

Competition & Cooperation

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

It is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern, since our most basic task is to evaluate the reasons and evidence that are offered to support accepting one possible position on an issue, rather than another.

Reading

Hobbes, T. (2006, July). *Leviathan, part 1: Man* (J. Bennett, Ed. & Trans.). Early Modern Texts. https://www.early-moderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hobbes1651part1_2.pdf (Original work from 1651/1668)

Questions

1. In the first section on “The Difference of Manners”, Thomas Hobbes wants to look at the different things that psychologically motivate people to act.

According to Hobbes, what is the “general inclination of all mankind” (p. 44)? What other desires does Hobbes discuss? Which of these desires cause people to compete with each other? Which lead to cooperation?

2. In the next section, “The Natural Condition of Mankind As Concerning Their Happiness and Misery”, Hobbes applies his claims about human motivation to what happens “for as long as men live without a common power to keep them all in awe” (p. 57).

Why does Hobbes think this time is pretty bad? In particular, why are people generally equal according to Hobbes, and why does this radical equality—combined with our competitive desires—cause problems? Hobbes ends this section claiming that our cooperative desires, nonetheless, have us seek peace. Why is that?

3. For the third section, “The First and Second Natural Laws, and Contracts”, Hobbes wants to show how our cooperative desires, along with our prudential reason, lead us recognize and accept two laws of nature.

What are these two natural laws? Why accept them? How are they different from your right of nature?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.