

Introduction to Western Political Thought
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Lecture No. 29
J S Mill – I: Intro, Utilitarianism and Subjection of Women

Hello and welcome everyone. Today, we are going to study a new thinker, John Stuart Mill and on Mill, we are going to have two lectures. In the first lecture, we will briefly discuss the political and intellectual contexts of John Stuart Mill and his personal, political life. In the second part of the lecture, today, we are going to discuss his views on utilitarianism and subjection of women or his support for the rights of women.

In this second and concluding lecture on Mill, we will focus on his views on liberty and arguments he provided for absolute freedom of the individual from any external interference that later becomes a kind of negative freedom as said by Isaiah Berlin. So, we will discuss his views on liberty and representative form of government before concluding the lecture on Mill. We will also discuss the critical aspect of his philosophy and the mini criticism levelled against his thought.

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- John Stuart Mill was one of the greatest British philosophers of the nineteenth century. His book *On Liberty* is a classic defence of liberal individualism. Mill believed in human perfectibility – that is, human beings know what is best for himself/herself, and they should be allowed to develop their personality the way they like.
- Mill is known for his defence of liberty. But he is also known for his advocacy for equality among men and women. Many scholars argue that his text *On Liberty* should be read together with his equally significant work, *The Subjection of Women*. He was also the champion of the representative form of government and detested the tyranny of the majority.
- Although Mill synthesized many prevailing ideas such as the defence of liberty with the rights of working classes and women and so on, he remained throughout a utilitarian philosopher. His defence of liberty, or women's rights, or the representative form of government is also based on the fact that these enhance the social utility and improvement of mankind. Although a utilitarian, Mill provided the qualitative and ethical substance to the philosophy of pleasure by arguing about the higher and lower category of pleasure.

So, John Stuart Mill was one of the greatest British philosophers of the nineteenth century and many of his thought such as his defence of liberty, support for women's right, defence for representative government continues to shape the political debates throughout the twentieth

century. It is relevant to understand politics in the twenty-first century, especially, when we talk about free speech or hate speech, the rule of representatives in protection or empowering of the democracy. We find Mills ideas relevant to understand politics in the twenty-first century as well.

And particularly his text is a classic defence of liberal individualism. It is a defence of what is later known as a kind of negative liberty that is individual should be left free to decide for himself or herself, what is good for him or her. There should not be any obstruction or limits to individual freedom and he defended not just because it is helpful for an individual to grow and develop his personality and individuality the way he or she likes, but also, it has the social implication. That means the society would be prosperous or progressive when individuals have the freedom to make decisions or take actions which they think is good for themselves.

On Liberty, which is a classic defence of individualism and individual liberty, I will request you to read this text. This text is written in an easy and accessible language, and certainly, it is not as complex as Hegelian or Kantian text whether it is the Hegel's, *Phenomenology of Spirit* or Kant's, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. So, this text, *On Liberty*, by Mill, I will request you and recommend you all to read, to understand what liberty of thought, speech, and expression means in a democratic society. And why we should all protect individual right to express or think freely without question or restrictions from the society or state.

And the basis of such defence in Mill about individual liberty is his idea of human perfectibility that means human being has the inherent capacity to perfect themselves and this perfectibility or human gradual perfection or maturity if you like the Kantian discourse of coming out of self-imposed immaturity condition to bring about enlightenment. It is necessary to give individual freedom. So, there is the kind of belief in the human capacity to perfect themselves that they will be able to do when the condition of freedom is provided to them. Therefore, freedom is necessary for individual growth, human personality or individuality.

That is an idea of human perfectibility or why human beings should have absolute freedom without any coercion or interference from others in society or state. Human beings know what is best for themselves. The society and state or anyone else cannot decide for him what is good for himself and herself. So, the human being is rational and this is the kind of enlightenment ideas in

Mills argument that human beings know what is good for himself and this is extended by many contemporary philosophers as well.

So, whether it is John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, where what is good for the individual should be left for the individual to decide, it is not the business of society and state to tell the individual what is good for himself or herself. Similarly, Nozick, they defended this idea of human being capacity to decide for himself what is good, what is desirable, and what should be done and how they should perfect themselves or develop their personality and individuality, and develop that the condition of freedom is necessary.

So, human beings know what is best for himself or herself and they should be allowed to develop their personality the way they like and that is the basis for the liberal democratic state where the state maintains the rule of law to punish those who violate the rule of law and ensure the contract. But the individual in other spheres of life is left free to decide for themselves. That is the kind of defence of the market economy as well.

This kind of defence is not just for the development of individual personality or human freedom, but also, it would lead to overall progress and prosperity in the society that is the basis of the classical economist as Mill is also known for his defence of liberty. In the next class, we will discuss it in detail. But he is also known for his advocacy of equality among men and women and unlike many other thinkers, we have discussed he had a systematic argument in support of the equality between men and women.

