

Second paper topics

Write a paper no longer than 1800 words, about 5-6 pages, on one of the topics below. Please upload your paper to Sakai *and* turn a paper copy in to me by the beginning of class on Monday, October 29. Please note that this is later than the date in the syllabus and feel free to thank Matt. Good luck!

1. Hobbes described the state of nature as a war “of every man against every man” (*Leviathan*, ch. 13, ¶8). But he surely knew that this would not literally be true: his case against the Fool depends on there being confederacies for defense (ch. 15, ¶5) and he noted historical cases in which people band into groups of “small families” (ch. 17, ¶2-3). Explain why there appears to be a problem for Hobbes here. How might he square his theoretical explanation of conflict in the state of nature with observed facts? What do you think, can Hobbes both maintain that the state of nature would be a state of war and acknowledge that there could be social cooperation within it?
2. Hobbes described a peaceful and a violent way of forming a state. He called the first a commonwealth by institution (*Leviathan*, ch. 18) and the second a commonwealth by acquisition (*Leviathan*, ch. 20). He claimed that there is no important difference between the two. Explain two things: why that is a surprising thing to say and why he nonetheless believed it was true. Then offer your own assessment of his reasoning: is he right that there is no important difference between the two?
3. According to Hobbes, “there is a question to be answered of much importance,” namely, “by what door the right or authority of punishing ... came in” (*Leviathan*, ch. 21, ¶2). Why did Hobbes think this was a question he had to answer? What was his answer to it? Describe what you regard as a compelling objection to Hobbes’s answer. How might Hobbes have tried to rebut this objection? What do you think? Is Hobbes’s account of the sovereign’s right of punishment adequate?

4. Locke thought we have much more extensive natural rights than Hobbes did. For instance, Locke's natural rights impose obligations while Hobbes's right of nature does not. What are the advantages of Hobbes's position? What are the advantages of Locke's? Which one do you think is closer to the truth?
5. Locke tried to show that individuals have property rights prior to any social arrangements. Explain Locke's argument for this conclusion: what did he try to prove and how did he try to prove it? Describe what you regard as a compelling objection. What would Locke's best answer to the objection be? Finally, give your assessment: did Locke succeed or not?
6. Describe Hume's case against social contract theories. Consider how a social contract theorist, such as Hobbes or Locke, might respond to Hume. Does Hume's argument succeed? Describe the implications of your assessment for the justification of the state.