



"All Minus One" is ideal for use in college courses, advanced high school classes, or in any organization in which people would benefit from productive, constructive disagreement. Heterodox Academy invites students, professors, teachers, and other heterodox enthusiasts to adopt or adapt these discussion questions as warranted by their interests and circumstances. Our one request: within an environment of open-mindedness, curiosity, and intellectual humility, please encourage disagreement and ensure everyone has an opportunity to be heard.

Citation:

Cicirelli, D., Haidt, J., Reeves, R. (2018). All Minus One: John Stuart Mill's Ideas on Free Speech Illustrated. Heterodox Academy.

About the Book

This adaptation of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* brings the text to life by making it accessible and relevant to modern readers.

"All Minus One" starts with an introduction by the book's editors, Richard Reeves and Jonathan Haidt, who draw the connection between Mill, his time, and his ideas, and the issues facing our world today. The book draws from the second chapter of Mill's work, where he makes some of the strongest cases for the importance of viewpoint diversity and free speech. By removing dated references and distilling and modernizing the original work, the editors have created a lively, readable version that is more accessible than ever before. Key insights are highlighted by 16 original illustrations by artist David Cicirelli that amplify the power of Mill's metaphors.

Discussion Questions

- 1 What kind of speech is Mill talking about when he speaks of "opinions"? Is there any kind of speech that Mill excludes or about which he is not concerned? Is every speech act an expression of an opinion?
- 2 To whom, or what, do we do the greatest harm when we suppress the opinions of "those who think differently from us"?
- 3 Why does Mill think we want to silence opinions with which we disagree?



- 4 What worries Mill most about the silencing of "those who think differently from us"?
- 5 What does Mill see as the value to society of dissenting opinions?
- 6 Why does Mill consider it an "evil" (p.14) if some people feel the need to self-censor out of fear of speaking against prevailing opinion?
- 7 Why, for Mill, is it not enough to believe rightly if you cannot "make a tenable defence of it" (p.20)? What is the difference between a "dead dogma" and a "living truth"—if both are true?
- 8 Why does Mill believe that "every opinion which embodies somewhat of the portion of truth. . . ought to be considered precious" even if it is blended with "error and confusion" (p.33)?
- 9 Why is it that "truth has no chance" except "in proportion as every side of it . . . is so advocated as to be listened to" (p.37)?
- 10 How does the "collision with error" provide a "clearer perception and livelier impression" (p.6) of truth?
- 11 What does discussion look like to Mill? Is 'vocalization' or 'expression' the same as 'discussion'? Is all expression of opinion valuable discussion?
- 12 If free discussion often intensifies our divisions, how does the "rough process of a struggle between combatants fighting under hostile banners" (p.35) bring us closer to the truth?
- 13 Does Mill place any rules or conditions on discussion?
- 14 Why does Mill say that "it is . . . obvious that law and authority have no business with restraining" what he calls "offensive attacks" on those with different opinions (p.40)?
- 15 Is Mill's belief in the existence of a "morality of public discussion" (p.40) anything more than wishful thinking?



- 16 What "salutary beliefs" today would Mill see as considered so "important to society" that they are "protected from public attack" (p.10)?
- 17 Does Mill think we should seriously consider every opinion that differs from our own, no matter how disagreeable?
- 18 Does Mill recognize the danger of lies and falsehoods in public debate?
- 19 Should all opinions, including those that are demonstrably untrue, be given equal consideration in public debate?
- 20 Does every attempt to regulate "the manner of asserting an opinion" in the public sphere, or any "setting bounds" on what constitutes "fair discussion", constitute a form of direct or indirect censorship?