Many scholars, therefore argued that the text, *On Liberty*, should be read together with his equally significant work, *The Subjection of Women*. For a very long time, Mill was known for his defence of liberty and *On Liberty*, the widely read the discussed text in western philosophy. But now recently with the rise of feminism and their assertion of personal, political and criticism of the patriarchal family, the text, *Subjection of Women* become a fascinating text for many scholars and intellectuals.

And they argued that Mills arguments, *On Liberty*, should also be read along with his argument in *Subjection of Women*. Mill was also the champion of the representative form of government and it is stated the tyranny of the majority. So, all kinds of conformity which subject individual freedom of choice to any external authority Mill detested and certainly in the democracy with the

rule of popular passion or collective will should not limit or control the individuality or individual freedom of thoughts, speech, and expression. We will discuss these ideas in the second lecture in some detail.

So, what do we have in Mill is a kind of synthesis of many prevailing ideas such as the defence of liberty with the right of working-class and women. He remained a utilitarian philosopher, his defence of liberty or women's right or the representative form of government was based on the fact that liberty or women's right or representative form of government enhanced the social utility and improvement of mankind.

Although, utilitarians would provide however a kind of qualitative and ethical substance to the philosophy of pleasure arguing about the higher and lower category of pleasure. This we will discuss when we discuss in today's lecture, Mill's views on utilitarianism that is a philosophy also regarded as the hedonist philosophy based on the idea that human beings constantly search for happiness, pleasure, and to avoid pain. And this you can connect with Hobbesian idea of individual being a bundle of self-mechanism which avoids or avers any pain or threat to their existence or welfare and they constantly seek fulfilment of desire.

Thus, utilitarians developed that idea and argue that the moral action or values should guide human action or the policies of the state cannot be based on an isolated or independent set of values or ethical norms. The criteria for measuring the correctness or incorrectness of a policy or action is to understand whether it enhances human pleasure or happiness or not. Similarly, for the state whether a policy would enhance the happiness and pleasure of the greatest number or not.

So, the assessment or the measurement of a policy is then whether it satisfies the criteria that the implementation of such policy would be in the benefit of the 'greatest happiness of the greatest number'. Mill remained a utilitarian. Although, he tried to provide an ethical or moral substance to this idea of the philosophy of pleasure or happiness by arguing that there was a higher order, pleasure, and a lower order pleasure. The pleasure of intellect is superior to the pleasure of body, whereas, in the utilitarian philosophy, there is no such distinction between a philosopher enjoying a text or a worker enjoying a coffee or doing other activities which give him or her freedom or essence of pleasure.

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Political and Intellectual Context

- John Stuart Mill was developing his ideas in the intellectual context of 'philosophical radicalism' of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and James Mill (1773-1836, Mill's father). They were advocates of Utilitarianism, which is based on the philosophy of the greatest good of the greatest numbers. In other words, pleasure is the measure of value. They do not make any distinction between different kinds of pleasures or happiness. That led many scholars like Carlyle (1795-1881) and others to criticize utilitarianism as the philosophy of swine. Mill, himself a utilitarian philosopher, tries to rescue the philosophy of utilitarianism from such criticisms and provide ethical and qualitative content to its definition of pleasure or happiness.
- It was also a time for radical politics in terms of demands for the extension of suffrage rights to all men, including the working class and women. Believing in the philosophy of human perfectibility, Mill supported the extension of these rights to both women and the working class.
- Politically it was also a turbulent time with the decline of aristocracy and assertion of democratic values of liberty and equality. These liberal and democratic values, in turn, were challenged by both socialists and the communists. It was in this context that Mill supported the representative form of government. He was against the tyranny of the majority. Thus, he supported the extension of suffrage on the one hand but wanted the best and skilled should be allowed to govern and protect the interest of the people. Thus, in Mill's philosophy, we find a middle ground between the conservative views on democracy (such as that of Edmund Burke 1729-1797) and radical views and philosophy of socialist thinkers.

Now, if we look at the political and intellectual contexts of Mill, he was developing his ideas in the intellectual context of philosophical radicalism of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. And James Mill was John Stuart Mill's father. He was the eldest son of James Mill. Bentham and Mill argued or advocated a radical philosophy of that time which is called utilitarianism and this philosophy was based on the 'greatest good of the greatest number'.

The criteria to decide a value whether it is correct or incorrect, desirable or undesirable, whether it enhances the happiness or pleasure of the greatest number or not. So, there is a kind of quantification of pleasure or happiness in this philosophy and that becomes the sole criteria of judging the value of any action or policy of any state. It was regarded by the conservatives and many scholars as a kind of crude or radical philosophy.

