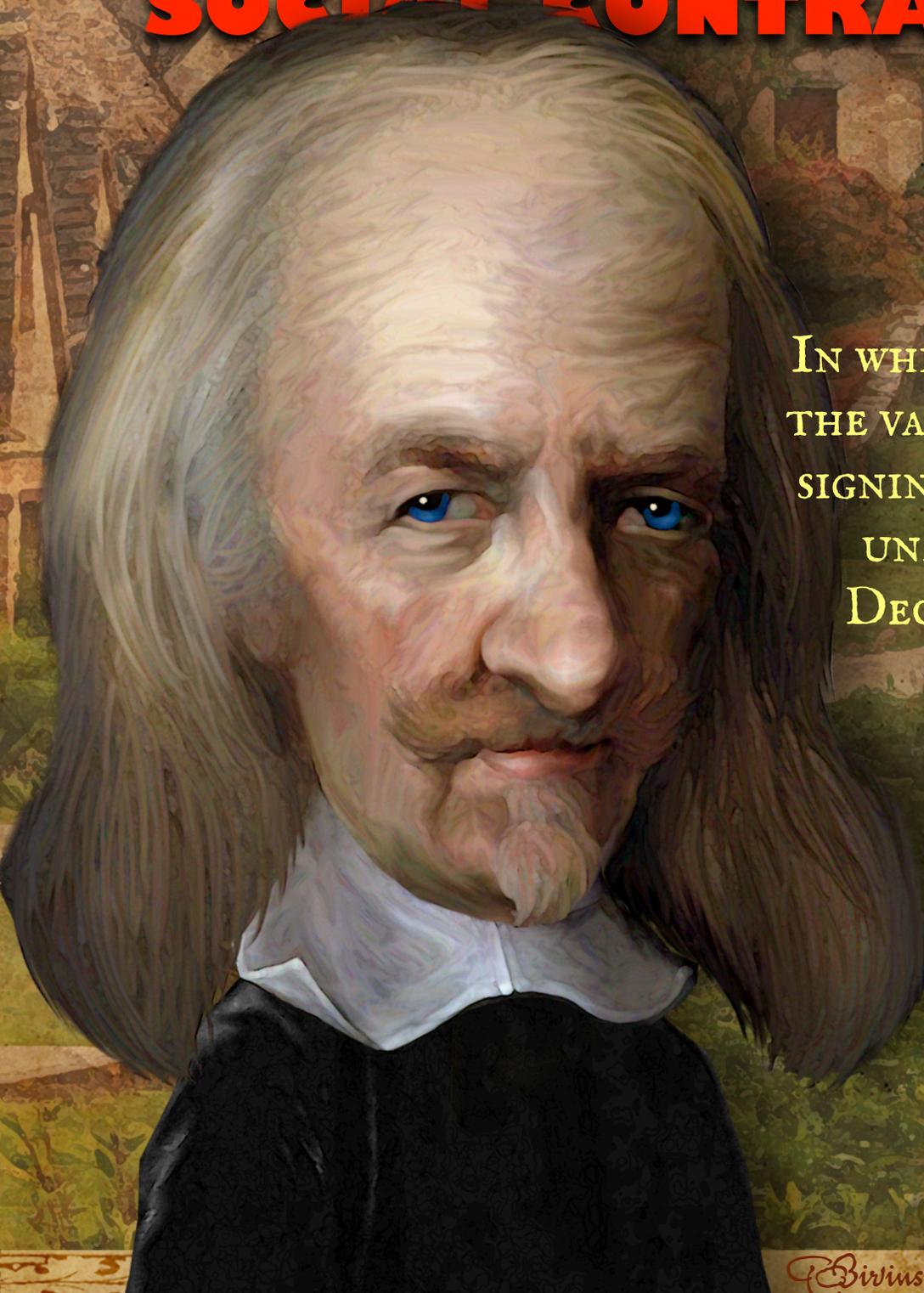


the story of **ETHICS**

How the media got moral, or not

SOCIAL CONTRACT

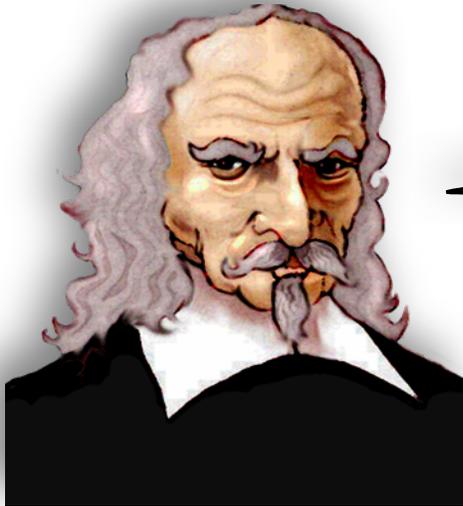


IN WHICH WE LEARN
THE VALUE OF NEVER
SIGNING ANYTHING,
UNLESS IT'S A
DECLARATION.

Social Contract Theory

HUMAN BEINGS ARE SOCIAL BY NATURE.
THIS IS THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING MORALITY.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) believed that human beings needed to live together in what he called a "Social Contract," without which we would all be existing in a **"State of Nature."**



Tom Hobbes, the eternal pessimist

"No arts; no letters; no society;
and which is worst of all, continual
fear and danger of violent death;
and the life of man, solitary, poor,
nasty, brutish, and short."

Hobbes' theory is based in large part on his belief that human beings are basically **egoistic** (self-interested) by nature.

You're always
NUMBER ONE!

EGOISM IS A CONSEQUENTIAL THEORY

- The rightness of an act is based on its consequences.
- A good act produces good consequences — but for whom?
- Egoism contends that an act is moral when it promotes the **individual's** best long-term interests.
- If an action produces, or is intended to produce a greater ratio of good to evil for the individual in the **long run** than any other alternative, then it is the right action to perform.

