

In this column, write the main idea of the paragraph in your own words

As you read, annotate in the margins the main idea of each paragraph. When you are finished, answer the questions below.

The following are excerpts from John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government Book II*

The State of Nature

"To properly understand political power and trace its origins, we must consider the state that all people are in naturally. That is a state of perfect freedom of acting and disposing of their own possessions and persons as they think fit within the bounds of the law of nature. People in this state do not have to ask permission to act or depend on the will of others to arrange matters on their behalf. The natural state is also one of equality in which all power and jurisdiction is reciprocal and no one has more than another. It is evident that all human beings – as creatures belonging to the same species and rank and born indiscriminately with all the same natural advantages and faculties – are equal amongst themselves. They have no relationship of subordination or subjection unless God (the lord and master of them all) had clearly set one person above another and conferred on him an undoubted right to dominion and sovereignty.

But though this be a state of liberty, it is not a state of licence: though man in that state have an uncontrollable liberty to dispose of his person or possessions, he has not liberty to destroy himself, or so much as any creature in his possession. The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions:

And that all men may be restrained from invading others rights, and from doing hurt to one another, and the law of nature be observed, which wills the peace and preservation of all mankind, the execution of the law of nature is, in that state, put into every man's hands, whereby everyone has a right to punish the transgressors of that law. For the law of nature would, as all other laws that concern men in this world 'be in vain, if there were no body that in the state of nature had a power to execute that law, and thereby preserve the innocent and restrain offenders. And if anyone in the state of nature may punish another for any evil he has done, every one may do so: for in that state of perfect equality, where naturally there is no superiority or jurisdiction of one over another, what any may do in prosecution of that law, everyone must needs have a right to do.

And thus, in the state of nature, one man comes by a power over another; but yet no absolute or arbitrary power. Retribution and restraint for a criminal: these two are the only reasons, why one man may lawfully do harm to another, which is that we call punishment EVERY MAN HATH A

RIGHT TO PUNISH THE OFFENDER, AND BE EXECUTIONER OF THE LAW OF NATURE.

The State of War

IF man in the state of nature be so free, as has been said; if he be absolute lord of his own person and possessions, equal to the greatest, and subject to no body, why will he part with his freedom? Why will he give up this empire, and subject himself to the dominion and control of any other power? To which it is obvious to answer, that though in the state of nature he hath such a right, yet the enjoyment of it is very uncertain, and constantly exposed to the invasion of others: for all being kings as much as he, every man his equal, and the greater part no strict observers of equity and justice, the enjoyment of the property he has in this state is very unsafe, very unsecure. This makes him willing to quit a condition, which, however free, is full of fears and continual dangers: and it is not without reason, that he seeks out, and is willing to join in society with others, who are already united, or have a mind to unite, for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties and estates, which I call by the general name, property.

And hence it is, that he who attempts to get another man into his absolute power, does thereby put himself into a state of war with him; it being to be understood as a declaration of a design upon his life: for I have reason to conclude, that he who would get me into his power without my consent, would use me as he pleased when he had got me there, and destroy me too when he had a fancy to it; for no body can desire to have me in his absolute power, unless it be to compel me by force to that which is against the right of my freedom, i.e. make me a slave. To be free from such force is the only security of my preservation; and reason bids me look on him, as an enemy to my preservation, who would take away that freedom; so that he who makes an attempt to enslave me, thereby puts himself into a state of war with me.

And here we have the plain difference between the state of nature and the state of war. Men living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth, with authority to judge between them, is properly the state of nature. But force, or a declared design of force, upon the person of another, where there is no common superior on earth to appeal to for relief, is the state of war.

The State of Government

To avoid this state of war is one great reason of men's putting themselves into society, and quitting the state of nature, yet no one can be put out of

this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent. The only way whereby any one divests himself of his natural liberty, and puts on the bonds of civil society, is by agreeing with other men to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties, and a greater security against any, that are not of it. This any number of men may do, because it injures not the freedom of the rest; they are left as they were in the liberty of the state of nature. When any number of men have so consented to make one community or government, they are thereby presently incorporated, and make one body politic, wherein the majority have a right to act and conclude the rest.

Hence it is evident, that Absolute Monarchy, which by some Men is counted the only Government in the World, is indeed inconsistent with Civil Society, and so can be no Form of Civil Government at all. For he being suppos'd to have all, both Legislative and Executive Power in himself alone, there is no Judge to be found, no Appeal lies open to any one, who may fairly and indifferently and with any Authority decide, and from whose decision relief and redress may be expected of any Injury or Inconveniency that may be suffered from the Monarch or by his Order. In an ordinary state of nature, man has liberty to judge of his right. With Absolute Monarchy, whenever his Property is invaded by the will and order of the Monarch, he is denied liberty of judge or to defend his right.

Questions to Consider:

Answer the following questions using complete sentences AND evidence from the readings to support

1. According to Locke, what is the State of Nature? Can you draw any parallels to these ideas and any we have in American history?
2. Who has the right to punish and judge others who violate the perfect state of nature? Why?
3. What is the difference between a State of War and a State of Government?
4. According to Locke's philosophy, can a state of nature and a civil society co-exist? Explain your reasoning.
5. How does Locke feel about Absolute Monarchy? What do you think would be his preferred method of government?
6. Which value do you think Locke's philosophy represents? Explain your answer.

