essential elements of happiness, and pillars of progress for both individuals and society as a whole were diversity and personal development (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007:324).



Mill defended the right to individuality, which encompasses the right to choose, as Mukherjee and Ramaswamy correctly note. He focused on how self-regarding actions of compulsion would be harmful to the process of forming the self. First, there were much more negative effects of applying force than positive ones. Second, since people have such a wide range of demands and enjoyment capacities, coercion would be ineffectual. (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007:326).

The optimal choice for each individual will differ based on their personality type. Every individual need to select a way of life that allows them to reach their maximum potential, provided that it does not do harm to others or impede their own growth. According to him, this discovery may only occur under a number of circumstances and with independence. Active people are more important to Mill than inactive ones in terms of development.

Mukherjee and Ramaswamy assert that Mill used the term "individuality" to refer to a person's capacity to examine deeply established beliefs and behaviours and submit them to the dictates of reason. Freedom is the capacity to grow and the lack of restrictions. A person would not differ from an ape if they were incapable of making decisions (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007:329).

According to Mill, every person is unique, and if given the opportunity to follow their own life goals, they would act differently. Unvarnished behaviour is a false reality brought about by the tyranny of dominating patterns. This consistency in human behaviour, according to him, is evidence that human nature has been compelled to adopt certain paths and tendencies. Some have lost interest in continuing on their path for self-improvement. In light of this, he embraces diversity and eccentricity—not because he thinks these qualities are beneficial in and of themselves, but rather because he thinks that when uniqueness is given the freedom to flourish, human behaviour will naturally grows more quirky and unique. According to John Stuart Mill, the pursuit of individuality is not exclusive as it is a goal that every man can accomplish. However, he feels that the wealthy have a unique role here as well as elsewhere. According to him, only a select few people are capable of establishing novel techniques.

However, having a vast array of unexpected options to choose from makes it possible for the others to recognize their uniqueness as well. According to Mahanjan, everyone is born with the capacity for reason and logic. For oneself and for society at large, it is possible to decide what is right or wrong. He is aware of his objectives and approaches things with a long-term view. Every individual tries to avoid suffering and



achieve happiness. The biggest numbers of people are happy as a result of this (Mahanjan, 2000:666–667). Because men can only learn what they truly value and consider important, as well as what ideas and life plans they are willing to accept, in a society that is open to a wide range of influences and ideas and does not seek to control and manipulate knowledge, the argument for individuality is also an argument in favour of that society. These two important schools of social and political thinking have an alternative in Mill's theory of individuality. Consequently, it is clear that Mill begins his argument by compellingly defending negative freedom. However, by emphasizing individuality so much, Mill also subtly advances positive freedom. The precise boundaries of the state's power over an individual are currently hard to determine (Harrison-Barbet, 2001:255). Even though Mill places a lot of emphasis on improving oneself, it is clear that he does not advocate a selfish philosophy; rather, he contends that individualism is essential to the welfare and growth of society (Harrison-Barbet, 2001:255).

Mill's Conception of Political Liberalism

John Stuart Mill has had a significant impact on how modern liberalism is perceived. His brand of liberalism condemned communal weakness and stressed the value of the individual. He allowed the fusion of more rights-based thinking with personalized conceptions of liberty by firmly establishing his liberal beliefs in the pragmatic and utilitarian domains. In his book *Political Thought*, J.S. Mills essentially advocated for the application of political liberalism as a useful or successful instrument for social engineering. John Stuart Mill contended in his book *Representative Government* (1861) that the development of democracy necessitates a mono-national state, as Gauba correctly points out. Since the publication of J.S. Mill's book on representative government, numerous new states have been established all over the world. People of different nations, customs, and racial and religious backgrounds inhabit the majority of these states. (Gauba, 1995:302-303. In this regard, Mill maintains that an individual is free to act whichever he pleases so long as he doesn't do harm to others. His concept of the free development of individuality is predicated on the idea that people are capable of making rational decisions about their welfare and practicing any religion they choose while living under the control of the state (i.e., the government), and that the state (i.e., the government) should or frequently interferes when it serves the interests of preserving society.

