

Locke's Second Treatise (Chap V) On Property

25. God, who hath given the world to men in common, hath also given them reason to make use of it to the best advantage of life and convenience.

Nobody has originally a private dominion exclusive of the rest of mankind in any of them, as they are thus in their natural state, yet being given for the use of men, there must of necessity be a means to appropriate them some way or other before they can be of any use, or at all beneficial, to any particular men.

26. The "labour" of his body and the "work" of his hands, we may say, are properly his.

27. He that is nourished by the acorns he picked up under an oak, or the apples he gathered from the trees in the wood, has certainly appropriated them to himself.

And it is plain, if the first gathering made them not his, nothing else could. That labour put a distinction between them and common. That added something to them more than Nature, the common mother of all, had done, and so they became his private right.

Was it a robbery thus to assume to himself what belonged to all in common?

We see in commons, which remain so by compact, that it is the taking any part of what is common, and removing it out of the state Nature leaves it in, which begins the property, without which the common is of no use.

The labour that was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, hath fixed my property in them.

30. The same law of Nature that does by this means give us property, does also bound that property too.

As much as any one can make use of to any advantage of life before it spoils, so much he may by his labour fix a property in.

Nothing was made by God for man to spoil or destroy.

31. As much land as a man tills, plants, improves, cultivates, and can use the product of, so much is his property.

33. He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational (and labour was to be his title to it);

34. The condition of human life, which requires labour and materials to work on, necessarily introduce private possessions.

43. It is labour, then, which puts the greatest part of value upon land, without which it would scarcely be worth anything;

47. And thus came in the use of money; some lasting thing that men might keep without spoiling, and that, by mutual consent, men would take in exchange for the truly useful but perishable supports of life.

51. And thus, I think, it is very easy to conceive, without any difficulty, how labour could at first begin a title of property in the common things of Nature, and how the spending it upon our uses bounded it; so that there could then be no reason of quarrelling about title, nor any doubt about the largeness of possession it gave. Right and conveniency went together. For as a man had a right to all he could employ his labour upon, so he had no temptation to labour for more than he could make use of. This left no room for controversy about the title, nor for encroachment on the right of others. What portion a man carved to himself was easily seen; and it was useless, as well as dishonest, to carve himself too much, or take more than he needed.