

John Stuart Mill's relationships, his "mental crisis," and the writing of *The Subjection of Women*

Şule Özler, Ph.D. and Pys.D.
Associate Professor, UCLA Department of Economics
The New Center for Psychoanalysis, Los Angeles

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944 9th Street #5, Santa Monica, CA, 90403. ozler@econ.ucla.edu

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Abstract

John Stuart Mill was one of the most eminent minds of the nineteenth century. At the age of twenty he went through a "mental crisis," as he called it, and when he emerged from that crisis he found deep love. A great deal of creative output followed this episode, including the writing of *The Subjection of Women* (SW). I hypothesize that at the root of Mill's crisis was an unconscious death wish (Freud 1900; Klein 1937) against his father to whom he was subjugated. Through his crisis, his dependency was raised to consciousness and through a confrontation of his conscious attitude with his unconscious mind (Jung 1960) came a transformation of both his consciousness and unconscious that created a new attitude, which in turn generated a creative surge over the next many years as well as a deeply loving relationship with his wife. He was able to develop both a mutually loving relationship and loved himself developing a "loving-self" (Natterson 2014). At the same time, his insecure attachment to his mother made him vulnerable to being bullied (Koiv, 2012) and this had a stable pattern (Troy and Sroufe 1987), as he was bullied by his father and later by his wife. I also posit that in the writing of SW, which was the strongest nineteenth-century argument for expanding women's opportunities for employment, education, and suffrage, Mill identified with the subjection of his mother to his father, as well as with the subjection of women in general. Additionally, his claim of male-female equality in SW was a defense against becoming fully masculine.

I. Introduction

In this paper I provide a psychoanalytic explanation for the mental crisis that John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) suffered at the age of twenty and how his recovery from this crisis enabled him to develop a loving relationship with his wife and functioned as the psychological roots of his essay *The Subjection of Women* (SW), which was one of the strongest nineteenth-century arguments in favor of making equal opportunities available to women. To that end, I describe Mill's relationship with his parents and his wife; his crisis and his recovery from it; his essay SW; and finally my hypotheses about the causes of his crisis, his way out of it, and the development of SW.

John Stuart Mill was one of the most influential philosophers of the nineteenth century. He was a political economist, a philosopher, and a civil servant. He wrote on numerous subjects including political economy, liberty, Utilitarianism, the advancement of equal opportunities for women, and democracy. Mill also wrote an autobiography on which I rely throughout my analysis.

Mill was educated by his dominant, strict, and intrusive father. Mill's emotions were systematically crushed by his father who had no regard for emotions. Mill learned to read at the age of two; he started studying Greek at three. Mill described the student-teacher relationship as being analogous to the relationship between master and slave. He had ambivalent feelings about his father, fearing him on the one hand and being loyally devoted to him on the other hand. Mill was dependent on his father and this dependence lasted until his father's death. Mill was able to

achieve some level of autonomy by breaking from his father's writings to an extent. However, his father's imprint was carried forward in Mill's emotional and mental lives.

In Mill's published autobiography, his mother is not mentioned even once, though he had included a few paragraphs on her in the unpublished version. Mill's mother was subjugated by his father, as was Mill, and Mill hated his mother's subjugation. Mill also blamed his mother for not being warm-hearted and thus not making his father a totally different person who could express emotions and who could be warm. Mill longed for the affection and love of his mother.

At the age of twenty, in 1826, Mill suffered from a mental crisis. His crisis appears to be have been an instance of acute depression. About six months into his crisis, he read a passage written by Marmontel in which Marmontel's father's death is described, and the experience brought Mill to tears. Mill says that this led to relief and to rediscovering enjoyment in "sunshine and sky."

(Mill, 1873, p. 56)

Due to his father's systematic attack on his emotions, Mill's access to his emotional life remained utterly unconscious. This included any natural relationship to his instincts. I hypothesize that Mill's instinctual aggression and the destructive fantasies that are so important to self-protection and individuality (Klein 1937) began to become conscious during his crisis through his recognition of a death wish in relation to his father. Specifically, Mill's destructive fantasies began to come to consciousness while reading Marmontel's writing on his own father's

death. After reading this passage, Mill reported that his depression had begun to lift and that he felt cured.

Mill's crisis opened the door for a confrontation with his unconscious that began with his recognition of his destructive fantasies concerning his father. His conscious confrontation with these potent energies gave rise to a creative third process that arose from the encounter between his conscious attitudes and his unconscious instinct. This third that transcended the original conflict (Jung 1960) brought about a mutually loving relationship and the creative work that followed, an example of which is *SW*.

Three years after his crisis, Mill met Harriet Taylor who was a philosopher and a women's rights advocate. Taylor, unlike Mill's mother, had a very strong character. She and Mill had a mutually loving relationship even though she was married. Twenty years after they met, Mill married Taylor at the age of forty-five. Taylor played a very influential role in Mill's intellectual and emotional development because she brought feelings into his life. They were deeply in love, were concerned about each other, and had mutual interests and goals. They enjoyed a long and mutually generative connection. In his relationship with his wife, Mill was able to develop a "loving self" (Natterson 2014). Yet he continued to be dominated by his wife as he was by his father, suggesting that his insecure attachment with his mother made him vulnerable to being bullied throughout his life (Troy and Sroufe 1987).

