

## Liberal philosophy

John Ayshford examines how, inspired by the republic of classical Athens, John Stuart Mill believed that individuals' freedom, virtue and flourishing were dependent upon their active participation in democratic government as citizens.

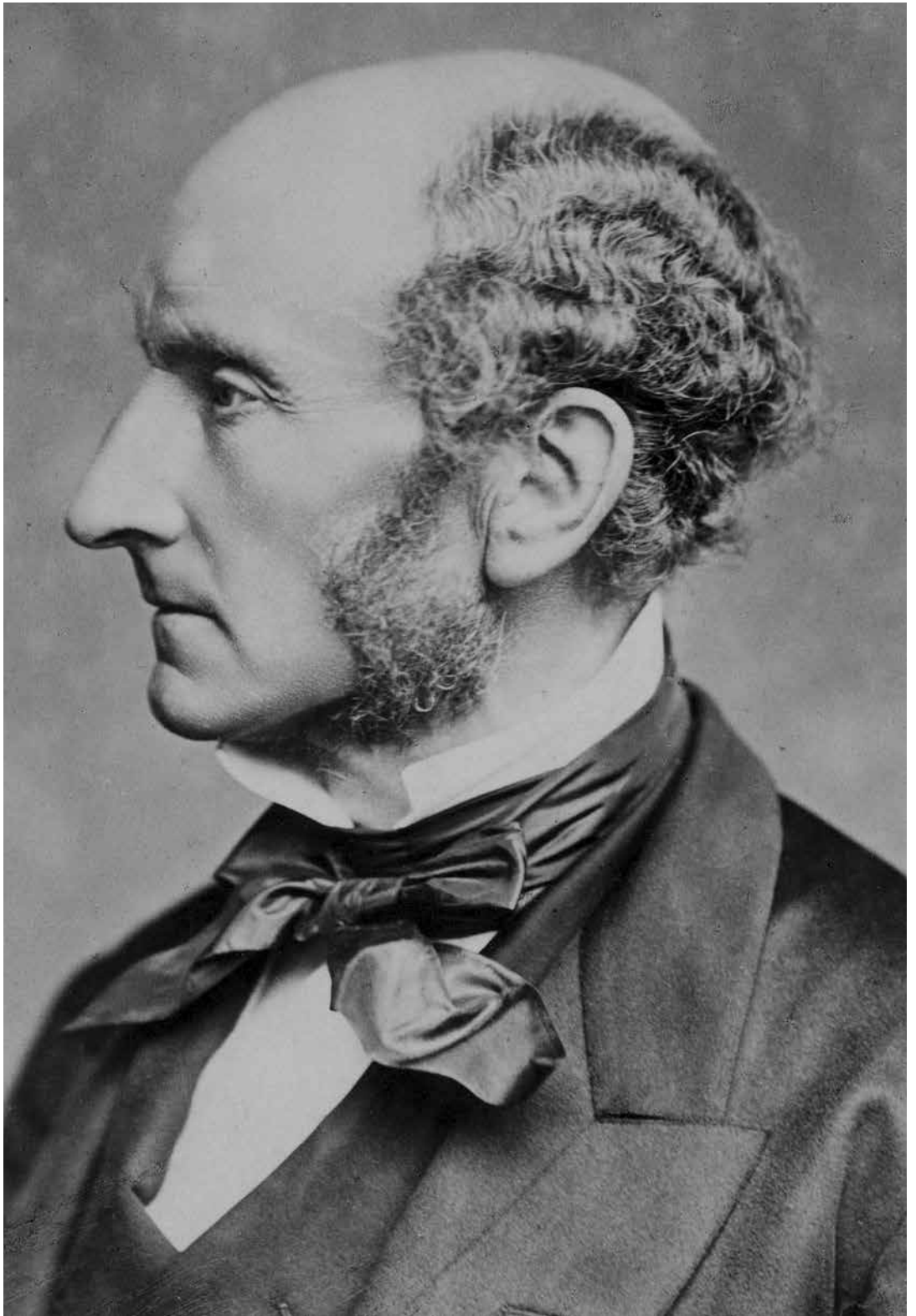
# John Stuart Mill: A Neo-Athenian Republican

**D**ESPITE HIS BEING one of the greatest political philosophers in British history, it remains troublesome to discern the thought of John Stuart Mill. Indeed, how Mill has been interpreted has historically been subject to change. As Stefan Collini has illustrated, in the decades following his death, Mill was transformed from being portrayed as an alien doctrinaire thinker by many to one who was emblematic of the English political tradition.<sup>1</sup> The issue of deciphering Mill in part stems from the fact that he is invoked by figures from across the political spectrum. As Richard Reeves, a biographer of Mill, has written: 'Mill has been claimed ... by pretty much everyone, from the ethical socialist left to the laissez-faire, libertarian right'.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the difficulty of comprehending Mill is further compounded by the fact that his thought was shaped by a truly heterogeneous assortment of people and influences. These ranged from his intense education to the ideas of conservative romanticism and utopian socialism, his interaction with great European intellectuals and leaders and his intriguing relationship with

Harriet Taylor Mill. Jose Harris succinctly illustrates the issue in her entry on Mill in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. As she explains: 'pinpointing Mill's precise identity on the political spectrum was a problem in his lifetime and has been so ever since'.<sup>3</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that he still attracts the unrelenting interest of historians. Multiple collected essays and academic companions on Mill have been published since the 1990s.<sup>4</sup> There is even an ongoing project by the University of Alabama and the University of Oxford to painstakingly document and digitise the thousands of annotations made by Mill in his gigantic collection of books.<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding the difficulties that trouble the location of Mill's thought, it is the contention of this article that Mill should be understood as a republican thinker and that this should lead us to reflect on the nature of liberalism. I argue that Mill, inspired by the republic of classical Athens,

John Stuart Mill (1806–73), 1865 (John Watkins, London Stereoscopic & Photographic Company; © National Portrait Gallery, London)



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believed that individuals' freedom, virtue and flourishing were dependent upon their active participation in democratic government as citizens.<sup>6</sup> This view of Mill, however, would strike many as a complete misreading. Republicanism, particularly of the type which draws on classical Greek civilisation, if anything, appears to be a creed totally at odds with Mill's thought and liberalism. It is often portrayed as a communitarian doctrine which has little regard for the private affairs of individuals and demands that citizens slavishly dedicate themselves to the public good. This difference is vividly demonstrated by the republican idea of the 'General Will' envisaged by the Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. For Rousseau, who was heavily influenced by ancient Greece, the General Will was the binding democratic decision made by citizens of a republic; those who refused to obey it due to their own separate individual and supposedly selfish 'will', would, in Orwellian fashion, 'be forced to be free.'<sup>7</sup> Republicanism, in short, seemingly stands in stark contrast to Mill's ideas as a father figure of liberalism; it suppresses individuality and condones the hobgoblin which liberals fear, the tyranny of the majority.

