

THE MORAL AND LEGAL FOUNDATIONS OF RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND HUMAN WELFARE

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Abstract

The concepts of obligations and privileges form the framework for moral and legal regimes in social systems all over the world. When compared to commitments, which are people's comparative duties to respect other people's freedoms and behave in ways that enhance social good, privileges are typically seen as the qualifications of individuals to certain opportunities and security. These concepts are intimately intertwined, with the recognition of privileges frequently resulting in vows to uphold and protect them. The ethical foundations of rights and obligations are frequently based on rigid norms and philosophical precepts that maintain that all persons are deserving of certain fundamental possibilities and guarantees and possess inherent dignity and value. These moral principles are frequently respected in legal. By guaranteeing that people may exercise their rights and uphold their duties, social systems may encourage realism, justice, and the flourishing of humans. Individual liberties must be acknowledged and upheld in order to achieve this, and services and resources must be established to enable people to exercise their rights and carry out their duties. Nevertheless, it is usually challenging for individuals to recognize their rights and duties due to social and economic inequities, discrimination, and political repression. In such circumstances, the improvement of civil rights and human government aid necessitates active attempts to break through these barriers and create even more impartial social regimes. This might involve alterations to the legislation and strategy, social developments, and collective action to upset the apple cart and promote reform. All things considered, expanding civil rights and providing human government support depend greatly on the moral and legal foundations of privileges and commitments. We can create a more just and equitable world in which everyone may live with dignity and respect by understanding and preserving the rights of individuals and the contrasting obligations of society.

Keywords: Rights, Obligation, Moral, Legal, Social Justice, Human welfare,

Introduction

The evolution of law is seen as the bedrock and the development of the society. The Judicial administration is established to promote rights and for the continuity of duty. Jurisprudence is concern with the issues arising from the use of rights or duty. Legal actions under the law are right, while respect to the right holder is duty. Legal rights can be

seen as right in rem and right in Personam. Duty exists where right exist. The classification of legal duty is similar as legal rights. Stoics followed the concept of religion as human have only duty but not of rights. Duguit also argues for same, for the Scandinavian Realist, rights, duties, obligation and justice are metaphysics; so they are meaningless.¹ According to Hohfeld, rights and duties are classified into Jural correlative, Jural contradictory and Jural opposite. There are vivid forms of rights i.e. claim/rights, liberty/privileges, power and immunity whereas forms of duty vary as duty no right, liability and disability etc. However, all the jurisprudence addresses the method of determining rights and duties of the people. For Dworkin, a right performs as a Trump and for John Rawls it refers to liberty and distributive justice, nevertheless, rights and duties are essential building blocks of legislation and case law to resolve dispute among various parties and essence of the law².

Rights and duty are basic fundamental human freedom and the moral obligation to promote the spirit of patriotism. They are the wheel on which the chariot of life moves, Rights and duties go in union and complement each other. Rights are fundamental for social life when rights are engaged it contributes to the development of the personality and the growth of the society. Duty is also man's right; it is the duty of the citizen to be loyal to the state. Rights and duty complement one another. The constitution of Nigeria guarantees certain Rights and duties to her citizens which are considered to be fundamental. It is absolutely for the governing of the state and the citizens. The complementary nature of rights and duties imposes an obligation on the state and the citizen, to practice fundamental human right and the promotion of the welfare of the citizen under specific statutes.

Philosophical Foundation of Rights and Duties

The issue of rights is ubiquitous. What is it to have a right. Some hold the benefit of rights, some hold choice of rights. The first person to hold the benefit of rights theory was Jeremy Bentham, the most contemporary defender is Joseph Raz. The choice theory was made by H.L.A. Hart.³ The theories have been developed and there had been objections to these theories. It has its different strengths and weakness. The philosophical theory of rights was technically proposed by Wesley Newcomb Hohfeld at the beginning of the last century. From a political philosophy perspective, the doctrine of natural law proved to be highly influential in contributing to the evolution of the theory of fundamental rights and duties of states (natural law and justice). Because of its character, *iusnaturalae* emerged as a possible source for the regulation of inter-state as well as inter-individual relationships.⁴ Starting with the 17th century, the view was developed, especially by Hugo Grotius of a natural legal order applying also to moral persons or collective entities such as states.⁵ Among the early supporters of the theory of fundamental rights and duties of states, mention must be made of Christian Wolff, Emerich de vattel, and Georges Frederic Marteus. In the writings of Wolff in particular, one may find arguably for the first time the presentation of a complete system of rights and duties of states. De Vattel, considered by some to be the real founder of the theory of fundamental rights and duties

of states, elaborates on the Wolffian theory by emphasizing the idea of comparability of states to individuals living in the state of nature as interdependent and yet free subjects.⁶ Martens, in turn, builds even further upon the findings of the preceding authors and develops a system based on the right to security and independence, the right to equality, and the right to mutual commerce.

