
UNIT 13 J. S. MILL

Structure

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13.1 INTRODUCTION

The economic principles of utilitarianism were essentially provided by Adam Smith's classic work *The Wealth of Nations* published in 1776. The political principles of classical utilitarianism mainly emerged out of Bentham's application of rationalistic approach and his deep suspicion of "sinister interests" of all those entrenched in power and as a counter check he advocated annual elections, secret ballot and recall. But the Benthamite presumption of a mechanical formula of quantifying all pleasures and all pains equally exemplified by his famous uttering 'pushpin is as good as poetry' could not satisfy his most famous pupil John Stuart Mill who himself admitted that he was "Peter who denied his master". In his writings the first great criticism of Benthamite Utilitarianism emerged and with considerable impact of Wordsworth and other romantic poets he tried to work out a synthesis of rationalism and romanticism. In the process he transformed the entire underpinning of Benthamite utilitarianism by claiming that pleasures have great differentiation and that all pleasures were not of equal value as a dissatisfaction of a Socrates is more valuable than the satisfaction of a fool.

J. S. Mill's importance lies not only in his criticism of utilitarianism but also in his rich contribution to liberalism by his memorable defense of freedom of speech and individuality and in his defense of a liberal society as a necessary precondition for a liberal state.

13.2 LIFE AND TIMES

John Stuart Mill was born in London on 20 May 1806. He had eight younger siblings. All his learning came from his father James Mill and he read the books his father had been reading for writing the book on India, *History of British India* (1818). At the age of eleven he began to help his father by reading the proofs of his father's books. Immediately after the publication of *History of British India* James Mill was appointed as an Assistant Examiner at the East India House, It was an important event in his life as this solved his financial problems enabling him to devote his time and attention to write on areas of his prime interest, philosophical and political problems. He could also conceive of a liberal profession for his eldest son, John Stuart. At the beginning he thought for him a career in law but when another vacancy arose for another Assistant Examiner in 1823, John Stuart got the post and served the British government till his retirement.

As James Mill decided to teach his son all by himself at home, the father was denied the usual experience of going to a regular school. His education did not include any children's book or toys for he started to learn Greek at the age of four and Latin at eight. By the time he was ten he had read many of Plato's dialogues, logic and history. He was familiar with the writings of Euripides, Homer, Polybius, Sophocles and Thucydides. He could solve problems in algebra, geometry, differential calculus and higher mathematics. So dominant was his father's influence that John Stuart could not recollect his mother's contributions to his formative years as a child. At the age of thirteen he was introduced to serious reading of English Classical Economists and published an introductory textbook in economics entitled *Elements of Political Economy* (1820) at the age of fourteen. From Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), Isidore Auguste Comte (1798-1857), Goethe (1749-1832), and Wordsworth (1770-1850) he came to value poetry and art. He reviewed Alexis de Tocqueville's (1805-59) *Democracy in America* in two parts in 1835 and 1840, a book that left a thorough impact on him.

From the training that John Stuart received at home he was convinced that nurture more than nature played a crucial role in the formation of character. It also assured him of the importance education could play in transforming human nature. In his *Autobiography*, which he wrote in the 1850s he acknowledged his father's contribution in shaping his mental abilities and physical strength to the extent that he never had a normal boyhood.

By the age of twenty Mill started to write for newspapers and periodicals. He contributed to every aspect of political theory. His *System of Logic* (1843) which he began writing in 1820s tried to elucidate a coherent philosophy of politics. The *Logic* combined the British empiricist tradition of Locke and Hume of associational psychology with a conception of social sciences based on the paradigm of Newtonian physics. His essays *On Liberty* (1859) and *The Subjection of Women* (1869) were classic elaborations of liberal thought on important issues like law, rights and liberty. His *The Considerations on Representative Government* (1861) provided an outline of his ideal government based on proportional representation, protection of minorities and institutions of self government. His famous pamphlet *Utilitarianism* (1863) endorsed the Benthamite principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, yet made a significant departure from the Benthamite assumption by arguing that this principle could only be defended if one distinguished happiness from pleasure. His essays on Bentham and Coleridge written between 1838 and 1840 enabled him to critically dissect Benthamism.