In other words, pleasure is the measure of value for Bentham and Mill, and they did not make any distinction between different kinds of pleasure or happiness. So, reading a book can be as pleasurable or defensible than talking with a friend or enjoying a cup of coffee or watching a movie. The value that decides whether that action is correct or not is whether the individual who performs that action is benefiting or not, in the sense of whether that action of individual enhance his happiness or pleasure or not.

There is no distinction in different kinds of activities, pleasures, and utilitarian philosophy. And yet the idea of happiness and pleasure and its enhancement is the basis of utilitarian philosophy,

in the sense that if an action enhances individual pleasure that action is morally good, the value of that action is based on consequences of that action. So, whether that action leads to happiness or pleasure is the sole basis of deciding its value. It is known as the consequentialist philosophy. This one can contrast with the Kantian idea of 'categorical imperative'.

So, one can perform a certain action, not because of the consequences of that action or one considers good in itself. That does not require any further justification in contrast to that utilitarian philosophy as a consequentialist philosophy argued that the value of an action is decided by the consequences whether it enhances the pleasure or not. Similarly, at the societal or the state level, it is the policy of the state that enhances 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number order'. It should be the sole criteria of value and in assessing those actions or policies, there should not be any description between different kinds of pleasures.

That is a kind of consequentialist philosophy and when Mill was developing his political ideas, this was a kind of philosophically radical traditions in British political philosophical tradition. And this philosophy of utilitarianism which talked about 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' led many scholars like Carlyle and others to criticize this philosophy as the philosophy of swine. Let me say, it cannot be the philosophy or guide for human being as a moral-ethical being. So, if all kinds of pleasures are equally or of same moral worth that is the philosophy of a pig for a human being as a moral-ethical person cannot base his or her action, according to the idea of pleasure and quantification of that pleasure.

Thus, Carlyle and many others criticized utilitarian philosophy as the philosophy of swine and John Stuart Mill constantly tried to rescue the utilitarian philosophy from such criticisms. So, Mill, himself a utilitarian philosophy tried to rescue the philosophy of utilitarianism from such criticisms and provided ethical and qualitative content to its definition of pleasure and happiness. We will come to this point later in this lecture when we will discuss Mills views on utilitarianism.

It was also a time for radical politics in terms of demands for the extension of suffrage rights or the right to vote to all men and not just a few based on their property or educational qualification. There was a kind of movement for the extension of the right to vote in England and this should be extended not just to all men, but also, to working-class and women. It is to believe in the

philosophy of human perfectibility that all human beings are capable of developing his or her personality or individuality if they are provided with the condition of freedom.

Mills fundamental belief in this idea of human perfectibility led him to support this kind of demand for the extension of rights to both women and working class. So, in Mills, there was a kind of synthesis or combination of the enlightenment, conservatism, utilitarianism with the liberal philosophy or in doing that he also went beyond utilitarianism as well. Mill also supported these radical politics as demonstrated by the supporters of women rights or the working class, including the socialist or communism.

Politically, it was a turbulent time with the decline of the aristocracy and the conservatives in British politics and assertion of democratic values of liberty, and equality. And these liberal and democratic values, in turn, are challenged by both the socialists and communists. So, while discussing Marx's views, we have also discussed that how industrial society led to economic disparities or huge economic disparities between the owners of production or the means of production and those who were left to be dependent on their labour, to sell their labour in the factories just for survival. It led Marx to develop a new philosophy about communism and also many socialists who were talking about communal ownership of property and cooperative modes of living.

So, they were very critical of equality and liberty extended to everyone only in the realm of politics and law, and the social and economic realms, economic disparities continued and that led many of the socialists and communist thinkers to challenge the bourgeois promise of liberty and equality. In that sense, Mill was developing his defence of liberty or his views on representative government, it was also in the intellectual context of this turbulent or certain times where there was the assertion of liberty and equality. But that assertion was increasingly questioned by the socialists and communists.

And it was in this context that we will support the representative form of government and use against the tyranny of the majority. He defended the individual liberty and freedom even when he was supporting the extension of the right to vote to everyone including the working class, women, and also the representative form of government. So, he is a defence of the liberal democratic institution of government and yet apprehensive of the tyranny of the majority. The

individual must not be subjected to social codes or social control. The individuals must be given the freedom to decide for himself and herself.

He was against the tyranny of the majority or majoritarian form of democracy. Thus, he supported the extension of suffrage on the one hand but wanted only the best and skilled should be allowed to govern and protect the interests of the people. Thus, in Mills philosophy, we find a middle ground between the conservative views on democracies such as in Edmund Burke on the one hand and the radical views, and the philosophy of socialist thinkers on the other. So, in Mills views, we have a middle-ground, a synthesis between these two extreme political views led by conservatives on the one hand and the radical socialists on the other.

Now, we move on to understand the personal life of John Stuart Mill briefly and we will also discuss his major text, before moving on to discuss his views on utilitarianism and *Subjection of Women*.

