

FREE-MAN'S PERSPECTIVE

How Life, Liberty & Sanity Can Win

Issue #22

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The Birth of Neo-Lockean Civilization



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You and I – right here in our own place and time – are witnessing the birth of a new civilization. This is occurring quietly (a lot like Jesus being born in a barn, interestingly enough), but it *is* occurring, and for those who recognize it, it is very exciting.

For lack of another term, I am calling this new culture *Neo-Lockean*, as it is based upon the core ideals of John Locke.

Locke, however, pulled back a bit from taking his principles to their natural end. Precisely why he stopped at a certain point is hard to say, but it is likely that he saw where they led and was simply uncomfortable with them going that far. (As Voltaire famously said, “it is dangerous to be

right when the government is wrong.”)

But, whatever the cause, we are the beneficiaries of three centuries of progress which followed Locke, and it is easily within our power to take his principles to their natural conclusion. And that conclusion involves a radically different way of looking at life than what is currently sold in our contemporary world.

Thus I have come to the name, *Neo-Lockean Civilization*.

The freshness of this new civilization is actually necessary for the many breakthroughs that stand just before us. In fact, those breakthroughs (I am thinking of genetic science, nano-materials, micro-fabrication and new energy technologies, as well as advances in psychology, history and other fields) will have no chance of taking their natural shapes if they stay locked inside of a stifling government-corporate culture.

We are on the verge of stunning breakthroughs, but they are not suited to the dense, choking environment that surrounds most of the world now. They need a new civilization in which to develop.

HOW CIVILIZATIONS FORM

Very little about the formation of civilizations is taught in schools. Serious historians are familiar with the subject, but it very seldom makes the schoolbooks. The reason for this is that authorized information (like schoolbooks) nearly always present the current culture as the inevitable end of history. “Our way” is always presumed to be permanent. I'm not aware of anyone enforcing this, but it occurs almost universally. Such is the way of institutions.

The interesting thing about new civilizations is that they generally form in Dark Ages; in the quiet periods following the collapse of the previous civilization, which its inhabitants had presumed was eternal.

For example:

- Greek civilization formed in the “Dark Age of the Greeks,” between approximately 1200 and 800 BC. Once that incubation was complete, the new civilization spread, combined with Rome, thrived for a long time, then fell.
- Our Western Civilization formed in the European Dark Ages between 500 and 900 AD. The formulation that emerged from that period spread and thrived for a long time, was corrupted in its principles and is warring against itself now.

We covered these cycles and their root causes in [FMP#18](#).

The chart below illustrates (in simplified form) the political breakdown and philosophical development that allowed Christian Europe to form a new type of civilization.

There are two things in the chart I'd like to point out, to avoid confusion:

1. “Devolution” (on the left) refers to the breakup of rulership from a few very large units (like an empire) to many small units (like hundreds of walled cities). This occurred strongly in the 5th Century as Rome simply fell apart. After that devolution, small units of power predominated through the 10th Century.
2. There is a line called “Distribution” just below “Christians” on the right side. This refers to the fact that there was no center of Christianity in those days. These were small, widely scattered, disconnected groups of believers. The groups in each little area developed independently. This was actually when the writings of the New Testament became important: they were used as a reference, so believers could tell which lines of development

were better or worse.

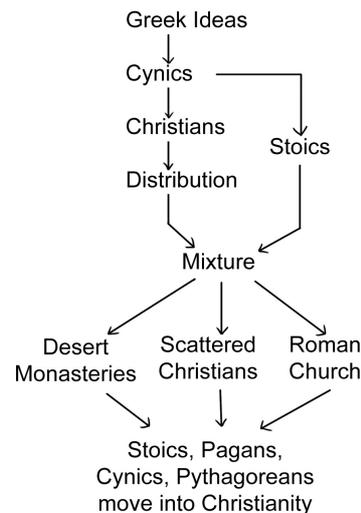
At the bottom of this chart we see “Western Civilization Forms During Dark Ages.” During those years, the people of Europe reset their minds and lives in the emotional void left by Rome. While Rome existed, the people of Europe thought in Roman terms. Once that was no longer possible, they began to face the important questions of life without an intellectual partner. This drew them hard into philosophical considerations, and then to the new formulation of ideas that became their new civilization.

