

LIBERALISM

Liberalism



LIBERALISM

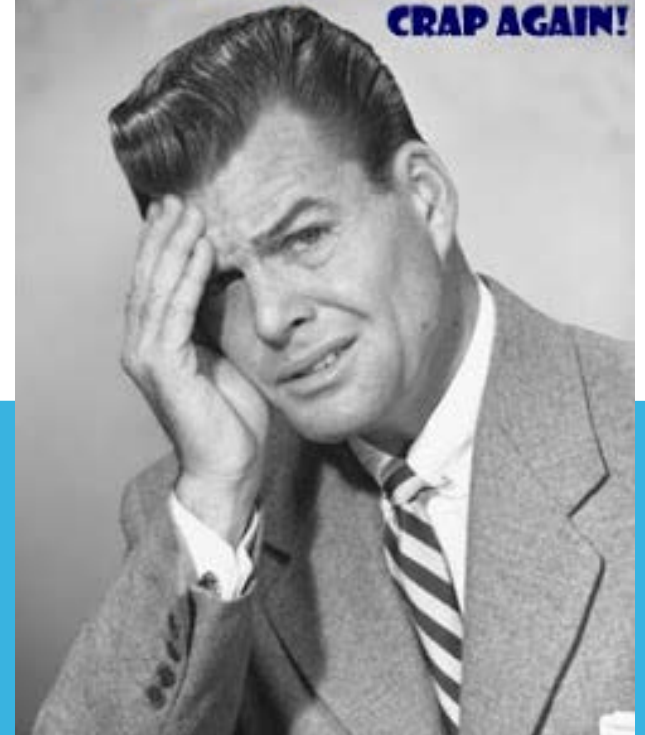
Hoffman and Graham note that *liberalism* has emerged as the world's dominant ideology.

Liberalism is trust of the people tempered by prudence. Conservatism is distrust of the people tempered by fear.

~ William E. Gladstone



AW JEEZ, NOT THIS LIBERAL CRAP AGAIN!

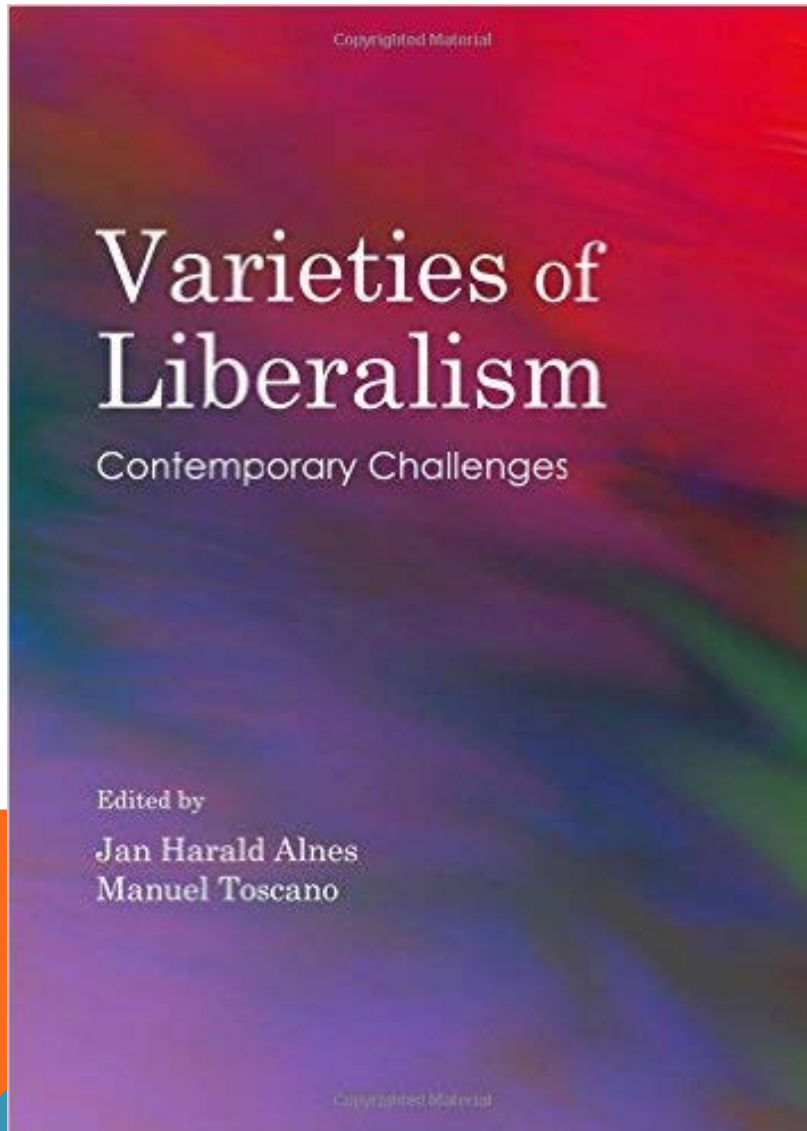


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Rise of Liberalism

- Waning of Middle Ages and demise of feudalism
- Increasing importance of trade and commerce
 - Appearance of merchant capitalist as key figure who sought to break down older feudal and religiously-based barriers to trade
- Protestant Reformation -- questioning of papal and priestly power
- Emergence of individualism, new ideas
 - Idea that individual is sovereign and endowed with natural rights, including right to life and liberty
 - State should serve individual, not other way around
- In name of these and other liberal ideas/ideals, great revolutions of 17th and 18th centuries fought in England, in American colonies, and France
- From beginning, liberalism embroiled in political conflict and ideological controversy

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The authors say that as a concept, *liberalism* is confusing as it can be applied differently to political parties, movements, or strands of thought within a “liberal democracy...”

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....further, one should ask: are we examining *economic, social, or classical* liberalism?

