

Why does Mill defend the freedom of speech and discussion? What are the limits of this freedom?

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Mill discusses the issues of whether an authority should be able to input the limits of anyone else's expression of their opinion. According to him such actions are illegitimate and mankind is not justified in silencing anyone's opinion regardless of what it is. It robs "the human race, posterity as well as the existing generation" (Mill, Chapter 2). His thoughts are divided into several arguments where he defends why it is important to have the freedom of speech. Such as, if any opinion is silenced there is no way to know if that opinion was truthful to start with. Silenced opinion can contain a portion of truth and muting one from expressing it diminishes the ability to think of a different point view and see this portion of truth. Furthermore, even commonly expressed opinion that is considered to be the truth can turn out to be a false one. Mill implies that it is important to constantly question ourselves, our beliefs and be in a constant state of wondering and brainstorming in order to stay open minded and accept the truth ourselves rather than being told which is the correct opinion. It is, however, impossible to tell where the border between free speech and hate speech. These points are discussed in more detail below.

If any opinion is compelled to silence, there is no way to know if that opinion is true. This means that by denying opinion people deny their own ability to be wrong. Only during discussion and voicing opinions it would be possible to understand one's point of view. There should be no authority that can decide everyone's perspective on the certain issue. Considering that people live in different conditions in different countries everyone has their own opinion and perspective on the world wide events. Some opinions are formed based on the cultural aspect of that country hence is why there are a lot of them that are completely different from one another, but not necessarily wrong. Mill argues that people should not stop others from expressing what they wish as it is based on the individual's interests, experience and knowledge.

The silenced opinion can contain some portion of truth and since there is at least a little bit of truth in any kind of opinion, it is impossible to judge which opinion should be silenced for being the wrong one. This means that by silencing some opinions the humanity loses the chances to hear the truth they may not have been able to consider before. The idea of truth logically implies that there exists an opposite force, such as untruth, which is important to distinguish from. Just like the existence of human means there is an existence of non humans (such as animals or plants). It also means that the untrue is something that can be contested, but if any opposite view is prevented, means that there is no discussion that would happen at all. Therefore, no possibility of differentiating between the views means that there is no truth to be found in the statement, which conceptually contradicts the notion of free will that is based on a thought that in order to do good one has to have a possibility to do evil.

Even if the received opinion is the whole truth, unless it is questioned enough times and thought through it should be acknowledged skeptically as some of the things that seem to be correct at the first sight may end up being wrong. In an open society one should have an opportunity to say things that are wrong. It strengthens the society and gives an ability to think out of the box through the arguments that are already provided. If free speech is forbidden, the society would start collapsing from losing its character. Eventually the dissolving of the border

between true and untrue, write and wrong, good and evil will bring bring the decline to the society. Just like healthy person can handle more hardship than unhealthy one, healthy society that is able to brainstorm and express their own ideas functions much better than the unhealthy one where free speech is forbidden and the strict system of “hate speech” and “speech codes” is implemented. And when implementing such system it is difficult to say where is the line between “hate speech” and an opinion that is being expressed. Of course, there is an extreme side to a free speech, which can be considered as a hate speech, but also it is difficult to determine where is the border put between the two, since most of the ideas and expressions get mixed in the middle. If such rules were to be implemented, who would be in charge of implementing them? And what if the society disagrees with such rules, but they are forced to simply follow it without questioning. This erases the character of a person, whose nature is to question things and creates a hardship for a society. Eventually, living in such a society when one is not allowed to express their opinion unless the opinion is part of someone else’s is unhealthy and destroys the society.

If an opinion is popular, it doesn’t necessarily mean that it is a correct opinion. In order to truly understand the problem behind the issue discussed and beliefs of a person that gives their point of view and rationality, it is important to have a discussion and provide arguments. Mill’s example is a Christian morality in which many things are unquestioned and just accepted as a truth. In his opinion is it incorrect to do so as people stop understanding what they actually mean and just accept them as a truth. Without understanding the beliefs humans tend to not act on them as they are no longer motivation and rather just become a routine thing that has to be followed. It becomes a problem when someone has chosen a belief and becomes closed to further discussion, listening or thinking about the issue. The opposition and debate is necessary in order to battle intellectual laziness or challenge hypocrisy.

In the article “Psychological Harm and Free Speech on Campus” the author argues that it is a mistake to deny the free speech or limiting certain sorts of speech acts in certain circumstances. He compares recent events and contradictions that have happened on college campuses and explains the analysis of the situation. This is related to the harm principle that is discussed by Mill and a free speech, as the main cause of the harm. Some could understand Mill’s principle as that the interference and forbidding speech can be allowed as soon as someone is hurt. However it is important to recognize that people can be hurt without being wronged. Good example is provided, if a person stab a toe on something, that person is hurt, but there is no wrong done and the person isn’t wronged. But if a burglar breaks in the house and stabs a person in the process, that person is hurt because of the wrongful act against. It is similar with thoughts and expressions, also much harder to be recognized by the person committing wrong. It is possible to hurt someone with an opinion without meaning it. The harm principle allows interference when one person wrongfully hurts another and that is Mill’s point. On college campuses it is often forgotten though, which is the issue. The author argues that the point of school is to learn facts and hear as many views as possible, since colleges and university teach their students to be able to collect facts and use them to form their opinion. The skill becomes

important later on in a job and further life. College gives a great opportunity to exercise one's mind and expand vision. The author believes that the real harm is caused when students are not challenged and remain exposed to only one thought or idea that they believe is correct. It is considered that the school has failed those students. It is indeed true that challenging students while in college provides great opportunity for many to widen their horizons and prepare for the life ahead where those students will meet variety of different people and interact with those who have different mindset. It is reasonable that some would want to get away from intellectual challenge and to a "safe place", but college isn't proper place for that. It shouldn't be free of intellectual debate, but instead be continuous with the rest of college life. The author also argues that the classrooms are not the only place for learning and growing as there are many things that are learned outside of classroom during discussions. There are some issues that are discussed that could benefit from warnings about potentially hard topic, but there aren't many of such cases. Overall, having a free speech is how students learn and grow and university or college space is one of the best places to do so by having an ability of interacting with peers and challenging the new view.

The meaning of doctrine itself could be in danger of being lost or deprived of its effect on the character. It can become nothing more than a formal profession which prevents the growth of any argument and thought processing from reason or personal experience. Liberty and the society are surrounded by paradoxes and this becomes clear with the concept of the freedom of speech, which is then supported by other paradoxes that get formed or thought of as an outcome of the discussion about the freedom of speech. There are however some limits of the freedom. Such as, an individual might accidentally harm another with their thoughts or discussion. There are a lot of different societies that maintain different traditions and interests and therefore there are many different opinions. Actions that are based on a certain opinion can be used against others or create a bad example for others, which eventually could hurt society as a whole. This is paradoxical, as those thoughts and actions can be based on an opinion that is accepted as a true one by a society. When an action violates a person's obligation to the society, it affects everyone and not just the individual who committed the action and, according to Mill, such behaviour needs to be punished in order to show the society and person that they failed to fulfil their duty to the society.

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