

RESEARCH PAPER

Rethinking Human Rights: Bridging Universalism and Cultural Relativism in the 21st Century

Chandan Kumar Dan

Assistant Professor in Political Science, Vivekananda Mahavidyalaya, Haripal, Hooghly, West Bengal, India

Corresponding author: chandankumardan@vmharipal.ac.in (ORCID ID: 0009-0006-9931-2742)

Received: 14-07-2025

Revised: 20-11-2025

Accepted: 05-12-2025

ABSTRACT

Human rights theory has historically operated within the framework of universalism, emphasizing a set of rights inherent to all human beings. However, growing attention to cultural diversity, post-colonial critique, and global political pluralism has intensified the debate between universalism and cultural relativism. This paper revisits the foundational premises of human rights theory, exploring its evolution from natural law traditions to contemporary legal frameworks. It critically examines the tensions between universalist and relativist positions, assessing whether a synthesis is possible or desirable. Using interdisciplinary perspectives, the paper suggests a middle path rooted in “pluralistic universalism,” which respects cultural contexts without compromising core human dignity. The conclusion emphasizes the need for a rearticulated theory that balances ethical consistency with political and cultural inclusivity.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ① *Human rights should be universal, but not culturally insensitive:* The paper argues that while certain rights belong to all human beings, their interpretation and implementation should take cultural diversity and local traditions into account.
- ② *The debate between universalism and cultural relativism needs a balanced approach:* Instead of treating the two perspectives as opposites, the study suggests finding common ground that protects human dignity while respecting cultural differences.
- ③ *Human rights are not solely a Western idea:* The paper shows that traditions such as Confucianism, Islamic thought, and Ubuntu philosophy also contain important values related to justice, dignity, and human welfare.
- ④ *Human rights theory must adapt to modern challenges:* Emerging issues such as climate change, migration, digital surveillance, artificial intelligence, and environmental protection require a broader and more flexible understanding of human rights.
- ⑤ *Dialogue and local participation are essential for promoting human rights:* The author emphasizes that lasting human rights progress is more effective when it grows from intercultural dialogue, community engagement, and locally driven reform rather than external pressure.

Keywords: Human Rights, Universalism, Cultural Relativism, Human Dignity, Cultural Diversity, International Human Rights Law, Global Justice, Intercultural Dialogue, Normative Pluralism, Human Rights Governance

Human rights are often regarded as the cornerstone of modern moral and legal order. Enshrined in international treaties, constitutions, and philosophical texts, they represent claims to dignity, equality, and freedom that transcend geography and culture. Yet, the foundations of these rights, and the assumptions underpinning them,

remain subjects of intense philosophical and political debate. The 21st century presents a challenging paradox:

How to cite this article: Dan, C.K. (2025). Rethinking Human Rights: Bridging Universalism and Cultural Relativism in the 21st Century. *Int. J. Soc. Sci.*, 14(04): 91-98.

Source of Support: None; **Conflict of Interest:** None



while the global acceptance of human rights norms has expanded, so too has resistance to the perceived hegemony of Western moral and legal paradigms. In this context, the debate between universalism and cultural relativism gains renewed significance. This paper aims to revisit and critically analyse human rights theory by exploring its historical evolution, philosophical underpinnings, and the tensions arising from attempts to apply universal norms in diverse cultural contexts.

The Evolution of Human Rights Theory

Natural Law and the Birth of Rights

The concept of human rights is deeply rooted in natural law philosophy, which posits that certain moral principles are inherent in human nature and can be discerned through reason (Finnis, 1980). Thinkers like John Locke (1689/1980) argued for natural rights to life, liberty, and property, which governments must protect rather than grant. These ideas laid the foundation for political revolutions in the 18th century and informed documents like the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789).

While natural law grounded rights in human reason and moral order, it also implicitly assumed a universal human nature—a presumption that would later become central to universalist claims. However, critics have pointed out that these early formulations largely reflected Eurocentric understandings of individualism and autonomy, often excluding women, slaves, and non-Western peoples from the scope of “humanity” (Moyn, 2010).

Historical Development of Human Rights Theory

Ancient and Medieval Roots

While modern human rights discourse often begins with Enlightenment thinkers, the roots of rights-based reasoning can be traced back to ancient civilizations and religious traditions. For instance, the Code of Hammurabi (circa 1754 BCE) in Mesopotamia outlined legal protections and duties, albeit stratified by class. In ancient India, the Edicts of Ashoka (3rd century BCE)

reflected principles of tolerance, welfare, and moral governance derived from Buddhist values, promoting ethical treatment of subjects regardless of status.

