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UTILITY, CHARACTER, AND MILL'S ARGUMENT FOR REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

by

PAUL VICKERY

Under the Direction of Andrew J. Cohen

ABSTRACT

John Stuart Mill's *Representative Government* argues that the ideal form of government is representative. In this paper, I interpret Mill's argument as a utilitarian argument for a political system with the salient feature of authoritative public participation. Mill argues for this feature in the first three chapters of *Representative Government*. This argument is interpreted in the context of Mill's utilitarian views as elaborated in *Utilitarianism,* with emphasis on Mill's understanding of pleasure formation and high quality utility.

INDEX WORDS: John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism, Utility, Representative government, Character, Public participation

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I. INTRODUCTION

John Stuart Mill made lasting contributions in political philosophy with his work *Representative Government.* In it, he argues for the then radical position of greatly enhanced public participation in English government, including the enfranchisement of the poor and women. The eighteen-chapter work prescribes specific political proposals such as voting procedures, legislative deliberation, and protection of minorities. The fundamental argument backing these detailed proposals is found in the first three chapters. In those chapters, Mill considers various possible and historical political systems and argues for his proposed representative government over any available alternative. In this paper, I present a textual interpretation of Mill's argument in *Representative Government* as a utilitarian argument in favor of authoritative public participation in government. I argue that Mill's utilitarian theory of character development as expressed in *Utilitarianism* grounds his central political argument in *Representative Government*. This paper analyzes two of Mill's major works and argues for a comprehensive reading of the two works as complementary arguments for a political position firmly grounded in utilitarian ethics.

This thesis begins with interpretations of Mill's arguments for utilitarianism and representative government and then argues for a close connection between the two. In Section II, I examine Mill's arguments in *Utilitarianism* with references to some of Mill's explanations in *On Liberty*. I focus on Mill's emphasis of the utilitarian importance of character and his theory of the process of character development. Section III is a textual examination of the primary argument for representative government that Mill makes in chapter III of *Representative Government*. I argue that authoritative public participation is the salient feature of representative government that distinguishes it as better than any available alternatives. In Section IV, I draw

on the previous two sections to interpret Mill's argument for representative government as utilitarian. I show how Mill's proposed authoritative public participation will promote utility in accordance with Mill's theory of character development. Finally, in Section V, I anticipate and respond to objections that propose other means as better than representative government in promoting character development. I analyze several such proposals and show that representative government's authoritative public participation is uniquely positioned to best promote good character development.

My arguments are consistent with Mill's historical role in utilitarianism. John Stuart Mill self-identifies as a utilitarian in the tradition of Jeremy Bentham and his own father James Mill. I argue that Mill's utilitarian theory of character development as expressed in *Utilitarianism* grounds his central political argument in *Representative Government*. That is, even though Mill does not explicitly state the connection, he nonetheless offers his political position in *Representative Government* as a utilitarian analysis showing that utility is better served through his proposal than any available alternatives.[1] This intimate connection between Mill's unique brand of utilitarianism and his political theory runs counter to some contemporary liberal political philosophers who take inspiration from Mill's political views while rejecting their underlying utilitarian justification.[2] In contrast, my argument concludes that utilitarianism motivates and provides essential context for understanding Mill's political views.

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[1] Mill does explicitly state a utilitarian connection in another of his political works, *On Liberty*. There he writes, "I regard utility as the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions" (74). Even though Mill does not explicitly invoke utilitarianism in *Representative Government*, in this paper I wish to show that his political argument there is best understood as a utilitarian argument.

[2] For example, Husak claims that there is a consensus that utilitarianism cannot defend liberty in all cases (Husak 28).

II. MILLIAN UTILITARIANISM

I present a reading of Millian utilitarianism as an interpretation of classical utilitarianism that introduces a qualitative dimension to personal happiness resulting from individuals' character development. My reading in the section is drawn from *Utilitarianism* with some references to Mill's explications of character development in *On Liberty*. In section IV, I will apply this reading to show that Mill's proposed political arrangements seek to promote widespread advances in the quality of happiness.

Classical utilitarian theories are characterized by the basic premise that there exists one and only one exclusive ultimate criterion for evaluating one thing as better than another. Mill explicitly embraces this premise as the fundamental starting point for formulating his own version of utilitarianism: "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (*Utilitarianism* 6).[3] He is careful to clarify that the happiness that determines the right or wrong of actions is not any one individual's happiness, but is an aggregate of all individuals' happiness: "the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct, is not the agent's own happiness, but that of all concerned" (*Utilitarianism* 16).[4] Utility in the aggregate is determined according to Mill's interpretation that introduces the evaluative criterion of quality to complement the quantity of happiness. For Mill, the quality of a person's happiness results from that person's development and pursuit of what I call *complex pleasures*. I will detail Mill's theory of complex pleasures and their development and go on to address Mill's argument for the qualitative value of complex pleasures and their related contributions to overall utility.

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[3] In this paper, I cite three of Mill's works that are found in the compilation *Utilitarianism, Liberty*, and *Representative Government* edited by Ernest Rhys. In parenthetical citations, I will indicate which of the three works is cited, followed by the page reference from Rhys' compilation.

[4] In another passage, Mill says equivalently that the utilitarian "standard is not the agent's own greatest happiness, but the greatest amount of happiness altogether" (Utilitarianism 10).

I borrow the term *complex* from Wendy Donner's discussion in chapter one of *The Liberal Self* in which she distinguishes these distinctly human pleasures as different in kind from the simpler animal-like pleasures. Many animals pursue pleasures but their pleasures are limited to the predictable pursuit of base sensuality, or they may employ the "ape-like [faculty] of imitation" (*Utilitarianism* 8; *On Liberty 134*). Some people are similarly limited in the nature of the pleasures that they pursue; in this paper I will refer to such pleasures as *simple pleasures*. However, many people develop more individualized interpretations of happiness in which they pursue and enjoy pleasures that are not possible for animals – examples include art, knowledge, virtue, and so on.[5] Any given individual pursues a variety of simpler and more complex pleasures. This mix of pleasures constitutes that person's individual conception of happiness. Accordingly, a person's pleasures may also be called constituents of that person's happiness.

