

PE 100 Sections 105 & 106
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Writing Assignment #1

Due Week 3: September 9th - Friday, in Section

1. Of the classical theorists reviewed this week (Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau), which 'State of Nature' do you think is most sound? Why? Use logic and evidence to substantiate your argument.

I believe that either Aristotle or Rousseau's version of the state of nature is the most sound because two basic premises of their arguments haven't been proven to be incorrect. Hobbes and Locke both establish their arguments upon the fundamental supposition that the human experience began in a solitary state. While it may be true that our reptilian ancestors emerged from the egg, matured, and died in the relatively solitary pursuit of survival and reproduction, the *Homo sapien* state of nature as we understand it today is rooted in a strong evolutionary history of social interdependence. Anthropological and neurobiological research conclusively shows how, since the hominid lineage diverged from the ape lineage 5 to 8 million years, our ancestors progressively evolved specific traits (ex. comparatively large brains, mirror neurons, etc.) that allowed us to better interact with other individuals as a key method of ensuring our survival.¹

Hobbes and Locke, along with Rousseau, make a second fundamental assumption that has proven to be flawed. They argue that human beings within their original state of nature made a calculated choice to forfeit their personal liberty and pass their individual power to the sovereign. However, we now understand that the part of the brain responsible for this type of

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"Frequently Asked Questions about Evolution – A Matter of Time." *PBS*. <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/faq/cat06.html>> See also, Hamilton, Jon. "From Primitive Parts, a Highly Evolved Human Brain." *NPR*. August 9, 2010. <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129027124>> See also, Jha, Alok. "Human brain result of 'extraordinarily fast' evolution." *The Guardian*. December 29, 2004. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2004/dec/29/evolution.science>>

rational, analytical thought, the neocortex, doesn't actually govern our decision-making. Instead, the limbic section of the brain, which houses all of our feelings, like trust and loyalty, is also largely responsible for human behavior and decision-making.² This evidence would support the claim that our socially conditioned subconscious is what led us to the formation of complex civilizations and forms of government, not rational calculations of fear and freedom. For these reasons, I would say Aristotle's state of nature is the most sound because it's the least wrong.

² Hamilton, Jon. See also, Sinek, Simon. "How Great Leaders Inspire Action." *TEDxPugetSound*. September 2009. <http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action.html>