

INFO 350

Ethical Systems - 1

Info Policy, Law, Ethics...



Technology

They were settling into their Airbnb. Then they found a hidden camera.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2019/04/06/they-were-settling-into-their-airbnb-then-they-found-hidden-camera/?utm_term=.87947d856715

The Barker family was settling into their Airbnb in Cork, Ireland, another stop on their 14-month trek around Europe, when they discovered something disturbing.

On the ceiling in the living room, hidden inside a detector, was a camera.

“We have encountered lots of weird and wonderful things and like to think we take most things in our stride,” Nealie Barker [told New Zealand’s Stuff](#). “However this was shocking.”

The family, residents of New Zealand, said it confronted the homeowner and complained to Airbnb, setting off a month-long saga with the company that has drawn international attention. Just this week, after 33 days and stays from 10 other “unsuspecting” guests, Airbnb removed the listing and problematic host, Barker [wrote on Facebook](#).

The Barkers, a crew of two adults and five children, only found the camera because Nealie Barker's husband, Andrew, works in IT. He connected his phone to the WiFi network and noticed a device labeled "IP camera," Stuff reported.

"He scanned that device's ports and found the live video feed," Nealie Barker told Stuff. "We were all watching ourselves on his mobile phone."

Questions...

- Is it illegal?
 - What laws might be involved (if any)?
- Is it unethical?
 - Why or why not?
- How might the Airbnb host justify doing this?

Exclusive: Google cancels AI ethics board in response to outcry

The controversial panel lasted just a little over a week.

By [Kelsey Piper](#) | Apr 4, 2019, 7:00pm EDT

Ethical Systems

Ethical Systems

- Contemporary ethical systems have their roots in ancient philosophy.
- We are going to focus on **deontology, consequentialism, and virtue ethics**.
- In the 18th and 19th centuries in the west, ancient ideas were “rationalized.” Turned into formal systems emphasizing the human ability to reason.
 - Philosophers of this period sought to find guidance for ethical action not based in religion
 - Reason was seen as a means to do this – emphasis on human choice rather than acting from external edicts, which can be abused.

The Ethical Point of View

- Most everyone shares “core values”, desiring:
 - Life
 - Happiness
 - Ability to accomplish goals
- Two ways to view world
 - Selfish point of view: consider only your own self and your core values
 - Ethical point of view: respect other people and their core values

Defining Terms

- Society
 - Association of people organized for mutual interest, under a system of rules
 - Rules: (should) advance the good of members over time
- Morality
 - A society's rules of conduct
 - What people ought / ought not to do in various situations
- Ethics
 - Rational examination of morality
 - Evaluation of people's behavior

Why Study *Information* Ethics?

- Ethics: a way to decide the best thing to do
- New problems accompany new technologies
- “Common wisdom” may not exist for novel situations brought about by new technologies

2.4 Divine Command Theory

The Appeal to a Moral Authority

Imagine that there is a moral/political authority who is never mistaken when it comes to moral questions: if this being judges something morally right then it is morally right — if it is judged wrong then it is morally wrong.

Many people think that God is a moral authority and all we have to do is listen to God or consult holy texts to answer moral questions.



Overview of Divine Command Theory

- Good actions: those aligned with God's will
- Bad actions: those contrary to God's will
- Holy books reveal God's will
- We should use holy books as moral decision-making guides

Case for Divine Command Theory

- Obedience is ordained in holy texts
- God is all-knowing and all-good
- Ultimate authority resides with the creator

Case Against Divine Command Theory

- Different holy books disagree on certain teachings
- Society is multicultural, secular
- Some modern moral problems not directly addressed in scripture
- “The good” ≠ “God” (Euthyphro problem)
- Based on obedience, not reason
- Conclusion: Not a workable ethical theory for our purposes

The Euthyphro problem (Socrates)

Is X right because God commands X or does God command X because it is right?

Suppose we say that X is right because God commands X.

Question: Does God have any reasons for what he commands?

- If yes, then it is these reasons that make X right not God's mere commandments.
- If no, then morality is arbitrary – God, alas, could command anything and it would be moral.

