

Rights – Reciprocal or Absolute?

Are rights strictly reciprocal? If you refuse to recognize the rights of others, does that mean you, yourself, have no rights?

I saw someone make this claim, and in my mind it doesn't hold up, even if it seems correct at first.

First off, let's get this out of the way: if rights are imaginary, then no one has any rights, including the right to rule, so that gets rid of the specter of "legitimate government" (among other atrocities) right off the bat. Go in peace and do what you're going to do—subject to what others are willing to put up with.

On the other hand, I think the nature of human beings makes rights a real and necessary thing, so the rest of this is based on that premise.

I think it is the nature of rights that they can either be *respected* or *violated*, and nothing else.

I think rights can't be "lost" regardless of what someone does. Actions which violate rights may create a debt which needs to be paid, or they may cause defensive actions to be used against the person, but that person still has the exact same rights they did before they violated anyone. Consequences simply happen.

Insisting on restitution doesn't violate rights. Restitution is justice.

Self defense (of person or property) doesn't violate rights. Self defense is a human right.

Shunning someone, even to death, is an exercise of the right of association and doesn't violate anyone's rights. No one has the right to impose their presence on you, and their existence doesn't obligate you to do anything other than to not impose yourself on them.

If rights somehow only exist if they are mutually recognized, then rights would never exist in the presence of anarchists of any kind, and specifically anywhere there were a State or government. States NEVER recognize rights, but relegate them all to the status of privileges— to be handed out and withdrawn at the whim of the "law".

Yet, I can still see that you have rights regardless of who is violating them.

If you are facing an armed mugger (or a government employee), it is apparent he doesn't recognize your rights. If rights only exist when mutually recognized, there would be no rights present for either of you. But if I am watching, I know you still have rights, and if I need to shoot the mugger in order to help you keep your rights inviolate, I may choose to

do so. The opinion of the mugger has no bearing on the existence of your rights. Rights never depend on what the other person believes or does.

So, no, rights are not dependent on being reciprocated, even though that might be nice.