

Chapter 4. On ownership

4.1. The right to life as a source of ownership

It is worth noting that every living creature strives to preserve its life, considering it its natural right, and defends it in a manner appropriate to the circumstances. In the case of an imminent threat to life from outside, it either escapes when this is the easiest way to protect it, or - when escape is not possible or purposeful - fights until it reaches its goal or is defeated. If it does not see any immediate danger, it takes action to provide itself with food and other things necessary for survival and possibly to improve its quality of life using what is available in its environment. For the same reason, it tries to protect what it has gained through its efforts.

In direct connection with the right to life, there remains the second natural right, which every living creature grants itself in the same way. This right is the right of ownership of the results of one's own efforts. It derives in a necessary way from the natural right to life¹. Without the appropriation of even just air, water and food, life could not last. Therefore, every living creature tries to defend what it has gained by its own efforts, even if this effort has come down to finding some useful thing that can satisfy its need. The conviction that this thing belongs to itself is also, in a sense, "inscribed" in the genes of every living creature, whether or not it realizes it.

While animals instinctively recognize the ownership of things belonging to other beings only if its violation could endanger their health or life, humans, apparently the only rational beings in the material living world, consciously associate the ownership with the fact that someone has deliberately and knowingly done something that leads to the possession of a good in order to use it for their needs. Therefore, they usually take it for granted that the item belongs to the one who possesses it, and treat the assassination of this property as an act of injustice to be opposed. Usually, too, a person is able to distinguish between goods that are the result of other people's actions and things that are the result of the laws of nature, and when he accidentally comes across the former, he is immediately aware that they probably have an owner and that a violation of the ownership may have negative consequences for him. All the more so, he can expect the negative effects of a deliberate and intentional assassination of someone else's ownership.

¹ This argument was already put forward by John Locke, who wrote (Locke 1690, § 24): "Whether we consider natural reason, which tells us that men, being once born, have a right to their preservation, and consequently to meat and drink and such other things as Nature affords for their subsistence, or "revelation," which gives us an account of those grants God made of the world to Adam, and to Noah and his sons, it is very clear that God, as King David says (Psalm 115. 16), "has given the earth to the children of men," given it to mankind in common. (...)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. The fruit or venison which nourishes the wild Indian, who knows no enclosure, and is still a tenant in common, must be his, and so his — i.e., a part of him, that another can no longer have any right to it before it can do him any good for the support of his life."

When I write about the natural right to life and the right of ownership that determines it, I mean that such rights necessarily belong to every living being by reason of his or her living, and that is why each of them takes them for granted. The right to life and the right to ownership are simply the logical consequence of the fact that the individual has been called to life and therefore enjoys it in such a way that this life can last; he is passive when this is enough to preserve life and acts in a certain way when necessary. The decision on how to act for the preservation of life is always made regardless of whether or not someone else agrees to it. Therefore certain actions of some living beings may interfere with the right to life and ownership of others. A classic case of the effects of such a collision is, for example, the killing of an animal by another animal or by a human being for food. The occurrence of such collisions proves that the fact that all living beings have the right to life does not mean that this right is guaranteed to any of them. The same applies to the right of ownership. The fact that every living being has the right to life and the right of ownership of what he or she gains for this purpose is objective, but the possibility of exercising these rights depends, among other things, on whether others can or want to respect them.

In the animal world, the decision in case of a conflict of rights seems to depend only on the relative strength of the individual; when it is strong enough, it violates the right of ownership of others, otherwise it gives way. In the human world, on the other hand, in such conflicts of rights, moral norms usually come to the fore, and the power goes to the background. Being aware of the existence of other people's right to life and the right of ownership, and having knowledge of the sources of these rights and their meaning for others, as well as having reason, knowledge, experience and free will, a person always has an opportunity to look for such solutions which do not lead to such a conflict, even if she has enough strength to adopt an easier solution. She only has to want this. Animals and plants cannot do this. However, if a person does not want to respect the objective right to the life of other people and their ownership rights, then - being absolutely free in her decisions - she can violate these rights regardless of whether or not they are formally protected by some state law and regardless of whether or not she will suffer any negative consequences for herself.

It is quite symptomatic that the rights to life and ownership are not accepted by two groups of people, although each for a different reason. The first is made up of various thieves and bandits, for whom the notion of the right to life and ownership of others has no meaning, regardless of whether or not the violation is prohibited by either divine or state law. The second group, on the other hand, are those philosophers materialists who do not acknowledge such a thing as natural law, let alone divine law, so that both the right to life and the right to ownership derive only from the will of some legislator. And although this parallel is not pleasant, it is a fact that the attitude of the former has to do with that of the latter. Can't a thief or bandit feel justified in using for his own purposes what the philosopher doubts about existence? Such an attitude becomes all the more justified because the state law changes according to the needs of legislators, so that, for example, what was not so long ago called murder becomes nowadays a right to one's

own body, and what was considered theft or robbery extortion is now referred to as nationalization or reform of public finance in order to reduce the budget deficit. Of course, I do not want to impute to thieves and bandits that they do their business because they read the works of philosophers and to the latter that they encourage the former to do so. Nevertheless, criminals may feel justified because their actions comply with scientific theory².

In this state of affairs, there has long been a struggle between, on the one hand, those who defend ownership and those who do not recognize it, and, on the other hand, many are looking for a justification for the right of ownership that is sufficient for it to be recognized and possibly sanctioned by state law. John Locke, already mentioned, with his theory of just acquisition (Locke 1690, Chapter V), certainly occupies an important place in this search. According to his approach, it is legitimate to take ownership of what a person's work has been put into, at least if there are still sufficient and not inferior common goods for others³. This condition of leaving sufficient and not inferior common goods for others is called Locke's clause of legitimacy for the just acquisition of goods.

Robert Nozick (2010 [1974], pp. 208-217) presented an interesting reasoning in which he criticized Locke's theory of just acquisition, demonstrating, by numerous examples, that the fact that anyone appropriates any thing always deprives others of the possibility of using it for their own needs, and even if it does not make their actual situation worse, it cannot be justified in any way without contradicting Locke's clause that there are still sufficient and no worse common goods left. In this approach, the acquisition of ownership of anything is never justified.

Nozick's arguments are hard to deny. Only that these arguments are not arguments for rejecting Locke's theory, but only for rejecting the very clause conditioning the validity of the acquisition of property. If we make certain additions, Locke's theory will become logical and coherent without this clause. Let us therefore make these necessary additions using certain elements of K. Menger's theory of goods and the concepts of need and freedom presented elsewhere in this work.

