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Right to Universal, Plural and Secret Vote: On the Liberal and Conservative Paradoxes of Mill's 'Elitist' Democracy

Evrensel, Çoğul ve Gizli Oy Hakkı: Mill'in 'Seçkinci' Demokrasi Kuramının Liberal ve Muhafazakâr Paradoksları Üzerine

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Abstract: During the era witnessing the development of representative democracy, Mill defended the right to "universal suffrage" and believed that individuals should not be deprived of their political rights. This can be seen as a reflection of his modern, liberal, and democratic attitude. However, by defining certain mandatory prerequisites to have such voting right and adding that taking votes of each individual with an equal impact would be impossible, Mill also showed a contradicting position against his liberal and democratic attitude. The paradoxical limitations brought by Mill to the universal suffrage right can be interpreted as his presentation of an elitist democracy theory. In this paper, the reasons behind Mill's elitist democracy approach are discussed in details and the nature of his theory of democracy is examined.

Keywords: Mill, democracy, plural and secret vote, right to vote, paradox, policy.

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Introduction

British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) is a representative of an era that needed a scale shift in democracy regime, differentiating from city-state applications of ancient time. Mill believed that in the first half of 19th century, the physical conditions of direct democracy requiring all adult men to gather in areas like *agora* in Athens or *forum* in Ancient Rome did not exist anymore. In this respect, Mill expressed with open heart in every opportunity since his youth that the ideal type of democracy regime to be adapted to a broader sample is the "representative" governing style (Mill, 1958: 9, 56; Leslie, 1984: 48). Because, according to Mill, it was possible to establish a rational democracy idea only with the election of the administrators by the citizens with the sense of responsibility, contrary to the general opinion of self government. With the help of representation system, citizens could maintain their controlling power with elections repeated at certain intervals so that they could ensure their power against the representatives they authorized for the government ruling them (Warner, 2001: 406). Thus, Mill evaluated the representative democracy as a modern and desirable political system reflecting the characteristics of developed societies and also as an effective means that may support the development of free individuals (Smart, 1990: 308).

Mill evaluated John Locke and Thomas Hobbes' "the rules of the social contract" in a total speculative way, and criticized their political understanding as being based upon abstract premises, evaluating the democracy as a system where the beliefs and actions of humans have a certain level of rationality. According to Mill, however, the primary concern with the democratic regime was about how much effective and equalitarian tool was the representative system to ensure the sustainability of the political system. For instance, during the *Victorian* era Britain to which Mill witnessed, the majority of the parliament members consisted of wealthy landlords. Mill, at the beginning of his twenties with the effect of *Philosophic Radicals* led by significant names such as Jeremy Bentham and David Ricardo who put their efforts to develop liberal culture in terms of political and economic aspects, was passionately defending that the representation system must be extended beyond the land aristocracy, at least to involve the middle class (Capaldi, 2004: 46).

The fact that the privileged groups desiring to protect their own political privileges at the cost of endangering the society with underdevelopment defend the right to vote in a very narrow way by ignoring the reality in the society was a great resistance point for the *Philosophical Radicals*. As a liberal who believes that political participation is one of the descriptive characteristics of the concept of "citizenship", Mill accepted universal suffrage, which promotes the participation of all groups, as a radical means to democratize the political power (Kinzer, 1978: 38). On the other hand, at the heart of the theory of politics based on Mill's representation system, the elements for the development of political participation equipped with contemporary "liberal" must be said to exist together with some "elite" items that are presented as prerequisites for the creation of an idealized political life. The source of this encounter, which reflects the tension between freedom and change and the status quo, stands as a problematic matter to be questioned.

1. Universal (Proportional) Suffrage Defense

As described above, Mill believes that a healthy democratic regime indeed should depend on an equal and proportional system to represent all segments of the society. A representation system designed in such way will definitely bring certain benefits. For example, it will encourage the participation to the elections and enable different segments, either majority or minority, to be represented at the parliament in proportion with their complexity levels in the society. According to Mill, with this way, a minority social group or movement in society can be protected from being deprived of the opportunity of representation on purpose or because of a disproportionate electoral system. This is because Mill supports that freedom should not reflect only certain segments of the society, instead, it should cover all groups, leaving no man behind (Mill, 1958: 46). This understanding which encourages the participation in political system and which can be appreciated even today for protecting the interests of the citizens, is a reform–type proposal to 19th century British parliamentary system (Miller, 2003: 647-648). On the contrary, in the event that representation gets only a numerical majority as a reference, the system might leave certain minorities without any representation each time (Kern, 1972: 309). In order to prevent such threat, a true democracy

model as Mill expresses was evaluated as a proper governing model, which does not deprive the minorities of the right to vote and not depend on privileges (Schmidt, 2002: 95). As declared by Mill, in this model, "A majority of electors would always have a majority of the representatives [in parliament], but a minority of electors would always have a minority of the representatives" (Mill, 1958: 103). However, according to Mill, it does not follow that the minority should have no representatives at all, so each segment or each community of interest should have their spokesperson and supporters in the parliament and each group should have the power in exact amount they should have (Mill, 1958: 103,125). For Mill, only a parliament organized in this way can ensure the settlement of true, equal and universal democracy understanding.

