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Bachelor Thesis

The Subaltern will never speak

Critical Reflection on Mill's Thoughts of Political Representation

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1. Introduction

Since the often celebrated ‘cradle of democracy’, the Athenian *polis*, questions of equality and difference have accompanied democratic theory. Acknowledging that democracy in Athens was severely restricted to property-owning men of a certain age, one could question its democratic scope.¹ Issues of democratic equality and equal access to democratic participation are thus depicting one of the main pillars of democratic theory. Especially liberal democratic theories are vigorously debated in this context. Particularly the theorization under a feminist perspective has developed powerful critiques against liberal democracy.² Liberalism takes the individual as the basic unit in democratic life and assumes an abstract individualism that imposes a unitary conception of human needs and concerns. It may note the differences, but states that these differences should not count.³ In this notion people can (and should) detach themselves from whatever traditions or values they have inherited.⁴ While this may represent itself like a way to equal access to political representation, taking substantial inequalities in the social and economic sphere into consideration reveals another picture. Feminist approaches to democracy criticize that existing mechanisms, like the national vote, deliver effective power to the dominant group and continue to suppress marginalized and disadvantaged voices. What is perceived as the majority decision must be considered as imbalanced due to inherent social and economic inequalities. Nancy Fraser adds to this, that the public sphere is not accessible for everybody equally.⁵ She argues that for marginalized groups it is not possible to bracket their differences in social statuses. Consequently, this further marginalizes those who differ from the dominant norm.⁶ Under this perspective the liberal assumption of an undifferentiated humanity does not suffice for an equal access to political deliberation. Marginalized voices are not equally weighted by their equal right to participate in the vote.⁷

¹ On the same account democratic theory often dismisses political systems in pre-colonial African communities that are likely to be called ‘democratic’ today. For more see: Alison J. Ayers, “Beyond the Imperial Narrative: African Political Historiography Revisited,” in *Decolonizing International Relations*, ed. Branwen Gruffydd Jones (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006)

² See Anne Phillips, *Democracy and Difference* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2002), p. 105

³ See *ibid.*, p. 114

⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 95

⁵ See Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text*, 25/26 (1990), doi:10.2307/466240, p. 63 - 65

⁶ See Phillips, *Democracy and Difference*, p. 95

⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 116

Liberal democracy as currently practiced makes it hard to address this dilemma. It returns to the individual as the basic unit in political life and yet blocks any serious considerations of the empowerment of disadvantaged groups.⁸ This is where Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and her concept of the subaltern come into play. Adding reflections of postcolonialism to these of gender-based inequalities, Spivak examines the oppression and marginalization of what she calls the subaltern's voice. According to Spivak, the subaltern is cut off from any social mobility. Due to her existence at the fringe of society she is unable to make herself heard.⁹ With the help of the Indian *sati*, a widow sacrifice, as an example, Spivak elaborates her concept of the subaltern. During British colonial rule British advocates abolished *sati* in India, representing it as an act of redemption and emancipation of the Indian woman.¹⁰ At the same time Indian nativist argued against the abolishment, highlighting the woman's will to die and stressing her individual freedom. In both narratives the voice of the Indian woman is not perceived.¹¹ In her essay titled "*Can the subaltern speak?*" (1988) Spivak refers for the first time to the speaking of the subaltern as an act between speaker and listener. It is not due to an absence of a talking of the subaltern that she is not heard, but to the lack of somebody who is willing to listen.¹² Both representations, of the British as well as of the Indian arguments, can thus not be considered as a rising of the subaltern's voice. Talking about the subaltern is talking about representation and power.¹³ While liberal democratic theories are stressing the individual's equality towards the state, Spivak points out how, especially under a postcolonial perspective, the individual's amount of social power differs greatly. The subaltern therefore cannot be assumed as equally taking part in political deliberation.

In this thesis I will question the subaltern in the postcolonial state within the theoretical framework of John Stuart Mill's notions on representation. John Stuart Mill is considered one of the greatest British economists of his time. Despite his famous contribution

⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 118

⁹ In this thesis I will use the pronoun "she" when referring to the subaltern, following the lead of Spivak. As I will elaborate below more detailed, it is especially the female sexed subject that is oppressed.

¹⁰ See Gayatri C. Spivak, "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 63

¹¹ See *ibid.*, p. 79

¹² See Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, "Subaltern Talk: Interview with the Editors (29 October 1993)," in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, ed. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 292

¹³ See Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, "Repräsentation, Subalternität und postkoloniale Kritik," in Steyerl; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, *Spricht die Subalterne deutsch?*, p. 30

"Principles of Political Economy" (1848) he published also on political issues. His *"Considerations on Representative Government"* (1861) is counted today as his most famous political work. Mill's considerations of representative government are generally perceived as moral basis of today's liberalism.¹⁴ Especially due to his ambitious advocacy of the women's suffrage he must be acknowledged as a progressive member of his time. His firm belief in the improvement of human society validates the allocation of Mill as an advocate of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment is generally conceived as a process of social, psychological and spiritual development. It is often associated with political revolutions and ideals, especially the French Revolution of 1789. Having its primary origin in the scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th century, the core of the Enlightenment is the aspiration for intellectual progress, and the belief in the improvement of human society as well as individual lives.¹⁵ As we will see later, Mill's considerations of representative government are very well attachable to this.

Inherited from the Enlightenment, we deal today with an ideal of universal citizenship, which claims the existence of an essentially 'human' concern. The vision of democracy that is associated with this claim treats us as abstract individuals or citizens regardless of our sex, race or class.¹⁶ Taking Spivak's notion of the subaltern into consideration puts this assumption into question. This thesis asks if Spivak's critique of the subaltern can be applied to John Stuart Mill's theory of political representation. The following chapter will approach democratic theory under a postcolonial perspective and elaborate shortly what is meant with the term postcoloniality. The third chapter of this thesis outlines John Stuart Mill's considerations on political representation. His thoughts are providing the theoretical ground of this work. The notion of the subaltern is discussed in length in the fourth chapter. The last part of this thesis is dedicated to the discussion of Mill's theory of political representation under a postcolonial perspective and the answer to the here proposed question.

¹⁴ See Stefan Collini, "Introduction," in Mill; Collini, *On liberty*, p. vii

¹⁵ Dramatic successes of the new science in explaining the (natural) world promotes philosophy to an independent force with power and authority. Kant identifies in his essay "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (1784) the process of humankind's release from the self-centered immaturity, to undertake to think for oneself, and to employ and rely on one's own intellectual capacities in determining what to believe and what not, as the core of the Enlightenment. This newly gained confidence is generally paired with suspicion or hostility towards other forms of authority, such as tradition, superstition, prejudice, myth and miracle. See William Bristow, "Enlightenment," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 29.08.2017, accessed March 8, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/enlightenment/>

¹⁶ See Phillips, *Democracy and Difference*, p. 93

2. A Postcolonial Perspective on Democratic Theories

Colonialism cannot be understood as a monolithic operation. Diverse strategies and methods of control and domination were deployed to take over other people's land, goods and economy by forcible means.¹⁷ It is often defined as the European and U.S. expansion from 1500 to 1945.¹⁸ By the 1930s, 84, 6 per cent of the earth's surface was covered by colonies or ex-colonies under European control.¹⁹ Ania Loomba, born in India, is an American-based intellectual on early modern literature and histories of race and colonialism as well as postcolonial studies. She points out how modern colonialism often extracted tribute, goods and wealth from the conquered countries and drew them into a complex economic relationship with their colonizers.²⁰ While the flow of goods, including slaves, raw materials, and cloth in the so called transatlantic triangular trade, worked in both directions, the profit always flowed in one direction alone; towards the so-called 'mother countries'. An economic imbalance was produced that accelerated the growth of European and capitalist industry.²¹ At the same time colonialism is not to be understood as a system of mere economic power and exploitation, it was backed by a system of knowledge production and representation.²² Unequal power relations of colonialism implemented an asymmetrical system of knowledge production, which functioned as legitimization for the colonizer. European technologies and knowledge were thus understood as symbols of the desirable progress and enforced in all parts of the world.²³ The omission and marginalization of non-western knowledge constructed a so called 'imperial narrative' that made Europe both, the author and embodiment of the universal.²⁴ Edward W. Said, author of the world famous book "*Orientalism*", described the unchallenged authority of the Euro-American as following:

¹⁷ See Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, Repr., digital print, The new critical idiom (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 15f

¹⁸ See Walter D. Mignolo, "Further Thoughts on (De)Coloniality," in *Postcoloniality - Decoloniality - Black Critique: Joints and Fissures*, ed. Sabine Broeck and Carsten Junker (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag, 2014), p. 22

¹⁹ See David Kenneth Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A comparative survey from the eighteenth century*, Weidenfeld & Nicolson universal history (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), p. 373

²⁰ See Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, p. 3

²¹ See *ibid.*, p. 3f

²² Stuart Hall, "Wann gab es 'das Postkoloniale'? Denken an der Grenze," in Conrad; Randeria; Röhmschild, *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus*, p. 237 and Castro Varela, María do Mar and Nikita Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie: Eine kritische Einführung*, Cultural studies Band 12 (Bielefeld: Transcript, op. 2005), p. 16

²³ See *ibid.*, p. 15

²⁴ Ayers, "Beyond the Imperial Narrative", see p. 156f

“No area of experience was spared the unrelenting application of these hierarchies. [...] in the nascent disciplines of anthropology, Darwinism, Christianity, utilitarianism, idealism, racial theory, legal history, linguistics, and the lore of intrepid travellers mingled in bewildering combination, none of which wavered however, when it came to affirming the superlative values of white (i.e. English) civilization.”²⁵

The term ‘postcolonialism’ can be understood in two ways; in a temporal and in an ideological sense. The prefix ‘post’ suggests, in its temporal sense, an ‘after’ of colonialism, gained for example through political independence. Simultaneously, inequities that have been implemented during colonial rules the world over have not been erased, hence it seems premature to proclaim the demise of colonialism.²⁶ Postcolonialism, in its ideological sense, acknowledges the hegemonic position of the Western world in its analysis and spells out power-relations and their impact on global culture, thoughts and politics.²⁷ Thus, Loomba argues, postcolonialism cannot only be understood as a time coming after colonialism, but as a contestation of colonial domination in its manifold ways.²⁸ Or as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak puts it: “[...] postcoloniality is not a signal for an end to struggle but rather a shifting of the struggle to the persistent register of decolonization.”²⁹ Decolonization aims at the delinking of the world from basic epistemic and hermeneutic foundations, based on a Western conception.³⁰ Thus ‘colonial discourses’ should perceive cultural, intellectual, economic and political processes as legacies of colonialism and incorporate colonial differences of power in the thinking of the world, according to Ania Loomba.³¹ In this sense any analysis today must keep the focus on traces of heterogeneity of

