

**PLATO, BENJAMIN CONSTANT AND JOHN STUART MILL
ON JUSTICE AS A POLITICAL VIRTUE AND ON
POLITICAL CONFORMITY**

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ABSTRACT

Most often political conformity is taken as a prerequisite for the establishment and implementation of justice, even in the most democratic of states. Nonetheless, it remains as a question whether the particular conformity meddles positively or negatively with the way individuals realize their political goals within a Polity. In our analysis, we attempt to explore how three different thinkers conceive of this necessity of the political conformity and to what degree. On the one hand, John Stuart Mill sides with a conception of justice that defends individual freedom and prevents a great deal of political conformity, whereas he wishes this freedom to be exercised along with reason. Like Plato, he defends the admission that a person's character is paramount in social progress but also in the pursuit for human happiness. Constant, on the other hand, declines ancient theories of political participation and sovereignty as outdated, claiming that individual rights and the pursuit of personal interests are highly significant. As Constant risks a higher degree of conformity, with the further risk of abolishing justice under the rule of a demagogic government, Plato states as a necessity the hierarchical precedence of the *Polis* to the person but with an eye to the self-fulfillment of the individual, without disregarding the political basis.

Keywords: Mill, Plato, Constant, Conformity, Justice, Political

**PLATON, BENJAMİN CONSTANT VE JOHN STUART
MILL'İN, POLİTİK BİR DEĞER OLARAK ADALET VE
POLİTİK UYGUNLUK ÜZERİNE GÖRÜŞLERİ**

ÖZET

Çoğu zaman politik uygunluk, en demokratik devletlerde bile adaletin kurulması ve uygulanması için ön şart olarak kabul edilir. Bununla birlikte, belirli bir uygunluğun, bireylerin bir yönetim biçimi içindeki siyasi hedeflerini gerçekleştirme tarzlarına olumlu veya olumsuz yönde etki edip etmediği bir soru olarak kalmaya devam eder. Analizimizde, üç farklı düşünürün, politik uygunluğun gerekliliğini nasıl ve ne dereceye kadar kavradıklarını tetkik etmeye çalıştık. Bir yandan, John Stuart Mill, bireysel özgürlüğü savunan ve politik uygunluğu büyük ölçüde önleyen bir adalet anlayışının yanında yer alırken, aynı zamanda bu özgürlüğün akla uygun biçimde kullanılmasını ister. Platon gibi, bir insanın karakterinin sosyal ilerlemede olduğu gibi insan mutluluğu peşinde de baskın olduğu kabulünü savunur. Öte yandan, Constant, bireysel hakların ve kişisel ilgilerin peşinde koşmanın bir hayli önemli

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olduğunu iddia ederek, antik politik katılım ve egemenlik teorilerini reddeder. Constant, üst dereceden bir uygunluğu, demagojik bir yönetimin altında adaleti ortadan kaldırma riskiyle birlikte tehlikeye atarken, Platon, bireyin kendini gerçekleştirmesini, politik temeli göz ardı etmeden hesaba katarak, *polis* birey karşısındaki hiyerarşik önceliğini bir gereksinim olarak ifade eder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mill, Platon, Constant, Uygunluk, Adalet, Politik Olan

GİRİŞ

By the word “conformity” what is generally understood is a behavior that follows the usual standards that are expected by a group or society. Moreover, it means the intentional effort to comply with these standards or align our already existent ones to those of others, a practice that looks inevitable in all forms of collective life, much more the political life. But how much does this put at havoc: a) individual liberties and b) the capacity of an individual or a smaller group to alter the rest of the group or society to the better by peaceful means? One of the means through which conformity may be secured is justice, which, when it is not a political virtue, may be used to achieve a homogeneity that is not always desirable. Rather than being seen under any other prism, this question necessitates a political examination, due to the fact that conformity may be a more radical factor in our societies than believed, in other words an element that catalytically does not allow social and political divergences from rules and norms that may have taken an automated and self-reproductive direction.

