

## **Critical Reflections on Mill's View of Socialism**

It is well known that Mill was largely unfamiliar with the Marxist conception of socialism and that his treatment of socialism and communism in the *Chapters on Socialism* and *Principles of Political Economy* reflects this unfamiliarity. However, few commentators have paused to consider how Mill's unfamiliarity with the Marxist variety of socialism vitiates his generally incisive and far-sighted analysis of socialism as such. This paper aims to help redress this shortcoming in Mill scholarship. To this end, it shows, first, how Mill's unfamiliarity with, or neglect of, the Marxist socialist tradition yields certain mischaracterizations of some canonical socialist positions (e.g., as regards socialist criticism of competition, or socialist proposals to eliminate the disutilities occasioned by a highly advanced division of labor). Second, it argues that certain characteristically Marxist theses (e.g., concerning the tendency of capitalism to produce workers "fit for" socialism) prove more persuasive than Mill's own views in grounding the kind of ethical socialism to which Mill gives his qualified endorsement. The paper concludes with a discussion of a few of the ways in which the ethical turn in analytical Marxism produces a convergence of sorts between Marxist and Millian approaches to socialism.

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