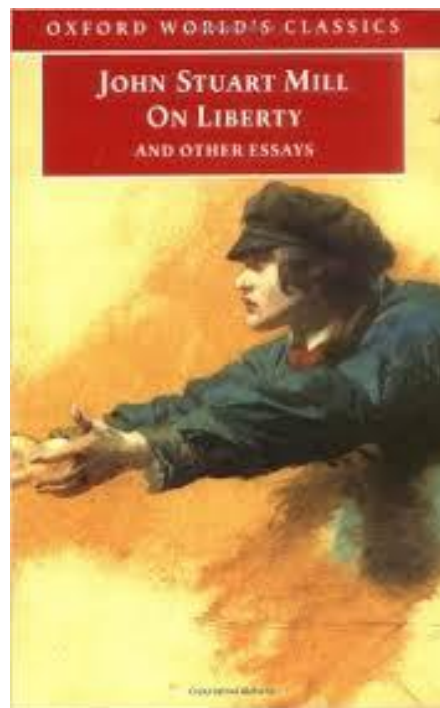




On Liberty and Other Essays

John Stuart Mill

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On Liberty and Other Essays

John Stuart Mill

On Liberty and Other Essays John Stuart Mill

Collected here in a single volume for the first time, *On Liberty*, *Utilitarianism*, *Considerations on Representative Government*, and *The Subjection of Women* show John Stuart Mill applying his liberal utilitarian philosophy to a range of issues that remain vital today - the nature of ethics, the scope and limits of individual liberty, the merits of and costs of democratic government, and the place of women in society. In his Introduction John Gray describes these essays as applications of Mill's doctrine of the *Art of Life*, as set out in *A System of Logic*. Using the resources of recent scholarship, he shows Mill's work to be far richer and subtler than traditional interpretations allow.

On Liberty and Other Essays Details

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From Reader Review On Liberty and Other Essays for online ebook

Olivia says

Should still be a 'primer' in High Schools world-wide

Dana says

I am not a fan of reading essays. Though they give interesting views, they are not entertaining in the slightest. I was more intrigued by the last essay out of all of them which is called "The Subjection of Women." It seems as if he is a feminist of the Victorian era, which is very cool to be able to see. He has a lot of good ideas in there that are still very relevant today. Out of all of these essays, I would recommend this one out of all of them.

The one thing I didn't like about any of these essays is that they are all very repetitive. They seem to say the same thing over and over again which gets very boring, very quickly.

Alex says

The only canonical author who has actually shaped my political philosophy. Great essays. Also, the man knows is eminently quotable.

"War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself"

Lauren Sheil says

<http://wp.me/p1x1Ng-bm>

On Liberty – John Stuart Mill

I'm trying something new in this space. As part of my ongoing study of Meekonomics I read a lot of books on economics, politics, philosophy and religion. I've been tweeting out a "quote of the day" from some of my reading for about 2 years now but I've decided that those tweets were getting rather disjointed and many of my followers were just getting sound bites that didn't make much sense unless you've been following my thought process all along. So now instead of spreading them out I've decide to bunch all of the quotes together on the same day and write a blog post simultaneously. That way you get to see not only what tweaked my interest but how and why it did so.

The tweets below are in italics with my further comment and observation following in regular type.

My next series of tweets will be excerpts from John Stuart Mill's essay "On Liberty" published in 1959.

#jsmonliberty

As readers of the blog and book review published on Good Reads you will also be able to see my own impressions and observations.

The ‘people’ who exercise the power are not always the same people with those over whom it is exercised.
#jsmonliberty

This first observation has been clear to me since a young age, even as I child I understood that those who make the rules don’t always have to follow them. Self-government is an ideal and a myth that is fed to the lower classes by the upper classes but the actual levers of power are kept far away from those that are deemed too un-educated or otherwise incapable of any real control. The function of the middle class is to act as a buffer between the upper classes and the lower classes. It is the middle classes that are expected to buy into the myth of equality the most, for if they were to side with the lower classes, those in the upper class that exert control would soon be forced out of power.

The only purpose for which power can be exercised over any member of a civilized community, is to prevent harm to others. #jsmonliberty

This speaks to the idea that certain things be controlled “for your own good”. That has always sounded like a hollow argument to me. Shouldn’t I be afforded the right to decide what is for my own good? However, for my liberty to be curtailed for the good of the community is a completely different argument. The question now becomes what constitutes “harm to others?”

