

Re: Historical comparisons

Source: <http://sci.tech--archive.net/Archive/sci.space.policy/2006-03/msg00311.html>

- *From:* royls@xxxxxxxx
 - *Date:* Sat, 11 Mar 2006 19:28:18 GMT
-

On 10 Mar 2006 03:35:00 -0800, "William Mook"
<william.mook@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

royls@xxxxxxxx wrote:

On 9 Mar 2006 15:40:59 -0800, "William Mook"
<william.mook@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

Please answer this question with something more than, "I
already stated
the obvious" or some similar nebulous claim;

If a free and open and diverse and robust market exists in the
buying
and selling natural resources how can any one person or
group in that
market be privileged?

Everyone who owns them is privileged, because others must pay them for
access to what nature provided for free --

This raises some interesting questions...

1) How do you figure free,

?? How do you figure anybody ever paid rent to Mom Nature?

2) And even if it were free, how do you figure it creates privilege?

Being legally empowered to deprive others of it without appropriately
compensating them for that deprivation is a privilege.

Re: Historical comparisons

TO the first point, even if there were gold lying freely on the ground somewhere, there's still the cost of finding it, going out there, picking it up, carrying it securely to market – nothing is ever free – so, I don't know how you figure that anything ever could be.

The gold lying on the ground (or sitting underground in the form of ore) is free. The gold that has been mined, refined, picked up, transported to market, etc. is a product that has been earned by labor.

TO the second point – let's say something were really free – say something like sunlight falling on the Earth. It has value,

No. It has utility. Value is something that only comes with a market. Please try to stick with the accepted definitions of technical terms in economics. Layman's definitions will only lead to equivocation and confusion, like a physicist trying to use the same definition of "force" as a prosecuting attorney.

and with
the right equipment that value can be extracted in electrical form, chemical form, biological form. Its not really free that way because it takes land area and time and effort and knowledge to make use of it

It takes labor to utilize sunlight for electrical power generation. That does not mean the sunlight itself is not free. You are trying to confuse yourself.

– but I've already 'demolished' the idea that anything is free already,

No, you most certainly have not. Natural resources are all free unless they have been appropriated, because as long as they are not owned, you don't have to pay anyone just_for_access to them.

so to the second point – haha – even if it were free, if anyone can set up a solar collector on any available surface where the sun shined – how would allowing people to do that freely create privilege?

Re: Historical comparisons

It wouldn't. But if somebody owns the land, so that there is a natural space where others cannot put up their solar collectors without paying the owner for what nature put there with no help from him, then that does create privilege.

The point is, privilege requires something more than just making use of what is freely available.

If it were freely available, there would be no privilege.

If anyone can compete there is no privilege created that I can see. So, you need to educate me here..

Anyone can't compete if the space nature provided is owned by someone else. The owner has already won, without having to compete.

I mean, I'm as handsome as they come – that was freely given me by my genes. Does that mean I'm privileged?

No. But maybe it has contributed to a certain attitude of entitlement...

Not really – I compete with all sorts of guys – girls like personality as much as looks! lol. Does my good fortune in the looks department mean I'm privileged? Not really, because everyone can compete. Sure, I might have certain advantage over others – but I'm not privileged. I don't get ALL the girls!

Whether you get all the girls or not is not the point. The point is, are you legally empowered to deprive others of the opportunity to get girls unless they pay you for it?

So, I don't understand your logic at all. In fact I see no consistent logic. You make a statement about stuff being free and then assume that just because something is free and valuable, that that somehow creates privilege.

I of course said no such thing. The privilege arises when some are empowered to deprive others of what nature provided for all.

Re: Historical comparisons

and which they have every right to use, because they have rights to life and liberty.

Everyone has rights to life and liberty.

Right, unless the state has empowered private interests to deprive people of their liberty to access and use the natural resources they need in order to sustain their lives. If I can legally prevent you from using the naturally occurring air you need to breathe, water you need to drink, or land you need to obtain your food, then you have no legal right to liberty, or to life.

