Chapter 1

Analysing moral reasoning

Reasoning about moral or ethical issues such as abortion or euthanasia is often to be found in newspaper articles and letters to the editor. Those writing the articles may hold a particular point of view – for example that abortion is morally wrong – and wish to convince others that this point of view is right. One way to attempt to do this is to offer reasons or evidence which they believe supports their position: that is to say, they present an **argument**. What we mean by 'argument' in this context is a **reason** or a series of **reasons** which aim to support a particular claim, which is called the **conclusion**.

This is not the only context in which reasoning about ethics occurs. Sometimes we attempt to reason for ourselves about a particular ethical issue. For example, you may see a fellow worker stealing something from your employer, and experience a genuine dilemma as to what to do in these circumstances, since you feel some loyalty to your friend but also have a sense of responsibility to your employer. If the question you ask yourself is not 'What shall I do?', but 'What ought I to do', then you may engage in moral reasoning by considering the consequences of

various courses of action, or by weighing the conflicting responsibilities, and attempting to come to a conclusion on the issue.

We have mentioned two instances of moral reasoning – written arguments (often in newspapers, but also to be found in textbooks, magazines, political pamphlets and so on), and the mental exercise of figuring something out for oneself. In this chapter we shall concentrate on written moral arguments, in order to help you to develop skills both in recognising when other people are presenting moral arguments, and in understanding the way in which someone's argument aims to support its conclusion. Chapters 2 and 3 will deal with assessment of moral arguments, and in Chapter 4 we shall offer practice in doing the reasoning for yourself on a number of ethical issues, when we introduce decision making.

Recognising moral arguments

In order to be able to recognise moral arguments, we need to be clear about two things:

(i) What is the difference between an argument and a written passage which does not contain an argument?
(ii) What is the difference between a moral argument and a non-moral argument?

Let us consider the first of these.

Recognising arguments

All arguments, whether on ethical issues or not, will contain a main conclusion and a reason or reasons which are offered in support of the conclusion. Certain characteristic words – which we can call **conclusion indicators** – may be used to introduce a conclusion – for example, 'so', 'therefore', 'thus', 'hence' – as illustrated in the following passage:

> **Most manufactured baby milks have been found to contain chemicals which can cause infertility. So mothers of new-born babies should be advised to breast-feed their babies.**

Here the conclusion is the second sentence, and is introduced by 'So'. Where such words are used they can give us a clue that an argument is being presented, but we need to remember that these conclusion indicators

also have other uses in language, so we cannot take it for granted that any passage which contains such a word must be presenting an argument.

There are a number of words which can function as **reason indicators**, which can also suggest to us that reasoning is taking place. Examples are 'because', 'for', and 'since'. The above argument could have read as follows:

> Mothers of new-born babies should be advised to breast-feed their babies, because most manufactured baby milks have been found to contain chemicals which can cause infertility.

In this example, the word 'because' signals that 'most manufactured baby milks have been found to contain chemicals which can cause infertility' is being offered as a reason for the conclusion that 'mothers of new-born babies should be advised to breast-feed their babies'.

Conclusions and reasons are sometimes introduced explicitly by a phrase which makes the author's intention very clear, for example 'it follows that', 'I draw the conclusion that', 'the reason for this is'. Other words which can indicate the presence of a conclusion are 'must' and 'cannot', as shown in the following two examples:

> He must have committed the murder. No-one else had the opportunity to do it, and his fingerprints were found on the murder weapon.

> People who accept that it is sometimes right to go to war cannot really believe that killing is always wrong. War inevitably involves killing.

In the first example the evidence presented in the second sentence is being used to support the conclusion that 'He *must* have committed the murder'. The second passage relies on the claim that war inevitably involves killing, in order to support the conclusion that those who are not in principle opposed to war *cannot* believe that killing is always wrong.

Although we can often find 'argument indicator' words to help us to identify arguments, it is possible for a passage to be an argument even if it contains no such words. Here is an example:

> Being aware of the dangers of driving too fast is not sufficient to stop people from speeding. Many drivers are still exceeding speed limits. A recent television campaign has emphasised the dangers of driving too fast, by showing home videos of children who were subsequently killed by speeding motorists.

