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PREDECESSORS

On Liberty's Liberty



CARLOS RODRÍGUEZ BRAUN

John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* supports drug legalization because there is no reason why the state should block citizens from consuming any substance they choose at their own risk. It attacks general public education as little more than a ploy to make every citizen the same, molding them into whatever form pleases the government. It argues that if political power is centralized, or if the roads, rails, businesses, universities, and beneficence organizations belong to the state, the country may have freedom of the press and a democratic parliament and still not be a free country. It opposes bureaucracy, social rights, wage equality, and tariff protectionism. The author, a renowned defender of women's rights and enemy of slavery, also warned of the risks that socialism poses to economic prosperity and, more important, to individual liberty. He criticized opponents of the free market and competition, fought progressive taxation—in particular, taxes on salaries—and defended capitalists' private property and a greater freedom to buy and sell, with a general rule of *laissez-faire*. Mill believed democracy could become oppressive, and he proposed severe limits to keep it from restricting freedom. For example, he recommended that individuals who did not pay taxes should not be represented in parliament. Published in 1859, *On Liberty* is a radical defense of freedom of thought, expression, and action. Its thesis can be summarized in a few brief lines from the first chapter: "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. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant" (Mill 1963–91, 18:223, hereafter cited as *CW*, referring to the *Collected Works*).

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It is easy to understand why Mill was thought to be a follower of the classical-liberal Manchester School, why Milton Friedman ranked *On Liberty* second among his favorite classical liberal books, behind only Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, and why Marx held a deep disdain for Mill. Ludwig von Mises, however, had this to say: "Mill is the great advocate of socialism. All the arguments that could be advanced in favor of socialism are elaborated by him with loving care. In comparison with Mill all other socialist writers—even Marx, Engels, and Lassalle—are scarcely of any importance" (2005, 154; see also Mises 1981, 154–55, Flew 1983, 57, and Rothbard 2000, 2, 307). F. A. Hayek agreed: Mill "probably led more intellectuals into socialism than any other single person" (1988, 149; see also Hayek 1993, 2:111, 186).

The fact is that Mill's notion of liberty coexists with antiliberal ideas, some of which are profoundly hostile to freedom. He defended the private property of capitalists, but not that of landowners, an inconsistency shared by most nineteenth-century liberals and one that opened the door to interventionism in our time. He criticized protectionism, but he made an exception for infant industries. He defended competition, but he set limits on it. He anticipated current interventionist fallacies, condemning exaggerated consumption and praising a supposedly idyllic stationary state. He criticized general public education, but he allowed the state to force citizens to study. He defended women and men's freedom, but not their freedom to choose the number of children they would have or to decide on their education or to bequeath goods to them. He said that parting from laissez-faire was bad unless it produced some good. He warned of the dangers of socialism, but he flirted with the advantages of experimentation with this system, which proved to be the most criminal in history. This great friend of liberty could not find the logic in family, marriage, religion, tradition, morality, and custom; he saw them—and we still suffer from this enlightened error—as repressive obstacles to freedom, never mentioning that they might be the bulwarks of liberty.

Trapped between social romanticism and utilitarian rationalism, Mill appears to be an imprecise eclectic aiming simultaneously at the supremacy of the individual and the greatest happiness of the greatest number, standing between liberty as a principle and the denial of nonlegal rights (Winch 1970, 15; Rees 1985, 8).

With his distinction between laws of production and laws of distribution (*CW*, 2:199), Mill inaugurated the doctrinal and academic respectability of income redistribution that became predominant in almost every political position up to the present day. In his 1848 *Principles of Political Economy*, he analyzes interventionism, starting with the one based on false theories, such as protectionism, which he criticizes except for the protection necessary to help start-up industries get on their feet. Such protectionism is nuanced and temporary, but it is protectionism all the same and cannot be ignored because it has proved to be long-lasting: although there is a context of more or less general support for free trade, in practice there have been and continue to be protected activities that consumers are forced to pay for.