In 1826 Mill experienced 'mental crisis' when he lost all his capacity for joy in life. He recovered by discovering romantic poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth. He also realised the incompleteness of his education, namely the lack of emotional side of life. In his re-examination of Benthamite philosophy he attributed its one-sidedness to Bentham's lack of experience, imagination and emotions. He made use of Coleridge's poems to broaden Benthamism and made room for emotional, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions. However he never wavered from the fundamentals of Benthamism though the major difference between them was that Bentham followed a more simplistic picturisation of human nature of the French utilitarians whereas Mill followed the more sophisticated utilitarianism of Hume.

Mill acknowledged that both *On Liberty* and *The Subjection of Women* was a joint endeavour with Harriet Hardy Taylor whom he met in 1830. Though Harriet was married Mill fell in love with her. The two maintained an intimate but chaste friendship for the next nineteen years. Harriet's husband John Taylor died in 1849. In 1851 Mill married Harriet and described her the honour and chief blessing of his existence, a source of a great inspiration for his attempts to bring about human improvement. He was confident that had Harriet lived at a time when

women had greater opportunities she would have been 'eminent among the rulers of mankind'. Mill died in 1873 at Avignon, England.

13.3 EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

The *Subjection of Women* (1869) begins with the revolutionary statement, "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," (p. 119) Mill's referent for the legal subordination of women was the mid 19th Century English law of the marriage contract. By this law, married Englishwomen could hold no property in their own name, and even if their parents gifted them any property that too belonged to their husbands. Unless a woman was legally separated from her husband, (a difficult and expensive process) even if she lived away from him, her earnings belonged officially to him. By law, only the father and not the mother was the guardian of a couple's children. Mill also cited the absence of laws on marital rape to prove the inequality suffered by the Englishwomen of that time.

What Mill found paradoxical was that in the modern age, when in other areas the principles of liberty and equality were being asserted, they were yet not applied to the condition of women. No one believed in slavery any more, yet women were sometimes treated worse than slaves and this was accepted as beyond questioning. Mill wanted to explain this resistance to women's equality in the contest of a general acceptance of the principles of equality and liberty. We did so by first presenting and then defeating the arguments for women's subordination, and then providing his own arguments for women's equality.

The first argument for women's inequality which Mill refuted was that since historically it has been a universal practice, therefore there must be some justification for it. Contra this, Mill showed that other so called universal social practices like slavery, for example, had been rejected, so perhaps given time women's inequality would also become unacceptable. Mill also said that from the existence of something, one could argue for the rightness of that thing, only if the alternative has been tried, and in the case of women, living with them on equal terms had never been done. The reason why women's inequality had survived slavery and political absolutism was not because it was justifiable, but because whereas only slave holders and despots had an interest in holding on to slavery and despotism, all men, Mill argued, had an interest in women's subordination.

A second argument for women's inequality was based on women's nature—women were said to be naturally inferior to men. Mill's response was that one could not make arguments about women's inequality based on natural differences because these differences were a result of socialisation. Mill was generally against using human nature as a ground for any claim, since he believed that human nature changed according to the social environment. At the same time, Mill also pointed out that in spite of being treated so differently from men, many women throughout history had shown an extraordinary aptitude for political leadership—here Mill cited examples of European queens and Hindu princesses.

The third argument refuted by Mill was that there is nothing wrong with women's subordination because women accept it voluntarily. Mill pointed out that this claim was empirically wrong—many women had written tracts against women's inequality and hundreds of women were already demonstrating in the streets of London for women's suffrage. Further, since women had no choice but to live with their husbands, they were afraid that their complaints about their position would only lead to worse treatment from them. Lastly, Mill also claimed that since all

women were brought up from childhood to believe—"that their ideal of character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others," (p. 132)—what was not to be remarked was that some women accepted this subordination willingly but that so many women resisted it.

The last point against which Mill argued was that for a family to function well, one decision maker is needed, and the husband is best suited to be this decision maker. Mill scoffed at this argument—the husband and wife being both adults, there was no reason why the husband should take all the decisions.

Having refuted all of these four arguments for women's inequality, Mill wrote: "There are many persons for whom it is not enough that the inequality has no just or legitimate defence; they require to be told what express advantage would be obtained by abolishing it." (p. 196) The question was, would society benefit if women were granted equal rights. Answering in the affirmative, Mill detailed four social benefits of women's equality.

