15. GEWIRTH AND ADAMS ON 
THE FOUNDATION OF MORALITY

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ABSTRACT. In his book, Reason and Morality, Gewirth has defended the principle of generic consistency as logically and materially necessary: "Act in accord with the generic rights of your recipients as well as of yourself." This paper argues that Gewirth can make a good response to the evaluation of Adams that Gewirth gives "no conceptual analysis of 'X is a necessary good' and 'X is a right' that reveals . . . an entailment." The paper also argues that Gewirth has not shown that one who would claim superior rights because of superior intelligence necessarily involves himself in a logical self-contradiction. Finally, the paper considers how the positions of Gewirth and Adams could be used to provide an existentialist, assertoric foundation of morality and suggests how Gewirth would evaluate such a foundation.

In his book, Reason and Morality, Alan Gewirth has defended the principle of generic consistency (PGC) as logically and materially necessary: "Act in accord with the generic rights of your recipients as well as of yourself." E.M. Adams, in his review article of the book, has offered a substantive evaluation. In this paper, I intend to examine their views on the foundation of morality and to offer my own view on the matter.

Gewirth outlines his argument for the PGC in three steps, and Adams challenges Gewirth particularly at the second step of the argument. These are the three steps of Gewirth's argument:

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First, every agent implicitly makes evaluative judgments about the goodness of his purposes and hence about the necessary goodness of the freedom and well-being that are necessary conditions of his acting to achieve his purposes. Second, because of this necessary goodness, every agent implicitly makes a deontic judgment in which he claims he has rights to freedom and well-being. Third, every agent must claim these rights for the sufficient reason that he is a prospective agent who has purposes he wants to fulfill, so that logically he must accept the generalization that all prospective agents have rights to freedom and well-being.2

The objection of Adams to the second step is this: "In speaking of the agent's movement from 'my freedom and well-being are necessary goods' to 'I have rights to freedom and well-being', he [Gewirth] speaks of conceptual connection, entailment, logical consequence, and says that the agent would contradict himself if he accepted the first and rejected the second. But he gives no conceptual analysis of 'X is a necessary good' and 'X is a right' that reveals to me an entailment."3

Adams is willing to agree with Gewirth that granted an agent desires his freedom and well-being as necessary goods, the agent should "on pain of inconsistency desire, and even regard as an indispensible good, that others not interfere with his freedom and well-being."4 But there is a difference, Adams claims, between regarding non-interference as a necessary good and the claim to a right to non-interference that would impose an obligation on all other agents.

Adams is correct that in the second step Gewirth proposes to show that the "right-claim is correlative with and logically equivalent to a strict 'ought'-judgment that other persons ought at least to refrain from interfering with the agent's freedom and well-being."5 It is important to note that Gewirth is not arguing from an assertoric standpoint but from a dialectic standpoint. Rather than use an assertoric method that would fallaciously claim some natural desire or need of humans as the basis of a fundamental moral value or obligation, Gewirth uses a dialectical method rooted in Socrates and Aristotle that refers to the mode of "argument that begins from assumptions, opinions, statements, or claims made by protagonists or interlocuters and then proceeds to examine what these logically imply."6 Rather than argue from a contingently true statement that particular agent A happens to value freedom, Gewirth argues dialectically from assumptions that any agent pursuing any purpose must make.

In the light of Gewirth's distinction between arguments based on an assertoric standpoint, a dialectically contin-
A second way of interpreting the objection of Adams is from a dialectically contingent standpoint in which two agents \( A \) and \( B \) both happen to agree that they shall rob a bank and hence that 'X (their freedom) is a necessary good' for their purpose. This dialectically contingent standpoint creates only a hypothetical obligation for those agreeing with this standpoint. However, for agent \( C \) who does not happen to share the desire of \( A \) and \( B \) for their purpose and who indeed morally ought not to share such a purpose with \( A \) and \( B \), there is no obligation for \( C \) to respect the freedom of \( A \) and \( B \) as a means to their purpose. This dialectically contingent standpoint reduces, in effect, to an assertoric standpoint. So a dialectically contingent standpoint does not justify an inference from 'X is a necessary good' to 'X is a right' which any other agent ought to respect.