Menger clearly distinguishes between useful things and goods in his theory. The former are things that can be combined in a causal relationship with the satisfaction of human needs (Menger 2007, p.52). Here, a small critical remark is immediately imposed. Since Menger distinguishes between useful things, there must necessarily also be useless things, the kind that is not mentioned for some reason. And those - on a rule of thumb - must be defined as those that cannot be combined in a causal relationship with

² It is worth mentioning at this point the G.Becker's theory (1990), according to which both stealing and prostitution, as well as marriage and having children are the result of economic cost-benefit calculations.

³ Locke, op. cit. § 27: "For this labour being the unquestionable property of the labourer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joined to, at least where there is enough, and as good left in common for others."

satisfying needs. While it is easy to agree that some things are useful to a particular person and others are not, that is to say, that this division makes sense at the level of the individual, it would be rather difficult to find things at the level of the human community that were not suitable for meeting people's needs, i.e., were useless at all. It seems, therefore, that at this level of generalization, it would be better to give up this division and to remain with only one category, namely, the things that can always be of use to someone.

This remark, however, does not call into question the sense and validity of the theory of Menger's goods itself, and in particular the four conditions he formulated, the fulfilment of which makes a thing a good (Menger 2007, p. 52). This occurs only if:

- there is a need;
- the thing has qualities that can be used to satisfy that need;
- the human being is aware of this relationship, and
- has the power over this thing to the extent that it meets the need.

This in turn shows conclusively that things have no owner. In fact, according to Menger's approach, a good ceases to be a good, i.e. it loses its good character, when the owner finds it unneeded and abandons it. In this case, the good becomes a thing again.

If we adopt Menger's approach to goods, then Locke's ownership theory will take on a new dimension. It is worth noting that the first three conditions given by Menger for turning a thing into a good constitute in fact the concept of entrepreneurship or inventiveness. These conditions determine whether or not a person has the ability to see in things the potential that can be used to satisfy specific needs, including the creation of new uses for a given thing, i.e. the creation of new needs in fact. Without having such a feature by at least one person, none of the things available in natural environment can become a good. The fourth condition, on the other hand, can only be fulfilled if the person concerned takes certain actions, i.e., makes an effort to possess such a thing, that is, to transform it into a good. Without meeting this condition, no thing will become a good.

From this perspective, let's look at the Locke's clause first regarding the so-called free goods. According to Menger's theory, they should be called free things here. Leaving aside the legal restrictions existing here and there on access to such things, there is an infinite number of them in the natural environment. However, although these things exist objectively as elements of the natural environment, most people are not interested at all in the fact that they exist nor do they have any idea what happens to them. So if such things disappear as a result of the forces of nature or as a result of the actions of other people, then there can be no question that someone's interests have been compromised because he has been deprived of the possibility of using them for his own purposes. The lack of awareness that they exist and that something is happening to them, as well as the failure to take action to get them - according to Menger's theory - determines that these things were not goods for most.

If, therefore, anywhere in the world someone finds an application for any thing and appropriates it to use it directly or after any modification to satisfy his own need, then at this point all four conditions of Menger are fulfilled and the thing useless so far is excluded from the world of things and goes into the world of goods. Its appropriation does not harm anyone or violate anyone's freedom, understood as the freedom to use what is available to the public. For what happens is, from the point of view of millions of city dwellers who know the forest only from television, analogous to the case where a person takes a twisted stump and a piece of rock from a particular forest to make a fancy table in his garden. For these millions, these two particular things taken from this particular forest would never become goods.

The fact of transforming a thing into a good, i.e. the act of creating a good, is a sufficient reason to consider it as the property of its creator on the same grounds as a composed musical work or a written novel is considered to be the property of the author. It doesn't matter at all whether a given good has a material form, and thus required the appropriation of some things (e.g. the aforementioned fancy table, or the statue of Venus of Milo), or whether it has no material form (e.g. a recited sonnet). It also doesn't matter if and how many of the same things as those that have been appropriated left for others, because those others have never needed them before and will never need them in the future.

At any moment in life, every person has all those things at her disposal that are available to the public (they do not belong to anyone) and can become goods. This is an objective state, and its causes are of no importance for what may happen in the future.

You cannot deprive someone of what he or she hasn't had before or of opportunities he or she hasn't used in the past, regardless of the cause. It cannot be considered a violation of my freedom or any of my rights, for example, the fact that someone mines gold in South Africa or catches fish in the ocean, even if it turns out that the last piece of gold was mined there or the last fish was caught. So far, not only have I not been interested in making these things my goods, but I have not even considered whether I need them for anything (first Menger' condition), so I have not done anything to get them from my natural environment (fourth Menger' condition). However, if I felt the need for gold at the moment, the fact that the mines in South Africa, for example, have been exhausted would not limit my freedom to look for gold where it could still be, for example at the bottom of the Arctic Ocean, in the Australian Interior or on Mars. In such a case, however, it would be worthwhile to first check whether it would not be cheaper to buy it on the London Stock Exchange or in the bank around the corner. We will come back to this last issue a little further.

In each of the cases described, Locke's theory of ownership proves to be valid in its entirety, without the need for an additional clause. Moreover, if this clause were to be strictly adhered to, as Nozick has shown, there would be overt absurdities.

I could, for example, demand (question only - from whom?) compensation for the fact that I was unjustly deprived of the freedom to eat a dinosaur chop, or for the fact that a

tourist who unknowingly took the sand on his shoes from the beach in Mallorca deprived me of the opportunity to use this sand to "inoculate" with it the pearl mussels that I could possibly grow there, perhaps from next year on. In the same way, I could claim a grudge against my neighbor, that he has recently deprived me of the opportunity to collect mushrooms appropriated by him from the Knyszyńska Forest, about which I know only that it lies somewhere in Poland. What's more, in the same way, I could claim to myself that I ate a cake yesterday and thus deprived myself of the freedom to eat it today. Even in science, there are limits to the absurd, although Cicero was probably right when he said that "there is nothing so absurd as not to fall from the mouth of the philosopher". (quoted from Wiker 2012, p.13). So let's go on.

