

The American University of Beirut

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Final  
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I. *These two speeches are taken from the scenes "Prologue in Heaven" and "Night" (Faust's Study) from the play Faust. Give a more or less line-by-line interpretation of what is being said in each speech, and then explain what Goethe is saying in these speeches about the human condition in light of Enlightenment principles. (15 pts)*

MEPHISTOPHELES (Speaking to God)

1. The solar system I must leave unsung,  
And to mankind's woes lend my humbler tongue.
2. The little earth-god still persists in his old ways,  
Ridiculous as ever, as in his first days.
3. He'd have improved if you'd not given  
Him a mere glimmer of the light of heaven;
4. He calls it Reason, and it only has increased  
His power to be beastlier than a beast.
5. He is—if I may say so, sir—  
A little like the long-legged grasshopper,  
Which hops and flies, and sings its silly songs  
And flies, and drops straight back to grass where he belongs.
6. Indeed, if only he would stick to grass!  
He pokes his nose in all the filth he finds, alas.

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FAUST

7. Well, that's philosophy I've read,  
And Law and Medicine, I fear  
Theology too from A to Z;  
Hard studies all, that have cost me dear.
8. And so I sit, poor silly man,  
No wiser now than when I first began.
9. They call me Professor and Doctor, forsooth,  
For misleading many an innocent youth  
These last ten years now, I suppose,  
Pulling them to and fro by the nose;
10. And I see all our search for knowledge is vain,  
And this burns my heart with bitter pain.
11. I've more sense, to be sure, than the learned fools,  
The masters and pastors, the scribes from the schools;
12. No scruples to plague me, no irksome doubt,  
No hell-fire or devil to worry about—
13. Yet I take no pleasure in anything now;  
For I know nothing, I wonder how  
I can still keep up the pretense of teaching  
Or bettering mankind with my empty preaching.
14. Can I even boast any worldly success?  
What fame or riches do I possess?
15. No dog would put up with such an existence!
16. And so I am seeking magic's assistance.

(Goethe, *Faust*)

**II.** *The following two quotes each encapsulate key ideas from the texts from which they are extracted. Choose one of them and explain what is being said and why it is important to the overall argument of the broader work in which it appears. For whichever one you choose, answer the question listed at the end of the quote (15 pts).*

**A.** The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country....All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries...that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the production of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have...universal inter-dependence of nations....

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap prices of commodities are the heavy artillery with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves....

Modern bourgeois society, with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past, the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeois and of its rule....The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand, by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented.

The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself.

But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working class—the proletarians. (Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*)

**Q.** *Irrespective of your opinion of Marxism, do you think the overall description of the condition of capitalism presented here is appropriate? Explain your opinion (5 pts).*

**B.** No one can be a great thinker who does not recognise, that as a thinker it is his first duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead. Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think. Not that it is solely, or chiefly, to form great thinkers, that freedom of thinking is required. On the contrary, it is as much and even more indispensable, to enable average human beings to attain the mental stature which they are capable of. There have been, and may again be, great individual thinkers, in a general atmosphere of mental slavery. But there never has been, nor ever will be, in that atmosphere, an intellectually active people. When any people has made a temporary approach to such a character, it has been because the dread of heterodox speculation was for a time suspended. Where there is a tacit convention that principles are not to be disputed; where the discussion of the greatest questions which can occupy humanity is considered to be closed, we cannot hope to find that generally high scale of mental activity which has made some periods of history so remarkable.

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At present individuals are lost in the crowd. In politics it is almost a trivality to say that public opinion now rules the world. The only power deserving the name is that of masses, and of governments while they make themselves the organ of the tendencies and instincts of masses. This is as true in the moral and social relations of private life as in public transactions. Those whose opinions go by the name of public opinion, are not always the same sort of public: in America they are the whole white population; in England, chiefly the middle class. But they are always a mass, that is to say, collective mediocrity. And what is a still greater novelty, the mass do not now take their opinions from dignitaries in Church or State, from ostensible leaders, or from books. Their thinking is done for them by men much like themselves, addressing them or speaking in their name, on the spur of the moment, through the newspapers. I am not complaining of all this. I do not assert that anything better is compatible, as a general rule, with the present low state of the human mind. But that does not hinder the government of mediocrity from being mediocre government. (Mill, *On Liberty*)

**Q.** *Considering the two quotes above (taken from chapters II and III respectively), how do you think Mill assesses the state of people in modern Western society? Do they truly enjoy liberty? (5 pts)*