

Public Abstract

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In this dissertation I discuss the conditions under which a person can justly come to own or use common resources. Common resources are simply those resources, such as a spring of fresh water, which no person initially has any greater claim to than any other person. I maintain, in the spirit of John Locke's thought, that persons may appropriate common resources only if they 'leave enough and as good' for others. This means, for instance, that a person is not at moral liberty to appropriate vast amounts of land from the commons leaving others little or nothing for themselves. I then extend the idea of appropriators having a moral duty to leave enough and as good to also apply to users of common resources. Just as appropriators of common resources have a duty to leave enough and as good for others users of common resources, I maintain, have a similar duty. The ideas of this dissertation are applicability to concerns of global poverty, the environment, and duties to future generations of people.