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J S Mill (1806-1873): Brief Biographical-sketch

- John Stuart Mill was the eldest son of utilitarian philosopher and economist James Mill. James Mill developed his utilitarian philosophy as a follower and collaborator of Jeremy Bentham. He eventually became the senior civil servant in the East India Company. He is also the author of the *History of British India*.
- John Stuart Mill has early education under the tutelage of his father. He was extremely intelligent. About his early education, it is said that he began to learn Greek when he was three, Latin at the age of eight, logic, mathematics, and political economy by the time he reached teens. By then, he has also read many dialogues of Plato. Since a very young age, thus Mill was trained to promote the utilitarian ideas of his father and Jeremy Bentham.
- Soon he began to write for radical journals like *The London and Westminster Review*. He suffered a nervous collapse in 1826. He accused the pedagogical training of his father, which deprived him of normal schooling for this collapse. He also began to engage with the opposite schools of philosophy, such as conservatism and socialism, which opposed the philosophy of utilitarianism promoted by his father, James Mill and Jeremy Bentham. Mill also discovered solace in the poetry of romantic poets like Wordsworth.

So, John Stuart Mill was the eldest son of utilitarian philosopher and economist James Mill and James Mill developed this philosophy of utilitarianism as a follower and later on collaborator of Jeremy Bentham. He eventually became the senior civil servant in the East India Company who controlled India's most parts. He also wrote this famous text called *History of British India*, which became a kind of chronological ways of looking at British India divided into three

historical past or ancient glorious past or medieval darks and a kind of renaissance undertaken by the British rule.

Although there are many criticisms to this text, James Mill is the author of this famous text called *History of British India*. John Stuart Mill had early education under the tutelage of his father, so he did not go to a normal school learning with other kids according to the prevalent norms of schools or universities in England of that time.

So, he was extremely intelligent and had his early education under the tutelage of his father who on the recommendation of Jeremy Bentham asked him to read the classic text, which was beyond his is. It is said about his education that John Stuart Mill learned Greek when he was three, Latin at the age of eight, logic, mathematics and political economy by the time he reached ten. In his twelve or thirteen years, he finished many of the dialogues of Plato and text on logic, mathematics and political economy, and began to contribute in scholarly journals as well.

In that sense, Mill was a voracious reader knowing philosophy, logic, mathematics, Greek writers such as Plato's dialogues. And since a young Mill was trained to promote the utilitarian ideas of his father and Jeremy Bentham. Soon, he began to write for radical journals like the London or Westminster review and he suffered a nervous collapse in 1826 at the age of 20 years.

He accused the pedagogical training of his father which deprived of normal schooling for this nervous collapse and he went into depression for two years and only recovered by reading many philosophically treatises of the opposite schools of his own father's and romantic poetry of William Wordsworth and others. So, he began to engage with the opposite schools of philosophy such as conservatism and socialism, which opposed the philosophy of utilitarianism that was promoted by his father James Mill and Jeremy Bentham.

Mill also discovered the solace in the poetry of romantics, poets, such as William Wordsworth. And in that sense in much of his treatise, you find the combination of both the rationality of enlightenment tradition with the passion or imagination of romantics or the gothic views on the use of literature on education or development of one's personality or individuality. In Mills writing, you have the combination of both the rationality or reason of enlightenment tradition, but also the recognition of passion, emotion, and imagination attributed to the tradition of romantics such as Goethe, Wordsworth, and others.

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- In 1827, he joined the East India Company and worked for it for three decades until 1858, when India came under the direct rule of the British parliament. He met Harriet Taylor in 1830, whom he married after twenty years of friendship in 1851. She was mostly self-educated but more radical in her political views than Mill. Mill acknowledged her contributions in shaping many of his ideas *On Liberty* and also on the *Subjection of Women*. Harriet Taylor died in 1858.
- Between 1865-68, Mill was also a member of the British Parliament representing the city of Westminster. He became the leader of the radical groups who advocated and fought for the rights of women as well as the working class. He also took a keen interest in the conservatives as well as the socialist philosophy of Saint-Simon and Robert Owen. Mill died in 1873.
- His major works are – *A System of Logic* (1843), *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), *On Liberty* (1859), *Utilitarianism* (1861), *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) *Subjection of Women* (1869). His other works, such as *Autobiography*, *Three Essays on Religion*, *Chapters on Socialism*, were published posthumously. Mill also wrote numerous articles in newspapers, magazines, and general on the areas of scientific inquiry, ethics, philosophy, politics, and economy. However, J S Mill's magnum opus remains *On Liberty*.

In 1827, John Stuart Mill joined East India Company like his father before and work for it for three decades until 1858. And 1858 is in the history of modern India, it was after the first revolution for independence in 1857. In 1858, India came under the direct rule of the British parliament. Before that, it was ruled by the East India Company under the overall supervision of the British Parliament. But after 1857 revolt, India came under the direct control of the British Parliament and until 1827, Mill served in the East India Company in different capacities for three decades.