In SW, Mill recognized both the social and individual benefits of equality. I hypothesize that Mill's writing of SW was a result of his identification with the subjugation of his mother and women in general, which came to his consciousness in part through his mental crisis and later due to Taylor's influence. At the same time, his claim of male-female equality was a defense against fully becoming masculine.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. In section II, I cover Mill's early education and his relationship with his father and mother. Section III contains a description of his mental crisis and a psychoanalytic explanation for it. In section IV, I describe the emergence of love and creativity following his recovery from his crisis and a psychoanalytic explanation for their emergence. Section V consists of concluding remarks.

II. Mill's early education and relationship with his parents

a. Mill's early education and relationship with his father

James Mill was a Scottish historian, political theorist, economist, and philosopher. James Mill spent a considerable amount of time educating Mill, who was home schooled. Mill was often scolded by his father for his stupidity and as a result had a lifelong inferiority complex.

Packe (1954) suggests that Mill became a reasoning machine as a result of being brought up with a definite educational plan. Mill (1873) himself wrote, "I conceive that the description so often given of a Benthamite, as a mere reasoning machine... was during two or three years of my life not altogether untrue of me..." (43). He had a sad boyhood. Mill was kept completely away from the company of boys of his age. His "friends" were adults who were his father's friends. Mill had no holidays, and he viewed them as periods that would interrupt his education and lead to idleness. It appears that there was not much room for a normal childhood in Mill's life.

Capaldi (2004) speculates that Mill saw the relationship between student and teacher as being analogous to that between master and slave or the superior and the inferior. In SW, Mill explicitly discusses husband-and-wife relationships in the Victorian era as analogous to master-slave relationships. He viewed master-slave relationships as being to the detriment of not only the inferior but also the superior, as the latter's identity is tied up with the subordination of others.

Mill spent his days being educated under his father's watchful eyes, in the same room with him. He describes the environment of his early education as severe and based on fear, which he was very ambivalent about. On the one hand, he stated, "I do not, then, believe that fear, as an element in education can be dispensed with" (Mill 1873, 21). On the other hand, he considered fear an "evil" when it precluded love and confidence. Of his education Mill notes, "But, my father, in all his teaching, demanded of me not only the utmost that I could do, but much that I could by no possibility have done" (3). Yet he also had good things to say about his early

education: he acquired the skills of critiquing his own positions, dissecting arguments, and recognizing the importance of discovering the truth for himself.

James Mill was an irritable and tyrannical man in his home relations. Mill viewed his father as a Stoic who lacked any regard for passionate emotions. According to Mill, his father viewed emotions as a form of “madness.” His father needed this intense repression of feeling to maintain self-control. Yet Mill does not see this attribute of his father as a deficiency. He asserts, rather, that his father resembled most Englishman, who were ashamed of feelings and their demonstration. According to Mill, his father lacked tenderness toward his children. James Mill’s children’s love for him was mingled with fear. James Mill was extremely possessive of Mill (Bain 1882).

Mill was loyally devoted to his father but had ambivalent feelings toward him. On the one hand, in his autobiography he speaks of his father’s intellect, public spirit, and sense of morality with awe. On the other hand, he admits he feared him, and, as I will describe later, there are indications that he hated him. Mill’s references to his father in his autobiography are reticent, perhaps because Mill did not wish to make negative statements about his father in such a public document.

Mill was dependent on his father throughout his father’s life. Capaldi (2004) states that Mill was conscious of the fact that his liberation was made possible by his father’s death in 1836 when Mill was 30 years old. Until James Mill’s death, Mill lead a double life: on the one hand he was

loyal to his father's views; on the other hand he harbored a secret intellectual existence in which he hoped to assert his independence. Mill resented having to pay lip service to his father's views. Upon his father's death, Mill was able to break from his father's thought to an extent. It is therefore not surprising that Mill's critique of his father's economic position was not published until after his father's death. Due to his father's intrusive parenting, Mill struggled to free himself from his father by nurturing his own life inside himself.

Mill's father was an absolute authority for him from the time of his infancy. This authority also became indispensable for him. He never grew out of his dependency upon a strong character whom he could look up to and idolize. In his mental and emotional life, Mill carried his father's imprint to his last breath, which had been the intention of his father. Mill states: "I was so well accustomed to being told what to do... that I acquired a habit of leaving my responsibility as a moral agent to rest on my father, my conscious never speaking to me except by his voice" (quoted in Borchard 1957, 34-35). Yet he was resentful of this. Rose (1984) argues, "His early experience led him to resent subjection, but also to experience it as the most intense connection between two people" (135).

b. Mill's views of his mother and his relationship with her

In the unpublished version of his autobiography, Mill had only a few paragraphs on his mother, and in the published version he does not mention his mother even once. This may suggest that

his mother did not play any role in his moral and intellectual development, and that he was his father's son.

One can get a picture of Mill's mother's character from Capaldi (2004) who quotes an acquaintance, Mrs. Grote, describing the relationship between Mill's parents: "He [James Mill] married a stupid woman, 'a housemaid of a woman,' and left off caring for her and treated her as his squah..." (5-6). Mill's sister described her mother as a "German Hausfrau." (p. 6)

Mill wished for a mother who would have stood up for him against his father's severity. It seems that Mill despised the subjugated position of his mother. At the same time, as I will elaborate later, there are indications that he identified with her subjection since he was subjugated by his father as she was. Mill also blamed his mother: "...a really warm hearted mother, would in the first place have made my father a totally different being..." (quoted in Mazlish 1975, 154). Mill viewed his father's relationship to his mother as one that lacked tenderness and affection.

Capaldi (2004) suggests that both Mill and his father were contemptuous of Mill's mother, regarding her as stupid. Mill appears to have identified with his father, the aggressor. From the earliest age, everything about his mother was felt to be inferior. But was his mother stupid?

