Liberalism and the Problem of Colonial Rule: Three Stages in Anglo-American Thought

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

Signature:

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Introduction

From as early as the 15th century when European explorers rounded the tip of Africa in search of trade routes to the East, until the early twentieth century, the West, through the territorial expansion of empire, established itself as the dominant authority within the global political order. Ideologically inspired conflicts in the first half of the twentieth century, Cold War tensions and the process of decolonization, however, resulted in a fundamental change in the nature of this power and global influence, and led to the construction of a new global order that had never existed before. After centuries of being structured around the power of a few European countries with colonial subjects, the post-colonial order was based on formal equality between states, where the notion of territorial expansion and paternal rule were no longer accepted practices. Instead, power within the international system was determined by economic competition and the notion of 'civilization' was replaced by the ideal of economic development, predominantly through the forces of the international capitalist system.

The aim of the following chapters is to highlight the dominant discourse of the Anglo-American liberal tradition within the context of the changing global order, and argue, more specifically, that the process of decolonization can be used as a lens through which changes reflecting how the 'liberal task' was conceived within Anglo-American political thought, can be traced. Furthermore, it aims to show that Anglo-American political philosophy in the post-colonial era can understood as a part of a larger historical process, dating back to the work John Stuart Mill in the early nineteenth century. By contrasting the liberalisms of Mill, the British Idealists and Isaiah Berlin, and their responses to the question of colonial rule, this history sheds light on the fundamental impulses of the liberal tradition between the colonial and post-colonial periods. It is widely known that Mill was employed by the East India Company and that the subject of colonial rule, to some extent, informed his liberalism. There has also been much written on how Mill uses his 'simple' principle of liberty to justify British intervention into the affairs of 'backward' societies. In a similar way the work of the Idealists was concerned with liberalism in the age of Empire and they commented directly on how the liberal 'project' could best explain the practice of colonialism. Berlin's liberalism, however, does not fit this pattern. Although he does, at times make, passing remarks regarding colonialism and the nature of anti-colonial struggles, his liberalism is not informed by colonial rule in the same way as it does the work of Mill or the Idealists. The importance of

Berlin's philosophy to this project is in examining how the process of decolonization impacted upon the purpose of Anglo-American thought. In other words, Berlin's liberalism elucidates the contrasts that can be drawn between Anglo-American thought in colonial and post-colonial eras, and is foundational to the liberalisms of those, such as Rawls, who arguably re-defined political thought in the post-colonial West. The following chapters, therefore, do not intend to argue that the Anglo-American liberal tradition was directly focussed on the problem of colonialism or that the links between the three chapters are complete, but rather that when read within the context of colonial rule and by analyzing what the liberal tradition does have to say on the subject, one can establish that the problems facing Anglo-American thought in the post colonial-era are part of a deeper historical tradition.

Initiated by the independence of India in 1947, the process of decolonization, which spread throughout Asia and Africa over the following thirty years, changed the manner in which politics and power were interpreted within the international system. The change in global structure and role of the West within the international system was inevitably reflected in Anglo-American political philosophy. Primarily, decolonization signalled the end of the West's 'civilizing mission' which, for centuries, was used as a moral justification for colonial rule. John Stuart Mill in his famous essay *On Liberty* (1859) held that "Despotism is a legitimate mode of dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement."[1] He continued with this argument in *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) when he stated that "the great majority of the human race" remained in such a "savage or semi-savage state," requiring that they be ruled by "the more advanced."[2] During the period of colonial rule Anglo-American political thought sought to offer an account of 'political and social relationships at the widest possible level of generality,' providing a universal standard by which societies could be judged. At the same time, these principles were used, often ambiguously, to justify the practice of colonial rule and thus the West used its moral resources, conceived within the liberal tradition, to support its Imperial global domination.

[1] J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 18, p. 224.

[2] J. S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 19, p. 410

Both J. S. Mill and the British Idealists who succeeded him, believed in the superiority of Western culture and the need to spread, paternalistically if necessary, liberal principles throughout the colonised world. Although the principles which formed the basis of their philosophies were fundamentally different, they shared the commonly held belief in the West that that their societies were culturally superior to the 'backward' ways of life practiced within the colonies, thus justifying paternal intervention. Mill endorsed a utilitarianism which held individual freedom as the highest good and believed that it was only in societies which fostered such a principle that civilization could progress. For Mill, the role of the state was to produce self-developed, autonomous agents who would be able to lead satisfying, progressive lives within a civilised society, and justified colonial intervention on the grounds of preparing under-developed states for self-government through a 'civilizing' process. Unlike Mill who saw colonial rule as a moral imperative, the Idealists based their colonialism on the notion that it was inherited responsibility that had to be fulfilled. The Idealists offered a more collectivist approach based on a conception of the General Will within society, and believed that because the state is the ultimate expression and sustainer of moral communities, the imperial task required them to provide a philosophy which made coherent a General Will within colonised states. What is significant with regard to the liberalisms of both Mill and the Idealists is that although fundamentally different, they both saw the West as a paternal figure within the international order and justified colonialism on the grounds of civilization, defined by Western society.

This mode of thought remained dominant until after World War II and was replaced in the post-colonial order by the notion of economic development, dictated by the forces of the international market system. Paternal intervention into the affairs of other states was thus no longer the accepted method of drawing African and Asian states into the global capitalist system. The economic and social welfare of the former colonial subjects was left to the responsibility of new governing elites, who were generally the primary figures behind the liberation movements struggling against colonial powers for political autonomy. Whilst a system of political and national equality was established within the post-colonial order, growing material inequality meant that the restructured system was still subjected to Western economic domination. Cold War tensions also had a significant influence on the nature of post-colonial system, in that in the struggle between the West and the Soviet bloc for the support of the decolonised Third World, the ideology of liberation movements within newly

independent states was largely forgotten, and their 'global vision' became principally dictated by the forces of the Cold War struggle.

The post-colonial period also signalled a distinct shift in the trajectory of Anglo-American thought and the application of liberal principles in the West. In 1956 Peter Laslett claimed in his introduction to *Politics, Philosophy, and Society* that political philosophy concerned with "political and social relationships at the widest level of generality" was dead. [3] He made the argument that the Anglo-American tradition which sought to prescribe universal political principles had, "for the time being anyway," stopped.[4] The rise of analytical philosophy confined philosophical thought to dealing with linguistic muddles, steering it away from making universal claims on human nature. The impulse of Anglo-American thought was to restrict the sphere of argument and maintain only a narrow sphere where its conclusions were applicable. The analytical tradition distinguished political and philosophical principles on the basis of the conceptual clarity, where unity is preferred to diversity because diversity was seen as a result of conceptual confusion. The Anglo-American tradition thus returned to defending principles of individualism over collective goals in that collective goals were seen to be unclear and of diverse meaning. Isaiah Berlin, arguably the iconic figure of the Anglo-American tradition in the post-war period, claimed in his defence for negative liberty that because of the lack of theoretical clarity any collective or 'positive' conception of freedom can be made to serve the needs of "every dictator, inquisitor and bully who seeks moral, or even aesthetic, justification for his conduct."[5]

The practical consequence of this 'shift' was that in endorsing regimes which supported individual rights and which characterised the spirit of the capitalist West, Anglo-American philosophy rejected any collective threat to their global dominance on the basis of theoretical incoherence. In other words, although it did not defend, or even need to defend colonialism, the liberal tradition treated any collective challenge to colonial rule as theoretically

[3] See Peter Laslett (ed.) "Introduction" in *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), p. 1

[4] Ibid. p. 1

[5] Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in Henry Hardy (ed.) *Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 197

incoherent. In his essay titled "Does Political Theory Still Exist?" which was published in Peter Laslett's second edition of *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, Berlin states that "where...concepts are firm, clear and generally accepted, and the methods of reasoning...are agreed between men...there and only there is it possible to construct a science." He goes on to say that "where concepts are vague or too much in dispute, and methods of argument ...are not generally agreed...we are at best in the realm of quasi-science." It is into the latter category that Berlin claims "misty ideologies" fall.[6] Collective responses to Western hegemony, according to Berlin, are examples of such ideologies and have "not succeeded in passing the required tests" to be considered as being based on sound philosophical arguments.[7] The trajectory of Anglo-American thought in the post-colonial era was thus strictly restricted to the bastions of Western capitalism, leaving the real workings of the Western capitalist system and the struggles facing post-colonial societies outside the boundaries of coherent philosophical argument.

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It has been argued by many modern political philosophers that a survey of contemporary Anglo-American political philosophy should necessarily begin with John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, published in 1971, in that it set the precedent upon which political philosophy has been shaped in the post-colonial West.[8] It is the argument of the following chapters, that the issues facing the post-colonial order and the response of Anglo-American thought to these can be understood as part of a much longer social history. As Ellen Wood claims, in order to understand how political thought has developed through time and what the history political theory can teach us about our contemporary circumstance, it is important to "place ourselves on the continuum of history, where we are joined to our predecessors not only by our continuities we share but by the processes of change that intervene between us."[9] By analysing the changing attitudes of the liberal tradition to the subject of colonial rule, the problems facing Anglo-American thought in the post-colonial era, and which still pose

[6] Isaiah Berlin, "Does Political Theory Still Exist," in Peter Laslett (ed.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), pp. 2-3

[7] Ibid. p. 3

[8] See Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 2002), p. 9

[9] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Citizens to Lords: A Social History of Western Political Thought From Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (London: Verso, 2008), p. 16

significant questions for political thinkers today, can be understood. Although it must be noted that there are a number of ways of tracing the relationship between the Anglo-American liberal tradition and the problem of colonial rule, both time and space limits this analysis to the three chapters to follow.

CHAPTER 1:

MILL'S LIBERAL PROJECT AND DEFENCE OF COLONIALISM

"...despotism is a legitimate mode of dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement..."[10]

I. The Liberal Landscape in Nineteenth Century Britain

Nineteenth century Britain may be regarded as the 'golden era' of liberal philosophy and practice, in that it exemplified, in practical politics, the historical paradigm of the classical tradition of minimal state activity and an individualist character of life. John Gray, in his book *Liberalism*, captures the essence of the 'liberal civilization' that nineteenth century Britain aspired to by quoting A. J. P. Taylor:

> Until August 1914 a sensible, law-abiding Englishman could pass through life and hardly notice the existence of the state...He could live where he liked and how he liked...He had no official number or identity card. He could...leave his country forever without a passport...exchange his money...without restriction. Unlike other countries on the European continent, the state did not require its citizens to perform military service. It [the State] left the adult citizen alone.[11]

When tracing the development of the liberal tradition, however, it is crucial to understand that the nineteenth century saw a fundamental shift from, what is considered, the classical liberal tradition towards a more revisionist approach- an approach which, to a large degree, compromised the primary insights of the classical school.[12] Although victories such as the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, the Reform Act of 1832 and the repeal of the Corn Laws of 1846 seem to strengthen the position of classical liberal practice in the 1800's, Gray argues that the latter half of the century provides evidence of a 'piecemeal shift' away from the

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[10] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 224

[11] A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1965), p.1

[12] John Gray, *Liberalism* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), pp. 27-30

'minimalist state' advocated by the individualist principles of the classical tradition towards greater government intervention and activity.[13] With regard to the realm of ideas or philosophical theory, however, the retreat of the classical liberal tradition begins much earlier and can be traced to the rise of the Philosophical Radicals and the work of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. 'Benthamite' utilitarianism, of which James Mill was a close disciple, ruptured the development of the classical tradition by employing the Principle of Utility as a quantitative measure of different policies on public welfare and created a system of thought which legitimised the interventionist theories of the British Idealists in the latter half of the century; a rupture which would ultimately be used to defend the socialist engineering policies of Stalinist Russia by Sidney and Beatrice Webb in the middle of the twentieth century.[14] Although not all the practical effects of Utilitarian philosophy were anti-liberal- in that they did inspire reforms in public health, civil service and local government in tune with the classical tradition- as it was "transmitted into public life via the Philosophical Radicals...it had an inherent tendency to spawn policies of interventionist social engineering."[15]

It was into this intellectual environment that John Stuart Mill was born, or as Alan Ryan suggests, 'grew up with' and which had a marked influence on his philosophy.[16] As shall be illustrated as this chapter unfolds, Mill's liberalism, in many respects, returned to the classical tradition and his commitment to individualism supercedes his commitment to the Utilitarian reforms of the Philosophical Radicals. In some of his other works and in particular in his later life, however, Mill's views on nationalism, socialist experimentation and trade unions signal, to some extent, a departure from the classical tradition and 'in his single person...spans the interval between the old and the new liberalism' that was to take up a particular force in the latter decades of the century and early twentieth century. [17] This background is necessary in that it gives essential perspective on the development of the liberal tradition and, most importantly for the purpose of this project, on the changing attitudes towards colonial rule.