Here comes a second argument related to Menger's theory of goods, which argues for Locke's theory of just acquisition of goods to be considered valid. In fact, the Menger's definition of goods states that a thing becomes a good only if all four conditions are fulfilled at the same time, including, among others, the condition of need to exist. If, instead of the Menger's concept of need as a state not entirely dependent on man⁴, we introduce the concept of need as a state in which a man has decided that he wants to achieve something in a material or immaterial sense and is making adequate efforts to achieve it (see 6.2), then the Menger's concept of good fits perfectly with Locke's theory of the just acquisition of goods.

According to Menger's theory, just because a thing has become a good for some person absolutely does not mean that it automatically becomes a good for others, or that it is the same good for others. For being a good is a feature of a thing that is inseparable from a particular person. One can validly use the term that every good is branded by its owner, because it differs from the thing that has become that good both in what it is used for and in what that owner has done to possess it.

Therefore, what for some people is a good, for others is only a thing they do not need. It can be said with absolute certainty that among the infinite number of things existing in the world, for most people, only some of them become goods. Although people are often aware that these other things could make their lives better, more enjoyable, richer, etc., they do not make efforts to get them. For this reason, these things will never become goods for them. This is all the more true for those things that people have no idea about. Can the accusation that the appropriation of certain things deprives others of the possibility of satisfying their needs with them be taken seriously if the others have chosen, directly or indirectly⁵, that they do not need them?

⁴ That this is how Menger understands the term "need", is indicated by the following passus (Menger 2007, p. 77): Needs arrive from our drives and the drives are imbedded in our nature. An imperfect satisfaction of needs leads to the stunting of our nature. Failure to satisfy them brings about our destruction."

⁵ Directly: "I know but don't want to"; indirectly: "I don't want to look for it, because I can't get it all."

And finally, the last aspect of a close relationship between a good and its owner, which determines that the same thing in the possession of two different people is two different goods, because each of them is used for something different and each has been gained by the different efforts of its owner. As an example, we can use two similar pieces of amber, one dug out as part of the professional activities of an amber mining entrepreneur and the other found by a tourist on the beach. The former will become a merchandise for sale to a jeweler and the latter - a souvenir from the vacation, which the vacationer will place among other trinkets on his shelf. So, what good did the two founders of two similar pieces of amber deprive the others of?

To the remarks made so far about the differences between good and thing, let's add that good is something only as long as it is part of the owner's property, even if it is not used by him. If, on the other hand, the good is no longer needed by its owner and he gets rid of it, then it loses its good character and becomes a thing again, despite its full technical efficiency and its utility values⁶. Most people get rid of unnecessary items with full knowledge of their usefulness for specific purposes and either give them to others for free or even throw them away, making them nobody's property. If someone appropriates such a thing that does not belong to anybody, the thing gains back the goods-character for that particular person without infringing anyone's interests.

The arguments given so far support the arguments used by Locke. I completely agree with him both in that the ownership comes directly from the right to life and that the acquisition of property occurs at the moment of appropriation of anything that does not belong to anyone⁷. Nor can be accused Locke's argument that the source of the right of ownership is work done for the appropriated good⁸. All this arguments should only be complemented by the condition of Menger's theory of goods that before an item becomes a good in which work has been put into, i.e. before the fourth condition of Menger is fulfilled, the possessor must first fulfill the first three conditions, which boil down to recognizing that an existing need can be satisfied by the appropriated item. This condition becomes pointless if we consider that these three conditions are implicitly fulfilled since the work has been inserted.

However, what definitely makes the approach presented here different from Locke's position is his clause of the legitimacy of appropriation. As already mentioned above, Locke made the legitimacy of appropriation of goods conditional upon others having

⁶ Menger 2007, p. 52: "When even one of them is absent, a thing cannot acquire goods-character, and a thing already possessing goods-character would lose it at once if but one of the four prerequisites ceased to be present."

⁷ Locke 1690, p. 27: "And it is plain, if the first gathering made them not his, nothing else could. (...) The labour that was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, hath fixed my property in them."

⁸ Locke 1690, p. 26: "Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. (...)"

enough goods left over, so that, as Nozick has rightly demonstrated, this right can always be challenged. But if we start with Menger's theory of goods, it is legitimate to say that the appropriation of any item, i.e. turning a thing into a good, does not deprive anyone of the possibility of using other things that are in the environment for their own needs. There is an infinite number of such things, and it depends only on people's invention what and for what purpose they will be used. The Locke's clause thus becomes pointless, as it is always fulfilled. Therefore, it must be considered that since the fact of the appropriation of an item makes it a good for the owner, it is sufficient for it to become his exclusive ownership.

In addition to the above, there is another argument for recognizing the legitimacy of the appropriation of items that do not belong to anyone for personal use without looking at the Locke's clause. It has been mentioned above that an item becomes a good only if someone gives this item an additional feature that it did not have before, namely the feature of being useful for a particular need. In such a way, a person becomes the creator of that good. This act of creating a good or transforming a thing into a good is analogous to making a sculpture from a piece of wood or stone or to painting a picture or writing a book. It cannot be denied that the only creator, and therefore the owner of the created work is its author, just as it cannot be denied that the work is something completely different from the material from which it was made. This example clearly illustrates what makes a thing different from a good and clearly shows both what the right of ownership of that good results from, and in what relation it remains to the rights of other people. The Locke's clause, as already mentioned, applies not to goods but to things and is always fulfilled, and the creator of every good has an inalienable right to it.

Two further arguments speak in favor of recognizing the legitimacy of acquiring ownership of goods. The existence of free things in nature, as already mentioned, only means that anyone can make any use of them. However, the condition for the use of any item is to make a sacrifice in the form of one's own effort that is appropriate to the circumstances. Even manna in the desert was not given to the Israelites for free, because it had to be collected first and only then could be eaten. Without such effort, things always remain things. This, among other things, causes that many people consciously do not want them. On the other hand, however, the fact that someone has appropriated any item, making it a good, does not necessarily mean depriving others of the possibility of using the good for their own needs.

