

Hobbes · Locke · Mill

Day 13 of your revision. The social-contract turn and the liberal inheritance — from Leviathan to liberty — every scholar and debate compressed for fast recall.
Revise → write a little → don't break the chain.

PYQs across these three thinkers (UPSC 2016–2024): 7 × 10-markers · 2 × 15-markers · 1 × 20-marker. A heuristic from past papers, not official weightage.

1 Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) — the first modern thinker

Thomas Hobbes stands at the opening of modern political thought. He turns theory away from divine right and Aristotelian teleology toward **fear, consent, law** and **sovereignty**. Politics begins not with the good life but with the problem of **violent death**. From self-preserving individuals in insecurity he builds the state — combining radical individualism with absolute sovereignty.

Life & works

- Born 1588 (the year the Spanish Armada was repelled); Oxford; tutor to an aristocratic family; lived through the **English Civil War** and the execution of Charles I; exile in France.
- Major works**: translation of Thucydides (used to criticise Athenian democracy); *The Elements of Law* (1640); *De Cive* (1642); *Leviathan* (1651) — the magnum opus on human nature, state of nature, covenant, sovereignty, law, religion and liberty.
- Backdrop: Westphalia (1648), the Reformation associated with **Martin Luther**, the emerging modern state system. **Karl Marx** called him “the father of all of us”; widely the father of modern political science.

Placing him: against Machiavelli, against Aristotle

Contrast	Machiavelli	Hobbes
Object	the prince	the sovereign
Method	historical experience, observation	scientific, formal, analytical
Instrument	arms and cruelty	law, order, institutional power

Against **Aristotle**: politics is about life and death, not virtue, teleology or the good life. The state exists to escape fear, conflict and death — so Hobbes is closer to Machiavelli than to Aristotle.

First-modern-thinker contest & method

- The title is contested between Machiavelli, **Jean Bodin** and Hobbes. Bodin *defined* sovereignty but left it under divine and natural restraints; Hobbes gives the **first complete theory of sovereignty** — absolute, indivisible, final, and extending over religion.
- Resolutive-compositive method**: break the whole into parts, study each, reconstruct through causes — “everything is best understood by its constitutive causes.” Deductive, mathematical in style; rests on **psychological egoism** and ethical relativism. Influenced by Galileo, Bacon, Harvey, Newton, Kepler. **John Rawls** later reads the state of nature as a classic Prisoner’s Dilemma.

“While Bodin was standing at the gate of modernity, it was Hobbes who jumped inside.” — on Hobbes’s completed sovereignty

2 Human Nature & Power

Hobbes begins with a hard view of man: not naturally moral, social or public-spirited, but **matter in motion**, driven by desire, fear and the search for security.

- Two motions: **vital** (involuntary, e.g. circulation) and **voluntary** / endeavour. Sensation yields **appetite** (toward what aids) and **aversion** (from what harms). Man is a collection of appetites and aversions — a materialist, non-teleological account.
- Self-preservation** is the deepest impulse; fear and self-interest the two deepest motives. **Felicity** is not moral perfection but continual success in obtaining desire — movement, not rest; acquisition, not fulfilment. Hence no Aristotelian highest good.
- Three causes of quarrel: **competition** (gain), **diffidence** (safety), **glory** (reputation). Power must be continually augmented or it dissipates — so struggle is permanent.

“All mankind has a general inclination towards a perpetual and restless desire for power that ceases only in death.” — **Thomas Hobbes**

“Man is a complex of power; desire is the desire for power, pride is an illusion about power, honour is an opinion about power, life is the unrelenting exercise of power, and death is the absolute loss of power.” — **Michael Oakeshott**

3 State of Nature as State of War

The **state of nature** is a hypothetical pre-political, pre-social condition — no civil law, no state, no common judge, no enforceable authority. Men are naturally **equal in vulnerability**: even the strongest can be killed by the weakest through cunning or conspiracy (**Sharon Lloyd**: equality in the ability to conquer or kill). Scarcity meets unlimited desire; **Tom Sorell** notes scarcity turns equality into enmity.

