

HEALTH, DEVELOPMENT & HUMAN RIGHTS

A Natural Right to Property

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, it is *information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Locke, J. (1980). *Second Treatise of Government* (C. B. Macpherson, Ed.). Indianapolis, IN: Hackett. (Original work published 1690).

Questions

1. How is John Locke's understanding of the state of nature similar to, and yet significantly different, from that of Thomas Hobbes?
2. According to Locke, what is the law of nature and what is the *fundamental* law of nature (these are not necessarily identical, though they are very similar)? What natural rights follow from this and why do they follow? How are these natural laws and rights different from what Hobbes claims them to be?
3. One topic Locke and Hobbes disagree on is private property. Recall that Hobbes denies a natural right to private property, arguing that private property is merely a conventional right created by the state. However, Locke goes to great lengths, and uses a lot of examples, to refute Hobbes and defend a natural right to private property. In other words, Locke argues that, even in the state of nature, there are property rights.

What is Locke's argument that there a natural right to take something previously available to everyone and making it one's own private property? What conditions does Locke specify for a person to rightfully do so?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.