Essentially: **Ethical Egoism**, states that people should behave in a selfish, self-interested manner.

IN ETHICAL EGOISM, SELFISHNESS IS SEEN AS A VIRTUE.

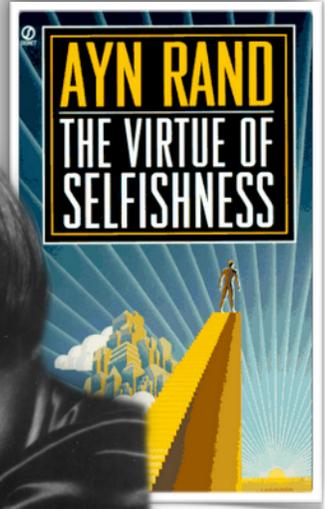
Niccolò Machiavelli was an Italian historian, philosopher, humanist, and writer based in Florence during the Renaissance. His book, **The Prince**, is literally a manual for how to acquire and keep political power. The focus is very much egoistic.



Nicky Machiavelli, the smarty pants

ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS PEOPLE TO ADVOCATE EGOISM WAS RUSSIAN IMMIGRANT AYN RAND, PHILOSOPHER AND NOVELIST.

One of her more famous books was **The Virtue of Selfishness**. In it, she lays out an argument for thinking of yourself above others.



Do not hide behind such superficialities as whether you should or should not give a dime to a beggar. That is not the issue. The issue is whether you *do* or do *not* have the right to exist *without* giving him that dime. The issue is whether you must keep buying your life, dime by dime, from any beggar who might choose to approach you. The issue is whether the need of others is the first mortgage on your life and the moral purpose of your existence. The issue is whether man is to be regarded as a sacrificial animal. Any man of self-esteem will answer: "No."

Altruism says: "Yes."