Another advantage of proportional system based parliament is that it provides opportunities for the citizens to develop their intellectual capacities, as well as increasing the political participation. Since political institutions also work as a school for the training of the citizens on public relations, individuals can learn about their essential interests and all other interests and expectations and develop their perspectives in this way. According to Mill, participation will provide the citizens self-esteem and the sense of belonging and equip them with more skills and information to understand public problems in a better way. Depending upon all these reasons, Mill always defended that each citizen must have a voice and right to vote for the government and ruling system of the society (Warner, 2001: 405)[1].

While trying to justify his arguments, Mill does not neglect to give examples from the Antique Greek world. According to him, as similar democratic institutions developed and diversified, Athenian citizens could develop their public responsibility ideas and education (Ten, 1998: 375-376)[2]. Otherwise, they would have felt as if they had had "no business

[1] Mill, with the understanding emphasizing the universality of the right to vote, appears to be highly coherent with Aristotelian ancient wisdom. As Aristotle describes human in *Politics* as a creature in need of a social partnership (***koinōnia)*** because of their nature (Aristotle., 1971: I, 1253a), Mill explains his idea that nobody should be eliminated from the democratic system depending on such social partnership idea.

[2] Mill seems to be right on this. Modern politic science people mention that Athenian adult me interiorised the citizenship responsibilities after participating to fundamental democratic institutions such as parliament, and that they earned a certain type of educa-

with the laws except to obey them nor with public interests and concern except as a looker-on" (Mill, 1958: 131). According to Mill, at least not to cause any personal injustice, the people who have to pay taxes, who are forced to fight in wars, and even expected to obey, should be asked for their content and advise for all these responsibilities (Mill, 1958: 131).

Moreover, by going beyond the spirit of his century, Mill included women into the concept of citizen status and handled universal right to vote without discriminating women.[3] He never hesitated to ask the ones defending to deprive women of political rights if they really thought that we would not lose anything by hedging off the abilities of "one-half of mankind". (Mill, 2009b: 91). With the motive that there is no basis or justification to deprive women of their citizenship rights, Mill also undertook serious attempts in the parliament to which he was elected as a member.[4] Mill, when dealing with universal suffrage in depth, criticized gender discrimination in which women were deprived of their rights and expressed that different genders, or different height or hair colour and other features can be of no interest with the political rights (1958: 143).

However, no doubt, the main reason why the debates on universal suffrage flared up well in the era when Mill lived is the argument that the

tion and formation (*paideia*) naturally. Accordingly, political participation contributed to the moral virtue development and institutional collaboration idea of Athenian citizens (Finley, 1973: 30). Moreover, with the development of democratic institutions in Athens, the idea of public responsibility developed so much that especially wealthy citizens could own some positive designation in proportion to their contribution, such as dignity, honour and "philanthropy" (*philitimia*), which gave them some immaterial privileges in the eyes of other citizens, and thanks to such definitions giving them social privileges, they were tolerated when they encountered any commercial or legal problems, for the discussion, see (Ober, 2008: 220).

[3] Considering the era he lived, where the current situation of the women was too different than his projections, Mill's political expectation to give women the right to vote was clearly ahead his time. When Mill was a parliamentarian, in Britain, "Women could not own property or have any right to the proceeds of their labour. Married women had no right to property, including property they had inherited from their fathers, had no protection from marital rape, did not have a voice in the education of their children, and could not obtain the custody of their children in case of divorce. Divorce itself required an act of Parliament. Unmarried women who paid taxes were not allowed to vote. Nor could women serve on juries" (Capaldi, 2004: 334).

[4] For this purpose, Mill gave a petition to the House of Commons on June 7, 1866, still, he could receive support from only 73 members [of the parliament consisting 658 members at that time], and this is why his proposal was not accepted. Despite any discouragement, Mill named all his studies on women rights as "the only really important public service he had performed as a Member of Parliament" (Capaldi, 2004: 327).

system of representation might be expanded to include the working class. Mill participated in the debate by expressing that the working class should be represented in the parliament. According to him, a parliament where working class representatives also find place, would certainly be beneficial for both the workers and the nation. Mill believed that if the working class were to have political possibilities, they would also contribute to the development of political institutions (Ten, 1998: 372).

According to Mill, if political participation of the masses is not promoted, then they will continue to live as a potential threat outside the system. Mill, who wanted to justify his ideas, frequently emphasized the importance of participation by recalling that the workers in the United States, where the working class had more rights, were generally more knowledgeable and educated about political issues compared to the ones in the United Kingdom (Miller, 2003: 661). Even if Mill's demands on right to vote may seem a defence specifically for the rights of the working class, when looked closer, the matter was still Mill's heartfelt belief in universal suffrage which also includes the working class. Mill defends the right to universal suffrage also because he believes in the philosophy that the greatest amount of beneficial consequence was possible with a democrat ruling and that it was the ideally best form of government, partly depending on his pragmatist approach (Mill, 1958: 43). This results from the fact that Mill believed that "any limitation of the field of selection deprives society of some chances of being served by the competent, without ever saving it from the incompetent" (Mill, 2009b: 35). The popular administration in Mill's mind points to a system in which the number of people excluded from the vote are the least, and where whole public participates to the government as much as possible which gives the citizens of all classes the widest participation in details of judicial and administrative affairs (Mill, 1958: 86). This political attitude of Mill is highly compatible with his pragmatist philosophical stance utility grounding "that laws and social arrangements should place the happiness, or the interest, of every individual, as nearly as possible in harmony with the interest of the whole" (Mill, 2009c: 32). Defending that it could have a positive impact on the general welfare of the society, Mill supported the right to universal suffrage not only in theory but in practice as well.

