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A COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU AND JOHN STUART MILL'S NOTIONS ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

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ABSTRACT

Freedom is one of the most valuable and beautiful words so far inscribed in the human mind. Freedom is the deepest border between human munificence and lofty stance of the mankind. In other words, many scientists are of the belief that enjoyment of a value and identity like freedom is the largest human index of the mankind and a sign of his munificence and, contrarily, lack of access to freedom is the main theme of the mankind's animal identity. This is why Rousseau, the French thinker, realizes slavery and colonization against the human nature and considers abandonment of freedom equal to the abandonment of humanity. Rousseau's name is most often related to irrational idealism of pure and wild nature and the primitive natural human. But, beyond all these, he is a complex political philosopher who proposes a specific form of the government as the prerequisite to human freedom within the framework of a modern society. He emphasizes that a person can be considered as a human if s/he is free and this is such a freedom that paves the way for perfection. John Stuart Mill, another western thinker, asserts that absence of freedom means lack of intellect and, in this regard, he delineates a close relationship between freedom and intellectuality and finds absence of freedom equal to one's non-enjoyment of intellect.

Keywords: Rousseau, Mill, Freedom, Concept of Freedom, Natural Status, Social Contract.

INTRODUCTION

John Stuart Mill is an English thinker and a theoretician who is enumerated amongst the preliminary circles of English intellectuals known as radical philosophers. He is considered as one of the theoreticians zealously defending the democratic institutions in his eternal work on freedom. His goal in his valuable work, named "a treatise on freedom", is discovering and explaining the nature and the limits of the society's domination over an individual. The immediate outcome of such domination shows off in the context of battle between individual freedom and political authority. Although the tension between freedom and authority, as concerned by Mill, is not a new issue and it has always been there during the past eras, the modern society, in Mill's mind, is faced with a specific regulation and classification of the issue. In short, the modern society has been afflicted by historical growth and development in such a manner that it has redefined the nature and conditions of this battle.

Jean Jacques Rousseau is considered as an 18th century Swiss thinker, who was living during the peak of enlightenment period in Europe. He is one of the most prominent figures during a period known as enlightenment that has had subtle effects on the educational system and philosophy. Emphasis on the nature made the educated individuals of the enlightenment period consider the study of nature, world and human beings as the primary pivot of education. His intellectual role and mental ideas in politics and literature became ideal solutions of the France' great revolution. He is amongst the first intellectuals in whose ideas

and thoughts the concept of human right can be vividly seen. Rousseau presents a detailed explanation of human characteristics and human position in his valuable work called “social contract”.

Jean Jacques Rousseau's Perspective Regarding Concept of Freedom:

Freedom is a very much praised concept and attainment of freedom and getting rid of chains and limitations is considered as one of the most exciting human ideals. That is because philosophers and jurists as well as the spiritualists and materialists are all somehow engaged and work with and think about freedom and have to incumbently guard it (Eslami, 2004, 31). Jean Jacques Rousseau, the great French writer, philosopher and thinker and the creator of such works as social contract and Emile, is undoubtedly one of the most influential thinkers whose ideas and beliefs exerted a large deal of effect on the formation of France' great revolution. Rousseau's attachment to freedom can be visibly seen in the first lines of the book “social contract”: “human beings are born free and chained everywhere” Rousseau begins his discussion about social contract with these questions: “how and why such a situation has come about? What are the factors depriving humans of freedom? Does freedom naturally and essentially have no border? If it does, how do these borders and natural barriers differ from the slavery imposed by tyranny and oppression of a minority on majority in the course of history? Which are amongst the borders and hindrances of natural freedom and which have been created by the other humans parallel to their safeguarding of their own interests and their suppression and exploitation of the others?” It is the abhorring smell of blood from every page of the mankind's history that comes and there have always been minorities chaining the majorities and depriving them from their most natural rights and freedoms to achieve their own goals and interests since the day private and personal interests come about in the human communities and their subsequent conflict with one another as well as with the public interests. But, are these freedom impediments also natural and justifiable? The domineering minority does not suffice to the imposition of its dominance and it has always endeavored to justify its interventions and legitimize its domination assisted by social theories and excuses, regulations and even by resorting to religion thereby to delimit the rights and freedoms of the its own dominated majority. For example, Aristotle, denying the freedom and natural rights of the slaves, used to say “slaves are the living instruments of work”. The slavers, the governing class, did not grant slaves rights and freedom, they bought and sold slaves and they even murdered them for their smallest mistakes and they did it all by the support of the law meaning that the ruling minority had turned its will into law. Later on, the ominous system of slavery was disintegrated but, during the consecutive centuries in the era of feudalism, the majority of the society was again subjected to tyranny and exploitation in another form. The governing class, to wit the large owners and feudalists, had deprived the peasants of their rights and freedom and all the then regulations and theories were against the vassals because these regulations were the very wants and policies of the governing class that had been arranged within the format of rules but it was with the collapse of each of these systems along with the overthrown class that all those theories and regulations were announced invalid and refuted and denounced and obsolete. Thus, the question raised is that “which of the limits and borders specified for the mankind are the natural and inherent boundaries of freedom and which of them are imposed by the governing minority in line with safeguarding of their interest to the condemned majority?