Opinion

BusinessWorld

Posted on May 24, 2016 10:31:00 PM

Classical liberal, neoliberal and the anti-liberal

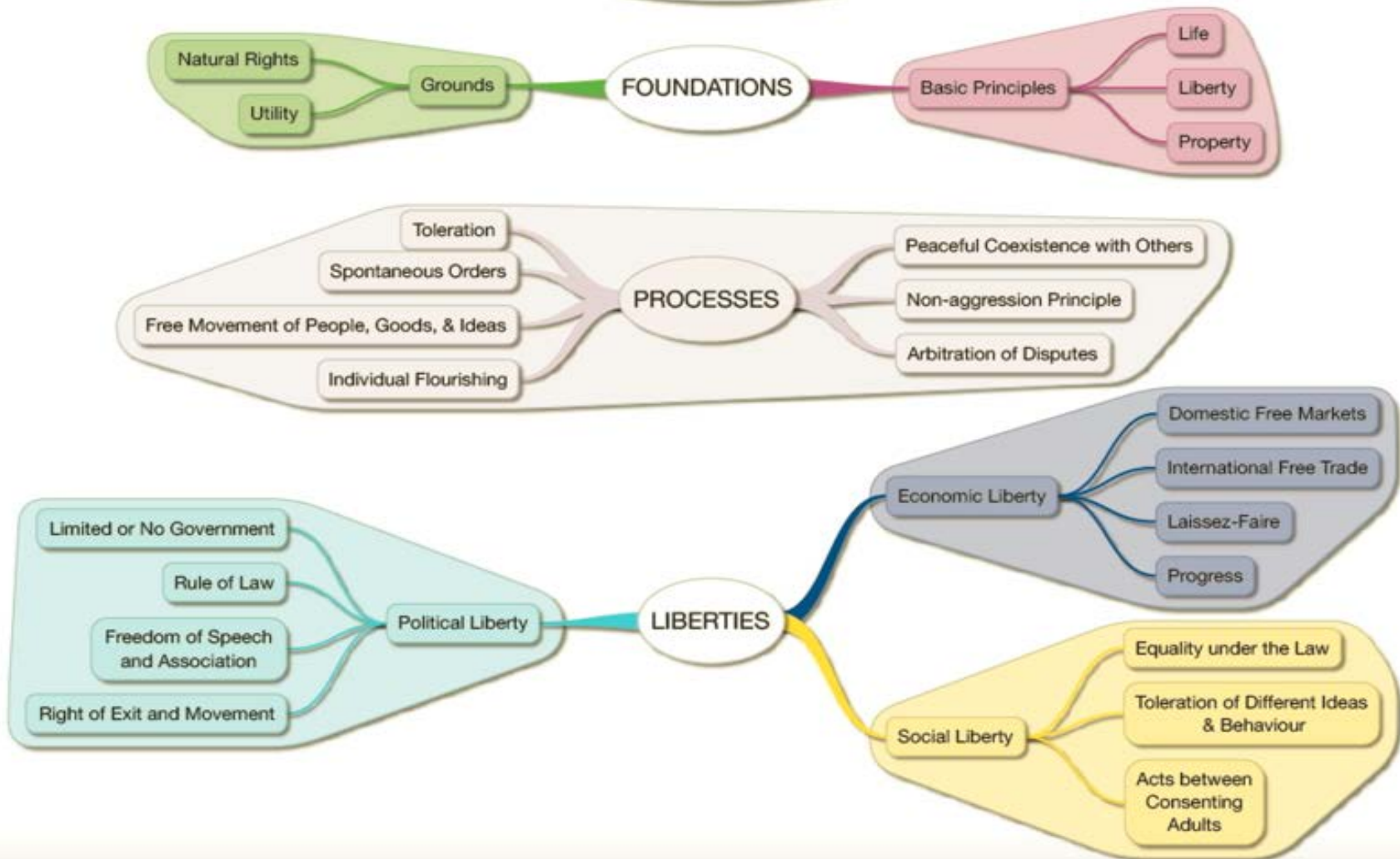
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Political labels sometimes tend to create more confusion instead of clarifying things on philosophy and ideology. One reason for this is that certain advocates and campaigners of particular philosophies are themselves confused of what they are talking about, and yet they project to be the leaders and

My Cup Of
Liberty
Bienvenido S.
Oplas, Jr.

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KEY IDEAS OF CLASSICAL LIBERALISM



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Liberals emphasize freedom (liberty), but also equality (although not necessarily material equality, more of a moral equality).

The four most important “liberalisms” for our purposes are:

- 1. Liberalism as toleration (modus vivendi liberalism)**
- 2. Contractarianism**
- 3. Rights-based liberalism (libertarianism)**
- 4. Utilitarianism**

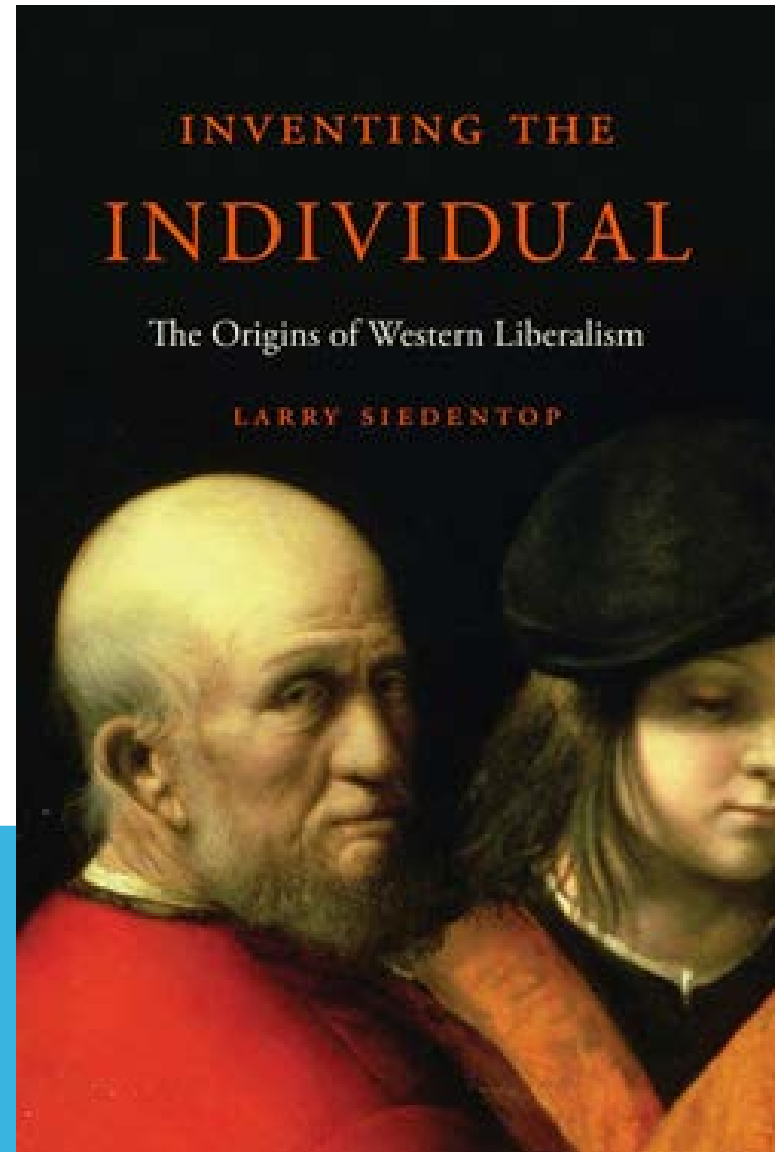
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1. Liberalism as Toleration

Hoffman and **Graham** tell us that the origins of liberal discourse are associated with the struggle for religious toleration generated by the Reformation and subsequent Wars of Religion running from the mid-1500's to 1648.

