

WOMEN IN PHILOSOPHY: THE CASE OF HARRIET TAYLOR MILL

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Feminist reflection of the traditional philosophical canon focuses not only on the criticism of open misogyny and sexism but it also pays attention to the various ways in which women are excluded from the area of philosophical output. One of the mechanisms used for reproducing and confirming the tradition of androcentrism in the history of European philosophy is the strategy of downgrading, making invisible, and concealing the position of women in the field of philosophy. A consideration of the position of Harriet Taylor Mill in the history of philosophical ideas is a good illustration of some of the more sophisticated forms of the strategies of exclusion; she is portrayed and perceived as an appendage to John Start Mill, her liberal feminist opinions are generally overlooked. A closer examination of her views on the issues of the emancipation of women formulated particularly in the article *The Enfranchisement of Women* shows that through her criticism of the subordinated social position of women and her defence of their emancipation, Harriet Taylor Mill contributed not only to the contemporary political struggle for women's suffrage but also to the theory of feminism.

Feminist ideas gradually penetrated the sphere of academic disciplines, chiefly the humanities and social sciences during the modern feminist movement from its advent at the end of the 1960s. The intellectual movement witnessed the shaping of various types of interaction between feminism and philosophy. This interaction has led to the development of a wider subject area: feminist philosophy, with its many subdivisions, and focuses on a variety of aspects and levels of gender and gender relations both from a broader social perspective and the historical perspective. Consideration of philosophy and gender from the point of view of history, or more precisely, from the perspective of the development of philosophical thought in history, represented one of the major impulses for the development of the feminist dispute with philosophy. The need to look at the history of philosophy through the lens of gender issues had often stemmed from both the professional and the personal experiences of feminist women philosophers; in pursuit of, or by defining their own position within their discipline, these women philosophers had unavoidably to face what some of them called the "masculinity" of philosophy and the fact that the history of philosophy is presented as the history of the ideas of renowned men, as a history where women are almost absent (see e.g. McAlister 1994, 188–197). It is true that it is easy to explain the absence of women in the history of philosophy, through the existence of various barriers, including institutional barriers to

the adequate education of women or their admission to the sphere of philosophy. However, such a simple explanation will not suffice if the masculine character of philosophy is to be understood to any great extent, attention will therefore also be paid to the ideas and opinions of men—philosophers on the subject of women, on the ways in which relations between men and women are arranged, on using the terminology of contemporary feminist theory, and about gender issues in the broadest sense of the word. Manifestations of open misogyny, animosity toward women and sexism in the opinions of the canonical figures of European philosophical tradition are not exceptional and it is not always possible to ascribe them to the personal features or life stories of a particular philosopher: e.g. Hegel and Nietzsche have often been described as enemies of women.

The critical reappraisal of the history of philosophy, which was associated particularly with the period when feminist ideas first penetrated philosophy, has not been exhausted in terms of revealing open and latent misogyny in philosophy. This initiative has been joined by another which, in a sense, goes deeper because it not only pays attention to how woman or gender issues have been thematized within philosophical conceptions, but it is also concerned with how and in what connection philosophy is silent on women and gender relations. In some philosophical concepts, in some philosophical thinking, women are often disparaged, particularly their intellectual capabilities and moral qualities, and this occurs even where women and men or the differences between them are not directly addressed, but where human beings in general are the subject of consideration (Nagl-Docekalova 1992, 744). Various forms of women's disparagement are tied in with the strategy of elimination at the conceptual level, e.g. if women are excluded from the concept of autonomous and rational actors or from the concept of moral subjects. Hidden behind the universalistic language of traditional philosophy, we often find the male perspective—in referring to humans in general, philosophy was often, in fact, describing men. Revealing the hidden androcentrism, the one-sided and unconsidered orientation “in the posing of questions, in the different approaches and in the interpretation of the self and the understanding of the world through the masculine gender” (Klinger 1998, 5) that is present in the history of philosophy (but masked by a universalist language) has a unique place in feminist philosophy, or more precisely, in the feminist appraisal of the canon of philosophy. Contemporary feminist theory is not simply concerned with androcentrism in philosophy but also in many disciplines and in science in general. Contemporary feminist analyses focus on the domain of knowledge and the construction of theories in the broadest sense of the term. Within the context of this aspect of feminist research, the thesis of the androcentrism of western science has been emphasized. In the light of this thesis, we can refer to at least four basic areas, where the masculine character of science and knowledge is evident. Firstly, the basic norms and methods of scientific activity and the ideals of science, such as objectivity, disinterest, logic, impartiality, independence, rationality and emotional non-involvement, are also (cultural) signs of masculinity and male behaviour and contrast sharply with the opposite norms of femininity and feminine behaviour. The second indication that science is masculine stems from the fact that modern science has been controlled by men since its very inception. It is a historical fact