This common interpretation of a major gulf between liberalism and republicanism stems in part from the classic lecture, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, delivered by the famous liberal philosopher Isaiah Berlin in 1958. In the lecture Berlin, who cited Mill many times, demarcated liberty into

### **This common interpretation of a major gulf between liberalism and republicanism stems in part from the classic lecture, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, delivered by the famous liberal philosopher Isaiah Berlin in 1958.**

two separate senses, negative and positive freedom. According to Berlin, freedom in its positive sense as self-rule which entails the ability to participate in government had 'little to do with Mill's notion of liberty'. Instead, Berlin championed Mill as a prophet of negative liberty, or the freedom of the individual from any external interference.<sup>8</sup> For Berlin, Mill, as a leading

figurehead of classical liberalism, had astutely recognised that democratic rule had the potential to be far more tyrannical than emancipatory. Quoting Mill's *On Liberty*, Berlin asserted that democratic self-government was not 'of each by himself' but instead 'of each by all the rest'.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Berlin claimed that the existence of negative freedom as espoused by Mill was not dependent upon democracy, as it could clearly trample upon the liberties of the individual as much as any autocracy. In Berlin's view 'a liberal-minded despot' would therefore pose no issue for Mill:

the despot who leaves his subjects a wide area of liberty may be unjust, or encourage the wildest inequalities ... but provided he does not curb their liberty, or at least curbs it less than many other regimes, he meets with Mill's specification.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, the idea of a supposed dichotomy between liberalism and republicanism has been propagated in more recent years by the political theorist Philip Pettit and the historian Quentin Skinner. Pettit and Skinner in the 1990s outlined the republican idea of liberty which they posited against Berlin's conception of negative liberty. They illustrated how for republicans people are enslaved if they are at the mercy of – or, in republican terms, dominated by – another more powerful person. While one may live without interference (and enjoy negative freedom) one is

not truly free, as one's liberty is entirely dependent upon the whim of someone else. For republicans, real liberty, or freedom from domination, is thus only secured when the citizens

of a state are ruled not by an unaccountable dictator, but by themselves. This idea of freedom was, however, according to Pettit and Skinner, supplanted by the classical liberal or negative conception of liberty. The popularisation of this conception of liberty by utilitarians such as Jeremy Bentham, Mill's 'philosopher grandfather', and by the nineteenth-century Franco-Swiss

liberal Benjamin Constant, meant that the republican understanding of liberty, which had existed long before liberalism, was superseded.<sup>11</sup> A close examination of Mill's thought demonstrates, however, that in contrast to these influential accounts, he believed that individual freedom and human flourishing were inextricably intertwined with democratic government. Given Mill's canonical status, this disparity demands that we should review how we understand liberalism.

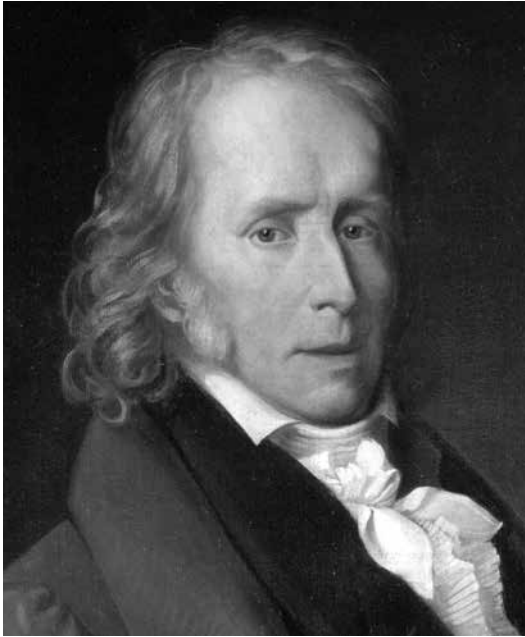
This article is not the first to challenge the apparent dichotomy between republicanism and liberalism. There have been several studies which have demonstrated the strong republican element within Mill's thought and British Liberalism. H. S. Jones, for instance, pointed out how the republican notion of virtue shaped Mill's 'ideal of character' and how, furthermore, Berlin's account of Mill did not capture this.<sup>12</sup> Gregory Claeys, in his comprehensive examination of Mill's thought, *Mill and Paternalism*, claimed that Mill's ideas made him 'indisputably... a radical republican'.<sup>13</sup> Another notable piece was Eugenio Biagini's 2003 article 'Neo-Roman Liberalism'. Biagini not only provided a succinct overview of the republican values imbedded in the thought of Victorian liberal thinkers, but also demonstrated how popular liberalism was intertwined with the multitude of mid-Victorian volunteer associations which represented a resurrection of the republican idea of a citizen army.<sup>14</sup> Alongside this existing historiography, the article posits Mill not only as a republican but one who belongs to the neo-Athenian tradition.<sup>15</sup> In this respect it shadows and builds upon the work of Nadia Urbinati and another essay composed by Biagini, 'Liberalism and Direct Democracy', written at the turn of the millennium.<sup>16</sup>

### Freedom from subjection

Mill, in contrast to Berlin's assertion that he was unmoved by dictatorship as long as the individual was not interfered with, could not countenance autocratic rule. He detested the despotism and militarism of authoritarian European leaders. Indeed, Mill called for a citizen-army, akin

to those in the republics of the United States and Switzerland, to protect liberty in Britain from belligerent continental tyrants, ready to return to peaceful civilian life after a conflict to prevent it becoming a domestic source of despotism.<sup>17</sup> He had, as Reeves writes, an 'unquenchable' loathing of Emperor Louis Napoleon III. Upon hearing the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, for instance, Mill angrily exclaimed his regret that the Italian nationalist Orsini had failed to assassinate him earlier.<sup>18</sup> Mill's disdain for despotism was also inherently prevalent in his writing and constituted an underlying theme in his work. Mill, in stark contradiction to Berlin's interpretation of him, staunchly held the republican belief that no one could be free under a despot, no matter how generous they were to their subjects. Mill articulated the republican principle that freedom was conditional upon the citizens themselves deciding the laws under which they were governed. This republican concept was a core theme of *Considerations on Representative Government*, Mill's main political treatise, for instance. Mill, in order to demonstrate that representative democracy was 'the ideally best form of government', provided a retort in *Considerations on Representative Government* to what he considered 'a radical and most pernicious misconception' that 'despotic monarchy' was the superior type of government. Mill contended that even if there could be a 'superhuman' ruler who could manage all affairs of society, in such a situation, however, people would have their development stunted from want of participation in government. As such Mill imagined that the despot could choose to mitigate such stagnation by opting to become a constitutional monarch in order to afford the people a substantial role in government 'as if they governed themselves'. The despot could further allow freedom of speech too 'as would enable a public opinion to form and express itself on national affairs'. Such freedoms, Mill asserted, however, would be solely dependent upon the temperament of the despot who could choose to relinquish them immediately if they decided not to tolerate criticism or dissent towards their rule. Despite the

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Liberal philosophers; Benjamin Constant (1767–1830), 1820; George Grote (1794–1871), 1824

possibility of a paucity of interference and the affordance of liberties, Mill demonstrated in *Considerations on Representative Government* his fundamental belief that subjects under a benevolent despot were nothing more than ‘slaves’.<sup>19</sup>