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[13] Ibid. p. 28

[14] Ibid. 30

[15] Ibid. p. 29

[16] Alan Ryan, *J. S. Mill* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 8

[17] L. T. Hobhouse, *Liberalism* in, James Meadowcroft ed., *Hobhouse: Liberalism and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 51

II. James Mill and the East India Company: Their Influence on Mill's Colonialism

John Stuart Mill was probably the outstanding and most widely studied British philosopher of the nineteenth century. He was a member of British Parliament as well as a colonial administrator, and followed in his father's footsteps in becoming Chief Examiner at the East India Company, a privately owned joint-stock company which controlled vast regions of Britain's largest colony. His academic interests, both vast and complex, have been of critical importance to Western philosophy over the past 150 years, and in particular, his acclaimed work *On Liberty* is often considered the 'manifesto' for modern liberal thought. It is widely acknowledged that Mill was a 'public' thinker, actively engaged in the debates of his time and place, and that his writing sought to explain and defend what he believed to be the fundamental philosophical, moral and political principles by which modern society should be organised.[18] What prompted Mill to think and write, therefore, was the 'state of the social, literary, intellectual or religious world about him'.[19] How he viewed the issue of colonial rule and what questions he asked that his philosophy sought to explain in defence of Imperialism, therefore, become clear when analyzed within the context of his work as a public figure. By examining his work for the East India Company, as well as his engagements with his contemporaries on political issues of their time and locating them within the context of his philosophy, great insights can be gained into his attitude towards colonial rule and British Empire.

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Any account of the work of John Stuart Mill needs to begin with mention of his father and the huge impact he had on his son's life. Much has been written about the extraordinary influence James Mill had over his son, especially with regard to the unusual and intense education he taught and which Mill himself recounts in his *Autobiography*.[20] Born in 1773 to a successful shoemaker in the Scottish village of Northwater Bridge, James Mill went on to study Divinity at Edinburgh University and became a licensed Presbyterian minister, thanks largely to the financial support and social patronage of local baronet John Stuart. Unable to find work as a

[18] See John Rawls, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. Samuel Freeman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 252

[19] Ryan, *J. S. Mill*, pp. 4-5

[20] J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 1, especially Chapters 1-3

preacher, or, it has been argued, through losing faith in the Church itself, Mill moved to London in 1802 to pursue a writing career and, along with his friend Jeremy Bentham, was among the leaders of the utilitarian radical movement in early nineteenth century Britain.[21] Aside from editing and writing for a number of journals and newspapers of little significance, James Mill was a devout defender of extending education to all social classes and a vehement supporter of freedom of the press. As Ryan notes, James Mill moved to London during a time when all the 'ingredients' for a new radicalism were being created by an upsurge in intellectual activity in Britain, following the war in America and influenced by the early stages of the French Revolution. Political and social power had begun to shift, creating a middle-class that was resentful of political exclusion and whose voice was becoming ever louder. It was out of this that the philosophical radicalism, lead largely by Bentham and the elder Mill, emerged.[22] Over the duration of eleven years after moving to London, Mill wrote his acclaimed *History of British India*, a book in which he spoke of the nature of Indian society and their domination by the British, and it was after the publication of this book that he gained employment in the Examiner's office at the East India Company, a position that his son was to later follow. Although the younger Mill often expressed reservations about the utilitarian philosophy of his father and Bentham, James Mill had a particular influence over his son with regard to his views towards British Imperialism and his devout belief in the importance of education as essential to individual and social development.[23]

Mill's tenure in the Examiners Office at the East India Company, which began in 1823 and ended when the company was dissolved following the Sepoy Rebellion in 1858, provides a useful context from which to study his views on the 'mission' of the East India company and the state of Indian society and, furthermore elucidates the consistency between his liberal principles and his support for colonial rule. In entering the Examiner's office at a young age as his father's unpaid assistant, J. S. Mill's early years in India House were probably a continuation of his father's special education that aimed to prepare him to inherit the tradition of 'Benthamite' utilitarianism to which his father subscribed, a tradition that John Stuart Mill

[21] Ryan, *J. S. Mill*, pp. 6-8

[22] Ibid. p. 7

[23] For his criticisms of Bentham see J. S. Mill, *Bentham*; *Coleridge* and in particular, *Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 10

was to later reject.[24] Like his father though, Mill was of the opinion that British control over Indian society was in the long-term interests of the Indian people. He too saw little value in Indian culture and agreed with the view that it was 'despotic', 'stagnant' 'backward' and 'barbaric'.[25] In the words of James Mill, "As the manners, institutions, and attainments of the Hindus, have been stationary for many ages; in beholding the Hindus of the present day, we are beholding the Hindus of many ages past; and are carried back, as it were, into the deepest recesses of antiquity."[26]

Colonial rule was thus not a moral concern for either of the Mill's in that both believed it was good and just because it advanced civilization and promoted the general welfare of the colonized population. John Stuart Mill constantly defended the role of the East India Company before Britain's Parliament and went to great lengths to describe the multitude of ways in which Indian society had benefitted from British rule, especially with regard to public services and the establishment of political and social institutions. In 1853, for example, he stated: "It must be said that the years which have since elapsed have been marked by a degree of activity in every description of public improvement, not only greater than that exhibited previously, but unsurpassed, it is believed, in any country in any age."[27]

This highlights Mill's belief that the mission of the East India Company was to help provide Indian society with the stimulus necessary for development and progress, without which they would remain a backward and stagnant race. Mill's views on colonialism reflected the age in which he lived, when few Europeans questioned the notion that their cultures were far superior to other contemporary cultures, that Western European society was at the forefront of development and civilization, and thus that it was their moral duty to spread their 'ways' to all peoples of the world.[28] Mill's admiration for European culture and justification for British

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[24] Lynn Zastoupil, "J. S. Mill and India," in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (Autumn, 1988), p. 34

[25] See Robert Kurfirst, "J. S. Mill on Oriental Despotism" in *Utilitas*, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 75

[26] James Mill, *The History of British India* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975), p. 248

[27] J. S. Mill, *Memorandum of the Improvements in the Administration of India During the last thirty Years*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 30, p. 93

[28] Don Habibi, "The Moral Dimensions of J. S. Mill's Colonialism," in *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Spring 1999), p. 125

paternalism, is highlighted by his claim that, "among the inhabitants of our earth, the European family of nations is the only one which has ever yet to show any capability of spontaneous improvement beyond a certain low-level".[29] Mill's claim that "...despotism is a legitimate mode of dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement..." offers further support for his colonialism and his acknowledgement of the superiority of European cultures as the most progressive forces to stimulate growth and development within stagnant, non-progressive societies. [30] Backward societies, according to Mill, had no right to non-interference as he did not believe that progression was a 'natural, historical process', but rather that 'backward' societies would remain in such a state unless there was paternalistic intervention by a more developed nation. Founded on his utilitarian justification, Mill claimed that in comparison to the chaos and despotism it replaced, British rule provided order, unification and a liberal challenge to the traditional repression which fuelled the stagnation of most 'backward' societies. This 'vision' is evident in the fact that Mill vehemently opposed a system of indirect rule where the "British propped up Indian princes as semi-autonomous allies and used them as bulwarks against possible threats from other princes or rebellious subjects", and believed that such a system was detrimental to the 'Imperial task'.[31] Indirect rule merely protected the atrocious behaviour of, what was considered by Mill, a 'barbaric' and 'backward' social system. Direct British rule, on the other hand, was the only appropriate method to fulfil the 'civilising mission' of colonial rule and therefore advocated the importance of good administration to bringing about social and political improvement.[32]

It is important to note that Mill condoned colonialism only insofar as it's 'end be the improvement' of the colonized, and that it was limited by the point in time where the subjected peoples become capable of ruling themselves.[33] In Mill's 'Minute on the Black

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[29] J. S. Mill, *De Tocqueville on Democracy in America*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 18, p. 197

[30] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 224

[31] Zastoupil, "Mill and India," p. 37

[32] Ibid. p. 38

[33] See Michael Levine, *Mill on Civilization and Barbarism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)

Act', he explicitly expresses the limits and boundaries of British Empire and the fact that British rule should never be to the detriment of the interests or rights of the natives. He plainly states that: "Natives of India need protection against the English, and that to afford them that protection is one of the first duties of the British government in India" He goes on to say: "It should be proclaimed that the English who resort to India or any foreign possession, to make their fortunes, are naturally inclined to despise the natives and seek to make themselves a privileged caste. That is a pretension that ought to be resisted; and it is because the company has always resisted it, that the English public of Calcutta are as a body, always hostile to the company's government." Most importantly, Mill emphasised that: "...our Empire in India...will not exist for a day after we shall lose the character of being more just and disinterested than the native rulers and of being united among ourselves"[34] Colonial rule and the 'mission' of the East India Company thus had a significant moral imperative for Mill which is inextricably linked to his ardent belief in progress and development, and which is easily identified in his 'liberal project' as a whole.

It is my argument that at the basis of John Stuart Mill's defence of colonialism and key to understanding his life's work in general, is his unwavering belief in the importance of human growth, development and progress. Although his support for colonial rule often seems at odds with his latitudinarian views on issues such as women's rights, the promotion of civil liberties and the protection of individual autonomy in the face of social tyranny, under closer examination it becomes evident that the fundamental liberal values he advocates throughout his political theory are foundational to his colonialism. From his utilitarianism, which forms the basis of his liberalism, to his comments on civilization and culture, the notion of 'progress' is the ligament which holds his philosophy together. This is highlighted in the dedication to *On Liberty* where he borrows from Wilhelm von Humboldt's *Spheres and Duties of Government*, and states that "...the Grand, leading principle, towards which every argument unfolded in these pages directly converges, is the absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest diversity".[35] The concept of 'progress' in Mill's writing, which includes terms such as development, cultivation, elevation of character and refinement,

[34] All three references come from: J. S. Mill, *Minute on the Black Act*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 30, p. 14-15

[35] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 215

thus "constitute[s] a moral force in Mill's worldview...helps define and justify his utilitarian value system...his understanding of happiness, liberty and individuality..." and "...elucidates the moral dimensions of his support for colonialism..."[36]

III. Mill's Colonialism in the Context of His Utilitarianism

Like traditional utilitarians, Mill believed that 'utility' or 'intrinsic value' is the foundation of morality and thus his primary principle of utility asserts that "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness", holding that the ultimate principle of human good is the experience of happiness or pleasure.[37] 'Right' or 'just' actions are therefore those which provide the most happiness for the greatest number of people. It is important to note that Mill was highly revisionist in his utilitarianism and subscribed to a hedonism that distinguished between higher and lower forms of pleasures based on quality.[38] Earlier utilitarian thinkers, such as Bentham and Mill's father, subscribed only to a quantitative hedonism, which Mill criticized for portraying human beings as "being capable of no pleasures except those of which swine are capable".[39] Whilst lower forms merely consist of sensations, pleasures of the intellect- such as sentiments of morality, feelings and imagination- appeal to a higher faculty only humans' possess. It is to these 'higher pleasures' that Mill's utilitarianism speaks. For Mill, utility and appeasement of the 'higher pleasures' was therefore the foundation of practical and moral reasoning, and forms the evaluative platform upon which morality is based. Drawing on this, Mill places much emphasis on the importance of 'self-developed agents' who, he believed, are the most likely to maximise utility, promote good in the world and lead satisfying lives. He defines self-developed agents as those who are in the position to attain maximal happiness and who have reached a level of perspective that is appropriate of evaluating which paths of life are

[36] Habibi, "Moral Dimensions," p. 125

[37] J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 10, p. 210

[38] For more on the 'Nature of the Good' and Mill's argument for 'Qualitative Hedonism' see Wendy Donner, "Mill's Utilitarianism," in John Skorupski, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Mill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 256-273

[39] Mill, *Utilitarianism*, p. 210

worth pursuing.[40] In other words, a 'self-developed agent' is a person who has developed the appropriate 'evaluative platform of morality' necessary to distinguish between 'right' and 'wrong' methods of action. The preference and choices of self-developed agents are pivotal to Mill's utilitarianism in that they are in the best position to indicate the values which promote the highest levels of happiness, making them 'both the judge and locus of value'.[41] Mill is extremely concerned with the notion of 'right action' in order to promote happiness and thus also with the provision of a social environment in which self-development is possible.