In order to recognise this passage as an argument, we need to consider the relationships between the statements in the passage. Can any of the statements

be taken to support any other statement? We could answer this question by considering each statement in turn, and asking 'Is any support or evidence given for this?' When we consider the first statement in this passage, we find that the rest of the passage can be taken to support the claim that awareness of the dangers of driving too fast does not stop drivers from speeding. The two further claims made in the passage – that many drivers are still speeding, and that there has been publicity about the dangers – are presented as reasons for accepting the conclusion expressed in the first sentence.

We have discussed two ways in which we might recognise an argument:

(i) by finding 'argument indicator' words (conclusion indicators, or reason indicators),
(ii) by finding a claim for which reasons appear to be offered.

If we have found 'argument indicator' words, then it is reasonable to assume that the writer was intending to present an argument. However, when we try to assess whether a written passage contains an argument, we are not simply trying to guess what the author's intentions were. A passage can function as an argument even if the author did not consciously set out to present an argument. It will function as an argument if it contains some claim (the conclusion) which is given support by other statements in the passage (the reasons).

There are many different purposes of written communication, and often, when, for example, we read newspaper articles, it will be obvious to us that an argument is *not* being presented. Some pieces of writing aim to tell a story, some to evoke our sympathy with a person's misfortune, some to amuse us, some to describe a scene, and some to present information to us without drawing any conclusions. However, the wording of a passage may sometimes mislead us into thinking that an argument is being offered, particularly when information is presented. For example, only one of the following two passages is an argument. Read them, and decide which one is an argument.

(a) Most mothers want the best for their babies. Some people think that it is better to feed babies on breast milk rather than on manufactured baby milks. Not all mothers find it convenient to breast feed.

(b) Mothers who go back to work soon after the birth of their babies find it inconvenient to breast feed. Trying to persuade such mothers to breast feed will only make them feel guilty. Instead, we should require employers to extend the period of paid maternity leave, so that mothers have more freedom of choice as to how to feed their babies.

In order to decide whether the passage is an argument, it is useful to ask first if there is a single main point which the passage is making. We can consider this question in relation to each of the statements in the passage. First passage (a) – does it try to convince us that most mothers want the best for their babies? It simply presents this as a piece of information, without giving us any evidence to support it. Does the passage try to convince us that some people think that it is better to feed babies on breast milk rather than on manufactured baby milks? Again, no support is given in the passage for this claim. Does it offer evidence for the claim that not all mothers find it convenient to breast feed? No, it simply presents this as a fact. There is a sense in which the passage aims to convince us of the truth of each of these statements, by presenting them as pieces of information, but not by presenting extra information or evidence which supports any of them. The statements are not interrelated in such a way that any one of them, or a combination of two of them, supports another. Hence this passage is not an argument, but simply presents information from which readers might draw their own conclusions.

Now let's consider passage (b). Does it support the claim that mothers who go back to work soon after the birth of their babies find it inconvenient to breast feed? No, it just tells us that this is so. Does it offer any evidence that trying to persuade such mothers to breast feed will only make them feel guilty? No, again, this is simply presented as a fact. Does it offer support for the claim that instead of trying to persuade these mothers to breast feed, we should require employers to extend the period of paid maternity leave, so that mothers have more freedom of choice as to how to feed their babies? The other two statements *do* appear to offer *some* reason for accepting this recommendation, in that the recommendation gives one possible solution to the problem identified by the other two statements – namely that there may be some mothers who want to breast feed their babies, and feel guilty about not doing so, but find it inconvenient to do so, because (perhaps for financial reasons) they go back to work. Thus it is reasonable to regard this passage as presenting an argument, though we may wish to question whether it is a very good argument. Perhaps the recommendation to require employers to extend maternity leave is unrealistic. Perhaps the argument relies on a questionable assumption – that it is better for babies to be breast fed than to be bottle fed. Perhaps there are other ways of solving the perceived problem – for example, convincing mothers that their babies can still be healthy if bottle fed, or providing crèches in places of employment, so that mothers can both work and take time off to breast feed their babies.

Examination of these two examples emphasises the fact that argument is not just a matter of presenting information. It is, rather, a matter of presenting a conclusion based on information or reasons.

