

# Studying Social Inequality with Data Science

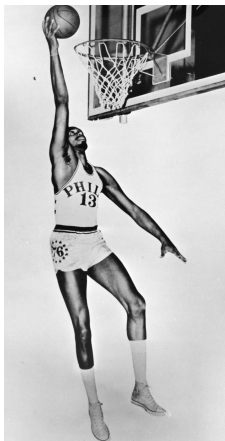
INFO 3370 / 5371  
Spring 2024

## Nozick and the Entitlement Theory of Justice

All page numbers refer to  
Nozick, Robert. 1974.  
*Anarchy, State, and Utopia*.  
Basic Books.

# Why Nozick at all?

“intellectual honesty demands that, occasionally at least, we go out of our way to confront strong arguments opposed to our views. How else are we to protect ourselves from continuing in error?”  
(p. x-xi)



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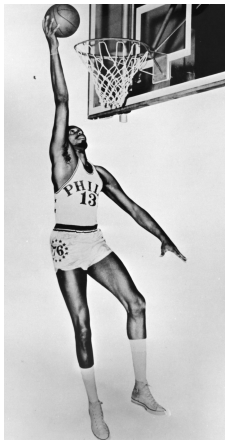
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- ▶ “Wilt Chamberlain winds up with \$250,000...larger than  
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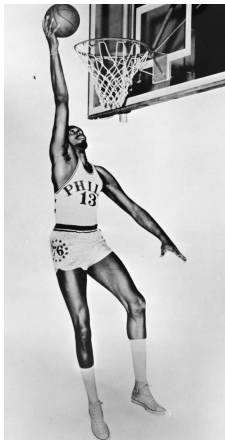
Nozick: A redistributive state is not justified



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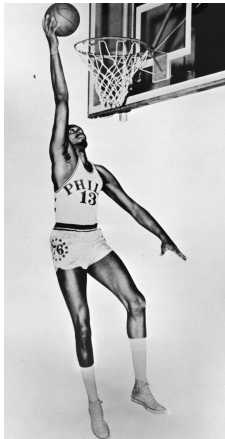
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People voluntarily pay Chamberlain

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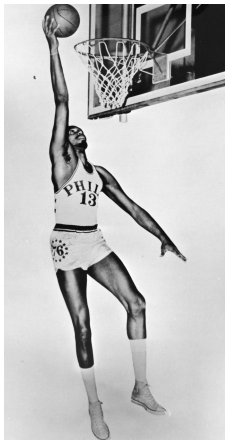
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Philadelphia 76ers press photo, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

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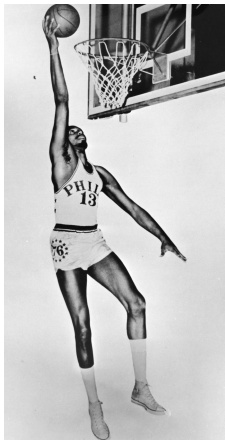
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Nozick: That law requires “continuous  
interference with people's lives”  
which is morally unjustified

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# Entitlement theory of justice

p. 151

“Whatever arises from a just situation by just steps is itself just.”

1. original acquisition of holdings
2. transfer of holdings

Should there be a state at all?

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(at least, according to Nozick)

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p. 52

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Nozick: No.

- ▶ “the term ‘redistributive’ applies to types of reasons for an arrangement, rather than to an arrangement itself” (p. 27)

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2. a more extensive state is not



(at least, according to Nozick)



# Two different logics of justice

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then whatever distribution results is just

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What facts in our class violate the Nozick sense of justice?

An exception where Nozick allows redistribution:  
correcting past injustice

Past injustice

## Past injustice

“Not all actual situations are generated in accordance with the two principles of justice in holdings...some people steal from others, or defraud them, or enslave them”

p. 152



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“past injustices might be so great as to make necessary in the short run a more extensive state in order to rectify them” p. 231

Learning goals for today

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By the end of class, you will be able to

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- ▶ justify a minimal state (per Nozick)
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- ▶ draw contrasts between
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# Learning goals for today

By the end of class, you will be able to

- ▶ justify a minimal state (per Nozick)
- ▶ critique any more extensive state on the grounds of individual rights (per Nozick)
- ▶ draw contrasts between
  - ▶ historical principles of justice Nozick
  - ▶ end-state principles of justice Rawls
- ▶ recognize how these different logics could both lead to redistribution today
  - ▶ Example: Correcting past injustice

## Extra: Nozick critiquing Rawls

p. 214

“Notice that there is no mention at all of how persons have chosen to develop their own natural assets. Why is that simply left out? Perhaps because such choices also are viewed as being the products of factors outside the person’s control, and thus ‘arbitrary from a moral point of view.’”

“This line of argument can succeed in blocking the introduction of a person’s autonomous choices and actions (and their results) only by attributing everything noteworthy about the person completely to certain sorts of ‘external’ factors. So denigrating a person’s autonomy and prime responsibility for his actions is a risky line to take for a theory that otherwise wishes to buttress the dignity and self-respect of autonomous beings; especially for a theory that founds so much (including a theory of the good) upon persons’ choices.”