In line with his utilitarianism and qualitative hedonism, the level and nature of a society's development held significant moral implications for Mill. Progressive societies with mature, morally developed citizenries are in a position to benefit from a wide-range of civil liberties, whereas backward societies, with immature, stagnant citizenries are not, thus requiring paternalist intervention to provide the social management necessary to stimulate growth. In *System of Logic* Mill alludes to this in his science of 'ethology', which involved an empirical study of human nature and advocated an 'art of education' that encourages the tendencies within individual character that render the most utility if manifested by society as a whole.[42] His ethology relies heavily on his belief that human character is highly dependent on historical and social circumstance, and argues that ignorance of the "irresistible proofs" that show that differences in "individuals, races or sexes" would be produced by differences in circumstance, is the "chief hindrance" and "greatest stumbling block" to human improvement.[43] He goes on to say that because social environments are crucial to development, both individual and collective, and that different "states of society" lead to different levels of development, where needed, political and social environments must be coaxed into creating conditions optimal for progress and development. Education, for Mill, should thus include the 'formation of national or collective character as well as individual' and thus concern for the 'social feeling of mankind' becomes critical to the educational

[40] See Donner, "Mill's Utilitarianism," p. 274- 278

[41] Ibid. p. 274

[42] Mill, *A System of Logic: Ratiocinative and Inductive*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 8, pp. 869-870

[43] Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 270

process required for self-development.[44] Mill believed strongly in the power of 'collective will' and believed that if administered in a mature fashion, through responsible public institutions, it held the ability of creating a social environment conducive to progress. By examining the actions of a nation *en masse*, he claimed that one can make the best generalizations about the individuals composing it.[45] By examining Indian society and culture, Mill believed that the 'despotic' regimes of traditional Indian society did not cultivate a social environment which enabled self-development, therefore justifying paternal intervention. Mill's liberalism, which is essentially a utilitarian defence of liberty, offers further support for his colonialism and elucidates the importance he placed on self-development as essential to maximising utility within society.

Mill's primary focus in *On Liberty* was to protect individual liberty from social tyranny, and he was extremely aware of the power that collective opinion had over individual freedom. Mill realised that he lived during a time when the movement towards democracy was irreversible and, although he welcomed it on liberal and moral grounds, he was conscious of the danger that collective opinion has over individual expression and sought a liberalism to prevent such tyranny. For Mill, therefore, public institutions were to provide individuals with protection from illegitimate coercion and to create an environment conducive to individual expression and self-development.

> There needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling; against the tendency of society to impose, by means other than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them; to fetter the development and, if possible, prevent the formation of any individuality not in harmony with its ways, and compel all characters to fashion themselves upon the model of its own.[46]

In other words, public institutions should provide for a community of self-developed individuals and for an environment where 'collective character' is a manifestation of

[44] Mill, *System of Logic*, p. 869-870

[45] Ibid., p. 867

[46] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 220

maximum utility and this is only possible where protection from tyrannous 'collective opinion' is guaranteed. Mill's liberal project was thus to create an environment where the utility of society is maximised in line with the principle of liberty and create a society of self-developed individuals whose 'collective will' was to limit illegitimate coercion of individual liberty. The 'simple principle of liberty' upon which Mill's liberal project is based asserts that "the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection".[47]

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How then does one correlate Mill's 'simple principle' with his support for colonialism? Does it allow for a justified intervention of another person or country's liberty? The answer lays in the fact that coercion to prevent 'self-harm' or to prevent someone doing that which he does not desire through ignorance, in Mill's eyes, is not a true violation of their liberty. John Gray, commenting on Mill's liberalism, suggests that Mill warrants intervention in that he "conceives his principle as allowing the state and society to limit a man's liberty so as to protect him from the damaging consequences of his own ignorance or delusion".[48] Mill declares the following example to support justified intervention. "If either a public officer or anyone else saw a person attempting to cross a bridge which had been ascertained to be unsafe, and there was no time to warn him of his danger, they might seize him and turn him back, without any real infringement of his liberty, for liberty consists in doing what desires, and he does not desire to fall into the river."[49] In much the same way as Mill did not believe any person would desire to fall into the river, he also believed that no person would desire the consequences of living in societies which were detrimental to self-development. It could be argued, though, that a person about to fall into a river would be able to articulate his unwillingness to fall, yet native support to be ruled paternally by a colonial government could not be articulated in the same way thus making colonial intervention unjust. If, however, the person about to fall into the river was 'deluded' or ignorant of the dangers of falling into the river, then he may not be able to express a desire not to fall into the river and it is in the latter light, therefore, that Mill viewed Indian society and justified paternal intervention.

[47] Ibid. p. 223

[48] John Gray, *Mill On Liberty: A Defence* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 91

[49] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 294

Mill did not restrict his support of justified intervention to circumstances of ignorance, misinformation or delusion, but also to conditions from which one makes choices that are less than autonomous. Mill thus commits himself to a 'weak-form' of paternalism which allows intervention for a limited period of time, preventing agents from acting until such time that they are capable of autonomous decision-making and action.[50] Colonialism was thus justifiable according to Mill, in that territories, such as India, which had immature societies with despotic governments, were in a 'backward state of civilization' and were 'unsusceptible of being well-governed'.[51] In his essay *Civilization*, Mill makes a fundamental distinction between 'civilised' and 'savage' societies, claiming that a country is considered more civilised if, "...we think it more improved; more eminent in the best characteristics of Man and Society; farther advanced in the road to perfection; happier, nobler, wiser..."[52] In savage life, on the other hand (which is how he considered Indian society) "...there is little or no law, or administration of justice; no systematic employment of the collective strength of society, to protect individuals against injury from one another; every one trusts to his own strength or cunning, and where that fails, he is generally without resource."[53]

The people of India, and other 'backward' societies, were not 'autonomous decision-making units' in that the 'despotic' conditions under which they lived, prevented them from becoming self-developed agents, and their decision-making ability was thus clouded by ignorance, misinformation and delusion. The British considered paternal intervention or, what Ryan calls 'compulsory liberation' its moral duty, requiring them to bring 'civilization' to these parts of the world.[54] Mill's view on intervention did not imply that the British should 'tour the world looking for people to emancipate', but rather when faced with a situation necessary of action, they should not 'flinch from forcing liberal values on those they could

[50] Gray, *Mill On Liberty*, p. 92

[51] Mill, *The Spirit of Age*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 22, p. 289

[52] Mill, *Civilization*, *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 18, p. 119

[53] Ibid. p. 120

[54] Alan Ryan, "Mill in a Liberal Landscape," in John Skorupski, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Mill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 523

affect'.[55] Mill justified intervention as a means of development, it was a 'civilizing mission'. He believed that every moral question had a 'right answer' and because the British were a society of 'self-developed' persons, they were in the best position to know what moral values to pursue or course of 'right action' to follow to ensure maximal happiness. The colonized did not, and thus the British were in a position to enforce the 'right answer' upon the colonized peoples.

IV. Mill's Colonialism in the Context of the Liberal Tradition

Mill's attitude towards colonialism, when read from the context of his work as a whole, clearly stems from a moral imperative. Although when read from a contemporary standpoint Mill's support for colonialism sits rather uncomfortably with his image as a progressive libertarian who longed for the 'widest variety of human life and character' and who demanded toleration of differing opinions, when read from the historical context from which he wrote, his liberalism and colonialism appear less contradictory.[56] As Berlin notes, Mill was not a prophetic writer and he spoke little of the contours of the future.[57] He did not predict, for example, the cataclysmic events of the twentieth century and tended rather to extrapolate the tendencies of his own time. Given his support for colonialism, there is little doubt that he expected the liberal institutions of nineteenth century Britain to spread throughout the world.[58] He was acutely aware of the destructive forces at play within his own world and sought a philosophy that dealt directly with such problems. Although he was considered a radical in his day, from a contemporary perspective he has a reputation for being a progressive, informed social and political thinker and his principles, to some degree, have enlightened the modern liberalisms of theorists such as John Rawls and Robert Nozick.[59] The principles for which he fought such as civil liberties, women's rights, tolerance of diversity and the value of social equality, are strongly supported in the Western tradition of the late

[55] Ibid. pp. 524-525

[56] Isaiah Berlin, "John Stuart Mill in a Liberal Context," in Henry Hardy (ed.) *Liberty: Isaiah Berlin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 229

[57] Ibid. p. 227

[58] See John Gray, *Liberalisms: Essays in Political Philosophy* (London: Routeledge, 1989), p. 229

[59] See in particular, John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1972) and Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974)

twentieth century. On the contrary, however, his support and moral justification for colonial rule would not be considered as 'progressive' or 'enlightened' in the post-colonial era. Although it is anachronistic to apply contemporary political 'norms' or 'standards' to the philosophy of a nineteenth century political and social theorist, by interpreting his work from a modern perspective it is possible to gain the insights necessary to trace the trajectory of the Western 'liberal project' through the 'colonial lens' and help to better understand the changes that occurred from the time of Mill through to the period of decolonization.

Mill's liberal justification of British Imperialism forwarded an ethnocentric view on society and culture which implied that when dealing with 'backward' or 'barbarian' nations, his principles of freedom, justice and equality apply only in a paternalistic way. His 'liberal project' thus did not apply to what he deemed as the 'uncivilized' in the same way as it did to civilized societies, in that he believed that the benefits of liberty can only be enjoyed once a certain level of civilization has been reached. Mill's support for colonialism is consistent with the historical tradition of late-eighteenth and nineteenth century utilitarianism which accepted that the colonized peoples benefitted from Imperial intervention and who were often publically active in supporting the British Empire.[60] Like many of his contemporaries, Mill could not see beyond the value of European society and, although he advocated the "absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest diversity", this only applied to societies which, institutionally at least, fostered his 'simple principle of liberty'. European society, for Mill, thrived because it was 'scientifically orientated, culturally diverse and not rigidly established in custom'.[61]

Although there are grounds for arguing that Mill was culturally bigoted, it is difficult to say that he was a racist and that his colonialism was based on racial prejudice. Mill attacked the view that "...to regard all the marked distinctions of human character as innate, and in the main inedible, and to ignore the irresistible proofs that by far the greater part of those differences, whether between individuals, races, or sexes, are such as not only might but naturally would be produced by differences in circumstances..." He claimed that such a view

[60] See Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959)

[61] See Habibi, "Moral Dimensions," p. 138

"...is one of the chief hindrances to the rational treatment of social questions and one of the greatest stumbling blocks to human improvement."[62]

His condemnation of attributing differences in development to inherent racial differences is also highlighted in the well documented debate with his long-term and cherished friend Thomas Carlyle regarding "The Nigger Question". Published anonymously in 1849 in *Fraser's Magazine*, Carlyle took aim at the abolitionist campaign to end the practice of slavery in Britain's colonies, led predominantly by English Parliamentary spokesman, William Wilberforce.[63] Carlyle was of the view that blacks and the colonial natives in general, were inherently intellectually inferior to Europeans and were morally depraved to the level of mere beasts. This belief was also founded on the indictment that the 'negro' was inherently lazy.[64] Carlyle addressed the Negroes as

> ...servants to those that are born lords of you - servants to the whites, if they *are* (as what mortal can doubt that they are?) born wiser than you. That, you may depend on it, my obscure Black friends, is and was always the Law of the World, for you and for all men: To *be* servants, the more foolish of us to the more wise; and only sorrow, futility, and disappointment will betide both, till both in some approximate degree get to conform to the same. [65]

Mill, in his response to Carlyle's essay entitled *The Negro Question*, stated on the contrary that every difference among humans is not a result of inherent natural differences, but rather "to an infinitely greater variety of accidents and external influences."[66] He also stated that:

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[62] Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 270

[63] See William Baker, "William Wilberforce on the Idea of Negro Inferiority," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (July-September, 1970), pp. 433-440

[64] See Thomas Carlyle, "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question" in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country XL*, (December, 1849), pp. 670-679

[65] Ibid. p. 677

[66] J. S. Mill, "The Negro Question," in *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country XLI*, (January 1950), p. 29

> Of all the vulgar modes of escaping from the consideration of the effect of social and moral influences on the human mind, the most vulgar is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences. What race would not be indolent and insouciant when things are so arranged, that they derive no advantage from forethought or exertion?[67]

It becomes apparent, therefore, that Mill's colonialism was based on a moral imperative to 'civilise' the backward nations upon which the British Empire stumbled. Although not excuse his ethnocentrism, when read in such a light, the congruencies between his liberal and utilitarian principles, and his moral justification for colonial rule are elucidated. Unlike many of his contemporaries, such as Carlyle, Mill saw all peoples of the earth as inherently similar but that due to a 'variety of accidents and external influences', during his lifetime European culture was superior to all other cultures. He explicitly renounces that whites were "born ever so superior in intelligence to the blacks, and competent by nature to instruct and advise them", but rather because "spontaneous improvement, beyond a very low grade- improvement by internal development, without the aid from other individuals or peoples- is one of the rarest phenomena in history", paternal intervention to stimulate growth was morally justifiable.[68]

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The relationship between Mill's liberalism and colonialism aimed to provide a moral justification for colonial rule based on a set of utilitarian principles. In other words, Mill sought to morally defend colonialism upon the basis of his world-view, which, although at times appears to abandon the individualist tradition and comes uncomfortably close to supporting interventionist liberalism that was to succeed him, it maintains, at its core, the threads of classical liberalism. This is contrary to British Idealists who were to attack the utilitarian philosophy of Mill later in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and whose liberalism merely forwarded an explanation on how best to achieve the 'Imperial task'. It has to be noted, however, that although Mill placed individual liberty as the highest of all values and strongly supported diversity of character, especially when choosing one's own goals, the social tensions brewing within British society towards the latter part of his life led him to

[67] J. S. Mill, *Principles of Political Economy*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 2, p. 319

[68] Mill, "The Negro Question," p. 29

acknowledge the need for 'socialist experimentation'. It was these changes or fluctuations in his convictions which had the most significant impact on the school of thinkers that were to follow him, and change the trajectory of the liberal tradition moving into the twentieth century.