²⁵ Edward W. Said, *Culture and imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), p. 101

²⁶ See Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, p. 7 and Mignolo, “Further Thoughts on (De)Coloniality”, p. 21 The term ‘postcolonial’ is ever contestable, a whole debate is going on around its accuracy. Walter D. Mignolo for example suggests the use of the term neocoloniality, in order to grasp a plurality of times in relation to the colonial matrix of power. (See Mignolo *ibid*, p. 46)

²⁷ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, eds., *Key concepts in post-colonial studies*, Key concepts series (London [u.a.]: Routledge, 2001), see p. 1

²⁸ See Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, p. 12

²⁹ Gayatri C. Spivak, “Teaching for the Times,” in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, nation, and postcolonial perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat, Cultural politics v. 11 (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 478

³⁰ See Mignolo, “Further Thoughts on (De)Coloniality”, p. 27-33

³¹ See Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, p. 54

the issue at stake and acknowledge the heterogeneous realities in a world beyond formal colonialism.³²

It is the epistemic violence, that accompanied the colonial expansion and economic exploitation, which is taken into perspective by a postcolonial analysis. In order to redraft the 'imperial narrative', the authority of European and Western principles in the historical and current production of knowledge has to be recognized.³³ Epistemic violence continues to shape the knowledge production in neocolonial times and thus construct the so called postcolonial subject.³⁴ This thesis aims at the analysis of neocolonial power relations towards political theories. As depicted above, under a postcolonial perspective the global validity of central categories cannot be taken for granted.³⁵ This remains true for categories of the state and associated institutions. The idea of 'democracy', as an ideal with alleged universal value, can function as an example here. Contemporary attempts to spread and monitor the progress of democratization across the world are becoming a mean of global governance.³⁶ A critical attempt to identify limits of democracy gains new urgency when liberal democracy is being touted as the *non plus ultra* of social systems.³⁷ Especially political systems that are based on liberal principles cannot claim universal validity, because liberalism is marked by its Western origin.³⁸ Thus, democracy reveals itself as a product of a particular environment, emerged under specific construction of power.³⁹

Market-based liberal-representative multiparty democracy is used as a global measure and ignores the socio-historic specificities of democratic norms and practices. This is not to say that the values of democracy, as individualism and traditions of rights, are unique for Western societies, but a mechanic one-to-one transplantation of liberal democratic institutions cannot have the same value for non-Western societies. The contemporary

³² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, 3. print (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000), p. 314-316

³³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Europa provinzialisieren: Postkolonialität und die Kritik der Geschichte," in Conrad; Randeria; Römhild, *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus*, p. 155

³⁴ See Castro Varela, María do Mar and Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie*, p. 56

³⁵ See Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Europa provinzialisieren: Postkolonialität und die Kritik der Geschichte," in Conrad; Randeria; Römhild, *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus*, p. 157

³⁶ See Ricardo Blaug and John Schwarzmantel, eds., *Democracy: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), P. 418

³⁷ See Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere", p. 56

³⁸ See Bhikhu Parekh, "The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy," *Political Studies* 40, no. 1 (1992), doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.1992.tb01819.x, p. 170

³⁹ See Blaug and Schwarzmantel, *Democracy*

practice of democracy emerged as a result of a colonial consensus.⁴⁰ Especially in the context of postcolonial societies the value of democracy should be assessed in the light of their cultural resources, needs and circumstances.⁴¹ Considerations of differences in power relations, through different historical experiences, gain great importance. In her essay “*The absence of non-western IR theory in Asia reconsidered*” (2011) Chen points out that the incorporation of ideas from so called local vantage points does not make the realm of international relation and democracy theories more global or democratic. Decolonization, in this perspective, calls for a transformation of Eurocentric epistemological foundations.⁴²

The West has taken a clear political and economic ground in the racial distribution of capital and knowledge, during its colonial rule.⁴³ Thus considerations of knowledge production reveal the relevance of re-examining central political categories towards colonial power positions. In this light I will reconsider the category of political representation. In the work at hand I will work out how the subaltern of a postcolonial state cannot be heard in conceptions of political representation based on hegemonic assumptions of the West.

3. John Stuart Mill’s Thoughts on Representation

John Stuart Mill was born 1806 in London. He was the first son of James Mill, a firm advocate of Utilitarianism who personally undertook his son’s education. John Stuart Mill never visited a school or university. Under the supervision of his father, who believed in the enhancement of the people through education, he started to learn Greek at the age of three. When he was seven he read Platon in the original language and revised the logic of Aristotle at the age of eleven. The conviction about the value of education John Stuart Mill adopted from his father and is one of the core elements of his political considerations.⁴⁴ 1823, at the age of seventeen, Mill followed his father into the service of the East India Company. The East India Company was a semi-private body of control which administrated the British colonies in India.⁴⁵ His involvement in the Company has, as I will discuss later in this work, to be taken

⁴⁰ See Amartya K. Sen, “Democracy as a Universal Value,” *Journal of Democracy* 10, no. 3 (1999), doi:10.1353/jod.1999.0055, p. 15

⁴¹ See Parekh, “The Cultural Particularity of Liberal Democracy”, p. 172

⁴² See Ching-Chang Chen, “The absence of non-western IR theory in Asia reconsidered,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 11, no. 1 (2010), doi:10.1093/irap/lcq014, p. 1-4

⁴³ See Mignolo, “Further Thoughts on (De)Coloniality”, p. 29

⁴⁴ See Dominique Kuenzle and Michael Schefczyk, *John Stuart Mill zur Einführung*, Zur Einführung 360 (Hamburg: Junius, 2009), p. 18

⁴⁵ See Stefan Collini, “Introduction,” in Mill; Collini, *On liberty*, p. ix

into consideration when approaching his texts, because it certainly had an influence on his political contributions. 1826 he had a mental breakdown and suffered from a severe depression for almost two years.⁴⁶ This experience of human insufficiency profoundly challenged Mill to rethink some aspects of his education and political disposition. He became an advocate of civic education and individual liberty.⁴⁷ In 1851 he married Harriet Taylor, who died only seven years later. It is not clear which role she played in his writings, but she probably strongly influenced his sympathy for certain forms of socialism and the issue of women's suffrage.⁴⁸ 1865, with almost sixty years, he decided to run for a post at the British parliament, but refused to canvas. Yet he was elected as liberal MP for the Westminster. During his incumbency he unsuccessfully undertook an attempt to modify the Reform Bill in favor of the women's suffrage.⁴⁹ After one term he lost his seat and died 1873 in Avignon.⁵⁰

At the center of Mill's political writings is the search for the best form of government.⁵¹ Based on utilitarian principles, that are emphasizing the greatest amount of good with the least of evil for the society as a whole, Mill proposes two criteria for the assessment of different forms of government.⁵² He concludes that with due regard to these criteria representative institutions are necessarily providing the most desirable form of government. In his essay "*On Liberty*", first published in 1859, he discusses the limits of legitimate power of the society over the individual.⁵³ Based on this he develops his thoughts on political representation. In "*Considerations on Representative Government*" (1861) he elaborates why representative government is the best form of government. Today Mill's work is admitted in the modern canon of the history of political thought.⁵⁴ In the following I will focus on his formulations on political representation and thus limit myself to the aforementioned contributions.

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, p. ix

⁴⁷ See Lance DeHaven-Smith, *Foundations of Representative Democracy* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), p. 67

⁴⁸ See Stefan Collini, "Introduction," in Mill; Collini, *On liberty*, p. x

⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, p. ix

⁵⁰ See *ibid.*, p. xxvi

⁵¹ See Manfred G. Schmidt, *Demokratietheorien: Eine Einführung*, Lizenzausg. [der 5. Aufl.], Schriftenreihe / Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung 1059 (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2010), p. 133

⁵² See John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, Great books in philosophy (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1991), p. 10

⁵³ See John S. Mill, "On Liberty: (1859)," in Mill; Collini, *On liberty*, p. 5

⁵⁴ See Stefan Collini, "Introduction," in Mill; Collini, *On liberty*, p. vii

3.3 Why Representative Governments?

Based on utilitarian principles, Mill discusses two criteria on which ground every form of government can be evaluated. The first criterion is “the degree in which it tends to increase the sum of good qualities in the governed, collectively and individually.”⁵⁵ While the second assesses the degree in which the government makes use of the good qualities for the right purpose.⁵⁶ Under these considerations representative government is the best form of government to Mill. Unlike Bentham, John Stuart Mill thinks political institutions as dependent on the people. To Mill, political institutions are the product of human agency and the political constitution of a state is dependent on the character of its citizenry. A nation cannot choose its governmental formation, but has to adjust to the given conditions, provided by the human beings composing the society.⁵⁷

To read Mill correctly we have to acknowledge the time he has lived in. John Stuart Mill was born in a century that was shaped by rapid industrial change and economic and imperial expansion.⁵⁸ The trade of Africans as slaves over the Atlantic was abolished and the tension between democratic equality and freedom in Great Britain was rising.⁵⁹ The experience of the French Revolution had a significant influence on the political discourse. It illustrated a conclusive example of the dangers of social tyranny to Mill.⁶⁰ To him, the great and paramount question of the age was the question of democracy.⁶¹ Similarly to what De Tocqueville had observed and commented in his *“De la Démocratie en Amérique”* (1835), Mill identified certain foibles and dangers in the course of democratization. The term democratization was used to describe profound changes in the nineteenth century, for example the vast augmentation of literacy. The ability to read provided the many with the opportunity to unite and to learn to cooperate.⁶² Mill refers here to ‘the many’ as the majority of the people, consisting of the so called uninstructed middle-class. His object was

⁵⁵ Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 40

⁵⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 40

⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 12, 21, 37f

⁵⁸ See Schmidt, *Demokratiethorien*, p. 132

⁵⁹ See Kuenzle and Schefczyk, *John Stuart Mill zur Einführung*, p. 17 and Schmidt, *Demokratiethorien*, p. 132

⁶⁰ See Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 24

⁶¹ See John S. Mill, “De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (1): [1835],” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill: Essays on Politics and Society*, ed. John M. Robson and Alexander Brady, 33 vols. 18 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 49

⁶² See *ibid.*, p. 51

not the prevention of democracy, as the movement was inexorable towards democracy since the dawn of so called modern civilization, but to make it a well-regulated democracy.⁶³

The invention of mass media and the growth in literacy enabled the people to conceive themselves as a collective that shared the same convictions and preferences.⁶⁴ The emergence of a collective consciousness and the new capacity to cooperate for a common purpose made motions and activities of the masses increasingly significant for the fate of the society.⁶⁵ Mill states: “Hardly anything now depends upon individuals, but upon classes [...]”.⁶⁶ Thus, in a purely democratic state it would be the uninstructed middle-class that would succeed to make itself the ruling class. This is what struck Mill the most and he states in *“The Spirit of the Ages”* (1831):

