

***On Liberty*, Chapter II: “Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion”**

John Stuart Mill

Third Argument

We have hitherto considered only two possibilities: that the received opinion may be false, and some other opinion, consequently, true; or that, the received opinion being true, a conflict with the opposite error is essential to a clear apprehension and deep feeling of its truth. But there is a commoner case than either of these; when the conflicting doctrines, instead of being one true and the other false, share the truth between them; and the nonconforming opinion is needed to supply the remainder of the truth, of which the received doctrine embodies only a part.

Popular opinions, on subjects not palpable to sense, are often true, but seldom or never the whole truth. They are a part of the truth; sometimes a greater, sometimes a smaller part, but exaggerated, distorted, and disjoined from the truths by which they ought to be accompanied and limited. Heretical opinions, on the other hand, are generally some of these suppressed and neglected truths, bursting the bonds which kept them down, and either seeking reconciliation with the truth contained in the common opinion or fronting it as enemies, and setting themselves up, with similar exclusiveness, as the whole truth.

- Paraphrase each paragraph in your own words.
- Provide a specific example that illustrates what Mill is describing.
- How has our class worked toward reconciling different perspectives this term? What specific debates/discussions stand out to you?

Every opinion which embodies somewhat of the portion of truth which the common opinion omits, ought to be considered precious, with whatever amount of error and confusion that truth may be blended.

Truth, in the great practical concerns of life, is so much a question of the reconciling and combining of opposites, that very few have minds sufficiently capacious and impartial to make the adjustment with an approach to correctness, and it has to be made by the rough process of a struggle between combatants fighting under hostile banners... When there are persons to be found, who form an exception to the apparent unanimity of the world on any subject, even if the world is in the right, it is always probable that dissentients have something worth hearing to say for themselves, and that truth would lose something by their silence.

- Paraphrase each paragraph in your own words.
- Provide a specific example that illustrates what Mill is describing.
- Why does Mill argue that dissenting opinions should be considered "precious"? When have you struggled to do this? What made it difficult?