From equal vulnerability to the war of all against all



- War is not constant fighting but a **known disposition** to it: “the nature of war consists not in actual fighting, but in the known disposition thereto during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary.”
- No morality, justice, industry, arts, letters, commerce or society; force and fraud become the cardinal virtues. Every person has a right to everything — yet no one’s rights are secure.

“No arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death: and the life of man — solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.” — **Thomas Hobbes**

UPSC 2023 · 10m Comment on the State of Nature as State of War (Hobbes), in 150 words.

4 Natural Right & the Laws of Nature

- Right of nature:** the liberty each person has to use his own power for the preservation of his own life — in the state of nature, a right to everything, even to another’s life. Right indicates **absence of obligation**; law indicates obligation. Rights precede law. Paradox: everyone possesses rights, yet no one enjoys secure rights.
- The **right to self-preservation** is basic and inalienable — it survives even after the commonwealth is formed.

Laws of nature

Rational **articles of peace** discovered by reason; Hobbes lists nineteen. The load-bearing ones:

- First:** seek peace and follow it. **Second:** lay down natural rights if others do the same. **Third:** honour covenants. **Nineteenth:** no man should be judge in his own case.
- But reason points to peace while passion pulls back to pride, partiality and revenge — so the laws are **ineffective without coercion**. **Philip Pettit’s** logic: where promises alone cannot restrain the passions, awe must finish what reason starts.

“For the laws of nature, without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions.” — **Thomas Hobbes**

“It is not wisdom but Authority that makes a law.” — **Thomas Hobbes**

5 Covenant, Commonwealth & Absolute Sovereignty

The laws of nature show the road to peace; the **covenant** creates an authority that can maintain it. Hobbes distinguishes a loose **contract** from a **covenant** — a durable, perpetual pledge for future action.

A single covenant — the sovereign is its creation, not its party



- One contract founds society and state together — no separate social and political contract. **William Eubenstein:** “the sovereign is not a party to the contract, but its creation.” The covenant is **among subjects**, not between subjects and sovereign.
- Justice arises only after covenant; injustice is “not performance of a covenant.” Two routes: **sovereignty by institution** (mutual covenant) and **sovereignty by acquisition** (conquest) — fear is as valid a basis of obligation as consent.

“I authorize and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or to this assembly of men, on condition that you give up your right to him and authorize all his actions in like manner.” — **Thomas Hobbes**

“Covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all.” — **Thomas Hobbes**

Theory of sovereignty — and why it must be absolute

Sovereignty is the highest, final and effective authority: **absolute, indivisible, inalienable, perpetual, legally unconstrained**. The sole limit lies on the subject’s side — the inalienable right of self-preservation; obligation lasts only while protection lasts. Multiple centres of power breed civil war (**Robert Caponigri:** a limited sovereign is merely one more contender). Hence the hard choice — anarchy or absolutism — and “to divide the power of a commonwealth is to dissolve it.”

Hobbes admits no middle ground

ANARCHY

unlimited natural liberty → the war of all



ABSOLUTISM

one indivisible sovereign → peace & security

Bodin leaves the sovereign under divine & natural law

Hobbes relieves sovereignty of those disabilities (Sabine) — the friend of **Bentham**, **Austin**

Quentin Skinner: the political covenant “shows that the powers of the crown have no limits at all.” Hobbes secularises sovereignty and subordinates Church to state — completing internal sovereignty.

UPSC 2016 · 10m “How would I and my fellow human beings behave if we were to find ourselves in a state of nature, and what does this behaviour tell us about our innate predispositions?” (Hobbes)

6 Law, Religion, Liberty & Political Obligation

Law & religion

- Not bare command theory: law is the sovereign's command **after** a normative relation already made by covenant. Private judgement is surrendered; the sovereign's reason becomes **public reason**. Civil law is the only functioning law; natural law binds only through sovereign adoption. Hobbes stands between natural law and legal positivism.
- Religion grows from anxiety and can breed disorder — so it needs sovereign coordination. The church is “nothing more than a corporation governed by the commonwealth”; no profession of faith is lawful unless sanctioned by the sovereign. Even the Church falls under the state — a strong mark of his modernity.