“[In times of transition] *the multitude are without a guide; and society is exposed to all the errors and dangers which are to be expected when persons who have never studied any branch of knowledge comprehensively and as a whole attempt to judge for themselves upon particular parts of it.*”⁶⁷

Traditional authority, which was given through inheritance or conquest, was now challenged by a democratic self-empowerment of the individual. Contradictory to early European liberalists who thought elective rulers as necessarily in line with the people, Mill argued that limiting the power of the government loses none of its importance.⁶⁸ To him, society itself could become the tyrant.⁶⁹ He thus argues; “now, as ever, the great problem in government is to prevent the strongest from becoming the only power [...]”.⁷⁰ In this conception the so called ‘tyranny of the majority’ can be more parlous than many kinds of political oppression, because it leaves fewer means to escape and freedom is given only through the freedom to

⁶³ See *ibid.*, p. 50 + 56

⁶⁴ See John S. Mill, “De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (2): [1840],” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill: Essays on Politics and Society*, ed. John M. Robson and Alexander Brady, 33 vols. 18 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 194

⁶⁵ See Mill, “De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (1)” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, p. 51

⁶⁶ See Mill, “De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (2)” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, p. 194

⁶⁷ See John S. Mill, “The Spirit of the Age (1831),” in *Mill: Texts, Commentaries*, ed. John S. Mill and Alan Ryan, A Norton critical edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), p. 9

⁶⁸ See John S. Mill, “On Liberty: (1859),” in Mill; Collini, *On liberty*, p. 5f

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 8

⁷⁰ Mill, “De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (2)” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, p. 200

dissent from the opinion of the majority.⁷¹ Mill consequently emphasizes the importance of controlling democratic government:

“The will of the people, moreover, practically means the will of the most numerous or the most active part of the people; the majority, or those who succeed in making themselves accepted as the majority; the people, consequently, may desire to oppress a part of their number; and precautions are as much needed against this as against any other abuse of power.”⁷²

The protection and representation of minorities is thus an essential part for Mill’s conception of democracy, best performed by representative governments.⁷³ He perceived that if democracy was transformed by the device of representation, a debating rather than a silent assembly had to be restored. Although a majority had to be formed to make political decisions, the citizenry as a whole is, in Mill’s conception, entitled to the right of representation.⁷⁴ In his perspective the interests of those who are excluded from the political process are always in danger to be ignored or misread. He states: “Each is the only safe guardian of his own rights and interests.”⁷⁵ Above that, good government based on utilitarian principles requires to make the most of the good propositions in a nation. To Mill good representative government should seek active participation of the citizenry. This would, according to him, introduce the mind of each to thoughts that are extending the individual needs and thus cultivate the citizenry as a whole.⁷⁶ He argues:

“It is not sufficiently considered how little there is in most men’s ordinary life to give any largeness either to their conceptions or their sentiments. Their work is a routine; not a labor of love, but of self-interest in the most elementary form, the satisfaction of daily wants; [...]. Giving him something to do for the public supplies, in a measure, all these deficiencies. If circumstances allow the amount of public duty assigned him to be considerable, it makes him an educated man.”⁷⁷

⁷¹ See John S. Mill, “On Liberty: (1859),” in Mill; Collini, *On liberty*, p. 8

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 8

⁷³ Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 151

⁷⁴ See Nadia Urbinati, *Mill on democracy: From the Athenian polis to representative government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 9

⁷⁵ Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 65

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 78

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78

Through political participation the ordinary man is made one of the public, and consequently understands the public interest as his interest. This 'school of public spirit', advanced through representative government, is performing the best influence upon the character of the nation. Every individual is, at least occasionally, required to take part in the government.⁷⁸ Where this does not happen, the private person will not recognize any duties towards society; expect to obey the law and submit to the government.⁷⁹ A people that is too passive is, according to Mill, equally unready for representative government as one that is not ready to acknowledge a superior power. Representative government is thus based on the active participation of the citizenry. In Mill's perception, it secures the representation of every person, unlike pure democracy where the rule of the people is effectively the rule of the numerical majority over the minority. To secure the representation of the minority is thus one of the core elements of good government to Mill and prevents society from the so called 'tyranny of the masses'.⁸⁰ The admission of all to a share in the sovereign power of the state is ultimately desirable, but not everybody can personally contribute to the public business. Thus, the ideal type of government of communities that are exceeding the size of a small town must be representative.⁸¹ On this basis Mill concludes that representative government is the best form of government. How exactly he wants to ensure a system that equally represents all positions I will elaborate more specifically in the next chapter.

3.2 How to conduct Representative Governments properly?

In order to achieve the best government possible, in the above depicted aspects, Mill suggests that the electorate should be encouraged to participate personally and directly. He distinguishes between the national and the local level. A representative type of government is therefore the ideal form on the national level, while on the local level direct participation is possible and desirable. Like de Tocqueville, Mill considers democratic processes on the local level as the place where the individual is to achieve political maturity. He argues:

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 64

⁷⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 69 + 79

⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 151

⁸¹ See *ibid.*, p. 80

“What really constitutes education is the formation of habits; and as we do not learn to read or to write, to ride or to swim, by being merely told how to do it, but by doing it, so it is only by practicing popular government on a limited scale, that the people will ever learn how to exercise it on a larger.”⁸²

On the national level Mill distinguishes sharply between doing and controlling the government, which allowed him to propose an original argument with important democratic implications.⁸³ According to Mill a state’s government consists of the administration on the one and representation on the other hand. The representative body, elected periodically by the citizenry, is responsible for controlling the business of the government, while the administration is doing it.⁸⁴ The general function of the representative Parliament is not to interfere with the public business but to control that it is well done.⁸⁵ The tendency of the representative body to interfere in the details of administration is the main danger Mill conceives for the practicability of representative government.⁸⁶ The representative assembly is, according to Mill, unfit to govern, because it is a fair sample of every grade of intellect among the people, and not composed of the greatest political minds.⁸⁷ Emancipating bureaucracy from political preferences represents a crucial step toward democratization in Mill’s theory. To him, the deliberative body rather than the executive is the defining institution of democracy.⁸⁸

“Instead of the function of governing, for which it is radically unfit, the proper office of a representative assembly is to watch and control the government; to throw the light of publicity on its acts, to compel a full exposition and justification of all of them which any one considers questionable; to censure them if found condemnable, and, if the men who compose the government abuse their trust, or fulfill it in a manner which conflicts with the deliberate sense of the nation, to expel them from office, and either expressly or virtually appoint their successors.”⁸⁹

⁸² Mill, “De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (1)” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, p. 63

⁸³ See Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 100 and Urbinati, *Mill on democracy*, p. 55

⁸⁴ See Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 100

⁸⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 106

⁸⁶ See *ibid.* P. 108

⁸⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 118

⁸⁸ See Urbinati, *Mill on democracy*, p. 55 and 60

⁸⁹ Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 115f

According to Mill, the exclusion of women from any political power is a severe injustice that cannot be justified through a utilitarian principle. To him, political competition is enough of a safeguard to grant that no person who is not competent enough to hold political authority would enter the arena of public affairs.⁹⁰ The difference of sex is thus entirely irrelevant to political rights and an a priori exclusion of women depicts an artificial inequality.⁹¹ In his perspective, an expansion of the suffrage towards women would double the mass of mental faculties that are available for the higher service of humanity. Consequently the general society as a whole would improve.⁹² This does not only erase unjustified social inequality, it also further advances the national character, according to Mill.

He suggests that the privilege of voting should be only bound on conditions which can be influenced by the individual itself. As a representative of the liberal thought, he is convinced that nobody should be excluded except through their own default.⁹³ Therefore he suggests conditions, bound to the privilege of voting, that would exclude no one that is interested enough in the political process. He states: "I regard it as wholly inadmissible that any person should participate in the suffrage without being able to read, write, and, I will add, perform the common operations of arithmetic", this would "leave the suffrage accessible to all who are in the normal condition of a human being".⁹⁴ To guarantee every citizen an equal chance to compete, to be represented and to be heard, Mill calls for a national system of education.⁹⁵ At the time he distinguishes carefully between opportunity for and kind of education. The former must be, according to Mill, guaranteed by the state, while the latter is not the state's business.⁹⁶ He argues that a general state education is a "mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like on another" and thus would establish a "despotism over the mind, leading by natural tendency to one over the body."⁹⁷ All that has been said of the importance of individual liberty and diversity in opinions involves, to Mill, the diversity of education. Thus, in general, if the country contains a sufficient number of persons qualified to provide education, the state's obligation would be to defray the expenses for those

⁹⁰ See John S. Mill, "The Subjection of Women: [1869]," in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill: Essays on Equality, Law, and Education*, ed. John M. Robson and Stefan Collini (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 280

⁹¹ See Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 190

⁹² See Mill, "The Subjection of Women" in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, p. 326

⁹³ Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 173

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 174 + 178

⁹⁵ See Urbinati, *Mill on democracy*, p. 61

⁹⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 132

⁹⁷ John S. Mill, "On Liberty: (1859)," in Mill; Collini, *On liberty*, p. 106f

unable to afford it.⁹⁸ In a state that is conducted accordingly, the citizenry would consist only of those ready to acquire the necessary level of education and able to grasp its wider interests.⁹⁹ A nation that incorporates the greatest amount of people would, according to Mill, cultivate a citizenry that arrives at better decisions, there he argues for the expansion of the suffrage.

For the same purpose he suggests a system based on so called plural votes. According to Mill, every person is ought to have a vote, but not an equal vote. To him not every voice is worth the same and the voice of the higher moral or intellect is worth more than of the person inferior to it.¹⁰⁰ More potential voters, who are able to better understand the subject at stake, should obtain two or more votes.¹⁰¹ The plural vote, as suggested by Mill, is not installed to outweigh one part of the community, but should serve as a means of protection from class legislation, of the uneducated as well as of the educated.¹⁰² Thus Mill emphasizes that this plurality scheme should be equally open to the poorest individual as to the richest in the community. Everyone ought to be able to prove that he or she is entitled to the privilege of obtaining a plurality of votes through voluntary examinations.¹⁰³ To be left out of a constitution is, according to Mill, a great discouragement to the individual as to a class.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless his consideration of representative governments cannot claim universality.