A third way of interpreting the objection of Adams is from a dialectically necessary standpoint. This is the standpoint in which Gewirth attempts to justify the inference in question. His argument is that any agent ought logically to value his freedom as a necessary condition of his pursuit of any goal and ought logically to claim a right to non-interference.

Since the first two standpoints obviously did not justify such an inference, our question now becomes whether or not a dialectically necessary standpoint rules out as illogical the attempt of the would-be bank robber to claim a right to his freedom as a necessary means to his goal, a right which other agents ought logically to respect.

Before we examine Gewirth's argument, we may distinguish two uses of the term 'logical' and then identify more exactly what Adams is objecting to.

One use of the term 'logical' is consistency with one's
given purpose. In this sense, we have seen that the would-be bank robber is logical in willing his freedom as a necessary means for his goal and in affirming this hypothetical imperative whether from an assertoric standpoint or from a dialectically contingent standpoint. 'If any agent wills the goal of bank robbery, then that agent ought logically to will freedom as a necessary means to the goal.' The Kantian 'Whoso wills the end wills the means' logically imposes an obligation on the agent willing the end but not on agents not willing the end. However, from a dialectically necessary standpoint the would-be agent (who happens to desire the goal of bank robbery) is logical, that is, consistent with the desire of any goal, in affirming this categorical imperative: 'Any agent acting for any goal ought logically to will freedom as a necessary means to that goal.' The imperative should be stated categorically and not hypothetically. If it were stated hypothetically, the agent would logically have to will freedom as a means only if he willed to act for a goal. However, the agent as an agent must perform at least one action—even if that action be the decision to commit suicide. A rational awareness is necessarily an agent acting for some end even if that end be to end all further action. Hence, a rational awareness, an agent, must logically will to value his freedom as the means to his desired end. 7

However, in the second use of 'logical' as consistency with the freedom of any agent, the would-be bank robber is not logical in claiming a moral right to his freedom that others ought to respect. For his freedom to pursue his goal is not consistent with the freedom of other agents to pursue their goals. From the moral point of view, only those goals are fitting for an agent to pursue that are logically consistent with a respect for the freedom of every rational agent.

In the second stage of his argument, when Gewirth attempts to make a logical inference from 'X is a necessary good' to 'X is a right', he is not claiming that 'X is a moral right' but that 'X is a prudential right'. This prudential claim is similar to a claim to an intellectual right to conclude or say something without intellectual interference from others. For example, one author writes and Gewirth quotes him, '"I conclude then that the necessary and sufficient conditions for knowing that something is the case are first that what one is said to know be true, secondly that one be sure of it, and thirdly that one should have the right to be sure. This right may be earned in a number of ways . . ."'8 There are intellectual norms that are the basis for the right to know and say things in accord with those norms, and there are specific moral and legal norms that are the basis for the right to act in specific ways in accord with moral and legal norms. But so also are there prudential norms that are the basis for any agent to claim a prudential right to freedom and well-being. These pruden-
tial norms are indeed the normative conditions for any pur-
poseful action, namely, the dialectically necessary goods of
freedom and well-being as means for any purpose.