Liberty — negative, with one exception

- Liberty is the **absence of external impediments**; subjects are free to do what the sovereign has not forbidden — trade, property, diet, education of children, private conscience. Liberty is distinct from ability (a man without legs is unable, not unfree, to run).
- Hobbes is among the earliest advocates of **negative liberty**; **Isaiah Berlin** later: liberty is “not being interfered with by others... the wider the area of non-interference, the wider my freedom.” The crucial exception is self-preservation: no subject is bound to kill himself or surrender self-defence; if the sovereign cannot protect life, the subject may resist.

“Liberty is where the law is silent.” — **Thomas Hobbes**

Political obligation

One of the strongest theories in the canon — obligation almost unlimited, resting on fear of punishment, duty to keep the bargain, the sovereign as authorised representative, and the overlap of civil and natural law. Yet it is not blind: it lasts only while protection lasts, and the right of self-preservation is inalienable. **A.E. Taylor** reads it as prudential (one never truly gains by breaking peace); **Howard Warrender** grounds it in a natural law that obliges “antecedently to... the commands of the civil sovereign” — giving obligation a divine-command structure.

UPSC 2017 · 10m Comment on the Hobbesian notion of Political Obligation, in 150 words.

7 Individualism, Absolutism & Liberalism

The deepest tension in Hobbes — and the resolution. He begins from the **individual**, not the community: a **methodological individualist** (society explained through separate persons' passions) and a **normative individualist** (the sovereign exists to preserve life). Human beings are self-interested, utilitarian, materialistic, possessive; he removes guilt from selfishness and treats it as a fact.

- George H. Sabine** calls him “the greatest of all individualists”; **C.B. Macpherson**, with **Ferdinand Tönnies** and **Michael Oakeshott**, recognises the individualist core — Macpherson names Hobbes, with Locke, “a father of **possessive individualism**” and an ideologue of a nascent capitalist market.
- Yet he ends in absolutism — not a contradiction but a derivation: unregulated natural liberty destroys security, so the all-powerful state is created **for** the individual. The retained right of self-preservation proves the individual never disappears under Leviathan.

“Hobbes starts as an individualist but ends as an absolutist — an individualist in his assumptions, an absolutist in his conclusions.” — **C.B. Macpherson**

Hobbes & liberalism; the gender question

- His rights are narrower than later liberalism's, but he lays liberal starting points: consent, natural rights, self-preservation, negative liberty, government as **protection** rather than moral tutelage. **Judith Shklar**'s reading sees him as a founding father of liberalism.
- On women: he accepts basic equality (a mother is also a lord; female subordination forms *with* civil society) yet denies women political participation and upholds paternal authority in the home — equality in language, patriarchy in structure.

UPSC 2022 · 15m “Individualism is inherent in Hobbes' absolutist ideology.” Comment.

8 Evaluation, Criticism & Legacy

Defence

- William Ebenstein**: *Leviathan* “is not an apology for the Stuart monarchy nor a grammar of despotic government but the first general theory of politics in the English language.” His break with divine right and teleology earns the title “Father of Revolutionary Philosophy.”

- **Kenneth Minogue:** Hobbes treats politics as “an aspect of a universal human dilemma involving freedom and security.” And the sovereign cannot reach conscience — laws are like hedges, set “not to stop travellers, but to keep them in the right way.”

“The Leviathan is the greatest, perhaps the sole, masterpiece of political philosophy in the English language.” — **Michael Oakeshott**

Criticism

- Absolute power without legal limit invites arbitrariness. **C.E. Vaughan:** “Leviathan is useless as a book of history and fruitless as a book of politics” — “pernicious and impossible,” reducing “the whole herd to slavery.” The state of nature is criticised as excessively pessimistic and wrongly taken as literal history.
- **John Locke, Rousseau** and **Immanuel Kant** are major critics; **Karl Popper** counts Hobbes an enemy of the open society; he has been accused of anticipating totalitarian politics — a reading Ebenstein rejects (covenantal origin, order for well-being, equality before law, the sovereign may be an assembly, no glorification of war).

