

The Defense of Property



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Those who argue that property is merely what you can defend have a point. When it comes down to the reality of things, as versus abstractions, property *is* merely what you can defend. That defense, however, is not always based on force. It’s also based on reason. And more, those who can’t use either, such as children, are left with only that property which others assign to them. Let me explain.

Force-based Defense of Property

The more power I have, the greater my ability to defend myself (my body) and whatever it is that I consider as my property. That could be personal possessions, land, animals, and even other people. If I have the power to keep it under my control (ownership), then it is *de facto* mine. Arguably, my control may be unjustified or illegitimate on philosophical or ethical grounds, but my control remains so long as I have enough power, and thus my ownership. If others with more power are able to wrest control of my property from me, it would now be their property until control of it was wrested from them, either by me or others. A great amount of wealth in our world is defended primarily by force.

Reason-based Defense of Property

If I haven’t enough power to defend my property by force, then I will likely attempt to defend it by reason. If I can persuade you to keep your hands off my property, then it will remain under my control. I have encountered many different kinds of arguments in defense of different kinds of property assignments. Some are more logical than others. As I am a person that values reason over force, I am persuaded by and attempt to persuade others with sound logical arguments for property assignation. The more successful I and others are in defending our property with reason, the less we need to defend it by force. Arguably, a greater amount of wealth in our world is defended primarily by reason than by force.

Non-Defense of Property

If you can't defend your property by reason, and you don't have enough power to defend it by force, then you are left to the mercy of others. Children are prime examples of the kinds of beings that are limited in their ability to defend their property. Young children are completely vulnerable to have their property violated by others, especially adults. Older children are in the midst of development of both mind and body, and at some point have sufficient control of either to begin defending what they claim is theirs. But as a class, children are the least able to defend their property claims. This is obvious if when you look out at the world before you and witness how often children are assaulted, imprisoned, indoctrinated, and enslaved against their unadulterated wills, relative to every other class of humans. They are often treated worse than pets, and comparably to beasts of burden.

Final Thoughts

Property is defined differently among various cultures and societies. This is the result of what has been defended either by force or by reason throughout the course of history. If we favor self-ownership, privately-assigned property, for both adults and children, then we must defend it, or we will lose it. My values push me to defending my property primarily by reason, but I am not opposed to defending it by force (I am not a pacifist). Ultimately, I value my life and the lives of my loved ones more than the life or lives of those who would take them from us. If their lives are the price I must pay to save ours, I'll gladly pay it.

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