

# Exploring John Mill's Harm Principle

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Freedom is a necessary principle to abide by in order for the human race to function. On the other hand, freedom can be taken advantage of, thus resulting in harmful consequences to those directly and indirectly involved. The article, "On Liberty" by John S. Mills, places emphasis on the functioning of individual liberty and its co-existence with society. Mills stresses the limits of individual liberty through what is famously known as his Harm Principle: "the only purpose for which power may be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant" (Cahn). With special consideration placed on drug use and free speech, this paper will delve deeper into the matter of an individual's sovereignty. The subject of implemented drug policies has continued to exist in society as a controversial topic. Mills would advocate that drug use is a personal choice and in prohibiting it means prohibiting an individual's free rights to govern themselves. Though drug use is a personal choice, its usage has affected society in form or the other. The choice weighs heavily on the individual's interest in his freedom to use drugs against the potential harm this may cause to himself and to others. More recently, the war on drugs have escalated the prohibition of recreational drug use. In order to evaluate its justification, the reasons prohibiting its use need to first be explored. The most popular argument is that drugs are addictive and users become dependent on its

effects to function. If the dependency is not satisfied, it can disrupt the life of the user so that this individual forms a threat to society. Addicted user..... middle of paper .....to Merriam-Webster dictionary, freedom is the quality or state of being free: as the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action. If every soul abided by this ultimate rule with the consideration of its effects, society as we know it would be overwhelmingly better. The basic premise of Mill's 'Harm Principle' is that a person has rights to their own decisions and the consequences that follow, however, no one else should be subjected to these consequences. Differing opinions and lifestyles are a progressive force and will eventually lead to an improved civilization and greater happiness.CitationCahn, S. M. (Ed.). (2009). Exploring Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.Hart, C., Ksir, C., & Ray, O. (2008). Drugs, Society, and Human Behavior (13th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

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