

### **Complex conditionals**

If A or B, then x is wrong.

If neither A nor B, then x is permissible.

If A and B, then x is wrong.

If either A is not true, or B is not true, then x is permissible.

### **Making an argument for a claim by giving evidence that directly supports it**

1. Give clear, compelling examples of relevant things that are wrong/permissible [or whatever it is that you are discussing]
  - a. If your examples are implausible or unclear, your argument will be weak.
  - b. Be careful: the fewer examples you use, the harder it is to generalize, and the more objections there will be.
2. Show that your claim gives the best explanation of why these things are wrong/permissible
  - a. This will require showing that the examples fit your thesis.
  - b. This typically requires showing that they would not fit alternative views. So pick examples that allow you to rule out alternative views.

*For example:*

Stoljar wants to argue that actions based on defective desires are not autonomous.

- She gives some compelling examples of failures of autonomy (e.g. brainwashing).
- She shows why defective desires are similar (showing how the examples support her view).
- She considers alternative views (e.g. the view that one is autonomous when one endorses one's own reasoning), and shows why they are not true.

*Another example:*

Thesis: If an employment contract requires an employee to violate human rights, then it is morally permissible for the employee to violate that contract. If the employment contract does not require an employee to violate human rights, then it is morally wrong to violate that contract.

Evidence:

- It is morally permissible to do not do ones' job when it requires murdering innocent people.
- It is permissible to not do one's job when that requires discriminating against members of certain races or certain religions.
- It is permissible to not do one's job when that involves spying on people's romantic relationships without their consent.
- It is morally wrong to refuse to do one's job because it (legally) causes one's competitor to lose business.

- It is morally wrong to refuse to do one's job because it involves violating extremely unjust laws (imagine a company that was hired to help people escape legal slavery).
- It is morally wrong to do one's job because that involves firing someone who refused to do their work without any reason (it would be wrong to do one's job if that involved firing someone on discriminatory grounds, or firing someone for no reason).

How the thesis fit the evidence:

- There is a human right to not be discriminated against due to race or religion. There is a human right to life. There is a human right to privacy (at least about one's romantic relationships).
- There is no human right to not have business competitors, or for one's business to thrive. People might have some human right to have a job, but they forfeit that right when they refuse to work for no reason.
- So, the examples where it is permissible to violate one's contract are all ones where one's job involves violating rights, but the ones where it is wrong to violate one's contract are ones where the contract does not infringe any rights.

Why the evidence does not fit alternative views:

- Alternative: it is always wrong to violate one's job contract.
  - The first three examples are counterexamples.
- Alternative: it is permissible to violate contracts requiring illegal things, wrong to violate contracts that require legal actions.
  - It is sometimes wrong to violate a contract that requires doing illegal things, when the law is unjust (e.g. wrong to violate a contract to help people escape legal slavery).
- Alternative: it is wrong to do a job that involves unjust power structures (which might explain why it is wrong to discriminate on the job).
  - But murdering on the job is wrong no matter what the structure of one's business or society is; murdering on the job is wrong even if there is no relevant unjust structure.
- Alternative: it is permissible to violate contract that requires negatively affecting people's well-being, and not otherwise.
  - Spying on people does not necessarily affect well-being – if the people don't find out, they will not be harmed.
  - Causing one's competitor to lose business, or firing someone who refuses to work, negatively affects their well-being, but it is wrong to refuse to do these.

**A related approach (argument by elimination):**

1. Start by discussing a very intuitive/plausible/common-sensical view.
2. Show why it can't be true, using strong counterexamples.
3. Show how the counterexamples mean we have to adopt a different view.
4. Do this until you end up with your thesis. Summarize how it fits all the evidence given.

*For example:*

Crisp wants to argue that all persuasive advertising violates autonomy. That's clearly surprising, so he isn't going to find enough compelling examples that directly support it.

- So he considers alternative views (different views of autonomy, which would say that persuasive advertising does not interfere with autonomy).
- Then he shows why each cannot be true.
- Once he's gone through the alternatives, he has evidence that shows that his view is correct.

*Another example:*

Thesis: If an employment contract requires an employee to violate human rights, then it is morally permissible for the employee to violate that contract. Otherwise it is wrong.

- Initially, we might say that it is always wrong to violate one's job contract.
  - Counterexample: Contracts involving murder or discrimination.
  - These are both illegal, so...
- We might say it is permissible to violate contracts requiring illegal things, wrong to violate contracts that require legal actions.
  - Counterexample: Jobs having to do with legal slavery.
  - Discrimination and slavery involve unjust power structures, so...
- We might say that it is wrong to do a job that involves unjust power structures.
  - But murdering on the job is wrong no matter what the structure of one's business or society is.
  - Discrimination, slavery, murder are all harmful, so...
- We might say it is permissible to violate contract that requires negatively affecting people's well-being, and not otherwise.
  - Spying on people does not necessarily affect well-being – if the people don't find out, they will not be harmed.
  - Causing one's competitor to lose business, or firing someone who refuses to work, negatively affects their well-being, but it is wrong to refuse to do these.
- So, we are left with my thesis...

**Arguing for your thesis by arguing for something else first**

1. Find a general idea that, if true, would allow you to show that your thesis is true.
  - a. You might do this because your thesis is surprising, or does not clearly or obviously fit examples that others are inclined to accept.
2. Argue for that principle:
  - a. This involves giving evidence
  - b. And showing how alternative principles are actually false.
3. Then show how the principle leads to your thesis.
  - a. This won't always be obvious to your reader, so be sure to explain (and give evidence for) this.

*For example:*

- Paine wanted to argue for the surprising view that marketing to children is wrong.
  - So she starts by arguing for the view that children are not capable of making consumer decisions (giving a lot of evidence to support this view).

*Another example:*

Thesis: If an employment contract requires an employee to violate human rights, then it is morally permissible for the employee to violate that contract. Otherwise it is wrong.

- General principle: respecting human rights is always more important than keeping one's promises.
- General principle: One has an obligation to fulfill one's job contract just because it is one's promise.
- Putting these together, it is wrong to violate one's contracts unless fulfilling the contract violates human rights (which is the thesis).
- To argue for the thesis, one would then argue for these two general principles (using evidence, showing how the evidence supports the principle, considering and rejecting alternative views)