That's a side issue having nothing to do with your first point – which you haven't supported.

It is absolutely central to my point, which is why I have supported it.

Nothing is ever free and even if it were, ownership of free things do not necessarily create privilege.

Yes, it most certainly does, if those things are thereby made not free to others.

You haven't supported your position at all as far as I can see. You're just restating your conclusion – not the facts and the logic you use to arrive at your conclusion.

I'm not sure how I can make it any clearer.

The owners are thus getting something for nothing at the expense of others, the very essence of privilege.

If I found gold lying on the ground somewhere on the bottom of the ocean and picked it up and carried it back to market and sold it for a profit – how am I privileged if any Tom Dick or Harry could do the same thing?

You are privileged if you can stop others from doing the same thing

Re: Historical comparisons

Re: Historical comparisons

because you own that stretch of ocean floor. I'm not sure there is any clearer way to say that.

Sure, I would profit by bringing something to market. But if I went to the expense to find this resource, figure out a way to recover it, and took the trouble to recover it – it ain't free even if its sitting at the bottom of the ocean

It most certainly is free at the bottom of the ocean. It just can't be brought to the surface for free.

– so I would be getting something if this happened – but I'm not getting something for nothing!

You are if you are empowered to stop others from finding, recovering, and using it unless they pay you for not interfering with that exercise of their liberty.

Furthermore,if this gold that I found sitting at the bottom of the ocean – if no one else knew about it before I discovered it – know one even suspected its existence – how do you figure my discovery of it is at the expense of everyone else?

Discovery does nothing to deprive others of the resource. If you subsequently deprive others of the opportunity to use it, then of course it is at their expense.

See, this is where I think you have a socialist bug somewhere in your system. How does my making use of a fortunate event deprive everyone else of something – even if they never knew of it before I came along?

As long as they do not know of it, then you can use it without compensating them and you are not depriving them. Economic rent only arises when more than one person wants to use the item, and at least one must be deprived of it.

the existence of a market in privileges does not mean they are not privileges.

You have to explain that one to me.

Re: Historical comparisons

Do you know what a taxi medallion is?

Like I said, you have to go back to simple examples and stuff for me to see what you're saying. Can you do that?

I will try.

I mean take the example of me finding gold at the bottom of the ocean.

It meets your first two criterion on the surface, but when I think about it in detail, your conclusions don't hold any water for me!

If you do not understand any of what I have written above, please ask for clarification.

That's cause it ain't free for me to find it, to get at it, or to bring it safely back to market and get some value out of it.

Finding it is free, because the expense is the same whether it is found or not. I.e., searching for it and finding some costs no more than searching for it and not finding any.

When I sell it I can only sell it at market rates.

Irrelevant. Slaves were also sold at market rates.

Once sold, I don't have it any more and if I want more value I've got to go get more of the 'free' stuff.

But, anyone can go out and pick up gold at the bottom of the ocean,

Not if you own that stretch of ocean. That is very much the point.

so
if I were a guy who picked up some gold, I wouldn't feel privileged at all even though it meets all your standards of a privileged situation.

Re: Historical comparisons

No, it does not. You are only privileged if you are empowered to deprive others of what they would otherwise have been able to use.

The existence of a market in slaves did not mean that their owners were not privileged.

There you go, you prove my point. It wasn't the market that created slavery – it was the idea you could own human chattel that created slavery. The very concept of human chattel creates the slave and the slave owner.

And the privilege. Right.

You haven't explained in a way I can understand how other forms of chattel, like me claiming I own a chunk of gold I found at the bottom of the ocean, creates privilege.

_No_chattel_is_a_natural_resource_;_no_natural_resource_is_chattel_.

If you find a chunk of gold at the bottom of the ocean and perform the productive labor of bringing it to the surface, it is rightly yours. If you find it (say by remote sensing) and leave it there, but are legally empowered to prevent others from finding it and performing the productive labor of bringing it to the surface unless they pay you for being allowed to do so, then you are privileged: you are getting something for nothing.

