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Human Rights: A Trojan Horse of Western Values?

The United Nations *Universal declaration of human rights* indicates that human rights are a common moral basis for humanity irrespective of people's cultural surroundings or political background. Irrespective to the ideal of universality in the Declaration, the Western powers have eagerly introduced their influence on other countries as enhancement of human rights, not as enforcement of their political hegemony. The deepening political suspicion of countries that have traditionally been the main proponents of human rights thinking, i.e., the USA and its European allies, has complicated the matter further. The notion that human rights really stem from Western values and contradict the basic values of other cultures has gained popularity, thus, adopting the human rights thinking means accepting the Western way of seeing things and giving up one's own tradition.

I suggest that the conceptual history of human rights can help to analyze the problems and even offer a remedy to them. It is a historical fact that the term 'human rights' has Western roots and was first formed by Enlightenment thinkers. The concept of human rights, i.e., the idea behind the term, is however not of Western origin. Conceptually, human rights refer to the sphere of action every person needs in order to be able act as a moral agent, make moral decisions, fulfil one's responsibilities, and take care of the duties one has as a member of one's community. Moral personhood is not possible without basic liberties that enable autonomous reasoning and voluntary action.