that women were completely excluded from this sphere by institutional mechanisms that existed in the past, for example because of the lack of access to higher education. The third area, where the androcentrism of science can be identified, concerns the content of several dominant scientific theories, where women remained unnoticed, overlooked, or invisible. Lastly, the fourth point at which the male character of science is revealed consists in the predominantly negative representation of women with regards to several scientific theories. Numerous theories that provide evidence of the intellectual inferiority of women, theories of women's hysteria or some of Freud's views serve as examples (see Kournay 1998, 232-234). Such theories often depicted women as being in some way lacking and, in comparison with men, less perfect or inferior beings. I suggest that these indicators of the masculine nature of science can be equally well applied to philosophy. Philosophy is also regarded as a product of "pure", disinterested reason, uncontaminated by feelings, values, or interests and its ideals and norms were formulated in harmony with the cultural norms of masculinity. Philosophy, like science, was historically shaped as a male plan and a male product. It is a historic fact that philosophy has been controlled by men since it began. This masculine dominance in or over philosophy was linked to the fact that women were made invisible and silenced as subjects of philosophical thought. The indifference of traditional philosophy to gender issues is predominantly associated with the negative "portrayal" of women by many philosophers.

One of the more dominant aspects of the critical feminist reappraisal is that concerned with the tradition of androcentrism in philosophy, which focuses primarily on the portrayal of women as inferior beings (the criticism of misogyny and sexism), as well as the androcentrism hidden behind the mask of the (false) universalism that disguises the maleness of philosophy. Feminist criticism of the canon of philosophy also focuses on bringing into the public forum women philosophers who had been made invisible and silenced, and on publicizing their activities that had largely been overlooked in the domain of philosophy. It appears that in addition to the explicit, clearly articulated devaluation of women as a means of excluding them from the sphere of philosophy, the concealment of the position of women was also a very effective mechanism for securing "the management and control" of men over philosophical output.

My intention to write about Harriet Taylor Mill may seem a little strange at first sight, given what I have already said about the feminist critique of the history of philosophy. However, this thinker and philosopher is undoubtedly one of the few women whose names are relatively well known even in the established history of philosophy. We might therefore think that it is not really possible to talk of her as having been made invisible or silenced (at least, in comparison with the women authors whose names do not appear in any lexicons or in the history of philosophy). In spite of this, I would argue that her case, her position in the field of philosophy, can be very instructive and can also reveal the more sophisticated, as it were, forms of the strategy of exclusion.

As I have already mentioned, we would be hard pushed to find the names of many women who became as famous as Harriet Taylor Mill (1807-1858) in the history of philosophy. If, however, we ask why this name is recorded in the history of philosophical ideas, the reply is quite clear—we know Harriet Taylor Mill almost

