



ETHICS AND ECONOMICS

Lecture Notes for Week 8

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Social Stability, Order and Liberty

In the first part of this chapter, we classify rules and norms into four levels: personal, social, legal, and metaphysical. We briefly describe how rules at different levels are evaluated. In the second part, we explore the reasons that justify ethical norms—encompassing both personal and social norms. Providing strong justifications supports the transformation of personal rules into personal norms, fosters the general acceptance of norms, and enhances social stability. In the third part, we examine the trade-off between social order and liberty.

Appendix 1 includes points for discussing freedom of speech, while Appendix 2 promotes John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*.

Classifying and Evaluating Rules

Rules can be classified into personal rules, social norms, legal norms, and metaphysical norms:

- **Personal Rules:** Personal rules guide an individual's choice of actions. They are evaluated by the individual based on their success in empirical life and their alignment with personal conscience. These rules are enforced by the Self, and terms like "good" and "bad" are used for evaluation. In Czech, the set of personal norms is referred to as *morálka*. Personal rules are often derived from social norms and are shaped through experience. Children learn social norms through imitation, reinforced by external influences like love or punishment. Over time, this process becomes internalized in Psyche. Actions that lead to success in empirical life may result in adjustments to personal rules to replicate that success. Conversely, actions causing pangs of conscience prompt modifications to avoid future feelings of shame or guilt. This process can lead to divergence between an individual's personal rules and others' rules or social norms. When such contradictions arise, individuals feel a psychological drive to resolve them, often resulting in the reevaluation and adjustment of both personal and social norms.
- **Social Norms:** Social norms form the morality of a society. They are evaluated by society's members based on their effectiveness in empirical life and their social

acceptance. Modern societies typically comprise multiple communities, and the acceptance of norms within a community depends largely on habit. In contrast, the acceptance of norms across an entire society relies on the availability of strong justifications. Social norms are enforced by the community, and terms like "just" and "unjust" are used for their evaluation. Social stability requires common—or at least non-contradictory—norms across communities. In Czech, the set of social norms is called *mravnost*.

- **Legal Norms:** Legal norms are formalized in written laws and enforced by the state. In heterogeneous societies with diverse communities and moralities, legal norms serve as a crucial tool for maintaining social stability.
- **Metaphysical Norms:** Metaphysical norms, often influenced by religion or metaphysical philosophy, can shape personal norms directly or indirectly, especially in cultures with longstanding metaphysical traditions.

All levels of norms are interconnected. In contemporary Western thought, personal rules are considered foundational, a perspective rooted in Greek philosophy, the New Testament of the Christian Bible, the Enlightenment, and the rejection of 20th-century totalitarianism. Social and legal norms should align harmoniously, as contradictions between them can create societal tensions.

Social Stability – Giving Reason to Ethical Norms

The general acceptance of common social norms is a fundamental condition for social stability. This acceptance can be based on either authority or argumentation.

Acceptance Based on Authority

The acceptance of norms through authority relies on the recognition and legitimacy of various types of authority:

- **Authority of Persons or Legal Entities:**
 - **Formal Authority:** Examples include Plato's *philosopher-rulers* or the communist party in authoritarian regimes.
 - **Informal Authority:** Examples include Aristotle's *men of virtue* or influential journalists.
- **Authority of Texts:**
 - Examples include the *Holy Bible*, the *Holy Qur'an*, or Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*. These texts require interpretation and explanation, which involve two key concepts:
 - **Exegesis:** This refers to the critical interpretation and explanation of a text, focusing on uncovering the author's original meaning. It involves close reading, linguistic analysis, and contextual examination, especially for religious texts, to resolve ambiguities by considering historical, cultural, and literary contexts.
 - **Hermeneutics:** This is a broader theory and methodology of interpretation, applicable not only to texts but also to understanding human experience, culture, and communication. Hermeneutics considers the interpreter's perspective and the evolving nature of meaning over time. While it applies to religious texts, it also extends to fields like philosophy, law, and literature.

