

RIGHTS

How reliable and universal are they?

Related Ideas

role, relationships; responsibility, duty; law, guilt, debt, sanction

Bases

Sources

- 'the mighty'
- moral authorities
- cultural conventions
- reason

Supporting

- autonomy / the will
- welfare / interests

Universal declaration of human rights - including

Civil & political

- equality before the law
- a fair trial
- freedom from cruel or degrading treatment
- freedom of expression
- ..

Economic, social & cultural

- work in just and favourable conditions
- adequate standard of living
- education
- ..

Reason

As a basis we may all agree on is reason reliable or does morality rest on changeable norms as David Hume suggested? If so can doubters be persuaded by seeing a good society first hand .. being picked up as it were via an inbuilt justice meter?

Autonomy or welfare?

Human rights endeavours highlighting where freedoms have been removed suggest autonomy is central to them. However many philosophers consider they are more to be seen as welfare based.

Single-mindedly focussing on the greatest good for the greatest number leaves little room for individual inclination so how can we marry the two goals. Should we ..

- recognise imagining the possibility of being in a position of deprivation is at the heart of morality, yet something we need to act on separately or ..
- accept trade offs will have to be made, and judge on a scenario by scenario basis? or ...

Further questions - contingency?

- what rights can be expected by those whose actions show a complete disregard for them?
- how dependent are rights on straightened circumstances - e.g. is a starving person refusing to steal probably suffering from low blood sugar?

Further questions - scope?

- if the scope of rights is inflated how does it affect acceptance of any which are more well founded?
- should we allow groups to live under different systems of rights relying on provisos such as freedom to leave and an exceptional recourse to state law?