

Property and political philosophy

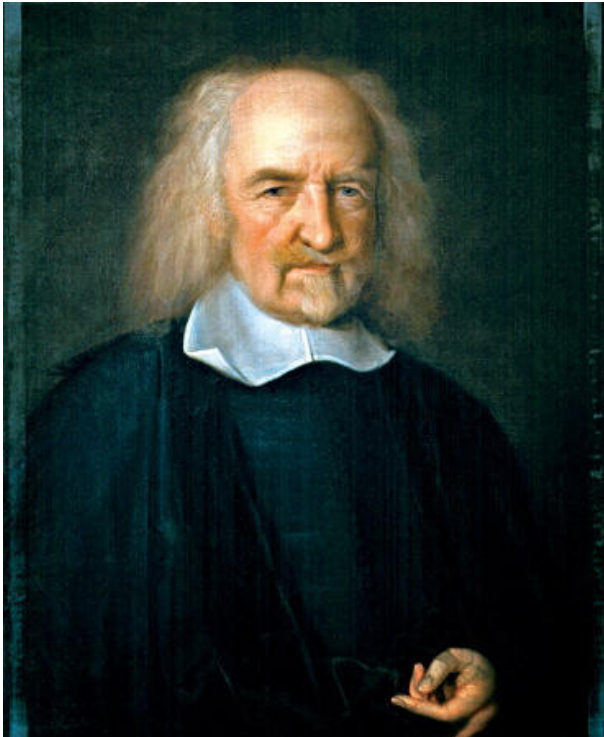
E. de Dios

7 September 2008

for the Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung

Thomas Hobbes

(1588-1679)



- Human condition: “war of every one against every one” (*bellum omnia contra omnes*)
- Solution: *Leviathan*, a ruler to whom individuals transfer their power to preserve security and maintain order.
- Abuses as a price of peace: essentially an efficient monopolist

Samuel Pufendorf

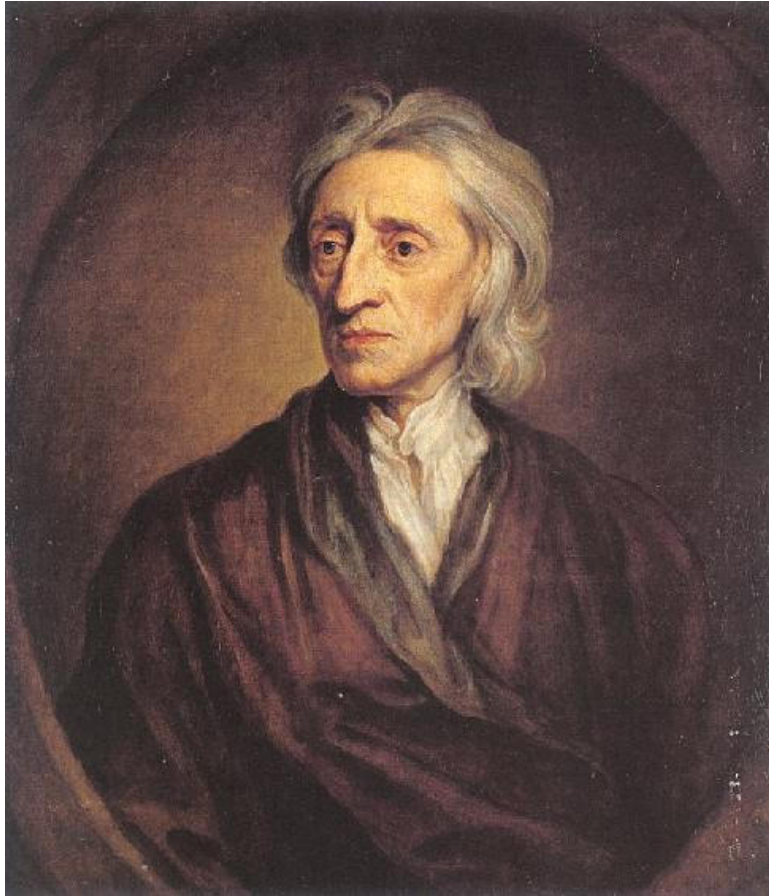
(1632-1694)



- Ownership only of goods rival in use
- Original ownership based on first occupancy
- But must be sanctioned by state

