



# Putting It All Together

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*Creating a Just  
America*



# New Disclaimers

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- **EVERYTHING DISCUSSED WILL BE TESTED;  
EVERYTHING!**
- Detailed notes can be provided
- Mr. Busby is still blameless



# These Past 5 Months

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- You and Mr. Busby
- Our Prior Sessions
  - #1—Liberal democratic regime
  - #2—U. S. strengths and weaknesses
  - #3—Achieving change through advocacy
- Today
  - #4--Putting it all together

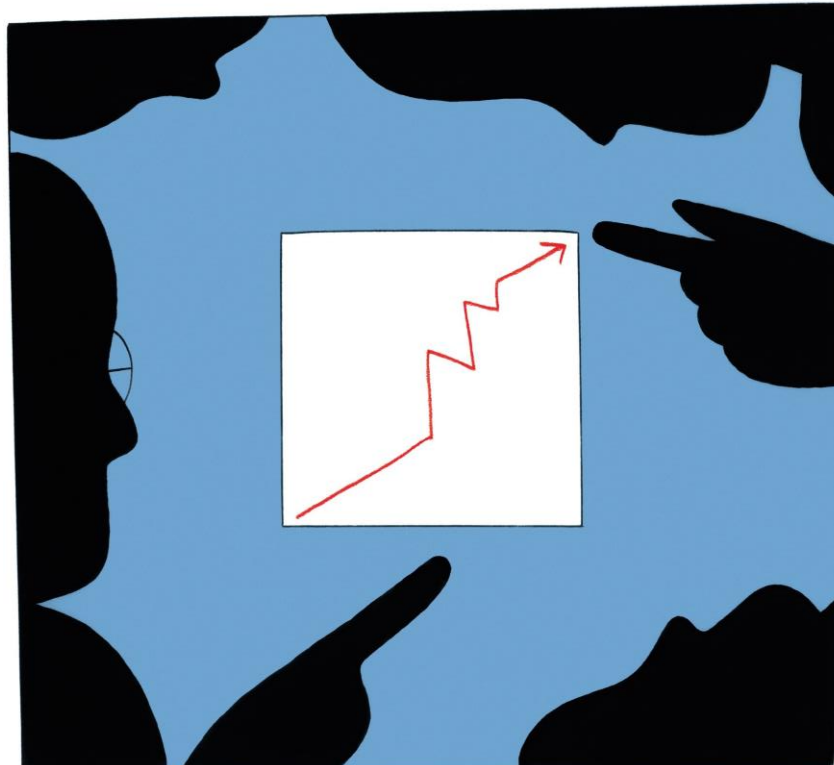


# 3 Statements

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- The U.S. is in bad shape
- Life in U.S. is now much better than it was
- It can be much better than it is

# Objectively, life is better today



# Signal Hill, 1941



**Oil rigs, Signal Hill, Los Angeles, 1941.**

# Signal Hill, Today



# But, life was also

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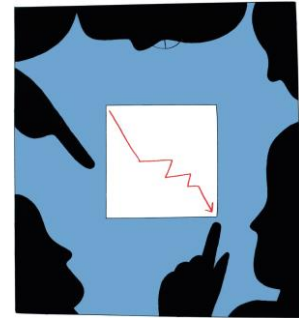
Simpler

More true to form

More spiritual

With greater interaction, reliance, and trust in each other

With more confidence in the future







# A Disappointment

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“Critics say that America is a lie because its reality falls so short of its ideals. They are wrong. America is not a lie; it is a disappointment. But it can be a disappointment only because it is also a hope,” for Americans and for others around the world.

