

Coordination Without Communication

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

Schelling, T. C. (1980). Tacit coordination (common interests). In *The strategy of conflict* (2nd ed., pp. 54–58). Harvard University Press. (Original work from 1960)

Questions

1. Thomas Schelling presents several examples of situations where multiple people make coordinated decisions without being able to communicate and/or negotiate with one another.

For instance, suppose a friend messages you, saying to meet them at Grand Central Station in New York City tomorrow. Unfortunately, they do not say where or when, nor do they respond when you message them back for those details. Assuming you like this friend enough, you go to New York City. Once there, though, where and when do you meet them? If you are even a little familiar with Grand Central Station, I suspect you would be waiting at the famous big clock in the Main Concourse at 12:00PM, noon.

Now go through all the examples that Schelling gives of coordination without communication. How would you choose in each of those situations? Why would you choose in that way? Do your answers match Schelling's?

2. In coordination situations without communication, what does Schelling mean by a "focal point" (p. 57)? What are the focal points in the example about meeting your friend at Grand Central Station? How are the focal points determined in these situations?

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.