Template ethics argument

First, refer Prof Cohen's notes (p 1 bottom right). Typically, in a real professional ethics problem, discussion moves from case (bottom level) to middle level (general topic) and then back to case. If it is a standard topic (e.g. confidentiality) under discussion, then you may not need to appeal to general principles (top level), because the profession (society) has an agreed belief about standard topics in some cases. But beware: some topics (e.g. euthanasia) are not agreed!

Now look at his notes again (p 2 top left). You can see what is necessary in a complete ethics argument. However, the frameworks can allow short-cuts, by appealing to the ideas that are "generally accepted" as valid, without needing the final step explaining something "causes great unhappiness" (to quote his example). For example, we can refer to a "duty to promote safety" or a "right to privacy" without needing to prove that these exist.

Here is one way to use each of the frameworks. I am sure you can think of others. Or look at Prof Cohen's example.

duties: X's [action] is ethical/unethical because X has a duty to [reason].

rights: X's [action] is ethical/unethical because Y has a right to [reason].

virtues: X's [action] is ethical/unethical because it is/is not [feature] which is a virtue.

utilitarianism: X's [action] is ethical/unethical because it will cause [$outcome_1, \ldots outcome_n$], which is/is not the best possible overall result because [balance].

Again, if your right/duty/virtue is "well accepted" you can stop with this statement, but if it is not commonly identified you should explain why you believe it exists as a right/duty/virtue.

Finally, refer to the supplementary course notes about Ethics Arguments to get a more complete idea about how to phrase ethics arguments, both things to do and things not to do.