As a result of all these intentions, after being elected as a liberal member of the parliament in the House of Commons in *Westminster* between 1865-1868, Mill mainly worked on the expansion of the right to vote. General tendency in liberal side, of which Mill was a member, was to believe that working class could be represented collectively in the parliament with the enlargement of the right to vote, and that the leadership of the liberals on this issue could contribute to the political development of both the liberals themselves and of the country. In this context, Mill supported the reform package on elections presented to the parliament by the Liberal Party Leader and United Kingdom prime minister William E. Gladstone (1809-1898) on March 12, 1866, however, unfortunately, the package was not accepted.[5] It can be argued that the realization of the reform is caused by traditional aristocratic prejudices. If the package had been accepted, the amount of working class votes could have made up almost one fourth of the total registered voters in Britain and the Wales, and it is clear that rejecting such package means missing a great opportunity to expand the right to vote (Kinzer, 1992: 89-90).

On the other hand, there were some handicaps in the interest of proportional representation to increase participation, according to Mill. Representative democracy, according to him, contained the two most fundamental dangers in itself. One of them, and perhaps the most important one is the danger that a mass democracy based on a proportional representation would generally be prone to "*collective mediocrity*"[6] and depend on the "deficiency in high mental qualifications" (Mill, 1958: 86). This would result in a low level of intellect in the parliament and in the controlling public opinion. Because of this problem, a concern for Mill, the political power could go from the uppermost levels of society to the lower classes, and the voice of the educated minority could never be heard.[7]

[5] The Reform Package presented by Gladstone to the parliament about the electoral system predicted that the voting competence would be reduced from 10 pounds to 7 pounds in cities and 14 pounds in rural areas (Kinzer, 1992: 89-90; Capaldi, 2004: 324).

[6] Mill uses the term "*collective mediocrity*" together with the term "mass", as he puts them forward in his work *on Liberty*. See (Mill, 2009a: 111).

[7] Mill voices the disadvantaged situation of the cultivated minority in the representation system with a striking statement: "the highly –cultivated members of community, except such of them as are willing to sacrifice their own opinions and modes of judgment, and

According to Mill, another threat in mass democracies was the probability that laws could be made for benefit of quantitative majority who are the members of the same group (Mill, 1958: 102). In such a condition, one power can overrule all others and this will naturally result in one-side societal slowdown. Mill was concerned that when political power was held by the rising working class which constituted the majority in the society, there could be societal slowdown, similar to one-way aristocratic sovereignty. At this point, according to Mill, one of the most important questions demanding consideration in determining the best constitution of a representative system was "how to provide efficacious securities against this evil" (Mill, 1958: 100). Mill believed that the solution to such problems could be found only by building a barrier to the democratic characteristics of representation. *Philosophical Radicals* to which Mill was also a member, and who were mainly members of middle class, saw themselves as the natural leader and spokesperson of the working class in their battle against aristocracy in 1830s (Capaldi, 2004: 292-93). However, the situation changed in the following decades and Mill also revised his understanding on democracy to balance the uncontrolled increase in participation instead of supporting this understanding as a way to guarantee that the government could observe the mutual benefit.

Against the social problems that the voting right could cause, Mill tried to find a solution with two radical and concrete proposals. The first was that the voting right had the minimum requirements, and the second was that some voters were allowed to have two or more voting rights, considered as privileged. Beyond any doubt, these two proposals are interesting when discussing democracy.

1.1. First Barrier against Democracy: Minimum Requirements to be a Voter

It can be argued that J. S. Mill was seeking a qualification condition

become the servile mouthpieces of their inferiors in knowledge, seldom even offer themselves for Congress" (Mill, 1958: 114). As can be seen, according to Mill, a educated minority in mass democracies can find themselves in parliament when they give up the privileged position and views that education has earned them. Already upon this reason, Leslie Lipson, a contemporary theoretician, mentions the necessity of people who are engaged in politics being an example of the average person to their environment, just like Mill expresses (Lipson, 1964:52).

for voters to come over the threats that mass democracies could cause. Mill, described this qualification as "education" and "tax payment" criteria at a level that does not reflect a general indulgence.

1.1.1. Education

Mill believed in a very clear way that the path to universal suffrage must go through universal education. According to Mill, universal teaching must precede universal enfranchisement. This understanding can be interpreted as Mill benefited from Plato's heritage in terms of the importance of the education of the citizens to establish a good politic order (Giorgini, 2009: 629)[8] Therefore, the most important prerequisite of a person having the right to vote is his literacy skills and the ability to perform ordinary arithmetic operations. According to Mill, the opposite is unacceptable; because a voter who cannot afford a minimum of a healthy presence to vote in the face of a public official cannot contribute to the voting process.[9] It is undoubtedly a possibility that the poor citizens can be deprived of basic education facilities because their poverty. Mill believes that education must be provided free of charge or at the lowest cost to prevent any unjust treatment for the right to vote (Mill, 1958: 132, 164).

1.1.2. Paying Taxes

Another prerequisite for the right to vote is that the voters can have as much income as he or she can pay taxes on his own terms. Therefore,

[8] In a letter he wrote to Henry Jones on June 13, 1868, Mill interprets an ideal state and education relationship in a Platonic manner: "...when I said that the general happiness is a good to the aggregate of all persons I did not mean that every human being's happiness is a good to every other human being; *though I think, in a good state of society & education it would be so*." (Mill,1972: 1414).