Leaving aside erroneous theories, Mill postulated two classes of acceptable interventions: the necessary and the optional. For the necessary ones, he relied on Adam Smith: markets require respect for property rights and contract enforcement, which means that the state must intervene to establish a legal framework and to provide justice, defense, and security. Again, however, land is an exception. But it follows that if one type of property is excluded, other types logically may be excluded, too, as in fact they have been (Rodríguez Braun 2008, 87, 93). Although Mill argues that the free market ought to be the general rule, he goes on to propose so many exceptions that it is appropriate to view him as the founder of the theory of market failures and state interventionism (Bowley 1967, 265; Schwartz 1972, 116; Platteau 1991, 121). He examined various types of market failure that over time would be exhaustively analyzed: information, divisibility of factors of production, discrimination among goods, and various cases of externalities. The idea of market failure would prove most successful, as would be the economics of welfare: when politicians today defend the market “but with limits, because there are things the free market cannot provide,” they are repeating, as Keynes said, the ideas of a defunct economist: in this case, John Stuart Mill.

Some economists—neoinstitutionalists, public-choice analysts, Austrian school followers, and others—have challenged this vision. Ronald Coase shows that market failures are often failures of the institutional framework; for example, private-property rights may not be well defined and enforced. It is unclear, therefore, that the state should intervene in every instance of a seeming market failure and, by its action, rule out the possibility of negotiation among the affected parties. The idea that certain goods and services are by their nature public, in the sense that the market cannot adequately supply them, is a popular one. From Mill to Samuelson, economists have used examples such as the lighthouse: given the difficulty of charging the people who benefit from a lighthouse and the virtual impossibility of excluding those who benefit from it but do not pay for that benefit, it seems clear that the state should finance the lighthouse. But this conclusion is wrong. Coase (1974) shows that many lighthouses at the time Mill was writing were private and financed by port fees, as they are today, although all the ports now are public and back then they were not. The argument for public goods is far from evident, but its weight in economic and political analysis has been and continues to be extraordinary (see also de Jasay 1990).

Notions of Liberty

The two most intuitive and widespread notions about liberty are that it is something exercised on an individual level and that it is limited by that fact for everyone else. Mill follows this two-pronged approach. In chapter 1 of *On Liberty*, he writes, “the individual is sovereign,” and in chapter 5, “liberty consists in doing what one desires”

(*CW*, 18:224, 294). In regard to the crucial question of the limits placed on the individual exercise of liberty, Mill puts forward in the first chapter,

[O]ne very simple principle . . . the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. . . . The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way, so long as we do not attempt to deprive others of theirs, or impede their efforts to obtain it. Each is the proper guardian of his own health, whether bodily, or mental and spiritual. Mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest. (*CW*, 18:223, 226)

All of this looks fairly clear, but the idea of liberty seems inseparable from nonlegal rights and the role of the state, and Mill's argument ignores both.

Like all utilitarians, Mill maintains that there are no natural rights; rather, all rights are created by the law. Liberty, therefore, cannot be defended as existing prior to legislation. Instead, its justification must rest on its utility. Mill stated that utility is "the ultimate appeal on all ethical questions," but, as usual, he adds a qualification: "it must be utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being" (*CW*, 18:224). The debate over what he might have meant by this caveat continues today.

Mill keeps the state out of sight. In his view, the enemy of liberty is not power, but the weight of public opinion. Under this remarkable and now generalized doctrine, the state not only does not restrict liberty, but "can and must be the instrument for guaranteeing and extending individual liberties" (Dewey 2000, 17). The seeds were planted long ago: classical liberalism retreated during the supposedly liberal nineteenth century, and politicians such as Joseph Chamberlain argued that political criticism was justified only when there was no democracy. Echoes of this naivety resound in republican theory's recent demand to preserve the social-democratic (and Millian) contradiction of the state's simultaneous defense of liberty and coercive redistribution: according to Philip Pettit, such action is acceptable as long as it is undertaken not by an arbitrary government, but by one subject to an equitable rule of law (2006, 238). As thinkers such as Robert Nisbet (2003, 15, 24) and José Ortega y Gasset (2004, 2:541–42) have warned, democracy, a theory of political power, overtakes classical liberalism, a theory of immunity from power. A reader and admirer of Tocqueville, Mill did not accept this view fully, but when the time came to defend liberty, he ignored private property and voluntary contracts. Instead, he used collective utilitarian categories and the idea of the separability of personal self-regarding conduct that does not affect others. His thesis is not simply that we are free as long as we do not violate the freedom of others. Rather, in everything self-regarding, laws, beliefs, values, and morals have no place. This thesis is the

foundation of the progressive idea that nonlegal rights and institutions, from the family and matrimony to property and the market, are paradigms of repression.