POLITICS

33 BC - Empire Forms
50 AD - Emperors are clearly depraved
150 AD - Reformers hold to traditional values
250 AD - 1st Major Crisis
350 AD - Reordering, desperation
450 AD - Conquest, failure

↓
Devolution

PHILOSOPHY



**Western Civilization Forms
During the Dark Ages**

There are several important things to observe from this process:

Most people are emotionally unable to abandon large systems.

The people of Europe knew that Rome was corrupt. Nearly everyone understood that it had long abandoned its old values. Yet very few people ever abandoned the Empire. Instead, the better of them tried, endlessly, to reform it. Only at the desperate end did individuals begin running away. The few who condemned Rome outright (such as the anarchist Cynics) were thought by respectable Romans to be a bit unhinged.

Always, a civilization rots long before its people are willing to look at the rot. They will allow themselves to think that an emperor is deranged, or that a senator has been bought, or that an official is cruel, but they always imagine that their system has some special magic in it, and that this magic will keep everything working, even when all of its parts are broken.

This same inability to accept the truth occurred in the medieval church, in Stalin's USSR, and in more or less every other case. People always believe in the system far longer than

they should. And it is happening today: Millions of Westerners now speak the word “democracy” as if it were a magic incantation... as if democracy can magically preserve us from chaos and give us more than we deserve.

Beliefs tied to the old civilization tend to fail with it.

You can see from the chart that Cynics, Stoics and Christians are shown as being associated with one another. While there were clear divisions between the groups, there were also many similarities. For example:

- Christians used the same rhetoric (methods of arguing) as the Cynics.
- Like Christians, some of the Cynics were martyred for speaking out against Rome.
- The great Stoic, Epictetus, was revered by early Christians.
- The ascetic Christians (in monasteries) lived almost identically to the Cynics, who had come first.

Nonetheless, Christianity thrived while paganism (which was more monotheistic than you might suppose) failed and both Stoicism and Cynicism either merged into Christianity or faded away.

A crucial factor in Christianity's survival was that it was a separatist movement. Consider some of the sayings that were popular among Christians at this time:

This present evil world.

We are not of this world.

Our kingdom is not of this world.

The god of this world has no part in us.

New wine should be put into new skins.

It is widely known that the ascetics of the desert monasteries played a large role during this time, but what is not well recognized is that they were not just religionists; they were also political separatists. The point of going to the desert was to escape from Rome's thoughts and to think and live a new, separate way.

Roman culture of the time was stifling and vulgar; it encompassed nearly all aspects of life and imagination. Christians separated from it. Most were isolated in small towns; others went off to the desert. Only a few followed the pattern of other philosophers and sought political favors in the big cities.

It is true that the Bishops of Rome (later given the title *Pope*) allied with the state in the 4th Century, but the Roman Church had surprisingly little control beyond their own area. Only in the medieval period did they gain centralized control.

It is also important to understand that Christianity was not uniformly the “religion of Rome” from Constantine to the end. Other emperors reversed Constantine and tried to remove Christianity.

Separation was crucial in enabling Christianity to survive the collapse of Rome, while similar philosophies failed. It did not need the state for support or approval. Most importantly, Christians did not acknowledge the state as a central point of reference.

New civilizations form separately.

Western Civilization did not form while Rome remained. Europe had to lose Rome before it could become its own thing. This had little to do with the political and military power of

Rome; it had mostly to do with the place Rome occupied in the minds of the Europeans. As we've said before, people who acclimate to being ruled take on the state as an intellectual partner. That locks up a lot of mental territory and prevents important new formulations.

Once Rome was gone, a lot of mental territory opened up. People began to imagine different ways of living. They began to use their own will, without getting approval in advance. Very shortly they were moving to new places and creating new types of ventures. And, most importantly, they formed new ideas about how they ought to live.

This couldn't happen until Rome was out of their heads.

Thinking on their own, the people of Europe settled around a new set of (primarily) Christian ideas and a new type of civilization took shape.