Adams believes that Gewirth's characterization of the
claim to a right as a prudential judgment follows from Ge-
wirth's belief that morality is concerned with "furthering
or favorably considering the important interests of other
persons, especially when these conflict with one's own in-
terests . . ." Even if he were to grant that the claim to
a right is a prudential judgment, Adams argues:

Nevertheless, the agent's rights-claim entails a
judgment about what others ought to do for a reas-
on that is not to them prudential. Therefore,
from his own standpoint, the agent claims that his
freedom and well-being are reasons why others
ought to do or to refrain from doing certain
things. It is on the basis of this, Gewirth ar-
gues, that an agent must, on pain of inconsis-
tency, acknowledge that he ought to respect the free-
dom and well-being of others as their rights. So
it would seem that even to Gewirth's conception of
morality, which I think is too restricted, the
agent's rights-claim would have to be counted as a
moral judgment.10

The first and essential part of Adam's objection is that
Gewirth has failed to derive a prudential right to freedom
and well-being. Second, Adams also argues that the pruden-
tial claim to a right is really a moral claim to a right.

Response to Adam's Objection

Gewirth argues that, if an agent were to deny that he
has rights to freedom and well-being, then the agent would
have to accept "(3) 'It is not the case that all other per-
sons ought at least to refrain from interfering with my
freedom and well-being.' But how can any agent accept (3)
and also accept (4) 'My freedom and well-being are necessary
goods'?"]11 In the dialectical argument of Gewirth, the
agent who acts for any purpose ought to value his freedom
and well-being as necessary means for his purpose. Such an
agent, to be consistent with his necessary valuation of
freedom and well-being, cannot deny that all other persons
ought not to interfere with his freedom and well-being.

Gewirth further develops his dialectical argument by
considering an objection from the standpoint of the amoral-
ist. The amoralist would accept "(4) 'My freedom and well-
being are necessary goods,' in that these are required for
his pursuit of all his purposes."12 But on the basis of
this evaluative premise he would not make or accept any
right-claims or 'ought'-judgments for himself or any others.
The amoralist would hold "(6) 'I'll do what I can to get what I want.'"\textsuperscript{13}

Gewirth's answer is that even the amoralist must accept 'ought'-judgments, as in the following example, 'If I want to go to New York, then I ought to take the appropriate means.' If the amoralist rejects such an 'ought'-judgment, he is either not rational or not conatively normal. Granted that the amoralist is rational and conatively normal and that the amoralist as an agent dialectically must value his freedom and well-being as necessary goods for the pursuit of any purposes, Gewirth argues that the amoralist consistently must accept "(7) 'I ought to do X [X being a necessary and sufficient condition for avoiding a threat to his well-being]'\textsuperscript{14} But (7) entails '(8) 'I ought to be free to do X,' where to be free means at least not to be prevented or interfered with by other persons . . . .'\textsuperscript{15}

If the objection is made that (7) 'I ought to do X' entails no reference to others as stated in Gewirth's (8) 'I ought to be free to do X,' but rather only a reference to oneself in a different (8) 'I ought not prevent myself from doing X,' Gewirth's reply would be that "one cannot rationally both accept that something ought to be done and reject a necessary condition of its being done."\textsuperscript{16} It is a necessary condition of being able to do X that the self be free from being prevented or interfered with by others, and it is a necessary condition of being obligated to do X that the self be able to do X. Hence, (7) 'I ought to do X' entails (8) 'I ought to be free to do X'.

It is clear, then, that Gewirth does consider a number of objections to his attempt to show a logical entailment between 'A's freedom and well-being are necessary goods' and 'A has prudential rights to freedom and well-being'. It appears evident that agent A ought logically to claim such prudential rights for the sake of attaining his purposes. However, the objection of Adams must be considered further. Granted that A ought logically to claim such prudential rights, is the obligation for other agents to respect such rights moral or prudential? The force of Adam's objection against taking the rights-claim to be morally binding on other agents surely holds. There still is no moral obligation for other agents to respect the freedom of an agent committing a bank robbery, even though the bank robber as an agent ought logically to claim a prudential right to freedom in order to be able to accomplish his purpose. However, if we emphasize that the would-be bank robber is making a claim to a prudential right, then we can see that other agents do have a prudential, that is, a conditional, obligation to respect that right. If the purpose of the bank robber agrees with the purposes of other agents, then prudentially they ought not to interfere with the bank robber. Of course, a prudential obligation is not a moral obligation, and Adams is mistaken for objecting to the obligation as if
it were a moral obligation even though he is correct that the argument of Gewirth has not thus far established a moral obligation. The question remains whether or not Gewirth can establish an entailment between a dialectically necessary prudential right to freedom and well-being and a moral right to freedom and well-being for all agents.