Similarly, Greek philosophy introduced important ethical concepts underpinning later rights discourse. Aristotle wrote about justice, equity, and the role of virtue in a good society. Although not a rights theorist in the modern sense, his emphasis on the moral worth of individuals and the need for laws to align with ethical principles contributed to later developments.

During the medieval period, Christian theology—particularly through the work of thinkers like Thomas Aquinas—integrated natural law with divine reason. Aquinas asserted that humans possess certain rights and duties grounded in their rational nature, which is a reflection of God’s order (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*). In the Islamic world, scholars such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), and Al-Ghazali explored notions of justice, responsibility, and human welfare within an ethical-theological framework that influenced both Eastern and Western thought.

The Renaissance and Secular Humanism

The Renaissance (14th–17th centuries) marked a revival of classical learning and a gradual shift toward secular conceptions of humanity. Thinkers began emphasizing human agency, dignity, and the capacity for rational self-governance. The rise of natural rights theory in the 17th century, especially in the works of Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf, and John Locke, formalized the notion that individuals possess inalienable rights simply by virtue of being human. Grotius famously argued that natural law would exist even “if God did not exist,” paving the way for a secular foundation of human rights.

Enlightenment Rationalism and Universalism

The Enlightenment further entrenched universalist thinking in human rights theory. Immanuel Kant (1785/1996) emphasized the intrinsic worth of individuals as ends in themselves, leading to a moral imperative for equal respect and dignity. The rational, autonomous individual became the normative subject

of rights discourse, setting the stage for a globalized moral language that claimed universality.

This Enlightenment idealism culminated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, adopted by the United Nations in the aftermath of World War II. The UDHR affirmed rights that are “inherent” and applicable “without distinction of any kind” (United Nations, 1948, Article 2), signalling a firm commitment to universalism. However, even at its inception, the document faced criticism for lacking representation from non-Western philosophical traditions.

The Challenge of Cultural Relativism

The Anthropological Critique

Cultural relativism emerged as a significant challenge to universalist human rights claims, particularly in the mid-20th century. Anthropologists like Melville Herskovits (1947) argued that moral values are culturally bound and that imposing Western standards of rights risks ethnocentrism. This perspective gained traction as post-colonial states criticized human rights as instruments of neocolonial domination (Mutua, 2002).

Relativists argue that notions such as individual autonomy, gender equality, or secular governance may conflict with traditional communal, religious, or patriarchal structures. For instance, critiques have been raised against international norms related to LGBTQ+ rights, which some communities view as contrary to their religious or cultural values (An-Na'im, 1990).

The Politics of Relativism

While cultural relativism offers a valuable critique of universalism's blind spots, it also presents ethical dangers. Used cynically, relativism can serve as a cover for human rights abuses under the guise of cultural sovereignty. For example, governments have invoked cultural arguments to justify practices like female genital mutilation or restrictions on freedom of expression (Donnelly, 2003). This dual-edged nature of relativism calls for a nuanced approach that neither ignores cultural differences nor allows them to excuse violations of basic human dignity.

Cultural Relativism in Practice — Case Studies and Political Realities

Case Study 1: Gender Rights and Cultural Traditions

One of the most contentious areas of conflict between universalism and cultural relativism emerges in the realm of gender rights. For instance, the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) in parts of Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia has been strongly condemned by international human rights organizations as a violation of bodily autonomy and physical integrity. However, some communities defend the practice as a cultural rite of passage or religious obligation (Shell-Duncan & Hernlund, 2000).

International responses to FGM highlight the tensions between respecting cultural traditions and enforcing universal human rights standards. The United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO) have worked with local activists and community leaders to promote culturally sensitive education and alternative rites of passage. This approach—sometimes termed “culture within change”—recognizes the need for internal reform led by local voices rather than external imposition (UNICEF, 2013).

Case Study 2: Freedom of Expression in Authoritarian Contexts

Another flashpoint concerns freedom of speech and press, particularly in countries where political authority is tightly controlled. For example, in China, the government justifies internet censorship and restrictions on dissent as necessary to preserve social harmony and collective stability, values deeply embedded in Confucian political philosophy. From a relativist standpoint, these measures are culturally coherent. Yet from a universalist perspective, they represent clear violations of internationally recognized rights to information and free expression (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Theoretical reconciliation in such contexts is difficult but not impossible. One proposed pathway is the use of “local vocabularies of rights”, which frame civil liberties in culturally resonant terms. For example, advocates might appeal to Confucian ideals of benevolence

and moral duty to legitimize greater transparency and public accountability. In this way, human rights can be indigenized rather than perceived as foreign impositions.

