The Purpose of Government: From Hobbes to Jackson

Enrichment Questions – Sample Answers

1. **Do people always pursue their self-interest, as is assumed in the Hippie-Hobbes game?**

Many people may pursue what Alexis de Tocqueville referred to as “self-interest well understood”. They choose to cooperate and play a pacifist strategy because they understand that it will serve their best interest in the long run.

This often entails playing a “tit-for-tat” strategy in which they begin by being a pacifist and will continue to do so when playing other pacifists but they will meet aggression with aggression.

But others simply cooperate because they believe it is the right thing to do. Some may be overwhelmed by the guilt of taking an aggressive stance that they will always choose to be a pacifist no matter what the consequences. Of course, in this instance, there is no dilemma.

For more please see Bowles, Samuel and Herbert Gintis. *A Cooperative Species*. New Jersey: Princeton Press, 2011 and Nowak, Martin. *Super Cooperators*. New York: Free Press, 2011.

1. **Should government have the power to pass any law so long as it reduces levels of aggression?**

Hobbes would argue yes. But other political thinkers such as John Locke and Thomas Jefferson would disagree. Yes, protecting life is an important function of government. But, as is made clear in the Declaration of Independence and the preamble of the U.S. Constitution, government also has the responsibility of protecting, among other things, liberty. As such, order must always be balanced with liberty.

1. **Are current international institutions, such as the United Nations and the International Criminal Court, capable of resolving the Pacifist’s Dilemma?**

The Pacifist’s Dilemma will most likely never be resolved and current international institutions leave much to be desired, however, there is substantial evidence that suggests the United Nations and international tribunals such as the ICC have indeed reduced aggression.

For more please see: Goldstein, Joshua. *Winning the War on War*. New York: Dutton, 2011 and Russett, Bruce and John Oneal. *Triangulating Peace*. W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 2001.