The beliefs which we have most warrant for have no safeguard but a standing invitation to the world to prove them unfounded. #jsmonliberty

This has been the basis of scientific and philosophic argument for centuries. If a belief cannot stand up to a constant onslaught of new thought and experimentation it isn’t worth holding. Many of my atheist friends will no doubt stand up and cheer at this point, but not so fast, all beliefs must be open to this level of scrutiny and to date neither side of the atheism, deism debate has been able to definitively prove their position so we must continue to search for new and better explanations for the way the universe works until one belief is so proven to be unfounded.

The advantage truth has is that though it may be extinguished in the course of ages there will be found people to rediscover it. #jsmonliberty

What is truth? Although Mill stops short of a definitive definition here he does make it clear that truth is powerful enough to withstand persecution and re-emerge after times of suppression over the course of many years. It has been said that the truth shall set you free, but it must first be set free.

It is not the minds of the heretics that are deteriorated most, but whose mental development is cramped by the fear of heresy. #jsmonliberty

This is perhaps the best critique I have ever read against suppression of new and innovative thought. It’s not that certain free thinkers are persecuted for their new and controversial ideas but that other, less confident and less developed free thinkers are cowed into suppressing their own thoughts for fear of persecution themselves. Mill goes on to pose the hypothetical question, what other ideas and innovations have been lost to mankind forever simply as a result of the fear of being branded a heretic?

By Christianity I mean the maxims contained in the NT. Not one Christian in a 1000 guides his conduct by those laws. #jsmonliberty

This one hits close to home yet I have very little to say in refute. The fact that Mill made this observation over 150 years ago and that it is still very true today, is a rebuke to every professing Christian from Rome to Los Angeles. Mill goes on to state that the true governing maxim of most of mankind is the custom of his nation, class or profession. How far we have fallen from the original Heavenly Kingdom mindset of the early Christ-followers into an earthly Kingdom mindset dictated not by the maxims of the New Testament but by philosophies inherited from a much more recent time?

He who does anything because it is the custom, makes no choice. #jsmonliberty

Who say fiddler on the roof? The opening number and indeed the entire musical is profound in both its comment on and rebuke of “tradition”. Tradition is held up as some kind of eternal truth, a touch stone against the onslaught of progressive ideas that are damaging to community but at the same Tavia, the father of a traditional Jewish family admits he has no idea why the community as so many traditions.

Tradition, or as Mill puts it, custom is of no use if it is not examined and questioned for its usefulness from time to time. Without the right to regularly scrutinize custom it becomes an enemy of liberty.

It is impossible 2 do anything permanently hurtful 2 yourself, without mischief reaching 2 your near connexions and beyond. #jsmonliberty

This harkens back to my early observation of preventing harm to others and the distinction between doing things for your own good. We must always bear in mind the effect our actions have on those around us. Even if our actions harm only ourselves, those close to us will be injured by watching us go through unnecessary trials. It is also possible that damage done to ourselves will have far reaching consequences that we cannot immediately see, such as permanent environmental damage done to land we own that does not become evident until long after it has been sold to another party.

The absorption of all ability into the governing body is fatal to the mental activity and progressiveness of the body itself. #jsmonliberty

Although the governing body is capable of administering all function of society it is not a good idea to allow it to do so. Personal responsibility and initiative are essential for any society to remain viable and progressive. A passive acceptance that the government can and should run all facets of a functioning society leads to a lazy and dysfunctional community. In fact I believe it contributes to the downfall of community and the rise of individualism and selfishness. Government involvement should be limited to regulation for the safety and well being of it citizens and must walk a fine line between collective good and individual responsibility.

So ends my observations and conclusions from John Stuart Mill and On Liberty. Feel free to comment on anything I have observed here, I will do my best to respond. If you have any suggests for other books that will aid in my continuing research for The Meekonomics Project let me know.

Next up, Capital by Karl Marx.

Aaron says

Definitive text on utility and freedom

Matt says

In 2013, Noam Chomsky gave a lecture on the Common Good, and he quoted the epigraph at the beginning of *On Liberty and Other Essays* as a good place to start:

The grand, leading principle, towards which every argument unfolded in these pages directly converges, is the absolute and essential importance of human development in its richest diversity. -Wilhelm Von Humboldt.

What follows is Mills attempt to achieve a State worthy of the individuals who compose it. The alternative being a State which “dwarfs its men” so that they become small, docile instruments incapable of any great tasks. Pg. 128, *On Liberty*.

