Tutorial A06 Answer Key

A06.2 Exercises

Identify the likely hidden assumptions in these arguments.

1. We should reduce the penalty for drunken driving, as a milder penalty would mean more convictions.

Answer: We should increase the number of convictions for drunken driving.

2. Moby Dick is a whale. So Moby Dick is a mammal.

Answer: “Anything that is a whale is a mammal,” or “If Moby Dick is a whale it is a mammal.”

3. Giving students a fail grade will damage their self-confidence. Therefore, we should not fail students.

Answer: We should not damage students’ self-confidence.

4. It should not be illegal for adults to smoke pot. After all, it does not harm anyone.

Answer: Anything that does not cause harm should not be made illegal.

5. There is nothing wrong talking on a mobile phone during lectures. Other students do it all the time.

Answer: If an action is done by other students (or people) all the time, then there is nothing wrong with it.

6. Killing an innocent person is wrong. Therefore, abortion is wrong.

Answer: Abortion involves the killing of an innocent person.

7. Traces of ammonia have been found in Mars’ atmosphere. So there must be life on Mars.

Answer: “Only living things produce ammonia.” (or something similar)

8. There cannot be more than one God. Otherwise, there would be two Gods equally powerful, or one is more powerful than the other.

Answer: If something is a God, nothing else can be as powerful as it, or more powerful than it.

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