The first advantage would be that the family would no longer be "a school of despotism". (p. 160) According to Mill, the patriarchal family teaches all its members how to live in hierarchical relationships, since all power is concentrated in the hands of the husband/father/master whom the wife/children/servants have to obey. For Mill such families are an anachronism in modern democratic polities based on the principle of equality. Individuals who live in such families cannot be good democratic citizens because they do not know how to treat another citizen as an equal: "Any sentiment of freedom which can exist in a man whose nearest and dearest intimacies are with those of whom he is absolute master, is not the genuine love of freedom, but, what the love of freedom generally was in the ancients and in the middle ages—an intense feeling of the dignity and importance of his own personality; making him disdain a yoke for himself,...but which he is abundantly ready to impose on others for his own interest or glorification." (p. 161) In the interests of democratic citizenship then, it was necessary to obtain equality for women in the family.

Another advantage, Mill pointed out, would be the "doubling of the mass of mental faculties" (p. 199) available to society. Not only would society benefit because there would be more doctors, engineers, teachers, and scientists (all women); an additional advantage would be that men in the professions would perform better because of competition from their female colleagues.

Third, women enjoying equality will have a better influence on mankind, Under relations of subordination, women assert their wills only in all sorts of perverse ways; with equality, they will no longer need to do this.

Finally, by giving women equal rights, their happiness would be increased manifold, and this would satisfy. Mill argued, the utilitarian principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

Note some of Mill's conceptual moves—for instance, the link he established between the private and the public. Unlike other liberals, who not only saw the extant family as the realm of freedom, but since this freedom was mostly defined as arbitrariness, disassociated the family as irrelevant to larger public concerns of liberal democracy, Mill argued that without the reform of the patriarchal family, it would be impossible to firmly ground democracy. Note that he was not merely saying that without equal rights to women, the democratic project is incomplete, but that democracy in the political/public sphere will remain shaky unless we bring up or create democratic citizens in egalitarian families.

What still makes some feminists uncomfortable is that Mill insisted that patriarchal families are an anachronism in modern society: “[t]he social subordination of women thus stands out as an isolated fact in modern social institutions...a single relic of an old world of thought and practice...” (p. 137) Many feminists now talk about capitalist patriarchy—the reinforcing of patriarchal institutions by modern capitalism.

13.4 THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY

On Liberty (1859) begins with a paradox—civil liberties are under greater threat in democratic than in despotic regimes, wrote Mill. In the absolutist states of earlier times, the ruler’s interest was seen as opposed to that of the subjects, who were specially vigilant against any encroachment on their existing freedoms. In modern democracies based on the principle of self government, the people feel less under threat from their own government. Mill berated this laxity and said that individuals needed to be more vigilant about the danger to their liberty not only from the government, but also from social morality and custom.

Why is it important to protect individual liberty? When individuals make their own choices, they use many of their faculties—“The human faculties of perception, judgement, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference, are exercised only in making a choice...The mental and moral, like the muscular powers, are improved only by being used...He who chooses his plan for himself, employs all his faculties. He must use observation to see, reasoning and judgement to foresee, activity to gather materials for decision, discrimination to decide, and when he has decided, firmness and self-control to hold to his deliberate decision.” (p.59) Individuals who act in a certain fashion only because they have been told to do so, do not develop any of these faculties. Emphasising that what is important is “not only what men do, but also what manner of men they are that do it”, (p. 59) Mill said that we might be able to ‘guide’ individuals in ‘some good path’ without allowing them to make any choices, but the ‘worth’ of such human beings would be doubtful. .

Mill clarified and detailed his position on liberty by defending three specific liberties, the liberty of thought and expression including the liberty of speaking and publishing, the liberty of action and that of association. We will follow Mill's argument in each of these cases.

Liberty of thought and expression: “If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.” (p. 20) Mill provided four reasons for this freedom of expression. For Mill, since the dominant ideas of a society usually emanate from the class interests of that society's ascendant class, the majority opinion may be quite far from the truth or from the social interest. It's more than likely that the suppressed minority opinion is true, and those suppressing it will only prevent or at least delay mankind from knowing the truth. Human beings are fallible creatures—and their certainty that the opinion they hold is true is justified only when their opinion is constantly opposed to contrary opinions. Mill wanted us to give up the assumption of infallibility—when our certainty about our beliefs makes us crush all contrary points of view so that our opinion is not subject to criticism.

