

Mill on Liberty and Solidarity

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The main aim of this paper is to take Mill's utilitarianism seriously, especially concerning topics such as liberty and solidarity, that have been often neglected, or, even more often, misunderstood by scholars and writers in general. They usually leave aside the actual meaning of liberty that Mill champions (particularly in *On Liberty*) as a personal pursuit of autonomy, excellence and individual enlightenment, according to Mill's ideas of the need the "competent judges's advice" (as he writes in *Utilitarianism*).

Although Mill is recognised as a "sui generis" liberal, attention has rarely been paid to his socialist bending, and his personal engagement, both as a politician and philosopher, on topics like egalitarianism, solidarity, enlarged sympathies and distributive justice. Works such as *The Subjection of Women* or the chapter on "The future of the working class" in *Principles of Political Economy*, are to be taken into account, as well as his personal explanation about his mental and political development that made of him, initially a liberal, a "qualified" socialist, as it is shown in his *Autobiography*.

Mill makes it clear that justice is to be considered as one of the main means to secure the "greatest happiness" for as many people as possible, as opposed to Kantian and Neokantian ideas that mistake Well-being for Welfare, or avoid to evaluate the consequences of Justice and Liberty concerning human well-being.

From my point of view, Mill's moral and political approach is the most accurate and sensible one could expect in connection to the value of Justice, Liberty or Solidarity, that, it seems to me, would be unworthy if they lacked the especial link that joins the whole of them to human well-being. There is possibly an overly optimistic anthropological approach on Mill's part, but it he is not so naive as some should like to think. Mill is aware of the limited capacity of sympathy of human beings (a point that has been made by G.J. Warnock in the last century). However, this does not make Mill despair as he believes in the force and vigour of moral education and institutional regeneration, in order to make people wiser, more enlightened and able to enjoy a gratifying life sharing other people's enlightened joys.