1) We need fixed principles to have any meaningful application. Just as you cannot measure something with a ruler constantly changing length, you need a standard by which to judge real world events. Otherwise your framework is incoherent because it cannot measure moral progress at all. Modified gendered language. **CHESTERON[[1]](#footnote-1):** Silly examples are always simpler; **let us suppose a person wanted a** particular kind of world; say, a **blue world**. He would have no cause to complain of the slightness or swiftness of his task; he might toil for a long time at the transformation; he could work away (in every sense) until all was blue. He could have heroic adventures; the putting of the last touches to a blue tiger. He could have fairy dreams; the dawn of a blue moon. **But if they worked hard, that** high-minded **reformer would certainly** (from his own point of view) **leave the world better and bluer** than he found it. If he altered a blade of grass to his favorite color every day, he would get on slowly. But **if they altered his favorite color every day, they would not get on at all. If, after reading a fresh philosopher, they started to paint everything red or yellow, their work would be thrown away: there would be nothing to show except a few blue tigers walking about, specimens of their early bad manner**. This is exactly the position of the average modern thinker. It will be said that this is avowedly a preposterous example. But it is literally the fact of recent history. The great and grave changes in our political civilization all belonged to the early nineteenth century, not to the later.

2) Abstraction is key to stopping oppression. **WOOD[[2]](#footnote-2):** There is no plausibility at all, for example, in the suggestion that such Kantian **principles as** human **equality**, rationalism, **universalism**, and cosmopolitanism **are [not]** in their content **favorable to racism**, sexism, **or** other forms of **oppression**, and such a thesis needs only to be stated explicitly to discredit itself. But this highly implausible thesis may be put forward by implication if it can be associated with the quite distinct but correct point that *even* a cosmopolitan and universalistic ethical theory, such as Kant’s, can be combined with racist or male-supremacist views in its application. It is also true that **[these principles]** egalitarianism, rationalism, universalism, and cosmopolitanism **are** especially **liable to rhetorical** **abuse** by those who advocate policies in direct violation of them, because subscribing to the correct principles at an abstract level is often enough a shabby ploy used to protect contrary policies from criticism. **The thought that this point has any *philosophical* significance**, however, **rests on an error** of abysmal proportions **about philosophy** and its relation to human practices. **If someone thinks there is a** philosophical **theory** of morality **whose uncritical adoption** and mechanical application **would** suffice to **protect us from evil,** then **that person is looking for something that could never exist. The correct standard for an ethic**al theory **is whether it** gets things **right at the level of basic** principles and **values, not whether it contains some** **magical property that protects us**, in the application of the theory, **from every perversion** or abuse through the influence of tradition and prejudice or the infinite human ingenuity of rationalization. **All theories are** about **equally subject to such abuse**, and no theory is immune to it. In fact, if we **[To] think** that the adoption of **a certain philosoph**ical theory, or a certain set of religious dogmas, **will protect us from all** **moral error**, that way of thinking itself **is** extremely dangerous, quite irrespective of the content of the theory or dogma with which we associate it. That thought itself is actually **responsible for** a lot of **the evil** that **people do.**

Means that every ethical theory can be misused – but that isn’t a problem with ethical principles, that is a problem with us – also means we should reclaim the true function of these ethical concepts in places like debate to challenge the way they are misunderstood; our depravity is a reason we need them now more than ever. Your argument is only uniqueness for mine.

3) Your framework doesn’t actually guide action in the real world unless it’s fully fleshed out. It’s unclear whether minimizing oppression is better, or acting so we never oppressed anyone in a Kantian way. If I oppressed or killed one person, which prevented the oppression of two, would it be ok? Only debating philosophical justification can ensure any value to your principles in the debate space. Even if certain things are always bad the project of ethics is not to prove the obvious – science doesn’t seek to do that either. We know an apple falls but want to know more how the force of gravity interacts with the rest of the universe. In the same way, we know oppression is bad but interrogating the normative reasoning behind those claims allows us to deal with issues that aren’t so black and white in the real world, like affirmative action for women versus blacks, which are not as easy as a debate K.

1. Gilbert Chesterton [Christian apologist and writer]. “Orthodoxy.” 1908. [modified for gendered language]. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Kantian Ethics ALLEN W. WOOD Stanford University [↑](#footnote-ref-2)