

POLITICAL & SOCIAL THOUGHT

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 premises, assumptions, reasons, evidence, and other important considerations 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 and justify accepting the author's conclusions as opposed to other ones.

Reading

Hobbes, T. (2007, August). *Leviathan, Part 1: Man* (J. Bennett, Trans.). Early Modern Texts. Retrieved November 20, 2018, from <http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/hobbes1651part1.pdf>. (Original work from 1651/1668.)
(Excerpts are from chapters 11, and 13–15.)

Comment

In our discussions this semester, starting here with Thomas Hobbes, the following distinction will prove extremely useful.

- **Instrumental Value:** Value based on being the *means to something else* that is valued.
So things with this type of value are valued insofar as these things are the means to *other* ends or goals.
Things with *only* this type of value—like money or exercise—are called **instrumental goods**.
- **Intrinsic Value:** Value based on being valued *for itself or in its own right*.
So things with this type of value are valued insofar as these things *are* ultimate ends or goals of their own.
Things with *only* this type of value—like pleasure, happiness, or true love—are called **intrinsic goods**.
Of course, some things may have *both* types of value—like health or education. These are called **mixed goods**.

Questions

1. In chapter 11, 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 us to cooperate?

Based on this, what (if anything) has intrinsic value?

2. In chapter 13, Hobbes applies his claims about human motivation 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?

3. In chapter 14, Hobbes wants to show how our cooperative desires, along with our prudential use of reason, lead us to 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?

4. 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 (unless you miss or are late to class, and must then submit a written reading question review).

You do need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting. You may, during the following class, be randomly selected to present answers to these if selected to do so for a verbal reading question review.