

Book Reviews

Buchbesprechungen

Miller, Dale E. 2010. *J.S. Mill: Moral, Social and Political Thought*. Cambridge: Malden Polity Press (252 pp., ISBN: 978-0-7456-2584-3)

Dale E. Miller's work on John Stuart Mill is a concise yet incredibly informative work which centers on Mill's moral, social, and political philosophy, disciplines in which Mill's influence has been most felt although his views on the theory of knowledge, philosophy of language and other areas of philosophy were also rich and substantive. Dale Miller, professor at Old Dominion University, has published extensively on Mill, both his MA dissertation and his doctoral dissertation centered on the study of Mill's philosophy. Much of his recent work, both articles and books, centers on the study of Mill and consequentialism. Co-author of *John Stuart Mill and the Art of Life*, and numerous articles on different aspects of Mill's thought, Miller's introduction to *John Stuart Mill* includes and builds upon his earlier investigations offering an insightful study to undergraduates and scholars alike. Miller's introduction to Mill is divided into four parts, part one includes the preliminary remarks, part two discusses Mill's moral theory whereas part three focuses on Mill's political and social philosophy. A fourth section is devoted to Miller's concluding remarks on Mill's philosophy.

The first chapter is a brief yet informative account of John Stuart Mill's life. Mill's life is of interest, apart from in its own right, as it greatly shaped his intellectual development. Drawing evidence from Mill's own *Autobiography*, and selected scholarly titles, Miller discusses the main turning points in Mill's life. Born to James Mill (a close friend of Bentham's) and Harriet Mill he was brought up as an intellectual promise in order for him to become part of the new generation of philosophical radicals of which his father was a part.

Mill was introduced to Bentham's philosophy at the age of fifteen; being, from then on, heavily influenced by Bentham's approach. Mill's development as an intellectual eventually caused him to fall into a state of depression after which he emerged as not just a follower of Bentham's ideas but as a refiner and reviser of them.

Before the in-depth analysis of Mill's moral, political and social philosophy Miller writes a second introductory chapter in which Miller introduces Mill's view of human nature, his theory of association (of great importance to Mill's morality), Mill's commitment to a non-skeptical empiricism, his phenomenism and his defense of the reliability of memory. In this second introductory chapter Miller lays down the theoretical foundations on which many of the future moral claims rely. Miller reads Mill as a total thinker who uses epistemological and ontological facts about human beings as the theoretical underpinning for his practical philosophy.

Miller also gives a detailed analysis of the notion of sympathy as the capacity to feel the emotions of others. Miller's reading of Mill posits sympathy as one of the most fundamental aspects of Mill's conception of human nature. Miller views much of Mill's prescriptive moral claims as dependent on, and intended to nurture, humanity's innate

feeling of sympathy. Human's capacity of progress and betterment is characteristic of Miller's reading of Mill's philosophy.

Having reached the end of the first part of the book in which Miller lays down the fundamental notions necessary for an in depth treatment of Mill's social, political and moral philosophy the second part of the book, which focuses on Mill's moral theory, begins with a chapter on Mill's proof for the Principle of Utility.

Miller fathoms the principle of utility as a moral theory, due to Bentham's use of it in that way, although Mill doesn't explicitly state the fact. The principle of Utility is an ambiguous term as it can be taken to mean: first, that actions are right in the measure in which they promote happiness; or second, as has been argued by some Mill scholars, the underlying idea that happiness (understood in it's most general sense as pleasure and the absence of pain) is the only thing desirable in itself. Miller contends Mill's philosophy is essentially hedonistic, although other scholars point to evidence that conflicts with this reading.

One of Miller's main aims is to solve the underlying logical inconsistencies in Mill's presentation of The Principle of Utility. As G.E. Moore pointed out, Mill commits an is-ought fallacy when he argues that happiness is desirable as it is factually desired by many. Furthermore, Mill also commits the fallacy of composition when he states that as happiness is desirable for an individual it is desirable for the collectivity. The logical inconsistencies of Mill's account can, as Miller will argue, be overridden, only at the cost of either admitting Mill is an inconsistent thinker or a consistent thinker who has regrettably chosen imperfect expressions of his views.

