Individuality in John Locke and John Stuart Mill: A Response to Michael J. Sandel

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Abstract

This thesis examines from a philosophical and theoretical standpoint, the validity of the communitarian claim that liberalism promotes an abstract, asocial, and atomistic conception of the self. To better understand the inner logic of Lockean and Millian arguments, I analyse ‘individuality’ the concept at the centre of the dispute between liberals and communitarians. The thesis illustrates the essentially contested nature of this concept, and the complexity and diversity of the liberal tradition which has been generally overlooked by communitarian critics.

Locke’s conception of individuality is morphological because it emphasises how an individual assisted by the right kind of education constructs his individuality through deliberation and self-control. In contrast to Sandel’s self which cannot distance itself from its obligations and situations, Locke’s individual is aware of and assisted by his constitutive attachments but can stand apart from them and critically evaluate them. Reflecting in part the influence of the German Romantics, Mill’s conception of individuality is holistic as it strives for completeness of character. In comparison to the static depiction of the self in the liberal-communitarian debate, his conception involves spontaneous development of the individual’s unique potential.

Communitarians assert that the liberal emphasis on plurality and liberty comes at the expense of securing a conception of the good. Liberty enhances for Locke and Mill the sincerity of beliefs and the authenticity of opinions. Their conceptions of individuality are instrumental in the flourishing of society and are intrinsic to human excellence and virtue. A recognition of the distinctiveness and diversity of human existence facilitates greater social harmony and cooperation.
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Abstract ................................................................................................................. ii  
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................. iv  
Introduction: Appraising the Communitarian Critique of Liberalism ............... 1  

**CHAPTER I**  Lockean Morphological Individuality  
1 The Gift of Reason ......................................................................................... 12  
2 Education and Virtue ..................................................................................... 22  

**CHAPTER II**  Millian Holistic Individuality  
1 A Comparison with the Romantics Goethe and Humboldt ......................... 33  
2 A Principal Ingredient of Happiness ............................................................. 44  

**CHAPTER III**  Locke, Mill, and the Communitarian Critique of Liberalism  
1 Distinctiveness, Diversity, and Atomism .................................................... 56  
2 Sincerity, Authenticity, and Autonomy ......................................................... 67  

Conclusion: A Reassessment of Liberalism ......................................................... 79  
Bibliography ........................................................................................................ 90
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Introduction
Appraising the Communitarian Critique of Liberalism

Michael Sandel's criticism of the Rawlsian unencumbered self in his book *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* and in later works is a cornerstone in the debate among liberals and communitarians about the role of individualism in liberal thought. Communitarians claim that liberalism promotes an abstract, asocial, and atomistic conception of the self. These concerns resemble in part the original meaning of individualism used by the Saint-Simonians in their attack against the Enlightenment's enthusiasm for the individual. For communitarians, liberal political thought overemphasises individual autonomy and rights while overlooking involuntary commitments that shape an individual's identity. The identity of the self, they suggest, is embedded in and constituted by the community. Disregarding the diversity of the liberal tradition, communitarians equate the liberal perspective of individualism with the static dichotomy of separate, unconnected individuals on one side, and the larger community on the other. While one can identify such a definition of individualism in some liberal thinkers, there is considerable disagreement among liberals about the appropriate meaning of individuality. In a seminal essay, W.B. Gallie proposed seven conditions that identify an essentially contested concept.\(^1\) Successful application of the seven conditions demonstrates that individuality qualifies as such a concept.

First, the importance of individuality can be measured by the negative appraisal of situations where it is absent or not permitted to develop. According to John Stuart Mill, one of the deficiencies of Benthamite utilitarianism is that it fails to recognise the diversities of character. Second, there are a multiplicity of internal characteristics that describe its achievement. John Locke and John Stuart Mill contribute to the theory of individuality. This tradition of discourse reflects the moral beliefs emerging in sixteenth century Europe as a reaction to medieval communal life which value individual self-determination, liberty, diversity, and originality. Its definition ranges from the more basic formulations of the Italian Renaissance to its more extensive elaboration in the Romantic period. Third, Lockean and Millian rival conceptions of individuality rank in a different order of importance the various components of their description of individuality. Lockean individuality places greater emphasis on realisation of an individual’s potential whereas a Millian conception stresses the development of originality and spontaneity. Fourth, the ascribed meaning of individuality permits substantial transformation given the unpredictable and dynamic circumstances. Karl Joachim Weintraub’s historical account of individuality illustrates the ‘open’ character of the concept, by demonstrating how a more limited view of individuality prepared the foundations for its expansionary phase in the eighteenth century. Fifth, the concept of individuality is used both aggressively and defensively to justify Lockean natural rights and Millian utilitarian philosophy. To take into consideration the central position of individuality in their political philosophy provides a more coherent interpretation of Lockean and Millian liberalism. Sixth, all

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contestant users of the concept have acknowledged the derivation of the concept from the original exemplar. The original exemplar can be defined as the antonym to the concept of individualism portrayed by the Saint-Simonians and the communitarians. “From Balzac onwards, stressed the opposition between individualism, implying anarchy and social atomisation, and individualité, implying personal independence and self-realisation.”

Seventh, the continuous competition for approval of particular conceptions of individuality by the various political theorists assists in the optimal development of the original exemplar’s achievement. Mill’s conception of individuality is in part an elaboration of the ideas of the German Romantics.

Few communitarians have examined in depth the merits of the idea of individuality or ‘the individualism of difference’ which focuses on self-realisation and originality. As a consequence, they misunderstand why Locke and Mill place individual self-determination and freedom in a central position. These qualities of the self are pursued because they are preconditions to the cultivation of individuality. Locke and Mill conceive that in some contexts the idea of community and the concept of self-development are complementary. Part of my purpose in this thesis is to illustrate the complexity and diversity in the liberal tradition by comparing two different conceptions of individuality. Locke’s conception of individuality is morphological because it emphasises how an individual constructs his individuality through deliberation and self-control. In contrast to Sandel’s self which cannot distance itself from its obligations and situations, Locke’s individual is aware of and assisted by his constitutive attachments but

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can stand apart from them and critically evaluate them. Mill’s conception of individuality is holistic as it strives for completeness of character. In comparison to the static depiction of the self in the liberal-communitarian debate, at the centre of his conception of individuality is the spontaneous development of the individual’s unique potential.

Liberals view the enforcement of individual rights as a precondition for the creation of new associations and communities. Individuals who are dissatisfied with the existing communities can more effectively develop alternatives in a society that recognises individual rights, even when the majority of their fellow members wish to remain within the existing community. Exploring alternatives would likely lead to improved forms of community while providing a greater selection of communities to choose from for potential members. Individuals require different communities due to their own unique combination of attributes and depending on the different ways that communities contribute to their evolution as distinctive human personalities.

In disagreement with this liberal position, communitarians assert that the enforcement of individual rights is detrimental to the creation of community. Sandel claims that Rawlsian deontological liberalism prioritises the right over the good and fails to provide a basis for shared self-understandings. In order to achieve justice as fairness, individuals in the original position of Rawlsian contract theory are placed under a veil of ignorance. “Among the essential features of this situation is that no one know his place in society...nor does anyone know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and
The purpose of the original position is to prevent any derivations of principles that presuppose a particular conception of the good while preventing individual rights from being sacrificed for the sake of the common good. Sandel believes that the individuals in the original position do not choose among principles since they are in reality undifferentiated and similarly situated. Rawls does not entertain the possibility that there might be a variety of different but equally reasonable positions. The faculty of self-reflection is limited to the evaluation of wants and desires while deliberation into the identity of the individual is prohibited. As a consequence of the distancing from its experience and its interests, Sandel claims that the Rawlsian “antecedently-individuated self” is incapable of capturing “how common purposes and ends could inspire more or less expansive self-understandings and so define a community in the constitutive sense, a community describing the subject and not just the objects of shared aspirations.” While Sandel is correct to point out that the Rawlsian self is conceived abstractly, his own view of the self is also limited. It is primarily constituted by its ends and by the practices of its society. I maintain that the individual can participate in self-discovery and also in the creation of his identity. This entails not only understanding but also freedom of choice and judgement, regardless of how deeply implicated the individual is in the social practice.

An important target of communitarian attack is Rawls’ Difference Principle, which attempts to establish a basis for a fair agreement between all participants in the original

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position. Rawls points out that the existing distribution of assets, natural advantages (talents, abilities) and social and economic advantages (wealth, status, power) are arbitrary and contingent. Given that these endowments are no better allocated than at a lottery, Rawls suggests that a more equitable way to distribute such goods would be to arrange basic structures in order that "these contingencies work for the good of the least fortunate" whereby "no one gains or loses from his arbitrary place in the distribution of natural assets or his initial position in society without giving or receiving compensating advantages in return." Every individual is therefore assured a social minimum of economic goods. For Sandel the difference principle supports his claim that Rawls’ view of the self is unencumbered. "My physique and good looks, because they are only accidental, not essential facts about me. They describe attributes I have, not the person I am, and so cannot give rise to a claim of desert." Sandel cannot perceive a rationale for society’s claim over individual assets proposed by Rawls, unless the other individuals in the society share a way of life and a history with which the individual’s identity is bound.

Paralleling Sandel’s criticism is that of Charles Taylor who asserts that Rawls’ contractual approach to political relationships fails to understand that every individual is dependent on the recognition of other individuals as members of that community. Primacy-of-right theories like that of Rawls- which ascribes rights to individuals independent of their obligations to sustain the society- are a fallacy. If an individual were to assert his rights at the expense of the society, he would be ensuring that the activity

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defended by the rights assertion is impossible of realisation. He has an obligation to sustain the society in order that future generations can fulfil their chosen life plans. This is because individuals are in fact dependent on society to provide the opportunities for them to exercise their autonomy. These theories promote the idea that individuals can be self-sufficient and an individual’s obligations to the state only arise out of consent. Such theories fail to capture how the process of self-definition is also essentially communal. “Self-understanding is not something we can sustain on our own, but that our identity is always partly defined in conversation with others or through the common understanding which underlies the practices of our society.”

To locate the eschatology in Lockean thought is to escape from polarised liberal-communitarian debate and to realise that the Lockean vision of politics is not based on an association of solitary individuals. John Dunn contends that interpersonal trust, which is a central factor in Lockean contract, reflects his commitment to Christianity. The message of Christ is peace, tolerance, and sociability. While self-preservation is emphasised, the exercise of individual rights is not permitted to supersede the public good of the society and every individual is obliged to do what he can to preserve mankind. The omnipotence and omniscience of God and the right of God over his property obliges individuals to obey the law of nature which expresses the will of God.

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Peter C. Myers explains how Locke attempts to reconcile the two traditions surrounding the antipodes of religion and rationalism: God as beyond reason, obeyed through faith, and God as known through reason. Nicholas Wolterstorff elucidates how Lockeian piety is an expression of gratitude to the Creator for providing individuals with a reasoning capacity, and of obligation to God to use one’s reason. While God may be known through reason’s guiding half-light, it cannot reveal everything to humankind. This thesis demonstrates how this gift of reason is a potentiality for freedom and self-development. Through the exercise of their reasoning faculty, individuals can be critical of prevailing norms, customs and traditions, suspend the operation of desires if these wants are harmful to their future well-being, and direct their actions toward that which provides the true and lasting happiness. For Locke the expression of individuality is revealed as a rational essence at the core of a human being.

Critics have debated whether Locke’s emphasis on rational essence and autonomy is inconsistent with his proposed educational system that is focused on habituation, with his rejection of innatism, and with his assertions of the considerable malleability of a child’s character. For John Passmore, Locke is denying that man has any nature at all prior to

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socialisation. If Passmore’s interpretation were correct, Locke would not be providing an opportunity for the growth of individuality, since education and society would mould into shape almost entirely an individual’s personality. I agree with Peter A. Schouls that the main purpose of the Lockean educational program is to develop the child’s ability to question her/is own tenets and that of her/is society. The forging of a habit presupposes acts of both an individual’s reason and will. Parents and educators must refrain from instilling in the relatively malleable child prejudiced beliefs that suppress the child’s individuality. Virtuous behaviour results from educating children to voluntarily submit to the dictates of their reason.

While it is commonly recognised that Mill incorporates the Romantic elements of individual uniqueness, originality, and self-realisation into his conception of individuality, few critics stress important differences between the Romantic and the Millian conceptions of individuality. This contrast demonstrates to what extent the Millian conception is a more complete account of the concept of individuality vis-à-vis Lockean and Goethean conceptions. There is a different approach taken to the depiction of a dialectic between the self and the world. While Goethe depicts a symbiotic and harmonious relationship between the societal and cultural factors and the inner self, Mill envisions a perpetual tension among these elements. Since Goethe views custom as permeable, the individual can filter out and modify those aspects of society that are most

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appropriate to his own character. In contrast, Mill treats the individual’s environment as hostile to individuality and places individuality in opposition to social custom, in order to stress how individuality must struggle in an age where public opinion is omnipotent.

Mill considers individuality as one of the principal ingredients of happiness. An examination of the relationship between individuality and happiness provides a rebuttal to the frequent criticism that Mill’s conception of individuality is incongruent with the remaining components of his utilitarian philosophy. Isaiah Berlin claims that Mill stretches the notions of happiness and pleasure to the point of vacuity rendering his avowed commitment to utilitarianism unsubstantiated. According to Berlin, Mill’s real commitment is to a pluralistic morality, which includes distinct values such as individual liberty, individuality and justice. These moral ends cannot be combined to produce a consistently coherent utilitarian philosophy.

While Berlin highlights the diversity of Millian liberalism, an alternative interpretation views Mill’s extension of the idea of utility as part of the complex character of a revised utilitarianism which includes a conception of individuality. Mill and Bentham concur on the end, happiness, but differ on the means to achieve it. Whereas Bentham rejects the idea that a pleasure might be preferred because of its intrinsic nature and measures pleasures only in quantitative terms, Mill declares that certain pleasures might be ranked superior in quality through experience, outweighing any quantity of inferior pleasures. By distinguishing between contentment and happiness, Mill includes in his conception of individuality the idea of self-development. While his stress on the

exercise of mental faculties, which regulate animal appetites, is analogous to Locke’s focus on reason as the mechanism to transcend natural desires, Mill differs from Bentham and Locke in his appeal to the imagination and the predominance of the active over the passive pleasures.