Mill’s dislike of domination was not only a feature of his mature thinking either. Indeed, Mill as a teenage utilitarian radical decried the domination of the poor by the aristocracy. In a debate in August 1824 on parliamentary reform Mill lambasted the inefficacy of the British constitution in securing the liberty of individuals. Mill pointed to how the landed elite in Britain were in a position whereby they could freely ‘oppress’ their tenants ‘almost without restraint ... on the most frivolous of pretexts’. Equally, at the same time, Mill was also keen to underscore that no security provided by the government against bodily harm or theft, however, was worthwhile if no security was afforded against it dominating its citizens:

look at the government of Napoleon Bonaparte: if security from robbery and murderers constituted good government, there

never was a better government than his ... Why do we call Bonaparte’s government a bad one? Because if person and property were secure against individuals, they were not secure against the despot.<sup>20</sup>

Mill’s critique of domination was not just limited to the political sphere but also addressed the despotic relation between husbands and wives in the nineteenth century. Mill had strong feminist inclinations from his childhood, and these were augmented by his relationship with his wife Harriet Taylor Mill.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, Mill expounded his critique of domination most fervently in *The Subjection of Women*. Even Skinner, amongst other scholars, for instance, recognises that freedom from domination is at the heart of the text. Skinner has remarked that the work ‘draws on a wholeheartedly republican conception of freedom to excoriate the domination and dependence suffered by women in mid-Victorian England’.<sup>22</sup> Mill published the text in 1869 having written it originally in 1860, waiting to publish it ‘when it should seem likely to be most useful’, having tried in vain as an MP to realise

the attainment of female suffrage in 1867.<sup>23</sup> It echoed many of the ideas raised in Harriet Taylor Mill's essay *Enfranchisement of Women*, which was published anonymously in the *Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review* in 1851. Whilst the work was Harriet's own, Mill had collaborated with her in drafting its principal arguments.<sup>24</sup>

In *The Subjection of Women* Mill argued that women were not free but in a state of slavery. Whilst this subjection had evolved 'into a milder form of dependence' their current state of bondage ultimately derived not from free deliberation concerning the most fit form of relation between the sexes, but from the physical inferiority of women which allowed men to coerce them. Over time this physical inferiority had transformed into their inferior legal and social status in society. As Mill stated: 'the inequality of rights between men and women has no other source than the law of the strongest'.<sup>25</sup> Here Mill was resonating Harriet's assertion 'that those who were physically weaker should have been made legally inferior, is quite conformable to the mode in which the world has been governed'.<sup>26</sup> This inferior status, Mill noted, placed women in a state of domination. They were not allowed to pursue any action without their husband's consent, whose watchful eye they were under nearly every moment of every day. Mill thus concluded that while slaves were treated in a far less humane way to wives, 'no slave is a slave to the same lengths, and in so full a sense of the word, as a wife is'.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, Mill argued that women did not have any means of redress to relieve this domination. For Mill the fact that the wife was not even afforded the 'insufficient alleviation' of being able to leave her master for a better one, was additional testament to how women were in a worse position than slaves who could in some instances force their master to sell them if too maltreated.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, as they had no right to vote they had no say in how they were governed and any safeguards they were afforded under the law were thus dependent upon the will of enfranchised men; to which Mill rhetorically noted: 'and we know what legal protection the

slaves have, where the laws are made by their masters'.<sup>29</sup> Mill's staunch belief that women could not rely on the protection of men and therefore needed the vote was a core tenet of his feminism which he had held since a young age. Mill had disagreed, for instance, with his father who believed that women did not need the vote as they shared the same interests as men.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Mill raised this argument in the House of Commons when he proposed an amendment to the bill which would become the Reform Act 1867 to include the enfranchisement of women. Mill asserted that for the same reasons working men could not be in any way represented by their employers and needed the vote to protect their interests, so did women need the vote to provide 'other protection than that of their men'.<sup>31</sup>

Given Mill's vehement dislike of domination regardless of whether it manifested in the political or family sphere it naturally followed that, in illustrating the plight and domination of women, Mill painted the husband throughout *The Subjection of Women*, as Harriet had done in her essay, as a despot, the wife being their subject.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in noting that Mill construed the family as a dictatorial 'miniature polity', Claeys argues that the work was heavily influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792).<sup>33</sup> In a reiteration of the argument he made in *Considerations on Representative Government*, Mill likened the wife to a subject living under a tyrant with the wife being 'entitled to nothing except during the good pleasure' of her husband.<sup>34</sup> Mill further elaborated on the comparison by describing how the good nature of the husband, like that of a tyrant, was no protection from subjection and ill-treatment. Whilst Mill recognised that there could easily be a loving bond between husband and wife, in his eyes, however, this had little difference between the attachment of slaves to their masters in antiquity whose devotion would stretch so far as to sacrifice themselves to save their master despite their often-cruel treatment.<sup>35</sup> Despotism of any kind was arbitrary regardless of whether the husband or tyrant chose to withhold some of their terrible powers. As Mill argued:

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not a word can be said for despotism in the family which cannot be said for political despotism. Every absolute king does not sit at his window to enjoy the groans of his tortured subjects ... The despotism of Louis XVI was not the despotism of ... Caligula; but it was bad enough to justify the French Revolution, and to palliate even its horrors.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, Mill was anxious to stress that, whenever despotism of any kind was defended, be it between slaves and their master, subjects and their dictator, or between a wife and her husband, the despotic relation was depicted as one of happy deference and paternal benevolence. In Mill's words: 'we are presented with pictures of loving exercise of authority on one side, loving submission to it on the other'. There was absolutely no guarantee, however, that power would be exercised in such a benevolent way. There was no test, Mill noted, for instance, before marriage to ascertain whether the husband could be judged worthy to wield such power over the wife. To Mill there were innumerable terrible men, 'little higher than brutes', who could treat their wives in despicable ways with impunity. Whilst Mill recognised that 'absolute fiends are as rare as angels', such licence to despicably treat women showed the depths of their domination. As Mill wrote: 'in domestic as in political tyranny, the case of absolute monsters chiefly illustrates the institution by showing that there is scarcely any horror which may not occur under it if the despot pleases'.<sup>37</sup> Only when women were granted equal rights and liberties to men and thereby freed from marital despotism could their deplorable subjection end.

