

Political Theory Comprehensive Exam

August, 2012

Answer three questions, one from each section. Your examination will be evaluated as a whole, so avoid repeating yourself.

Section I

1. "Consent is the font of political legitimacy." Discuss with reference to Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant. Who gives the most compelling account? Why?
2. Machiavelli advises princes to base their power on the People rather than on the Aristocrats. Why? How does Machiavelli's view of the People compare to three other political philosophers?
3. What does the truth have to do with politics? Discuss with reference to any three of Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, and Locke. Who gives the most compelling account? Why?

Section II

4. "The question is not whether we should embrace freedom, but rather it is what kind of freedom should we embrace?" Criticize or defend this view by reference to at least four authors on the reading list.
5. Critics of liberalism and cosmopolitanism have often pointed out that human rights can become a tool for contemporary imperialism. Are they right? Why or why not? Discuss with reference to at least three authors on the list.
6. What is the will of the people, and why, if at all, is it relevant to political legitimacy? Discuss by reference to any four authors on the list. After discussing their views as fully as time permits, give your own considered judgment as to who makes the best argument and why.

Section III

7. Republican thinking about institutional design has always revolved around interactions among the one, the few, and the many. Discuss with respect to at least four authors on the list, explaining what problems their institutional theories were intended to address, and how effectively they addressed them.
8. Every theory of politics rests on a philosophical psychology: a set of assumptions about human motivation, malleability, and aspirations. Yet every philosophical psychology is controversial. How, then, can political theory advance? Discuss with reference to at least four authors on the list, at least one of whom should be drawn from each part of the reading list.
9. Science can be used to liberate, to subdue, or both. Discuss with reference to at least four authors on the list. Who makes the best argument? Why?

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