Mill, perhaps influenced by his religious skepticism, questions the legitimacy of authority and only builds on those foundations which he believes are solid. He begins with the value of individuality in all its uniqueness, then seeks to define limits as to when it must be constrained. Though dispensing with the idea of a “social contract”, Mill nonetheless recognizes that “every one who receives the protection of society owes a return for the benefit...” Pg 83. The payment the individual gives for this protection is adherence to utilitarianism, aka the “Greatest Happiness Principle.” Pg, 137. Mill precedes to defend this ethic. Ultimately, he concludes that

The ultimate sanction, therefore, of all morality (external motives apart) being a subjective feeling in our own minds, I see nothing embarrassing to those whose standard is utility, in the question, what is the sanction of that particular standard? We may answer, the same as of all other moral standards- the conscientious feelings of mankind. Pg. 161.

At about this point in his essay on Utilitarianism, he brings his ideals to the practical. He attempts to balance the tricky scales of utilitarianism and justice.

In *Considerations on Representative Government*, Mill is clearly a child of the Enlightenment. He seeks, in language fitting a utilitarian, to maximize the participation of the people in their government. Due to practical restraints, true democracy is too unwieldy so a representative government becomes the ideal. See pg. 256. With great deference to the arguments of the Federalists from the American Constitutional Convention from almost 100 years prior, he sifts Parliament through a federalist screen. Though published (1861) two years before his essay on Utilitarianism (1863), it feels like a natural extension of that essay into the practices of government.

Finally, in *The Subjection of Women*, Mill makes a rousing argument for gender equality and admonishes the attitude toward institutions which propagate subjugation- like marriage. Generally, common social attitudes today are (arguably) more in-line with Mills’ views, but he must have been a bad-ass feminist ally for 1869. His fierceness is palpable. I consider myself pretty far left, but I still felt inexplicably shamed. Given his dedication to his deceased wife in *On Liberty*, which I’m going to end this review with, I think we can easily see why he felt so strongly:

To the beloved and deplored memory of her who was the inspirer, and in part the author, of all that is best in my writings- the friend and wife whose exalted sense of truth and right was my strongest incitement, and whose approbation was my chief reward- I dedicate this volume. Like all that I have written for many years, it belongs as much to her as to me; but the work as it stands has had, in a very insufficient degree, the inestimable advantage of her revision; some of

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[illegible]

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Mitchell Croom says

A classic that's still applicable today. In this work, Mill spells out his harm principle and the philosophy that informs it, and despite the principle's near-universal fame, it is of benefit for any reader to examine the original argument and see for themselves what Mill intended. But the best part of this work is not On Liberty, but On the Subjection of Women (which is appended in this volume). On the Subjection gives the reader insight into the feminist movement in its earliest days, and while Mill is primarily remembered for his work on democratic theory, what he has to say on feminism and the rights of women should not be overlooked. Additionally, if possible one should read On Liberty and Marx's Manifesto back-to-back; these two scholars were contemporaries of one another, and their works clash in very interesting ways.

Daniel Maldonado says

This book is not an easy read because of it's complex content, nineteenth-century learned readers had immense economies for words and twenty-first-century readers are quite remedial in comparison. Yet if you get passed the heavy language, there are some dynamically interesting ideals being discussed here, some progressively liberal and others backwardly imperialistic. Mill is ahead of his time for his advocacy for women's rights, the dedication is to his wife Harriet, a brilliant woman, whom scholars credit for filling Mill's mind with much of the intellectual fodder that fills these pages. She is also probably a coauthor of many of these works!

Maria Shury-Smith says

On Liberty is an odd mix between impressively modern progressive thought, in particular in relation to Mill's regard for women's Liberty, and forgivable oversimplifications. Most notable is the idea that we should allow people to do as they please regardless of our personal opinion unless their actions are affecting others negatively which doesn't count for the fact that people's disapproval of the actions of those around them often manifest into other negative symptoms. Therefore the chances of finding a situation where an individual is truly free to do as they please is narrow. However it should be noted how encouraging the essay is in moments where we doubt how far we have come in the fight for Liberty.

Without going into any analysis of the valid of Mill's Utilitarianism, it is hard to comment on this essay. However, it is again his forward-thinking that is most impressive whilst his essay on Representative Government is especially interesting in the climate of the EU referendum due to his musings on the benefits of cross-country cooperation.

Still for me it is his recognition of the value of women, not just in themselves, but to the progression of society that is most impressive, providing a comforting thought that even as early as the 19th century there were men willing to publish arguments in support of women's rights.

