# A Brief Excursion in Deduction

Since our Course Outline mentions “deduction” and “induction”, we should say something about these topics.

One deductive system tries to symbolize things we say in the natural language. (Our Philosophy 4 is an introduction to that system.) For example “It is neither fish nor fowl” becomes ~(p v q). A famous logician, De Morgan showed this first expression was equivalent to (~p & ~q) i.e. it is not fish and it is not fowl.

Now suppose someone misunderstood De Morgan’s rule and performed the following ~((p ᴝ q) v r) as

((~p & ~q) v r). (p ᴝ q) reads as “if p, then q)

This would be a logical mistake.

Some philosophers have said that the logical principles and different from moral principles in that if violated they do not constitute the same deductive violation illustrated by the above[[1]](#footnote-1)

Let’s test this by going back to our example of separating children who have come across the border. Perhaps the principle would be something like: There is no moral justification for inflicting the kind of pain described in the New York Times article as punishment on innocent children.

Can we deduce as a violation the current policy with the same certainty as found in the violation of De Morgan’s principle? I leave this open discussion.

As an opening for the discussion, I will remind you of the attempts at justification that have been offered; They are not innocent, they have violated the law. We do this in order to further discourage further border crossings. These conditions are not as described in the article.

Do any of these work?

1. Peter Strawson; *A Modern Introduction to Philosophy* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)