



Human Rights and the Uses of History

By Samuel Moyn

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What are the origins of human rights? This question, rarely asked before the end of the Cold War, has in recent years become a major focus of historical and ideological strife. In this sequence of reflective and critical studies, Samuel Moyn engages with some of the leading interpreters of human rights, thinkers who have been creating a field from scratch without due reflection on the local and temporal contexts of the stories they are telling.

Having staked out his own claims about the postwar origins of human rights discourse in his acclaimed *Last Utopia*, Moyn, in this volume, takes issue with rival conceptions—including, especially, those that underlie justifications of humanitarian intervention

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Review

“There is a struggle for the soul of the human rights movement, and it is being waged in large part through the proxy of genealogy ... Samuel Moyn ... is the most influential of the revisionists.” —Philip Alston, *Harvard Law Review*

Praise for *The Last Utopia*:

“With unparalleled clarity and originality, Moyn’s hard-hitting, radically revisionist, and persuasive history of human rights provides a bracing historical reconstruction with which scholars, activists, lawyers and anyone interested in the fate of the human rights movement today will have to grapple.” —Mark Mazower, author of *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Imperialism and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*

“A most welcome book, *The Last Utopia* is a clear-eyed account of the origins of ‘human rights’: the best we have.” —Tony Judt, author of *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*

“A triumph of originality, scholarship, concision ... A genuinely thrilling account of the modern history of human rights.” —S.N. Katz, *Choice*

“A major contribution to the history of twentieth-century human rights ... From now on taking rights seriously means reading Moyn seriously.” —Bryan S. Turner, *Contemporary Sociology*

About the Author

Samuel Moyn is professor of law and history at Harvard University. He is the author of *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, and *Christian Human Rights* (2015), among other books, as well as editor of the journal *Humanity*. He also writes regularly for *Foreign Affairs* and *The Nation*.

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