

# The Coherence of Rights

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## Abstract

A rights-assignment is called coherent iff the exercise of rights by itself never leads to an empty choice set irrespective of which profile of individual orderings and which nonempty finite subset of alternatives are considered. We discuss the following two formalizations of the idea of coherence : (i) a rights-assignment  $D = (D_1, \dots, D_n)$  is coherent iff for every profile of individual orderings  $(R_1, \dots, R_n)$ , there exists an ordering-extension of each and every  $D_i \cap R_i$ , where  $D_i$  is the set of ordered pairs assigned to individual  $i$  and  $R_i$  is  $i$ 's ordering of social alternatives (ii) a rights-assignment  $D$  is coherent iff there is no critical loop in  $D$ . We show that neither of the two formalizations is equivalent to coherence. We present modified versions of these formalizations and show them to be equivalent to coherence.

We discuss some of the implications of our analysis for the way the idea of a liberal individual is formalized. We introduce a new formalization of the idea of a liberal individual. Using it, we show the existence of a collective choice rule satisfying (i) unrestricted domain (ii) conditional weak Pareto-criterion (iii) coherent libertarianism and (iv) the property that, whenever profile of individual orderings is such that the weak Pareto-criterion and coherent libertarianism do not conflict, the choice set is a subset of Pareto-optimal alternatives in the sense of weak Pareto-criterion.