Exegesis and hermeneutics often produce multiple interpretations of a single text, leading to the emergence of different sects or schools of thought and the rise of leaders—whether individuals or organizations—with interpretive authority.
- **Authority of Tradition:**
 - The French philosopher René Descartes (1596–1650), in his *Discourse on the Method*, introduced the concept of "provisional morality." He argued that in the absence of moral certainty, individuals should follow temporary ethical guidelines, such as adhering to the laws and customs of their country and favoring moderate opinions.
 - Contemporary communitarian thinkers emphasize the role of communities and

their traditions as authorities in shaping ethical norms.

- **Authority of Law:**
 - Philosophers such as Aristotle (384–322 BCE) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) described the interconnection between ethical rules (*ethos*) and legal rules. Ethical norms influence the formation of law, and law, in turn, with its authoritative power, shapes societal ethics.
- **Authority of Science:**
 - Science provides knowledge about the real world, which informs moral reasoning. However, this authority can be challenged:
 - Scientific paradigms rely on non-empirical, theoretical, and methodological positions that set standards for acceptable abstractions. As a result, different, sometimes contradictory, scientific frameworks can co-exist.
 - Scientists, while experts in their fields, may hold diverse World Views - *sapientia*, which can sometimes be embedded within their expertise and influence their judgments.

Acceptance based on argumentation

Argumentation should be factual, not emotional. However, this can be challenging in the postmodern, media-driven society, where emotions and appeals to authority often dominate discussions, sometimes sidelining facts altogether.

In contemporary Western society, several foundational positions are used for argumentation regarding ethical norms:

- **Ethical Subjectivism:**
 - The moral principle is toleration of all norms.
- **Utilitarianism:**
 - The moral principle is the maximization of total utility for all those affected by the norm.
- **Ethical Egoism:**
 - The moral principle is pursuing one's self-interest exclusively.

- **Ethics of Care:**
 - The moral principle is to care for and support one's community.
- **Ethics of Virtue:**
 - The moral principle is to be a virtuous person.
- **(Neo)Kantianism:**
 - The moral principle is the categorical imperative.
- **Natural Law Position:**
 - The moral principle is to "obey natural laws and respect natural rights."
 - Proponents argue that universal, non-arbitrary laws underlie human characteristics, and rights are based on nature rather than history. In the Middle Ages, the theory of natural laws was elaborated by Thomas Aquinas. Nowadays, the existence of universal rights is questioned. This mirrors e.g. in the naming of the "Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Euro-pean Union".
- **Critical Theory:**
 - Advocated by figures like Jürgen Habermas (1929–), this position sees natural laws as products of a dialectical evolutionary process and considers natural rights to be historical, reflecting the stage of human development.
 - Declarations of rights are viewed as prescriptive, outlining what ought to be. Proponents often critique existing norms by uncovering and questioning their deeper meanings.
- **Critical Rationalism:**
 - Championed by Karl Popper (1902–1994), this perspective views ethical norms as binding yet falsifiable hypotheses rather than dogmas.
 - It opposes:
 - **Positivistic Resignation:** The view that ethical norms are irrational and cannot be analyzed.
 - **Existentialism:** The belief that ethical norms are irrelevant, focusing solely on decisions in specific situations.
 - **Uncritical Belief in Religious Norms:** Acceptance of religious norms without critical examination.

- **Justice Theory:**
 - Developed from Social Contract Theory (e.g., Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau), justice arises from fair contracts.
 - Individuals pursue self-interest and expect reciprocity. While consent is a key aspect of a just contract, it does not guarantee justice. A just contract should not exploit any person and must offer distributive advantages to all participants.
 - Justice Theory is the fundamental position in current political philosophy in the Western World.
- **Positions Beyond Pure Rationality:**
 - E.g., Blaise Pascal (1623–1662), in *Pensées* (1669):
 - He distinguished between *certitude* and *assurance*:
 - *Certitude* refers to unshakable knowledge, often associated with mathematics or logic.
 - *Assurance* relates to confidence in beliefs, particularly in matters of faith, derived from personal experience and intuition—what Pascal called the "reasons of the heart."
 - While certitude about social norms is unattainable, assurance in them can provide deeply meaningful and valuable confidence, even without logical proof.

