



Metaphysical Problems, Political Solutions: Self, State, and Nation in Hobbes and Locke

Asaf Z. Sokolowski

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In defiance of the predominant pattern of reading liberal political thought in isolation from the metaphysical and theological investigations of its classic thinkers, *Metaphysical Problems, Political Solutions: Self, State, and Nation in Hobbes and Locke* seeks to place their writings in context. Asaf Z. Sokolowski demonstrates that the political measures offered by theorists to remedy the social state of instability, known as the 'state of nature,' are intrinsically connected to distinctive metaphysical conceptions of the relationship between order and individuation. In each system of thought the origin and role of the self are determined by a particular conception of a created and evolving universal order. In turn, each version of order must contend with the vital question of how the individual is able to sustain a continuous identity. Thus, contrary to conventional thinking, it becomes apparent that the political theory developed by thinkers like Hobbes and Locke is predicated less on a security threat than on a debilitating insecurity concern, derived from ontological identity difficulties. This identity-focused reinterpretation of the liberal tradition transforms differences between key thinkers, previously reduced to nuance, into pivotal discords that shed a new light on the theoretical underpinnings of the self, the state, and the nation. As such, it will be valuable to scholars of political theory, metaphysics, theology, social science, and law.

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