Establishing which actions are specifically personal and have no relationship to third parties is obviously difficult. Mill admitted as much in chapter 4 of *On Liberty*. However, there is something more serious in this discussion of the private sphere, as Anthony de Jasay has remarked: “An implicit drawback of the idea of a privileged sphere, of course, is that it is almost asking for intrusions into the area outside the privileged one” (2005a, 568).

De Jasay also points to an analogous problem in a celebrated distinction regarding liberty: Isaiah Berlin's notions of negative and positive liberty. In typical Millian fashion, that is, with an appearance of clarity but rather fuzzy content, the difference between negative liberty as noninterference, *liberty from*, and positive liberty as realization, *liberty to*, has much more algebraic and literary than philosophical merit (MacCallum 2006). In Berlin, we find the typical arguments that interventionists use to discuss liberty and its dangers, including the popular though mistaken animal metaphor that the market means freedom only for the wolves devouring the sheep. He also gives us the socialist retort to any classical-liberal idea that if a person is poor and cannot buy something, the purchase of which is not prohibited, then his freedom to possess it is as limited as if a law prohibited it (Berlin 2002, 38, 169–70). It is unsurprising to see Berlin backing Mill because the English economist believed that without state intervention, the weakest would be squashed—the same fallacy through which the state has expanded at the expense of citizens' liberties. Frank Knight (1962), one of the few who have criticized the division of liberty into positive and negative types, notes that if one freedom demands the reduction of other freedoms, it opens the door to any usurpation as long as that usurpation has enough legitimacy in society. Despite the emphasis placed on unmolested development of the individual in *On Liberty*, the truth is, as Ortega y Gasset pointed out, that in Mill's “socializing cruelty” everything hangs on society like a nail (2006, 6:61; see also Negro 1975, 205).

The idea of limiting liberty to avoid harm undergirds the history of interventionism over the past century. The public commitment to care for individuals from cradle to grave, accelerated under Roosevelt and the founders of the welfare state in Great Britain and Europe, has proved counterproductive to liberty. It has contributed to the weakening of personal responsibility for saving, investing in human capital, supporting the family, and attending to the urgent needs of neighbors. There exists a nebulous border between not avoiding harm and provoking it. Popular rhetoric today is symptomatic of this relation; for example, claiming that “X number of children die each year of illnesses that could have been avoided” suggests that someone is not preventing these deaths and, therefore, that the evil persists. This reasoning justifies taking any political measure aimed at avoiding the specific evil. In the end, the harm principle expands; omission becomes commission, and not helping people means hurting them: “Observing the effects of good intentions is often a

matter for bitter irony,” states de Jasay. “Locke tried with his innocent-looking proviso to prove the legitimacy of ownership and succeeded in undermining its moral basis. John Stuart Mill thought that he was defending liberty, but he ended up shackling it in strands of confusion” (2005b, 429).

Mill, Bastiat, and Socialism

It is worth remembering what Mill thought of one contemporary and renowned classical liberal, the French-Basque Frédéric Bastiat. In *Principles of Political Economy*, he reproached Bastiat for defending private landownership (*CW*, 2:424), and he displayed his interventionism in two letters to J. E. Cairnes. In the first, he regretted Bastiat’s opposition to socialism: “Bastiat shines as a dialectician, and his reasonings on free trade are as strictly scientific as those of any one; but his posthumous work (*Harmonies Economiques*) is written with a *parti pris* of explaining away all the evils which are the stronghold of Socialists, against whom the book is directed” (*CW*, 17:1665).

In the second letter, he congratulates Cairnes for the logical and economic content of his article against Bastiat, reprinted in his *Essays*, and invites him in the future to conduct an examination of the Frenchman’s doctrines from a social or practical perspective, to “shew how far from the truth it is that the economic phenomena of society as at present constituted always arrange themselves spontaneously in the way which is most for the common good or that the interests of all classes are fundamentally the same” (*CW*, 17:1764; see also Rodríguez Braun 2005).