Quite the opposite, in many cases it is precisely because someone has appropriated an item and transformed it into a good, that it is possible for others to achieve this good with less effort. This can be seen in the example of the hunter, described in chapter 6, who exchanges the hunted hare for honey collected by the forest bee-keeper. Each person in this example appropriates the given thing, making it good for himself, but thanks to the exchange for what the other person has, benefit both of them. The benefit for the hunter is that he does not have to learn bee-keeping to eat some honey, and the benefit for the bee-keeper is, similarly, that he does not have to chase after animals in the forest. Each of them therefore saves that part of the effort they would have to put

into becoming the owner of the good obtained by exchange if they wanted to get it personally in their natural surroundings⁹. The source of these benefits is that every person is different from other people in every respect and it is the natural diversity of people that creates conditions for specialization. So if we assume that a hunter and a bee-keeper, for example, are the only inhabitants of an island, isn't this clear proof that the appropriation of any item not only doesn't limit others, but even becomes a source of additional benefits for them?

It is this mechanism of mutual benefits from specialization and exchange that has become the most important factor of economic and civilization development in the world. Whenever and wherever the ownership rights, which are the most important element of the foundation of the voluntary exchange economy, were protected, peace prevailed, and the economy and civilization flourished and developed dynamically. Where the rights were not respected, or where they were even liquidated by ideologies that questioned their natural character, the right to life was always violated both on a micro scale (thefts, robberies, murders) and on a macro scale (conquests, revolutions), and the world was then moving back in its development. That is still the case today. And the reason is always the same; despite the clear historical evidence of the natural relationship between the ownership right and the right to life and their beneficial influence on the development of civilization, philosophers of different orientations, including Christian ones, do not want to accept the absolute Decalogue ban "do not steal", which explicitly protects the ownership right. Instead, attempts have always been made to design different economic systems in which ownership rights are to varying degrees restricted or even abolished by state laws, and the basis for such solutions is always some kind of ideology dressed in scientific robes. Of course, what is at stake here is the violation of property rights for redistribution purposes, i.e. those that go beyond the need to ensure the normal functioning of the power apparatus.

An extreme example of this is the communist system without private property in the Marxist or Maoist version, which always starts with the robbery of private property and mass murders and ends with a social and economic collapse (e.g. USSR, Cambodia, North Korea, Cuba and many others). Less drastic are the systems in countries with so-called market economies, which formally provide legal protection of private property. Such protection, however, applies only to that part of property that remains after the transfer of obligatory public levies. However, since this part is not specified anywhere, the legal protection of property is in fact a fiction that depends solely on the discretion of the public authorities of different levels, which can reduce it at any time and to any extent by virtue of legal acts of different kinds.

⁹ The thesis in this paragraph contradicts the theory of value and the related exchange theory promoted, among others, by the Austrian School, according to which the condition for exchange is a profit from the exchange understood as an increase in value (see Menger 2007, pp. 179-180), which, in addition, may be unfairly distributed among the counterparties (see O'Boyle 2008, p. 18: "Without that gain, the exchange cannot be carried out. However, without a limit to the extent of that gain and its origins, some persons in the exchange process are able to take more than their due while others are left with less.").

It does not matter from what philosophical position a policy of legal violation of property rights of those who are deemed to have too much to support in various forms those who are deemed to be entitled to such support is justified. In the so-called mainstream economy, this justification is built upon the marginal utility theory, formulated almost simultaneously by W. Jevons, L. Walras and C. Menger. (Blaug 2000, p. 296). The conclusions of this theory are applied, among others, in welfare economics, public choice theory and in the Rawls' theory of justice. The proponents of economic personalism, on the other hand, see such a justification in the moral commandments in the Bible for sharing excesses of wealth with those who have too little to live in dignity.

Apart from the ideological foundations, in the case of each redistributive system that can be found in real economic life, there is not only total subjectivity on the content of concepts such as "excess", "wealth", "poverty", "dignified life " or any other that determine the scale of the redistributive actions, but first and foremost the gross moral hypocrisy of the advocates of this approach. The hypocrisy lies in the fact that the moral virtue of voluntarily sharing the results of one's own efforts with those in need is replaced by an institutional charity based on coercion, in which people provide charity at someone else's expense, while they themselves consume a portion of these resources in the form of wages received for work in these institutions. As a result, at most half of each unit of money collected in the form of compulsory taxes goes to the recipients, because the rest has to cover the costs of the entire redistribution system.

In the current state of affairs, therefore, ownership is at best only the result of an arbitrary decision of the legislators. If they consider it advisable for so-called socio-political reasons, they protect the ownership rights to the extent deemed appropriate under the given conditions. If the political system changes, the property rights can be freely changed, limited or completely abolished in the name of the same reasons.

However, let us return to the main thread, which is to discuss the reasons why the right of ownership of what has been gained by one's own efforts should be absolutely protected. This right is also supported by an argument from outside the economy, however related to what has already been stated above. One of the objective processes taking place in the world is the process of evolution of species in the material living world. The essence of this process is the continuous need for individuals of each species to adapt to changing environmental conditions. One of the most important factors of evolution is precisely the appropriation of certain things by some individuals from the same or from other species, so that the next must look for other solutions to satisfy their own needs. Thanks to this, the world has been developing both in terms of biology and economy. The right to property is an objective result of life and a necessary condition for its development in the whole animated world, and thus in the human world. Therefore, attempts to find an excuse for it are pointless. Unless someone feels strong enough to stop the process of the evolution of the world.

Finally, it is worth presenting one more argument that the property right is a necessary consequence and condition of the right to life. From a purely formal point of view, there is no difference between the appropriation of inhaled air, drunken water or any food, and the appropriation of a sling stone, dug gold, a plot of land for the construction of a house or anything else that a person has gained by his own efforts. Therefore, the recognition of the legitimacy of such acquisition of property under any exclusionary condition immediately makes it necessary to recognize that every person lives illegally, since it deprives others of the freedom to use what he has appropriated by eating, drinking and breathing, and what has become more or less a permanent component of his body. Questioning the objective nature of the ownership right of any item acquired to satisfy any need inevitably leads to questioning the right to breathe. For air is the same element of the material world as any other form of matter. Any other solution to the question of ownership may be based solely on discretion.

To sum up the considerations of property, it must be stated that whenever there is any need, every person is in a certain objective state in which he or she wants to satisfy that need. One of the elements of this objective state is what this man possesses and what he can take possession of, that is, the whole universe not yet mastered. It is an objective state of nature. This state is not subject to evaluation in ethical and moral terms, that is, in terms of right and wrong, justice and injustice, equality and inequality; it is simply as it is. It is therefore pointless to seek in the past to justify any element of this state of nature, and therefore also of property. In fact, by following this "logic of justification", we will necessarily come to the question of the justification of the so-called "big bang" which, according to current scientific theory, started our world.