Relying on Mill's theory of association, Miller develops a highly plausible explanation as to why money and virtue can be seen as a part of happiness, as the pleasure associated with being virtuous and possessing money as a means could be transferred to the possession of either virtue or money making them desirable in themselves. Miller also contends, by relying on Thomas Reid's common sense philosophy, Mill's is-ought fallacy is in fact, non-existent.

Miller is also quick to point out Mill's lack of consideration of equality as a necessary condition for an outcome to be judged as good. Miller fully accepts what in some circles is seen as an obvious objection to utilitarianism.

Even after Miller's reconstruction of the proof he acknowledges the fact that Mill's argument isn't a smashing success as well as admitting it is based on dubious psychological facts which will be extremely hard to prove, such as the fact that pleasure is the only thing desirable in itself. Indeed, in his experience machine experiment (Anarchy, State and Utopia) Robert Nozick shows pleasure isn't the only desirable thing in itself.

Chapter 4 of the book focuses on one of the distinctive features of Mill's philosophy, the difference between higher and lower pleasures by answering three fundamental questions about the higher pleasures: What are they? How do we distinguish between the quality of pleasures? Which pleasures are higher?

Higher pleasures are those which, quantity being equal, are more desirable and valuable; contributing more to the happiness of the individual. Millers interpretation of Mill as an externalist about pleasure (pleasurable is what is desired irrespective of the internal disposition towards it) becomes much more fruitful now as he can correctly explain how the higher pleasures differ from the lower, effectively making it a more fruitful interpretative theory although it cannot give an adequate account of the masochist or of the pleasure an athlete might get from aching muscles after a hard training session.

The second relevant question is how does one decide which pleasure is higher. Mill's answer is simple, a pleasure is higher if those who are acquainted with both would consistently choose it. The difference between higher or lower pleasures is essentially based on consensus, a consensus that, as Michael Sandel has shown in his popular series of lectures *Justice*, may be nonexistent.

Which pleasures are higher? Mill's answer is commonly known: intellectual, sentimental, imaginative and moral pleasures. Miller makes sense of the common objection to Mill's higher pleasure doctrine by pointing out that not only days in the library and nights at the opera are able to yield the higher pleasures.

Even the commonly considered 'basic' pleasures can become higher pleasures if undertaken in the right spirit and with an appropriate disposition. Miller also points out, in Mill's defense, that the lower pleasures must also be embraced in order to be happy by citing a reformulated preference principle which asserts that competent judges need not always choose the higher pleasures but choose a life which employs the higher faculties. The cultivation of a desire to experience these higher pleasures, which Mill takes to be a consequence of civilization, is part of Mill's human betterment scheme. Education, albeit not just intellectual education, plays a fundamental role in Mill's utopian philosophy.

The last two chapters of the second part deal with utilitarianism both as an approach to moral theorizing (establishing a difference between act and rule utilitarianism) and defines Mill's own version of utilitarianism. Utilitarianism is the view that moral evaluation is dependent on our actions (being therefore a form of consequentialism) and on how these actions promote happiness. Utilitarianism also denies one's own happiness is more morally relevant than the happiness of others and thus assesses actions impartially. Miller contends that Mill's view is that the best course of action is that which maximizes total net happiness.

Miller argues that Mill is, despite conflicting evidence, a sophisticated rule utilitarian. Mill asserts that one should abstain from committing acts of a certain class, even though an individual act may have desirable consequences. Miller draws support for his reading from Mill's treatment of actions considered beyond the call of duty, actions which are not obligatory but meritorious, which lends support to a rule utilitarian reading due to the fact an act-utilitarian reading could not endorse such a claim.

Miller's reading of the contradictory evidence on whether Mill was an act or a rule utilitarian is similar to Miller's treatment of the formulation of the proof of the principle of utility, Mill is simply not transparent with the language he employs. The evidence for reading Mill as a rule utilitarian is strong but not overwhelming. The 'utopian' reading of Mill Miller endorses is backed up by Mill's belief that morality is essentially provisional due to the fact human progress will, someday, make moral actions and natural inclination coincide. Moral reformers must promote received moralities that conform to ideal moral codes, which once internalized by all, would no longer be prescriptive but descriptive.

Miller also expounds on Mill's view of justice as continuous, albeit distinct, from the rest of his moral system. Rules of justice bind one in acting or refraining from acting towards a specific individual. This perfect obligation is correlated to individual rights. Making sense of Mill's conception of justice is therefore another possibility open only to rule utilitarian readings such as Millers. Such rules of justice are subject, in the cases in which they conflict, to utilitarian arguments although rules of justice will 'trump' rules of morality due to the negative social consequences of a violation of rights.

