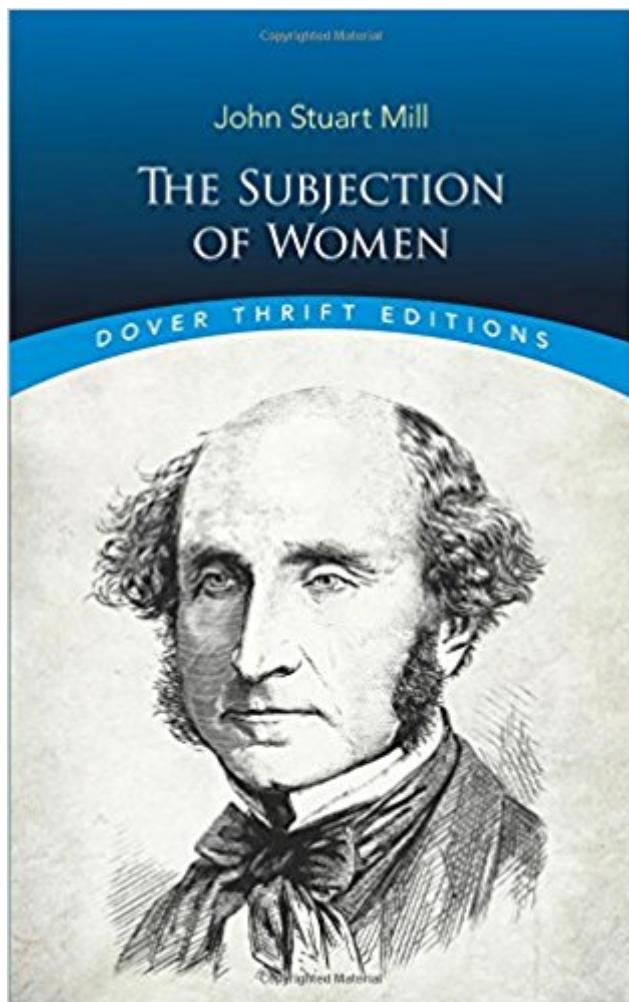


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The Subjection Of Women (Dover Thrift Editions)



Synopsis

Written in 1861 and published eight years later, this influential essay by the great English philosopher and economist is still relevant and its arguments significant. Believing that the subjugation of women was primarily political and psychological in origin, Mill urged the establishment of "complete equality in all legal, political, social, and domestic relations between men and women." Arguing for both legal reforms and a social revolution, he focuses on women's exclusion from the political process, their lack of any rights in marriage, and the benefits to be obtained by their liberation. Moreover, if they are to share the freedoms enjoyed by men, equal opportunities for employment and education for women are also necessary. For its time, the work was radical and far-reaching in its demands; but despite its repeated emphasis on forms of oppression and recognition of the difficulties endured by women, it is essentially an optimistic work maintaining a firm belief that increased equality and liberty for women were inevitable. Carefully researched and clearly expressed with great logic and consistency, the book remains a landmark in the struggle for human rights. In this inexpensive edition, it will certainly be welcomed by feminists but will also appeal to anyone interested in the philosophical, human, and social issues underlying the idea of freedom and equality for all people, regardless of gender.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"An excellent and affordable edition, with a pithy introduction by Okin that contextualizes and

summarizes the argument well. Mill's work affords insight not only into the issue of women's emancipation, but also into the world of 19th century liberalism: its views of history, of class, and of slavery." --Peter C. Caldwell, Rice University --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Written in 1861 and published eight years later, this influential essay by the great English philosopher and economist is still relevant and its arguments significant. Believing that the subjugation of women was primarily political and psychological in origin, Mill urged the establishment of 'complete equality in all legal, political, social and domestic relations' between men and women.

Daring to predict the future, a couple of weeks before the American presidential election, there is a very high probability that the "piggish" opinions and treatment of women by one man will be the dispositive factor in electing America's first female president. John Stuart Mill was an English philosopher and independent thinker who was born in 1806 and died in Avignon, France in 1873. I recently read and reviewed *On Liberty* (Dover Thrift Editions), liked it, and decided this topical work would be next. Mill was the first Member of Parliament to call for women's suffrage. Eight decades before Simone de Beauvoir published her classic work *The Second Sex* on women's subordinate position in society, Mill published this one. Mill had a long-term collaborative relationship with Harriet Taylor, whom he would eventually marry after her husband died. Mill seems to have "practiced what he preached" and felt their marriage and work was one of equality. He credits her for both inspiration as well as actual writing of this work. Specifically, he says: "Who can tell how many of the most original thoughts put forth by male writers, belong to a woman by suggestion, to themselves only by verifying and working out? If I may judge by my own case, a very large proportion indeed." (Of course, he did not actually credit her as the co-author!) The work commences like a legal brief, and much of his tone and argument are in the best traditions of tight rationale discourse. In the first paragraph he says: "the legal subordination of one sex to the other is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that 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." Mill observes the duality of the claims, for example, in America, that "all men are created equal" but maintained the

institution and practice of slavery. So too with the ancient Greeks, who considered themselves "free" but utilized slaves. As Mill states, with women, "from the very earliest twilight of human society, every woman was found in a state of bondage to some man." In all these cases, much intellectual effort was expended justifying these arrangements as the "natural order of things." A room of one's own? Mill recognized the need for a woman to have independence and a bit of her own space, and finances independent of a man were essential when he said: "The power of earning is essential to the dignity of a woman, if she has not independent property." Only in the last 20-30 years have women become accepted in traditional "male dominated fields", from telephone lineman to CEO. In this work Mill proclaimed that "No occupation should be off-limits" and that women can beat men in many fields of endeavor and he questions if there are any innate mental differences at all, without those imposed by acculturalization. And he concedes they are often more incisive in their observations, particularly social: "With equality of experience and of general faculties, a woman usually sees much more than a man of what is immediately before her." Mill was enthralled with Madame de Staël, the "greatest enemy of Napoleon":

"There is not in all modern literature a more eloquent vehicle of thought than the style of Madame de Staël." As a result of Mill's recommendation, I finally read my first work of hers, "Geneviève de Brabant" (French Edition). A wise, ethical, and thoughtful man, far ahead of his times. 5-stars. [Note: Posted on November 18 - like a lot of people, I made a bad prediction.]

Men and women will forever constitute mystery to one another. Though there are ways in which men are superior (such as in physical prowess), there are ways in which women are superior (such as in hearing and fine finger dexterity). Any such differences do not constitute one superior and the other inferior. Men and women are complementary to one another, that is to say that together they are complete and separated they are incomplete. Rest assured that in the eyes of God men and women are equally the "sons" of God. For long ages women have been treated as chattels, as mere property. Though many modern civilized nations have come a long way to giving men and women equal freedoms and rights, far too many cultures are still abusive to women. This book is a good read and a good beginning study of the topic. The arguments are well thought out and well presented. I highly recommend this book to any thoughtful reader; you may enhance your insight,

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