

I.

1. Consider this snippet: “The only thing that matters for a business is profitability and improving productivity is one obvious way to improve profitability. But not all efforts to increase productivity are beneficial. Often, attempts to increase productivity decrease the number of employees which negatively affects the motivation of the retained employees.”

Which of the following is closest to the conclusion of this passage?

- (a) Profitability is not the only thing that matters for a business.
- (b) Employees should have a right not be dismissed.
- (c) Some efforts to improve productivity harm profitability.

Answer Key

(c)

2. Consider this snippet: “From an ecological perspective, insects have a lot to recommend them. They are renowned for their small ‘footprint’; being cold-blooded, they are about four times as efficient at converting feed to meat as are cattle, which waste energy keeping themselves warm. Ounce for ounce, many have the same amount of protein as beef—fried grasshoppers have three times as much—and are rich in micronutrients like iron and zinc. Genetically, they are so distant from humans that there is little likelihood of diseases jumping species, as swine flu did. They are natural recyclers, capable of eating old cardboard, manure, and by-products from food manufacturing. And insect husbandry is humane: bugs like teeming, and thrive in filthy, crowded conditions.” (from *The New Yorker*, Aug. 15/22, 2011)

Which of the following is closest to the conclusion of this passage:

- (a) Insect husbandry is humane.
- (b) Insects are delicious.
- (c) Eating insects is environmentally friendly.
- (d) Rather than becoming vegan, we should start eating insects.
- (e) Insect husbandry is environmentally friendly and humane.

Answer Key

(e). Reading the last sentence as a separate point from the first sentence of the paragraph.

3. Consider: “ We have everywhere tried to merge with the peoples around us, and to only preserve the faith of our fathers. We are not allowed to do so. In vain are we loyal patriots, our loyalty in some places even running to extremes; in vain do we make the same sacrifices of property and blood as our fellow-citizens; in vain do we strive to increase the fame of our home countries in the arts and sciences, and their wealth by trade and commerce. In our home-countries where we have lived for centuries we are still decried as foreigners, and often by those whose families were not yet present in the land when our fathers were already toiling there.” (from Theodor Herzl, *Der Judenstaat (The Jewish State)*. 1896. “We” are the Jewish people. If you don’t know who Herzl was, look him up.)

What is the conclusion of this passage?

- (a) More needs to be done to assimilate Jewish people into mainstream Europe.
- (b) Jewish people must be integrated without denying their separate identity.
- (c) Jews should pack up and leave.
- (d) None of the above.

Answer Key

Herzl himself is well-known to have advocated something like (c), but the passage merely lists some facts and does not draw any conclusions. Stefan Zweig, another famous Austrian Jew and one-time protégé of Herzl lists the same facts in his *The World of Yesterday* but is adamantly opposed to Zionism.

II.

1. Upon meeting John Watson, Sherlock Holmes immediately figured out Watson had returned from Afghanistan recently. Here is his explanation of how he figured that out (from Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*):

I knew you came from Afghanistan. From long habit the train of thoughts ran so swiftly through my mind, that I arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps. There were such steps, however. The train of reasoning ran, 'Here is a gentleman of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He has undergone hardship and sickness, as his haggard face says clearly. His left arm has been injured. He holds it in a stiff and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan.'

Put Holmes's reasoning that Watson has just come from the tropics as an argument in standardized form.

Answer Key

Notice that the part that matters is:

"He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair."

1. If Watson's face is dark and his natural tint of skin is not dark, then he has just come from the tropics. premise
2. If Watson's wrists are fair, then his natural tint of skin is not dark. premise
3. Watson's wrists are fair. premise
4. Watson's natural tint of skin is not dark. from 2,3,MP
5. Watson's face is dark. premise
6. Watson's face is dark and Watson's natural tint of skin is not dark. from 4,5, ??
- ∴ 7. Watson has just come from the tropics. from 1,6,MP

2. Here is a problem known as the Prisoner's Dilemma:

Ben and Jerry have been arrested for robbing the Sleepytown Savings Bank. They have been placed in separate isolation cells. The prosecutor makes the following offer to each: "You

may choose to confess or remain silent. If you confess and your accomplice remains silent I will drop all charges against you and use your testimony to ensure that your accomplice does serious time. Likewise, if your accomplice confesses while you remain silent, they will go free while you do the time. If you both confess I get two convictions, but I'll see to it that you both get early parole. If you both remain silent, I'll have to charge you both with the lesser crime of firearms possession. Think about whether or not you want to confess, and let me know by tomorrow morning." What should Ben do assuming he is only interested in getting the best deal for himself?

Ben should confess because whatever happens Ben will be better off confessing. Here is the reasoning:

Jerry will either confess or remain silent. If Jerry confesses, Ben is better off confessing too (because Ben will have to do serious time otherwise). If Jerry remains silent, Ben is better off confessing (because all charges against him will be dropped). So either way Ben is better off confessing.

Put this reasoning in standardized form by using Argument By Cases.

Answer Key

1. Jerry will confess or Jerry will remain silent.	premise
2. If Jerry confesses, then Ben is better off confessing.	premise
3. If Jerry remains silent, then Ben is better off confessing. ..	premise
∴ 4. Ben is better off confessing.	from 1,2,3,AC

3. Descartes—by common acclaim the founder of modern philosophy—argues that while he may be ignorant about many things, he can be absolutely certain that he himself exists. Here is his argument early in his Second Meditation:

I have convinced myself that there is absolutely nothing in the world, no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies. Does it now follow that I too do not exist? No: if I convinced myself

of something then I certainly existed. But there is a deceiver of supreme power and cunning who is deliberately and constantly deceiving me. In that case I too undoubtedly exist, if he is deceiving me; and let him deceive me as much as he can, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I think that I am something. So after considering everything very thoroughly, I must finally conclude that this proposition, I am, I exist, is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind.

Put this argument in standardized form. The argument form is Reductio Ad Absurdum, and the two crucial sentences involved are: \langle I am being deceived about my own existence \rangle , and \langle I exist \rangle . The conclusion is the negation of \langle I am being deceived about my own existence \rangle .

Answer Key

1. If I am being deceived about my own existence, then I do not exist.
premise
2. If I am being deceived about my own existence, then I exist. premise

\therefore 3. I am not being deceived about my own existence. . . . from 1,2,RAA