Sure, it creates value for me to make that claim

No, it doesn't. Only government enforcement of your claim would create any value in it.

but I don't see how that denies value to others – especially if they didn't even suspect that gold existed in the first place, and if anyone can go out and pick up a piece for themselves.

If no one else knows of the gold, it has no value in situ because there is no market for it. If they do know of it, and they are not free to go pick up that_piece_, they are not free.

Re: Historical comparisons

The existence of a market in taxi medallions does not mean they are not privileges.

Sure taxi medallions confer some sort of privilege, but that's not the kind of privilege I'm talking about.

It's the kind I am talking about: the legal power to deprive others of naturally occurring opportunities.

We're not talking about privileges we're talking about a fixed privileged class being created by property rights.

No, no, no. It couldn't matter less if the class is fixed. In Zimbabwe, for example, you had a privileged class of white landowners. Now they are being dispossessed, and replaced by a privileged class of black ones. It's still privilege.

Master and slave was created by the concept of human chattel and creates a privileged class of people having unfair power over others.

Correct.

This form of property right DOES create privilege by definition and should be universally banned. That is a form of property right that creates privilege. That I grant you and I agree, we shouldn't be allowed to own one another.

OK. On that we agree.

A class of business person – the Taxi operator – is created by the concept of taxi medallions. I grant you that.

No. That is false, as taxi operators existed before the medallions. You need to think very carefully about why that fact demolishes your argument.

Does that property right create privilege of the same type as human chattel? lol. Not in a pigs eye! lol.

Re: Historical comparisons

The medallion owner's privilege is obviously not the same as the slave owner's privilege. Do you think there are no other kinds of privilege than that of the slave owner?

The privilege to operate a taxi in the streets of NYC is what the medallion confers. Is this the sort of privilege I'm discussing with you? Not really. I'm not a slave to the taxi operator, in the same way I would be a slave if we allowed me to be human chattel.

Of course there are degrees of privilege, of which chattel slavery is among the most egregious. That does not mean lesser privileges are not privileges at all.

I can
walk, take the bus, hire a limo, ride with a friend, drive my own car...

But if you want to take a cab, you will pay more because of the medallions.

so, while you play with words, you're not really letting me understand what the basis of your objection to property rights freely owned is.

I have no objection to property rights freely owned
_and_freely_acquired_. But there is no way to acquire property in natural resources that is consistent with others' freedom.

So, I'm not following your logic that free stuff in nature being owned by people willing to put the effort to bring that stuff to market is the same as slavery.

That is not the problem. The problem is free stuff in nature being owned by people who do _not_ put in the effort to bring that stuff to market, but instead charge others rent for not interfering with _their_ efforts to do so.

Its a great privilege for me to be with my girlfriend. I wonderful privilege. And its not one that anyone else can share! Very privileged.

Re: Historical comparisons

Equivocation.

This is not the same order of privilege we're talking about here – at least not the one I'm talking about.

Right. Because you're equivocating.

I'm talking about the sort of privilege that would derive from say a RULE that said I am the only guy that can have sex with anyone. That's the sort of privilege I'm talking about. Human chattel creates a slave class and that's wrong. I give you that. But you haven't shown me in a way I can understand, how ownership of other stuff creates poverty and hardship in the same way as human chattel does.

You think the productive having to pay an idle, privileged, parasitic resource owner for what nature provided for free doesn't create poverty and hardship? You think homelessness has nothing to do with the skyrocketing cost of land?

Just because I claim the right exclusively to my girlfriend's time and attention – and deny others that right – doesn't mean I am denying all men the right to have the time and attention of other women!

It's not you or government that is depriving others of her time and attention. It's her. That's what makes it not a privilege for you, in the relevant sense.

The existence of a market in licenses to steal would not mean they were not privileges.

A right to steal? Steal? Steal?

Yes. That's how the word is spelled.

This is nearly the same as human chattel in different words.

No, it is more like owning a natural resource.