--Samuel Huntington



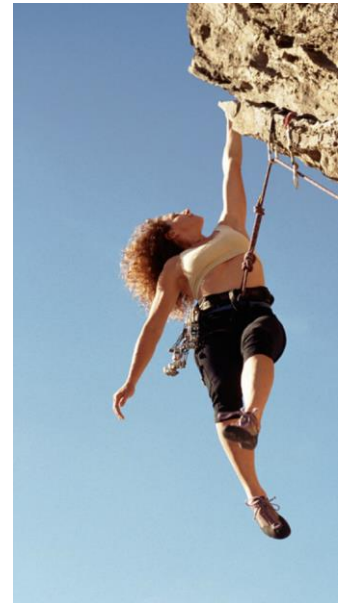
# Pessimism or Hope?

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- Pessimism—a bias that doesn't lead to action or positive outcomes
- Hope—can, and usually does

# Plan for the Day

- You will decide:
  - Values on which U.S. should be based
  - Kind of state and society you want us to become
- To do so, first need to address 4 concepts





# The 4 Concepts

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- Individual
  1. Good vs. Right
  2. What Is a Just Individual?
- Society
  3. Good vs. Right
  4. What Is a Just Society?



# 1. Individual Good vs. Right

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- The good:
  - Improves our life; has real benefits
  - Ask, “Good for what?”
- The right:
  - Matches religious teachings or a moral maxim/imperative
  - Ask, “According to what maxim?”



# Going through life

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- Often the good and the right align
- Moral dilemma--when they don't
  - “Be right or be successful?”

A good practice: ask yourself, “Is this good, right, or both?”



# Examples

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- When they align
  - Helping a stranger
  - Keeping commitments to yourself
- When they don't
  - Finding \$1,000 bill
  - Seeing test answer



## 2. What Is a Just Individual?

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- Lives by the moral virtues
  - Honesty, integrity, honor, ...
- Has prudence
  - Self-discipline thru practical wisdom and responsible decision making
- Is of high character







# Moral Virtues

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“Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom.”

--Franklin, Madison, Adams



# 3. Societal Good vs. Right

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- The good: what improves lives (the common interest)



**THE  
GOOD**

- The right: what is fair or our duty to others



# Examples

- When they align
  - Runaway trolley, Part I
  - Basic utilities: water, power, etc.
- When they don't
  - Runaway trolley, Part II
  - Heart transplant case





## 4. What Is a Just Society?

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- Has aspirational set of core values as to the good and the right
- Is dedicated to acting consistent with those values



# Foundational Docs

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- Declaration of Independence
  - “all men are created equal”
  - “endowed...with certain unalienable rights,” including “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”
- Constitution
  - “to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense...and secure the blessings of liberty”



# Foundational Docs (cont.)

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- Bill of Rights

- Freedom of speech, press, assembly, and to petition
- Rights not denied if not enumerated

- Gettysburg Address

- “a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal”
- “a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people...”



# Foundational Docs (cont.)

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- 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment
  - “due process of law”
  - “equal protection of the laws”
  - [one person, one vote]
- [Pledge of Allegiance]
  - “with liberty and justice for all”