He met Harriet Taylor in 1830 whom he married after 20 years of friendship in 1851. And Harriet Taylor was mostly self-educated. But more radical in her political views than Mill and Mill in many of his writings acknowledged her contribution in stepping many of his ideas on liberty and *Subjection of Women*. Harriet Taylor died in 1858 and since then he began to take a more active interest in the politics.

Between 1865 to 68, Mill was a member of the British Parliament representing the city of Westminster. He became a leader of the radical groups who advocated and fought for the rights of women as well as the working class. He also took a keen interest in the conservatives as well as the socialist philosophy of Saint-Simon and Robot Owen. Mill died in 1873. In Mills writing, because of his early training in Greek and Latin in logic and mathematics, and political economy

with a combination of other traditions of philosophy such as the conservatism or socialism that allow him to develop his arguments.

And in developing those arguments, he remained though a utilitarian thinker, but also, provided a more ethical and moral substance to the utilitarian philosophy. If you look at the major works of John Stuart Mill, it was a system of logical principles of political economy *On Liberty* in 1859, *Utilitarianism* in 1861, *Considerations on Representative Government* in 1861, *Subjection of Women* in 1869 and his other works such as autobiography, three essays on religion, chapters on socialism were published after his death in 1873. Among these, the autobiography can be regarded as a classic text along with Socrates's *Republic* or Rousseau's *Emile* on the philosophy of education.

He advocated against the method of education that was followed by his father and Jeremy Bentham. These three ties can be read as a philosophy of education. Mill wrote numerous articles in newspapers, magazines, and journals on the areas of scientific inquiry, ethics, philosophy, politics, and economics. However, James Mill's magnum opus remained *On Liberty*. In contemporary times, there is a kind of interest in reading this text, *On Liberty*, along with his views on the *Subjection of Women*.

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Utilitarianism

- Utilitarianism is also known as the hedonist philosophy, which was developed by Mill's father, James Mill, and his friend Jeremy Bentham. It is based on the idea that human beings necessarily seek pleasure or happiness and avoids pain. Thus the measurement of a policy or course of action should be based on whether it satisfies the 'greatest good of the greatest number'.
- However, by the time Mills began to develop his political ideas, utilitarianism came under severe attacks from scholars like Carlyle. These critics argue that the philosophy which emphasizes so much on quantitative pleasure is worthy of the only swine. Mill attempted to rescue the utilitarianism from such critiques.
- He sums up the philosophy of utilitarianism in the following way – 'the creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness'. Much of his own defence of liberty of the individual, or rights of the women, or defence of the representative form of government is based on this principle of social utility or the philosophy of utilitarianism.

Now, we move on to understand his views on utilitarianism known as hedonist philosophy, which gives primacy to human pleasure or happiness. This philosophy was developed by Mills,

father James Mill and his friend Jeremy Bentham. It was based on the idea that human beings necessarily seek pleasure or happiness and avoids pain. So, the purpose of life according to utilitarian philosophy is to seek pleasure or happiness.

The pursuit of happiness in that sense is the basis of utilitarian philosophy and it should also guide the action of the state or policies of the state. The state should follow only those policies that would bring 'greatest happiness to the greatest number' that would be in the benefit of the greatest number in society. There is a quantitative approach to this idea of pleasure. So, in assessing the value of an action or a policy, there is no pre or a priori maxim about what is ethically or morally good.

The criteria to decide what is ethically or morally good is the basis whether it enhances the pleasure or happiness of the individual or society or not. The utilitarian philosophy's basic assumption is the pursuit of happiness or pleasure as the basis of measuring any action of individual or of the state. The measurement of a policy or course of action should be based on whether it satisfied 'the greatest good of the greatest number'. If it does, then that action is good, but if it brings pain to individuals or the greatest number, it should be avoided.

So, it gives a very radical basis of measuring the value of any action or policy of any state, it should not be based on any a priori notion of ethics or values, but whether in empirical material terms, the course of action will enhance the happiness of an individual or the greatest number of individual in the society or not. That should be the sole criteria for judging the action of the individuals or policies of the state.

However, by the time Mills began to develop his political ideas, the philosophy of utilitarianism came under severe attacks from scholars like Thomas Carlyle and these critics argued that the philosophy which emphasized so much on quantitative pleasure was worthy of the only swine. So, the pigs could be inspired by the philosophy of constant pursuit of happiness. The human being as a moral-ethical, not on the course of action should not be based on quantifiable pleasure or happiness.