Case Study 3: LGBTQ+ Rights and Religious Traditions

In many parts of the world, LGBTQ+ identities and rights are suppressed due to prevailing religious or moral beliefs. In countries like Saudi Arabia, Uganda, and Brunei, same-sex relationships are criminalized, and advocacy is often punishable by law. Governments often cite religious texts or traditional values as justification.

The challenge here is not simply a clash of cultures, but a deeper moral disagreement over the nature of rights and personhood. Some relativists argue that demanding recognition of LGBTQ+ rights imposes Western liberal values on societies that conceive of sexuality differently. Yet defenders of universalism counter that the right to non-discrimination and bodily autonomy are foundational, and transcultural, regardless of their specific cultural expressions.

The solution, again, may lie in dialogical engagement—promoting public debate within these societies and supporting local rights movements grounded in internal ethical frameworks. This strategy enables transformation from within rather than confrontation from without.

Non-Western Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights

Confucian Ethics and Communitarian Rights

Confucianism, dominant in East Asian cultures, emphasizes hierarchy, filial piety, and social harmony over individual autonomy. Critics argue this tradition undermines liberal conceptions of rights, particularly those related to dissent or personal freedom. Yet modern Confucian scholars such as Tu Weiming (1998) have articulated a Confucian humanism, which upholds the intrinsic value of human life, the importance of compassion, and a moral duty toward others.

In this model, rights are not derived from abstract autonomy but from one's role within the web of

relationships. While this contrasts with Western liberalism, it offers a communal framework that could support group rights, economic justice, and duties of care—areas sometimes neglected by individualistic models.

Islamic Conceptions of Justice and Human Dignity

Islamic legal and ethical thought recognizes a wide array of rights and obligations under Shari'a, including protections for life, property, religion, family, and intellect (Maslaha principles). The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990) is one attempt by Muslim-majority countries to articulate a culturally rooted rights charter.

However, tensions persist between Islamic norms and certain international rights standards—especially regarding gender equality, apostasy laws, and freedom of expression. Scholars like Abdullahi An-Na'im (1990) argue for **internal** reform of Islamic jurisprudence, grounded in *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), to harmonize Shari'a with universal human rights without abandoning Islamic identity.

Indigenous Perspectives: Ubuntu and Relational Rights

African Indigenous thought, particularly the Ubuntu philosophy in sub-Saharan Africa, provides a relational conception of the self—"I am because we are." Unlike Western notions of individualism, Ubuntu stresses interdependence, community obligation, and collective well-being (Metz, 2011). Rights in this context are not entitlements claimed by isolated individuals but recognitions of human worth within a network of social relationships.

This philosophy supports a broader spectrum of rights, including group rights, environmental rights, and duties to others, which can enrich global human rights frameworks. It also encourages a duty-based ethics, where moral obligations accompany every claim to rights—potentially resolving some of the tension between rights and responsibilities in global discourse.

Emerging Challenges in Human Rights Theory

Climate Change and Ecological Justice

Climate change represents one of the most urgent and transboundary challenges to human rights. Rising sea levels, extreme weather, and resource scarcity directly threaten rights to life, housing, food, and water, especially in vulnerable regions like the Global South and island nations. The UN Human Rights Council (2021) recently recognized the right to a healthy environment as a fundamental human right.

This emerging discourse pushes human rights theory beyond anthropocentric and presentist limitations. Scholars argue for ecological rights that encompass future generations and non-human life forms, challenging traditional human rights paradigms centered solely on individual entitlements (Boyd, 2012). Concepts like intergenerational justice and Earth jurisprudence represent radical but necessary evolutions of human rights thought in the face of environmental collapse.

Migration, Borders, and Statelessness

Global migration flows have intensified debates around citizenship, asylum, and the rights of non-citizens. Refugees, stateless persons, and irregular migrants often fall into legal grey zones, where their rights are denied or selectively enforced. For example, the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh illustrates how ethnic cleansing, statelessness, and legal exclusion can render entire populations vulnerable and unprotected.