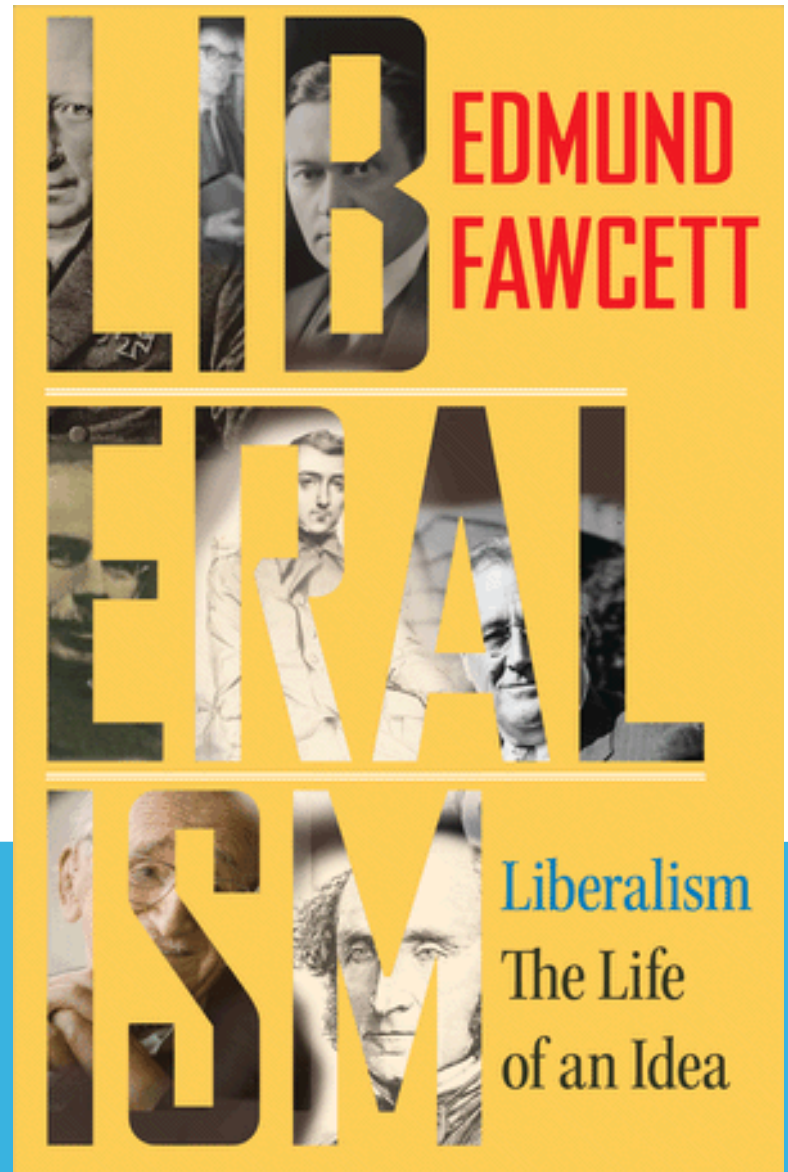
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The eventual settlement of the Wars of Religion is credited with making toleration a central concept in political life, and in the process...



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...generating a body of political reflection and writing that can be described as “liberal.”



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2. *Liberalism as Contractarian*

Hoffman and **Graham** point to Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651) as the first significant work of modern political thought. Its conclusion: *it is rational to submit to a powerful sovereign.*

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Although this conclusion does not appear “liberal,” the way Hobbes *reaches* this conclusion draws on ideas that are now a major part of liberal reflection on the state...



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**...that reflection is called
“contractarian,” where we first
imagine a situation in which there is
no state – the state of nature – and
ask ourselves whether it is better to
remain in the state of nature or
agree to submit to a sovereign (or
state).**

**“...and the life of man [in the state of nature],
solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.”**

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Views on State of Nature

Thomas Hobbes

- In the natural state, people would lead lives that were “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short”
- People needed government to impose order

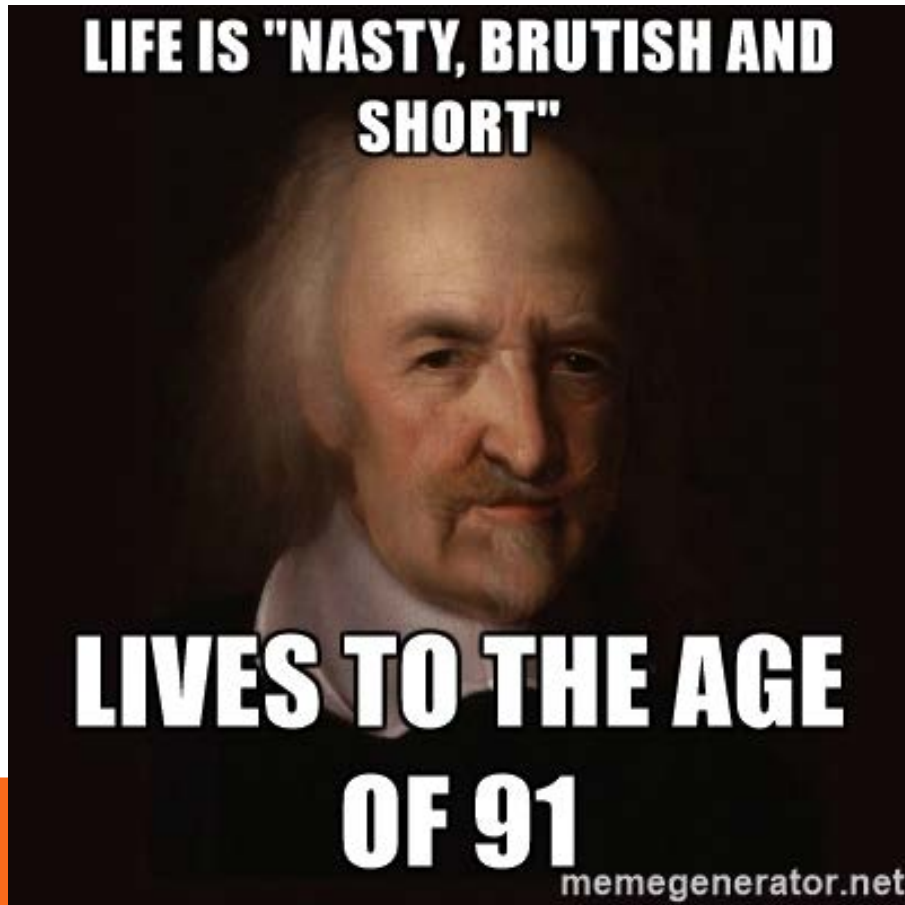
John Locke

- In the natural state, people are happy, tolerant, and reasonable
- People are born equal with the natural rights of life, liberty and property
- Governments exist to protect people’s natural rights, and people could overthrow the government if it failed to do this

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

- In the natural state, people are good, but they are corrupted by society
- “Man is born free, but everywhere is in chains”
- Governments should work for the benefit of the common good, not for the wealthy few

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Hobbes was the first of the classic contract theorists – later important contractarians are Locke, Rousseau, and Kant.

