# Util K

By defending oppression impacts under a utilitarian framework, the Aff reduces the complex nature of people’s suffering to an aggregative risk calculus. Util justifies horrific conclusions by challenging assumptions about intrinsic, unconditional badness even for genocide or gruesome torture. Domestic violence brings incredible pleasure to the abuser; what’s wrong with oppression has little to do with the pleasure and suffering involved but more to do with some notion of bodily integrity and intrinsic value.

#### Anscombe**[[1]](#footnote-1)** [bracketed for gendered and ableist language]

It is a necessary feature of consequentialism that it is a shallow philosophy. For there are always borderline cases in ethics. Now if you are either an Aristotelian, or a believer in divine law, you will deal with a borderline case by considering whether doing such‐and‐such in such‐and‐such circumstances is, say, murder, or is an act of injustice; and according as you decide it is or it isn't, you judge it to be a thing to do or not. This would be the method of casuistry; and while it may lead you to stretch a point on the circumference, it will not permit you to destroy the center. But **if you are a consequentialist, the question "What is** it **right** to do **in such**‐and‐such **circumstances?" is [irrelevant]**a stupid one to raise. The casuist raises such a question only to ask "Would it be permissible to do so‐and‐so?" or "Would it be permissible not to do so‐and‐so?" **Only if it would not be permissible** not to do so‐and‐so **could [s]he say "This would be the thing to do."**[6] **Otherwise**, though [s]he may speak against some action, **[s]he cannot prescribe [action]** any‐for in an actual case, **the circumstances** (beyond the ones imagined) **might suggest all sorts of possibilities, and you can't know** in advance **what the[y]** possibilities **are going to be**. Now the consequentialist has no footing on which to say "This would be permissible, this not"; because by his own hypothesis, it is **the consequences** that are to **decide**, and he has no business to pretend that he can lay it down what possible twists a man could give doing this or that; the most he can say is: a man must not bring about this or that; he has no right to say he will, in an actual case, bring about such‐and‐such unless he does so‐and‐so. Further, the consequentialist, in order to be imagining borderline cases at all, has of course to assume some sort of law or standard according to which this is a borderline case, where then does he get the standard from? In practice the answer invariably is: from the standards current in his society or his circle. And it has in fact been the mark of all these philosophers that they have been extremely conventional; they have nothing in them by which to revolt against the conventional standards of their sort of people; it is impossible that they should be profound. But the chance that a whole range of conventional standards will be decent is small.-‐Finally, the point of considering hypothetical situations, perhaps very improbable ones, seems to be to elicit from yourself or someone else a hypothetical decision to do something of a bad kind. I don't doubt this has the effect of predisposing people--who will never get into the situations for which they have made hypothetical choices-‐to consent to similar bad actions, or to praise and flatter those who do them, so long as their crowd does so too, when the desperate circumstances imagined don't hold at all.

The presentation of the Aff ensures that the oppressed are reduced to disposable objects in a calculus. The impact is the trivialization of oppression in debate. To clarify, the Aff advocacy may be a good thing but this is a critique of your method of using the wrong framework to filter out this offense.

1. Modern Moral Philosophy: G. E. M. Anscombe Originally published in Philosophy 33, No. 124 (January 1958). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)