

LIFE WITHOUT RIGHTS

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HUMAN RIGHTS OR NEIGHBORLY LOVE

BIRGIT BERGGRENSON



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*Life Without Rights:
Human Rights or Neighborly Love*

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PREFACE

After a long career as lecturer and head of department at an international business college in Copenhagen, Denmark I began to study theology. Actually, I began to study the subject to get through a life crisis and to obtain a greater understanding of what I believe in—not with the purpose of becoming a pastor.

But Life—fate if you will—had other plans and I ended up being ordained and now have a position as pastor for Danes living in Southern Sweden. In a way I have found a way of continuing my international teaching work by adding a spiritual dimension—teaching and preaching are not so different after all.

Cultural Christians—which describes the way most Danes are Christians—first and foremost see Christianity as an expression of neighborly love. What matters is being nice to one another. They forget that neighborly love is only half of what is called the dual commandment of love:

“You shall love the Lord with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength and all your mind—and your neighbor as yourself.”

In other words the first commandment is missing, concerning your relationship with God as the most important relationship in your life—more important than all the other things we cling to in life—more important than all the things we own.

Then, neighborly love comes into the picture as the second most important commandment—but even this many people find hard to live up to, in spite of their good intentions, and this is exactly where the focus on rights comes into the picture.

My thesis is that the focus on rights prevents the practicing of neighborly love. How can you be focused on the needs of your neighbor, if your priority is your own rights?

The next difficulty is to communicate this opinion. “If freedom means anything, it means the freedom to tell people what they do not want to hear” the English writer George Orwell said, and I am aware of the fact that there are things in this book that people definitely do not want to hear, but I have decided to say them anyway.

Fairytales on the other hand everybody would like to hear and most people understand a problem much better if it is presented to them as a story, a parable or a picture and for that reason I have chosen to use fairytales. Fairytales are as universal as Christianity, but whereas people readily accept miracles or that animals or people can fly in fairytales, unfortunately not as many accept without reservations the miracles that Jesus carried out, or that miracles can be experienced in our present daily life.

At the theological college in Copenhagen I learned to write sermons using a story as the beginning or to support an argument in the text; this has been very useful in my work as a pastor and is the reason why I use fairytales and stories as an introduction to each chapter of the book.

In my book I turn the thinking of human rights upside down and force the reader to see the problem from the opposite point of view, just as I treat the whole question of the right to asylum and immigration from completely different points of view than the conventional ones.

Besides making the reader think about the whole mentality focused on rights which is prevailing these years, it is my hope that the book will contribute to creating a debate on subjects which have become more or less tabooed, and which are closely connected to thinking focused on rights.

When I took driving lessons many years ago I learned that there is no such thing as having a right of way. You only have the right to give way to somebody and the only distinction is between general duty to yield and a more stringent duty to yield.

Still most people, both cyclists and those driving a car, are going as if they had a right of the way. I have to get ahead and everybody else has to wait. Most of us do not readily accept having to yield and wait in our stressed, overburdened days.

This principle from the Highway Code can, with advantage, be transferred to life as such. There is no right of way and there are no rights. Nobody is entitled to anything, everybody has a duty to yield, a duty to take responsibility and contribute to the best of one’s ability to the society one is a part of.

Being a human being is something most people consider a matter of fact. What else would you be? Very few people think about being human as a task you

have to fulfill, something you have to live up to and become acquainted with. Even fewer have ever thought about the rules applying to being a human being.

As a member of society you cannot just do as you please; on the contrary, you have to adapt and show consideration.

My basis for the opinions I express is Christian. That is the way it has to be considering my personal background. But my message, my appeal if you like, is addressed to the individual human being—called the individual by the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard—regardless of religious confession or atheism.

It concerns the individual human being and the task it is to live as a human being. Being human does not mean living without rules. Of course there are rules connected to being human and there are consequences for each person's life, if one lives as if there were no rules.

When apparently it goes over most people's head that they have been given a task to perform while they are here on Earth, it is closely connected to the mentality which has spread in the countries we call welfare states, above all, the Scandinavian countries. The prevalent mentality I tend to call rights fundamentalism.

The Scandinavian countries are Christian, so is it possible that the idea of rights and claims has its roots in the New Testament? This is not the case.