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But ultimately the case for treating Hobbes as a liberal rests on 3 important characteristics of his thought:

**DEAR
THOMAS
HOBBES,
MEET NICER PEOPLE.**


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- a. It entails a rejection of natural authority – the authority of the sovereign derives from a contract and not from inheritance or divine right;**
- b. People are equal in the state of nature;**
- c. Although later contract theorists have revised the nature of the contract, the basic method remains, so Hobbes's argument has served to stimulate and advance liberal thought.**

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3. Liberalism as Rights-Based

The textbook compares the contractarian aspects of Hobbes, with the more rights-based liberalism of Locke. Although they offer a similar description of the state of nature, their understanding of freedom, equality and natural law are quite different.



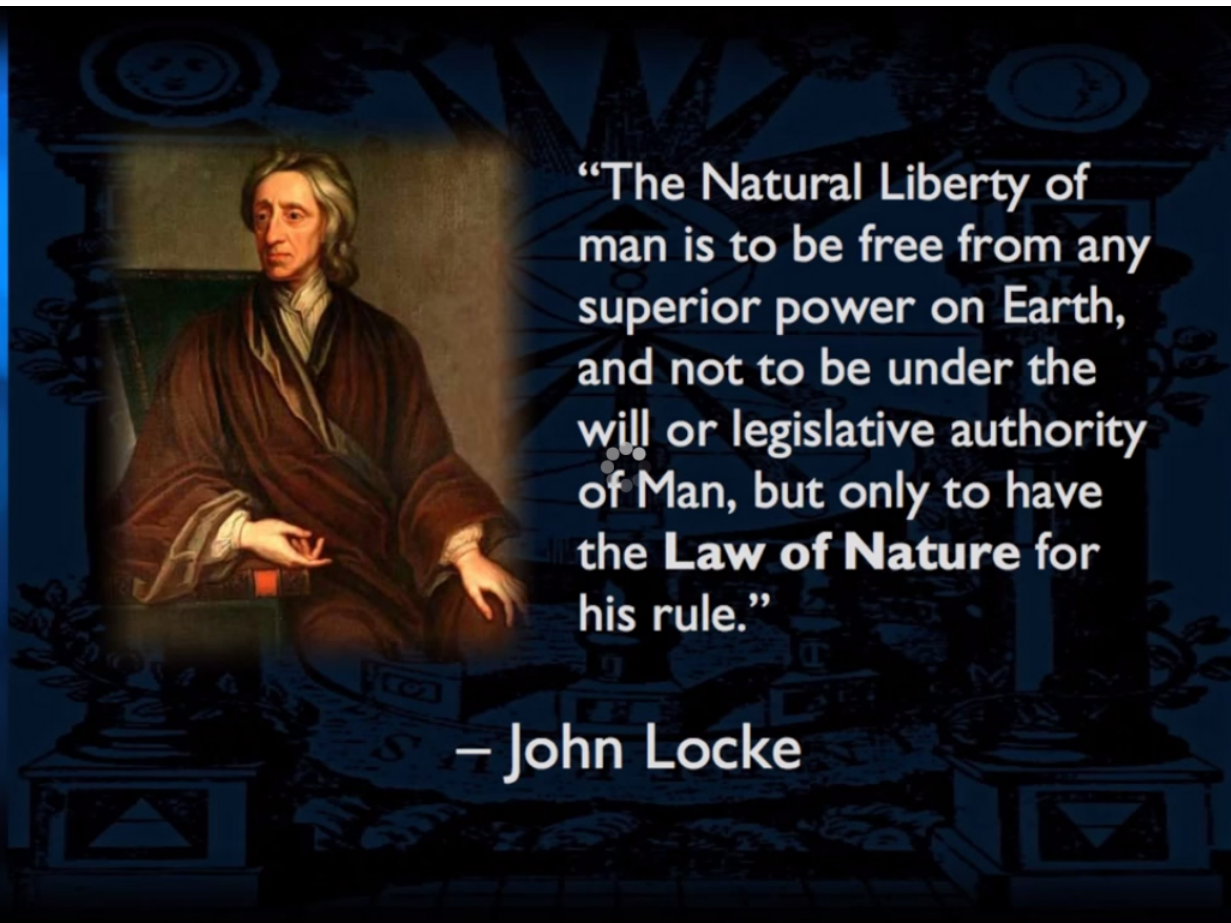
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Social Contract Theory

- An agreement among citizens or between the ruler and ruled that defines the rights and duties of each
- Thomas Hobbes argued that our aggressive, destructive human nature forces us to set up a powerful, restraining state
- John Locke saw a benign human nature and asserted that the state's only justification was to protect the natural rights of citizens

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Locke's contribution to the liberal tradition include:

A portrait of John Locke, an English philosopher, is shown on the left side of the image. He is depicted from the waist up, wearing a dark brown robe over a white shirt and cravat. He is seated and looking slightly to the right. The background of the portrait is dark and indistinct. The entire image is set against a dark blue background with a faint, large-scale geometric pattern of lines and circles. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

“The Natural Liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on Earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of Man, but only to have the **Law of Nature** for his rule.”

– John Locke

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a. The idea that there are limits to what the state, or society in general, can do to human beings.

**GOVERNMENT
HAS NO OTHER
END, BUT THE
PRESERVATION
OF PROPERTY.**



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John Locke
English Philosopher

