

# [The the right to life, liberty, and the](https://assignbuster.com/the-the-right-to-life-liberty-and-the/)

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The Declaration of Independence affirmsthat citizens have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Aseries of clauses in this declaration were influenced by John Locke’sphilosophy in Second Treatise of Government. Many years before thedeclaration was written, the philosopher wrote that “ no one ought to harmanother in his life, health, liberty, or possessions” (Locke, 1980). Thequantity and quality of property, or “ possessions”, generally appear to moldthe capitalist society of the United States in the current scope.

With thatbeing said, it is worth noting that the mentality in the aforementioned quote –about property greasing the economy and Rousseau’s naivety – prevails as theclosest to reality. Thus, I am in accordance with the quote. Jean-Jacques Rousseauand John Locke, as elucidated in A Discourse on Inequality and SecondTreatise of Government respectively, have diverging views on the topic ofprivate property. In summary, Locke views private property as a fundamentalright, while Rousseau views it as the basis for inequality in society. AlthoughRousseau is correct in some aspects, especially in regards to property being afoundation of disparity, Locke holds the upper hand through his argument of thematerializing unfairness being something to manage.            Rousseauwas not unsound when he explained that property leads to inequality. Forinstance, when one has more land than another being, it is only natural for theindividual to seek out methods to obtain more land, whereas those who do nothave as much land have envy over those who do – with some possibly devisingstrategies to gain the same amount of land, or more. From this situation alone, private property, as Rousseau argues, breeds inequality.

As seen in thecompelling film, “ Do the Right Thing”, the battle over property matters led tocomplete chaos in the town, with one death of a civilian upon the hands of apolice officer. Rousseau argues that inherent goodness does not exist sincehumans in a state of nature do not possess the capability of abstract thought. Hence, there is no such concept as morality in the state of nature, meaning noone could have possibly held the capabilities of being “ good” (Rousseau, 1984). However, it is not clear if being in a state of nature would have reversed thisproblem. Just because there generally was not as much property to fight over (beforewell-mannered civilization occurred) does not mean that there would have beenan absence of disagreements over other matters, such as race (as demonstratedin the film “ Rosewood”), gender, and relationships.

It is true that the moreadvanced society seemingly becomes, individuals become increasingly dependent onproperty and materialism. The conflict in “ Do the Right Thing” was fueled byracial inequality, along with property means. The pride that Sal, owner of awhite pizzeria in a primarily black neighborhood, had over being in possessionof property that warranted admiration is the reason for the intense emotionsassociated with the destruction and fall of the establishment at the end of thefilm. At one point, Sal exclaims, “ the fuck is wrong with you? This ain’t aboutmoney. I could give a fuck about money. You see this fucking place? I builtthis fucking place with my bare fucking hands.

Every light socket, every pieceof tile – me, with these fucking hands” (Lee, 1989).  The fall of the establishment is juxtaposedwith the death of Radio Raheem, a significant and slightly unlikable characterin the film. In spite of his likability factor however, there should be noanalogy. The fall of the pizzeria should not be compared to against the deathof Raheem, as there is simply no comparison and analogy with the death of ahuman and the death of property.

Infact, Rousseau’s argument seems to align with the idea of socialism andcommunism, as he is not an advocate for the inequality created by ownership ofproperty (Rousseau, 1984). Though socialism and communism may work in somecountries, in the context of American society, civilization likely would notsucceed as a whole if Rousseau’s ideas were infused into society. Thus, theconcepts are definitely idealistic. Locke accepts that inequality will exist, as it is nearly impossible for everyone to be equal in the sense of property.

Locke’s ideas in The Second Treatise of Government not only make themost sense for American society, but it is also the one that rings most true toactuality today.            Lockeheld the belief that natural competition is prevalent in society; though theweak are evidently beaten out by the stronger in this competition, the power isonly temporary and not absolute. As such, all civilians have a right andresponsibility to enforce the law of nature (and punish those who break it). This leads to equality being maintained. Therefore, while it is correct thateveryone in society has the right to property, not everyone will be satisfiedwith the amount of property that they hold. As such, conflict could ensue. Butas Locke notes, individuals would consent to the fact that it is simply notpossible for everyone to hold an equal amount of possessions (Locke, 1980).

Without the concept of property, humans would not be able to survive sincesurvival would depend on receiving the consent of everyone else before gettinga necessity, such as food and water, if the earth belonged to every individual(Locke, 1980). To be more specific, a piece of bread belongs to everyone onlyuntil someone else claims it as theirs, in which case, it would no longerbelong to society but specifically to that person. There is one caveat withLocke’s philosophy however; Locke maintains the idea that humans are inherentlygood. Be that as it may, with every individual having the right to privateproperty, the idea that humans are inherently bad and selfish, as illustratedby Thomas Hobbes in The Leviathan holds more true to reality. This isexemplified in the film, “ Wall Street”, as the protagonist, Bud Fox, increasinglytries to gain more wealth until he wakes up to his moral conscience and decidesto bring down the selfishness of Wall Street personified in Gekko. He tries to ceasethe cheating and manipulation, even at the cost of his own freedom, as he windsup in prison.

(Beforehand though, the obsession with materialism and wealth isthematically illustrated throughout the film. And though Bud returns to havingmorality, Gekko does not change.) Furthermore, Rousseau was not entirelyincorrect or illogical in his philosophy.

Generally speaking, many individuals, once they get a taste for a more exquisite and luxurious life, strive for evenmore to chase that feeling of ecstasy. “ Wall Street” had an exemplar role inshowcasing the loss of humanity and morals in the race to obtain material goodsand wealth. Gordon Gekko, though not an epitome of a great human, was stillenviable and admirable to a degree. This would correspond well with the factthat many people, after seeing the film, were inspired to join the businessworld and model themselves after Gekko, which completely opposed the takeawayfrom the film and aligns with the aforementioned quote (Weiser, 2008). Lockesystematically believes that property defines who we are as individuals, andespecially in capitalist American society, this is correct. The most populardegree in America, as of 2016, is involving the field of business (USDEO, 2016). This would correlate with the notion that many Americans have about businessbringing in a higher income than a degree in, perhaps, English literature.

Itis not easy to question that if wealth and power were not held in such highregards, if so many people would be seeking the business degrees. And at alarger scope, students and pupils in modern society are highly encouraged topursue advanced degrees in order to obtain a well-paying job, live a betterlife, and generally enhance the possibility of owning larger houses, specialtechnologies, fashionable clothing items, and other items that would beclassified as property.            Inshort, though the concept of Rousseau’s philosophy would be ideal, in which noconflict would exist because everyone would be equal in the amount of propertyowned, it is simply not realistic. Therefore, John Locke’s idea is moresensical, in that with the natural right to property, comes the inevitabilityof inequality. In consonance with Locke’s other theory, in order to alleviatethe tensions that would arise from said inequality of property amongindividuals, the government and citizens would enter into a social contract toproperly govern the people.

This is possibly the only sound manner forgoverning and managing inequality.