Let us bring the Kantian idea of 'categorical' and 'hypothetical imperative' again. For Kant's 'hypothetical imperative' is somewhat akin to this idea of utilitarian philosophy. That means you choose a course of action. Because you want to achieve certain ends and that course of action is

correct. In this sense, it helps you to achieve that ends and if it does not that course of action is wrong. The happiness or satisfaction that you derive from a course of action is based on the fact that it helps you to achieve certain ends certain desires, it should be fulfilled.

So, happiness and pleasure are dependent on the outcome of a certain action. It is a kind of consequences further or external things that justify the course of your action. Whereas the 'categorical imperative' was based on a sense of universal morality that gives you pleasure in doing the thing itself, it does not depend on the consequences of any action and in human life, many actions we perform with a sense of duty or obligation may not necessarily lead to enhancement of our material gains or a sense of pleasure or happiness. It may lead to some loss or disadvantages for us.

But when performing that action, you derive certain pleasure and that cannot be explained in the material quantifiable terms as put forward by James Mill or Jeremy Bentham. For him, human beings and all kinds of actions are judged based on whether it enhances pleasure or happiness or not. Carlyle and many other scholars considered utilitarian philosophy to be the philosophy of pig and not for the human being. Mill attempted to rescue this utilitarian philosophy from such criticisms. He summed up this philosophy of utilitarianism in his text, *Utilitarianism* in the following way.

The creed which accepts the foundation of morals, so the philosophy of utilitarianism provided us with the quantifiable mechanism to decide whether a course of action is morally or ethically correct or not. So, the creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, utility or the greatest happiness principle is the basis for deciding the moral values of any action. It holds that actions are right in the proportion as they tend to promote happiness 'wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness' that is a pig.

The philosophy of utilitarianism, according to John Stuart Mill is the foundation of morals and the foundation of morality is its utility, and utility is explained in quantifiable terms. Thus, any course of action or the policy of state helps in 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'. If it does, it brings happiness. Therefore, it brings utility and is morally correct. If it brings pain, it is morally incorrect and unacceptable. Thus, the utilitarian philosophy is based on the moral percept of utility or 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number'.

Much of his defence of liberty of the individual or rights of the women or defence of the representative form of government is based on the principle of social utility or the philosophy of utilitarianism. For John Stuart Mill, the liberty or women's right or representative form of government was good not because they were good in itself, but it also enhanced the social utility or the happiness of mankind. Therefore, it should be defended.

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- Like Bentham, for Mill too, pleasure or happiness has both individuals as well as the social aspect. Thus 'the desire for one's own greatest happiness is the sole motive of the individual; the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the object of social good and the object of moral action'.
 - However, Mill introduced a qualitative aspect to the quantitative tradition of Benthamite utilitarianism. All pleasures, according to Mill, are not of the same or equal moral worth. He argued that the pleasure of the mind is superior to the pleasure of the body. He famously observed that 'it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied'. Thus, Mill attempted to provide the ethical basis of utilitarian philosophy. And he used it consistently in his defence of liberty, women's right, or representative forms of government.
- Mill on the Subjection of Women**
- Mill was a great champion of liberty and equality among men and women. He supported the demand for the right to vote for women. In his book *The Subjection of Women*, Mill put forward the argument in support of women's rights, which were much ahead of his times. It is not that women themselves were not making such demands. Hundreds of women were already demonstrating on the streets of London, making demands for the recognition and protection of their rights and extension of the right to suffrage to women.

Like Bentham, for Mill too, pleasure or happiness had both individuals as well as the social aspect. Thus, the desire for one on the greatest happiness is the sole motive of the individual, so an individual in that sense is a self-seeking creature to maximize his or her on pleasure. 'The greatest happiness of the greatest number' is the object of social good. So, the state or community tried to formulate policy for everyone, the purpose of that policy or objective of that policy should be the benefit of the greatest number of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' and the object of moral action.

However, what Mill did was to introduce a qualitative aspect to the quantitative tradition of Benthamite utilitarian. Mill made an extension or if you like a break from this quantitative philosophy of utilitarianism. He argued that all pleasures were not the same or of equal moral worth. He argued that the pleasure of mind was superior to the pleasure of the body. This is famously asserted in his statement that 'it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied'. And better to be a Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.

He gave a moral and ethical percept to this philosophy of utility. So, the pleasure of all kinds is not equal and the same worth. Life of the mind or intellectual pleasure is always superior to bodily pressure. Whereas in the philosophy of Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, there was no such difference, reading a book or having a cup of coffee was of the same worth if it helps the concerned individual derive pleasure or satisfaction from doing these actions or by reading a book or drinking a cup of coffee.

Whereas in Mill, reading a book was always better than drinking a coffee. In other words, the pleasure that individual derived from the mind or intellectual life was superior to the pleasure of the body. That his contracts assert by saying that 'it is better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied'. So, there is a kind of universal, moral, ethical position. Mills, nonetheless, remained a consistent utilitarian thinker himself and that became the ground for many other scholars and intellectuals to criticize Mills philosophy.