# Priority Values for Society

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## The Good/Flourishing

Order: public safety

Greatest good for the  
greatest number

Cost-effective

## The Right/Just

Social order

Equality/fairness

Liberty

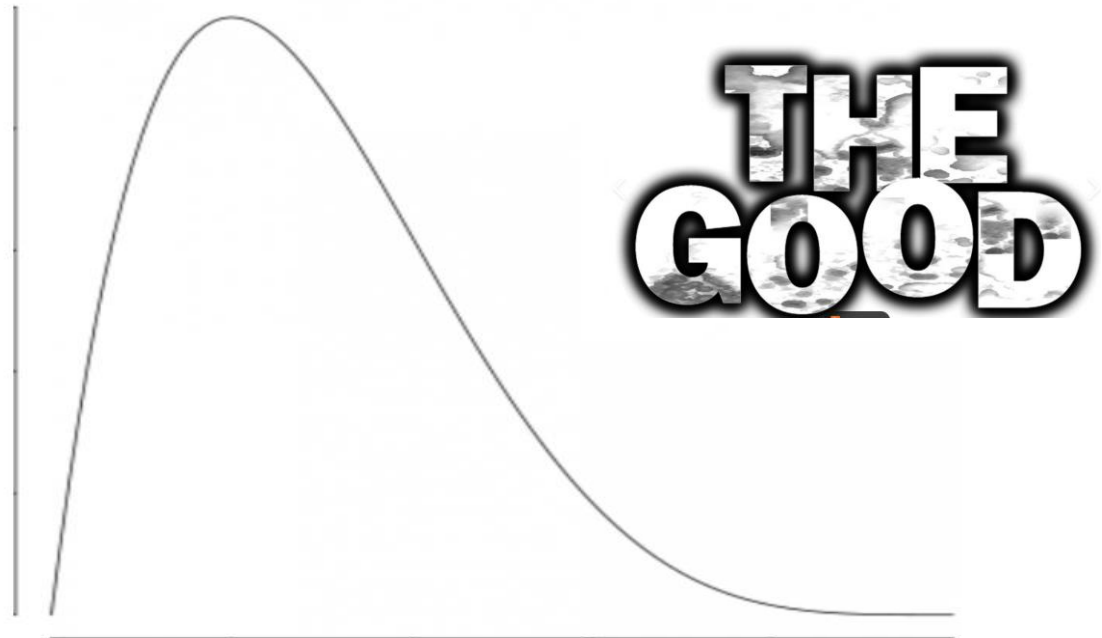




# Focusing on the Good

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Creates a higher upside, but leaves many behind

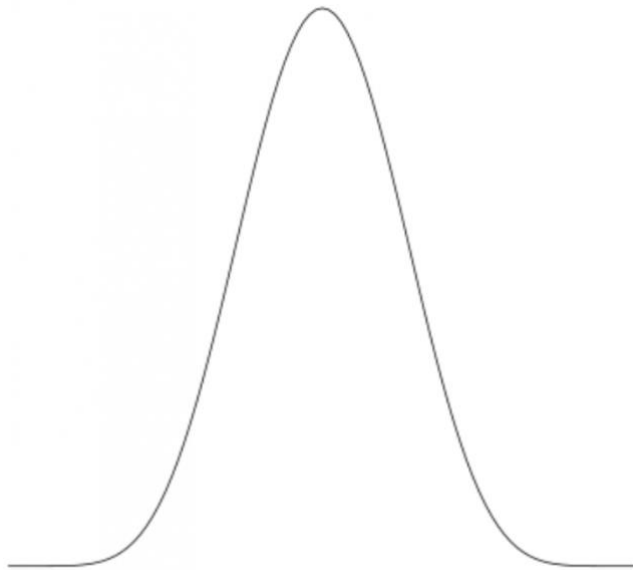




# Focusing on the Right

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Creates a more fair society, but limits objective benefits





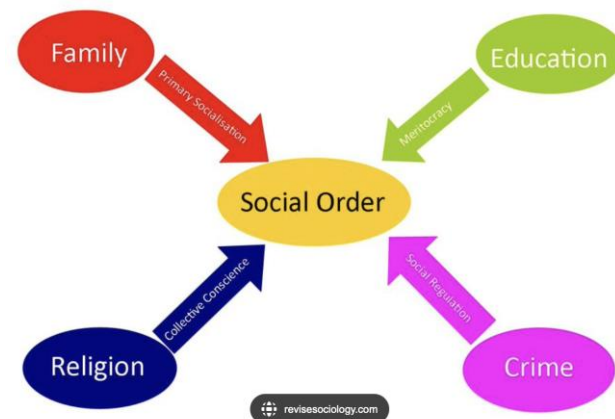
# #1: Good vs. Right

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- Ground rules and roles
- Questions to address
  - In general, which is more important: the good or the right? Why?
  - In the U.S. right now, which should be the focus? Why?
  - Who would agree with you? Disagree?