The Third Step of Gewirth's Argument

Gewirth attempts to show by an argument from the sufficiency of agency (ASA) that "every agent must claim these rights to freedom and well-being for the sufficient reason that he is a prospective agent who has purposes he wants to fulfill, so that he logically must accept the generalization that all prospective purposive agents have rights to freedom and well-being."17

Gewirth considers several ways of attempting to evade universal rights. One such way would be to offer for any right-claim sufficient reasons which include additional reasons beyond the condition of being a purposive agent. These additional reasons would be either individual, unique to one person, or particular, shared by some group of persons but not universal to all agents. Gewirth notes that one specific way of making an objection to universal rights in this way would be to claim that only agents of superior intelligence have rights. Gewirth's basic response is his argument from the sufficiency of agency (ASA). He argues that the person of superior practical intelligence would claim rights to freedom and well-being "even if he lacked superior intelligence or other superior practical abilities so long as he was a prospective purposive agent."18 If an agent has purposes freely chosen, it does not matter whether he has simple or complex purposes, few or many purposes. For the quality of being a purposive agent does not vary in regard to the logically necessary evaluation of one's freedom and well-being as goods materially necessary for the attainment of one's purposes. It is sufficient that one is a prospective purposive agent for one's necessary claim to a right to freedom and well-being.

Gewirth, however, may have fatally weakened his ASA in this matter when he writes:

To justify the claim of superior rights, the argument from superior intelligence would have to include one or both of two further assertions: (a) that those who have superior intelligence will necessarily use it to fulfill not only their own purposes but also the purposes of all or many other purposive agents; (b) that those who have superior intelligence also have more valuable purposes. Neither of these assertions is plausible.19
Plausible or not, these assertions do not involve the agent who would state them in self-contradiction. Furthermore, from the French Revolution onwards, followers of Jacobin democracy have been all too willing to assume that their superior knowledge of what advances the true welfare of the people justifies superior rights for self-elected leaders of revolutions. Whether or not these self-elected leaders of superior rights do know better the true welfare of all agents is not a matter than can be solved by analysis of concepts of agency, but rather by a study of history. Hence, Gewirth's ASA is not analytically true. For the denial of ASA by statement (a) above does not involve the holder of superior rights in self-contradiction.

Gewirth could reply to my objection by noting that assertion (a) "would involve an implicit admission that the action-rights of the more intelligent agents, so far as they claim to fulfill the purposes of persons of inferior intelligence, must be evaluated by reference to those purposes." So the very claim to superior rights in this case assumes universal rights as basic. For unless the persons of inferior intelligence have a basic right to freedom and well-being, why should the agents of superior intelligence have to concern themselves with justifying their rights by reference to their ability to assist other agents? However, it might be true that agents of superior intelligence could provide for the purposes of other agents better than those agents themselves, and here is the point where Gewirth's argument may falter. He has valued freedom as a good necessary for the attainment of other purposes. If a superior agent could provide for a lower agent's purposive goods, why should not that superior agent claim a right to take away that lower agent's freedom in order to provide for the well-being of that lower agent? Unless Gewirth can provide an argument for the value of freedom for its own sake as the basis of universal rights, it appears that the freedom of lower agents may be done away with by superior agents. Only if the lower agents can claim that their freedom/creativity is essential to their being purposive agents, then they can claim that their freedom ought not to be taken away.

