

Fall 2015
PhD Comprehensive Examination in Political Theory
Morning Session

Choose one of the following questions and make sure to include the question number and text at the start of your answer.

1. Are neo-republican conceptions of liberty examples of "positive" or "negative" conceptions of liberty, or neither, according to the typology Berlin introduced?

2. Much of the contemporary literature on distributive justice focuses on the attempt to balance two moral imperatives: (i) life chances should not be determined by endowments of qualities distributed in a manner that is arbitrary from the moral point of view; and (ii) persons should only be compensated for inequalities in fortune for which it is not reasonable to hold them responsible. Various balances between these concerns have been urged. Ronald Dworkin, for example, argues that persons should be compensated for the effects of bad brute luck, but not of bad option luck. Richard Arneson argues that persons should not be compensated for inequalities in fortune that result from choices made after a person has been guaranteed equal opportunity for welfare. In a contrasting vein, Robert Nozick argues that neither of these concerns should be central to an account of distributive justice. Discuss three or more thinkers who, in your opinion, best develop the case for or against the centrality of these concerns for an account of distributive justice. Examine the balance of considerations that each theorist cites to justify his/her approach. Which approach provides the firmest foundation for a conception of distributive justice?