The third part of the book opens with a discussion of Mill's classic text *On Liberty* devoted to individual freedom. Miller reads Mill as being concerned not only about state limits on freedom but also societies informal limits on freedom.

Mill's main point is that individuals may only be coerced to prevent harming another's interests. Miller points out Mill's non-interference principle is anything but simple as it includes many maxims which defend the individual from Paternalism, overreaching moralism and even the simple hatred of difference.

Mill's liberty principle is even more restrictive of social interference than it appears to be at first glance. Even in the cases in which the agent's actions harm others the cost and benefits of intervention are to be taken into account prior to the decision to interfere. Miller reads Mill as arguing tolerable interference is that which stops a third party harming one's primary goods. Miller uses John Rawls' analysis of primary goods as an analogue description of what Mill calls 'interest'. Rawls' Theory of Justice includes amongst the primary goods: rights, liberties, opportunities, health, income and more.

Miller documents the debate surrounding which way of understanding the liberty principle is best, whether as a harmful conduct preventing principle (where only negative acts are prohibited) or whether as harm-prevention principle (where one can be compelled to act in a positive sense in order to give back the benefit he has received from society in ways such as court duty). Miller argues Mill's position is essentially a harm-prevention view.

Miller also states the utilitarian underpinning of Mill's views on freedom. The respect for freedom is both socially and individually beneficial as it permits the exercise of the human faculties and develops individuality. Freedom matters only in as much as it promotes happiness. Miller does point out that Mill's liberty principle never went without objection, even among his contemporaries and fellow utilitarians. The most common counter-argument states the fact that people's relations are so close that even when one succumbs to an 'individual' vice the interests of others are harmed, which makes Mill's principle too intrusive. Mill's critics argue utilitarian principles, if strictly applied, may lead to the reduction of the private sphere. Miller argues against such a position by introducing the distinction between harming and failing to benefit someone arguing then that one hasn't the right to be benefited by others.

Miller is sensitive to the fact that certain 'private acts' may have harmful social consequences and develops the theme at length. Miller takes the example of drug consumption, which may cause both an unhappy life for the agent taking them and may harm others in so much as they influence others to take them. Miller is critical at this point of Mill's critics arguing that although destructive private acts publicize the act they also publicize the degrading and damaging consequences of indulging in the act.

Miller second line of argument points out that even though certain private behavior may have a negative consequence on the rest of society the cost of prohibiting it may be high and ineffective therefore causing a reduction of the total net happiness. Miller also raises a skeptical objection to Mill's opposition of paternalistic laws pointing out that some of his moral and social philosophy could be interpreted as paternalistic in the sense that it imposes the good life of intellectual pleasures over an unwilling population. Miller points to the fact Mill can be interpreted as arguing for a soft paternalism, that is, paternalism when the harm inflicted upon oneself may be largely involuntary.

Chapter 8 of Mill's book focuses on Mill's writings on normative political economy and on Mill's views on the relative virtues of capitalism and socialism. Mill's consideration

of a weak variety of socialism as desirable may have been influenced by his acquaintance with the writings of the ‘utopian’ socialists. Mill’s commitment to some of the socialist critiques of modern capitalism does not imply, as it does with the ‘utopian’ socialists, attribution of the evils of society to private property or competition. Miller points out that Mill’s utilitarian principle could be taken, in the economic sphere, to advise a more equal distribution of wealth as a certain sum of money produces more happiness to those who have less; introducing into Mill’s philosophy the egalitarian considerations denied by Miller beforehand. Mill also proposes state interference when it comes to education, and the employment rights of women as these would increase the total net happiness of society.

Although Mill raises certain socialist concerns these are on a second plain to his version of improved capitalism. Mill seems to prefer, as Miller interprets it, a cooperative system of governing the workplaces where capitalist lend their capital to associations of workers. Such worker owned firms may also have educational purposes as they will increase the dignity of labour giving way to sympathy and a common effort towards the maximization of happiness. Such a process may even lead to community level communism although such a step would require a moral revolution before such a project could be considered viable. All such deviations towards a reformed capitalism must, however, be accomplished without violating capitalist property rights.