Communitarians suggest that liberalism’s approval of plurality weakens the very foundations of human relationships. On the contrary, Locke and Mill fear that the failure to recognise distinctiveness and diversity in human expression, lifestyles, and aims would be detrimental to the societal fabric. Against the atomistic view of liberalism proposed by Taylor, the prominence of education in the formation of morphological individuality demonstrates that Locke’s liberalism acknowledges why individuals can only flourish in a propitious social context. For Sandel, autonomy and self-determination are the most salient features of the liberal self. Although the concept of liberty has a central position in the liberal thought of Locke and Mill, liberty assists rather than supersedes the accomplishments of other goals which include political equality, civic friendship, and individual development. Positive and negative liberty enable individuals to formulate sincere beliefs and authentic opinions. While communitarians frequently consider Locke’s theory as rights theory simpliciter, this first chapter illustrates how Locke’s insistence on the natural sociability of human beings is grounded in his belief in human trust of God’s creating purpose.
CHAPTER I  LOCKEAN MORPHOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALITY

1  The Gift of Reason

When Communitarians view Lockean natural law theory as a proposal to uproot traditions and dislocate individuals, they neglect the implications of Locke’s complex synthesis, which contains three elements: the rationalist, hedonist, and theist. A human being’s reasoning capacity is a source of divine enlightenment for amelioration of this life and preparation for redemption. The gift of reason is frequently interpreted as at odds with the development of individuality. Schouls claims that Locke’s writings follow the universal uniformity of rational human nature doctrine.15 Uday Singh Mehta argues that rationality in Lockean theory “functions to close off forms of individual self-expression.”16 This thesis disputes the position that Lockean political order secures protection for what naturally is at every individual’s disposal and does standardise individual personalities in order that they submit to conventional authority. When the candle of reason is allowed to glow, an individual does more than master her/is natural passions. To fulfil an obligation toward the Creator, every individual must develop her/is own distinctive set of abilities.

A.P Brogan claims that Locke’s hedonistic doctrine of human action makes Locke an empiricist while his emphasis on reason as a guide to action makes him a rationalist.17

15 Peter A. Schouls, Reasoned Freedom: John Locke and Enlightenment, 43.
Locke does assert that the aim of every individual is to desire happiness and to avert misery. Pleasures and pains are closely linked to the most basic ideas of sensation and reflection. "Delight or uneasiness, one or other of them, join themselves to almost all our ideas both of sensation and reflection; and there is scarce any affection of our senses from without, any retired thought of our mind within, which is not able to produce in us pleasure and pain." Since uneasiness is the chief spring of action, Lockean philosophy does contain an element of negative hedonism. Content with what s/he can experience already, an individual would be indifferent to potential pleasures. Only a present pain would stimulate her/im to action.

Unlike a purely hedonistic explanation of human action, Locke's arguments are not tied to mechanical calculations of pleasures and pains. There is a symbiotic relationship between the two central faculties of sense-perception and reason. "Two faculties serve one another, sensation furnishing reason with the ideas of particular sense-objects and supplying the subject matter of discourse, reason on the other hand guiding the faculty of sense, and arranging together the images of things derived from sense-perception...."

Locke does not accept a deterministic theory of action where individuals inevitably react to the innate desire for personal pleasure and aversion to pain. Although sensations do furnish the individual with possible motivations for action, an individual will use active power or will to reflect before selecting action from a range of alternatives. By contrast,


when an individual reacts to a sensation, passive power is being used and passion then
takes the place of the will. Autonomy and a better life is realised when an individual
prevents any of her/is behaviour to be based on internally derived passions or pleasures
not approved by reason. "They who are blind," writes Locke, "will always be led by
those that see, or else they fall into the ditch: and he [she] is certainly the most subjected,
the most enslaved...." 20

Charles Taylor claims that the Lockean individual is a punctual self or a disengaged
agent of instrumental reason. 21 This viewpoint neglects the central role in Lockean
philosophy of the relations between a human being and her/is Creator. Human beings
share with God the privilege of possessing active power but the freedom generated from
this power is not unlimited and unconstrained. Locke rejects Filmer's statement that
freedom is "a liberty of every man [woman] to do what he [she] lists, to live as he [she]
pleases, and not be tied by any laws..." 22 Reason as the voice of God transmits the law of
nature and individual freedom coexists with the order of the world when rationality is
exercised. The establishment of a legal framework based on natural law prohibits any
arbitrary power of one subject over another. Eternal salvation follows the mastery of
desire.


21 Charles Taylor, Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity (Cambridge,

Communitarians claim that Lockean liberalism depicts atomistic individuals without any attachments or responsibilities, pursuing their own interests. This neglects the fact that in Lockean theory individuals have the potential to become social beings as well as to exercise their freedom and rationality. According to Robert Bellah, Locke is the central figure in the emergence of political-economic individualism that is antithetical to a Christian understanding of human nature. "Rather it consciously started with the biological individual in a 'state of nature' and derived a social order from the actions of such individuals, first in relation to nature and then in relation to one another."²³ In the context of this interpretation of Lockean social contract theory, governmental authority derives from a voluntary compact rather than from the will of God. On the contrary, Locke insists on the natural sociality of human beings in the Second Treatise, when he states that "God put him under strong Obligations of Necessity, Convenience, and Inclination to drive him into Society, as well as fitted him with Understanding and Language to continue to enjoy it."²⁴ Not only are individuals created with the capacity to enjoy and maintain social relations but also they are made to naturally pursue human companionship. In the state of nature, human beings are in a state of liberty but not of licence that is apolitical but not amoral. They equally share the status of Creatures of God and have no right to interfere in the activities of other human beings.

Whereas every individual in the state of nature interprets on her/is own the law of nature, individuals transfer this right to the society which grants representatives of the


sole right to interpret the law of nature through universal positive laws. "The liberty of man [woman] in society is to be under no other legislative power but that established by consent in the commonwealth, nor under the dominion of the will or restraint of any law, but that of what legislative power shall enact according to the trust put in it."25 The most significant duty of any human being is to act towards others in a way that deserves their trust. If the rulers refuse to submit themselves to the will of the community, the people 'can appeal to heaven' during this breach of trust, overthrow the existing government and re-establish the necessary conditions for a constitutional government. Apart from the natural sociability of human beings, the desire to maintain a favourable reputation with other members of the society encourages trustworthiness. Moral duties, which form the touchstone of the society, do not rely solely on rational self-interest. "Unless they anticipate a future life, they are perfectly rational in pursuing whatever terrestrial pleasures happen to appeal to them."26 Since it is impossible to know the complete content of the duties that one owes to other human beings due to finite rational understanding and limited spiritual revelation, an adequate assessment of them must rely on faith. Locke denies the right of toleration to atheists because he claims that a man [woman] who does not believe in the existence of God cannot be trusted since s/he is devoid of morality. "Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human

25 Ibid., Chap. XV, para 171.
26 John Dunn, Rethinking Modern Political Theory, 49.
society, can have no hold upon an atheist. The taking away of God, though but even in thought dissolves all.”

Despite the importance of religious faith, Locke maintains that individuals still retain “the capacity to take responsibility for, to modify and even to dispose of their own beliefs.” True faith is the consequence of a sincere conviction. This type of religious belief must be distinguished from superstition or “enthusiasm” which depends on the submission to custom or coercion and the adoption of “absurdities” that “fill almost all the religions which possess and divide Mankind [humankind].” In order to assuage their deep uneasiness stemming from their fear of death, many individuals rely on “strange opinions and extravagant practices” that impede their self-development as potentially rational and unique persons. Their intense desire to achieve a heavenly afterlife would conflict with their rationality. Although physical conflict is often cited as an important weakness of existence in the state of nature, the fragility of reason represents perhaps one of the most significant problems. Locke claims that Christianity’s most important role is to facilitate the rational pursuit of eternal happiness that recognises the diversity of religious experience. Reasonable and tolerant religious belief is a precondition to the formation of peaceful self-government. While Locke affirms that God is the source from whom “all magistrates, everywhere, have their identity,” as well as addressing the question of “for what end they have it, and should use it”, he asserts that there is no


28 John Dunn, Rethinking Modern Political Theory, 48.

29 Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Bk.IV, Chap. XVIII, para 11
biblical passage which describes the process whereby rulers gain possession of their political authority nor is an account provided of who may rightly come to possess that power.\textsuperscript{30}

While it would be improper for the gospel to interfere in the temporal affairs of the state, in a moral dimension, Locke seeks to establish an alliance between reason and true faith. Reason unassisted has failed to "establish morality in all its parts upon its true foundation with a clear and convincing light"\textsuperscript{31} Locke asserts that true faith is capable of toleration and can withstand the critical examination of reason. "Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything" whether "divine Revelation or no."\textsuperscript{32} Although human beings do not have comprehensive knowledge to verify with certainty the occurrence of a miracle, reason can still establish its high probability and whether a Scripture's claim to revelation contradicts rational truth. If a divine revelation does not achieve a minimum standard of reasonableness, it is a superstition rather than representative of a true faith. "This standard allows us to judge as reasonable a religious doctrine that does not contradict what reason can demonstrate concerning God and God's ends for humankind."\textsuperscript{33} Reason consists of the evidence of the existence, good will and power of the Deity toward its creations. It would be unimaginable that a wise and benevolent God

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Locke, "The Reasonableness of Christianity, "\textit{The Works of John Locke}, 10 vols, (Damstadt, Germany: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1963), 7: 144.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Locke, \textit{An Essay Concerning Human Understanding}, Bk.IV, Chap. IX, para 14.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Peter C. Myers, "Locke on Reasonable Christianity and Reasonable Politics," 154.
\end{itemize}
would provide humankind with rationality yet proclaim a law whose effect would be to “overturn all the principles and foundations of knowledge he has given us; render all our faculties useless; and wholly destroy the most excellent part of his workmanship, our understandings.” Second, it would be inconsistent with divine kindness and wisdom to create in human beings the desire for happiness while at the same time promulgate a law whose obedience produces unhappiness.

Locke frequently uses metaphors of light when discussing the reasoning faculty. The light source is not the sun but the glow from a candle. This is because human knowledge is limited to the mind’s ideas and the observation from the senses. Locke seems unperturbed by the limited human comprehension of the spiritual and material world. His serenity, contentment and gratitude toward the Creator are a manifestation of his piety. He insists that an individual must “stop when understanding is at the utmost extent of its tether; and to sit down in a quiet ignorance of those things, which, upon examination, are found to be beyond the reach of our capacities.” The individual must not only accept her/is ignorance but must show gratitude toward God for providing her/im with limited yet sufficient comprehension of the universe for a comfortable and virtuous existence.

In addition to displaying gratitude for being provided with faculties that exceed any other living being, individuals are also obligated by divine sanction to utilise those powers to expand human knowledge. In the place of the bright light of the certainty of true knowledge, there is the twilight and candlelight of probability. Yet this dim light can


be no excuse for not making an effort. "He [she] that makes use of the light and faculties God has given him [her], and seeks sincerely to discover the truth, by those helps and abilities he [she] has, may have this satisfaction in doing his [her] duty as a rational creature..." From Locke’s Protestant standpoint, religious observance should not consist of suffering, quiescence, or passivity. Unlike St. Augustine, he did not equate a sense of the divine power with a complete surrender to God. In contrast to those who followed St. Augustine like Luther, Locke’s deity is compassionate; faith functions through love not fear. Belief in God stimulates individuals to action. The light of Reason permits the individual to examine observations from her/is own experience and the judgements of others rather than accepting blindly the most popular interpretations. Instead of encouraging conformity, the exercise of reason permits the growth of a diversity of opinions that revitalises public discourse.

In Lockean political theory, the greatest foundation of property is in the individual her/himself. However, it is different from the property held externally to the body because it involves a moral change rather than a physical transformation. There is no conflict between Locke’s assertion of human self-ownership in the Second Treatise and his much fuller discussion of divine ownership in his works on religion. God has provided humankind with abundant material and intellectual resources in order that they may improve their condition on earth and expand their abilities. As long as individuals do not damage their own property or that of others, they are free to pursue goals, which


37 Ibid., Bk.IV, Chap. XVII, 24.
enhance self-preservation as well as ensure a more fulfilling life. While the pursuit of happiness is shared by all persons, without the guidance of reason, an individual may misjudge how to achieve happiness in the long-term, failing to perceive that the pleasures of the moment may have painful future consequences. Human beings should have the power and responsibility to judge for themselves what is really good because “though all pursue good, but the same thing is not good to every man [woman] alike.” This explains why Locke emphasises those actions, which are directed by reason since they are instances of the behaviour of a free, self-determined agent.

Locke’s liberal politics represents a compromise between the realms of faith, of the senses, and of reason. His philosophy embodies a respect for the limits of reason, a cognisance of the incompleteness of human knowledge, and an appreciation of the indispensable contribution of religious belief to the cultivation of the capacity for moral personhood and rational liberty. While he escapes the distorted abstractions of an extreme rationalist position, he also challenges the view that support for theism must necessarily be accompanied by religious fanaticism. The gift of reason is the nexus of human potentiality to morphological individuality. Reason’s central purpose is not to assist the individual in successfully disengaging her/himself from society but to provide her/im an opportunity to develop her/is own unique talents and capabilities. The next section explores how the proper kind of education can facilitate the emergence of reason, virtue and individuality.

38 Ibid., Bk.II, Chap. XXI, para 221.
In Chapter XIX of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke declares that a newborn child is not born with innate ideas or with the reasoning ability. Unlike animal offspring, the child does have the potential to develop into a reasoning creature. Rationality is not produced by particular societal or political conditions. It is an essence, which surfaces when not impeded by the society. The exercise of rationality enhances the life of an individual. More importantly, it assists the individual to lead a virtuous existence, worthy of a heavenly afterlife. Proper education acts as a catalyst while the wrong kind of education is a barrier to the emergence of rationality.

