

Lecture 6 Reading Questions

“The Utility of Speech”

Reading:

“Of The Liberty of Thought and Discussion.”
Chapter 2 in “On Liberty” by John Stuart Mill.

(1) According to Mill, when is it permissible for the government to restrict free expression?

(2) Why should there be no censorship of even *deeply unpopular* doctrines?

(3) What’s the problem with censoring popular but *pernicious* doctrines that are *known to be false*? Hint: “[I]t is not the minds of heretics that are deteriorated most by the ban placed on all inquiry which does not end in the orthodox conclusions. The greatest harm done is to those who are not heretics.” Why?

(4) Consider each of the following:

- (i) laws against hate speech,
- (ii) fines for uttering profanities in public
- (iii) restrictions on the sale or content of graphic pornography.

Which of these laws would Mill condemn? Which of these laws would Mill support? Does the argument that he would give actually support his view?

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