Mazlish (1975) suggests that based on her letters, stupidity was hardly a fitting description of her. The letters were sensible and literate. Mazlish also suggests that she was good natured, warm, and tender hearted.

Mill appears to have wished for affection and love. In the unpublished version of his autobiography, he blames his mother for the absence of love in the family:

[My mother] would have made the children grow up loving & being loved. But my mother with the very best intentions, only knew how to pass her life in drudging for them. Whatever she could do for them she did, & they liked her, because she was kind to them, but to make herself loved, looked up to, or even obeyed, required qualities which she unfortunately did not possess. (quoted in Mazlish 1975, 154)

The above quotation indicates that Mill believed his mother lacked loving qualities. She does not appear to have reacted in sensitive ways to Mill's need for love or his need to see a mother strong enough to be able to stand up to his father. In his dislike for his mother, it is clear that Mill had a strong attachment to her via his negative feelings. Attachment theory suggests that maternal sensitivity, which involves the personality characteristics and behavior of the caregiver, determines the quality of object relations (Diamond and Blatt 1999). Noting the absence of a loving mother, who may have lacked sufficient sensitivity, one might speculate that Mill developed an insecure attachment pattern (Ainsworth et al. 1978; Main and Cassidy 1988).

Research further suggests that victims of bullying have higher levels of insecure attachment (Koiv 2012) and their status of being victimized shows a stable pattern (Troy and Sroufe 1987). Mill was certainly victimized, or bullied, by his father, and it could be argued that he had an insecure attachment pattern with his mother. An important foundation for future behaviors is provided by attachment in early life because children continue to expect others to react to them

in the ways their early care givers did. Internal representations of the environment that continue into adulthood can be effected by the degree of attachment in infancy (Bowlby 1969, 1973).

Despite this, Mazlish (1975) speculates that Mill's mother gave a good deal of attention and love to him as her firstborn. Until the arrival of her second child, she nursed and cared for him. This view suggests that Mill might have had some level of "good enough" mothering (Winnicott 1971). Since Mill did not crumble into enfeeblement or experience psychosis during his crisis, and since he was able to develop a loving relationship with his wife, I infer that though he had an insecure attachment pattern he must have had some level of good enough mothering, even if it might have been minimal.

III. Mill's crisis and a psychoanalytic approach to his crisis and his way out of it

It is clear from Mill's history that in his early life he was intellectually schooled by his father while also being emotionally dominated and brutalized by him. The influence of his mother is less explicit and not as overtly noticeable. It is not surprising from his history that Mill would face some sort of psychological crisis that would involve his struggle for autonomy and selfhood. After almost twenty years of ritualized education and extreme subjugation, Mill descended into a bout of depression which appears to have been a facilitative crisis. His recovery from this crisis coincides with the beginning of a loving relationship with his future wife and the advent of his own creativity.

a. Mill's Crisis

Mill's early life, including his being a "reasoning machine," collapsed in 1826 when his crisis began at the age of twenty. He states that he found relief after about a year. There were two aspects of his crisis. The first was a personal-psychological aspect, which was due to Mill's need to become independent of his father. The second was an intellectual aspect, which was due to his disenchantment with his father's intellectual program. In his writings, Mill intellectualizes his mental crisis, describing what he was disenchanted with in his father's views; therefore, it is important to describe briefly what he was disenchanted with. Mill set for himself the goal of synthesizing Romanticism with the Enlightenment project. In Romanticism the free expression of feelings was of primary importance whereas in the Enlightenment project it was assumed that the physical sciences tell us how to model the social sciences. Over time, Mill moved away from Philosophical Radicalism, which offered a scientific account of human nature as the solution to humanity's problems. In addition, his faith in Bentham's Utilitarian doctrines as a guide to the good life collapsed at a rational level. For Bentham, there were three components to utilitarianism: (1) humans, by being psychological egoists, are motivated to minimize pain and maximize pleasure; (2) public policy should seek to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number; and (3) the psychological theory of association accounts for how individuals could come to identify their interests with the common good. Even though he initially subscribed to all three of these tenets, Mill rejected the first of them later in life. Utilitarianism had to be supplemented by the life of emotion; in other words, it had to be supplemented by the "internal culture of individuals" and "passive susceptibilities." (See Capaldi 2004 for a discussion of Mill's views and how they changed over time.) Rather than discussing the psychological aspects of his crisis directly, Mill discussed much of his psychological crisis in intellectualized terms.

Mill (1873) describes his psychological crisis as follows: “I was in a dull state of nerves, such as everybody is occasionally liable to; unsusceptible to enjoyment or pleasurable excitement... I seemed to have nothing left to live for” (53). To this he adds:

In this frame of mind it occurred to me to put the question directly to myself: “Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected at this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?” And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, “No!” At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. All my happiness was to have been found in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for. (53)

He states that “The lines in Coleridge’s ‘Dejection’—I was not then acquainted with them—exactly describe my case: ‘A grief without a pang, void, dark and drear, a drowsy, stifled, unimpassioned grief, which finds no natural outlet or relief in word, or sigh, or tear’” (54).

Mill attributes his crisis to self-analysis, at least to an extent. He thought of self-analysis as paralyzing and debilitating. He felt that he must master it in order to prevent it from mastering him. He describes himself as having no sail, despite having a well-equipped ship and a rudder, and he insists that both unselfish and selfish pleasures are no longer pleasurable to him. He also blamed his crisis in part on his education.

