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Nota di contenuto	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS -- ABBREVIATIONS -- Introduction -- I: The Politics of Freedom -- II: The Contribution of John Stuart Mill -- III: Steps in the Argument -- 1 Mill's Conception of Freedom -- I: Freedom and Liberty -- II: Freedom, Autonomy, and Individuality -- III: Degrees of Autonomy, Degrees of Freedom -- IV: Freedom and Power -- V: Freedom, Power, and Culture -- VI: Conclusions -- 2 Mill's Theory of Modern Freedom -- I: 'Science, ' 'Art, ' and 'Theory' in Mill's Political Philosophy -- II: Freedom and Mill's Moral Theory -- III: Empirical Theories and Spheres of Freedom. A. The Theory of Social Power -- b. The Theory of Individual Development -- c. The Theory of Societal Development -- IV: Secondary Principles -- a. The Principle of Liberty -- b. Democratic Self-government -- c. Social and Distributive Justice -- d. Equality -- V: Conclusions -- 3 The Theory of Social Power -- I: Mill's Conception of Power -- II: The Sources of Social Power -- III: Mill's Theory of Authority -- a. Being 'an Authority' -- b. Traditional Authority -- c. Modern Authority -- IV: Power and Authority -- V: Government, Self-

government, and the Government of Conduct.

4 Education for Freedom -- I: Association Psychology and the Development of Autonomy -- II: The 'Science' of Ethology and the 'Art' of Education -- III: The Powers of Education -- a. Formal Education -- b. Education in the 'Larger Sense' -- c. Authority, Discipline, and Self-discipline -- IV: Equality versus Elitism -- V: Conclusion -- 5 The Principle of Liberty -- I: Individual Liberty and Modern Democracy -- II: The Province of Individual Liberty -- III: Individuality, Utility, and the Diversity of Goods -- IV: The Domain of Social Morality -- V: Indirect Utility and the Politics of Rights.

VI: Individual Liberty and the Powers of Education and Opinion -- VII: Conclusion -- 6 Freedom, Sex Equality, and the Power of Gender -- I: Gender and Individual Liberty -- a. Autonomy, Freedom, and the Constraints of Gender -- b. Life Plans and Career Opportunities -- c. Marriage and Divorce -- d. Gender, Sexuality, and Sexual Freedom -- II: Sex Equality and Democratic Self-government -- a. Marital Partnership -- b. Economic and Political Freedom -- III: Conclusion -- 7 Economic Freedom -- I: Mill on Economic Freedom -- a. Economic Freedom -- b. Maximal Economic Freedom.

II: The Political Economy of Freedom -- a. Individual Liberty -- b. Democratic Self-government -- III: Conclusion -- 8 Political Freedom -- I: Representative Democracy -- a. Equal Representation and Democratic Deliberation -- b. Political Equality and Class Division -- c. The Principle of Publicity and the Public Sphere -- d. Local and National Democracy -- e. Popular Participation and the 'Authority of the Instructed' -- II: Maximal Political Freedom -- III: Conclusion -- 9 Mill and the Politics of Freedom -- I: Rethinking Freedom and Power -- II: Four Principles of Freedom.

Sommario/riassunto

In his canonical text, "On Liberty", the English philosopher and social reformer John Stuart Mill (1806-73) looked at the limits imposed by society and the state on individual freedom. Over one hundred years later, Bruce Baum, in "Rereading Power and Freedom in J.S. Mill," shows how important aspects of Mill's theory of freedom have been misinterpreted. The author recovers lost dimensions of Mill's thought, and in so doing, contributes to a critical sociology of freedom for our time. Drawing on Mill's thoughts on liberty and power scattered throughout his numerous texts on related subjects, Baum moves beyond what Mill has to say about freedom in "On Liberty." Baum discovers a consistent purpose behind Mill's advocacy of women's rights, universal suffrage, parliamentary and educational reforms, and workers' co-operatives. Whereas Mill is commonly interpreted as an advocate of negative liberty, Baum argues that Mill possesses a complex theory of freedom that unifies the pursuit of personal autonomy with the quest for collective self-determination through an egalitarian, genuinely participatory democratic politics. This insightful work traces new connections between Mill's liberalism and the later revisionist liberalisms of theorists such as T.H. Green and John Dewey, as well as between the liberal and socialist traditions. Not only does it break new ground in its demonstration of the complementary relationship between freedom and power, it is the first comprehensive study of Mill's social and political thought that seriously engages his feminism.