3.3 Towards the Universality of Mill's Theory of Political Representation

Despite his conviction that a suffrage carried out as he suggests would be universal, his proposed suffrage excludes a substantial number of people.¹⁰⁵ As depicted above Mill firmly vindicates an expansion of the suffrage. To him, the ideally best form of government is that which keeps the supreme controlling power in the community. Representative government, conducted properly, enables every citizen to voice their interests and to take part, at least occasionally, in the government, local or national.¹⁰⁶ Everybody capable of it should get the chance to take account in the government. But not everybody is capable of having a voice in

⁹⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 106f

⁹⁹ See Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 176

¹⁰⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 179f

¹⁰¹ See *ibid.*, p. 181 - 183

¹⁰² See *ibid.*, p. 184f

¹⁰³ See *ibid.*, p. 185

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.*, p. 179

¹⁰⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 64

the political processes and, even more noteworthy, not every nation is capable of representative government, conducted as suggested by Mill.¹⁰⁷ In this chapter we therefore leave the context of national government and discuss why Mill argued for a government of liberated states over so called dependencies.

As discussed above, to Mill the political institutions are dependent on the people composing the society. The search for the best form of government is thus dependent on the conditions of the citizenry.¹⁰⁸ Capacities of learning and adapting are differing greatly between nations and stages of civilization, according to Mill.¹⁰⁹ In a state where the people are regarding only their interests, is not sufficiently interested in the democratic process and do not make use of their right to vote, representative government is impossible.¹¹⁰ Consequently not every nation is equally capable of adopting any form of government at any time.¹¹¹ To figure and introduce the best institutions possible in a country is thus one of the most rational objects.¹¹² Where the people have not yet settled to any common superior and are in a generally bad disposition, representative government cannot perform effectively.¹¹³ In such a state, progress in civilization is practically impossible and thus he suggests a foreign government that is “in a considerable degree despotic [...]”.¹¹⁴ To Mill the improvement of so called savage states “cannot come from themselves, but must be superinduced from without.”¹¹⁵ Only the best form of government could help them advance from where they could otherwise only develop in a lopsided manner.¹¹⁶ Mill argues for a benevolent inspired rule of a superior people, belonging to a more advanced state of society.¹¹⁷ To him, foreign government is the most suitable form for a people in the earliest stage of civilization.¹¹⁸

Again we have to acknowledge the context in which Mill has developed his conception of good government. Throughout his life he had worked 35 years for the East India Company, which was in charge of the government of Great Britain over India. The years towards the

¹⁰⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 11, 39, 46f, 62

¹⁰⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 37 + 85

¹⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 19

¹¹⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 16 + 49

¹¹¹ See *ibid.*, p. 13

¹¹² See *ibid.*, p. 20

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 15 + 38f

¹¹⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 15 + 47

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49

¹¹⁶ See *ibid.*, p. 50

¹¹⁷ See Martin Moir, “Introduction,” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill: Writings On India*, ed. John M. Robson, Martin Moir and Zawahir Moir, Reprinted., 33 vols. 30 (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press 1996), p. xliif

¹¹⁸ See Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 90

extinguishment of the Company in 1858 Mill firmly argued for its retention. His conception of good government and especially his theory of political representation must be viewed in this light.¹¹⁹ As he argues towards the importance of foreign government he probably has the future of the East India Company in mind. As I will elaborate in the discussion more detailed, his argumentation for foreign governments of so called 'savage states' reveals itself as an argument for the retention of the East India Company. It is, according to Mill, the only institution that advances the state in question, while keeping the nation's interest in mind.

4. The Subaltern

This thesis is based on the conception of the subaltern by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak was born in 1942 in Calcutta, five years before India reached independency from British colonial rule. She graduated 1959 from Presidency College of the University of Calcutta and has made her following academic career in the United States.¹²⁰ After attaining a Master degree in English from Cornell University and a one-year fellowship at Girton College she completed her doctoral dissertation on Yeats.¹²¹ Today, Spivak's texts are influencing the intellectual production from around the world. She is one of the guiding feminist critics with an international reputation.¹²² Especially her translation of Derrida's "*De la Grammatology*", and her subsequent work on deconstruction within a deeply feminist perspective is of importance for the academic discourse. The essay "*Can the Subaltern speak?*", first published in 1988, is regarded as one of the most influential works in postcolonial theory.¹²³ In "*Can the Subaltern speak?*" Spivak is initially developing her conception of the subaltern. Hereupon she is making various additional notes and revisions which this thesis will make use of. Especially the annotations Spivak makes in an interview with the editors of the "*Spivak Reader*" (1993), and her revisions contained in "*A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*" (2000) are of importance.

¹¹⁹ See Moir, "Introduction" in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, p. xli

¹²⁰ See Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, "Introduction: Reading Spivak," in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, ed. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 1

¹²¹ See *ibid.*, p. 1-2

¹²² See *ibid.*, p. 2-3

¹²³ See J. Maggio, "Can the Subaltern Be Heard? Political Theory, Translation, Representation, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 32, no. 4 (2007), doi:10.1177/030437540703200403, p. 419

The term of the subaltern has its historical roots in the writings of Antonio Gramsci. Revisited in the context of postcolonial theory, by the Subaltern Study Group, the term developed towards a conception of a space that is cut off from any social mobility.¹²⁴ On Spivak's account, the subaltern is unable to make herself heard. She is by definition below the dominant narrative.¹²⁵ Once she has successfully entered the discourse and made herself heard, she ceases to be subaltern. The inclusion of the subaltern, and thus the erasure of any subaltern space, according to Spivak, must be the desired goal.¹²⁶

4.1 The Concept of the Subaltern by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

In her essay "*Can the Subaltern Speak?*" Spivak relied on the redoing of Antonio Gramsci's notion of the subaltern by the Subaltern Studies Group.¹²⁷ The Italian Marxist writer Antonio Gramsci was the first to use the term of the subaltern in his famous "*Prison Notebooks*" (1929 -1935).¹²⁸ Due to the fascist censorship in Italy at that time he could not use the Marxist term 'proletariat' and surrogated it with that of the subaltern.¹²⁹ Gramsci refers with this term to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes.¹³⁰ In this work the term 'hegemony' is used as suggested by Gramsci, referring to the power of a class that succeeded in persuading other classes of society to accept its moral, political and cultural values.¹³¹ In Gramsci's conception the subaltern is denied access to social power, she is politically unorganized and do not possess a general class-consciousness.¹³² She is excluded from political representation, because she is not able to constitute herself as political subject.¹³³ The Subaltern Studies Group, formed by Ranajit Guha, aims at a systematic study on the issue of the subaltern through rethinking Indian historiography from the perspective of peasant insurgency.¹³⁴ For that purpose they extended the term of the

¹²⁴ See Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, "Subaltern Talk: Interview with the Editors (29 October 1993)," in, p. 288f

¹²⁵ See Bart J. Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (New York: Verso, 2000), p.81+88

¹²⁶ See Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, p. 310

¹²⁷ See Landry and MacLean, "Subaltern Talk", p. 288

¹²⁸ See Castro Varela, María do Mar and Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie*, p. 69

¹²⁹ See Steyerl, Hito, "Die Gegenwart der Subalternen", in: Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", p. 8

¹³⁰ See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, "Subaltern," in *Key concepts in post-colonial studies*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, Key concepts series (London [u.a.]: Routledge, 2001), p. 215

¹³¹ Monica Stillo, "Antonio Gramsci: Concept of Hegemony," accessed March 8, 2018, <http://www.theory.org.uk/ctr-gram.htm#hege>

¹³² See Castro Varela, María do Mar and Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie*, p. 69

¹³³ See Steyerl, Hito, "Die Gegenwart der Subalternen", in: Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", p. 9

¹³⁴ See Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," p. 78

subaltern above the Marxist understanding and included any form of social subordination expressed by class, caste, age, or gender.¹³⁵

For Spivak, the constitution of the neo-colonial subject is the clearest example of how epistemic violence is continuously exerted. She approaches nineteenth-century historiography in the light of colonial power relations, which offers an account of European archives that differs from the usual construction as “repositories of facts”.¹³⁶ In her understanding, the definition of the subaltern is more than an identity in difference.¹³⁷ Spivak criticizes the definition of the Subaltern Studies Group, which identifies the subaltern space as a space between foreign and indigenous elites and points out:

*“The object of the group’s investigation, in the regional case not even of the people as such but of the floating buffer zone of the regional elite-subaltern is a deviation from an ideal – the people or subaltern – which is itself defined as a difference from the elite.”*¹³⁸

The abolishment of *sati* during the British Raj in India can serve as an example for the limited subaltern identification. In the practice of *sati* the Hindu widow ascends the pyre of her dead husband and immolates herself upon it. *Sati* was not practiced universally and neither class- nor caste-fixed. The codification of the Indian law was conducted by the Indian Law Commissioners, a body of five English advocates.¹³⁹ Especially the abolishment of *sati* was generally perceived as an act of liberation of the Indian woman.¹⁴⁰ Indian nativists argued simultaneously that the woman wanted to die and conceived the abolishment as an act of oppression of the women’s will.¹⁴¹ Both are essentializing the voice of ‘the woman’ and thus diminishing the heterogeneous experiences of the Indian widows. The various reasons for each, to conduct *sati*, blend into a homogenous utterance.¹⁴²

¹³⁵ See Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, “Subaltern”, p. 216

¹³⁶ See Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, p. 203

¹³⁷ See Gayatri C. Spivak, “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography (1985),” in *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, ed. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 213

¹³⁸ Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, p. 80

¹³⁹ See John S. Mill, “Penal Code for India: [1838],” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill: Writings On India*, ed. John M. Robson, Martin Moir and Zawahir Moir, Reprinted., 33 vols. 30 (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press u.a, 1996), p. 20

¹⁴⁰ See Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, p. 63

¹⁴¹ See *ibid.*

¹⁴² See *ibid.*, p. 79

Spivak's substantive contributions on this topic are helpful to further comprehend her understanding of the subaltern. She states: "In the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak [...]"¹⁴³ Here speaking is not to be taken literally as talk. She is rather referring to the speech act, as the transaction between a speaker and a listener.¹⁴⁴ A completed speech act requires both, someone who talks and someone who listens. For Spivak the subaltern does not fail to talk, but there is nobody who listens; "even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard."¹⁴⁵ The discussion around the widow-sacrifice illustrates how a subaltern voice is not heard by the privileged of neither First nor Third World.¹⁴⁶ The sexed subaltern is doubly in shadow as the figure of the women disappears between the violent discourses of imperialism and patriarchy.¹⁴⁷ The special misfortune of having a female body is hidden in both narratives. While the imperialistic notion can be generally understood as a case of 'white men saving brown women from brown men', the Indian nativist argumentation identifies individual agency within the act of *sati*, constructing the act as a killing of the female body in the entire cycle of birth.¹⁴⁸ The testimony of the women's voice is never encountered as it is oppressed by both; colonialist liberation and nativist insurgency.¹⁴⁹ According to Spivak there are two senses of representation that are often being run together.¹⁵⁰ On the one hand representation as in the German word *vertreten*, which can be cautiously translated into 'speaking for'. On the other hand there is representation as *darstellen* which means as much as 're-presentation' as in art or philosophy.¹⁵¹ The collapse of the two meanings can lead to the fundamental mistake to assume literal referents behind masterwords like 'the worker' and 'the women'.¹⁵² While the British administrators depicted themselves as standing in for the rights of 'the Indian woman' (representation in the sense of *vertreten*), the Indian nativist argument represents itself as the speaking of the woman herself (*darstellen*).