Mill sought relief in his favorite books, but they did not provide any relief. Neither could he find relief in music during this “gloomy” period. He went about his usual occupations “mechanically,” only due to habit. He quotes from Coleridge: “Work without hope draws nectar in a sieve, and hope without an object cannot live” (Mill 1873, 56). He sought no comfort in speaking to others. He says that he would not have been in his condition if there were anyone he loved sufficiently and in whom he could confide his grief. He claims that there was nothing else that could have alleviated his condition. With particular regard to sharing his feelings with his father, he writes, “My father, to whom it would have been natural to me to have recourse in any practical difficulties, was the last person to whom, in such a case as this, I looked for help” (54).

After thinking that he could not bear his state beyond a year, Mill finally found relief, which helped him to find enjoyment again “in sunshine and sky, in books, in conversation, in public affairs” (Mill 1873, 56-57). “[T]here was, once more, excitement,” he continues, “though of a moderate kind, in exerting myself for my opinions, and for the public good. Thus the cloud gradually drew off, and I again enjoyed life: and though I had several relapses, some of which lasted many months, I never again was as miserable as I had been” (56-57). Indeed, Mill was never again as miserable. He describes how this occurred as follows:

I was reading, accidentally, Marmontel’s “Mémoires,” and came to the passage which relates his father’s death, the distressed position of the family, and the sudden inspiration by which he, then a mere boy, felt and made them feel that he would be everything to them—would supply the place of all that they had lost. A vivid conception of the scene

and its feelings came over me, and I was moved to tears. From this moment my being grew lighter. The oppression of the thought that all feeling was dead within me, was gone. I was no longer hopeless: I was not a stock or a stone. I had still, it seemed, some of the material out of which all worth of character, and all capacity for happiness, are made. (56).

During this period Mill “began to find meaning in the things, which [he] had read or heard about the importance of poetry and art as instruments of human culture” (58). He was particularly impressed with the poems by Wordsworth that described natural scenery, especially the poet’s descriptions of the mountains because they reminded him of his earlier Pyrenean excursion, which was his own ideal of natural beauty. Mill tells us that through reading these poems he completely dislodged from his habitual depression and was never again subject to it. What was most important for Mill in these poems was that “they expressed not mere outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty” (59-60). Later in the same paragraph, Mill remarks, “And the delight which these poems gave me, proved that with culture of this sort, there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habit of analysis” (59-60).

At this point in time, one of Mill’s main preoccupations became the “cultivation of feelings.” He also became disenchanted with Benthamism during this period. He saw his father’s premises, including those regarding Benthamism, as too narrow. In 1833 he wrote a critical account of Bentham’s philosophy, putting such thoughts into print for the first time. Writing on Bentham in 1838, Mill states: “Knowing so little of human feelings, he knew still less of the influences by which those feelings are formed...” (quoted in Durham 1963, 380).

b. A Psychoanalytic explanation

As has been indicated by his intellectual observations and descriptions of his crisis, Mill was heavily influenced by his one-sided intellectualized education. It is also clear—from what proceeded in his work after his crisis and in his newfound capacity to develop a mutually loving relationship with his wife—that significant internal changes and a surge of creativity were facilitated by his depression. As Mill indicated, his education and overwork no doubt helped to expedite his descent into depression; however, he would not necessarily have gone to such depths if much more substantial unconscious issues did not still need to be addressed.

Mill's relationships with others, particular others his own age, were all but nonexistent. Fairbairn (1946) has argued quite convincingly that the self seeks out others in order to be realized in relationships. A great deal of Mill's substantial self could not be realized within the literal confines of his father's dominance of his life until the time of his crisis. His depression and confrontation with his own primitive emotional experience were crucial in helping facilitate the resolution of his depression. While it is not clear to what extent Mill was able to fully realize the implications of his confrontation with his aggression, to the extent that he was able to experience a new relationship to his aggression vis-à-vis his reading of Marmontel, his internal and external lives began to shift. It can be speculated that his fear of aggression in himself and others was at least modified, allowing him to experience enough instinctual energy to become separate and to escape, at least in part, the utter domination of his father.

The significance of Mill's experience of destructive fantasies cannot be underestimated here. Klein (1937) is extraordinarily helpful in her explication of the importance of both love and hate in human development. Klein tells us that these desires and a hatred of the mother (or parental figure) shows itself in the baby's conscious wish for the mother to have been different—as Mill in fact did wish of his own mother. Unresolved destructive impulses disturb the first love to the mother, and those impulses becomes a source of difficulty if they persist through life.

These emotions often have attached to them what both Freud (1900) and Klein referred to as death wishes toward those to whom a person is most attached. In his twenties, Mill became aware of his death wish toward his father, which must have laid dormant and unconscious until that time. Mill was absent from his father's deathbed and did not attend his father's funeral. Those facts support the view that Mill held highly ambivalent feelings about his father. Mill's hatred and fear along with his love and admiration were the basis of his attachment to his father. He realized that his father's domination over him and his father's very existence were a threat to not only his ego, as Levi (1945) suggests, but also to his self. Mill's death wish was the energetic mechanism that facilitated a release from his father's domination. His entire way of being was dominated by the introjection of his father upon him. It was only once he discovered that some fundamental instinctual part of him wished his father dead that he could begin to release himself from his father's emotional bondage. This allowed him to slowly develop his own unique thoughts and perspective through the symbolic death of his father.

It is also important to note that the experience of the deep emotional energies that were contained in his unconscious aggression and “death wish” enabled him to find the emotional separation from his father’s lock on him to the extent that he could begin his own separate life. Mill, however, was not fully “cured.” He had several relapses, and evidence indicates that he never reached full autonomy in his life. He had hated his mother’s subjection and his father’s domination over both his mother and him, and, in that sense, his love was never safe with them. The experience of his death wish coming to his consciousness and, later, the actual death of his father together allowed him to recover more capacity to love (depressive position). His capacity to love took its full expression in his relationship to his wife. Furthermore, his recovery from his crisis allowed him to continue to develop, in a creative fashion, his thoughts on a topic with which he was all-too-familiar: subjection.

