

Possible titles:

Did we consent to this? An Ethics Animation

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Appreciation for the importance of consent is growing in the world.

What is consent? Consent is when the owner of a thing knowingly gives permission for that thing to be used in a specific way.

You own your body. That's why another person must have your permission if they want to use your body. We don't usually talk about sex in these terms, but during sex, two people use each others' bodies. If one of those people *don't* want their body to be used in that way, the sex is not consensual.

Consent can't be given under duress. If a person says yes to sex, believing they will be harmed if they don't cooperate, that isn't genuine consent.

Taking something without consent is theft. Sex without consent is rape. Ending someone's life without consent is murder. The most despicable behaviours all have violation of consent in common.

Discussion of consent usually relates to sex, but we can think about consent in other human interactions too. For instance in the relationship between a government and a citizen.

The government demands money from you in the form of taxes. If you don't pay, you'll be fined. If you consistently fail to hand over the funds, agents of the state will use physical force to take you away and lock you up.

Is this arrangement consensual? In other words, have you given permission for your body to be subject to violence if you consistently disobey the state's demands?

You certainly didn't give permission explicitly.

Could it be that you implicitly agreed, without realising it? No. Because consent must be given knowingly.

Could it be that the state is within it's rights to use violence anyway because it owns the land you live on, and gets to set the terms of use for that land?

The state *\*controls\** the land through threats of violence, but is it the rightful owner? In most cases the state took the land from other people who were there first, or simply declared itself to be the owner of large areas of unoccupied land. I don't believe these are legitimate ways to acquire ownership.

So it seems to me that:

- \* The state is *not* the owner of the land
- \* Which means the state has no right to impose any conditions on the use of that land
- \* The state imposes taxation as a condition of remaining in the territory it claims.
- \* And this means that taxation is illegitimate and non-consensual

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Taxation is non-consensual. It's carried out without your consent. I'm going to explain how I get to this conclusion.

**Consent** can be given by a person. It's is an owner's permission to use their property in a certain way.

To **own** a thing is to have the right to determine how it's used, and by whom.

You **own** your body. Meaning you, and you alone, determine how your body may be used, and by whom. That means another person must have your permission to use your body.

It sounds odd, but during sex, two people **use** each others' bodies. If either person doesn't want their body used that way, the sex is not consensual.

Consent can't be given under duress. If a person says yes to sex, believing they will be harmed if they don't cooperate, that isn't genuine consent.

How is consent relevant to taxation?

The state maintains threats of violence against all of us so we comply with its demands for payment. Like sex, violence is a *particular way of using a body* - that means violence can be carried out with consent, or without it.

What happens when you're taxed?

First the state informs you it expects you to pay. If you don't pay, a fee gets added. If you consistently fail to obey the demands for payment, eventually agents will come to take you away and lock you up against your will. They'll use physical force to drag you away if you don't obey their commands. If you try to defend yourself against being taken, the agents will escalate their use of force to overpower you. If you defend yourself powerfully enough, they'll kill you.

Most of the time, no actual violence needs to be carried out. The threat is enough to keep people in line.

If this sounds hard to believe, consider that if the state *didn't* maintain this threat, if the agents just left people alone who protested strongly enough, the public would soon realise they could safely disobey en masse. Almost no one would voluntarily pay taxes.

Although the state threatens its citizens, taxation **could** still be consensual. Let's see if it is.

The taxed don't explicitly consent. Maybe they **implicitly** consent.

Some say that by using government-provided services like roads or healthcare you are consenting to taxation. Does that make sense?

If a slave accepts the daily meal from his master, has he **consented** to his enslavement? No. The slave can't consent because he's under duress:

- He knows he won't be freed even if he rejects the meal,
- and he expects to be harmed if he tries to escape.

We're also under duress with regard to taxation:

- We know we'll be taxed whether or not we use government services,
- and we expect to be harmed if we disobey the demands for payment.

On the other hand the *owner* of a place **does** get to set rules for others who use it. **If the state owns the land**, maybe we consent to taxation by just by staying there.

The state certainly **controls** the land but in most cases the state used coercion to gain that control: It either took the land from other people who were there first, or simply declared itself to be the owner of large areas of unoccupied land. I don't think these are legitimate ways to acquire ownership.

We've seen that

- The state depends on threats of violence to collect taxes
- But the taxed haven't consented to this arrangement
  - No explicit consent was given
  - No implicit consent was given
    - The state doesn't own the land
    - Use of government services isn't consent

This means taxation is nonconsensual. Even if you think it's necessary or beneficial.

Taking something without consent is theft. Sex without consent is rape. Ending someone's life without consent is murder. The most despicable behaviours all have violation of consent in common.

Do a search for some of these phrases to find out more.

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