exclusively as a figure from the biography of a renowned man, for, she was the long-term friend, colleague, and later wife of the famous philosopher and intellectual John Stuart Mill. There is no doubt either that it was John Mill himself who did his utmost to ensure that her name would go down in the history of philosophical thought. He himself admitted in his *Autobiography* but also in dedications in his work, in *On Liberty* particularly, that not only had Harriet had a significant influence on his philosophical and political views, but he also repeatedly admitted the contribution she had made to his writings. For instance, in the dedication in *On Liberty* to the memory of his wife, he referred to Harriet as not only the inspiration, but also in parts as the “co-author” of “the best” he had ever written, and he stressed, “Like all that I have written for many years, it belongs as much to her as to me” (Mill 1991, 22). There is no doubt that the name of Harriet Taylor Mill made history in part thanks to the fact that shortly after his death, Mill’s *Autobiography* became one of the most widely read autobiographies. Although Mill attributed the intellectual co-authorship of several of his writings to his wife, *On Liberty* and *The Principles of Political Economy* in particular, historians of philosophy usually do not place Harriet Taylor Mill in the philosophical or literary canon as a philosopher or thinker. Her place is exclusively that of a woman standing by the side of a renowned man: a philosopher, even though they attribute to her some (whether great or small, positive or negative) influence on the writings of John Mill. Philosophers and historians of philosophical ideas probably did not consider—and evidently still do not consider—her views on the position of women in society and her passionate defence of the emancipation of women worthy of attention. Harriet Taylor Mill expressed her views on the social problems of her period, on liberty and equality, and her opinions on the issues of the emancipation of women in particular, were published in several articles in various journals. These ideas remained almost forgotten until the second half of the last century and not much attention has been devoted to them at present either (except in the area of feminist philosophy and theory where considerable attention is paid to the liberal feminism of Harriet Taylor Mill). It is worth noting that although Harriet Taylor Mill is included in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the entry devoted to her and her writing focuses on the question of which of John Mill’s work Harriet might have influenced and how much of an influence she really had; on the other hand, her best-known essay *The Enfranchisement of Women*, in which the author thematizes women’s issues, and particularly, women’s suffrage receives little mention, beyond a few sentences and the conclusion that the essay contains many of the same lines of argument as *The Subjection of Women* written by John Stuart Mill. In fact, Harriet Taylor Mill wrote enthusiastically about many different issues. As early as the 1830s, she published short articles about art and literature, and she also wrote poems, essays, and reviews. Together with her husband John Taylor, she was active in radical political circles of Unitarians and she frequently took part in the meetings of Utilitarians—at that time the intellectual elite. Since her youth, Harriet Taylor Mill had mingled with society where the ideas of freedom and equality were accepted positively (mostly) and the people she met were familiar with the idea of equality between men and women (Nye 1988, 12-13). Harriet Taylor Mill had shown a genuine interest in topical political issues since she was younger and had taken part in debates on social issues. She had a particular interest in

the democratic political reforms taking place in mid-nineteenth century England. She reacted to topical political issues in her articles about the history of painting and in book reviews, which she published in an influential Unitarian journal *Monthly Repository* in the early 1830s. Her correspondence with John Mill and also the correspondence with John Taylor, her children and friends were very rich. Harriet Taylor Mill and John Mill wrote to each other daily when they were separated. It is probably worth noting that Harriet Taylor Mill's complete works have only recently been published (see Jacobs 1998) and that the volume no longer simply presents Harriet Taylor Mill as an "appendage" to Mill, but as an original thinker.

I have already said that Harriet Taylor Mill became known in the history of philosophy within the context of Mill's personal life and partly also in the context of his philosophical output. The relationship between these two exceptional and unconventional personalities has long attracted the attention of philosophers, historians and biographers. Their extremely intensive intellectual collaboration and strong emotional ties aroused and indeed still arouses theoretical interest but also a natural curiosity (various speculations appeared e.g. whether they were sexually involved before they married or whether they had a sexual relationship after their marriage). There have always been questions about the extent of Harriet's influence on Mill's views. Doubts were raised as to whether the articles published under her name were actually written by her, and there was long debate about the authorship of some of the texts, published mostly in the 1840s on several contemporary political topics, including the emancipation of women and women's rights issues.

The essay "*The Enfranchisement of Women*" can be regarded as Taylor Mill's most elaborate text on women's position in society. This text was published in an influential journal *The Westminster Review* in 1851 and was originally attributed to Mill. Only after Mill's public declaration that the author of the essay was Harriet was it attributed to her. It seems to me that the dispute carried out in the literature devoted to their relationship and concerned with the authorship of the particular texts in question lasted for almost the whole century, vividly illustrating the rigidity of the traditional model of the interpretation of philosophical output. It seems that for the philosophers and historians of philosophy who joined the dispute with enthusiasm, the idea of joint production was alien and unacceptable. Mill often stressed that some of the work published under his name was a joint effort, but they did not believe or did not want to believe him. The fact is that the debates about their intellectual collaboration concerned the issue of whether she had any influence on Mill at all and if so, how great and whether it was positive or perhaps negative. It was almost out of the question that both could have contributed on equal terms to the writing of some of the work published under Mill's name. It is worth mentioning that in his autobiography, Mill attributed the co-authorship of *The Subjection of Women* to Harriet. In spite of this, the work has always been attributed to Mill. There is no doubt that hiding behind this approach of the commentators and interpreters is a kind of distrust of the abilities of women to think philosophically (as Hegel said), or even an evident disparagement of women regarding their ability to "do philosophy". In any case, it seems that Mill's warning that his thought and writing was in fact their common thought and joint production went unheard on the part of later

commentators, although the philosopher was unambiguous on this matter. In his autobiography he states:

When two persons have their thoughts and speculations completely in common; when all subjects of intellectual or moral interest are discussed between them in daily life, and probed to much greater depths than usually or conveniently sounded in writings intended for general readers; when they set out from the same principles, and arrive at their conclusions by processes pursued jointly, it is of little consequence in respect to the question of originality, which of them holds the pen; the one who contributes least to the composition may contribute most to the thought; the writings which result are the joint product of both, and it must often be impossible to disentangle their respective parts, and affirm that this belongs to one and that to the other (Mill 1873/2006).