### Freedom, virtue and flourishing

Contrary to Berlin's reading Mill held a strong attachment to freedom from domination. No matter how well-intentioned a despot could be, be they a King or a husband, given that any liberties their subjects enjoyed could be taken away in an instant, individuals under their yoke were in a state of slavery in all but name. Mill's

republicanism, however, was not just limited to freedom from arbitrary rule. Mill also held the traditional republican belief that humans become far more virtuous, and flourish, when they participate enthusiastically in government as equals. When citizens collectively governed themselves, they would reach a higher plane and come to see others as associates and actively seek to realise the good of their fellow-citizens. As Mill wrote, the citizen would 'feel himself one of the public, and whatever is for their benefit to be for his benefit'. In Mill's mind when people energetically participated in public affairs they became 'very different beings, in range of ideas and development of faculties, from those who have done nothing in their lives but drive a quill, or sell goods over a counter'. Ordinary, routine private life and work based on self-interest did nothing to enlighten the individual.<sup>38</sup>

These ideas also pervaded Mill's feminism as well. Mill likewise contended that, because women had no say in how their lives were governed nor any role in public affairs, they could not develop into the rational and virtuous citizens he wished to see them become. As Mary Lyndon Shanley writes: 'Mill shared Aristotle's view that participation in civic life was enriching and ennobling activity, but Mill saw that for a woman, no public-spirited dimension to her life was possible'.<sup>39</sup> Reiterating the ideas which he and Harriet had formulated earlier, Mill argued that the exclusion of women from public affairs left them with no concern for the community, caring only for what was best for their family, and that this in turn led them to sap the civic virtue of their husbands.<sup>40</sup> If women were granted the vote, on the other hand, their faculties alongside their concern for others outside the family would be considerably expanded.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, Mill's vision of an ideal marriage mirrored that of a republic as a free association of equals. According to Mill, such an association, even more than citizenship, 'would be the real school of the virtues of freedom ... a school of sympathy in equality, of living together in love, without power on one side or obedience on the other'.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, one of Mill's

best descriptions of the ‘ennobling influence’ of free collective self-government is used in *The Subjection of Women* to laud the enhancing effects women would experience in being treated as free and equal partners to men:

the nerve and spring which it gives to all the faculties, the larger and higher objects which it presents to the intellect and feelings, the more unselfish public spirit, and calmer and broader views of duty, that it engenders, and the generally loftier platform on which it elevates the individual as a moral, spiritual, and social being – is every particle as true of women as of men.<sup>43</sup>

To summarise, Mill professed that self-government would ensure the liberty of individuals from domination, cultivate their public-spirit-edness, and allow them to blossom. Mill’s thinking in this respect was undoubtedly influenced in part by his reading of Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, but the real source of Mill’s republicanism, however, lay in his love of ancient Greece, specifically the history of the republic of Athens.<sup>44</sup>

### The Athenian origins of John Stuart Mill’s republicanism

Throughout his life Mill had a real affinity with ancient Greek history. Indeed, the study of classical Greece was central to his upbringing. Mill disclosed in his *Autobiography* that, given how young he was, he could not remember when he first started learning Greek. Between the ages of eight and twelve he had consumed works ranging from the philosopher Aristotle, the historian Thucydides and the playwright Aristophanes.<sup>45</sup> In adult life, whilst relieved of his father’s straining education, Mill’s interest in ancient Greece would not fade and he would go on to write many works and reviews on the subject.<sup>46</sup> The jewel in the crown

of his love affair with ancient Greece was Athens. Athens ‘eclipsed’ all other city-states of classical Hellenistic civilisation. In Mill’s own words: ‘all the Greek elements of progress, in their highest culmination, were united in that illustrious city’.<sup>47</sup> Naturally it followed that Athens would have a major influence on his thought; and by analysing how Berlin viewed democracy in the ancient republic of Athens compared to Mill it is possible to further illuminate the discrepancy between Berlin’s assessment of Mill as a proponent of negative liberty and Mill’s own actual neo-athenian republicanism.

Berlin’s account of negative liberty as expressed in his lecture *Two Concepts of Liberty* was also inspired by Benjamin Constant, who he placed alongside Mill as one of the ‘fathers of liberalism’.<sup>48</sup> Constant, in a lecture delivered in Paris in 1819, delineated liberty into that of the moderns and that of the ancients. Having experienced the Jacobin dictatorship which eulogised classical virtues, he wanted to extol the freedoms afforded to the individual in modern liberal states. He illustrated that while the liberty of the moderns was the freedom to enjoy one’s affairs undisturbed, the liberty of the ancients pertained to self-government, and that the private lives of individuals were totally subject to the community. The practice of ostracism in Athens, for instance, demonstrated that ‘the individual was much more subservient to the supremacy of the social body in Athens, than he is in any of the free states of Europe today’.<sup>49</sup> Constant’s speech underpinned Berlin’s belief that negative lib-

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erty was a modern concept, not found in classical civilisation, and was one which provided far greater freedom than the very limited (positive) freedom of collective rule.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, Berlin too drew on the historic example of ancient



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Athens to demonstrate the value of negative liberty. For Berlin, people in Athens alongside other Greek cities were conceived not as individuals, but as communitarian beings whose lives were unquestionably entwined with the polis. Examining the famous Funeral Oration of the fifth-century BCE Athenian statesman and general Pericles, Berlin argued that people in Athens were not really free at all but totally subject to the city-state having 'no claims against it', yet owing it absolute loyalty. Ironically mirroring Mill's point that slaves and wives could love their overlords despite being completely at their mercy, Berlin stated that Pericles was celebrating the allowance of a tolerant atmosphere in Athens because there was no need to coerce men into certain moulds in order to make them sacrifice themselves for the state because they would do it out of devotion. As such Berlin asserted that Pericles and his fellow Athenians simply had no understanding of individual rights. Berlin explained instead that the true conception of freedom: 'that men need an area ... within which they can do as they please', i.e. 'the notion of freedom from state control', was only later conceived by the leading liberals of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Constant and Humboldt, finding 'its most eloquent champion in John Stuart Mill'.<sup>51</sup>

Mill too had his understanding of freedom informed by ancient Athens, but he had a fundamentally different view of the liberty of the ancients to Berlin. Whereas Constant and Berlin castigated ancient or positive liberty in order to critique Jacobin and Communist dictatorships, Mill in contrast, just as he had upheld the French Revolution against the ire of Tory historians, extolled the greatness of the Athenian republic in order to bolster the cause of democratisation in Britain.<sup>52</sup> In fact, Mill's defence of Athens was part of a wider debate between conservatives and radicals over ancient Athenian democracy following the French Revolution, with its history being used as a political football to either lambast or uphold the Revolution and democracy. Indeed, Mill labelled the anti-democratic Spartans, the arch-rivals of the 'nobler'

and 'wiser' Athenians during the Peloponnesian war, as the 'hereditary Tories and Conservatives of Greece'.<sup>53</sup> Notably, there was, for instance, a rather public literary mêlée between the Tory *Quarterly Review* and the Radical Benthamite *Westminster Review* in the 1820s over Athenian Democracy.<sup>54</sup> Nowhere, however, was this debate better illustrated than in the works on Ancient Greece by the historians William Mitford, who had been a Tory MP, and George Grote, a friend of Mill and Philosophic Radical who had been influenced by James Mill and Bentham. Mitford's *History of Greece* was published as five volumes between 1784 and 1810 and his second volume which appeared in 1790 sketched 'many parallels between the direct and radical democracy of ancient Athens and the French Revolution'. Mitford asserted that the Athenian republic was prone to demagoguery, corruption and irrational decision-making.<sup>55</sup> Mitford's histories were thus clear warnings against further democratisation 'explicitly designed to prevent England from following the path followed by France'.<sup>56</sup> Mill, who was just as 'Greece-intoxicated' as Grote, according to his friend Alexander Bain, thoroughly enjoyed reading Mitford's history several times as a child, but was warned by his father of its anti-democratic bias. Mill was alerted to 'the Tory prejudices of this writer, and his perversions of facts for the whitewashing of despots, and blackening of popular institutions'.<sup>57</sup> In response to Mitford's oeuvre, Grote wrote a critique of it in 1826 in the *Westminster Review*, in which he lambasted Mitford's work for being laden with 'political bias ... without disguise or mitigation'. Grote accused Mitford of distorting and omitting historical evidence to glorify monarchism and of arbitrarily deriding democracy without justification especially in the volumes which followed the French Revolution.<sup>58</sup> This first rejoinder followed his embarkation in 1823 on writing a history which would rebut Mitford's assessment and defend the reputation of Athenian democracy. Mill would come to review Grote's *History of Greece* twice in 1846 and 1853 in the *Edinburgh Review*. On analysing his second review, in which Mill exalted Athens, it

becomes clear that Mill, in this climate of fierce debate, infused what he saw as the qualities of the ancient Athenian republic into his conceptions of liberty and democracy elucidated in his later and most famous works.<sup>59</sup>

