

# PHILOSOPHY IN DEBATES

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PART 1

MGIMO Debate Club

# WHY DO WE NEED PHILOSOPHY IN DEBATES?

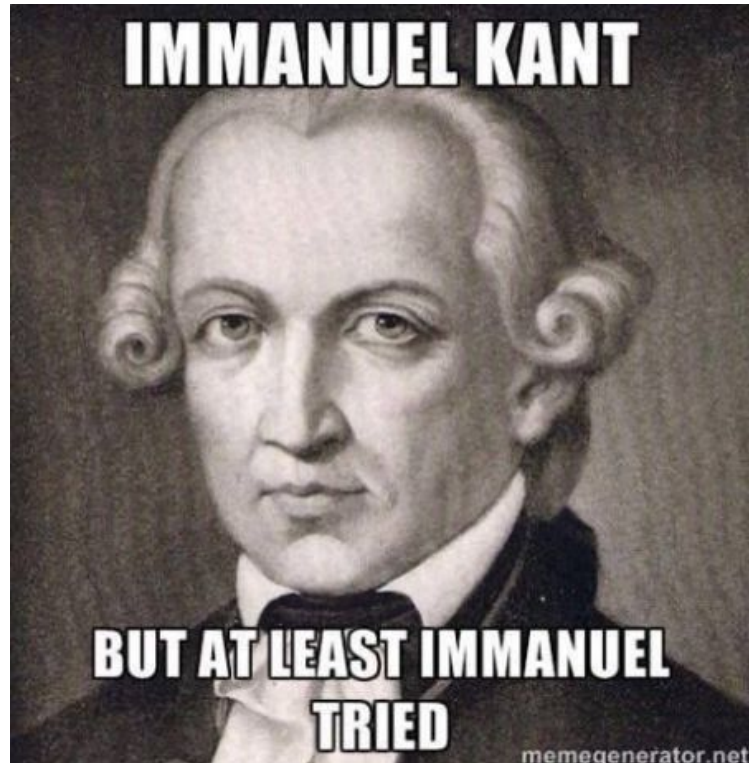
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- Moral debates
  - THBT having children is immoral
- We operate in a human society which by definition includes subjectivism -> simple cost-benefit analysis won't suffice
  - Humanity – refugee crises

# CONTENT

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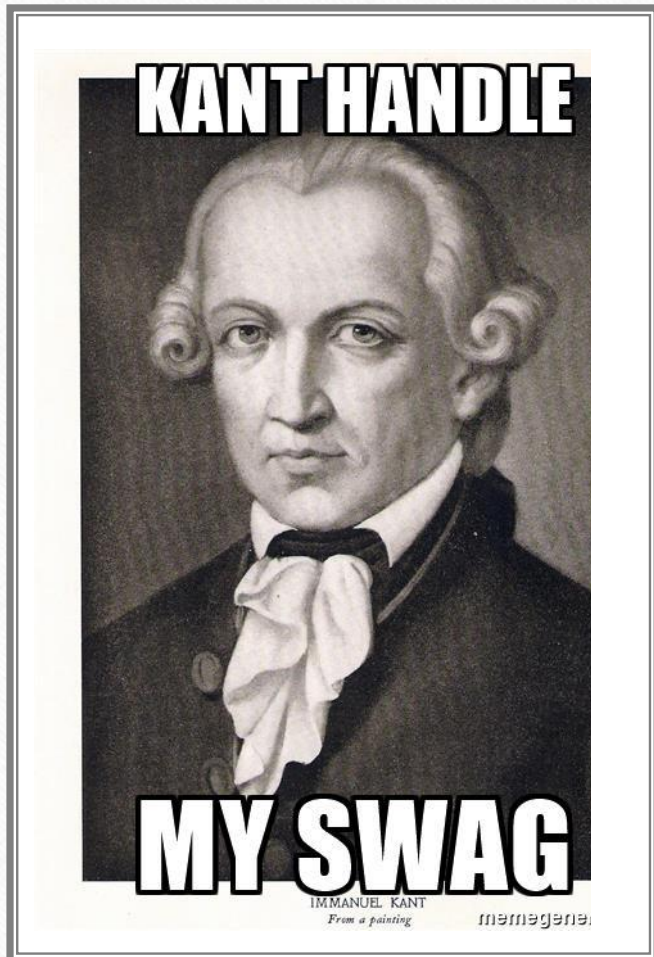
- MORAL FRAMEWORKS
  - DEONTOLOGY
  - UTILITARIANISM
- THEORY OF RIGHTS
  - SOURCES
  - LIMITS
  - WEIGHING