[9] Mill finds a striking event in history at this point, and establishes a historical relationship between literacy and voting, reminding the Greek politician *Aristides* (530-468 BC). The *Aristides* event, which Mill was presumably depending on readings of famous historian Herodotus, was an interesting anecdote showing that it allowed illiterate citizens of Athens to participate in exile votes (*ostrakismós*). *In a voting in B.C. 482 for Aristides to exile him from Athens, according to Herodotus, there was a dialog between a farmer and Aristides: "during voting, a citizen came near [Aristides] and asked him to write Aristides on a piece of crockery (ostrakon)... Aristides wrote it... A man honest and virtuous even to help someone vote against him"* (Plutarch, 1914: VII. 5-6; Herodotus, 1925: VIII.79). It seems that Mill might resorted to the example of Aristides in order to demonstrate that the understanding of *isonomia*, in which it was thought that all citizens were equal and such sense of equality connected the collective desire of all citizens, was not very effective in taking political decisions.

Mill considers it necessary to deprive people who live by buying church and social services (parish relief) from the right to vote. Mill believes that people who provide their livelihood for the support of all the rest of the community cannot have the same political rights as the rest of the society, as long as this dependency relationship continues.

Mill finds it suspicious when a voter who can change their vote in exchange for some financial incentives is treated equally with another voter who represents the ideas and aims of life in a healthy manner (Mill, 1958: 133, 165). It can be considered that Mill limits voting right with such a precondition claiming that a voter in poverty would not be the master of his own will.[10]

At this point, however, we can put forward several grounds why Mill's voters propose a restrictive set of basic political rights, such as "voting". When Mill's individual freedoms are the subject of debate, it seems that the individual has gone through a fundamental separation between "interests only him" and "harming others". Accordingly, the right to vote is not a right only of an individual's concern and this is why Mill suggested limitations to this right. Reason behind such limitations, when looked closer, is expressed clearly in the introduction of *on Liberty,* accordingly: "that the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others" (Mill, 1958: 18). From this point forth, Mill's limiting barriers on the right to vote depended on the justification that the reflections of the decisions of a voter without such qualification may cause results that may exceed the limits of this individual's freedom.

On the other hand, with a closer look, it is probable to state that the methods used by Mill to protect the mass democracies had similarities with the applications named *Lockean Accommodation* referring to another liberal John Locke, to limit the comprehensive right to vote in 19th century Europe. Even though the intention was different than Mill had,

[10] Mill puts forward a similar financial restraint not only in terms of voting, but also in candidacy to become a parliamentary member. Mill believes that if a collateral of 50 pounds is requested from all candidates, it could prevent those who could engage with the public, even though they have no chance of success. Candidates who cannot pay this amount do not seem to be able to propagate the electorate through advertisements, posters and brochures (Mill, 1958: 166).

Lockean Accommodation consisted of many different applications such as *the regime censitaire* limiting the suffrage with the possession of wealth or the payment of taxes, or the *regime capacitaire* restricting suffrage on the basis of literacy and formal education and finally, the ones known as the *house-holds responsibility* (Bowles & Gintis, 1986: 42). Although they were based on the purpose to keep the working class, who could possibly stand against the hegemonic powers of the wealth holders, away from being represented, (Bowles & Gintis, 1986: 42); it is interesting that those real arrangements had similarities with the barriers put by Mill in front of the democracy.

2. Second Barrier against Democracy: "Plural Voting" System

Mill, while trying to eliminate the possible dangers that could emerge in representative democracies in parallel with the expansion of universal suffrage, by laying down the minimum conditions of being a voter and foreseeing the structure of a qualified electorate; on the other hand, in a democracy based on the principle of equality, Mill tried to overcome by suggesting a "plural vote" system so that individual talents and differences are not ignored. The essence of the system, which is defined as the plural vote, is based on the understanding that one has to have more than one vote due to some intellectual or professional qualities that one has. According to Mill, the criteria of having more than one right to vote should be handled through "intellectual superiority" of an individual, not through their properties or personal fortune. At this point, it can be expressed in this way that Mill linked plural vote to intellectual factors such as mental superiority or skills instead of some economic principles, which means that he added some moral meaning to a political regulation. Even though grounding the right to plural vote on only qualifications instead of wealth may sound well, such approach still does not change the fact that Mill was proposing an elitist democracy model. Mill's allocation of a privileged position to certain individuals despite the nature of their personal qualities can even be interpreted as the integration of traditional aristocracy to the democratic system, by picking up the best parts of the system (Kern, 1972: 322).

When looked a little deeper, it can be deducted that although Mill

believed wholeheartedly that every person deserves to be represented at the parliament, paradoxically, he also desired that educated and professionally skilful people, who were a minority in number, should have more impact on politics against the majority of mass "ignorance". The following statement can be read as the clearest indication of this thought:

> ...everyone is entitled to some influence, but the better and wiser to more than others, it is important that this conviction should be professed by the State and embodied in the national institutions (Mill, 1958: 142).

Mill sees equal and universal suffrage right not as "things which are good in themselves" but "comparatively better" in front of an inequality based on random conditions such as inequality in wealth o property, and principally stands against gaining a better absolute status with such inequality. Upon this idea, Mill prefers to limit the right to vote with an elitist political stand, first voters' qualification and then plural voting system. With such an approach, Mill thinks that by giving plural voting right to the educated elite minority, he can help them to have a higher voice. The main reason behind Mill's legitimizing the right to plural vote derives from his reaction against the possibility that qualified people who can provide more effective contributions to the decision making processes might be prevented by the uneducated majority. On the other hand, such skeptic approach of Mill against majority is an indicator that unlike a liberal such as John Locke, Mill was not evaluation the approval of the majority as a rational *act of the whole* (Locke, 1988: 332)[11].