I use the term *complex* to describe this class of pleasures because they are more complex than any pleasure possible for animals in several important ways. They are formed through a complex process of repeated instrumental association with other pleasures. In addition, the description of what makes such a pleasure desirable is a complex account that describes the pleasure in distinctly human terms. Finally, the development and pursuit of complex pleasures engages higher distinctly human faculties and is necessary for human character development. Mill often refers to these pleasures as *higher*. Mill's description is useful because it suggests the distinctly human nature of such pleasures as well as their utility-promoting effects. However, in this paper I prefer the term *complex* as a preferable term that focuses on the nature of these pleasures as contrasted to the simpler animal-like pleasures and carefully distinguishes between the nature of these pleasures and the high quality utility-promoting effects of their pursuit. In this

[5] I will discuss the example of virtue in more detail later in this section.

section, I explicate the elements of these pleasures' complexity, and I go on to describe the qualitative benefits on overall utility that occurs through the pursuit of complex pleasures.

Complex pleasures are developed through a process by which their frequent instrumentality in achieving other pleasures gives rise to their direct pursuit as pleasures in and of themselves.[6] As a person regularly pursue something as a means to their own happiness, the distinction between means and end is blurred. Initially, something that will become a complex pleasure is pursued for its instrumental value in achieving another pleasure. As a person regularly pursues this as a means, the distinction between means and end is blurred, and what was previously only instrumental in value comes to be valued for itself. As something of inherent value to the person, it is a pleasure for that person.

Mill illustrates this process of complex pleasure formation with the example of money. Someone may pursue money because he uses money as a means to make purchases that are associated with pleasure. At this point, money is desired "as an instrument for the attainment of happiness" (*Utilitarianism* 34-35). As exclusively a means to some other pleasure, money is not desired for itself. It is therefore not a pleasure in and of itself. However, through the regular and repeated application of money as a means to happiness, a person may come to desire money for itself. Once this desire is formed, money has become a pleasure: "the person is made, or thinks he would be made, happy by its mere possession; and is made unhappy by failure to obtain it" (*Utilitarianism* 35). Mill's theory explains why people act to accumulate money because they

[6] These other pleasures may be simple animal-like pleasures or they may be already-developed complex pleasures. Complex pleasures may also be lost; I describe the way in which a complex pleasure may be lost in my discussion of habits later in this section.

value it for itself, independent of its usefulness as a means to other pleasures. It explains cases of people who work hard and spend frugally, as well as the case of the miser who hoards money.[7]

For something to become a complex pleasure, it must have begun as a means to some other pleasure and then come to be desired for its own sake. A complex pleasure may retain its original instrumental role as can be seen in the money example. In the case of both the miser and the prudent saver, money is pursued instrumentally as a means to other pleasures but also as a pleasure in and of itself. Cases in which the complex pleasure no longer holds its original instrumental role can be seen in certain cases of virtuous behavior. Mill would argue that many adults who value honesty do not do so primarily because of the prospect of reward or the fear of punishment, although these are contributing factors in some instances. But in cases where there are no instrumental incentives to act honestly, the virtuous person nonetheless still acts honestly because she values honesty as a complex pleasure independent of its instrumental value. Per Mill's account, at some point in the past, however, perhaps as a child, the person was likely subject to a system of rewards and punishments based on her honesty. In this past context, honesty had an instrumental value. Through the repeated pursuit of honesty for its instrumental value, the child came to value it for its own sake as a complex pleasure and now pursues it as a complex pleasure, even in cases where it has a negative instrumental outcome.[8]

Other common examples of complex pleasures include music, power, and fame (*Utilitarianism* 35). Complex pleasures can build on each other through the instrumental development process that I have outlined. For example, an explanation for a sophisticated

[7] As this example suggests, an individual's personal conception of happiness may be more or less consonant with overall utility depending on the specifics of the desires that make up the ingredients of that conception. Later in this section, I will address cases like the miser in which people develop complex desires as part of their happiness that seem to run counter to their own and to their communities' best interests.

[8] Mill implores society to employ childhood education to develop complex pleasures and the higher faculties that are closely associated with them: "If society lets any considerable number of its members grow up mere children, incapable of being acted on by rational consideration of distant motives, society has itself to blame for the consequences" (*On Liberty* 139).

musical appreciation could be that it is the result of years of development that begins with the appreciation of simple sound combinations as a simple pleasure. As the listener grows in musical knowledge and appreciation, she comes to value specific musical techniques or patterns as a result of their use as means to producing the simple pleasure. This appreciation is then developed by her growing understanding the musical elements and theory that grounds musical patterns.[9] Over time and through musical study and further listening experiences, the listener comes to a very sophisticated understanding of music that values many diverse elements of music. Mill's theory allows for a great deal of complexity and variety in complex pleasures as limitless as people's creative pursuits of their own happiness.[10]

Mill's theory accounts for simple animal-like pleasure, but also offers a broader account of pleasure that acknowledges the complexities of these distinctly human pleasures. Mill describes utilitarian pleasure as "fairly simple mental states" in the case of simple pleasures and as "complex states of experience" in the case of complex pleasures (Donner 16). In contrast to simple pleasures, the utilitarian value of complex pleasures is derived only to a small degree, or in some cases to no degree at all, from the good sensations that these pleasures induce. For complex pleasures, utilitarian value is derived to a greater extent from the individual's personal conception of happiness and the way in which the pleasure contributes to this conception. For example, the appreciation of a work of art may involve a pleasing aesthetic feeling, but some works of art induce unpleasant feelings and nonetheless promote utility. The feeling induced is undeniably one component of the pleasure of art appreciation. But the value of art appreciation in promoting utility cannot be reduced to this feeling alone. Art appreciation derives its high quality

[9] As this example indicates, the development of complex pleasures engages the intellect and other human faculties. Later in this section, I discuss the close relationship between complex pleasures and these higher faculties as well as the importance of this relationship for Millian utilitarianism.

[10] On pages 33-34 of *Utilitarianism*, Mill writes that "the ingredients of happiness are very various, and each of them is desirable in itself, and not merely when considered" (*Utilitarianism* 33-34).

from the complex, distinctly human nature of the pleasure of which the appealing feeling is only one small part. I will address the utilitarian quality of complex pleasures in more detail later in this section.