CHAPTER 2:

THE BRITISH IDEALISTS, COLONIALISM AND A DEPARTURE FROM THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

We are little influenced by the idea of the universal brotherhood of men, of mankind as forming one society with a common good, of which the conception may determine the action of its members... Yet [the common good] is the proper correlative of the admission of a right to a free life, [a right] belonging to man in virtue simply of human nature.[69]

I. From Mill to the British Idealists: A Revision of the Liberal Tradition

Towards the end of Mill's prolific career as a political thinker and writer, his views towards the state and its role within society began to change. Although he always remained steadfast in his belief in the superiority of individual liberty, his *Chapters on Socialism* (1879) reflect a growing concern with regard to the social tensions developing within British society, rooted in the effects of unregulated capitalism. Mill thus saw the inevitability of the need for revision within political philosophy. Without altogether abandoning the liberalism he advocated in *On Liberty*, his attitude towards trade unions, nationalism and socialist experimentation highlight a significant rupture in the fabric of liberal political thought in the nineteenth century.[70] In the introduction to *Chapters on Socialism*, speaking on the growing voice of the working class and the effect this would have on political thought, Mill stated: "The political aims will themselves be determined by definite political doctrines; for politics are now scientifically studied from the point of view of the working class, and the opinions conceived in the special interest of those classes are organised into systems and creeds which lay claim to a place on the platform of political philosophy, by the same right as the systems elaborated by previous thinkers."[71] Mill's departure from the classical tradition was thus

[69] T. H. Green, *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, in P. Harris and J. Morrow eds, *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.155

[70] For an interesting analysis of the change in trajectory of the liberal tradition see John Gray, *Liberalism*, (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986), esp. Chapter 4, 'The Liberal Era'.

[71] J. S. Mill, *Chapters on Socialism*, in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), vol. 5, p. 707

crucial to the development of liberalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century. As A. V. Dicey observed:

> ...changes or fluctuations in Mill's convictions, bearing as they do in many points upon legislative opinion, are at once the sign, and were in England, to a great extent, the cause, of the transition from...individualism...to...collectivism. His teaching specially affected the men who were just entering public life towards 1870. It prepared them at any rate to accept, if not to welcome, the collection which from that time onwards has gained increasing strength.[72]

By the late 1870's and early 1880's the revisionist liberalism initiated by Mill, was taken up by a group of philosophers in Britain who began to supplant Mill's 'imperfect' classical model with ideas inspired by the philosophy of Aristotle, Kant and, above all, Hegel. The British Idealists, under the influence of Edward Caird at Glasgow University and, more particularly Thomas Hill Green at Oxford, sought a philosophy to 'arrest the development of scientific materialism' promoted by the empirical tradition, by fundamentally changing the conception of the role of the state within the liberal tradition.[73] By providing a justification for state intervention within the spheres of economic life and welfare, and by arguing that the role of the state was not only to secure material welfare, but to also provide a sense of community in which the 'good life' of all citizens could be articulated, the Idealists provided a thorough re-interpretation of the fundamental concepts of political thought. By re-interpreting concepts such as the individual, community, rights, citizenship, liberties and, in turn, human nature, the Idealists aimed to provide a philosophy of greater complexity than that of the classical liberals and thus changed the way in which politics was conceived within the liberal tradition.[74]

The impact of this change in the trajectory of liberal thought in Britain was not only confined to the lecture halls and journals of British academia, but also had a wider impact on practical

[72] A. V. Dicey, Lectures on the Relation between Law and Public Opinion in England in the Nineteenth Century, 1905, p. 432, as quoted in Gray, *Liberalism*, p. 30

[73] See John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 35-72

[74] See Andrew Vincent and Raymond Plant, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship: The Life and Thought of the British Idealists* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 2-3

politics by providing the foundation to institutional change and social reform. As Kenneth Dyson argues in his book *The State Tradition in Western Europe*: "During the period from about 1880 to about 1910 philosophical Idealism enjoyed considerable success within technical philosophy...and had an influence on political leaders like Herbert Asquith, R. B. Haldane and Alfred Milner, social reformers like William Beveridge and Arnold Toynbee, and public servants many of whom were educated in Oxford liberalism..."[75] Central to the thesis of Idealist thought was the relationship between intellectual and practical politics, and thus by examining the fundamental philosophical principles of the Idealist tradition and how they formed the basis of a 'practical creed,' an analysis of the change in the liberal attitude towards the subject colonial rule becomes possible. It is first important, however, to make a brief decent into the philosophy of T. H. Green, who was the most influential of the early Idealists in bringing Idealism to popular audience, and then to look at the work of Bernard Bosanquet and J. H. Muirhead, both of whom were students of Green, and examine their views on the relationship between liberalism and colonialism.

II. Thomas Hill Green and His Metaphysical Theory of Politics

It is widely acknowledged that Thomas Hill Green was the most influential of the British Idealists and his philosophy set the foundation upon which the Idealist tradition was built. R. G. Collingwood, in his *Autobiography*, stated that: "The school of Green sent out into public life a stream of ex-pupils who carried with them the conviction that philosophy, and in particular the philosophy they had learned at Oxford, was an important thing and that their vocation was to put it into practice...Through this effect on the mind of its pupils, the philosophy of Green's school might be found, from about 1880 to about 1910, penetrating and fertilizing every part of the national life."[76] Whilst predominantly a teacher, Green was also an active social reformer and, both as a student and in later life, was a member of a number of radical political societies. Although he never a left behind a fully-worked out statement of both his political and metaphysical views, due largely to his untimely death from blood poisoning at the age of 45, by looking at his work as a whole (of which much was published posthumously) it is possible to gain a systematic understanding of his philosophy.

[75] Kenneth Dyson, *The State Tradition in Western Europe* (Oxford: Robertson, 1980), p. 191

[76] R. G. Collingwood, *Autobiography*, quoted in, Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, p. 56

The importance of Green's writing, in the context of analysing the trajectory of the liberal tradition in relation to colonialism, is rooted in the Monism to which he subscribes and which is central to all Idealist thought. Writing against the empiricism re-stated by Mill, Green set out to extinguish the belief that reality is something given to us by experience, that facts are objective. He argued against the idea that 'reality' is independent of consciousness and claimed that "[t]he terms 'real' and 'objective,' then, have no meaning except for a consciousness which presents its experiences to itself as determined by relations, and at the same time conceives a single and unalterable order of relations determining them..."[77] In other words, reality lies in relations, remove relations and the objects of experience become unintelligible. Reality, according to Green, is thus created by the mind and sustained by thought. How then, one may argue, is the world as we experience it objective? How do we distinguish between what is real and what is imaginary? Green answers these questions by moving from the individual mind to the eternal consciousness.

Green defines the eternal consciousness as "freedom in the conscious union with God, or harmony with the true law of one's being ... freedom in devotion to self-imposed duties."[78] In knowing, individuals slowly become aware of what has always existed as an object of the eternal consciousness and thus 'reality' seems objective because it is an object of the eternal consciousness and not the individual mind.[79] As individuals become conscious of what the eternal consciousness has always known, they too become a part of the eternal consciousness, or at least a vehicle for it. In his *Prolegomena to Ethics* Green writes, "...in the growth of our experience, in the process of our learning to know the world, an animal organism which has its history in time, gradually becomes the vehicle of an eternally complete consciousness."[80] Green continues by stating that the eternal consciousness is the manifestation of God within society, the growing unity of man's will and God's will, and that the ultimate ideal or reality of God is always present. It is because of the limits of the human mind, Green argues, which

[77] Thomas Hill Green and A. C. Bradley ed., *Prolegomena to Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 17

[78] Thomas Hill Green, "Different Senses of 'Freedom' as Applied to Will and the Moral Progress of Man," in Paul Harris and John Morrow eds., *T.H. Green: Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation, and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

[79] See Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy*, pp. 58-59

[80] Green, *Prolegomena*, p. 77

prevents individuals from ever fully realizing the eternal consciousness and therefore the world appears to be objective. Society, according to Green, is "always keeping before man in various guises, according to the degree of his development, an (unrealised) ideal of a best which is his God, and giving divine authority to the customs and laws by which some likeness of this ideal is wrought into the actuality of life."[81] The importance of Green's argument regarding the eternal consciousness lies in how it develops through the minds of individuals into the political institutions of society.

According to Green, morality is found in the reproduction of the eternal consciousness by the individual mind. In choosing to pursue certain ends in order to realize the eternal consciousness and in transforming natural instincts or impulses to serve rationally conceived purposes, Green argues that one acts in accordance with one's 'real' self or his self-conscious spiritual self. An end, posed for our self by our rational faculties, according to Green, is always good. "The motive in every imputable act for which the agent is conscious on reflection that he is answerable is a desire for personal good in some form or other."[82] Moral activity is thus the pursuit of a self-set ideal to which we aspire, which, as mentioned, is the manifestation of the spiritual principle seeking to reconcile the 'natural' and the 'ideal,' the current self and the possible self.[83] "By a moral ideal we mean some type of man or character or personal activity, considered as an end in itself."[84] Morality, in this sense however, is a matter of constant endeavour and individuals never have the knowledge of its actual realization.[85] Freedom, for Green, thus can only exist in the 'positive' sense in that it refers to the actualization of goals by transforming instincts into rationally thought out objectives and is thus closely related to self-realization or the realization of one's 'real' self. With reference to freedom Green stated: "We shall probably all agree that freedom, rightly understood, is the greatest of blessings; that its attainment is the true end of all our efforts as citizens." He went

[81] Thomas Hill Green, "Faith," in R. L. Nettleship ed., *Works of T. H. Green Volume: III* (London: Longmans Green, 1885–8), pp. 269-270

[82] Green, *Prolegomena*, p. 96

[83] See Andrew Vincent and Raymond Plant, *Philosophy, Politics and Idealism: The Life and Thought of the British Idealists* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), pp. 20-21

[84] Green, *Prolegomena*, p. 205

[85] Ibid. p. 206

on to say that, "when we speak of freedom as something to be so highly prized, we mean a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying, and that, too, something that we do or enjoy in common with others...That end is what I call freedom in the positive sense: in other words, the liberation of powers of all men equally for contributions to the common good."[86] Freedom in the 'positive' sense, freedom as the ability to realize one's ideal self and at the same time becoming a vehicle of the eternal consciousness, is crucial to Green's political philosophy and the philosophy of those Idealists who followed him.

