

(This is the 6th video in the series that starts with Video 45.)

I'm going to critique one final argument against positive rights, this time based on the idea of a conflict of rights:

(P1*****) If there are positive rights, then they would conflict with negative rights.

(P2*****) Positive rights can't conflict with negative rights.

(P3*****) So, there are no positive rights.

The idea behind premise 1 is that rights are typically enforceable, in the sense that it's permissible to use force to compel others to respect them.

However, if there are positive rights to be provided aid, and if they're enforceable, such that you can sometimes use force to compel others to provide aid, then this seems to allow for violations of negative rights, namely forcibly compelling people to do things.

Premise 2 assumes that rights can't conflict in this way. If you have a right to something, then it should be possible to exercise that right without thereby violating anyone else's rights.

However, I think we should reject premise 1. Just like it's not a violation of negative rights to forcibly compel people to respect your right to life, it's also not a violation of negative rights to forcibly compel them to respect your positive rights.

If someone's refusing to provide the aid that they're obligated to provide—for instance, like a person refusing to throw in a life vest to save a drowning child—then they're violating someone's rights, and it's not a violation of rights to use force to stop a violation of rights.