

American Philosophy - Essay 1 –Spring 2020

Locke says, “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 who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty or possessions; for men being 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; they are His property, whose workmanship they are made to last during His, not one another’s pleasure. And, being furnished with like faculties, sharing all in one community of Nature, there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us that may authorise us to destroy one another, as if we were made for one another’s uses, as the inferior ranks of creatures are for ours. Every one as he is bound to preserve himself, and not to quit his station wilfully, so by the like reason, when his own preservation comes not in competition, ought he as much as he can to preserve the rest of mankind, and not unless it be to do justice on an offender, take away or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of the life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another.”

(1) Explain Locke’s arguments for: (a) the immorality of suicide, (b) the immorality of harming other people except in self-defense or as punishment for their harmful acts, and (c) the immorality of starting wars of conquest. Make sure to explain Locke’s ideas of natural law and natural right and to describe the role they play in his arguments for these conclusions. (2) Does the value of humanity depend on its “natural” (i.e. non-normative) superiority to the other species of animals? Might Locke be wrong in thinking that humans don’t have an obligation to respect the lives, liberties and property (i.e. ecosystems) of other animals? How might one argue for a moral obligation to respect other animals without invoking the “natural equality” of species? (3) Explain Locke’s account of the “state of nature” and the “social contract” that brings people into a “civil society.” (5) According to Locke, how do our rights in a state of nature differ from our rights in a civil society? Are Locke’s views on this matter correct?

**5-6 Pages Double-spaced**

**Due 4/22/20 by 5PM**