Klein further tells us that a person’s hate impulse makes him or her feel guilty. This is something Mill must have felt in light of this line of thinking. Following the destructive impulses due to his feeling of guilt, the baby tries to repair the mother that he injured in his fantasy. Winnicott (1963) states that instinctual drives lead to the ruthless use of objects, which leads to a guilt sense, which can be alleviated by the “environmental mother.” Such guilt is not felt but lies dormant. Since these feelings are painful, they are kept in the background. An inferiority complex develops as a consequence of this unconscious guilt, which Mill had despite his monumental achievements.

At the same time, in this process there is the potential for an unconscious fear of being incapable of love, due to the fear of not being able to master aggressive impulses. When a person receives love and gratification there is feeling of security. Until he met Taylor, Mill appears not to have achieved such security, as indicated by his lack of confidence, which was itself the result of his father's emotional abuse. At the same time, that he was able to form a deeply loving relationship with Taylor indicates that he had "good enough" mothering (Winnicott 1971). Klein's analysis also helps us see why Mill married a strong woman very much unlike his mother. Early attachment to the mother determines the feelings of a man toward another woman.

One can also argue that Mill had developed a false self that was constructed as a result of his father's expectations. As a result of his "mental crisis," Mill began to recognize that his true self was the part of himself that he had kept hidden from his father. The conflict with his father was also a conflict within himself. Mill was terrified that his self would never be actualized because of his father's subjection. This unconscious terror raised a key question: if Mill separated from his father, where would he go? Only when he could consciously access his own hate expressed through his death wish could Mill begin to manifest as a separate self and experience the liberation of his ego. This allowed him to eventually separate from his father, though that separation did not occur until his father's actual death. Mill's feelings were repressed and were in his unconscious, yielding neurotic symptoms. He struggled with all of this and started to find his own intellect after his father's death, which allowed him to take a stand against his father's views. Mill had resilience; he survived.

The death wish hypothesis is also supported by Levi (1945), though he makes his arguments along Freudian lines. At the same time, Levi suggests that Mill wanted to take his father's place upon his father's death. Levi provides a quote from Marmontel where he wished to replace his own father and concludes that, even though the voice was Marmontel's, it was the wish of Mill. It is unclear whether Mill read this statement since there is no mention of it in his autobiography.

Durham (1963) argues against the death wish hypothesis. He argues that Mill's near mental collapse upon his father's actual death is evidence against the death wish hypothesis. The author further argues that while it is unclear if Mill hated his father it is certain that he was afraid of him. He attributes Mill's crisis to the nature of his education and his relationship with his father, as well to his own emotional exhaustion. Even though Durham's emotional exhaustion hypothesis might have some relevance, it does not take into account how Mill was "cured." I argue that Mill's "cure" from his crisis upon reading the passage from Marmontel provides evidence in support of the death wish hypothesis.

IV. The emergence of a "living third": love and creativity

Jung (1960) tells us that the union of conscious and unconscious attitudes gives rise to the "transcendent function." It is called transcendent because a new attitude is made organically possible, without loss of the unconscious. At this stage the ego takes the lead, not the unconscious. When the conscious mind confronts the unconscious, a reaction can emerge, which is a creative formulation or understanding.

The confrontation of the two opposites generates a tension charged with energy and creates a *living third* thing... a living birth that leads to a new level of being, a new situation. The transcendent function manifests itself as a quality of conjoined opposites. So long as these are kept apart—naturally for the purpose of avoiding conflict—they do not function and remain inert. (Jung 1960, 90; emphasis added)

In Mill's case, this living third had two dimensions: love and creativity. Mill had a conscious desire to live his true self, being consciously aware of his oppression. What was unconscious was his death wish toward his father. It is the confrontation of these two opposites that led to Mill's capacity to love himself, to give love, and to receive and produce creative work. Once he could allow the desire to kill his father, he had taken the first step to becoming more of his own person. If he had not been able to allow that, he would have been utterly trapped. His most genuine aspects subsequently emerged in relation to his work and love life.

a. Relationship with Harriet Taylor and her intellectual influence on Mill

Harriet Taylor (1807-1858) was a very influential person in Mill's emotional and intellectual life. She was a philosopher and an advocate for women's rights. *The Enfranchisement of Women* (1851) was the most important work attributed to her. In that work, she offered a path-breaking

analysis of gender inequality. Taylor, unlike Mill's mother, had a substantial career of her own and had a strong influence on Mill, emotionally and intellectually. Mill himself writes about her influence on his writing of *SW*, as well as his other works.

Mill met Taylor in 1830, at the age of twenty-four, following his mental crisis. From the very beginning, even though they had many mutual interests, their primary mutual interest was in each other. Taylor's capacity for love was seemingly boundless, and Mill was overflowing with energy due to meeting her. Taylor brought feelings to his life and helped him to understand the value of autonomy. Before he met Taylor, Mill had been emotionally isolated from humanity, a fact of which he was conscious. In a letter he wrote to Sterling in 1829, he states, "By loneliness I mean the absence of that feeling which has accompanied me through the greater part of my life" (quoted in Packe 1954, 108). It is clear that he had a great need for companionship when he met Taylor.