In John 3, 27 it says: "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven."

We cannot take anything ourselves and therefore we cannot claim anything. What have you got that was not given to you? It is a great misunderstanding to believe that we can demand anything of society or of anybody else. It is my thesis that all of it must be turned upside down if we are ever to get to—or get back to the neighborly love Jesus talks about in the New Testament.

What is it that a welfare society does to people and what has thereby disappeared in the process, which must be considered a great loss?

If all your material needs have been met, spirituality is lost, for what is left for God to give to people who have everything? Sometimes it takes a serious disease or natural disasters before the individual turns to heavenly powers for help. If you have always been convinced that you need to have check on everything in your life and want to control everything yourself, you will inevitably fail when catastrophe overtakes you, for then you are bound to discover that you do not control anything.

It is sufficient for many people today to be materially well off; the secularized society suits most people quite well, but when they lose a child or a spouse or have to face a serious disease and begin to look for a meaning of life, they realize that something important is missing, if there is nothing greater than yourself

to turn to. Whom can you ask for forgiveness for the things you said or did that ought to have been unsaid and undone and who is to receive you after death if no one is greater than you?

The former bishop In Linköping, Sweden, Martin Lönnebo says: “What threatens belief in a spiritual world is not deep critical thinking for even that is spiritual activity. The threat is to be found in the cowardice, stress, carelessness and forgetfulness of our time. And in fear, which is everywhere.”

Based on Lönnebo’s remark to the individual I would like to add: Turn around! See things from the opposite point of view and alter your behavior and leave carelessness, superficiality, selfishness and not least cowardice behind.

What does it mean to be turned around—does it require outside help? No, first of all it requires self-knowledge. It is necessary for all of us to take a deep look into our own mind, see it all, including the faults we all hold. Only when you have recognized who you are, including both the good and the bad sides, can you begin to accept yourself and act the way God wants you to act. How is that? Deep down we all know what is the right thing to do and when in doubt we can listen to our conscience and find the answer there. When we do the right thing and act according to our conscience, we feel better about ourselves and other people and we begin to sense an inner peace that no material thing can give us.

Is it a question of being Christian and showing your faith in your actions? No, that would very soon be seen as self-righteousness. Being Christian does not mean showing or proving through your actions how good you are. “Look how good I am and how much I do for others.” It is actually even more radical and revolutionary: Your actions reveal what you believe in. Our actions—when we do not try to achieve or prove anything by them—show others what we believe in and which values are important to us.

We must give God what is God’s due before we begin to raise claims for ourselves. In other words, there is nothing to boast about.

Fortunately, we experience growing spirituality and a far greater moral consciousness these years but we still have far to go.

My thesis is that all of the above unfortunate qualities derive from the rights oriented thinking, which has arisen, especially in the Western countries since the Second World War. As mentioned, it has become a rights fundamentalism, which has to be exchanged by responsibility and a sense of duty and care, if future generations are not to be characterized by an even greater egoism.

In other words, it is necessary to turn things upside down and return to former values.

Cowardice, carelessness, superficiality and egoism can be caused by a lack of courage to face life. Fear is prevailing in modern society, where everybody is for himself, and where things have become so complicated that many people feel powerless and feel that they have been excluded from society, because they do not understand complicated technical issues or the legislation from the European Union, The Washington Administration or the national state which direct people's lives without their feeling of participation.

Fear and lack of courage to face life are reflected in a rights oriented thinking and, in order to obtain an imaginary security, everybody makes sure that they get as many things as possible which they are convinced they are entitled to by law.

It is without importance whether people need these things; it is a question of not missing out on something that they might be entitled to. We are here talking about everything from public assets to the right to a certain behavior or treatment; whether it concerns yourself or others. Political correctness, #metoo# and Black Lives Matter are recent examples.

Turn around and take a look at the opposite of claims and rights and you will see responsibility and duties. These qualities should always be your starting point, as thereby your neighbor, the other human being, is put first.

In my opinion this all started from the best of intentions with the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. It was established after two world wars in which millions of people had been killed because of ideologies, which were equally misanthropic whether their name was Nazism, Communism or Islamism, and all of this needed to be replaced by something better. All these ideological "isms" were destructive and needed to be substituted. The danger is, however, that you end up going to the opposite extreme. In 1948 it probably was not possible to imagine a welfare so extensive that everybody would be able to get much more than they needed.

