

Hayek's Readings of Mill

This text is aimed at studying the role that Friedrich Hayek assigns to John Stuart Mill ; it can help to understand his reconstruction project for "true liberalism". Hayek sees Mill as the main thinker responsible for the perversion of the liberal tradition that emerged in the 18th century.

Mill is first presented by Hayek as an ambivalent author, on the borderline between "true" and "false" liberalism. Despite his insistence on Mill's negative role in the history of liberalism, one can nevertheless detect a kind of fascination with Mill. But in the sixties, Hayek's opinion of Mill became solely negative.

The starting point of our research is the acknowledgement of the contradiction between the admiration that Hayek had for Mill during the forties and the fifties and the fundamental differences between those two authors. We present the background of Hayek's readings of Mill and deal with one aspect of this lecture: Hayek's criticism of Mill's opinion about "production" and "distribution", which he considers as the root of the "constructivist" idea of social justice.

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