Interpreters of Lockean philosophy have debated whether Locke belongs in the camp which stresses nature and limits the role of nurture or whether his position mainly lies with the camp that asserts that environmental forces shape the character of the person. An examination of Locke’s ideas on education is critical for an adequate assessment on this debate. If his view of human nature primarily focuses on the latter position, there would be little place for a conception of individuality in his political philosophy.

The primary aim of the Lockean educational program is to fashion into children’s nature “the principles and practices of virtue and good breeding.” Children learn to use their reason in order that they become members of political society and participants in the Lockean social contract. “Nobody can be under a Law, which is not promulgated or made known by reason only, he [she] that is not come to the use of his [her] reason,
cannot be said to be under the law.”

Education conveys morality when it encourages the exercise of reason. The source of moral rules is in the laws of nature which derive from God. Children should read the Bible since moral rules are “scattered up and down” in it.

Locke’s discussion of the relationship between parents and their children mirrors his treatment of the Creator’s relationship with humankind. The approach of the Creator or parents vis-à-vis their subordinates is a combination of affection and severity. God’s benevolence toward humankind is exemplified by his gift of reason as well as his provision of resources. Similarly, parents are naturally inclined to care for the well-being of their children. “God hath woven into the principles of human nature such a tenderness for their off-spring.”

Despite God’s kindness or a parent’s tenderness, neither provide everything for an individual or a child. This inducement of hardship should not represent divine punishment or parental cruelty. “God commanded Man [woman] also to labour and the penury of his [her] condition required it of him.”

In addition to mental and physical exertion required in order to improve one’s existence, God provide humankind with a capacity for reason in order that their actions are premeditated. Likewise, parents persuade their children to exercise their self-control and provide for themselves. Even


41 Locke, “Some Thoughts Concerning Education,” para 159.


small children should be encouraged to make their own toys. This advances the exercise of responsibility and promotes their happiness in the long term. The distinguishing feature of a “wise and godlike” ruler is that he establishes “law of liberty to secure protection and encouragement to the honest industry of mankind [humankind]” instead of providing all the conveniences of life for members of society.

Although Locke affirms that the absence of education is tantamount to thrusting a child “out amongst the Brutes”, human beings are not good or evil by nature. Locke alleges that those who advocate the Augustinian doctrine of original sin have misinterpreted the Scriptures. The rest of humankind’s sole punishment for Adam’s transgression is their banishment from paradise and loss of bliss and immortality. Death need not be associated with “a state of guilt, wherein not only he, but all his posterity was so involved, that every one descended of him deserved endless torment, in hell-fire.” Such an interpretation of Adam’s fall would be incongruous with a just and benevolent God. The calibre of one’s endeavours is critical since “every one’s sin is charged upon himself [herself] only.” An educational system that develops the use of reason increases the probability that individual acts are virtuous and merit salvation.

Locke’s refusal to consider human beings naturally either innocent or guilty supports his rejection of the doctrine of innate ideas. Preceding the influence of society and education on individuals, they are assumed to be neutral with only a natural tendency to

44 Locke, “Some Thoughts Concerning Education”, para 130.
what delights and from what pains them. Mehta contends that these statements coincide with a doctrine of *tabula rasa* and that Locke intends to limit singularity and independence of the individual at an early age while the mind is unburdened by memory. Parents should be more authoritarian with younger children who have a less developed reasoning faculty and are more likely motivated by unruly and disorderly appetites. “He [she] that is not used to submit his [her] will to the reason of others, when he [she] is young, will scarce hearken or submit to his [her] own reason, when he [she] is of an age to make use of it.”

Metaphors such as river, blank slate, white paper, clay cottages, and wax tablet underscore the importance of environmental influences, custom, and education. Locke’s emphasis on habituation as a principle mode of education appears to be tending in the direction of nurture rather than nature. “What he [she] is to receive from education, what is to sway and influence his [her] life, must be something put into him [her] betimes, habits woven into the very principles of his [her] nature.”

John Passmore endorses the position that Locke treats the mind of a child as an empty room, which an educator can furnish with habits that give her/im moral character. He claims that Locke is overly optimistic about the possibility of counteracting any bias in the natural tendencies of children with education. Locke’s assertion that education leads to moral improvement is evidence of his approval of perfectibilism.

Passmore and Mehta are correct to point out that Locke’s education does inculcate self-discipline at an early age as a precondition to the emergence of reasonable and

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49 Ibid., para 42.
virtuous actions. "The principles of all virtue and excellence lies in a power of denying ourselves the satisfaction of our own desires, where reason does not authorise them. This power is to be got and improved by custom, made easy and familiar by an early practice."¹⁵¹ Locke prefers using shame and reputation as inducements rather than corporal punishments. The former is more effective and it uses to its advantage the malleability of a child’s mind. “Though reputation be not the true principle and measure of virtue...yet it is that, which comes nearest to it.”¹⁵²

Nevertheless, these interpretations remain incomplete and present an underdeveloped account of Locke’s conception of individuality. Locke’s statement in the first paragraph of his *Thoughts Concerning Education* is often cited by those critics like Passmore who want to emphasise Locke’s belief in the malleability of human nature. “Nine parts of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their education. 'Tis that which makes the great difference in mankind.” I concur with Peter A. Schouls that previous critics have placed too great an emphasis on the nine part of ten, disregarding what Locke mentions regarding the other one part of ten. For example, Schouls points out that in the same paragraph, Locke asserts that “men’s [women’s] happiness or misery is most part their own making.” Despite the significant influence of education on the formation of character, individuals remain free to choose or reject what they have learned. Locke states in the same paragraph that some individuals can surmount much hardship including

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⁵² Ibid., para 61.
the wrong kind of education since they have “body and mind so vigorous and well
framed by nature, that they do not need much assistance from others.”

Citing education as one of the possible contributors to the formation of a biased and
narrow mind leads one to conclude that Locke does not approve of all educational
methods. An examination of how he distinguishes the proper kind of education from an
unfavourable kind provides additional clues as to whether or not Locke believes that
education should indoctrinate prevailing customs or escort the light of reason that is
within the mind. If it is the former, then Passmore’s assessment of Lockean individuals
with perfectly malleable characters is accurate and there is little possibility for individual
agency.

Locke prefers an active type of education which encourages pupils to accept
principles endorsed by others only after they have been proven to be congruent with their
own understanding. One’s knowledge base does not expand simply by a passive activity
like reading. “Not by bare reading, but by reading and understanding what he [she]

writ.” 53 As soon as “age, discretion, and good behaviour could allow it... the father will
do well, ...to ask his advice, and consult with him, about those things wherein he has any
knowledge, or understanding...that it will put serious considerations into his son’s
thoughts, better than any rules or advice he can give him.” 54 His son’s mind is “raised”
or improved by being stimulated. Rather than submit to the dictates of his father’s will,
he exercises his own reasoning faculty to formulate his own judgement. Similarly in

53 Locke, “Of the Conduct of Understanding.” The Educational Writings of John Locke, ed. John

54 Locke, “Some Thoughts Concerning Education,” para 95.
paragraph 98, Locke advises that the tutor should present “morality, prudence, and breeding cases” in order that the child’s “judgement be asked.” A competent teacher maintains the vigour of a child’s natural curiosity since it is “a great instrument nature has provided to remove that ignorance they were born with....” Locke enumerates three basic rules to ensure that this “appetite for knowledge” is not extinguished: do not check the child’s questions, do not laugh at her/is inquiries, use vocabulary that s/he can comprehend, and never respond deceptively. On the other hand, this does not diminish the importance of exemplary behaviour, which Locke acknowledges plays an especially significant role in the upbringing of young children. Even when children can begin to reason for themselves, “the testimony and approval that other people’s reason gives to virtuous and well-ordered actions” acts as a form of reinforcement.

Apart from role modelling, Locke stresses that repetition is also an important method for instilling virtuous actions. Whereas rules are likely to slip out of their memories, reiterated actions may be corrected by the teacher and “perfected into an habitual and becoming easiness.” For Passmore, the central role of habits in Lockean education exemplifies Locke’s belief in the infinitely malleable human nature and in the unlimited possibilities for the social engineer. “We do not need to make the child a blank sheet of paper; he [she] is a blank sheet of paper- not only in the intellectual sense...but also in a moral and theological sense...education is the secular equivalent of supervenient grace,

55 Ibid., para 118.

56 Ibid., para 66
in that it creates in us the will to be good." Passmore oversimplifies Locke’s treatment of habituation by neglecting Locke’s discussion of contrary or bad habits and the primary purpose of instilling good habits in children. Locke associates a harmful kind of education with one that fosters bad habits directly or that allows contrary or negative habits to develop. Principles inculcated during upbringing but which were originally not present become natural to individuals influenced by a kind of education that does not encourage them to be critical of their acquired habits. Individuals “embrace falsehood for truth; not only because they never thought otherwise, but also because, thus blinded as they have been from the beginning, they never could think otherwise; at least without a vigour of mind able to contest the empire of habit, and look into its own principles.” A child that is allowed to satisfy any whim will develop a negative or contrary habit of not being able to master her/is own desires and inclinations. Both forms of habituation prohibit the development of reflection and rationality that are the prerequisites of autonomy.

Passmore claims that virtue can be acquired directly through proper education; “true virtue is a matter of habit.” Locke not only mentions how valuable education can be when it imparts virtue but also how difficult it is to communicate virtue to children. “Virtue is harder to be got than knowledge…That which requires most time, pains, assiduity, is to work into them the principles and practice of virtue…It is virtue then,

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59 Passmore, The Perfectibility of Man, 162.
direct virtue, which is a hard and valuable part to be aimed in education."\(^{60}\) The role of education in Lockean thought is more complex than what Passmore has suggested. Not only must educators present children with the opportunity to develop their own opinions and exercise their own reasoning capacities, but individuals themselves must first be willing to be guided by the reasoning of others and then later voluntarily submits to the dictates of their own reason. "The greatest principle and foundation of all virtue and worth, is placed in this, that a man [woman] is able to deny himself his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best, though the appetite lean the other way."\(^{61}\) Virtuous action is the reward for foregoing gratification and mastering the tools of understanding, reason and reflection.

As children mature, they begin to take responsibility for their habits. To permit bad habits to become entrenched in one's mode of behaviour is as irrational as to prefer vice over virtue. Every human being is responsible for all her/is actions even those that have become fixed. Regardless of whether those habits originated externally or within the mind, individuals have the power to replace old habits with improved new ones. The failure to exercise their rationality by suspending old habits and guiding action into new habits, is a "shameful neglect of what is in their power that may put men out of their way to happiness."\(^{62}\) Even if education has instilled ill habits, individuals can reshape their character by re-educating themselves through the process of inculcating habits that have been informed by self-chosen rational principles.

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\(^{60}\) Locke, "Some Thoughts Concerning Education," para 70.

\(^{61}\) Ibid., para 33.
From Locke’s standpoint, education aims at providing a suitable environment for learning rather than indoctrinating children’s memories with rules and precepts. "The business of education in respect to knowledge, is not, as I think, to perfect the learner in all or any one of the sciences, but to give his [her] mind that freedom, that disposition, and those habits that may enable him [her] to attain any part of knowledge he shall apply himself [herself] to, or stand in need of in the future course of his [her] life."63 One concludes from this statement that Locke believes the teacher does not transmit knowledge directly to the pupil. Every individual must procure it for her/himself. Since “a child will learn three times as much when he [she] is in tune, as he [she] will with double the time and pains, when he [she] goes awkwardly, or is dragged unwillingly to it”, education should “be made as much a recreation to their play, as their play is to their learning.”64 In addition to making education as enjoyable as possible, the preceptor or parent should respond to a student’s variable dispositions and inclinations and treat him like a rational being. “That he that will have his son have a respect for him and his orders, must himself have a great reverence for his son.”65

Critics have debated whether Locke’s stress on the role of habits diminishes self-autonomy and adumbrates individual characteristics. I have argued that on the contrary, it is the individual rather than the social context that is in the limelight. In opposition to convention, Locke views habits as complementary, instead of antipodal, to developing a

62 Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Bk II, Chap. XXI, para 70.
64 Locke, “Some Thoughts Concerning Education,” para 74.
65 Ibid., para 71.
self-directed life. Learning through practice and interrogation in place of the memorisation of dogmas liberates the individual from the pervasive influence of fashionable opinions, prejudices, and orthodoxies. The resulting search for self-determination and self-improvement constitutes the basis for a conception of individuality that is morphological. The most important aim of education, virtue, cannot be coercively learned. The role of education is to set the stage for learning by providing the appropriate balance of freedom and discipline. The development of moral character depends on the congruency of the educator’s techniques to the child’s own character and motivational configuration.

The Lockean educational project ensures that human beings are not denied the freedom to exercise their gift of reason. However, regardless of educational opportunity, the final responsibility lies with the individual to utilise her/is gift of reason. Similarly, as I noted in the previous section, an appreciation of the individualisation of religious belief is critical to an understanding of those deliberative, rational, trusting, and virtuous individuals that inhabit the Lockean cosmos. The emergence of morphological individuality prevents human beings from becoming “no other than bare machines.” Individual freedom is also an important prerequisite for Millian holistic individuality examined in chapter 2. In like manner, Mill claims that the actions of a person who has failed to develop his individuality resembles the operations of a mechanical device. Preferences, opinions, and sentiments are formed largely by the society rather than self-chosen.

CHAPTER II MILLIAN HOLISTIC INDIVIDUALITY

1 A Comparison with the Romantics Goethe and Humboldt

Communitarians pay little attention to the ‘new individualism’ of the German Romantics which had a considerable influence on the liberalism of Mill. The German Romantics have a balanced view towards human agency and liberty which recognises how individuals are socially embedded yet unique. Millian holistic individuality incorporates the idea of Bildung, the cultivation of spontaneous, energetic and protean self-development. The similarities between Romantic and Millian conceptions of individuality highlight the shortcomings of a static dichotomy between the individual and the society which surrounds the polarised liberal-communitarian debate.