John Locke

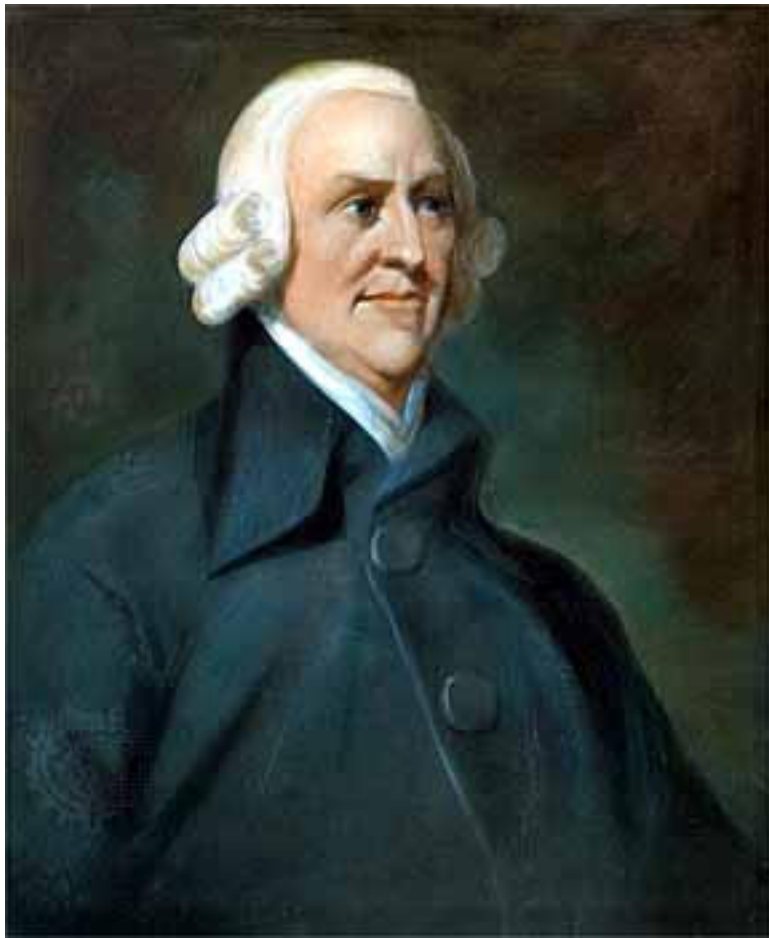
(1632-1704)



- Government not based on divine right but on public good
- Limited government primarily to protect property
- “labour-rights” argument for property as a natural right

Adam Smith

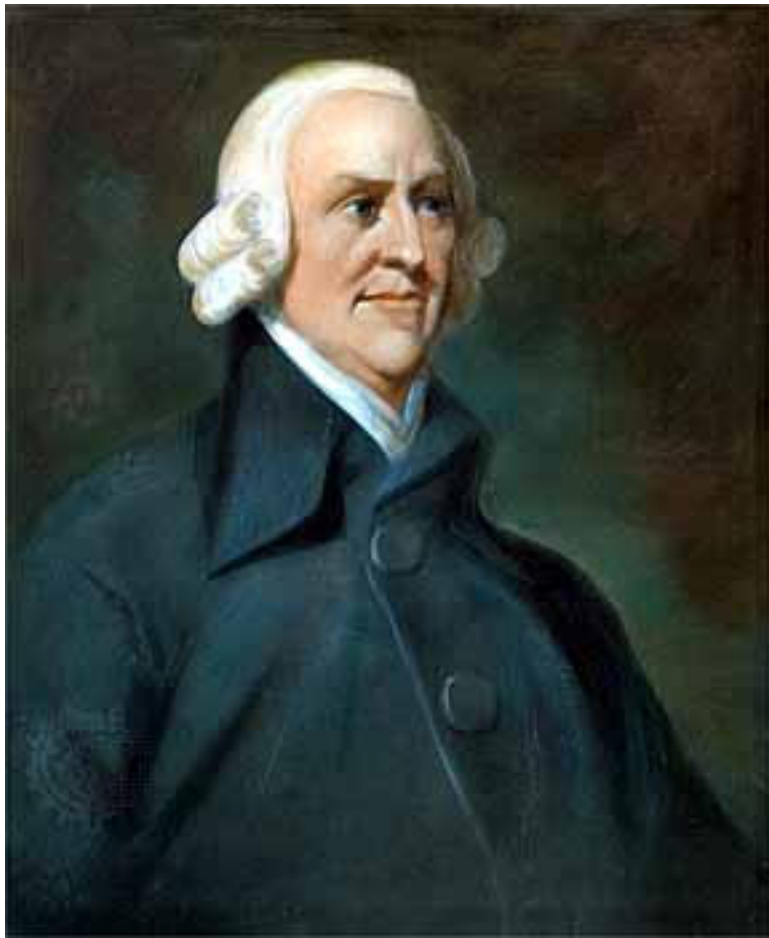
(1723-1790)



- Property also as part of natural right.
- Protection of property (*justitia comutativa*) one of three roles of the sovereign
- But also a functional rationale for private-ownership (market) economy

