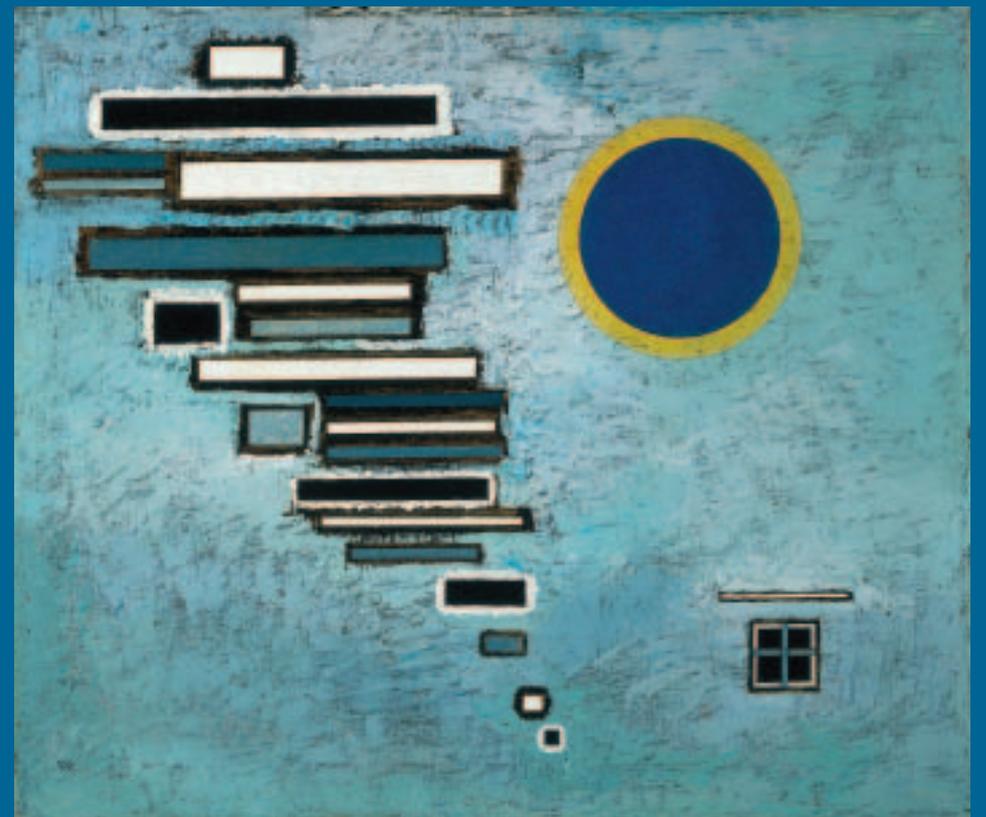


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# Libertarianism *without* inequality



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Libertarianism *without* inequality

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Michael Otsuka sets out to vindicate left-libertarianism, a political philosophy which combines stringent rights of control over one's own mind, body, and life with egalitarian rights of ownership of the world. Otsuka reclaims the ideas of John Locke from the libertarian right and shows how his *Second Treatise of Government* provides the theoretical foundations for a left-libertarianism which is both more libertarian and more egalitarian than the Kantian liberal theories of John Rawls and Thomas Nagel. Otsuka's libertarianism is founded on a right of self-ownership. Here he is at one with 'right-wing' libertarians, such as Robert Nozick, in endorsing the highly anti-paternalistic and anti-moralistic implications of this right. But he parts company with these libertarians in so far as he argues that such a right is compatible with a fully egalitarian principle of equal opportunity for welfare. In embracing this principle, his own version of left-libertarianism is more strongly egalitarian than others which are currently well known.

Otsuka argues that an account of legitimate political authority based upon the free consent of each is strengthened by the adoption of such an egalitarian principle. He defends a pluralistic, decentralized ideal of political society as a confederation of voluntary associations. Part I of *Libertarianism without Inequality* concerns the natural rights of property in oneself and the world. Part II considers the natural rights of punishment and self-defence that form the basis for the government's authority to legislate and punish. Part III explores the nature and limits of the powers of governments which are created by the consensual transfer of the natural rights of the governed.

*Libertarianism without Inequality* is a book which everyone interested in political theory should read.

'Otsuka's style is pithy, engaging, and crystal clear. His theses are bold, imaginative, and defended with the utmost philosophical rigour . . . one of the best recent contributions to normative political theory . . . it surely deserves to have a major impact on current debates on justice and political obligation.'

Ian Carter, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*

'One may disagree with some of Otsuka's extremely clear and highly imaginative arguments. Yet all those interested in the implications of self-ownership, the extent to which left-libertarianism can come close to egalitarianism, the significance of costless exit for theories of democracy or business ethics, or the intergenerational illegitimacy of constitutions should definitely read it. Otsuka's brilliant book will no doubt become a classic of left-libertarianism.'

Axel Gosseries, *Ethics*

Michael Otsuka is Reader in Philosophy at University College London.

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