John Locke: Of Political or Civil Society

1 Man being born, as has been proved, with a Title to perfect Freedom, and an
2 uncontrouled enjoyment of all the Rights and Privileges of the Law of Nature,
3 equally with any other Man, or Number of Men in the World, hath by Nature a
4 Power, not only to preserve his Property, that is, his Life, Liberty and Estate, against
5 the Injuries and Attempts of other Men; but to judge of, and punish the breaches of
6 that Law in others, as he is persuaded the Offence deserves, even with Death itself, in
7 Crimes where the heinousness of the Fact, in his Opinion, requires it.
8 But because no Political Society can be, nor subsist, without having in itself the Power
9 to preserve the Property, and in order thereunto, punish the Offences of all those of
10 that Society; there, and there only is Political Society, where every one of the members
11 hath quitted this natural Power, resigned it up into the hands of the Community in
12 all cases that exclude him not from appealing for Protection to the Law established
13 by it.

And thus all private judgment of every particular Member being excluded, the Community comes to be Umpire, by settled standing Rules, indifferent, and the same to all Parties; and by Men having Authority from the Community, for the execution of those Rules, decides all the differences that may happen between any Members of that Society concerning any matter of right; and punishes those Offences which any member hath committed against the Society, with such Penalties as the Law has established: whereby it is easie to discern, who are, and who are not, in Political Society together.

Those who are united into One Body, and have a common establish’d Law and Judicature to appeal to, with authority to decide Controversies between them, and punish Offenders, are in Civil Society one with another: but those who have no such common Appeal, I mean on Earth, are still in the state of nature, each being, where there is no other, Judge for himself, and Executioner; which is, as I have before shew’d it, the perfect state of Nature.