Kirk says

After several months, I've finally slogged through these four essays by John Stuart Mill: On Liberty, Utilitarianism, Considerations on Representative Government and The Subjection of Women.

It was not the easiest read. Mills' writing is complex and dry with extremely long sentences of nested thoughts. He rarely pulls up to summarize. This book put me to sleep many times and I rarely could read more than 20 pages in a go. Many naps later, it is finished. This all being said, there were a lot of thought provoking arguments across all four essays and I enjoyed them all for various reasons.

I understand why excerpts are still passed out in political science and philosophy classes today, but the longer versions are a lot to take in. I did more active reading in the first essay than the other three. I think Mill's final essay arguing for equality for women is the most passionately argued and (as a result?) the most engaging to read.

On Liberty:

Mill uses Aristotelean 'reason' instead of logic to form his arguments. But within this text are several gems explaining the value of liberty.

As I understand it, Mills argues:

1. People should have complete liberty concerning themselves
 - a. This does not extend to children or citizens of "backwards states", where paternalism is more appropriate
 - b. 'Liberty over myself' does not mean 'complete power over my spouse or children', a very progressive thought for the eighteenth century.
2. People can be compelled by the state to participate in certain actions for the social good, such as participate in the military, testify in court, and to not act negligently towards the well-being of others... so Mills was not a rabid libertarian
3. He is a vehement defender of freedom of discussion and the marketplace of ideas.
 - a. This is essential for allowing new ideas to flourish and progress to be made
 - b. As a corollary, preaches open-mindedness and nonconformity as a way to develop new thinking and to encourage a safe atmosphere for expressing different thoughts
 - c. In fact, the collective wisdom of the masses is merely collective mediocrity. Deferral to majority opinion will only regress the best of us to the mean so as not to allow unequal reward. Mills is egalitarian – genius can come from anywhere - but not democratic – the masses are irresponsible with power and average citizen is mediocre in thought.
 - d. Norms of nonconformity are desirable, not because everyone is special and will contribute new ideas, but because we have to establish the structure such that the few geniuses who are capable of new thoughts and inventions can drive society forward. In other words, liberty is essential for a true meritocracy. Norms of uniformity cannot allow true liberty.
 - e. Laws are equally as important as social norms in promoting this liberty
4. Mills believes societal laws should have limits, but it not entirely clear himself where the line should be drawn
 - a. Society has jurisdiction when ones actions begins to harm others
 - b. Again - laws, social norms and societal obligations should exist. Mills is not an objectivist who believes

only in rational self-interest (this was surprising to me). But in terms of 'giving back', society can only suggest and nudge, not compel

c. There need to be limits on the power of society over its people, he recognizes the slippery slope of giving purchase to the regulation of conduct, and implores that it not be enlarged to enforce morality or opinion of the majority.

d. 'Because I am right' is not sufficient to give one power over another

e. There is a lot of danger in expanding the justification of when a society can interfere. Anything can be construed as harming me or society indirectly or through offense. These 'social rights' do not justify interfering with my liberty.

5. Government should not interfere when it infringes on liberty. But it also shouldn't interfere in other situations

a. When 1) individuals are better suited to perform a task than the government 2) it is good for an individual to perform a task, even if the government can perform it better 3) doing so adds unnecessarily to government power.

b. If government tries to do too much for people, people no longer have the incentive to explore, invent, grow and develop.

c. His ideal governmental structure would involve centralized information (dissemination of best practices) but local control

(1) p. 14 "In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign."

(1a) p. 14 "We may leave out of consideration those backward states of society in which the race itself may be considered in its nonage... despotism is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, providing the end be their improvement, and the means justified in actually effecting that end."

(2) p. 15 "He may rightfully be compelled to perform [acts for the benefit of others]; such as, to give evidence in a court of justice; to bear his fair share in the common defense; or in any other joint work necessary in the interest of the society in which he enjoys the protection; and to perform certain acts of individual beneficence, such as saving a fellow creature's life, or interposing to protect the defenseless against ill-usage, things which whenever it is obviously man's duty to do, he may rightfully be made responsible to society for not doing."

(3) p. 21 "If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person of the contrary 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."

(3b) p. 26 "The beliefs which we have most warrant for, have no safeguard to rest on, but a standing invitation to the whole world to prove them unfounded."

(2) p. 62 "No one pretends that actions should be as free as opinions."

(3b) p. 70 "It is not by wearing down into uniformity all that is individual in themselves, but by cultivating it and calling it forth, within the limits imposed by the rights of others, that human beings become a noble and beautiful object of contemplation."

