

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

The Evolution & Enforcement of the Racial Contract

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Mills, C. W. (1997). [Chapter 2, last two sections]. In *The racial contract* (pp. 62–89). Cornell University Press.

Questions

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. In the third section of chapter 2, Charles Mills argues that “the *Racial Contract* is ... the truth of the *social contract*” (1997, p. 64).
What does Mills mean by all that?
2. To support the connection between the social contract and the Racial Contract, Mills argues that “there is some direct evidence ... in the writings of the classic contract theorists themselves” (1997, p. 64). In particular, Mills considers the following four contract theorists:

- A. Thomas Hobbes (pages 64 to 66),
- B. John Lock (pages 67 to 68),
- C. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (pages 68 to 69), and
- D. Immanuel Kant (pages 69 to 72).

What evidence of the Racial Contract does Mills find in the social contract theory of each of those four philosophers?

3. Mills (on pages 72 and 73) considers the following two historical periods:
 - A. De jure white supremacy and
 - B. De facto white supremacy.

How is white supremacy different in these two periods?

4. According to Mills, how does the de facto white supremacy of the Racial Contract currently manifest itself globally (page 74) and nationally (page 75)? Why does Mills believe that “neutrality” (1997, p. 76) and “color blindness” (1997, p. 77) only serve to reinforce the terms of the Racial Contract and its de facto white supremacy?
5. In the final section of chapter 2, Mills claims that “the Racial Contract has to be enforced through violence and ideological conditioning” (1997, p. 81).
What is Mills’ argument for that claim?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.