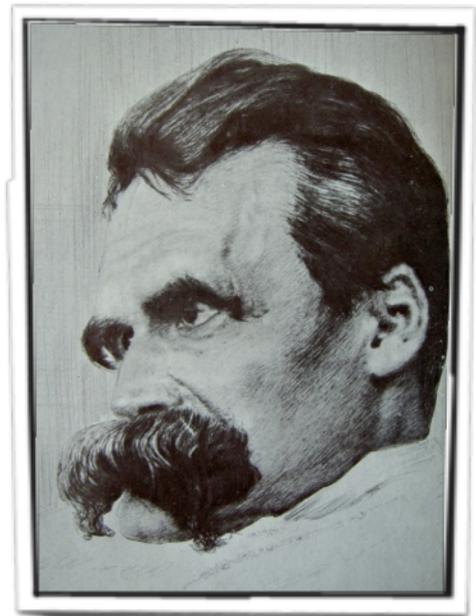


Annie Rand, the self-centered extrovert

THREE ARGUMENTS TYPICALLY USED TO SUPPORT ETHICAL EGOISM ARE:

1. ALTRUISM IS DEMEANING.

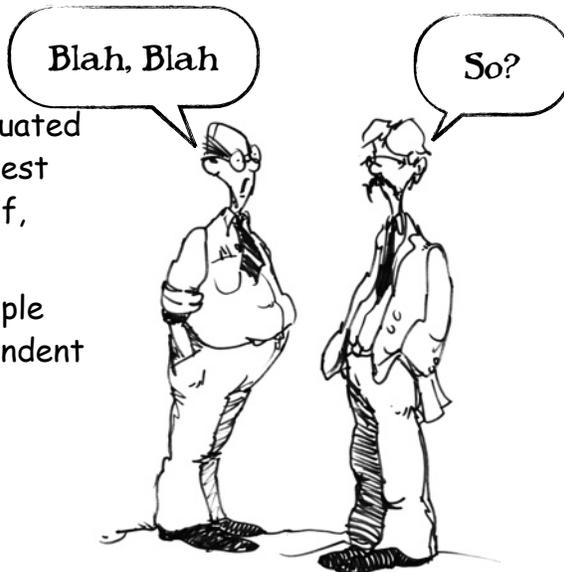
German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche claimed that putting the wishes and needs of others ahead of oneself is equivalent to saying that the other person is more important. This is degrading to the self.



Fred Nietzsche, the grump

2. ACTING SELFISHLY CREATES A BETTER WORLD, BECAUSE:

- Each person is probably best situated to know what is best for him-or herself, and
- helping other people makes them dependent upon you, to the detriment of all.



3. ACTING SELFISHLY IS ACTUALLY BETTER BECAUSE IT IS MORE STRAIGHTFORWARD AND HONEST, SINCE MOST PEOPLE ARE IN FACT LOOKING OUT FOR THEIR OWN INTERESTS ANYWAY.

I just need a martini for my olive. The rest of you can fend for yourselves..

Louis XVI, with his head still intact



REGARDLESS, THERE ARE SEVERAL PROBLEMS WITH ETHICAL EGOISM.

FIRST, IT TENDS TO ASSUME THAT EVERYBODY IS AN ABLE-BODIED, INDEPENDENT ADULT.

- There isn't much room for people who are physically or mentally handicapped, or for children or others who really can't fend for themselves.

Yeah...
What about us?

IT ALSO PRESUPPOSES A WORLD OF STRANGERS INDIFFERENT TO THE FATE OF EACH OTHER.

