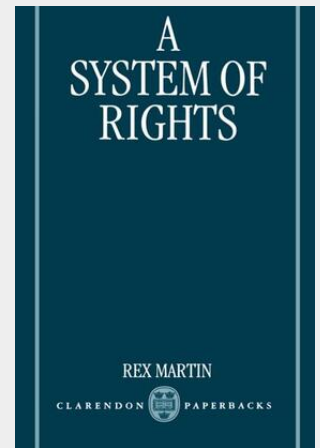


A System of Rights

The justification of political authority is one of the long-standing issues of political philosophy, and one which persistently defies satisfactory solution. In this paperback edition of a highly successful study, Professor Martin sets out to provide an original justification by establishing a background framework for dealing with the problem. He begins by identifying the main elements of political authority, arguing that they need to be linked in order to create a political authority that can be described as justified. He then sketches a framework - a sample system of political institutions and conceptions which is internally coherent - to link these elements. The rest of the book fills in this outline. Professor Martin argues that rights are established patterns of acting or of being treated and are hence essentially institutional in character. The institutions that tend to be the most supportive and productive of individual rights are, he believes, democratic, and the central section of the book is devoted to the connection of rights with majority rule, democratic political institutions and conceptions. From this nexus, secondary lines are traced to political obligation (or allegiance) and to an eligible justification for using punishment to enforce the rights of individuals. Thus Professor Martin's analysis forms a distinctive and systematic approach to one particular style of government. This rethinking of some of the main topics in political theory is long overdue; it yields some striking conclusions about both the nature of rights and the nature of political authority itself. Reviews for the hardback edition: 'analytical political theory at its best, thoroughly worked through, illuminating, and persuasive' Political Studies 'he discusses knowledgeably yet imaginatively one sort of political and legal system. I unreservedly assert that his institutional conception of rights deserves to be taken seriously as a very plausible alternative to the more familiar theories of Hart, Feinberg, Dworkin and Raz. Equally important are his discussions of the nature of democracy and the internal justification of punishment. Most impressive of all is his detailed demonstration of the internal coherence of the system of rights sketched in this book' Ethics 'his book is valuable for presenting a distinctively political view of rights. the book is impressively scholarly, with references, when relevant, to most of the voluminous literature on rights. In this respect A System of Rights is a model work of philosophy: at once thoroughly steeped in the literature on its topic and rising above that literature to propose a novel, distinctive view' Mind 'a rewarding and impressive book, which deals with a wide range of issues central to political philosophy in an interesting and original way. In this carefully argued examination and justification of a particular political system, Rex Martin offers an original account of rights, and links these rights with other political conceptions and institutions. to forms what he calls a "system of rights". his discussion is rich and nuanced, and provides the philosophical groundwork for clearer thinking about the difficult and elusive relationship between rights and democracy' Canadian Journal of Political Science 'What makes Martin's book so trenchant is that it can be read with great profit from different points of view. The broad scope and provocative arguments of Martin's work assure that it will be a focal point in philosophically-orientated debate on rights' Ratio Juris 'Rex Martin has written the most important analysis and justification of political authority and obligation since T. H. Green's Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation. [A System of Rights is] rich in argument and unorthodox conclusions' Gerald F. Gaus, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research



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