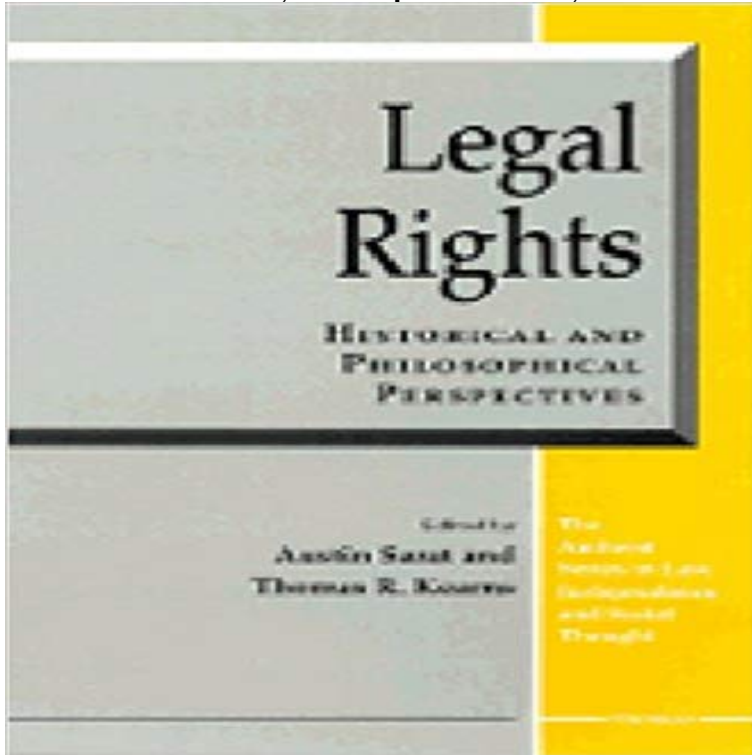


# Legal Rights: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives (The Amherst Series in Law, Jurisprudence, and Social Thought)



The idea of legal rights today enjoys virtually universal appeal, yet all too often the meaning and significance of rights are poorly understood. The purpose of this volume is to clarify the subject of legal rights by drawing on both historical and philosophical legal scholarship to bridge the gap between these two genres--a gap that has divorced abstract and normative treatments of rights from an understanding of their particular social and cultural contexts. Legal Rights: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives shows that the meaning and extent of rights has been dramatically expanded in this century, though along with the widespread and flourishing popularity of rights, voices of criticism have increasingly been raised. The authors take up the question of the foundation of rights and explore the postmodern challenges to efforts to ground rights outside of history and language. Drawing rich historical analysis and careful philosophical inquiry into productive dialogue, this book explores the many facets of rights at the end of the twentieth century. In these essays, potentially abstract debates come alive as they are related to the struggles of real people attempting to cope with, and improve, their living conditions. The significance of legal rights is measured not just in terms of philosophical categories or as a collection of histories, but as they are experienced in the lives of men and women seeking to come to terms with rights in contemporary life. Contributors are Hadley Arkes, William E. Cain, Thomas Haskell, Morton J. Horwitz, Annabel Patterson, Michael J. Perry, Pierre Schlag, and Jeremy Waldron. Austin Sarat is William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Jurisprudence and Political Science, Amherst College. Thomas R. Kearns is William H. Hastie Professor of Philosophy, Amherst College.

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