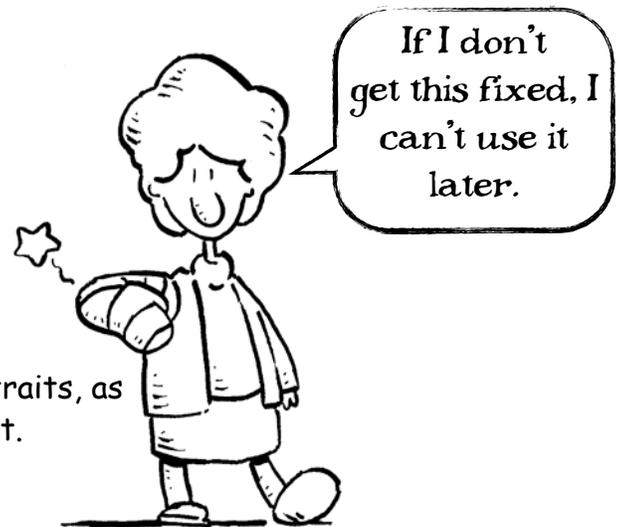
- It doesn't account well for how love and friendship work beyond temporary utilitarian alliances.
- There is little role for relationships for their own sake.



IT COMES ACROSS AS MORALLY INSENSITIVE, BECAUSE THERE IS LITTLE ROLE FOR CARING ABOUT THE NEEDS AND DESIRES OF OTHERS, OR FOR RECOGNIZING THAT THE NEEDS OF OTHERS CAN EXERT A MORAL "PULL" UPON US.

MISCONCEPTIONS CONCERNING EGOISM

- Egoists do only what they want
 - Not true: Undergoing unpleasant or painful experiences is okay as long as it advances long-term self interest.
- Egoists don't possess virtues like honesty, generosity, and self-sacrifice.
 - Not true: Egoists can possess all of these traits, as long as they advance long-term self interest.



HOWEVER, EGOISM DOES OFFER THE FOLLOWING INSIGHTS ABOUT HUMANS:

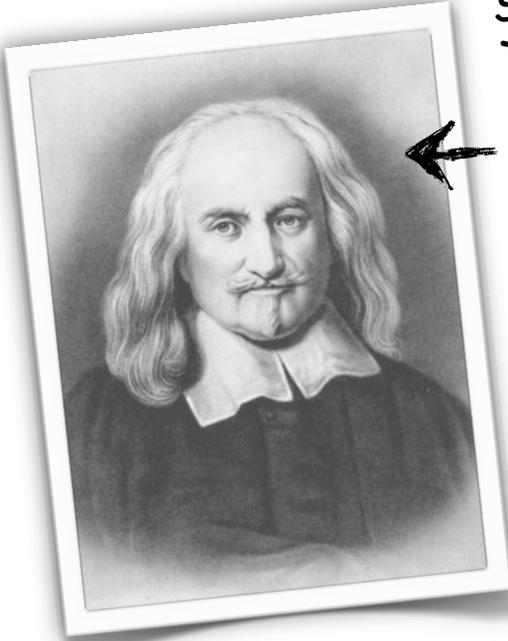
- Self-interest can sometimes disguise itself as altruism.
- An ethical system should not deny the reality of, and importance of, self-interest.
- Self-love is a virtue, but it is not the only virtue. Ethical egoism mistakes a part of the picture for the whole picture.
- What is needed as a way to take into account and balance the needs of both self and others (reciprocity).



EGOISM, ALTRUISM, AND THE IDEAL WORLD

- Ideally, we seek a society in which self-interest and regard for others converge —everybody gets something.
- Egoism at the expense of others and altruism at the expense of self-interest both create worlds in which goodness and self-regard are mutually exclusive.
- A world with no egoism and no altruism would be a dreary place indeed. Balance is needed.

SO, HOW WOULD A **SOCIAL CONTRACT** WORK TO MITIGATE THE EGOISTIC NATURE?



According to Hobbes:

- There must be a guarantee that people will not harm one another—No fear of attack, theft, or treachery.
- People must rely on each other to keep their agreements—Each person can be counted on to do his/her part.

Let's go do our part!



Bring me my tea and cakes.

IN OTHER WORDS, PEOPLE MUST AGREE TO ESTABLISHMENT OF RULES TO GOVERN THEIR RELATIONS WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND FORM AN AGENCY (**THE GOVERNMENT**) WITH THE POWER TO ENFORCE THOSE RULES.

