

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

READING GUIDE #7

ENTITLEMENT THEORY

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). Distributive justice. In *Anarchy, state, and utopia* (pp. 149–231). Basic Books.

QUESTIONS

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. What are the elements of Robert Nozick's entitlement theory of justice? What seems to justify this view?
2. Nozick presents his "Wilt Chamberlain" example to illustrate problems with patterned theories of justice. (Chamberlain was a famous basketball player back in the 1960s. If you prefer, think about someone like Serena Williams, LeBron James, or Sidney Crosby.)
What problems is Nozick's example supposed to reveal?
3. How does Nozick justify his claim that "taxation of earnings from labor is on a par with forced labor" (p. 169)?
4. Justice in acquisition claims that, under certain circumstances, an agent may be entitled to take something public (or un-owned) and turn it into private property.

To flesh that idea out, Nozick compares his approach to that of the 17th century philosopher John Locke.

What puzzles does Nozick see with Locke's "mixing argument"? How does Nozick propose to justify the just 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.