This theory of individual conceptions of happiness provides context for Mill's behavioral observation that "each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness" (*Utilitarianism* 32-33). In the absence of appropriate context, this claim might be interpreted as a commitment to egoism. Mill makes this empirical observation while at the same time arguing for the existence of genuinely selfless behavior. Mill's theory explains selfless action by arguing that even though the action may be contrary to some of the person's pleasures, it is nonetheless in line with that person's overall conception of happiness because it supports a complex pleasure. In such a case, the complex pleasure is evidently given a greater priority in the individual's overall conception of happiness. An example will illustrate the case. Suppose a hungry person selflessly foregoes a meal and instead donates the food to another. This person has willingly acted in a way contrary to the simple pleasure of food sustenance, or equivalently has accepted the pain of going hungry for that meal. Why would a person act in this manner if he desires his own happiness? From this example, we may infer from the person's action that he has incorporated the complex pleasure of charity as a constituent of his individual conception of happiness. His conception apparently values charity above his own food sustenance, at least in this particular case. So even though the action is contrary to one of his pleasures, giving away the food is the action that best promotes the person's overall conception of happiness.

As the example of giving to charity illustrates, Mill's claim that people desire their own happiness is best read as the claim that people desire their own individual interpretations of happiness, and these can incorporate many different simple and complex pleasures. Taken

together with Mill's theory of how complex pleasures develop, the claim holds that for the person who desires something, there is some connection of that which is desired to happiness, and this is what Mill means when he says that "each person…desires his own happiness" (see entire quote above). In the case of a simple pleasure, this connection is a very direct relationship between the object of desire and a base pleasure. In the case of more complex pleasures, the connection can be as weak as an association, even a past association, to happiness that led to the development of the complex pleasure. Mill believes that empirical introspection of one's own desires suggests this necessary, though sometimes tangential, relationship of desires to happiness (West 91). Complex pleasures explain how happiness can motivate behavior in an indirect way and explain why people do not always act on selfish and base desires.

Complex pleasures engage different faculties than do simple pleasures. Simple pleasures primarily engage base sensuality and the faculty of imitation. Mill writes that these are faculties that people share in common with members of the animal kingdom. His discussions of animal pursuits in *Utilitarianism* and *On Liberty* involve comparisons to people, indicating that he believes that some, perhaps many, people do not operate beyond these basic animal capacities. However, some people incorporate complex pleasures into their personal conceptions of happiness and in order to pursue these pleasures they engage the higher faculties of "observation to see, reasoning and judgment to foresee, activity to gather materials for decision, discrimination to decide, and when he has decided, firmness and self-control" (*On Liberty* 117). People who engage these higher faculties in pursuit of complex ends such as virtue, art, and truth are in sharp contrast to those who primarily engage lower, animalistic faculties in pursuit of the simple pleasures like the basic needs of food and shelter.

The engagement of higher faculties plays an important role in Millian utilitarianism because Mill holds that complex pleasures that engage higher faculties are qualitatively superior to simple pleasures. As "pleasures derived from the higher faculties [they] are preferable *in kind*" to pleasures derived from lower faculties (*Utilitarianism* 10, emphasis in original). Mill's argument for the utilitarian superiority of such pleasures is the empirical observation that people with well-developed characters "give a most marked preference to the manner of existence which employs their higher faculties" and "can never really wish to sink into what [they feel] to be a low grade of existence" (*Utilitarianism* 8). This observable preference indicates that these "*kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others" (*Utilitarianism* 7, emphasis in original).[11] Additional empirical evidence for the quality associated with higher faculties can be found in the ways in which people are often distinguished according to the faculties that they engage or fail to engage. For example, someone may be characterized as intelligent in contrast to another who is foolish, "instructed" versus "ignoramus", and someone of "feeling and conscious" versus one who is "selfish and base" (*Utilitarianism* 8). These characterizations demonstrate the greater value of higher faculties in contrast to lower faculties. Because of the high quality attributed to complex pleasures, Mill advocates the promotion of complex pleasures as part of individuals' conceptions of happiness.[12]

[11] When Mill conjoins the clause about the desirability of pleasures derived from the higher faculties with the clause about the value of these pleasures, I interpret him as offering a logical implication. He moves from the near universal desirability among those adequately informed to the conclusion that such pleasures have superior value because of their empirical desirability. He might have said: "These *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and" therefore "more valuable than others" (*Utilitarianism* 7).

[12] In the calculation of overall utility, Mill indicates that quality will always trump quantity, at least in cases of major qualitative differences, for he famously writes that "it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied" (*Utilitarianism* 9). However, in this paper I do not wish to offer a precise answer to the question of the relative contributions of quality and quantity to overall utility. Rather, I merely highlight that Mill introduces quality as a critical factor in overall utility. Later in this paper, I will interpret Mill's political views in *Representative Government* as designed to promote this aspect of Millian utilitarianism.

As a person incorporates complex pleasures into her conception of happiness, she should also cultivate appropriate habits. If someone has a strong desire for a pleasure but does not have habits that enable its effective pursuit, she will not pursue it. Habits and the cultivation of higher faculties are also closely interrelated. The higher faculties must be employed regularly in order to achieve and retain good development, and appropriate habits are necessary for this frequent engagement of higher faculties. Mill compares a person's higher mental and moral development to muscular development: "The mental and moral, like the muscular powers, are improved only by being used" (*On Liberty* 116-117).[13] As with building muscular strength, a person requires regular mental and moral exercise to develop strong higher faculties. Once developed, one who does not employ these faculties will face deterioration over time. With the mental powers, such deterioration would be evidenced by a reversion to more primitive faculties and a more simplistic individual conception of happiness. When Mill extols an active pursuit of happiness over a passive one, it is because the person who keeps his faculties active continues to nurture them and grow as a human person, while the person who becomes passive will suffer a regression. This observation leads to the conundrum that people who do not engage higher faculties regularly are unlikely to begin doing so because they do not have the appropriate habits. In section IV of this paper, I will discuss how Mill recognizes this problem in his own society and proposes to foster the habitual engagement of higher faculties through political engagement.