Mill also considered the problem of the poor, especially with regard to whether poor relief was beneficial or not. On one hand poor relief helps protect the poor from starvation and protects society from the poor turning to crime although it is also a disincentive to work.

Chapter 9 of Miller’s book focuses on Mill’s views on democracy. Miller favors an interpretation of Mill’s political philosophy as neither elitist nor egalitarian but a synthesis of both. Mill argues both that forms of government in which a part of society is disenfranchised do not increase happiness and that one should be governed by those who are more intelligent and virtuous. Mill’s subscription of both positions gives way to the hybrid moral philosophy he defends. On the one hand Mill argues for a more universal suffrage (as it will better promote happiness), whereas on the other hand he holds an elitist point of view. While the intelligentsia and moral elite of his day is divided Mill hopes, in his typically utopian way, that one day a consensus will be reached.

Scholarly debate still exists of whether Mill believes the two elites to be one or distinct. Miller points out some more recent readings of Mill claim he views the elite as a socially governing force, therefore revealing Mill as an anti-liberal.

The twofold nature of Mill’s views on democracy and voting mean Mill believes that property requirements in order to vote should be abolished although he is fearful of the house of Commons being dominated by the undereducated working class and it becoming a dictatorship of the majority which would exclude minority groups. To solve the problem he proposes a plural voting system in which the more knowledge one has the more votes one is entitled to. Such a system would also serve to teach the benefits of a cultivated intellect and sense of morals.

The reading of Mill as an anti-liberal has some relevance as his views on suffrage are in some ways not as liberal as history of philosophy textbooks treatments leads one to expect. Mill proposed the existence of a literacy test to qualify for the vote, excluding a good part of the working class. Mill also disenfranchises the poorest members of the community

when he posits as a qualification to vote the fact that one must not be receiving social benefits.

Miller points out that Mill's earlier defense of individual liberty and freedom from state intervention conflicts with his views on the secret ballot. Mill argues against the secret ballot, because if the vote is public one is more accountable for one's vote and will be compelled to promote the common good and not his selfish interests. Miller points out that Mill doesn't seem to recognize that one would effectively vote for the majority opinion as peer pressure would result in homogenization, which may not be the common good.

The concluding remarks of Miller's book focus on one of the main themes of his reading of Mill, his utopian version of utilitarianism. Mill's hopes for the improvement of mankind through the development of human's intellectual, moral, ascetic and active faculties.

Mill's account of the moral development of humanity has been described in the book as the overcoming of selfishness. The cultivation of public spirit, while worthwhile is not the ultimate end of humanity. Miller argues Mill is sufficiently realistic as to understand that such a progress may take time, however from our privileged historical perspective it seems little progress has been made. Although more people know more, few more are first class thinkers, furthermore it seems our aesthetic ability is less (or at least not more) developed. Moral progress has, no doubt, been made in areas such as women's rights and the abolition of slavery although it is not clear whether humanity is any closer to transcending selfishness. On a pessimistic note Miller hints that the possible reason why human moral progress hasn't occurred is the fact that we don't know how to make people better. According to Miller the failure of the project for human betterment doesn't weaken Mill's philosophical system as Mill introduces arguments for his positions that do not depend on humanity's improvement.

Miller's brief overview of Mill's philosophy is excellent. In parallel to his informative descriptions of Mill's views, aided by a rich base of quotes both from primary and secondary literature, Miller introduces the fundamental points of disagreement between Mill scholars and touches upon contemporary debates on Mill's correct interpretation. While the different readings are not analyzed in depth, and some are simply stated, the secondary literature and possibilities for further reading the book provides are more than sufficient. Miller's book is highly illuminating to the undergraduate, as it helps dispel many common misinterpretations of Mill's philosophy, and is also a brilliant starting point for further research into particular aspects of Mill's thought.

Miller's own reading is highly illuminating although objectionable, as are all readings of Mill, due to the conflicting evidence in Mill's body of work. A particularly objectionable claim can be found in Miller's attempt to reconstruct the proof. Miller's defense of Mill's is-ought fallacy as an example of Mill's common sense reasoning is a stretch, although it may be argued Moore's is-ought fallacy is an unreasonable application of excessively high epistemic standards. Another of the points in which Miller's reading seems to lead to an inconsistency is his inability to account for the masochist, as has been pointed out earlier. The virtues of Miller's analysis outweighs the questionable points. Miller's book is extremely valuable when it comes to his explanation of Mill's views on normative political economy, a part of Mill's philosophy often cast to the shadows. Miller's book shows both Mill's growth as a thinker and his aspiration to be a complete and systematic philosopher. Miller embraces and carefully points out the conflicting points in Mill's body of work and the problems that arise when trying to give a complete reading to Mill's body of work.

