

tors) we feel a strong link of ownership with that which we have thus possessed and used, and on which we have bestowed our improvements; and we are aware that another man, in similar relation with another property, will feel towards it in like manner; and a sense of justice, or its still more significant and instructive name, of equity, suggests this equality between me and him—that, in the same manner as I would regard his encroachment on myself as injurious, so it were alike injurious in me to make a similar encroachment upon my neighbour.

27. We have expatiated thus long on the origin and rights of property—because of all subjects, it is the one, regarding which our writers on jurisprudence have sent forth the greatest amount of doubtful and unsatisfactory metaphysics. They labour and are in great perplexity to explain even the rise of the feeling or desire that is in the mind regarding it. They reason, as if the very conception of property was that, which could not have entered into the heart of man without a previous sense of justice. In this we hold them to have antedated matters wrong. The conception of property is aboriginal; and the office of justice is not to put it into any man's head; but to arbitrate among the rival feelings of cupidity, or the arrogant and overpassing claims that are apt to get into all men's heads—not to initiate man into the notion of property; but, in fact, to limit and restrain his notion of it—not to teach the creatures who at first conceive themselves to have nothing, what that is which they might call their own;