

Review Mill

I. Last Words on Mill

A. Mill is *not* a 'social contract theorist' of civil government.

B. But he does hold that by benefiting from the protection of a society, one tacitly consents to bind oneself to (1) not injure the interests of another, and (2) to offer one's fair share of labor and sacrifice "incurred for defending the society or its members from injury and molestation." [337] Upshot: social contract does not create social obligations; rather, the harm principle and the principle of utility create them.

C. While it may seem that all Mill cares about are the interests of individuals (since all other principles of his moral and civil government theories are derived ultimately from these), in fact he agrees with all utilitarians that the only thing that is specifically *moral* is whatever concerns the greatest possible aggregate satisfaction of individual interests. The ultimate concern of all moral questions, according to utilitarianism, is: "whether the general welfare will or will not be promoted" by an action, and Mill betrays his acceptance of this principle when he notes that, despite his radical commitment to the value of individual liberty, he thinks the latter may be restrained or compromised whenever an action that can possibly affect the interests of anyone but the actor him or herself would *'promote the general welfare'* or not. Upshot: any action affecting others is morally acceptable (good) if and only if it promotes the greatest degree of satisfaction of the greatest number of those 'permanent interests of a man as a progressive being' that Mill claims is the ultimate objective of all moral judgments.

D. Some further objections to utilitarianism: 1) is it moral to torture someone even if failure to torture them would reduce the general welfare (where "general welfare" is defined as the 'maximum degree of satisfaction of the greatest number of the permanent interests of those living, progressive beings who are alive.' [this challenges the utilitarian core principle that *general welfare* is what determines moral goodness by placing it into direct conflict with what is combined into the aggregate of interests satisfied, i.e., the permanent interests of *one individual progressive being*. 2) is it moral if the general welfare is served by a grossly unequal distribution of satisfaction (i.e., if the greatest *aggregate satisfaction of interests* is all that must be promoted according to the principle of utility, then conceivably this could be achieved even if 25% of the population is poor [if attempts to reduce poverty would reduce the aggregate total of interest satisfaction]).

E. Mill's idea of 'progressive being' comes from Rousseau, who thought that human beings are *perfectible*, and that whatever promotes this process of self-improvement is good, and whatever stands in its way is bad.

II. Socialism & Communism (Marx, Engels, Lenin)

A. Socialism and Communism, as theories of social and moral life, proceed from materialist and scientific assumptions their theorists hold in common with philosophers like Hobbes, and from views about the perfectibility of man held in common with thinkers like Rousseau, Bentham, and Mill.

B. While socialism and communism can be distinguished from each other, communism is just a form of socialism. What they have in common:

1. history is the history of class struggle
2. the modern state arose as the result of an industrial/commercial revolution in the means of production leading to a capitalist economy.
3. this created the bourgeois and proletarian classes, with the former exploiting and degrading the latter.
4. dialectical materialism: class struggle is inevitable, as is the collapse of capitalism sooner or later.

C. Communism and socialism differ in their response to these facts and beliefs.

Socialism

Communism

Evolutionary, peaceful, democratic

Revolutionary, totalitarian, atheistic, militant

D. Communism begins in ancient times—"living in communes, where property is not private, but public." The modern notion of communism is only one form of a very old idea. Even the early Christians lived in communes, as do some contemporary Israelis and even some of your contemporary Americanos!

E. Marx and Engels refer to early communism as "utopian socialism", and contrast the latter with their own, which they entitle "scientific communism".

Old communist theory:

- 1) the utopian state would evolve away from private property and eliminate the division of wealth that creates poverty (eliminate the conflicting classes, in other words)
- 2) the will come about through peaceful means.

F. M & E (along with Lenin, Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, Castro, and other contemporary and later communists) thought this was unrealistic. They rest their case on a certain, for them *scientific reading of history*. Note: This is not radically new. Mill also had a reading of history that helps to determine his social theory. So did Hobbes.

G. M & E are the 'children of Hegel'. I.e., their *historical, scientific interpretation of social life* is a kind of extension of Hegel's historicist theory of ideas, which claimed that philosophical ideas develop by means of a series of inevitable historical stages in which opposing views (thesis vs. antithesis) come into conflict and then are periodically resolved (synthesis), creating a new framework within which the next stage of thesis-antithesis-synthesis will develop (this is a *very* complicated theory that Hegel developed under the influence of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, and cannot be adequately covered here).

III. M & E's Theory of History and Society

A. History=history of class struggle. *Communist Manifesto* argues that the modern revolution in the means of production has reduced the ancient class struggle among many classes (remember Plato on the class warfare that arises after degeneration of the ideal state?) to one, monumental struggle between the Haves and the Have Nots (bourgeois and proletariat).

B. Communism promises a classless society when 'history ends' (history ends when the class struggle ends....this is not, however, the end of *time* or of *life* or of *society*).

C. The essence of modern capitalism is "free trade" and "free trade=exploitation" (pg. 347)

D. Negative consequences of this revolution in means of production: "loss of reverence for the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science", not to mention the loss of something associated with "heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm",

not to mention tearing "away from the family its sentimental veil" and reducing "the family relation to a mere money relation."

E. Positive consequences: "It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former exoduses of nations and crusades." [347]

F. Thus, M & E are providing a broad and deep expression of outrage at changes arising due to the rapid industrial and commercial and political developments of the 18th and 19th centuries.

G. Key concept: 'relations of production' generate "the whole relations of society."!!!
Upshot: if you want to know why society has the structures and elements it has, look to the *means of production* and the relations these means foster among human beings. [347b]

H. Ultimately, the bourgeois revolution "compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production ... [and hence] it creates a world after its own image." [348]

I. Commercial/productive centralization causes political centralization.

J. The primary determining factor in social life is not *our nature* (Plato) or a dialectical relationship between what *nature itself creates* and what *man himself wants* (Hobbes and Locke), but *economic arrangements*!!!! All else is explained, and presumably justified, by the forces set into motion by the means of production [349] (note: In Plato, the means of production only concerns the nature of one class of human beings, and does not determine the other social relations, nor does it take precedence over the products of the other classes [philosophers, warriors]).

Next time: "Bubblegum and Surplus Value" followed by a mini-lecture on: 1) why capitalism and all other fruits of the industrial/commercial revolution must lead to the collapse of capitalism and the modern bourgeois state, and 2) whether Marx & Engels were right about the proletariat..