Rights oriented thinking can lead to hostility towards other people and especially Danes are often considered unfriendly by tourists and business people visiting the country and by the native population when we ourselves are tourists.

Danes tend to come barging into a store or office and put forward their requirements without first bothering to say hello, which is normal In Southern Europe or for instance or in the USA, where it is considered rude not to spend a few minutes greeting. We do not greet each other in the street or on trains or buses, which was earlier part of popular education and does wonders when everybody is to feel welcome and well during travel or in everyday life. Now everybody is focused on their expensive cell phone on the train or the bus and

totally ignore their fellow passengers, not least when their assistance might have been needed, when a passenger is annoyed. The attitude has become “I don’t want to be involved.”

Unkindness has done to us that we are astonished when we meet kindness. One day I was walking with a friend in the countryside and we had stopped to check the map but we were not lost. Suddenly a van stopped and a friendly lady asked us, if we were lost and offered to help out. We thanked her and assured her that we were OK, and discussed afterwards how extraordinary her behavior had been compared to the Danes we normally come across.

A former Danish bishop has a similar story about a day in August when he was on his way to visit relatives and in an unguarded moment hit the hard shoulder with the front wheel. He tried to steer the car straight but ended up on the opposite side of the road, in the ditch, where the car finally stopped—and was totally wrecked.

Miraculously there were no cars coming from the opposite direction, but two young people who had seen the accident. They looked after the bishop and stayed with him until the rescue team arrived. “It was a nice experience on a day like this to meet the good Samaritans” the bishop said about the incident.

Similar stories in which thanks is given to the people who assisted can be found in all the social media because it is no longer a matter of fact that other people show responsibility and put themselves aside. Earlier that kind of readiness to help was a natural thing and part of everybody’s upbringing. At the same time, there was never a need to “blow your trumpet” about offering your seat to a pregnant woman on the bus or helping an old lady cross the street amidst heavy traffic.

Is there a connection between lack of kindness or empathy and rights oriented thinking? In my opinion, that is definitely the case. If you are only preoccupied with your own rights and demands, other people and their needs become irrelevant and become something subordinated my own rights.

Without a doubt, secularization in society has contributed to both rights oriented thinking and materialism and thereby to egoism and unkindness. The Golden Rule mentioned by Jesus in the sermon on the mount in the gospel of Matthew: “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.” has been replaced by the opposite thinking: Behave towards me so that my wishes and rights are fulfilled.

By introducing the welfare state we have institutionalized neighborly love; the state is to take care of the sick, the children, the elderly, help the poor and provide housing and jobs for all. Neighborly love becomes something you pay

for via taxes the same way you contribute to subscriptions of relief organizations. Only neighborly love is not about the masses. Neighborly love is about the individual person in front of you. It is about the irritating boss, the nasty colleague, the daughter-in-law you dislike and the homeless person who wants to sell you a magazine. These are the people you need to treat with neighborly love. Only you can do that and no state or institution can take over that role.

The things people feel they are entitled to, have almost no limit in our modern welfare society. I'll give you a few examples: "Everybody deserves a smart kitchen", "the right to abortion", "the right to have children", "The right to free health care", "the right to housing", "the right to work", "the right to free education", "The right to assisted suicide", "men's right to know about a woman's pregnancy", "the right to a dream job/dream education", "rights in relationships", "the right to social services", "the right to change gender", "the right to.... The list is endless and in the following the specific rights and absurdities will be discussed."

HUMAN RIGHTS

My starting point in all this is that nobody has a right to anything. “A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven.” (Joh 3, 27).

Well some might argue a lot has improved in the world since the UN ratified the Declaration of Human Rights and now at least we have guidelines if a state should be in doubt about how to treat its citizens.

The declaration of human rights; whose correct name is “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (1948) is not legally binding, but functions as moral guidelines and a political plan of action, and in my opinion nothing is wrong with the intentions behind the declaration. As mentioned above it was drafted after the Second World War when it was necessary to do something to create a better world, especially for all the people who had been persecuted during five years of horrors of war—all of it just has to be turned around, seen from the opposite point of view.