Hobbes believed a monarchy was the best form of government. More on that later...



We're in charge, forever.



A bunch of kings and queens

HOBBS BELIEVED THAT WITHOUT A "SOCIAL CONTRACT," HUMAN BEINGS WOULD BE LIVING IN A CONSTANT STATE OF VIOLENT CONFLICT OVER SCARCE RESOURCES.

- The answer was to band together in a state of cooperation in which:
 - labor would be divided, and
 - the amount of essential goods would increase and be equitably distributed.

Then, we'd all be living on "Beer Street"!



COOPERATION AS MORALITY

Cooperation can be the only solution to many social dilemmas.

These are situations in which:

- people's interests are affected not only by what they do but by what other people do as well.
- everyone will end up worse off if they individually pursue their own interests than if they simultaneously do what is not in their own individual interests.

In living together with other people, you could adopt either of two strategies:

- You could pursue your own self interests exclusively, or
- you could be concerned with other people's welfare as well as your own.

SO THERE ARE 4 POSSIBILITIES:

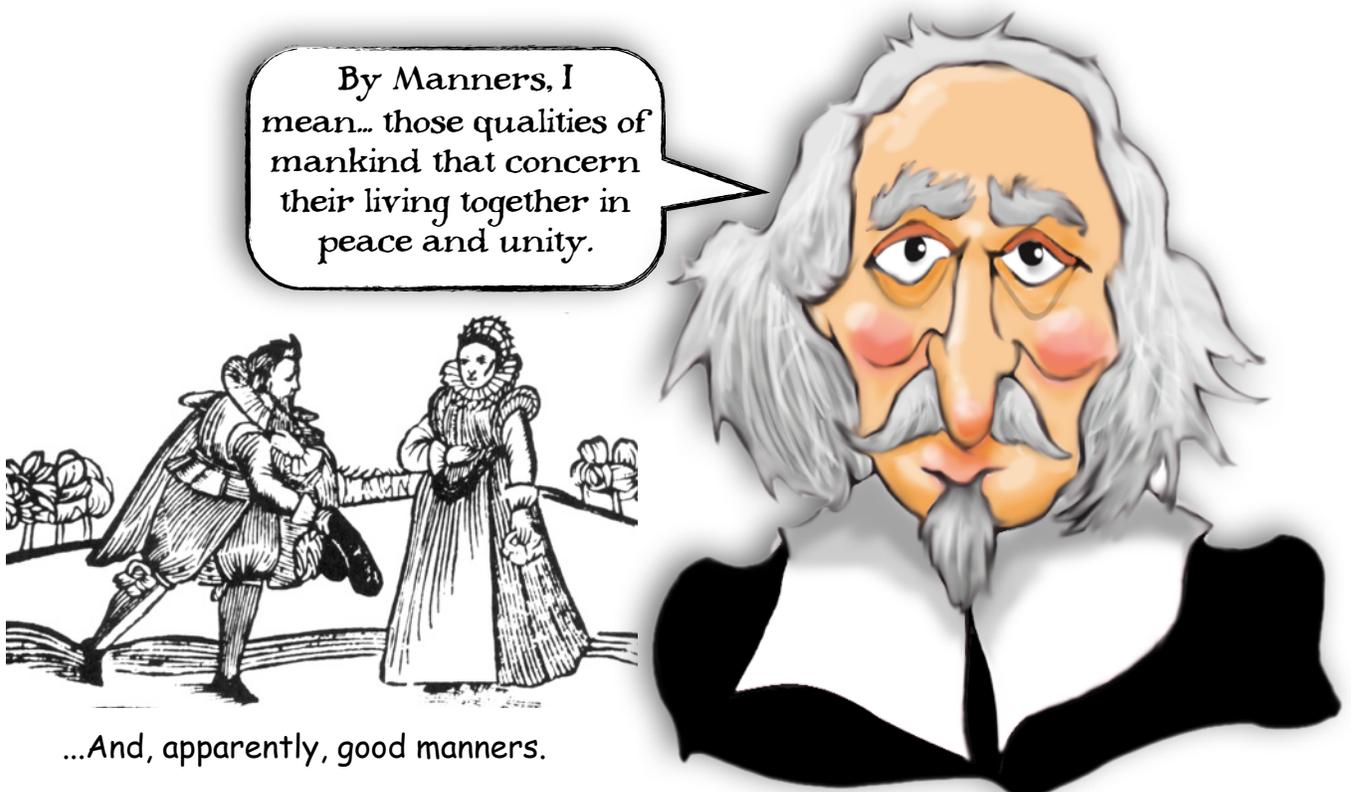
- You could be an egoist while other people are benevolent, ("free ride")
- Others could be egoists while you are benevolent, (sucker)
- Everyone could be egoistic, (Hobbes "state of nature")
- Everyone could be benevolent. (ordinary "morality")