I have interpreted Mill as identifying two key elements that determine people's behavior: the desires that they form and the habits that they develop. These two elements are illustrated by a passage in *Utilitarianism* in which Mill discusses virtue. In this passage, Mill anticipates and provides two reasons in response to the question of why some people fail to act virtuously. The

[13] The mental and moral powers are reference in the context of a discussion about the higher "human faculties" (*On Liberty* 116).

first reason concerns desire; it may be the case that a person simply does not desire virtue, or at least does not desire it sufficiently to motivate action. In this case, the "virtuous will is still feeble, conquerable by temptation, and not to be fully relied on" (*Utilitarianism* 37). The will can be strengthened, Mill writes, "only by making the person *desire* virtue" (*Utilitarianism* 37, emphasis in original). In other words, the individual has not successfully incorporated virtue into his own conception of happiness. The second possibility is that although one properly desires virtue, he may nonetheless fail to act accordingly because the pursuit of virtue has not become habitual.[14] Mill's discussion of virtue applies generally to all potential human ends that are pursued as ingredients of happiness. The proper pursuit of virtue, or any other ingredient of happiness, requires the two conditions: (1) the person desires the ingredient in her own individual conception of happiness and (2) the person has a developed habit for its pursuit (*Utilitarianism* 37). A person who has a well-developed personal conception of happiness and acts accordingly is a person of character.[15] This analysis focuses Mill's discussion how to encourage character development in society; he seeks to promote the processes by which people develop their conceptions of happiness and foster habits in pursuit of those conceptions.

Mill notes that societies of individuals with character would be characterized by individuality rather than conformity because of the great variety of complex pleasures that would come to be desired. Mill examines individuality and its causes in greater detail in his earlier work *On Liberty,* especially in chapter III titled "Of Individuality." Differences in people's conceptions of happiness stem in part from "differences among human beings in their sources of

[14] Mill writes that "the influence of the pleasurable and painful associations which prompt to virtue is not sufficiently to be depended on for unerring constancy of action until it has acquired the support of habit" (*Utilitarianism* 38*)*. I interpret this quote as showing that the instrumental value of virtuous actions is not sufficient to assure that a person will always behave virtuously. Instead, virtuous behavior is only guaranteed by the processes adopting virtue as a complex pleasure and developing virtuous habits.

[15] "A person whose desires and impulses are his own – are the expression of his own nature, as it has been developed and modified by his own culture—is said to have a character" (*On Liberty* 118).

pleasure, their susceptibilities of pain, and the operation on them of different physical and moral agencies" (*On Liberty* 125). Furthermore, each person's unique experience and natural differences in the "inward forces" of talents and interests will drive him or her to pursue different paths to happiness (*On Liberty* 117). Mill concludes that "human nature is not a machine to be built after a model" but instead exhibits individuality when properly fostered (*On Liberty* 117). In *Utilitarianism,* Mill echoes this discussion of individuality when he characterizes complex pleasures as "very various" (*Utilitarianism* 33-34). A personal conception of happiness, when properly developed, will be a unique reflection of the individual. Mill identifies the close association of individuality with character when he says that a person with individuality "is said to have a character" (*On Liberty* 118). Individuality in a society should be celebrated since it will correlate with advances in character.

My reading of Mill on individuality and more generally on utilitarianism is inconsistent with some readings of Mill as a perfectionist such as Joseph Hamburger's reading in *John Stuart Mill On Liberty and Control.* In this work, Hamburger argues that Mill advocates individuality "less for its intrinsic value than for its usefulness in helping bring about distant and (in the largest sense of the word) political ends" (Hamburger 149). Hamburger goes on to argue for both the destructive aspects of individuality in eliminating certain social institutions and conventions and for the constructive aspects in constructing an ideal society. For Hamburger, individuality is instrumental for other roles and will lead to utility promotion. Like Hamburger, I do not read Mill as advocating individuality primarily for its own intrinsic value. However, I read Mill as arguing that individuality is a consequence of character formation. For me, individuality is a result of utility promotion, whereas for Hamburger it is a precursor. In more general terms, Hamburger reads Mill's politics as advocating a descriptive phase necessary to allow for future

development. In contrast, I read Mill's political arguments as constructive. Mill's proposals build on simple and preexisting complex pleasures to promote further development of complex pleasures. Similarly, his political arguments in many cases seek to enhance public participation in existing political institutions rather than destroy them and build anew. For these reasons, my argument in this paper runs counter to Hamburger's reading of Mill's politics.

Character development promotes utility in several ways. For the individual, a person's character involves the interests that person adopts into his conception of happiness and thereby pursues. Similarly, it indicates the degree to which he employs higher faculties, which make life "rich, diversified, and animating, furnishing more abundant aliment to high thoughts and elevating feelings" (*On Liberty* 121). Character is the most important determinant of how a person directs his interests, a factor more important than his "outward circumstances" (*Representative Government* 251-252). Mill's utilitarian theory indicates that the individual best contributes to overall utility by forming high quality pleasures and pursuing them. Utility is better promoted by "involvement in activities and projects which are valued for their own sakes" rather than by the direct pursuit of overall utility itself (Gray 44).[16] People will invariably pursue pleasures, but the quality of the pleasures that they pursue depends on their characters.

A person's character also has important consequences for the promotion of utility for others in their community. Well-developed characters commonly include virtuous character traits that promote the wellbeing of others such as sound judgment and a sense of public responsibility. For example, to extend a previous example, a person with a well-developed character may give to charity, whereas someone without would never give to charity because he would not desire the requisite complex pleasure. Charity will contribute to the community by satisfying a basic need

[16] Mill illustrates the case with the example of a virtuous person. Even though virtue contributes to overall utility, it should be pursued for its own sake, (i.e. incorporated into an individual conception of happiness), rather than pursued as a part of overall utility (*Utilitarianism* 33).

for the beneficiary. As this example shows, characteristics of people with character contribute to utility, even as they do not directly pursue the utilitarian criterion of overall utility. People with characters that promote utility often cannot be readily identified because individuality precludes them from being defined by a specific set of characteristics. Instead, people's characters must be evaluated in light of their specific traits and how well those traits promote utility.

Mill's theory argues that a failure to develop complex pleasures is incompatible with high quality individual happiness. It is also unlikely to contribute to overall utility in the community because short-sighted self-interest is a characteristic many simple pleasures. When Mill discusses character faults, he mentions the person who "pursues animal pleasures at the expense of those of feeling and intellect", which is one way of saying that the person pursues simple pleasures but has not incorporated complex pleasures into his personal conception of happiness (*On Liberty* 134). But it does not follow that the development of complex pleasures guarantees positive contributions to overall utility. For Mill also faults the "person who shows rashness, obstinacy, self-conceit," and these traits could exist in the person who pursues complex pleasures (*On Liberty* 134). The miser that was discussed earlier is a tangible example of someone who pursues a complex pleasure, but that pursuit has a negative effect on overall utility. It is important that people develop complex pleasures but equally important that they develop pleasures that are consonant with the promotion of overall utility.

