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Samuel MOYN (2018). *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

A few months ago, Samuel Moyn delivered the 2020 Page-Barbour Lecture series at the University of Virginia, under the title "A History of Duties for an Age of Rights." Little more than one year before, Moyn wrote (arguably) his most important book so far on the history of human rights, which we are presently reviewing.

The author of this interesting book is a Professor of Law and History at Yale University. He has produced for us already some intriguing work with a marked historical and political character – and his *The Last Utopia* (2012) provides us with a fine show display of his craftsmanship in putting historical narrative to work for the demonstration of political points. In fact, and in particular, it seems that an important characteristic of his historical works is their level of achievement in integrating a unique approach to human rights with the historical context of those rights. Moyn draws upon ideas of diverse disciplinary provenance, from philosophy, history, law, and sociology, giving his ideas a currency and relevance in his specific field, as well as managing to capture plenty of interest elsewhere.

The book of our present attention, *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*, is a largely historical examination of "sufficiency" and "equality" as they have come to relate to the distribution of goods in contemporary society. Ensuring that the otherwise penurious have sufficient material welfare is an agenda that has come to be strongly associated with human rights. This association has cemented to that point that human rights language is the language one would use when championing the alleviation of the abject and the destitute. Befittingly so; yet what may escape our notice is the failure of sufficiency-minded alleviation to level out the (growing) social and economic hierarchies that sit on top of the (growing) demographic of the non-destitute.

As Moyn asserts in the beginning of the book: "Enough, in this view, is not enough" (p. 4). Indeed, what may also escape our notice, he tells us, is that "Human

rights do not necessarily call for a modicum of distributive equality" (p. 3), so that we are left to infer that neither alleviation of the destitute nor, more crucially for Moyn, the language and notions of human rights are sufficient for equality.

At least, this is what we would infer from a rigorously argued history demonstrating the proposed relationship between equality, sufficiency, and human rights – including, as one might come to expect, a good and persuasive account of how human rights got tangled up with sufficiency in precisely this way. Just this is what Moyn looks to provide, and it constitutes most of the book's anatomy. "The primary goal of what follows", he says, "is to chart the evolution of human rights to illustrate how (...) they reached this state of imprisonment" (p. 6).

Among the contemporary jail wardens responsible for the imprisonment of human rights language are the articulate defenders of "market fundamentalism" and "neoliberalism" (p. 8), among which are to be counted politicians and philosophers – especially modern philosophers of human rights (p. 9). But the story apparently stretches a bit further back than the current trends among philosophers.

We are first given a story that goes from the Old Testament through the French Revolution. A concern for sufficiency, we are told, has a history beginning as early as various monotheistic injunctions demanding concern for the poor's indigence (p. 16). Yet it was through the legacy left by the "the first welfare state", (p. 22) in particular the "Jacobin national welfare state", that equality among citizens, over and above mere sufficiency, was first demanded (p. 23). This ideal would fall into disuse, as signaled by Thomas Paine's rejection of distributive equality in his book on agrarian justice (pp. 24-25).

Next, the ambitious historical survey brings us swiftly to the eve of the 20th century – when the early embers of socialism began to kindle (p. 25) – and then to key events of the following century, especially in the post-war period. Among such events we find: the rise of national socialism, the emergence of national welfare, e.g. in Roosevelt's New Deal, decolonization, and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Concerning the UDHR, Moyn suggests that it should be read as

orbiting around "the project of national welfare", whereas it is presently read as "an internationalization of rights politics that occurred decades later [than the document's writing]" (p. 44).

Over the time elapsed since the (unsuccessful, anyway) Jacobin state, an increasingly wide margin of social and economic disparity grew. While this trend of disparity began then perhaps in the late 18th century, and continued through the immediate post-war period, the breaking point was the Cold War (1947-91), when the human rights revolution "occurred almost *ex nihilo*" (p. 121). This manifested itself in different ways on various continents, but in the end, the winners were the capitalists who asserted themselves through their global campaign of "neoliberalism", a "maelstrom" leaving in its wake a global eruption of social and economic inequality. "What was really occurring", Moyn says, "was the detachment of social rights from the welfare state project that had birthed them" (p. 193).

The entrapment of human rights in neoliberalism has left us in a world of mere sufficiency, a world at odds with economic equality. This is the world of Croesus, "a kind of utopia" (p. 212) wherein the "wonderfully rich" Croesus bestows, in his magnanimity, sufficient provision for those well below him.

Moyn's narrative leaves us with a bleak, but not despairing picture: "[A dream of welfare] will not look like our human rights movement, which has become prominent as our world has become more like Croesus's. (...) Human rights will return to their defensible importance only as soon as humanity saves itself from its low ambitions. If it does, for the sake of local and global welfare, sufficiency and equality can again become powerful companions, both in moral lives and in our political enterprises" (p. 220).

While the book as a whole is interesting, we may ponder how profound a renovation or innovation is really needed to secure a "dream of welfare." If we are supposed to radically reframe our outlook as one between "barbarism" and "socialism" (p. 220) in the interest of equality, the required conversion from one to the other may require a profundity such that today's advocates of socialism would

be tomorrow's enemies of equality – and not just in the banal way that Kant and Rousseau could, as mere predecessors, be enemies of Rawls. Distributive equality may come to mean something more and different than material equality, in which case a story which treats the concept as, here at least, functionally the same (quasi-theological?) from Deuteronomy to the UDHR would need to be rewritten.

If the dream of welfare has never been successfully fully thought or worked through, one might wonder whether there is not something important hidden from our sight. In particular, if the plot is supposed to twist as we discover that mere sufficiency is too thin compared with the ideal of equality, it may twist again if we find that mere welfare is too thin compared to some grander and less barbaric notion of human flourishing.

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