

SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORIES

Key Concepts:

The State of Nature

The Social Contract

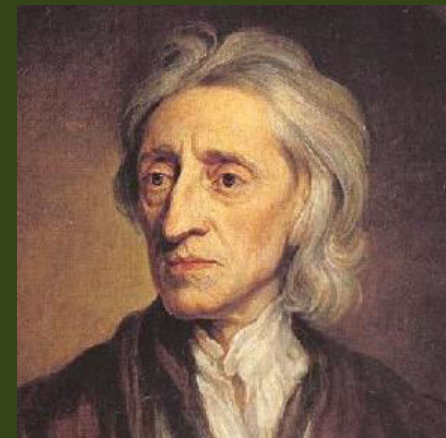
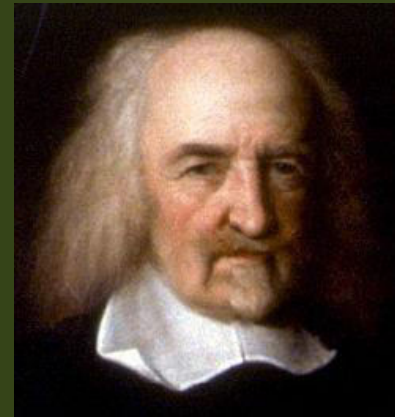
The Sovereign

Key Concepts:

- The State of Nature: A pre-social condition.
- The Social Contract: An agreement between
(a) members of the community or
● (b) members of the community and the Sovereign.
- The Sovereign: The legitimate head of state after the Social Contract: (a) a person or group of persons, such as a monarch or a government, or (b) the people representing themselves.

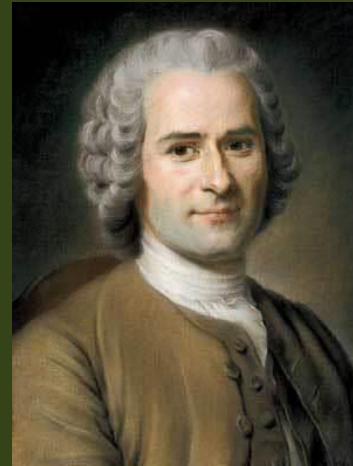
KEY PLAYERS IN SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

- Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679): Argues in favor of absolute monarchy.
- John Locke (1632-1704): Argues in favor of representational democracy. Anti-royalist.



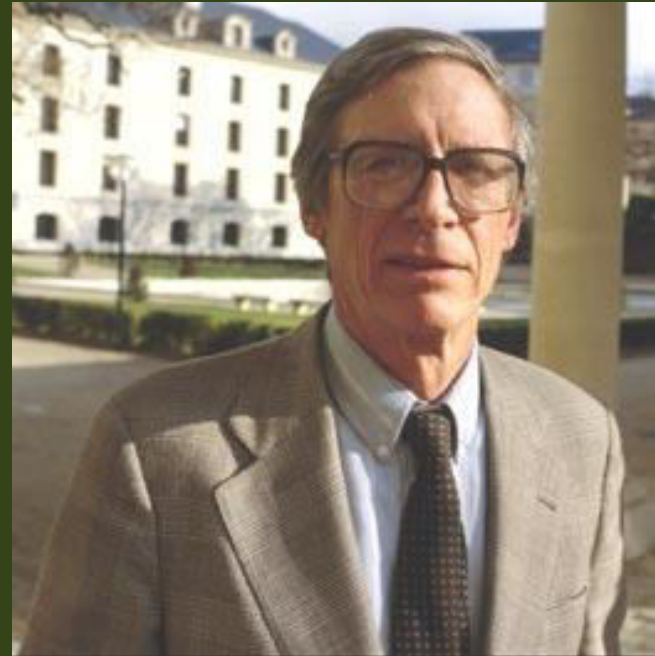
KEY PLAYERS IN SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778): Argues in favor of direct democracy.
- Immanuel Kant (1724-1804): Argues in favor of a representational system, but lead by a monarch/government with the people's interest at heart.



KEY PLAYERS IN SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

- John Rawls (1921-2002): Argues in favor of an imaginary social contract within a democracy, an “Original Position.”



VIEWS ON HUMAN NATURE

- Hobbes: Humans are selfish by nature and must be controlled.
- Locke: Humans are rational by nature, and can by-and-large control themselves.
- Rousseau: Humans are good and compassionate by nature, but can be corrupted by civilization.
- Kant: Humans are selfish by nature, but can control themselves through rational, universalized thinking.
- Rawls: Humans are selfish by nature, and the Social Contract must be made attractive by appealing to everyone's self-interest.

VIEWS ON THE STATE OF NATURE:

- Hobbes: The State of Nature is a dangerous place, and “life of man “ is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”
- Locke: The State of Nature exists any time humans haven’t entered into an agreement with each other to participate in a government. Even so, it is not chaotic because of human rationality, and the three natural rights to life, liberty, and property.
- Rousseau: The State of Nature is a wonderful, rich environment for early humans living solitary peaceful lives.
- Kant: The State of Nature is a fiction; the Social Contract is a rational, moral concept limiting the powers of the sovereign. States are in a State of Nature vis-à-vis each other.
- Rawls: The State of Nature is a fantasy, but we can use it to imagine creating a fair society.

THE SOVEREIGN

- Hobbes: The absolute monarch (king or queen)
- Locke: The people (all adult males) electing a government in democratic elections
- Rousseau: The people vote on all matters; the people *are* the Sovereign
- Kant: The monarch/government accepting the rational limitations of legislative power, governing for the people.
- Rawls: Modern Republican form of government.

EFFECTS OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

- Hobbes: People will live in peace but without rights except for the right to self-defense
- Locke: The three natural rights which exist in the State of Nature will be easier to enforce by the government. Those who have given *express consent* will be bound by the contract; those who have given *tacit consent* can opt out and leave.
- Rousseau: Life will be fair for all if we employ the *general will* and set aside our personal interests.
- Kant: The people will be fairly represented by the Sovereign without actually having to participate.
- Rawls: We will have decided on a system that is fair for everyone, using the “Veil of Ignorance.”

INFLUENCES

- Hobbes: Inspired Locke, and indirectly, Jefferson
- Locke: Inspired Thomas Jefferson in his Declaration of Independence
- Rousseau: Inspired Jefferson, to some extent, but also Kant, Marxism, the environmentalist movement, respect for indigenous peoples, and modern child pedagogy
- Kant: Influenced social philosophies and the human rights concept with his theory of the rights of rational human beings. Influenced John Rawls.

