In Feinberg’s analysis of two-party interactions, valid consent marks the boundary line between legitimate applications of the harm principle, on the one hand, and illegitimate paternalistic interventions, on the other. In my seminar, I explore a number of weaknesses in Feinberg’s approach. First, he underplays the significance of any restraints on the liberty of the protected individual in respect of so-called ‘soft’ paternalistic interventions. Second, he dismisses as irrelevant the burdens that all indirect paternalistic interventions impose on their direct addressees. Thirdly, he removes from view certain internal facts about the agent, provided that these do not affect the validity of the affected party’s consent. I argue that these weaknesses force us to move away from Feinberg’s beautifully simple scheme towards an independent framework for the analysis of two-party interactions.

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