

USING AND COMING TO OWN: A LEFT PROPRIETARIAN TREATMENT OF THE JUST USE AND APPROPRIATION OF COMMON RESOURCES

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ABSTRACT

How is it that people come to appropriate (privately own) and justly use resources in the world that initially exist within conditions of ‘common ownership’? The historical story in our world is surely that the strong pushed aside the weak and did as they pleased. This is how title over something was secured. But in this project I seek out an answer to the question, how does a person legitimately appropriate or use resources which are initially existed within conditions of common ownership. I argue that persons may come to legitimately appropriate and use such resources only if they abide by the duty, suggested by John Locke, to ‘leave enough and as good’ for others. I interpret the duty to leave others enough and as good when we use ‘common resources’ in a Georgist fashion and likewise maintain that a person may appropriate a common resource only if she pays the competitive value of the resource in a fashion which best promotes equal initial opportunity for welfare. After arguing that appropriators of common resources have the aforementioned duty I extend my analysis to suggest that users of common resources likewise have a duty to pay the competitive value of using common resources in the fashion which best promotes equal initial opportunity for welfare.