Those critics that recognise the influence of the German Romantic movement on Mill’s liberalism rarely remark on the important differences between the Romantic and Millian conceptions of individuality. For example, Berlin states that Mill attempts “to fuse rationalism and romanticism: the aim of Goethe and Humboldt; a rich, spontaneous, many-sided, fearless, free, and yet rational, self-directed character.” John Gray mentions that “Mill absorbed the Romantic belief that each man possessed a peculiar and in-born endowment which might or might not be realised in the course of his [her] life.” I will show that Mill did not merely borrow ideas from the Romantics and then combine

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67 Berlin, Four Essays on Liberty, 199.
them with his revised utilitarianism. He significantly modified the Romantics’ idea of individuality in the same manner that he transformed the ideas of Jeremy Bentham into a new form of utilitarianism, which will be discussed in the following section of this chapter. Mill rejects the idea that completeness of character must necessarily embody symmetry and must not require uncovering some unique core. While the Romantics envision a smooth path for the development of individuality, Mill’s own personal crisis illustrates how the expression of individuality can be discontinuous.

Both the Millian and the Romantic conceptions of individuality recognise the rich diversity of human nature. His mentor, Johann Gottfried Herder shows Goethe how languages, poetry, and literature symbolise the collective expressions of historical individuality. This stimulates Goethe’s curiosity for unique cultures which he later applies to the microcosm of this manifold universe of collectivities, the individual and her/is individuality. Distinctiveness is appreciated in all its forms, from the more mundane, a particular way of dressing, to the empyrean, a unique artistic style. Goethe remarks that characteristics of his beloved Lilli show how a person can express his uniqueness in an unconscious and minute fashion. This anecdote demonstrates how individuality can be aesthetically pleasing for others.

Through his correspondence with Goethe, Humboldt incorporates some of Goethe’s ideas into his own writings. The beauty of diverse human development is also at the base of Humboldt’s desire to limit the state’s influence on the morals and character of its citizens. The state’s policies on educational or religious matters would be required to
supply some definite interpretation of the term religiousness or defend chosen educational methods. These interpretations would favour certain aspects of character while suppressing the varieties of belief and personality. “For all moral growth and culture spring solely and immediately from the inner life of the soul, and can only be induced in human nature, and never produced by mere external and artificial contrivances.” The diversity of situations nourishes relationships as well as ensures the well-being of individuals. “The principle of the true art of social intercourse consists in a ceaseless endeavour to grasp the innermost individuality of another.” Mill, like Humboldt and Goethe, links a diversity of character and culture with progress. “Europe, is in my judgement, wholly indebted to this plurality of paths for its progressive and many-sided development.” A gradual and nonlinear process symbolised by Millian ‘experiments in living’ brings human beings closer to practical truth about their worth, just as diversity of opinion advances individuals to nearer truth intellectually.

Goethe and Humboldt regard harmony to be a central characteristic of Bildung. A harmonious development of all human potentialities is neither desirable nor feasible in the Millian conception of individuality. “An ideal of equal and harmonious development,


71 Ibid., 36.

was generally one of severe compression and repression of the larger portion of human nature...In the greater huddle of multifarious elements which compose modern life, symmetry and mental grace are still less possible...”

Mill does not approve of Goethe’s or Humboldt’s ideal of life, an individual “rounded off and made symmetrical like a Greek temple or a Greek drama.” Humboldt’s admiration of ancient Greek civilisation leads him to consider it as a model for the German society. According to Mill, the ideas of antiquity are inappropriate for modern societies. Since societies have adapted to a new set of circumstances, they have different virtues than past societies. “Not symmetry, but bold free expression in all directions is demanded by the needs of modern life and the instincts of the modern mind.”

For the Romantics, self-expression cannot be conceived as a causal relationship between actor and action. The impetus for development emanates from an inner power that follows its own enigmatic course. Goethe calls this impelling force the daemonic. “It was not godlike, for it seemed unreasonable; not human, for it had no understanding; nor devilish, for it was beneficent; nor angelic, for it often betrayed a malicious pleasure. It resembled chance, for it evolved no consequences; it was like Providence, for it hinted at connection.” This power enables one to transcend seemingly impenetrable limitations and to transform one’s experience of the temporal dimension. An inner spontaneous

74 Ibid.
vitality is a critical constituent of Humboldt’s idea of individuality. “The consummating point of human existence is the flowering of these generating forces.”77 In agreement with Humboldt and Goethe, Mill claims that one leads a life that is only one-half of what is desirable when one fails to vigorously utilise all of one’s mental and physical capacities. “Instead of great energies guided by vigorous reason, and strong feelings strongly controlled by a conscientious will, its result is weak feelings and weak energies, which therefore can be kept in outward conformity to rule without any strength either of will or of reason.”78

Goethe’s botanical studies initiate a movement away from the notion of a plant as a passive arrangement of atoms to an organism with a self-driven goal-directed entity. Humboldt adopts similar comparisons of the natural world with that of the human domain. “The seed… which drops into the awaiting soil, unseen and unheeded, brings a richer and more blessed growth than the violent eruption of a volcano, which however necessary, is always destructive…."79 Distinguishing between the self and the archetype, Romantic thought identifies “the relationship between the underlying reality and surface appearance: it is…one of expression, or realisation, or fulfilment."80 The archetype is the core, which provides the plan and vitality for development while the self is the core, plus an expression of the core. Goethe illustrates this distinction by demonstrating how a

77 Humboldt, The Sphere and Duties of Government, 14.
79 Humboldt, The Limits of State Action, 10.
single elemental form of a plant, the archetype, gets expressed variously in the differentiated organs of a mature plant, depending on the conditions of the development and the stage of development achieved at any particular time. Since the essence of the Romantic self lacks a detailed plan as to how it should evolve, a single archetype can be expressed in several ways.

Whereas the Romantic philosophers view the expression of individuality as the unfolding of a core, Mill does not envision that spontaneous and protean self-development necessarily involves uncovering some unique essence. Even if individuals were sufficiently similar by nature that complete agreement in many areas of human endeavour was possible, diverse personal circumstances and endowments would tend to discourage uniformity of characters. "The same things which are helps to one person... are hindrances to another."81 Mill rejects the Romantic idea that a superior excellence resides in some individuals or nations. Originality and exceptional intelligence are a result of the cultivation of individuality rather than its inducement. Mill attributes his extensive intellectual development not to natural talents but to an exceptional education. "If I have accomplished anything, I owe it... to the fact that through the early training bestowed on me by my father, I started... with an advantage of a quarter of a century over my contemporaries."82

For Goethe and Humboldt, individuality would evolve through a ceaseless interaction between the two protean spheres, the self and the world. Humboldt proposes that the


search for individuality involves not only receiving stimuli from the outside world but also marking those objects that one receives with one’s own signature. “How much sweeter and closer must this correspondence become between effect and cause—this reaction between internal feeling and outward perception, —when man is not only passively open to external sensations and impressions, but is himself also an agent!”

Goethe’s autobiography is original in that it rejects the confessional mode and confessional mood. “For Goethe was deeply convinced that intense staring into the soul to recall and register all its moods and twitters would not make us wiser about the self.”

He discarded his initial idea to use the metamorphosis of a plant as a plan for his autobiography because he felt that such a metaphor would place too much emphasis on the inner unfolding nature and not enough on how continuous experience would transform the self. One can sense how sanguine he felt about this interactive process by his insistence that it is also a symbiotic relationship. An individual requires the external world for “nourishment for his growth and at the same time a standard for its measurement” while simultaneously the world benefits in return from his creations.

Mirroring the interlaced pattern of his autobiography, human growth does not move forward in a linear fashion, but follows an ascending helical path. Part of the art of living is discerning which materials of this universe advance one’s individuality and to be attuned to the boundaries of the surrounding world. Such awareness prevents an

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83 Humboldt, The Sphere and Duties of Government, 14.

84 Weintraub, The Value of The Individual, 346.

excessive preoccupation with self-knowledge and with idiosyncratic pursuits. Goethe is concerned that the popularisation of individuality would promote a cult of natural genius.

Mill, like Goethe, recognises the dangers from ‘hero-worship’. While the study of Thomas Carlyle’s works was one of the ways he expanded upon Benthamite utilitarianism, Mill had reservations with Carlyle’s hero theory. Carlyle claims that almost every human advance is due to a few supremely gifted individuals. In anticipation of communitarian criticisms of individualistic theories, Italian patriot Giuseppe Mazzini criticises Carlyle for comprehending “only the individual; the true sense of the unity of the human race escapes him. The shadow thrown by these gigantic men appears to eclipse from his view every trace of the national thought of which these men were only the interpreters and prophets, and of the people, who alone are its depository.” Despite his desire, like Carlyle, to counteract the “march towards doing without intellect, and supplying our deficiency of giants by the united efforts of a constantly increasing multitude of dwarfs”, Mill qualifies his support for the hero, a supposedly endangered specie in the modern society. In opposition to the scientific model, which claims that all human beings are fundamentally made the same and merely circumstances explain differences in human behaviour, Carlyle’s hero theory suggests that individual genius is providential. As an empiricist, Mill envisions a greater role for environmental factors than Carlyle does. “Whoever knows anything of his own knowledge, not immediately obvious to the senses, manifests more or less of the same faculty which made a Newton

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or a Locke.”\textsuperscript{87} The main difference between an individual genius and an average human being relates to the greater degree to which the genius exercises the capacity for extracting knowledge. In contrast to Carlyle who is critical of representative government, Mill does not recommend that “the strong man of genius forcibly seize on the government of the world; all he can claim is, freedom to point the way.”\textsuperscript{88} In parallel with his claim that even the rule of an eminent individual would not be superior to representative government, Mill comments that “hero worship would be doubtless a fine thing “if it were the worship not of a hero but of heroes…One hero and sage is necessary to correct another.”\textsuperscript{89}

Unlike Goethe, Mill’s primary concern does not revolve around the public’s zeal for individuality through the idolatry of exceptional human beings. Rather, the problem is that “individual spontaneity is hardly recognised by the common modes of thinking as having any intrinsic worth….”\textsuperscript{90} Mill develops a theory “which regards the tyranny of ‘society as such’, even more than that of governments, as the main threat to the individual’s liberty in the modern state.”\textsuperscript{91} Mill claims that public opinion homogenates individual characteristics more effectively and rapidly, than do the extension of


\textsuperscript{89} Mill, The Letters of John Stuart Mill, 2: 384.

education, the improvements in communication, or the increase of commerce and manufactures. As more individuals become alike, government representatives are more reluctant to resist the will of the majority. Eventually, “there ceases to be any social support for nonconformity- any substantive power in society, which, itself opposed to the ascendancy of numbers, is interested in taking under its protection opinions and tendencies at variance with those of the public.”

Society would stagnate without the survival of social minorities that provides a motivation to conceive alternatives to the prevailing mass beliefs. It is even more harmful if the government that attempts to control the expression of opinion is in accordance with public opinion. Even if there is only one person whose views do not coincide with the rest of humankind, silencing his opinions would be depriving the human race, “posterity as well as the existing generation”, “the opportunity of exchanging error for truth” if his opinion is the sound one and “a clearer perception and livelier impression of truth produced by its collision with error” if his opinion is erroneous.

Mill notices that as civilisation advances, “power passes from individuals to masses, and the weight and importance of an individual, as compared with the mass, sink into

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93 Ibid., Chap.II, 961.
greater and greater insignificance." Not only is individual originality like a sailboat close to being submerged by the immense ocean waves of collective will, but individual character tends to become indolent and inactive. To resist the growing strength of public opinion requires a considerable amount of determination and vigour. This is partly why Mill stresses the importance of spontaneity and vitality in his conception of individuality. Mill’s urgent tone reflects how easily individuality could completely be overtaken by collective mediocrity. “The time is now, while much is still wanting to complete the enforced assimilation.”

In common with Goethe and Humboldt, Mill recognises that the dynamic and diverse process of historical change and progress is the counterpart to an active and spontaneous self-development. For the Romantics the reward for achieving individuality is the beautiful feeling that enters the mind when one feels one’s interdependence with the whole of nature. Since Mill considers the environment adverse to the existence of individuality, he focuses instead on creating wholeness of character and fortitude. While symmetry accompanies diversity in the Romantic conception, the maintenance of symmetrical balance is not a requirement for Millian holistic individuality. Self-development pursued in its own unique fashion and to the fullest extent might entail a variety of uncoordinated directions. Nevertheless, as the next section will explore, happiness is the common thread through such diverse experiences.

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2 A Principal Ingredient of Happiness

According to Sandel, *On Liberty* exemplifies one of liberalism’s most fundamental principles, freedom of choice. “The state should not impose on its citizens a preferred way of life, but should leave them as free as possible to choose their own values and ends, consistent with a similar liberty for others.”

Taylor contends that liberals consider the capacity for choice to be pursued for its own sake, regardless of the projects voluntarily chosen. Instead, freedom must be ‘situated’, it “cannot specify any content to our action outside of a situation which sets goals for us....”

Berlin concurs with Taylor and Sandel that “the issues to which Mill was dedicated, whether in his published views or his actions, were concerned with the extension of individual freedom”; “utility was not uppermost in his mind.”

I explore how individuality is a principal ingredient of happiness and an end in itself. Following his mental crisis, Mill adopts a new philosophy of life that is crucial to an adequate understanding of his conception of individuality. Although he “never wavered from the conviction that happiness is the test of all rules of conduct, the end of life,” he came to realise that “this end was only to be attained by not making it the direct end.”

