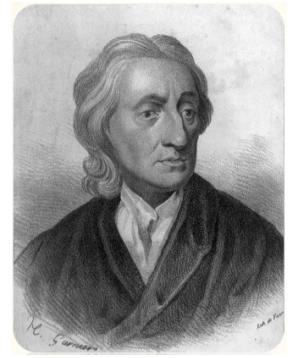


## Enlightenment in 17th/18th century: John Locke – Declaration of Independence

Source: <https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/three-enlightenment-ideas-used-declaration-471209>



Jefferson's idea of "unalienable rights" in the Declaration of Independence (USA, July 4, 1776) is similar to the idea of natural rights, which comes from Locke (1632–1704). According to Locke, people are born with certain **inherent rights** that the government cannot remove. Jefferson writes in the Declaration that "all men are created equal." This idea is derived in part from Locke's idea of the "tabula rasa," which means that all people are born without prior knowledge and are therefore equal in status.

The idea that the government **owes its existence to the consent of the governed** and that once the government goes against this so-called **social contract**, it should be overthrown, comes from Locke and Rousseau. According to their philosophy, people give up some of their rights to the government for protection and security, but the government must still protect individuals' natural rights.

Another Enlightenment idea in the Declaration is that people have the **rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness**. These rights come from those Locke felt the government should protect, though Locke defined these rights as life, liberty, and property.

Locke quotes:

- “The natural liberty of man consists in not recognizing any sovereign power on earth, and not be subject to the will or legislative authority to anyone.”
- “The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule.”
- “The State, according to my ideas, is a society of men established for the sole purpose of the establishment, preservation and promotion of their civil interests. I call on civil interests, life, freedom The health of the body, the possession of external goods, such as are money, land, houses, furniture, and things of that nature.”
- “The people are the supreme judge of how governments fulfill their mission because it is the person who gave them power and who care as such, the ability to revoke.”