Therefore, there is nothing else to do but to recognize that, starting from any objective state in which someone is currently in, every person can set himself or herself any goals he or she would like to achieve and then make a consistent efforts to reach them. By making such efforts, no matter who he or she is or what he or she has at the moment, everyone gives himself or herself the chance to achieve the chosen goal. It is worth emphasizing, however, that no one has ever guaranteed that this will happen. The only thing absolutely certain is that in an unknown moment everyone will end their lives. This is the only equal opportunity that every living being has.

4.2 Ownership in the light of the doctrine of the universal purpose of goods

In seeking justification for private property, the argumentation used by J. Locke in his theory of just acquisition of goods was used in the previous section of this work, complemented by the K. Menger's theory of goods. This combination resulted in a coherent theory of ownership, according to which the property right arises at the moment of the appropriation of an item that does not belong to anyone in order to use it to satisfy some personal need of the person who made that item a good. The argument used is precisely that of K. Menger's theory of goods, that the appropriation of an item means giving it an additional feature that it has not yet had, namely a feature of utility which makes it a good,. For model reasoning, such an argument is sufficient to further use the concept of ownership in the sense given to it. Here, however, it is worth developing this problem, since it is fundamental for each discipline of the social sciences. This is all the more necessary because the right of private property is unlikely to be highly respected, and is only recognized and protected as long as it is convenient for those in power.

The most famous representative of economic personalism, Pope John Paul II, devoted much space to ownership in his numerous speeches and encyclicals. His approach to this matter is based on the doctrine of the common destination of goods (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 9). This doctrine is derived from the doctrine of creation, according to which all external goods were created by God in order to serve man. A similar thesis was put forward by Aristotle (*Politics*, 1256b) with the difference that it did not refer to God, but to nature. One of the Doctors of the Church, St. Ambrose, recalled as an obvious truth that "God created the earth for all men", stating elsewhere that "Nature gave birth to the common law, and usurpation (human will) gave birth to private law".

St. Thomas of Aquinas, who transplanted Aristotle's philosophy to Christianity, derived two human rights from it in relation to goods. The first is the right to produce and distribute material goods, to which the right of private ownership of goods is linked. To justify the necessity of such a right, Aquinas used three arguments of a pragmatic nature, repeating them *de facto* after Aristotle (*Politics*, II. 2). First, man is more inclined to acquire and create goods and to care for them more when they are his property than if they were common. Secondly, private property contributes to the maintenance of order, since it is known what belongs to whom and who is responsible for it. Thirdly, finally, private property ensures greater harmony and social peace if everyone cares about his or her own interests and is dependent on himself or herself. These arguments are repeated to this day, even in the writings of contemporary representatives of economic personalism (see Finn 1999, Sorondo 2003, Dougherty 2003, Lisak 1999, among others).

The second right of every person is the right to use external goods. St. Thomas, however, introduces here an important reservation, which has been fully accepted in the social teaching of the Church. He claims that man is free to use his possessions to satisfy his own needs and those of his family, but when he has more than he needs, and

there are those who have less than they need, he has a moral duty to share that surplus with people in need. It is quite characteristic, as Finn pointed out (1999, p. 82), that St. Thomas did not write about the rights of those who have little, but about the duties of those who have much.

In this case, however, St. Thomas made one exception, namely, he allowed for the right to appropriate someone else's item in case of danger to life. He writes in *Theological Sum* (quoted after: Sorondo 2003, p. 13): "if the need be so manifest and urgent, that it is evident that the present need must be remedied by whatever means be at hand (for instance, when a person is in some imminent danger and there is no other possible remedy), then it is lawful for a man to succor his own need by means of another's property, by taking it either openly or secretly; nor is this, properly speaking, theft or robbery, because that which he takes for the support of his life becomes his own property by reason of that need. In cases of need, all things are common property." St. Thomas considers this justification sufficient and does not develop or return to this thread.

The Saint Thomas' approach is fully in line with Christian doctrine, which puts human life on a higher level in the hierarchy of values than ownership. It is also entirely consistent with the so-called common sense, which does not necessarily require ethical or religious justifications in such a case. The removal of a state of direct threat to life does not require any extraordinary measures, so the damage to property caused by the appropriation of things necessary to remove such threat is not significant. It is for this reason that in no culture has such a violation of someone else's property been considered theft. This is evidenced, for example, by the passus from St. Mark's Gospel (Mk 2:23-28), in which the Evangelist describes the situation when Jesus justifies the Apostles who on the Sabbath ripped off ears of grain when they were hungry. The Pharisees accuse Jesus not of allowing the Apostles to rip off the ears, but of doing so on the Sabbath. This is similar in Polish criminal law, for example, where the seizure of property of little value is not penalized for minor social harm (Article 1 §2 of the CCC).

The attitude of St. Thomas to ownership is therefore clear; the right can only be violated if human life is at stake. Except in this one case, no one has the right to goods belonging to someone else. However, those who possess goods have a moral duty to share them with those in need.

Unfortunately, St. Thomas' exception gave some asumpt to widen the gap in the principle of inviolability of property by moving from the "language of duties" of the owners of goods to those who do not have them to the "language of rights" of the latter.

The first signs of the "language of rights" appeared as early as the Middle Ages, but it was only in modern times that it became dominant in the discourse on socio-economic issues (Finn 1999, p. 82). This was primarily due to French communism, which had been developing since the eighteenth century and for which the Marx theory of added value became a strong support (Marx 1951 [1867]). On the other hand, the language of rights also began to be used by Christian personalism. A significant step in this direction

was the encyclical *Rerum novarum* of Leo XIII of 1891, in which the Pope addressed for the first time the so-called "worker issue" in response to the growing social tensions caused by the industrial revolution and dynamically developing capitalism. John Paul II took up this subject again in three encyclicals: *Laborem exercens* (1981), *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987), and especially *Centessimus Annus* (1991). It is also quite characteristic, as G. Gronbacher (1999, p. 249) pointed out, that economic personalism makes extensive use of Marxist terminology, despite a completely different philosophical basis.

Leaving communism and Marxism aside, let us deal with economic personalism. This stream has gone much further in questions of ownership and use of goods than St. Thomas. The Aquinas justified taking someone else's property only in an extreme case of danger to life. In general, however, he believed, like his predecessors, e.g. St. Ambrose (Finn 1999, p. 82), that man has a moral duty to share goods with those who suffer poverty. Economic personalism, on the other hand, from the just moral imperatives to assist those in need, has derived and grants to a wide range of people the right to use someone else's property, invoking the inalienable dignity of the human person, from which, among other things, the right to dignified life is to derive.