1632 - 1704

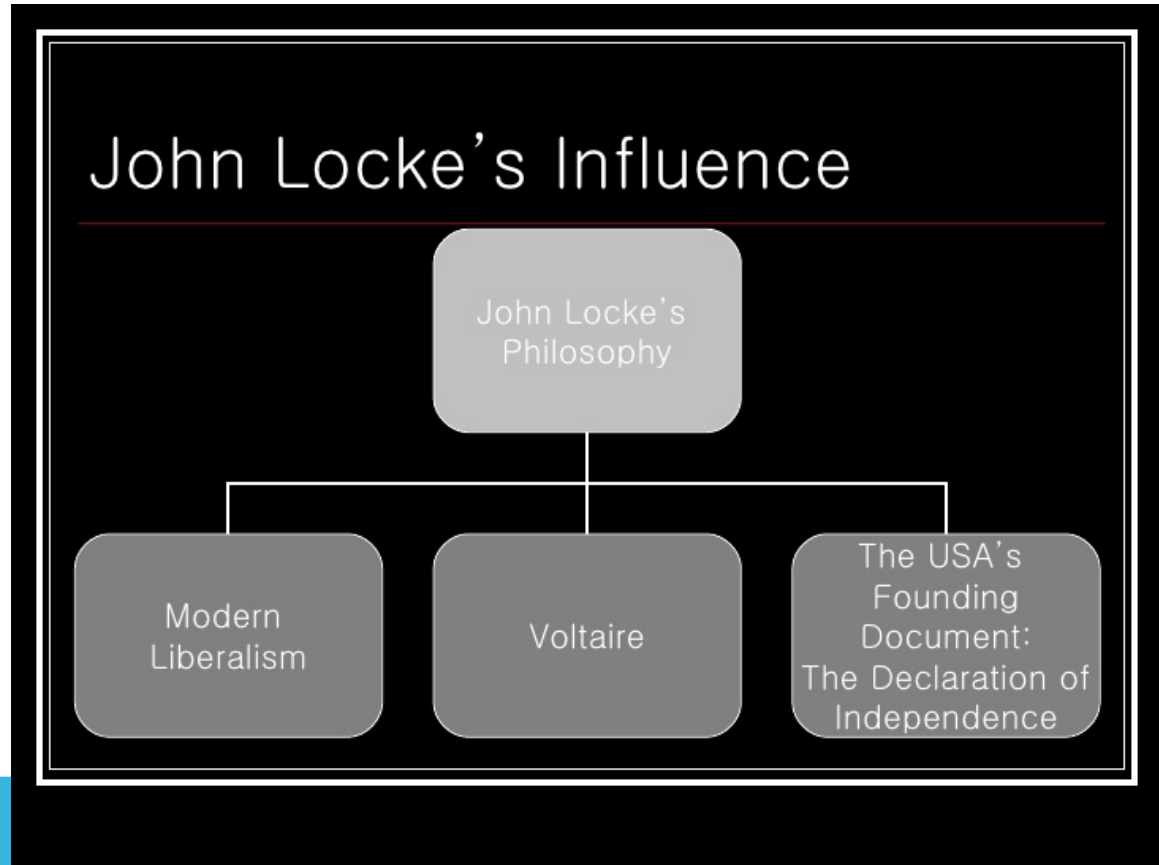
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- b. The idea that natural (or moral) rights provide us the opportunity to judge the state, meaning it is not necessary for us to “hand over” all our autonomy.

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c. A more detailed discussion of *institutions* in a liberal democracy. Locke is considered a key influence on the formation of the American Constitution.



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KANT'S CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

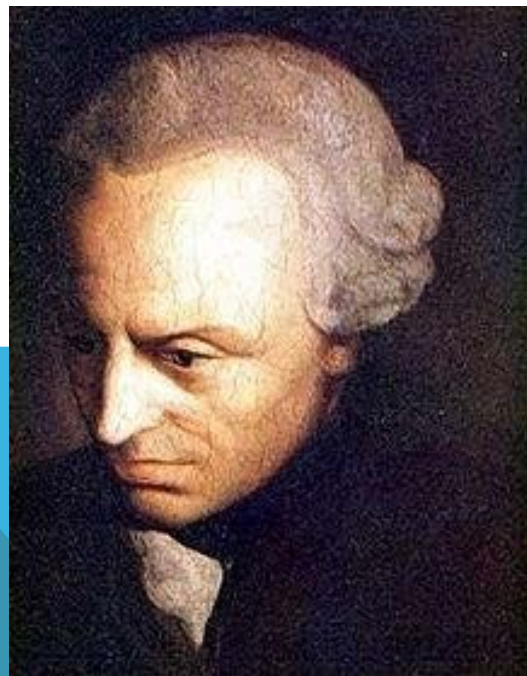
- UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE
 - A person should act that the principle of one's act could become a universal law of human action in a world in which one would hope to live.
 - A person should treat other people as having intrinsic value, and not merely as a means to achieve one's end.



Kant also contributed to the rights-based liberal tradition, by emphasizing that the purpose of the state was not to realize goodness, but to ensure that people respected each other's rights.

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When one prioritizes the right over the good, it serves to limit the state's functions – a key tenet of liberal thought.




"All our knowledge begins with the senses, proceeds then to the understanding, and ends with reason. There is nothing higher than reason."

Immanuel Kant

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4. Utilitarianism

Utilitarians believe that political institutions function to increase the overall level of welfare – or utility – of a society.