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 83

¹⁴⁴ See Landry and MacLean, "Subaltern Talk", p. 289 - 291

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 292

¹⁴⁶ See Landry and MacLean, "Introduction" in *The Spivak Reader*, p. 5

¹⁴⁷ See Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", 84, p. 99 – 103,

¹⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 93 + 99

¹⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 82, 93, 98

¹⁵⁰ On Spivak's account Marx uses both terms in his work "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon", but in English translations the terms got confused and are often run together now. Due to the very limited space I cannot refer to the whole controversy in length here. p. 70f

¹⁵¹ See Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, p. 256f

¹⁵² See Landry and MacLean, "Introduction" in *The Spivak Reader*, p. 6

Spivak further explains the distinction between the two senses of representation with a conversation between Foucault and Deleuze as an example. She argues, that in “Intellectuals and power: a Conversation between Michael Foucault and Gilles Deleuzes” (1972) both philosophers omit the implications of the international division of labor and thus foreclose any considerations of power.¹⁵³ In her analysis of the conversation of the two philosophers she points out how the reference to ‘the worker’s struggle’ depicts ‘the worker’ as a homogenous group, ignoring heterogeneous experiences due to international differences in conditions of labor. According to Mill, the contemporary international division of labor must be understood as a displacement of the divided field of nineteenth century territorial imperialism.¹⁵⁴ The subaltern does not stay essentially untouched by the global economy, but is only remotely involved.¹⁵⁵ In their effort to further the struggle of the subaltern for greater recognition Foucault and Deleuze ignore different dimensions of power in their analysis.¹⁵⁶ Through their self-construction as merely representing, as in terms of *darstellen*, the ‘worker’s struggle’ they make themselves allegedly transparent.¹⁵⁷ The intellectual can think itself as playing a negligent role in the construction of the subject at stake, when assuming a subject that can speak for itself. The contrary is the case; heterogeneous subject formations from around the world are being continuously suppressed.¹⁵⁸ As long as the complicity between the investigating subject and its object is being ignored the margin of the subaltern will continue to narrow, due to lasting power distribution.

This depicts itself as especially challenging when acknowledging that the imperial production of a consistent narrative was most often accompanied by an educational program.¹⁵⁹ Particularly the indigenous elite played a special role as so called native informants. Their intellectual production served as source of legitimization for the imperial’s undertakings. The use of the British colonial system of the separation between different disciplinary formations of the Sanskrit studies can serve as an example here. In their function of native informant’s authoritative, Sanskrit scholars generated cultural explanations that matched the aims of the colonialists. Gradually a version of history was established, that had the same intentions as

¹⁵³ See *ibid.*, p. 9

¹⁵⁴ See Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, p. 83

¹⁵⁵ See Landry and MacLean, “Subaltern Talk”, p. 292

¹⁵⁶ See Bart J. Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (New York: Verso, 2000), p. 89; Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, p. 69

¹⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 70

¹⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 62 + 74

¹⁵⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 77

the British administrators and was thus providing additional legitimation for the imperial ruler.¹⁶⁰ Spivak refers here to Thomas Babington Macaulay, a British historian and politician, who wrote in his *“Minute on Indian education”* (1835): “We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions who we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.”¹⁶¹ Thus trapped between elite forces, indigene and imperial, the subaltern had, and continues to have, no means to make herself heard.¹⁶²

Taking these strategies of colonial power production into consideration reveals that the subaltern is entirely constructed by colonial discourses; consequently, there is nothing that can be reached independently from it. As discussed in the second chapter of this work, to assume colonial power relations in today’s knowledge production only as part of the past reveals itself as false, especially under a deconstructive perspective. The complicity between the investigation subject and its object, especially in regard to colonial narratives, has to be acknowledged continuously.¹⁶³ A nostalgia for any lost origins blurs the role of the West in the production of the rest of the world.¹⁶⁴ The colonizer constructed himself as he constructed the colony.¹⁶⁵ The same conceptions are being used continuously in today’s knowledge production. Thus any notion of a ‘pure’ or ‘original’ form of neocolonial consciousness implies that colonialism has had no role in constructing the identity of its subjects and is therefore misleading.¹⁶⁶ Every moment that is being noticed as a case of subalternity is undermined by a colonial history of oppression and has to be acknowledged in this context.¹⁶⁷ In order to approach the production of the colonial subject critically, today’s intellectual must carefully preserve a place that can be occupied by the subaltern herself and is not immediately occupied by any form of representation, as discussed above.

¹⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 77 - 79

¹⁶¹ Thomas Babington Macaulay and George Malcolm Young, *Speeches by Lord Macaulay: With his minute on Indian education*, 1st AMS ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 359

¹⁶² See Landry and MacLean, “Introduction” in *The Spivak Reader*, p. 5

¹⁶³ See Spivak, “Subaltern Studies” in *The Spivak Reader*, 232

¹⁶⁴ See Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, p. 87

¹⁶⁵ See Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, p. 203

¹⁶⁶ See Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory*, p. 86

¹⁶⁷ See Landry and MacLean, “Subaltern Talk”, p. 289

4.2 Deconstructive Criticism after Spivak

Under these considerations Spivak's attempt to rehabilitate deconstructive strategies for the use in postcolonial analysis becomes visible. She emphasizes the importance of revealing assumptions, strategies, and rhetoric through which a given narrative is, politically, literarily, historically, and theoretically, grounded.¹⁶⁸ Power relations can be revealed by putting the reader at the center of the production of meaning.¹⁶⁹ To read deconstructively is, according to Spivak, to read archives, historiography and other works in regard to what they cannot say. Thus, one is able to trace back a collective ideological refusal that can be diagnosed for the codifying legal practices of imperialism.¹⁷⁰ Spivak borrows this formula for the interpretation of ideology from the French philosopher Pierre Macherey, who states: "What is important in the work is what it does not say."¹⁷¹ He further elaborates a method called 'measuring silences' upon which Spivak basis her outline for the postcolonial intellectual to contribute to the production of the subaltern in a complicitous way. Between 'standing in for' and 'embody' the subaltern, the task of the intellectual, aiming to reintroduce the subaltern into the hegemonic discourse, is to assume a place of 'inaccessible blankness'.¹⁷² Any search for lost origins is accompanied by the risk to efface the 'inaccessible blankness' the subaltern space constitutes. Conserving this space as inaccessible serves as a reminder of the limits of Western knowledge and reveals that there is nothing which can be developed independently from the colonial territorial and formal violence. Finding the subaltern is not so hard, but actually entering into a responsibility structure with her, with responses flowing both ways, is.¹⁷³ Learning to learn to speak with the subaltern, instead of about or through her, is to unlearn assumptions of cultural supremacy, and to speak in a way that she is able to answer back.¹⁷⁴ To bring the subaltern into the hegemonic discourse, not through cultural benevolence, but through extra-academic work, is to work for the subaltern.¹⁷⁵ This is the task of the intellectual aiming to reintroduce the subaltern into the hegemonic discourse.

¹⁶⁸ See Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory*, p. 82 - 84

¹⁶⁹ See Landry and MacLean, "Introduction" in *The Spivak Reader*, p. 11

¹⁷⁰ See Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", p. 82

¹⁷¹ Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, translated from the French by Geoffrey Wall, Routledge classics (London, Henley and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978)

¹⁷² See Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", p. 89

¹⁷³ See Landry and MacLean, "Subaltern Talk", p. 293

¹⁷⁴ See Landry and MacLean, "Introduction" in *The Spivak Reader*, p. 2, "Subaltern Talk", p. 293

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 307

As depicted above the subaltern cannot speak because she is either 'stood in for' or assumed to be able to embody herself in the dominant discourse.¹⁷⁶ Between keeping the status quo intact, by leaving the Other's radical alterity untouched and attempting to opening up to that Other, without assimilating it to one's own position, the task of the postcolonial intellectual is not an easy one.¹⁷⁷ Spivak continuously acknowledges the ambiguities of her own position as a privileged Western-based critic. She points out that her own decipherment of subaltern utterance, "must not be too quickly identified with the "speaking" of the subaltern", as it is a 'speaking for' in the above presented form.¹⁷⁸ But, as she argues, her own complicity in the muting has to be acknowledged as an attempt to make subaltern utterance more effective in the long run.¹⁷⁹ To talk about the subaltern is to talk about representation and power.¹⁸⁰ The hegemonic intellectual thinks itself as transparent while he represents and hence constructs the subaltern subject. Any intellectual, that seeks to engage itself in critical praxis, must resist politics of representation and criticize any recognition of the Third World through mere assimilation towards the West.¹⁸¹ Based on the above depicted notion I will outline in the following the question of the subaltern within the issue of political representation.

4.3 Perceiving Subaltern Voices in Politics

The antagonistic fight between the civil-national elite and colonial hegemony did not leave any room for subaltern expression in its complex social constitution.¹⁸² The story of the rise of national resistance to imperialism can only be told coherently as long as the indigenous subaltern is strategically excluded.¹⁸³ Spivak argues that between the civil-national elite and the state's administration the subaltern is not able to voice her interests. She neither takes part nor does she find an interlocutor in the political discourse.¹⁸⁴ For Ranajit Guha, the

¹⁷⁶ See Maggio, "Can the Subaltern Be Heard?", p. 422

¹⁷⁷ See Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory*, p. 104

¹⁷⁸ See Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, p. 309

¹⁷⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 309

¹⁸⁰ See Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez, "Repräsentation, Subalternität und postkoloniale Kritik," in Steyerl; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, *Spricht die Subalterne deutsch?*, p. 30

¹⁸¹ See Castro Varela, María do Mar and Nikita Dhawan, "Postkolonialer Feminismus und die Kunst der Selbstkritik," in Steyerl; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, *Spricht die Subalterne deutsch?*, p. 279; Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", p. 88

¹⁸² See Castro Varela, María do Mar and Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie*, p. 69

¹⁸³ See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In other worlds: Essays in cultural politics*, Routledge classics ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008, ©1987), p. 245

¹⁸⁴ See Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, p. 357

founder of the Subaltern Studies Group, the colonial state does not contain citizens; it only has subjects that need to be controlled.¹⁸⁵ Under these considerations the subaltern depicts a disruption of the political narrative of democratic modernity.¹⁸⁶