Character-development plays a central role in Mill's theory of utilitarianism because it is a prerequisite to enjoying high quality pleasure and it has a major effect on the promotion of utility for others in the community. As a result, the utilitarian improvement of a society is best achieved by good widespread character development.[17] Given the close connection of character

[17] Mill affirms this conclusion in *Utilitarianism*: "Utilitarianism, therefore, could only attain its end by the general cultivation of nobleness of character" (*Utilitarianism* 11).

to utility, Mill's application of character to the utility of society as a whole is unsurprising and fits well with his overall utilitarian theory. I propose that Mill's political argument be read as an argument that his system better promotes widespread character development in society than do available alternatives. In the next section, I will interpret Mill's argument for representative government. Finally, I will show how Mill's political proposals promote utility by drawing on Mill's explication of character development.

III. MILL'S REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT AS AUTHORITATIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In this section, I interpret the salient feature of Millian representative government as *authoritative public participation*. A political system of authoritative public participation is one in which a large portion of the public actively participates in government and holds ultimate governing authority. In this section, I argue for this interpretation based on Mill's central argument for representative government found in chapter 3 of *Representative Government*, titled "that the ideally best form of government is representative government." In that chapter, Mill argues that his proposed representative government is better than any alternative political system. The argument defines authoritative public participation and highlights it as the distinctive feature of Mill's proposed representative government.

Mill's argument for representative government is framed in terms of a distinction between two ways to evaluate a system of government. He considers but does not pursue a consideration of political systems as means and focuses instead on the evaluation of the inherent worth of what he calls "government machinery." When government is understood as a means to the fulfillment of a set of ends that are in the public interest such as national defense, taxation,

police protection, judicial arbitration and so on, one first lays out the proper functions of government, and then moves on to rate the given system of government on how well it fulfills these functions.[18] A comparative argument for one political system *A* over another *B* identifies a specific set of worthy government functions and then argues that *A* better fulfills them than does *B*. For example, an argument might identify fair judicial arbitration as a worthy function of government and contend then that political system *A* better fulfils the function than does *B* because *A* is a system that will more likely place competent judges in courts than will *B*. In chapter 2 of Representative Government, Mill considers this type of evaluation as a way to determine the best form of government. Mill recognizes that the functions of government are themselves subject to debate. He believes that these functions would need to be determined in light of social well-being as a whole, a task he finds difficult.[19] Instead, Mill focuses his argument for representative government at a second level of analysis that evaluates the worth of political machinery independent of the extent to which it fulfills government functions.

Mill focuses on extolling the machinery of representative government, but he also makes the further claim that representative government fulfills government functions just as well or better than any alternative political system. Mill makes a general argument for the effectiveness of public participation with the claim that the involvement of more people brings more resources, and more varied resources, to bear on the public interest.[20] While additional resources and experiences probably add some value, the question remains whether all members have the

[18] To pursue this form of evaluation, one must "decide what are the proper functions of government: for, government altogether being only a means, the eligibility of the means must depend on their adaptation to the end" (*Representative Government* 185)

[19] "Unfortunately, to enumerate and classify the constituents of social well-being, so as to admit of the formation of such theorems, is no easy task" (*Representative Government* 186).

[20] Mill hints at this argument when discussing how difficult it would be for one person to manage the affairs of an entire nation in the case of the absolute despot (*Representative Government* 203). He later spells out the argument: "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" (*Representative Government* 208).

political acumen and political interest to make contributions or whether they are just as likely to hinder progress as to promote it. Furthermore, there are coordination problems with involving so many people. Mill's general argument is susceptible to these challenges to the effectiveness of public participation. Later in *Representative Government*, he provides more effective specific responses in the context of his specific proposals for increased public participation. When Mill makes each of his proposals for a public role in government, he also details practical safeguards that he argues will guarantee the effectiveness and success of the proposal. Mill's argument for the effectiveness of representative government in his society rests on the practical effectiveness of his proposals with their safeguards. In analyzing Mill's argument as it relates to any other society, such as our contemporary society, one should similarly consider the effectiveness of various forms of public participation to judge how effective representative government might be in achieving government function.

Mill's argument for political machinery has more general salience. He argues that political machinery has value (i.e. contributes to utility on his view) independent of its direct contributions to the public functions for which it aims to address. What Mill calls government machinery includes the formal structures of government and their operations, such as houses of parliament, bureaucratic departments, and citizen obligations such as voting and jury duty. These structures and their operations contribute to utility to greater or lesser extents in different political systems. For example, in order to enact a given law X, political system A will go through a different process than political system B. An absolute despot will unilaterally decree X, while a Millian representative government will have a deliberative process and a vote by the representatives. Mill observes that these processes – entirely different from one another – can themselves have value independent of the decision about X. Therefore one political system can

be more valuable than another because its machinery quantitatively or qualitatively better contributes to utility. This difference in value between political systems holds even if the two systems do not differ in fulfillment of governments functions through the governmental actions.[21] Mill proposes such a situation in chapter 3 of *Representative Government* and argues that his proposed representative government is superior to a hypothesized good absolute despot because its government machinery contributes to high quality utility to a greater extent. I will examine this central argument and show that Mill highlights processes of authoritative public participation as the distinctive utility-promoting feature of his proposed representative government.

The chapter "That the ideally best form of government is Representative Government" is an argument for authoritative public participation as opposed to any alternative. Mill frames his argument as a comparison between his proposal for representative government and what he takes to be the best possible alternative, a "good despot" (*Representative Government* 202).[22] For the sake of argument, the despotism is hypothesized to approach perfection in identifying and carrying out government functions.[23] This generous hypothesis closes off any argument that representative government could possibly be better at the fulfillment of government functions. Although Mill suggests that such a good despotism is impossible in practice, or at least

[21] The value of government machinery often coincides with and complements government functions. For example, Mill considers the public education to be an important function of government. As an example, suppose two governments create equivalent library systems to fulfill this function. Suppose that one government is a despotism and the other is a representative government. By hypothesis, the two library systems are equally effective at promoting utility through public education. However, the representative government will have a greater overall promotion of public education because the public will be benefited not only the library system itself but also by the public participation involved in the deliberative process that led to the system's creation and in its ongoing administration.