Legacy

The first complete modern theory of **sovereignty**; legitimacy shifted from divine right to covenant; the seedbed of legal positivism (**Bentham, Austin**) and of **realism**. **Hans Morgenthau:** “International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power.” **Max Weber**’s state echoes him: “the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.” He remains live wherever **security and liberty** collide — emergency powers, lockdowns, concentrated authority justified as peace and order.

9 John Locke (1632–1704) — the father of liberalism

John Locke turns the contract device away from absolutism toward **limited government under law**. The grammar is clear: natural law, life, liberty, property, consent, toleration, constitutional government, resistance to tyranny. A moral state of nature, a rights-based politics, a limited government.

Life, works, position

- Lived through the Civil War, the Commonwealth, the Restoration and the **Glorious Revolution of 1688** — whose intellectual defence he supplied. Westminster “King’s Scholar,” Oxford, medicine, Fellow of the Royal Society; entered public life through the Earl of Shaftesbury.
- **Works:** *Two Treatises of Government* (1689–90) — First Treatise attacks Filmer’s *Patriarcha*, the Second gives the positive theory; *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (the mind a **tabula rasa**; knowledge from sensation and reflection); *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689); *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693).
- Empiricist after Bacon; the major contractual thinker after Hobbes, but rejecting Hobbes’s bleak human nature. **Peter Laslett** treats **Robert Filmer** as Locke’s primary antagonist; **John Dunn** reads Locke essentially as a Calvinist natural theologian.

Demolishing Filmer

Filmer: the state is created by God, authority given to Adam and passed to his heirs; the king rules “by the Grace of God,” the king–subject bond like father–child. Locke’s reply: no proof God gave Adam such authority or that it was transmissible; even if it once existed, no genuine heir can now be identified. The state is not a family — at most a family of families; citizens are not children. Authority rests on **consent**, not divine right or patriarchal power.

10 State of Nature, Natural Law & Natural Rights

Locke’s state of nature is a **moral condition governed by reason** — not Hobbes’s state of war. A state of perfect freedom and equality, with no natural subordination; pre-political, but neither pre-social nor pre-moral.

- Men are rational and capable of cooperation — a condition of “peace, goodwill, mutual assistance and self-preservation,” governed by the law of nature, which forbids harm to another’s “life, health, liberty, or possessions.” Freedom is not licence; each is bound to preserve others as far as possible. Locke rejects Hobbes’s psychological egoism.
- **Inconveniences** (not war) push men to civil society: men interpret natural law differently; no impartial judge; each is judge in his own case; enforcement is uncertain; property is insecure.

Natural law & natural rights

- Natural law precedes civil law, is universal, discoverable by reason, rooted in God’s reason and will — an “eternal rule” binding even rulers. Government exists to **uphold** natural law, not replace it.
- From it flow the rights to **life, liberty** and **property** — natural, inalienable, inviolable, prior to the state. (In the wide sense, “property” includes life and liberty.) Against Hobbes: positive law is valid only when it conforms to natural law.

Empiricism vs natural law — the analytical knot

The *Essay* rejects innate ideas, yet Locke keeps a moral law: moral truths reach certainty through “the creative participation of mind.” **Raymond Polin** calls him closer to a critical method than to “atomistic sensationalism.” **C.E. Vaughan** and **George H. Sabine** saw a contradiction; **Laslett, Hans Aarsleff** and **Richard Ashcraft** reject it. Core: empiricism gives Locke his method, natural law his moral standard.

11 Social Contract & Consent — society above government

No subjection to power without **consent**. Locke differs from Hobbes by separating **society** from **government** — a two-stage contract.

Two stages, and the remedy of last resort



- Society is prior to government; government holds **delegated power only**. If government dissolves, society does not — a bad government can be replaced. Men surrender only the right to make, execute and judge law; they retain **life, liberty, property**.
- Express consent** founds full membership; **tacit consent** binds residents, travellers, heirs and resident aliens. Founding needs unanimity; thereafter **majority rule** operates. Taxes need consent — directly or through representatives.

Waldron's three stages

Jeremy Waldron: first, men unanimously come together as a community and pool their natural powers; second, the community sets up legislative and other institutions by majority; third, property-owners consent — personally or through representatives — to taxes. Absolutism of Hobbes's kind is ruled out: rights held as a trust from God cannot be transferred to another's arbitrary power.