# DEONTOLOGY

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- MORALITY IS A PRIORI
- IMPERATIVES
- ACTIONS AND INTENTIONS



# MORALITY IS A PRIORI

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- MORALITY COMES BEFORE EXPERIENCE -> CONSEQUENCES DON'T DETERMINE THE NATURE OF ACTIONS
- MORALITY EXISTS AS A SEPARATE ENTITY THAT CAN BE ACCESSED THROUGH **FREE WILL** AND **REASON**
  - CHILDREN; MENTALLY DISABLED PEOPLE

# CATEGORICAL IMPERATIVE

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- **UNIVERSAL LAW:** “Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law.”
- **KINGDOM OF ENDS:** “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.”
  - **AUTONOMY (LYING)**



# RIGHTS

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- Deontology is rights-based -> you can't abandon rights when it's convenient. The whole point of something being a right is that it can't be traded away, that it is non-derogable (so important that it can't be limited).
- Only 4 rights are non-derogable: right to life, right to be free from torture, right to be free from slavery, right to be free from retroactive application of penal laws



# HYPOTHETICAL IMPERATIVE

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- GOAL-BASED
- These sort of actions are capable of producing good, but they are primarily motivated by a desire to meet specific purposes.
- "I must study to get a degree."

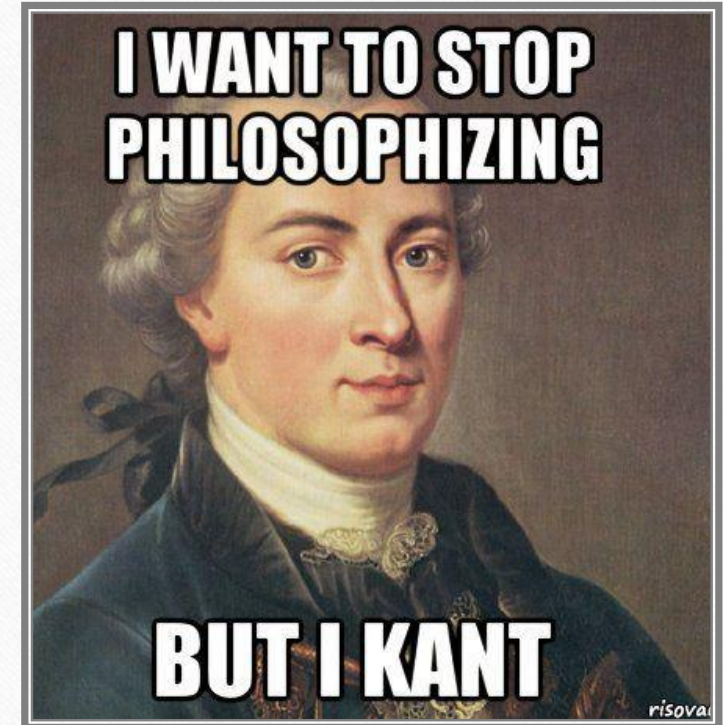




# ACTIONS AND INTENTIONS

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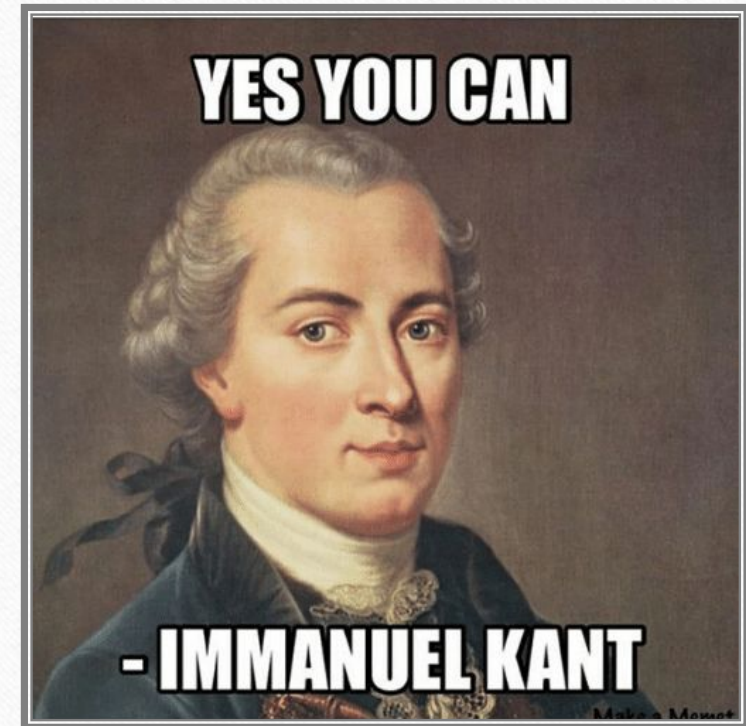
- If one acts right out of good intention, they act **morally**.
- If one acts right out of bad intention, they act **non-morally** (not moral but not immoral either; morally neutral)
- If one acts wrong out of bad intention, they act **immorally**.



