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Mill’s Utilitarianism

Mill was particularly interested in finding solid ways of working when the values ​​of individual freedom and the common good are at odds. In particular, he dealt with Freedom(1859) the extent to which the state and state power are entitled to restrict an individual's freedom and interfere with his or her choices. The questions and arguments raised by Mill remain relevant, even though his theories were heavily entwined with the political issues and changes that surfaced in mid-19th century Victorian Britain. In her writings on individual freedom, Mill also takes a stand on women's rights, which she also advocated as a Member of Parliament. In this political thinking, he sets himself up to represent a much more equal perspective among his contemporary philosophers.

Mill’s conception of morality

Mill justifies the moral value of actions by their usefulness. True, unlike his predecessors, he does not reduce utility to selfish pleasure. His ethics also speaks of the principle of altruism, although the objective grounds for the transition of egoism to its opposite, altruism, are not disclosed. In continuation of the line of moral philosophy, which goes from Aristotle and Epicurus, and contrary to Kantianism, Mill displays morality as having a composite ultimate human goal. Each person seeks to satisfy his desires, and human happiness lies in pure, long and continuous pleasure. Thus, utilitarianism is a theory directed against selfishness, i.e. against the point of view that kindness is the satisfaction of a person with his interests (Harsanyi656).

Mill’s conception of enlightenment

Mill could be said the "maverick of freedom" . He considers that "the individual is not accountable to society for his actions as long as they do not concern the interests of any other person than himself" Thus society does not have on this point to legislate. Freedom is the protection against all constraint, the most formidable of all being that of a public opinion which wants to impose its customs and its beliefs. Freedom is not the law of numbers. On the other hand, the individual must be accountable for acts prejudicial to the interests of others. Political freedom is first and foremost participation in power and Mill is deeply democratic. He defends a representative democracy where all currents are represented and not just the majority. Minorities should be heard with a chance to triumph by the force of their arguments if they conform to reason. In addition to ethical and political questions, Mill's work addresses the problems of knowledge: he is one of the last English empiricists, thinking that the only foundation of knowledge is experience. (Mill 40)

Critique to one’s society

The state must make education compulsory even if Mill does not oppose the existence of private schools for fear of standardizing ideas. We must coordinate the individual interest. Thus, trade must be a social act whose end is to serve the general interest. The state should not have too many tasks because it would increase its power. Large companies are therefore left to the private sector. Mill is wary of the central state hence the idea that the municipalities must ensure the tasks (maintenance of roads, canals). The state must help individual efforts and provide the necessary relief. Mill is not an ultra-liberal: faced with the weakness of the people, the state must act (Mulgan 175). Those who have earned more should not be penalized (for example, by too much tax on large fortunes), but, conversely, children must make efforts for their inheritance. In the absence of a direct heir, the inheritances must revert to the state.

Mill will devote herself to the emancipation of women. The demand for the right to vote for women was one of the conditions for accepting to be a candidate for Westminster in 1865. He wished to demonstrate the need to grant women equality with men at a time when, In England, husbands considered their wives as something to serve their purpose. Mill believes that women's right to vote will have the dual benefit of allowing women to become interested in politics and making them aware of their responsibility. Mill recognizes the utopian socialists of the time ( Saint-Simon , Owen , Fourier) the merit of having proclaimed the total equality of men and women. Mill therefore appears as a liberal influenced by social goals.

Work cited

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