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PH611 – Modern Philosophy

Module 2 - Essay

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Submit a one-thousand-word essay related to an aspect of the material covered in the module. You can summarize the module material, reflect on the impact of the text on either yourself or others, state the weaknesses or strengths of the text, and so on. Great variety is allowed in the essay as long as it deals with the material dealt with in the module.

**Whose land is it anyway?
A look at what the Philosophers said!**

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PH 611 Modern Philosophy

Professor Mike Caba

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Introduction

Both the *Second Treatise of Government*¹ and *The Communist Manifesto*² have been interesting reading and have provided me with insight of how the world has been influenced by these great philosophers. Although I may not agree with either Locke or Marx, the insight and the thinking of these philosophers are invaluable. The corrupt nature of human beings has led to the exploitation of the laborers. Governments that are made up of human beings who are corrupt protects the officials and other individuals from the dominant class, and therefore allows injustice and cycles of poverty to remain the status quo for the underprivileged. We often use terms like “civil society” but there is nothing civil about protecting injustice or favoring one cultural group over another.

The right to equal property title

Locke's suggestion that everyone should have an equal title to the property,³ raises a few questions:

1. Why then are there so many people without a piece of a property title today?
2. Why has the government protected those who forced people from their land?
3. Who gave colonials the right to claim a country as their own?
4. Why is there such a high emphasis placed on immigration if everyone has equal title to property?

My feeling is that everyone should have equal title to property, for there would be much less poverty surrounding us and possibly less social issues, such as crime, violence and theft. When looking at this from a South African point of view, most properties are owned by white landowners even in this post-apartheid era. White landowners were able to acquire and amass wealth far beyond the non-white community. Mortgage lenders still view white borrowers more favorably than non-white borrowers when applying for a mortgage to purchase a property, possibly because statistics reveal that

¹ John Locke and Crawford Macpherson, *Second Treatise of Government* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980), vii-124.

² Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), 3-44.

³ John Locke and Crawford Macpherson, *Second Treatise of Government*, 21.

the wages of the white community is considerably more than the wages of the non-white community.⁴ As Locke suggested, the duty of the government is to protect private property and this has been done effectively in South Africa. The government protected the land of white community and forced non-white people from their land to create more “whites only” communities as stated in the apartheid segregation acts and, more specifically, the Group Areas Act of 1950. These acts limited property rights and the lives of Black, Coloured and Indian people. Thereby the government did not maintain equal title to property but rather protected private property for a select part of the population using evil and unjust laws.

Marks and Engels reference to the abolition of private property⁵ may seem to be good, yet this theory has its own issues. In a communist system, the property would cede to the government and therefore be controlled by the government. Thus, another question comes to mind: Who would the government place in current affluent suburbs and who would they place in the informal and less affluent suburbs?

My thoughts are that the communist system would create a capitalist system within itself and governors and political leaders would be living in abundance whilst they accumulate property while the main population of a country would live in absolute squalor. This may therefore become a situation of the Bourgeoisie vs the Proletariat, where the proletariat being the poor would fight against the government that protects the Bourgeoisie.

South Africa – expropriation without compensation

The South African government is on the brink of implementing a strategy of expropriation without compensation, which is related to agricultural land.⁶ Although this is much needed in South Africa, because of the injustice of the past, there is a fear of

⁴ Staff Writer, "Whites earn 5 times more than blacks in South Africa: Stats SA" *Business Tech*. January 30, 2017, accessed March 5, 2018, <https://businesstech.co.za/news/wealth/153485/whites-earn-5-times-more-than-blacks-in-south-africa-stats-sa/>.

⁵ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, 25.

⁶ Staff Writer, "EFF to introduce 'appropriation without compensation' motion to Parliament" *Business Tech*. February 23, 2018, accessed February 23, 2018, <https://businesstech.co.za/news/government/227319/eff-to-introduce-land-appropriation-without-compensation-motion-to-parliament-report>.

how this would be executed. Landowners are concerned that their property values may be affected and therefore banks may no longer find value if lending for production is required. In one instance, I feel that it is the right thing to do, but in the same sense I wonder how different then is this from the segregation acts of South Africa? One can understand the fear these landowners may have because they are aware of what they or their forefathers did to the non-white community and therefore may now fear the same would happen to themselves.

Controlling property ownership

I feel that the government should limit the amount of property an individual may acquire only for the sake of profit. Property should also be acquired to create employment opportunities for others whilst the laborers are remunerated fairly. "Fairly," meaning that laborers can also acquire property, since minimum wage leaves the laborers with no means to acquire property of their own. Furthermore, larger organizations should not be allowed to acquire smaller organizations, as larger organizations are in essence controlled and owned by the wealthy and mostly white businessmen in South Africa and too often these businessmen are not concerned for the well-being of the non-white laborer, and laborers are often exploited and are expected to live for less⁷ because employment opportunities are scarce in South Africa.

Our duty as followers of Jesus

In conclusion, as followers of Jesus Christ, we should be at the forefront in the battles against injustice, and we should be willing to lay our lives down in pursuit of justice. The Bible teaches us that "There should be no poor among you, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the Lord your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today" (Deut. 15:4–5, NIV). May we fight against injustice and obey the commands of the Lord, that there may be no poor amongst us, and may we love everyone at all times.

⁷ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto.*, 16.

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