Re: Historical comparisons

Okay, lets think about this – if there is a piece of gold found in my pocket, its mine

Assuming you came by it rightly.

and if you took the trouble to find it and liberate it – that would be stealing. That deprives me of the value of the gold and you benefit. The fact that you took the trouble and risk and effort to liberate the gold from my pocket doesn't enter into it.

___***BINGO!!!***___

Likewise, the fact that you spend time, effort and money to obtain ownership of a natural resource doesn't enter into it.

You need to think long and hard about that, until you understand what you yourself have said: money, effort, etc. invested in acquiring the ability to steal does not confer a right to steal.

I am unjustly poorer by your theft of my gold.

Right. Same as if you appropriate a natural resource, thus depriving others of it.

Society is not enriched by your theivery.

Indeed. Nor is it enriched by your ownership of a natural resource, which was there already, ready for others to use, with no help from you.

You are making all my arguments for me. That is good, because it shows you are able to think outside your current box.

Therefore, I would have to agree, that licenses to steal another's property would not be a good thing generally. Although penguins steal nesting materials from one another – and it benefits everyone.

Does it? How does it benefit those stolen from?

Re: Historical comparisons

But we're not penguins with limited nesting material drawn from the ocean.

Natural resources are limited, and stealing them by depriving others of their liberty to use them does not "benefit everyone."

But this bears little relation in my mind to the situation where I find gold at the bottom of the ocean. Gold in my pocket is in some sense already participating in the market. Gold at the bottom of the ocean is not.

More relevantly, gold in your pocket is a product of labor, and gold at the bottom of the ocean (assuming it's not on a sunken ship) is not.

So, my discovering it, developing it, bringing it to market – is quite different than someone liberating that gold from my pocket in the streets.

Right.

And the existence of a market in private titles to natural resources does not mean they are not privileges.

But they don't create a privileged class the same way human chattel does, or human theivery does.

??? Yes, of course they do. That is very much the point. What do you think a "landed aristocracy" is?

In the case of slavery and theivery you are taking something that rightfully belongs to someone else.

Just as the private appropriation of natural resources deprives others of opportunities they would otherwise rightfully have enjoyed. The only difference is that unlike the thief or slave owner, the resource owner does not just deprive a specific victim of his rights, but everyone_else_.

You assert that natural resources are the property of everyone.

Re: Historical comparisons

No, I do not. I assert that all have equal rights to use them. There is a difference. Consider the parallel case of the atmosphere: it is not everyone's property. It is no one's property.

But if people don't even suspect that those resources exist and they aren't part of the market and contribute nothing to society – then your claim is highly suspect to my mind.

As long as at most one person wants to use a resource and is willing to pay to use it, they are free to use it and are not depriving anyone else of it. But once others want to use it and are forbidden by its owner, they are being deprived of what they would otherwise have had a right to, and are owed compensation for that.

How can someone own something they know nothing about?

I do not claim they own it.

How can someone claim value in something that contributes no value at all to their lives?

It is when they are deprived of its value that they can rightly claim compensation for the loss of that value.

I mean you have a pretty logical argument. You have defined ownership in a way that supports your conclusion logically. But when you think about it in real terms it doesn't make any sense.

You're just not used to thinking about it as it really is.

And its in those terms I want to understand what you're saying.

OK, I'm doing my best to make it clear.

If I claim to own a person – I am denying that person the right to live their life as they desire. That's a great cost for any benefit I

Re: Historical comparisons

receive. This is an unfair privilege. So, such claims of ownership are denied by any decent society.

Right.

If I claim to own the gold in your pocket – I am denying you the right to the value of that gold. That's an unfair burden for you for any benefit I receive. This is an unfair privilege. So, such claims of ownership are denied by any decent society.

Right.

Now, if I claim to own a natural resource that is undeveloped, and in fact, unknown to society before I arrived on the scene – I am denying no one any rights to anything in a practical sense.

Right, as long as no one else wants to use it, because then there is no deprivation involved even if they do know about it.