# Social Order

- Two aspects:
  - Structures and institutions function fairly
  - Interpersonal cooperation and harmony
- As contrasted with anarchism and disorder





# Issues re: Order

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- State vs. Society's responsibilities?
- Can multi-pluralism work?
- Does Madison's large republic still work?



# Equality

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- What should be the focus?
  - Having the same rights?
  - Being treated the same way?
  - Having the same opportunities?
  - Having the same outcomes?
  - By group or by individual?
  - How much is enough?

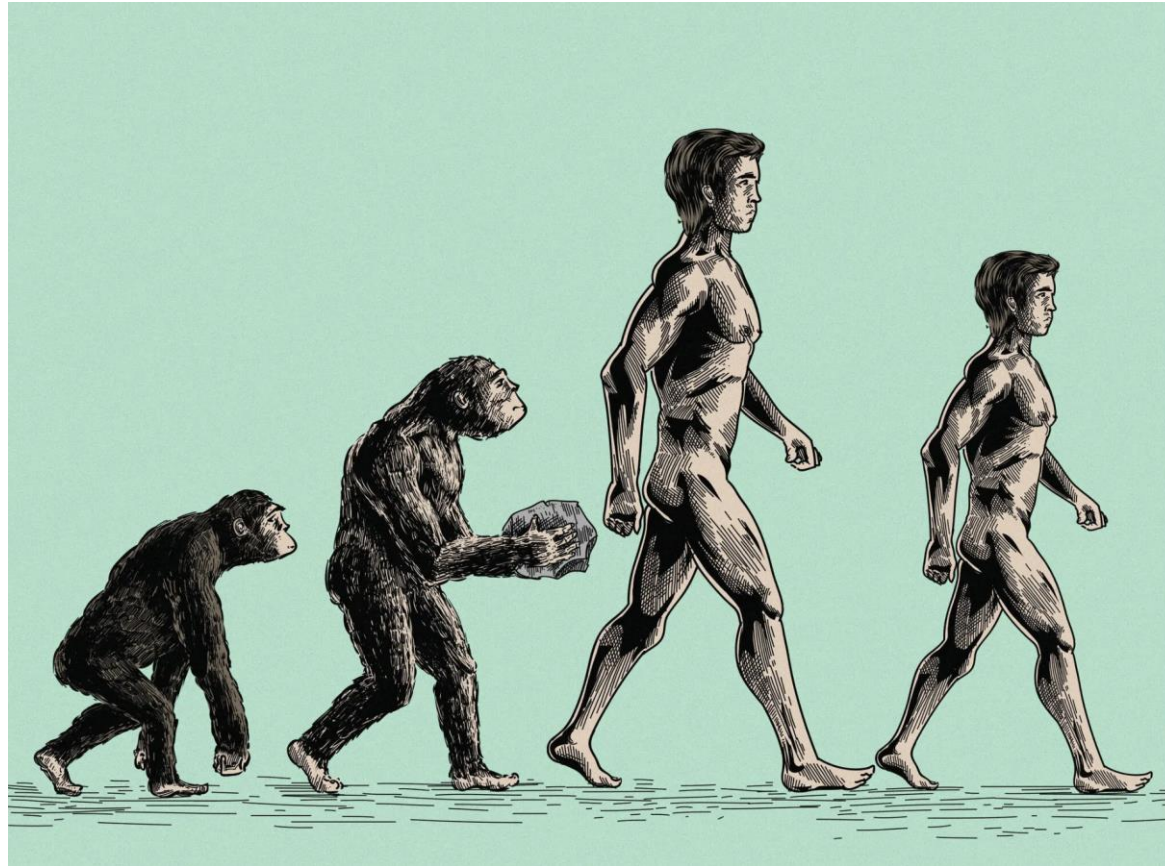


# In the Obvious Ways, We Aren't Equal

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- Physically
- Intellectually
- Emotionally
- Ethically
- Self interest vs. common interest
- The opportunities we pursue & outcomes we achieve