To stick with the issue of the Indian subaltern, the project of the Subaltern Studies Group, to attend the voice of the subaltern through a re-reading of the imperial archives, could serve as an example here.¹⁸⁷ In the context of the colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak; there are no subaltern testimonials or memoirs preserved in official histories.¹⁸⁸ To retrace a 'subaltern voice' is thus a very difficult project, which needs to strategically refer to an essentialized subaltern consciousness.¹⁸⁹ This enables the Subaltern Studies Group to create a political subject that can be retraced. Under this assumption the Group is reading historiography actively, as an act of transaction between the past and the future. The potential lies in the dynamic of the breaking and relinking of the chain of imperial texts. It is this active disruption that brings hegemonic historiography into crisis and reveals its inconsistency in the light of a postcolonial perspective.¹⁹⁰ Imperialistic politics divided the Indian people into what Spivak calls native informants, and 'the rest'. The former served as representatives of 'the Indian voice' and made the perception of a voice composed by non-elite indigene people impossible.¹⁹¹ The usurpation of the subaltern voice, either through native informants or Western intellectuals, is not to be confused with her own voice consciousness. To construct representation of either one of them as a speaking of the subaltern, marginalizes and silences her permanently.¹⁹² Thus, it has to be kept in mind that the essentialization of the Subaltern Studies Group is only strategically justifiable. Through this a subaltern consciousness becomes retraceable, but it will never be fully recoverable. Depending on her receiving signifier, since the production of the colonial hegemony, the voice of the subaltern is irreducibly blurred.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁵ See: Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without hegemony: History and power in colonial India*, Digital reprint, Convergences (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997)

¹⁸⁶ See Nikita Dhawan, "Postkoloniale Staaten, Zivilgesellschaft und Subalternität," *APUZ (Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte): Kolonialismus*, 44-45 (2012), accessed December 11, 2017, <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/146979/postkoloniale-staaten-zivilgesellschaft-und-subalternitaet?p=all>, p. 4

¹⁸⁷ See Landry and MacLean, "Subaltern Talk", p. 307

¹⁸⁸ See Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", p. 83

¹⁸⁹ See Spivak, "Subaltern Studies" in *The Spivak Reader*, p. 216

¹⁹⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 206f

¹⁹¹ See Dhawan, "Postkoloniale Staaten, Zivilgesellschaft und Subalternität", p. 2

¹⁹² See *ibid.*, p. 4

¹⁹³ See Spivak, "Subaltern Studies" in *The Spivak Reader*, p. 212

In regard to the question of political representation of the subaltern it has to be acknowledged that contemporary political modernity cultivates itself in public debates.¹⁹⁴ Especially electoral democracy is used as a kind of political staging, through which the postcolonial state can legitimate itself in the global political sphere.¹⁹⁵ Particularly on election days every subject becomes a citizen of equal vote.¹⁹⁶ Medovoi, Raman and Robinson were the first to apply the question of the subaltern to a political context, in 1990. In *"Can the Subaltern Vote?"* the authors are discussing under what conditions an election is acknowledged as a completed political speech act, which allows the subaltern to be heard. For their analysis they are using the example of the presidential elections of 1990 in Nicaragua.¹⁹⁷ Medovoi, Raman and Robinson review the ability to make a political utterance, through the act of voting, and point out that representation based on elections is informed by Eurocentric notions of democracy. Neocolonial aggressions and imbalances in shares of power are not spelled out and thus deny the subaltern any form of political representation, Medovoi and his colleagues conclude in accordance to Guha.¹⁹⁸ In contrast, Spivak acknowledges the extension of power, given through the act of voting, as a first step of the subaltern into hegemony. She states: "Access to 'citizenship' (civil society) by becoming a voter (in the nation) is indeed the symbolic circuit of the mobilizing of subalternity into hegemony."¹⁹⁹ Spivak argues, "any subaltern anywhere is today, de jure, a citizen of some place or the other", consequently she is not kept from having a vote, provided that she lives in a state that is composed democratically.²⁰⁰ The question, which results from here, is not if a subaltern is having a vote or can vote, but if her vote is counted equally as a voice.

Especially in liberal conceptions of democracy it is impossible to recognize the incongruence between lived existence and representational identity. Participatory parity is thought a necessary condition in democratic processes. Fraser argues that open access is one central condition for publicity, but the public sphere is not accessible for everybody equally.²⁰¹ For the subaltern it is not possible to bracket differences in social statuses and to deliberate as if

¹⁹⁴ See Dhawan, "Postkoloniale Staaten, Zivilgesellschaft und Subalternität", p. 3

¹⁹⁵ See Nikita Dhawan, "Zwischen Empire und Empower: Dekolonisierung und Demokratisierung," *Femina Politica* 2009, no. 2, accessed November 17, 2017, p. 58

¹⁹⁶ See Dhawan, "Postkoloniale Staaten, Zivilgesellschaft und Subalternität", p. 4

¹⁹⁷ See Leerom Medovoi, Shankar Raman, and Benjamin Robinson, "Can the Subaltern Vote? Representation in the Nicaraguan Elections," *Socialist Review*, 20, No. 3 (1990), accessed November 17, 2017, p. 134

¹⁹⁸ See *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ See Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, p. 309

²⁰⁰ See Landry and MacLean, "Subaltern Talk", p. 307

²⁰¹ See Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere", p. 63 - 65

she is societal equal to its interlocutor.²⁰² It is not the lack of a speaking by the subaltern, but the absence of somebody who listens, which is the reason for her exclusion. The subaltern does not have the power to bracket the differences. Equality between speaker and listener cannot be provided by the subaltern alone but must be acknowledged from society and those who are supposed to listen. Subaltern positions exist by definition as a gap between heterogeneous realities, which she cannot voice, and represented identities.²⁰³ This gap cannot be closed by a process of representation that assumes homogenous identities; she thus cannot be assimilated into hegemony without violence.²⁰⁴ To consider democratic forms of representation under a postcolonial perspective put them into question. Subaltern spaces are, on this account, depicting a disruption of the political narrative of democratic modernity.²⁰⁵ The subaltern is not able to voice her interests equally, especially in a liberal conception of political representation. In the next chapter I will discuss the implications of these insights in regard to John Stuart Mill's theory of political representation and ask if Spivak's notion of the subaltern is applicable to it.

5. Applying the Subaltern to Mill's Theory of Representation

5.1. Mill's Theory under a Postcolonial Perspective

The chapter at hand will shed light on Mill's considerations of representative government under a postcolonial perspective. This demands us to consider his writings in the colonial context he has generated them in. Mill's position in the East India Company and his intellectual writings are not easily distinguishable. As mentioned in the short review of Mill's biography, Mill followed his father into the service of the East India Company at the age of seventeen. The East India Company was part of a complex system of dual government, immediately responsible for the administration of British territories in India and itself subject to close governmental supervision.²⁰⁶ During his 35 years of service for the Company, Mill holds different positions. 1856 he assumes the office of the first Examiner, where he is responsible for the drafting of despatches.²⁰⁷ Due to the speed of communication between London and India at that time, direct regulations of the local authorities in Calcutta, Madras

²⁰² See *ibid.*, p. 62

²⁰³ See Medovoi, Raman and Robinson, "Can the Subaltern Vote?", p. 141f

²⁰⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 141f + 146

²⁰⁵ See Dhawan, "Postkoloniale Staaten, Zivilgesellschaft und Subalternität", p. 4

²⁰⁶ See Moir, "Introduction" in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vii - x

²⁰⁷ See *ibid.*, p. xiv, xvii

or Bombay was not feasible. Thus, the despatches functioned as comments and instructions for local authorities of the British Raj.²⁰⁸ 1858 with the India Act the Company was extinguished, and its responsibilities were transferred to the British Crown. The years towards the extinguishment Mill supported firmly the retention of the East India Company. His ideas of government, and especially his writings of government in India, must be viewed in this light.²⁰⁹

Mill thought the progress of a state as the superior goal of government, which puts him in line with other advocates of the Enlightenment. He believed in a foreign government's duty to take over a less advanced state's administration with a form of benevolent despotism. In Mill's conception the liberated state was obliged to govern another, less advanced state until it had proven the conditions necessary for representative self-government.²¹⁰ It was under those conditions only that the state in question, and the people belonging to it, could take over its own administration.

“To determine the form of government most suited to any particular people, we must be able, among the defects and shortcomings which belong to that people, to distinguish those that are the immediate impediment to progress - to discover what it is which (as it were) stops the way. The best government for them is the one which tends most to give them that for want of which they cannot advance, or advance only in a lame and lopsided manner. We must not, however, forget the reservation necessary in all things which have for their object improvement, or Progress; namely, that in seeking the good which is needed, no damage, or as little as possible, be done to that already possessed.”²¹¹

At the same time he argues against the acquisition of the administration of India by the English crown. In his eyes the rule of the Company was most conducive to the progress of India; to further develop virtues and intelligence.²¹² At the other hand, a government conducted by the British crown, would not act in the interest of the citizenry, but make it object to Anglo-centric policies.²¹³ He was at the same time committed to a moral legitimacy

²⁰⁸ See *ibid.*, p. xxiv

²⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, p. xli

²¹⁰ See *ibid.*, p. xliv

²¹¹ See Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 50

²¹² See Moir, “Introduction” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, p. xlii

²¹³ See Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 345 - 357

of the British rule and the preservation of the East India Company. As Spivak worked out in her essay, the discourse around *sati*, and especially its reproduction as an act of violence against the Indian women, served as a source of legitimization for the colonial acquisition. The same remains true when looking at Mill's writings and his political program:

*"A people who are more disposed to shelter a criminal than to apprehend him; who, like the Hindoos, will perjure themselves to screen the man who has robbed them, rather than take trouble or expose against him; [...] a people who are revolted by an execution, but not shocked at an assassination, require that the public authorities should be armed with much sterner powers or repression than elsewhere, since the first indispensable requisites of civilized life have nothing else to rest on."*²¹⁴

When Mill says 'assassination' he refers to the widow-sacrifice *sati*. Especially in his writing "*Penal Code for India*" (1838) he addresses the ritual. Martin Moir points out that this text was conducted stress the significance of the abolishment of *sati* to the public attention.²¹⁵ Mill particularly sheds light on the article of statute "*Of Offences affecting Life*". It is this same article where the abolition of the *sati* takes place and to which Spivak probably refers as well. The article defines in paragraph 295 "voluntary culpable homicide" as murder, unless it is mitigated by consent or defense.²¹⁶ The code further illustrates: "[Person] Z, a Hindoo widow, consents to be burned with the corpse of her husband. [Person] A kindles the pile. Here, A has committed voluntary culpable homicide by consent."²¹⁷ Mill strongly opposes all interference with any religious practices of the people of India. He was especially hostile against any official attempts "to force English ideas down the throats of the natives" by measures of proselytism offensive to the religious feelings of the people.²¹⁸ At the same time, the construction of *sati* as abhorrent to humanity allows him to see its abolition as part of the civilizing duty.²¹⁹

