

Is the Welfare State Justified?

In this book, Daniel Shapiro argues that the dominant positions in contemporary political philosophy - egalitarianism, positive rights theory, communitarianism, and many forms of liberalism - should converge in a rejection of central welfare state institutions. He examines how major welfare institutions, such as government-financed and -administered retirement pensions, national health insurance, and programs for the needy, actually work. Comparing them to compulsory private insurance and private charities, Shapiro argues that the dominant perspectives in political philosophy mistakenly think that their principles support the welfare state. Instead, egalitarians, positive rights theorists, communitarians, and liberals have misunderstood the implications of their own principles, which in fact support more market-based or libertarian institutional conclusions than they may realize. Shapiro's book is unique in its combination of political philosophy with social science. Its focus is not limited to any particular country; rather it examines welfare states in affluent democracies and their market alternatives.

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