UPSC 2022 · 10m Comment on Locke's Social Contract, in 150 words.

12 Civil Society, Government & the Separation of Powers

Locke's state exists for the benefit of the individuals who form it — no mystical good apart from the people. It is a **limited, negative, night-watchman state**: it protects life, liberty and property, works within a constitutional frame, rests on standing known laws, and does not exist to shape character. Government power is held **on trust**; its purpose is to preserve and enlarge freedom.

Power	Function	Standing
Legislature	law-making; the will of the people	the "supreme power" — most important
Executive	enforces and administers law (absorbs the judicial function)	subordinate to the legislature
Federative	foreign affairs, war and peace, diplomacy	often in the same hands as the executive

- Limits on government: natural law stands above it — even the legislature cannot act against it; no arbitrary rule; laws promulgated and known in advance; property not taken without consent; legislative power cannot be delegated away; due process; valid only while it protects rights.
- Montesquieu**'s later formulation broadly aligns with Locke's stress on legislative superiority and limited executive power.

13 Theory of Property

The most debated part of Locke — linking labour, personality, rights, consent and the purpose of the state.

From common stock to accumulation



- Since labour belongs to the person, its product becomes property — tied to personality and freedom; an early source of the **labour theory of value**. Three limits: **labour**, **sufficiency** (leave "enough and as good") and **spoilage** (no waste). The invention of money allows storage without decay, weakening the spoilage limit and opening the door to larger accumulation.
- Property & consent: the "great and chief end" of civil society is the preservation of property; "the supreme power cannot take from any man any part of his property without his own consent" — anticipating "no taxation without representation." **Robert Nozick**'s entitlement theory later echoes just acquisition, transfer and rectification.

Possessive individualism — and the defence

C.B. Macpherson reads Locke as the theorist of "possessive individualism": "the conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them." The limits are vague, bypassable, weak once money appears; the theory favours accumulation and defends bourgeois society — a line shared by **Karl Marx**. Against this, **Isaiah Berlin**, **John Dunn** and **Martin Seliger** stress natural law and common good; **James Tully** argues Locke's purpose is "not to justify unlimited acquisition but to replace these limits with other conventional rules, based on consent"; **A. John Simmons** places him in the middle ground between accumulation and redistribution.

14 Law & Liberty, Toleration, and the Right to Revolution

Law & liberty

Against Hobbes's "liberty is where the law is silent," Locke answers "**No law, no liberty**." Liberty is not absence of restraint but living under **just law** rooted in reason; unjust law has no moral validity, and government cannot deprive people of natural rights. (In modern constitutional terms, the idea is linked to

reasonable restrictions under Article 19 and due-process values under Article 21, read through the **Maneka Gandhi** case.)

Toleration

In *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, matters of conscience are personal — the state must not impose or punish belief; church and state stay separate in their proper spheres. “Toleration is the substantive heart of liberalism”; “in matters of God, nobody listens to the magistrate.” A major source for later religious freedom and secularism.

Right to revolution

It follows from consent, trust and natural rights: government is a **fiduciary trust**, not a master. A ruler who acts by arbitrary will places himself in a **state of war** with the people, who may dissolve the government and create a new one — **sovereignty ultimately rests with the people**. Revolution dissolves government, not society; it is a remedy for breach of trust, used only in extreme cases.

- Conditions: failure to protect rights; tyranny and arbitrary will; blocking or preventing the legislature; refusing to implement law; placing the people under a foreign prince; seizing property without consent.
- Who may resist? **Richard Ashcraft**: resistance to tyranny is everyone’s business; **John Plamenatz** notes Locke confined it in practice to the “educated and propertied classes.” **George H. Sabine**: despite the right to resist, Locke was not revolutionary in temperament — above all an apologist of the Glorious Revolution. The American Declaration of Independence echoes the right to “alter or abolish” destructive government.

UPSC 2024 · 10m Comment on Locke’s views on Revolution, in 150 words.