According to Mill, although not in the short term, the right to plural vote has positive results in medium and long term. For example, the working class, who Mill believes that deprived of the ability to govern in the centuries it lived, can adapt to the democratic struggle by acquiring the skills, education and charities that are deprived of its own members, as they experience the pluralistic voting recognized by distinguished educated and qualified citizens. Uneducated or less educated masses can seek ways to have the qualifications they desire, in order to have more than

[11] Indeed, Locke, different than Mill, believed that to integrate the Community as a whole single body, it is necessary to consent to what the majority decides and wants. If the majority cannot decide for the others, "consequently [body] will be immediately dissolved again (Locke, 1988: 333). Thus, unlike Mill, Locke sees majority not as a danger but as the foundation of the idea of Community.

one vote. From this point of view, according to Mill, right to plural vote is an important driver and motivation to help uneducated masses develop themselves (Miller, 2003: 647, 666). Mill deeply believed that such system could succeed and tried to combine the universal suffrage which he thought as a necessity for the education of a society, with the right to plural vote which would be in force at least unless the working class was educated and their economic conditions could be fixed. Thus, liberal and conservative factors resisting against change existed in Mill's approach together paradoxically.

Mill, on the other hand, was persuaded to weaken the influence of the right to universal suffrage by preventing the despotism based on the arithmetic majority (Haliday, 1976: 134, 136-*emphasis added*-). It can be clearly stated that behind this search by Mill lays the claim to restrain the possible threats of democracy. Mill was concerned that a democratic regime based on the consensus of the majority could undermine the different ideas and creative originality that could develop the society, so he thought that plural voting could encourage the principle of "guaranteeing divergent interests" as the greatest social function of a government (Warner, 2001: 406). To put it in another way, Mill's such approach can be understood as an elitist matter of choice restraining his democratic attitude based on universal suffrage, because Mill claims that without active and wise citizens, all governments, either representative or not, can turn into *paternal* administrations, interfering everything and behaving to the individuals living under its ruling like a father treats his children (Haliday, 1976: 137). In order to prevent such a potential threat, Mill justifies the right to plural vote to limit the damage to the "others".

Mill was worried that the right of the majority could turn into the legitimacy of the majority, and the majority principle could not logically create such postulates of value. Mill's paradox was coming back and forth between the demand to rescue the numerical majority after the enlargement of the right to vote from the privileges of the minority, and the desire to protect the minority from the pressure from the majority. Mill saw the solution to that problem in replacing the ancient hereditary aristocracy with an elitist group consisting of intellectuals (Lipson, 1964: 64). Mill believed that "the only quarter in which to look for a *supplement,* or

completing corrective, to instincts of a democratic majority is *the instructed minority*" (Mill, 1958: 117). In a more explicit way, thinking that mass democracy would be incomplete without the voice of the educated minority, Mill suggested the right to plural vote to enable that voice become louder. Mill's mind-set was so clear about this issue that he never hesitated to express that it was necessary to keep the opinions of the masses defined by personal interests rather than intellect (or average individuals) within *reason* and *justice,* and that educated minority was the perfect value to protect the democracy from such opinions' cankerous effects (Mill, 1958: 14, 118)[12].

Indeed, although Mill defended the universal suffrage rights of the masses ever since earliest days of his intellectual development, he also stated from time to time that this right could be balanced with some limitations. In an article he wrote on weekly *Examiner* paper dated 15, 1832, he was giving some hints about the right to plural vote, which he had not named yet:

> We know that the will of the people, even of the numerical majority, must in the end be supreme... but the test of what is right in politics is not the will of the people, but the good of the people, and our object is, not to compel but to persuade the people to impose, for the sake of their own good, some restraints on the immediate and unlimited exercise of their own will (Mill, 1832: 502).

As explained before, Mill was standing against the representation of the private rights earned through inheritance, and instead of evaluating the plural vote system through a measurement comparable to material qualities such as money or property, he linked the plural voting system to "education", a scale that could be directly tested. Thus, it seems that Mill avoided at least presenting any arbitrary qualification for the discussion on which qualifications should be taken into consideration while giving right to plural vote. In Mill's perspective, education can be evaluated through some documents or diplomas framed by a certain exam system or

[12] Mill criticizes the ones acting only for their interests in *on Liberty* and accuses them of not being large-minded: "And the World, to each individual, means the part of it with which he comes in contact; his party, his sect, his church, his class of society: the man may be called...large-minded to whom it means anything so comprehensive as his own country or his own age (Mill, 2009a: 31).

through professional status: "An employer of labour is on the average more intelligent than a labourer, a foreman is generally more intelligent than an ordinary labourer, and, a labourer in the skilled trades than in the unskilled" (Mill, 1958: 138).

Mill links the conditions to plural voting with two criteria; education and profession, and he delivers his principal stand in relation to plural voting right in *Considerations on Representative Government* (1865) and it is seen that he avoids using concrete examples. Indeed, in the booklet he wrote in 1859, *Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform*, he uses some concrete expressions open to discussion on this topic:

> If every ordinary unskilled labourer had one vote, a skilled labourer, whose occupation requires an exercised mind and knowledge of some of the laws of external nature, ought to have two. A foreman, or superintendent of labour should perhaps have three. A farmer, manufacturer, or trader should have three or four. A member of any profession requiring a long, accurate, and systematic mental cultivation, -a lawyer, a physician or surgeon, a clergyman of any denomination, a literary man, an artist, a public functionary ought to have five or six (Mill, 1977: 324-25).

