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Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities

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Human rights emerged first with the establishment of the United States of America in 1776 and developed gradually in the aftermath of the French revolution in 1789, and finally gained a global importance after the World War II (1948). The flourishing of the idea of nation-state, no doubt, accompanied this development. The suffering inflicted by the Church on the Europeans who had to migrate to America; the pressure the civil and religious authorities put on people in France and the irresponsible waste of human beings during the two world wars were the decisive factors which paved the way for the conception of human rights. This political background, however, caused the adoption of human rights without any reference to human responsibilities. The simultaneous development of epistemological relativism and relativism of emotive morality as the basis of Liberalism did also contributed to the negligence of human responsibilities. After the abolishing of the ultimate authority of God and the Church, it was not possible to talk about any valid and binding moral responsibilities. The individual himself was now able to determine his own good, and moral responsibility if he wished so.

It was definitely right and meaningful to put forth the ideal of Human Rights and defend it against the totalitarian states oppressing the individual. Individuals whose rights were protected by law against the state power, however, would disregard the rights of other nations and states without any sense of moral responsibility towards them when they assumed a political position to

protect and increase the interests of the nation and the state (the nation-state). Although, theoretically, the notion of “human dignity” lay behind the modern individual’s abiding by the rights in society and turning them into that are also laws binding for the state, in practice the real motive was “the close threat” or the golden rule of interest that “you shall not do unto others what you want them not to do unto you.” As there was no other more powerful and transcendental basis of moral responsibilities or abiding by the rights, those who held economic and political power (class, status, etc.) domestically as well as the nation-states powerful in international politics could easily do unto others, or condone, what they would not wish to be done unto themselves (exploitation, imperialism, war, usurpation, etc.). The main reason for this is the disappearance, with the Renaissance, of teleology from ethics and politics and the replacement of it by the theories of emotive morality. This explains why human rights were only sanctioned on a national level despite its global appeal as a discourse. Unfortunately, this discrepancy became even worse in recent decades, so much so that the massacres in Bosnia in the heart of Europe, Palestine, Ruanda, Congo and Zimbabwe and so on were simply ignored. As long as the United Nations, which was established by the victorious countries of the World War II and was organized according to power structures (e.g., veto power), does not see itself as an agent that is accountable for human responsibilities, it cannot come to be a just power which can establish international law and inspect human rights violations through actual intervention on national and international basis. Therefore, it is high time that we demanded out loud the universal human responsibilities which must be the necessary component of human rights and which can carry these rights into practice worldwide. Moreover, human responsibilities have all the more respect and esteem than do human rights.

Human responsibilities are the prerequisites to man’s gaining dignity, honor, respect, and value before another man or before God –if one believes in Him. These are not values which, just because they belong to human species, human beings possess by nature and which are placed at the center of the modern notion of human rights. These are acquired values; and arguing to the contrary would be a meaningless tautology. That man, among other creatures on earth, was given by birth privileged superior abilities such as reasoning, walking upright, making tools, speaking, free, and even sensing moral values, etc., does not render him *honorable* and *valuable* in himself, as Kant claims (*Metaphysik Der Sitten*, 53). Man, by virtue of possessing them, has *immunity*. In practice, immunity urges us to accept human rights. Being valuable, dignity and honor are acquired privileges, which stem from man’s fulfillment of his responsibilities as a rational and free being with a sense of morality. Kant confuses immunity with dignity and honor, or rather he does not differentiate one from the other. What legitimizes immunity is the expectation of responsibility –upon acknowledgment of the rights. Everyone is equal in immunity. Upon reaching

the age of responsibility, those who take on their responsibilities are characterized with honor and respect, and those who do not are characterized with dishonor and disgrace. Claiming equality in this respect is like seeing a mountain and a creek as equals. The assertion that man is a purpose in himself and is honored by birth rests upon the metaphysical premise that man is the originator of himself and is a value in and of himself. The alternative view is that the value and dignity of man stems from the chain of ability-rights-responsibility, which is based on the alternative creationist answer to the question of the origin of the human abilities. Human abilities constitute the foundation for meriting human rights which are the prerequisites of responsibility. God's being an authority—for believers—in terms of respect and responsibility is God's conferring abilities on human beings. Those who fulfill their responsibilities to God obtain value, dignity and respect before God; and those who fulfill their responsibilities to man gain value, honor and respect in the eyes of man. For believers, responsibility to man is also part of responsibility to God. For atheists, the source of responsibility may well be the ability to sense the values (Kant's moral principle) or the principle of self-interest which can be summed up as "you shall not do unto others what you do not want them to do unto you." While Human Rights aim to protect by way of law the individual's integrity and potential capabilities against their destruction by the state, human responsibilities aim to protect human beings from the evil acts of other human beings and to encourage them to enrich one another. Human rights are the guarantee of the state, but human responsibilities are under the guarantee of conscience. And conscience is the ultimate judge that adjudicates whether we fulfill our responsibilities. It is the guard of man's integrity, protecting us from ourselves; it is the source of our pride and dignity; and the voice of the care that we feel for ourselves and fellow humans. The state cannot ensure that individuals fulfill their responsibilities, but can punish the actors that fail to fulfill some of them (e.g., not to murder) as they are also public crimes. Human rights are preconditions to human responsibilities. Those who have no rights cannot have responsibilities. Entrusting to individuals their rights unconditionally may have no rationale other than expecting responsibility therefrom. Unless we have a moral expectation from him, the claim that man is inherently entitled to rights insofar as he is a man is an empty assertion with no real foundation other than his claim for self-sufficiency. Having rights without responsibility would dehumanize one (and make him a beast). Then the difference between the lion's killing an antelope and Cain's murdering Abel would vanish. Rights create the opportunity for human beings to unfold his potential capabilities; responsibilities, however, amounts to bringing out the moral ones among them. One cannot evade one's responsibilities whether one conceives of life as "art" or a "trial". Human responsibilities, depending on worldview that one chooses or belong to, are multi-layered:

Article 1

Whether a theist, a deist or a pantheist, everyone has a responsibility of believing in and thanking God who created man and the universe and blessed man with all the means to survive. Human beings are themselves responsible for the manner in which they fulfill these responsibilities (i.e. whether that manner is right or wrong).

Article 2

Although there is a consensus against the abuse of animals (e.g., not to torture, not to hunt out of season etc.), humanity has not reached a consensus regarding the scope of the rights of animals (e.g., to hunt certain animals and to slaughter others for food). Nonetheless, it is incumbent upon human beings to acknowledge the rights of the animals at least for the purpose of protecting the species.

Article 3

Whether a theist, an atheist, a pantheist, or a polytheist, all human beings, insofar as they are human, have the following responsibilities to themselves and to their fellow human beings in terms of performing and refraining:

1. Not to harm oneself.
2. To preserve and unfold human physical, mental and emotional potentials in productive ways without harming others.
3. To perpetuate human race.
4. To take special care of children until they reach adolescence.
5. Not to destroy and waste natural resources and environment which make life possible.
6. Not to kill.
7. Not to steal and usurp the properties of another.
8. To be honest (not to lie and deceive others)
9. To help fellow human beings in exigent situations and disasters (to share).
10. To be just and fair in dealing with others.
11. Not to restrict the freedom of others by oppressing them.
12. Not to rape.