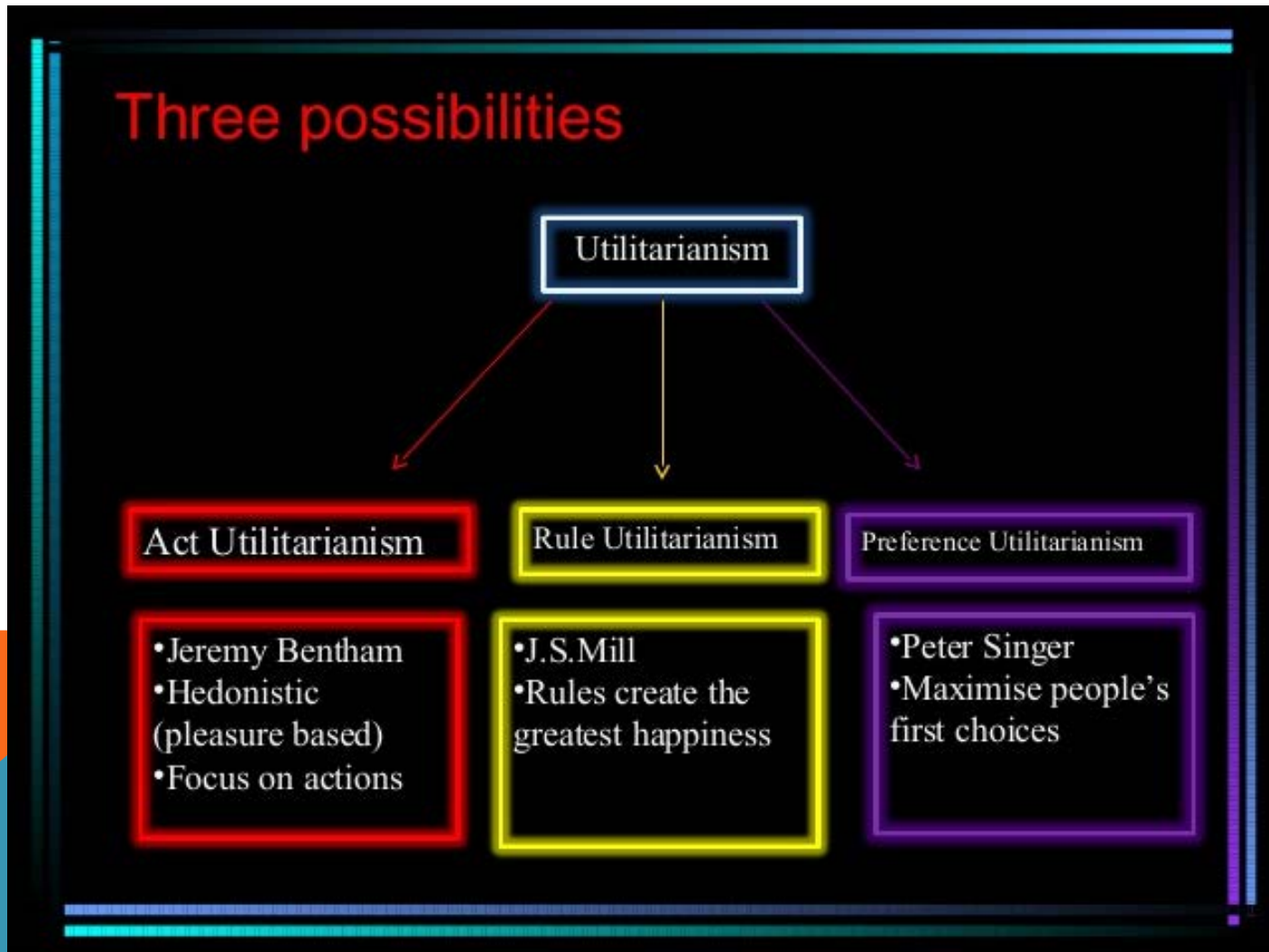


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Hoffman and **Graham** note that while there are obvious tensions between utilitarianism and rights-based liberalism, and much of the debate within the liberal tradition is between these positions, there are shared historical roots, such that they are both clearly part of the liberal tradition.

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But....what is utility?



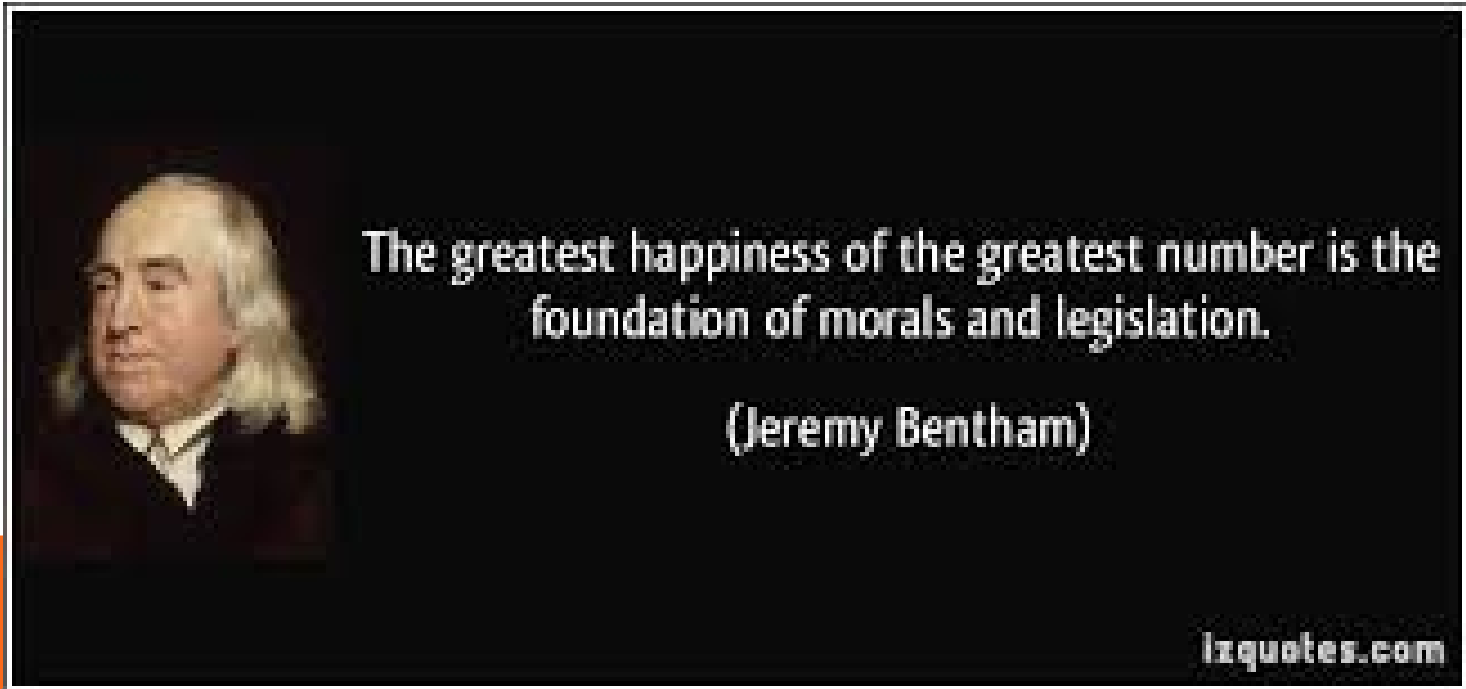
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Utilitarianism: Act v. Rule

- Example: Why not lie?
 - Act Utilitarian: This lie will have bad consequences.
 - Rule Utilitarian: If everyone lied, it would be much worse.
- Example: Why not slice up one patient to save five?
 - Act Utilitarian: If it would have the best consequences, you *should* do it.
 - Rule Utilitarian: The consequences would be better if everyone followed the rule “don’t kill others.”

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For Bentham, utility = happiness



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For Mill, utility = pleasure (as derived from happiness)

Utilitarianism (John Stuart Mill)

Principle of Utility

(Also known as *Greatest Happiness Principle*)



An action is *right* to the extent that it *increases* the total happiness of the affected parties

An action is *wrong* to the extent that it *decreases* the total happiness of the affected parties.

Happiness may have many definitions such as: advantage, benefit, good, or pleasure

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For Moore, utility = “ideal states of mind”

Ideal Values



G. E. Moore
1873-1958

- **G. E. Moore** suggested that we should strive to maximize ideal values such as freedom, knowledge, justice, and beauty.
- The world may not be a better place with more pleasure in it, but it certainly will be a better place with more freedom, more knowledge, more justice, and more beauty.
- Moore’s candidates for intrinsic good remain difficult to quantify.

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All these definitions conceptualize utility as something “mentalistic” – a feeling or a state of mind. But how would we know if someone was happy, or feeling pleasure, or has a right state of mind?

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Contemporary utilitarians define utility as “preference satisfaction.” This definition has the advantage that there are available real-world systems for ordering preferences:



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a) Voting –
(political
preferences)