Distinguishing moral from non-moral arguments

We now turn to the question as to what is distinctive about moral arguments. Does it really matter whether we can distinguish between a moral and a non-moral argument? In some respects, the two are alike, in that they present a reason or reasons for accepting a conclusion, and if we develop our skills in recognising arguments in general, then we are likely to be able to recognise moral arguments as arguments. Moreover, the basic steps we must take when we evaluate arguments (which will be set out in Chapter 2), are the same for both kinds of argument. However, the primary aim of this book is to improve reasoning skills applied to ethical issues, so it is important to learn to recognise those issues and features of language which suggest that a *moral* argument is being presented.

A moral argument, simply because it *is* an argument, will contain a conclusion, i.e. a claim in support of which some reasoning is offered. Think for a moment about what the idea of a moral or ethical claim involves. Before reading on, try to write down what you think are the important characteristics of a moral or ethical claim. You may find this very difficult, so perhaps as an easier first step, you could list a few examples of moral claims.

You may have come up with examples which claim that a certain action or activity or way of life is wrong – e.g. 'It is wrong to fiddle your tax return'. Or your examples may have been claims that someone, or everyone, ought or ought not to act in a particular way – e.g. 'Jamie should not hit other children'; 'Everyone ought to look after their elderly parents'; or 'Teachers should not use corporal punishment on pupils'.

A moral argument must have a conclusion which makes some kind of moral claim, as do the examples quoted in the last paragraph. These moral claims are often expressed as **recommendations**, using the words 'should' or 'ought'. Even where they do not directly make a recommendation (e.g. 'It's wrong to fiddle your tax return'), it is clear that a recommendation is intended to follow from them ('So you shouldn't do it'). The words 'should', 'ought', 'right', 'wrong' can be described as **evaluative** terms, and they can indicate to us that a moral argument is being presented. Sometimes the evaluative aspect of a conclusion can be captured in an adjective – for example 'cruel', 'inhumane', 'admirable' and so on.

The presence of a recommendation or an evaluative term cannot be taken as a guarantee that a moral argument is being presented, since not all recommendations are moral recommendations, and not all evaluations are moral evaluations. Evaluative statements occur also in the context of aesthetic judgements, that is to say judgements as to what is beautiful in art, literature and music, or as to what is pleasing to other senses such as taste and smell.

Recommendations can include such matters as what kind of car to buy or which career to pursue. We need to develop a sensitivity to evaluations which are moral as opposed to aesthetic or practical.

The distinction between moral and practical (sometimes referred to as 'prudential') recommendations can be made clear with some examples. For each of the following statements, decide whether it makes a moral or a prudential recommendation:

(i) You want to live to a ripe old age, so you should take regular exercise,
(ii) You should look after your mother when she is ill.
(iii) No-one should drink and drive.
(iv) I want to get high grades, so I ought to attend lectures.
(v) You should refrain from hitting your children.
(vi) If you want to keep a clean driving licence, you ought not to drink and drive.

The crucial difference between the moral and the practical recommendations lies not in the subject matter of these statements, but in the form or shape in which they are expressed. Numbers (i), (iv) and (vi) have the form 'You want *x*, so you should do *y*'. These are practical recommendations, addressed to those who have a particular interest or aim, and telling them what to do in order to achieve it. On the other hand, numbers (ii), (iii) and (v) do not specify any aim held by those to whom they are addressed. Their form is 'You should do *y*', and the implication is that you should do it regardless of what your aims and interests are. You should do it, because it is, quite simply, the right thing to do. These are examples of moral recommendations.

It will not always be obvious that a moral, as opposed to a practical recommendation is being made. Consider the following example:

> The Italians, who drink a lot of wine and eat a diet rich in fruit, vegetables and olive oil, have a lower incidence of heart disease than the British. The British government should therefore encourage its citizens to increase their consumption of wine, fruit, vegetables and olive oil, so that its citizens will be less susceptible to heart attacks.

Disregarding for the present the question as to whether this is a good argument, is it making a moral recommendation? There are two ways in which one could construe the second sentence. It could mean 'If the British government *wants* its citizens to be less susceptible to heart attacks, it should encourage them to consume more wine, fruit, vegetables and olive oil', in which case a merely practical recommendation is being made. Or it could mean 'The British government has a moral obligation to encourage its

citizens to consume more wine, fruit, vegetables and olive oil, because this would make them less susceptible to heart attacks'. A thorough assessment of the argument would have to evaluate both of these two possible interpretations.