Probably the most extreme position in this matter is taken by Sorondo (2003, p. 10), who writes: "All men and thus, also, the most humble of human beings, have the right to use (and I say "use" and specifically not "possess") what they need for a dignified life for themselves and for their families. Nobody may be driven out or excluded. Thus, an economic system that does not ensure, perfectly, that all families have what is necessary for a human existence is an unjust regime." This passus is preceded by an argument referring to the Bible, from which the author concludes that this law is a simple consequence of the fact that everything God has created has been put at the disposal of man.

Leaving aside the extreme materialists, for whom man is even a harmful intruder in this world, nobody seems to challenge the fact that all so-called external goods, i.e. all gifts of nature, are to serve man. It is worth emphasizing, however, that the supporters of such views as that of Sorondo quoted above seem to forget that in order to use any of these gifts of nature to satisfy one's needs, one must at least bend down and collect them. Thus, both in the simplest one and in all other cases, man must put a certain physical and intellectual effort in order to acquire these external goods and transform them so that they are suitable for satisfying his needs.

The most obvious and elementary need of every man is to preserve the life of his own and his loved ones. This is only possible if the food, water or clothing that one has gained by one's own efforts can be used without hindrance by the one who has taken care of it. In this context, the obvious condition of being able to satisfy both the basic needs of a person's survival and any other needs must be that the right of ownership of what that person has acquired for this purpose is respected by others. If, therefore, we recognize that the right to life is a natural right of every human being, and this is rather

difficult to deny, then the property right must be given the same character. Otherwise, it inevitably leads to constant wars and feuds. For this very reason, the right seems to have found protection in the form of the absolute Divine commandment “do not steal”.

The right to life and the right to property must therefore be counted among the fundamental natural rights not necessarily because they are given by God or nature, but because they result from the very essence of life, which can only last and develop if these rights are respected by others. They must therefore be absolute. In this context, it is difficult to understand that Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical *Rerum novarum*, presented four arguments in favor of the thesis that the source of private property is the law of nature, and yet he did not grant this law that character (*Rerum novarum*; 3-11).

It is also worth noting that the acquisition of property by one's own efforts does not violate the right of others to satisfy one's needs with the things that remain (cf. the previous point of this chapter). It does not therefore violate the principle of universal access to goods. This assertion remains valid even if the good in question is the only one of its kind in a given place, and thus its appropriation by one person, cuts others off from the possibility of using that very good for the satisfaction of their needs. Imitation is undoubtedly easier than looking for other solutions, but this does not imply at all that the desire to do the same thing that someone else has done must be considered sufficient reason to violate someone else's property. If someone caught the only fish in the pond to eat it alone or with anyone else, this does not mean that someone else could have the right to take it away from him because there was only one fish and the one taking it would also want to eat it. The fact that the person who caught this exemplary fish is taken over by the one who caught it does not limit other people to satisfy their hunger with what is still available and does not belong to anyone. This can be done, for example, by hunting animals, looking for mushrooms, or picking fruit, berries or any edible plants. The same applies to all other cases. I don't think that anyone would consider taking someone's wallet with the money as an excuse for being unemployed and having nothing to buy bread for. The fact that someone has money does not limit in any way the right of this unemployed person to do various decent things that will allow them to "earn money. The argument that a philosopher or chemical engineer, for example, cannot work as a laborer because it offends his dignity, is nonsense and shows a completely misunderstanding of the term dignity, which is discussed below.

Writing about the natural right to life and the right of ownership that determines it, it is worth emphasizing that the exercise of these rights does not entail any negative consequences for others; it does not impose any obligations or limitations on them, nor does it require any action on their part. The only limitation, if we can call it that, is to respect these rights, and thus to refrain from violating them.

What follows is that it is enough to rename the principle of the universal purpose of goods into the principle of the universal purpose of things, and then everything will become logical and understandable. It will then turn out that everyone has the natural right to appropriate what he or she can use to satisfy his or her needs, but to do so in

such a way as not to infringe upon others' property. For what already belongs to others does not belong to the world of things, but to the world of goods and is not subject to this principle. Otherwise, it becomes impossible for people to coexist peacefully and to build up any social bonds, and this is precisely what we are dealing with in the Hobbesian world described in *Leviathan*, in which "(...) there is no culture on earth, no navigation, no art, rape and murder dominate, and human life is lonely, poor, terrible, brutal and short, in which everyone fights everyone" (quoted after Samuelson and Nordhaus 1992, p. 305). However, contrary to Hobbes' diagnosis, the reason for this is not the lack of a state, but precisely the violation of someone else's property. If, therefore, we consider that relations between people are to be peaceful, we must also recognize that the view of property presented here is correct. And, as regards the moral imperative to share goods with those who have found themselves in need for various reasons, it is, of course, also correct, only for reasons other than those implied by the misnamed and thus misunderstood principle of the universal purpose of goods.

In the publications of the authors representing economic personalism, the right to property is recognized as one of the natural laws, but - treating it after St. Augustine as a law of man (Dougherty 2003, p. 483) and referring precisely to the doctrine of the universal purpose of goods - its limitation is advocated.

As long as general matters are concerned, this restriction takes the form of appeals to those who possess goods to fulfil their moral duty to those who do not possess them. John Paul II (*Centesimus annus*, 30,) writes for example: "The Second Vatican Council likewise clearly restated the traditional doctrine in words which bear repeating: "In making use of the exterior things we lawfully possess, we ought to regard them not just as our own but also as common, in the sense that they can profit not only the owners but others too"; and a little later we read: "Private property or some ownership of external goods affords each person the scope needed for personal and family autonomy, and should be regarded as an extension of human freedom ... Of its nature private property also has a social function which is based on the law of the *common purpose of goods*". In the same vein, Finn writes that man has the right to use goods to satisfy his needs, but the excess should be shared with those in need (Finn 1999, p. 82). We will return to the question of this excess below.

However, when we move from general matters to details, the matter takes on a completely different character. Then, in the name of the doctrine of the inalienable dignity of the human person, certain people are granted the right to participate in the fruits of other people's efforts simply because the latter have some goods and the former do not, and the moral obligation to assist those in need is replaced by the demand to establish a system of redistribution, that is, a system of depriving the latter of their property under duress. What is important here is that no objective criteria are defined that would, on the one hand, limit the scale of the expropriation of the owners and, on the other hand, set the level from which the former "should" be supported.

