LAI 524 – La Shun LEADS WEEK 12 DISCUSSION

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November 8, 2017
La Shun’s Preparation for Role as Leader/Facilitator During Week 12 Discussion of Reasoning and Conclusions:

We discussed the importance of rival causes. The point there was that there are different possible causal bases for a particular causal conclusion. This chapter, however, focuses on the alternative conclusions that are all possible outcomes from a single set of reasons.

(Browne, 20141218, pp. 158-159)

A facilitator’s role and responsibilities were to:

. Set the agenda for the discussion: objectives, guiding questions, or scenarios.

. Clarify the purpose: what is the expected outcome of the discussion?

. Encourage participation: create a trustful atmosphere.

. Guide the discussion by asking leading questions rather than speaking for students.

. Ensure that some participants do not dominate the conversation by inviting less participative members to enter into the discussion.

. Keep the discussion focused on the topics related with the readings.

. Encourage multiple views of the same issue(s).

. Bring the discussion to an end by summarizing the highlights (short posting).
Discussion Questions Draft for My Lead Week 12

Dichotomous thinkers often are rigid and intolerant because they fail to understand the importance of context for a particular answer (Browne & Keeley, 2015, p. 159). We often learn that our legal system, ethics, and morality are pretty “black & white.” By “black and white,” it is intended to convey that lines delineating ethical/unethical, moral/immoral, or legal/illegal are obvious. Furthermore, the obviousness refers to the underlying dichotomous nature of notion of “right and wrong” on which the aforementioned are believed to be based. Nevertheless, in terms of what may be obviously dichotomously right or wrong to one may either not always be so to another, or be obviously so to another, yet in a different respect.

Based on everything that you know and have learned thus far, construct a prescriptive argument for why and how right and wrong should exist as dichotomous. If you do not think right and wrong should exist as dichotomous, then provide your prescriptive argument for your position. Also, construct a descriptive argument addressing why and how right and wrong is dichotomous. If you do not believe that right and wrong exist as a dichotomy, then provide your descriptive argument for this.

La Shun’s Official Leader Week 12 Discussion Questions:

"Dichotomous thinkers often are rigid and intolerant because they fail to understand the importance of context for a particular answer" (Browne & Keeley, 2015, p. 159).

According to Browne & Keeley (2015), dichotomous thinking is not the most useful framework with which to approach things for consideration. However, I contend that despite its questionable utility, dichotomous thinkers and thinking pervade every aspect of society ranging from academia (i.e., P/F) to our emotions (i.e., happy/sad), all the way to decision-making (i.e., Guilty/Not Guilty). In fact, with respect to decision-making, we often are taught from an early age that our legal issues, ethics, and morality are “black & white.”

By “black and white,” the implication is that there exist obvious lines of demarcation distinguishing the ethical from the unethical, the moral from the immoral, or the legal from the illegal, which are conspicuous, unmistakable, and immutable. Such obviousness refers to what many assume to be the underlying dichotomous essence of notions of “right and wrong” on which the aforementioned are believed to be based. Nevertheless, what may obviously be dichotomously right, or wrong, in the mind of one individual may either fail to always be so to another, or be obviously so to another, yet be so in a different respect.

Based on everything that you know and have learned thus far culminating with what we have read in this week’s text concerning reasoning and conclusions,
Construct a prescriptive argument for why and how right and wrong should exist as dichotomous. If you do not think right and wrong should exist as dichotomous, then provide your prescriptive argument for your position.

Construct a descriptive argument addressing why and how right and wrong is dichotomous. If you do not believe that right and wrong exist as a dichotomy, then provide your descriptive argument for this.

References

La Shun L. Carroll

LAI 524 Critical Thinking

Fall 2017
Important to Note:

If logic, facts, or studies were self-explanatory, we would approach learning in a particular manner. Our task would be to have someone else, a teacher perhaps, provide the beliefs that we should have. Specifically, we would seek that single identifiable set of beliefs that logic and facts dictate.

