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John Stuart Mill

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Everyone have heard somebody else say this is my right and I do not harm someone even myself or make someone annoyed. You do not have any rights to intervene or stop me<sup>1</sup>. This quote has been used for a long time but almost of them do not know where it is from. The person who said this quote was very famous in 19<sup>th</sup> century as the most influential English-speaking philosopher<sup>2</sup> and he was a political economist, civil servant and proponent of utilitarianism. His name is John Stuart Mill. He and his work changed many thing in the world especially philosophy. Nowadays, John Stuart Mill's philosophy can be applied to solve moral situation and develop economic system

The first, John Stuart Mill adjusted the utilitarian concept, from Bentham's concept. He said the quality of happiness is the core of utilitarianism which cannot be calculated but it can be distinguished between lower pleasure, physical pleasure, or higher pleasure, intellectual and moral pleasure<sup>3</sup>. He emphasized every utilitarian focus on the great happiness principal that it means they care about overall happiness and want to do more happiness for everyone in society. Moreover, the great happiness principal stated the lower pleasure and higher pleasure is not equally, difference from

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<sup>1</sup> Mill, John Stuart. "On Liberty" 2006 pages 90–91

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia contribution, "John Stuart Mill's" Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.6 September 2012 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Stuart\\_Mill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Stuart_Mill)>

<sup>3</sup> Carnegie Mellon University, "online guide to ethics and moral philosophy" department of philosophy. 6 September 2012 < <http://caae.phil.cmu.edu/cavalier/80130/part2/sect9.html>>

Bentham's principle which state lower and higher pleasure is equal, and every utilitarian always prefer higher pleasure to lower pleasure<sup>4</sup> and the one way that people to get higher pleasure is liberty. From his statement, it can solve and explain some moral situation; for example, a hospital is fired and a fire fighter can help only one person between old man and physician. Generally, the fire fighter would help physician because the physician can help other people that means physician can make people happier by help people get out from their pain unlike the old man. This is followed his statement the most happiness for the most of people<sup>5</sup>. Hence, in some country, the government supports to settle industry in their country for overall happiness, benefit, despite the fact that a few people would be sick by pollution from industry.

The second, John Stuart Mill was the early person who talked about women rights by writing a book<sup>6</sup>, Subject of women. He said women should have the rights to vote and liberty of man and women should be equal because women have potential but the men have not let them do. Moreover, he urged that women needed to be taken care of by men because women are lower physical capacity. Nowadays, Mill's concept of women rights realizes the world that the women are as important as the men.

The third, Mill talked about freedom of speech. He said the society, law and politics is driven by discussion, so the censorship is the one of hindrance of developing the society. For Mill, the truth is not stable but it is depended on time. Free

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<sup>4</sup> The University of Adelaide Library , "What Utilitarianism Is" eBooks@Adelaide 6 September 2012 <[http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/m/mill/john\\_stuart/m645u/chapter2.html](http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/m/mill/john_stuart/m645u/chapter2.html)>

<sup>5</sup> Charles D. Kay. "Notes on Utilitarianism" Wofford college 6 September 2012 <<http://webs.wofford.edu/kaycd/ethics/util.htm>>

<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia contribution, "John Stuart Mill's" Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.6 September 2012 <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Stuart\\_Mill#Connection\\_to\\_feminism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Stuart_Mill#Connection_to_feminism)>

discussion is the tool for considering what true or false is<sup>7</sup>. Nowadays, his opinion in freedom of speech is used as classic concept of freedom of speech<sup>8</sup>. From the first paragraph, it is an example for his concept.

Mill's economic book, Principle of political economy, was widely used in 19<sup>th</sup> century especially be the main textbook in Oxford university until 1919<sup>9</sup> but his book is very famous until today. His book is about economic theories and politics. Many economist read his work and someone wrote in his book that Mill's work is very important in modern economic development<sup>10</sup>. For his book, he supported Adam Smith's theory, invisible hand, but his opinion is further than Smith that he supported the government intervene market sometime such as alcohol tax and inheritance tax. Moreover, Mill said taxation should be related to their income because utilitarian think that everyone should be equal<sup>11</sup>. Mill's concept is used for fiscal politics in every country especially alcohol tax. In Australia, heritance has been used for a long time because Mill's concept too.

The first part of his book, Principle of political economy, is about production. He urged that it has two important factors, labor and land<sup>12</sup>. For agricultural product decrease, Mill suggested that innovation, higher technology and lower tax can be solved this problem. From his suggestion in the past, Nowadays, US have subsidized

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<sup>7</sup> Sanders, Karen. "Ethics & Journalism" 2003. Page. 67.

<sup>8</sup> Sanders, Karen. "Ethics & Journalism" 2003. Page. 66.

<sup>9</sup> Wikipedia contribution, "John Stuart Mill's" Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.6 September 2012  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Stuart\\_Mill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Stuart_Mill)>

<sup>10</sup> A Project Of Liberty Fund, Inc. "The Online Library of Liberty" 2009 page 8

<sup>11</sup> A Project Of Liberty Fund, Inc. "The Online Library of Liberty" 2009 page 8

<sup>12</sup> The University of Adelaide Library , "Chapter 1: of the Requisites of Production " eBooks@Adelaide 6 September 2012  
<[http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/m/mill/john\\_stuart/m645p/book1.1.html](http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/m/mill/john_stuart/m645p/book1.1.html)>

farmer to increase food production. Furthermore, US have bought all of agricultural product for stabilizing agricultural price.

The fourth part of Mill's book is talking about stationary state. It means, in Mill's opinion, too high economic growth would be cause of forest demolition and lower quality of life. Hence, Mill's suggested that economy should grow properly and everyone, in economy, should maintain their economy in stationary state or with sustainability. At this moment, every country in Asia does not only worry about economic growth but also stationary state or sustainability because they do not want to be like the Euro zone or America in case of debt crisis.

The other concept that changed the world is influence of government. In the fifth part of principle of political economy, Mill suggested that government should improve education, welfare and control the gap of class in society but should not intervene in the market<sup>13</sup>. Today, Europe especially Euro zone have followed Mill's concept that they improve welfare very well for everyone in country and highly improve education. Moreover, they control the gap of class by raising the tax. This is one of example for Mill's concept about role of government.

John Stuart Mill changed many things in the world. The first, Mill's utilitarianism philosophy show that sometime should leave individual happiness for everyone or society happiness. The second, he was the early person who called for women rights. He showed the world that women are as important as men and women have potential like men. The third, he urged that everyone should have freedom of speech with no censorship because true or false should be judge by people in society

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<sup>13</sup> The University of Adelaide Library , "Book 5Chapter 1: Of the Functions of Government in General " eBooks@Adelaide 6 September 2012  
<[http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/m/mill/john\\_stuart/m645p/book5.1.html](http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/m/mill/john_stuart/m645p/book5.1.html)>

so freedom of speech or expression is necessary. The forth, he wrote the book, principle of political economy, that economist can use for a long time. And next 2 or 3 years, Thailand and more 10 countries are going to open ASEAN economic community that every country worries about sustainability like the third part of Mill's economic book.