So, Mill attempted to provide the ethical basis of utilitarian philosophy and he used it consistently in his defence of liberty, women's right, and representative forms of government. Now, let us move on to understand Mills views on equality between men and women, and his defence for the rights of women. This is beautifully explained in his text, *The Subjection of Women*.

Mill was a great champion of liberty and equality among men and women, and he supported the demand for the right to vote for women. This was radical in his time, although, there was the demand for women's suffrage or in the extension of the right to vote, to the working class. But no thinkers systematically provided the argument in support of women's right and how it would lead to the overall progress of mankind or society as Mill did in his *Subjection of Women*.

So, in his book, *the Subjection of Women*, Mill put forward the argument in support of women's rights which were much ahead of his times. It is known that women themselves were not making such demands. And hundreds of women were already demonstrating on the streets of London making demands for recognition and protection of their rights, and extension of rights to the suffrage of women.

Politically, and historically, there was also articulation and demonstration of demands in support of women's right and right to vote, Mill gave it a more philosophical and systematic defence in

this *Subjection of Women*, much ahead of his time. Many contemporary feminist writers and philosophers engaged with this text as well, they wanted *On Liberty* to be read along with this *Subjection of Women*.

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- Mill begins his defence of women's rights by asserting that 'the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes – the legal subordination of one sex to the other – is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and...it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other'.
- He argued that where equality and liberty have been accepted as the organizing principles of modern social and political life, and slavery or subjugation of men by men is detested, the subjugation of women continues. He considered the subjection of women by men is regarded as 'natural' because, unlike slavery, every man has an interest in the subjugation of women.
- His defence of women's rights too is based on the utilitarian point of view. It is based on many grounds. First, Men and women would have a more satisfying and enriching experience as free and equal rather than as one controlling the other. Second, the recognition and treatment of women as a free agent would make the family – a hierarchical institution under patriarchy, a more egalitarian institution. Once the children learn the value of freedom and equality in the family, they would learn to treat others as equal and free in other spheres of life too. It would strengthen the democratic state and its institutions. Third, when women are allowed to join all kinds of employment that are open to men, society would progress overall. It would lead to more doctors, lawyers, scientists, and teachers in society. Healthy and open competition for the post would benefit society. And only when women are allowed to do what they please, we come to know about their capabilities and 'nature'. Finally, giving women rights to equality and liberty would increase the overall benefit of mankind manifold, thus satisfying the utilitarian criteria of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. By the same logic, he also extended these rights to the working class too.

Mill began his defence of human rights by asserting that the principle which regulates the existing social relation between the two sexes, the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself and one of the chief hindrances to human improvement, and it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side not disability on the other. So, it is a critique of patriarchal difference between men and women in the family, society, laws, and politics.

So, if you think about the laws of marriage or divorce or property, inheritance, all were formulated in a way that put women in the disadvantaged position and all ownership of property belonging to the husband or the male member. The subjugation of women for Mill is wrong in itself and one of the chief hindrances of human improvement and he gave a utilitarian argument in favour of the protection of women's right and recognition of women as equal to men.

It helps those family, individuals, and polity based on the egalitarian principle of equality and liberty. Unlike, previous regimes based on the class hierarchy or economic hierarchies of classes or states modern democracy, it was based on the principle of equality and liberty. However, that

equality and liberty were denied to the majority of the population, half of the population were women and that made a mockery of the principle of liberty, equality, and democracy. (47:34).

So, he considered it as a kind of chief hindrances to human freedom and he argued that equality and liberty were accepted as the organizing principle of modern, social, and political life. And that is the fundamental break from medieval or ancient ideas. Although in practice, the material existence of men and hierarchy existed, there is the disparity of social and economic status. Yet in the imagination, laws, and politics, every men and woman are treated equally.

But when Mill was writing or developing his political ideas such rights were denied to the working class and the women, even when the right to vote was extended to the working class, women were denied and they were considered naturally inferior. Mill had a problem with this understanding of women being naturally inferior to men. He argued that unless the women's right to participate in the public and political life and allowing them to have the right to join any employment as like open to the men, then how to understand their capacity or about what is the natural capacity of women.

It is based on an experimented premise which cannot be the basis of rational discussion or debates on the nature or capability of men and women. So, they must be allowed like men to join any employment, demonstrate their capability and nature. He argued that on the one hand, while organizing the modern life and polity, the principle of equality and liberty is accepted and slavery or subjugation of men detested, the subjugation of women continues and many considered them as natural.

So, there is nothing natural, according to Mill, in this difference between male and female or men and women. He considered the subjection of women by men is regarded as natural because unlike slavery, every man has an interest in the subjugation of women. Let us think it this way, so the economy of slavery or other forms of subjugation of men by men existed. But it was overcome. Because those who controlled the slaves or those who were in the position of authority over other men were always in minority.