Is Mill's claim not similar to the minimalist's? Here, the problem inevitably surfaces. The "harm principle," which operates via the state, has the effect of weakening the role of the government by promoting utility in the widest sense while undermining the long-term interests of man as a progressive being. To ensure or realize the "free



development of individuality" or the advancement of mankind, one must be steadfastly and fervently committed to the damage principle, which upholds people's right to do as they choose as long as they do the least amount of harm to others. The different political demands for political liberalism made by different political theories and thinkers eloquently illustrate Mill's assertion. According to Guaba, several of these countries have strong democracies. As a result, for democracy to thrive there needs to be a feeling of unanimity among citizens, motivated by a shared past, present, and future as well as a common core of allegiance (Gaub, 1995:303). The different political demands for political liberalism made by different political theories and thinkers eloquently illustrate Mill's assertion. According to Guaba, several of these countries have strong democracies. As a result, for democracy to thrive there needs to be a feeling of unanimity among citizens, motivated by a shared past, present, and future as well as a common core of allegiance (Gaub, 1995:303). J. S. Mills observed that under the correct circumstances, the human body can acquire evolved talents and attributes, given the dynamic nature of human civilization. So, rather than being static, human nature is demonic. And using one's freedom wisely is the only way to reach one's full potential as a person and advance human society. Here are some distinctive qualities of activities that have an impact on other people. Mill considered that free speech and thought should be the cornerstones of political liberalism. He presented evidence to back up his claim to freedom. Because they are unique creatures, humans actively pursue and maximize their freedom. Added to this is the reality that splitting up activities only has an impact on oneself and other people.

By encouraging acts motivated by autonomy, the best aspects of human potential are achieved. For this reason, every action taken by our species ought to result in the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of individuals. In this instance, ensuring everyone's satisfaction while encouraging the unrestricted growth of uniqueness is morally correct. Liberty, in J.S. Mill's view, is not so much an amendment as it is a basic predicate for rights within the polity and the state. Moreover, it is believed that a free populace could be the foundation of political stability. The right to individual liberty, including the ability to own and control private property, and the inherent dignity and equality of every person may collide when it is shown that certain people's property rights and other people's dignity cannot coexist. This border is exacerbated by disputes inside the state over people's rights to freedom and the question of how much the government can restrict an individual's freedom of action. Asirvatham and Misra assert that democracy elevates the standing of the populace. It all starts with the idea that a guy will respect something much more that he has accomplished for himself than that which has been



bestowed upon him. It is the most effective way to promote self-reliance, initiative, and accountability. According to J. S. Mill, democracy delivers the greatest benefit since it generates a better and higher kind of national character than any other polity (Asirvatham & Misra, 2000:450).

This section's defense of Mill's connection to individual liberty, which is held in high regard, provides the framework for elaborating his brand of political liberalism, which typically backs the freedom to disagree with the status quo in both political and religious matters and maintains that the protection of individual liberty is the purpose of government. It is obvious that man wants to change from conventional thinking. By laying forth in clear, particular detail a framework that demonstrates how and when a government should become involved in the private lives of citizens, Mill carefully articulates two essential positions. The fundamental issue is the limited role of government in people's lives as a result of political liberalism. The central thesis is that happiness cannot be attained without individuality, which is inherently one of the prerequisites for human well-being.

Individual and Social Progress

Civic participation increases both autonomy and generosity: autonomy through self-government and altruism through identifying societal needs (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007:339). From Mill's theories, we may deduce that a person perfects himself by a free and dynamic evolution of himself and through connections with individuals who live in various ways; as a result, truth is upheld in society through discussion and dispute. It is undeniably proven that social stagnation results from uniformity. People are seen to be inherently unique and should be free to explore their differences, according to his political liberalism account. Regardless of how important group interests are, individuality should always come first. By doing this, the more capable members of society will be prevented from oppressing the less capable members.

