

Lecture 5 Reading Questions

“The Harm Principle”

Reading:

“Introductory.” Chapter 1 in “On Liberty” by John Stuart Mill.

- (1) Mill says that the object of *On Liberty* is to defend “one very simple principle.” What is that principle?
- (2) To whom does Mill’s principle apply? Whose actions does it restrict? Actions toward whom?
- (3) Mill’s principle entails that there is a sphere of human actions that should not be subjected to coercive interference:
 - (i) How is that sphere defined?
 - (ii) Which liberties does the sphere comprise?
- (4) Use Mill’s principle as a test for the permissibility of coercion. Does this principle allow or condemn
 - (i) laws requiring motorcyclists to wear helmets
 - (ii) laws forbidding recreational drug use
 - (iii) blackmailing your older brother into quitting smoking by threatening to expose something truly embarrassing about him on Facebook?

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