

2. Individual rights

The social recognition of man’s rational nature—of the connection between his survival and his use of reason—is the concept of individual rights.

“Rights” are a moral principle defining and sanctioning a man’s freedom of action in a social context. They are derived from man’s nature as a rational being and represent a necessary condition of his particular mode of survival. The right to life is the source of all rights, including the right to property. (For a fuller discussion of rights, I refer you to my articles on “Man’s Rights” and “The Nature of Government” in my book *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, which has just been issued in its paperback edition.)

In regard to political economy, property rights require special emphasis. Man has to work and produce in order to support his life. He has to support his life by his own effort and by the guidance of his own mind. If he cannot dispose of the product of his effort, he cannot dispose of his effort; if he cannot dispose of his effort, he cannot dispose of his life. Without property rights, no others rights can be practiced.