

Reading Questions: Mill, *On Liberty* I, Chs. 1-2

1. What danger is Mill concerned with that emerges from the triumph of democratic government? Is Mill primarily concerned with abuse of power by the government? If not, by whom?
2. What is Mill's "object" in *On Liberty*? What principle does he put forth to govern the dealings of society with individuals? What do you think about this principle? Does the principle apply to all human beings?
3. On what basis does Mill pledge to argue? What are "the permanent interests of man as a progressive being?"
4. What is wrong with silencing an opinion, according to Mill? What is lost if the opinion is true? What is lost if it is false?
5. What is fallibility and what role does it play in Mill's argument? Why does the fact that we must assume our opinions are true to conduct our lives *not* imply that we can obstruct discussion which calls them into question? What is the "condition" that justifies assuming an opinion is true enough to guide our conduct?
6. How does Mill use the examples of Socrates, Jesus, and Marcus Aurelius in his argument?
7. Does Mill believe that the truth can be successfully suppressed? Why or why not?
8. What does it mean for a belief to be a "living truth?" What about a "dead dogma?" What must we do to hold our beliefs as living truths rather than dead dogmas?
9. What example does Mill use to illustrate the idea of a dead dogma? Do you think this applies today? Can you think of other conventional beliefs that people hold to as dead dogmas?
10. What are partial truths?
11. Why is it a good thing that countries host a party of "order and stability" and a party of "progress or reform?" On whom will the "salutary effects" of conflict between sectarian groups fall primarily?
12. How do we come to learn about partial truths?