What if the minority opinion were false? Mill gave three reasons for why it should still be allowed freedom of expression. It's only by constantly being able to refute wrong opinions, that we hold our correct opinions as living truths. If we accept an opinion, even if correct, on the

basis of authority alone, that opinion becomes a dead dogma. Neither do we understand its grounds, and nor does it mould our character or move us to action. Finally Mill argued that truth is a multifaceted thing and usually contrary opinions both contain a part of the truth. Suppressing one opinion then, leads to the suppression of one part of the truth.

When it comes to the liberty of action, Mill asserted a very simple principle: "the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection...the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant." (p. 13) Mill acknowledged that it was difficult to draw a line between self-regarding and other regarding action, and he provided some hypothetical examples as proof of this difficulty. If a man destroys his own property, this is a case of other regarding action because others dependent on that man will be affected. Even if this person has no dependants, his action can be said to affect others, who, influenced by his example, might behave in a similar manner.

Against this, Mill said that only when one has specific obligations to another person, can one be said to affect his or her interests; therefore the case of an individual affecting others by his example will not stand. On his own ground, Mill cited all kinds of restrictions on not eating pork or beef, or priests being required not to marry, as examples of unnecessary restrictions on self-regarding action. Other examples are Sabbatarian legislation which prevents individuals from working or even singing and dancing on Sundays.

Mill wrote that sometimes even in the case of other regarding action, no restrictions can be placed on one—for instance, if one wins a job through competition, this action can be said to affect others' interests by ensuring that they do not get the job, but no restrictions are applicable here. Similarly, trade has social consequences, but believing in the principle of free trade, Mill argued that lack of restrictions on trade actually leads to better pricing and better quality of products. And when it comes to self-regarding action, as we already showed, the principle of liberty requires the absence of all restrictions.

Mill defended freedom of association on three grounds. First, "when the thing to be done is likely to be done better by individuals than by government. Speaking generally, there is no one fit to conduct any business, or to determine how or by whom it shall be conducted, as those who are personally interested in it." (p. 109) Second, allowing individuals to get together to do something, even if they do not do it as well as the government might have done it, is better for the mental education of these individuals. The right of association becomes, for Mill, a "practical part of the political education of a free people, taking them out of the narrow circle of personal and family selfishness, and accustoming them to the comprehension of joint concerns—habituating them to act from public or semi-public motives, and guide their conduct by aims which unite instead of isolating them from one another." (pp. 109-110) Further, government operations tend to be everywhere alike; with individuals and voluntary associations, on the contrary, there are varied experiments, and endless diversity of experience. Third, if we let the government do everything, there is the evil of adding unnecessarily to its power.

Mill's ideal was improvement—he wanted individuals to constantly better themselves morally, mentally and materially. It was to this ideal that he saw individual liberty as instrumental: "The only unfailing and permanent source of improvement is liberty, since by it there are as many possible independent centres of improvement as there are individuals." (p. 70) Individuals improving themselves would naturally lead to a better and improved society.

13.5 REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Mill began his Representative Government by stating that we can only decide which is the best form of government, by examining which form of government fulfils most adequately the purposes of government. For Mill, the point of having a government was that it perform two main functions: it must use the existing qualities and skills of the citizens to best serve their interests, and it must improve the moral, intellectual and active qualities of these citizens. A despotic government may be able to fulfil the first purpose, but will fail in the second. Only a representative government is able to fulfil these two functions. It is a representative government that combines judiciously the two principles of participation and competence which is able to fulfil the two functions of protecting and educating the citizens.

