

(This is the 5th video in the series that starts with Video 45.)

I'm going to critique another argument against positive rights, this time based on the idea that rights must be "enforceable":

(P1****) If there are positive rights, then there are enforceable (unchosen) positive obligations.

(P2****) There are no enforceable (unchosen) positive obligations.

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

By "enforceable", I mean people have the right to use force to compel others to satisfy these obligations.

Negative obligations, corresponding to negative rights, are typically like this. For instance, if someone's trying to kill you, and thus violate your right to life, you or a third party can use force to stop them.

But premise 2 says positive obligations aren't enforceable. After all, even if people do have obligations to aid others, perhaps by volunteering or giving to charity, it seems wrong to compel this with force.

However, I think we can reject premise 2, since in some cases, it *does* seem permissible to compel aid by force. Consider this scenario:

There's a child drowning in the ocean next to a cruise ship, and the only way to save her involves throwing in a life vest. But there's one person in control of all the life vests, and he's refusing to throw one in, without a good reason. Suppose the only way to get him to do so is by threatening him with force. Is it permissible? I think so.

And if so, then *some* positive obligations *are* enforceable, like your obligation to share resources with those in need when it costs you very little.