²¹⁴ Ibid., 15f

²¹⁵ See Moir, "Introduction" in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, p. xl

²¹⁶ See Mill, "Penal Code for India" in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, p. 24

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 25

²¹⁸ Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 350

²¹⁹ See Moir, "Introduction" in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, p. xlvif

Ania Loomba points out, that the nature of the British intervention, from the first legislation enacted in 1813 to the final abolition of *sati* in 1829, was to gain pervasive power. Through the definition of what was voluntary and what was illegal the British Raj gained control over the state. The implementation of certain criteria to the practice of *sati*, such as caste, age, and physical state, regulated the (ill-) legality of the widow-sacrifice. Through this, the idea of the Indian woman as both victim of Hindu barbarism and supreme devotee of man could be maintained.²²⁰ In the same manner Mill's argumentation against interferences with religious practices should not be understood as a vindication of the Indian citizenry. His interest was not primarily the self-government of the people; more than that he thought their protection as a safeguard of the British Raj in the long run.²²¹ Mill feared any widespread disaffection against the British, which could override their government.²²²

Several advocates of the British government were suggesting approaches of what can be called in Spivak's words native informants. Spivak refers here to the British historian and politician Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay who among others took part in the codification of the Indian law. Macaulay promoted the use of the English language as imparting of knowledge and suggests an educational program that would make use of indigene intellectuals as interpreters and disseminators.²²³ Although Mill firmly rebuts Macaulay's ideas, as a trigger of people's disaffection against the Western ruler, his own version of a modernized India involves active cooperation of Indian elites. Unlike Macaulay, Mill advocates the use of vernacular languages used by the mass of the people. He suggests that the government should enlist learned Indian individuals to interpret Western ideas and prepare textbooks that should be used in Indian schools. Although Mill and Macaulay have contradicting perceptions of how to conduct the diffusion of Western ideas, they agree about the necessity of using native informants for the progress of the Indian state.

The Indian people were thus divided into the representatives of "the Indian voice" and the rest. It is the latter where the subaltern belongs to. In between the oppression of colonial and nativists objectives the subaltern individual vanishes to a silenced subject. Mill and

²²⁰ See Ania Loomba, "Dead Women Tell No Tales: Issues of Female Subjectivity, Subaltern Agency and Tradition in Colonial and Post-Colonial Writings on Window Immolation in India," *History Workshop Journal* 36, no. 1 (1993), doi:10.1093/hwj/36.1.209, p. 212

²²¹ See Moir, "Introduction" in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, p. xlvii

²²² See *ibid.*, p. xlvi

²²³ See *ibid.*, p. xlviii

Guha, the founder of the Subaltern Studies Group, insofar coincide that they argue that the colonial state does not contain citizens; it only knows subjects that need to be controlled. Guha uses this argumentation to depict how subaltern representation was impossible in colonial India, while it served Mill as a legitimization for the Company's rule. In Mill's view the majority of the Indian population was not ready for the citizenship and its duties. Thus, they had to be excluded from political deliberation until they had proven the necessary conditions. Until then foreign government and instructed representatives of more advanced states were required to hold the political administration. This kind of political representation is brought into crisis, when the critique of the subaltern is taken into consideration. From a postcolonial perspective the subaltern constitutes a disruption of the political narrative constructed by Mill. In that sense, representation is a practice that constructs rather than represents subject.²²⁴ Like Spivak has elaborated with the help of the conversation of Deleuze and Foucault, Western based categories are often thought as transparent. In the same manner, the necessary conditions as suggested by Mill are thought unitarily applicable, disguising their Eurocentric core. In Mill's theory of political representation the subaltern would not be considered as a citizen. Assessed against the so called necessary conditions she would be constructed as unable for political deliberation. This would allow Mill to exclude the subaltern from the political discourse and further advance his argumentation for the retention of the East India Company. A subaltern in a neocolonial state today is acknowledged to have a vote, provided that it lives in a state that is democratically constituted. But this alone does not secure that the voice of a subaltern is perceived equally as any other voice. According to Spivak, she is still not able to claim a political voice, due to powerful re-presentations of her identity and the lack of an audience.

5.2 Does Spivak's Critique apply to Mill?

Influenced by the convictions of his father, Mill firmly believes in the progress of humanity through education. Education plays a central role for Mill's political considerations as well as for the colonial assurance of power. The light of a postcolonial perspective reveals the Eurocentric core of categories like 'education, 'progress' and 'modernization'. This is especially relevant when we acknowledge that the same indicators are still in use for the assessment of so called development. 'Education' serves as an indicator for a state's

²²⁴ See Castro Varela, María do Mar and Nikita Dhawan, "Postkolonialer Feminismus und die Kunst der Selbstkritik," in Steyerl; Gutiérrez Rodríguez, *Spricht die Subalterne deutsch?*, 276

“readiness” for democracy, but quantified tests, which are in use for the assessment of educational success, are inappropriate to evaluate the quality of education in newly liberated countries.²²⁵ And I quote Spivak here again:

“I am sharing with you my conviction that sustainable underdevelopment is the rule, and the peculiarly intractable notion of “developing”, studiable through quantifiable indexes whose items are quantifiably expandable, is not isomorphic with epistemological change.”²²⁶

Intellectual production secured the imperial’s narrative in ideological terms and served as a source of legitimation for the colonizer’s undertakings.²²⁷ The same mechanism can be observed in Mill’s understanding of education. Everybody, who did not engage in an educational training that was acknowledged by the ruler as such, would be dismissed the right to participate in the political debate. His criterions for the right to vote thus reinforce the power of the colonial rule. Mill’s liberal construction of principles that are supposed to lie within the individual agency does not apply to the subaltern. The reexamination of Mill’s assumptions under a postcolonial perspective reveals inherent exclusions due to imbalances of power. Contradicting to his assumption, not everybody has the same access to the required education, even when it is supposed to be guaranteed by the state. An Indian subsistent farmer for example is predominantly employed with securing his basis of life. To assume the same chances for him as for any other ‘worker’ does not meet his social reality. When the question of the subaltern is taken into consideration, the conditions of the right to vote are not determinable by the individual itself. For her, the conditions are static, because she does not possess the power to enhance her position and enter the political arena. Consequently, the criteria of Mill’s so called universal suffrage would not equip the subaltern with a vote. Despite his fight for an extended suffrage, that has to be acknowledged as very progressive, compared to his contemporaries, it does not acknowledge the subaltern. Mill’s considerations of political representation are thus backing the British Empire’s narrative. What he considered as ‘progress’, ‘fit for liberty’ and ‘qualified for self-government’ is determined by Eurocentric definitions.

²²⁵ See Gayatri C. Spivak, “What Is It to Vote?,” in *Gendered Citizenship and the Politics of Representation*, ed. Hilde Danielsen et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), p. 23

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 25

²²⁷ See Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, p. 203

Following Spivak's notion, the subaltern is cut off from any social mobility. She is not able to reach the conditions of voting, as suggested by Mill. The absence of education in the habit of democracy reveals that getting suffrage is not the end but the beginning of the subaltern's struggle for political recognition.²²⁸ Voting, as an act of political utterance, can be counterproductive if there is no effort in producing the desired 'fitness to vote'.²²⁹ Dhawan points out how neocolonial states reproduce the existence of subaltern spaces; the majority of the prospective global citizenship does not attain any intellectual education and thus remains excluded from democratic habits. On that account, the chance of the subaltern to take part in political encounters shrinks.²³⁰ Formally the subaltern does possess a vote, but the extent to which this vote is equally counted as a voice is questionable. Without an adequate incorporation in democratic structures, Spivak argues, the subaltern can vote on election days, but she does not equally contribute to political processes. Because of a lack of a common consciousness, subalterns by definition do not constitute a political subject. Despite Mill's prediction of the emergence of a democratic spirit, due to the invention of mass media and the growth in literacy, subalterns did not form a collective consciousness. There is no such thing as a "subaltern class", cooperating for a common purpose. Thus the subaltern as an individual does not belong to a political group and is hence easily neglectable as political subject. One of the main obstacles that a revision of Mill's considerations under a postcolonial perspective reveals is that it assumes a false equality. In his liberal conception Mill does not consider conditions of social inequality. But external circumstances the individual is confronted with are providing it with certain opportunities and limits. Under a postcolonial-feminist perspective the individual unit has to be acknowledged in the context of its historical and social environment as a part of human identity.

Mill acknowledges that an equality of votes does not translate into equal political influence.²³¹ In his conception this poses a threat to democratic governance, because due to its numerical majority the working middle class would take over a state's administration. An acquisition of political power by the working class would, according to Mill, endanger the success of the political system, because it is not duly equipped for political offices. Mainly to ensure that those in charge are providing the required capabilities, Mill pleads for the so

²²⁸ See Dhawan, "Zwischen Empire und Empower", p. 58

²²⁹ See Chakravorty S. Spivak, "What Is It to Vote?," in *Gendered Citizenship and the Politics of Representation*, ed. Hilde Danielsen et al., Citizenship, Gender and Diversity (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), p. 19

²³⁰ See Dhawan, "Postkoloniale Staaten, Zivilgesellschaft und Subalternität", p. 37f

²³¹ See Urbinati, *Mill on democracy*, p. 93

called plural vote. As discussed above, this would equip those with two or more votes who are proving the necessary education, defined in an Eurocentric understanding. What Mill omits is that the numerical majority of the masses do not automatically transfer into political majority. Despite their numerical majority, the working class does not hold an equal share of social power and would thus not be able to make itself the political majority. An application of Spivak's critique thus reveals that Mill is neglecting the imbalance in shares of social power. Despite his conviction that representative government would offer all citizens an equal chance to be heard and seek approval, in conjunction with reflections on the subaltern it becomes clear that that this is not the case. The category of the subaltern does not depict another social group. Spivak's critique is more about individual voices that are not acknowledged and thus excluded from the political process. The subaltern as such would therefore not be able to take over the government of a state as Mill is suggesting.

