Exercise based on John Stuart Mill, Essay on Liberty

The Harm Principle:  The ideal of individuality comprises three basic elements:

first, the inward domain of consciousness; demanding liberty of conscience, in the most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling; absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral, or theological. The liberty of expressing and publishing opinions may seem to fall under a different principle, since it belongs to that part of the conduct of an individual which concerns other people; but being almost of as much importance as the liberty of thought itself, resting in great part on the same reasons, is practically inseparable from it. Secondly, the principle requires liberty of tastes and pursuits; of framing the plan of our life to suit our own character; of doing as we like, subject to such consequences as may follow; without impediment from our fellow-creatures, so long as what we do does not harm them, even though they should think our conduct foolish, perverse, or wrong. Thirdly, from this liberty of each individual, follows the liberty, within the same limits, of combination among individuals; freedom to unite, for any purpose not involving harm to others: the persons combining being supposed to be of adult age.

**Thus, the law, or private persons, cannot legitimately interfere with a person's liberty if the person is:**

**(a) not harming others**

**or is**

**(b) only harming himself.**

**HOW WOULD MILL JUDGE these following cases, either BY POLITICAL LAW AND PUNISHMENT OR BY SOCIAL DISAPPROVAL on individuals, AND HOW WOULD YOU? If you disagree, please state your reason(s) for your disagreement.**

1. **Restricting slander and libel**
2. **Restricting name-calling. (Think of your own example.)**
3. **Dynamiting competitor’s plant**
4. **Competing by lowering prices and/or improving service or product quality**
5. **Rape**
6. **Consensual heterosexual activity**
7. **Consensual homosexual activity**
8. **Stopping someone from harming another**
9. **Stopping someone from harming herself**
10. **Free to believe and feel whatever one wants**
11. **Free to express and publish whatever one wants**
12. **Free to do to oneself whatever one wants, for example, drugs**
13. **Free to do to one’s children whatever one wants**
14. **Free not to pay taxes to support via Medicare the health care of seniors and those who are on Social Security after being disabled for two years**
15. **Free not to pay Social Security taxes because the government is forcing me to do a good for myself**
16. **Free not to pay Social Security taxes because the government gives lower income wage earners somewhat better benefits relative to their contributions than it does for higher income wage earners**
17. **Free not to pay any taxes that support both free education of children and also somewhat subsidized higher education in state colleges and universities**
18. **Free not to pay taxes that support Pell Grants and Subsidized Loans for college students**
19. **Free not to pay state and federal taxes that support unemployment benefits for unemployed workers**
20. **Free not to pay taxes that support a cleaner environment and/or that prevent global warming**