

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

The Natural Condition of Humanity

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?

For our purposes, *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). [Chapters 13–15]. In J. Bennet (Ed. & Trans.), *Leviathan, part 1: Man* (pp. 56–74). Early Modern Texts. <https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hobbes1651part1.pdf> (Original work from 1651/1668)

Questions

As you read, keep these questions in mind:

1. In chapter 13, Thomas Hobbes applies his claims about human motivation (from our previous reading) to what happens when “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?
2. In chapter 14, Hobbes wants to show how our cooperative desires, along with our prudential use of reason, lead us recognize and accept two laws of nature.
What are these two natural laws? Why accept them? How are they different from, yet connected to, your right of nature? Why does this last point bring up the issue of contracts and covenants?
3. Finally, in chapter 15, Hobbes presents his third law of nature.
What is this law and how does Hobbes justify it? What does this law reveal about the nature of justice and of property? Are these intrinsic or instrumentally valuable?

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.