Another important aspect of Mill's theory of political representation is the protection of minorities. He firmly vindicates an adequate protection of minority voices; but, as I worked out above, the subaltern is not part of his concern. Whom Mill perceives as minority is not anyhow close to Spivak's definition of a subaltern. His considerations are based on numerical minority, consisting of the so called 'instructed few'. In order to ensure that these he perceives as able representatives would be voted in the government he suggests the so called plural vote. He expects this system to further advance society, because able voter would vote for the right representatives. In the light of a postcolonial perspective, it becomes clear that this system of political representation is solely based on re-representation (as *darstellen*). Spivak's critique is very well applicable here. In accordance Mill and Spivak assume that a re-representation by somebody else is not equal to one's own voice. Mill states: "Each is the only safe guardian of his own right and interest."²³² He uses this argumentation for his deliberations on the protection of minorities, constituted as discussed above. Applying Spivak's notion of the subaltern and social power relations reveals that these re-representations are further silencing the subaltern. She gets deprived of any chance to obtain a public position or make herself heard by those who are holding it. Additionally to the lack of adequate self-representation Mill's theory then results in the impossibility for the subaltern to access the political sphere. The suggested system of plural voting would finally marginalize subaltern politics, as there is neither anybody listening to her and nor somebody

²³² Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 65

having the responsibility to re-present her. Considering social power distributions marks the significance of the protection of subaltern voices, regardless of her potential numerical majority. In this regard the so called “instructed few” are holding the majority of social power and are thus able to oppress the numerical majority.

Mill perceived that if democracy was transformed by the device of representation, a debating rather than a silent assembly had to be restored. Although a majority had to be formed to make political decisions, the citizenry as a whole is entitled to the right of representation. Thus Mill’s conception of government has a strongly deliberative nature.²³³ To him, representative government is the best way to ensure a talking of the citizenry. In the context of Spivak’s critique of the not talking subaltern this aspect of Mill’s theory is especially interesting. Rejecting the critique of representative assemblies as mere talk he writes:

“I know not how a representative assembly can more usefully employ itself than in talk, when the subject of talk is the great public interests of the country, and every sentence of it represents the opinion either of some important body of persons in the nation, or of an individual in whom such body have reposed their confidence. A place where every interest and shade of opinion in the country can have its cause even passionately pleaded, in the face of the government of all other interests and opinions, can compel them to listen, and either comply, or state clearly why they do not, is in itself, [...] one of the most important political institutions that can exist any where, and one of the foremost benefits of free government”²³⁴

As discussed above, representatives were supposed to be chosen for their noteworthy virtue and their capability to represent the interests of the citizenry. Thus not everybody was required to actively incorporate an administrative position. The appointment of an able representative was thought to ensure the representation of one’s own voice. When applied to Spivak’s critique this seems not to be the case. A re-presentation (as *darstellen*) of her voice is not the same as the utterance of the individual itself. From Spivak’s point of view, the subaltern does not get the chance to “passionately plead” her interests “in the face of

²³³ See Urbinati, *Mill on democracy*, p. 9 and 67

²³⁴ Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 117

the government". The subaltern gets at the utmost re-presented, often instrumentalized for other political objectives and lacking any extended considerations of her heterogeneous subject-formations. Once again the subaltern is reduced to a homogeneous utterance. This time not due to a strategical essentialism in her favor, but through imbalances of power that are reinduced by a political representation after Mill. Regardless of his conviction that everybody can talk and be heard in a representative government, the state is still not compelled to listen to the subaltern.

Based on utilitarian principles, Mill aims to put these into responsibility who are able to keep the good for the greatest number in mind. Society as a whole is supposed to advance under a government conducted by the greatest political minds. This, as discussed previously in length, must be of significance for every good government. Regarding Spivak's critique, one must acknowledge that even a good government, according to Mill, would not perceive the voice of a subaltern. The advancement of the society as a whole is thought in terms of what Mill perceives to be the citizenry. Only who is capable of reading, writing and calculating, is part of that citizenry, everyone else needs to be controlled and guided. The subaltern would most likely be accounted to the latter, which consequently allows those in control to omit every utterance of her as incompetent. As elaborated above, Mill's conception of the instructed few are embodying the numerical minority, but are definitely holding the majority of social power. Any subaltern majority, is thus still holding the least amount of power altogether. Under these considerations it gets clear that the sexed subject-formation is doubly in shadow. In Spivak's understanding the figure of the Indian woman disappears between both, the discourse of imperialism and patriarchy.²³⁵ Mill's theory of political representation does not escape this critique. While he must be considered as a progressive member of his time, due to his vindication of the women's right to vote, he does not interrupt the imperial narrative. Mill occupies a clearly oppressional position in his depiction of the *sati*, adopting its imperial reproduction. Thus, the Indian female subject is further marginalized; as part of the Indian population and as the voice of a helpless woman that needs to be saved. Applied to a neocolonial world, the subaltern is still not able to make herself heard. The 'third world woman' for example still serves as a fertile ground for the hegemonic discourse of 'development'. Between the 'developed' and so called 'developing' countries, the subaltern is still used as a means of legitimation for various purposes.

²³⁵ See Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", p. 99 - 102

6. Will the Subaltern ever speak?

In the first chapter of this work I elaborated the theoretical context in which this thesis is written and described shortly the meaning and implications of the postcolonial discourse. I worked out why political theories have gained a new relevance under this perspective. This thesis is written as an attempt to reconsider classical approaches of political theory, applying Spivak's critique on John Stuart Mill's theory of representative government. Mill has, as depicted in the second chapter of this work, composed his ideas of the ideal form of government in his book "*Considerations of Representative Government*" (1861). He argues, that the ideal form of government increases the sum of good qualities in its citizenry and makes use of the good within a nation to the right purpose.²³⁶ Based on utilitarian principles Mill considers the status of the people as a whole. He firmly stands in for the expansion of the suffrage, especially towards women's right to vote. To Mill, an expanded suffrage would enhance the so called national character and secure a sense of responsibility within the people towards their representatives and vice versa.²³⁷ Great emphasis is put on the adequate protection and representation of minorities, perceived by Mill as the so called instructed few.²³⁸

Applying Spivak's notion of the subaltern to Mill's theory of representation reveals several constraints. Spivak's understanding of the subaltern is based on the definition by Antonio Gramsci. In this conception the subaltern is perceived as cut off from any social mobility. Due to her limited social power she does not constitute a political subject and is hence easily neglectable in the political discourse. Through incessant representations of an essentialized subaltern voice, of for example foreign and indigene elites, the individual subaltern subject does not have room to voice her interests.²³⁹ In Spivak's understanding, especially the female subaltern is caught in the violent repression. Despite Mill's conviction that an ideal form of government would increase the sum of good qualities in the citizenry as a whole, taking the subaltern's situation into account it is unlikely that her situation would improve. The citizenry by Mill is, as discussed in the fifth chapter, perceived as a community of certain capabilities. The suffrage he pleads for is certainly an extended one, compared to the

²³⁶ See Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, p. 40

²³⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 203

²³⁸ See *ibid.*, p. 151 + 190

²³⁹ See Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, p. 287

situation of his time, but not universal. His severe restrictions to the right to vote are keeping the often illiterate subaltern out. Everybody who does not meet Mill's criteria is excluded from the right to vote and constructed as in need of protection. This argumentation allows the oppression of individuals in the state which the subaltern would probably belong to. A similar argumentation legitimates foreign government over so called less advantages states. In the habit of the Enlightenment Mill argues for the use of good qualities within a nation to the right purpose. The right purpose is perceived as a development after the model of the West. Encroaching politics, from one state over another, are until today legitimated with the same argumentation. Above that, the enhancement of the so called national character plays a significant role in Mill's theory. Despite his socio-political analysis of the nineteenth century, that proclaimed great enhancements towards democratic freedom and equality,²⁴⁰ social immobility and political exclusions are still restricting these ideals. Thus, the issue of subaltern spaces, which are excluded from the political discourse, is still relevant. The enhancement of the so called national character further oppresses the subaltern. The unequal allocation of political influence and the fact that not everyone has the same opportunity to voice their own interests left me wondering if one could speak, in Mill's words, about the tyranny of the masses over the subaltern.

Mill stresses the responsibility that would be perceived by the voter and the representative in front of each other, in a representative government. Yet the subaltern is neither able to run for a public office nor make herself heard by potential representatives. Even if she gets the right to vote, her interests and intentions would not preponderate in political deliberations. Her vote is not perceived as a political utterance in an equal measure. Regardless of Mill's conviction that everybody would talk and be heard in a representative government, the state in this conception would be still not compelled to listen to the subaltern. The adequate protection of minorities could, as it seems, support the subaltern in raising her voice and making it heard by these in charge. But Mill's conception of the minority is based on a numerical minority, consisting of the educated upper class. The subaltern therefore does not fall into his perception of a minority group. Mill's aim is to secure that these who are thought capable for public offices are in charge. Therefore he suggests a system of plural voting, assuming that able voters are casting their votes for able

²⁴⁰ See Mill, "De Tocqueville on Democracy in America (1)" in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, p. 49

representatives. Applying Spivak's critique to this makes clear that this system would finally marginalize the subaltern, making her voice even less count.

Altogether the here discussed aspects of Mill's theory of political representation leads to the conclusion that Spivak's critique is very well applicable to it. The light of a postcolonial perspective reveals that Mill's political theory does not leave the colonial discourse behind. His lifetime was certainly characterized by great shifts towards social equality, especially due to the change from aristocratic to democratic governments. Yet, an overall equal participation can still not be identified in national politics. Regarding the international sphere it remains to be discussed to what extent electoral democracy is used as a means of global governance. Medovoi, Raman and Robinson for example are suggesting that to refuse electoral democracy today leads to a silencing of the state in the international sphere and consequently to the refusal of legitimate nationhood and sovereignty.²⁴¹ The subaltern, here used as a term of critique towards hegemonic discourses, does speak but is not being heard. Once she has successfully entered into a responsibility structure with somebody who listens to her, she ceases to be subaltern. Until then the question of the subaltern and her manifold oppression will stay relevant.

On Spivak's account philosophers must be read as symptoms of their time, just as we are symptomatic of our time.²⁴² Yet I argue we have to critically approach writings as Mill's in the light of colonial power relations and re-read them accordingly. An uncritical adaption of Mill's considerations of good government for example would continue to oppress the subaltern and subaltern politics. If we do not consistently keep in mind that the West has successfully established its social, political, and economic hegemony during the colonial era we neglect the basis of the contemporary knowledge production. With considering the context and the assumptions theories as like Mill's were developed in, we're opening the academic discourse towards a critical re-examination. If we do not, the subaltern will never speak. Approaching this carefully was one of my intentions for this thesis. Carrying it more deeply into the realm of democratic theory was another. At the same time I am aware of my own position as a Europe-based student. Nevertheless, I am convinced of the importance of taking such considerations into account and making it relevant to contemporary debates.

²⁴¹ See Medovoi, Raman and Robinson, "Can the Subaltern Vote?", p. 135

²⁴² See Spivak, "What Is It to Vote?", p. 19

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8. Declaration of Academic Authorship

I declare that this paper represents my own work and that it has not been previously included in a paper or report submitted to the University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or any other qualification.

I have approached the task with honesty in citing published and non-printed sources. Both direct citations and paraphrases are properly acknowledged within the main texts. Full details of the cited sources are provided in the end-text list of reference.

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Thesis Title: The Subaltern will never speak

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