Sure, in some theoretical sense you could argue people are denied – but if they didn't even know the resource existed until I came along and took the trouble to find it?

As long as no one else knows, they cannot want to use it, and are therefore not deprived of it.

I am denying no one any rights. If I am granted the privilege of developing this resource and benefitting by bringing it to market – everyone is better off,

No. Now you have made an unjustified leap. As soon as you are privileged to deny others the opportunity to use it, you are better off, but they are worse off. You are then privileged.

and I deny no one else the right to develop other resources found elsewhere.

So what? That's like saying that taking the gold in your pocket does not deny you the opportunity to go get some other gold.

Re: Historical comparisons

Re: Historical comparisons

This is a fair and equitable privilege.

No, it is not. It is an egregious, evil privilege that has destroyed many great civilizations, and is on its way to destroying ours. It usually takes a few hundred years, so we likely won't live to see it. But I can see the signs.

So, such claims of ownership enrich society and any decent society recognizes them.

They do not enrich society, only the owners. And a truly decent, just and free society would not recognize them.

If I'm wrong tell me where I've made a mistake.

You are logically wrong in claiming that private ownership of natural resources does not violate anyone else's rights, and you are wrong as a matter of historical fact in claiming that everyone is made better off by the privilege of privately owning natural resources.

Answer this fully and honestly with peer reviewed references and I will take back all the bad things I said and thought about you! lol.

?? "Peer-reviewed references"? LOL!

So, you won't provide any peer reviewed references? Why not?

Because there are no peer-reviewed journals devoted to research on this issue. It's simply not a question of empirical science. It's a question of being willing to know facts that are self-evident, indisputable, and true by definition.

This is the point. Its not self evident to me. I'm asking you quite honestly and plainly, what is the basis of your belief?

The premise of equal human rights to life, liberty, and property in the fruits of one's labor, the facts of economics, and the historical

Re: Historical comparisons

facts of what has happened when those facts of economics are ignored and those rights violated by private ownership of natural resources.

You know Newton discovered his three laws of motion hundreds of years ago. Anyone who knows anything about physics, or science, or engineering, knows about Newton's laws of motion. Even so, if someone were to ask me or anyone who knows, about the three laws and why those laws are believed to work the way they do... people can point to accepted reference works, and even peer reviewed documentation of those laws. Any decent person wouldn't laugh at a newbies question, or make fun of his ignorant notions. Any decent person would clearly state the three laws, the observational basis for those laws, and the step by step logical connection between those observations and the three laws of motion. They would do it with far less verbiage than you have spewed forth here.

There is a difference. Most people who know about Newton's laws _don't_ know that they are derived not from peer-reviewed research, or even Newton's own experiments, but from the definitions of the basic dimensions of physical relationships -- time, distance, mass -- that Newton created and applied. Once those definitions are clearly established, there is really no need for peer-reviewed research to confirm the laws. They cannot be otherwise.

The same is true in this case. It is not a question of peer-reviewed research, but of definitions.

If someone asked me about force and acceleration – I could answer their questions – in a clear and cogent way. That's because I understand about force and acceleration. I wouldn't tell them it's self evident or attack them because they didn't know.

Yet in Newton's day, force was not universally understood as $M \times A$, and people _didn't_ know that force is _self-evidently_ $M \times A$ once you understand the relevant definitions. Because physicists had not been clear in their definitions, there was a lot of confusion about force, pressure, energy, momentum, impetus, work, power and so on. Newton's great contribution was that he cleared all that up by first establishing correct definitions.

I am asking you to explain yourself to me in a way I can understand. You have not done so. You have taken every opportunity to attack me and demean me and dismiss the question.

How would you answer someone whose physical argument consisted of

Re: Historical comparisons

denying that $F = MxA$?

and indisputable facts

What indisputable facts exactly? Do you have a list?

Principally, the fact that natural resources are not products of labor.

