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## *Human Rights* in Sophie de Grouchy (1764–1822)

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Sophie de Grouchy argues that people possess natural rights. While she does not provide a comprehensive list of rights, she draws the distinction between negative and positive rights. Negative rights exist based only on the supposition that someone might wish to deprive a person of his or her freedom. Positive rights refer to the right to possess, and de Grouchy focuses on property rights, arguing that people have a right to own property and to the surplus they produce. De Grouchy derives her concept of rights from our natural moral inclination grounded in both reason and sentiments. She defines a right as a preference of reason based on the sentiment of natural equality and on our ability to sympathize with pain and suffering. Sympathizing with suffering that results from a violation of rights will not only result in moral indignation but will also leave us afraid or worried that our own rights might be violated as well. Upon reflecting on these sentiments, and through our rational capacity to formulate general laws, we reach the concept of human rights as a rational construct as well.

Further, de Grouchy's theory of natural rights is essential to her moral and political theory, particularly to her theory of justice. She defines a just action as one that preserves human rights and an unjust action as one that violates rights. The same principle applies to legislation. Legislation is the foundation and guardian of social justice, and with the goal of social reform, de Grouchy defines a just versus unjust legislation in terms of preserving or violating people's rights. Altogether, a well ordered government is one that is based on the "natural rights of man."

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