This criticism of classical liberalism is understandable in an author who sympathized with oppositional ideas on liberty; it is a contradiction also typical of the predominant thinking of our time, which appreciates liberty but esteems equality through the law—that is, the reduction of liberty—even more. Mill’s ambiguity in this regard and his utilitarian notion of liberty beg us to consider him a socialist (Aiken 1962, 120; Negro 1975, 209–10; Smith 1991, 240). Hayek writes:

John Stuart Mill, in his celebrated book *On Liberty* (1859) directed his criticism chiefly against the tyranny of opinion rather than the actions of government, and by his advocacy of distributive justice and a general sympathetic attitude towards socialist aspirations in some of his other works, prepared the gradual transition of a large part of the liberal intellectuals to a moderate socialism. This tendency was noticeably strengthened by the influence of the philosopher T. H. Green who stressed the positive functions of the State against the predominantly negative conception of liberty of the older liberals. (1978, 129–30)

Mill, as his *Autobiography* attests, enthusiastically supported socialists: “It was partly by their writings that my eyes were opened to the very limited and temporary value of the old political economy, which assumes private property and inheritance as

indefeasible facts, and freedom of production and exchange as the *dernier mot* of social improvement. . . . The social problem of the future we considered to be, how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action with an equal ownership of all in the raw material of the globe and an equal participation of all in the benefits of combined labor” (CW, 1:174, 239). As early as 1832, he had argued, “The State is at liberty to modify the general right of property as much as it likes; to new-model it altogether, if the public interest requires it” (CW, 23:460). And in *Principles*, even as he applauds laissez-faire, he also leans in the opposite direction: “The ends of government are as comprehensive as those of the social union. They consist of all the good, and all the immunity from evil, which the existence of government can be made either directly or indirectly to bestow. . . . In the particular circumstances of a given age or nation, there is scarcely anything really important to the general interest, which it may not be desirable, or even necessary, that the government should take upon itself, not because private individuals cannot effectually perform it, but because they will not” (CW, 3:807, 970).

In his 1840 essay on Coleridge, Mill maintains that liberalism, which he terms the “let alone doctrine,” does not emerge from principles, but from “the manifest selfishness and incompetence of modern European governments,” and that it is only a half-right theory. The government should not prohibit or intervene, and “beyond suppressing force and fraud, governments can seldom, without doing more harm than good, attempt to chain up the free agency of individuals.” But, as usual, offering the ingredients of modern interventionism, in the next line, he asks whether this stipulation means that the state cannot exercise freedom of action itself, to promote the public welfare. Here Mill falls into the widespread modern fallacy that dissolves the state into every other social institution, conceding to it a quality incompatible with its monopoly over the use of legitimate force: “A State ought to be considered as a great benefit society, or mutual insurance company, for helping (under the necessary regulations for preventing abuse) that large proportion of its members who cannot help themselves” (CW, 10:156).

Yet Mill always supported cooperativist socialism and recognized the deficiencies of communism—his socialist sympathies were substantially more excusable than those of so many intellectuals who, even after that system’s criminal outcomes became undeniable, continued to harbor them. Mill was a reformer, not a revolutionary. He did not openly attempt to eradicate private property, but only to perfect it, and he recognized the superiority of a competitive system. He did not believe that capitalism was doomed. As he wrote in *Chapters on Socialism*, “The present system is not, as many Socialists believe, hurrying us into a state of general indigence and slavery from which only Socialism can save us. The evils and injustices suffered under the present system are great, but they are not increasing; on the contrary, the general tendency is towards their slow diminution” (CW, 5:736).

Moreover, he was not especially friendly with the socialist leaders of his time. From Avignon, he wrote to the Danish critic Georg Brandes in May 1872:

You ask my opinion on the International . . . from the debates in their Congress I have not found any more common sense than from the English delegates, because my compatriots are accustomed to waiting for improvements more from individual initiative and private association than from the direct intervention of the State. The opposite custom that prevails on the Continent leads reformers to believe they only need to grab the reins of government to quickly arrive at their objective; this is true not only of the French socialists, who are more moderate than others, but more so in the case of the Belgians, Germans and even the Swiss who, under the apparent direction of some Russian theorists, think that it is enough to expropriate everybody and topple existing governments, without worrying about what might replace them. (*CW*, 17:1874, written in French)

This “qualified” socialist (*CW*, 1:199), a supporter of free competition, was, however, expelled from the Cobden Club for his ideas on private landownership in the association he founded: the Land Tenure Reform Association (*CW*, 29:371–73; Winch 2004, 552). If the price of forerunners is that of Saint John the Baptist, Mill paid it: neither the socialists nor the most radical Communists nor the next generation of antiutilitarian liberal reformers—for whom Mill stood among the most eminent Victorians Lytton Strachey depicted—considered him one of their own (Himmelfarb 1990, 301).

