

## J.S. Mill - Considerations on Representative Government

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LECTURE NOTES — CHAPTERS VII AND X

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- On page 316 Mill takes up the problem of the “tyranny of the majority” once again. Recall that the opening sections of *On Liberty* motivate the need to establish a number of constitutional liberties mainly as protection against the dangers of the despotic rule of majorities, “chiefly through the acts of public authorities.” (pp. 8-9). In this section Mill gives more details on that topic and explains why the tyranny of the majority is more dangerous than the tyranny of one or few people. Why does Mill think that despotic rule by ‘the many’ is more dangerous than the one by ‘the few’?
- What is the difference between direct and representative governments. What system of representation and what type of electoral rule does Mill support?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of proportional representation, as indicated by Mill?
- What does Mill mean with the expression ‘function of antagonism’ (p. 315)? In which other work of his is Mill focused on the importance of different and contradictory opinions in a dispute?
- Why is Mill opposed to the secret ballot and what are, consequently, his reasons for defending public and transparent voting?
- What is, according to Mill, the duty of the voter; and what would the consequences be, if voters were left to vote in secret?

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ADDITIONAL LITERATURE ON VOTING

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- Saari, Donald. *Disposing Dictators, Demystifying Voting Paradoxes: Social Choice Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2009).
- Laruelle, Annick and Federico Valenciano *Voting and Collective Decision-Making*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2008).
- Norris, Pippa *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2004).