

Nehemias Jimenez

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Prof. Robison

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Locke's Logic on the State of War Emerging from the State of Nature

The State of War according to John Locke is a “state of enmity and destruction” that one deliberately enters by acting or speaking against another in a way that violates the State of Nature. From the perspective of the responder, the State of War is a state of defense where he rightfully responds to protect the State of Nature. By rightfully I mean respond with a natural right making a legitimized response to terminate the violation of the State of Nature.

The State of War rises out of the State of Nature because of the presuppositions concerning human nature within the State of Nature as a theory. The first of these presuppositions is that humans are born equal and with natural liberty. This natural liberty can be summed up to be that all people are born free of any kind of authority or rule. Because all men are born in this way, there is no person who can impose their will on another. Hence they are equal. This natural liberty then extends to the kind of rule of a government over a society whereby no society can be legitimately ruled without consent. And although man is born naturally free from the rule of any kind of man or government without consent, there is a natural law that governs his way of being in the world pre-political activity and pre- State of War. These are the other presuppositions concerning how humans act. Locke believed that the nature of humans was that they are driven towards self-preservation. They could have easily been people who wanted to escape the world and take their own lives, but Locke rightfully observes that it is

not the tendency. In this manner he connects this to an idea that all men have property, starting with one's own body. One preserves their body because they are all born with a natural understanding of autonomy. The work of one's body, through working ground, planting a tree, or picking up harvest extends the property of a person. Here is how it connects to the previous assumptions. The freedom of natural liberty is fixed with bodily autonomy since one's body is one's property. Since one owns their body, no other person can rightfully take possession without consent. If one wants to assume the right of life and death over an individual, the individual does not even have this to hand over. And if the preservation and the non-termination of the bodily life is the tendency of individuals, it must remain the same in political organization. (What Locke is largely theorizing). In connection to the pre-political state called the State of Nature, all these assumptions set up the backdrop of human interaction.

All humans then have the right to property, starting from their bodies, and forward to other possessions they get. In many ways the State of War is the violation of these natural rights whereby someone might want to impose their will in making slaves, or in stealing another's properties. This whether done by deed or through verbal threat puts this person in a State of War with the responder. To keep the State of Nature in pact where all can live in harmony and freedom to personal property, the person terminates this violation by whatever means necessary. All people have an equal right to defend this natural law when it is violated. Consequently, this back and forth, and the risk of someone going too far sets up the solution of a government whereby individuals and the society reasons to relinquish these rights by consent.