

WRITING ASSIGNMENT

PHILOSOPHY 166 FALL 2007

This assignment is due in class on Friday, November 30. Late papers will be subject to grade penalty.

Construct an essay of about five to seven pages on one of the topics below. Please indicate on your title page the topic that you have selected.

1. In *The Social Contract* Rousseau appears to suggest that with the right form of democratic political arrangements in place, a society of private property owners, in which material inequality is not excessive, could be a just society that sustains the conditions for the freedom of all members. In contrast, Marx appears to favor abolition not regulation of private property. According to Marx, in a market economy based on private ownership of resources, exploitation occurs and so does avoidable alienated labor. Defend Rousseau against Marx, or Marx against Rousseau (or you might defend a line of argument against both Marx and Rousseau) on this issue.

2. Addressing an imaginary critic of communism, Karl Marx writes in the *Communist Manifesto*, "But don't wrangle with us, so long as you apply, to our intended abolition of bourgeois property, the standard of your bourgeois notions of freedom, culture, law, etc. Your very ideas are but the outgrowth of the conditions of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property. . . ." Explicate Marx's critique of morality and justice articulated in Part II of the *Communist Manifesto* and in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*. Defend or attack Marx's position on this issue.

3. Describe the ideal of individuality that J. S. Mill develops in chapter 3 of *On Liberty*. Explain how Mill uses this conception of individuality to argue for the liberty principle that he asserts in chapter 1. Consider this objection: People are disposed sometimes to make stupid and foolish choices that intelligent coercion, intended to aid the coerced persons, could prevent. Consider also this objection: In some circumstances coercion directed at people who are not wrongfully harming or threatening to harm anyone could do a lot of good, and hence is justified. Explain how the objections might be elaborated as objections against Mill's liberty principle, and either defend Mill against the objections or the objections against Mill.

4. A utilitarian might object to the system of private ownership rights defended by Locke in chapter 5 of his *Second Treatise on Government* on the ground that aggregate human happiness (adjusted to give extra weight to Millian higher pleasures) will be greater if we restrict or abolish Lockean property rights. A democratic perfectionist might in a similar way argue that aggregate human self-realization (adjusted to give greater weight to self-realization gains for those people who are worse off) will be greater if we restrict or abolish Lockean property rights. (For the idea of higher pleasures, see Mill, *Utilitarianism* chapter 2, first ten paragraphs and *On Liberty*; for the idea of self-realization, see Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*). Defend Locke's chapter 5 position against the critics or one or the other of the critics against Locke.

5. "It's morally bad—unjust and unfair—if some people are worse off than others through no fault or choice of their own." To what extent, if any, does Rousseau agree with the quoted statement? To what extent, if any, does he disagree? To what extent, if any, does Marx agree with the quoted statement? To what extent, if any, does he disagree? With respect to the issue posed by the quoted statement, defend or attack Rousseau's position, or Marx's, or both of their positions.

Avoid long quotes from course texts. Use precise footnote references to indicate passages from course texts that support your interpretations of the texts. If you introduce the ideas of words of

another person into your essay you must attribute their ownership properly by quotation and citation; failure to do this is plagiarism, a serious offense.

Your essays will be assessed by the clarity of your prose, the cogency of your arguments, and the soundness of the understanding of course texts that you demonstrate.

Arneson's office hours: Tuesdays 2-3 and Thursdays 4:30-5:30 in HSS 8057.