15 Locke as Individualist — Assessment, Criticism, Legacy

“Locke is an individualist out and out” — though his individual is more enlightened than Hobbes’s. Natural rights belong to the individual and precede the state; the state is created for the protection and happiness of the individual; authority rests on consent; government has no original powers; the people retain the right to revolt; division of powers guards liberty.

“Everything in Locke’s system revolves around the individual.” — **C.E. Vaughan** (the “Prince of individualists”)

Criticism

- **Harold Laski**: Locke reduced the state to “a negative institution, a kind of gigantic limited liability company” — too little attention to social justice and the weak. Bourgeois bias (**Macpherson, Marx**). Ambiguity of sovereignty: **C.E. Vaughan** and **Ernest Barker** say Locke had no clear doctrine of where sovereignty resides. **John Dunn** warns that consent is central in form but imprecise in application. **Willmoore Kendall**, paradoxically, reads Locke as a collectivist of Rousseau’s brand.
- **George H. Sabine** finds four levels of authority — individual, community, legislature, executive — with “a kind of absoluteness” in each; read positively, this is awareness of institutional complexity. Locke seeks balance and harmony under natural law — nearer to Aristotle than to Plato.

Legacy

Intellectual ground for the Glorious Revolution and constitutional monarchy; the language of consent, limited government, rule of law, rights and representative taxation. American revolutionaries drew heavily on him (**Thomas Jefferson**); he influenced **Voltaire, Rousseau, David Hume** and the French Revolution; his separation of powers prepared the ground for Montesquieu; his property theory fed **Nozick** and later liberal-capitalist thought; his toleration shaped modern secularism; his natural-rights language fed human-rights discourse.

UPSC 2018 · 20m “John Locke is the father of liberalism.” Explain. [**Martin Seliger**: the first to elaborate modern liberalism as a comprehensive system.]

16 John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) — revising utilitarianism

John Stuart Mill sits at the centre of nineteenth-century liberalism: a utilitarian who puts **liberty, dignity and self-development** at the centre. A thinker of tension — champion of liberty yet the “Prophet of empty liberty”; defender of democracy yet a “reluctant democrat” — carrying liberal, pluralist, cooperative-socialist, elitist and feminist strands together. **Influences**: the Greeks, **Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, Harriet Taylor, Alexis de Tocqueville**. **Works**: *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, Considerations on Representative Government, The Subjection of Women, Enfranchisement of Women* (1851).

From Bentham’s calculus to qualitative happiness

Bentham: “nature has placed mankind under two sovereign masters: pleasure and pain” — all pleasures quantitatively comparable, so “pushpin is as good as poetry” (**Thomas Carlyle**: a “pig’s philosophy”). Mill keeps utility but deepens it: pleasure differs in **quality**, not just quantity; the true end becomes dignity and self-realization.

Bentham	Mill
quantitative pleasure; felicific calculus	qualitative happiness; quality resists measurement
self-interest the prime driver	self-sacrifice also has moral worth
material pleasure	dignity and self-realization
egoistic utilitarianism	moral & developmental utilitarianism

“It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied.” — **J. S. Mill**

Hence Mill the thinker of transition — “a utilitarian who destroys utilitarianism.”

17 On Liberty — thought, action, individuality

If Locke gives liberalism its defence of property, Mill gives it the most elaborate defence of **liberty** — the highest utility and the precondition of material, intellectual and moral progress. The threat comes not only from the state but from **majority tyranny**, social conformity and public opinion.

Liberty of thought & expression

- “Silencing an opinion is an assumption of infallibility.” The minority view may be true; even a false one tests and rejuvenates truth; accepted opinion, untested, becomes **dead dogma**. Public opinion can be more dangerous than state coercion. Mill therefore backs “absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects” — restricted only where there is actual harm to others.

“If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.” — J. S. Mill

Liberty of action — the harm principle

The harm principle: the one boundary on liberty

SELF-REGARDING

mind & body — the individual is sovereign; absolute liberty

“the only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way”



OTHER-REGARDING

affects others — may be regulated, only to prevent harm

society restrains conduct only for self-protection, never for a person's own good

“The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.” The line is hard to draw in practice (selling or destroying property may touch dependents) — so intervention needs **genuine harm** and a definite obligation, not mere indirect effect.