The struggle between those men in the minority and majority late to overcome the subjugation of men by women, at least, in the legal political and the sense of modern imaginary, any form of subjugation by men to other men is detested and disapproved of legally politically

philosophically. But the subjugation of women continued and he gave the argument that unlike slavery, where only a few men had their interest in the sustenance or continuance of slavery, the subjugation of women is something that every man prefers and benefit from.

So, they would like to control another person that gives them a kind of self-esteem and that leads to the continuation of the subjugation of women even when liberty and equality are accepted and any form of slavery or subjugation of one man by the other is detested. The reason being that in the subjugation of women, every man and not just a few men have an interest and that is untenable when we agree to have liberty and equality as the basis of modern life. So, how you can deny the same right to half of the population. His defence of women's right is based on the utilitarian point of view and he gave many arguments in support of women's right.

First of all, he or you, the men and women would have a more satisfying and enriching experience as human beings or as a moral, ethical human ascend as a free and equal partner rather than one controlling the other. So, if you have the partnership of domination and subordination, it will not lead to an enriching or fulfilling life. He detested the men controlling the women in the sphere of family, conjugal relationship of marriage, and enriching experience was denied when one partner treats other partners merely as the subject or control or subject, the other partner to the will of himself.

He argued such a relationship would be more satisfying and enriching when one partner treats the other as free and equal rather than one controlling the other. That is the first defence that he gave for women's right, they must be treated and recognized as a free and equal agent like men. Second, the recognition and treatment of women as a free agent would make family a hierarchical institution under patriarchy. This is the kind of clear hierarchy that exists in the family between the male householder, women, children and the workers or servants and the male householder is regarded as the patriarch or the honour of that household. Everyone is subjected to his will or his dictates.

So, there is a kind of hierarchical living or kind of despotism that exist in the patriarchal family. Mill argued that when you recognize individual or women as an individual having her free will, it would transform the family as an institution from a hierarchical institution to a more egalitarian institution and once the children learn the value of freedom and equality in the family,

they would learn to treat others as equal and free in other spheres of life too and that would strengthen the democratic state and its institutions.

Thus, think about this contradiction in modern democracies. So, if you have the family where there is the hierarchy, protection, or defence of such hierarchy between the male and female member, husband and wife, how one can think of the same individual will treat others equally in other spheres of life. So, the family should be the first school where the egalitarian values of equality and liberty should be taught to everyone in the family. And then it would help strengthen the democratic values in the sphere of society, state, or polity.

Mill argued for the protection of women's right, not just for the conjugal relationship or enriching experiences in the marriage. But it also created a new individual who would act according to the egalitarian principle of equality and liberty when they learn it in their family and family becomes the egalitarian institution and not the hierarchical institution based on the differences between male and female.

Third, when women are allowed to join all kinds of employment that are open to men, society would progress overall. It would lead to more doctors, lawyers, scientists, and teachers in society and healthy open competition for the post would benefit the society in the long term. Mill argued only when women were allowed to do what they please as men do, we come to know about their capabilities and what is considered as natural for women.

So, the patriarchal hierarchies exist because men consider women as naturally inferior to men, unless it has experimented and women are allowed to participate in the public, political life or employments are open to them. We cannot decide on certain untested experimental premises that they are naturally inferior to men. He wanted them to be allowed to participate in the public, political life of the state as it is available to men.

Finally, given women rights to equality and liberty would increase the overall benefits of mankind manifold, the satisfying utilitarian criteria of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' and by the same logic, he extended the rights of the working class as well. That is all in this lecture on Mills intellectual and political context, his personal life and defence of utilitarianism and women's right. In the next class, we will discuss his views on liberty and

representative forms of government and while concluding, we will discuss the critical assessment of his thoughts.

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And the topics that we have covered in this lecture for that you can refer to some of these books like David Boucher and Paul Kelly's, *Political Thinkers from Socrates to the Present*, Maurice, Cowling's, you can refer to, to understand Mill views and his philosophy of liberty, and how it extends the liberal arguments of individual freedom and free society. You can also refer to Roger Crisp's, *Mill on Utilitarianism* and Shefali Jha's, *Western Political Thought from Ancient Greeks to Modern Times*.

You should read this text, particularly John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and The Subjection of Women* edited by Alan Ryan (58:58) from Penguin New York in 2006. This text will give you the basic premise of many political and philosophical precepts in John Stuart Mill. You can also refer to Susan Moller Okin's, *Women in Western Political Thought* and James Alan Ryan's, *On Politics: A History of Political Thought from Herodotus to the Present*. So, these are some of the texts, you can refer to, to understand more on the topics we have covered in this lecture. Thanks for listening. Thank you all.