Instead of seeing things from the victims’ perspective you need to see them from the perspective of all that can be done by those who were not victims. In the preamble of the declaration of human rights the reasons for the proclamation of these rights are mentioned. Good reasons, which are:

“Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”

“Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind, and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.”

Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of friendly relations between nations.

Whereas the peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the legal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

Whereas member states have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Whereas a common understanding of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge, now, therefore THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY proclaims THIS UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member states themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

The Declaration was proclaimed on 10 December 1948 by affirmative votes by 48 countries; 8 countries abstained from voting. No countries gave a negative vote. The UN has 193 member states!

Before I start discussing the articles, I would like to emphasize that the responsibility to carry out the intentions of the declaration lies with every single human being and every single social institution.

It is not something anybody is entitled to, for the moment you focus on your own right you move your focus away from your fellow human being and neighborly love becomes impossible.

As soon as you focus on your own demands and rights, the other human being becomes your enemy who won't or cannot meet my demands.

If the other party, on the other hand, has a responsibility and obligations, it is a totally different matter. Then there is a responsibility to live up to, and whether you are dealing with a fellow human being, the state or a government institution, they cannot excuse themselves from taking action or claim that some rights and demands are reasonable and others are not.

You could ask if it is really necessary to go through all 30 articles to prove my point, but I believe it is, because some of them have actually been phrased in such a way that they do not focus on *rights* whereas others (most) have been phrased in the opposite meaning.

Article 1. *All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.*

It is a sort of rephrasing “freedom, equality and brotherhood”. All human beings are free and equal! It is a fact; that is how every human being is born, it is not a right. But all human beings are not born free, even though that is how it ought to be. A better way of putting it would be: “All human beings are born free and equal according to the obligations of their country towards its inhabitants”. That all human beings are endowed with reason and a conscience when they are born may be true at that moment, but otherwise you very often feel like asking if that is really the case when you watch the acts being performed worldwide. Finally I do not think that you can dictate human beings in declarations or legislation how they ought to behave. Brotherhood has more or less gone by the board in the materialism and egoism that above all is characteristic of the western welfare states, where it is important what is in it for you and where otherwise the state is expected to cover all needs, requirements and “rights”.

Article 2. *Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.*

Here things are going too far by talking of “entitled to all rights”!

It ought to have been: Every State is responsible for treating all human beings in such a way that no distinction shall be made with regard to race, color etc.

The second paragraph is better as it says: “Furthermore no distinction shall be made....”

The individual human being does not have a right, but society has an obligation and a responsibility, and it is at all times possible to check whether a state lives up to that.

If that is not the case, there are politicians and leaders that you are wise to get rid of. The latter is of course somewhat easier in a democracy than in other social systems, but nothing is impossible.

Article 3. *Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.*

Rephrase it to: Every State is responsible for securing that everyone can maintain his life, his liberty and his security of person.

In my opinion also life is a gift from God, which, accordingly, we ourselves cannot take or be entitled to. We can lose the gift in a split second and we can do nothing about the fact that we are mortal. Our liberty is the only thing we have got and nothing must threaten or remove our liberty, but as mentioned before, it is no good claiming it, as others can deny the claim and that is exactly what they should be prevented from doing.

Article 4. *No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.*

Here I totally agree, as the text is written the way it should be i.e. without mentioning any right.

Article 5. *No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.*

Like above, no objections. No State can misunderstand what they are meant to do.

Article 6. *Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.*

Rephrase! Every society and every State in the world has an obligation and a responsibility to ensure that a human being is recognized as a person before the law.

The UN can act when it concerns States, not when it concerns one human being by making claims from the States in question.

Article 7. *All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.*

Is it getting clear where I am heading? Also this article has to be rephrased into: "All are equal before the law and every State and every society has an obligation to prevent any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and to prevent any incitement to such discrimination."

Article 8. *Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.*

No that is not a right; tribunals on the contrary have an obligation to ensure satisfaction for violation of the fundamental rights granted by the constitution or by law.

Article 9. *No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.*

Here the matter is seen from society's point of view and that is how it should be.

Article 10. *Everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.*

Probably a lot of people can come up with examples of violation of the spirit and word in this article. Again it is necessary to say: Turn it around!

