

Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*; Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

1. What is a “theory of justice” as Rawls understands it? (Chapter 1.) Is a theory of justice a special case of the theory of morality (an account of right and wrong action), or something else? What are the connections between the two?
2. What is the original position? (Chapter 1.) Is it a good test for the correct principles of justice?
3. According to Rawls’s difference principle (p. 57), social and economic inequalities are fully just (part of a perfectly just scheme) only if they work to the greatest expected advantage of the least advantaged. How can an inequality make the least advantaged better off? Is the difference principle plausible?
4. What is the point of Nozick’s Wilt Chamberlain example (p. 160)? Consider four variants of the case, and assume (following Nozick’s presentation) that the status quo distribution fits a distributional pattern:

No Taxation 1: Each person who attends a basketball game is required, as part of the admission fee, to drop \$10 into a Wilt Chamberlain box. At the end of the season, the Chamberlain box has accumulated \$10 million. Everything in the box is handed to Chamberlain as a supplement to his salary, with no taxes on this income.

No Taxation 2: Each person who attends a basketball game is required to put \$5 into a Wilt Chamberlain box and is given the option of also putting \$5 into a Literacy Program box. Attendance is the same as in *No Taxation 1*. At the end of the season, the Chamberlain box has \$5 million, which he receives without taxation, and the Literacy Program box has nothing. Chamberlain then gives his \$5 million to the literacy program.

Taxation 1: A tax rate of 50 percent is announced before the basketball season starts, and it is announced that the revenues will be spent on funding a literacy program. Chamberlain decides not to play, and so no money is put in the Wilt Chamberlain box. Attendance is 20 percent lower than it would have been, and everyone keeps their \$10.

Taxation 2: A tax rate of 50 percent is announced before the season starts, and it is announced that the revenues will be spent on a literacy program. Chamberlain plays, and each person who attends drops \$10 into the Wilt Chamberlain box. Once more, \$10 million is accumulated in the box. Chamberlain gets \$5 million, and the \$5 million in taxes goes to the literacy program.

- 4a. In *Taxation 1* and *Taxation 2*, do we have an intrusion on liberty? Whose liberty is burdened?

4b. How should we think about the use of the money to support the literacy program? Does that spending benefit the liberty of the people who receive the training?

4c. Nozick says that “liberty upsets patterns.” In which of the four cases has liberty upset the previous pattern?

5. According to Nozick, “Taxation of earnings from labor is on a par with forced labor” (p. 169). Is that right?



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24.401 Proseminar in Philosophy II
Spring 2020

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