



M. A. Khalidi



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CS 203: Final Exam

INSTRUCTIONS: CHOOSE THREE FROM PART A, OR ONE FROM PART A AND ONE FROM PART B. ALSO CHOOSE ONE FROM PART C.

Part A. Short Essays: one paragraph each (10 points).

1. "By a good law, I mean not a just law: for no law can be unjust. The law made by the sovereign power, and all that is done by such power, is warranted [i.e. justified] by every one of the people..."

Explain why Hobbes considers every human law to be just. How do you think he would define "justice" and a "just law"? What is his definition of a "good law"? According to Hobbes, do citizens have the right to resist if the laws passed by the sovereign are not good? Explain.

2. "Though the earth, and all inferior creatures, be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person... The labor of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his."

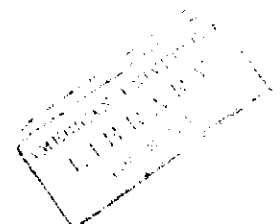
Explain how Locke uses these claims to justify the moral legitimacy of private property, including ownership of land. What qualifications or provisos does he add to this argument? Does this mean that there is private property in the state of nature? Briefly compare Locke's view with Hobbes' view.

3. "The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects are perhaps always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding. He... generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become... His dexterity at his own particular trade seems, in this manner, to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues."

Explain the process which Smith is describing here and briefly outline how it helps to increase economic efficiency. Then explain its role in making humans stupid and ignorant. How does Smith think these negative aspects should be counteracted? How do you think Marx would react to this proposal? What would his proposal be?

4. "All the children born beyond what would be required to keep up the population must necessarily perish, unless room be made for them by the deaths of grown persons. To act consistently, therefore, we should facilitate, instead of foolishly and vainly endeavouring to impede, the operations of nature in producing this mortality... But above all, we should reprobate [i.e. condemn] specific remedies for ravaging diseases."

Explain why Malthus thinks that human beings are heading for a catastrophe. What are the two kinds of checks which act against this trend? Why does Malthus think that cures for diseases must be condemned? How (briefly) do you think Mill would have reacted to this proposal?



Part B. Essay on the later texts (20 points).

1. Explain the difference between Hobbes' and Locke's conceptions of the state of nature. How does each author use this hypothetical device to explain the true function of government? How does a state of nature differ from a state of civil society? Show how the differing conceptions they have of the state of nature result in differing conceptions of government, the limits of political authority, and the right of resistance.

2. Explain the difference, according to Smith, between wages and profit. Why can't we consider profit to be wages paid for the effort of inspecting and directing a business? How does Marx use this distinction between wages and profit to conclude that profit is exploitation of the workers?

How do you think Kant and Mill would respond to Marx's claim that profit is illegitimate? Based on the above, do you think it is correct to say that profit is immoral? Justify your answer.

Part C. Essay on the whole course (20 points).

(Questions on: Descartes, Hume, Kant (Prolegomena), Kant (Morals), Mill, Goethe, Hobbes, Locke, Smith, Malthus, Marx & Engels. In your answers, please refer at least one of the earlier texts.)

1. "It is misleading to consider Modernity the Age of Reason." Discuss this statement, by referring to at least three authors we read this semester.

(Note: "Modernity" is the label often used to describe the period in European intellectual history from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, i.e. the period covered by this course.)

2. What are some of the differing conceptions of human nature found in these texts? Are human beings naturally moral, or do we have to be trained or forced to be moral? Are human beings born with some basic knowledge, or do we have to acquire it all through the senses? Can human beings progress or are we doomed to stagnate or to degenerate? Which conception do you think is most plausible?