The State has an obligation to ensure a fair and public treatment and make sure that a tribunal is independent and impartial.

There is no easy solution to the question of who is to ensure equal rights and how and the question is, if there are not so many questions to deal with and a 100% equality is not possible, but this must not prevent a fair trial in a criminal charge. We can only hope that appeal options, attorneys and judges as competent as we are able to educate them and a clear and unambiguous legislation will help.

Article 11

1. *Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.*
2. *No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.*

Here it would suffice to rephrase into: "Everyone charged with a penal offence is innocent until proven guilty". Why would you need the phrase 'has the right to be presumed' innocent. You *are* innocent until proven guilty, no matter what others may think.

Article 12. *No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, not to attacks upon his honor and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.*

Again: Rephrase into: “Society has an obligation to offer protection of the law against such interference or attack.”

Article 13

1. *Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.*
2. *Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.*

Even this article should be rephrased, so that every State has an obligation to ensure that everyone can move freely and can leave a country and return to his own country.

Besides the rephrasing, the wording of this article is controversial, and there are many places in the world where this is not observed. It also needs to be made clear that the article must mean that it is the citizens of a State who cannot be prevented from moving freely in their country, leaving it or returning to it.

Article 14

1. *Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.*
2. *This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.*

No one has a right to anything and therefore this also has to be turned around: Every State has an obligation to treat an application for asylum and grant asylum in case of persecution. In paragraph 2 it would suffice to say: This cannot be invoked....

In this article an exact definition of persecution is called for. If you are persecuted for having committed crime, no matter what the type of crime was, no State would have an obligation to grant asylum.

Article 15

1. *Everyone has the right to a nationality.*
2. *No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.*

It sounds very nice, but the same applies here: No one has a right to or is entitled to anything. If the meaning is that everyone must have a nationality and that no one may be prevented from changing nationality, if they wish so, again it is a State or a society who has an obligation to ensure that this is effected.

When the former East Germany deprived their citizens of their nationality, if they left the country, they were automatically granted West German citizenship. The people in question had no right to a West German citizenship, but it was granted to them, because a responsible State arranged it—and (admittedly) had a political interest in granting citizenships to East Germans.

Article 16

1. *Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and its dissolution.*
2. *Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.*
3. *The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.*

Here again it must be denied that it concerns a right. It should be “Without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion a State must allow that men and women marry and found a family.”

Nowadays it would include that gender may not be an obstacle to marriage.

The parties are not entitled to equal rights but are equal when entering marriage, during marriage and its solution. Equality is a fact, not a right and must be enforced by any State.

Paragraph 3 belongs to a time when people had a different view of family and its construction and may be superfluous altogether. Family (the nuclear family?) cannot alone be entitled to protection from State and society. Do single parents not? A family where for some reason spouses have agreed to live apart do not enjoy protection by society? In this article a definition of family is absent.

This article has also been written without any understanding or knowledge of Muslim families and their culture. These points are not likely to find sympathy or support in a Muslim society, and we are having a hard time making it clear to Muslims in Western countries that the contents of these points are indispensable, if human beings are to be free and equal. This is a task we have ahead of us!

Article 17

1. *Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.*
2. *No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.*

One can never have the right to own property. Does that mean that people who do not own property can claim such ownership?

If you own property on the other hand, it goes without saying that a State cannot take this property from you, whether arbitrarily or otherwise.

Again it has to be turned around into: “No State may prevent anyone from owning property and may not deprive anyone of their rightfully owned property without expropriation according to law.”

Article 18. *Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.*

As an obligation to ensure that every human being enjoys freedom of thought. This is a very important article, but not even here is it appropriate to talk of a right. Turn it around into: “Every State or society has an obligation to ensure that every human being enjoys freedom of thought, conscience and religion and may not prevent any one from changing his religion or belief... or express his religion or belief through education, practice, worship or observance.”

The State is to ensure freedom of religion, but it is worth remembering that it is a question of individual freedom of religion and the possibility for the individual person to practice his religion and observance. It is not for a State to fulfill wishes or worse, claims demanding that some religious rules must apply to others than the members of the religious community in question.