Gewirth's response to my line of questioning would be his claim that freedom is essential to the very nature of being a purposive agent and hence that the freedom of agents ought not to be taken away. He writes that "the agent values freedom not only as a necessary means to an end but also as intrinsically good, simply because it is an essential component of purposive action and indeed of the very possibility of action." Even phenomena such as the 'escape from freedom' where a person abandons his freedom to some superior agent who will provide for that person do not contradict the thesis that an agent must logically regard freedom as a necessary and intrinsic good, Gewirth argues. For if the agent does not give up his freedom permanently then
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the agent as a prospective agent must logically continue to value freedom as a necessary good. If he gives up his freedom permanently, then he is no longer an agent, actually or potentially; and Gewirth's dialectical argument does not apply to such an individual. Gewirth, however, sees no problem for his argument since such a case is best regarded as pathological.22

Nevertheless, it is my view that Gewirth's argument has failed at this point. If we suppose that superior agents could in fact provide for the fulfillment of the purposes of all agents better than could the freedom of lower agents acting for their own benefits, then even lower agents would not have to evaluate their freedom as a necessary good for the achievement of other purposes. If adults of lesser intelligence, for example, choose to return to a child-like stage of living where adults of superior intelligence would provide for most of their needs, such a choice may not be morally inspiring; but can Gewirth show that this choice is implicitly stating a contradiction?

One way to develop Gewirth's argument at this point would be as follows. We might argue that every action dialectically shows forth a desire, a necessary desire, on the part of every agent towards self-mastery and self-creation. The agent who would choose to let go of his freedom and to let others provide for his needs by living in a child-like stage would be contradicting the essential thrust of agency that calls every agent to self-mastery and self-creation. Gewirth's remarks on the growth of the child to adult agency hint at various stages or levels of becoming an adult.23 So Gewirth is assuming an essential drive towards self-mastery and self-creation. But for Gewirth's method the question then becomes whether or not he can establish by conceptual analysis that action involves necessarily the desire for the good of self-mastery and self-creation.

My assumption tends to be that the claim that the drive to self-mastery and self-creation is essential to human action is the best working hypothesis that makes sense of our experience of growth from childhood to adulthood and of our experience of creativity in science, technology, philosophy, music, art, and so many other aspects of our lives. To call this claim the best working hypothesis is not to claim that it is analytically or intuitively true, but to claim that it is my most reasonable interpretation of what it means to be a human being. Given this assertoric claim of what it means to be a human being, it is very reasonable and even analytically true to claim that all human beings are valuable as follows: 'If I value myself as a process of self-mastery and self-creation, then logically I ought to value all other agents who are capable of developing self-mastery and self-creation.' This fundamental statement of value for self and others would logically prohibit any agent from claiming superior rights that would enable him to take away the freedom
of others. For the freedom of others is essential to the development of their self-mastery and self-creation.

I have argued, then, that the basis of morality is the hypothetical imperative: 'If I value myself as a process of self-mastery and self-creation, then logically I ought to value all other agents who are capable of developing self-mastery and self-creation.' In contrast to my view, in his review of Gewirth's book, Adams argues for a categorical imperative built into rational agents for striving essentially for self-mastery and self-creation, as follows:

Agents, as informed, reflective beings who act voluntarily and purposively, are, I suggest, beings who act to reconstruct themselves and/or their environment through their awareness and extended knowledge of themselves and their world and the factual and causal constitution of things. It is not simply a fact about human beings that they have a normative self-image, they regard themselves as beings who ought to have the powers of agency and who ought to develop and to employ them in action . . .

Having a normative image of oneself as a rational agent makes one a person. As such, one not only has purposes to pursue, but responsibilities to fulfill—the requirements binding on one that are implicit in one's normative self-image as a rational agent. It is, I suggest, relative to these responsibilities, not one's simple purposes, that one regards one's freedom and well-being as rights, which entail obligations on the part of others . . .