The moral ideal, according to Green, is the object of free endeavour and although this is difficult to expand upon, given that self-realization is never attained, he does offer the form that self-realization takes. The substance of this, however, is dependent on the historical context in which persons find themselves. Crucial to Green's thought is the metaphysical view he held that all people within a society, regardless of social circumstance, share a 'common good' and thus, that community life links people into a single harmonious whole. The 'common good', Green continued, shared by all members of society manifests itself through social and political reforms. His view rests on the assumption made by Hegel, that mutual recognition is crucial to one's consciousness of self. Man, by nature, according to Green, is a social being and requires a society in which human beings are recognized as ends in themselves. Self-realization is thus a social activity: "...individual men and...the society which is at once established by them and makes them what they are."[87] The ideals which one pursues, however, are derived from the context of society at a given time, and he therefore argues that self-realization is restricted by one's place and function within society. [88] He states: "Human society presupposes persons in capacity- subjects capable each of conceiving himself and the bettering of his life as an end to himself- but it is only in the intercourse of men each recognized by each as an end not merely a means and each as having reciprocal claims that the capacity is actualized and we really live as persons."[89]

[86]T. H. Green, "Liberal Legislation and the Freedom of Contract" in R. L. Nettleship ed., *Works of T. H. Green Volume: III* (London: Longmans Green, 1885–8)

[87] Green, *Prolegomena*, p. 114

[88] See Vincent and Plant, *Philosophy, Politics and Citizenship*, pp. 21-23

[89] Green, *Prolegomena*, p. 192

Green argues that society and communal life are the realms in which characters develop, and such environments are only possible when individuals are prepared to accept others as persons and treat them as ends in themselves. In doing so, beneath all the social tensions and disputes, lies the 'common good', the 'mutual recognition of personality' integral to personal growth. The true good, according to Green is thus, "the perfection of human character-a perfection of individuals which is also that of society, and of society which is also that of individuals."[90] History reveals, according to Green, the breaking down of barriers to mutual recognition which enables people to pursue their own ends. Like Hegel, Green therefore believes that history represents the gradual development of freedom within society. In contrast to the thought of Mill, Green's metaphysical theory of the state is founded on his Monism, belief in the eternal consciousness and his view that morality and realization of the 'common good' is made possible through state reforms. Unlike Mill's empirical view of the state which claimed that the role of the moral state was to provide the conditions for individual self-development through education, Green believed that morality was something manifested within society that had to be realized through the realization of the eternal consciousness and, hence, the common good.

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The metaphysical theory of the state offered by Green is the crucial foundation upon which one can make an analysis regarding the relationship between Idealist thought and colonial rule. The importance of historical development and the role of the state in achieving the 'common good' are essential in understanding the views Idealists held regarding international relations. Because history represents the unfolding of reason and development of freedom within the world, international relations, from the Idealists perspective, had to be accounted for. Colonialism, by the turn of the century, was a fact of life that required explanation and thus, by using Green's philosophy as the philosophical basis of the Idealist tradition, one can draw interesting insights from the Idealist justification for colonial intervention. By looking at the work of Bernard Bosanquet and J. H. Muirhead, both of whom were students of Green and whose own philosophies are greatly indebted to his work, one is able to analyze the attitude of the Idealist tradition towards colonialism which, in turn, reflects the change in trajectory of the liberal tradition itself.

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[90] Ibid. p. 266

III. Bosanquet and Muirhead: Idealism, the State and Colonial Rule

The question of colonialism brings to attention the importance of Bosanquet's formulation of the General Will in legitimising the state and determining what role it should play within society. Furthermore, it highlights how tradition and historical context affect the external affairs of the state. The work of Bernard Bosanquet, which is often claimed to be an elaboration and augmentation of the ideas of Green, under whom he studied, arguably provides the clearest departure from the classical tradition and thus his formulation of the General Will and views on the state and international relations, provides a useful foundation on which to establish the trajectory of the Idealist's liberalism and their attitude towards colonial rule.

Although his theory of the General Will was heavily criticised by those who found Hegelian political thought 'morally reprehensible' and who argued that his philosophy was undemocratic and authoritarian, once one acknowledges his indebtedness to Green, it becomes evident that his ideas should be interpreted along the same lines and that the General Will is just another formulation of standard Idealist principles. His political philosophy was the dominant voice representing the Idealist tradition at the turn of the century thus making study of his arguments crucial to understanding the wider Idealist movement. In his obituary in the *Times* on the 10th February, 1923, Bosanquet was said to have been "the central figure of British philosophy for an entire generation" and Green described him as "the most gifted man of his generation." Bosanquet's philosophy and in particular his theory of the state, according to R. F. Hoernlé, was "instinct with the best temper of his age" and was the "philosophical interpretation of the implications of public-spirited citizenship" which was the popular mindset of the people during that time. In 1890 Bosanquet wrote:

> We look forward to a society organized in convenient districts, in which men and women, pursuing their different callings, will live together with care for one another, and with in all essentials the same education, the same enjoyments, the same capacities...The only thing I dread in the system known as Socialism is the cutting off individual initiative outside certain duties specified by rule...What is wanted is the habituation of the English citizen to his rights and duties, by training in organization, in administration, in what I may call neighbourly public spirit...Such as the citizen is, such the society will

be; and the true union of social and individual reform lies in the moulding of the individual mind to the public purpose.[91]

It is his theory of the state and formulation of the General Will which is of most relevance to the subject of colonialism. It sought to answer the question, 'how can man live in an organised society and obey its laws and yet still be free, that is, obey his own will and not the will others?' Put simply, the answer is revealed in three stages: (1) Freedom lies in conformity to our real will; (2) our real will is identical to the General Will; and (3) the General Will is embodied in the state.[92] The idea of the General Will thus is a development of Green's idea of the common good. Bosanquet defines the General Will as the "ineradicable impulse of an intelligent being to a good extending beyond itself" where this 'good' refers to "the existence and the perfection of human personality." Hoernlé, defending Bosanquet's theory of the state claims that his concept of the General Will cannot be equated with the 'actual will' of the people, nor is it identical with the consent to be governed by the acts of government. Rather, "...it is found only by pushing behind the surface-play of political forces, behind the details of constitutional machinery. It is the spirit of community, expressing itself through its laws and institutions, its customs and traditions, its industry and commerce, its national art and science, its philosophy and religion. With this spirit the individual learns, in his own unique way, to identify himself; he grows into one of the organs through which it lives on and develops itself."[93] Through the correct organization and administration of political affairs, the General Will becomes realized within society.

In explaining the relationship between the individual and the state, Bosanquet argues that the General Will is the only way of explaining how a free man can 'put up with compulsion and even welcome it'. He claims that any condition of outward authority, whether it be a city-state, nation-state or world-state, is only legitimate if it is an expression of the General Will,

[91] Bosanquet, "Essays and Addresses," in Hoernlè, "Bernard Bosanquet's Philosophy of the State," pp. 612-613

[92] See Stefan Collini, "Hobhouse, Bosanquet and the State: Philosophical Idealism and Political Argument in England 1880-1918," *Past and Present*, Vol. 72 (August, 1976), p. 98

[93] Hoernlè, "Bernard Bosanquet's Philosophy of the State," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 34 (1919) pp. 629-630

and the General Will must represent a 'communal mind'.[94] Bosanquet defines the state as "the power which, as the organ of a community, has the function of maintaining the external conditions necessary to the best life," where the 'conditions' are "claims recognised by the will of a community as the...highest obtainable fulfilment of the capacities for the best life possessed by its members."[95] Put simply, the state is the 'actuality of concrete freedom'. For Bosanquet, freedom cannot exist, in any sense, in a society where public irrationality stifles the normal development of one's will in ordinary social enterprises and activities.[96] Bosanquet characterized the embodiment of the General Will in the state as follows:

> The State, as thus conceived, is not merely the political fabric...It includes the entire hierarchy of institutions by which life is determined...It includes all of them, not as the mere collection of the growths of the country, but as the structure which gives life and meaning to the political whole...It follows that the state, in this sense, is, above all things, not a number of persons, but a working conception of life.[97]

Although not addressing the subject of colonialism directly, in his paper *The Function of the State in Promoting the Unity of Mankind*, Bosanquet frames the issue of state legitimacy and function in a way which illuminates the general position the Idealist's held towards colonial rule. He claims that when approaching any problem regarding the state, it needs to be answered by the question of how self-government is possible. He goes on to say that "anything which interferes with the possibility of self-government destroys altogether the conditions of true government." Presupposing Green's formulation of the Common Good, Bosanquet argues that self-government, and therefore true-government, draw on the concept of the General Will which exists in "an actual community, of such a nature as to share an identical mind and feeling."[98] In essence, for Bosanquet, in line with the Idealist tradition in general, the state is the sustainer of morality within society. Although, in accordance with Green, Bosanquet argues that each individual acts depending with their position in society, it

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[94] Bernard Bosanquet, "The Function of the State in Promoting the Unity of Mankind," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series*, Vol. 17 (1916-1917), p. 29

[95] Ibid. p. 29

[96] See Collini, "Hobhouse and Bosanquet," p. 104

[97] Bosanquet, *The Philosophical Theory of the State* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1951), p. 140

[98] Bosanquet, "Function of the State," pp. 28-29

is the context of society that provides them with ideals that they should pursue and thus, the state embodies the values of its citizens and is the sustainer of the moral world.

Bosanquet's position was to express a liberalism which justified state action only if it was an expression of the General Will. Individual liberty, as with Green, is only intelligible from the positive conception where the good of the individual and the good of society are indistinguishable; 'it realizes itself in me, and I in it'.[99] This implies that with regard to colonialism and paternal rule, an Imperial government would only be legitimate if it served in the best interests of the colonized people, which would require a conception of the General Will. What becomes apparent is a distinct shift in the focus of the imperial task stemming from a change in what the 'best interests' of the colonized people were. Whilst for the classical tradition this implied paternal rule until such time as the colonial people were capable of operating and governing a state where the institutions were founded upon the individualist principle of liberty, for the Idealists to serve in the 'best interests' of the colonized was to provide them with the education necessary to achieve a communal coherence and possess a General Will. The question regarding colonial rule therefore rests on the concept of the General Will and, more specifically, it is answered by making possible for the colonized people self-government, which is true-government and which requires the expression of the 'communal mind'. Furthermore, because the state is the ultimate expression and sustainer of moral communities, with regard to colonial rule, the question over whether states have a responsibility to a wider-community and other states is integral.

As mentioned earlier, colonial rule was something that needed to be explained by Idealist philosophy from a historical perspective. The fact that it existed and would simply 'go-away' required more than outright condemnation for its apparent failures. The problem that Bosanquet saw when dealing with the issue of international relations, and which is of critical importance to understanding the Idealist's view of colonialism, was that at the time he was writing, he saw no 'organism of humanity'. For such an organism to exist, he argued, "consciousness of connection is necessary" and went on to ask whether the "multitude of

[99] See David Boucher, "British Idealism, the State, and International Relations," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (October, 1994), p. 674

humanity possesses any connected communal consciousness whatever?" He answered this question by claiming that other than the communities which speak through the state, no wider community or moral conscious exists, and stated quite plainly that "neither the main values which govern our aspirations to the best life, nor valuation of them, are possessions common to mankind." [100] Any form of state-like association wider than this, according to Bosanquet, is bound to fail for lack of common experience. This implies that the Imperial task could not be based on imposing upon the colonized people a conception of the 'best-life' in that knowledge of the 'best-life' would require a 'common conscience' between colonizer and colonized. Government in the best interests of the natives was thus not a sufficient justification for colonialism, but rather providing the colonized with the means to achieve an understanding of what the 'best-life' was; to provide them with the ability to possess a General Will. It was believed among the Idealists that the colonized peoples of backward nations were not coherent communities sufficiently civilised so as to possess a General Will, and thus to provide such nations with the coherence of community necessary to make self-government possible, fell to the responsibility of Empire. This, from the Idealist's perspective, was the task of Imperialism.

J. H. Muirhead, in his paper, *What Imperialism Means*, provided an account of the Imperial task which follows closely from the ideas of Bosanquet. By drawing on the history of Empire, Muirhead claimed that to have a true understanding of what the Imperial task entailed, which is to understand why the colonial project for the Idealists was perceived differently from the interpretation of Mill and the classical tradition, required one to understand the phases through which the Empire had passed. There was a long period, Muirhead argued, that the British Empire, beset in utilitarian ideals, did nothing for their colonial subjects and the colonial ideal was fuelled by treachery and greed. In 1783, for example, Edmund Burke, commenting on the failure of the Empire in India said that, "England has erected no churches, no hospitals, has built no bridges, made no roads, cut no navigations, dug out no reservoirs. Should we be driven out this day nothing would remain to tell that it had been possessed by anything better than the ourang-outang or the tiger."[101]

[100] Bosanquet, "Function of the State," p. 47

[101] Edmund Burke, "Speech on Fox's East India Bill, December 1, 1783," in, *Works*, Volume III (London, Oxford University Press, 1915), p. 79

Henry Jones also deplored the earlier forms of Imperialism and stated forcefully that, "It was not by converting the heathen that we acquired their lands, nor for the sake of the "ends of civilization" that we drove the savages out of their hunting-grounds. We may say, with much truth, that our conquests have followed our trade, and what we now possess has come "in the way of business.""[102] The following generation however, lead predominantly by Mill, offered a wider interpretation of the colonial ideal and, along with others of the classical tradition, believed that the true 'spirit of colonialism' was the spread of liberty, and that through the 'spirit of industry, organization and civilization' the liberties, freedoms and duties owed among civilized nations, would be owed to all nations. The British Empire was thus considered the 'hope of mankind'. The ambitions and ideals this generation held regarding the colonial project are most eloquently encapsulated in the writings of Thomas Carlyle.