This new civilization was more interested in progress than dominance, and in production rather than conquest. Staples of Greco-Roman civilization like slavery faded away almost entirely. By 900 AD, the principles of this new civilization were being passed down consistently from one generation to the next. At that point Western civilization began to spread and to produce more positive results, with more justice, than any of the civilizations that preceded it.

THE DIVISION

Western civilization (by a long and complex series of events that we will pass over in this issue) generally thrived until the 17th century, when it faced a crisis.

Christianity – the root philosophy of Western civilization, which had been carefully controlled for several centuries prior – had broken out of its restraints. And, probably more importantly, new continents had been discovered, which cracked open men's imaginations. There was now someplace to run away to.

In this tumult, states found themselves with insufficient legitimacy. People were thinking and imagining, apart from them.

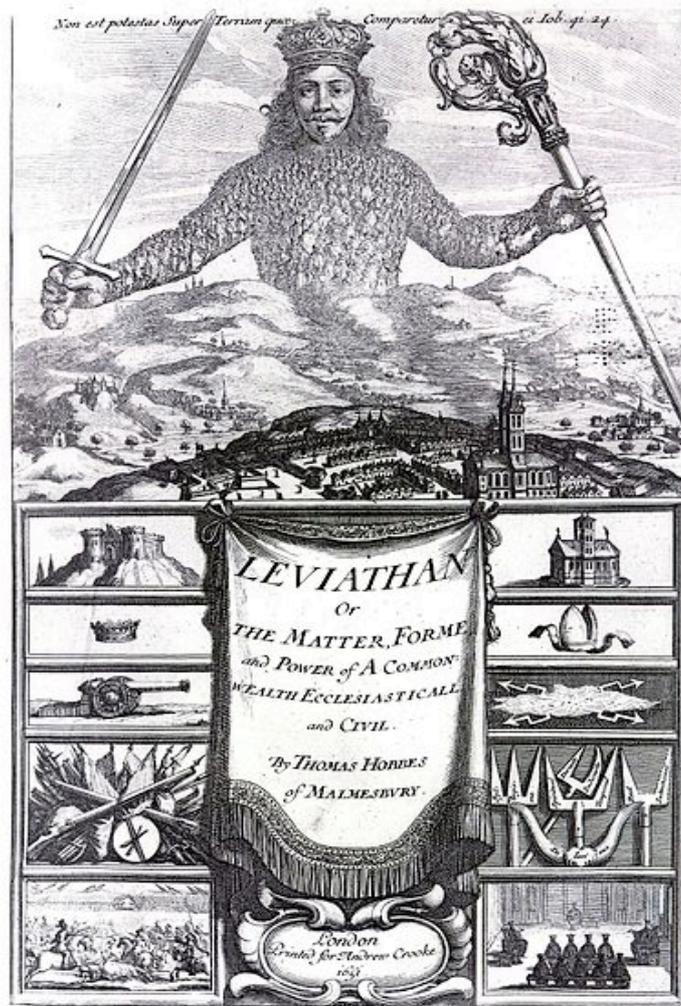
From this came two important new formulations:

Hobbes: With the divine right of kings failing as the great justification for the state, the rulers of Europe needed a replacement, and they found it in the work of Thomas Hobbes. His book *Leviathan*, published in 1651, reset the philosophy of rulership.

Hobbes claimed that overwhelming central authority and force were necessary to avoid discord, murder and civil war. Hobbes wrote that life without government would inevitably lead to conflict, to a “war of all against all,” and that life would be “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”

To escape this state of permanent war, said Hobbes, all individuals must yield their rights to a Sovereign Authority for the sake of their protection. And if this Sovereign were to act badly, the people would have to accept it as the price of peace.

Here is the frontispiece of the book, showing the sovereign towering over the city of men and intimidating them into peace:



It is worth mentioning that Jean Jacques Rousseau came up with a modified version of this philosophy about a hundred years later, setting the argument for rulership in terms of a “social contract.” (This “contract” was abstractly defined, of course.)