This sort of reasoning generally results in pursuing your own best interests because...

- Either people will respect your interests or they won't.
- If they do, you will be better off not respecting theirs.
- If they do not, then it would be foolish for you to respect theirs.
- Therefore, regardless of what other people do, you are better off not respecting their interests.

The catch is that if everyone else reasons the same way you do, we end up in Hobbes' "state of nature."

The answer is **mutual cooperation**, or Hobbes' "social contract."



PROBLEMS WITH HOBBS' SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

- Hobbes believed that any people would only follow the social contract if they were forced (i.e., by a strong government)
- He believed that any government was better than rule exclusively by the people. (He strongly supported a monarchy.)

Who wouldn't?



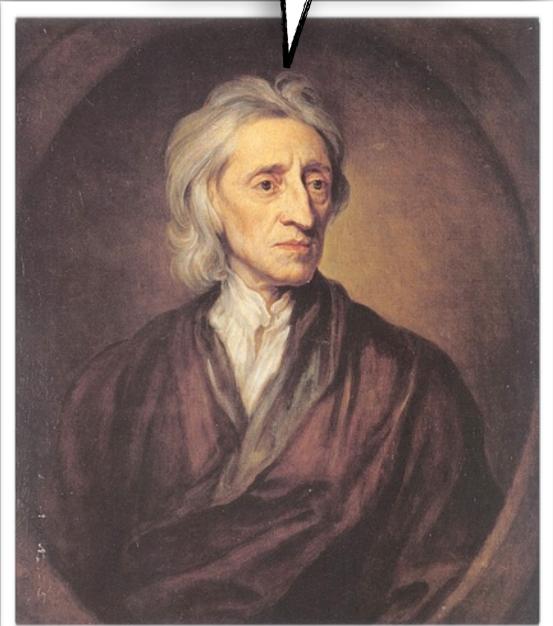
WELL... JOHN LOCKE, FOR ONE.

JOHN LOCKE'S SOCIAL CONTRACT

John Locke believed that the role of government in the social contract was to **preserve individual rights** and nothing more.

If government failed to protect those rights, it was the duty of the people to replace that government with one that would.

It's all about defending your rights as citizens.



Johnny Locke, radical

LOCKE'S SECOND TREATISE ON GOVERNMENT

"The end of government is the good of mankind; and which is best for mankind, that the people should be always exposed to the boundless will of tyranny, or that the rulers should be sometimes liable to be opposed when they grow exorbitant in the use of their power, and employ it for the destruction, and not the preservation, of the properties of their people?"

...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.** For all power given with trust for the attaining an end... whenever that end is manifestly neglected or opposed, the trust must necessarily be forfeited, and the power devolve into the hands of those that gave it, who may place it anew where they shall think best for their safety and security."