As seen above, Mill claims that an individual can have even five, six or more votes depending on their professional status and education. Modern political scientist Paul Smart thinks that such attractive approach presented by Mill could match with *meritocratic* system rather than democratic regimes. By opening the government's authority to the approval of intellectually superior people and elites, Mill prevents the government from getting under the control of some specific groups and by doing so, he presents a merit-based meritocracy [or elitist] characteristics as to reflect a traditional understanding (Smart, 1990: 308, 317-*emphasis added*-).

Mill relates that the voices of individuals with certain knowledge and ability are heard more loudly within the government when they move with a more civilized existence purpose. The elites, according to Mill, make decisions not only for themselves but also by considering the principle of public partnership and responsibility. However, Mill's claim that "enlightened qualified people" act with the social partnership idea, can be evaluated also as an optimistic expectation in the contexts of modern

democratic conditions. Historical mission assigned to elite and educated individuals, contentiously, derives from the claim that they could pick the wise ones and the public interests can be protected in this way.

Indeed, what pushed Mill to think in this way were the reel political developments of the age. Mill observed that when it is politics or economics, working class was acting upon class interests instead of the general and unbiased principles. According to him, working class was still asking for more money and less work (Haliday, 1976: 127). Hence, Mill's attitude about the representative government and his approach looking out for the right to plural vote can be assessed through such relationship. Mill tried to establish a close relationship between the plural voting system and participation, qualification and capability to vote to balance the political willpower of the majority apt to self-interest with citizens who are more educated and more qualified.

At the point we got so far, a question may arise: how can the citizens with only one voting right give consent to the plural voting rights of the elites in limited number, and on which intention? Indeed, this question is one of the problematic discussions in Mill's theory. Even though Mill expresses that a democracy understanding based on representation system is the basic motto of a modern government, in the event that citizens are reluctant to perform the expectations of the modern society, he believes that the government can bring forcible limitation on the acts of the citizens. According to Mill, in such situation, "a civilized government will require to be in a considerable degree despotic" (Mill, 1958: 7). Actually, Mill stated not only in his discussions on representative system but also in his book *On Liberty* (1859) that such a despotic attitude was indispensable for the development of a society not enough civilized yet, and which cannot tell what is good for them from what is not. In this context, being coercive or despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement (Mill, 2009: 20).[13] No

[13] Indeed, that forced despotic attitude of Mill may seem contradicting his ideas again in *On Liberty* that he cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right. However, Mill insistently expressed that such a principle applies only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties (Mill, 2009: 19). From this point onwards it can be stated that a society, which cannot embrace liberal cul-

matter how hard Mill wished for enlarging the right to vote and fought for it both in and outside the parliament as an intellectual, he was still concerned about the eventuality that representative democracy might serve to personal interests in the end (Mill, 1958: 101). Probably depending on this reason, despite some reluctance and contradiction, Mill agreed to a level where he could accept the idea that a philanthropic dictator might develop and promote the virtue and wisdom of the society. (Pennimann, 1958: XIV).[14]

3. Secret Vote

In the case of Mill's theory of democracy, one of the controversial issues is his ideas on secret voting, claiming that voters actually should vote open. These ideas are included in hereby study because they constitute another trivet which he used to base his elite democratic discourse.

Mill respected "secret voting" as an important achievement to protect especially the middle class voters from the land aristocracy who was dominating the government in 1830s, a time Mill accepted the political opinions of *Philosophical Radicals,* and unwilling to lose or share with the public their long-lasting political privileges. According to Mill, a voter could only make a reasonable political choice in a voting booth, far from the eyes, protected from the systematically and deterrent pressure of the landlords. Seeing the right to general voting as the most important instrument of radical political power in the 1830s, Mill was evaluating the secret vote as an important and necessary measure to prevent boss and landowners from intimidating workers in order to secure electoral security and to protect the people in vulnerable situations from reprisals (Kern, 1972: 316).

In 1840s, Mill's ideas on societal change shifted gradually and he began to believe that social reform was only possible with accompanying "moral" change. At this point, Mill's words in 1842 are clear indicators of

ture, does not have the opportunities to show that maturity.

[14] Mill gives historical examples to the despots whom he thought was possible to be supported for a while with "a means to some temporary purpose". According to Mill, because *Solon* (B.C. 638-559), the wise government man of ancient time and *Pittakos of Mytliene* (M.Ö. 650-570) could give up the power under their control, their attitude could be tolerated (Mill, 1958: 42).

that change mentioned above: "[I]t is becoming more and more clearly evident to me that the mental regeneration of Europe must precede its social regeneration..." (Mill, from Capaldi, 2004: 256). Since 1840s, Mill began to see right to vote as a precondition for political change, rather than seeing it as the main factor that could cause political change, and gave greater priority to moral and intellectual advancement for change. If the plural voting right articulated to universal suffrage can be read as a natural end result of the change in the conception of Mill, the change in his view upon secret voting can be similarly interpreted in that way. Mill then thought that the decisive factors that had to be defended in the past years had changed, and believed that the obligatory commitment of the voters to the upper classes, at least in the contemporary Western European countries, no longer existed.[15] According to Mill, now "the higher classes [are] not masters of the country" (Mill, 1977: 333). Moreover, now there was a more serious problem than it seemed; the real threat was the possibility that voters could vote for their personal interests such as bribery, instead of contributing to a social common cause with a civilized existential feeling (Kinzer, 1978: 32, 38). Mill thought that the more open voting system becomes, the less possibility emerges for the individuals to vote for their personal interests, because as Mill stated, voters could possibly vote under the effect of their personal interests, competition, class or sect differences and similar other bias more in secret voting than the public one (1958: 164). However, voters should be able to demonstrate their obligation to vote in the presence of a public official and on behalf of the public interest while voting, like they carry out other public duties by public opinion and against all possible criticisms. According to Mill, the public vote was now regarded as a necessary practice so that personal interests were not strengthened and voters could act responsibly.