Let us look more carefully at what Mill had to say about the first function of government. Mill began his discussion of this subject by introducing Bentham's concept of sinister interests. How does representative government ensure that the common interest of society is being furthered instead of the partial and sinister interest of some group or class? Even though Mill distinguished between short term and long term interests, he was certain that every individual and every class is the best judge of its own interests. He scoffed at the idea that some human beings may not be aware of their 'real' interests, retorting that given these persons' current habits and dispositions, what they choose are their real interests. It follows then that participation in the political process must be as extensive as possible, so that every individual has a say in controlling the government and thus protecting his interests. It is on this basis that Mill demanded the right to vote for women. He advocated the extension of the suffrage to cover everyone except those who could not read and write, did not pay taxes or were on parish relief.

It was this same impetus for wanting everyone to be represented that made Mill support Hare's system of proportional representation for electing deputies to Parliament. Under the current system, Mill pointed out, minorities went unrepresented, and since they too needed to protect their interests, another electoral mechanism should be found to ensure their representation.

Whereas his belief in participation led him to advocate a widening of the franchise, his belief in competence led him to recommend plural voting. In fact, he said that the franchise should not be widened without plural voting being introduced. Plural voting meant that with everyone having at least one vote, some individuals would have more than one vote because they were, for example, more educated. It assumed 'a graduated scale of educational attainments, awarding at the bottom, one additional vote to a skilled labourer and two to a foreman, and at the top, as many as five to professional men, writers and artists, public functionaries, university graduates and members of learned societies' (see p. 285). Plural voting would ensure that a better calibre of deputies would be elected, and so the general interest would not be hampered by the poor quality of members of Parliament.

Mill sought to combine his two principles in other institutions of representative democracy as well. Take the representative assembly, for instance. Mill said that this body must be 'a committee of grievances' and 'a congress of opinions'. Every opinion existing in the nation should find a voice here; that is how every group's interests have a better chance of being protected. At the same time Mill argued that this body was suited neither for the business of legislation nor of administration. Legislation was to be framed by a Codification Commission made up of a few competent legal experts. Administration should be in the hands of the bureaucracy, an institution characterised by instrumental competence, that is, the ability to find the most efficient means to fulfil given goals. Mill's arguments employed two kinds of competence—instrumental

and moral. Instrumental competence is the ability to discover the best means to certain ends and the ability to identify ends that satisfy individuals' interests as they perceive them. Moral competence is the ability to discern ends that are intrinsically superior for individuals and society. Morally competent leaders are able to recognise the general interest and resist the sinister interests that dwell not only in the government but also in the democratic majority. The purpose of plural voting is to ensure that morally competent leaders get elected to the legislature.

What about the other goal of government, that of making the citizens intellectually and morally better? Again it is a representative government that is based on a combination of participation and competence which is able to improve the quality of its citizens in the mental, moral and practical aspects. Let us again look at some of the specific institutional changes recommended by Mill. He wanted to replace the secret ballot with open voting, that is, everyone must know how one has voted. For Mill, the franchise was not one's right in the sense of, for example, the right to property, which implies that one can dispose of one's property in any arbitrary manner. The franchise is a trust, or a public duty, and one must cast one's vote for that candidate whose policies seem to best further the common interest. It is the need to justify one's vote to others that makes the vote an instrument of one's intellectual and moral growth. Otherwise one would use one's vote arbitrarily, voting for instance, for someone because of the colour of his eyes. Everyone must have the franchise, but it must be open—this is how Mill combined the principle of participation and competence in the suffrage, to ensure the improvement of the voting citizens.

We find here the motif of improvement again. Representative government scores over despotism not because it better protects the given interests of the citizens, but because it is able to improve these citizens. The citizens develop their capabilities by being able to participate in government, minimally by casting their vote, and also by actually taking decisions in local government. At the same time, this participation is leavened by the principle of competence to ensure that the political experience does have an educational effect;

13.6 BEYOND UTILITARIANISM

Having looked separately at three tests, let us bring out some general themes in Mill's writings. Mill never gave up his self-characterisation as a utilitarian, no matter how far his principles seemed to have moved away from that creed. When he spoke about rights, for instance, he subsumed rights under the concept of utility, defining rights as nothing else but some extremely important utilities. As we all know, Mill's father, James Mill, was the closest associate of Jeremy Bentham, the founder of utilitarianism. J.S. Mill grew up in the shadow of utilitarianism, and even after his emotional crisis in his early twenties, he managed to write a defence of utilitarianism. Throughout his work we have seen him applying the standard of utility. One consideration for giving equality to women was that it would increase their happiness. The principle of liberty was defended on the grounds of its social utility—social progress depended on individual freedom. A modified liberal democracy was characterised as the best form of government because of its usefulness.