To answer this question, there is a need for a brief analysis of the relationship between the natural necessities and human freedom. But, before investigating the relationship, it is necessary to pay attention to one point:

When discussion is put forth about freedom, it is in the first place related to political and social freedoms striking the mind. But, in its original and general sense, freedom is not solely limited to the political and social freedoms rather it is more general and more extensive than this. Since the enjoyment of freedom or deprivation thereof is a trait or property ascribed to the human beings in the course of performing certain activities, it incorporates the entire domain of human action and activity and, since the entire possible human actions and activities are not limited to political and social activities, freedom or absence of freedom, as well, would not be limited to political and social areas. Put it differently, humans' social relations, i.e. with the other human beings, do not constitute the entire arena of their actions and activities rather the human beings are to encounter the nature in another part of their activities that are increasingly more extensive. So, social and political freedom is, in fact, a specific state of general meaning of freedom or a specific territory of freedom with its particular characteristics. But, to more accurately recognize the concept and limits of social and political freedoms, familiarity should be made with the general concept of freedom and its limits because freedom, in its general sense i.e. in both natural and social areas, features a series of borders and limitations originating from inherent and natural lawfulness and, in order to investigate the nature and limits of freedom, these inherent and natural lawfulness cases and their effects on the restricting of human freedom should be examined. These limits and boundaries are called natural borders of freedom in the current research paper. These natural limits exist both for human freedom in respect to nature and for the social freedoms because the human nature that is effective and involved in the social arena is also a part of nature. But, as it was mentioned, there are other limitations and barriers in the social area, to wit in the human individuals' relationships with one another, that are imposed by the society's political organization parallel to the safeguarding of the interests of some powerful groups and classes on the human freedoms and these also happen to be against the natural essence and movement of the society and stemming from the groups and classes' survival fight and conflict that exchange their interests and goals for slavery and exploitation by others (Red line, collection of articles and interviews, 1999, 133-135). Rousseau believes that nature has created good and free human beings but it is the society that turns them into villains, making them slaves. Nature fosters felicitous human beings but society renders them miserable and poor. These interrelated issues express one truth: the relationship between the society and the university is like that of evil and good. All of Rousseau's deductions rely on the above principle. Rousseau's primary concern is the problem of freedom. In fact, Rousseau is the first philosopher defining and understanding human being from the perspective of freedom. In his ideas, freedom is the specific destiny of the human beings who fear nothing more than dependency. He attempted showing that freedom is one of the mankind's essential assets but the novel forms of the socialization process work in line with the absence of freedom and establishment of slavery. In his opinion, withdrawing from freedom is per se synonymous to refraining from one's own human features, mankind rights and even duties.

Rousseau's extreme attention to freedom has made him a liberalist in such a way that he gives individual freedom the special importance of a statutory provision. Rousseau believes in



humans' freedom in their transition from a natural state to a civil state and realizes freedom in civil status as meaning the upgradation of a natural man to an ethical rank that turns him into a citizen abiding the law (Karbasizadeh and Solaimani Dehnavi, 2009, 38). The important issue, in Rousseau's perspective, is the reconciliation of individual freedom with collective freedom. This is the main topic discussed by Rousseau. In his book "Emile", Rousseau expresses that individual freedom is related to education and upbringing. Rousseau helps the individuals somehow get rid of what he calls slavery of wishes and temptations to achieve a sort of right and freedom experience. It means that he aims at driving the mankind away from wishes and temptations and hedonism. In other words, human beings get perfected, from Rousseau's viewpoint, to become free. Due to the same reason, although Rousseau is found believing in a sort of civil progress like some thinkers of enlightenment era, he is of the belief that the human beings move towards freedom for which reason he also seeks making a bond between the individual and the society.