The concern for freedom within liberalism rests on the belief that freedom of choice is “a precondition for pursuing those projects and practices that

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are valued for their own sake." 100 While one's capacity for free choice is one's
distinctive endowment", exercising that faculty is not significant as a good in itself, but
because without it one acquires "no practice either in discerning or in desiring what is
best." 101

Apart from Bentham's categorisation of pleasures by intensity and duration, Mill
considers the object that is the origin of the pleasure to be significant in an adequate
examination of the pleasure. Although some pleasures may be able to be categorised as
simple mental states, many others are bundled with other mental entities through
association, and therefore develop into complex states of experience. There are two
different kinds of pleasures: bodily sensations, which he associates with animal appetites,
and mental attitudes and feelings of satisfaction which only human beings can
experience. The enjoyment of bodily pleasures would be only contentment. While
bodily pleasures may be greater in intensity, Mill claims that it would never outweigh the
superior quality of pleasures derived from exercising the higher faculties. Therefore, the
pursuit of happiness is closely linked to mental cultivation. "Few human creatures would
consent to be changed into any of the lower animals, for a promise of the fullest
allowance of a beast's pleasures...." 102

In contrast to Bentham's quantitative hedonism, Mill's qualitative hedonism values
pleasures that are less in duration and intensity because they are preferable in kind. From

his own experience, he learned "that the passive susceptibilities needed to be cultivated as well as the active capacities." However, active pleasures would remain predominant both in number and in importance. A second difference with Benthamite utilitarianism relates to Mill’s definition of the term ‘higher pleasures’ to include the mental pleasures of feeling and imagination as well as the customary mental pleasures which derive from the intellect and moral sentiments. “A cultivated mind...finds sources of inexhaustible interest in all that surrounds it; in the objects of nature, the achievements of art, the imaginations of poetry....” While “high thoughts and elevating feelings” increase self-esteem, they also strengthen the bond between human beings since “as each person becomes more valuable to himself [herself], and is therefore capable of being more valuable to others.”

According to Mill, Bentham’s main contribution to philosophy can be traced to his “questioning spirit”, his “disposition to demand the why of everything”. Mill’s own method of inquiry into human nature is based upon Bentham’s “habits of thought and modes of investigation, which are essential to the idea of science.” In the same manner as Bentham and Mill demand that the philosophy of human conduct analyse generalities and avoid opinions without reasons, Mill believes that human beings aim for

107 Ibid., 48.
understanding and self-examination. Mill writes that “if the society refrained from stigmatising independent thinking” and if education ceased “cramming” the students’ minds with knowledge rather than “training” their minds to reason, “there would be no complaint of any want of genius in modern times.” The exercise of their rational capacities provides individuals with the knowledge required being able to determine the supremacy of higher pleasures over those of swine. “On a question which is the best worth having of two pleasures, or which of two modes of existence is the most grateful to the feelings, apart from its moral attributes and from its consequences, the judgement of those who are qualified by knowledge of both, or, if they differ, that of the majority among them, must be admitted as final.” To be able to exercise one’s deliberative faculties requires a certain amount of freedom and self-determination as well as knowledge of possible alternatives. In the same manner that the ascendancy of public opinion suppresses unique individual expression, the capacity for higher pleasures withers under unfavourable environments that do not provide individuals with the possibility of exercising their higher faculties. Human beings “addict themselves to inferior pleasures, not because they deliberately prefer them, but because they are either the only ones to which they have access, or the only ones which they are any longer capable of enjoying.”

One of the reasons why Mill views representative government as the ideal form of government is that it promotes through political participation, even in the smallest

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110 Ibid., Chap. II, 903.
function, the development of every citizen’s intellectual, deliberative, and moral capacities which form the basis of higher pleasures and an energetic character. Under benevolent despotism, there would be “one man of superhuman mental activity managing the entire affairs of a mentally passive people.” Representative government would coincide with one of Bentham’s principle axioms, to achieve the greatest possible happiness for the greatest number. “The general prosperity attains a greater height, and is more widely diffused, in proportion to the amount and variety of the personal energies enlisted in promoting it.” Self-development as an element of individuality is an instrument of social progress and a component of the welfare of all.

Berlin questions whether in a desire to capture the complexity of the felicific experience, Mill can no longer support his commitment to maximising aggregate happiness by calculating the means to that end. His broad use of pleasures and his account of kinds suggest that the term ‘pleasures’ is just as vacuous a technical term as when “happiness comes to mean something very like ‘realisation of one’s wishes’.” I present a different viewpoint which recognises that Mill considers freedom of choice and thought as a necessary condition for individuality, but not as an end in itself. Mill poses the question: “what more or better can be said of any condition of human affairs than that it brings human beings themselves nearer to the best thing they can be?”

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112 Ibid., 142.

113 Berlin, Four Essays on Liberty, 181.

from this question that the mere exercise of the capacity for choice is not sufficient; the consequences of its free exercise are also a desideratum. While the cultivation of individuality “brings human beings themselves nearer to the best thing they can be,” it may also be considered an end in itself.

Mill explains how “what once desired as an instrument for the attainment of happiness, has come to be desired for its own sake.”\textsuperscript{115} Ends such as virtue or love of money are pursued because of the pleasure inherent in themselves, as well as a means to the production of general happiness. Furthermore, “virtuous actions by which happiness in the particular instance is sacrificed... admits of justification only because it can be shown that on the whole more happiness will exist in the world” if these virtuous modes of action are pursued.\textsuperscript{116} Despite his praise for the ideal nobleness of character as a paramount end, that takes shape through the development of higher faculties, Mill insists that the cultivation of virtuous character is desirable both for its own sake and as a road to the general happiness. In this manner, Mill is not departing from his utilitarian position or abandoning his qualitative hedonism. Similarly, those who cultivate their individuality come to regard it, not only as assisting in the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain, but also pleasurable in itself. The objects of one’s happiness are an integral part of that happiness.

Mill distinguishes between two kinds of habituation, which Roderick T. Long labels as atomisation and cultivation. “In the case of atomisation, we continue to choose

\textsuperscript{115} Mill, “Utilitarianism,” Chap. IV, 925.

X out of habit even if we no longer expect pleasure (whether intrinsic or consequential) from X, though we are now no longer said to ‘desire’ X in the strict sense, and it is not an ‘end’.”\footnote{Roderick T. Long, “J.S. Mill’s Higher Pleasures and the Choice of Character,” Utilitas 3 no.2 (November 1991): 293.} In the case of cultivation, although previously good X is desired in order to experience good Y, through association, the individual becomes accustomed to desire X for itself. At that point, X is considered intrinsically pleasurable, a ‘part of happiness’, an end in itself. Since the preferability of higher pleasures involves an appeal to their intrinsic nature, Mill claims that cultivation is the only kind of habituation that can be linked to the formation of noble character. “The will to do right ought to be cultivated into this habitual independence.”\footnote{Mill, “Utilitarianism,” Chap. IV, 928.} Mill’s use of the words ‘habitual independence’, an oxymoron, illustrates the difference between these two types of habituation. As I discussed in section 2 of chapter 1 regarding Locke’s views on habituation, Mill like Locke believes that the individual must activate her/is own will preceding the establishment of a habit if it will lead to virtuous behaviour. In contrast, atomisation is connected with blindly and mechanically chosen actions which afford no presumption of being intrinsically good. Mill stresses that habit formation as cultivation does not contradict utilitarian premises “that nothing is a good to human beings but in so far as it is either itself pleasurable, or a means of attaining pleasure or averting pains” since “it is a means to good, not intrinsically a good.”\footnote{Ibid.} The higher pleasures and the character that chooses them are ends in themselves but they are also parts of happiness.
Robert F. Ladenson lists an eight-step explanation of how the cultivation of individuality is congruent with the greatest happiness principle. First, the cultivation of individuality develops the distinctive endowment of a human being, which includes the ability to make observations, judgements, and show firmness of will. Second, these qualities are instrumental in discerning what is best, and therefore, individuals become more valuable to themselves and to others. Third, a utilitarian equates “what is best” with what is most productive of happiness. Also, a utilitarian considers something valuable to the extent that it is productive of happiness. Fourth, these qualities are abilities and capacities which, more than any other aspect of individuals, enable them to promote their own happiness and the happiness of others. Fifth, therefore, individuality ought to be encouraged to develop. Sixth, liberty in action is a necessary precondition for the cultivation of individuality. Seventh, from a utilitarian viewpoint, the fostering of individuality is highly desirable. Finally, therefore, there ought to be liberty of action. This eight step process underscores how Mill can be committed to utilitarianism as he professes twice in *On Liberty*, once in the introduction and again in the beginning of chapter three itself, while at the same time attach so much importance to the cultivation of individuality. It also makes the clearer link between his works *On Liberty* and *Utilitarianism*.

While Ladenson’s eight-step explanation highlights the relationship between rationality and individuality, it omits an essential component of the Millian conception of individuality. The development of reason is only the first stage towards developing one’s

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individuality. Apart from exercising what is common to all human beings, the development of what is unique to the individual is also an indispensable ingredient of a happy and fulfilling life. “Each person differs from all others in having unique capacities, sources of pleasure and pain, and hence unique kinds of combinations of desires, enjoyments, and so on.”\textsuperscript{121} Mill does not conceive human nature as an unchanging essence. His account of human flourishing is dynamic and prismatic. In order to achieve the greatest happiness possible, an individual must search for lifestyles, projects, and pursuits and traits of character that are in harmony with her /is own nature. “Like a tree which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides”, individual well-being necessitates the development of the whole person.\textsuperscript{122}

Communitarian critics comment on how liberalism supposedly perpetuates the view that society consists of a multitude of isolated and heartless selves each pursuing their own rational egoistic interests. Taylor believes that feelings, intuitions, and instincts are the points of access to morality. “If you want to discriminate more finely what it is about human beings that makes them worthy of respect, you have to call to mind what it is to feel the claim of human suffering, or what is repugnant about injustice, or the awe you feel at the fact of human life.”\textsuperscript{123} While culture, upbringing and education may help define the boundaries of the relevant ‘others’, from Taylor’s standpoint, there seems to be a natural, inborn susceptibility to feel sympathy for others. Communitarians neglect to


\textsuperscript{123} Taylor, Sources of the Self, 8.
point out that Mill would tend to agree. "The deeply rooted conception which every individual even now has of himself [herself] as a social being, tends to make him [her] feel it one of his [her] natural wants that there should be harmony between his feelings and aims and those of his [her]fellow creatures."\textsuperscript{124} Despite his identification of the importance of developing the affective faculties that go beyond considering the well-being of other individuals as mere instruments for a person's well-being, Mill "recognises that the extent of social feeling varies from person to person, and is dependent on the state of moral and cultural advance, and on the primary social institutions including education."\textsuperscript{125}

Taylor states that it is "one of the most grievous distortions" to see a human being "as in some way compounded of different elements: ...reason and feeling... and in so far as human beings try to live according to these dichotomies, they must suppress, mutilate or severely distort that unified expression which they have in them to realise."\textsuperscript{126} Mill does not write in dichotomies; like Bentham he aims for synthesis rather than focus exclusively on analysis.\textsuperscript{127} Mill claims that "the property which distinguishes every work of genius in poetry and art from incoherency and vain caprice is, that it is one, harmonious, and a whole: that its parts are connected together as standing in a common relation to some leading and central idea or purpose."\textsuperscript{128} As a human being can also be


\textsuperscript{125} Berger, Happiness, Justice, and Freedom, 44.

\textsuperscript{126} Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, 2.

\textsuperscript{127} Mill, "Bentham," 46.

\textsuperscript{128} Mill, "On Genius," 333.
appreciated aesthetically for its perfection and beauty, one of Mill's goals is to achieve wholeness of character. "Every human action has three aspects: its moral aspect, or that of its right and wrong; its aesthetic aspect, or that of its beauty; its sympathetic aspect, or that of its lovableness. The first addresses itself to our reason and conscience; the second to our imagination; the third to our human fellow-feeling." Mill sees self-development as the flourishing of all three aspects in a way that is specific to each individual. Consequently, Mill's conception of individuality is holistic.

Both Mill and the Romantics value individuality for fostering diversity and spontaneity in human nature and for promoting social progress. From a different perspective that highlights the differences rather than the similarities, Mill reinterprets Humboldt's statement that "the end of man is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole" in his formulation of holistic individuality. For Goethe and Humboldt, enriched existence consists of inhalation and transformation of the surrounding environment followed by an expiration of an expression of one's core that is perpetually shaped by the surrounding atmosphere. Activity complements harmony in the Romantic idea of individuality. Harmony signifies for Mill not balance or symmetry, but self-development according to one's unique personality. Mill's primary focus is on the internal energies of the individual to resist nefarious societal pressures. This explains partly why Mill stresses that the individual should fully utilise the elevated faculties in order that every individual can self-consciously choose for her/himself how s/he should live. The end of man is not simply

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130 Humboldt, The Limits of State Action, 16.
attaining perfection, but it is experiencing happiness through the development of all one’s potentialities.

An admirable feature of Mill’s treatment of hedonism is that it takes into account why there are different levels of happiness. “Out of the building blocks of pleasures are built human happiness and satisfaction, and on this base of pleasures is erected the edifice of developed humans of character freely choosing the projects and meaningful activities of life.”\textsuperscript{131} Mill acknowledges how life’s experiences are diverse and complex, just as an adequate assessment of pleasures must contain quality of feeling as a source as well as the pleasure itself. “The ingredients of happiness are very various, and each of them is desirable in itself, and not merely when considered as swelling an aggregate.”\textsuperscript{132} Despite the prominent position of Mill’s conception of individuality in his political philosophy, it still remains within the utilitarian orbit. Individuals who are able to pursue a life that is planned in congruence with their peculiar nature have designed a life of happiness. In the following chapter, I contrast Millian and Lockean conceptions of plurality and examine communitarian concerns regarding liberalism’s emphasis on plurality.


