

Lecture 12 Reading Questions

“Justice in Acquisition”

Readings:

Selections from “Self-ownership, Freedom, and Equality” by G.A. Cohen.

(1) Nozick’s principle of justice in acquisition says that private appropriation of unowned objects is permissible just in case it leaves no one worse off. When and how does someone’s private appropriation of an unowned object leave others worse off?

(2) According to Nozick, all purely natural resources such as land and natural objects are initially *unowned*. Is that true? What recommends this view against the view that all natural resources are initially *jointly owned* by all of humanity? What recommends it against the view that everyone initially has a claim to an *equal share* of natural resources? Which of these views, if any, should we accept?

(3) If the world were initially *jointly owned* by all human beings, would respecting rights of self-ownership lead to large inequalities of wealth? Why or why not?

(4) Would respecting self-ownership produce large inequalities if everyone were initially entitled to an *equal share* of natural resources? Why or why not?

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