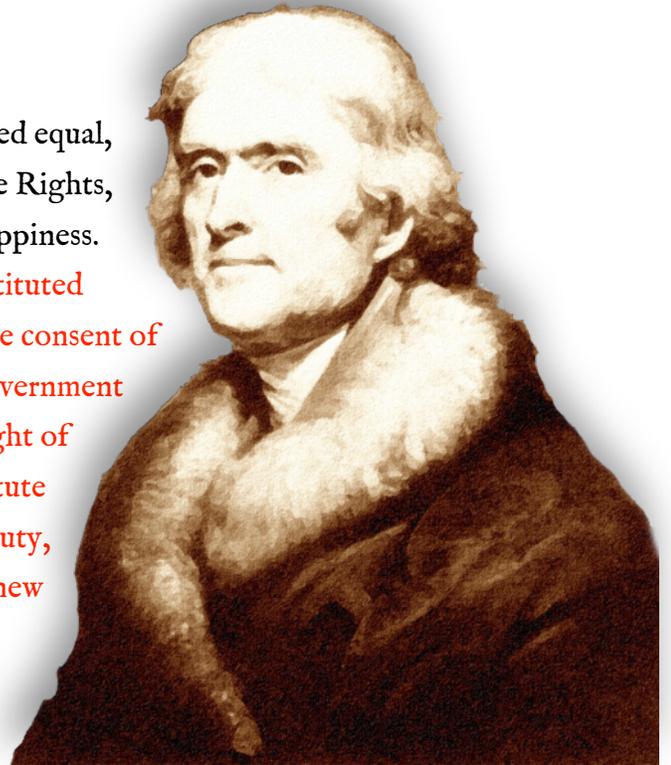
THIS DIDN'T ESCAPE THE NOTICE OF SOME VERY IMPORTANT PEOPLE

DOES THIS LOOK FAMILIAR?

In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

That to secure these rights, **Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, ... it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.”**