Of course, the opportunity for political and social change may not always be that welcome, or it may even be advised against (Holmes, 1984), just like in the case of the French philosopher Benjamin Constant (1999, pp. 75-76) who claims that: “man adapts himself to those institutions that he finds already established, as he does to the laws of physics. He adjusts, in accordance with the very defects of such institutions, his interests, his speculations and his entire plan of life. These defects become softened, because whenever an institution lasts for a long time, there is some exchange between the institution itself and man’s own interests. Man’s relations and hopes cluster around what is already in existence; to change all this, even for the better, is to do him harm”. Constant’s remark orientates this discussion to the point where people have accepted the fact that institutions and norms may seem not adequate but still, they are preserved or even fostered as they match people’s life plan. In fact, to make any effort to produce change might not just equal with an attempt to avoid conformity but also to discomfort the citizens.

Constant (1999, p. 175) interestingly continues this argument by stating that: “theocracy, royalty, aristocracy, whenever they rule men’s minds, are simply the general will. When, on the other hand, they fail to rule

them, they are nothing but force. In short there are only two sorts of power in the world: one, illegitimate, is force; the other, legitimate, is the general will". This statement adds the concept of what emerges as justice, provided that its origin is the general will. Hence, the efficiency of the authorities to rule people's minds is affirmed as a legitimate way of ruling in the sense that in that case, "technically", people accept and share the values of power as well as the formed correlations. That denotes that communal values could become the outcome of an external source, an outcome much distinct to the common will, at least in its initial phase. Justice thus will have to be influenced to the degree that it becomes legitimate, but as power, by means of public acceptance. Constant also attempts to demarcate how this affected sovereignty of the people, or what is left of it, is even further narrowed down since institutions start taking the place of communal consensus and even speak for the citizens, as it happens in the case of individual rights. According to Constant (1999, p. 182): "the sovereignty of the people is not unlimited: it is circumscribed within the limits traced by justice and by the rights of individuals". In this projection, the French political thinker maintains that the sovereignty of the people has to be encompassed within a "just" limit, which is a limit that has been accepted as the general will, without having been the product of the general will in a prior and necessary state. The only recourse that is offered in the particular situation, by Constant, is public opinion as a restraint, and the distribution and balance of powers (Constant, 1999, p. 183; cf. Lumowa, 2010, p. 396).

Constant both criticizes and inherits the tradition of political rationalism in his time (cf. Ghins, 2018, pp. 224-243). As regards the former part, i.e. of his political criticism to rationalism, he mainly prefers individual judgment in the place of a politics of truth. This of course deprives politics of any sense of public certainty whereas it does not deter the rejection of a politics of consensus during the political action, especially as regards the connection between the individual citizen and the State. Yet, Benjamin Constant tries to approach Plato, even quite indirectly, when he fosters values such as compassion, self respect, enthusiasm, as political prerequisites (cf. Vincent, 2004, pp. 5-21); nonetheless, in our opinion, he does not take a similar stance due to the fact that a narrow self-interest of the citizen never seems to be avoided, regardless of the emphasis that Constant occasionally attempts to give to the prevalence of reason. The French political thinker steadily believes that the governors are practically encumbered with those procedures which will eventually suffice for all citizens and in all circumstances.

Plato, just like Benjamin Constant, attributes certain responsibility to those who govern, thus detracting the same amount of responsibility from the citizens. For Plato though, the political statesman is a central figure in the

sense that he should not be ignorant of the political ends of the City (*polis*), and he should be able to secure its salvation (Plato, *Laws*, 962 a-b). Consequently, his responsibility is graver although conformity to the decisions of the people who rule appears as initially inevitable here too. But Plato takes another syllogistic route, where he explores the political phenomena along with the capacities and particularities of human nature. For Leys (1965, pp. 272-276), that signifies that the philosopher of Athens perhaps remains antipolitical, at least to some extent, in the sense mainly that Plato does not ever really approve of institutions that one might call 'political'. Yet, the law is present and defines people's lives in an unambivalent perspective of the ontological particularities of the human being. In Plato's thought, human nature is so connected with pleasure and pain that there is a need for conformity with the law in every State. In the first book of *the Laws*, the Greek philosopher takes the stance that when men are investigating the subject of laws, their investigation deals almost entirely with pleasures and pains, whether in States or in individuals (cf. Russell, 2005, pp. 106-137; also see Monoson, 2000, pp. 92-97). These two come out by nature's impulse and "whoever draws from them at the due place and time is blessed, whether it is a State or an individual" (Plato, *Laws*, 636e).

