

(This is the 3rd video in the series that starts with Video 45.)

I'm going to critique another argument against positive rights. I've heard it argued that there can't be positive rights cause they'd demand too much of us.

In other words:

(P1**) If there are positive rights, then there are highly demanding obligations.

(P2**) There are no highly demanding obligations.

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

The idea behind premise 1 is that positive rights entail obligations to provide aid. And since lots of people need aid, these obligations would be highly demanding, requiring us to spend all our extra time and resources helping others, leaving us with little freedom for ourselves.

Premise 2 assumes our obligations can't be that demanding—they can't preclude us from pursuing our own goals in life.

However, I think both premises can be resisted. First, we might reject premise 2 and admit that some obligations *are* highly demanding.

After all, if you really want a certain job, then your obligation to not kill the more qualified applicants is highly demanding—it's standing in the way of your goal—but clearly you still have this obligation.

But I think we can also reject premise 1. Positive rights only entail *some* positive obligations but nothing about how demanding they are. You *could* take the "maximizing" position ("Do ALL you can do") or you could take the "satisficing" position ("Do ENOUGH").

For instance, if you're walking by a long series of ponds each with a drowning child in it, perhaps you have an obligation to save the first child and maybe the second, but it's not obvious you have an obligation to continue saving children over and over until you literally can't anymore. Perhaps at some point, you've done *enough*, even if there's more you *could* do.