Liberty of association & individuality

- Free association is civic education — those interested in an activity best manage it; responsibility develops moral and mental powers; local self-government is “a practical part of the political education of a free people.”
- Freedom is the “free development of **individuality**”: critical thought, responsible choice, the courage to be eccentric. Liberty protects dignity, not mere convenience.

“A state which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments in its hands — even for beneficial purposes — will find that with small men no great things can be accomplished.” — J. S. Mill

Ernest Barker dissents: Mill is the “Prophet of empty liberty,” his self-regarding / other-regarding line artificial — liberty cannot be an “empty space” without real social conditions (**Bernard Bosanquet** agrees). **Isaiah Berlin**: negative liberty “is compatible with some kinds of autocracy.”

18 Representative Government — protective and educative

Government is a **moral institution**, not an administrative machine: the worth of a constitution lies in what it makes of its citizens. The best polity must serve present interests *and* improve the moral, intellectual and active qualities of the people.

- The ideal is direct participation; under modern complexity, the **best practicable form is representative government** — it reconciles equality with freedom, gives legitimacy through participation, and breeds self-reliant, alert citizens (despotism breeds apathy).
- It is a **school of character** combining “participation and competence.” Open voting matters because justifying one's vote turns it into “an instrument of intellectual and moral growth”; Parliament should be “a committee of grievances and a congress of opinions.” **Dennis Thompson**: participation creates a “sense of political efficacy.”
- Two competences: **institutional** (workable means) and **moral** (better ends). Franchise wide but qualified — excludes the illiterate and “unfit”; supports women's suffrage and proportional representation; devices include **plural and weighted voting** and a strong second chamber to check the tyranny of the majority, mobocracy and mediocracy.
- Economic democracy: partnerships between owners and workers, and worker cooperatives — **Wendy Donner** notes Mill is even more optimistic about participation in the economic than the political sphere, giving his liberalism a **cooperative-socialist edge**.

19 Reluctant or Radical Democrat?

C. L. Wayper calls Mill a “**reluctant democrat**.” He supports democracy but not unconditional one-person-one-vote majoritarianism: democracy is not a free gift — people and society must first become *fit* for it. Influenced by **Tocqueville**, he fears the tyranny of the majority, populism and mediocrity, and brings aristocratic safeguards (weighted and plural voting, a second chamber, educational filters) into democracy. His notorious corollary: “benevolent despotism is good for barbarians” — he treats colonies such as India and China as unfit for representative government in their existing condition.

- But the label does not exhaust him: **radical-democratic** elements run deep — broad participation, women's suffrage, minority representation, open voting, educative citizenship, the conviction that every class must have a voice. He is democratic in principle, qualified in institutional design.
- David Held** argues Mill does not carry democratic equality to its logical conclusion — equal participation could itself have educated the very people he feared. The contrast sharpens it: **Rousseau** trusts direct participation; **Gandhi** and **Nehru** appear as more passionate democrats — Nehru's line: “If people cannot come to democracy, we can bring democracy to their doorstep.”

20 The Subjection of Women

Mill raises the woman question when liberty was expanding for men but not for women — who lacked equal suffrage, property, education and standing in marriage. His intervention is moral, political and civilizational, and his argument joins **justice and utility**.

"The principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes — the legal subordination of one sex to the other — is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality." — **J. S. Mill**

- The new condition must admit "no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other." Targets: marriage and inheritance laws, absorption of a wife's property, the absence of protection against marital rape, exclusion from politics, business and education. Unequal marriage is "legal bondage" — a domestic slavery.
- **Nature vs nurture**: what passes as women's "nature" is the product of long socialization; apparent consent under patriarchy is shaped by dependence and lack of alternatives. The old order rested on force — "might was right" — which has no place in the modern world. Joan of Arc, Elizabeth and Margaret of Austria show women's capacity for public affairs.
- **Suffrage**: difference of sex cannot ground political rights; as an MP he backed enfranchisement, presenting in 1866 a petition of more than 1,500 signatures to the Commons. **Utilitarian case**: equal freedom releases half of society's talent, doubles the available brain trust, raises competition, and even civilizes men. **Susan Okin** treats him as among the first to study women's oppression systematically; **O. P. Gauba** calls it one of the strongest vindications of the feminist cause; the line runs on to **Betty Friedan** and second-wave feminism.

