

SELECTIONS FROM *OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT*

John Locke (1632–1704)

(Primary Source)

The State of Nature

To understand political power aright, we must consider what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature; without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man. . . .

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: for men [are] all the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise Maker; all the servants of one sovereign master, sent into the world by his order, and about his business. . . .

Reason

Men living together according to reason, without a common superior on earth, with authority to judge between them, is properly the state of nature.



John Locke

God, who hath given the world to men in common, hath also given them reason to make use of it to the best advantage of life, and convenience. The earth, and all that is therein, is given to men for the support and comfort of their being.

Nothing was made by God for man to spoil or destroy. And thus, considering the plenty of natural provision there was a long time in the world, and the few spenders . . . there could be then little room for quarrels or contentions about property so established.