

Consider once again the libertarian claim:  
(T) Taxation is theft.

Yesterday I criticized an argument for this claim, but today, let's suppose it's true, just for the sake of argument. What follows from it?

Well, libertarians use the claim to argue against government programs—usually ones like welfare, education, healthcare, etc.

Here's a simple argument that might represent their reasoning:

- (W1) Taxation is theft.
- (W2) Theft is always wrong.
- (W3) So, taxation is always wrong.

The problem is, W2 looks like it's open to counterexamples.

If I have a child who's starving or dying of thirst, and the only food or water around is something I need to steal—is it still wrong?

If I have a child who's dying of a preventable illness, and the only cure is owned by a rich person who doesn't need it and won't even notice it missing—is it still wrong?

Well, you *could* bite the bullet on these and maintain that it's still wrong to steal even in these cases. You'd be consistent, I just don't think many people will agree with you.

Instead, you could try to revise premise 2 so it says something like:  
(W2\*) Theft is always wrong, except in circumstances A, B, C, etc.

The problem is, then you'd have to argue that taxing the rich to pay for welfare, education, healthcare, etc. isn't one of the exceptions.

Maybe you ultimately *could* make that argument, but it's not clear to me it would succeed.