UPSC 2021 · 10m Comment on J. S. Mill's ideas on women's suffrage. UPSC 2023 · 15m "The legal subordination of one sex to another is wrong in itself..." (Mill). Comment.

21 Power Quotes — carry these into the hall

"The life of man — solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short." · "Covenants, without the sword, are but words." — **Thomas Hobbes**

"The Leviathan is the greatest, perhaps the sole, masterpiece of political philosophy in the English language." — **Michael Oakeshott, on Hobbes**

"Hobbes starts as an individualist but ends as an absolutist." — **C.B. Macpherson**

"No law, no liberty." · The state exists for "the preservation of property" — life, liberty and estate. — **John Locke**

"Everything in Locke's system revolves around the individual." — **C.E. Vaughan**

"It is better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied." — **J. S. Mill**

"The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others." — **J. S. Mill**

"The legal subordination of one sex to the other... is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement." — **J. S. Mill**

22 Scholar Index — if a name feels unfamiliar, go back to your notes

Hans Aarsleff · Richard Ashcraft · Aristotle · John Austin · Francis Bacon · Ernest Barker · Jeremy Bentham · Isaiah Berlin · Jean Bodin · Bernard Bosanquet · Robert Caponigri · Thomas Carlyle · Wendy Donner · John Dunn · William Ebenstein · Robert Filmer · Betty Friedan · Gandhi · O. P. Gauba · David Held · Thomas Hobbes · David Hume · Thomas Jefferson · Immanuel Kant · Willmoore Kendall · Harold Laski · Peter Laslett · Sharon Lloyd · John Locke · Martin Luther · Machiavelli · C.B. Macpherson · Karl Marx · James Mill · J. S. Mill · Kenneth Minogue · Montesquieu · Hans Morgenthau · Nehru · Robert Nozick · Michael Oakeshott · Susan Okin · Philip Pettit · John Plamenatz · Raymond Polin · Karl Popper · John Rawls · Rousseau · George H. Sabine · Martin Seliger · Judith Shklar · A. John Simmons · Quentin Skinner · Tom Sorell · Harriet Taylor · A.E. Taylor · Dennis Thompson · Alexis de Tocqueville · Ferdinand Tönnies · James Tully · C.E. Vaughan · Voltaire · Jeremy Waldron · Howard Warrender · C. L. Wayper · Max Weber

23 How UPSC Asks It — mapped to the file's PYQs

Thinker	Theme	Years & marks
Hobbes	State of nature / human nature / innate predispositions	2016 / 10m
Hobbes	State of nature as state of war	2023 / 10m
Hobbes	Political obligation	2017 / 10m
Hobbes	Individualism inherent in his absolutist ideology	2022 / 15m
Locke	Father of liberalism	2018 / 20m
Locke	Social contract	2022 / 10m
Locke	Views on revolution	2024 / 10m
Mill	A "reluctant democrat" (Wayper)	2018 / 10m
Mill	Women's suffrage	2021 / 10m
Mill	Subjection of women / legal subordination of one sex	2023 / 15m

24 Today's Practice — write before the evening

1. "Individualism is inherent in Hobbes' absolutist ideology." Comment. (UPSC 2022, 15m)
2. "John Locke is the father of liberalism." Explain. (UPSC 2018, 20m)
3. "The legal subordination of one sex to another is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human development." (J. S. Mill). Comment. (UPSC 2023, 15m)

Model answers drop tonight on the Telegram channel — [@psirbyamitpratap](#). Keep notifications on. Blank on a point above — a covenant clause, Locke's spoilage limit, Mill's harm principle? It is covered in full in your **Foundation & OGP** class notes and handouts — revise it, then write. **Don't break the chain.**

See you tomorrow with Day 14 — Western Political Thought III: Marx, Gramsci & Hannah Arendt.