(Browne, 20141218, p. 161)

Equally Important

Qualifications for conclusions will move you away from dichotomous thinking. If-clauses provide a technique for expressing these qualifications.

(Browne, 20141218, p. 162)

Draft for Practice Questions for Discussion:

- Author’s Conclusion: Advertisements aimed at children should be illegal.
- Alternative Conclusions:
  1. If corporations are to be treated as persons, then they have a right to free speech that includes advertisements; thus, their right to advertise should not be limited. (anthropomorphize corporations, equate advertisement with currently legal behavior (e.g., free speech), determine who is privileged with free speech (i.e., persons), then draw analogy: advertisements made by corporations, so advertisements are to free speech as corporations are to persons)
2. If it can be demonstrated that children are unable to assess what they view, and thus are heavily influenced by the advertisements they see, then advertisements aimed at children should be illegal. *(victimize children, see them as disadvantaged)*

3. If the purpose of the proposed legislation is to limit the content of advertisements aimed at children, then the government should not make such ads illegal, but rather take a more proactive role in regulating the content of advertisements aimed at children. *(an aspect of advertisement not the whole, can address problem by regulating content instead of banning everything.)* *(Browne, 20141218, p. 162)*

Alternative 3 appears to counter 2. That is, if children cannot accurately assess what they view AND what they view heavily influences them, then as long as the content of advertisement is regulated they may be legal! Also, alternative 2 is a response to 1 in that corps as persons free to speak through advertisements may heavily influence children with their words because kids cannot assess. Thus, three alternative conclusions, each different yet may be seen as responses to the previous one.


Now, looking at the alternative conclusions, they all seem completely unrelated to one another. Nonetheless, upon encountering differences between any two or more things, it should be immediately realized that, however many numbers of differences exist, there can be no difference without at least one core similarity (i.e., property,
quality, or concept) serving as the basis or link allowing comparison. For example, whatever the plethora of differences between males and females may be, these differences are based on particular aspects we share.

**Challenge yourself:** Find one similarity between two of the most different things that you can think of and share what you produced.

The absence of a straightforward relatedness works in one’s favor because alternative conclusions that seemingly diverge from one another provide the foundation for even more alternatives to construct and consider. Nevertheless, the divergence of alternatives implies there must be a common basis, or a theoretical conclusion precursor that explains the manner in which any two divergent conclusions are similar.

It is analogous to word formation as found in the applied linguistics’ subfield of lexical semantics. With regard to word formation, the relationships between and among concepts may be understood through the similarities and differences that exist.

For instance, what patterns can we identify? Relational semantics important to appreciate.

Number three alternative: the alternative may be understood in terms of the relation it bears to the author’s original conclusion.

The author’s conclusion: **Advertisements aimed at children/should be illegal.**

Alternative Three: If the purpose of the proposed legislation is to limit the content of advertisements aimed at children, then the government should **not** make such ads illegal, but rather take a more proactive role in regulating the content of advertisements aimed at children.

Analysis: specific author – more general alternative

The chapter talks about “if-clauses” (Browne & Keeley, 2015) and their use. If clauses form conditional statements (Cook, 2009). What follows “if” is referred to as the antecedent and establishes the conditions as premises to be satisfied, which result in what follows the “then” that is known as the consequent (Cook, 2009). Conclusions, arguments, or any statement may be constructed in the logical form of a conditional, which is known as the process of conditionalization (Cook, 2009). Conditionalization is helpful because it allows one to compartmentalize the conclusion, argument, or statement in order to determine whether it has justification, or there are alternatives. Justification is provided by the truth of the antecedent by means of assumption or it logically following from something else. The determination of alternatives to a conditionalized conclusion may be thought of as that which is different.
As it pertains to the present case and the chapter on reasoning and conclusions, we are concentrating on alternatives. Furthermore, since the author’s conclusion may be viewed as a conditionalization as I have suggested, it should fit into the logical “if-clause, then clause” format. Accordingly, given that conditionalization comprises both an antecedent and a consequent, the following are the possible different forms for alternative conclusions that can be determined from the author’s original conclusion:

**Author’s Conclusion:**

“Advertisements aimed at children/should be illegal”

**In other words:**

If advertisements (are) aimed at children/then (advertisements) should be illegal.