He also characterized the collaboration with his wife in other contexts as “a partnership of thought, feeling and writing” (Mill 1873/2006). Such formulations of J.S. Mill are constantly received with misunderstanding or an unwillingness to understand. Apparently, the idea that a publication can be the result of joint philosophical work, of common intellectual effort and the joint thought of two equal partners, a woman and a man in particular, is in philosophy still barely acceptable. The interpretation of the position of women in the history of philosophy follows only one model: a woman standing by the side of a man as his muse or inspiration, or most often as a disciple. According to this model, women’s relationship to philosophy has always been mediated through a man—a philosopher, a woman’s love of wisdom has to be mediated through her love of a man—a philosopher. (The relationship between Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and Rene Descartes is but one of the many well-known or less well-known cases.) Their relationship has been interpreted as hierarchical: he the scholar, master, philosopher, she his admirer, disciple, and perhaps muse. The relationship between Harriet and John Stuart Mills did not fit such a model. The philosopher J.S. Mill saw viewed his partner in terms of a co-author, the co-creator of their common writings. It is undeniably worth noting that this example did not lead to a revision of the accepted model in philosophy but rather to the rejection of that which did not fit: a refusal to see the role of Harriet for what it was—one of co-author. Philosophical knowledge and philosophical creation are perceived in European tradition as strictly individualized activities bound to one author; collaboration in philosophy has almost no place within this tradition. Harriet and John Mill evidently broke with this tradition; they worked together on several pieces published in the name of J.S. Mill, reflected on problems together and their writing had the character of joint writing. In their essay *On Liberty*, they defend the idea that knowledge or the quest for truth has to be understood as a matter of dialogue, of joint confrontation and the exchange of different opinions.

Truth, in the great practical concerns of life, is so much a question of the reconciling and combining of opposites, that very few have minds sufficiently capacious and impartial to make the adjustment with an approach to correctness... (Mill 1991, 65).

Only the knowledge acquired from the dialogue of several individuals, the joint exchange of opinion can avoid dogmatism.

[T]here is always a hope when people are forced to listen to both sides; it is when they attend only to one that errors harden into prejudices; and truth itself ceases to have the effect of truth, by being exaggerated into falsehood (*ibid.*, 69).

As I have indicated above, the literature dealing with the relationship between Harriet Taylor and John Mill is extremely rich and has a long tradition. Much has been written about the influence of Harriet Taylor over John Mill and his philosophical output, on feminism in particular. Much work has been devoted to assessing the intellectual impact Harriet had on the development of John Mill's thought. This evaluation varies from rejecting the criticism through underestimating the measure and importance of her influence and (more seldom) positive recognition (for more details, see Jacobs 1994, 132-163). Interestingly, these assessments are almost exclusively focused on the issue of her influence on Mill. Yet, her opinions formulated mainly in the article on the suffrage of women focus upon the issues associated with the position of women and her criticism of patriarchal society and remain more or less unnoticed or are shifted to the margin of the interests of philosophers, historians of philosophy and commentators on her life and/or the life of John Stuart Mill and their relationship. It is notable that the first work devoted to the relationship between Harriet and John Mill and which mentions her views and articles was published in 1936, more than a hundred years after her death (Jacobs 1994, 144). The approach to Harriet Taylor Mill as a person and to her work was prevailingly critical. Her critics often reacted to the evaluation of her significance and position by John Stuart Mill who was reproached for his uncritical exaggeration, his overvaluation of the significance of his wife's influence on his thought. From the end of the nineteenth century to the present, Mill's biographers, historians of philosophy and commentators on Mill's writings have intensely examined the question of whether Harriet had an influence on her husband's writings and if so, in what way, and what direction did it take? (For a detailed overview of the development of the opinions on Harriet from the 1870s to the 1980s, see Jacobs 1994, 132-163). Two basic perspectives have gradually emerged in the literature devoted to this issue: according to the first, Harriet's effect on John Mill was not in fact significant, rather it was negligible because her contribution to her husband's philosophy was allegedly of no real substance. According to the second perspective, Harriet exerted a considerable influence on her husband's philosophical thought and writings but the effect was decidedly negative. This line of criticism emerged as early as towards the end of the nineteenth century and was most often tied in with the negative image of Harriet as a dangerous, overambitious, self-important, egocentric, and domineering woman. Mill's mind was allegedly overpowered by Harriet and he was completely bewitched by her personality. Mill's sympathies for the ideas of socialism and feminism in particular have often been construed as being a consequence of Harriet's negative impact. These rather psychologizing analyses accusing Harriet of negative personal and moral traits were most often carried out in the spirit of Victorian morality and the traditional image of

