**Questions for J. S. Mill’s “Individualism”**

1. **What difference should there be between liberty of opinion and liberty of action? Pp. 99-ff.**
2. **In von Humboldt’s view, which Mill accepts, what two requisites will give rise to individual vigor and manifold diversity, or in other words, originality and individuality? Pp. 100-ff.**
3. **What three reasons does Mill give for not simply following the traditions and customs of others? P. 101.**
4. **Mill writes: “Among the works of man which human life is rightly employed in perfecting and beautifying, he first in importance is surely man himself.” In that paragraph on p. 102, what abilities of man does Mill see as the most important for being perfected?**
5. **Under what conditions does a person have a character? An energetic character? Pp. 102, bottom—103.**
6. **Was there ever a time in Mill’s view when the element of spontaneity and individuality was in excess and the social principle had a hard struggle with it? Ex- plain. And how does Mill now see the relationship between society and individuality? P. 103.**
7. **What is the Calvinistic theory of self and its proper development, and what is the Greek ideal of self and its proper development? P. 104.**

1. **In proportion to what does each person become more valuable to oneself, and therefore, capable of being more valuable to others? ……. How much compression or restriction of people should there be in human relationships? ……. In what sense is there ample compensation even in the point of view of human development? Pp. 104, bottom—105.**
2. **What are the conditions of genius, and why does Mill insist on the importance of genius? P. 106.**
3. **Mill develops the point from p. 108, new paragraph, that independence of action and disregard of custom are deserving of encouragement for what reason? ….. What further reason does Mill then add in the lines following for encouraging independence of action, and what is his point about a man who needs a coast or pair of shoes to fit him? P. 108.**
4. **What is the contrast in the 19th century that Mill draws between the culture of Europe (Great Britain, for example) and China on custom and individuality? Pp. 110-112. Could he make the same contrast today?**
5. **Mill affirms that everyone who receives the protection of society owes a return for the benefit and that the fact of living in society renders it indispensable that each should be bound to observe a certain line of conduct toward the rest. What two requirements should this conduct follow? See text below for paragraphs referred to: Ch. 4, para. 3. ……. Is that all society may do? Mill answers, “No.” What else may it properly do and not do? Same paragraph.**
6. **Should society always interfere with a part of a person’s conduct whenever it prejudicially affects the interests of others? Ch. 4, para. 3, again!**
7. **Does Mill believe that people are motivated only by selfishness, or does he believe that people are sometimes motivated by benevolence towards others? Gove some explanation for Mill’s view. Why do you agree or disagree with Mill on this question? Ch. 4, paragraph 4.**
8. **What kind of rules should human beings follow in their conduct toward one another? Ch. 4, last several lines of para. 4. Who is the proper judge in a person’s own concerns? Of course, Mill answers that it is the individual. All errors which he is likely to commit against advice and warning are far outweighed by what evil? Ch. 4, last several lines of para. 4.**

**CHAPTER IV.OF THE LIMITS TO THE AUTHORITY OF SOCIETY OVER THE INDIVIDUAL.**

**What, then, is the rightful limit to the sovereignty of the individual over himself? Where does the authority of society begin? How much of human life should be assigned to individuality, and how much to society?**

**Each will receive its proper share, if each has that which more particularly concerns it. To individuality should belong the part of life in which it is chiefly the individual that is interested; to society, the part which chiefly interests society.**

**Though society is not founded on a contract, and though no good purpose is answered by inventing a contract in order to deduce social obligations from it, every one who receives the protection of society owes a return for the benefit, and the fact of living in society renders it indispensable that each should be bound to****[Pg 141]observe a certain line of conduct towards the rest. This conduct consists, first, in not injuring the interests of one another; or rather certain interests which, either by express legal provision or by tacit understanding, ought to be considered as rights; and secondly, in each person's bearing his share (to be fixed on some equitable principle) of the labours and sacrifices incurred for defending the society or its members from injury and molestation. These conditions society is justified in enforcing, at all costs to those who endeavour to withhold fulfilment. Nor is this all that society may do. The acts of an individual may be hurtful to others, or wanting in due consideration for their welfare, without going the length of violating any of their constituted rights. The offender may then be justly punished by opinion though not by law. As soon as any part of a person's conduct affects prejudicially the interests of others, society has jurisdiction over it, and the question whether the general welfare will or will not be promoted by interfering with it, becomes open to discussion. But there is no room for entertaining any such question when a person's conduct affects the interests of no persons besides himself, or needs not affect them unless they like (all the persons concerned being of full age, and****[Pg 142] the ordinary amount of understanding). In all such cases there should be perfect freedom, legal and social, to do the action and stand the consequences.**

**It would be a great misunderstanding of this doctrine, to suppose that it is one of selfish indifference, which pretends that human beings have no business with each other's conduct in life, and that they should not concern themselves about the well-doing or well-being of one another, unless their own interest is involved. Instead of any diminution, there is need of a great increase of disinterested exertion to promote the good of others. But disinterested benevolence can find other instruments to persuade people to their good, than whips and scourges, either of the literal or the metaphorical sort. I am the last person to undervalue the self-regarding virtues; they are only second in importance, if even second, to the social. It is equally the business of education to cultivate both. But even education works by conviction and persuasion as well as by compulsion, and it is by the former only that, when the period of education is past, the self-regarding virtues should be inculcated. Human beings owe to each other help to distinguish the better from the worse, and encouragement to choose the****[Pg 143] former and avoid the latter. They should be for ever stimulating each other to increased exercise of their higher faculties, and increased direction of their feelings and aims towards wise instead of foolish, elevating instead of degrading, objects and contemplations. But neither one person, nor any number of persons, is warranted in saying to another human creature of ripe years, that he shall not do with his life for his own benefit what he chooses to do with it. He is the person most interested in his own well-being: the interest which any other person, except in cases of strong personal attachment, can have in it, is trifling, compared with that which he himself has; the interest which society has in him individually (except as to his conduct to others) is fractional, and altogether indirect: while, with respect to his own feelings and circumstances, the most ordinary man or woman has means of knowledge immeasurably surpassing those that can be possessed by any one else. The interference of society to overrule his judgment and purposes in what only regards himself, must be grounded on general presumptions; which may be altogether wrong, and even if right, are as likely as not to be misapplied to individual cases, by persons no better acquainted with the circumstances of such** **[Pg 144]cases than those are who look at them merely from without. In this department, therefore, of human affairs, Individuality has its proper field of action. In the conduct of human beings towards one another, it is necessary that general rules should for the most part be observed, in order that people may know what they have to expect; but in each person's own concerns, his individual spontaneity is entitled to free exercise. Considerations to aid his judgment, exhortations to strengthen his will, may be offered to him, even obtruded on him, by others; but he himself is the final judge. All errors which he is likely to commit against advice and warning, are far outweighed by the evil of allowing others to constrain him to what they deem his good.**