In Rousseau's mind, freedom is so important to a person that withdrawing from it is equal to refraining from human characteristics and, in more exact terms, human rights because it seems that freedom, in this approach of Rousseau, is a precondition for being a human so a sort of change in human concept can be seen in Rousseau's perspective. Rousseau explicitly expresses this freedom as undoubted rights he enumerates for the human beings. Now, in between, from Rousseau's perspective, freedom is considered as the humanity root and Rousseau tries supplementing this freedom in the humans' transition from a natural status to a civil status by social contract as a foundation for granting rights to them. Rousseau is of the belief that what the human beings lose as a result of this social contract are the natural freedom and unlimited right they have in acquiring and keeping all things and what they attain as a result of this contract is civil freedom and the right to possess all things that are in their occupation. The human beings are free in its real sense when obeying the codified regulations as citizens. On the other hand, it has to be pointed out that Rousseau distinguishes between natural freedom the limits of which are exclusively determined by an individual's power and the civil or ethical freedom the limits of which are demarcated by the public volition (Jones, 1992, 354). In Rousseau's idea, the ethical freedom should be also reminded as another of the civil status's advantages. In fact, the ethical freedom grants authority to human beings because an individual commanded by lusts and carnal wishes is a sort of slave but the real freedom is when a person follows the laws enacted by human beings for themselves (Ibid, 354). Rousseau realizes freedom as stabilizer of the human nature and the humans' special destiny. In his opinion, the human beings are free and provided with the conditions of an independent life in their natural status but the society and civilization cause their diminishment. Rousseau believes, on the one hand, that the human beings are born free but always chained and, on the other hand, considers withdrawal of freedom as synonymous to refrainment from the human rank. In regard of the human and animal differences, he states that "it is not wisdom that particularly distinguishes mankind from animals rather it is his trait of being "a free doer". Nature orders all animals and they obey. The human beings have the same feeling but they know that they are free to accept or resist and it is especially the insight over such a type of freedom that the spirituality of the human soul emerges (Karbasizadeh and Solaimani Dehnavi, 2009, 37). Ignoring the freedoms is the negligence of the human traits, human rights and even human duties. Any person ignoring all these would not have any room



left for compensation. Such a type of ignorance contradicts the human nature. Depriving the human will from any freedom equals the depriving human actions from any spirituality. Rousseau gives too much importance to human freedom and recalls it as a precious gift provided that it causes no harms to a person's own self or the others in his close vicinity. Rousseau sees freedom in keeping a pupil from the corrupted society and believes that the instructors should provide the human beings with the freedom granted by nature to them so that they can grow corresponding to the natural rules. He is of the belief that the nature executes his rules on the condition that we stay away from interfering with it. Rousseau opines that freedom does not exist in any of the governments rather it has to be solely sought in the heart of a free man.

John Stuart Mill's Perspective about Freedom:

Description of the borders of freedom and demarcation of the government's realm of interference have always been and are amongst the controversial issues in the area of the political philosophy and, of course, this is of a far greater fundamental importance for the supporters of liberalism. In line with this, John Stuart Mill, founder of modern liberalism, took measures for designing and codifying criteria and scales called principle of freedom by he himself (Javadi and Hosseini Suraki, 2018, 110). John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) might be one of the most praised democracy theoreticians in the modern era. His father, James Mill, was a utilitarianism theoretician and the son earned his living by working as a supervisor in Eastern Indi Company. But, his intellectual life belittles his work. He bases his tendencies for defending liberal democracy on the originality of utility and, inter alia others, reasons that the freedom of thought and action causes gradual improvement in the human felicity. The good ideas drive out the bad ideas and the superior life methods recognized only via trial and error in a free society downplay the more inferior methods. In his mind, democracy is superior not only because of the individuals' prior rights but also for the fact that democracy upgrades everyone's life.

Freedom is defined as the absence of barrier and a society can be considered free the individuals in which are not confronted with hindrances for chasing their felicity. These barriers might be political and result from the oppression of the governors. They might be barriers created by the worldly sultanate of the religious leaders on people's way. But, they may even be barriers brought about by the majority and general public's opinions for the minority.

Stuart Mill believed that the political and social progress can only come about as a result of the individuals' betterment which is per se solely possible if they are provided with freedom thereby to foster their talents and reach perfection. Every individual's achievement of perfection is the very development of "individuality", to wit the traits making every person distinct from another. In Mill's idea, nothing is more important than the community's provisioning of situation and status in which an individual can flourish and express his or her talents in such a manner that the gardener's most important duty is the elimination of the barriers and creation of a status and situation in which each tree can become a perfect tree of its species; this is exactly the same in the society. In a perfect society, there would be diversity of the tastes and talents hence the diversity of the individuals. The essential condition for such a progress is freedom hence the safeguarding of freedom should be one of the most important goals of the persons who want the society to improve.