Already at this stage, however, the theory of fundamental rights and duties of states appears to have lost some of its original components, especially because Martens abandons at least in part, a strict natural law approach by inserting in his writings some significant elements of Juridical positivism.⁷

The 18th and 19th centuries witness the contribution of eminent figures such as Henri Gregorie and Jeremy Bentham with the former's Declaration *du Droif des Gens*, on the one hand, a catalogue of fundamental rights and duties is set forth which comprises principles such as independence, equality (states, sovereign equality), sovereignty, jurisdiction (Jurisdiction of states), non-intervention (intervention, prohibition of).⁸ Self-defense, mutual respect of the rights of all immunity of ambassadors (immunity diplomatic) and Pactasunt Servando. The latter's most crucial contribution, on the other hand, consists in a draft declaration, mainly of a political nature, based on equality and independence of states. The innovations brought about by these scholars however, relate to the form rather than to the substance of fundamental rights and duties of states which they suggest for the first time as a topic suitable for inclusion in a written legal instrument. As a consequence of their contribution, the theory under consideration will then become closely interwoven with the process of codification and progressive development of inter-nation law.¹⁰

The 20th century debate on fundamental rights and duties continues and a greater variety of positions emerges proposals of declarations of rights and duties of states are tabled by Jurist such as Albert de Lapradelle, Victor M. Maurtua and Alejandro Alvarez. In addition various international organizations and bodies become increasingly involved in the debate and provide the forum for the discussion of projects and draft levels.¹¹ In 1919, for example the American institute of International Law adopts a 'Declaration of Rights and duties of Nations' consisting of six articles and mentioning, self-preservation, independence, equality and jurisdiction as well as the principle of the correlative character of rights and duties.¹² Again in 1919 the institute de Droit international invites de Lapradelle to prepare a draft declaration of rights and duties of nations which is discussed in Rome in 1921 and at the Hague in 1925 but never adopted. Finally, a work by Alvarez entitled 'Expose' de motifs de project de declaration sur les donne's. fondamentals et les grands principes du droit international de l'avenir? Including chapters on Rights of states, their limitations and Duties of states, groups of states and continents, after having been.¹³ submitted since 1931 to a number of European and American academic circles is subsequently amended and developed into a declaration adapted in 1936 by the 39th session of the International Law Association (ILA)¹⁴. One of

the oldest Western Philosophies on human rights is that they are a product of a natural law, other theories hold that human rights codifies moral behavior which is a human social product developed by a process of biological and social evolution associated by Hume.¹⁵

Human rights are also described as a sociological pattern of rule setting as in the sociological theory of law and works of Weber. These approaches included the notion that individual in a society accept rules from legitimate authority in exchange for security and economic advantages as in Rawls Social Contract. The two theories that dominate contemporary human rights are the interest theory and the will theory. Interest theory argues that the principal functions of human rights is to protect and promote certain essential human interest, while will theory attempts to establish the validity of human rights based on their unique human capacity for freedom.¹⁶

The philosophy of human rights centers around issues of existence, content, nature, universality, justification and legal status of human rights and duties. The early Greek philosophers, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle described the human right from the point of natural law. The idea that mankind possesses rights by existence and it is inalienable is directly linked to the natural law or natural rights. However, a persistent opposition to this view builds on the criticism of Burke and Bentham, and even from the contractarian views of Rousseau's image of civil society. In this perspective rights do not exist independently of human endeavour, they can only be created by human action. Rights are viewed as the product of a particular society and its legal system.¹⁷

Concept of Rights

From a historical point of view, 'right' in its objective sense is described as right or just actions that individuals have to discharge to maintain harmonious relationships between themselves. In the modern or subjective sense, its definition is long and divisive.¹⁸ Right must be looked at from the point of view of claim and duty. Rights guarantees certain freedoms or liberties. In jurisprudence rights are looked at from the positive and negative points. Accordingly, the person who is possessive of positive rights entitled to provisions of some goods or services. A holder of negative right is entitled to non-interference. In the eyes of law, Rights confers on a person certain amount of liberties and privileges. At the same time impose obligations to discharge.

