

Alimentazione non salutare, autonomia individuale e principio del danno

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Unhealthy Food, Individual Autonomy, and the Harm Principle

Abstract: Tackling food-related health conditions is becoming one of the most pressing issues in the policy agendas of western liberal democratic governments. In this article, I intend to illustrate what the liberal philosopher J.S. Mill would have said about legislation on unhealthy food. Mill is normally considered as the archetype of liberal anti-paternalism and his ideas are often invoked by those who oppose paternalistic legislation aimed at restricting the consumption of unhealthy food. My analysis proceeds as follows. First, I assess whether and to what extent Mill's 'harm principle' justifies social and legal non-paternalistic penalties against unhealthy eaters who are guilty of other-regarding harm. Second, I show that Mill's account warrants taxing unhealthy foods, thus restricting the freedom of both responsible and irresponsible eaters and *de facto* justifying what I call 'secondary paternalism'.

Keywords: John Stuart Mill, Unhealthy food, Paternalism, Harm.

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