Of course one cannot, on pain of logical inconsistency, lay claim . . . to rights to one's freedom and well-being that entail obligations for others, without recognizing that others have similar rights and that they entail obligations for oneself. Thus I agree with Gewirth's DPGC: "Every agent logically must accept that he ought to act in accord with the generic rights of his recipients as well as of himself." But, as I have tried to show, the inherent normative structure of agency that is appealed to in proof of the principle is richer than Gewirth has acknowledged. 24

Adams has based moral responsibility upon the normative self-image that one ought to have the powers of agency and that one ought to develop and to employ them in action. In response to the argument of Adams, I raise the following two questions:

(1) Must an individual have a self-image
which affirms that action is worthwhile? If mor­
ality is to be based on a normative self-image
about the worth of one's action in developing
one's own abilities, does not morality depend in
part upon a commitment to value the self and the
self's ability throughout a lifetime? But the
suicide victim does not so value the self. Hence,
it is not necessary that an individual have a
self-image which affirms that action is worthwhile
throughout a lifetime.

(2) Must an individual have a self-image
which affirms that rationality is worthwhile?
Again, my answer is negative. A person need not
value rationality as part of one's self-image.
The person might choose to value impulsive action
rather than rationally guided action. Such impul­
sive action may very well bring an individual
recklessly close to death, but there is no neces­
sity that the individual value life rather than
death. So it appears that one's self-image is
chosen.

How would Gewirth respond to my line of argument that
the agent chooses his ideal or normative self-image? Well,
Gewirth has shown by his discussion of the agent acting for
the end of suicide that even such an agent must value his
freedom as a necessary means to his goal.25 However, isn't
moral action concerned with the value of human life as an
end in itself? If an agent freely commits suicide because
life means nothing to him, the agent is saying that human
life is not valuable for its own sake. It is, indeed, log­
ically necessary for the suicide to value his freedom as a
necessary means to his last end, but that last end negates
the value of all his action.

The analysis of nihilism by Hans Kung supports my argu­
ment. He affirms that no rationally conclusive argument
against nihilism is possible. For the individual can with­
out fear of being refuted hold that his human life is mean­
ingless, worthless. There is the formal logical argument
against the nihilist that he contradicts himself by attempt­
ing to make a meaningful statement about meaninglessness.
But Kung argues that the assertion of the nihilist that life
is meaningless is not a contradiction in terms. "For the
very fact that this statement is made about the nullity of
all being, is itself meaningless and worthless."26

I believe that Gewirth would argue against nihilism as
a self-contradictory position. For he considers the case of
the agent who views human nature as radically evil as hold­
ing in that perspective that his purposes are not good and
that hence he does not have rights to freedom and well-being
as the necessary conditions of his actions.27 Gewirth ar­
gues that even such an agent must be free to be an agent and

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must judge some purpose as relatively good in order to act for it. Even if the agent who sees life as radically evil chooses the end of suicide, such an end must be held by the agent to be relatively good in order to be pursued. That judgment of relative goodness is sufficient for Gewirth to proceed with his dialectically necessary analysis of human action that leads to his theory of morality. Gewirth is not basing his ethics on a vision of any specific end or telos of human life. The end may even be suicide. But any end for a free agent dialectically necessitates that a rational agent claim a prudential right to freedom and well-being and logically universalize that right to all other agents, thereby creating a moral obligation.

Gewirth’s argument, whether against the nihilist or against the agent who views human life as radically evil is consistent, almost convincing, but not conclusive. For does not morality ultimately concern itself with the value of a human life as a whole? If there is no value to human life as a whole, does Gewirth’s dialectically necessary analysis of any particular human action logically demand a value to human life as a whole? It hardly seems so. It appears that an existential, pre-rational, primordial decision to value one’s human life as a whole must lie at the foundation of morality. Otherwise, suicide by a nihilist or by an agent who views life as radically evil cannot be judged as morally incorrect. But surely the ultimate decision about the value of a human life as a whole is part of morality. As Alasdair MacIntyre argues, "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'"28 Any human action is part of a narrative history, and it is reasonable to ask what is the telos, the end, the value, of a particular human life. MacIntyre arrives "at a provisional conclusion about the good life for man: the good life is the life spent in seeking the good life for man, and the virtues necessary for seeking the good life for man enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is."29 But does not the very quest of the good life for man depend upon an existential, pre-rational, primordial decision to value human life as a whole? Gewirth’s attempt to found morality upon a dialectically necessary analysis of any isolated action misses the importance of the value of a human life as a whole and of the free commitment to seek such value even before it is known or achieved.

