

Reading Guide

Liberty

Readings for 7 April 2011

READINGS (REQUIRED)

[A] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974), (pp. ix-xiv), pp. 149-164, 174-182, 213-216, 228-231

READINGS (SUPPLEMENTARY)

[B] Thomas Pogge, *Realizing Rawls* (1989), pp. 48-62.

[A] Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, selections

Background

As you already know, Robert Nozick (1938-2002) was an American philosopher who spent most of his career teaching at Harvard University. He was also Professor Gendler's dissertation director (though she did not work with him on a project in political philosophy.) We have already read selections from two of his other works. We read a chapter called "Love's Bond" from *The Examined Life* (1989) for our class on flourishing and attachment. And for our class on Weakness of the Will, we read selections from *The Nature of Rationality* (1993) about the role of interpersonal and intrapersonal principles.

However, Nozick is best known for his early (1974) work *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, in which he defends political libertarianism. It is from this book's long seventh chapter that our current selections are taken.

Anarchy, State and Utopia ("ASU") was published three years after John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, which we looked at in our last lecture and readings. Nozick and Rawls were colleagues at the time, and although ASU is a self-standing work, Nozick was prompted to write it as the result of thinking about Rawls' work. (Yes, the two were on excellent terms throughout their lives.)

Passages to focus on/passages to skim

- If you are pressed for time you may skim the Preface (ix-xiv).
- Please read the remaining passages (149-164, 174-182, 213-216, 228-231) in full.

Terms, Concepts and Examples

Be sure that you understand and are able to distinguish among the following:

Terms and Concepts: the minimal state, holdings: original acquisition of; transfer of; rectification of injustice in, historical principles, end result principles, patterned principles/patterning, Lockean proviso, natural assets.

Examples: Wilt Chamberlain example

Reading Questions:

As you read through the selection, keep in mind the following questions:

- (1) What is the problem of distributive justice, according to Nozick?
- (2) What does Nozick mean by each of the following expressions, and why does he introduce them?
 - Original acquisition of holdings
 - Transfer of holdings
 - Rectification of injustice in holdings
- (3) What is the distinction between “historical principles” and “end result principles”? Why does Nozick introduce this distinction? What role does it play in his larger argument for the libertarian conclusion that “the minimal state is the most extensive state that can be justified?”
- (4) What is “patterning” and how does liberty upset patterns? Why might someone think this is a problem? How does Nozick respond? What role does the Wilt Chamberlain example play in this discussion?
- (5) What is Locke’s theory of acquisition? Why does Nozick discuss it? What is the Lockean proviso? Why does Nozick think the free market will not run afoul of it?
- (6) What view regarding the nature of natural assets does Nozick attribute to Rawls? What does Nozick think is wrong with this view? Is Nozick’s argument compelling? Why or why not?

[B] Thomas Pogge, *Realizing Rawls*, selections

Background

Thomas Winfried Menko Pogge (born 1953) is a German-born philosopher who serves as Director of the Global Justice Program and Leitner Professor of Philosophy and International Affairs here at Yale. Pogge received his Ph.D from Harvard University with a dissertation supervised by John Rawls. The selections we are providing come from Pogge’s book *Realizing Rawls* (1989). In these pages, Pogge aims to defend Rawls against Nozick’s critiques, and to identify what he sees as certain deep problems in Nozick’s own political philosophy.