2.5 Ethical Egoism

Definition of Ethical Egoism

- Each person should focus exclusively on his or her self-interest
- Morally right action: that action that provides self with maximum long-term benefit
- Ayn Rand, author of *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*, espoused a theory akin to ethical egoism

Case for Ethical Egoism

- It is practical since we are already inclined to do what's best for ourselves
- It is better to let other people take care of themselves
- The community can benefit when individuals put their well-being first
 - Individual well-being may lead to collective well-being
- Other moral principles are rooted in the principle of self-interest

Case Against Ethical Egoism

- An easy moral philosophy may not be the best moral philosophy
- We know a lot about what is good for someone else
- Self-interest can lead to blatantly immoral behavior
- Other moral principles are superior to principle of self-interest
- People who take the good of others into account lead happier lives
- By definition, does not respect the ethical point of view
- **Conclusion: Not a workable ethical theory**

“The Tragedy of the Commons”

- In his essay, ecologist Garrett Hardin argued that the main difficulty in solving environmental problems is the conflict between the short-term interests of the individual and the long-term welfare of society.
- The example he used was the commons, or the areas of land that belonged to the whole village.

Tragedy of the Commons

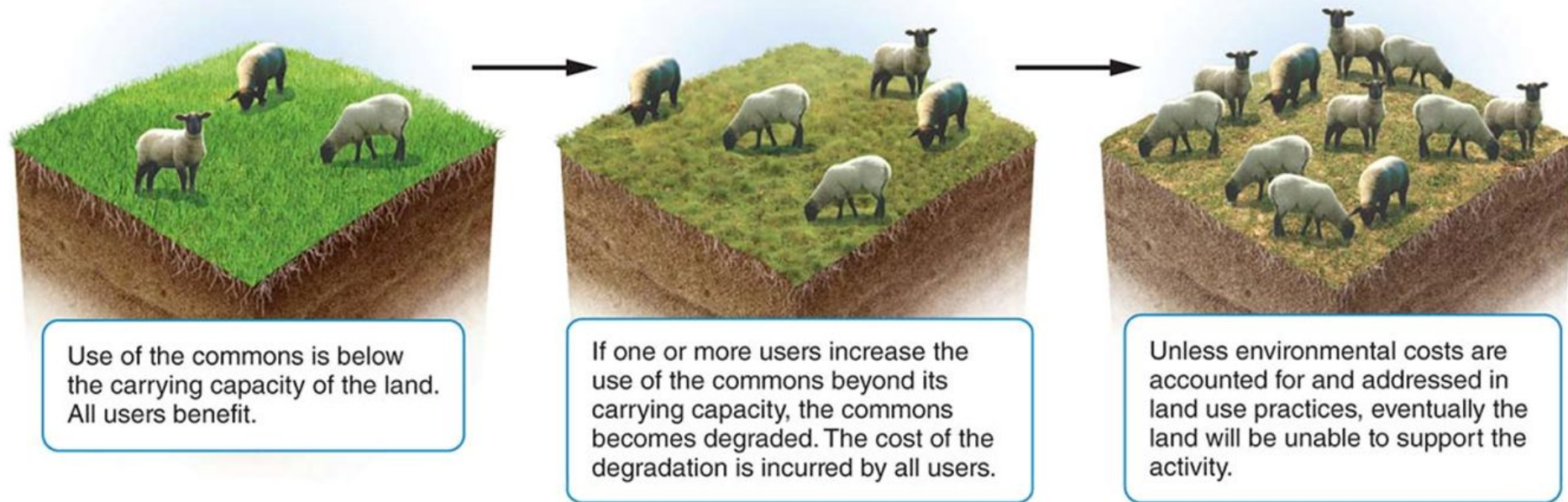


Figure 29.2
Environmental Science for AP[®], Second Edition
© 2015 W.H. Freeman and Company

The tragedy of the commons. If the use of common land is not regulated in some way—by the users or by a government agency—the land can easily be degraded to the point at which it can no longer support that use.

2.2 Subjective Relativism

Relativism and Subjective Relativism

- Aka “ethical relativism”
- Relativism
 - No universal standards of right and wrong
 - One person can say “X is right,” another can say “X is wrong,” and both can be correct
- Subjective relativism
 - Each person decides right and wrong for himself or herself
 - “What’s right for you may not be right for me”

Case for Subjective Relativism

- Well-meaning and intelligent people disagree on moral issues
- Ethical debates are disagreeable and pointless

Case Against Subjective Relativism

- Blurs line between doing what you think is right and doing what you want to do
- Makes no moral distinction between the actions of different people
- SR and tolerance are two different things
- Decisions may not be based on reason
- **Conclusion: Not a workable ethical theory**

2.3 Cultural Relativism

Cultural Relativism in a Nutshell

- What is “right” and “wrong” depends upon a society’s actual moral guidelines
- These guidelines vary from place to place and from time to time
- A particular action may be right in one society at one time and wrong in another society or at another time

In-Lecture Activity April 9th

- Consider your own moral position about the following:
 - Recreational drug use
 - Suicide
 - Honor killing
- Then, consider the moral position of a society or culture that generally endorses the opposite view
- What comes up for you in this conflict?
 - Could you live in a society that holds the opposite view?
 - Why / why not?

