

Honor 2103  
Lecture Notes  
J. S. Mill  
*On Liberty*

Quick Review: *Utilitarianism*

- Principle of Utility: maximize our utility (happiness)
  - Not just selfish, but all happiness (greatest happiness for greatest number)
- Human Nature
  - Human act to achieve happiness (pleasure or lack of pain)
- Naturalistic Fallacy?
  - Does Mill try to derive an 'ought' from an 'is'?
    - Descriptive vs. normative claims in the argument
  - Problems: Limits to our pursuit of happiness?

*On Liberty*

- Legitimate powers of government
  - Representative government, but not derived from social contract or human rights because these are not yet tested ideas
  - Worry about 'tyranny of the majority'.
- Principle of Liberty
  - Maximize the amount of liberty people have to pursue happiness
  - Darwinian thinking, of a sort: increase variety of ways to pursue happiness (as a great experiment) to see which will be best, which will win out in the end.
- Harm Principle
  - Only legitimate limit to one's liberty is the liberty of others;
  - If my pursuit of liberty/happiness results in harms to or restrictions of other's liberties, then that is the only legitimate restriction to my liberty (or the liberty of individuals)
  - Consider examples: drugs, alcohol, sex, etc.

Science and Political/Social Theory

- Mill (and others) take a scientific attitude toward understanding and advising social theory
- In particular, Mill takes a very Darwinian view (even though Mill was writing prior to the publication of *Origin of Species*)
- Marx takes a similar attitude, but comes to a different conclusion... next week.