

PROPERTY:
WHO HAS RIGHTFUL CLAIM?

Philosophers, economists, and politicians have always explored and debated the issue of property ownership. This discussion has profound implications for freedom, equality, rights, and morality.

PROPERTY

can be defined as **anything produced or accumulated in order to meet needs.**

Land, money, crops, clothing, iphones, Big Macs... "THE FRUITS OF LABOR."

Property EMPOWERS people to meet needs. Example: you need nutrition. Food allows you to meet that need. You need to get to work on time. A car empowers you to do that. As you can see, *needs cannot be met without property*. This is why questions of property ownership and taxes are always so controversial.

PROPERTY CAN BE ACQUIRED IN TWO WAYS:

- 1) through COMPETITION and INDEPENDENCE: you get it yourself.
- 2) through COOPERATION and DEPENDENCE: you get it with/through others.

PROPERTY OWNERSHIP BREAKS DOWN TO TWO CATEGORIES:

1) PRIVATE PROPERTY is owned and controlled by the individual. All power resulting from that property goes to its owner to use as one sees fit.

2) SHARED OR COMMUNAL PROPERTY is owned by the government in the name of the group, society, tribe, community, or state. The use of that property and all power resulting is controlled not by any individual but by whatever group is represented (meaning controlled by whoever is in charge of that group).

"ISM" Q & A: WHO SHOULD OWN AND CONTROL PROPERTY?

Hierarchism / Elitism: The elites!

It is fitting that higher grade people enjoy the results of the lower masses labor. It's also better for the greater good, since the better people will know best how to justly order and distribute the wealth.

Egalitarianism: all property should be owned and shared in common. No one should benefit more than anyone else from property, which rightfully belongs to the Group as a whole. True egalitarians must work to enforce this through government.

Pure Individualism: I should always have the most. Then I should have more...

Mutual individualism/ Natural Rights: Property ownership is self-ownership... it's the only way to independence and freedom, and the only just social arrangement. Each person has rightful claim to the fruits of their own labor. No one else has claim over the results of your work, and you have claim over no one else's.

A CLOSER LOOK: EGALITARIANISM VERSUS NATURAL EQUALITY

EGALITARIAN VIEW.

Private ownership is unjust. Society as a whole has rightful claim to property.

Rousseau said *"Man is born free, yet everywhere is in chains."*

The root of this slavery? Private ownership of property. Private ownership results in competition, inequality, poverty, and generally all manner of evil. Instead of competition and private ownership, property should be gained through a cooperative system in which all work for the good of all. All property produced would be owned communally and distributed evenly among the populace by government or whoever administers the collective. This, of course, will lead to freedom, as people will have achieved the security of knowing that their needs will be met. In addition, "freedom from fear" will result, since the inequalities which cause crime will become a thing of the past.

"Imagine no possessions. I wonder if you can. No need for greed or hunger. A brotherhood of man. Imagine all the people, sharing the whole world... you may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will live as one." -J. Lennon.

NATURAL EQUALITY / MUTUAL INDIVIDUALIST VIEW.

You have a moral right to property you give yourself. It is the product of your work. If it's true and just that you own yourself, then it's true and just that you own the results of your labors.

Freedom is impossible without private property. It's simple: All people have needs. All people need property (anything produced or accumulated to meet needs). The question is, who's property is it? Do you gain property by getting it yourself? Or do others provide it for you? Property you acquire independently is controlled by YOU. It empowers you. If it was provided by someone else or the government, the power is in their hands. The natural law of power:

"He who has the power to give has the power not to."

Your private property is your mean to independence, which is required for your freedom. Property provided by others is only a PRIVILEGE, and in that case the power is not yours.

MIXED ECONOMY (& MIXED PHILOSOPHIES?)

A COMPROMISE position advocates that the government allow people to keep some of what they earn, take the rest, and distribute some of it to those with less. This is the basis of the graduated income tax. The more property you produce or accumulate (the higher your paycheck), the higher the percent taken by the government. A goal is to reduce inequality and provide security to the poor.

This of course leads to endless debate. Collectivists push for higher taxes to increase government programs, resulting in more security and greater equality. They argue that the existence of poverty and endless examples of inequalities show that the government does not go far enough.

Natural Law/Individualists point out that they have a right to their property, that property is power, and that high taxes infringe their rights and reduce their freedom. Worse, the higher the taxes, the more powerful the government... programs of government provided security result in dependence... both situations can be grave threats to freedom.

PHILOSOPHERS' OPPOSING VIEWS ON PROPERTY

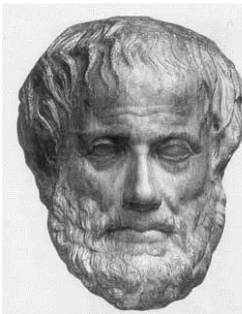
Which thinkers support the right to private ownership of property, and which support a system in which property is owned and controlled by the group?

How does this subject relate to different ideas about freedom?

How do the opposing philosophies of individualism and collectivism offer answers to the debate over property?