Locke: The great philosopher John Locke, rather than forming his principles around current controversies and crimes, looked back to man's essential nature and his condition in his primal state – before rulers, philosophies and crimes drove him to unnatural reactions. Locke wanted to understand man in his natural setting and to discover the natural laws that affected him before man-made laws were imposed.

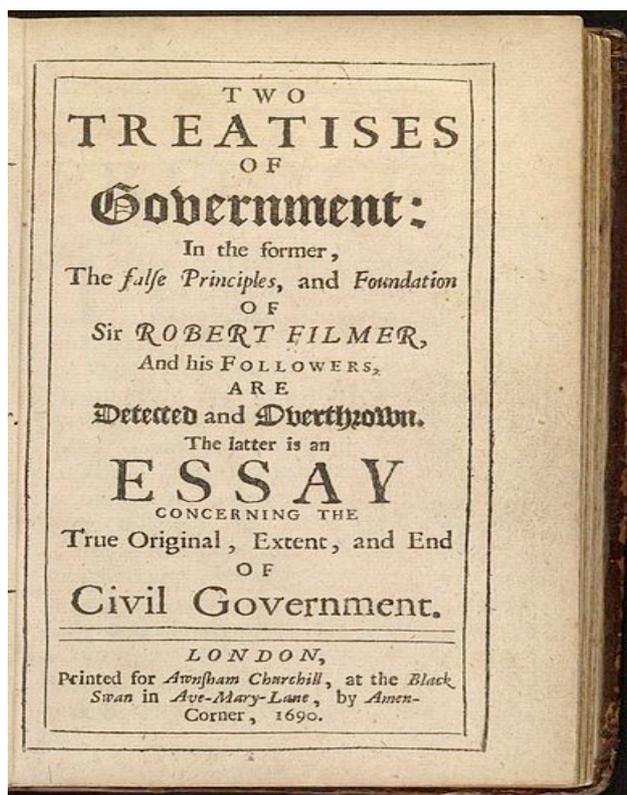
In his *Second Treatise of Government*, published in 1690, Locke did precisely this, and decided that:

All men are naturally in a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of Nature, without asking leave or depending upon the will of any other man.

Locke's ideas started a new stream of liberty-consciousness on Earth, especially in the wilderness of North America, then populated by Europeans who had run away.

Rulers never did appreciate Locke, but the early American rebels did, as have independent thinkers ever since.

Below is the frontspiece of Locke's book. You will notice that his name never appears on it. And it never did, as long as he lived.



The philosophy of Hobbes became the authorized philosophy of the Western rulers. It is taught in virtually all schools and universities; certainly in all political science courses. It is the philosophy that rules in all the halls of government and through all its institutions.

The philosophy of Locke thrived in America from the time of its publication through about 1789, was assaulted by Alexander Hamilton and the Federalists in the 1790s, restored by Thomas Jefferson in the early 1800s, and has generally faded since.

In recent years, the Hobbesian model has surged and overcome all opposition. In every seat of power on the planet, Hobbes rules without a challenger. Underneath this dominating surge, however, a new Lockean impulse has formed.

THE TRAJECTORY OF THE DOOMED

The current Hobbesian order of states is more or less doomed. It is certainly unsustainable; its only long-term continuance would be as a giant, consolidated, surveillance state. (Which is where many of its operators wish it to go.)

In order to become a global state, however, the rulers of the world will have to cooperate closely, which is doubtful. They will also have to degrade individuality even more than they already have, and that will hurt their ability to get things done, which ultimately relies upon those degraded individuals.

In the meanwhile, the world's states are currently at war with the free Internet. This is, primarily, to stop unauthorized ideas from influencing their subjects' minds. They are also working very hard to increase the fear of anything that has not been authorized. They have commissioned dozens of studies and written books (see [Nudge](#)) on how governments and corporations ought to be

manipulating people into making “better decisions.”

The large culture of our time: government, schools, Google, Facebook, television, universities, movies, music... everything large and regulated and approved... all of it is closing like a noose around those who admire it. Soon, they may be unable to see outside of the televised script. Already, many people know of no purpose in life save one: happiness through perpetual consumption.

