

Dueling Mental Constructs

Rights, as I have pointed out, are a (human) mental construct. As are ethics, liberty, freedom, and so many other ideas.

However, those who use this fact as an excuse to violate people forget that they are usually relying on *another* mental construct: the State (what most people mean when they use the word “government”). You can’t justify allowing *your* mental construct to crush and enslave people by saying their *rights* are nothing but a mental construct.

Rights (and ethics and liberty) are *positive* mental constructs. Acting as though these things have physical reality, even though they don’t, is good for individuals and thus good for society. In fact, civilization isn’t really possible without at least most people respecting each other’s rights most of the time. A functioning society would be otherwise impossible.

Government/the State is a *negative* mental construct. Acting as though it has physical reality is generally used as justification for harming people through the political means. It’s not good. Even when it is claimed to be used for good, there is someone who has to lose for others to win. And to claim this negative mental construct trumps the positive mental construct of rights is to encourage evil.

All mental constructs are *not* created equal.

Instead of saying that rights are a mental construct, some people just say there’s no such thing as a right. That they are imaginary. When someone makes the claim that rights are imaginary, I’m OK with that, too. If there’s no such thing as a right, then no one can have the right to govern- to rule- other people in any way. They would be nothing more than a bully, relying on the most dangerous superstition for their power.

There’s also no reasonable way to pretend that the mental construct of rights is created or granted by *another* mental construct. This is the claim being made when saying that rights come from government. That’s magical thinking.

You can’t have it both ways. Since both concepts exist as mental constructs, I’ll choose to favor the positive one and reject the negative one. You may choose differently, but that would be your choice. I would appreciate you explaining your reasons in that case.