At the time they met, Taylor was married. It was only two years after her husband's death that she married Mill in 1851, after a twenty-year relationship. In line with his arguments in *SW*, Mill was equality-minded in his marriage. Prior to their marriage, Mill wrote a document which would have been unheard of at the time, in which he promised Taylor absolute freedom of action. According to the document, half the share of Mill's books and the inheritance from her former husband were at Taylor's own disposal. The document was signed and formalized.

There have been speculations about whether Mill and Taylor were sexually intimate or not (see Kamm 1977). The accepted conclusion is that they did not have a sexual relationship. It has been speculated that they might have been too idealist to become lovers, that Mill was impotent, or that Taylor found the physical act distasteful (Kamm 1977). Borchard (1957) suggests that Mill had neurotic anxiety about their relationship and that any lack of sexual intimacy might have resulted from Mill's sense of insecurity. One might also argue along oedipal lines that because he was not close to his father, and possibly unconsciously close to his mother, Mill's heterosexuality was inhibited.

Borchard (1957) reports a dream that Mill had about Magdalen, a symbol of voluptuousness (107-108). In the dream, Mill wishes for a sincere friend and a Magdalen. Mill speaks of yearning for a Magdalen, which suggests an unconscious longing for sex. Taylor was anything but like Magdalen. She was domineering, priggish, invalid, and superior.

Despite the likely conclusion that they did not have sex, Mill and Taylor certainly shared a great passion for ideas. From the letters they wrote during their marriage, it is obvious that they were deeply in love and concerned about each other's spirits and health. Mill had yearned for their marriage. In fact, his autobiography suggests that they had far greater intimacy after they were married. With Taylor, Mill felt safe. He wrote, "What a sense of protection is given by the consciousness of being loved, and what an additional sense, over and above this, by being near the one by whom one is and wishes to be loved best" (Borchard 1957, 106).

Taylor was the only person with whom Mill could express his emotions freely. Mill (1873) recounts his relationship with Taylor with great fondness, describing her as “the lady whose incomparable worth had made her friendship the greatest source to me both of happiness and of improvement, during many years in which we never expected to be in any closer relation to one another” (98). Mill felt the “sincerest respect” and the strongest affection toward Taylor.

Taylor is said to have had a great influence on Mill and to have wished for his success. Her intellectual influence is discussed by many of his biographers. For example, Hayek (1951) suggested that Taylor had an influence on Mill regarding economic matters. In describing *Principles of Political Economy*, Hayek explains how Taylor contributed to and even dictated parts of it. Mill also talks about Taylor’s great influence on SW.

After their marriage, Mill and Taylor withdrew from social life. She emphatically refused to be patronized despite the efforts of his friends to draw them into a social life. Taylor also cut Mill off from his family. She took offense that Mill’s mother and sister had not called upon the announcement of their marriage and that Mill’s father had refused it.

By all accounts Mill was dependent on Taylor in intellectual and personal matters. Schwartz (1972) argues that Mill became sentimentally enslaved to Taylor. According to Kamm (1977), Mill’s complete dependence on Taylor showed immaturity. He clung to her like an anxious child, which provides evidence for my suggestion that Mill had an insecure attachment to his mother. He was anxious to please Taylor, and pleasing her was a central aim of his life. Furthermore,

Schwartz (1972) states that Mill lacked emotional security and was afraid of being alone; as such, he could not be independent despite his desire to be so. Mill is thought by some scholars to have been dependent on Taylor for practical matters to the point of being ridiculous.

Borchard (1957) states that Mill was conscious of his dependence and that he glorified it. To justify this, he exalted Taylor's eminence and perfection to greater heights. Mill wrote the following of Taylor: "My only rule of life... is what you tell me you wish" (Borchard, 1957, p. 98). According to Borchard, "The basis of his dependence on her lay in the fact that she alone was the pivot upon which turned his feeling of safety in an overwhelming hostile world; he clung to her much as a young child clings to his mother" (p. 104). Borchard further suggests that Mill had a need to put someone on a pedestal; he needed a guiding star to whom he could submit his mind, actions, and decisions. He was lost without this guidance.

Taylor scolded Mill and that was what constituted her hold on him, which suggests she had taken the place of his father (Borchard 1957). Taylor's comments, though often sweetly admiring, were also unforeseeably reproaching. Such behavior made Mill feel guilty and uneasy. Obeying her was a necessity. This was a cause of further bonding with Taylor. He resented subjection due to his earlier experiences, yet subjection was also, according to Mill, the most intense connection between two people. It was inevitable that he was drawn to a woman stronger than himself, a woman who would reproach and rebuke him, who was controlling, and whom he endowed with all those qualities he lacked, such as passion, intuitiveness, and deep feeling.

Mill (1873), while speaking of Taylor's death, refers to it as a "bitter calamity" (102). Upon her death he bought a cottage near where she was buried. He says, "Her memory is to me a religion, and her approbation of the standard which, summing up as it does all worthiness, I endeavour to regulate my life" (102). After her death he wrote, "For seven and a half years that blessing was mine; for seven and a half only! I can say nothing which could describe, even in the faintest manner, what that loss was and is" (99).

b. A psychoanalytic approach to Mill's relationship with Taylor

Mill held strong feelings of love for Taylor. Klein states that people disregard their own desires when they have the capacity to identify themselves with their loved ones and to put the interests of those loved ones first. Mill's relationship with Taylor was a deeply loving one, not one imbued with the ambivalence that results from the types of destructive impulses arising from hatred. As articulated by Klein (1937), by identifying with the loved one, a person plays the role of a good parent and behaves as he or she wishes his or her parents had to him or her. Mill's behavior with Taylor seems to have reflected this tendency.