As a matter of fact, while Mill was opposing the secret voting system, it should not be overlooked that he was mainly targeting the lower classes, mainly because they could make personal choices. It is worth

[15] Mill explains how the secret ballot has changed the historical frame with these words: "Thirty years ago it was still true that in the election of members of Parliament, the main evil to be guarded against was that which the ballot would exclude- coercion by landlords, employers, and customers... the present, I conceive, a much greater source of evil is the selfishness, or the selfish partialities, of the voter himself" (Mill, 1977: 332).

considering that Mill's reference to lower classes was a generic and reductionist approach:

> There are but few points in which the English, as a people, are entitled to moral pre-eminence with which they are accustomed to compliment themselves at the expense of other nations: but, of these points, perhaps the one of greatest importance is, that the higher classes do not lie, and the lower, though mostly habitual liars, are ashamed of lying (Mill, 1977: 338).

As we have seen above, Mill claimed that lower classes were prone to lie differently from upper classes, or, in a different way, misleading public opinion and the capacity to be in the wrong political preferences, albeit with distant and partially soft expressions avoiding an accusatory approach.[16] In each case, lower classes were put on the target board.[17]

On the other hand, Mill defended that representation was beside the point in a political system in which public happiness was sacrificed for private interests because of the secret vote system:

> Representative institutions are of little value... when the generality of electors...do not bestow their suffrages on public grounds but sell them for money or vote at the beck of someone who has control over them, or whom for private reasons they desire to propitiate (Mill, 1958: 8).

Eventually, in Mill's description, if the citizens do not stand for the power to rule themselves by protecting the minimum morality at least, and the citizen virtue and interests, the government ruling them – as a true reflection of such insufficiency (Warner, 2001: 405), standing against secret vote was added to the protective measurements for a high qualified

[16] Even if this approach is considered as a sociological finding, it seems to reflect a certain preliminary acceptance and prejudice. Antti Melleri states that Mill emphasizes to the traditional British male character with such and other similar expressions. Accordingly, a British gentleman in Mill's mind is openly speaking, expressing his ideas, manly and independent. There is no secret agency. Mill's opposition to a secret vote is fed by the British conservative attitude of the Victorian era, see (Melleri, 2014: 71-72). The attitude that Mill is evaluating subgroups may also be partly due to this conservative point of view.

[17] A surprising point here is that from time to time, Mill used a similar description used by Machiavelli to describe the whole humankind, but to describe lower classes specifically. Machiavelli thinks about men in general that they are ungrateful, fickle, dissembling, hypocritical, cowardly, and greedy (Machiavelli, 2008: 271). Similarly Mill uses the concepts "sinister interests", "discreditable feelings", "absurd opinions" all together while mentioning lower classes in an effort to point out the threat to democracy (Mill, 1958: 158, 1977: 335, 332).

representation. What Mill essentially was seeking, was a necessary balance between the personal interests and the representation system (Mill, 1958: 101). Therefore, the publicity during voting in Mill's mind was a decision to prevent the sovereignty of any singular group over politics, either working class or others (Ten, 1998: 374). In secret voting system, it is thought that it is much easier for the masses that cannot accept responsibility to hide behind their votes used secretly. No matter for what reason they do, for Mill, a person who does not express his political views publicly will not be able to be independent, so his preferences will always be insufficient in reflecting the public interests.

Conclusion

At the beginning of 1830s the British political system structure was based on aristocratic privileges largely dominated by landowners or their candidates. As the electoral system was based on property or personal wealth, voting rights were very limited. Mill advocated universal voting regardless of class [or even gender] in a political atmosphere where feudal values were dominant. Yet, in the eyes of Mill, the expansion of the scope of representation to include the masses of people led to some paradoxical flaws. If democracy was accepted as a fundamental principle of "one person = one vote", a political life shaped without the consideration of the mental and educational superiority would be a simple reflection of a homogeneous society conception in which only personal interests are preserved and based on the principle of majority. According to Mill, participation to such kind of sense of community, which did not include adequacy and authenticity in decision-making processes and was inclined to mediocre, must be balanced on the condition of ability or capability to participate. Mill believed that this balance could be maintained by creating some sets of electoral systems. In this context, Mill believed that this could become possible by advocating the right to plural vote with such capability of voters based on minimum education and income status, which was not the case already in the modern democratic system, and recognizing a privileged right to elect to an elitist group of voters. His reaction to "secret vote" can be evaluated as another factor attached to this structure. Because as a result of conservative and elitist attitude, Mill believed that especially lower classes (or Many and worker classes) could

use "secret voting" as a screen while they were voting only for their limited, religious and cultural interests. From this approach, Mill complaints about lower classes' moral worth and criticizes them not having a high level of development (Lipson, 2005: 130-131). On the other hand, such understanding conflicting with democratic and liberal approach can also be interpreted as limiting the democracy with aristocratic and elitist practices in order to protect the public interests. Political system is tried to be controlled with an approach "which does not accept equality as a sufficient condition"[18] thus an approach which cannot be regarded as full democratic, and handed over to a sort of intellectual elitism. Mill, just like Plato, gave intellectual aristocracy an important role for a good political order and shaping the well being of the society (Giorgini, 2009: 629-630). A well-known political scientist Leslie Lipson interprets this as balancing the quantity with quality, and numerical quantity with information (Lipson, 1964: 65).

