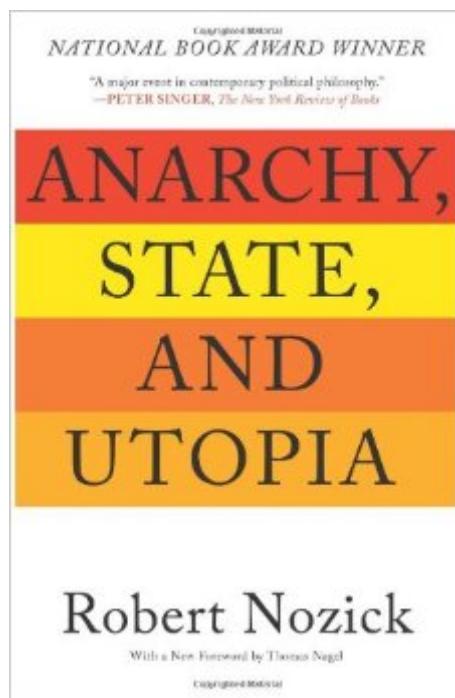


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Anarchy, State, And Utopia



Synopsis

Translated into 100 languages, winner of the National Book Award, and named one of the 100 Most Influential Books since World War II by the Times Literary Supplement, *Anarchy, State and Utopia* remains one of the most theoretically trenchant and philosophically rich defenses of economic liberalism to date, as well as a foundational text in classical libertarian thought. With a new introduction by the philosopher Thomas Nagel, this revised edition will introduce Nozick and his work to a new generation of readers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Rawls and Nozick were responsible for reinvigorating rights-based liberalism in the 20th century, saving political philosophy from mere in-fighting among utilitarians, and the superstitions of Marxism. Political philosophy since is largely a response to Rawls and Nozick. This is a work of genius, though it is frequently misunderstood, perhaps on purpose. Most readers, including important philosophers like Thomas Nagel, simply misunderstand the argumentative structure, with the result that many famous criticisms of the book are irrelevant. Nozick's thesis is that a minimal state can be justified, but a more than minimal state cannot, except under unusual situations. Part I of the book is addressed to other libertarians, specifically market anarchists (also called anarcho-capitalists). As such, Nozick assumes libertarian rights of self-ownership (or self-governance). Basically, Nozick wants to show market anarchists that a minimal state can arise without violating anybody's rights, where the rights in question are things that all parties to the

debate agree that we have. To do so, he describes a scenario in which security companies come inevitably to have natural monopolies over geographic areas. After providing a highly original analysis of the nature of risk and its moral implications, plus a hugely important discussion of side constraints and moral prohibitions, Nozick establishes that such a monopoly would legitimately prohibit other security firms and independent enforcers from operating in its area, provided it compensates everyone involved. The most natural form of compensation is free security. Nozick then argues that an equilibrium will occur in which the security of all can be provided for with an analogue of coercive taxation.

If you have any interest in political philosophy at all, if you are worried about the erosion of individual liberty (and its companion, individual responsibility) in modern society, or (even) if you are a collectivist and actually promote government involvement in our individual lives for the "greater good" at the expense of some or all, you MUST read this book. It is a somewhat difficult book to digest, so others (political moderates or those apathetic with regard to political philosophy) need not even crack the cover. If you find that you agree with the arguments and conclusions of Robert Nozick, you will be enriched with ammunition for debating political philosophy. If you DON'T agree and you believe that your disagreement is based upon sound philosophy, you will still be greatly rewarded - if for no other reason than you were required to expend some great effort to refute the presented material as you read it. The major principles presented and defended by Mr. Nozick are as follows: 1) Anarchy is not tenable. 2) A "minimal state" or "nightwatchman state" that only protects the rights of its constituents is justified/legitimate. 3) any state beyond that "minimal state" is unjustified/illegitimate because it will inherently violate the rights of (at least) some of its constituents. Beyond these major principles, Mr. Nozick also revisits the concept of Utopia in the last section of the text. I found this last section very enjoyable. Mr. Nozick's presentation of the concept of "Meta-Utopia" opened up whole new avenues of political thought for me. I agree with the major principles of this work as I have stated them above; however, I found that I did not agree with everything presented.

This book is one of the most unusual in the history of political philosophy, and perhaps one of most brilliant. The author's ideas are thought-provoking and highly original, and he asks the reader to consider arguments, rather than engaging in a "diatribe to convince" (my words here). The author creates a reading atmosphere of intellectual honesty, and this helps to soften the possible uneasiness that some readers might feel in encountering these kinds of arguments for the first time.

Some may seem radical and unpalatable for readers of other political persuasions, but any reader who is open to new ideas should find the reading highly interesting. The political philosophy of libertarianism finds its best apology here, but the contents of the book, and the method of presentation will and has found application to other political philosophies, and to legal philosophy. In the first chapter, the author asks the reader to consider what he calls the "state-of-nature theory". This (Lockean) notion, although archaic in the author's view, allows one to answer whether a state would have to be invented if it did not exist, this being a classical question in liberal political philosophy. The chapter is a detailed justification for pursuing the state-of-nature theory. He holds to the premise that one can only understand the political realm by explaining it in terms of the nonpolitical. He thus begins with the Lockean state of nature concept and uses it to build a justification for the state in the rest of the book. Most of the discussion in part 1 of the book revolves around the "dominant protective association" in a given geographical area. The author then builds on this in an attempt to justify from a moral perspective "the minimal state".

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