woman; an image consciously rejected by Harriet. Harriet was described as a strong woman, a sort of “intellectual seducer” and this image dominated in literature up to the 1950s. In that period, commentaries and analyses began to appear with the strategy of casting doubt on or denying the significance of her influence over the philosophical views of her husband. They reproached earlier critics for magnifying her influence and power. The critics barely took into account the fact that Mill praised her significance in public. Advocates of this “criticism as denial” often maintained that Mill was himself mistaken when he attributed such influence and importance to his wife; they explained that he had been disoriented by Harriet’s “feminine wiles” and that she had deprived him of the ability to judge his own personality correctly. In this case as well then, criticism of Harriet concentrated on her personal characteristics, while her ideas were somewhat ignored. We can therefore state that in all these criticisms arguments prevailed *ad feminam* (Jacobs 1994, 133). The majority of critics and commentators basically ignored the philosophical views of Harriet Taylor Mill on women working outside the home, her accentuation of the importance of women’s economic independence and her views on marriage and divorce. In my opinion, it is at this point that we can identify a special “strategy of exclusion”—concealment as a mechanism for maintaining men’s dominion. This is exceptionally efficient where it is not about “completely” making a particular woman invisible, but “just” concealing her ideas. This concealment also applies to the theme studied intensively by Harriet—the issue of the unequal position of women in matrimony and within wider society, a theme not considered worthy of philosophical attention. Such concealment does not necessarily concern women as authors exclusively, but also refers to women as a theme, even when the author is a man. Mill’s writing on *The Subjection of Women*, criticizing the subordinated position of women in patriarchal society, serves as evidence: it has not become the centre of academic attention, it is not one of the most reflected upon, admired and read work of the otherwise revered thinker and it is not usually part of academic or standard textbook interpretations of Mill’s philosophy. Interestingly enough, as Jacobs has noted, the first theoretical study on Mill’s *Subjection of Women* was published in the USA as late as 1973 (Jacobs 1994, 162-163).

Let us go back to Harriet Taylor Mill to look closer at her views on the issues associated with the emancipation of women. This was one of the central areas of an exceptionally wide range of interests of this thinker in both political and philosophical issues. Harriet Taylor Mill published several articles devoted to the position of women in society and to the issues related to women’s liberation and emancipation. Together with John Stuart Mill, she published a series of newspaper articles analyzing court cases of domestic violence in which they called for the strictest punishments for those who commit violence against the economically dependent members of the family, i.e. against women. She penned articles on marriage and divorce sharply criticizing circumstances that keep women in a position of economic dependence on their husbands. Harriet Taylor Mill regarded the economic dependence of women as one of the most significant factors in their social subordination and as the main obstacle to their liberty. Her views on women’s situation in society were expressed in their most accomplished form in the essay *The Enfranchisement of Women*, published in 1851.

Harriet Taylor's views on women's issues are amongst the most radical opinions from the period of enlightenment feminism; the author's demands concern complete civil and political equality, including equality in matters of education and occupation. Her views on marriage and its regularization are particularly interesting and radical. She was a passionate defender of the principle of freedom in the private sphere, the family sphere and demanded that the state should not regulate marriage by law, and particularly that it should not ban divorce. As the introduction to her essay indicates, Harriet Taylor Mill's views were also influenced by the "Women's Rights Convention", based on the theory of natural rights and adopted in Massachusetts in October 1850. The theory of natural rights was the basis of her demand that women be granted equal rights with other citizens—men. The article by Harriet Taylor Mill also contains harsh criticism of the existing social system that disputes women's political and civil rights. The author's arguments that such a system is in principle unjust are convincing. To remove social injustice, it is necessary to accord women all civil rights, including the right to vote, to admit women to all spheres of society, including the area of politics and economy. In reply to opposing views stating that the proper sphere for women is that of private and domestic life because they are not fit for higher social (intellectual, political, economic) positions, she gives several counter-examples from history and adds:

We deny the right of any portion of the species to decide for another portion, or any individual for another individual, what is and what is not their "proper sphere". The proper sphere for all human beings is the largest and highest which are able to attain to (Taylor 1970, 100).