> This poor nation, painfully dark about said tasks and the way of doing them, means to keep its colonies, nevertheless, as things which somehow or other must have a value, were it better seen into. They are portions of the general earth where the children of Britain now dwell; where the Gods have so far sanctioned our endeavour as to say that they have a right to dwell. England will not readily admit that her own children are worth nothing but to be flung out of doors? England, looking on her Colonies, can say 'Here are land and seas, spice-lands, corn-lands, timber-lands, overarched by Zodiacs and stars, clasped by many sounding seas; Nations and their Sciences and Heroisms. Unspeakable deliverance and new destiny of thousandfold expanded manfulness for all men dawns out of the future here, to me has fallen the godlike task of initiative all that: of me and of my Colonies, the abstruse future asks: Are you wise enough for so sublime a destiny? Are you too foolish?[103]

The 'spirit of Empire' the Idealists inherited from the classical generation and which required explanation, Muirhead argued, was in fact a 'lying spirit' whose guidance was foolishly followed by the exponents of the classical tradition. Although he conceded that the British Empire had begun to strengthen its social and political connections with its colonial subjects, and that the 'spirit of industry, organization and civilization' may have proved that the colonies of Britain could be held together, he argued that whilst this may make colonialism comprehensible, it does not justify it. He claimed to the contrary that, "Imperialism...has been begotten in greed and treachery, and in endless unrecorded slaughter. It has produced...an

[102] Henry Jones, "Why We Are Fighting," *Hibbert Journal*, Vol. 18 (1914-1915), p.56

[103] Thomas Carlyle, "Latter Day Pamphlets," in Muirhead, "What Imperialism Means," p. 243

endless progeny of similar horrors" and it has been opposed by "not only the supporters of pinchbeck utilitarianism, but the greatest men of the century." He claimed that fulfilling the Imperial task as conceived by the classical tradition, "only plunges us deeper in the crimes of the past; distracts attention from much needed home reforms, and presses on the masses of the people with an ever-growing burden of taxation." He thus concluded that the British "had no right to undertake [the duty of colonialism]" and that they had "no means of performing it". [104] Critically however, Muirhead argued that to repudiate the responsibilities of colonialism "would be a crime outweighing all we have committed in creating it," and thus the question that the Idealist's needed to answer was not whether they were "right in undertaking all it involves, but how best [they] shall perform it."[105]

In order to fulfil the requirements of this task one needed an acute understanding of the nature of the Empire. Muirhead claimed that the first step towards successfully acknowledging the responsibilities of colonialism was to acknowledge that the British Empire consisted of two distinct elements which posed equally distinct problems. On the one hand, the problem of Empire was mainly political and concerned the government of 'a few million Europeans in accordance with European traditions', such as in Canada and Australia. Here the task of Empire was to discover a system of government which, "while extending the Anglo-Saxon form of liberty, [kept] the members of the Empire in organic connection with one-another." This is the same problem that Jones was addressing in his lecture tour of Australia when he stated that,

> Reluctantly, but surely the whole world is becoming one mart. The ebb and flow of commercial and industrial prosperity travel round the world, and they creep into the most quiet creek and remote inlet. All the civilized, or productive, peoples of the world have one economic destiny...That these deep economic changes must bring others in their trains is obvious. Interchange of commodities and identity of economic destiny bring interchanges of another kind...Social and political impulses travel from state to state, and nations inspire one another to good ends and to bad. In short, changed outward circumstances compel reflexion; the new world demands a new response.[106]

[104] All above quotes: Muirhead, "What Imperialism Means," p. 245

[105] Ibid. p. 246

[106] Henry Jones, *Idealism as a Practical Creed* (Glasgow: James Maclehouse and Sons, 1905), p. 211

Formulating this 'response', Muirhead argued, was a distinctly different task from the more poignant and ambiguous task rooted in the other element of Empire and which required "the reconstruction of the moral, industrial and political ideas of four or five hundred million souls of every race and religion and at every stage of development except our own." [107] Such a reconstruction would be necessary to make coherent the moral, industrial and political ideas within these societies so as to provide them with the ability to recognise a General Will, and this was, therefore, predominantly a social and educational task.

The problem that Muirhead was confronting with regard to the 'reconstruction' of native ideals was that whilst there should be no hesitation in spreading the European idea which claimed that justice is the basis of the moral and science of the material well-being of all people and civilizations, to make European ideas the basis of all that is taught raises serious doubts about the effectiveness of the colonial project. He claimed that studies of native life showed that whilst the native people possessed the human capacity necessary to develop, the efforts employed by the Imperial government to initiate such development had altogether failed. The reason for Britain's failure, argued Muirhead, was that "in setting about the education of these people we have taken no trouble to understand the people we are educating. We have not yet taken to heart and applied abroad what we have known for the last half-century at home, that there can be no true education where the ideas we aim at imparting stand in no organic connection with the ideas already there." The education that the British had thus far imparted, Muirhead continued, consisted of "nothing more than a thin veneer of European ideas sufficient to destroy the beliefs and sentiments that gave the mind a hold on the realities of life, but wholly insufficient to provide it with anything that can take their place." [108] This was the reason why native societies remained incoherent, unable to possess a General Will and ill-equipped for self-government. Freedom and the ability of self-government were not gifts that the colonial government could endow upon the colonized. The idea of 'compulsory liberation' where the ideal of liberty was to be forced upon backward nations was not sufficient or appropriate to raise the natives to the level where self-government would be possible in that it did not encapsulate the existence of a 'communal

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[107] Ibid. 246-247

[108] Muirhead, "What Imperialism Means," in David Boucher, ed, *The British Idealists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) p. 250

mind' among the colonized people. The ultimate aim, therefore, had to be the education of the native peoples to a level where self-government was possible, and this would entail encouraging the development of the best native traditions and customs.[109] The moral principle employed was thus rather one of maternalism and, to use David Boucher's analogy, to guide a nation to the age of reason "at which point it could untie itself from its mother's apron strings'.[110] As Bosanquet argued, beyond the state, no wider community had yet to show an expression of 'communal mind' and thus it was imperative to the success of the 'Imperial task' to provide a system of education within colonized societies that was rooted in the customs and traditions already there. Muirhead stated quite plainly on the failure of imperialism: "The mistake, of course, is that in setting about the education of these people, we have taken no trouble to understand the people we are educating. We have not yet taken to heart and applied abroad what we have known for the last century at home, that there can be no true education where the ideas we aim oat imparting stand in no organic connection with the ideas already there."[111]

In essence, what Muirhead alluded to was that the history of Empire and the nature of imperial rule in the past had failed to fulfil the task of 'civilization' primarily because of what they perceived the Imperial task to be. For the Idealists, to impart upon 'lower races' the Anglo-Saxon principle of liberty, to construct a state framework that would foster a concept of liberty that aimed, above all, to protect individual liberty, without any recognition of the customs and traditions of the colonized people, would inevitably fail. Although the responsibilities of the Empire were not borne out of the principles of the Idealist tradition, their task was to accept these responsibilities and to use their entire moral and philosophical knowledge, not only to fulfil the task, but to also redefine what the task was in order to ensure it success. The imperial task was not, therefore, to ensure the progress of backward nations by putting them on the correct path towards self-government, as conceived by the classical liberal tradition, but rather to provide such societies with the level of education necessary appropriate to possess a 'communal mind' so that self-government implies choosing one's own path as an expression of the General Will. This, in many ways, shows a distinct shift

[109] See Boucher, "British Idealism, the State, and International Relations," pp. 682-683

[110] Ibid. p. 683

[111] Muirhead, "What Imperialism Means," p. 250

away from the cultural bigotry expressed by Mill and his contemporaries and thus represented a change in the impetus behind the Imperial task from that of a definite 'moral imperative' to that of something which merely required explanation and a duty to be fulfilled.

CHAPTER 3:

ISAIAH BERLIN'S LIBERALISM IN THE POST-COLONIAL GLOBAL ORDER

...there has, perhaps, been no time in modern history when so large a number of human beings, in both the East and West, have had their notions and indeed their lives, so deeply altered, and in some cases violently upset, by fanatically held social and political doctrines.[112]

I. The Change in Trajectory of Western Political Thought after World War II

Since the 15th century, the West used its moral prescriptions and resources to support its global domination. The 'ethical burden' of Western society, as expressed by both Mill and the British Idealists, was viewed largely in paternalistic terms, where 'backward' or 'savage' societies who had not yet reached the level of civilization necessary to enjoy the civil liberties of Western societies, required justified despotic intervention until such time as they were capable of responsible self-government. Recall Mill's famous claim that: "Despotism is a legitimate mode of dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement."[113] In his *Consideration on Representative Government* he was quite explicit when he stated that "the great majority of the human race" remained in such a "savage or semi-savage state," requiring that they be ruled by "the more advanced."[114] This pattern of thought, which justified the West's 'civilizing mission', remained dominant until some years after the Second World War when a shift in global power and a restructuring of the global political order had a definitive impact on the trajectory of Anglo-American philosophy.

With most European countries in economic ruin, and the United States responsible for over half the world's economic output, the post-war system, being remade in the image of the only Western power with no colonies of its own, was extremely inhospitable to European claims to their colonies in both Africa and Asia. Whilst the Atlantic Charter, signed by Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941, established the terms on which the United

[112] Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in Henry Hardy (ed.) *Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 229

[113] Mill, *On Liberty*, p. 224

[114] Mill, *On Representative Government*, p. 410

States would extend aid to Britain after the War, it also initiated debate regarding the subject of colonial rule by declaring that the allies must, "...respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and that they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."[115] Once the principle of self-rule had aligned itself with national liberation movements, the global system, which was by now determined largely by U.S interest and the needs of the Cold War, slowly began to accommodate the process of decolonization and by the end of the 1950's it had become almost irreversible.[116] This is highlighted in Harold MacMillan's 'Winds of Change' speech, delivered to a South African audience on February 3rd, 1960, when he stated: "The wind of change is blowing through this continent and, whether we like it or not, this growth in national consciousness is a political fact and our national policies must take account of it."[117] MacMillan's speech also expressed concern for the growing tensions of the Cold War by claiming that the struggle regarding decolonized states would concern which side of the ideological fence they 'fell' and therefore, he argued, it was the British 'way of life' that was on trial to win the minds of uncommitted, newly independent nations.

The context of the post-colonial order that emerged, therefore, was a universal system of states based on formal equality. Paternal intervention on the grounds of 'civilization' was no longer acceptable, and development became recognised rather in economic terms. In other words, the 'civilizing mission' of the West was replaced by the universal goal of economic development. Wealth and power was determined by economic competition within the global capitalist market as opposed to territorial expansion, and thus the West managed to maintain its global dominance and control over Third World states through the forces of the capitalist system. Equality between states occurred alongside growing economic and material inequality, with the West dominating the global provision of both goods and services using Third World resources. The process of decolonization led to complex restructuring of the global order which resulted in the post-colonial context reflecting a fundamental change with

[115] "The Atlantic Charter" in W. Arnold-Foster, *Charters of the Peace* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1944), p. 136

[116] See Andrew Nash, "Politics and Ethics in a Global Age: A Reflection on Our Debt to Johan Degenaar," in Dirk Hertzog, Ettienne Brita and Alastair Henderson, *Gesprek Sonder Grense: Huldingsbundel ter ere van Johan Degeaar se 80ste Verjaarsdag* (Stellenbosch : H & B Uitgewers, 2007), p. 214

[117] Harold MacMillan, *Pointing the Way 1959-1961* (London: MacMillan London Ltd., 1972), pp. 473-482

regard to Western domination in comparison to the colonial era, one which is traceable in the discourse of Anglo-American political thought.

