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A DEDUCTIVE ARGUMENT WITH A SPECIFIC PREMISE AND A GENERAL CONCLUSION

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Though no contemporary logicians hold that every valid deductive argument has a conclusion not more general than its premises, it has recently been claimed that every counter example to this claim is contrived [1]. I wish to propose a noncontrived counter example. Consider the following three sentences.

(1) John is mortal.

(2) John is not mortal.

(3) All men are mortal.

(1) and (2) *seem* less general than (3) since they are about one man while (3) is about all men. The word 'seem' is used because I am really unclear about what distinguishes a less from a more general sentence. For example, I do not know whether

(4) John is not mortal or all men are mortal.

is "specific" like (1) and (2) or "general" like (3). Whichever it may be, however, a valid deductive argument may be constructed which has a conclusion more general than any of the premises from which it is derived.

Suppose that (4) is not more general than either (1) or (2).

Since they are less general than (3), (4) is also less general than (3). The following argument has, then, a conclusion more general than any of its premises.

- (A) (1) John is mortal.
 - (4) John is not mortal or all men are mortal.
 - \therefore (3) All men are mortal.

Suppose that (4) is more general than either (1) or (2).

On this, the alternative assumption, (A) may no longer be a counter example to the questionable claim about deduction, but the following argument is.

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