**N.B*:**

Conditionalization of conclusion does nothing to affect the conjunctive nature of it when self-comparison is done. In other words, unless both the antecedent and the consequent are true or the same as the author’s, then the alternative conclusion is false

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of Conclusion</th>
<th>Antecedent “IF”</th>
<th>Consequent “THEN”</th>
<th>Resulting Conclusion</th>
<th>Logical Pattern (&amp;)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author’s Conclusion</td>
<td>Advertisements aimed at children (Same)</td>
<td>Should be illegal (Same)</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative One</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative Two</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative Three</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>Different</td>
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</table>

As long as either antecedent or consequent is different, then the resulting conclusion will be considered different. That is, to say, because the author’s CONCLUSION = ANTECEDENT + CONSEQUENT, the structure resembles a logical conjunction. In other words, only when both the “if-clause” + the “then clause” are true (i.e., identical to the author’s) will the conclusion be true; all other combinations are false.

Note that any designation of different in a row results from a change that occurs, which substantially modifies the meaning of the corresponding part of the conditional statement. For example, the consequent “should be/illegal” may be made different most simply by negating the whole. Negating the entire consequent would result in “not the case that advertisements should be illegal,” or more recognizably “should not be illegal.” Of course, this is exactly the approach of alternative three, as well as alternative one.

Compare alternative three conclusion to the original:

intro post:
Hello Everyone!

Hope all is well. Just wanted to briefly mention a few things about this week's asynchronous online discussion (AOD) I thought you might find helpful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Presence</th>
<th>The extent to which higher-order knowledge acquisition and application is gained through sustained reflection and critical discourse (Garrison et al., 2001, p. 8)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Triggering</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Exploration</td>
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<td>3. Integration</td>
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<td>4. Resolution</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The cognitive construct framing my role as facilitator for this week is that of Cognitive Presence. According to Garrison, Anderson, & Archer (2001), cognitive presence refers to “the extent to which higher-order knowledge acquisition and application is gained through sustained reflection and critical discourse,” (p. 8). The phases of cognitive presence comprise triggering, exploration, integration and resolution (Molnar & Kearney, 2017). This week’s question posted was the phase one triggering event, which was designed in hopes of pushing each of us a little beyond our comfort zones.

As we begin Reasoning and Conclusions, I will do my best to facilitate with structured prompts (like this one) using a 4-question reflective learning technique that assists in gaining understanding and memory (Dietz-Uhler & Lanter, 2009). The questions encourage (analysis), reflection, relating, and generating. While I cannot guarantee that we will reach phase four resolution (i.e., defend conclusion regarding right/wrong pertaining to dichotomous thinking), the combination of cognitive presence and 4-question reflective learning I believe will foster our growth as a community of critical thinkers. Have fun!

La Shun

4–Question: Analysis

What is one important concept of idea from the Chapter on Reasoning and Conclusions? Analyze your choice and explain why in a few sentences.

To assess the effect of a 4-question reflective learning technique on quiz performance, students engaged in an interactive activity, responded to 4 questions to encourage analyzing (i.e., what was learned), reflecting (i.e., why it is important), relating (i.e., how the material related to their personal lives), and generating (i.e., what questions they now have about the material), and took a quiz on the studied material. Quiz performance was better for students who responded to the 4 questions prior to the quiz than for those who did so after the quiz. Students also perceived the 4-question technique to be enjoyable and successful in meeting its objectives. We discuss how this simple
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4–Question: Analysis

What is a critical concept or idea from the Chapter on Reasoning and Conclusions? Analyze your choice and explain why in a few sentences.