Whilst Berlin believed that it was ‘a gross anachronism’ to locate individual liberty ‘in the ancient world’, both Grote and Mill in his review of Grote’s work saw it as a staple element of Athenian democracy which was responsible for its glory.<sup>60</sup> As Biagini writes, ‘far from being an illibertarian republic, Grote’s and Mill’s Athens was the home of civil liberties’.<sup>61</sup> Like Berlin, both Grote and Mill were drawn to Pericles’ Funeral Oration, Mill even went as far as to quote it in his second review. Indeed, Mill’s father had shown Mill how famous orations provided ‘insight ... into Athenian institutions’.<sup>62</sup> Mill, following Grote, was anxious to convey to his readers that the oration demonstrated that civic virtue coexisted perfectly with individual liberty in Athens. As he wrote:

in the greatest Greek commonwealth, as described by its most distinguished citizen [Pericles], the public interest was held of paramount obligation in all things which concerned it; but, with that part of the conduct of individuals which concerned only themselves, public opinion did not interfere.<sup>63</sup>

Mill remarked how this speech fundamentally challenged older accounts’ understanding of liberty in the ancient world (such as Mitford’s and Constant’s). For Mill, ‘Athenian democracy had been so outrageously, and without measure, misrepresented’. Mill asserted that Pericles’ Funeral Oration, as Grote had ‘not failed to point out’, dislodged ‘what we are so often told about the entire sacrifice, in the ancient republics, of the liberty of the individual to an imaginary good of the state’.<sup>64</sup> Mill’s understanding of ancient Athenian democracy, as outlined in his review of Grote, had a substantial influence in

informing his most famous later works. From analysing his veneration of the Athenian republic, we not only see how Mill’s thinking differed from Berlin’s famous interpretation, but at the same time gain a richer account of some of his most influential ideas which in turn prompts us to contemplate how we perceive liberalism.

### The Athenian ideal

Mill’s admiration for ancient Athens is omnipresent throughout his principal texts. As Biagini has asserted, ‘the common thread’ connecting Mill’s seemingly varied thought ‘was a version of the ‘classical republican’ model which held the key position in Mill’s liberalism’.<sup>65</sup> Reeves makes a similar observation, writing that ‘much of his political philosophy can be seen as an attempt to recapture what he saw as the best features of Athenian democracy, for an industrial world’.<sup>66</sup> Understanding this not only allows one to comprehend the disparity between Mill’s republicanism and Berlin’s championing of him as a hero of negative liberty, but also affords the insight that Mill’s conception of an exemplary liberal democracy was based upon the Athenian republic.

A seeming underlying tension in Mill’s work is the clash between his individualism and support for popular government. Whilst he extols democracy, Mill seems equally to warn of the dangers of democratic government encroaching on the individual. As discussed above, Berlin quoted Mill’s point in *On Liberty* that democratic government was not ‘of each by himself’ but rather ‘of each by all the rest’ to stress the value of negative liberty.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, when the entire passage is read in full, Mill is reiterating de Toc-

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queville’s warning of the threat posed by the tyranny of the majority.<sup>68</sup> This apparent disparity



The Athenian Assembly, as imagined by Philipp von Foltz (1805–77); Pericles delivering his funeral oration to the Assembly.

dissipates, however, when placed in the context of Mill’s wish to model democratic government on Athens. Whilst the threat of the tyranny of the majority had emerged following the creation of large modern democracies, a healthy republic composed of engaged, virtuous and enlightened citizens modelled on Athens held the key to securing individual freedom.

As discussed above, at the centre of Mill’s republicanism was his desire for individuals to actively participate in their own government together. In doing so Mill believed that people, beyond securing their political freedom, would flourish becoming far more virtuous and wiser. This reasoning, which formed such a core component of Mill’s thought, drew heavily from his understanding of ancient Athens:

the practice of the dicastery and the ecclesia raised the intellectual standard of an average Athenian citizen far beyond anything of

which there is yet an example in any other mass of men, ancient or modern. The proofs of this are apparent in every page of our great historian of Greece [Grote].

The involvement of individuals in their own governance would give them an ‘education which every citizen of Athens obtained from her democratic institutions’ and render them, as mentioned above, ‘very different beings, in range of ideas and development of faculties’.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, Mill believed that this transformation fostered by engagement in public affairs would also make individuals respectful of the interests and liberties of others. In short, the public good would be strongly pursued by all, but everyone would have an equally potent attachment to the freedom of individuals, just as Mill imagined was the case in Athens where ‘freedom from social intolerance’ was ‘combined with ... a lively and energetic participation in public affairs’.<sup>70</sup>

This constituted what Mill called the exercise of ‘rational freedom’ which he comprehensively outlined in *The Subjection of Women*:

when they have learnt to understand the meaning of duty and the value of reason, they incline more and more to be guided and restrained by these in the exercise of their freedom; but they do not therefore desire freedom less; they do not become disposed to accept the will of other people as the representative and interpreter of those guiding principles. On the contrary, the communities in which the reason has been most cultivated, and in which the idea of social duty has been most powerful, are those which have most strongly asserted the freedom of action of the individual – the liberty of each to govern his conduct by his own feelings of duty.<sup>71</sup>

Mill further echoed this thinking in his treatise *Utilitarianism*. Through creating a cooperative association of equals, democracy enlightened people and greatly enhanced their virtue, with individuals becoming ever more eager to protect the wellbeing and freedom of others:

Society between equals can only exist on the understanding that the interests of all are to be regarded equally ... In this way people grow up unable to conceive as possible to them a state of total disregard of other people’s interests. They are under a necessity of conceiving themselves as at least abstaining from all the grosser injuries, and (if only for their own protection) living in a state of constant protest against them ... Not only does all strengthening of social ties, and all healthy growth of society, give to each individual a stronger personal interest in practically consulting the welfare of others; it also leads him to identify his feelings more and more with their good ... Every step in political improvement renders it more so, by removing the sources of opposition of interest, and levelling those inequalities of legal privilege between individuals or classes,

owing to which there are large portions of mankind whose happiness it is still practicable to disregard. In an improving state of the human mind, the influences are constantly on the increase, which tend to generate in each individual a feeling of unity with all the rest; which feeling, if perfect, would make him never think of, or desire, any beneficial condition for himself, in the benefits of which they are not included.<sup>72</sup>