Later liberalism lost even more of its original skepticism of the state. Thomas H. Green thought that Mill and *On Liberty* were not sufficiently interventionist, and he argued, for example, that if health is good and alcohol bad, it is logical for the state to intervene and prohibit alcohol. Green regarded the state as no adversary to people’s liberty, but rather as the grantor of their rights; indeed, state power should be increased in order to promote liberty (McCarthy 1978, 208–10; Berger 1984, 203–4; Robson 1998, 484–86). In Green, we see almost every aspect of current democratic socialism, with the antiliberal key of the common citizenry and with the state viewed not as coercive, but as liberating; he reproaches Mill for not having recommended more emphatically the expansion of politics and legislation beyond education to the unlimited universe of rights that makes up today’s welfare state (Green 2006; see also Holloway 1960, 390–93, 399, and Coats 1971, 14).

Mill blazed the trail, however, and he was admired for doing so, although much later and by both socialists and those whose main goal was not the limiting of power, whether they inhabited the political center or right. Such flabby contemporary thought now hails him for having been social or progressive, casuistically combining capitalism and socialism and defending liberty until it needs to be attacked. Alfred Marshall fell into this contradiction so characteristic of Mill and said about the state’s growth: “This expansion gives rise to major evils and must be resisted, except when there is clear *prima facie* evidence that it will be efficient and economic” ([1890] 1920, 631–32).

It is understandable that authors such as de Jasay have little patience for this type of reasoning: “Mill, despite his ringing phrases in *On Liberty*, his mistrust of universal franchise and his dislike of the invasion of liberty by popular government, had no doctrine of restraint upon the State. His pragmatism strongly pulled him the other way. For him, State intervention involving the violation of personal liberties and (to the extent that these are distinct) property rights, was always bad except when it was good. True to his broad utilitarian streak, he was content to judge the actions of the State ‘on their merits,’ case by case” (1985, 81–82). Utilitarianism rejects a priori existing institutions, explains de Jasay, in “an implicit denial that existing arrangements contain a presumption in their own favor,” and it regards acts as good if their consequences are good, allowing for the alteration of any agreement for improvement: “Despite his non-interventionist reputation, this was precisely J. S. Mill’s position. He held that a departure from *laissez faire* involving an ‘unnecessary increase’ in the power of government was a ‘certain evil’ unless required by ‘some great good’—greater than the evil in order that the balance of good and bad consequences should be good” (1985, 90).

A False Moral Superiority

We find in Mill the typical personal traits of progressive intellectuals: the arrogance to start from the idea that one’s own opinions are “advanced”; the victimism that believes one is arguing for minority views while in fact having a wide influence; and the paternalism that professes great sympathy for the poor in general, but little for individuals. Mill imagines an idealized and, in truth, dangerous cooperation—dangerous because, as James Fitzjames Stephen (1991) hints, those who love the human race in the abstract and look toward the future, but who do not much care for specific individuals living with them in the present will be eager to reduce liberty for those people’s own good. Mill moves from one economic stereotype to another: from the fallacy of having to socialize capitalism to save it from socialism to the presumption made by self-affirmed progressives that if someone rejects classical liberalism, that rejection makes him a better and more humanitarian person who helps, promotes, supports, and really represents the humble and disadvantaged (Kirk 1952, 577; Stephen 1991, 81, 213, 239; Witztum 2005, 256; Sowell 2006, 129).

Progressivism’s false moral superiority lies at the center of Mill’s position. It is noticeable in his open hostility to religion, the closer the worse, and in his support for a secular-Comtean “religion of humanity” (Hamburger 1999; Raeder 2002). Attacking religion, like relativizing Christian morality, is a characteristic mark of antiliberalism and is evident in the progressive reaction to the two most recent popes who openly questioned socialism and whom, as a result, the left classified as dangerous extremists. Already in the 1800s, Catalan liberal Laureano Figuerola referred to socialists as “the monks of the nineteenth century” (1991, xxxvii) who aspire to replace Christianity with their own creed.