Order and Liberty

Shared social norms are important for social order and social identity. Social identity relates to how individuals identify with their society or with particular groups within society, such as gender, race, nationality, and religion. It also includes the roles people play in society and how they are perceived by others. We can distinguish between homogeneous and heterogeneous societies; in heterogeneous societies, there is a plurality of groups with different social norms. Modern Western societies value liberty and tend to be heterogeneous.

Social norms are the basis of social capital. Social capital refers to the networks of

relationships that enable individuals and groups to collaborate effectively to achieve common goals. It is built on trust and the expectation of reciprocity, fostering cooperation and reducing the need for formal regulations. Social capital is manifested through social networks, which facilitate the exchange of resources and support, and through civic engagement, which strengthens community bonds. It includes both bonding social capital, which connects individuals within close-knit groups, and bridging social capital, which links diverse groups. High levels of social capital are associated with numerous benefits, including economic development, improved health outcomes, better educational achievements, and stronger community resilience. Overall, social capital is a vital component of societal well-being, emphasizing the importance of relationships and trust in fostering cooperation and achieving shared goals.

In long-existing societies, social capital and social order have evolved over time. They are in a continual process of change as tastes, technology, and resources evolve. Friedrich von Hayek (1899–1992) introduced the concept of spontaneous order and emphasized its importance. Social order in heterogeneous societies must be supported by shared legal norms. The contemporary German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (1929–) has expressed the view that in the postmodern world, positive laws—legal norms—are more important than spontaneously developed social norms.

Positive laws are laws that have been formally enacted or codified by a governmental authority or institution. These laws are distinguished from natural laws, which are considered inherent and universal principles governing human conduct, discoverable through reason. Positive laws are specific to a particular society or government and are created through legislative processes, judicial decisions, or administrative regulations.

Two major legal systems producing positive laws are continental law (civil law) and common law. They differ in their sources, methodologies, and judicial practices. Continental law is based on comprehensive legal codes and statutes, deriving from Roman law, with judges primarily tasked with applying these codified laws to cases. Legal proceedings are typically inquisitorial, with judges playing an active role in investigating facts. Common law, on the other hand, is based on judicial precedents set by previous court decisions, with the doctrine of *stare decisis* (Latin for “to stand by things decided”) guiding the application of law. Judges in common law systems have a more active role in shaping the law

through their rulings, and legal proceedings are generally adversarial, with a focus on interpreting the law as it applies to specific cases. While continental law predominates in Europe, Latin America, and parts of Asia and Africa, common law is primarily found in countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, and other former British colonies. Common law develops more flexibly and evolutionarily than continental law. Continental law is based on contracting among different groups, and analyzing this contracting is a major focus for many political philosophers. Contracting among rational individuals is the natural playground for economists; many excellent economists, such as Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950), Friedrich von Hayek (1899–1992), and James Buchanan (1919–2013), were also accomplished political scientists.

Rational individuals involved in contracting about rules face the trade-off between liberty and order and must include an enforcement mechanism into their contracting. Rational individuals value not only liberty but also order, which increases predictability and expected societal efficiency. As an analogy, we can consider the use of an alarm clock: it decreases freedom but increases expected efficiency.

Order is non-excludable—no one can be excluded from enjoying it—and non-rivalrous—one person’s use of it does not diminish others’ enjoyment. These are the basic characteristics of public goods, which is why order can be analyzed as a public good.