Furthermore, possessing a right should also enable a person exercise it. However, based on the common usage of the term philosophers and political analysts in subjects like philosophy, politics, law and logic et al, have defined the rights in a number of categories.¹⁹

Natural Rights

“Natural rights” are the pre-political rights individuals possess in the absence of established political authority, that is, in the state of nature. A natural rights-based

argument for limited government has several familiar and easily identifiable features. It begins by identifying the rights individuals possess in the state of nature. It proceeds by the presenting a list of the inconveniences inherent in life in that state and by arguing that to escape these inconveniences, individuals delegate some of the power derived from their natural rights to the exclusive use of a civil government.²⁰ It then identifies the powers so delegated to conclude that a government that exercises these powers and only these powers is morally justified. Different versions of this argument can be generated by different lists of natural rights, different conceptions of the state of nature, different methods of delegation, and different lists of delegated powers¹¹.

In order to understand the Natural Rights, let us look briefly at Hobbes' and Locke's state of nature to get knowledge of the different rights they ascribe to human beings. For Thomas Hobbes men tends to create a state of war 'of every man against every man'.²¹ "Men live without other security than what their own strength and their own invention shall furnish them"²². In a world where life was "Solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short"²³. In the view of Hobbes, the human society was absent of governance. John Simmons had argued that Locke's state of nature was not intended to describe human behavior but a prescriptive condition. "The condition of men living together without legitimate government."²⁴

The distinction between Hobbes's Conception of the state of nature and Locke's is reflection in the different rights they ascribe to human beings in that condition. Hobbes's war of all against all is an entirely lawless state. Under such conditions, the only right of any relevance, and hence the only natural right human beings possess, is the right of self-preservation. In contrast, Locke's state of nature, although it lacks a normatively binding human law, is not lawless. It is governed by the law of nature, which obligates human beings to act for the preservation of mankind, hence, no one may "take away, or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of the life, the liberty, health, limb or goods of another. Thus, nature entails the existence of natural rights to life, liberty and property: life, because the preservation of mankind requires individuals not to take their own or others' lives; liberty, because "all men are by nature equal and hence possess equal right... to (their) natural freedom, without being subjected to the will or authority of any other man" and property, because "every man has a property in his own person" that entitles him to (t)he labour of his body, and the work of his hands" such that whatever "he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property"²⁵.

In the Locke's state of nature, human beings can be far off better, natural rights is not secured under Hobbes's state of nature. Natural Rights if truly practiced by the individual then government can only function to the point of not violating them. The Natural rights theorists do not agree if natural rights exist as the thoughts of Hobbes and Locke postulate. A natural right is nothing but, rights based on just, fair and reasonable. This means, the individuals unite themselves to form political societies through mutual

consent and agree to form a government of their own. It will enable them to lead their life through common rules and regulations framed by either them or their representatives. At the same time, they accept a set of legal and moral duties to be observed or bound by them in the exercise of their rights in order to live in peace and security without any violence.²⁶

Legal Rights

It is the standard right of an action which a person has under the law. It should be noted that legal rights are distinct from moral or natural right. Since it is recognized and protected by the law. Legal rights are the common claims of people which every cultured society recognizes as essential claims for their development and which are therefore enforced by the state. Learned authors of Jurisprudence have defined the term in different ways.²⁷

- According to Salmond “A right is an interest recognized and protected by a rule of law.
- According to Austin, right is a faculty which resides in a determinate party or parties by virtue of a given law and which avails against a party or parties or answer to duty lying on party or parties, other than the party or parties in whom resides”.

According to Holland “legal right is the capacity residing one man of controlling, with the assent and assistance of the state, actions of others”.

- According to Laska, “Right is those conditions of social life without which no man can seek in general to be himself at his best.
- T. H. Green explained that “Right is a power necessary for the fulfillment of man's vocation as a moral being”.
- Beni Prasad, stated that “Rights are nothing more nor less than those social conditions which are necessary or favourable to the development of personality.
- According to Pollock “right is freedom allowed and power conferred by law.
- According to Kant “right is an authority to compel”.²⁸

Characteristics of Legal Rights

- Legal rights exist only in society. These are the products of social living. They cannot be exercised against the society. They are to be exercised by the people for their development hence for the development of society.
- They are claims of the individuals for their development in society. They are recognized by society as common claims of all the people.
- They are rational and moral claims that people make in their society.

- They are equally available to all the people.
- The concept and contents are rights keep on changing with the passage of time.
- They are not absolute, these always bear limitations deemed essential for maintaining public health, security, order and morality.
- They should be utilized with some duties.
- They need enforcement and only then these can be really used by the people. It is the duty of a state to protect the rights of the people.²⁹

Legal rights are not just measured in terms of its place in Jurisprudence but as it is experienced and use in contemporary life. Man has natural rights and cannot be taken away from him. It is the right that is recognize by the common law courts.