The degree of autonomy bestowed upon its people by a state empowers them to actively choose a path that will eventually result in progress for society and for themselves. As a result, the government cannot stop its people from becoming more successful in society. Reducing governmental restrictions would prevent an increasingly strong majority from prosecuting an individual, according to the previously indicated viewpoint. The claim is that as long as the core values of individuality and personal growth are upheld for each person as well as society at large, social progress is achievable. Mukherjee and Ramaswamy contend that individuals must have the freedom to participate in their countries and their



workplace's administration as well as to resist the autocratic nature of modern bureaucracy. Only until everyone is able to vote will there is a sense of community (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007:339). Mill's application of the concept of liberty, according to Mukherjee and Ramaswamy, was limited to adults; he neglected minors, the mentally sick, people with disabilities, and communities that were considered barbaric due to racial perceptions. People's freedom may be limited by a lack of knowledge. More developed societies ought to be free, but less developed societies ought to follow rigid authoritarian or paternalistic laws, he argues (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007:328). Social progress, in Mill's view, can only occur in free societies. There is a sincere belief that self-initiative exercises aid in brain development. In the long run, this viewpoint will benefit or advance society because it vehemently opposes societal control and encourages individual initiative. The overview of Mill's perspectives on individual and societal development restricts such governmental or social control measures, contending that they always pose a threat to liberty and must be carefully supervised to prevent unintentionally impeding the state's citizens from achieving adequate development.

A variety of environmental factors must also be present for society to achieve freedom and individuality. However, how other community goals are achieved will depend on each individual's ideal. The idea of individuality is the foundation of political life, and we must always act within its parameters. Mill argues for greater personal freedom than was previously the norm in society in his critique of political liberalism. We will respond to the foraging idea by arguing that a government policy of non-interference with people's behaviour, except to stop certain hostile or unfavourable acts or actions of others, would accelerate the development of institutions that allow and promote religious freedom and free discussion (where they already exist) and the realization of a situation in which a society experiences a significant level of protection, improvement, and development of such institutions.

Liberty, the Individual, and the State

It is essential to comprehend how important liberty is to the people of a state. Existential freedom allows people to reach their full potential and places them in a position that is conducive to self-realization and personal growth, making them more practically viable. Mill makes a strong case for the idea of the free development of individuality, which liberates people from constraints that impede their ability to freely develop their identities. Despite the apparent differences, the state has the authority to act negatively against the person. The goal of Mill's qualitative argument for a position that prioritizes the quality of life for the individual is to encourage the realization of a social and political structure that considers the need for each



individual in the state to have a substantial amount of space to freely develop positively. John Stuart Mill's clear assertion that no one lifestyle will work for everyone and that various people need diverse circumstances to thrive is evidence for political liberalism, a philosophy that supports the defense of individual liberty as the goal of government. It represented utilizing one's own will and improving oneself. He firmly believed that these liberties were necessary for human growth, which is why he stressed them so much (Mukherjee & Ramaswamy, 2007:327–328). Based on the aforementioned, it focuses on how people can shape society in ways that pose a severe threat to the current state structure. The idea that uncritical acceptance of custom typically indicates the incapacity of the state's individual members to make decisions and, ultimately, to affirm their status as free human beings who can act, choose, and launch new initiatives aimed at their own and the state's development is a significant deterrent to the ossifying tendencies of following custom.

The ability to make decisions that would be extremely beneficial to both the individual and the state shows that the individual's objectives and feelings are the product of conscious decision-making rather than being passive outcomes of outside influences. According to J.S. Mill, individuality is defined as one's capacity to choose thoughtfully and intentionally from a variety of worldviews and lifestyles, as well as the scope and character of those choices. This perspective helps to further explain Mill's claim. Mill's concept of free individuality led to the need for the state to recognize the apparent differences that defined the population of the state. With the proviso that they do not harm others or impede their own growth in the process, liberty should create an environment in which every individual is free to choose a way of living that would enable them to realize their full potential. It is now evident that Mill's theory of the free development of personality aims to keep liberty and the essential need for each person's growth within a state from being compromised in the name of protecting the state's overall interests. In this situation, the greater good shouldn't come at the expense of an individual's rights within the state unless doing so will effectively promote and protect that individual's freedom and growth within the state. It should be mentioned that in his philosophical analysis of personalities free evolution,