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These changes to the global structure were inevitably reflected in the discourse of Anglo-American philosophy. The practice of philosophy as an autonomous academic discipline occurred much later in Britain than it did throughout the rest of Europe. It thus lent itself to being rapidly professionalized and prone to emulating the methods of the natural sciences, focussing more on its own technical problems, rather than confronting disagreements about political and moral ends.[118] The rise of analytical philosophy led to a paradoxical moment in Anglo-American philosophy after 1945, in that whilst its ideas and institutions became globally dominant, there was a sustained retreat from claims to their universality. One of the more blatant assaults on the field of traditional political philosophy came from T. D Weldon, who claimed that philosophy should be concerned only with secondary problems involving language and concepts, and its purpose should solely be to "expose and elucidate linguistic muddles". He thus criticized the belief that political philosophers should be concerned with the "establishment and demolition of political principles" that form the 'blueprint for moral and political institutions'. [119]

This change in Anglo-American thought highlighted a marked shift away from the prescriptive method of dealing with practical politics, as characterised by the British tradition as early as Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century. Peter Laslett acknowledged the shift in the purpose of Anglo-American philosophy in his introduction to *Politics, Philosophy, and Society* in 1956 when he claimed that political philosophy, concerned with "political and social relationships at the widest level of generality," was dead. He suggested that a possible reason for this 'death' was that the problems and events of the post-war political arena were "too serious to be left to philosophers."[120] Laslett claimed that this 'death' was primarily the responsibility of the Logical Positivists and their role in convincing philosophers to "withdraw unto themselves for a time, and re-examine their logical and linguistic

[118] Nash "Politics and Ethics," pp. 220-221

[119] See T. D. Weldon "Political Principles," in *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956)

[120] Laslett, *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, p. vii

apparatus."[121] This argument is supported by Robert Cummings in his two-volume book *Human Nature and History*, in which he argues that analytical philosophy, and in particular, positivism, scepticism, existentialism and historicism, exacted a heavy toll on the confidence of the political philosopher to assess political truths.[122] Analytical philosophy called into question the intelligibility of ethical statements which resulted in answers to questions such as, "Is an Indian as good as an Englishman?" or "Should I adopt a socialist mentality?" being reduced to, "It depends what you mean by...?" Part of this 'retreat', which both Laslett and Cummings address, was attributable to the fact that the horrors of the twentieth century placed man outside of the scope of reason, threatening political philosophy with the "irrational man" and destroying any concept of human nature trustworthy enough upon which to base political doctrine.[123]

In essence, political thought in the West began to focus on conceptual clarity and distinctness of meaning as important goals in themselves in that achievable ends are distinguished by their conceptual coherence, and conceptual confusion was seen as an obstacle to political ends. Regimes which endorsed collective goals were seen to be conceptually incoherent in that they are open to diverse meaning and thus could be easily manipulated. In direct contrast to the philosophy of the British Idealists, distinctive unity of the individual mind was preferred to meaning produced by the social process, such as the formation of the General Will. Anglo-American thought in the post-colonial era thus often equates itself with the individualist liberalism which defends individual goals against collective, and therefore often implicitly rejects any collective threat which may challenge Western dominance.

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The iconic figure of the liberal tradition in the post-war era was Isaiah Berlin who, in his most widely acclaimed essay "Two concepts of Liberty" sought to restore political philosophy to the meaningful place it had occupied for centuries within the Anglo-American philosophical discipline. Whilst staying within the boundaries of the analytical tradition,

[121] Ibid. p. ix

[122] Robert Cummings, *Human Nature and History*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969), pp. 4-16

[123] See Glenn Tinder, "Liberalism and the Death of Political Philosophy," in *Polity*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Winter, 1970), pp. 272-279

Berlin argued that the challenges facing political philosophers in the twentieth century were to be blamed upon political movements that "...put their faith in some immense, transforming phenomenon, like the triumph of reason or the proletarian revolution..." and claimed that because such regimes believe in the 'ultimate end of man' they too "must believe that all political and moral problems can thereby be turned into technological ones." Such an outlook prophesising the "true history of humanity," Berlin argued, is nothing more than "the play of idle fancy."[124] The West, in the post-war era, he continued, could easily be mistaken by some 'alien' visitor for living in something very similar to this 'idyllic state,' in that all attention regarding political and social problems was left to professional philosophers on a technocratic level. This approach was criticized by Berlin for assuming a resolution of moral disagreement within Western politics, whereas in reality all it did was displace it. In his paper titled 'Does Political Theory Still Exist,' which appeared in the second edition of Laslett's *Politics, Philosophy, and Society*, he states that political theory is, in principle, possible only in a world where ends collide, a condition necessary to human existence.[125] This argument is continued in the opening line of "Two Concepts": "If men never disagreed about the ends of life, if our ancestors remained undisturbed in the Garden of Eden, the studies to which the Chichele Chair of Social and Political Theory is dedicated could scarcely have been conceived."[126] The paradox, Berlin argued, was that in a time when literally the 'whole of mankind' was 'violently divided' by real political issues, political philosophy began to lead a 'shadowy existence'. Despite this, however, he believed that the very nature of post-war society in the West, given the real need for choice between values of freedom, equality and justice, indicated "not the death of a great tradition but, if anything, new and unpredictable developments."[127]

Berlin's belief in value-pluralism and the philosophical need to defend a negative conception of liberty in order to avoid the dangers of authoritarian rule forms the basis of his world-view and offers an interesting lens through which to analyse how Anglo-American liberal thought

[124] Berlin, "Two Concepts," p. 166

[125] Isaiah Berlin, "Does Political Theory Still Exist," p.8

[126] Berlin, "Two Concepts," p. 166

[127] Berlin, "Does Political Theory Still Exist," p. 33. See also, Michael Ignatief, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (London: Vintage, 1998), pp. 198-201

approached the problems facing the post-colonial world-order. His liberalism attempts to return to answering philosophical questions, facing the [then] contemporary global system, at the 'widest level of generality,' whilst at the same time confining his philosophical enquiry to a conceptual analysis. By looking more closely at both his pluralism and liberalism and establishing the basis of his world-view, insights into his views regarding the nature of the relationship between liberalism and colonial rule can be drawn.

II. Berlin's Value Pluralism and Defence of Negative Liberty

In a letter to Jean Floud dated, July 5 1968, Berlin stated that: "All central beliefs on human matters spring from a personal predicament."[128] This statement, to a large degree, exposes the source of his own philosophy. The basis of Berlin's liberalism is rooted in his life-long detestation of ideologically inspired violence, a hatred which he ascribes to an event he witnessed in Petrograd at the age of 7, when he watched a terrified Tsar loyalist being carried off to his death by a wild lynch mob.[129] According to Berlin, this image never left him and was fundamental to his suspicion of political ideologies working towards the realization of some collective goal.

Born in Riga, Latvia in 1909, Berlin moved to London with his family as a young boy, to escape the turmoil of the Russian Revolution. Schooled in England, he was the first Jew elected as a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford in 1932. In 1940, taking leave from his lectureship post at Oxford, he took up a position in New York working for the British Information Services, where his role was to compile weekly reports for the Ministry of Information regarding the state of public opinion in America, in a campaign against American neutrality towards the war. His job, in effect, was "to get America into the war."[130] After the bombing of Pearl Harbour, which initiated America's active military involvement, the success of his press surveys in New York led him to a position at the British Foreign Office in Washington where his task was to report on developments within American politics.

[128] Quote taken from, Hardy, "Introduction" in, Henry Hardy (ed.) *Liberty*, p. xxviii

[129] Ibid. p. xxix

[130] Michael Ignatief, *Berlin: A Life* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 101

Returning to Oxford in April 1946, the quality of his 'Washington Dispatches' had earned him the reputation of being one of more prominent political thinkers of the time, and he spent the vast majority of his professional career writing and teaching on the subject of political philosophy. His experiences during the war coupled with his life-long hatred of violence were crucial contributions to his liberalism, but it was the onset of the Cold War and the tensions of the changed global structure to which his philosophy most poignantly relates.

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Berlin's liberal project is most clearly set-out in his widely acclaimed essay 'Two Concepts of Liberty,' which was written primarily in response to the growing threat of Soviet Marxism during the 1950's. It is important to note, however, that although the Cold War was central to his defence of negative liberty, 'Two Concepts' was written and crafted consciously during the period of decolonization. The dominant issues facing the world in the post-war period, according to Berlin, surrounded questions regarding the limits to legitimate coercion. 'Why should I obey anyone else?' 'If I disobey, should I be coerced?' 'What is the area that the subject should be free to do or be what he wants, without interference by others?'[131] As one delves more deeply into Berlin's arguments regarding the dangers of 'positive liberty' and the need for liberty to be acknowledged only from a 'negative' conception, his detestation of social ideologies pursuing a 'collective goal' or 'predetermined truth' becomes increasingly apparent. His belief that value-pluralism is a fact of the human moral condition and that the liberty for individuals to choose among these values is thus prior to all other values, makes it evident that although Berlin never confronts the issue of colonialism directly, his world-view implicitly relates to the tensions of the post-colonial order.

His liberalism and the special importance he places on liberty are best understood from the perspective of his theory of value-pluralism, which is central to his ethical and political philosophy. As John Gray points out, Berlin's 'Two Concepts' was less significant in defending the 'negative' idea of liberty, than in grounding the worth of liberty on the conflict of values in human affairs.[132] In essence, Berlin connects the worth of liberty to the reality of moral conflict. Berlin defined moral thought as "the systematic examination of the relations

[131] Berlin, "Two Concepts," p. 169

[132] Gray, *Liberalism*, p. 39

of human beings to one another, the conceptions, interests and ideals from which human ways of treating one another spring, and the systems of value on which such ends of life are based...beliefs about how life should be lived, what men and women should be and do."[133] His argument, as will become apparent after analysis of his liberalism, is that human history testifies to an eradicable and incommensurable diversity of competing moral values over which there exists no overarching standard. This is in contrast to the thought of the British Idealists who believed that morality existed in the realization of the 'common good' within the confines of state. Recall Bosanquet's claim that the state is the widest context through which the General Will can be formed. Berlin, on the other hand, claims that because there is no overarching moral standard, and given the formal equality between states, there exists a universal moral context.

Although Berlin does not set out a systematic theory regarding the nature of values, his comments and statement regarding their origin are at times ambiguous. On the one hand, he seems to take a Romantic viewpoint, which he traces back to Kant, and claims that values are human creations and are not derived from nature nor are they to be conceptualised as 'ingredients' of the universe. On the other hand, however, he comes precariously close to advocating a theory of 'natural law' and claims that there are common values shared between different cultural groups and societies that are not derived by a theory of human needs, but rather are constituted in history. He goes further to suggest that the fundamental nature of 'natural law' is most often revealed during the experience of moral horrors and extreme situations. The short-coming of 'natural-law' doctrines, as John Gray argues, is that they are primarily concerned with the basis of morality and the foundational requirements for civilization, but do not take into consideration the conventions, cultures, customs and institutions of actual societies and, furthermore, provide "no direct route from a theory of human nature to the superiority of a liberal society."[134] Berlin agrees with this argument and acknowledges that whilst natural-laws provide the basic-conditions necessary for a tolerable, workable, decent society, they do not tell us how much liberty is needed. What is required, according to Berlin, is a moral theory which takes into account the diverse histories and cultures of different societies. The right measure of liberty can only be assessed, according to

[133] Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, (New York: Vintage, 1959) pp. 2-3

[134] Gray, *Liberalism*, p. 50

Berlin, once one understands "the total patterns of life" within a society.[135] This view of the origin of values is significant to Berlin's defense of the value of 'negative' liberty. He claims that the freedom to think, enquire and imagine without constraint is imperative because human beings need to be able to have such mental freedom; to deny it to them is a denial of their nature. In other words, to choose between values and to have the freedom to make these choices is fundamental to human nature and needs to be protected.

Berlin defines the concept of negative liberty with the principle of non-interference, that is: "the wider the area of non-interference the wider my freedom."[136] Whilst there has always been disagreement regarding how wide the area of non-interference should be, the 'negative' conception of freedom, argues Berlin, has always been central to the classical definition of liberty within the Western tradition. Hobbes in his *Leviathan*, for example, stated that, "A free man is he that...is not hindered to do what he has a will to do."[137] Aside from the fact that the strong would suppress the liberties of the weak if freedom was left uncurtailed, human activities and purposes are not always compatible with one another, and thus because people place high value on other goals, such as, among others, freedom, equality, justice, and happiness, they are prepared to limit freedom in the interest of these other values.[138] Whilst freedom must be limited by law to ensure the attainment of these other values, Berlin argues that there ought to also be a minimum of personal, inviolable freedom for one to do or be what one wishes. Although it is true, he continues, that no man is ever completely free and that the liberty of some is dependent on the restraint of others, the concept of freedom for the restrained is not a different species of freedom compared to that of the more free, but rather that the scope or area of free action is smaller. He claims that, "to offer political rights, or safeguards against intervention by the state, to men who are half-naked, illiterate, underfed and diseased is to mock their condition; they need medical help or education before they can understand, or make use of, an increase in their freedom."[139] To reinforce his argument he

[135] Berlin, "Two Concepts," p. 170 , see also, Claude Galipeau, *Isaiah Berlin's Liberalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 116-117

[136] Ibid. p. 170

[137] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* in, Richard Tuck (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 146

[138] Berlin, "Two Concepts," p. 170-171

[139] Ibid. p. 171

states that, "The Egyptian peasant needs clothes or medicine, before and more than, personal liberty, but the minimum freedom that he needs today, and the greater degree of freedom that he may need tomorrow, is not some species of freedom peculiar to him, but identical with that of professors, artists and millionaires."[140] Liberty, in the 'negative sense', is thus not incompatible with certain forms of autocracy, in that it is concerned with the area of control, not its source. In other words, 'negative' freedom is not necessarily connected with self-government. Although self-government may provide a better guarantee for the preservation of civil liberties, the two are not mutually dependent.