This can be seen clearly in the passage of the Sorondo text cited above, in which such "quasi-criteria" as "dignified life" and "human conditions" for "all families" are used. The author leaves no illusions that he considers these conditions to be relative. In fact, he writes (Sorondo 2003, p. 11): "Every man has the right to live in a family and he thus has the right to the means that ensure that he can have a familial human existence, because all these means are external, which means that every man has the right to the goods that ensure his subsistence and the subsistence of his family. It should be observed here that reference is made to the minimum of what human being must use. This minimum is the human subsistence of the family – the term human is employed, and thus, something more than what is needed to eat and be clothed is indeed. One is certainly dealing here with permanent, human well-being. The human being can be poor; that is to say, he can be without superfluous wealth, but he should never be acutely poor. God does not want acute poverty for any man."

It is also worth noting that the demand to forcibly deprive those who possess "excess" of property in order to ensure a dignified life for those who do not possess "superfluous" property is not expressed *expressis verbis*. The "language of duty" is still formally used in this regard. However, this demand becomes evident when the obligation to ensure a "more just distribution of wealth" is attributed to the state. For it is precisely what lies behind the enigmatic "unjust regime" used by Sorondo in his article¹⁰. And any method the state uses for such a purpose always means depriving some people of their property through legal coercion.

Some of these methods reach for property directly; these are various types of taxes, fees, and mandatory tax-type contributions (e.g., social security contributions, pension funds contributions, etc.). Others reach for it indirectly; these include, for example, decisions setting minimum wages, prohibiting layoffs, defining mandatory forms of employee contracts, etc. Finally, there are those that seemingly do not encumber property, but actually allow for "setting up" at the expense of others. This group includes various types of permits, licenses, prohibitions that interfere with the freedom to undertake certain activities, as well as all corporate privileges. Any use of one of these instruments or any combination of them inevitably leads to the encumbrance of property of one group of people in favor of another.

Facing such a position of supporters of economic personalism, it is worth posing a fundamental question as to who is to care for a person and his or her family to have what is necessary for a dignified life? Should it be an economic system, i.e. - to put it bluntly - other people, or should it be taken care of by the person concerned?

If one would like to answer this question by referring to religious arguments, the right answer is already found in the Book of Genesis. Having driven Adam and Eve out of

¹⁰ Let us repeat the first quote from the above mentioned paper: "(...) an economic system that does not ensure, perfectly, that all families have what is necessary for a human existence is an unjust regime".

paradise, God said to Adam (Genesis 3: 17-19, 23)¹¹: “(...) Accursed be the soil because of you! Painfully will you get your food from it as long as you live. It will yield you brambles and thistles, as you eat the produce of the land. By the sweat of your face will you earn your food, until you return to the ground, as you were taken from it. For dust you are and to dust you shall return.’ (...) So Yahweh God expelled him from the garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he had been taken.”

There is no doubt about who is responsible for having anything to eat. The man has been given at his disposal everything that God has created, but it is up to him to make things useful for him. This quotation therefore clearly confirms the principle of the universal destiny of things, but it also indicates, just as clearly, what is the condition for the use of this principle. Neither here nor in any other place in Scripture is it mentioned that the fact that man was created in God's image and likeness should justify the use of the effects of the effort of his neighbor against his will. On the contrary, the example of the parable of the beggar Lazarus (Lk 16:19-23)¹² clearly shows that Lazarus' dignity not only did not suffer in God's eyes from extreme poverty, but was even confirmed by the fact that he was accepted into the womb of Abraham. However, not a single word was said there about Lazarus' right to the goods of the rich man. It could not have happened, because it would have been in clear contradiction with Jesus' teachings. If Lazarus were to be granted the right to use the wealthy man's goods against the will of the latter, could the rich man then "deserve" condemnation and an eternal stay in the abyss? Where would then be the place for charity, and where would be the place for the sin of not doing good?

This is why in the Old Testament the right to property is protected by the commandment "do not steal". In Christ's doctrine, on the other hand, one can only find exhortations and encouragement to share goods with people in need in the name of love of neighbor (cf. Mk 10:21, Lk 18:22, James 2:15-17) and warnings to those who do not do so (Mt 25:41-46). Jesus, in fact, clearly confirms the right of ownership, even in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, by putting words in the mouth of the owner of the vineyard (Mt 20:13-15)¹³: “My friend, I am not being unjust to you; did we not agree on one denarius? Take your earnings and go. I choose to pay the lastcomer as much as I pay you. Have I no right to do what I like with my own? Why should you be envious because I am generous?” It is also clear from this parable that it is not an injustice to pay in accordance with the contract, and that any gift is merely an act of goodwill on the part of the donor, and not a right of whoever gets it or of those who would like it.

The same position can be found in Saint Paul's letter to Thessalonians (2Tes 3:11-13)¹⁴: “Now we hear that there are some of you who are living lives without any discipline, doing no work themselves but interfering with other people's. In the Lord Jesus Christ, we urge and call on people of this kind to go on quietly working and earning the food

¹¹ https://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?id=1&bible_chapter=3

¹² https://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?id=49&bible_chapter=16

¹³ https://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?id=47&bible_chapter=20

¹⁴ https://www.catholic.org/bible/book.php?id=60&bible_chapter=3

that they eat. My brothers, never slacken in doing what is right.” There is no excuse for those who do not have goods, but there is even an injunction for them to get them with their own work, while encouraging people to do good to others.

The "softening" of the seventh commandment of the Decalogue through the use of the "language of the rights" has its second bottom. The proponents of the principle of the universal purpose of goods recognize the right of private ownership of goods, but, as already mentioned, the surplus of these goods is to serve others. Consequently, they not only approve, but also demand that the State redistribute such "surpluses", i.e., take away from their owners and use them for the improvement of the well-being of those in need. Let us now consider the consequences of such approach.