Sandel comments on how subnational communities are becoming more important with the advent of globalisation. "In the age of NAFTA, the politics of neighbourhood matters more, not less."\footnote{133} Despite the greater interaction among individuals of diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, the desire to belong to a group of individuals that share a similar set of beliefs and customs remains strong. For communitarians, this trend highlights how political deliberation must not only include "competing policies but also about competing interpretations of the character of a community, of its purposes and ends." The well-being of society depends on narratives that "orient individuals to the good, and thus determine their place relative to it."\footnote{134} "A politics that proliferates the sources and sites of citizenship complicates the interpretive project" and soon "we will find ourselves slipping into a fragmented, storyless condition."\footnote{135}

Communitarianism considers differences in opinion, belief, or lifestyle like walls between individuals. "A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it. Freedom and individuality have conspired to produce an identity which

\footnote{133}{Sandel, Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1996), 346.}

\footnote{134}{Taylor, Sources of the Self, 52.}

\footnote{135}{Sandel, Democracy's Discontent, 350.}
seems a negation of this.”\textsuperscript{136} Sandel claims that in liberal theory, each person’s identity as an individual person has priority over her/is identity as a member of a community. “A sense of community describes a possible aim of antecedently individuated selves, not an ingredient or constituent of their identity as such. This guarantees its subordinate status.”\textsuperscript{137} The liberal preoccupation with plurality leads to the formation of an atomistic society. Such a society would undermine the social preconditions that enable individuals to become persons of integrity and civility. Taylor comments on how wo/men are not self-sufficient in the sense that they can “develop their characteristically human potentialities outside the society.”\textsuperscript{138}

One reason why Locke and Mill are intent on preserving plurality through their conceptions of individuality is because they believe that recognition of the uniqueness and particularity of human existence facilitates greater social harmony and cooperation. For Locke, the right kind of education recognises the needs of the particular child while at the same time prepares the child to become a reasonable and responsible adult, able to participate in a tolerant society with a government that is free from absolutism. In comparison, individuals in the state of war are “not under the ties of the common law of reason, have no other rule but that of force and violence, and so may be treated as a beast of prey....”\textsuperscript{139} Mill believes that the “smallest germs” of social and moral feelings “are laid hold of and nourished by the contagion of sympathy and the influences of

\textsuperscript{136} Taylor, \textit{Sources of the Self}, 35.

\textsuperscript{137} Sandel, \textit{Liberalism and the Limits of Justice}, 64.

\textsuperscript{138} Charles Taylor, “Atomism,” 50.

education.”\textsuperscript{140} In order to successfully “enter into the mind and circumstances of another”, one must recognise the “diversities of character.”\textsuperscript{141} The development of such sentiments is indicative of progress and civilised society.

Communitarian critics conflate two possible meanings for the word plurality in liberal thought. Rawls faults utilitarianism for assuming that the whole society would follow the same principles of the choice of one rational wo/man.\textsuperscript{142} His contract theory attempts to find principles of justice that make agreement possible among persons despite their conflicting claims.\textsuperscript{143} Sandel defines plurality as follows: “In order for subjects to be plural, there must be something that differentiates them, some way of distinguishing one from another, some principle of individuation.”\textsuperscript{144} He relates plurality to the process by which in the course of a human being’s interaction with a particular environment, the individual develops a set of unique attributes and aims. This differentiation forms the basis for separateness of individuals. “Each individual is located uniquely in time and place, born into a particular family and society, and the contingencies of these circumstances, together with the interests and values and aspirations to which they give rise, are what set people apart....”\textsuperscript{145} To Locke plurality signifies distinctiveness

\textsuperscript{140} Mill, “Utilitarianism,” Chap.III, 919.

\textsuperscript{141} Mill, “ Bentham,” 62-63.

\textsuperscript{142} Rawls, A Theory of Justice, 29.

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 16.

\textsuperscript{144} Sandel, Liberalism and the Limits of Justice, 51.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
whereas Mill defines plurality to mean diversity. Distinctiveness focuses on how individuals pursue a life that they themselves have chosen. Even if the characteristics of these lives were identical, these lives would still be considered distinct if they contain experiences that belong to a particular individual. Diversity differs from distinctiveness in that it does not include the possibility of uniformity of experiences. A life of value must be one that an individual considers her/is own because it contains experiences that are different from experiences of any other person.

According to Locke, the educator frees the mind from the fetters of prejudiced ideas by developing a student’s reasoning and analytical skills. Biased understandings stem from precipitous decision-making or inadvertent submission to the authority of an opinion. Locke remarks that “ideas we received by sensation are often by grown people altered by the judgement without our taking notice of it.” There are two conditions to be fulfilled if one is to achieve the “freedom of the understanding which is necessary to a rational creature.”

First, individuals must learn to love truth for its own sake. Secondly, they must not accept the certainty of their tenets until they have fully examined them. In order to preserve the mind’s impartiality vis-à-vis external evidence and alternative interpretation of that evidence, “distinct ideas of the question must be stripped of words…He that does this will be able to cast off all that is superfluous.”

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147 Locke, Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Bk.II, Chap IX, para 8.


149 Ibid., para 42.
Casting off redundant words relates to the concept of ‘bottoming’. Bottoming involves reducing one’s convictions to clear and distinct foundations by tracing the necessary connections among the ideas in them. “To accustom ourselves in any question proposed, to examine and find out upon what it bottoms.”

Children first learn this skill by studying the principles of mathematical reasoning. Locke is advocating the study of mathematics not because he thinks it “necessary that all men should be deep mathematicians… but they might be able to transfer it [way of reasoning] to other parts of knowledge... The connexion and dependence of ideas should be followed, till the mind is brought to the source on which it bottoms....” The study of mathematical reasoning would make children practice their analytical skills of being able to trace any truth through a long chain of consequences. The result of establishing the habit of bottoming is that individuals are able “to state the question right, and see whereon it turns; and thus he will stand upon his own legs, and know by his own understanding.”

Locke remains sceptical with regard to the extent that education could reform human nature through its control of the individual’s milieu. Apart from an individual’s possible refusal to heed what her/is reason has disclosed, the various “tempers, humours, and constitutions,” of children can also possibly diminish the effectiveness of a larger scale educational program. In the last paragraph of Thoughts Concerning Education, Locke apologises for assuming that “a child is white paper, or wax, to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases,” while disregarding “the various tempers, different inclinations, and

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150 Ibid., para 44.
151 Ibid., para 7.
152 Ibid. para 15.
particular defaults, that are to be found in children.” Locke insists that a general treatise on education would likely only be of limited value since “each man’s mind has some peculiarity, as well as his face, that distinguishes him from all others.” His educational preference is the tutorial method which stresses a careful study of individuals in order that their education is tailored to the specific characteristics of the personality.

From Locke’s standpoint, a more uniform distribution of personal characteristics would be advantageous since education would then be able to assist a larger number of people in their development of rationality, thereby creating more fulfilling lives and more productive and stable society. In contrast, Mill believes that greater uniformity would diminish individual enjoyment as well as hamper human progress. Mill measures the level of utility for the whole society by the extent to which diversity has become a prominent characteristic of the society. In Darwinian fashion, the clash among diverse patterns of opinion and conviction draws out truth that advances human knowledge.

“…That unity of opinion, unless resulting from the fullest and freest comparison of opposite comparisons, is not desirable, and diversity is not an evil, but a good….” While Locke places little importance on the outward display of individual belief whether it be unique or not, Mill claims that the “mere example of nonconformity, the mere refusal to bend the knee to custom, is itself a service” to the society. Even eccentricity is desirable; as in a *chiaroscuro* painting, it highlights what is habitual and prosaic.

Mill fears that the extension of education to the mass of individuals might bring more individuals under common influences while discouraging diversity in opinion and modes

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153 Locke, “Thoughts Concerning Education,” para 216.

of conduct. While he recommends that the government render education compulsory and provide funding to students who are unable to defray the expenses, the government should refrain from controlling the schools and universities. "A general State education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another: and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government...in proportion as it is efficient and successful, it establishes a despotism over the mind...."  

As the above quote suggests, due to its compulsory and authoritative nature and the fact that its influence would be targeted to a younger audience, a general state education might be more effective than widely circulating books or newspapers to disseminate not only knowledge but also opinion.

Locke stresses the importance of ensuring that the influence of political authorities remains outside the sphere of religious faith. The duty of the magistrate is to enforce civil order and not to meddle with the religious convictions of subjects since the salvation of souls is "not better known to the magistrate than to private persons." The creation of religious institutions by the state would reinforce divisions among adherents, which might lead to greater tension among the various sects and even civil war. It is the sole responsibility of every human being to examine the content of her/is beliefs and prepare to answer for them to God at the Last Judgement. The role of the magistrate is to encourage individuals to show religious tolerance and be sensitive to how individuals require different religious practices. "Almost every particular man in this sense has, or may have, a distinct catalogue of fundamentals, each whereof it is necessary for him

155 Ibid., Chap.V, 1033-34.

explicitly to believe...nobody can tell what is fundamental to another, what is necessary for another man to believe.” Due to the manifold forms of belief, Locke remarks that it would be a long time before there is one religion sufficient for all individuals. Diversity in religious conviction is deleterious to maintaining a peaceful relationship among all Christian believers. Differing views provide ammunition for the “promoter of schism” that “sets up a sect and division that tears in pieces the church of Christ” when the true aim of the Christians ought to be “maintaining of charity and brotherly kindness with the diversity of opinions.” Locke points to how even at the inception of Christianity, complete agreement was not possible among apostles, and yet the religion was successfully established. Greater agreement and toleration among the followers of the Christian faith would strengthen the influence of Christianity on potential proselytes, increasing the number of those who would be converted to Christianity.

While Locke treats differences of character and creed as obstacles to the formation of the ideal society, Mill believes that individual lives and the whole society would be disadvantaged if uniformity became the trend. Mill endorses various institutional mechanisms by which diversity in the political domain can be preserved. He remarks how there is a natural tendency of representative government toward collective mediocrity and a tyranny of the majority. The time was not far off when the majority of English voters were from the working class that did not support the interests of the more


privileged and educated minority. Universal suffrage would exacerbate this trend. Fewer talented and well-educated representatives would be elected as public officials. Although his arguments in favour of proportional representation can apply to all minorities, his greatest concern is to protect the interests of the educated middle-class minority.

In order to counterbalance the predominance of the masses, Mill endorses three schemes: plural voting, a basic educational qualifier on voting rights, and Thomas Hare’s proportional representation principle for all minorities. Hare’s plan for a system of proportional representation is designed to ensure a hearing for minority views, whatever the composition of the suffrage. “Independent opinions will force their way into the council of the nation and make themselves heard there…and the legislature will comprise a large proportion of the most eminent individual minds in the country….” A system of plural voting for the educated would ensure that persons with greater mental ability would wield more influence. Universal access to basic education would be a prerequisite for the establishment of universal enfranchisement. Only those who demonstrated that they could read, write, and perform common operations of arithmetic would be permitted to vote. Mill is satisfied that his proposals are not directly biased in favour of the wealthy whose wealth might be inherited and not related to ability. Even the poorest but educated individual by passing the examination demonstrating superior competence, could be eligible for plurality of votes. Furthermore, “the plurality of the votes must on no account be carried so far, that those who are privileged by it, or the class (if any) to which they mainly belong, shall outweigh by means of it all the rest of the community.” Mill


considers the system of plural voting only to be a transitional measure. Once the majority of the electorate becomes sufficiently educated, this mechanism could be discarded.

Like Locke, Mill is preoccupied not only with the content of the curriculum of formal education but also with the extensive and universal education in mores, habits, and social life. If individuals are left in the form that they had entered the world, Mill claims that their characters would atrophy and corrupt. Human beings are not born with virtue and self-control; they learn through a long apprenticeship. “The duty of man is to co-operate with the beneficent powers, not by imitating but by perpetually striving to amend the course of nature....”

As with Locke, Mill associates freedom with rationality and the faculty of reason is depicted as a light-source which guides the mind. “Taking Reason for your Safety Lamp, and perpetually warring with inclination; then you will attain to that Freedom which results only from obedience to Right and Reason...in the darkest passages of human existence a Pole Star...which will guide the wanderer into the effulgence of Light and Truth.”

Not only does most of the responsibility of a child’s education lie with the parents because they brought the child into the world, but it would be a moral crime against children if they were not made capable of providing materially for themselves and if their mental faculties are not cultivated. “One of the most sacred duties of parents is give to their children an education fitting him to perform his part well in life towards others and towards himself” and “if the parent does not fulfil this obligation, the State ought to see it


towards himself” and “if the parent does not fulfil this obligation, the State ought to see it fulfilled, at the charge, as far as possible, of the parent.” A child’s right to be educated is extended toward the society since society benefits from his education as well as the individual. Education informs the child about how to behave toward others as well as how to cultivate her/is own individuality.

My examination of Lockean and Millian conceptions of plurality demonstrates the inaccuracy of the communitarian critiques of liberal thought that depict liberal pluralism as promoting an atomistic society. Ignoring pluralism can be costly both in terms of human lives imperilled by intolerance as well as a diminution in the quality of life from impeding human progress. The Lockean conception of plurality as distinctiveness stresses the importance of taking responsibility for one’s own actions towards oneself and towards others in this life and in preparation for salvation. In some ways Mill structures his idea of plurality in a similar fashion. For example, in the Millian conception of plurality, the development of rationality is significant since then individuals can become self-directed. Diversity is a narrower definition of plurality because in addition to distinctiveness, there must be originality and uniqueness. Locke and Mill believe that a particular and varied life is also an existence imbued with liberty. In the next section, I will examine the merits of another frequent communitarian portrayal of liberalism, which relates to the concepts of autonomy and liberty.

Sincerity, Authenticity, and Autonomy

The state's protection of basic civil and political liberties has a prominent position in Rawls' first principle of justice. "We distinguish as a matter of principle between the claims of liberty and right on the one hand and the desirability of increasing aggregate social welfare on the other; and that we give a certain priority...to the former."[^164] The state is prohibited from imposing any particular or substantive conception of the good life. For Communitarians, the primacy of individual rights in liberal society promotes adversarial relations and assists in the weakening of interpersonal commitment. Rawls states that "justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought...Being first virtues of human activities, truth and justice are uncompromising."[^165] Sandel mentions that the primacy of justice fails to apply to groups in which the members share common aims. "Justice is that first virtue of social institutions not absolutely, as truth is to theories, but only conditionally, as physical courage is to a war zone."[^166] For Sandel, rights have a central position only when conflicts take place in societies. "The virtue of justice is measured by the morally diminished conditions which are the prerequisite."[^167] Where there is a sufficient measure of benevolence and fraternity, the virtue of justice would almost never be exercised.

