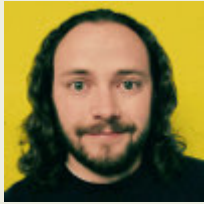


Might Makes Rights



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"One Voluntarist's Perspective" is an original column appearing sporadically at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found [here](#). OVP-only RSS feed available [here](#).

All rights are property rights, so says libertarian philosopher Murray Rothbard. And property rights are the result of the use of either force or reason eventually leading to the emergence of customary law (norms and conventions), so says amateur voluntarist philosopher me. In other words, might makes rights. Let me explain.

Equivocation

Now before you make an equivocation and accuse me of the Argumentum ad Baculum fallacy, read what I actually wrote. I did not write "might makes right" but rather "might makes rights." I do not believe that idea "might makes right" as in "my gun justifies my taking your stuff." Heavens no! I see no logical evidence that might could ever justify right. Of course, if by "right" we mean "correct" and we're talking about how much might is needed to, say, split a boulder, then the more might the better. But I digress.

Rights

People claim rights for all sorts of things these days, as if rights are something tangible, something that "exists." In "Evidence of Jurisdiction" I took the state to task for claiming the authority to enforce its laws but unable to provide any evidence for it. The same line of questioning to discredit the state's supposed jurisdiction is also effective in discrediting anyone's supposed property rights. At some point, the property rights-holder must appeal either to the state's jurisdiction (his state-produced and -backed title) or to customary law.

Appeal to Might

Both the appeal to the state's jurisdiction and the appeal to customary law is an appeal to might. Law, whether state-made or the result of the emergence of norms and conventions in a free society, is a form of might. What good is a law if its not enforced? That doesn't mean that enforcement must always occur through the use of arms. The state always acts as if it does, but many customary laws are enforced through the use of ostracism, for

example. Either way, enforcement must pack a punch, must be “mighty” if it is to be effective. Therefore, the only way to secure property rights is through the the use of might (of force or reason).

Final Thoughts

The more mighty among us are best able to secure their property rights, an obvious point. How many of us view the state as the mightiest group in society? Most, methinks. This is unfortunate, because the state is always a minority. What a con it’s pulled to convince everyone else that it is right to use its might to secure its property rights. And I mean “con” as both a scam and as a conquest. No, the state is **not** right to use its might to secure its property rights. The sooner we all understand and accept that, the sooner we can be rid of the state.

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