# HOW TO USE DEONTOLOGY IN DEBATES

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- MORAL FRAMEWORK
- OPP AN ACTION THAT INTERFERES WITH SMB'S AUTONOMY
- RIGHTS
- LAWS & LEGAL SYSTEM (intention)

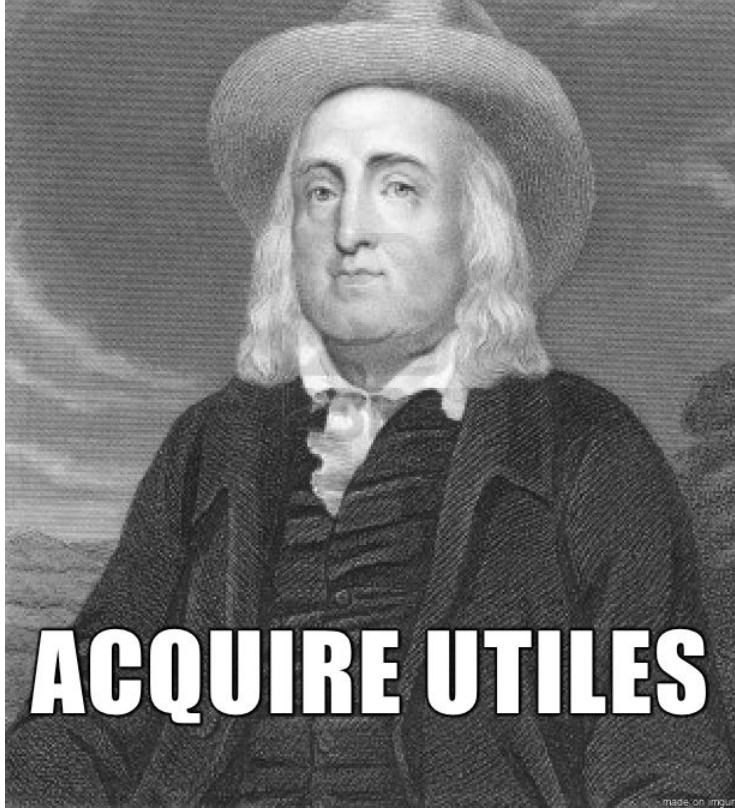


# QUESTIONS?

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**FUCK BITCHES**



**ACQUIRE UTILES**

# UTILITARIANISM

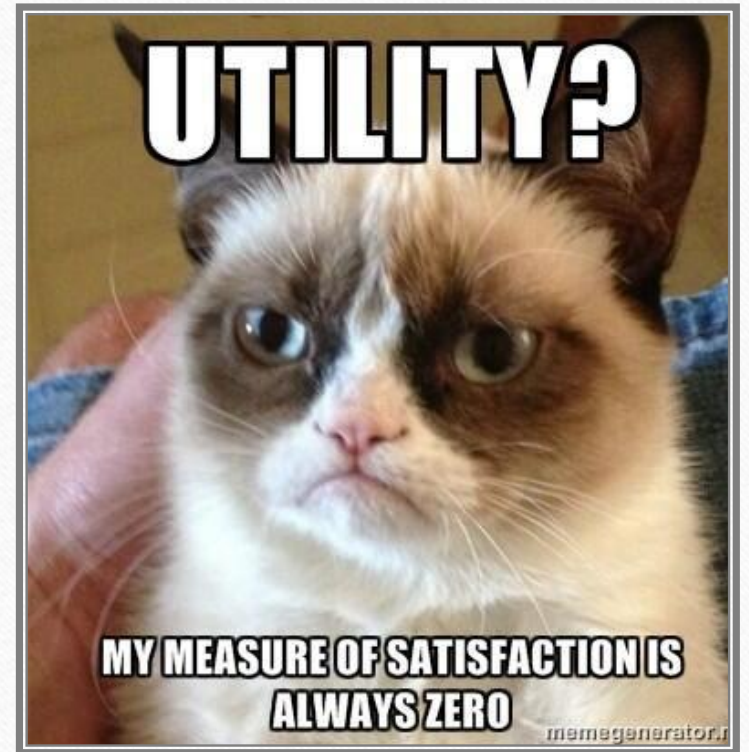
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- Greatest happiness principle
- Measures of utility
- Rights