The attempt to substitute reason for religion and morality has two aspects related to liberty. On the one hand, if one may play with those institutions without limit, important checks to power are lost. Hayek points out that Mill was close to the enlightened rationalist school of thought that tended to reject established practice (the consuetudinary) not based on reason and that had already at that time turned the presumption favoring liberty to one opposing it (1998, 92–93). Like many socialists today, Mill supported competition and the market, but for reasons of instrumental efficiency, not principle: principle was what had to yield to reason. For this reason, liberty annoyed Jeremy Bentham, who in economic areas such as usury was more liberal than Adam Smith. Liberty, like natural rights, did not fit with rational utilitarianism. It was, as it remains, more like a feeling, and Bentham could not stand it: “Liberty therefore not being more fit than other words in some of the instances in which it has been used, and not so fit in others, the less the use is made of it the better. I would no more use the word liberty in my conversation when I could get another that would answer the purpose, than I would Brandy in my diet if my physician did not order me. Both cloud the understanding and inflame the passions” (qtd. in Crimmins 1996, 752; see also Kelly 1993, 90, and Paul 1980).

The second antiliberal aspect of this moral superiority derives from the first: if the rational position is to remove the checks on power when planning reforms to maximize the happiness of society, why suffer such checks when putting these reforms into practice? (Hollis 1983, 32). Not only should there be no such checks, but just the opposite is called for. Maurice Cowling notes that Mill’s principles do not stand out for their philosophical rigor or authority, but for their commitment to action (1990, 77; see also Viner 1949, 380). Contemporary interventionism is always filled with such calls, to fight whatever needs fighting at the moment, from poverty to climate change, but in these battles the collective goals rule supreme, never individual liberty. Dalmacio Negro observes that Mill’s emphasis on the diversity of individual development in *On Liberty* is insufficient because it lacks a core liberal precept: limiting power. On the contrary, if politics invokes morality, no limits may be placed on its actions, and Mill’s moralizing standpoint opens the way to confusion between public morality and politics as well as to the use of the law to achieve any political goal regardless of its detriment to liberty (Negro 1996, 41, 46, 52). This displacement has happened in our time, when diversity and pluralism have become moral catapults used to justify subversion of the institutions that protect liberty in order to achieve any laudable collective aim or right. Martin Hollis warns us of the dangers when people question laissez-faire and the economic problems of distribution become ethical problems regarding who has a right to what (1987, 1:385). Gertrude Himmelfarb notes that in Mill’s time there was a strain of economic liberalism, but the sphere of morals “was deemed to be too important to be left to the unguided impulses of individual passions and interests. It remained for *On Liberty* to reverse this order. There, for the first time, not only the State but still

more society were enjoined from intervening in intellectual, moral, and cultural affairs" (1990, 327; see also Dalrymple 2007, 42–62).

Concluding Remarks

In sum, we have good reasons to doubt the classical liberalism of *On Liberty*, the most celebrated text ever written in favor of liberty. I conclude with two remarks on this paradox.

First, contradictions follow easily from contradictions, and Mill contradicts himself often, among other reasons because, as Geraint Williams says, "a degree of circularity is an unavoidable element in the moral discourse of one who no longer derives everything from a fundamental or ultimate principle" (1976, 137). This aspect is attractive in a democratic world that often appeals to fictions in order to make impossible ends meet, and it also highlights H. Cowell's error in predicting, in an early review of *On Liberty*, that Mill's "evanescent" theories would never take root (Pyle 1994, 301).

Second, Mill presents some libertarian notions with unparalleled mastery. And if his case for freedom has been called a "patchwork mixture of insight and chaos," the implication is that it provides ammunition both for and against liberty (Spitz 1962, 178; Smith 1980, 252). To appreciate this self-contradictory quality, the reader may reflect on the restrictions authorities now place on liberty, from the most blatant economic interventionism to the most meticulous and moralizing social engineering of daily life, all with the apparent justification that democracy simply and automatically reflects citizens' interests, and, in the name of progress, none of its incursions should be opposed. *On Liberty*, however, includes reasons for rejecting all of it.

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