

POLITICAL THEORY COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

AUGUST 2014

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

Section I

1. The theme of statesmanship is one of the oldest in political philosophy. Yet the term can mean many things from the *founder* who establishes laws and institutions, to the *reformer* who revises and adapts these institutions, to the *preserver* who seeks faithfully to maintain and transmit them. Critically evaluate three authors from among the ancients and the moderns who illustrate each of these different approaches to the problem of statesmanship.
2. Why does the city in Plato's *Republic* banish the poets? Evaluate the arguments against poetry found in the dialogue and the importance of "truth and lies" for thinking about politics more generally.
3. The role of the people, whether the *demos* for Aristotle, *il popolo* for Machiavelli, the "general will" for Rousseau or the "majority" for the Federalists and de Tocqueville plays a central part. What should the role of the people be? Discuss with reference to these thinkers.

Section II

1. The "equality of what" literature sidelined the discussion of the more important and in any case prior question "Why equality?". Discuss with reference to at least four authors on the list.
2. Contemporary democratic theory is split between "aggregationist" and "deliberative" theorists. Is this a helpful split? Are there other theoretical positions as well? Discuss with reference to at least four authors from your list.
3. What is the significance of the public sphere for legitimation in modern societies? And what if the public sphere is radically transformed? Discuss with reference to at least four authors from your list.

Section III

1. Every political theory rests on a philosophical psychology: a set of assumptions about human motivation, malleability and aspirations. Yet every philosophical psychology is debatable. How, then, can we do political theory? Discuss with reference to at least four authors from all sections of the list.

2. Can there be 'global justice'? Why or why not? Discuss with reference to four authors on Part II of the reading list.
3. Discussions of freedom abound in dichotomies: positive and negative liberty; the liberty of the ancients vs. that of the moderns. Are these helpful? Discuss with reference to Aristotle, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Arendt and Skinner.