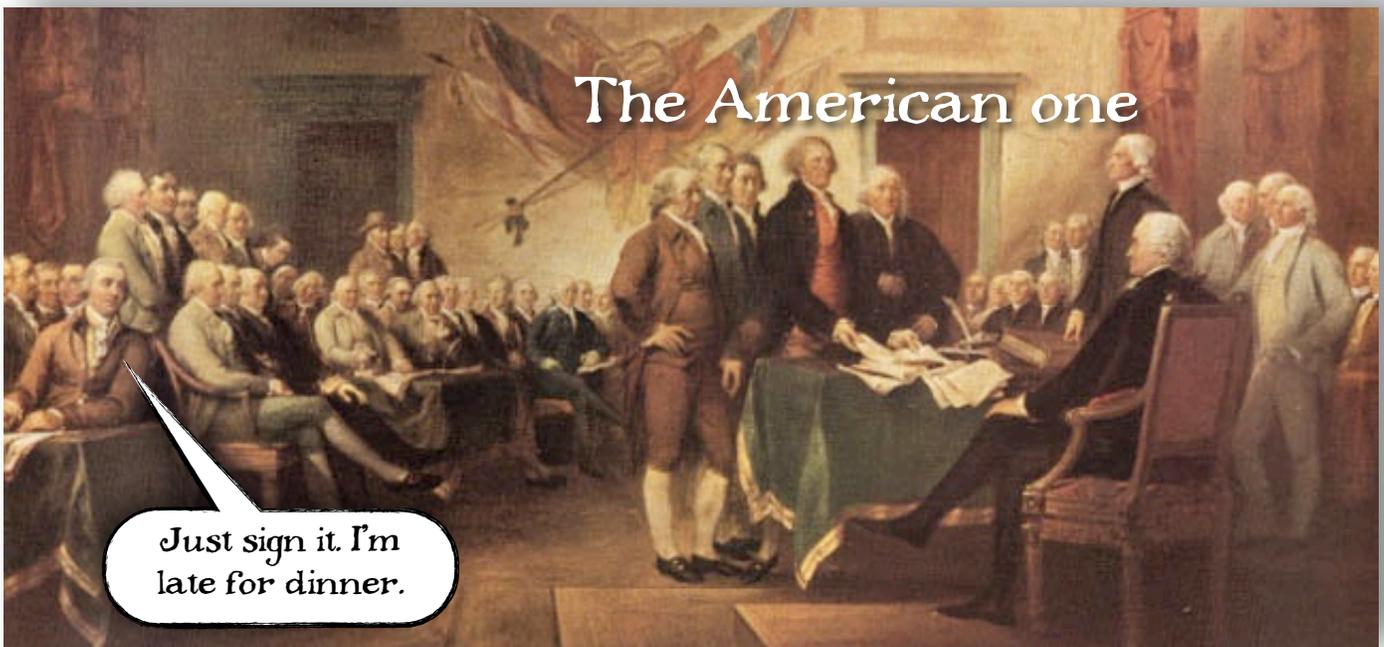


Tom Jefferson, another radical



At least someone was listening.

JOHN LOCKE'S PHILOSOPHY PROVIDED JUSTIFICATION FOR A COUPLE OF LATE 18TH CENTURY REVOLUTIONS.



The American one

Just sign it. I'm late for dinner.

Extra Credit: These guys are on the back of what piece of American currency?

And the French one

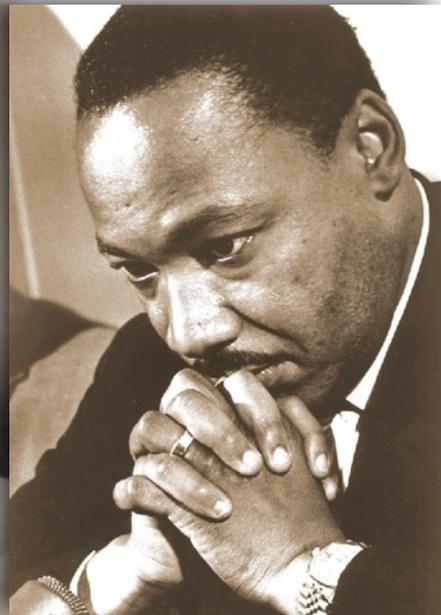
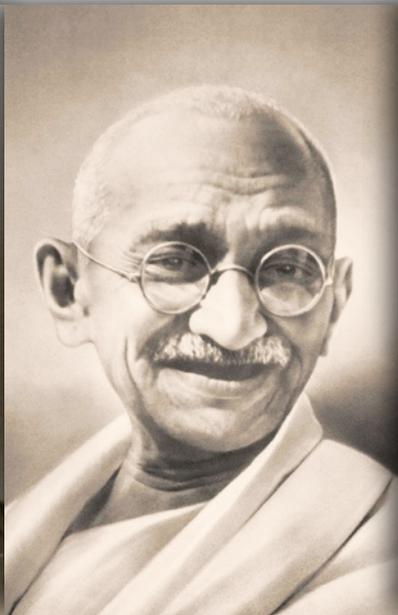


Which was a bit more messy.

This way to the Bastille!



On the more peaceful side, John Locke provided an ethical justification for everyone from Thoreau and Gandhi to Martin Luther King Jr. to speak out against unjust laws.



Why is Gandhi the only one smiling?

WHEN USING EGOISM, TRY THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE:

Ask yourself to what degree your choice of alternatives is based on your own or your organization's best interests? Remember that self-interest is always present, but it shouldn't be the driving force behind your decision.

WHEN USING SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY, TRY THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE:

Ask yourself what your relationship is to all those who have some claim against your potential actions. What is your level of responsibility to them, and would a spirit of cooperation net more positive results than acting in your own or your employer's best interest?

THE MORAL OF THIS TALE IS:

The social contract affirms that although human beings may be self-interested, ultimately they are social creatures and crave the company and companionship a society offers. ... unless, of course, you agree with Mark Twain...



My idea of our civilization is that it is a shoddy, poor thing and full of cruelties, vanities, arrogances, meannesses and hypocrisies; however, there is no salvation for us but to adopt Civilization and lift ourselves down to its level.

Mark Twain