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Jeremy Bentham

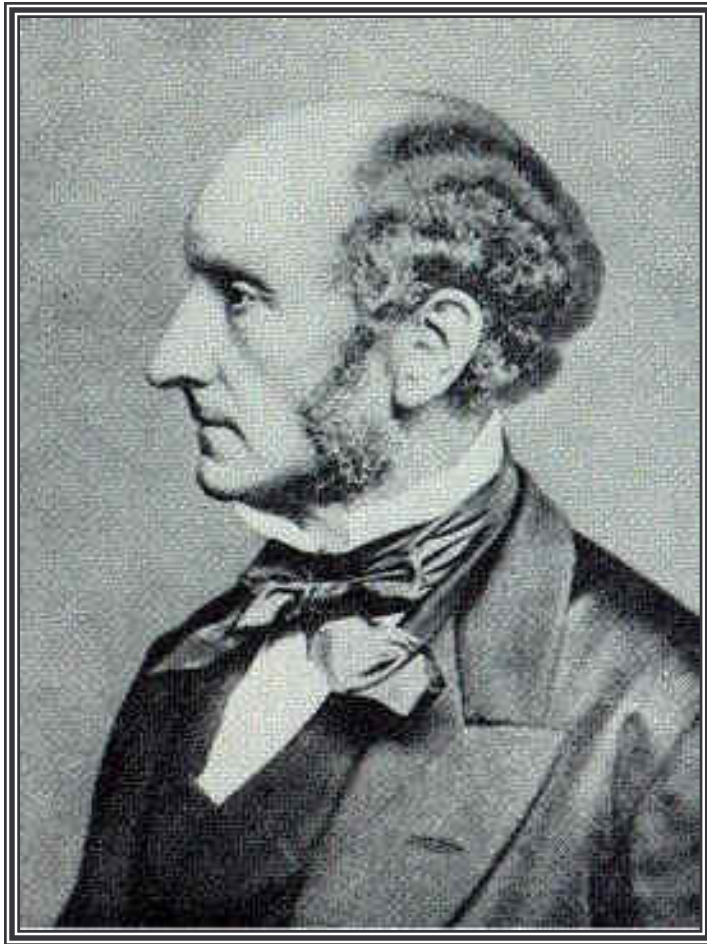
(1748-1832)



- Utilitarian individual philosophy
- Maximising total social utility as government's goal
- Property guaranteed by the state
- Functions as incentive to industriousness (and growth)

John Stuart Mill

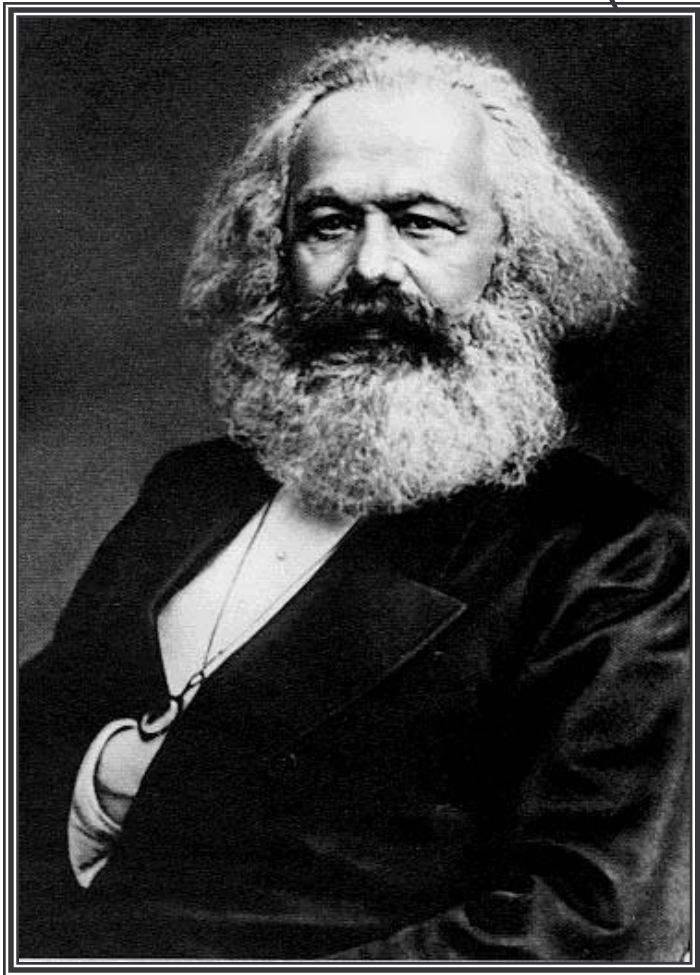
(1806-1873)



- Utilitarian individual philosophy
- Emphasised inviolability of the private sphere v. the state
- Conceded defects of capitalism
- Property and markets as components of individual liberty: a political/cultural defence

Karl Marx

(1818-1883)



Critique still based on natural rights arguments

Projection of abundance and predictability of production relative to human needs

Makes property superfluous

Allows state to reallocate.

Poverty and political philosophy

Private property's link with desired human aims (liberty, well-being, incentive to progress, etc.) and hence the state's role to protect it.

Rationale for the state linked positively or negatively with the institution of property.

But an inherent tension between state power and individual rights, including the right to property: state strong enough to protect property can also take and reallocate it.

End