

I'm going to give another counterexample to this claim:

(K) It's always wrong to kill an innocent person.

It's a bit science fiction-y, so bear with me.

Suppose an evil scientist kidnaps you and another person Bob and uses a shrink ray to shrink Bob to about the size of a fetus. Then, he implants Bob inside your body in such a way that there's no way to remove him without killing him, unless you wait about nine months.

Suppose you want Bob out of your body right away, so you remove him, killing him. Did you do something morally wrong? Well, I think not. And I expect most people to agree. It's a tragedy, for sure, but you're just exercising your bodily autonomy.

So, K is false: it's not always wrong to kill an innocent person.

Admittedly, this case is pretty far-fetched. But it's *possible*—it's not inconsistent or anything.

And K is a universal principle—it says “always”. It applies to *all possible* cases, so even one possible case, however unusual, is enough to refute it.

You might wonder, why not instead defend a weaker principle, like:

(K*) It's typically wrong to kill an innocent person.

The problem with this principle is that it's not useful for applying to controversial issues. For instance, it won't work in an argument against abortion, even if you argue that abortion kills an innocent person, since it's unclear whether abortion counts as a typical or not.

References

Dan Korman – “Learning from Arguments: An Introduction to Philosophy”