Another example in which it might be difficult to decide whether a moral argument is being offered is the argument presented on page 8:

> **Mothers who go back to work soon after the birth of their babies find it inconvenient to breast feed. Trying to persuade such mothers to breast feed will only make them feel guilty. Instead, we should require employers to extend the period of paid maternity leave, so that mothers have more freedom of choice as to how to feed their babies.**

Think for yourself about whether this is best understood as a moral argument.

Because making moral recommendations, either explicitly or implicitly, is central to moral arguments, it is tempting to define moral arguments as those arguments which tell us what is morally obligatory or what is morally forbidden. But this would exclude a whole class of arguments which defend claims that, contrary to what others may argue, something is neither morally obligatory, nor morally forbidden, but is morally permissible. For example, some people claim that abortion is morally wrong, from which it would follow that carrying out an abortion or seeking an abortion is morally forbidden. Someone arguing for the opposing view – that abortion is not morally wrong and is therefore morally permissible – is presenting a moral argument even though the conclusion does not make a claim about what is obligatory or forbidden. Such an argument aims to tell you what you *may* do, rather than what you should or should not do. Another example would be an argument with the conclusion that there is nothing morally wrong with being a conscientious objector when one's country is at war. This would be aiming to tell you that refusing to fight is morally permissible, contrary to claims that for males in a certain age group, fighting for one's country is morally obligatory. Of course, a huge amount of our normal everyday activity comes into the category of what is morally permissible, but we do not usually see any need to produce arguments to the effect that it is morally permissible to take out the rubbish or to mow the lawn. In general, arguments with conclusions that something is morally permissible will be on topics which are known to be contentious, and concerning which some of the disputants make claims that *x* or *y* is morally forbidden or morally obligatory.

Moral arguments, then, can come in a variety of guises. The use of certain words or phrases, or the discussion of certain issues, can alert us to the fact that a moral argument is being offered. Once we have satisfied ourselves that a moral claim is being made, we need to look in the text to see if reasons are

given in support of it, in order to be sure that what is offered is argument, rather than dogmatic assertion of a point of view.

Exercise 1 Identifying moral arguments and conclusions

For each of the following, decide whether it is a moral argument, and, if it is an argument, identify the main conclusion. (NB some of these passages may not be arguments, and some may be arguments, but not moral arguments.)

Comments about each of these passages are made in Appendix 1.

1 Foxhunting and angling are similar in some respects. They are both done by human beings for their own enjoyment, and in both cases, an animal is made to suffer.

2 The fact that people disagree about moral matters is not a good reason for believing that there can be no rational discussion about morals. Scientists often disagree about scientific matters. This does not lead us to believe that there is no possibility of rational discussion between scientists.

3 A mouse is not a human being. Therefore there is no scientific justification for experimenting on mice in order to find out things about people.

4 It is argued, possibly with some justification, that skinny models provide unhealthy images for adolescents. But this does not mean that they should be criticised for presenting this image. No supermodel is chastised for smoking, a habit that is far more likely to kill her, and her admirers, than slimness. Nor do we persecute ballerinas, many of whom are not just anorexic, but crippled.

5 It is known that child molesters expose their victims to paedophiliac pornography to make sexual abuse seem normal. Likewise, certain films may have the effect of making violence acceptable to some children. Research has so far failed to assess the impact of such material.

(*Independent*, 26 November 1993)

6 Why should people who have been found guilty of supposed war crimes be punished? If it is because they have caused death and suffering, then surely that would mean that anyone who has killed another person in battle should be punished. Terrible things happen in wars, yet most people think that to fight in defence of one's country is not wrong. If war is morally justifiable, then killing the enemy during war-time cannot be wrong. And if it is not wrong, how can we say that those who perform such acts are committing a crime?

7 Some day soon we will have to ration energy use in planes and cars.... Here is one scheme some environmentalists have put forward. If as a nation we set a limit to the total number of air miles flown, or indeed to the number of car miles driven, we could issue a ration to every citizen. Those who did not want to use their driving or flying ration could sell their quota on the open market. The rich would scramble to buy, the poor to sell if they wanted to, if the price was enticing enough. Rations would become very valuable and it would lead to a healthy redistribution of wealth that had nothing to do with taxation. (Think what this principle could do for redistributing wealth between rich and poor nations too.)

