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?