The institutional culture of our time is becoming what Allan Bloom described in *The Closing of The American Mind*:

The most successful tyranny is not the one that uses force to assure uniformity but the one that removes the awareness of other possibilities, that makes it seem inconceivable that other ways are viable, that removes the sense that there is an outside.

There is much more that could be said on this subject, but it is almost superfluous to point it out – we all see it on a daily basis... just like the people of Rome saw their version of it.

THE FUTILITY OF MEDICATING THE DEAD

The seeds of our new Lockean civilization have been spreading consistently since the mid 1940s. But like the would-be reformers of Rome, the good and brave people spreading these seeds have been endlessly frustrated. They have been trying to revive a general culture which is approaching death, and getting very little in the way of positive results.

Again: these have been good people, seeking to improve things. And, given their starting positions, it is easy to understand that they didn't see any other course of action. But, like the Roman reformers, they would be happier and better if they stopped trying to medicate the dead and started building a new civilization... like the non-political Christians did.

Late stage institutions are effective enough and complex enough to absorb almost any type of corrective idea. A civilizational cycle carries the subconscious and emotional inertia of millions, which cannot be stopped with mere words. People being carried along by that cycle will ignore new messages, and if there should be some supremely convincing message, they would hate it for exposing their moral failures.

Spoon-feeding medicine to a corpse is futile. It is time for the older generation of “freedom people” to let it go. The new generation already has.

THE TRAJECTORY OF THE NEW

Neo-Lockean civilization will have only the trajectory that you and I give it. We are effectively starting fresh. Where we want to take this, we take it. And there are many directions in which to take it:

- We can create parallel channels of commerce, using our own currencies, dispute resolution and reputation systems.
- We can build trading cooperatives, like the old Hanseatic League.
- We can build autonomous cities. People and businesses will be able to move to them, and then stay or not based on how much they benefit from the experience.
- We can create underground cultures and temporary autonomous zones.

The sad part about creating a Neo-Lockean civilization will be that some good people will not be able to join us. The reason for this is politics, and particularly the addictive nature of politics. Here

is a story from Rome that indicates how badly that can go:

In the second century a man by the name of Peregrinus Proteus traveled to Judea, where he became a Christian. At some time thereafter, however, he either gave up Christianity or was expelled from it. The details are unclear, but it seems that Peregrinus couldn't let go of politics.

Since Christians didn't do politics (they considered it ungodly and flatly separated from it), and since he desperately wanted to fight in the field of politics, Peregrinus became a Cynic. Having done so, he denounced Rome, tried to lead Greece into a revolt, and committed suicide in a dramatic political statement. (He built his own funeral pyre, lit it, then threw himself upon it.)

The Cynics decried all government, but rather than leaving it on the wayside, they stopped to throw rocks at it.

In our day, many good people have stopped to throw rocks at the state. Some aim at the state's red party, some at its blue party, and a few at the entire state. But all of the rock-throwers retain the state as a center of reference and have stopped progressing past it. With so much of their energy spent fighting Party A or Party B, they have precious little left over for their own improvements. Thus they are in danger of being dragged to destruction along with a dying system.

Again: what happens next is up to *us*. There is no one to petition and no one to follow. The question that stands before us is what we will **do**.

SEPARATION AND BIRTH

Many freedom people from America – the old stronghold of Lockean thought – are physically leaving; many others are simply dropping out of the system. Freedom advocates in other locations are starting to abandon the political systems that reign in their territories. These are, above all else, acts of separation... just as birth is an act of separation.

The best Westerners are dumping politics and abandoning their mental ties to the state. Like the Europeans who had to get Rome out of their heads before they could create something better, these creators of a new civilization need to get states and politics out of their heads.

These people are becoming Agorists, Voluntarists, Perpetual Travelers, Crypto-Anarchists, or simply underground entrepreneurs. They are forsaking the system and finding ways of living apart from it. They are having difficulties, of course, due to the size and aggressiveness of the state, but they are willing, acting and creating nonetheless.

This is the birth of the new Lockean civilization, and it is communication via the Internet that is allowing it to occur here and now, somewhat ahead of schedule.

