

GEWIRTH'S ARGUMENT

ARGUMENT FOR PRUDENTIAL RIGHTS

Suppose there is an agent, A. When A acts, he must accept:

1. "I do X for an end or purpose E."
2. "E is good." [from 1, equivalent to having an end or purpose]
3. "My freedom and well-being are necessary goods." [from 2 and facts about the necessary conditions of action]
4. "I must have freedom and well-being." [equivalent to 3]
5. "I have rights to freedom and well-being." [*reductio ad absurdum*: see 6-9]

Argument for 5: if A denies 5, he would have to deny 6 too, contradicting 4.

6. "All other persons ought at least to refrain from removing or interfering with my freedom and well-being." [equivalent to 5]
7. "It is not the case that all other persons ought at least to refrain from removing or interfering with my freedom and well-being." [equivalent to denial of 6]
8. "Other persons may (i.e. it is permissible that other persons) remove or interfere with my freedom and well-being." [from 7]
9. "I may not (i.e. it is permissible that I not) have freedom and well-being." [from 8]

ARGUMENT FOR MORAL RIGHTS

10. "I have rights to freedom and well-being because I am a prospective purposive agent." [1-5]

Argument for 10. Suppose A held he had rights for some other reason, R.

11. "I have rights to freedom and well-being *only* because I am R."
12. "It is not the case that I must have rights to freedom and well-being." [follows from 11 – note, not the original text]
13. "All prospective purposive agents have rights to freedom and well-being." [from 10]
14. "I ought to act in accord with the generic rights of my recipients as well as of myself." [from 13]