The realization of active people is more important to Mill than that of inactive people. The individual is shown in this instance as an instrumental or active participant in the state's rebuilding and reform. While stressing the need of human growth, Mill made a compelling case for the maximum extent of personal liberty, as Mahajan noted. He believes that everyone has the fundamental right to be free from the tyranny of the state or the tyranny of the mob. He believed that the government was powerless to



suppress those who held different opinions (Mahajan, 2000:665). The necessity that societies progress in line with people's significant contributions to the state's development serves as evidence of the importance of this contribution. J.S. Mill's anthropological view of the individual or man states that the state cannot harass people or make them do things that are frequently against their natural instincts. This makes it clear that Mill considers that for the state to operate effectively without being restricted by organic structure there must be the potential and actuality of free individual progress. Granted, Mill's emphasis on the value of letting personality develop freely explains why it is so important for a state to tolerate human peculiarities and eccentricities since they are viewed as signs of originality. The idea that a democratic state, as defined and advocated by J.S. Mill in his writings, does not result in a structurally classified society, which would ultimately hinder the state's citizens from actively contributing to its advancement, will therefore be advanced. As seen in many closed cultures where individual freedom and opinions are horribly suppressed or stunted, an open society allows a range of influences and ideas to be expressed without the ossifying desire to gain control and dominate knowledge.

J.S. Mill's daring defense of uniqueness (in terms of the unrestricted development of individuality) is a pass-mark for such a society. According to Mills' theory, it makes sense that a society that values people's freedom to define their own identities would foster a friendly environment where men (individuals) could discover what they truly value and find significant, as well as what ideas and plans they are willing to embrace. Mahajan asserts that no outside influence can prevent a person's faculties from developing to their greatest capacity. Government intervention generally undermines an individual's feeling of autonomy and ability to make appropriate decisions on their own (Mahajan, 2000:667). It is important to keep in mind that in his vision of the free development of individuals, Mill rejected the opinions and desires of men as they already exist as the ultimate basis for political reasoning. This is because, in Mill's view, to try such a path without taking into account the formation of these ideas would be to submit to the oppression of modern orthodoxies. Paternalism, on the other hand, occurs when such ideas—the present attitudes and desires of people—are totally rejected in favor of attempting to impose enlightened standards on everyone in spite of their express preferences. By its very nature, paternalism stifles human freedom and liberty. The argument here is that Mill's idea of individuality expresses the need for alternatives to those two important traditions of social and political thought that either seek to acknowledge and preserve the traditions that already exist or establish a new order that disregards the current opinions and desires of men in order to impose a new standard on everyone.



Implications of Mill's Notion of the Free Development of Individuality

This section will start by emphasizing that if a society is to make real progress, the significance of the individual on issues cannot be understated. However, reading Mill's philosophical justifications for the free formation of personality raises a number of philosophical issues. How much freedom should a state's residents have? What could the government do, at the absolute least, to improve the lives of its people? When members of society have conflicting interests, what institutional or operational rules should be followed to break the deadlock and work toward a shared goal of social progress and development? To achieve the ideal society that Mill envisioned, we must emphasize that the aforementioned issues can and should not be minimized for a number of reasons. Although the person should be free, the main focus of this portion would be on how little restraint should be placed on him. The aforementioned demonstrates how Mill persuasively argues for negative freedom at the outset of his argument, but he also subtly supports positive freedom by emphasizing individuality. The precise boundaries of the state's power over an individual are currently hard to determine (Harrison-Barbet, 2001:255). A lot of the arguments made by proponents of individualism, especially those put forth by J.S. Mill and founded on the notion of the free development of individuality, have occasionally been mistakenly believed to be faultless, undermining the role of the state in governing or managing the lives of those who reside in the state. In response to the dominant claim of the individualists, philosophers and political theorists of different temperaments have attempted to show how crucial it is to allow the individual to be at least minimally conscripted by the state in order to achieve social progress in the pursuit of a just social order. The counterargument to individualism holds that the state is the product of man's social nature and rejects the idea that it is a necessary evil. Intellectuals claim that the modern idea that the state should be a welfare organization whose main objective is to foster human personality development must align with J.S. Mill's thesis of the free evolution of individuality. JS Mill believed that increasing the state's powers and activities would inevitably lead to more laws, which would ultimately limit individual freedom. Numerous persons have been the target of harsh or moderate criticism of one form or another. It is said that no one is as smart as proponents of individualism have consistently asserted; hence, it is unlikely that anyone is the best arbiter of their own interests. Furthermore, despite its seeming individualism, Mill's theories have been shown to support free competition, which has been deemed harmful to society. It has been suggested that the state should regulate and control trade, industry, and other essential aspects of society since it promotes exploitation. It has been argued that planning has greatly benefited society and has not at all hampered individual freedom (from the perspective of the state).