(Polly Toynbee, *Independent*, 13 October 1997)

8 The idea that it is the fault of tobacco companies if smokers suffer from smoking related illnesses is crazy. We do not think that brewers are to blame for alcoholism, or that suppliers of dairy products are to blame for heart attacks and obesity. The tobacco companies are simply supplying a product which people can choose to buy or not to buy. The health risks of smoking are well known; warnings about the dangers even appear on the cigarette packets. It is tempting to look for someone to blame – and someone to sue – when misfortunes occur. But if anyone is to blame for a smoking related illness, it is the person who smokes in full knowledge of the risks.

9 Remission of prison sentences should not be based just on good behaviour, but on whether the prisoner is fit to rejoin society. If prisoners are considered a danger to the public they should not be let out when there are still some years of

their sentence to run. So rapists and arsonists should remain under lock and key until their sentence is completed.

10 The impression is created for the public that embryo research will bring treatment and miracle cures. That is cruelly untrue. Testing embryos for disorders and then destroying them offers no help to disabled people. Nor does it prevent handicap because it cannot stop new conditions arising in families with no previous history of them – a very common aspect of genetic disease.

Structure of arguments

Arguments can have a variety of structures. In order to be able to assess an argument, it is helpful first to work out its structure. Before we look in detail at the idea of structure, let us remind ourselves of the nature of argument – i.e. a reason or a set of reasons offered in support of a conclusion. Thus, there are two basic components of arguments – reasons and conclusions.

Reasons and conclusions

We have already learnt something about the nature of conclusions from examples of arguments given earlier. We know that a conclusion must make a claim. Another way of expressing this is to say that it must be presented as being true. We also know that a conclusion is sometimes, but not always, introduced by a 'conclusion indicator' word such as 'so' or 'therefore'. Looking back through previous examples will also show you that conclusions do not always appear at the end of arguments. They can occur at the beginning, as shown in both examples on page 7, or in the middle of an argument, as shown in the passage below.

> **Anyone who works hard can improve their exam grades. Kim cannot have worked hard this year. Her exam grades are just as bad as they were last year.**

We have said little about reasons so far. Many different kinds of statements can function as reasons, for example, items of scientific evidence, statistics, general principles. What they have in common is that they are offered in support of a conclusion, and, like conclusions, they are presented as being true. Because arguments have to start somewhere, not

all of the reasons in an argument can be given support *within that argument*. Every argument must have at least one basic reason for which no support is offered. The evaluation of arguments, which will be introduced in Chapter 2, requires us to assess whether such reasons are true. But for the present, we are concerned simply with working out the structure of an argument, as a preliminary to evaluating it, so we shall not worry about the truth of reasons in this chapter.

The reasons and conclusions in an argument can fit together in a number of ways, the simplest of which is where one reason supports a conclusion. We have already seen some arguments with this structure, for example:

> People who accept that it is sometimes right to go to war cannot really believe that killing is always wrong. War inevitably involves killing.

Here we have:

> Reason: War inevitably involves killing.

offered in support of

> Conclusion: People who accept that it is sometimes right to go to war cannot really believe that killing is always wrong.

Another example of this simple structure is given below:

> Since we are not under an obligation to give aid unless aid is likely to be effective in reducing starvation or malnutrition, we are not under an obligation to give aid to countries that make no effort to reduce the rate of population growth that will lead to catastrophe.
> (P. Singer, 'Famine, Affluence and Morality' in W. Aiken and H. LaFollette (eds.) *World Hunger and Moral Obligation*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1977, p. 35)

In this example we find a reason indicator, 'since', which tells us that the first part of the passage is a reason. The structure is as follows:

> Reason: We are not under an obligation to give aid unless aid is likely to be effective in reducing starvation or malnutrition.

offered in support of

> Conclusion: We are not under an obligation to give aid to countries that

> make no effort to reduce the rate of population growth that will lead to catastrophe.

Sometimes two or more reasons are offered which, taken together, give support to the conclusion. This happens in the following example:

> Withholding information is just the same as lying. Lying is wrong. So withholding information is wrong.
> (T. Govier, *A Practical Study of Argument*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1985, p. 139)

You will have noticed that this argument contains the conclusion indicator 'So'. The structure can be set out as follows:

> Reason 1: Withholding information is just the same as lying.
>
> Reason 2: Lying is wrong.

presented together to support:

> Conclusion: So withholding information is wrong.