Case for Cultural Relativism

- Different social contexts demand different moral guidelines
- It is arrogant for one society to judge another

Case Against Cultural Relativism

- Because two societies **do** have different moral views doesn't mean they **ought to** have different views
- It doesn't explain how moral guidelines are determined
- What if there are no cultural norms?
- It doesn't account for evolution of moral guidelines.
- It provides no way out for cultures in conflict
- Existence of many acceptable practices does not imply all practices are acceptable (many/any fallacy)
- Societies do, in fact, share certain core values
- Only indirectly based on reason
- **Conclusion: Not a workable ethical theory**

Ethical Systems

Theories of <i>Rightness</i>	Theories of <i>Goodness</i>	Theories of <i>Character</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deontology (Immanuel Kant)• Action guided by duty• Intent is what matters (consequences are uncertain).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consequentialism (Bentham, Mill)• Emphasis on the calculated goodness of an action	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Virtue Ethics (Aristotle)• Emphasis on the development of excellence of the person.

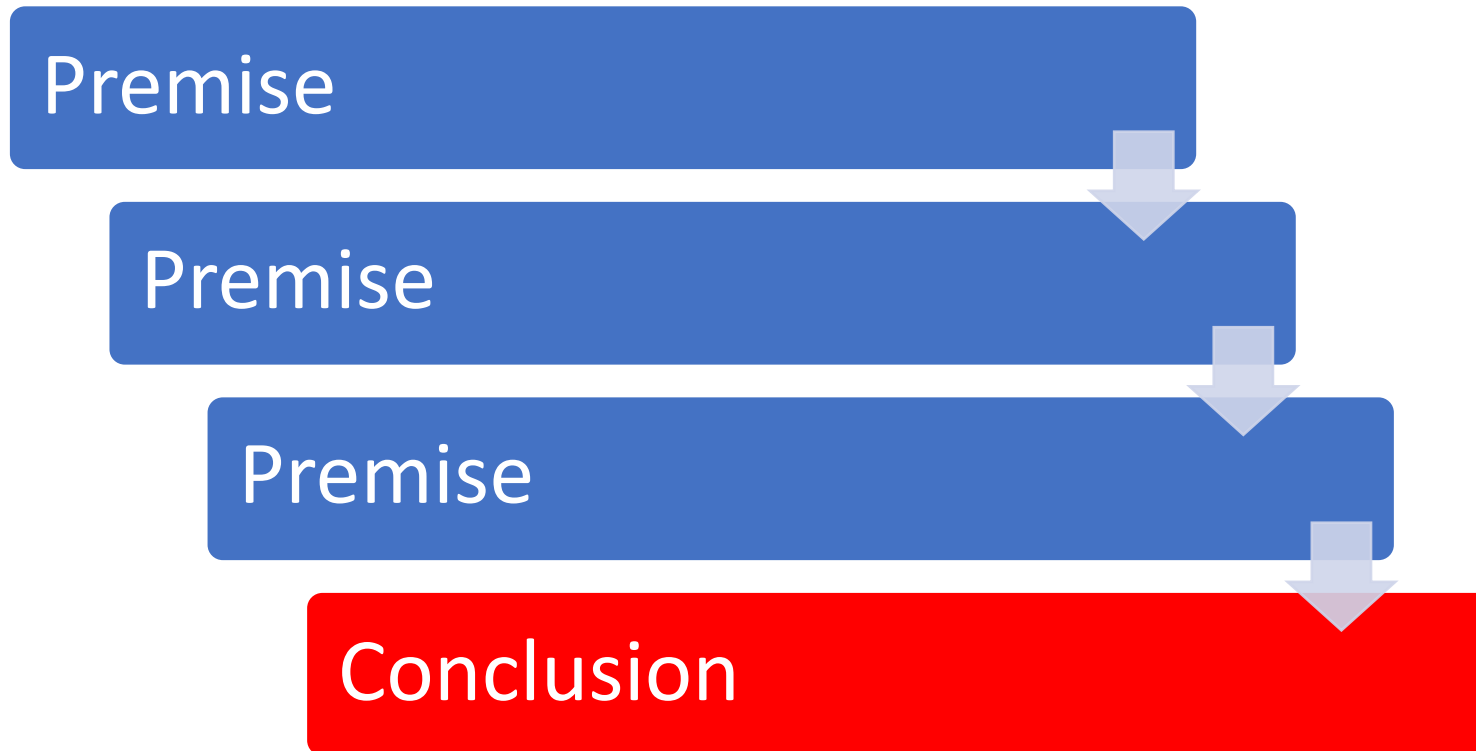
Ethical Systems

Theories of Care	Theories of Justice
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feminist ethics• Emphasis on relationships• Ethics embedded in the social nature of human life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical Race, Gender, Ability...• Emphasis on difference• Ethics emerges from quest for justice.

More about arguments

The Elements of Arguments

Adding premises provides additional evidence...



Uber & the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

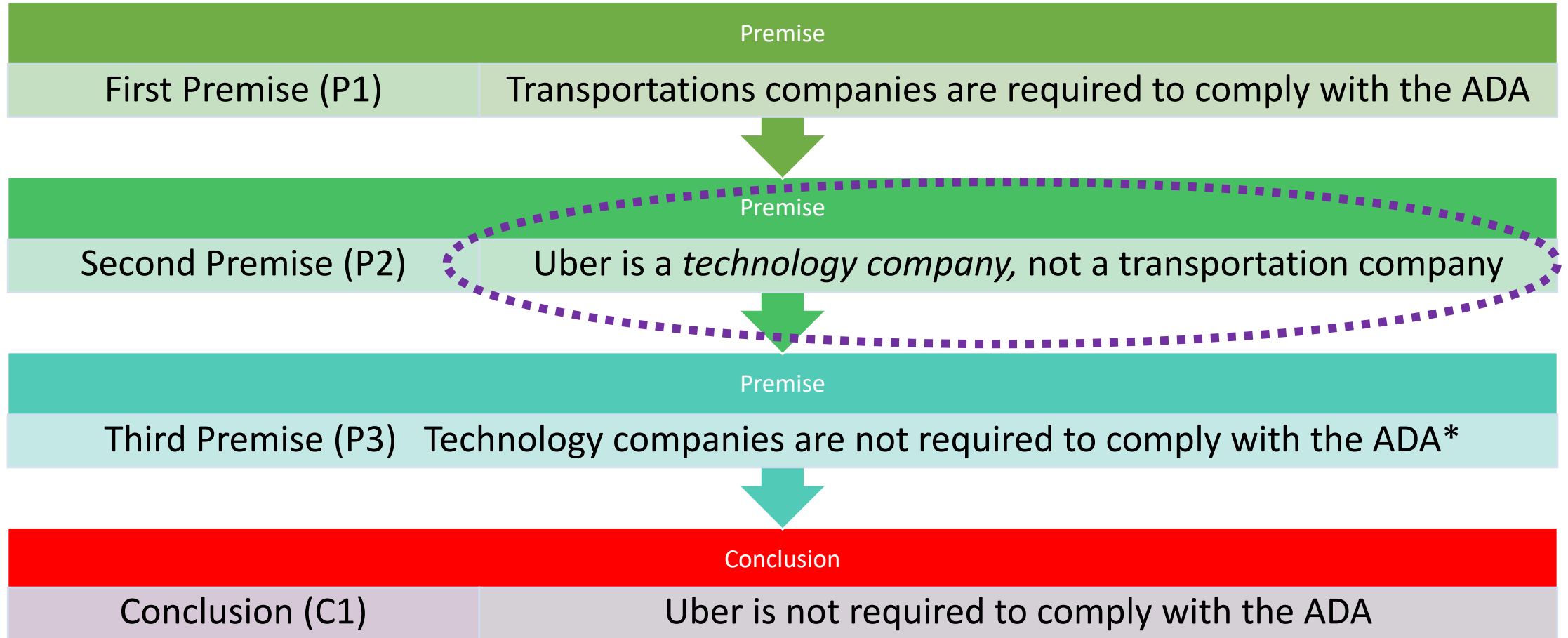
- Uber has been sued for failing to provide ADA compliant services for Uber riders.
- Lawsuit is based on prior court and regulatory decisions requiring companies providing transportation services to comply with the ADA.