(3d) p. 72 "Persons of genius, it is true, are... always likely to be a small minority; but in order to have the, it is necessary to preserve the soil in which they grow."

(3c) p. 73 "Those whose opinions go by the name of public opinion... are always a mass, that is to say, collective mediocrity. Their thinking is done for them by men much like themselves."

(3d) p. 74 “Precisely because the tyranny of opinion is such as to make eccentricity a reproach, it is desirable, in order to break through that tyranny, that people should be eccentric.”

(3e) p. 76 “The man, and still more the woman, who can be accused of doing ‘what nobody does’, or of not doing ‘what everybody does’, is the subject of as much deprecatory remark as if he or she has committed some great moral delinquency.’

(3c) p. 77 ‘The general average of mankind are not only moderate in intellect, but also moderate in inclinations: they have no tastes or wishes strong enough to incline them to do anything unusual, and they consequently do not understand those who have, and classify all such with the wild and intemperate whom they are accustomed to look down upon.’

(4a) p. 83 “Though society is not founded upon a contract, and though no good purchase is answered by inventing a contract in order to deduce social obligations from it, everyone who receives the protection of society owes a return for the benefit, and the fact of living in a society renders it indispensable that each should be bound to observe a certain line of conduct towards the rest.”

(4b) p. 83 “As soon as any part of a person’s conduct affects prejudicially the interest of others, society has jurisdiction over it.”

(4b) p. 91 “Whenever there is definitive damage, or definitive risk of damage, either to an individual or to the public, the case is taken out of the province of liberty, and placed into that of morality or law.”

(4b) p. 84 “It would be a great misunderstanding of this doctrine to suppose that it is one of selfish indifference, which pretends that human beings have no business with each other’s conduct in life, and that they should not concern themselves with the well-doing or well-being of one another, unless their own interest is involved.”

(4b) p. 85 “In the conduct of human beings towards one another, it is necessary that general rules should in the most part be observed... considerations to aid his judgment... may be offered to him... by others; but he himself is the final judge. All errors which he is likely to commit against advice and warning, are far outweighed by the evil of allowing others to constrain him to what they deem the good.”

(4c) p. 92 “let not society pretend that it needs the power to issue commands and enforce obedience in the personal concerns of individuals in which the decision ought to rest with those who are to abide by the consequences.”

(4c) p. 93 “But the opinion of the simple majority, imposed as a law on the minority, on questions of self-regarding conducts, are as likely to be wrong as right; [it means at best] some people’s opinion of what is good or bad for other people; while very often it does not mean even that – [not considering the benefit of those they are censuring] and considering their own preference.”

(4d) p. 96 “Unless we are willing to adopt the logic of persecutors, and to say that we may persecute others because we are right, and that they must not persecute us because they are wrong, we must beware of admitting a principle of which we should resent as a gross injustice the application to ourselves.”

(3c) p. 97 “It is known that the bad workmen who form the majority of the operatives in many branches of industry, are decidedly of the opinion that bad workmen ought to receive the same wages as good, and that no one ought to be allowed... to earn by superior skill or industry more than others can without it.”

(3e) p. 99 “it is the absolute social right of every individual, that every other individual shall act in every respect as he ought; that whosoever fails thereof in the smallest particular, violate my social right, and

entitles me to demand the from the legislature the removal of the grievance. So monstrous a principle is far more dangerous than any single interference with liberty; there is no violation of liberty which would justify it.”

(3e) p. 101 “The notion that it is one man’s duty that another should be religious, was the foundation of all the religious persecutions every propagated.”

(1b) p. 116 “The almost despotic power of husbands over wives needs not to be enlarged upon here, because nothing more is needed for the complete removal of the evil, than the wives should have the same rights, and should receive the protection of the law in the same manner, as all other persons.”

(5a) p. 121 The objections of government interference, when it is not such as to involve infringement of liberty, may be of three kinds [1] when the thing is likely to have been done better by individuals than by the government [2] though individuals may not do the particular thing so well, on the average, as officers in government, it is nevertheless desirable that it may be done by them... as a means of their own mental education [jury trial, municipal institutions, voluntary philanthropy – trains citizens, political education in the responsibilities of a free people]... accustoming them to the comprehension of joint interests. [3] most cogent reason for restricting the interference from government, is the great evil of adding unnecessarily to [government’s] power.

(5b) p. 125 “But where everything is done through the bureaucracy, nothing to which the bureaucracy is adverse can really be done at all.”

