

States of Nature

no one has any political power and there is no government or an informal code of conduct

Examples: (all controversial)

Pre-societal individuals

- Locke: americal in 17th century
- Others: "primitive peoples" now

Non- individuals

- Nations in the absence of international law

Limited/ partial states of nature (respect to certain good and certain times)

- No state can be a total state, there cant be laws governing all behavior
- Producers in a free market
- Consumers in free market
- Individuals acting in ways not covered by effective laws/ regulations (illegal interactions)
(domestic interactions)

There are no examples (according to Hobbes and Rousseau who thought it was blasphemous to propose there was. Hobbes says it is theoretical, not historical)

How would people behave in the state of nature? - Fundamental philosophical question about States of Nature

Hobbes- absolutely terrible!

Locke- generic

General anarchist- it would work better!

What are people like in state of nature?

What is the world itself like?

Hobbes on the state of nature 9/10/14

Hobbes Greatest works

Leviathan (1651)

De Cive (1642)

De corpore (1655)

De homine (1657)

Widely regarded as greatest English political philosopher

Hobbes on the State of nature

- How people will act in the state of nature depends on:
 - What people are like
 - What the world is like
- Hobbes' assumptions about what people are like
 - People are rational, self-interested

Assumption 1: people are rational

people will choose most efficient means to our ends

Assumption 2: people are self-interested ("non-tuistic")

Take no interest in the interest of others
Not exactly selfish, but we take action to achieve our goals
It always relates back to you in some way
Trying to model beings who are "genuine individuals"
Perhaps these are idealizations but they make people "individual agents"
Irrational and non-self-interested individuals are weeded out by evolution
We are rational and self-interested in the aggregate (not always as individuals)

Assumption 3: basically equal

Equality before god

- Each has an equal moral standing
- Each has a natural right self-preservation (doesn't like talking about natural rights though)

Equality in power

- We have roughly the same physical and mental power
Small groups can always overpower or outwit anyone
- No natural hierarchy among people
Denies that women are naturally subordinate to men

Equality in lack of power

- Hardly anyone is self sufficient

Equality in basic desires/ wants

- We need food, clothes, etc.

9/15/14

Hobbes' assumptions about what the world is like in the state of nature

There are a number of rational, self-interested, naturally equal beings

There is a moderate scarcity of what we want and need

- Including:
Food, clothing, shelter, power

Extreme scarcity

Not enough for everyone to survive

Interest conflict

Zero-sum gain- a gain to one is a loss to another

All exchanges are involuntary by one party

No political solutions

- Only solution is more goods
- You have to look out for yourself

Extreme Abundance

Everyone to have however much they want

Ex:

- Oxygen
- Old paperbacks

No political problems

- Politics arise when we must deal with others

Moderate Abundance--Locke

Enough for everyone to survive, and interaction is mutually beneficial

Interests coincide

Interactions cooperative and voluntary

Ex:

- Playing in a band—coordination is essential
- Division of labor in a free market
- Task that is impossible for one person alone

Problems

- No issues of political power arise, but the “invisible hand” is at play