

PROPERTY RIGHTS IN LAND: A PHILOSOPHICAL
ANALYSIS OF THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
OF THE OWNERSHIP OF LAND

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There is nothing which so generally strikes the imagination, and engages the affections of mankind, as the right of property; or that sole and despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over the external things of the world, in total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe.

William Blackstone
Commentaries on the Laws of England

The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying 'This is mine,' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not anyone have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: 'Beware of listening to this imposter, you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody.'

Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Discourse on Inequality, part II

The earth is given as a common stock for man to labour and live on. If, for the encouragement of industry we allow it to be appropriated, we must take care that other employment be furnished to those excluded from the appropriation. If we do not, the fundamental right to labour the earth returns to the unemployed.

Thomas Jefferson
Letter to James Madison, Oct. 28, 1785