

# What is Social Responsibility?

by

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Social Responsibility is often mentioned as a compelling reason for taxation and regulation in a society. The question is...Is it valid?

To answer that, we have to determine several definitions, the first of which is property.

Property: A thing owned.

How is property created? Property is created through the mixing of labour(the one property that every man has according to John Locke).

*Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person. This nobody has any right to but himself. The labour of his body and the "work" of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, it hath by this labour something annexed to it that excludes the common right of other men. (Concerning Civil Government, 2nd essay, John Locke)*

So therefore, man is created through the labour of his parents. However children are not objects but are sentient beings. This gives parents a special ownership although limited(some may prefer to call this a trust in that the parents cannot dispose of the issue as they see fit and that the child is not an inanimate object). They do control the infant through it's development with the amount of control lessening as the child's own cognitive ability develops and he slowly develops self-responsibility. Eventually, he becomes independent of his parents(trustees) and in his own right becomes an autonomous person. One that is self-governing, yet not chattel.

That man existed before society and before the State is irrefutable. Therefore the State did not create man and so does not own him. The parents of man did not enter him into contract with the State. Although if they are considered owners they theoretically could by selling him. If considered trustees then they cannot sell him as that would be an abuse of the trust.

"If the State isn't the source of our rights to personal security and liberty, then it isn't the foundation of our property rights, either. Our property is the result of our work, our involvement in the world. To suppose that people have the right to life, and yet no right to property, is to take with one hand what you give with the other." (Narveson, "Moral Matters" Broadview Press 1993)

This assumes that we have a right to life and that our right to keep from being pushed of "this mortal coil" is held by ourselves and is

not a grant from the State.

If the parents enter into contract with the State, that does not imply that the child was brought into bondage. For to allow the taking of children into bondage would legitimize the taking of all people into bondage.

Thus we can say with assuredness that the State does not own us from birth. Whether it can acquire ownership from autonomous adults is less clear. If we can assume that contracts are valid only when made voluntarily, then yes, a man could enter into contract between himself and the State, which case he is surrendering his autonomy. He could not, however, sign anyone else into bondage. If we say that contracts are valid under duress, we can strike the crime of extortion from the law. For extortion is defined as *"/obtaining by force, threats or intimidation./"*

*"If we have a right against the State to be alive at all, we also have the right to live our \*own\* lives, in accordance with our own values and interests. And if we have that right, then we have the right to use and occupy bits of the world and incorporate those things into our lives on our own terms - not the State's."*(Narveson, "Moral Matters" Broadview Press 1993)

Having stated our case for autonomy, we can now examine whether such a thing as Social Responsibility exists.

Social is defined as "of society" and Responsibility is defined as "a legal or moral obligation or duty."

If members of society can claim a duty on another member, then they lay claim on his property, his self. To do so, the one who has that claim made on him must have entered into contract or incurred that obligation through damage to another's right of property. If Society claims damages from an individual it must prove that damage has occurred. If it is a contractual obligation, then a contract between each individual must be agreed upon. If society's claim is that it provides services to the individual, then it has the obligation to show that the particular individual consented to the delivery of that service otherwise no contractual obligation exists. Merely existing in physical location on the globe does not imply consent. The individual must have the right to reject a contract. If not, it then becomes an imposed contract. I have already shown how a contract entered into under duress is extortion and not valid.

It has been argued that a majority can impose obligations upon individuals, however if a man is autonomous, that imposed obligation is a violation of his right of property.

Therefore, any claim of "social responsibility" is invalid. A claim that everyone owes an obligation to each other implies that everyone is owned by each other, that there is no individual right to self-determination.

There may be a moral argument for social responsibility but again, that becomes an issue of self-determination versus coercion.

For moral values can be common to a group, but whether they are adhered to is up to each individual. I would argue that helping the sick or the poor is a moral act of virtue. It is also one that brings rewards to

those who perform that act. However, it is not a virtuous act to have your neighbour take your property and give it to someone else.

Therefore, social responsibility is a matter of individual moral decision-making. In other words... \*social responsibility is an individual's choice\*.

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