[22] Mill also considers the view that a good despotism is the best possible government to be a conventionally held position in the political thinking of his contemporaries. He argues against this position.

[23] "Good laws would be established and enforced, bad laws would be reformed; the best men would be placed in all situations of trust; justice would be as well administered, the public burthens would be as light and as judiciously imposed, every branch of administration would be as purely and as intelligently conducted, as the circumstances of the country and its degree of intellectual and moral cultivation would admit. I am willing, for the sake of the argument, to concede all this; but I must point out how great the concession is" (*Representative Government* 202).

unsustainable, he nonetheless concedes this claim as an assumption in his argument for the comparative advantage of representative government.[24] This hypothetical concession focuses Mill's argument on the benefits of representative government's political machinery. Mill compares the utility of the two government machineries independently of how well they fulfill government functions. He argues that the authoritative public participation in representative government is better than the alternative of unilateral decision-making in the good despotism, even if the two systems are equally good at fulfilling government functions.

Mill shows that he believes authoritative public participation to be the crucial difference between his proposal and alternative political systems when he anticipates an objector who proposes a good despot who entertains, or even encourages, public participation. In answer, Mill presses his would-be objector on how the despot would react in the inevitable case where the will of the public goes against the will of the despot. If the despot puts down his opposition, then public participation is effectively squashed and the political system no longer enjoys its benefits. If the despot acquiesces, then he is by definition no longer a despot but a constitutional monarch (*Representative Government* 205-206).[25] The case of the despotism that involves public participation threatens to conflate the two political systems of representative government and despotism. Mill's response highlights the key distinction that he sees between them. The political machinery of representative government provides for authoritative public participation, whereas the political machinery of the despotism does not. Mill will go on to argue in favor of

[24] Mill makes this concession for the sake of argument, even though he believes that good despots are very rare and unsustainable over the long term. Furthermore, he believes that a representative government would fulfill government functions better than a good despot because a single person cannot attend to all the matters of the state as effectively as can many people (*Representative Government* 203).

[25] A constitution monarchy is compatible with a system of representative government. For example, Mill's proposed representative government for England would take shape within the context of the already existent constitutional monarchy. But the case in this passage on page 206 of *Representative Government* considers a situation in which the despot gives authority to the populace out of choice and could always take power back if he so desired. This situation would allow for public participation but only "in a very imperfect degree".

representative government by showing the utility-promoting effects of authoritative public participation.

My interpretation of Millian representative government based on chapter 3 is supported by subsequent chapters of *Representative Government*. Chapter 3 offers the general argument in support of the political system of representative government; in the rest, Mill goes on to provide practical, detailed recommendations for how this argument's conclusion in favor of representative government should be interpreted and implemented in his contemporary case of England. The argument made in chapter 3 favors authoritative public participation, but does not support specific government arrangements. For example, the argument supports Athenian direct democracy and American republicanism as well as English parliamentarianism. Mill argues for his specific proposals on the basis of practical considerations specific to the case at hand such as demographics and existing government institutions. In the course of elaborating his proposals, Mill reaffirms the importance of authoritative public participation. In support of public participation Mill offers a proposal of weighted voting that significantly extends suffrage while at the same time taking practical steps to ensure good and efficient government.[26] In another passage regarding representative bodies, he identifies ultimate public authority as the integral element in the definition of representative government.[27] These discussions provide additional

[26]Although Mill proposes what in his time was a radical extension of suffrage, he does exclude from the vote citizens who are illiterate, insane, or depend on public assistance. These limitations highlight Mill's approach to the practical implementation of authoritative public participation in his contemporary English society. Any implementation must take note of the social and economic factors in the society and make suitable adjustments to the ideal approach. At the same time, Mill advocates working to improve society to reduce the need for these adjustments in the future. "There are, however, certain exclusions, required by positive reasons, which do not conflict with this principle [of universal suffrage], and which, though an evil in themselves, are only to be got rid of by the cessation of the state of things which requires them" (*Representative Government* 280).

[27] Mill writes: "The meaning of representative government is, that the whole people, or some numerous portion of them, exercise through deputies periodically elected by themselves the ultimate controlling power" (Representative Government 228).

textual support for my interpretation of Mill as an advocate of public authority and public participation.

In Mill's proposed representative government, authoritative public participation extends beyond the selection of the representatives. The public also performs civic duties in the form of jury duty and rotating positions of authority. These elements of Mill's government result from his view "that the participation should everywhere be as great as the general degree of improvement of the community will allow" (*Representative Government* 217). The qualification about the "general degree of improvement" references Mill's discussion in chapter four where he explains that he only intends his proposals for societies with populaces that have already achieved a minimal level of development such that public participation can occur without danger of extremely poor governance or a regression from public participation to an inferior political system. However, he also makes clear in the same chapter that he believes his contemporary English society ready for enhanced public participation, and he periodically offers arguments to try to dispel readers' fears to the contrary. Mill's proposals promote authoritative public participation in order to have a positive effect on character development and consequently promote utility. I will explain this in the next section.

IV. THE UTILITY OF AUTHORITATIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In the preceding two sections, I interpreted Millian utilitarianism with its emphasis on character development and Millian representative government as an argument for authoritative public participation. In this section, I will complete my interpretation of Mill by showing that authoritative public participation fosters good character development and therefore promotes utility. Mill's argument is that authoritative public participation regularly engages otherwise

unengaged higher human faculties to enable good character development. In this section, I present an interpretation of this argument for the utility of authoritative public participation.

Mill's argument begins with the claim that higher human faculties are not regularly employed in societies with political systems that do not employ authoritative public participation. Mill paints an unflattering picture of "most men's ordinary life" as a routine "satisfaction of daily wants" in which "with the exception … of a few studious men, who take an intellectual interest in speculation for its own sake, the intelligence and sentiments of the whole people are given up to the material interests, and, when these are provided for, to the amusement and ornamentation, of private life" (*Representative Government* 216; 205). Most people's daily lives consist mainly of relatively mindless routines to earn a living, and any remaining leisure time is similarly spent in idle amusement. Moreover, the vast majority of people will not opt to engage their higher faculties at all in these speculative leisurely pursuits. Instead, people must be motivated by some practical purpose to engage their higher faculties. A similar passage confirms this interpretation: "The only sufficient incitement to mental exertion, in any but a few minds in a generation, is the prospect of some practical use to be made of its results" (*Representative Government* 203). Although there are exceptions,[28] the ordinary routines of most people do not include many practical incentives to engage higher human faculties.

