

PHL 394S Markets and Morals

Final research paper

Due April 9, 2007

Please write a 3000-word paper that responds to the following question:

One of the central attractions of the Pareto-efficiency standard, it has been argued (*Normative Economics* §1.4), is that it provides a normative standard for the evaluation of social states that is *neutral* with respect to competing conceptions of the good. In this respect, it represents an alternative to *perfectionist* modes of evaluation.

In *The Social Limits to Growth*, Fred Hirsch criticizes several tendencies in modern society, including: 1. the suburbanization of cities, 2. the commercialization of culture, and 3. credentialism in higher education. Pick one of these topics, and show how Hirsch attempts to develop his criticism in a way that respects the neutrality constraint. (You may find it useful to contrast Hirsch's approach with that of some other author, of your choosing, who employs a more perfectionist style of social criticism.) Do you find the argument, and the attempt to respect neutrality, persuasive?

Please note:

- You may use any standard citation and bibliographic style you like, as long as it is used consistently.
- Please double-space, so that I have room to write comments.
- Keep the use of internet sources to a minimum. Books are best.
- The introductory section of your paper should contain a clear statement of the thesis that you intend to defend.
- Papers will be returned to you at the final exam, Wednesday, May 2. An anonymous grade sheet will be posted on my door (UC 149) Monday, April 30, for those who want to know what their grade is going into the final.