

Social justice and individualism



There are many differing views on the nature of justice. Some philosophers like John Locke and Frederich Nietzsche advocate the importance of individualism. However, John Stuart Mill strongly urges the vitality of concern for thy neighbor and the use of debate. Within each individual's ideology I can see the positives. However, when it comes to the nature of justice I think the strong sense of personal goals in individualism and the allocation of debate in Mill's ideals is what will bring the best for society. John Locke had a strong view of individualism when it came to the nature of social justice.

Locke believes political power is the natural power of each individual collectively given up into the hands of one designated body. The purpose of this power is to protect the public good. Locke believes all men by nature are created free and equal and have the basic rights to life, liberty, and most importantly property. In his eyes, government is set up solely to avoid the paranoia that would arise in a state of nature. This would be a situation where government did not exist and everyone had to preserve their own lives and property.

Although Locke believed no one can harm you in your life or possessions, he thought government should be used as a mechanism created to increase the ease at which we run our own private individual affairs. Through the formation of a political power a social contract is set up where people in a state of nature conditionally transfer some of their rights to government solely to protect and promote the public good. Locke believed government is only a factor that guides moral order it does not run or impose ideals upon others.

Locke believed it would be wrong for a political power to try and inflict ideas upon the masses. This is because according to Locke we are born as a blank slate and everything we understand comes through personal experience. These experiences are translated by reason and no outside force can make us understand anything we have not experienced for ourselves. All the knowledge we possess comes exclusively through experience. He argues that humans fill with ideas as they experience the world through the five senses.

Because ideas are limited by experience, and we cannot possibly experience everything that exists in the world, Locke believes our knowledge is further compromised. However, he asserts that though our knowledge is limited in these ways, we can still be certain of some things. For example, we have an intuitive and immediate knowledge of our own existence, even if we are ignorant of the metaphysical essence of our souls. Locke believes in the acceptance of all religions as long as they do not endanger the public. I see the positives in Locke's perceptions of individual morality.

I am partial to his ideas of using government more as a guiding force than a ruling one. I think government should be used more to only steer the public towards a greater good rather than trying to create positions on various ideas. This meaning that I believe that it is more beneficial to avoid situations where sides are taken. Nowadays, there is constant debate and through this controversy I think persons in power overlook what may be good for society as a whole and concentrate on imposing their ideals upon others to “win” or gain personal satisfaction.

I agree with Locke and think people should be able to decide things for themselves based on experiences they have rather than constant chatter of political persons arguing on television. I also have a high regard towards Locke's general acceptance of all religions. I agree and think that as a society we should focus on what drives us and ignore those who disapprove of individual differences. Like Locke, as long as it is not causing harm to others I see nothing wrong with individualism. In fact, I think we can all learn from each other and we can only grow from experiencing all different events.

Nietzsche is another philosopher who believes strongly in individualism. Nietzsche believes life is not about universal ethics or thoughts but it is about your own. For Nietzsche, it is important not to direct our strengths outward towards others but to propel it inward in order to gain self mastery. He has a strong belief in setting personal goals and for those goals not to be just for happiness. Actions should not be made solely for the purpose of happiness because this just receives instant gratification and is too earth oriented and materialistic.

Our fundamental drive is for power realized through independence and dominance. This is a will stronger than the will to survive, as Nietzsche points out martyrs willingly die for a cause if they feel that associating themselves with that cause gives them greater power. This is a will that is stronger than the will to have sex, as monks willingly renounce sex for the sake of a greater cause. While Nietzsche recognizes that the will to gain power can manifest itself through violence and physical dominance, he is more interested in the diverted will for power, where people turn their will for power inward and pursue self improvement rather than mastery over others.

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For example a warrior who submits himself to all sorts of physical deprivation gains profound self-control and spiritual depth, representing a more refined form of power than the power he would have gained by the conquering the barbarian. Nietzsche paints a portrait of his idea of the perfect man in his description of the overman. Nietzsche's concept of the overman is an ideal to aspire to be after we control our animal instincts. The overman has the self-mastery that animals lack but also the unrestricted instincts and good conscience that humans lack.

The overman is profoundly in love with life, finding nothing to complain about, not even during the constant suffering and struggle to which he willingly submits himself. In order to be an overman, a person must undergo three transformations. The first is the lion which represents strength. The next is the child whom Nietzsche believes can look at the world with new eyes creating new values. The last is the camel which represents endurance. I have a harder time agreeing with Nietzsche's concept of individualism.

I feel that he has a more extreme view than Locke and totally disregard's the well being of others where as Locke believes in individual betterment while aspiring towards the greater good. I don't get the sense of this with Nietzsche. I do not like his stance on pity and that is not a good thing. However, I do like his concept of aspiring to be an overman. Although I think it is a difficult if not impossible task I think having a sort of god-like person to base your actions on is a good thing. I also like his ideals on self-improvement I just think he has no concept of the greater good for all which I disagree with.

John Stuart Mill had a differing view on the nature of social justice in comparison to Nietzsche and Locke. Mill explains his concept of individual freedom within the context of his ideas on history and the state. On Liberty depends on the idea that society progresses from lower to higher stages and that this progress culminates in the materialization of a system of representative democracy. It is within this form of government that Mill envisions the growth and development of liberty. Mill defines civil liberty as the limit that must be set on society's power over each individual.

In the past, liberty meant protection from tyranny. Over time, for Mill the meaning of liberty changed along with the role of rulers, who came to be seen as servants of the people rather than masters. This evolution brought forward a new problem: the tyranny of the majority. This is where a democratic majority forces its will on the minority. Here, society itself becomes the tyrant by seeking to inflict its will and values on others. This is a large fear for Mill. He believes that we are above animals and should respect people's right to choose because as humans we have the capacity to see all sides.

Mill agrees with Locke in his belief that as long as you are not harming others in your choices you are morally sound. He believes that it is very important to let people think for themselves and if you censor that you are making them less human and more beast-like. Mill also has a strong belief in public debate. He believes that via a debate you can strengthen your views. However, he also says you must be aware of the cost of what you say and in contrast a debate can also weaken your argument. We have the liberty to

plan our own lives and we also have the liberty to join other individuals in a common person.

This is something Locke and Neitzsche did not agree with. Mill recognizes the importance of banding together for a common purpose and that it could have a positive effect on your cause by working with others. Mill is someone I find I can strongly agree with. I definitely agree that through discussion your views can be skewed stronger or weaker. I think through a debate such as this it can open your mind to other opportunities something I feel is important in life that an individualistic view on liberty does not address.

I am also partial to Mill's fear of the majority. I think it is very possible for individuals to band together and act in ways that can be considered morally wrong. However, if their belief is that strong and they have the power of the majority they won't be able to see with an open mind. So I can see that there are strengths and weaknesses to Mill's ideals however, I feel they are the most realistic and will result in the best form of justice in society. In my opinion an ideal stance on social justice would be a combination of Mill and Locke.

I think there is an importance to Locke's ideals of individualism and using government as a guide rather than a ruler. Perhaps this would wipe out Mill's fear of the majority. Having a strong sense of personal goals while working towards the greater good is very imperative. If you combined this with Mill's ideals of allowing differing opinions in the form of debate I think you would have the best possible scenario in terms of liberty. Allowing everyone to

have their own thoughts but letting them be open to debate can strengthen an objective.

With this possible like Mill said, a society can band together for a common goal that hopefully will work towards Locke's ideals for the common good.

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