# GREATEST HAPPINESS

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- The action is moral if it produces more UTILITY than harms (leads to best outcomes).
- THE GREATEST HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE: “The greatest good for the greatest number of people”.
- How to measure? *Most preferences fulfilled? Most urgent preferences fulfilled? Greatest net happiness? Happiness = lack of suffering*
- *Equal consideration/ interests?*





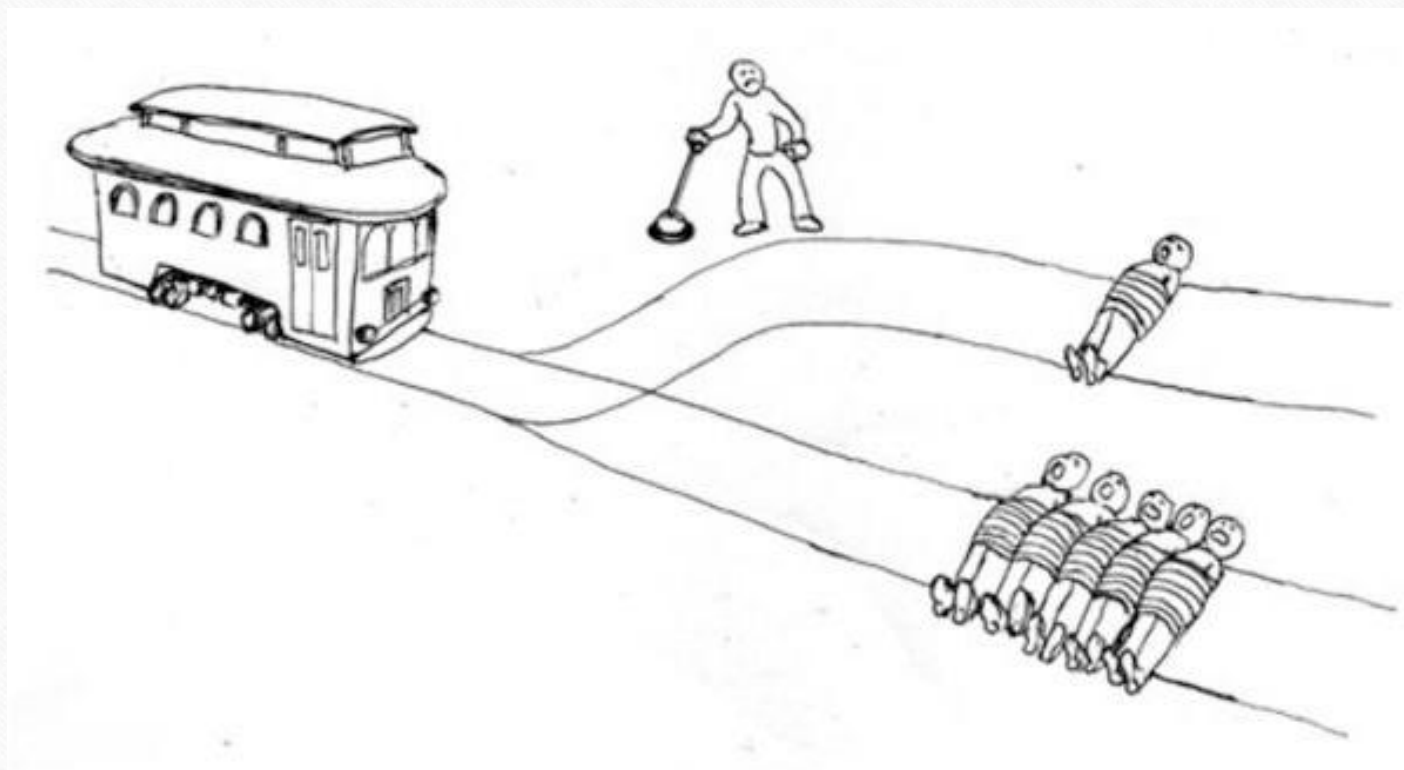
## RIGHTS

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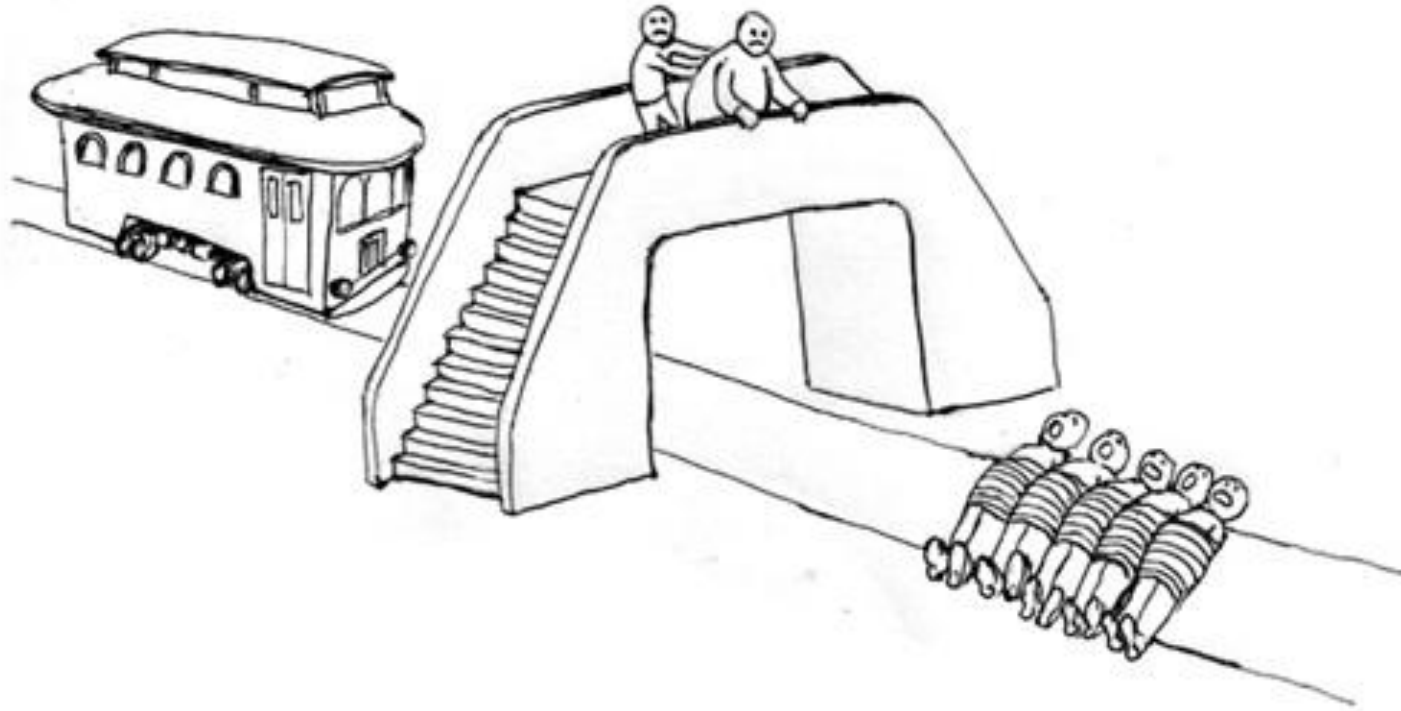
- Does not care about rights!  
As Bentham said, the notion of rights is “nonsense on stilts”

# TROLLEY PROBLEM

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# TROLLEY PROBLEM





# WHAT MATTERS?

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- Most debates occur within a solely utilitarian paradigm, where consequence is the only metric of value.
- It's much easier to explain why something will/won't lead to certain outcomes, as opposed to explaining why something is morally right or wrong.

# HOWEVER...

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- THW allow the torture of terrorist suspects for information.
- GOV will typically outline a utilitarian case: “torture leads to potentially life-saving information”
- OPP will often rebut: “torture leads to poor information/lies and it ruins interactions with key stakeholders, etc.”
- OPP can also argue that it is immoral to violate someone’s bodily integrity, cause them pain and suffering and diminish their autonomy - particularly where that person is merely suspected of wrongdoing.



I SAID NORTH KOREA IS A GREAT  
PLACE FOR HUMAN RICE

NOT HUMAN RIGHTS

## RIGHTS

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- When we talk about rights we're talking about many things. Human rights tend to control what **humans can** do to themselves/each other, what the **state can** do to us and what we can legitimately expect/**demand from the state.**

# SOURCES OF RIGHTS

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- Social contract - a contract between a government and its people in which the people give up some rights in order to have their other rights protected.
- 2 conception: citizens collectively agree on what rights people do/do not have – meaning that rights are culturally specific and can vary.