Gewirth does have a significant place in his ethics for the self-worth of the agent. He writes: "We have seen that every agent regards his particular purposes as worth pursuing and hence attributes value to them. When such evaluative purposiveness is more than incidental and transient, the agent has an abiding self-esteem in that he views the worth of his goals as reflecting his own worth as a rational person whose life, freedom and well-being are worthy of protection and development."30
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The point of my evaluation is that the would-be suicide may be choosing to view his death as worth pursuing. Hence, even from a dialectically necessary analysis of action, it is not necessary that such an agent have an abiding self-esteem. The goals of the agent may be only incidental and transient or even self-destructive. It is not dialectically necessary in the analysis of the suicide's action that he value his life as worthy of protection and development. The agent's ideal self-image and self-worth are chosen, not logically required by a dialectically necessary analysis of human action.

Concluding Summary with a Response for Gewirth

The essential points in my evaluation of Adams and Gewirth have been the following: In the second step of his argument, Gewirth is justified in making an inference from 'my freedom is a necessary good' to 'my freedom is a prudential right' for any purpose that I propose to myself as an agent. However, Adams is correct that Gewirth is not justified in the second step in making an inference from 'my freedom is a necessary good' to 'my freedom is a moral right' for any purpose that I propose since I may propose an immoral end such as bank robbery. It is in the third step that Gewirth attempts to argue from a prudential right to freedom to a moral right to freedom for every rational being. His argument from the sufficiency of agency (ASA) is consistent in affirming that even a would-be suicide must logically claim a prudential right to freedom as a necessary means for his goal and must rationally universalize the right to freedom to every rational being, thereby making freedom a moral right. Although the argument is consistent, it does not rule out suicide as immoral. Morality is essentially concerned with the value of human life as a whole, as MacIntyre has argued, and with the agent's normative self-image, as Adams as argued. Consequently, it is necessary to base morality upon an existential, pre-rational, primordial decision to value human life as a whole and a process of self-mastery and self-creation in the following hypothetical imperative: 'If I value myself as a process of self-mastery and self-creation, then logically I ought to value all other agents who are capable of developing self-mastery and self-creation.'

The response of Gewirth to Adams and to me could be something like this. In order to affirm that hypothetical imperative as the basis of morality, an agent must be free from interference from others in his development of knowledge and of choice. The right to freedom must, therefore, be assumed by any agent, even the agent who would claim that morality is founded upon a hypothetical imperative.

As for the problem that would arise when an agent might
choose a hypothetical imperative other than one which establishes universal rights, Gewirth could reply as follows. Any exclusive claim to value would run afoul of Gewirth's argument from the sufficiency of agency. Any agent, as an agent, must value freedom and well-being as necessary goods for the attainment of his purposes and ought consistently to claim rights to those goods and to universalize those rights to all agents.

Gewirth's argument is very powerful since it appears to be implicit in the very nature of human action and able to overcome the existentialist interpretation of the foundation of morality which I have offered.

FOOTNOTES

4. Ibid., p. 585.
5. Gewirth, op. cit., p. 78.
9. Gewirth, op. cit., p. 3.
10. Adams, loc. cit., pp. 585-6
16. Gewirth, op. cit., p. 91
27. Gewirth, op. cit., p. 93.
29. MacIntyre, op. cit., p. 204.