THE LOCKEAN WAY

The Lockean way is the way of independent producers. It is a way that focuses not on darkness and evil and fear, but on creation and goodness and progress. Lockean civilization is an acknowledgement that humans are engines of magic – having already created music and mechanics and courtesy and manufacturing and cooperation; having already deciphered the structure of matter, the chemistry of life, and the nature of the stars.

Our new civilization acknowledges what we've been able to accomplish thus far; it encourages us to dream and to make our dreams real; to build, to love, and to extend into the heavens. It acknowledges that this is what we *are*: that we possess these abilities by our very nature.

Neo-Lockean civilization is a better, purer Western civilization; one that requires us to will and act

independently – to improve ourselves, our neighbors and our world, directly.

THE VERDICT OF HISTORY

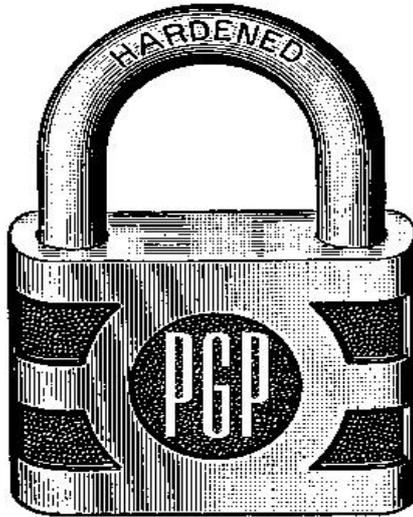
It will, of course, be some time before the success or failure of this new birth can be clearly seen. If it is overwhelmingly successful, it will be called a renewal of Western civilization. If it sputters and fades it will be called a foolish venture. But none of that matters. What matters is that we use our life according to our own will; that we crawl out from under the debris of oppressive centuries and begin building afresh.

The political world of our time is crashing and burning. It is remotely possible that someone will come along to give it an extension, like Diocletian extended the life of Rome beyond its apparent end. But that becomes less and less likely with each passing year. And even in the “best” case, that would merely delay the inevitable.

The future is ours to shape. We need to engage our will and to act.

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Pretty Good Privacy



One of the greatest freedom tools to come along over the past few decades is an encryption program called *PGP* or *Pretty Good Privacy*. It delivers free, instant privacy.

PGP was written by a young cryptographer named Phil Zimmerman, who nearly went to jail when his friends released it to the world in 1991. Believe it or not, encryption programs were classified by many governments as “munitions” prior to that time. The state did not want cryptography to be available to the people.

As with most breakthroughs, a solitary man risked serious punishment to deliver his benefit to us. We ought, at least, to appreciate it.

HOW IT WORKS

To use PGP, you begin by generating a key-pair. (Keys are long strings of letters and numbers.) The program creates two keys for you. One is called a *private* key; the other is called a *public* key.

The **public** key is the one you give to all your friends. It allows them to encrypt messages to you.