Plato considers conformity through understanding that pleasure and pain are two drastic natural forces within the human soul. Any kind of conformity will have to be relevant with encouraging one or the other, similarly with Constant's theory. For Plato while comparing the more pleasant life with the more painful, it must be contemplated whether one mode is natural to human beings, and that other mode unnatural. He is aware of the fact that all people desire that pleasure should be theirs, but they neither choose nor desire pain. In an exhaustive analysis he admits that a neutral state of being can also be attractive under certain circumstances: "the neutral state we do not desire in place of pleasure, but we do desire it in exchange for pain; and we desire less pain with more pleasure, but we do not desire less pleasure with more pain; and when the two are evenly balanced, we are unable to state any clear preference. Now all these states have, or have not, influence on desire, to govern its choice of each. So these things being thus ordered of necessity, we desire that mode of life in which the feelings are many, great, and intense, with those of pleasure predominating, but we do not desire the life in which the feelings of pain predominate; and contrariwise, we do not desire the life in which the feelings are few, small, and gentle, if the painful predominate, but if the pleasurable predominate, we do desire it. Further, we must regard the life in which there is an equal balance of pleasure and pain as we previously regarded the neutral state: we desire the balanced life in so far as it exceeds the painful life in point of what we like, but we do not desire it in so far as it exceeds the pleasant lives in point of the things we dislike" (Plato, *Laws*, 733a-c).

On the one hand, the Greek philosopher has enhanced the conviction that a) pleasure and pain are natural and b) that they interfere with ethical and political life. As shown above, he realizes that there is an intermediate phase where there is neither much pain nor much pleasure, leading to situations where these feelings are practically neutralized but also opted for through some right reasoning. This rightness consists in ‘calculation’ [λογισμός] pronouncing which of them, pleasure or pain, is good and which is bad; resulting to the point where ‘calculation’, “when it has become the public decree of the State [δῶγμα πόλεως κοινόν], is named ‘law’” (Plato, *Laws*, 644 c – d). So how does this interfere with the condition of people as citizens and in the way they conform themselves to potential principles of public justice? For Plato, the real problem of the political reality would be no other than the condition of the human soul; that in relation with passions. More specifically, he claims that the condition of the soul¹ of those citizens who cannot cope with pleasures and several enjoyments will be partly enslaved and partly free; a mixed circumstance that will not allow them to be called free men (Plato, *Laws*, 635d). That would bring about a situation where no political benefit could be drawn for the *polis* and for the individuals, and conformity would be attained through passions which may also grow to be political passions. Plato implies an amount of volitional effort and right reason while he also understands that being courageous, which is a prerequisite for the rest of the political and individual virtues, means showing courage against torments as well as against pleasures. A complete human being, that is also a functional political being, must possess freedom of the soul as well as courage to cope with all aspects of life (cf. Plato, *Laws*, 634 b). Justice, freedom, virtue, do not come magically: “a citizen possesses a sufficient craft, and one that needs long practice and many studies, in the keeping and conserving of the public system of the State, a task which demands his full attention” (Plato, *Laws*, 846 d). By having virtue and reason prevail, the citizen has started to participate in political life under the right terms. It means that the citizen has

¹ In the *Laws* (644 e- 645 b) he discusses how the condition of the soul could potentially guide people to law and justice. Through calculation, the right tendencies prevail and obedience to the laws of the *polis* becomes feasible: “these inward affections of ours, like sinews or cords, drag us along and, being opposed to each other, pull one against the other to opposite actions; and herein lies the dividing line between goodness and badness. For, as our argument declares, there is one of these pulling forces which every man should always follow and nohow leave hold of, counteracting thereby the pull of the other sinews: it is the leading-string, golden and holy, of “calculation,” entitled the public law of the State; and whereas the other cords are hard and steely and of every possible shape and semblance, this one is flexible and uniform, since it is of gold. With that most excellent leading-string of the law we must needs co-operate always”.

conformed but to values that do not exist outside of him. The former practice, according to which values are not borne in one's own soul, would place such values as exterior indicators which would, nonetheless, demand an analogous to their existence moral and political action. In a practical manner, Plato's perfect citizen has conformed to his own better tendencies through proper calculation, which is his own and not due to any other source. Autonomy though does not have a restricted or unilateral result: when the fierce tensions of the passions and desires retreat, one is rid of "many and mad masters". The aftermath is significantly enriched and does not touch the matters of the *polis* in a superficial manner. Thus, the character of the man is the one cause that affects moral and political coherence among kinsmen, friends and other citizens (Plato, *Republic*, 329b-d).

