

### Reading Questions: Mill, *On Liberty* II, Chs. 3-4

1. What analogy does Mill make between the existence of different opinions and “different experiments of living?” What is an experiment in living?
2. What does Mill mean by “individuality?”
3. How should individuals make use of the experience of others? Should it limit or dictate their own plan of life? Why or why not? What would Burke say about Mill’s view on this point?
4. Why does Mill think we shouldn’t want to exchange persons for automatons and what does it have to do with human nature? What metaphor does he use to describe human nature? How does this compare with other conceptions we’ve seen?
5. How does Mill’s praise for “our desires and impulses” compare with the views of previous authors? Do you agree with Mill about the value of “energy?” What does the cultivation of these impulses have to do with a person’s character?
6. What is needed for human beings to become “a noble and beautiful object of contemplation?” Does Mill think his own society promotes this cultivation or not? What about our own society?
7. How does allowing individuality to flourish benefit those who do not partake in experiments of living or that live in conformity with prevailing opinion?
8. What does Mill mean by “genius?”
9. What is the effect on human nature of a public that “endeavours to make every one conform to the approved standard?”
10. What does Mill’s use of China as a cautionary tale tell us about his conception of progress, if anything? What does it tell us about his attitude toward imperialism, if anything?
11. How does Mill propose dividing the realm of individuality from that legitimately ruled by society?
12. What is a self-regarding action? An other-regarding one? Do you think there is such a thing as a purely self-regarding action?
13. Does Mill’s harm principle imply that it would be wrong to prohibit the consumption of alcohol? What about gambling? Do you agree with him that it would be wrong to force the Mormons to give up polygamy? Does the case of the Mormons provide an attractive model for how we ought to respond to cultural practices we find offensive today?