Universal Rights

The creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was to act as a tool to protect freedom and equality of Humanity. It was a declaration accepted by countries to promote freedoms and rights that deserve universal protection to live their lives freely and in dignity. The UDHR was adopted by the establishment of the United Nation on 10th December 1948 in response to the barbaric acts of mankind during the second world war. Human rights were seen to be the foundation for justice and peace. The Declaration listed 30 rights and freedoms that belongs to all. This forms the basis for inter-nation human right law.

The Universal Declaration begins by recognizing of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. It declares that human rights are Universal to be enjoyed by all people, no matter who they are or where they live. The Universal Declaration includes civil and political rights, like the right to life, liberty, free speech and privacy. It also includes economic, social and cultural rights, like the right to social security, health and education. The Universal Declaration is not a treaty, so it does not directly create legal obligation for countries. However, it is an expression of the fundamental values which are shared by all members of the international community. And it has a profound influence on the development of international human rights law. Some argue that because countries have consistently invoked the Declaration for more than sixty years, it has become binding as a part of Customary International Law.³⁰

Nature and Concept of Duties

The word obligation common refers to as a synonym of duty or vice-versa. However, strictly speaking there exists a difference between the two. According to H.L.A. Hart, duty and obligation are distinct to each other. A right exists without any correspondence to an obligation incurred or created, at times. Whereas duty arises from position, status, role. This means every time a duty has a connection with the position of person, which is linked with right. Hence, an obligation may not correspond to a duty at all times. It is only usage or practice of referring to right as a synonym of duty. In the eyes of law, they are

different and especially in the area of rights.³¹

The concept of duty arises from fulfillment of a requirement. Duties arise in several ways and means, such as moral duties, legal duties, parental duties, societal duties and civil duties etc. However, from the point of view of law, duties arise from legal norms or requirements. They have to be discharged, the way it was prescribed. According to the actions constitute as right or wrong basing on the discharge of duty if one acts contrary to a duty, the constitutes a wrong (for example, a legal norm tells us not to speak ill of others which will affect their decency, if you speak ill of others, it constitutes as wrong). A duty imposes an obligation to respect the rights of others and the society. Hence, rights and duties are reciprocal. A right is demand and a duty is an expectation.³²

The Different Types of Duties

Duties may be distinguished between:

1. Natural and acquired duties.
2. Positive and negative duties.
3. Perfect and Imperfect duties.
4. Prima facie and all things considered as duties.³³

A Natural and Acquired Duties: Natural duties bind all of us without any specification by any institution or body. Each one of us discharge these duties voluntarily. For example: not to harm others, not to tell lies, not to misuse the freedoms, duty to respect others, not to injure the innocent not to beat children, to uphold truth and justice etc. Acquired duties are duties under taken by individual by virtue of something they have done, or as a particular relationship, which they might have with others. This means, certain duties are legal and need to perform the acquired obligations basing on one's willingness. If refused to perform after consented to discharge, it attracts legal consequences.³⁴ Another type of acquired duties results from special relationships that individuals undertake as groups, often referred to as responsibilities for example, parents discharging their duties towards their children, doctors to patients and lawyers to their clients. These duties assumed by individuals to exercise automatically by accepting to act in a specific role.³⁵

B. Positive and Negative Duties:

According to another legal Jurist John Rawls, positive duties require us to do good. On the other hand, negative duties impose restrictions on doing bad or refraining from acting. Helping the poor may be a positive duty which may not have any obligation. However, not tell lies or not to harm others in a negative duty, which imposes an obligation.

C. Perfect and Imperfect Duties:

Perfect and imperfect duties appear similar to that of the positive and negative duties. According to Prof. Immanuel Kant, a German Philosopher, they are not similar. Perfect duties expect individuals to discharge the incurred obligations as

per the goal that is set at all time without any deviation. Imperfect duties have no rigidity. Imperfect duties are duties that are never completed in its true spirit. The performance of these duties depends on circumstances. According to Kant it is difficult to cultivate one's own talents is an example for imperfect duty.³⁶

Duties of the States

According to the Declaration, States have a general responsibility to implement and respect all the provisions of the Declaration. However, some of the provisions make particular reference to the role of states and indicate that each state has a responsibility and duty.

