Alan Gewirth on Conflicts of Rights

1. What if A (agent A) is threatened by agent B that unless A coerces or does violence to R (recipient) agent B will then harm agent A?
2. What should A do if, in order to act in accord with his own right to basic well-being, he must violate B’s right to basic well-being?
3. What if A can save R’s life without endangering his own life?
4. What if A can strive to save R’s life but only with great endangerment to A’s own life?
5. What should A (for example, a country which is a democracy) do if, in order to act in accord with his (or the country’s citizens) own right to basic well-being (for example, health), he has to violate R’s right to nonsubtractive well-being (for example, raise taxes on those with higher levels of income or who own large amounts of property)?
6. What should A do if, in order to act in accord with his own right to nonsubtractive well-being, (for example, A’s property)he has to violate R’s right to basic well-being (for example, R’s life)?
7. What should A do if, in order to act in accord with his own right to free exercise of choice, he has to violate R’s right to one of the levels of well-being (basic, nonsubtractive, and additive)? For example, what if, in order to avoid being imprisoned, A must kill R in order to remain able to have free choice? (What if R is an innocent bystander?)
8. What if A, in order to save R, must let B drown? (or let B starve?)
9. What should A do if, in order to act in accord with a nonsubtractive right of R, he has to violate a nonsubtractive right of another agent S? For example, in order to avoid lying to R (who has asked him whether S has had an abortion), A would have to break his promise to S (whom he has promised that he will not reveal that she has had an abortion)? Assume first that R is a comparative stranger. Next case: assume that R is a medical doctor concerned with S’s health.
10. What should A (a country) do, if in order to act in accord with a basic right of R (health, for example), he has to violate a nonsubtractive right of S (have higher taxes on S)? For example, in order to prevent R from being murdered, he has to lie to S. Next case, if A needs to steal a loaf of bread from S in order to feed her child R?
11. What should A do if he is confronted with a choice between harming one person and harming twelve?