



Beyond Human Rights

Alain de Benoist , Matthew Peters (Editor) , John Black Morgan (Editor) , Jacob Alexander (Translator)

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Beyond Human Rights is the second in an ongoing series of English translations of **Alain de Benoist's** works to be published by Arktos. Alain de Benoist begins *Beyond Human Rights* with an examination of the origins of the concept of 'human rights' in European Antiquity, in which rights were defined in terms of the individual's relationship to his community, and were understood as being exclusive to that community alone. This changed with the coming of Christianity to Europe, after which rights were redefined as a universal concept derived from the idea of each individual as the possessor of a soul that is transcendent and independent of any social identity. This culminated in the Enlightenment belief in 'natural rights', which found its practical expression in the doctrines emerging from the American and French revolutions, in which all individuals were said to possess rights simply by virtue of the fact of their being human. In turn, laws issued by the State came to be viewed as negative impositions upon the naturally independent individual. De Benoist deconstructs this idea and shows how the myth of a 'natural man' who possesses rights independent of his community is indefensible, and how this conception of rights has, in modern times, led to their use as a weapon by stronger nations to bludgeon those weaker states which do not conform to the Western liberal-democratic form of rights, as we have recently seen in action in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Libya. As such, he presents us with a crucial critique of one of the major issues of our time.

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From Reader Review Beyond Human Rights for online ebook

Jim Aristopoulos says

An excellent book to expose Liberal hypocrisy and what horrible content beautiful words can hide!!!

Wilfredo Rodríguez Dotti says

Interesting points of view about 'human rights' and 'natural rights', In this essay de Benoist strongly condemns the Western idea of natural rights, which is associated with the idea that all humans have human rights, objecting to the imposition of human rights obligations on a multicultural society. He argues that the Western ideology of human rights is rooted in the Christian idea that each person has a soul that has a direct relationship with God regardless of any social identity, this idea was articulated and secularized until the UN's Declaration of Human Rights, so 'human rights' as we know them in the West, can't be imposed or applied uniformly because different cultures handle different moral values.

Despite the brevity of this book, de Benoist's thesis deserves a better review. So, I'll write a complete one when I have more time.

Ariston says

I'll be (hopefully) writing a fuller review of this later, but I have a few comments:

- Benoist makes a semi–Montesquieu–ian argument about the non–universality of rights (because legal systems must differ across cultures and situations); he also attacks the (incoherent) philosophical bases of the idea. He admits there are core human aspirations and traits that are admitted in laws, but these are fulfilled differently in different societies. It is not relativist in the common, nihilistic sense.
- He (correctly) portrays how the idea of human rights is used as a *carte blanche* for Western interference. He makes the obvious (though rarely stated) point that the ideology can only really exist in the presence of an overwhelming & hegemonic military power (in our case, it is obviously the US, but Benoist is not explicit). The brief accounts of the origins of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights was new to me; apparently an expert committee was gathered originally, but proved to not be able to provide an agreed–upon result (much less the desired one).
- Where Benoist attempts to create a genealogy of the idea, he frequently goes off the rails, he gets many things correct, but his Nietzschean influences force him into a position that is not consistent with his own data, which is that the modern idea of universal rights flows inexorably from Christian theological commitment. He quotes from Marx more than Nietzsche, however.
- Benoist does not offer anything in the way of a positive commitment; the book is rather short and mostly devoted to attacking the idea itself.
- There are a number of bon mots throughout the book, many of them unspoken commonsense— Benoist's popularity among the anglophone 'alt–right' is easily explained. It's sort of an ideological sledgehammer, giving expression to what they likely only dimly suspected. Unfortunately, getting so much from a single

author has the same result over many of these persons as it usually does— excessive commitment to the author and his branch of ideology, rather than going out to others who agree with him on these issues, but have differences (even extreme ones) on others. It's a little like teenagers who read Nietzsche or... Rand. I suppose he at least isn't as poisonous as their other obsession, Evola.

- Despite the similarity to portions of Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws*, the man himself is referenced only once. Unsurprisingly, his favorite anglophone writers are Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre.

As with Talyor & MacIntyre, Benoist's politics are kind of hard to place; there is an obvious attack on the liberal order, but he also has many pro-Enlightenment traits, politically speaking, just as those two have. While he does not specifically address this, I am certain he would agree with Taylor's argument for the achievement (even if tragic in ways) of disenchantment (rather than taking the typical Evolan re-mystifying route that exists in a lot of the radical right). As (especially) Taylor and MacIntyre are more to the 'left' of the Western political spectrum, Benoist's status as the father of the *Nouvelle Droite* seems somewhat ambiguous to me, but that may be a result of having only read this single work of his.

