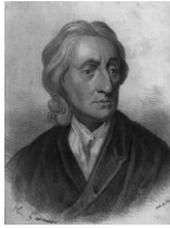


Social Contract Theory



The ideas behind the US government as seen in the Declaration of Independence

Social Contract Theory is about

1. Why people theoretically choose to give up some of their power in order to form a government
2. The purpose of government

Who are the main social contract theorists?

- Jean Jacques Rousseau,
- Thomas Hobbes
- John Locke
- All wrote about social contract theory in 1600s & 1700s.

John Locke's ideas are the foundation of the *Declaration of Independence*



The Second Treatise on Government
by John Locke

- Written 1679-83

Social Contract theorists like John Locke based their ideas about government on a fictitious “state of nature”

What is this state of nature?

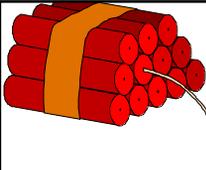
What does “the state of nature” mean?

- What life is “naturally” like before people created governments...



According to Locke, in the state of nature everyone

- Is equal
- Has liberty
- Follows “natural laws of reason” -
 - don’t harm others’ LIFE/HEALTH or
 - LIBERTY or
 - PROPERTY/ POSSESSIONS
 - Everyone has to preserve himself and others
- Has executive power- everybody has the right to punish others for breaking these natural laws



The state of nature is dangerous!

- If everybody has the right to punish people who break the natural laws then what is life like in the state of nature?

Violent! Chaotic!

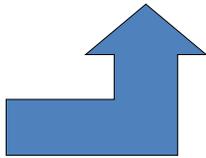
Trade State of Nature for Gov't

- State of nature can easily turn into a state of war, in which nobody's life, liberty or property is safe. So...
- Give up some liberties to leave the state of nature and form a civil society, to form a GOVERNMENT.
- You give the GOVERNMENT your executive power to punish people who mess with your life, liberty or property.

The purpose of government according to John Locke is to...

Forming a government to protect yourself from the violence of the state of nature is called...

A social contract



Examples of a “social contract” ...

Right to revolution

According to John Locke, people have a right to rebel or change the government when it no longer protects their LIFE, LIBERTY & PROPERTY.

This what the Founding Fathers used as the reason for declaring independence from England.

Compare John Locke's ideas with the Declaration of Independence



Elements in the D.o.I.