Article 19. *Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*

This is the most important freedom in a democratic society, but I am still of the opinion that this is not a right but an obligation. It should say: “Every State has an obligation to ensure that its citizens can practice their freedom of expression and of opinion and that they can seek, receive and give information and thoughts by means of any public media.

It might be appropriate to add that no religion may define the rules for freedom of speech. Freedom of speech is absolute as long as it stays within the scope of legislation. People who are of another opinion and believe that one should practice self-censorship ought to consult people who have lived in countries occupied by the Soviet Union or read books about life in those countries, and then they would understand that it was not possible to share your thoughts or opinions, not even with your next of kin. I believe that when people want to limit freedom of speech or thought, it is a question of fear. Fear of terror attacks as a result of drawings or ideas is comprehensible, but the consequences of fear are far worse; they are the consequences that people experience who have lived in or live in dictatorships.

Article 20

1. *Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.*
2. *No one may be compelled to belong to an association.*

Once again: Rephrase it!

“No one shall be prevented from assembling or forming an association and no one shall be compelled to belong to a union.”

Groucho Marx once said: “I wouldn’t dream of becoming a member of an association that would accept me as a member”. Of course it must be possible to opt out of associations of which you do not want to be a member. But no one should be prevented from joining associations one wants to be a member of—even those looked down upon by certain groups in society—and the same applies to political parties. This article is a subdivision of freedom of speech.

Article 21

1. *Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.*
2. *Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.*

3. *The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government, this shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.*

My comment on paragraph 1 and 2 is that they have to be viewed from the opposite point of view. Every State has an obligation to ensure that everyone can participate in the government of his country and ensure that everyone has equal access to public office.

It is not enough to be right, you also have to be righted/given justice. What good is standing on your rights if there are authorities who make all kinds of legal or illegal dodges in order to prevent it?

You can punish authorities, but for someone who has a claim or a right there is not much to be done, if an authority decides against you or refuses to deal with your case. No objections are called for concerning paragraph 3.

Article 22. *Everyone as a member of society has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.*

Right to and entitled to in one sentence is quite a mouthful and, in my opinion, this article ought to be deleted from the Declaration.

You have no *right to* social security whatever that term implies; there may even be many reasons for a society to deny social benefits to criminals, terrorists and others who are not in any way contributing to the society they make claims towards.

Entitlement to financial, social and cultural rights is even worse because these are claims that can be increased indefinitely, for when will these rights to a person's free development ever be extinguished? The whole article is so vague that there are unlimited possibilities for human rights activists, and nothing so far has indicated that they will not exploit them to the last comma.

Article 23

1. *Everyone has the right to work, to the free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.*
2. *Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.*

3. *Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.*
4. *Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.*

To begin with, I was tempted to accept the wording of this article—but no, no one has a right to anything, not even in this case.

It should be rephrased into: “Society or the State has an obligation to assist every citizen with ability to work in education; in finding a job that matches their capabilities, securing a job and by law, ensure favourable working conditions and protection against unemployment.”

In paragraph 2 the wording should be altered into: Every employer, public or private, has an obligation to ensure equal pay for equal work.

Likewise paragraph 3 must be altered into: Everyone who works must be guaranteed a just and favourable remuneration (what is meant by favorable? Sufficient? For what?) which ensures himself and his family a living worthy of human dignity and if necessary be guaranteed other protection measurements.

The text sounds like a wording put together in the USA in the forties, as a “just and favorable remuneration” is not sufficient in a modern Western society to secure a worker and his family an existence worthy of human dignity. Taxes are much too high to facilitate this, which is why both spouses have to work and a single parent alone cannot make ends meet.

Social protection measurements have been prioritized over breadwinning, which used to be the job of the man. At the time of drafting this Declaration this man was able to provide for his family. However, the days of the family structure described in paragraph 3 have long passed.

Likewise; paragraph 4 has to be rewritten to the effect that no one shall be prevented from forming or joining a union for the protection of his interests.

An important point, as even in Denmark, considered as a democratic and free society, there have been ugly attempts to prevent people from a free choice of union and a free decision as to whether they were willing to support a political party financially through their union subscription. So, even if the text is rephrased, there are good reasons for keeping it, so that in future we can be rid of more of these very unbecoming attempts to prevent people from forming or joining a union of their own choice.