Kant Stop Debating  
Negative Case by Thomas Keith



# Author Biography

Thomas Keith doesn’t come from anywhere. In the past six years, he’s lived in approximately a dozen states, traveling around with his family in an RV. When he realized that staying in one place for more than two months would mean that he’d have to give up sports, he chose a better hobby for the logistically challenged: politics.

For years, Thomas’s passion was researching and discussing politics with others. He changed political positions dozens of times over the years and bounced all around the political spectrum until deciding to become a pluralist. It’s a lot easier to argue from any side you want if you become a pluralist.

In December of 2015, Thomas had an opportunity to do what he’d always wanted to try: competitive debate. Though he did as poorly as any first-time debater, he fell in love with it and resolved to work as hard as he could to catch up with his peers. Over Christmas Break, he did nothing but drill nonstop in order to ensure that he was able to organize, tag, and deliver arguments effectively.

The constant drilling continued into the spring semester, and he began to see results. Thomas took 3rd place at his first LD tournament, and 1st place at his second. His success continued through other tournaments in the South, as he consistently placed in the top 5 of every tournament he went to. He ended his rookie season on a semifinal finish at the National Invitational Tournament of Champions.

Through the grace of God, the instruction of Joseph Abell, and the utilization of well-honed argumentation combined with hard work, Thomas went to places no other novice has gone. He looks forward to going even farther next season.

Kant Stop Debating

Today, I'm going to introduce you to a very rare, and very different kind of debate case. What's it going to say? Well, three things. None of which are going to bode well for the affirmative—at all.

The first one is common sense. A teensy observation about life in general that I think we can all agree on. You can write it down as “Don't Vote for Evil.” It's a simple maxim that all of us already live by. If voting affirmative will give 100 people Ferraris but force you to kill a person, don't vote for it. If voting affirmative will give you a mountain of candy but only because you stole from the candy store, don't vote for it. Why? Well, because we consider such things to be morally wrong, regardless of how much it benefits us.

This means that it doesn't matter—in life or this debate round—how our actions affect people until we first consider whether those actions are morally good. The question of good and evil is so important that if any action, including voting for this resolution violates our moral standards, then that is the only relevant consideration in today's debate round. If this resolution is immoral, we vote against it.

Why does this matter? Well, because of my second argument: a fancy moral standard that I'm going to introduce into this round right now.

A moral standard says: here is a moral principle that we all agree we should live by, and if the resolution violates this moral standard, the resolution must be immoral.

In other words, if the resolution meets standard, he wins. If the resolution doesn't meet standard, I win. That simple.

So… what is this great adjudicating yardstick of doom? Well, you can write it down as:

# Standard: Human Dignity

Human dignity says that because every human being is autonomous and rational, with our own goals, values, and desires, then it's immoral to use other humans as mere means of achieving our own goals. In other words, forcing people to do stuff against their will is evil.

This isn't to say that you can't ever use other people—we do it all the time—and that's okay. Because most of the time we use people as a means for something, but not as a mere means. We recognize their humanity when we use them, and they agree to being used. For example, I once used a taxi to get home from the airport, and in that instance I was using the driver as a means to my end of getting home, and he was using me and my money as a means of feeding his family.

The moment he puts a gun to my head and tells me to give him my wallet, he's no longer using me as a means, he's using me as a mere means because he's not taking into account my desire to go home to my family, he's only thinking about his desire to feed his. In the same way, if I had jumped in his taxi, put a gun to *his* head, and tried to force him to drive me home I would likewise be using him as a mere means of going home, because I wouldn't be taking into account his desire to earn money to feed his family.

In short, all human dignity says is that it's evil to force someone to do stuff against their will, because you would be using them as mere means, i.e. not taking their will into account.

Why is this the best way to determine the evilness of this res? Well, let's answer that with my

## Standard Link: Foundation of Morality

At its core the reason why we need human dignity is because it is quite literally the logical foundation of morality.

If there wasn't something inherent about us as human beings that made us worthy of respect and dignity, then why not treat others like how we would animals? Why would cannibalism be bad? Why couldn't we hunt humans in the way we hunt deer? Why couldn't my opponent just shoot me where I stand as a means of winning this round?

You see, there's nothing about human beings that makes us worthy of any moral consideration if we are willing to compromise on the inherent dignity of humanity. And thus the only way to ensure that the foundation of morality is preserved, is by making sure—at its core—that this resolution preserves that human dignity.

Unfortunately, it doesn't. Bringing me to my third argument, a simple

# Contention: The Resolution Undermines our Human Dignity

The link between human dignity and private property rights is so direct that it's impossible to violate property rights without also violating human dignity.

Every time your wallet is stolen, someone is using you simply as a means to an end of enriching themselves. That violates your human dignity. Every time your house is vandalized, someone is using you and your property as a mere means to achieve their ends. That violates your human dignity. Every time your property is confiscated for a road, or a building, or a parking lot, that is someone claiming that their ends are more important than your faculties and your property. Once again, that's simply using you as mere means to an end.

You see, if human dignity is other people respecting what you want to do with your life, talents, and possessions; property rights merely secures that last part—the one dealing with possessions. Private property rights tell us that we shouldn't touch the property of others without their consent. Sound familiar? It should, because that is a key pillar of human dignity.

When you value public needs over private property rights, you necessarily violate those rights, which consequently violates human dignity. This means that the resolution and human dignity is incompatible, and this resolution is immoral. Affirmative has a burden to show you how it isn't.

Let's take a look at my opponent's case. He has a lot of information in here: Values, Contentions, Applications… I'm going to cut through all of that with a simple group response, which you can tag as:

# Morality is More Important

When a 19-year-old girl boards a 4-seater Cessna so she can land in Myanmar to spread the gospel to the millions of people who live there, we say that she's brave. And when she is captured by a group of zealots who put a gun to her head and ask her one simple question: “Are you a Christian?” And she answers yes even at the cost of her life, we not only say that she did the right thing, we say that she is courageous. Because even though her decision means a young Christian missionary is dead, even though it means that the world is a little less brighter, she decided to obey God even at the expense of her own interests. And we celebrate that decision, because no matter how important life, or prosperity, or happiness, or [AFF VALUE] is, we all acknowledge that the basic desire to do what is right must always come first.

And because what is right must come first, none of my opponents' arguments in today's round are even relevant until he can show us that affirming this resolution is moral—that it upholds human dignity—and as we can see clearly, it doesn't.

Thank you.