
Book Reviews

Human Rights Horizons: The Pursuit of Justice in a Globalizing World. By Richard A. Falk. New York: Routledge, 2000. ISBN 0-415-92512-6. Pp. x+270.

Human rights discourse is relatively new, having gained widespread acceptance only after World War II, the creation of the United Nations in 1945, and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN General Assembly in 1948. Though human rights scholars generally agree that the concept of human rights stems from ancient Greco-Roman natural law traditions and later natural rights traditions associated with thinkers such as Aquinas, Grotius, Bodin and Locke, there remains considerable debate about the substance of human rights. Sounding a cautious note, Michael Ignatieff argues in *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry* (2001) that advocates of human rights discourse have not yet resolved the legal and political grounds for human rights, which transcend both the sovereign state and the legitimacy of coercive intervention to enforce norms. Ignatieff's proposal is a slightly-nuanced liberal defence of individualism within the confines of a sovereign state. By contrast, Richard A. Falk outlines in *Human Rights Horizons* the foundations of a moral politics of global governance—a self-reflexive politics that challenges the thugery of political realism and the servilism of neo-liberal economic policies. Anticipating the type of critique raised by Ignatieff, Falk grounds his normative commitments to universal rights and justice on a quasi-Kantian morality that effectively shifts the focus of international law and politics away from state sovereignty and toward deep democracy.

Though each of the thirteen chapters could stand alone, the book should be read as a single case for a rights-based humanitarian politics. Part one, "Framing the Inquiry," situates human rights discourse in the context of Westphalian political theory and the rise of integrated market systems. Not surprisingly, Falk focuses the political discussion on the central, but increasingly destabilized role of the state in international relations and on the attendant principle of non-intervention, which is preserved in Article 2(7) of the UN Charter. This brief discussion provides adequate support for an introduction to Falk's proposed system of global justice, which he calls "humane governance." In short, humane governance responds to the social disempowerment of the state caused by a privileging of business and finance interests, the reduction of funding for public goods such as education and the arts, the destruction of the global commons due to climate change and pollution, and a libertarian view of minimal government and maximum individualism. While there are

certain utopian elements in this proposal for humane governance, Falk's analyses of the symbiotic relationship between human rights and the global economy continually ground the argument in the complexities of the real world. For instance, he acknowledges that rights discourse has been used at times by the West for (neo-)colonial purposes. He decries the fact that the delivery systems of human rights have too often been linked to the institutions of global economy (e.g., World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and various trade agreements). This link, Falk argues, has led to cases of human rights hypocrisy, such as when the United States levelled charges of rights violations against China while failing to examine abuses within its own borders.

Part 2, "Substantive Dilemmas," examines some of the serious issues facing advocates of human rights. Falk identifies four primary themes: the right of self-determination, group claims and the UN system, the politics of exclusion, and the related politics of genocide. While the discussion of self-determination tends to rehash a number of tired debates, the chapters on group claims, exclusion, and genocide are remarkable for their courageous analyses and foresight. The chapter entitled "The Geopolitics of Exclusion: The Case of Islam" is particularly significant given the events of September 11, 2001—in fact, had certain policy analysts in the US and various pundits of international relations read this chapter in advance, they would have encountered a well-reasoned rejection of Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis and an outline of grievances by Muslims responding to Western political practices in the Middle East and the effects of economic globalization. One of the core mistakes made by the West, Falk argues, is that "Islamic perspectives have not been equitably represented in key authority structures and processes of world order, which helps account for the impression and actuality of an anti-Islamic bias in addressing controversial issues on the global agenda" (161). Whether through world health initiatives, economic development programs, or political deal-making, there remains a sense among Islamic leaders that the West has yet to hear their voices and that the West will continue to engage predominately Islamic countries only on the basis of their instrumental value. Indeed, it is precisely this type of formal relationship—one based on national interest and not moral obligations—that makes interventions, even in clear cases of genocide such as in Rwanda, a realist decision rather than a moral one.

Part 3, "The Future Prospect," attempts to link human rights discourse to issues of justice. Reminiscent of the discussions that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s around the work of Rawls, Nozick, Walzer, and Sandel, Falk's project calls for extending human rights to past and future generations. Chapter 12, "The Redress of Past Grievances: The Nanking Massacre," is representative of the type of process that Falk has in mind when it comes to the collective human responsibility to say "Never again." The book ends with a theoretical chapter entitled "Morality and Global Security: A Human Rights Perspective." While this chapter might be better situated as a part of the introduction, Falk does effectively make the point that current political and economic leaders enact policies that are infused with moral reasoning. In fact, the issue at stake, according to Falk, is whether the world will maintain the realist status quo or

begin to work toward a political ethics in which “a morality of ends...exerts control over the role of force in world politics through a combination of disarmament, demilitarization, and an ethos of non-violence” (221).

The strength of this book stems from Falk’s willingness to address issues of justice, economic globalization, international law, and human rights in a complex way. To be sure, Falk covers considerable ground as he demonstrates the interconnectedness between global economic regimes and international political policies. Paradoxically, this approach may leave him open to charges of superficiality. Such critiques, I would suggest, would have more to do with him diverging from the prevailing lines in human rights literature than with the substance of his sweeping argument. For example, unlike many of his colleagues, both liberal and progressive alike, he is not necessarily opposed to nationalism, religion or culture becoming apart of global governance. Indeed, Falk thinks these elements are inevitable in any discussion of international justice and must, therefore, be handled by scholars in a way that demonstrates the complexity of their interplay. For scholars of religion, in particular, this book is significant because it represents an attempt to take seriously the role of religious and cultural difference in the development of a humanitarian moral politics.

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Human Rights in an Information Age: A Philosophical Analysis. By Gregory J. Walters. Toronto: University Press, 2001. ISBN 0-8020-3583-3. Pp. 335.

In this book, Gregory Walters presents a philosophical consideration of the ethical challenges posed to Canadian society by electronic communications and information technology at the start of the 21st century. Walters situates North America’s role in the information revolution within the broader context of the post-industrial economy and the development of global capitalism in late modernity. He contends that North America has moved from an economy which was based primarily upon mass production and industry to one that is currently structured around digital information, robotics, and human labour which is primarily service oriented. In many ways, he finds, the “information age” tends to exacerbate the class divisions in North America, whereby an elite minority prospers, while the vast majority of humans suffer from poverty. Walters observes that recent technological developments represent a potential threat to the basic cultural, economic, physical, and social conditions of human well being. The primary task of the philosopher in the current social situation is, he infers, to make hope practical, rather than despair convincing.

Walters intends for his book to be “more visionary than programmatic” and he “offers no explicit policy agenda” (10). His vision could be characterized as a hope for a more just, liberal democratic community and society. The book explores the meaning of today’s historical and technological situation, on