I identified above

You mean your two points? Well they're not self evident to me. Sure, if you define property rights in the way you have and follow the logic of slavery and theivery, you can say quite logically that private ownership of resources is a form of theivery. But I don't understand your definition. Why do you hold it? Where does it come from?

The same place Newton's definitions came from: understanding the basic identity of what is being discussed.

I dispute your indisputable facts. Not because I think about it logically. But because I think about it practically. If I take a piece of gold no one anywhere knew existed its not the same as me taking a gold coin out of your pocket.

How about denying others the opportunity to mine and refine gold that they do know exists, unless they pay you for not interfering?

So, I don't see the fact the way you do, so I dispute it – and ask you to explain and support your view of that fact.

See above.

unless they appear in a peer-reviewed journal? Which peer-reviewed journals do you think focus on research into what's privilege and what isn't?

I don't know.

Re: Historical comparisons

Right. And I don't either.

You're the one making all the big claims.

?? ROTFL!! IMO the people who claim they own what nature provided equally to all are the ones making the big claims. And they're the ones getting rich by their claims, too.

Again, lets
reframe this a little. If you were making statements about how objects fell that I could see were at variance with Newton's laws, I would say dude, what you say doesn't make sense. If you then asked me why I said what I did, I would explain the laws of motion. If you asked me what is the basis of those laws, I would point you to an accepted reference on the subject of Newton's laws. I would not demean you and say what journals do you think focus on research into Newtonian motion – because it was me who told you that you were wrong and its up to me to prove it.

Can you really point to peer-reviewed research establishing Newton's laws? I am dubious of that claim, as those laws were established before meaningful peer review even existed.

Similarly, you keep talking about indisputable facts and things people have known for a long time. So, I ask you, what is the basis of those facts, and where can I read up on it.

Here is a layman's treatment of the basics:

http://members.aol.com/_ht_a/tma68/geo-faq.htm

And here is an economist's treatment:

<http://www.econjournalwatch.org/pdf/FoldvaryIntellectualTyrannyApril2005.pdf>

If you have any questions, feel free to ask them.

Hell, I gave you the Stanford paper on the efficiencies of private versus public ownership.

I have already explained to you that that paper was completely irrelevant, because the natural resources were all publicly owned in

Re: Historical comparisons

both cases.

I gave you the Cato Institute paper on the benefits accrued by society by private ownership of property and resources.

Except that the Cato paper made no actual case for private ownership of natural resources, merely dismissed facts of economics that have been known for centuries on the basis of a flippant generalization.

You dismissed the Cato Institute stuff in a very general way making broad statements, but not supporting any of it with details and your thoughts – so your comments were to my mind just asinine, and didn't convince me at all.

That is exactly what I thought of the Cato paper.

I'm asking you for something very simple – clear convincing logic based on clear convincing facts – that support your grand statements. You have yet to produce anything approaching that.

I don't know what else I can tell you. I'm identifying the relevant facts as clearly as I can.

I accept that slavery and theivery involve forms of property rights that create a sort of privilege we shouldn't have in society.

And taxi medallions?

I do not accept your logic that extends that to property rights over natural resources – particularly if those resources are not known to exist prior to the involvement of a developer.

See above. As long as no one is deprived of what they would otherwise have been free to use, there is no problem. Consider the atmosphere: people are free to breathe it, to bottle it, etc. But suppose someone started bottling so much air that the atmosphere actually got thinner, people couldn't live at high altitudes any more, aircraft could not fly over mountain ranges, etc. In the extreme, people would have to buy bottled air from him just to avoid suffocating. It is not using a

Re: Historical comparisons

resource that is wrong. It is depriving others of its use without appropriate compensation that is wrong.

I understand that your logic is impeccable, but I do not accept your indisputable fact that defines the public's rights over natural resources in the way you have.

Do you understand the logic of the air bottling example above?

That definition was made to support the conclusion you wanted

No. The conclusion derived from the definition.

it did not derive naturally from clear thinking about what is really going on in the world when people take the trouble to develop a resource.

Yes, actually, it did.

— Roy L

.