If applied to this situation, J.S. Mill's thesis on the free evolution of individuality would result in a situation where the person desires to pursue higher goals regardless of whether his actions are beneficial to the state. There are problems with unbridled individualism, and a state should, at the very least, have more influence over the day-to-day activities of its people. Hampsher-Monk argues that there is an important difference between "self-regarding" and "other-regarding" actions, which influences what we should be able to forbid or denounce (either illegally as a society or politically through the government). Whether this restriction is feasible depends on a number of factors, including how interconnected we think people are. According to one perspective, self-centred activity may not really exist (Hampsher-Monk, 1992:377).

Although J. S. Mill's idea regarding the free development of personality has been attacked for encouraging free competition, history has demonstrated that this approach largely deteriorates rather than improves the circumstances of the state's citizens. It seems to serve as a foundation for unrestrained capitalism and results in a system where the richest people get wealthy and the disadvantaged get poorer. Consequently, the state is brought up to serve as a restraint on competition for the benefit of society as a whole. Harrison-Barbet says the general rule is that people should be allowed to do whatever they want as long as they respect these rights. This argument gives Mill new issues even though it somewhat clarifies his position (Harrison-Barbet, 1992:379). Contrary to the notion put forth by individualists such as J.S. Mills that intervention hinders or inhibits individual traits or development, experience has shown that regulation has often helped people develop their personalities.

Therefore, the idea of a welfare state should be allowed since it has the potential to significantly benefit its people. The argument against government control or regulation is rejected as unpersuasive. The fundamental claim made by those opposed to atomism and in favour of state control has always been that society is organic and cannot be disregarded, and that every individual is an important part of the whole rather than an atom. One of the main defenses of political liberalism against the state has long been the individualist assertion that the state's actions are less effective than those of the people.

Conclusion

Examining John Stuart Mill's Notion of Free Development of Individuality critically with an emphasis on individualists' justifications for governmental control has been the major objective of this study. Neither public nor private conduct is intrinsically



beneficial or detrimental, we contend. It all depends on the activity; most significantly, the governmental apparatus can be used to encourage development and progress, while in other situations, autonomous, private organizations or companies can be tasked with enacting behavioural changes. In certain situations, society may be better equipped to protect and lead man than he is when he is by himself. The fact that man will now more than ever want to do only what will benefit him the most is proof of this. When the government restricts the development of new structures, this is evident. For example, certain state jurisdictions may restrict access to drinking water to specific sources, require people to get immunizations to protect themselves from specific diseases, and prohibit certain building types if they would obstruct the jurisdiction's growth and development. As this article has demonstrated, Mill was very concerned about the state and its citizens. He thus presents the clear-cut claim that self-defense is the sole reason why someone should obstruct another person's capacity to pursue their own interests, whether those interests are of the individual or the group. To keep people safe is the only reason to use power against the wishes of any member of a civilized society. This study demonstrated that individualism is not wholly irrational since it is predicated on the idea that every person has the right to liberty, which aligns with the contemporary push for individual freedoms. Despite the flaws in the numerous defenses of state control offered by opponents of individualism, this connection will be made. By emphasizing the risks of government participation, people promote self-reliance (with regard to the real growth of individuals in the state). It emphasizes the significance of personal growth for the well-being of society and individuals in general.

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