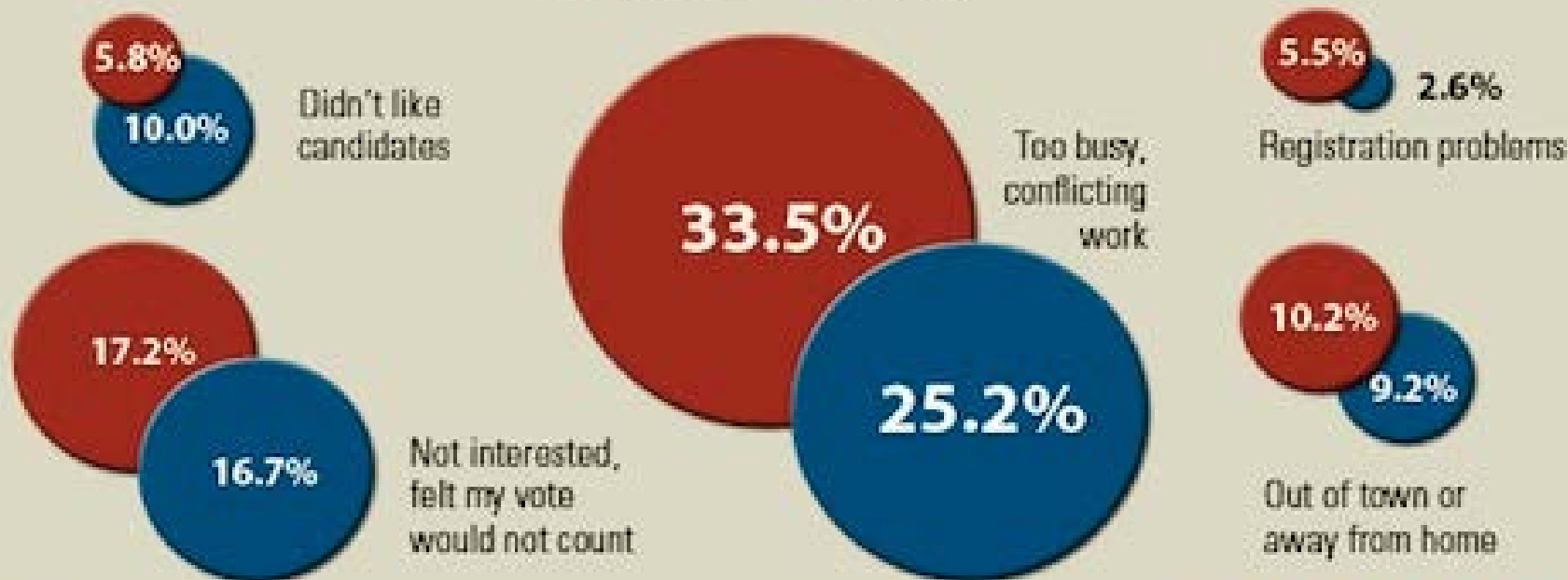


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Why Don't Young People Vote?

Reasons for not voting, registered voters by age (2010)

● 18-29 ● 30+

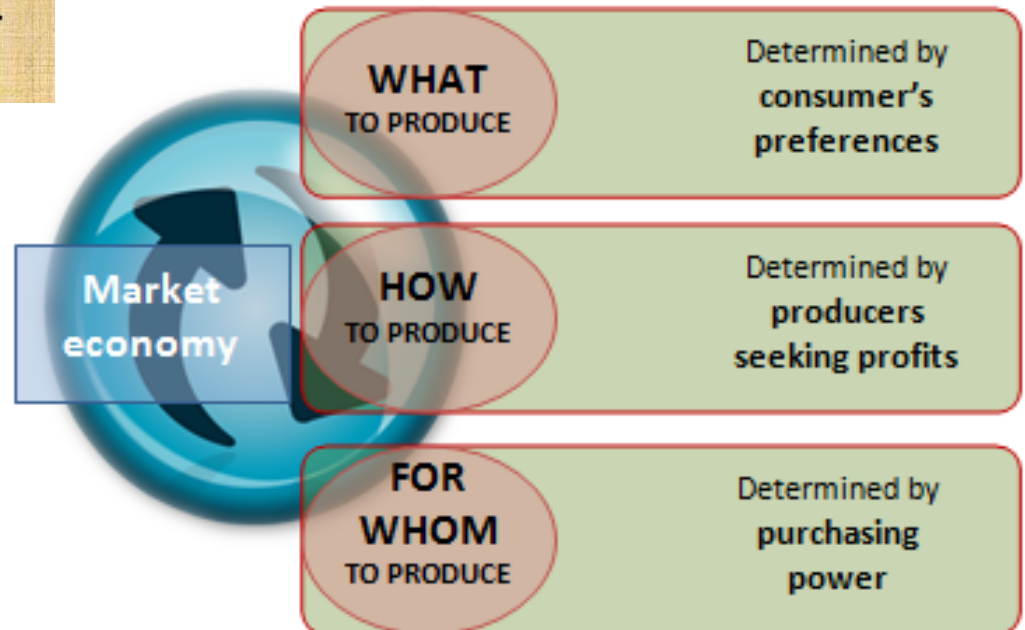


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Characteristics of Market Economies

- Resources are owned and controlled by individuals
- Economic decisions are made by individuals competing to earn profits
- Individual freedom is considered very important
- Economic decisions are made by the basic principles of supply and demand
- Profit is the motive for increasing work rather than quotas

b) Markets - (economic preferences)

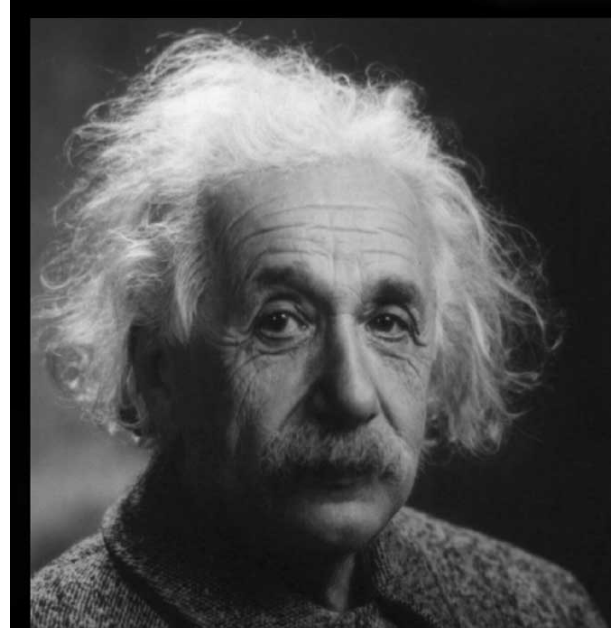


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Hoffman and Graham point to 4 aspects of utilitarianism that connect it to the broader tradition or “family” of liberalism:

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1) As do Hobbes, Locke, and Kant, and Rousseau, utilitarians reject “natural authority”



Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth

~Albert Einstein



No man has any natural authority over his fellow men.

(Jean-Jacques Rousseau)

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2) Utilitarians still support the liberal “presumption in favor of freedom” and the “presumption of natural equality”



Be careful. Sometimes they look like regular people.