For Mill the liberties of individuals would not be crushed by democracy; instead, their freedom was dependent upon it. A republic in the vein of Athens composed of a virtuous and active citizenry would create the conditions for maximising individual freedom. In Mill’s view ‘self-restraining government’ was impossible ‘unless each individual participant feels himself a trustee for all his fellow citizens... certainly no Athenian voter thought otherwise’.<sup>73</sup> As Biagini writes, Mill’s ‘liberal’ paradise was not only compatible with the full implementation of the ‘republican’ ideal of a perpetually deliberating *demos*, but, in fact, it *required* it.<sup>74</sup> Urbinati concurs, asserting that Mill’s theory of democratic government revived the ancient idea of *eleutheria*, the concept of being free both at the political and at an individual level.<sup>75</sup>

Mill’s belief, inspired by his understanding of the ancient republic of Athens, that individual freedom was inherently tied to lively democratic participation also affords a more nuanced understanding of some of Mill’s most profound ideas which lie at the heart of liberalism. For example, it permits a contextualised understanding of his delineation of actions into self-regarding and other-regarding ones as detailed in *On Liberty*. In promoting a society where the individual was totally ‘sovereign’ in affairs which only concerned themselves, but also one which encompassed ‘a great increase of disinterested exertion to promote the good of others’, Mill was again imagining a democracy in the guise of ‘the greatest Greek commonwealth’ for nineteenth-century Britain. Here, the public good was to be held in the utmost importance, but equally the

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individual's private concerns were to be left alone.<sup>76</sup> Unlike Berlin, who contended that Mill aspired for 'the maximum degree of non-interference compatible with the minimum demands of social life', Mill's neo-Athenian 'doctrine' of individual freedom was not, as he penned in *On Liberty*, one of 'selfish indifference, which pretends that human beings ... should not concern themselves about the well-doing or well-being of another, unless their own interest is involved'.<sup>77</sup>

### In sum, Mill wanted modern society to replicate Athens' respectful environment of tolerance in order to promote the conditions for progress.

Inspired by Athens, Mill linked civic virtue and individual freedom together like bees and honey.

Furthermore, Mill's stress in *On Liberty* on allowing geniuses who were inherently minorities to 'breathe freely in an atmosphere of freedom' in order to foster progress was also clearly influenced by his reading of Athenian democracy.<sup>78</sup> In his review Mill, concurred with Grote's argument that it was the respectful atmosphere garnered by the virtuous and freedom-devoted active citizens of the republican city-state which allowed it to become a 'centre of enlightenment'.<sup>79</sup> Mill quoted Grote to underscore his assessment:

'the stress which he [Pericles in his Funeral Oration] lays upon the liberty of thought and action at Athens, not merely from excessive restraint of law, but also from practical intolerance between man and man, and tyranny of the majority over individual dissenters in taste and pursuits ... brings out one of those points in the national character upon which the intellectual development of the time mainly depended ... the peculiar promptings in every individual bosom were allowed to manifest themselves and bear fruit, without being suppressed by external opinion, or trained into forced conformity with some assumed standard: antipathies against any of them formed no part of the habitual

morality of the citizen ... society was rendered more comfortable, ... more instructive, and more stimulating, all its germs of productive fruitful genius, so rare everywhere, found in such an atmosphere the maximum of encouragement'.

As Grote concluded, individual liberty belonged 'more naturally' in a healthy democracy like Athens.<sup>80</sup> Additionally, Mill elaborated on

Grote's remarks and, in doing so, further foreshadowed his argument in *On Liberty* that, without individual freedom, society would stagnate owing

to what he called 'the despotism of custom'.<sup>81</sup>

Directly echoing his later remarks in *On Liberty*, Mill wrote that genius would be 'fatally stunted in its growth' unless it grew in the right 'soil'. According to Mill, Grote, drawing on Pericles, had 'pointed out' that such favourable conditions existed in Athens; the tolerance of the Athenian 'made Athens illustrious' whilst the modern era was one of 'mediocrity'.<sup>82</sup> This was the case because, in Grote's words, as quoted by Mill, 'the intolerance of the national opinion' severely curtailed 'individual character'.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, Mill indignantly further wrote in his review of Grote's work that in modern society, in contrast to Athens, 'no one is required by opinion to pay any regard to the public, except by conducting his own private concerns in conformity to its expectations'.<sup>84</sup> In sum, Mill wanted modern society to replicate Athens' respectful environment of tolerance in order to promote the conditions for progress. This ideal starkly contrasted with Victorian society where attitudes towards the public good and the private affairs of the individual were the antithesis of what Mill aspired for.

The ancient republic of Athens was thus a font of inspiration for Mill and, by understanding how it influenced his thought, we can gain a richer, contextualised account of his major ideas. Before we consider what implications this may have for how we understand liberalism,

however, it should be clarified that Grote and Mill did not manipulate the history of Athens to forward their political ideas as Mitford did. James Kierstead writes, for instance, that while Grote's interpretation of Athens 'was partly a result of his own milieu in liberal London is undeniable', Grote's sympathy towards democracy and his rigorous historical analysis allowed him to provide a far more accurate account of Athens than previous works by royalist conservative historians such as Mitford. Indeed, some contemporary scholars argue that it is still a valuable account of ancient Greece. T. H. Irwin even described it as 'the pre-eminent modern history of Greece in English', unsurpassed by any contemporary work.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, Mill did not frivolously or uncritically review Grote's work. He would revisit primary sources in order to scrupulously assess it. Mill, for instance, 'reread all of Homer', to prepare for his first review and rightly challenged Grote's interpretation of the chronology of the construction of the *Iliad*.<sup>86</sup> Most importantly, however, whilst he aimed to refute the Tory account of Athens, Mill did not misconstrue it anachronistically as a liberal utopia. Whilst Mill wished that 'the Athens of Pericles could have lived on', he was certainly under no illusions regarding the existence of slavery and the oppression of women in the ancient polis.<sup>87</sup> Despite having a huge admiration for the city-state, Athens was not Mill's Shangri-La.

### Reflecting on liberalism

Argument over the nature of liberalism rages and will do continuously, and, as this article illustrates, Mill will always be at the heart of this debate. Notwithstanding the fact that Mill comprises just one thinker within the giant pantheon which constitutes the liberal ideological canon, the neo-Athenian ideals of Mill, in addition to demonstrating that liberalism and republicanism are not mutually incompatible creeds, lead us to reflect on what it means to be a liberal. The case of Mill illustrates that being a liberal by no means entails, as critics of liberalism (especially those who might point to Berlin) might

claim, being apprehensive towards popular rule and unaware of subtler forms of oppression, and subscribing to an individualism which places self-indulgence over the community. As Mill's thought demonstrates, vibrant individuality and the realisation of one's full potential, which are at the heart of liberalism, can go hand in hand with democracy and an unwavering dedication to upholding the personal freedom of others. Being a liberal can mean being both a citizen and an individual. This article is not alone in making this assessment of Millian liberalism either; Claeys writes that Mill wanted to develop the 'virtue of individuals, and their willingness to become more sociable and less self-interested beings without at the same time losing their individuality'.<sup>88</sup> Reeves remarks too how Mill 'wanted a society in which individuals had the freedom and strength to pursue their own goals, along with the virtue and character necessary to sustain collective life'.<sup>89</sup> Lastly, beyond stimulating discussion on what it means to be a liberal, Mill's neo-Athenian republican ideals present the outline of a healthy liberal and democratic society composed of equal and prospering associates. His vision offers a means to help remedy the deleterious effects of patriarchy, and the strange yet nonetheless true combination of selfish atomism and conformity of contemporary society.<sup>90</sup> As such, whilst some may potentially disagree with his portrayal of Athens, we can only profit from revisiting the ideas of Mill.