[^165]: Ibid., 3.
[^167]: Ibid., 32.
of benevolence and fraternity, the virtue of justice would almost never be exercised.

"Individual rights and fair decision procedures are seldom invoked, not because injustice is rampant but because their appeal is pre-empted by a spirit of generosity in which I am rarely inclined to claim my fair share." ¹⁶⁸

Communitarians claim that the prioritisation of individual rights deepens the separation between the private and public sphere. The political thought of Locke and Mill is associated with the idea of negative liberty or ‘freedom from’. The development of individuality requires that individuals be allotted a sphere free from external interference. Positive liberty describes the ‘freedom to’ determine one’s actions and thoughts and depends on the development of rationality. Sandel contends that the way Rawls conceives the individual as “a freely choosing, autonomous being” follows from regarding freedom of choice as the most fundamental value of human existence. ¹⁶⁹

Taylor declares that the concept of negative liberty disregards how freedom cannot manifest itself if the individual formulates desires which oppose plans and projects, are inauthentic, or relatively insignificant. “We can fail to achieve our own self-realisation through inner fears, or false consciousness, as well as because of external coercion.” ¹⁷⁰

While Taylor associates Millian liberalism with negative liberty, he omits Mill’s concern about how individuality can be suppressed by the pervasive influence of public opinion that warps and cramps individual personalities. Unlike Taylor’s assertion that liberals

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 33.
¹⁶⁹ Sandel, Liberalism and its Critics, 9.
favour freedom defined as negative liberty, Locke also considers the positive liberty to be realised when the individual does not react to passions not approved by reason. The problem with Taylor's narrower definition of freedom is that it encourages a life devoid of spontaneity. For Mill and the Romantics, a good life requires space for spontaneity as well as for deliberation. Seemingly unreflective or shallow activities sometimes lead to future advancements in human knowledge and improvements of human existence.

Communitarians neglect to point out that neither Locke nor Mill endorses a view that individual freedom in the choice of a plan of life is the single value that an individual or society should pursue. Sympathy, political and social stability, moral and intellectual progress, and greater individual happiness are some of the other complementary goals. While they acknowledge that individuals are part of the society, Locke and Mill believe that the preservation of individual liberty and a private sphere need not conflict with a commitment to the public good. One way in which negative and positive liberty coincide with aims of the society as a whole is that they enhance the quality of the beliefs and opinions of the individual members. Locke stresses the importance of sincerity in religious belief for a tolerant and peaceful society. Preserving the authenticity of opinion is an essential part of Mill's defence of individual liberty.

Sandel distinguishes between two kinds of religious liberty, freedom of conscience and freedom of choice. In both cases, to exercise religious liberty means the freedom to worship, support a church, or profess belief, without suffering civil penalties or incapacities. However, in the case of freedom of conscience, "opinions and beliefs depend not on their own will, but follow involuntarily the evidence proposed to their own
minds.”171 Sandel argues that liberalism, with its emphasis on voluntarism, its focus on the mode of acquisition rather than those activities that promote a good society, cannot adequately protect religious freedom. “Religious beliefs are ‘worthy of respect’, not in virtue of what they are beliefs in, but rather in virtue of being ‘the product of free and voluntary choice,’ in virtue of being beliefs of a self unencumbered by convictions antecedent of choice.”172 Sandel neglects to point out that freedom of choice involves more than selecting one’s action according to personal preferences and desires. For Locke and Mill, freedom of choice partly consists of deliberating the rationale and the consequences of an individual action.

According to Locke, what is significant is that followers of the Christian faith truly believe in their professed convictions. “Faith only, and inward sincerity, are the things that procure acceptance with God.”173 He is not concerned about “how initial beliefs were acquired but protects people who have already acquired beliefs against pressures to adopt practices that they reject.”174 The purpose of religion is to regulate individual lives according to virtue and piety. Given the diversity in the forms of belief, Locke believes that sincere conviction, which is the kind of faith that will ensure eternal afterlife, only coexists with religious freedom. Ceremonies and rituals are not significant; what is important is that every individual follows her/is own religious impulses. “Not to kneel at

171 Sandel, Democracy’s Discontent, 65.
172 Ibid., 64.
the Lord’s supper, God not having ordained it, is not a sin...But to him that thinks kneeling is unlawful, it is certainly a sin.\textsuperscript{175}

Through its portrayal of individuals as autonomous agents pursuing ends that they have chosen for themselves, Sandel claims that liberalism can only conceive of dignity, not honour, as the basis of respect. “Unlike honour, which ties respect for persons to the roles they inhabit, dignity resides in a self antecedent to social institutions, and so is invulnerable to injury by insult alone.”\textsuperscript{176} Sandel contends that liberalism’s overemphasis on freedom of speech in the name of individual fulfilment and self-expression disregards how individuals can inflict verbal and physical harm, on particular individuals because they are members of a certain group in a society. For Locke a church is an association of individuals who have joined voluntarily to worship God. “Neither single persons, nor churches, nay, nor even commonwealths, have any just title to invade the civil rights and worldly goods of each other, upon pretence of religion.”\textsuperscript{177} Locke establishes rights for communities as well as individuals.

Due to the heterodox nature of his belief, Locke’s religious works come under the attack of several critics. John Edwards argues that like the Socinians, Locke rejects the doctrine of original sin and reduces the Gospel message to a simple, rational creed which is founded on the principle that Jesus is Christ. John Toland’s book, \textit{Christianity Not Mysterious} uses Locke’s \textit{Essay Concerning Human Understanding} to formulate his attack on revealed religion. A Deist, Toland believes that the entire content of revelation

\textsuperscript{175} Locke, “A Third Letter for Toleration,” 330.

\textsuperscript{176} Sandel, \textit{Democracy’s Discontent}, 82.

\textsuperscript{177} Locke, “A Letter Concerning Toleration,” 20.
must be judged by its conformity to human reason. In his *Second Vindication*, Locke refutes the charges that he is a Socinian or a Deist by explaining how an individual cannot merit eternal salvation without the saving work of Jesus and the sustaining grace of the Spirit. In his later letters on toleration, against the dogmatic Jonas Proast, Locke denies that it is possible to have certain knowledge of the truth of the Christian religion. "Faith it is still, and not knowledge; persuasion, and not certainty."\(^{178}\) Like the Latitudinarians, Locke endorses the view that God exercises his power according to the principles of reason, but human reason is not to be the sole standard by which God is to be confined. "Religious freedom was freedom to be religious in one's own way. It was emphatically not as Toland gleefully took it to be, freedom to be utterly indifferent to religious considerations."\(^{179}\)

Locke states that "the greatest part cannot know, and therefore they must believe."\(^ {180}\) Most individuals do not have the resources in time or ability, to comprehend the probability that God exists and to make the test that propositions based on faith do not contradict reason. For them, what is important, is that the "cause of God... be spoken out plainly in a clear and determined sense, without any reserve or cover."\(^ {181}\) This creates a dilemma, since human beings can easily fall prey to parsons who attempt to impose conformity of belief in order that they can assert ecclesiastical dominion, with sometimes even political and economic ramifications. Critical of the High Church clericalism of

\(^{178}\) Locke, "A Third Letter for Toleration," 144.

\(^{179}\) Dunn, *John Locke*, 17.

\(^{180}\) Locke, "The Reasonableness of Christianity," 146.

Jonas Proast and the Anglican Calvinism of John Edwards, Locke views their heresy hunting and strict adherence to credal formulas as the kinds of ecclesiology that have accompanied “thousand of years and upwards; schisms, separations, contentions, animosities, quarrels, blood and butchery...” Rather than embrace the established ecclesiological views, Locke turns to the Bible for direction. The Scripture is “a collection of writings, designed by God, for the instruction of the illiterate bulk of mankind [humankind], in the way to salvation; and therefore, generally, and in necessary points, to be understood in the plain direct meaning of the words and phrases...” Locke insists that greater inclusiveness and sincerity of belief among Christians would be created if the ecclesiastical authorities recognised that a close study of the Bible can satisfy the illiterate as well as the educated.

In contrast to Locke, Mill as an agnostic is dubious about the positive role of religion in society. His preoccupation with the origins of opinions and beliefs leads him to reject the merits of Calvinism because it requires that the individual completely surrender her/is will to God. Such modes of authority do not recognise an individual’s capacity for choice and the merits of reasoned opinion. “If it be any part of religion to believe that man was made by a good Being, it is more consistent with that faith to believe that this Being gave all human faculties that they might be cultivated and unfolded, not rooted out and consumed...” Complete personal consent is a precondition for the formulation of authentic opinion. At the foundation of his arguments

183 Locke, “Reasonableness of Christianity,” 25.
in support of negative and positive liberty is the need to make individuals independent of whims and fancies of the prevailing group in society. Actions that follow the individual’s own inner rhythm lead to a full life and well-developed personality. True freedom is achieved when “no one who believed that he [she] knew thoroughly the circumstances of any case, and the characters of the different persons concerned, would hesitate to foretell how all of them would act.”

Mill remarks how as society progresses human beings become more humane and amiable but also less heroic. “A moral effeminacy, an inaptitude for every kind of struggle” accompanies those living in a civilised state. Mill joins Coleridge, Carlyle, and the German philosophers in the recognition that the comforts of civilization have been acquired with “the loss of proud and self-relying independence.” To revitalise individual character that has become relaxed and enervated, Mill recommends that the universities and churches abandon the principle whereby the important thing is that an individual adhere to an inculcated opinion. “It matters little whether he receive them from authority or from examination...by what temptations of interest or vanity, by what voluntary or involuntary sophistication with his intellect, and deadening of his noblest feelings, that result is arrived at....” Mill cites Locke when he refers to the malignancy of ‘principling’ that in no way creates great human beings, both in terms of virtue and

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185 Mill, System of Logic, Bk. VI, Chap. II, 837
intellect. However, Mill goes further than Locke, especially with regard to religion, in the amount of self-examining that is required. The weak side of civilization is strengthened by a rejection of all dogma whether in morality, religion, or philosophy. Churches and universities ought to produce individuals that are “determined and qualified to seek truth ardently, vigorously, and disinterestedly.”

Understanding and analysing reflects in part his own early education. “Striving, even in an exaggerated degree, to call forth the activity of my faculties, by making me find out everything for myself, he [Mill’s father] gave me explanations not before, but after I had felt the full force of the difficulties; and not only gave me an accurate knowledge...but make me a thinker....” Since the utility of an opinion relates closely to the extent that the opinion is true, opinions must be constantly allowed to be re-examined. If an opinion is no longer true, it must be rejected or revised. Otherwise, even a true opinion “abides as a prejudice” and “is just one superstition the more, accidentally clinging to the words which enunciate a truth.”

The communitarian idea of relationship that is founded on involuntary rather than self-chosen commitments might be an unsuitable kind of association between citizens and political authorities. This is because showing obedience to authority requires a greater surrender of judgement than in non-authoritarian relations. “An independently constituted subject surrenders his judgement, usually for limited time and purposes. In the political communitarian view, however, the person has lost any conception of

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189 Ibid., 72.
her/himself apart from what others tell him to do.”192 While Mill considers obedience “the first lesson of civilization”, he also emphasises that “the human faculties of perception, judgement, discriminative feeling, mental activity and even moral preference, are exercised only in making a choice.”193 This explains in part why Mill advocates that the working-class ought to be able to directly participate in the government. “By their own hands only can any positive and durable improvement of their circumstances in life be worked out.”194 Communitarians neglect a last step in Mill’s argument for representative government that provides the suffrage for the working-class. “The general prosperity attains a greater height, and is more widely diffused, in proportion to the amount and variety of the personal energies enlisted in promoting it.”195 Not only are the interests of those particular individuals better secured but also the whole society benefits from the active participation of every individual citizen.

According to Sandel, liberalism disregards the fact that for many individuals religious belief is not an expression of autonomy but a matter of duty. “Treating persons as ‘self-originating sources of valid claims’ may thus fail to respect persons bound by duties derived from sources other than themselves.”196 Mill does not abandon the duties of individuals towards the society when he rejects traditional forms of worship. On the contrary, his idea of a “religion of humanity”, adapted from Auguste Comte’s *religion de

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195 Ibid., 142.

l'avenir, is less selfish than religion that has God as the object of devotion. "It [Christian morality] holds out the hope of heaven and the threat of hell, as the appointed and appropriate motives to a virtuous life: in the falling far below the best of the ancients, and doing what lies in it to give to human morality an essential selfish character."\textsuperscript{197}

According to Mill, the survival of Christianity is tenuous since it relies on the passivity and unquestioned conformity of its believers. Free and vigorous discussion among rationally and empirically minded sceptics would render it extinct. Mill hoped that his new rational and secular religion would take its place. At the core of the religion of humanity is the development of "the sense of unity with mankind [humankind], and a deep feeling for the general good."\textsuperscript{198} Such sentiments of altruism and fraternity are "of the highest excellence" and are "rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire."\textsuperscript{199}

As I mention in chapter 1, Locke recognises the usefulness of approbation for education. Despite his frequent criticism of public opinion, Mill realises that "praise and blame, favour and disfavour of their fellow creatures" could incite individuals to feel that they have "an absolute obligation towards the universal good."\textsuperscript{200}

Communitarians have generally overlooked that Locke's standard of sincerity leads to a broader definition of an opinion, belief, or idea than Mill. The fact that an individual truly upholds her/is opinion is not sufficient for Mill. An authentic opinion must pass a


\textsuperscript{199} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 410 and 421.
rigorous test of examination in order that it may be completely understood and its origins deciphered. Communitarians misunderstand the kind of individual freedom that Locke and Mill have espoused in their writings. In Lockean and Millian liberalism, the individual is not absolutely self-governing or abandoning completely social commitments and ideals. This demonstrates how negative and positive liberty rather than autonomy need not conflict with social connections. The whole of Millian thought is frequently identified with a defence of individual liberty, spontaneity, and individuality. Yet, the same political philosopher also conceived a secular faith that could possibly unite all of humankind under a common vision, which transcended immediate egoistic interests.