- I would recommend it to persons who haven't heard an argument like this before. I like reading works I mostly agree with from political authors I have not read before (if possible), because it challenges me to pay better attention to their arguments, because I am more familiar with weak and strong variants of them and am challenged to argue against them— and thus, to an extent, myself. This is due to my naturally contradictory nature, and may not work for others.

- I actually read this in the Kindle edition (which is on the lending library right now, for Prime members), which is quite well formatted; both navigation systems are thoroughly in place, which is not normal. There are a few sentences that are rendered awkwardly in English prose, and a couple of places where there are homophone errors. All in all, for a non-mainstream translation job, this is impressive as it is about equal to most first editions from bigger publishers.

Bernardo Kaiser says

Benoist has good, valid points, such as the ones regarding human rights as an ideology of intervention, but he seems to have never opened an actual textbook of international human rights law ever in his life. If he happened to have done that, he would've known that the idea of human rights as deriving from natural law, the monolithic characteristic of these rights regarding cultural diversity and "human dignity" as a moral source of HRs are all very obsolete theoretical ideas.

Then he confuses oranges with apples: why all human rights, regardless of anything, should arise from natural law? Positive rights are generally considered rights politically agreed by states through a binding agreement. They do not derive from natural law, but through a political decision.

But, regarding "natural" rights, what does it mean to say that an individual has not a natural right to the property of his body, thoughts, well being and the such? Does it mean then that a third party has a right to it? Someone has a right to kill me? To harm me? Then where does THAT right derive from? Morally speaking, what justifies that right? Is law merely a Thrasymachean derivation of Force? Then why speaking of rights and law, and not merely speaking of power? Why 160 pages just to say that there is no law as such, only a manifestation of force?

Ah, but Benoist DOES seem to think there is some sort of natural law. He says that being free is better than being in bondage, that is better to be safe than to be harmed, and that a political specimen should strive for

these thing. Yes, but why? Why give politics any guidelines at all? Isn't law a free for all?

Finally, he seems to think that ALL social relations between human beings must be through politics, all social agreements and all rights derive from politics. He forgets that we derive rights from contracts we, as human beings, enter with other entities every single day. he actually says that, by mentioning Carl Schmitt idea that the Magna Carta and other instruments of political limitation where CONTRACTS between the nobility and the king. Even we enter political agreements, it does not follow that this political agreement must be hierarchical.

Honestly, I was expecting a more terse criticism of human rights. Perhaps a evolian rejection of the idea of equality (the main moral justification of modern human rights law) but i was given the limp-dick social liberal speech that rights are derived from institution! political participation! Elections!!! Snore. Human Rights, as a negative obligation of states, is not only a way of individuals to litigate against intrusions of the state in their well being, but also a moral support of resisting these instrusions. It is, as he says, "anti-politic", if all the politics one can imagine is the bureaucratic action of the centralized states.

Miklós says

De Benoist trace la ligne commune des juristes et des théoriciens biopolitiques en termes de comment il arrive à la construction de l'humain. Cette histoire ne se lit pas radicalement différemment de la Third Person de Roberto Esposito, par exemple. Ce tracé de la construction de l'humain dans son sens politique est louable, et les exemples de De Benoist varient assez largement. Cependant, de même (je pense) à Esposito, il est insatisfait dans ses conclusions. C'est au moment où il ne critique plus les constructions historiques des droits, mais au lieu de fournir les siennes, que le travail commence à prendre du retard. Alors que l'attaque de De Benoist contre l'«homme naturel» des Lumières est gratifiante, c'est sa tentative de construire à la place un remplacement païen dans le même cadre qui ne l'est pas.

M. K. says

man i don't know who teaches these people to write books
and i didn't really read this all at once so what do i know
but it felt like a lot of unnecessary fluff/restating of points was added to take the fundamental thrust of the book (which is basically all there in the first/last chapters) and fill it out to book length
said much more about much less than it really needed to or should have
maybe it's an academic thing, whatever

Tamer Ertangil says

This book includes certain strong criticisms towards liberal individualism; however, the reader is left with a feeling of incompleteness. The fact that the human rights as a whole has certain shortcomings does not mean that there are alternative frameworks which would outperform it.