In modern society, built on the principles of the equality and freedom of every individual, it is inadmissible for any individual or group to decide on behalf of another individual or group their proper place in society. In agreement with the overall individualistic orientation of liberal feminist thought, which had undeniably shaped her thinking, the author suggests that every individual has to be free to decide his or her own life strategy, his or her "proper sphere" in society.

Harriet Taylor Mill links the dominance of men in the political sphere, as John Mill does in *The Subjection of Women*, to the dominant position of men in the sphere of the family. She believes that it is male tyranny in the domestic sphere that leads to negative outcomes such as the servility and at times also the hollowness of women which in turn leads to the downfall of all society and civilization. Her underlying argument can be summed up as follows: the inequality of women in the domestic sphere, which is both the cause and consequence of women's lack of political power, leads to moral corruption in the family which, in turn, leads to the moral decay of society. The mental, emotional as well as the civil and legal power of men is devastating for men themselves—a situation where men can dictate their opinion and enforce their will instead of using rational arguments leads to intellectual laziness. "Habits of submission make men as well as women servile-minded" (Taylor 1970, 117). This leads to inactivity, both in the intellectual and the moral sense of the word. The intellectual inactivity leads to moral decay, which can only be averted when women win equality

with men in all spheres. The author stresses that an unequal relationship between man and woman is harmful to men themselves: such a relationship is humiliating and undignified for them as well.

Women's suffrage is thus a necessity for the development of the whole of society although, as Harriet Taylor Mill states, women's suffrage will not be enough without the equal admission of women into the sphere of paid work. It is assumed that if women earn money and contribute materially to the support of the family, they cannot be treated in a tyrannical manner; only work outside the home providing them with independence can contribute to their not being perceived as servants but rather as partners. At this point Harriet's views go beyond those of John Mill—he does not cast doubt on the traditional division of labour between husband and wife by arguing that it should be based on agreement and not coercion. Harriet Taylor Mill pays special attention to the issue of women's education, ardently arguing in favour of admitting girls and women to all forms of education and demanding that the doors of the universities be thrown open to them. Although she relies primarily on the humanistic ideals of the enlightenment, on the principles of freedom and equality, there is also a principle of usefulness in her reflections: she claims, for example, that the reason society must provide women with educational opportunities is because without adequate education they themselves cannot be good educators of their children. However, it would be wrong to conclude from this that motherhood is the primary role of a woman for Harriet Taylor Mill, quite the reverse: she emphasizes that women need freedom to shape their lives and it is absolutely wrong to dictate in law what they should or should not do.

It is neither necessary nor just to make imperative on women that they shall be either mothers or nothing; or that if they have been mothers once, they shall be nothing else during the whole remainder of their lives (Taylor 1970, 103).

Here, the author criticizes the sharp dichotomy between the private and the public spheres typical of modern industrial society, arguing that participation of women in the public sphere, that is in the sphere of employment and paid work, is part of their civil rights and it is an essential precondition of their liberation from "male tyranny".

As regards the cause of the subordination of women, Harriet Taylor Mill's reply resembles opinions of some later radical feminists:

When, however, we ask why the existence of one-half of the species should be merely ancillary to that of the other—why each woman should be a mere appendage to a man, allowed to have no interest of her own, that there may be nothing to compete in her mind with his interests and his pleasure; the only reason which can be given is, that men like it. It is agreeable to them that men should live for their own sake, women for the sake of men... (Taylor 1970, 107).

This is essentially a question of power, or more precisely, a question of the misuse of power by men as allowed by the laws which keep women in a subordinate position. The author presumes that changing the law will finally lead to a change in habit and that the avenue of legislative reform is not only an unavoidable but basically also a sufficient

prerequisite for establishing fairer relations between men and women within society as a whole as well as in the home. Of course, from the present-day point of view, such an opinion may appear too optimistic, even naïve. Nevertheless, I think that Harriet Taylor Mill deserves due credit—her defence of the emancipation of women contributed significantly not only to the contemporary political struggle for women's suffrage but also to the theory of feminism.

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