Utilitarianism (1862) is the slim tract which Mill put together to answer all the objections that had been raised against this philosophy. The work begins by Mill pointing out that there has been, over the centuries, little agreement on the criteria of differentiating right from wrong. Rejecting the idea of human beings having a moral sense like our sense of sight or smell, which can sense what is right in concrete cases, Mill put forward the criteria of Utility or the Greatest Happiness principle as the basis of morality. That action is moral which increases pleasure and

diminishes pain. In defending utilitarianism here, Mill made a significant change from Bentham's position. Pleasure is to be counted not only in terms of quantity but also in terms of quality. A qualitatively higher pleasure is to count for more than lower pleasures. "It is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact, that some kinds of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others...It is better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied." (pp. 7-9)

Having responded to the criticism that utilitarianism assumes an animal like human nature, Mill moved to the next serious problem. Why would individuals be interested in the happiness of others? Mill answered in terms of the "social feelings of mankind; the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures: a powerful principle of human nature." (p. 29) Because "the social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man," Mill believed that our taking an interest in other's happiness was not questionable at all.

Finally, the only objection that Mill took seriously was that justice instead of utility is the foundation of morality. Mill's response was first to link justice with rights—an injustice is done when someone's rights are violated—and then to assert that rights are to be defended because of their utility. "To have a right, then, is, to have something which society ought to defend me in the possession of. If the objector goes on to ask, why it ought? I can give him no other reason than general utility" (p. 50). A society in which individuals are certain of enjoying their rights is the one, which according to Mill is able to progress. Thus rights do not replace the concept of utility; for Mill utility was the justification for rights.

13.7 SUMMARY

Mill's liberalism provided the first major framework of modern democratic equality by extending the logic of the defence of liberty to end the subjection of women. As a Member of Parliament he tried to push through a law allowing women to vote, and was disappointed when that did not happen. He was the first male philosopher, as Okin points out to write about women's oppression and subjugation. He also portrayed the wide diversity in our society and cautioned the need to protect the individual from the fear of intruding his private domain by a collective group or public opinion. The distinction between self-regarding and other-regarding action would determine the individual's private independent sphere and the later, the individual's social public sphere. He stressed on the need to protect the rights of the minority within a democracy. He understood the shortcomings of classical utilitarian liberalism and advocated vigorously for important state actions in providing compulsory state education and social control. Realising that his scheme is very different from that of Bentham, he also described himself as a socialist. His revision of liberalism provided the impetus to T.H. Green who combining the British liberal tradition with the continental one provided a new basis of liberalism with his notion of common good.

It might be apposite here to cite his characterisation, in the *Autobiography*, of his later development away from democracy and towards socialism. "I was a democrat, but not least of a socialist. We were now much less democratic than I had been...but our ideal of ultimate improvement went far beyond Democracy, and would class us decidedly under the general designation of Socialists" (p. 239). "The social problem of the future we considered to be, how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action, with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe, and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labour." If these are the requisites of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the link between capitalism and democracy, had become questionable for the later Mill.

13.8 EXERCISES

- 1) What did Mill mean by the statement that "the family is a school of despotism"? Explain his claim that children who grow up in such families cannot be good democratic citizens.
- 2) One of Mill's arguments for women's equality is that it will make so many women happier. Is it a good idea to try to get rid of an injustice by making an argument about happiness?
- 3) How would you choose between a natural rights and a utilitarian defence of individual liberty?
- 4) Does it make sense for Mill to say that after food and clothing, liberty is a 'want' of human nature. Does not this claim go against Mill's own historicist position on human nature?
- 5) What do you think of some of the specific institutional reforms in the liberal democratic form of government advocated by Mill—for instance, open voting, plural voting, Hare's system of proportional representation, and the Codification Commission? Are these reforms consistent with each other?
- 6) What do you think of the utilitarian idea that a moral person is impartial between his own happiness or the happiness of his loved ones and the happiness of strangers?
- 7) How does Mill attempt to subsume justice and rights under the concept of utility? What do you think of this attempt?