Since the regular employment of higher human faculties is an essential prerequisite for good character development, Mill identifies this as a critical hindrance to the promotion of utility

[28] Mill's assertions hold true for most activities for most of the population, but they allow for exceptions. Mill admits that everyday work routines involve "some amount of intelligence" by it nonetheless remains confined "within a certain narrow range of ideas" (*Representative Government* 204). Similarly, there are exceptional individuals within the society who are privy to routines that do involve higher faculties and enable character-development. In despotism, for example, there are classes of people who fit this description, including the "select class of *savants*, who cultivate science," the bureaucrats who conduct public administration, and any other systematic organizers such as the military leadership (*Representative Government* 204, emphasis in original). Mill admits these cases as exceptions to the general rule. Particular exceptions do not undermine his identification of general social conditions that preclude character-development.

for a majority of members of his society. As discussed in section I, occasional or limited engagement is not enough to maintain and develop complex pleasures and the accompanying habitual use of higher faculties. Mill proposes to remedy this problem by introducing authoritative public participation as practical activity that will regularly engage citizens' higher human faculties. He proposes that public participation occur as frequently as practicalities allow by proposing many different forms of participation, from voting to jury duty, to rotating local posts.[29] These proposals aim to make public participation a routine part of every citizen's life. At the same time, Mill intends for public participation to be seen as a useful endeavor that merits citizens' efforts, and he assures this practicality by vesting ultimate government authority in public participation. Citizens will take interest and actively engage in their public roles because they know that their decisions are authoritative and have real consequences.[30] Mill proposes "that the participation should everywhere be as great as the general degree of improvement of the community will allow" (*Representative Government* 217). This maximization of public participation ensures that it regularly engages citizens to the greatest degree possible because it will be both practical and frequent.

Mill's proposals aim for people's active and regular participation. I will now interpret Mill's arguments for the positive character-building effects of participation starting with the claim that public participation involves intellectually challenging and stimulating decision-

[29] Mill writes that "any participation, even in the smallest public function is useful" (*Representative Government* 217). In my interpretation, Mill's use of the term *useful* in this passage can be read as promoting of utility.

[30] To illustrate the importance of authority to practicality, Mill considers the case of a despotism in which the citizenry participates in governance but serves at the pleasure of the despot. Since the populace "could never forget that they held [power] on sufferance," this form of government does not have all of the same advantages of authoritative public participation (*Representative Government* 206). In this passage, Mill admits that some advantages could be realized, like freedom of press and the formation of a public opinion. One of his arguments in this passage is that such a situation is unsustainable, as there will inevitably be conflict between the public will and the despot's will. But he furthermore argues that the mere knowledge that the public participation is not authoritative negates many of its advantages. Knowing that they serve a merely consultative role, the citizens will not take as much interest in their public functions and will not engage themselves to the same extent as they would in a true representative government.

making. Mill cites the historical example of ancient Athens' democratic institutions and, to a lesser extent, the contemporary (to him) example of English juries as evidence of the salutary effects of public participation upon citizens' intellects. He contrasts Athenian and English citizens who participate in public roles to "those who have done nothing in their lives but drive a quill, or sell goods over a counter" and argues that the former are much more developed "in range of ideas and development of faculties" (*Representative Government* 217). Similarly, Mill cites the public administration (i.e. bureaucracy) of all political systems as an exceptional occupation that engages higher faculties (*Representative Government* 217). In neither of these passages does Mill elaborate on exactly why he believes that public participation is intellectually engaging, but a latter discussion on weighted voting exposes Mill's reasoning. Mill identifies a correlation between the interests of activities and the degree to which those activities engage and develop people's intellects. As a result, skilled laborers people who manage large and complicated interests, such as bankers, merchants, and manufacturers, are generally more intelligent than people who do not manage such interests, such as tradesmen.[31] Because of their scope and complexity, public interests fall into this first class of activities that promote the intelligence of those who engage them. By extending public participation to almost all members of society, Mill assures that its beneficial intellectual engagement is extended to those who are not already privy to such activities through their occupations. This widespread engagement allows citizens to develop their higher faculties. As people engage their higher faculties, they will come to incorporate high quality pleasures into their individual conceptions of happiness; in

[31] "An employer of labour is on the average more intelligent than a laborer; for he must labour with his head, and not solely with his hands. A foreman is generally more intelligent than an ordinary labourer, and a labourer in the skilled trades than in the unskilled. A banker, merchant, or manufacturer is likely to be more intelligent than a tradesman, because he has larger and more complicated interests to manage" (*Representative Government* 285). This discussion of a few specific professions that engage intellectual faculties to a greater extent echoes the discussion on page 204 of the class of *savants* under a despotism. In both discussions, Mill emphasizes that such persons are in the numerical minority.

other words, they develop individual characters. Utility is promoted since people develop and pursue more high quality pleasures with greater frequency under the system of representative government than under alternative systems.

In addition to its contributions toward the incorporation of high quality pleasures into individual conceptions of happiness, public participation's directness toward public interests also has important consequences for the type of character traits that are fostered and developed. Public participation directs people to broaden their concerns from narrow self-interests for themselves and their families to broad concerns for the public at large.[32] This public directness develops higher quality pleasures that are motivated by public concern, and as a result are highly consonant with the utilitarian criterion of overall utility. Public participation not only contributes to character-development, but it does so in a way that it fosters character traits that promote overall utility.

V. ANTICIPATED OBJECTIONS

In this section, I anticipate and respond to objections to Mill's argument for authoritative public participation as the unique ideal means to promote good character development in society. I consider objections that propose some other alternative to Mill's proposed authoritative public participation as the better way to promote good character development. This sort of objection accepts that Mill's proposals may promote utility but presents alternatives as better approaches that would render Mill's recommendations superfluous. On my view, Mill does not argue that other activities do not promote character development. Instead, he sees his political proposals as

[32] "He [the citizen] is called upon, while so engaged [in public functions], to weigh interests not his own; to be guided, in case of conflicting claims, by another rule than his private partialities; to apply, at every turn, principles and maxims which have for their reason of existence the common good . . . He is made to feel himself one of the public, and whatever is for their benefit to be for his benefit" (*Representative Government* 217).

complementary to other areas of life that also promote character development. Nonetheless, authoritative public participation is uniquely ideal for the promotion of character development because it is more widespread and directed to broader interests than alternatives. To make this argument, I consider the specific alternatives of occupation and leisure activities. I then explain how directedness to broad public interests makes authoritative public participation the ideal best way to promote character development.