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- 1 Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual life in Britain, 1850–1930* (Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 320–2, 338–40.
- 2 Richard Reeves, *John Stuart Mill: Victorian Firebrand* (Atlantic Books, 2007), p. 8.

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- 3 Jose Harris, 'Mill, John Stuart', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 5 Jan. 2012.
- 4 See: John Skorupski (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Mill* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Nadia Urbinati and Alex Zakaras (eds.), *J. S. Mill's Political Thought: A Bicentennial Reassessment* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); Georgios Varouxakis and Paul Kelly (eds.), *John Stuart Mill – Thought and Influence: The Saint of Rationalism* (Routledge, 2010); Christopher Macleod and Dale E. Miller (eds.), *A Companion to Mill* (John Wiley & Sons, 2017).
- 5 <https://millmarginalia.org/>
- 6 I label Mill as a republican, not in the sense of being simply anti-monarchical, but as someone who feared tyrannical rule by unaccountable leaders and instead advocated citizen self-government.
- 7 Rousseau's concept of the General Will, in contrast to the common interpretation outlined above, can be understood as being far less tyrannical. Rousseau later outlines in *The Social Contract* that the General Will only decides on matters that affect the whole community or issues of *general* concern and not on the private matters of individuals. See: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract: or Principles of Political Right* (Wordsworth Editions, 1998), pp. 14–18, 31–3.
- 8 Isaiah Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', in Henry Hardy (ed.), *Liberty* (Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 169–70, 177–78, 207–09.
- 9 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (1859), in John M. Robson (ed.), *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, 33 vols (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963–1991) (Henceforth CW), xviii, p. 219, in Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', pp. 208–9. The Collected Works are available at the *Online Library of Liberty*: <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/robson-collected-works-of-john-stuart-mill-in-33-vols>
- 10 Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', pp. 176–78.
- 11 Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 4–5, 17–19, 41–50; Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 22–30, 60, 77–84, 96–9, 113–16.
- 12 H. S. Jones, 'John Stuart Mill as Moraliser', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 53 (1992), pp. 287–308.
- 13 Gregory Claeys, *Mill and Paternalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 170–72.
- 14 Eugenio Biagini, 'Neo-Roman Liberalism: "Republican" Values and British Liberalism, ca. 1860–1875', *History of European Ideas*, 29 (2003), pp. 55–72.
- 15 Biagini, 'Neo-Roman Liberalism', pp. 61–3, 66. Also see: Kyriakos N. Demetriou 'George Grote and John Stuart Mill on Classical Republicanism', in Kyriakos N. Demetriou and Antis Loizides (eds.), *John Stuart Mill: A British Socrates* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 176–206.
- 16 Nadia Urbinati, *Mill on Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government* (The University of Chicago Press, 2002); Eugenio Biagini, 'Liberalism and Direct Democracy: John Stuart Mill and the Model of Ancient Athens', in Eugenio Biagini (ed.), *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865–1931* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 21–44.
- 17 Georgios Varouxakis, *Liberty Abroad: J.S. Mill on International Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 163–71. See especially: John Stuart Mill, 'Political Progress', 4 Feb. 1867, CW, xxviii, pp. 128–30.
- 18 Reeves, *John Stuart Mill*, pp. 313, 464.
- 19 John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, CW, xix, pp. 399–402. Mill makes a similar argument in *On Liberty*. See: *On Liberty*, pp. 306–8.
- 20 John Stuart Mill, *Parliamentary Reform*, [2] Aug. 1824, CW, xxvi, p. 282.
- 21 Letter from John Stuart Mill to Paulina Wright Davis, 11 Dec. 1869, CW, xvii, pp. 1670–1.
- 22 Quentin Skinner, 'On the Liberty of the Ancients and the Moderns: A Reply to my Critics', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 73 (2012), p. 131; Gustavo Hessmann Dalaqua, 'John Stuart Mill's Republican Feminism', *Kalagatos*, 15 (2018), pp. 16, 20.
- 23 John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (1873), CW, i, p. 265.
- 24 Harriet Taylor Mill, *Enfranchisement of Women* (1851), CW, xxi, pp. 393–415; Jo Ellen Jacobs, *The Voice of Harriet Taylor Mill* (Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 218.
- 25 John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (1869), CW, xxi, p. 264.
- 26 Taylor Mill, *Enfranchisement of Women*, p. 399.
- 27 Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, pp. 284–5.
- 28 Mill, *ibid.*, pp. 285–6.
- 29 Mill, *ibid.*, p. 301.
- 30 Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 107.

