

John Stuart Mill and Democracy

On Representative Government (1861)

Mill is concerned to maximise the **higher pleasures**, to create more educated well developed individuals.

The role of a government should be to bring about this development

Key ideas

Despotism (dictatorship) leads to inaction and passivity. People must be engaged.

Societies with engaged citizens are more prosperous

Humans flourish when given independence and freedom

There must, however, be various conditions if the democracy is to work:

- a) Proper education in public life (e.g. jury service, local government)
- b) Checks and balances (no one is allowed to have too much power)
- c) No salary for representatives (no career politicians)
- d) Voters vote for common good, not for individual interests
- e) Open ballot (not secret)
- f) Exclusion from voting of poor and uneducated (perhaps allow for educated, responsible people to hold more than one vote)
- g) Protection of minorities (avoid the “tyranny of the majority”)