Miller's reading is therefore charitable and sympathetic although not uncritical. It is not the reading of a blind follower of Mill's but of a true Mill scholar.

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Tieszen, Richard. 2011. *After Gödel: Platonism and Rationalism in Mathematics and Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (245 pp., ISBN: 978-0-19-960620-7).

Richard Tieszen hat sich bisher in einer Monographie (*Mathematical Intuition: Phenomenology and Mathematical Knowledge*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989) und in zahlreichen Aufsätzen intensiv mit der Philosophie der Mathematik aus Sicht der Husserlschen Phänomenologie befasst, sowie mit der Philosophie Kurt Gödels und ihrer Beziehung zur Phänomenologie. Mit der vorliegenden Monographie *After Gödel: Platonism and Rationalism in Mathematics and Logic* präsentiert Tieszen nun im Anschluss an seine einschlägigen Aufsätze einen Vorschlag, wie sich die platonistischen und rationalistischen Ansätze in Gödels Philosophie mittels der Phänomenologie Husserls weiterentwickeln und verteidigen lassen. Es geht Tieszen dabei durchaus darum, aus dem Denken Husserls und Gödels eine haltbare Position für die aktuelle Philosophie der Mathematik zu gewinnen, und nicht etwa hauptsächlich um Exegese und reine Gelehrsamkeit. Die Zielgruppe der Monographie dürften vor allem Forscher(innen) auf den Gebieten der Philosophie der Mathematik und der Phänomenologie sein.

Tieszens Buch gliedert sich in 8 Kapitel. Nach einem einführenden 1. Kapitel stellt der Autor im 2. Kapitel die philosophischen Argumente Gödels dar, die von seinen berühmten metalogischen Resultaten zum Platonismus in der Philosophie der Mathematik führen. Im 3. Kapitel widmet sich Tieszen Gödels Kritik am "Zeitgeist" seiner Tage, nämlich den "linksgerichteten" Philosophien (wie Gödel in Anlehnung an William James philosophisches Denken im Umkreis von Empirismus, Szientismus, Physikalismus, Positivismus und Agnostizismus nennt) David Hilberts und Rudolf Carnaps. Gödels Präferenz für "rechtsgerichtete" Philosophien (Platonismus, Rationalismus, Idealismus, Theismus) führte ihn auf der Suche nach einem geeigneten philosophischen Fundament dann zu einer Beschäftigung mit Husserl und seiner Phänomenologie. In den verbleibenden Kapiteln wendet sich Tieszen der Entwicklung des eigenen philosophischen Vorschlags zu. Im 4. Kapitel mit dem Titel *A New Kind of Platonism* gibt er den zentralen Gedanken seiner Position an: Der neue mathematische Platonismus soll nicht in naiver Weise die Existenz objektiver abstrakter Gegenstände, wie etwa Zahlen, Funktionen, Mengen und geometrische Gebilde behaupten. Tieszens Ansicht nach sind die traditionelle Metaphysik und der neuzeitliche Rationalismus gerade an solchen naiven und unhaltbaren Behauptungen über Transzendentes gescheitert. In seiner Kritik an früheren Formen von Metaphysik und Rationalismus folgt der Autor der Philosophie Kants, die er durch Husserl kongenial fortgesetzt und ausgearbeitet sieht. Ein haltbarer Platonismus muss daher das Prinzip respektieren, dass man von Gegenständen, auch abstrakten, nur sinnvoll reden kann, insofern es sich um Gegenstände handelt, die sich auf irgendeine Art im Bewusstsein als Vorstellung manifestieren. Zur Verteidigung des Platonismus unter dieser Maßgabe sollte man Tieszen zufolge zwischen zwei verschiedenen Typen von Unabhängigkeit von Geist (*mind-independence*) unterschieden (Kap. 4, § 6): der erste Typ ist die absolute Unabhängigkeit von menschlichem Geist, mit der mathematische Objekte dem traditionellen Platonismus zufolge ausgestattet sind. Diesen Typ nennt