Apart from pathological cases, working to accumulate stocks of goods, as well as taking advantage of special occasions, such as exceptional harvests, extraordinary fruitful hunting, etc., is usually a sign of prudence, foresight and responsibility for the fate of the person concerned and his or her relatives. It is precisely these characteristics that prompt the people endowed with them to accumulate surplus goods over their current needs. The simplest case of accumulating such an excess is the stock of goods intended for the direct satisfaction of future needs, for example, stock of crops and other food to survive until the next harvest, fuel for the winter, food for farm animals, etc. The same purpose is served by durable goods, such as clothes or vehicles, and real estate, i.e. houses and apartments. In order to have them, it is necessary to work hard enough and to devote some of the effects of one's efforts to these very purposes. This is also a certain excess, but it is only the result of work and savings dictated by prudence and responsibility for oneself and his or her relatives.

A special kind of excess of goods, which also results from the prudence and responsibility of a certain part of people for their own fate and that of their loved ones, are the so-called intermediate goods. These are all kinds of tools, that is, goods that do not serve to satisfy needs directly. Instead, they serve to facilitate the acquisition of goods intended to satisfy such needs in the near and distant future. Thanks to intermediate goods, it is possible to either reduce the effort required to obtain further goods intended for the direct satisfaction of needs, or to increase the quantities obtained at a given expense. Such goods are by their very nature a future-oriented investment. As in any other case, the acquisition of such goods must be bought with a certain effort, but at the same time it requires either refraining from immediately consuming the effects of that effort, as in the case of seed for sowing, or increasing the effort to achieve that goal without reducing current needs.

Thus, in each of the cases described, there is a certain excess of goods over the quantities necessary to meet current needs. This surplus is always the result of the work and savings of those who have such goods, but it has nothing to do with superfluousness, that is, with the accumulation of things that are in fact unnecessary for the very possession of them.

By demanding that surpluses of goods serve those who do not have them, the proponents of economic personalism actually act against people who act prudently in order to ensure a reasonably secure existence for themselves and their loved ones, and *nolens volens* justify laziness, irresponsibility and living at someone else's expense. What makes them different from Marxists is, in fact, only the slogans under which they preach such views: the former invoke social justice, the latter invoke the principle of the universal purpose of goods and human dignity. In my opinion, however, this has nothing to do with either justice or morals.

The fact that the replacement of the moral duty of those who possess goods with the right of those who do not possess them is a very serious mistake of those who are in favour of economic personalism is further substantiated by other arguments. It has already been mentioned above that there is no objective evidence to determine when the excess of goods begins, from which the obligation to share with others arises, and, on the other hand, the degree of unmet need that gives rise to the right to be assisted. Only arbitrariness remains, therefore, and this always leads to evil. For those who think they "deserve" will always claim to have received too little, while those who are taken away will always feel aggrieved. And those who consider themselves judges, deciding how much and who must be taken away in order to pass on to those who they think they need, become benefactors at someone else's expense. The ambiguity of their role lies in the fact that they themselves give nothing of their own to those in need and often still "consume" part of what has been taken away from others to support those in need. It is indeed difficult to be more hypocritical than such "benefactors". Of course, this assessment does not apply to those charities that operate on a voluntary basis of contributions and volunteering.

Granting those who do not possess goods the right to use the property of those who possess them still has a "third bottom". The proponents of the principle of the universal destination of goods invoke the inalienable dignity of the human person, from which the legitimacy of their approach is to be derived. I have already mentioned the evangelical parable of Lazarus, pointing out that to grant Lazarus the right to use the goods of a rich man would be contrary to Jesus' teaching, above all because it would not, in fact, leave room for charity, and would even exempt us from it. However, since the argument of inalienable human dignity is also being put forward, it is worth considering it here, since this concept seems to be understood in a completely opposite way.

The source of human dignity for Christians is the fact that man was created in the image and likeness of God. Hence the demand that every person should see in others this divine element and respect it. And hence the right of every man to expect such respect from others. Such an approach does not seem to arouse any controversy among Christians. Nor does it seem that there are reasons to reject it by those who do not share the Christian vision of the origin of man. However, the problem is that the proponents of economic personalism interpret the dignity not as something that others should see and recognize in man as a person, but as something that gives man rights and privileges

at the expense of others. Again, then, we are facing the replacement of the language of duty by the language of rights.

When using the language of duty, the concept of human dignity should be understood as something that obliges me towards others. It is something that is due to others from me because I have dignity. It is my dignity that commands me to help those in need, not only the poor, and not to restrict my help to goods alone. It is from my dignity as a human being that I do not kill, steal, cheat, slander, defraud, etc. What's more, my duties resulting from my dignity extend not only to people, but to the whole world around me. I do not destroy nature, nor do I torment animals, not because they are living creatures of God, but because I have a dignity that obliges me not to do so. In short, my dignity as a human being comes down to doing what is proper to others and not doing what is non-decent to humans. But under no circumstances should my dignity be a burden for others. Any attempt to demand something from others in the name of my "right to dignity" is even a sign that I lose my own dignity.

It follows that, yes, man has a natural dignity, which stems from the fact that he is God's creation, but, except for the right to some respect, this dignity does not give man any rights but duties. Man, instead, can lose this dignity by his own choice by doing something that is against his dignity. The only way to regain such lost dignity is to return to the dignified behavior of the one who wants to be considered a person worthy of the name of man. This does not mean, however, that a person who has lost his or her own dignity in this way ceases to deserve to be treated with dignity by others.

At the end of this fragment it is worth adding a note of a terminological nature. In this subsection, the problem of property rights was considered in the light of the doctrine of the common purpose of goods. However, it follows from the context that the concept of good, sometimes also referred to as external good, is understood in this doctrine everything that is possible and available for human use, regardless of whether or not such a thing is an object of someone else's property. However, for the reasons given in the previous section of this chapter, a clear distinction must be made between goods and things. If we do so, we will find that the vague and morally questionable doctrine of the "universal destiny of goods" becomes a clear and understandable doctrine of the "universal destiny of things", which cannot be accused of anything either from the point of view of logic or from the point of view of its religious and ethical implications. For it is the things that do not belong to anyone that are destined for all those who wish to make them goods, as long as they fulfill the basic condition of such a transformation, which is to take possession of them. But what has already become someone's property is not subject to this doctrine. Thus, people other than the owners have no rights to the goods, regardless of their social and material status and regardless of the circumstances in which those others find themselves. This last statement, of course, does not in any way undermine the claim that owners of goods have a moral duty to help those in need.

The conclusion of the above considerations is that the "language of rights" must be firmly rejected and the "language of duties" of man towards other people, and especially

towards those in need, must be returned to. Only then will the world be put back on its feet.

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