As described before, Mill defines the political equality and majority understanding as the apparent purpose of the representative democracy and according to him; they are limited because they might turn into the superiority of the mediocrity and illiteracy against knowledge. As a solution, he makes an elitist intellectualism suggestion. "Millian" democracy model where qualification and capability prevail participation is based on the understanding that an elitist minority gains privileges in the parliamentary system. Briefly, the ones without qualification are alienated because they are thought to be incapable of managing themselves, while the ones with professional and educational qualifications are provided with privileges in the democratic system. Thus, Mill wears his democratic equality idea out in a paradoxical way. Clearly, at the center of the paradox, there is double-sided depiction of the society by Mill. While he evaluates the political society as an entirety where no one is alienated and supports proportional election system, he also depicts the society as a structure where trained, and experienced "Many" should be protected especially from the impulsive and shortsighted "Few"s sinister interests

[18] The expression in quotes belongs to the famous democracy theorist Giovanni Sartori. Sartori was a political scientist who regarded equality foreseen by democratic systems as an "inadequate condition" for freedom. See (Sartori, 1996: 391).

(Kendal & Carey, 1968: 29-32). This double-sided society concept of Mill caused him to be the target of critique in democracy discussions.

In other respects, Mill's seeing the individual status through an opposition and domination relation between the "choosers" and "learners" can be interpreted as the basis for his double sided understanding of society. While the status of the chooser has applied educated, propertied, rational and elitist; the status of learner has applied the uncivilized, insane and workers. Thus, the ones in the second category of the individual agents are put in a former-bound and subordinate position in Mill's understanding (Bowles & Gintis, 1986: 124). The way Mill evaluates the relation between the educated elites and working class and even the way he assesses the despotic management styles he referred to West and East becomes more meaningful only an opposition between the "choosers" and "learners".

In fact, Mill shared hints of a theory of democracy, which includes modern, liberal and democratic factors encouraging participation, and also some elitist, partially conservative and status quo democracy in his *Considerations on Representative Government*, where he delivered his political thoughts in details. In one-page preface of the book, Mill stated that a doctrine that both liberals and conservatives could embrace was possible and his work could be regarded as a proposal to contribute to such a doctrine (Mill, 1958: 2). Apparently Mill, who regarded politics as a relationship between gentlemen who had nothing to do with rumpus (Haliday, 1976: 137), showed a moderate democracy that maintains moral and intellectual privileges without turning his back on liberal approaches developing on mass representation ideas of the era. However, the validity of these privileges in the eyes of the masses can be fed in a contradictory manner, if necessary, for the benefit of them, but with a despotic attitude.

Beyond any doubt, even though it has some non-democratic suggestions, Mill's theory of democracy can still be excused for these because it reflects the spirit of his era, for a society where the proportion of the number of the citizens with the right to vote was only 7 – 8% in average

in rural parts, and 13% in urban (Schmidt, 2002: 101).[19] Hence, it would be unfair to judge Mill through modern democratic practices and today's political facilities. As he once said for the Greeks, Romans and ancient ages;

> To find fault with our ancestors for not having annual parliaments, universal suffrage, and vote by ballot, would be like quarrelling with the Greeks and Romans for not using steam navigation... [or] finding fault with the third century before Christ for not being the eighteenth century after (Mill, from Capaldi, 2004: 136).

Mill, eventually, was a child of *Victorian era,* where the majority of the population was not even accepted as voters.

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[19] In Britain, even in 1886, that rate was only almost 17% of the whole population (Lipson, 2005: 131), in 1911 only could reach to 30%. For a real right to vote including only men they had to wait until 1918 (Bowles & Gintis, 1986: 43).

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Öz: Mill temsili demokrasinin gelişmeye başladığı bir çağda "evrensel oy" hakkını savunarak hiçbir bireyin politik haklardan mahrum bırakılmaması gerektiğine inanmıştır. Bu, onun çağdaş, liberal ve demokrat tavrının bir yansıması olarak değerlendirilebilir. Ancak Mill seçmen hakkına sahip olabilmek için zorunlu birtakım ön koşulları belirleyip, bir de üstüne her seçmenin oyunun eşit derecede bir etkiye sahip olamayacağını ekleyerek, onun liberal ve demokrat tavrıyla çelişkili bir pozisyonu da paylaşmıştır. Mill'in evrensel oy hakkı karşısında getirdiği paradoksal sınırlamalar onun seçkinci bir demokrasi teorisi sunduğu şeklinde yorumlanabilir. Bu çalışmada Mill'in seçkinci demokrasi yaklaşımının temel nedenleri ayrıntılı bir şekilde tartışılıp, onun demokrasi teorisinin mahiyeti sorgulanmaya çalışılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mill, demokrasi, çoğul ve gizli oy, paradoks, oy hakkı, politika.