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General Characterizations

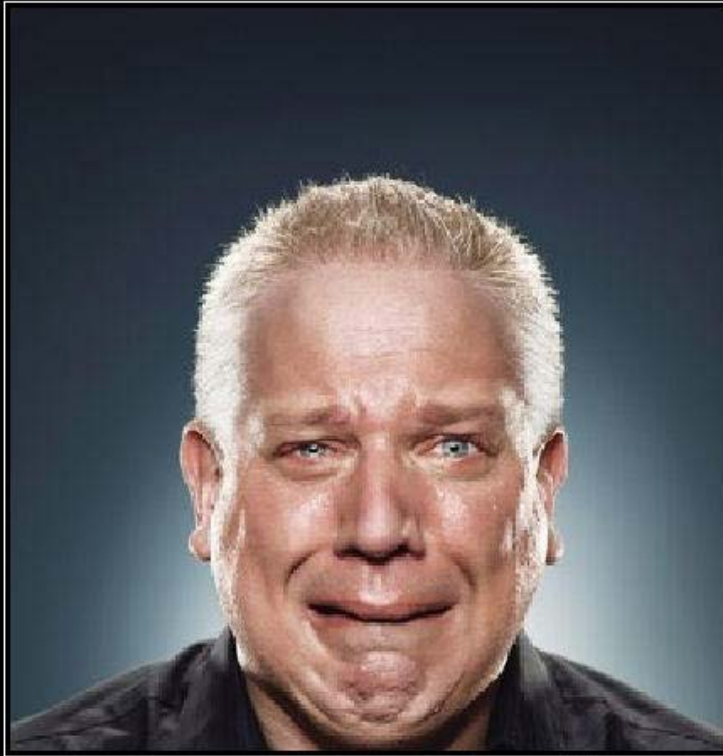
■ Left Wing

- More change is good
- Man is cooperative
- A natural equality exists w/o ranks
- Stress equality
- Want a more permissive society
- Human rights have priority
- Concerned with civil liberties

■ Right Wing

- Less change is desirable
- Man is competitive
- A natural hierarchy works
- Stress liberty
- Want a less permissive society
- Property rights have priority
- Concerned with order

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PROGRESSIVES

DAMN THEM FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS, ROE V. WADE,
THE CIVIL RIGHTS BILL, COMMON SENSE, AND SCIENCE

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3) In concrete political terms, utilitarians are typically progressive or radical in their attitudes to social problems.

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4) Most important of all, utilitarianism grew in parallel with the development of democracy.



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Liberalism:

A Summary from

Hoffman and Graham



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At the heart of liberalism is the belief that people are naturally free and equal...

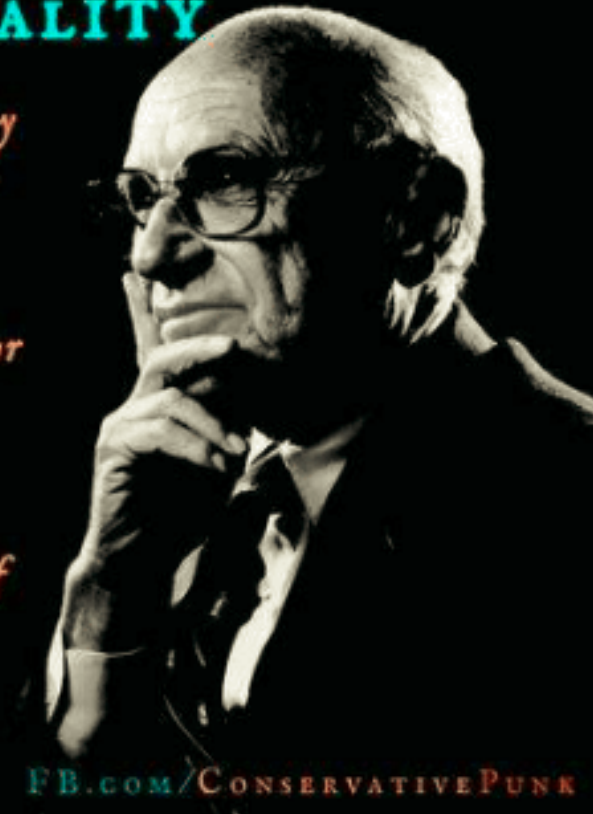
FREEDOM VS. EQUALITY

” A society that aims for equality before liberty will end up with neither equality nor liberty.

And a society that aims first for liberty will not end up with equality, but it will end up with a closer approach to equality than any other kind of system that has ever been developed.

MILTON FRIEDMAN

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...or rather, any departure from freedom or equality [by the state] will require justification.



Mikhail Bakunin

Political Freedom without economic equality is a pretense, a fraud, a lie; and the workers want no lying.

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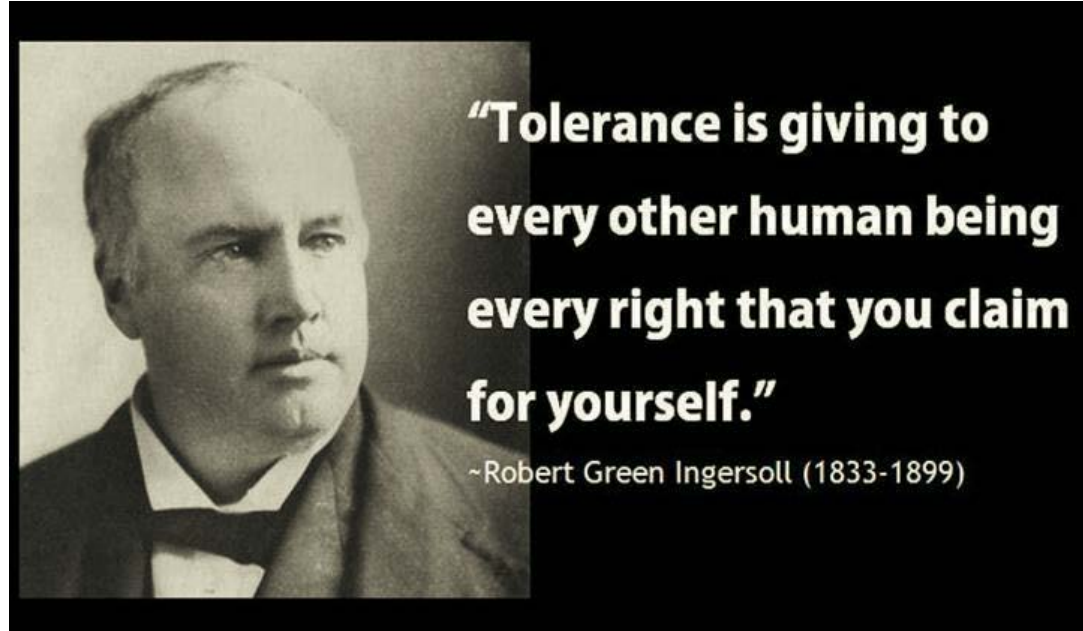
Liberalism

developed out of the settlement of the Wars of Religion, with the emphasis on toleration of religious difference.



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Such toleration was gradually extended beyond the sphere of religion to other aspects of belief and lifestyle.



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Several strands of liberalism emerged after the 17th century:

Contractarianism

Rights-Based liberalism

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism and Contractarianism

- ♦ Individual Rights trump the welfare of society or the group: Contractarianism
- ♦ The welfare of the group is more important than any one person: Utilitarianism
- ♦ We live in a society that tends to embrace utilitarianism

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Although there are significant philosophical differences between them, they are all clearly part of the “liberal family.”

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