My roommate (the living one) has spent the last twenty hours hosting her boyfriend’s frat—the party is still going on, upstairs—and all I want to do is eat cold pizza by myself in the cold light of day. But no. I decided to be cheap, and now I’m rooming with the two ghostly gentlemen I switched my major to avoid—Locke and Hobbes.

“Don’t give me that ‘man is a social animal’ bullshit you stole from Aristotle.” I tell Locke, pointing my cereal spoon at his face. “Breakfast time is me time.”

“Misusing my quotations will get you nowhere. And you take the Lord’s name in vain far too much.”

“Atheist, remember?”

“Further proof that atheists shouldn’t be allowed in polite society.”

“Don’t sugarcoat it, Locke, tell me how you really feel.” I spoon Captain Crunch into my mouth. “Don’t you have some… I don’t know, gathering of great dead minds thing to get to? Dead white guys unite?”

“I am… expecting someone,” Locke says.

“Shit, it’s that Calvin guy, isn’t it?” I ask.

“Hobbes,” he corrects me. “Although he was influenced by Calvin.”

“Apologies to Calvin, but technically speaking, I am now officially a Mahomedan,” says a voice to my right. Hobbes materializes slowly, grinning sardonically.

“Knock,” I say. “Ghost-whistle or something. I could’ve been naked.”

“I’ve repeated the shahadah,” says Hobbes.

“Don’t you not believe in that nonsense? Let me quote your words back to you: ‘For it is evident enough that words have no effect but on those that understand them; and then they have no other but to signify the intentions or passions of them that speak, and thereby produce hope, fear, or other passions or conceptions in the hearer… profession by the tongue is an external thing,
and no more than any other gesture’, all that.”

“I was just saying that!” Hobbes tells me.

“Left my notes on the table,” I reply, pointing to my Franzia-stained sheets of binder paper. Hobbes closes his eyes. I think he is counting to ten in his head.

“Internal faith is in its own nature invisible, and consequently exempted from all human jurisdiction’. If I will be judged by anyone, it will be Christ when he ‘proclaims his kingdom, not present, but to come’” (354, 355).

“Real enough to kill you,” Locke agrees. “Although I’ve always thought that the use of force was the sign of a fallacious argument. Religion should have persuasive power, at best.”

“Just be glad we don’t have divine right anymore,” says Hobbes. “Why, in my time, atheism—”


“Are you doing that thing where you pretend you agree with me?” I ask Hobbes. “Locke, is he?”

“Some things we cannot know,” Locke replies innocently.

“It’s too early in the day for epistemological honesty,” I grumble.

“Modesty,” Locke corrects me.

“And being awake.”

“I certainly understand the need to take dogma out of the picture,” Hobbes admits.

“Tolerant of you,” says Locke. “Tolerance, you know, is the chief characteristic mark of the true Church.”

“I mean, as long as she’s not Catholic,” says Hobbes. “And even if she did go to hell, it’s not as though she’d stay there long. As scripture says, ‘Hell itself

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will be thrown into the lake of fire, which is a second death’, and a permanent one. By the way, I hear the turnover rate down there has been amazing recently, what with the recent Purgatorial expansion” (Hobbes 507).

“Really?” Locke asks.

“Yes. The devil has really centralized power. I was quite disappointed. They hold people accountable for sins ordered by another. It would make ruling so much harder if people took that into account.”

“People should be allowed to publicly embrace their religion,” says Locke. “The more factions, the less bloodshed.”

“Or we could just not have any religion. Atheism all the way. Pastafarianism, anyone?”

“What is it you like to say? The other day, when we were talking about universal rights?” Locke asks me. “Allow me to quote: ‘Stop trying to make fetch happen’.”

“Human rights are a little far-fetched,” Hobbes says.

“Far… fetched,” I say. Hobbes looks at me, and I continue. “But come on though, you are totally a secret atheist. ‘They that approve a private opinion, call it opinion; but they that dislike it, heresy; and yet heresy signifies no more than private opinion’. Totally something a sixteenth century atheist would say. Or secret Catholic. Perhaps the lady doth protest too much, you know what I’m saying?”

I catch the look on Hobbes’ face, and decide to change the subject. “By the way, Hobbes, since I pay for the apartment, that makes me the head of the Leviathan, right?”

“My Leviathan has nothing to do with your unusual domestic arrangement; its use of force is employed only to prevent death, which is not a matter of much concern for Mr. Locke. But I will say it is true that authority, not wisdom, makes the law.”

“Pointed modifier much?”

“Perhaps, before imposing laws upon me or my acquaintances, you should seek the consent of those you seek to govern,” Locke suggests.

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3 Mean Girls, written by Tina Fey (2004)
“Certainly,” Hobbes agrees. “That’s the basis of any government. Otherwise you will always be in a state of war.”

“Or life will be always and everywhere only ‘solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short’, is that right Mr. Hobbes? Well let me make a correction: Life already is all that, and worse. I drank box wine out of my cereal bowl last night” (113).

“But it doesn’t have to be brutish,” says Locke. “Let’s make peace between us. We’ll draft a roommate agreement, between the living and the dead.”

“Do I get to be the ruler?” I ask, grinning.

“I think that would be the landlord,” Locke replies. “Who you may want to speak with. He came by yesterday. Something about cold spots, flickering lights.”

“Fancy that,” I say. “To peace?” I raise my cereal bowl, trying to keep a straight face. Locke inclines his head, and I look to Hobbes.

“Peace and consent,” Hobbes agrees. “We can all agree on that.”

“An A on my midterm wouldn’t hurt, either. You two are going to help me study, right?”

“I have a dead white guy convention to get to, sorry,” says Hobbes.

“No,” says Locke. “Just, no.”

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**Analects of the Core**

Callimachus: mega biblon, mega kakon (“A big book is big evil”)

Bertrand Russell: Scholastic education is a tiresome necessity. I can remember a feeling of profound regret when my children, after playing on the beach all day long, reached the age at which they had to be taught to read and write.