

Lecture 9 Reading Questions

“Rights as Side-constraints”

Readings:

“The Survival Lottery” by John Harris.

Selections from “Anarchy, State, and Utopia” by Robert Nozick.

Harris:

- (1) What objections are there to a well-run survival lottery? Are they sound? Are they consistent with utilitarianism?

Nozick:

- (1) What is the difference between conceiving rights as moral goals of human action and conceiving rights as side constraints on human action? How are rights best understood?

Consider for example:

- (i) the right to bodily integrity
 - (ii) the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest.
- (2) “Individually, we each sometimes choose to undergo some pain or sacrifice for a greater benefit or to avoid a greater harm: we go to the dentist to avoid worse suffering later [etc]. ... Why not, similarly, hold that some persons have to bear some costs that benefit other persons more, for the sake of the overall social good?” Why not?
 - (3) What is the libertarian constraint upon actions that Nozick endorses? Does it strike you as plausible?

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