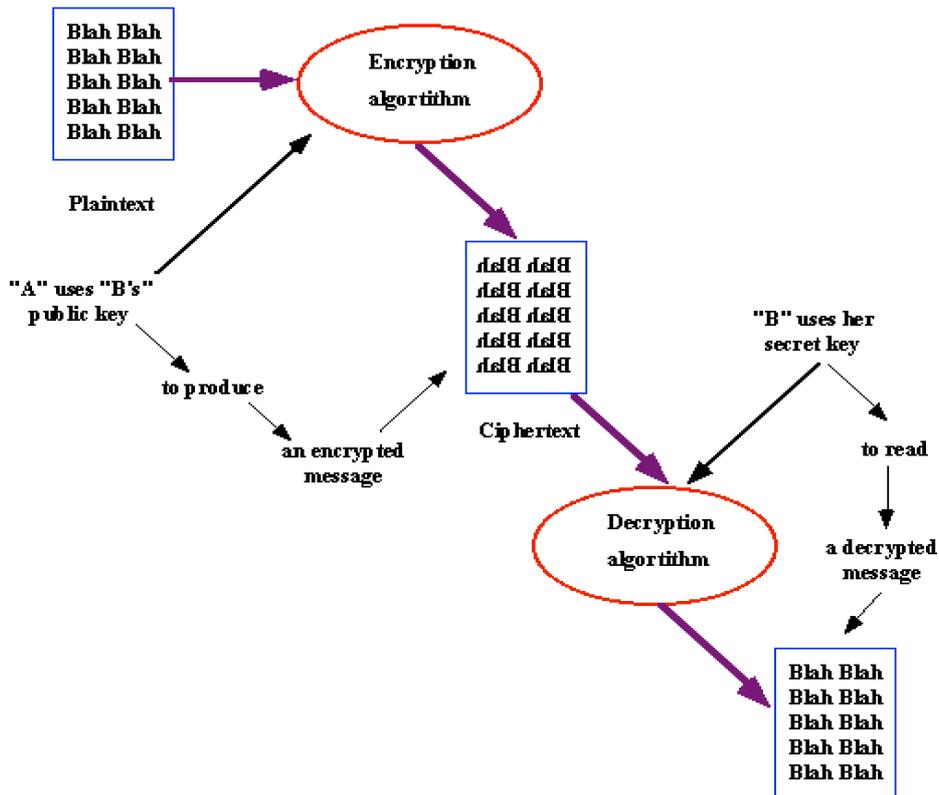
The **private** key is the one that decrypts messages from your friends. You don't share this one.

The two are related to one another, but not in any way you need to worry about – it's all crypto stuff inside the program.

None of this is too hard to understand, but like almost anything involving computers, it takes longer the first time. You can easily learn this in an hour. After that, encrypting or decrypting a message takes only seconds.

When you use PGP, no persons or groups, including the biggest, most powerful institutions on the planet, are able to read what you encrypt... except your recipient, of course.

Here's how the process works:



To send a message to your friend:

1. Write the message in your word processor.
2. Highlight and cut.
3. Click on your encryption icon, and then click “encrypt clipboard.”
4. Pick the keys to encrypt to: your friend’s and yours.
5. Click encrypt. (Your clipboard now contains the encrypted text.)
6. Paste into an email.
7. Send.

To decrypt a message from your friend:

1. Copy the encrypted text of the email.
2. Click on your encryption icon, and then click “decrypt message.”
3. Enter your passphrase into the window that pops up. (Your clipboard now contains the encrypted text.)
4. Paste the decrypted text into a document.
5. Read it.

(Terrifying, huh?)

The “passphrase” mentioned above is just a long password. Use a phrase that's easy to remember and toss in a number or two for spice.

Encrypted text, by the way, looks like this:

```
Dg7peRqL5nGAmjEDVahmVPLUJmZ7GJkNsPcVF8GHZG+gbNTWbpUpYrUyGQ
Hf/vGGcfqzLPjBAvNrEhyS5ckXxdX2FGT2Rd2PxZVwR6rc05+U0bSeX4L8
RkyRpn2tcvmJIg6GQr5zwJ9wfapg/gyVL6/RJXKkXmFkSs3OJAkqkKBOjn
xbE7Kw1/TAQ3I0NJmxe+UU5yCpd6N2iEt1e//B2Ks5w6pF+hxowPvppE77
x/IP+mQWLFL41yV60OPsCMd
```

DETAILS

There are three primary versions of *Pretty Good Privacy* currently available:

PGP: <http://www.gpg.com/> This is the for-pay version, but it isn't expensive and they have customer service; so you can get help if you need it. Get the cheapest email encryption (\$100. or so), then turn off all the extra functions. The PGP corp. is trying to make this into a "complete email solution," which conflicts with other programs. Turn off all the bells and whistles and just use the core email product.

GPG: <http://www.gnupg.org/> This is the free version. It does the same thing, without the extras. It does not, however, come with customer service.

GPG for Windows: <http://www.gpg4win.org/> This is the free Windows version. Again, it does the same thing as PGP's version, but without customer service.

So, there you have it. Find a friend who already uses encryption or would like to, then spend an hour learning to use PGP. After that, you'll be able to communicate privately for the rest of your life. That's not a bad investment of time.

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See you next month.

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