Klein (1937) further suggests that a dependent relationship can arise from the unconscious fear that the loved one will die. With such people, "love is very much needed as a support against the sense of guilt and fears of various kinds" (322). There is reasonable evidence that Mill harbored

a great deal of unconscious guilt which made him vulnerable to a dependent relationship with someone whom he loved. This is further supported by the fact that he did not live in a family where the conscious holding of aggressive emotions to work through would have been valued. This situation would set up a man like Mill to choose a woman with the opposite characteristics of the mother as an unconscious way of resolving the struggle.

People's loving potentials are developed intersubjectively through early object relations in childhood. Even in dysfunctional families, a child can develop the capacity to love through sufficient loving experiences (Natterson 2003). The potential for attachment appears to have developed in Mill's adult life as evidenced by his deep loving relationship with Taylor. Their love relationship was one of mutuality. It is through a mutually loving experience that love develops.

Love and self are inseparable and reciprocally influential. The self is increasingly actualized as love grows. Thus it can be argued that Mill's sense of self, which started emerging initially with his father's imagined death and was later strengthened by his father's actual death, developed further in his mutually loving relationship with Taylor. This is also evident in Mill's increased creativity, as I will argue below.

Individuality is confirmed in a loving relationship based on mutual recognition. Natterson quotes from Honneth's paraphrasing of Hegel:

Love represents the first stage of mutual recognition, because in it subjects mutually confirm each other with regard to the concrete nature of their needs and thereby recognize each other as needy creatures. In the reciprocal experience of loving, both subjects know themselves to be united in their neediness, in their dependence on each other. (Natterson 2003, 510)

The struggle for recognition is the root of love and from loving object interactions the self begins to emerge. This is the basis of Winnicott's (1965) good enough mothering. Benjamin (1992) comments that recognition is mutual, and Mill's relationship with Taylor was indeed based on mutual recognition. Mill recognized Taylor's contributions to his work and recognized her as an individual. Taylor, on the other hand, not only recognized Mill's capacity for creativity but also very much wanted him to succeed. She recognized him for the individual he was and could become.

According to Natterson (2003), love received and love given are inseparable, and love is generated intersubjectively. The author develops the concept of "loving-self": a process of simultaneous getting love from others, giving love to others, and loving oneself. In light of this concept, I posit that Mill developed a loving self in his relationship with Taylor. He was able to receive love from Taylor while giving love to her; without the sense of loving himself that thus developed, it is unlikely that his creative potential would have emerged.

There is evidence that Mill was bullied by Taylor, with her scolding and dominating him to some extent. As I already suggested, Mill's pattern of being bullied and the nature of his relationship with his mother suggest that he had an insecure attachment pattern. It is thus not surprising that Mill, who is likely to have had an insecure attachment with his mother, was a candidate to be bullied by his father, a pattern that continued into his relationship with Taylor.

Using Kernberg's (2011) work one might also suggest that Taylor and Mill had a mature love relationship. They indeed have some of the attributes described by Kernberg. They had an interest in joint projects; the work they did together was an important life project. They also had a basic level of trust, again revealed through the process of their working together. Mill trusted Taylor's ideas and implemented many of them, and Taylor trusted Mill's creative abilities. There is humility and gratitude on Mill's part about Taylor's contribution to his work. They seem to have had a common ego ideal as a joint life project. As revealed by statements in his autobiography, which I discussed above, Mill grieved Taylor's loss when she died and accepted her loss. However, it has been claimed that Mill was overly dependent on Taylor, and as I argued earlier he was bullied or victimized by her.

At the same time there are suggestions in the literature that Taylor was Mill's oedipal mother. Borchard (1957), suggesting that Taylor had taken the place of Mill's father, states that she scolded him and that this was what constituted her hold on him. On this point Mazlish (1975) makes the following statement:

Taylor was not only John Stuart Mill's mother, both as Oedipal and maternal object; in his unconscious she was also his father. Having started out as his pupil, she dramatically reverses roles... and began to be his teacher... Indeed, Taylor went beyond the real-life James Mill and displaced him as the greatest person John Stuart Mill had ever known.

(286)

This argument would lend support to the level of influence, if not control, that Taylor had over Mill's life. Certainly there was a great deal of complexity in their relationship, and her influence seems to have been very important to the creativity and courage that came forward in his work. The evidence would indicate that there were both positive and negative effects from their relationship, but compared to his earlier relationship with his father, Mill's experience with Taylor was much more generative and satisfying for him.

c. The Subjection of Women

An important byproduct of Mill's early life and his relationship with Taylor was his writing on the subjugation of women. Mill knew first-hand the impact of being subjected to a dominant other. This work was no doubt a statement of his experience and a strong statement of a cultural condition of his time. A brief description of this work follows to provide context for understanding the commentary relative to Mill and this work.

Mill published SW in 1869. In the opening paragraph of the essay, he states that he has held the views expressed in the essay from the time he started forming opinions on social and political matters. As early as 1833, in a letter to Thomas Carlyle, Mill wrote that the highest feminine and the masculine characters are without distinction (Mill, 1933). It is notable that he wrote this statement three years after meeting Taylor, indicating her possible influence on him even then.