The fundamental argument that Berlin makes, and which is of integral importance to understanding his liberalism within the post-colonial context, is that the type of freedom that men seek is not dependent upon social or economic conditions. What "troubles the conscience of Western liberals," however, is that the minority who possess the largest amount of freedom have gained it by exploiting or, at least by "averting their gaze" from those who are not free.[141] Equality of liberty, the repayment of debt by those with the most individual liberty to those who made that liberty possible, is the basis of liberal morality. It is therefore apparent that liberty is not the only goal of men. But what is important to understand is that an increase of social justice or an increase in equality comes at the expense of freedom. To compensate those who are not free, to 'lessen the shame of inequality', requires a curtailment of the freedom of those who have it.

> If the liberty of myself or my class or nation depends on the misery of a number of other human beings, the system which promotes this is unjust and immoral. But if I curtail or lose my freedom in order to lessen the shame of such inequality, and do not thereby materially increase the individual liberty of others, an absolute loss of liberty occurs. This may be compensated by a gain in justice or in happiness or in peace, but the loss remains...[142]

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[140] Ibid. p. 172

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid.

The question remains, however, that although the freedom of some must, at times, be limited to secure the freedom of others, upon what criterion should this be done? Although Berlin never provides such a principle, and rather suggests that the area of non-interference is dependent upon the circumstances of different societies, what he does state explicitly is that some minimum area of personal liberty must be protected in order to avoid 'degrading or denying' our human nature: "total self-surrender is self-defeating."[143] The concept of 'negative' liberty that Berlin defends is in opposition to the 'positive' conception which involves 'freedom to do' as opposed to 'freedom from constraint'. 'Positive' liberty, he argues, freedom to lead a 'prescribed' form of life, often represents nothing "better than a specious disguise for brutal tyranny."[144]

Berlin defines liberty in the 'positive' sense as stemming from the wish, on part of the individual, to be his own master. Such a conception lends itself to 'splitting' the individual into a 'higher' and 'lower' form of self, the lower, empirical self influenced by passion, and the higher 'ideal' or 'real' self. In order to be truly free and master of one's self, one needs to realise the 'higher' form. The danger that Berlin alludes to is that the 'ideal' self may be conceived as something greater or larger than the individual, such as the state, the Church or the 'social whole' and thus gives such a 'body' the right to paternalistically protect the individuals 'ideal-self' from its lower form. By imposing upon the individual the will of the collective, the 'ideal' self will eventually be realised and a 'higher' sense of freedom reached. Those, 'single-minded Monists' who subscribe to this concept of freedom, according to Berlin, rest their philosophy on two principles: firstly, that the cosmos exhibits a fixed structure (including human nature and moral life) and, secondly, that all just political regimes which hold to a fixed structure of moral ends are rationally intelligible, and commit, what he calls, the 'Ionian fallacy'.[145] The notion of the 'ideal' self can be manipulated at the level of theory and therefore "enough manipulation of the definition of man, and freedom can be to mean whatever the manipulator wishes."[146] In this way freedom, conceived in the 'positive' sense, can be made to serve the needs of "every dictator, inquisitor and bully who seeks

[143] Ibid.

[144] Ibid. 178

[145] See Galipeau, *Isaiah Berlin's Liberalism*, pp. 48-58

[146] Berlin, "Two Concepts," p. 181

moral, or even aesthetic, justification for his conduct."[147] What makes such a conception plausible, however, is that is possible to justifiably coerce someone in the name of some 'greater good' that, if they were more enlightened, they would pursue themselves. This, Berlin claims, was the argument of Hegel, Bradley and Bosanquet, and it is this argument that has been responsible for the fact that "...there has, perhaps, been no time in modern history when so large a number of human beings, in both the East and West, have had their notions and indeed their lives, so deeply altered, and in some cases violently upset, by fanatically held social and political doctrines."[148] In other words, whilst 'positive' liberty sets out to achieve 'universal truth' and the realisation of 'true freedom', the reality of history has shown that, more often than not, it results in the greatest oppression of freedom.

III. Berlin's Liberalism in the Post-Colonial Context

There has been much discussion and argument regarding the distinction Berlin draws between 'positive' and 'negative' liberty, but the greatest short-coming of Berlin's theory, argued Bernard Crick in his response to Berlin titled 'Freedom and Politics', is that whilst it tells us at length what freedom is not, it tells us very little about what freedom is.[149] In other words, Crick argues that in the attempt to avoid the error of confusing the actions which allow us to be free and freedom itself, Berlin walks too cautiously and virtually separates the concept of freedom from any real political or social context. Berlin does not recognise, according to Crick, that freedom is both a 'peculiar relationship between people' and an 'activity by people' and in so doing, "...freedom is being left alone from politics."[150] Crick's claim, therefore, is that there is reciprocity between politics and freedom, and he defines politics in three significant steps. As an institution, politics is the conflict of differing interests in an acknowledged mutual context, as an activity it is the conciliation of these differing interests within the public context created by the state, and as a moral activity it is the creative conciliation of these interests. "Freedom" according to Crick, is "the activity of

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[147] Ibid. 197

[148] Ibid. p. 229

[149] Bernard Crick, "Freedom as Politics" in, *Political Theory and Practice* (London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1971), pp. 35-62

[150] Ibid. p. 44

private men who help to maintain public politics."[151] Totalitarian ideologies that do not identify the value of politics are 'anti-political' and thus weaken freedom. Crick's criticism of Berlin is extremely useful when reading Berlin's liberalism within the post-colonial context in that it elucidates the point made by Nash that his theory of freedom, in effect, places the real struggles of the post-colonial order outside the sphere of freedom and, as a result, keeps the majority of humankind outside the realm of philosophical enquiry.[152]

Michael Ignatief in his biography of Berlin argues along similar lines and states that whilst Berlin tells us clearly what liberalism stood against, he was rather quiet on what it stood for. In other words, he never says how much justice or equality is compatible with negative liberty or how much social justice is, in fact, required. In his polemic against positive liberty and its pitfalls, Berlin leaves his commitments to social justice unspecified.[153] Furthermore, Ignatieff also highlights another source of conflict within Berlin's liberalism which is that it never explains why 'negative' liberty should have priority over other values.[154] Unlike for Mill, for example, who claimed that liberty was superior in that it is a necessary condition for the growth of human genius, Berlin argues that this relationship is contingent, not necessarily in direct relation. By separating a defence of liberty from any claim it has on emancipating or improving the human condition, Berlin's only defence for the priority of liberty is his value-pluralism. In other words, a regime of negative freedom provides the best guarantee of a free social life.[155] What is of significance to an examination of Berlin's philosophy, therefore, is that whilst he presents a liberalism offering a universal standard, it is quite clearly confined to the bastions of Western society.

This becomes apparent in reflection on his discussion regarding the goals or objectives of liberation movements. Unlike Mill and the British Idealists, Berlin says very little on the

[151] Ibid. 51

[152] See Nash, "Politics and Ethics," p. 223

[153] Ignatieff, *A Life*, p. 229

[154] Ibid.

[155] Ibid.

subject of colonialism directly, yet he does ascribe to a particular world-view of the post-colonial order to which his philosophy relates. Although Berlin never provides principled support for the practice of colonialism it becomes apparent from his arguments, however, that the type of freedom promoted by colonial rule is an example of the illusion of 'positive' freedom, of 'despotism disguised as liberty'. "Paternalism is despotic" according Berlin, "not because it is more oppressive than naked, brutal, unenlightened tyranny, nor merely because it ignores the transcendental reason embodied in me, but because it is an insult to my conception of myself as a human being, determined to make my own life in accordance with my own (not necessarily rational or benevolent) purposes, and, above all, entitled to be recognised by others."[156] Berlin's argument that rationalism in politics leads to the idea that freedom is achieved by following those who know better, which is an example of 'positive liberty,' is also a criticism of Mill's support for colonial intervention within 'backward' societies and his support for 'compulsory liberation'. Berlin also argues, however, that the 'collective identity' or 'collective goals' which fuelled the objectives of liberation movements, also fail to escape the pitfalls of 'positive' liberty. In line with the analytical tradition which places much emphasis on conceptual clarity, the collectivism that liberation movements subscribed to were conceptually incoherent. Berlin argues that the demand for 'collective liberation' is, in reality, not a demand for liberty at all, nor is it a demand for equality or justice, but rather a demand for recognition as a responsible human agent. This demand for recognition is so powerful, according to Berlin, that:

> ...I may, in my bitter longing for status, prefer to be bullied and misgoverned by some member of my own race..., by who I am, nevertheless, recognised as a man and a rival-that is, as an equal- to being well and tolerantly treated by someone from some higher and remoter group. Someone who does not recognise me for what I wish to feel myself to be...and...[It] is this desire for reciprocal recognition that leads the most authoritarian democracies to be, at times, consciously preferred by their members to the most enlightened oligarchies, or sometimes causes a member of some newly liberated Asian or African State to complain less today, when he is rudely treated by members of his own race or nation, than when he was governed by some cautious, just, gentle, well-meaning administrator from outside."[157]

[156] Berlin, "Two Concepts," p. 203

[157] Ibid. 205

What is sought in pursuing self-government, according to Berlin, is akin to what Mill called "Pagan self-assertion," but in a collective form. He draws an interesting parallel between the reasons Mill gives for desiring liberty- such as the value he puts on non-conformity and individual assertion of one's values in the face of prevailing opinion- and the demand by liberation movements for recognition. He claims that the reasons behind Mill's desire for liberty has little to do with his concept of 'non-interference,' but rather with the concern of men not to have their personalities 'set at too low a value' and assumed to be incapable of mature, authentic behaviour, even if this behaviour is restricted by legislation.[158] This is a similar desire to that of men who have fought for self-government, with little or no individual liberty, to be able to participate in the politics affecting their lives. In this way, the desire for freedom- which is indeed connected to the answers the questions such as 'What is the area of authority?' and, more particularly, 'Who is to govern us?'- is confused with freedom itself. Recall that negative liberty is connected to the question 'Over what area am I free?' which is distinctly different from and, both socially and politically independent of, the extent of negative liberty one demands for one's group or society. The 'plea' for liberation, according to Berlin is just, but "it does not allow for the basic human needs. Nor yet for the ingenuity with which men can prove to their own satisfaction that the road to one ideal also leads to its contrary."[159]

The relationship between Berlin's conceptual analysis of liberty and the tensions of the post-colonial order is best understood by his warning that the desire for freedom is too often confused for freedom itself. It was at this point, recall, that Crick argued that Berlin separates the concept of freedom from any real political or social context. The concept of 'negative' liberty thus has the complex limitation of failing to take into account the pervasive struggle in the post-colonial world for status and recognition and thus his defence of negative liberty leaves liberation struggles and the real working of the global system in the post-colonial era outside the sphere of philosophical enquiry. The struggle for recognition, which found expression among the post-colonial states in Africa and Asia, led to the choice: dignity for the many or freedom for the few; an increase in social equality and justice or a loss in liberty. Berlin finds a resolution by stating that the course of history has shown that values among

[158] Ibid. 206

[159] Ibid. p. 208

men are often incommensurable and thus negative liberty is the superior value in that it acknowledges this fact and allows for men to pursue their own goals and values. Given this, although he never explicitly justifies inequality, his defence of 'negative' liberty and the fact that he places the quest for recognition beyond the scope of freedom, Berlin seems to implicitly offer a justification for global inequality. As the iconic figure of Anglo-American liberal thought during this time, Berlin's theory of liberty attempts to offer an answer to questions regarding limits to legitimate coercion at the 'widest level of generality', but confines himself to conceptual analysis.

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Berlin's liberalism set the foundation of Anglo-American thought in the post-colonial era which has been most influentially built upon by the works Rawls and Nozick. The defence of individual gaols against the collective that characterised the Anglo-American tradition in the post-colonial context can thus be contrasted with the work of both Mill and the British Idealists and understood within the context of a restructured global order. In practice, post-colonial Anglo-American political theory has resulted in the endorsement the regime of individual rights, which is characteristic of the capitalist West. As is clear with Berlin's defence of 'negative' liberty, although Western thought does not necessarily defend global inequality or colonial rule, by treating any challenge to Western dominance as theoretically incoherent, it fails to provide solutions to the real problems, or even the real politics, involving the majority of humankind.

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