# Height, for example







# Key Ways We Are All Equal

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- ❑ Human consciousness and capability for rationality; our unique human identity
- ❑ Rights and liberties
- ❑ Treatment under the law
- ❑ Deserving of the opportunity to achieve a fulfilling life

# Equality: Arenas

- Legal
- Political
- Socio-economic





# Liberty

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Absence of constraints that would preclude or hinder you from doing something you believe is needed or desirable

Liberty, not license

*An instrumental value*



# Liberty's Underpinnings

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- Bestowed by God (St. Augustine)
- Based on “natural rights” (Locke)
- Acting consistent with what we would want as a universal law (Kant)
- Benefits society (Mill)

# Liberty: Arenas

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- National
- Political
- Individual





# Evolving Constraints on Liberty

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- Traditionally, the state exerted key control
  - E.g., miscegenation laws, forced sterilization
- Last 50 years: shift to society
  - E.g., cancel culture, control of women's bodies
- Now: Christian conservatives seeking to re-establish state control
  - E.g., abortions, LBGQT rights, same sex marriage, voting



# Political Ideologies and Values

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## Socialists

Equality  
Order

Liberty

## Liberals

Equality  
Liberty

Order

## Conservatives

Order

Liberty

Equality

## Libertarians

Liberty

Order

Equality

# What Does the Constitution Prescribe?



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- What provisions promote
  - Order?
  - Equality? Inequality?
  - Liberty?
- What conclusions do we draw?



## #2: Priority of Values

- In general, what should be the relationship of values, among: order, equality, liberty? Why?
- In U.S. right now, what should be our priorities of values? Why?
- Where do we fall short?





# Tension between Order & Liberty

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- The original tension in governing
  - Increasing order tends to decrease liberty
- Restricting everyone's liberty vs. liberty of a subset
  - E.g.: inheritance tax



# Large % of Laws Restrict Liberty

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- Preventing Harm to Others
  - E.g., Licensing MDs, noise ordinances
  - Mill's "Harm Principle"
- Preventing Harm to Self
  - E.g., helmets, SSA
  - The "Nanny State"
- Both
  - E.g., insurance, vaccinations



# Options for Addressing

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- Shift power between D.C. and the states or society
- Reduce limits to individual liberties—  
e.g., gov't collection of personal data
- Enumerate additional rights
- ...



# Tension between Equality & Liberty

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- Equality is the foundation of liberty; rights are universal
- But, liberty widens inequality



# Options for Addressing

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- Manage political influence of the rich
  - Negate *Citizens United*
  - Publicly fund campaigns
  - Close the revolving door
- Decide level of economic inequality to accept
  - Limit bigness, foster entrepreneurship
  - Manage inheritance tax rate
  - Amend income tax code
  - Keep money out of other spheres of justice
- ...



# Key Relevant U.S. Strengths and Weaknesses You Noted

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## Strengths

Civil rights

Free press

Strong military

↑ gender equality

Diversity

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## Weaknesses

Violence/crime

Vastly unequal wealth

Discrimination

Drug offender  
incarceration

...



# The Thought Experiment

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- 2<sup>nd</sup> Constitutional Convention
- You are selected
- Veil of Ignorance





## #3 Creating a More Just U.S.

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- You've seen how what the Founders created has worked out.
- In order to create a more just U.S. society, what would you change?
- How would you convince a majority of Americans to go along?



# Your Thoughts?

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- Group Report Outs
- Reactions and Questions?
- Please pass the recorder's cumulative notes forward

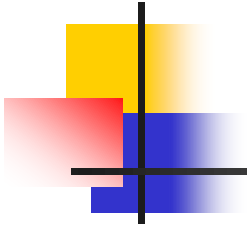
# Final Reflections

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- Appreciation







# Tested Objective Measures of Progress in Wellbeing

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## Progress: A Testable Hypothesis

- Life
- Health
- Sustenance
- Prosperity
- Peace
- Freedom
- Safety
- Knowledge
- Leisure
- Happiness