Mill made the strongest nineteenth-century arguments for opening women's opportunities for employment, education, and suffrage. It was Mill's view that the disabilities of women were because of legislation and that in his time their social subordination was an isolated fact. He advocated many measures meant to foster women's equality. He, however, understood that law alone could not bring about women's equality. Education, social inculcation, habits, and family life itself all had to be changed along with the law. Mill (1869) states that women are not allowed to do the things they are best at. To exemplify this he refers to the work of queens and other great women. He also sees that "The power of earning is essential to the dignity of a woman..." (Mill, 1869, pp. 35-36)

Mill asserted that men want the "sentiments" of women, not only their obedience. Men want to have women not as slaves but as willing subordinates. "[Men] have therefore put everything in practice to enslave their minds" (10). The vehicle for this is education. From their early upbringing and moral education, women believe it is their duty to live for others.

Mill argues that there would not be any difference between men and women in their capacities and character if women were not kept in an “unnatural state” in which “their nature [is] greatly distorted and disguised...” (41). He also asserts that the claim that it is natural for men to dominate women has been used to justify the subjugation of women. He argues that it is not possible to know the true nature of women because women’s present behavior is simply the result of conditioning by society, and thus it is wrong to look at women’s present behavior as a sign of their nature.

Mill uses the language of master and slave throughout the essay to depict the relationship between husband and wife in a marriage. He views marriage as the only form of bondage allowed by law: “There remain no legal slaves, except the mistress of every house” (57). He also compares the relationship between a husband and a wife to that between lord and vassal, except that “the wife is held to more unlimited obedience than the vassal was” (58).

d. A psychoanalytic explanation for the writing of SW

Mill’s creativity, particularly the creative burst having to do with SW, was a direct product of his own subjection and liberation. In addition, it can be argued that Mill unconsciously identified with his mother’s utter subjection, which he hated because it was a reflection of his own impotence in relation to his dominant father. In a more general sense, he identified with the

plight of women because it was so consistent with his own struggle. His unconscious need for autonomy was expressed in the form of intellectual thoughts about how to live, not from an empathic connection to being oppressed (consciously) but from an intellectualized philosophical theory of how people ought to be with one another, as indicated in SW.

Taylor had an important role in Mill's writing of SW. Taylor was a strong feminist. It seems that he identified with her intellectually, and perhaps through her his conscious awareness of his own subjugation was raised. Taylor had a great deal of integrity, which Mill's mother did not have, enabling Mill to write SW by raising his own subjugation to consciousness. It must be emphasized that while Taylor had a very important role in raising Mill's consciousness and bringing inspiration to his work, he would not have embarked on such an important work if it were not out of his own soulful need for liberation and development. Indeed, his own subjugation was foundational to his creative direction; it could not have been accomplished if his own life and integrity were not on the line. In short, Mill embarked on this work because he needed to for his own salvation.

Because Mill never fully resolved the hate of his father, he never accepted his father's strengths and limitations. His unexpressed hate toward his father, the hate which fueled his superego, did not allow him to acknowledge that his father might have loved him, too. In that sense, the son needs to forgive his father for his shortcomings such that he can then assume the position of his father and become a better version of him. Mill was still persecuting his father through his identification with the repressed feminine. He had a hard time integrating masculinity.

One can also argue that Mill in some sense never resolved his own issues about masculinity. Psychoanalytic cure can only be reached if the male can integrate both the feminine (anima) and the masculine (animus) not in fantasy but in reality (Jung 1957). The battleground for Mill was the integration of anima, the instinctual and unconscious aspects of his psyche, which were systematically attacked by his real father and the internal father. The boy needs to grow up to be a man and not identify as feminine. Mill appears to have identified with the feminine waging war against the masculine. Ideally, every young man needs to become an independent male, which requires one to stop being afraid of one's own life.

One can further argue that Mill's claim of male-female equality was a defense against fully becoming masculine, becoming a moral authority himself. He never fully resolved this issue and must have struggled with neurotic tendencies since the masculine was never fully integrated. It seems that he might have struggled with becoming masculine even after his marriage partly because he identified with women.

Assuming the position of the father, in reality not in fantasy, is something that happens instinctually in nature. It is, however, a problem for the neurotic male since he hates his father and feels that his father (both the internal and the external father) hates him. In reality, the father's hatred of the weakness or shortcomings of the boy could be either a projection of the father's own shortcomings or his resentment that the boy will take after the weak mother. Alternatively, some fathers fear the strength of the little boy and are afraid that they will be

replaced as in the oedipal myth. This alternative does not fit the facts of Mill's life. Nevertheless, it is a sacred battle, and one which the son needs to win in order to become fully masculine. He needs to become a man and join the group of men and not only develop an identification with women.

An alternative view to Mill's identification with his mother's subjection could be that he had a loving identification with his father. This would have been the case if James Mill was a women's advocate. However, Thompson (1825) has argued that James Mill was a male chauvinist. In his treatise *On Government* (1819), James Mill stated that women and children as well as "idiots" did not need to vote. Their interests were looked after by propertied men. This alternative view was disputed by Ball (1984). Given the lack of more conclusive evidence, and in light of James Mill's statement contained in *On Government* and his attitude toward his wife, I am inclined to agree with the former view and take the position that Mill identified with his mother's subjection.

V. Concluding remarks

In this paper, I argued that Mill had an unconscious death wish against his father, which was at the root of his mental crisis. As Jung (1960) has elaborated, Mill's crisis led to a development of a third through the confrontation of his unconscious and conscious mind. Upon emergence from his crisis, Mill was able to develop a mutually loving relationship with his wife. Though it was a mutually loving relationship, Mill was dominated by his wife as he was by his father. I suggested that his seeming insecure attachment to his mother was at the root of being prone to bullying. In

addition, I argued that Mill identified with his mother's subjugation as well as the subjugation of women in general. The writing of *SW* was a direct result of this. Another factor in the writing of *SW* was its role as a defense against becoming fully masculine.

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