

**Phil 74A/Humbio 174A/Ethicsoc 174:**

**Ethics in a Human Life**

**Section 4 Handout**

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Notes:

- Argument reconstruction: Reconstructing the structure of an argument more explicitly and clearly
- Terms:
  - o Argument:
    - A set of statements or ideas where at least one statement is presented in support of some conclusion
    - Example:
      - “Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.”
      - Conclusion statement = Socrates is mortal
      - Premise statement which supports the conclusion = Socrates is a man
  - o Main conclusion: The central statement which all other statements are intended to support
  - o Premise: A statement in support of some conclusion
  - o Objection: A statement that undermines the truth of some premise or conclusion, or an inferential step from a premise
  - o Reply: A statement that counters an objection
- Task: Begin assignment 4 for any article
  - Step 1: Find “a recently published piece of opinion/editorial writing, which argues for an ethical claim that relates to the current Coronavirus pandemic”
    - o To illustrate, I use Benatar’s paper which is **NOT an op-ed nor about the pandemic**
  - Step 2: Identify and write down the conclusion of the author’s argument
    - o “It is better never to come into existence”
  - Step 3: List the quotations that form the basis for your argument reconstruction
    - o “the absence of pleasure is not bad unless there is somebody for whom this absence is a deprivation”, “there is no duty to bring happy people into being”, etc...
  - Step 4 – Reconstruct the argument in standard form:
    - o Standard form:
      - A set of statements on separate lines where each statement is clearly designated as a premise or a conclusion and each premise is numbered
    - o Example:
      - P1: We have no duties to bring happy people into existence
      - P2: Bringing happy people into existence is not a reason to have kids
      - P3: We never regret not bringing a happy person into existence
      - SC1: There is a particular asymmetry: the absence of pleasure is not bad for a non-existent person (from premises 1-3)
      - P4: (Something like) Method of comparison #1 says this **[DON’T DO THIS]**
      - P5: (Something like) Method of comparison #2 says that **[DON’T DO THIS]**
      - SC2: If there is this asymmetry, then it is better never to come into existence (from premises 4-5)
- Step 5: Evaluate the argument
  - o “I think this is a bad argument. I disagree with **P1** because... I also disagree with the ***inference*** from P1 to SC1 because...”

ARGUMENT MAP ILLUSTRATION – don't worry about this for your assignment

