

Second essay assignment

INSTRUCTIONS:

This essay asks you to choose one question and answer it. It is an analytic essay based on a particular theme in the author's work. Your essay should be formally structured and written using normal font, double-spaced. The minimum length is 1000-1200 words (between 3 & 4 pages). You are to limit direct quotation to less than 10% of the grade. Your response must only be based on texts used in class; use of outside material is prohibited. For citation please use parenthetical in text (Hobbes, 128).

Essay is due via email (format: MS Word, Pages, or .pdf only) on Thursday April 12th. You will receive a confirmation email. Please name the file that you send with your last name.

QUESTIONS:

1. Hobbes is attempting to construct a "science" of politics. What are his assumptions about human behavior? How do these lead to a science that leads to the establishment and justification for absolute sovereignty? What is Locke's response to Hobbes?

2. How does Hobbes' and Locke's use of "reason" differ? How does their respective account of "reason" explain the differences between them?

GRADING:

Grading will be based on the following factors:

- a) Student follows instructions and answers each component of the question with equal importance. [10points]
- b) Grammar, spelling, essay structure (offers a main claim and proper introduction; use of topic sentences in paragraphs; logical structure to essay) [15 points]
- c) Student communicates an accurate account of author's work (demonstrates understanding) [20 points]
- d) Use of text: includes appropriate direct citation, and does so accurately; paraphrases effectively and accurately; develops supporting evidence for main argument based on text. [25 points]
- e) Overall argument: comprehensive, accurate or persuasive, thoughtful, and close attention to nuance [30 points]

April 12, 2018.

1. Hobbes is attempting to construct a “science” of politics. What are his assumptions about human behavior? How do these lead to a science that leads to the establishment and justification for absolute sovereignty? What is Locke’s response to Hobbes?

In his book *Leviathan*, Hobbes wrote that humans are self-centered, cruel, and prone to war while always breaking promises to one another when it suits them. He sees these behavioral characteristics as a problem where every man is every man’s enemy. This is his basis for the need for a governing absolute power to control as a solution to the problem.

Hobbes wrote that “from this diffidence of one another, there is no way for any man to secure himself, so reasonable as anticipation. In man, three principal causes of quarrel; competition, diffidence, and glory. During the time men live without a common power to keep them in awe, they are in that condition which is called war.” (Hobbes, *Wordsworth Classics*, Chapter 13).

Hobbes noted **three problems with human behaviors**. The first is about people’s tendency to be self-centered and competitive to achieve their goals no matter the tactics used. The second is about people cherishing worth of goals achieved and praise that comes as a result. It serves as a notion of aesthetics that some people are better than others. This violates the equality right in the state of nature and it leads to conflict. The third is people’s lack of self-confidence. People who lack opinions on what matters and what they want in society because they only care for their own safety. Such **people do not have an idea of a solution to problems, so they are the cause**. Such complacent people pose a conflict in society. Constant conflicts could lead to war.

Hobbes believed that **everyone is equal** in a state of nature and those who are weak can organize and use their intelligence to further their interests. He also believed that such equality would cause animosity between men fighting to **enforce their desires to attain their ends** for their own conservation. The naturally passionate nature of human beings, men's natural love control over others; the "miserable condition of war" that results from these elements are impossible to keep in check if there is no common power to do so.

He believed that in such conditions of war, there is a sense **of continuous fear and danger** of death and the unknown. There are no comforts of life as men's lives are cut short and reduced to the security of their own "strength and their own invention" to survive. Hobbes sees absolute sovereignty as a solution that would be able to bring union to the people in a civil society. The sovereign would be able to rule with an iron fist and bring peace to the state. Hobbes is not willing to trust that people would not break their promises with each other hence, the need for a sovereign.

Hobbes theory of calmness rests on the basis of an agreement or covenant between the governed and the governors. It is essential for Hobbes' political theory that the government or state is first created by an agreement among the citizenry themselves before the next stage of agreement between the citizens and the sovereign. This creation of a common power will force people to live peaceably in the society.

However, in Hobbes's theory, people renounce their rights liberty in a state of nature to submit to the sovereign's absolute rule voluntarily in order to be protected against all forms of adversaries. The sovereign could either be one person or a group of people with power, strength, and authority to perform the wills of the citizenry and bring peace to the society while fighting their enemies outside the society.

Hobbes wrote that “because the right of bearing the person of them all is given to him they make sovereign, by covenant only of one to another, and not of him to any of them, there can happen no breach of covenant on the part of the sovereign and consequently, none of his subjects, can be freed from his subjection.” (Hobbes, Wordsworth Classics, Chapter 18).

The desired society that Hobbes portrayed in his book is one that most people would not want to live in during the 21st century. A nation-state/society, where a sovereign control all the activities of the citizens, is undesirable. In this absolute sovereignty, citizens would be denied their freedom of thought, right to speech, and critique of the government. This is because the sovereign has the right to punish anyone that is deemed antagonizing of the society’s peace. The sovereign demands loyalty and obedience. An individual can only disobey if the sovereign intends to harm his life. The monarch ensures that the people do not think about what could be better and say something that could cause a change. The only things left in the control of an individual are things that are not stated by the sovereign and an individual’s life.

Also, the citizens are not free from the sovereign’s subjection. The covenant that had been made cannot be revoked. Hobbes wrote that only a sovereign can end his reign in a society. The citizenry “cannot lawfully make a new covenant amongst themselves”. The people are prohibited from making a change when the sovereign no longer serve their cause. The sovereign cannot break any agreement because the sovereign is independent, autonomous, and not accountable to anyone as he is completely detached from the people.

Unlike Hobbes, Locke fights against absolute sovereigns because their humanity defeats their purpose. Hobbes presented sovereigns as a solution to man’s cruel ways that often leads to war; Locke reprimanded that sovereigns are also men capable of doing the same thing. Locke wrote for limited sovereignty and limited government.

Locke wrote that "there can be but one supreme power, which is the legislative, to which all the rest are and must be subordinate. Yet the legislative being only a fiduciary power to act for certain ends, there remains still in the people a supreme power to remove or alter the legislative when they find the legislative act contrary to the trust reposed in them." (Locke, Section 149, pg. 77).

For Locke, a sovereign is attached to the people in a way. Not only are the powers of the government limited, but they are also revocable. The people have the "supreme power" to save themselves from any government that declines to carry out their wishes. Locke wrote that this power is only present when a government is dissolved. the government has no right to take any part of an individual's property without consent. The people are free from a government's subjection when the government endeavors to destroy the will of the society that it had promised to uphold. The authority of the government in Locke's world is on a condition on it performing its elected duties.