

Property vs. Intellectual Monopoly

Editor's Pick. Written by Dan Sanchez.

Property must be distinguished from monopoly. They are often conflated because they both involve exclusive rights. But they are importantly different. Property is an exclusive right to use a particular means. Monopoly is the exclusive right to use *any* means in a *certain way*.

Property is the exclusive right to use *this* boat, *this* paper, *this* trap, *these* speakers, *this* computer, *this* plastic, or *this* aluminum.

Monopoly is the exclusive right to use any boat to trade with India, to use any paper to make playing cards in 17th century England, to use any trap to catch beavers in North America, to use any speakers to play "Happy Birthday," to use any computer to deliver a podcast or download "Happy Birthday," to use any plastic and aluminum to build a certain kind of washing machine.

Since it is an exclusive right to use any means in a certain way, intellectual "property" is not property at all, but monopoly. Intellectual "property" is therefore a misnomer, euphemistically used by state-privileged monopolists to drape their monopolies in the mantle of property.

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