Human rights theory must confront the limitations of state-centric legal regimes, which often fail to protect those outside formal citizenship. Scholars have called for post-national rights frameworks, where human dignity is prioritized over legal status. Hannah Arendt's (1951) insight—"the right to have rights"—remains as relevant as ever in this context.

Attempts at Reconciliation: Pluralistic Universalism

Jack Donnelly's Framework

A leading voice in reconciling universalism and relativism, Jack Donnelly (2003) proposes "relative universality." According to this view, while human rights are universal in the sense of being widely applicable, their specific forms and justifications may vary across cultures. Donnelly distinguishes between the substance

of rights (which can be universal) and their practice or implementation (which can be relative). This approach allows room for cultural variation without undermining the moral imperative to protect core rights.

Bhikhu Parekh and Cross-Cultural Dialogue

Another important contribution comes from Bhikhu Parekh (1999), who emphasizes the importance of intercultural dialogue in constructing a global consensus on rights. Rather than assuming universality a priori, Parekh suggests that cross-cultural engagement can lead to a shared but flexible understanding of human dignity. This method respects cultural agency while aspiring to universality through conversation and mutual recognition.

Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach

Martha Nussbaum (2011) offers a capabilities-based framework that defines human rights in terms of what individuals are able to do and be. While grounded in universal moral reasoning, the approach is adaptable to different cultural and material contexts. For example, the right to education may be realized differently in rural India than in urban Europe, but the underlying capability remains the same. This allows for both ethical consistency and cultural sensitivity.

Contemporary Debates and Applications

Digital Rights and Technological Challenges

The digital age presents new challenges for human rights theory. Issues such as surveillance, data privacy, and algorithmic discrimination demand an extension of traditional rights frameworks (Floridi, 2016). The right to privacy, once conceptualized in physical terms, now requires protection in cyberspace. Moreover, AI technologies have introduced questions about non-human moral agents and whether rights might extend to them—provoking both legal and philosophical inquiry (Coeckelbergh, 2010).

Environmental and Intergenerational Rights

Another innovation in human rights theory concerns the environment. Climate change and ecological

degradation have led to calls for the recognition of “environmental rights,” including the right to a healthy environment (Boyd, 2012). These claims often involve intergenerational justice, challenging the traditional anthropocentric and present-oriented nature of human rights discourse.

Rights of Non-Western Traditions

Efforts are also underway to broaden the philosophical bases of human rights. Confucian, Islamic, and Indigenous traditions offer alternative conceptions of dignity, community, and obligation that can enrich global rights theory. For instance, African notions of Ubuntu emphasize relational personhood and collective responsibility—values that can complement rather than contradict individual rights (Metz, 2011).

Toward a Renewed Human Rights Theory

Philosophical Foundations

The theoretical renewal of human rights requires a more inclusive philosophical foundation. Rather than relying exclusively on Enlightenment rationalism, contemporary human rights theory must draw from a wider range of moral traditions. This does not mean abandoning universality but reconstructing it through pluralism. A “consensual universality is not imposed from the top down but developed from the ground up through inclusive dialogue, historical awareness, and mutual respect. This kind of universality maintains a core commitment to human dignity, freedom, and equality, while allowing for culturally diverse expressions of those values (Parekh, 1999).

Such an approach would benefit from normative humility—the recognition that no single culture or tradition holds a monopoly on moral truth. Instead of assuming Western liberalism as the default paradigm, a renewed theory must treat different moral sources (e.g., Islamic ethics, Confucianism, Indigenous cosmologies) as legitimate contributors to the global human rights discourse. These contributions can serve as checks against both relativist moral permissiveness and universalist moral imperialism.

Legal and Institutional Considerations

The renewal of human rights theory must also reflect on its institutional expressions. International legal frameworks, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, tend to universalize liberal rights models without adequate contextualization. A culturally sensitive implementation strategy should allow states some degree of discretion in localizing rights—without compromising their essence.

Mechanisms such as Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the UN Human Rights Council offer a potential model for this kind of balance. UPR allows states to evaluate each other’s human rights records while providing space for constructive dialogue, peer learning, and regional diversity. Such participatory mechanisms could be strengthened and used more widely in aligning theory with practice.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

Rethinking the Purpose and Practice of Human Rights

The theory of human rights is more than a legal instrument; it is a moral and political philosophy that aspires to uphold the dignity of all human beings across boundaries of culture, religion, class, and nationality. Yet as this paper has shown, it is also a contested terrain—shaped by power dynamics, historical legacies, and diverse value systems. If human rights are to remain relevant in the 21st century, their foundations must be reconceptualized to accommodate both ethical universals and cultural particularities.