References:


La Shun’s Notes Drafted Response as Leader to Student’s Prompt:

1. A dichotomous view of right and wrong is generally not workable in reality, nor is it desirable. Moral situations are often complex, and the effects of individuals' actions and decisions are similarly difficult to predict and account for. Additionally, different contexts will have unique needs and expectations from moral systems, and most contexts will have cases which require exceptions from the general rules about right and wrong. For these reasons, I would reject a dichotomous view of right and wrong and advocate something more nuanced and continuous. A good metaphor is Harris’ (2010) notion of morality as a landscape with many peaks and valleys which represent distinct levels of moral achievement. One need only assume some theoretically universal definitions of what “bad” and “good” are. In Harris’ model, “bad” is simply imagining that everyone suffers as much as possible for as long as possible, and “good” is the opposite of that.

Contextual moral theory, bearer (everyone) and attribute of: magnitude and/or intensity (quantificational = as much as, as long as).

From there, you can construct a landscape or continuum of ways to move between those two extremes. This is subtly, but importantly different from moral relativism which assumes that questions of right and wrong matter only in reference to a particular cultural or historical period (Westacott, 2017).

I can appreciate Harris’ conviction and his stance and phrasing strongly hints at a utilitarian framework. That is, his definitions of “bad” and “good” as being that which results in everyone suffering as much as possible for as long as possible, and vice versa (Harris, 2010), are reminiscent of utilitarianism’s prescriptive argument that revolves around a “pleasure principle” according to which it is to be striven for the greatest (amount of) good for greatest number of people. Two things to point out: 1) starting with such extreme conceptions of “bad” and “good,” if even a theoretically achievable consensus were obtained, this as a starting point would be considered dichotomous thinking. 2), Harris’ (2010) statement that:

“Even if each conscious being has a unique nadir on the moral landscape, we can still conceive of a state of the universe in which everyone suffers as much as he or she (or it) possibly can.” (p. 75)

the decision to use “each conscious being” with “unique nadir” although quantificationally correct, is inconsistent with the notion of “everyone suffers as much as he or she can.” That is, the construction universally quantifying with “all”, “each,” or “every” is equivalent so that all beings, each being, and every being refers to the same amount. In addition, if analyzed meticulously, a “unique nadir” implies that no two beings have the same “low point.” Therefore, with regard to the same “everyone,” “each,” or “all beings,” the suffering “as much as” for one being –although clever wording intimates at an equivalence of some sort– is not, and can never actually be,
suffering “as much as” any other being. In other words, the suffering is merely reflexive in that the “equivalence” hinted at just in reference to the suffering experienced itself being maximal for the being experiencing it.

That notwithstanding, because each person has different suffering thresholds, the “bad” to which Harris refers may not be universal. The concept of the word “bad,” much like the “pleasure principle” of which we spoke, is deictic in that how one defines worst suffering, depends on the context (i.e., person) in which it is to be understood. So, I disagree with Harris’ argument and contend that starting with the assumption of “it is good to avoid behaving in a way to produce the worst possible misery for everyone” (Harris, 2010) because we all have unique conceptions of suffering as well as limits for tolerance of such suffering.

La Shun’s Official Response

Argument Against Harris' Basis for Moral Landscaping: Harris Reliance on Dichotomous Good/Bad

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References


La Shun’s Subsequent Commentary as Lead in Week 12

Browne and Keeley (2015) note that characterizing things as dichotomies oversimplifies complex situations. Human morality and notions of right and wrong are certainly complex ideas. I would again assert that these concepts do not exist as dichotomies except in extremely limited situations like philosophical discussions, thought experiments, and perhaps literal interpretations of religious texts (to the extent that they do not self-contradict). In reality, though, moral decisions and judgments typically operate in the “gray area” in which we live. Part of this is due to the fact that we can never really know the extent to which our actions harm or benefit humanity eventually, nor can we accurately account for consequences and intentions in a way that makes it possible to reliably make the right decision. Humanity is thus forced to operate with imperfect knowledge of right and wrong and will always make decisions that occupy the territory somewhere in between.

References