Political oppression was once the most important sort of apprehension. The governors dominated the people's life and properties by force and coercion and treated them as they wished. At the time of Stuart Mill, such a type of suppression was less frequently seen in England and the affairs were only controlled by the legislator. Thus, the important issue in the preservation of individual's freedom was not preventing the government's tyranny. But, in democratic government and, essentially, in any other government, another type of oppression could be existent that might not be lower in its damage than the governing individual's oppression. Those familiar with the social status of England and have seen the influence of tradition and, in some parts, the influence of religion, in the social life of the people in there can feel that the issue proposed by Stuart Mill is amongst the real issues of the society (Sana'ei, 2015, 187).

Stuart Mill was well aware of the effect of tradition and habit or, more precisely, the tyranny of the tradition and customs. In his idea, an individual enjoying the gift of intellect is not allowed to blindly accept the traditions and habits contradictory to his or her explicit verdict of intellect. A wise man is obliged to weigh and assess the rites and rituals s/he has inherited in the community in his mind and distinguish the right from the wrong and discard what is not liked by intellect. But, the problem lies in the fact that the sages are low in number. Stuart Mill is not bound to demagoguery and explicitly asserts his humiliation for the "less wise masses".

When speaking about freedom, he knows that the enjoyment of freedom is possible when the individuals can be provided with the least of upbringing and discretion can gather around with no quarrel and dispute and illuminate their own good and bad otherwise freedom would lead to confusion and rascals and rogues take over the power.

Stuart Mill puts forward discussions about freedom under three titles:

The first is freedom of thought and expression; the second is the freedom of tastes and wishes and the third is the freedom of associations as one result of individuals' freedom.

He has the following words about the freedom of thought and expression: "because all mankind is prone to mistakes, nobody has the right to extinguish the opposite ideas because the novel idea that is opposite to the common idea is either true or untrue. If the newly expressed true idea is extinguished, a crime has been committed not only against the person positing the idea but also against all the other human individuals as well as against the future generations because the truth saves the mankind and its extinction makes the mankind deprived of their savior. The same also holds if the newly expressed idea is half true. But, assuming that the extinguished idea has been untrue and presuming that the mankind is not prone to mistake and knowing that the newly expressed idea is against the truth, it would be still sinful to extinguish it because its existence is needed so that the truth can prove a more brilliant manifestation in confrontation with it and also for the reason that the soldiers would become weak and consider their force as nonsense to the extent that they would lose their power of defense if there are no enemies in the arena. The truth would also lose its glaze and effectiveness in the people's mind if it is not in continuous fight with the enemy. That is because the important religions have had more accentuated influence on the mind and heart of their followers in their early periods than when they have established their domination and driven the enemies out of the battlefield. All in all, it is not justifiable based on any principle or scale for a person to impose his or her ideas on another by the use of force" (Ibid, 188).



One of the most beautiful parts of Mill's book is where he speaks of killing of Socrates and hanging Jesus and murdering of Christians. He shows that how harmful is bigotry in ideas, i.e. realizing oneself immune of any mistake, to the society. Strictness and bias are amongst the dead sins and Stuart Mill would have surely extremely admired our Islamic civilization if he had noticed that how denounced is such bigotry and haughtiness and giving all right to one's own self in our civilization. However, many individuals who currently consider themselves as the representatives of this aspect of our civilization are the embodiments of arrogance, bigotry and ignorance and pride. It should not be forgotten that the real Muslims never consider themselves immune of mistake and sin in such a manner that our authors have always given themselves such epithets as "inborn slaves" or other expressions of the like. Islamic theosophy, in its best manifestation, might perhaps be the most excellent example of forbearance and loftiness of thought and patience and abstinence.

Stuart Mill rises up for defending individuality in full power. By individuality, he means the actualization and perfection of the individual talents and verve and tastes. As a result of the manifestation and expression of these individual talents and tastes, diversity and variegation emerge in the society and culture and civilization become rich. In defending individuality, he advances the issue to the extent that permits eccentricity and believes that these eccentric individuals should be encouraged to keep on moving forward in their selected path. In a society that the standard of individual's behavior is not their individual verve and taste rather the social tradition and rituals, the most important factor of the individual's felicity is missing.