- To protect promote and implement all human rights.
- To ensure that all persons under its jurisdiction are able to enjoy all social, economic, political and other rights and freedoms in practice.
- To adopt such legislative, administrative and other steps as may be necessary to ensure effective implementation of rights and freedoms.
- To provide an effective remedy for persons who claim to have been victims of a human rights violation.
- To conduct prompt and impartial investigation of alleged violations of human rights.
- To take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of everyone against any violence, threats, relation, adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to, in the Declaration.
- To promote public understanding of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.
- To ensure and support the creation and development of independent national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights such as Ombudsmen or Human Rights Commissions.
- To promote and facilitate the teaching of human rights at all levels of formal education and professional training.³⁷

Impact of Duty on the Society

Every individual has duties towards the society or state. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the duties of each person towards the state are:

- To obey the law and other legal commands of the state and its agencies in a country.
- To render the services in civil and military affairs whenever required by the state for its defense.
- To cooperate with the state and the community with respect to social security and welfare to the extent possible.

- To pay the taxes established by law for public purposes.
- To protect the property and culture of the state.
- Not to discriminate or advocate anything on communal, linguistic and religious or any other ground that affect the liberty of other individuals.³⁸

The Duties Towards Society

- To respect the women, children wounded, sick, and elderly persons.
- Rendering charitable work through social service, education, religious activities, cultural activities etc.
- To respect the rights and responsibilities of others.
- Not to make false allegations or complaints against others.
- Not to misuse the laws and regulations.
- Not to discriminate or advocate anything on communal, linguistic and religious or any other ground that affect the liberty of other individuals.
- To follow and obey the moral and ethical values that belongs to each society.³⁹

Rights and Duties in the Nigerian Constitution

Every citizen of Nigeria is entitled to the fundamental human rights conferred on him/her by the constitution, the limitation to these rights is also in the constitution. These rights are stipulated in the 1999 constitution, chapter four (section 33) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as Amended as follows:

- a. Every person has the right to life, and no one shall be deprived intentionally of his life, save in execution of the sentence of a court in respect of criminal offence of which he has been found guilty in Nigeria.
- b. Every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person; and accordingly, no person shall be subjected to any form of torture or in human or degrading treatment.
- c. Every person shall be entitled to his personal liberty and no person shall be deprived of such liberty exceptive accordance with a procedure permitted by Law e.g., in the execution of the sentence or order of a court in respect of criminal offence of which he has been found guilty and so on.
- d. Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference.⁴⁰

The Constitution also provides for rights such as the right to fair hearing, right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, the right to peaceful assembly and association, right to freedom of movement, right to freedom from discrimination, right to property among others. However, certain conditions could limit some of the constitutionally guaranteed

human rights.⁴¹

Duties and Obligations of Citizens

Duties are those legal things citizens are expected from a citizen to do for the up keep of the state and for the state to continue to perform her function to the citizens. On the other hand, obligations are things citizens are expected to willingly perform with regard to Nigeria (the 1999 Constitution Section 24 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as Amended). Summarized the duties of a citizen thus:

- a. Abide by the constitution; respect its ideals and its institutions such as the National Flag, the National Anthem, the National Pledge and Legitimate authorities.
- b. Help to enhance the power, prestige and good name of Nigeria, defend Nigeria and render such national service as may be required.
- c. Respect the dignity of other citizens and the rights and legitimate interests of others and live in unity and harmony and in the spirit of common brotherhood.
- d. Make positive and useful contributions to the advancement progress and well-being of the community where he resides.
- e. Declare his income honestly to appropriate and lawful agencies and pay his/her tax promptly.⁴²

Conclusion

Human welfare and civil rights are personally connected with privileges and obligations. Privileges are the freedoms that individuals or people have, though commitments are the obligations that individuals or people need from others. Freedoms and obligations critically affect civil rights and human welfare. For civil rights to be maintained and human government assistance to be advanced, common liberties should be perceived and secured. It can bring about imbalance, separation, and foul play when individuals or gatherings are denied their privileges, which can be inconvenient to both their welfare and the government assistance of society in general. With freedoms come liabilities too. Individuals and associations both have the need to maintain others' privileges and backing cultural prosperity. For example, practicing one's more right than wrong to free discourse entails taking consideration to do as such without

imperiling
 others. Along these lines, the right to an education involves an obligation to go to classes
 and
 make an endeavor to review. Propelling civil rights and human welfare, taking
 everything into
 account, relies upon the right recognizable proof and defense of freedoms and
 obligations. We can
 fabricate an all the fairer and impartial society where everybody gets the opportunity to
 flourish by guaranteeing that everybody's privileges are maintained and that individuals
 and
 gatherings satisfy their responsibilities to each other.

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