James Buchanan states in his book *The Limits of Liberty: Between Anarchy and Leviathan* (1977) the following:

- Norm-abiding behavior creates pure public goods but is not in an individual’s self-interest. Economists would predict an absence of such behavior without enforcement mechanisms.
- Non-abiding of laws can produce private goods but generates public bads. This is analogous to pollution: pollution harms the environment, and non-abiding laws harm the socio-political environment.
- Law-abiding behavior in small coalitions can be strictly internal to the coalition members. The laws that emerge can be selective and discriminatory toward outsiders.
- Unorganized individuals are motivated to either join existing coalitions or form their own.

Individuals value order and the reduction of liberty differently; they have different opportunity costs of order. Buchanan speaks about a different liberty tax. Those that do not value liberty much, have low opportunity costs of order and pay a low liberty tax. They may be content with a strict order while those who pay higher liberty tax may be discontent with this public good (a strict order). In the case of orthodox public goods, discontent can be mitigated by side payments, such as offering alternative public goods. In Buchanan's opinion; in the case of order, side payments cannot be applied, making it more challenging to reach widespread agreement on changes in order compared to other public goods.

Social order and legal order given by positive legal norms are not only public goods but also public capital. The erosion of order diminishes this public capital, and, as with more traditional forms of capital, rebuilding it can be challenging. The yield from order tends to increase with its duration, meaning that not all social or legal reforms are rational.

Is the state we live in overregulated?

- Maybe we just falsely perceive it. Only unanimous budgetary and taxation decisions are Pareto efficient. With majority voting typical in modern societies, some participants suffer opportunity cost losses. In a continuous budgetary process, all members experience opportunity losses, leading to fiscal frustration and the perception that the system is unfair, even if it is efficient.

Plausibly general taxes normally have no legal basis for minority objections, regardless of benefit distribution or the involuntary nature of decisions.

- There is a strong tendency that leads to overregulation. The state often expands its activities beyond the implicit social contract, introducing questionable public goods under the guise of social interest. This trend contributes to citizens' alienation from the state.

This tendency aligns with Wagner's Law, an empirical regularity which posits that as economies grow, public expenditures relative to national income naturally increase. While societies demand more public services as they develop, this expansion is often accompanied by budget deficits and growing public debt.

The expansion of the state is supported by the wide discretionary powers of politicians and bureaucrats, creating a trade-off between their authority and decision-

making costs. Politicians, bureaucrats, and state employees typically fall into three categories:

1. Idealists seeking societal good.
2. Power-seekers.
3. Bribe-seekers. All three categories share a bias toward increasing budgets.

Possible individual reactions to overregulation:

- Accept it as an exogenous constraint.
- Emigrate to a more liberal country.
- Reject state authority entirely and embrace anarchism.
- Work to constrain government through democratic processes.

These options reflect different approaches to addressing the perceived overreach of the state in contemporary societies.

Summary

In the first subchapter, rules are categorized into four levels: **personal rules**, **social norms**, **legal norms**, and **metaphysical norms**. All levels are interrelated, with personal rules as the foundation in Western thought, which has been influenced by Greek philosophy, Christianity, and Enlightenment ideals. Alignment between social and legal norms is crucial to avoid societal tensions.

The second subchapter discusses different ways how to attain acceptance of social norms. Their general acceptancy is essential for social stability and can be achieved through authority or argumentation.

Authority-based acceptance relies on various types of legitimacy:

- **Authority of Persons or Legal Entities,**
- **Authority of Texts,**
- **Authority of Tradition,**
- **Authority of Law,**
- **Authority of Science.**

Argumentation-based acceptance relies in contemporary Western society on following positions:

- **Ethical Subjectivism,**
- **Utilitarianism,**
- **Ethical Egoism,**
- **Ethics of Care,**
- **Ethics of Virtue,**
- **(Neo)Kantianism,**
- **Natural Law Position,**
- **Critical Theory,**
- **Critical Rationalism,**
- **Justice Theory,**
- **Beyond Rationality**

The overarching message stresses the diversity of approaches to general acceptancy on norms, balancing logic, authority, and intuition to justify social norms and foster ethical discussions. Justice Theory is the fundamental position in current political philosophy in the Western World.