Freedom is necessary for the growth of the individuality of the persons and it is good not only to every individual but also to the society but it is evident and nobody can deny it that the individuals' freedom has certain limits. The issue becomes important when the turn comes for the freedom of action. In the arena of action, the individual freedom is limited by the individuals' parity of freedom in actions. The limits set by Stuart Mill for freedom are as explained in the following words: our freedom of action is unlimited in things exclusively related to us and this also holds for freedom in taste and verve and beliefs of any type and the actions the results of which are solely directed at us. But, when it comes to the actions the results of which are directed at others, the freedom is restricted. We are not free to do things that would cause harm and damage to the others and, if we cause such harms and damages to the others, the society has the right to intervene and punish and penalize us (Ibid, 189).

Urged by the expediency of his liberalist thoughts, John Stuart Mill insists on the superiority of the freedom and originality of individuals and their precedence to the society and is of the belief that individual precedes the society in importance and originality and, thus, the governments should not prevent individuals from florescence in personal areas rather they should grant absolute freedom to individuals in their selection and pursuing of the ideals and goals they are interested in as well as in adopting their lifestyles and life conditions. In his viewpoint, freedom is the only value or, at least, atop of the values every government should guard and police it and no governmental institution and even the common customs and mores and, in its pervasive sense, the society's culture, as well, should respect the wills and wants of the individuals for accepting and selecting the values and norms. He was always at odd with the unquestionable compliance with the society and collective bigotry and considered as a barrier to the individual freedoms and a sort of collective despotism what he called dictatorship, bullying, mores and majority. More than anything else, Mill underlined self-



righteousness, self-development and individual freedom and, thus, was always obsessively fearful of the government's domination over the citizens' private areas and drastically condemned proctorship, patriarchy and imposition of a sort of lifestyle or common beliefs to the citizens (Javadi and Hosseini Suraki, 2018, 111).

Individual freedom should be limited to the extent of not causing harm to the others but, if individuals mean no harm to the others in their actions and only do things related to themselves, their actions and ideas should be free and nobody has the right to interfere with them. Mankind is not immune of mistakes. The truths everybody believes in are most often no more than half true. The unity of beliefs amongst the people is not optimum except in cases that they are reached following free research and discussion and the notional discrepancies amongst the people are not bad rather they are good. This principle holds for all the mankind's actions till the day the mankind acquires a talent greater than what he has now for perceiving the truth. So, there should always be different beliefs till mankind becomes perfect and the trying of various types of life should be also free. The various kinds of dispositions should find an opportunity of manifestation as long as no harm is incurred by them to the others. The value of the various methods of life should be proved in practice and the individuals should be free to test all of them. In short, individuality should be provided with the ability of manifestation and expression in affairs not related to the others. One of the most important factors of human felicity and surely the most important factor of social progress is missing where the law and the scale of individuals' behaviors and deeds is not their dispositions but the habits and rituals of the other people (Sana'ei, 2015, 258).

CONCLUSION:

Rousseau was the benevolent member of the enlightenment movement and extremely delighted by the intellectual reforms and improvement of the human status and felicity. But, he was also a defender of the guardianship's simple and enthusiastic life, as well, and his intended concept of the public volition became an important tool in the hands of the subsequent romanticist writers who were seeking for a sort of supra-individual self. He laid his intellectual foundation on the premises of human freedom and it is in this intellectual approach that he realizes social contract as an accomplishment for achieving civil freedoms and legal rights by the individuals in their transition from a natural status to a civil status. Based thereupon, he speaks of human rights that would be actualized based on human freedom. In his book "social contract", Rousseau proposes that each individual is born free and possesses freedom and that nobody can, for any excuse, force an individual do something against his or her will and volition. Therefore, by authoring the book "social contract", Rousseau seeks estimation of real freedom for human beings and he finds freedom the right of the mankind rising up from inside a residential society and government by this social contract and, in his viewpoint, a government can be said to be laid on the foundation of human right that is based on the human freedom. But, on the contrary, Stuart Mill believes that freedom is the thing that is not barred by any barricade and, in his mind, a society can be considered free that its every individual member is faced with no barrier for reaching felicity and happiness. In his opinion, political and social freedoms are only suspended on the betterment of every individual member of that society and, to become better, every individual member of the society should be given freedom thereby to foster and develop their talents and reach an optimum perfection. From the perspective of John



Stuart Mill, the society should provide its members with conditions so that they can exhibit their talents. He believes that this comes about when the society acts like a gardener who is assigned to set the ground for each of the trees and plants to be able to grow. Mill believes that the only condition for achieving such an important goal is freedom and safeguarding of freedom that serve the community progress.

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