The Elements of Arguments

- How did Uber attempt to win this case? With an alternate argument.
 - The litigants argue that Uber, as a transportation company, must comply with the ADA.
- Uber claims it is not a “transportation company” and therefore is not subject to the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Elements of Arguments



*For purposes of transportation purposes

The Elements of Arguments

- A **valid deductive argument** is one in which *assuming the premises are true, the conclusion must be true.*
- **Valid:**
 - P1: Intellectual property rights provide incentives to creators (\$\$)
 - P2: Creators require incentives to produce new works
 - P3: Society benefits from the creation of creative works
 - C: Therefore, society benefits from intellectual property rights
- **Not valid:**
 - P1: Phyllis's great grandmother died on her 85th birthday
 - P1: Phyllis's grandmother died on her 85th birthday
 - P2: Phyllis's mother died on her 85th birthday
 - C: Phyllis will die on her 85th birthday

The Elements of Arguments

- A ***sound deductive argument*** is a valid argument in which the premises **are** true.
- **Sound and valid:**
 - P1: Uber's estimated worth is estimated to be about 120 billion dollars
 - P2: Lyft's estimated worth is estimated to be about 15 billion dollars
 - C: Therefore Uber is a more valuable company than Lyft.
- **Unsound, but valid:**
 - P1: Only rich people drive BMWs
 - P2: Alex drives a BMW
 - C: Therefore, Alex must be rich

The Elements of Arguments

- Recall that a **valid deductive argument** is one in which *if the premises are true, then the conclusion must be true*.
- **Valid, but not sound:**
 - P1: Transportation companies are required to comply with the ADA.
 - P2: Uber is a technology company, not a transportation company.
 - P3: Technology companies are not required to comply with the ADA
 - C: Therefore Uber is not required to comply with the ADA
- (A federal judge concluded that “Uber sells rides, not just technology.”)

Inductive Arguments

- Another form of argument is an ***inductive argument***.
 - Inductive arguments are non-deductive arguments that *infer* a claim rather than seek to prove it as true.
 - Claims are supported by evidence without assuming that the conclusion is *certain*.
 - Three days ago, a crow landed on my railing at exactly 7am.
 - Two days ago, a crow landed on my railing at exactly 7am.
 - Yesterday, a crow landed on my railing at exactly 7am.
 - Therefore: tomorrow a crow will land on my railing at exactly 7am.

Inductive Arguments

- In the 2016 elections, foreign governments (and others) used social media to inflame debates on divisive issues.
- African American voters were specifically targeted with messaging designed to discredit Hillary Clinton based on both real and fake information about her.
- Voter turnout by African Americans was lower than anticipated in the 2016 election.
- Therefore: social media *may have* suppressed the African American vote in 2016.

Inductive Arguments

- Inductive arguments are constructed like deductive arguments, but *validity* cannot be asserted.
- Even if all the premises are true, the conclusion may not be true.
 - Premises are offer *evidence* or *authority* about something in the world.
 - Premises lead us to *suggest* that something is true.
- Instead of validity or soundness, inductive arguments are evaluated for their *strength*.
 - A strong argument seems very likely to be true based on the premises.
 - **X** event occurred in the past when **Y** happened, therefore **Z** is probably true.

Inductive Arguments

- P1 When the drinking age is lowered, traffic fatalities go up.
- P2 When the drinking age is raised, traffic fatalities go down.
- P3 The number of lives saved by raising the drinking age fully justifies the loss of liberty imposed on young people.
- C Therefore, the minimum drinking age should be raised.

Inductive *Logic*

- Machine Learning algorithms are induction engines
 - ML systems look for patterns in data and then *infer* something about the target – a preference, an undisclosed condition, a future action, etc.
 - We cannot be sure that an ML assertion is true, but it may be the best explanation for a particular phenomenon.
 - Good ML algorithms produce *strong* inferences from which decision makers can make confident decisions.

Inductive *Logic*

- Target Store case:
 - If customer is female and of child-bearing age +
 - If customer buys unscented lotions and/or soaps +
 - If customer buys supplements, including calcium, magnesium, and zinc.
 - Customer is (most likely) pregnant
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/magazine/shopping-habits.html>

