

No Universal Human Rights

Humans don't exist for or by themselves as independent beings, but are always depend on others. As social beings we can only exist within community. While dependence from and interaction with others is necessary and empowers us, it often turns problematic and weakening because it gives others leverage against us. At this time, we can be quite sure, that any essential and even more existential dependencies, especially when asymmetric, will cause efforts to exploit the vulnerability to usurp control over the dependent people(s).

'Good' and 'Bad'

The concept of good and bad people is misleading in the sense that no one is good or bad, but everyone is both good and bad. Sure, we could begin to say that someone is worse than another one. But how should that be measured? Is it about time - who spends more time being bad? Or is it about the magnitude of bad acts - give bad acts a score and add them up as a kind of a badness indicator? And should the evaluation be based upon intentions or consequences? Besides, how do we set the standards for what is good?

There are few ways to argue 'good' and 'bad' universally, meaning not relative to and defined by peoples according to their ways and views. Whatever moral or ethical concept we apply, there will always be the fundamental problem of others having different understanding, definitions and decisions. And we find that rights which are declared, but not practiced, are no rights, but rather lies. So, after several decades of 'universal human rights', we can conclude that they don't exist but as propaganda and utopian belief. Everything finally comes down to our individual decisions, which show in our acting. Only to the extent, that expressed intentions and observable practice regularly match, can we trust the words. Basically we are, what we decided to be, in the frame of our possibilities and responsibilities.

Those who believe in a creator or whatever divine entities, a spiritual system and practices informed by superior or absolute authority and wisdom, transcending humanity and placing it into proper context as part of creation and defining relations and meaning, don't have to argue their morality on humanist terms. They instead study and apply the sacred teachings and revelations to their lives. But because others believe differently, and even among the followers of any faith we find a diversity of different interpretations and directions, the absolutes derived from faith are only universal for those who believe in them.

Secular worldviews

Since god died in western philosophy and science, defining good and bad became very difficult indeed. Coming from long periods of terrible oppression, destruction and mass extermination in the name of their Christian god, the ethical and spiritual degeneration of the western societies proceeded quickly under enlightenment, capitalism and industrialization, generating masses of highly isolated and manipulated human beings without much power for themselves, unwilling or unable to respect and live in peace with each others.

Among humans we find, that good and bad, right and wrong don't exist independently from us, at least to the extend that we are the ones who define those things. Everyone is both wrong and right, bad and good, depending on the definitions and perspective

applied. And we can begin to understand the arrogance and totalitarianism behind the concept of universal human rights created by Western thinkers, claiming to be superior people who have the right, or even the obligation (white man's burden), to force all others under their rule (to civilize them and bring progress) for their own good (which they don't really know themselves). With god dying, these people were claiming to be god themselves.

Universal Human Rights

Universal human rights are usually argued on three distinct grounds. Coming out of the particular historic realities of late Christian rule and the struggle against the Catholic Church in Europe, the conception of human rights is nevertheless in many ways either a scientific, humanist or democratic reformulation of Christian morality and values. So it is nature, rationality, or social contract, or some mix of these, which are used to argue the existence or even universality of human rights.

Nature

When god began to die in Western philosophy, it was quickly stated that all men are equal. It was further argued that our common nature means we have the same rights. But this line of argumentation fails in several aspects:

- The concept of nature, and the relations and interaction with the natural elements and other living things, are very different between cultures and nations.
- Even genetically identical twins can be quite different people. Genetics doesn't determine very much of who we are.
- Even if nature makes us equal in certain aspects and areas of definition, it does not give anyone more but the endless effort to argue that we are subjected to and determined by rules of the physical world and particulars of our species. These views largely dismiss what is most dear and important to us, our personal sensations and perceptions, our conscious efforts and choices, experiences and expressions.
- Even if behaviorist or utilitarian studies have some successes at the level of social control and mass society, they fail to explain in any satisfactory way the complexities and depth of life beyond the surface and a few anecdotes of behavioral patterns. They quickly hand over to the psychiatrists, neurologists, physicians, and the like, who tell us their stories about ourselves. And the social planners and propagandists, law and enforcement, punishment and prison system will make sure that compliance and obedience is enforced and delinquency contained and oppressed.
- If nature makes rights, how is it that those rights were never practised by us all? In practice, the Christian-Western societies never even respected the most basic of those rights. Instead we are engaged in constant warfare and plunder, exploitation, humiliation, destruction and mass extermination. If nature tells us anything, it is that, if not restrained, selfishness, lust and violence finally rule.

Rationality

Those arguing for rationality as a foundation of moral principles and values, to a varying extend, are in principle accepting the idea that humans are responsible, and that we need guidance how to act. By rejecting the absolute authority of God, they were faced with constructing absolute moral authority solely on human terms. This may well be possible, but no group of humans is more entitled than any other to assume that role for themselves. What it comes all down to is that rights are either about education and voluntary consent, or about imposition and enforcement.

This line of arguing assumes some kind of absolute rationality. But again, while a few basic logical procedures may be common, we are far too complex and different. Whatever seems perfectly rational for you, may seem foolish or despicable for someone else. Everyone knows that what the other one thinks is not necessarily what we think, and so we disagree about many things. We cannot rationally claim that only our perspective and principles are valid, or somehow superior, and those of others not equally respectable. Instead we face the reality of different and conflicting views and interests, which have to be negotiated insofar as necessary.

Moreover, far from just being rational, we find ourselves emotional and subjective, esthetic and creative, sensual and spiritual, extending far beyond the realm of logic and reason, transcending and defying the boundaries of whatever abstract rationality has been suggested. All kinds of wholesale criminality and morally despicable activities have been justified as perfectly rational and progressive, supported and also enabled by modern science.

The dominant scientific rationality is grounded in, and shaped by the specifics and often unique experiences and histories of Europeans. It is a particular understanding of relations between humans among themselves and with others, between human and non-human existing entities and living things, and of humanity within and as part of all creation. It is their epistemology of what is regarded relevant, from which position to approach and how to relate to things, as well as their methodology and doctrines.

Social Contract

Others base the concept of universal human rights on the idea of a social contract between members of a society or community. When this idea is generalized and applied to all humanity, we have the specter of a global community united under a common social contract in peace and justice. Even more than the concept of universal rationality, which at least sees the individual as the essential moral being, the democratic approach to human rights is much more openly totalitarian.

The idea, that all humans come together as equals to discuss, agree and decide about a catalogue of human rights, not even to speak about the rules, regulations and means of enforcement, is quite unbelievable and even theoretically impractical. Because even if such a process of fair dialogue in mutual respect, and with equal say for all, could be organized, there will always be peoples who don't agree with whatever dominant position and doctrine may emerge. And moreover, any such contract will always be based upon already existing relations and histories, which precludes the absence of coercion and domination of one over the other. Also, as each new generation is born into a pre-existing contract, which is imposed upon them through involuntary membership and enforced obedience, any such contract quickly turns into a dictate and expression of power instead of a moral imperative.