Centralized information, distributed power.

(5c) p. 126 “To determine the point at which evils begin, or rather at which they begin to predominate over the benefits attending the collective application of force of society, is one of the most difficult and complicated questions in the art of government... the ideal to be kept in view:... the greatest dissemination of power consistent with efficiency; but the greatest possible centralization of information and diffusion of it from the center.”

(5b) “the worth of a State... is the worth of the individuals composing it... a State which dwarfs its men, in order that they may be more docile instruments... will find that... no great thing can be accomplished; and that the perfect of machinery to which it has sacrificed everything, will in the end avail it nothing, for want of the vital power... it has preferred to banish.”

Utilitarianism:

p. 189 “When we call anything a person’s right, we mean that he has a valid claim on society to protect him in the possession of it, either by the force of law, or by that of education and opinion.”

Representative Government:

p. 286 “The positive evils and dangers of the representative, as of every other form of government, may be reduced to two heads: first, general ignorance and incapacity, or, to speak more moderately, insufficient mental qualifications, in the controlling body; secondly, the danger of its being under the influence of interests not identical with the general welfare of the community.”

p. 306 “[In the American primary system], the choice of the majority is therefore very likely to be determined by that portion of the body who are the most timid, the most narrow-minded and prejudiced; or who cling most tenaciously to the exclusive class-interest.”

p. 313 “The most natural tendency of representative government, as of modern civilization, is towards collective mediocrity: and this tendency is increased by all reductions and extensions of the franchise... It s

an admitted fact that in the American democracy, which is constructed on this faulty model, the highly-cultivated members of the community, except such of them as were willing to sacrifice their own opinions and modes of judgment, and become the servile mouthpieces of their inferiors in knowledge, seldom even offer themselves for Congress or the State Legislatures, so little likelihood have they of being returned."

The Subjection of Women

p. 474 "For the apotheosis of Reason we have substituted that of Instinct; and we call everything instinct which we find in ourselves and for we cannot trace any rational foundation."

p. 557 "The law of servitude in marriage is a monstrous contradiction to all the principles of the modern world, and to all the experience through which those principles have been slowly and painfully worked out. It is the sole case, now that negro slavery has been abolished, in which a human being in the plenitude of every faculty delivered up to the tender mercies of another human being, in the hope forsooth that this other will use the power solely for the good of the person subjected to it. Marriage is the only actual bondage known to our law. There remains no legal slaves, except the mistress of every house."

Jesse says

How we all know and love our liberal freedoms - freedom of speech (if you have the money to speak!), freedom of association (that is, if your union isn't in a right-to-work state, or your political group isn't being monitored and busted by COINTELPRO), and, the libertarian favorite, freedom to do bodily harm to oneself (i.e. freedom to buy an unhealthy lifestyle on the exhilaratingly free market). In theory, these are the freedoms Mill is particularly concerned with defending in his famous essay *On Liberty*. Along the way, he throws in a theory of individuality, taken wholesale from the altogether superior philosopher, Wilhelm Von Humboldt, which sits uneasily next to his empiricist/positivist views on morality and social conditioning - he both says that the individual must be elicited to develop in accordance with its innate tendencies (his famous Enlightenment reference to the individual being more like a tree than a vessel), and, at the same time, says that "moral feelings are not innate, but acquired". There are more discrepancies in his defense of utilitarianism, which is a dastardly ugly and almost impossible to understand theory (there are many, for instance, who think that its emphasis on the greater good looks like communism, but this theory is really about making everyone happy through commodities, which is obvious when one looks at the quantitative aspect). The ideal utilitarian looks at results only, which is in blatant opposition to any form of individuality which must rest on principles of knowing thyself; hence, Mill merely superimposes Enlightenment posturing on top of empiricist/positivist ethics, which, since it only takes into account consequences, and one of the most inscrutable at that, happiness, one must insist that Mill did not read his Humboldt, for the latter says somewhere that those who look to make everyone happy desire them to be machines for one's purposes - precisely the predicament of individuals who are branded as consumers, who are, in effect, nothing but machines for corporate execs. Furthermore, it is surely no coincidence that the largest propaganda campaign in human history, consumer advertising, literally began right after Mill's essays collected here were published. All in all, Mill can be seen in these confusing and contradictory essays to be one of the key architects of our incredibly ugly, wonderfully modern, liberal-nightmare (where freedoms exist so long as one doesn't test them), consumer-driven mess of a society.