As soon as these issues of virtue and character have been resolved, conformity to the rules of the *polis* is nearer than ever before. Plato sees a combination of power and character as the root for every good polity: "whenever the greatest power coincides in man with wisdom and temperance, then the germ of the best polity is planted; but in no other way will it ever come about" (Plato, *Laws*, 712 a; cf. Hansen, 2010, p. 25). Although there are of course, also, other voices on the issue, we side with the view of Monoson who observes that Plato is far from being an enemy to democracy or a supporter of elitist totalitarianism (Monoson, 2000). Although Plato reveals many times in *Politeia* how much he does not like democracy, at the same time he consistently does two things: a) he utilizes constructively processes that happen within democracies as presumptive precursors of political purpose and b) he appears certainly more democratic than expected in certain political functions such as those of education, the way one ascends to the heights of political rule, participation of women, etc. Woozley (2010, pp. 391-392) interestingly remarks how Plato ends up with at least a limited democracy, mainly for the reason that the citizens willingly allow themselves to identify with the legal system. Actually, according to Monoson and Woozley, Plato explores the potential transition from the main elements that constitute the Athenian democracy to his ideal Polity. While exploring this transition, his theory poses constant questions on the compatibility between justice and political conformity. Nonetheless he concedes to the fact that this is a procedure that allows margins for personal choice and volitional involvement. This involvement, although it employs the individual character, concerns all who participate in the political organization. According to the Athenian philosopher, State organization has particular features, which can be concluding with these two divisions: one is the appointment of individuals to office, and the other the assignment of laws to the offices. Dividing thus, the State recognizes needs for particular kinds of individuals that will be encumbered with serving those appointments. Practically that means that the State asks itself: what kind of

citizens do I need? Evidently this is a collective question that requires a collective response, motivating new degrees of conformity.

Plato finds the opportunity to plant the seed of doubt so as to highlight the problem much more than the answer in the debate concerning the best *polis* and the particular aspects of voluntariness and conformity: “There lies a cause in those non-polities—namely, democracy, oligarchy, and tyranny. For none of these is a polity, but the truest name for them all would be ‘faction-State’; for none of them is a form of voluntary rule over willing subjects, but a voluntary rule over unwilling subjects accompanied always by some kind of force” (Plato, *Laws*, 832 c; cf. Monoson, 2000). People’s willingness interferes with more than conformity; it has to do with the frame within which force is present as unavoidable (Plato, *Statesman*, 303 a-b)² and perhaps justified. As far as this direction of his approach is concerned, Plato divides the care of humanity into two parts, by the criterion of the compulsory and the voluntary. The art of those who use compulsion is depreciated as tyrannical and only the voluntary care that is voluntarily accepted can be valued as political (Plato, *Statesman*, 276 e). Furthermore, he does not discern any difference between those who rule and those who are ruled due to the fact that both have received the same education. An additional factor is focused on the anthropological element, since Plato understands that rulers and those ruled are equally human, therefore not differing at all in their human natures (Plato, *Statesman*, 275 c).

Justice and conformity to its demands are beneficial for all in the case that they are not parts of a political ontology which is imposed from the outside. In the *Republic* it is made known that: “justice is ... not in regard to the doing of one's own business externally, but with regard to that which is within and in the true sense concerns one's self, and the things of one's self—it means that a man must not suffer the principles in his soul to do each the work of some other and interfere and meddle with one another, but that he should dispose well of what in the true sense of the word is properly his own, and having first attained to self-mastery and beautiful order within himself” (Plato, *Republic*, 443 d; cf. Schofield, 2006, pp. 253- 257). Hence, conformity to the rules of the city and obeying to justice as it is does not contain any rejection of individuality and of the need for individual self-fulfillment. In this Polity it is regarded as essential to enjoy freedom and friendliness combined with wisdom due to the fact that these will bring progress (Plato, *Laws*, 693 d- 694 b). Through this political exigency that

² Cf. *Laws*, 715 c: “For wherever in a State the law is subservient and impotent, over that State I see ruin impending; but wherever the law is lord over the magistrates, and the magistrates are servants to the law, there I descry salvation and all the blessings that the gods bestow on States”.

delineates the foundation for the resolution of practical matters there is no schism between the public and the private interest³. Plato is convinced that this type of conformity will foster the organic bond between the citizen and the city as well as among the citizens themselves (Plato, *Republic*, 435e; cf. Bobonich, 2002, pp. 436- 449).

