

Essay Competition: Does Liberty Upset Patterns?

Description: The “Liberty, Equality, and Utility: Assessing the trade-offs between individual liberty, well-being, and material equality” project at the Université de Fribourg, funded by the John Templeton Foundation, invites essay submissions on the question: “Does Liberty Upset Patterns?”. This prize competition aims to encourage new work on tensions between commitments to individual liberty and 'patterned' goods, broadly construed to include commitments to equality, priority, Pareto-optimality, and more. There are of course well-known challenges for reconciling these commitments. Using his widely-discussed Wilt Chamberlain example, Nozick pressed a challenge for reconciling commitments to individual liberty and patterned views of distributive justice. Sen, in his influential paper, “The Impossibility of a Paretian Liberal”, pressed another challenge for reconciling commitments to individual liberty and a weak Pareto condition. Particular essay topics could include, but are not limited to, how to measure individual liberty/freedom, patterned views of distributive justice, game theoretic accounts of rights, and philosophical discussions of any relevant formal results in social choice theory and/or welfare economics.

Prizes: First prize will receive 4,000 CHF and an invitation to present at a conference in June 2026. Second prize will receive 2,000 CHF. Third prize will receive 1,000 CHF.

Details: Submissions up to 12,000 words (including footnotes, excluding references) should be fully anonymised and submitted via email to libertyequalityutility@unifr.ch before April 27th 2026. The panel reserves the right not to award any or all prizes, depending on the quality of submissions.