By moving beyond the rigid binary of universalism and relativism, a pluralistic universalism emerges as a compelling framework—one that affirms shared human values while remaining attentive to context. This approach neither dismisses non-Western traditions as backward nor imposes Western liberal norms as global standards. Instead, it seeks to co-construct rights discourse through intercultural dialogue, localized advocacy, and philosophical openness.

Normative and Practical Implications

The reform of human rights theory carries several practical and normative implications for global governance, civil society, and legal systems:

Institutional Flexibility: International institutions like the UN, ICC, and regional human rights bodies must allow for culturally appropriate interpretations and implementations of rights—without sacrificing fundamental protections. This may involve revising treaty language, expanding consultation mechanisms, and including local epistemologies in norm development.

Support for Grassroots Movements: Effective rights advocacy often begins within communities, not outside of them. Policy frameworks should support local NGOs, activists, and reformist religious or cultural leaders who can interpret and promote human rights in ways that resonate with their own traditions.

Education and Human Rights Literacy: Embedding human rights education in national curricula can nurture a bottom-up human rights culture. This includes not only teaching about legal instruments but encouraging moral reasoning, empathy, and cross-cultural understanding.

Interdisciplinary Engagement: Philosophers, anthropologists, theologians, environmentalists, and technologists must be included in shaping human rights theory. Emerging challenges like AI ethics, bioengineering, and planetary health demand input beyond legal scholarship.

Decolonizing the Framework: A critical step involves recognizing and redressing the colonial genealogy of international law and human rights discourse. This means valuing non-Western contributions, acknowledging historical injustices, and resisting the instrumentalization of rights for geopolitical ends.

Looking Forward

As we confront a future marked by climate change, mass displacement, digital surveillance, and growing authoritarianism, the stakes for human rights could not be higher. The need is not just to defend existing rights, but to expand the moral imagination of what rights can mean. A truly global and inclusive theory of human

rights must be capable of adapting to new threats, absorbing diverse traditions, and inspiring collective action.

Rather than viewing universality and cultural relativism as oppositional, they can be understood as productive tensions—dynamic forces that keep the theory of human rights both flexible and anchored. In this dialectical movement lies the enduring promise of human rights: not as a fixed creed, but as a living dialogue about what it means to be human in an ever-changing world.

Finally, the theory of human rights is at a crossroads. On the one hand, it remains a powerful ethical and legal framework for protecting human dignity, fostering social justice, and curbing authoritarianism. On the other, it is increasingly challenged by cultural pluralism, postcolonial critiques, and technological and environmental crises that the original theory did not anticipate.

This paper has argued for a reconstructed human rights theory that moves beyond the binary of universalism versus relativism. Instead, it supports a model of pluralistic universalism—grounded in intercultural dialogue, philosophical inclusivity, and contextual application. Rather than weakening the force of human rights, this approach seeks to deepen and democratize them, making them more responsive to the lived realities of a diverse and interconnected world.

The future of human rights depends not only on defending them against political threats but also on reimagining their theoretical foundations. As we navigate the ethical challenges of the 21st century—from AI and climate change to cultural resurgence and religious pluralism—human rights must evolve to remain both relevant and radical in their moral vision.

REFERENCES

- An-Na'im, A. A. *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, And International Law*. Syracuse University Press, cited in, Xanthaki, A. (2010). Multiculturalism and International Law: Discussing Universal Standards. *Human Rights Quarterly* 32(1): 21-48. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hrq.0.0139>.