The objective of the particular Polity is teleologically determined and predicts the participation of all: “The object on which we fixed our eyes in the establishment of our state was not the exceptional happiness of any one class but the greatest possible happiness of the city as a whole. For we thought that in a state so constituted we should be most likely to discover justice as we should injustice in the worst governed state, and that when we had made these out, we could pass judgment on the issue of our long inquiry. Our first task then, we take it, is to mold the model of a happy state—we are not isolating a small class in it and postulating their happiness, but that of the city as a whole” (Plato, *Republic*, 420 b-c). Happiness is promised for everyone due to the reason that no constituent of the Polis is left outside after its functional contribution to the whole.

However, there is a problem, as far as justice is concerned, and that is made evident through the argument of one of the interlocutors in the *Republic*. There Thrasymachus upholds that each form of government enacts the laws with a view to its own advantage, so that a democracy will enact democratic laws and a tyranny tyrannical laws and the other regimes will act similarly. By legislating in this manner, the regimes respectively proclaim that the just for their subjects is what is just for their rulers. This creates a necessary tautology which however defies the rules of logic as well as the rules of ethics, something that Thrasymachus apparently is not concerned to highlight enough. In this scheme, justice is not served and as a consequence the man who deviates from such laws is stigmatized as someone who is willing to break the law as well as the laws of social morality. In this way, justice exists to the advantage of the established government and, more specifically, to the advantage of the stronger (Plato, *Republic*, 338e- 339a; cf. Schofield, 2006, pp. 265- 270). Woozley (2010, pp. 373-374) rightly exposes how in the *Republic* and in the *Laws*, change of the law is neither encouraged nor allowed. In the comparison with the thesis of his Thrasymachus, Plato does not seem here to realize how change could be the catalyst that would protect justice and law and would therefore extend the

³ Plato, *Laws*, 875 a: “it is difficult to perceive that a true civic art necessarily cares for the public, not the private, interest,—for the public interest bind States together, whereas the private interest rends them asunder,—and to perceive also that it benefits both public and private interests alike when the public interest, rather than the private, is well enacted”.

possibilities of the *Polis* in a life of virtue and eudemonia. For that reason, in our interpretation, instead of being a political virtue, in the above clarification of Thrasymachus, justice seems contrary to its own original essence. The problem is not merely a potential deviation of justice but the even more profound reverberation of having justice impose, as a means, political conformity according to the wrong ends. If change cannot come, it is deduced that wrong ends may have to be served forever. Whereas the end of the *Polis* is the happiness of everyone and of the city as a whole, despotism may prevail due to the capacity of those who are more powerful to manipulate the lives of the people by means of the law. Through the discourse of Socrates, Plato seems convinced in the *Republic* about the direct relationship between the citizen and the city (Plato, *Republic*, 435e; cf. Bobonich, 2002, pp. 436- 449), something that if abolished the whole system of relations will turn against the individual and conformity will become unbearable. By protecting individuality, the Athenian philosopher rescues justice but also, he circumvents the difficulty of having conformity to rules and norms be no more than typical and external.

