Fall 2017 Helena District Writing Assessment, 9-12

“Motivation” Prompt

Sample Score Point 6

The renowned Philosopher Hobbes, who is considered to be one of the forefathers of American government and Democracy, had a very strong view of human nature. His philosophy was that mankind at their core are rooted in evil and greed. While his claims have been debated for over one hundred years, it is not deniable that humans tend to be greedy and will ultimately choose self-preservation in almost every situation. Extrinsic and intrinsic motivators are undoubtedly both successful, however the debate lies in which one is more effective. The different types of motivators both work for a reason, and perhaps Hobbes was right when suggesting that the reason is the human tendency of great. Intrinsic motivation is proven more successful because of the human desire for appreciation and value, yet there must be a balance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in order to ensure both short-term and long-term accomplishments.

Tangible rewards are vital to any short-term commitment. A letter or score in the gradebook is a hugely successful motivator for a student to complete an assignment on time and with effort. A piece of candy given to a child learning how to use the bathroom is vital to that development. Even a compliment on an outfit motivates humans to look their best throughout the day. Each of these examples of extrinsic motivators prove one thing, while the reward may not be significant to the life of that individual, these rewards are still desired. What is important to note about extrinsic motivators is that while their response may be immediate, their effects are long-lasting. Extrinsic motivators do not just motivate for moments after the task has been completed, but actually lead to intrinsic motivation, which is why they are not only significant, but necessary.

A large salary may be the force that drives a student to continue through eight or more years of education. A medal of honor in the military might provide a soldier with courage. Recognition in a college textbook could motivate a scientist to spend years researching. While intrinsic motivators are very powerful and have been proven to last longer it is important to note that intrinsic motivators usually come after several extrinsic motivators. Self-fulfillment and long-term happiness is a goal that is sought after years of fulfillment at a much more surface-level. Scientists, soldiers, politicians have all managed great achievements due to what motivated them externally. Their continued desire for fulfillment comes from within, and that desire would not be possible if it weren't for extrinsic rewards.

While Intrinsic motivators are more powerful it is because of extrinsic motivators that humans are able to be motivated in these ways. There are many levels to self-fulfillment and it begins with extrinsic motivators. If society were to only shift it's focus to intrinsic motivators, what would be lost is a very basic understanding of what reward is. However, only ever using extrinsic rewards would create a shallow society that valued material items over fulfillment and joy. In order to ensure a functioning and motivated society, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators need to be used in balance.

Many criticized Hobbes' claim of human nature for being too cynical, but perhaps his claim was just honest. It is wrong to suggest that humans are either good or evil but it is proven that greed is in fact a powerful motivator. However, initial greed or even a simple desire for material possessions will ultimately lead to a desire for higher fulfillment and happiness so it is important for humans to be motivated in both intrinsic and extrinsic ways.

Annotation: This essay effectively addresses the issue in the prompt and critically engages multiple perspectives while supporting the claim made. Specific examples are used to support the argument and to refute counter-claims. Language use is precise. There are some errors in mechanics, such as words capitalized that should not be, but these do not distract from the essay's content. The writer introduces the Hobbes example in the introductory paragraph and effectively returns to it in the conclusion, tying everything together.