- Aquinas, T. *Summa Theologica*. Benziger Bros. (Original work published 1265–1274), cited in, Xanthaki, A. (2010). Multiculturalism and International Law: Discussing Universal Standards. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 32(1): 21–48. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hrq.0.0139>.
- Arendt, H. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Schocken Books, cited in, Xanthaki, A. (2010). Multiculturalism and International Law: Discussing Universal Standards. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 32(1): 21–48. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hrq.0.0139>.
- Boyd, D. R. *The Environmental Rights Revolution: A Global Study of Constitutions, Human Rights, and the Environment*. UBC Press, cited in, Duncan Villalobos, S. (2022). The recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment at the international level: The path to Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/RES/48/13 of October 2021. *Revista Latinoamericana De Derechos Humanos*, 34. <https://doi.org/10.15359/rldh.34-1.1>.
- Coeckelbergh, M. (2010). Robot rights? Towards a social-relational justification of moral consideration. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 12: 209–221. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10676-010-9235-5>.
- de Bary, W.T. and Tu, W. *Confucianism and Human Rights*. Columbia University Press, cited in, Woo, F.J. (1999). [Review of the book *Confucianism and Human Rights*]. *China Review International*, 6(1): 85–89. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/cri.1999.0100>.
- Donnelly, J. *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (3rd ed.). Cornell University Press, cited in, Dunne, T., & Wheeler, N. J. (Eds.). (1999). *Human Rights in Global Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Finnis, J. *Natural Law and Natural Rights*. Clarendon Press, cited in, Mullender, R. (2003). Human Rights: Universalism and Cultural Relativism. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 6(3): 70–103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369823032000233564>.
- Floridi, L. *The Onlife Manifesto: Being Human in A Hyperconnected Era*. Springer Nature. Cited in, Coeckelbergh, M. (2010). Robot rights? Towards a social-relational justification of moral consideration. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 12: 209–221. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10676-010-9235-5>.
- Herskovits, M.J., & Herskovits, F.S. *Trinidad village*. Alfred A. Knopf. Cited in, Berndt, C.H. (1948), *REVIEWS. Oceania*, 19: 91–92. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1834-4461.1948.tb00497.x>
- Human Rights Watch. *World report 2021: Events of 2020*. Seven Stories Press, cited in, Duncan Villalobos, S. (2022). The recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment at the international level: The path to Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/RES/48/13 of October 2021. *Revista Latinoamericana De Derechos Humanos*, 34. <https://doi.org/10.15359/rldh.34-1.1>.
- Kant, I. *Groundwork of The Metaphysics of Morals*. Cambridge University Press, cited in, Mullender, R. (2003). Human Rights: Universalism and Cultural Relativism. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 6(3): 70–103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369823032000233564>.
- Locke, J. *Second Treatise of Government*. Hackett Publishing Company, cited in, Mullender, R. (2003). Human Rights: Universalism and Cultural Relativism. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 6(3), 70–103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369823032000233564>.
- Metz, T. (2011). *Ubuntu As a Moral Theory and Human Rights In South Africa*. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 11: 532–559.
- Moyn, S. *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*. Harvard University Press. Cited in, Dunne, T., & Wheeler, N. J. (Eds.). (1999). *Human Rights in Global Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mutua, M. *Human Rights: A Political and Cultural Critique*. University of Pennsylvania Press. Cited in, Dunne, T., & Wheeler, N. J. (Eds.). (1999). *Human Rights in Global Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach*. Belknap Press, cited in, Xanthaki, A. (2010). Multiculturalism and International Law: Discussing Universal Standards. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 32(1): 21–48. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hrq.0.0139>.
- Parekh, B. Non-ethnocentric universalism. In T. Dunne & N. J. Wheeler, *Human Rights in Global Politics* (pp. 128–159). Cambridge University Press. Cited in, Srnicek & Williams. (2015). *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work*. City Research Online (City University London)
- Shell-Duncan, B., & Hernlund, Y. *Female “Circumcision” in Africa: Culture, Controversy, And Change*. Lynne Rienner Publishers. Cited in, Rostbøll, C. F. (2011). Freedom of expression, deliberation, autonomy and respect. *European Journal of Political Theory*, 10(1): 5–21.
- UN Human Rights Council. *Resolution 48/13: The Human Right to A Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment*(A/HRC/RES/48/13), cited in, Duncan Villalobos, S. (2022). The recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment at the international level: The path to Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/RES/48/13 of October 2021. *Revista Latinoamericana De Derechos Humanos*, 34. <https://doi.org/10.15359/rldh.34-1.1>.
- UNICEF. *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Statistical Overview and Exploration of The Dynamics of Change*. United Nations Children’s Fund. Cited in, Crock et al. (2017). *The Legal Protection of Refugees with Disabilities: Forgotten and Invisible?* (Elgar Studies in Human Rights series). <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786435446>
- United Nations. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. G.A. Res. 217 A. Cited in, Crock et al. (2017). *The Legal Protection of Refugees with Disabilities: Forgotten and Invisible?* (Elgar Studies in Human Rights series). <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786435446>