The third subchapter discusses the importance of shared social norms for maintaining social order and identity, especially in heterogeneous societies that value liberty. Social norms form the foundation of **social capital**, which includes networks of trust and reciprocity that foster cooperation and reduce reliance on formal regulations. Social capital, encompassing both bonding (within groups) and bridging (between groups), is crucial for societal well-being and resilience.

Legal norms, derived from codified positive laws, play a key role in ensuring social stability in diverse societies. The text contrasts **continental law**, based on codified statutes and inquisitorial judicial processes, with **common law**, which evolves through judicial precedents and adversarial legal systems. Continental law is described as more static and contractual, while common law evolves flexibly. Both systems contribute to managing the balance between **liberty and order**, seen as essential for societal efficiency.

Order as a Public Good and a Public Capital: Order is non-excludable and non-rivalrous, making it a public good. However, maintaining it requires enforcement, as individuals may act in self-interest (non-abiding behavior), creating public harms. The erosion of social and legal order diminishes "public capital," which is challenging to rebuild.

Concerns about overregulation are raised and possible individual responses to this problem are discussed.

Appendix 1: Language and Freedom of Speech

Language

Can your language affect your economic behavior? The behavioral economist Keith Chen suggests that the structure of a language can influence economic behaviors, particularly saving habits. Key points in his TED talk are:

- **Future vs. Present Tense:** Languages are categorized based on how they handle future events in relation to the present. "Futureless" languages, like Chinese, German, or Finnish, do not distinguish as sharply between the present and future in their grammatical structure. For example, in Chinese, the same verb form is used for both present and future events. This linguistic structure may lead speakers to perceive the future as more immediate and connected to the present, encouraging behaviors that consider long-term consequences, such as saving money.
- **"Futureful" Languages:** In contrast, "futureful" languages, like English, require distinct grammatical constructions to talk about the future (e.g., "will" or "going to"). This separation between present and future might make the future seem more distant and less relevant to current decision-making, potentially leading to lower saving rates as individuals prioritize immediate consumption.
- **Empirical Findings:** Chen's research found that speakers of futureless languages tend to save more money, retire with more wealth, and engage in healthier behaviors than those who speak futureful languages. The study suggests that the way a language frames the future can subtly influence how people perceive and prepare for it, including financial planning and saving.

What is a speech act? In the philosophy of language and linguistics, speech act is something expressed by an individual that not only presents information but performs an action as well. Speech acts can be analyzed on multiple levels:

- Locutionary Act: The actual act of making an utterance (e.g., the statement itself);
- Illocutionary Act: The intent behind the statement (e.g., making a promise, giving an order). For example, if the locutionary act in an interaction is the question "Is there any salt?" the implied illocutionary request is "Please pass the salt to me." or at least "I wish to add salt to my meal.";
- Perlocutionary Act: The effect the statement has on the listener (e.g., persuading, frightening).
- Metalocutionary Act: For example, if someone says, "I didn't mean to sound rude, but...", they are engaging in a metalocutionary act by addressing the tone or manner of their previous statement.

Freedom of Speech

Freedom of speech is a principle that supports the freedom of an individual or a community to articulate their opinions and ideas without fear of retaliation, censorship, or legal sanction. The right to freedom of expression has been recognized as a human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law by the United Nations. Many countries have constitutional law that protects free speech. Terms like free speech, freedom of speech, and freedom of expression are used interchangeably in political discourse. However, in a legal sense, the freedom of expression includes any activity of seeking, receiving, and imparting information or ideas, regardless of the medium used.