I first consider the possible alternative that activities that promote character development could be found in people's occupations, which would eliminate the need for widespread public participation. Mill's argument for the necessity of a robust public life for citizens is premised on the observation that most people's working lives do not actively engage higher faculties. Mill's argument is premised on the idea that such occupations are not widespread in any actual society. Although such a society is perhaps imaginable, Mill seems to think that the practical necessities of life preclude such a society from ever coming into existence. This interpretation is suggested when Mill writes of the "common business of life …[that] must *necessarily* be performed" (*Representative Government* 204, emphasis added). When he wrote *Representative Government* in 1861, Mill's observation was based on the routines of industrial and agrarian workers. He could not have foreseen post-industrial changes in the workplace including the emergence of new occupations, many of which resemble the bankers, merchants, and manufacturers that Mill cites as people with more engaging occupations. Indeed, public opinion surveys show that most working people in the United States find their jobs to be interesting.[33] These surveys cast doubt on Mill's characterization of work as necessarily tedious and monotonous. However, the fact that a job is interesting job does not automatically imply that the job engages higher faculties, as the

[33] In 2004, 90% of respondents reported that their jobs were "interesting nearly all of the time" or "interesting most of the time" (Associated Press/Ipsos-Public Affairs Poll). In 1946, 69% of respondents reported that their jobs were "really interesting and enjoyable" (Roper/Fortune Survey).

job could be interesting for other reasons. Furthermore, there are significant portions of the populace who either reported that their job was not interesting or are unemployed, and Mill's proposals would serve as the sole catalyst for their character development. In short, if it turns out that people's jobs are engaging their higher faculties in contemporary society, then it would lessen the urgency of Mill's proposals, but he would still have a strong case for authoritative public participation as a complement to people's working lives.

Leisure activity presents another possible alternative source of engaging activity, but Mill similarly argues that relatively few people will take up intellectually engaging leisure activities. As with occupations, it is imaginable that new leisure activities that engage people's higher faculties could gain widespread popularity. Mill admits that a "few studious men" do in fact engage their higher faculties in their leisure time, out of intellectual curiosity (*Representative Government* 205). Mill's language suggests that it is a fact of human nature that most people will not spend their leisure time in intellectually engaging activity. Mill's position seems plausible in light of popular leisure activities in historical and contemporary societies. In any case, Mill makes an additional response to discount leisure as a plausible alternative to public participation. He argues that the idle, speculative nature of leisure activity makes it less engaging. Since people do not typically challenge themselves to further develop their higher faculties through leisure, people will not engage their higher faculties as fully as they would in a comparable activity with practical application like authoritative participation.[34] With these responses, Mill discounts both occupational work and leisure activity as plausible sources of widespread character development.

[34] "The test of real and vigourous thinking, the thinking which ascertains truths instead of dreaming dreams, is successful application to practice" (*Representative Government* 211-212). A minority of people in leisure do in fact engage in challenging and stimulating leisure activity. For example, a person might enroll in challenging course in the local university on the subject matter of her interest, and this course will provide specific practical activities in which to apply skills, such as testing or other assignments. But more commonly, people idly engage in the topic of interest without submitting to such rigorous practical activities.

Furthermore, public participation is the uniquely ideal solution to character development because its relationship to the public interest is more direct than any other alternative. This is important because its directedness to the public interest not only makes it intellectually engaging but also fosters character traits that promote overall utility. As described earlier in this paper, good character-development involves the incorporation of complex pleasures. The degree to which these complex pleasures promote overall utility plays a key role in determining the utilitarian value of a person's character. Mill's proposed public participation encompasses the entirety of the public interests of a nation, so it assures that the complex pleasures developed will be directed to the public interest and therefore be of good utilitarian benefit. Any alternative approach to character development would not involve the public interests as directly and completely, and so would not have as beneficial an effect on overall utility as would public participation. The passage in which Mill refers to the "common business" of people's occupations suggests this limitation when it makes explicit that labor is "performed by each individual or family for themselves" (*Representative Government* 205). This description is juxtaposed against Mill's later depiction of the "public spirit" engendered by public participation (*Representative Government* 217). Even in the case of a profession that involves a broader interest, such as banking, the interest remains much more limited than the public interest. The banker will develop her intelligence through her daily work routine, but she will not necessarily develop complex pleasures that are consonant with the promotion of overall utility for society as a whole. On the other hand, the citizen who engages in authoritative public participation will develop a character that incorporates concern for society as a whole into his character. The promotion of character that is directed to the public interest is the best way to promote overall utility and is best achieved by Mill's proposed authoritative public participation.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have interpreted Mill's utilitarian argument in *Utilitarianism* as an argument for the utilitarian benefits of good character development. I then interpreted his political argument in *Representative Government* as an argument for authoritative public participation. Drawing on these two interpretations, I showed how Mill's political argument for authoritative public participation is fundamentally a utilitarian argument in favor of political changes to improve character development on a widespread basis. This reading provides important context for understanding Mill's politics as consistently grounded in his interpretation of utilitarianism. Finally, I anticipated the objection of potential alternatives to authoritative public participation and showed why Mill believes his political changes to be uniquely effective in fostering character development.

Mill's broad application of utilitarianism supports my interpretation of his political argument as utilitarian. For Mill the utilitarian principle extends to all evaluative areas (Gray 21). As a result, Mill must adhere to this utilitarian principle as the evaluative basis of his political analysis if his political theory is to be consistent with his work in utilitarianism. Alternately, one could interpret Mill's political work as inconsistent with his utilitarian theory. But my interpretation has the advantage of preserving Mill's intended broad application of utilitarianism and maintaining consistency between Mill's political philosophy and his utilitarian evaluative theory. Furthermore, in my interpretation Millian utilitarianism provides important context for elucidating many of Mill's concrete political proposals as efforts to promote overall utility through character development. Mill's argument for representative government is best understood as an argument for authoritative public participation that will serve to develop people's higher faculties in a way that promotes good character development and overall utility.

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