For John Stuart Mill, individuality is the key to his political philosophy as well. Unlike Constant, he means the life of the individual as more substantial than taking pleasure in private rights and several enjoyments. Hence his main argumentation stands quite close, at least on some specific points, to that of Plato. According to Habibi (2001, p. 41): “Mill writes of a Greek ideal of self-development and cultivating our higher nature”, even though human development is not considered as a selfish enterprise. Being free, being responsible for one’s political freedom are situations that encourage political participation and the preservation of that critical limit where sovereignty is not surrendered to the government altogether. What is paramount in our analysis is that conformity is an eminent threat for J. S. Mill, for the main reason that conformity meddles with the possibility of true and essential freedom for the individuals. This principle of freedom is so politically perplexing that it even requires that one cannot be free not to be free; in other words, one cannot be allowed to alienate his freedom (Mill, 1983, p. 172). The general thesis that the British thinker holds is that a person is generally held accountable to society only for actions that concern the interests of others and may be prejudicial to them (Mill, 1983, p. 158). Mill rejects that necessity is the same thing as coercion; freedom is achievable as long as one activates those means that will bring his changes, whether in character or in life, in fruition (cf. Ryan, 1970, pp. 104-106). In his logical system Mill admits that actions and their causes should be considered as casually determined events although he confesses that this could destroy the concept of personal identity; it would be as if the agent disappears, leaving his place to a spectator of things that happen (cf. Ryan, 1970, pp. 129-130). For Mill it is significant to maintain that the individual

is not dragged behind events or the will of the State. Fortunately, human nature allows for a constant education of the human being. In accordance with this, Mill primarily agrees with both Plato and Benjamin Constant that pleasure and the avoidance of pain are of paramount importance (Mill, 1915, pp. 18- 23 & 65). But again, there is great risk that human moral faculty, while it is susceptible of being brought up by cultivation to a high degree of development, is also susceptible of being cultivated in almost any direction. So, there is nothing so absurd or mischievous that may not be made to act on the human mind with all the authority of conscience (Mill, 1915, p. 51). That would mean that conscience would not be able to avoid the direction of conformity and indeed to erroneous comprehensions and perspectives.

According to Skorupski, in Mill's theory, no person has a right to something if there is not a parallel obligation in society to either protect that person while he acquires that thing or to guarantee the resources which will enable him for that acquisition. Therefore, rights of justice, in the philosophy of the British scholar, are analogous to particular obligations of society. Claiming on justice signifies that one claims on other human beings to join in making safe the prerequisites of one's personal existence and that, of course, in turn is reciprocated, to those who join, by each one's individual contribution to common safety (Skorupski, 1989, p. 18; cf. Ryan, 1970, pp. 213- 230). By all means, one may also claim from someone else something as a right according to such justice (Mill, 1915, p. 80). This seems to be an eventuation of justice as a political virtue, in a way that supersedes the moral level that is required beforehand. But in this form, it presupposes a larger percentage of conformity even though Mill persistently tries to predict, in his theory of justice, traits that will make preventable government intervention (Clark & Elliott, 2001, pp. 467-490). Yet, Mill defends individual liberties by appeal to the general good, in the utilitarian sense, while, in our opinion, he does not make an unobstructed transition from justice to liberty. Skorupski is right when he upholds that "in real life individuals are not symmetrically placed. Some have an advantage over others and in these circumstances the outcome of a peaceful agreement cannot be assumed to be just because it is peaceful. The stronger may be able to maneuver into a position of power from which they can make an offer which the weak cannot peacefully refuse, or even reasonably refuse, given the costs of resistance. It certainly does not follow that the offer is a just one" (Skorupski, 1989, p. 34). Apart from this particular focus on manipulation, there is another real danger that in accordance with the utilitarian approach sacrificing a person's interests in favor of the general good could always be justified, one way or the other. Therefore, even in this manner, a person practically would need to remain conformed to something bigger than the law (Mill, 1915, pp. 69- 71), which is the general interest and is a latent parameter in the discussion about justice. At this point, Mill's theory seems somehow weaker than Plato's who

does not assert a utilitarian perspective with application on what is good or just but insists on preserving morality inside the political procedure.

Regarding the role of government, Mill insists in the *Considerations on Representative Government* that: “government altogether being only a means, the eligibility of the means must depend on their adaptation to the end” (Mill, 1991, p. 26). This affirmation indicates that the means ought to be flexible to the extent where the will of the people will be deciding upon the ends. It also shows how John Stuart Mill is aware of the fact that the presence of absolute power would denote the existence of a mentally passive people. Passivity would not be useful to the State even though conformity, by many, would be received well, especially by those who rule (Mill, 1991, pp. 56-57). Still passivity may allow order on the one hand, but not progress on the other, which is also an indispensable element in Mill’s political reasoning. That’s why, the peak of conformity for Mill comprises not only the peak of despotism but also evidence for a relentless political determinism: “a good despotism means a government in which, so far as depends on the despot, there is no positive oppression by officers of state, but in which all the collective interests of the people are managed for them, all the thinking that has relation to collective interests done for them, and in which their minds are formed by, and consenting to, this abdication of their own energies. Leaving things to the government, like leaving them to Providence, is synonymous with caring nothing about them, and accepting their results, when disagreeable, as visitations of Nature” (Mill, 1991, p. 59).