Freedom of speech is understood to be fundamental in a democracy. The norms on limiting freedom of expression mean that public debate may not be completely suppressed even in times of emergency. One of the most notable proponents of the link between freedom of speech and democracy is Alexander Meiklejohn. He has argued that the concept of democracy is that of self-government by the people. For such a system to work, an

informed electorate is necessary. In order to be appropriately knowledgeable, there must be no constraints on the free flow of information and ideas. According to Meiklejohn, democracy will not be true to its essential ideal if those in power can manipulate the electorate by withholding information and stifling criticism. Meiklejohn acknowledges that the desire to manipulate opinion can stem from the motive of seeking to benefit society. However, he argues, choosing manipulation negates, in its means, the democratic ideal.

Can we link the opinions of Amartya Sen on identity and violence with the freedom of speech discussion? Amartya Sen is an influential Indian economist and philosopher, renowned for his contributions to welfare economics, social justice, and development studies. Born in 1933 in Santiniketan, India, Sen has had a profound impact on how economic development is understood, particularly through his work on capabilities and human well-being. He introduced the "capabilities approach," which focuses on what individuals are able to do and be, rather than just economic wealth, as the true measure of development. He was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1998 for his contributions to welfare economics and his analysis of the causes of famine.

His book "Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny" explores the complex relationship between identity and conflict, challenging the notion that people are bound by a single, all-encompassing identity. Sen argues that reducing individuals to a single identity, such as religion, ethnicity, or nationality, can lead to divisiveness and violence. He critiques the "solitarist" approach, where people are seen primarily through one dimension of identity, often leading to conflict and exclusion. Sen advocates for recognizing the plurality of human identities, emphasizing that individuals belong to multiple overlapping groups, such as professional, cultural, and personal affiliations. By acknowledging this complexity, he believes that we can reduce the propensity for violence and foster a more inclusive society. The book calls for a more nuanced understanding of identity, one that celebrates diversity and avoids the dangers of narrow identity politics.

Sen's ideas from this book can be linked to the concept of freedom of speech, particularly in how diverse identities are expressed and respected in public discourse. Sen's emphasis on the plurality of human identities highlights the importance of allowing individuals to express the multiple aspects of their identity freely. This freedom is essential for

a healthy and inclusive society, where diverse voices and perspectives are heard and valued. Sen's critique of the "solitarist" approach—where people are reduced to a single identity—suggests that limiting speech or suppressing certain expressions of identity can contribute to conflict and violence. By promoting freedom of speech, societies can better accommodate the complex and multifaceted nature of identity, reducing tensions and fostering mutual understanding. Furthermore, freedom of speech enables open dialogue about identity and its complexities, allowing people to challenge stereotypes, address grievances, and promote social cohesion. In this way, the ideas in "Identity and Violence" support the notion that freedom of speech is crucial for mitigating the risks associated with narrow identity politics and for promoting a more inclusive and peaceful society.

Is there freedom of speech in the Czech Republic? Freedom of speech in the Czech Republic is guaranteed by the Czech Charter of Fundamental Rights and Basic Freedoms, which has the same legal standing as the Czech Constitution. It is the first freedom of the charter's second division - political rights. It reads as follows:

Article 17

- (1) The freedom of expression and the right to information are guaranteed.
- (2) Everyone has the right to express their opinion in speech, in writing, in the press, in pictures, or in any other form, as well as freely to seek, receive, and disseminate ideas and information irrespective of the frontiers of the State.
- (3) Censorship is not permitted.
- (4) The freedom of expression and the right to seek and disseminate information may be limited by law in the case of measures necessary in a democratic society for protecting the rights and freedoms of others, the security of the State, public security, public health, and morals....