Rather than portray individuals pursuing an atomised existence, Locke and Mill identify the importance of social connections and stability. They make every attempt to protect the right of association as well as individual rights. The recognition of individual liberties is an insurance against the risk of obliterating individual freedom entirely. If individual identities are defined only by roles imposed by the society, there is the danger that individuals become like marionettes where the society, the majority, or public opinion direct the strings. In such a situation, as Mill remarks, individuality may not only be rare but may also no longer be valued. In my reassessment of liberalism and the communitarian-liberal debate in the following section, I explain possibly why the Communitarians seemed unperturbed by the hazards involved in a too hasty acceptance of the merits of community.
CONCLUSION: A REASSESSMENT OF LIBERALISM

Communitarians have made a valid statement regarding the importance of civic participation and sense of common purpose for the well-being of individuals and liberal democracies. An aim of this thesis is to demonstrate that the ideals of community and of individual liberty need not be antagonistic. Communitarians have placed little emphasis on the significant differences between the liberal thought of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and that of contemporary liberal theory typified by Rawls. Although Sandel and Taylor primarily direct their criticisms of liberal theory at Rawls’ book *A Theory of Justice*, their arguments popularise the view that liberalism promotes the protection of individual rights and autonomy that contribute to the shaping of an atomistic society.

For the classical liberalism of Locke and Mill, freedom of religious belief is important because it is conducive to social stability and advances individual moral development. A more secular and materialistic normative doctrine, contemporary liberalism reflects the current liberal societies where religion is almost entirely removed from political discussion. In response to the criticism that his theory of justice is abstract, Rawls endeavours to make his theory reflect the practical reconciliation of political dialogue. He comments on how the moral doctrines of Kant and Mill “apply to a wide range of subjects” and “include conceptions of what is of value in human life, ideals of personal virtue and character that are to inform our thought and conduct as a whole.”

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His political conception of justice is based on “fundamental intuitive ideas viewed as latent in the public political culture of a democratic society” and an attempt to create an overlapping consensus by bypassing religion.  

Sandel claims that by trying to make his conception of justice acceptable to all members of a diverse and pluralist society, Rawls “conceives the unity of the self as something antecedently established, fashioned prior to the choices it makes in the course of its experience.” The Sandelian self is almost completely constituted by the values and customs of the community. The problem with emphasising involuntary commitments is that it could possibly force individuals to accept oppressive or demeaning roles that “may be experienced as suffocating rather than embracing.” In this situation, there might be greater solidarity among individuals but there also might be greater uniformity since they commit to the same standards. To avoid “slipping into intolerance, parochialism, and vicious separatism,” renewal of public life through powerful feelings of belonging must be balanced with the particular needs of individuals. Given their dynamic and adaptable nature, liberals believe that voluntary associations are more responsive to the personal needs for self-expression and individuality.

For Michael Walzer, the current liberal-communitarian dispute is the latest round in a series of debates, which emerges periodically throughout the history of political thought.

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202 Ibid, 14.

203 Sandel, Liberalism and the Limits of Justice, 21.


205 Ibid., 153.
Liberalism’s accent on a member’s right to withdraw, places associations continually at risk of fragmentation. Through its emphasis on social connection, communitarianism periodically corrects this tendency. In support of this conclusion, Walzer attributes the intermittent feelings of discontent present in American society, articulated in communitarianism, to how individuals “are continually separating from one another—continually in motion, often in solitary and apparently random motion....” The fragmentation, which he identifies in liberal society, can be partially counterbalanced by state policies that encourage the formation and survival of associations. Yet, being voluntary, these associations remain temporarily precarious.

Unlike the assessments of Taylor and Sandel, Walzer does not contend that liberalism has removed almost all communities, leaving no resistance to the forces of atomisation and homogenisation. Liberalism possesses the resources to develop shared meanings and a conception of the good life. In fact, Walzer is concerned that the individual might be unable to escape the surveillance and control of smaller but powerful groups that exist within liberal society while being excluded from the majority community. Given the pluralism of community, there is also the possibility of conflicting loyalties and obligations. Walzer recognises that since the division between the individual and any organised group might be as important as the division between the society and the

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government, the individual might be “twice-alienated within the state and within the ‘lesser’ group.”

Lockean and Millian liberalism would not necessarily require periodic communitarian correction to the same degree as Rawlsian liberalism, because they do not rely on a sharp contrast between the community and the individual. Locke considers an individual’s participation in associations apart from the state beneficial for the political sphere since activity in the wider social context influences government policy and prevents the establishment of mass politics and despotism. Locke and Mill consider individuals to be naturally social beings. Locke states that human beings are “urged to enter into society by a certain propensity of nature, and to be prepared for the maintenance of society... in fact as much as he is obliged to preserve himself [herself].” Members will promote the well-being of their associates since they are aware of their interdependence. Similarly, Mill mentions that “the social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man [woman], that... he [she] never conceives himself [herself] otherwise than as a member of a body; and this association is riveted more and more, as mankind [humankind] are further removed from the state of savage independence.” However, Locke’s plea for religious toleration and moderation reflects his concern that the magnetism of community may lead to exclusivity and coercion. Mill suggests that a sign of the powerful influence of society in relation to the individual is the fact that “persons


who are in possession of knowledge adequate to the formation of sound opinions by their own lights” remain a minority.210 Whereas communitarians attempt to revive communal spirit from what can be salvaged in an inconstant and cosmopolitan contemporary society, Locke and Mill through a study of their own societies concluded that community identification was too strong vis-à-vis individuality. “In fact, Mill was so far from denying an obligation to belong that he simply took social membership for granted….”211

By misunderstanding what Mill conceives are the advantages of permitting individuality to flourish, communitarians interpret Millian liberalism to be a libertarian doctrine. For Locke and Mill, liberty is significant because it reflects “the liberal rejection of some very specific oppressions and constraints: restraints on thought and expression, prohibition on economic activity, compulsion in matters of religion. In this setting liberty stood for relief, not the be-all and end-all of human existence.”212

Sandel uses the example of education to show how communitarians and liberals differ with regards to policies as well as theoretical concepts. “Where liberals might support public education in hopes of equipping students to become autonomous individuals, capable of choosing their own ends and pursuing them effectively, communitarians might support public education in hopes of equipping students to


\[^{211}\text{Samuel V. LaSelva, } \textit{The Moral Foundations of Canadian Federalism: Paradoxes, Achievements, and Tragedies of Nationhood, (McGill-Queen’s University, 1996), 74.}\]

become good citizens, capable of contributing meaningfully to public deliberations and pursuits."\textsuperscript{213} For Locke and Mill, the aim of education contains both of these perspectives since education assists in the formation of good citizens and self-directed individuals. Their examination of the role of education \textit{vis-à-vis} their conceptions of individuality demonstrates that they are also aware of how an individual is defined to a considerable extent by environmental and societal factors. Education must be adapted to the natural dispositions of the student and the child must exercise her/is will. Both theorists insist that acceptance of principles, beliefs, and customs without sufficient deliberation forestalls the development of individuality because actions do not coincide with uniqueness of personalities.

The fact that Mill is more concerned than Locke about the conformist pressures emanating from a broad educational system is partly because of the way he defines plurality. Distinctiveness is not sufficient, personalities must be allowed to be different, even eccentric, since diversity is the path to human progress. While they recognise that public opinion can enforce conformity, Locke and Mill also realise how public approval can be instrumental in conditioning the individual to behave virtuously and in the best interests of the society. Locke recommends that the educator cultivate the child’s sense of esteem and shame in order that s/he takes pleasure in doing good. Despite Mill’s attack on the tyranny of public opinion, public approbation of individual actions has a central role in Mill’s religion of humanity. Individuals are compelled to act according to moral standards through “conscientious feelings” that originate only in the mind.\textsuperscript{214}

\textsuperscript{213} Sandel, “Morality and the Liberal Ideal,” 17.

Communitarians are concerned that the liberal’s aim of securing a private space for individuals to freely pursue their private happiness or what Berlin calls negative liberty, would lead to a reduction in political participation. Walzer claims that since “public servants” maintain most of the affairs related to governing, “private citizens” are “first and most simply the recipients of certain benefits that the state provides.”\(^{215}\) Mill recognises that one must strive against the natural tendency of dependency and passivity that follows from civilised living. “In a rude state, each man’s personal security, the protection of his family, his property, his liberty itself, depends greatly upon his bodily strength and his mental energy and cunning, in a civilized state, all this is secured to him by causes extrinsic to himself.”\(^{216}\) Since “the mass of the population have very little opportunity of sharing personally in the conduct of the general affairs of the community”, Mill considers local representative bodies “most instrumental in the nourishment of public spirit” which he believes would ensure the survival of liberal democracies.\(^{217}\) As more citizens are given the opportunity of running for office, “they have to act for public interests, as well as to think and to speak, and the thinking cannot all be done by proxy.”\(^{218}\) These statements reflect a civic republican aspect to Millian liberalism that partly originates from Mill’s admiration of Alexis De Tocqueville’s writings. Ideas from Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* are included in Sandel’s later works.


\(^{216}\) Mill, “Civilization,” 56.

\(^{217}\) Mill, “Representative Government” 279.

\(^{218}\) Ibid., 280.
republican tradition stresses the importance of decentralised forms of political association. "Local attachments can serve self-government by engaging citizens in a common life beyond their private pursuits, by forming the habit of attending to public things. They enable citizens, in Tocqueville’s phrase, to ‘practice the art of government in the small sphere within [their] reach.’"  

The communitarian attack on Lockean liberalism neglects the implications of Locke’s theocentric framework. For Locke, the heavenly state of happiness not the imperfect happiness of this world is the ultimate aim of virtuous actions and sincere beliefs. In his journal of 26 September 1675, Locke explains how unsatisfactory and mundane temporal happiness of humankind is in comparison to the one in heaven. “We are so remote from true and satisfying happiness in this world that we know not wherein it consists but yet so much we apprehend it that we are sure it is beyond what all those imperfect things can afford….” Rational individuals will choose virtuous life in this world as it leads to perfect happiness in the afterlife. Given that every individual is different, there exist a multitude of definitions of what constitutes the greatest happiness in this world but “the Manna in Heaven will suit every one’s palate.”  

Communitarians claim that by overemphasising an individual’s capacity for choice and for examination of prevailing beliefs and opinion, liberalism has repudiated tradition and cultural history. Human beings are “not simply living organisms”, but are “expressive beings in virtue of belonging to a culture; a culture that is sustained, sustained, sustained.”

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nourished and handed down in a community.”  

Echoing communitarian concerns, John Gray suggests that Mill’s emphasis on individuality leads to the severing of the individual from the social context. According to Gray, Mill rules out the possibility that traditional conduct can express individuality. “By its invocation of a strong conception of autonomous choice, distanced from convention, it condemns as devoid of individuality all traditional forms of life.”  

Gray believes that a society, which does not recognise the merits of established forms of life, would be inimical to individuality since traditions encourage a variety of lifestyles and personalities. “Traditions are not windowless monads, each uniquely individuated, but complex and elusive practices which mingle with and transform each other.”  

According to Gray, Mill fails to acknowledge how individuals’ experiments in living are dependent on a cultural tradition and that social conventions are a prerequisite to civil order and individual freedom. “The conception of tradition as the enemy of progress, and of individuals as unencumbered experimenters of living, refuses to recognise individuality as itself a cultural achievement and an artifact of tradition.”

Mill recognises that traditions are important but they become deleterious when individuals blindly adopt customs unsuited to the peculiarities of their own natures. Apart from self-interest, “the character and course of actions is largely influenced (independently of personal calculation) by the habitual sentiments and feelings, the

222 Charles Taylor, Hegel and Modern Society, 2 and 87.
224 Ibid., 225.
225 Ibid., 226.
general modes of thinking and acting, which prevail throughout the community of which they are members..."\textsuperscript{226} The strongest of feeling of nationality originates from “the possession of a national history, and consequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past.”\textsuperscript{227} While critical reflection may demonstrate that a received opinion is morally deficient, communitarians neglect to mention that it may also confirm the goodness, wisdom and rightness of a custom or tradition. “The value of the ‘social’ depends on, rather than conflicts with the ‘individualistic’ picture of people forming and pursuing their own understandings of the good.”\textsuperscript{228} The whole society benefits from individual examination since opinions and beliefs passed through the sieve of rational deliberation come closer to approximate the truth. “There is always need of persons not only to discover new truths, and point out when what were once truths are true no longer, but also to commence new practices, and set human life.”\textsuperscript{229} Sincerity of opinion is not sufficient for Mill; convictions must be authenticated. To look forward to a better future by engaging in experiments of living does not entail that one must disregard one’s link to the past.

While for Mill, judgement is one of the faculties that enables one to exercise freedom of choice, communitarians maintain a different purpose for one’s reasoning ability. For Sandel, “the self ‘comes by’ its ends not ‘by choice’ but by discovery, by finding them

\textsuperscript{226} Mill, \textit{System of Logic}. Bk VI, Chap. VIII, 891.


\textsuperscript{228} Kymlicka, \textit{Liberalism, Community, and Culture}. 254.

Through the process of self-discovery, members locate "not merely an attribute, but a constituent of their identity." Regardless of how deeply one is involved in a tradition, it is possible to question the merits of the practice. Locke's principle of 'bottoming' applies to religious beliefs despite the fact that they require considerable involvement. "To whatever outward worship we conform, if we are not fully satisfied in our own mind that the one is true... such practice, far from being any furtherance, are indeed great obstacles to our salvation."

Few would disagree with Sandel that liberal principles ought to be abandoned if they are the basis for "atomized, dislocated, frustrated selves, at sea in a world where common meanings have lost their force." However, this statement does not capture the complexity, diversity, and high aspirations of the liberal tradition. I have identified two forms of the 'individualism of difference', Lockean morphological individuality and Millian holistic individuality. By recognising the difference every individual makes to the consistency of the community, the political thought of Locke and that of Mill make an important contribution to accommodating individual rights with communal needs.

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231 Ibid., 150.


Yolton, John W. John Locke and Education. New York: Random House, 1971