It is repeated quite lucidly in Mill’s theory that the idea of justice begins as conformity to law. Nevertheless, in continuation, people become aware that the law can be either good or bad and that eventually the idea of justice needs to be “that of conformity to laws which ought to exist” (Skorupski, 1989, p. 326). To avoid despotism and violations, Mill exhorts that the mandates that are dictated by the law should not be obeyed unconditionally nor should they be issued in the deliberate form of laws (Mill, 1991, pp. 28- 29). In addition, he suggests another perspective by assigning the citizens with the exertion of four major political virtues, industry, integrity, prudence and finally justice (Mill, 1991, p. 30). The growth of these qualities in the community brings the best possible improvement, and, just like Plato, Mill seems persuaded that the functions of the State cannot be dissociated from individual virtues that are capable of attaining political reference. In the same context, he upholds that the administration of justice yields in importance in comparison to the human qualities that are required, and rules cannot bear the burden of giving justice without the participation of human virtues which safeguard these rules (Mill, 1991, p. 38). It follows that good government is impossible if each individual regards solely his own interests, which are selfish, and does not

concern himself with the issues of general interest (Mill, 1991, p. 39). To prevent such a contingency, Mill proposes that government's necessary care is to promote the virtue and intelligence of the citizens. The philosopher from London encourages a political system of participation where there is space for individual development and in this way manages to sustain a form of political community where conformity will not intrude in every facet of individual life. Nevertheless, he discerns how labor in modern societies, "a continuous labor of an unexciting kind" as he calls it (Mill, 1991, p. 47), is a means of disciplining people's minds. In this case, conformity is not questioned owing to the fact that it comprises the key for a civilized society, according to Mill's argument.

In conclusion, John Stuart Mill sides with a conception of justice that defends individual freedom and prevents a great deal of political conformity, whereas he wishes this freedom to be exercised along with reason (Mill, 1983, p. 140). He agrees to a great extent with Benjamin Constant that the individual should have access to his own affairs, but he is at contradiction with Constant's view that sovereignty shall be surrendered in such a facile manner to the governors. Mill defends an individual stance where freedom is the most imperative element but despite his urgent acknowledgment of this issue, he does not manage to deter every connotation that might lead to the acceptance of conformity, neither in the political nor in the ethical life. However, it is interesting that, like Plato, he sees in the love for freedom the love for improvement (Mill, 1983, p. 122), both at a communal and at an individual level. If conformity is pursued within a certain community, that, for Mill, would signify the loss of the awareness that a community does not protect its interests by rejecting the material by which men are made (Mill, 1983, pp. 106-107). Similarly with the Greek philosopher, he returns to the admission that a person's character is paramount in social progress but also in the pursuit for human happiness (Mill, 1983, p. 101). All in all, some degree of conformity remains unavoidable inside the political theories of the three mentioned philosophers. As Constant risks a higher degree of conformity, with the further risk of abolishing justice under the rule of a demagogic government, Plato states as a necessity the hierarchical precedence of the Polis to the person but with an eye to the self-fulfillment of the individual, without disregarding the political basis. The rulers of his Politeia are not driven by expediency but by a rational plan in the form of a perfect ideal (Leys, 1965, p. 272). However, as it is shown above, he risks a unilateral moral reference to phenomena such as in his dedication to justice. Constant also is eager to confirm the presence of moral canons while claiming that one of the things that arbitrary political power destroys is morality, adding that "arbitrary power is for the moral what the plague is for the physical" (Constant, 1999, p. 290; cf. Lumowa, 2010, p. 399). Mill does not wholly prevent the emergence of conformity

although he seems to opt for a lesser type which protects the individual not only in his interests but also in the dominion of his virtues and his capacities, which need to be acceded to society, i.e. to an overall system.

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