# When to use?

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- Justifying a policy that seems to infringe on people's rights. E.i. collecting personal data (internet traffic, phone data) to track terrorism.
- Who does the government have obligations to (citizens v. immigrants).
- Paternalism (state is a parent)

**SOCIAL CONTRACT?**



**LET ME SEE IT**

## LIMITS OF SC

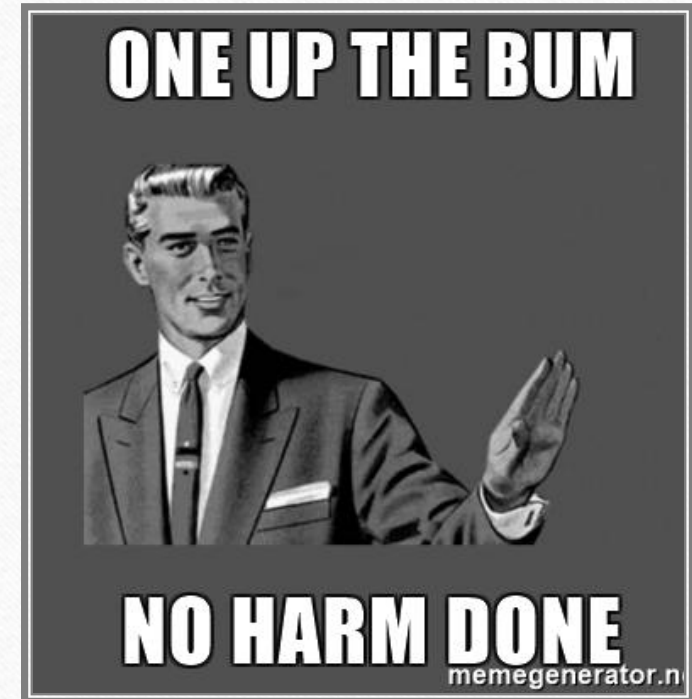
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- You don't sign the contract (consent)
- You can't opt out
- Under SC power is heavily weighted to the government

# LIMITS OF RIGHTS

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- The Harm Principle (protection/negative rights).  
Where do rights end? Pretty simple, when they conflict with other rights (reduce them)!
  - Direct (drugs) and indirect (no seatbelts -> healthcare  $\Delta$  -> others  $\nabla$ ) harms.
  - Income redistribution – protection of positive rights (gives advantage to a group)



# LIMITS OF RIGHTS

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- No ability to consent.
- If you are chemically addicted, can you consent to smoking?
- Debates about euthanasia, medical testing, sexual freedom and drugs are all classical discussions of when the state can step in and limit the freedoms of individuals based on unclear conceptions of consent and consequence.





# WEIGHING RIGHTS

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- Sometimes seemingly equal rights will come into conflict – how do we decide who wins? Two options include:
- **Hierarchy of rights.** *Usually:*
  - right to life
  - freedom from pain and suffering + right to act autonomously
  - secondary rights, such as privacy, free speech, religion, education and so on

# WEIGHING RIGHTS

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- **Utility:** giving preference to which rights will result in the best consequences for the most people?
- That might be a self-defeating way to conceptualize rights-clashes though. If utility is again our metric, why bother with thinking about rights at all?
- **Autonomy:** what right leads to better protection of autonomy?
  - **E.i.** data tracking v. national defense

# BALANCING RIGHTS

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- E.i. hate speech
- GOV: “speech which offends people, makes them feel uncomfortable in society and creates social friction should be prohibited.”
- OPP: “government shouldn’t punish thought. The market place of ideas is the best regulator of bigotry and free speech is important for a functioning democracy.”
- The clash is thus: right to be free from offence vs right to free speech.

ANY QUESTIONS?

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# QUESTION TIME THEN

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- ACCRODING TO KANT, WHAT ACTIONS ARE MORAL?

# QUESTION TIME

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- HOW SHOULD WE TREAT OTHER PEOPLE?

# QUESTION TIME

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- WHAT DOES DEONTOLOGY SAY ABOUT RIGHTS?

# QUESTION TIME

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- WHAT'S THE GEATEST HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE?



# QUESTION TIME

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- WHAT DOES UTILITARIANISM SAY ABOUT RIGHTS?

# QUESTION TIME

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- WHAT'S THE MAIN SOURCE OF RIGHTS?

# QUESTION TIME

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- WHAT ARE THE LIMITS OF SC?



THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!