- 31 John Stuart Mill, 'The Admission of Women to the Electoral Franchise', 20 May 1867, CW, xxviii, p. 158.
- 32 Taylor Mill, *Enfranchisement of Women*, p. 410.
- 33 Claeys, *Mill and Paternalism* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 202.
- 34 Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, p. 292.
- 35 Mill, *ibid.*, p. 286.
- 36 Mill, *ibid.*
- 37 Mill, *ibid.*, pp. 287–8.
- 38 Mill, *Representative Government*, pp. 411–12.
- 39 Mary Lyndon Shanley, 'Marital Slavery and Friendship: John Stuart Mill's The Subjection of Women', *Political Theory*, 9 (1981), p. 236.
- 40 Taylor Mill, *Enfranchisement of Women*, p. 411–12; Mill, 'The Admission of Women to the Electoral Franchise', pp. 155–6; Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, pp. 329, 331–2.
- 41 Mill, 'The Admission of Women to the Electoral Franchise', p. 157.
- 42 Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, pp. 294–5.
- 43 Mill, *ibid.*, p. 337.
- 44 Mill in his second review of de Tocqueville's work in 1840 discussed his account of how American citizens were enlightened by 'the administration of nearly all business of society by themselves'. Foreshadowing what he later wrote in *Representative Government*, Mill asserted that through engagement in public affairs the citizen was made to feel 'that not only the common weal is his weal, but that it partly depends upon his exertions'. Indeed, in *Representative Government* Mill called 'to witness the entire contents of M. de Tocqueville's great work' to convince those who doubted the enlightening effects of participation in government. See: John Stuart Mill, *De Tocqueville on Democracy in America* [II] (1840), CW, xviii, pp. 168–9; Mill, *Representative Government*, p. 468.
- 45 Mill, *Autobiography*, pp. 9, 15.
- 46 See: CW, xi.
- 47 John Stuart Mill, *Grote's History of Greece* [II] (1853), CW, xi p. 315.
- 48 Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', p. 207.
- 49 Benjamin Constant, *The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of Moderns* (1819), <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/constant-the-liberty-of-ancients-compared-with-that-of-moderns-1819> [accessed on 20/02/2021]. Interestingly some of the ideas Constant raised in his lecture actually resemble those of Mill's. Constant recognised that not having a say in government left one totally at the mercy of those who had political power. He also praised the enlightening benefits of self-government.
- 50 Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', pp. 176, 207.
- 51 Isaiah Berlin, 'The Birth of Greek Individualism: A Turning-Point in the History of Political Thought', in Henry Hardy (ed.), *Liberty* (Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 294–302, 318–19.
- 52 Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 135.
- 53 John Stuart Mill, *Grote's History of Greece* [I] (1846), CW, xi, p. 303.
- 54 Jennifer Tolbert Roberts, *Athens on Trial: The Anti-democratic Tradition in Western Thought* (Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 231–234.
- 55 W. W. Wroth, 'Mitford, William', revised by J. S. Taylor, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep. 2004; Leo Catana, 'Grote's Analysis of Ancient Greek Political Thought: Its Significance to J.S. Mill's Idea about "Active Character" in a Liberal Democracy', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 28 (2020), pp. 558–9, 561.
- 56 James Kierstead, 'Grote's Athens: The Character of Democracy', in Kyriakos N. Demetriou (ed.), *Brill's Companion to George Grote and the Classical Tradition* (Brill, 2014), p. 168.
- 57 Alexander Bain, *John Stuart Mill. A Criticism: with Personal Recollections* (Longmans, Green, and Co., 1882), p. 94; Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 15.
- 58 George Grote, 'Fasti Hellenici', *The Westminster Review*, 5 (1826), pp. 269–331.
- 59 Biagini, 'Liberalism and Direct Democracy', p. 25.
- 60 Berlin, 'The Birth of Greek Individualism', p. 319.
- 61 Biagini, 'Liberalism and Direct Democracy', p. 33.
- 62 Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 23.
- 63 Mill, *Grote's History of Greece* [II], pp. 317–19.
- 64 Mill, *Grote's History of Greece* [II], pp. 319, 329.
- 65 Biagini, 'Liberalism and Direct Democracy', p. 22.
- 66 Reeves, *John Stuart Mill*, p. 178.
- 67 See endnote 9.
- 68 Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 218–19.
- 69 Mill, *Representative Government*, pp. 411–12. The dicastery was the judicial system in which Athenian citizens would participate as jurors. The ecclesia was the Athenian democratic assembly.
- 70 Mill, *Grote's History of Greece* [II], p. 319.



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- 71 Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, p. 336.
- 72 John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, CW (1860), x, pp. 231–32.
- 73 Letter from John Stuart Mill to George Cornewall Lewis, 20 Mar. 1859, CW, xv, p. 608.
- 74 Biagini, 'Liberalism and Direct Democracy', p. 34.
- 75 Urbinati, *Mill on Democracy*, p. 6.
- 76 Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 224, 277; Mill, *Grote's History of Greece part [II]*, p. 319.
- 77 Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', p. 207; Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 276–7.
- 78 Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 267–8.
- 79 Mill, *Grote's History of Greece [II]*, p. 316.
- 80 George Grote, *History of Greece*, 12 vols (John Murray, 1846–1856), vi (1851), pp. 200–2, in Mill, *Grote's History of Greece [II]*, pp. 319–320. The quote is abbreviated.
- 81 Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 272.
- 82 Mill, *Grote's History of Greece [II]*, pp. 320–321; Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 267.
- 83 Grote, *History of Greece*, pp. 200–2, in Mill, *Grote's History of Greece [II]*, p. 320.
- 84 Mill, *On Liberty*, pp. 219–220; Mill, *Grote's History of Greece [II]*, p. 319.
- 85 Kierstead, 'Grote's Athens', pp. 162–5; T. H. Irwin, 'Mill and the Classical World', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mill*, pp. 424, 428.
- 86 Irwin, 'Mill and the Classical World', pp. 423–4; Reeves, *John Stuart Mill*, p. 178.
- 87 Mill, *Grote's History of Greece [II]*, pp. 314–315, 321, 324.
- 88 Claeys, *Mill and Paternalism*, p. 217.
- 89 Reeves, *John Stuart Mill*, p. 9.
- 90 Republican ideas also permeate Mill's socialist writings. His vision of a future economy based on democratic cooperatives offer teachings for progressives of all shades to learn from. See in particular: 'On the Probable Futurity of the Labouring Classes', in *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), CW, iii, pp. 758–96.

## A Liberal for All Seasons? Percy Alport Molteno, 1861–1937

*Continued from page 21*

- 55 Molteno to Merriman c. 1910, cited in Hirst, *Man of Principle*, p. 381.
- 56 Holt MSS 920 DUR 14/27/245, Molteno to Holt, 28 Jan. 1919.
- 57 Molteno was kept abreast of the hardships on the continent by Herbert Hoover who, as America's Food Administrator, led relief efforts in Europe. Molteno had befriended Hoover when the latter was living in London during the war. Now, in 1919, Molteno set up and endowed the Vienna Emergency Relief Fund to address the problems of hunger and deprivation at the heart of the old Habsburg Empire.
- 58 Molteno to Frank Molteno, late Jan. 1919, cited in Hirst, *Man of Principle*, p. 540.
- 59 *Ibid.*, p. 543.
- 60 *Ibid.*
- 61 Molteno to Charlie Molteno, 16 Sep. 1919, cited in *ibid.*, p. 545.
- 62 *Manchester Guardian*, 24 Jan. 1922.
- 63 Hirst, *Man of Principle*, pp. 548–9. The debate over a possible Anglo-French Alliance is discussed in G. Hicks (ed.), *Conservatism and British Foreign Policy, 1820–1920* (Farnham, 2011), pp. 189–213.
- 64 University of Liverpool Library, George Veitch MSS D40/15, Muir to Veitch, 25 Oct. 1928.
- 65 M. Bentley, 'The Liberal Response to Socialism 1918–29', in K. D. Brown (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (London, 1974), p. 47.
- 66 Molteno to H. Gladstone, Jan. 1922, cited in Hirst, *Man of Principle*, p. 561.
- 67 Gladstone to Molteno, 11 Jan. 1922, cited in *ibid.*, p. 562.
- 68 Liberal MP for Westmorland North 1905–10, Rushcliffe 1910–18 and Camborne 1923–4 and 1929–31.
- 69 Hirst, *Man of Principle*, pp. 564–5. Speaking at West Calder on 27 Nov. 1879, as part of his famous Midlothian Campaign, Gladstone enumerated six 'right principles of foreign policy'. These are listed in R. Shannon, *Gladstone: Heroic Minister 1865–1898* (London, 1999), pp. 238–9.
- 70 Molteno to Charlie Molteno, 7 Nov. 1922, cited in Hirst, *Man of Principle*, p. 558.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 558.
- 72 *Ibid.*, p. 572.