

# Capitalism vs. Collectivism: 1945 to the Present: African American Political Thought (Vol 4)

## The Positive Political Economy of Individualism and Collectivism: Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau

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In rich capitalist countries, Liberal political cultures mix ideas from Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau: both laissez-faire and New Deal Liberals value maintenance of societal order, protection of individual property, and consent by the governed. But when aggressive competition abets inequality, disrupts communities, undermines consensus, and encourages disorder, this mix is increasingly contradictory. One response is what Sandel's calls "search for a public philosophy,"<sup>1</sup> including communitarianism,<sup>2</sup> aiming to create a harmonious "civil society."

Because the theories of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau are merely utopian if they do not work in practice, this article aims to reveal their needed positive assumptions. Their perspectives are seen as special cases of a general model in which people choose the type of society that they want while society shapes their customs and characters, centering on the dimensions of personal individualism and societal individualization. Such two-way causation suggests the possibility of societal equilibrium, so that societies can be described as different equilibria and disequilibria.

Any examination of the assumptions needed for a political vision to work involves a critique of ideology. Because the nature of society is not unique in the

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