

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Redistribution & Original Acquisition

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Nozick, R. (1974). [Chapter 7, section I, second half]. In *Anarchy, state, and utopia* (pp. 167–182). Blackwell.

Questions

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. How does Robert Nozick justify his claim that “taxation of earnings from labor is on a par with forced labor” (p. 169)? (Hint: pretty much the entire section on “Redistribution and Property Rights” is somehow trying to justify or otherwise support this claim.)
2. Nozick’s account of justice in acquisition (from the previous reading claims that, under certain circumstances, a person may be entitled to take something unowned from the commons and turn it into their own private property. To flesh that idea out, Nozick compares his approach to that of John Locke.

In the section on “Locke’s Theory of Acquisition”, what puzzles and other serious problems does Nozick see with Locke’s “mixing argument” for justifying the original acquisition private property?

Meanwhile, in his section on “The Proviso”, how does Nozick propose to justify the just original acquisition of private property with something like the “Lockean proviso”?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.