Both reasons are needed to support the conclusion. Although this example has only two reasons, it is possible for arguments to offer more than two reasons as jointly supporting a conclusion. However, sometimes when there are two (or more) reasons, they are offered not as jointly supporting the conclusion, but as independently supporting it, for example:

> Cigarette advertising should be banned because it encourages young people to start smoking. But even if it had no such influence on young people, it should be banned because it gives existing smokers the mistaken impression that their habit is socially acceptable.

The presenter of this argument clearly believes that each reason *on its own* is sufficient to support the conclusion that cigarette advertising should be banned, and would claim that the argument had established its conclusion if it could be shown *either* that cigarette advertising encourages young people to start smoking, *or* that cigarette advertising gives smokers the impression that smoking is socially acceptable. By contrast, in arguments in which the reasons are offered *jointly* in support of the conclusion, *all* the reasons must be true in order for the argument to be a good argument.

It may not always be clear whether the reasons are intended to support the conclusion jointly or independently, as, for example, in the following argument, first shown on page 7:

> He must have committed the murder. No-one else had the opportunity to do it, and his fingerprints were found on the murder weapon.

Perhaps the author regards each piece of evidence as sufficient in itself to show that 'he must have committed the murder'. However, taken together, the two pieces of evidence present a much stronger case, particularly since the presence of the suspect's fingerprints on the murder weapon may be explicable in some other way. Often an argument like this will be stronger if it presents joint rather than independent reasons for its conclusion, provided its reasons are all true.

Sometimes arguments present reasons for a conclusion which is then used, either on its own or with other reasons, to support a further conclusion. We can distinguish, then, between an **intermediate conclusion** and a **main conclusion**. This can be seen in the following example:

> It is clear that we have criteria for deciding whether people would make good parents, because couples who want to adopt children have to be assessed as to their suitability for parenthood. Since those people who do not satisfy the criteria for being good parents should not be allowed to become parents, no couples should be allowed to have a baby unless they have been granted a licence for parenthood.

There are two reason indicators in this passage – 'because' and 'since'. In the first sentence, 'because' indicates that a conclusion is being drawn, i.e. 'It is clear that we have criteria for deciding whether people would make good parents'. What the passage is ultimately trying to get us to accept – its main conclusion – is that 'no couples should be allowed to have a baby unless they have been granted a licence for parenthood'. The conclusion in the first sentence is an intermediate conclusion, and the argument can be set out as follows:

> Reason 1: Couples who want to adopt children have to be assessed as to their suitability for parenthood.

which is intended to support:

> Intermediate conclusion: It is clear that we have criteria for deciding whether people would make good parents.

This intermediate conclusion is taken together with:

> Reason 2: Those people who do not satisfy the criteria for being good parents should not be allowed to become parents.

in order to support:

> Main conclusion: No couples should be allowed to have a baby unless they have been granted a licence for parenthood.

This is just one example of an argument with a more complex structure, but arguments can become much more complicated than this, and their main conclusion may not appear at the end, as it does in this passage. However, the same steps are required regardless of how long and complex an argument is. They are summarised below.

Summary

1 Look for 'conclusion indicator' words, i.e. words such as 'so', 'therefore', 'must', 'cannot', 'should'.
2 Look for 'reason indicator' words, i.e. words such as 'because', 'since'.
3 If there are neither 'conclusion indicator' nor 'reason indicator' words, look at each sentence in turn and ask, 'Does the rest of the passage give any extra information which tells me why I should believe this?' If the answer is 'No', then this sentence is not a conclusion. If the answer is 'Yes', then the sentence is a conclusion.
4 If none of the sentences in a passage is a conclusion, then the passage is not an argument. If at least one of the sentences in a passage is a conclusion supported by a reason or reasons in the rest of the passage, then the passage is an argument.
5 When you have found a conclusion in a passage, it may help you to rewrite the passage with the conclusion at the end, introduced by 'So'. Read through this re-written passage to check that it makes sense. If it does, then you can be confident that this passage is an argument.
6 Look for reasons and intermediate conclusions in your rewritten passage. Think about the way in which the reasons fit together, and try to write out the argument in the appropriate order of progression from basic reasons via intermediate conclusions to the main conclusion.

Do not worry at this stage about whether the reasons are true, or about whether they give conclusive support to the conclusion.