Specific limitations of the freedom of speech within the meaning of Article 17(4) may be found in the Criminal Code as well in other enactments. These include the prohibition of:

- Unauthorized handling of personal information (Article 180 of the Criminal Code), [which protects the right to privacy,
- Defamation (Article 184 of the Criminal Code),

- Dissemination of pornography depicting disrespect to a human, abuse of an animal, or dissemination of any pornography to children (Article 191 of the Criminal Code),
- Seducing to use or propagation of use of addictive substances other than alcohol (Article 287 of the Criminal Code), which protects public health,
- Denigration of a nation, race, ethnic or other group of people (Article 355 of the Criminal Code), i.e. hate speech,
- Inciting of hatred towards a group of people or inciting limitation of their civil rights (Article 356 of the Criminal Code).

Censorship in the World: General censorship occurs in a variety of different media, including speech, books, music, films, and other arts, the press, radio, television, and the Internet for a variety of claimed reasons including national security, to control obscenity, pornography, and hate speech, to protect children or other vulnerable groups, to promote or restrict political or religious views, and to prevent slander and libel.

Direct censorship may or may not be legal, depending on the type, location, and content. Many countries provide strong protections against censorship by law, but none of these protections are absolute and frequently a claim of necessity to balance conflicting rights is made, in order to determine what could and could not be censored. There are no laws against self-censorship.

Is Hate Speech a Speech Crime? Speech crimes are certain kinds of speech that are criminalized by promulgated laws or rules. Criminal speech is a direct preemptive restriction on freedom of speech, and the broader concept of freedom of expression.

Laws vary by country in accordance with the legal principles that form the basis of their system of jurisprudence. Prohibitions on shouting fire in a crowded theater (as a practical joke, not as a warning) are not considered controversial in any country, given the potential for imminent harm.

In May 2019, the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres presented this opinion: “Addressing hate speech does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech. It means keeping hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, particularly incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence, which is prohibited under

international law.”

How can we fight with hate? An interesting approach is described in the TED Talk, "Why I Have Coffee with People Who Send Me Hate Mail". Özlem Cekic shares her experiences as a former member of the Danish Parliament, where she received a significant amount of hate mail due to her identity as a Muslim woman. Instead of ignoring or retaliating against these hateful messages, Cekic chose a different approach: she invited the senders to meet her for coffee and engage in dialogue. Through these face-to-face conversations, she discovered that many of her critics were willing to listen and reconsider their views when confronted with her humanity. Cekic advocates for the power of personal dialogue in breaking down prejudices and building bridges of understanding, challenging us all to engage with those we disagree with, rather than isolating ourselves in echo chambers.

Appendix 2: John Stuart Mill “On Liberty”

John Stuart Mill (1806 – 1873) was a prominent 19th-century British philosopher, political economist, and social reformer, best known for his contributions to liberalism and utilitarianism. Mill was heavily influenced by his father, James Mill, and the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham. He expanded on Bentham's utilitarianism by emphasizing the quality of pleasures over mere quantity, advocating for individual liberty and freedom of expression as essential components of a just society. Mill's influential works include "On Liberty," where he argued for the protection of individual rights against the tyranny of the majority, and "Utilitarianism," which explores the ethical theory that the best action is the one that maximizes overall happiness. Mill's ideas have had a lasting impact on modern political thought, particularly in discussions of democracy, human rights, and ethics.

Mill was dubbed "the most influential English-speaking philosopher of the nineteenth century" by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. A member of the Liberal Party and author of the early feminist work *The Subjection of Women*, Mill was also the second member of Parliament to call for women's suffrage after Henry Hunt in 1832.

"On Liberty," published in 1859, is a foundational text in liberal political philosophy that defends individual freedom against the tyranny of the majority and the authority of the state. Mill argues that individuals should have the liberty to act as they choose, provided their actions do not harm others, encapsulated in the "harm principle." He champions freedom of speech, thought, and expression, asserting that these liberties are essential for personal and societal progress. Mill also emphasizes the importance of individuality and the dangers of social conformity. He contends that the best way to achieve a vibrant and progressive society is by allowing diverse opinions and lifestyles to flourish, even if they challenge prevailing norms.