The first and highest form of the State and of the government and of the law is that in which there prevails most widely the ancient saying, that "Friends have all things in common." Whether there is anywhere now, or will ever be, this communion of women and children and of property, in which the private and individual is altogether banished from life, and things which are by nature private, such as eyes and ears and hands, have become common, and in some way see and hear and act in common, and all men express praise and blame and feel joy and sorrow on the same occasions, and whatever laws there are unite the city to the utmost—whether this is possible or not, I say that no man, acting upon any other principle, will ever constitute a state which will be truer or better or more exalted in virtue. **(Plato, *The Laws*)**



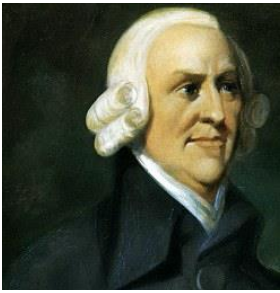
It is evident then that it is best to have property private, but to make the use of it common [According to William J. Ferree, S.M., Ph.D., making the use of property in common has, in ordinary circumstances, been construed as an admonition not to use what you own to harm yourself, others, or the common good as a whole.- Michael D. Greaney, Just3rdWay.com]; but how the citizens are to be brought to it is the particular business of the legislator. And also with respect to pleasure, it is unspeakable how advantageous it is, that a man should think he has something which he may call his own; for it is by no means to no purpose, that each person should have an affection for himself, for that is natural, and yet to be a self-lover is justly censured; for we mean by that, not one that simply loves himself, but one that loves himself more than he ought; in like manner we blame a money-lover, and yet both money and self is what all men love. Besides, it is very pleasing to us to oblige and assist our friends and companions, as well as those whom we are connected with by the rights of hospitality; and this cannot be done without the establishment of private property, which cannot take place with those who make a city too much one; besides, they prevent every opportunity of exercising two principal virtues, modesty and liberality. Modesty with respect to the female sex, for this virtue requires you to abstain from her who is another's; liberality, which depends upon private property, for without that no one can appear liberal, or do any generous action; for liberality consists in imparting to others what is our own.

(Aristotle, *The Politics*, II.v.)



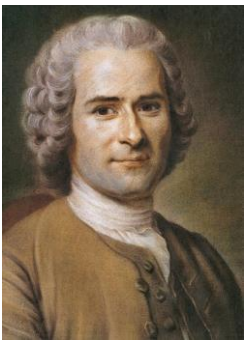
Though the earth, and all inferior creatures, be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person: this no body has any right to but himself. The labour of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state nature hath placed it in, it hath by this labour something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other men: for this labour being the unquestionable property of the labourer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good, left in common for others.

(John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, Ch. 5, Sect. 27)



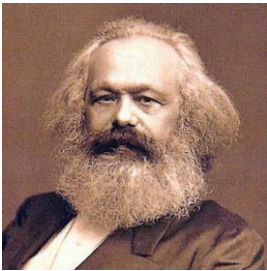
"The property which every man has in his own labour, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable. The patrimony of a poor man lies in the strength and dexterity of his hands; and to hinder him from employing this strength and dexterity in what manner he thinks proper without injury to his neighbour, is a plain violation of this most sacred property. It is a manifest encroachment upon the just liberty both of the workman, and of those who might be disposed to employ him. As it hinders the one from working at what he thinks proper, so it hinders the others from employing whom they think proper.

(Source: [Adam Smith](#), [The Wealth of Nations](#), 1776, Book I, Chapter X, Part II.)



EACH member of the community gives himself to it, at the moment of its foundation, just as he is, with all the resources at his command, including the goods he possesses. This act does not make possession, in changing hands, change its nature, and become property in the hands of the Sovereign; but, as the forces of the city are incomparably greater than those of an individual, public possession is also, in fact, stronger and more irrevocable, without being any more legitimate, at any rate from the point of view of foreigners. For the State, in relation to its members, is master of all their goods by the social contract, which, within the State, is the basis of all rights; but, in relation to other powers, it is so only by the right of the first occupier, which it holds from its members.

...It may also happen that men begin to unite one with another before they possess anything, and that, subsequently occupying a tract of country which is enough for all, they enjoy it in common, or share it out among themselves, either equally or according to a scale fixed by the Sovereign. However the acquisition be made, the right which each individual has to his own estate is always subordinate to the right which the community has over all: without this, there would be neither stability in the social tie, nor real force in the exercise of Sovereignty. ([Rousseau](#), [The Social Contract](#), Book I, Ch 9)



Under private property ... Each tries to establish over the other an alien power, so as thereby to find satisfaction of his own selfish need. The increase in the quantity of objects is therefore accompanied by an extension of the realm of the alien powers to which man is subjected, and every new product represents a new *potentiality* of mutual swindling and mutual plundering. ([Marx](#), [Human Requirements and Division of Labour](#) 1844)

The theory of Communism may be summed up in one sentence: Abolish all private property... Capital is a collective product, and only by the united action of many members, nay, in the last resort, only by the united action of all members of society, can it be set in motion. ([Marx](#), [The Communist Manifesto](#) 1848)



"What our generation has forgotten is that the system of private property is the most important guarantee of freedom, not only for those who own property, but scarcely less for those who do not. It is only because the control of the means of production is divided among many people acting independently that nobody has complete power over us, that we as individuals can decide what to do with ourselves."

([Friedrich von Hayek](#), [The Road to Serfdom](#) 1944)