

Thinking Straight Critical Reasoning WS 9-1 May 27, 2008

- I. **A. (Individually)** review and mark the answers for the assignment given on the last pages: (two points each for reconstruction and evaluation,
B. (In pairs or small group) discuss any items that you found difficult.
C. Plenary on any problem cases

II Plenary discussion of Expertise and the Global Warming debate.

III. Chapter 12.

(In small group)

- A.** Review discussion of the dilemma of an amateur in a world of experts and the “two ways of not facing the dilemma (relativism) and the “true believer” approach. Is there such a dilemma? If so, do you agree that the two are not good ways of facing the dilemma?
- B.** Discuss the recommendations for coping with the dilemma offered in the chapter.
- C.** How would you resolve the dilemma of whether to rely on experts or to figure out for yourself what to do if you faced the following situation? You are raising a child who begins to have severe behavioral problems, such as frequent temper tantrums, refusal to follow instructions at school or at home, and fighting with other children. Would you seek expert advice? From whom? What if you get conflicting advice from two sources? How would you be able to tell whether the person advising you is manipulating you for his or her own ends, rather than helping you decide what is best for the child and you?

D. Plenary discussion

IV Discussion of Quiz and opportunity for group and individual review of material.

Topics for Friday’s Critical Reasoning Quiz (Note: the quiz begins at 9 am but those who come early can begin at 8:30 This early start time is recommended for and those who wish to take a special “make-up” exam over material from the first half of the quarter.)

The exam will cover material in chapters 6 – 11

- Chapter 6: Characterization (definition) of a fallacy. For a passage, you should be able to state the name of the fallacy committed e.g. *false dilemma*, explain why it is a bad argument and why it still might be persuasive. You should be able to make a reasoned judgment about whether an “apparent fallacy” actually is a fallacy.
- Chapter 7: Characterization of the difference between vagueness and ambiguity, criticism of arguments which include an equivocation, reconstruction of conceptual theories in “standard form,” evaluation (criticism) of conceptual theories by finding a counterexample, citing lack of elucidation, and showing that conditions are incompatible. identification (and criticism) of arguments that include a conceptual theory as a premise.
- Chapter 8: Distinguishing inductive and deductive arguments, criticizing arguments that generalize.
- Chapter 9: Criticizing arguments that move from correlation to cause, identifying and criticizing analogical arguments, reconstructing an argumentative passage as convergent argument using appropriate evaluation (criticism).
- Chapter 10: Reconstructing passages involving empirical theories in terms of theory and regularity, criticizing empirical theory by finding alternatives and producing doubtful prediction. Criticizing a theory as untestable or the defense of a theory as *ad hoc*.
- Chapter 11: Applying the techniques of reconstruction and evaluation (criticism) to passages

Answers to Assignment for today Check your own assignment. Put a check \checkmark next to answers that are similar, an **X** next ones that miss the mark, and a question mark **?** next to any that are problematic

Submit: Exercise 9.2 #6, #8, #10, #11, **Exercise 9.3 1b** **Exercise 11.1** #1 (apply to exercise 3.3 #1b) , **Exercise 11.1** #3a, 3e of crises that might confront him.

Exercise 9.2 #6, #8, #10, #11

6. There is this relevant difference: Cars are easily replaced by equal or improved models; people are not so interchangeable. We might extend the metaphor and note that some people are nostalgic about their cars and are unwilling to replace them. This is especially true of classic cars.
8. A relevant difference is that the happiness of an individual can't be unjustly distributed, but an act that maximizes the happiness of a group might produce great happiness to some but undeserved harm to others.
10. The universe does not run smoothly. It contains rough spots (i.e., supernovas and other catastrophes). It is not like the perfectly manufactured watch.
11. Eliminating the underlying conditions that promote and support terrorism (labeled "garbage" in the analogy) might be necessary for a successful "war on terrorism." However, there is this relevant difference: garbage can be relatively easily controlled, but the basis terrorism – factors such as religious ideology and hatred of foreign culture—are not so easily controlled. Furthermore, rats can be eliminated by a combination of killing and controlling the garbage that promotes them; the same might be said of terrorism.

Exercise 9.3 1b

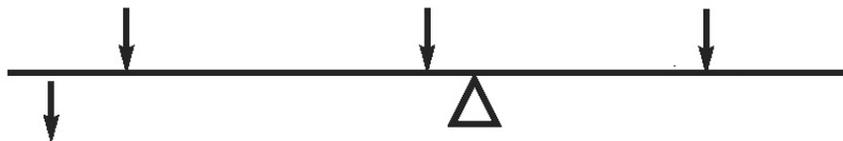
1b. **Pro-considerations**

Counter-consideration

A mild, borderline infraction can result in undeserved suspension

Zero tolerance is unrealistic, given the maturity level of school-agers.

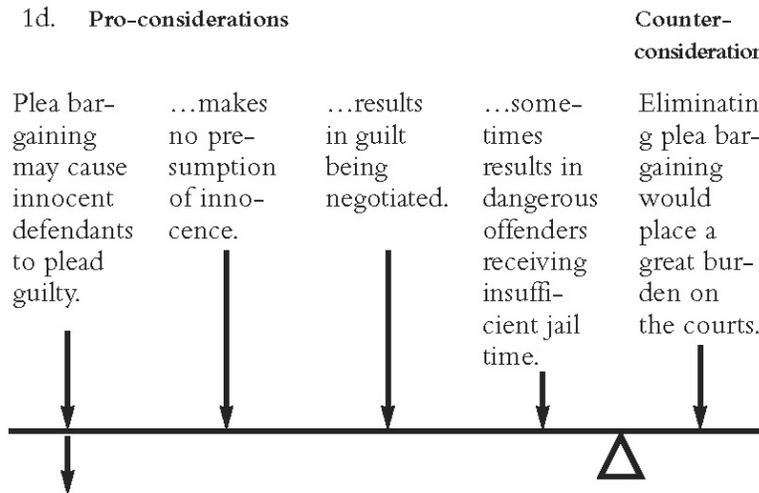
Zero tolerance is a better deterrent to misbehavior.



Conclusion: Public schools should not maintain zero-tolerance policies.

Assessment: Blunting a pro-consideration: If a zero-tolerance policy is well-publicized and carefully explained to children and parents, then infractions such as the table-knife case might be minimized.

Promoting a counter-consideration: If harmful misbehavior is a major problem that interferes with learning and with the safety of children in a school, then the deterrent effect of zero tolerance should be given greater weight.



Conclusion: Plea bargaining should be eliminated

Assessment: Blunting the counter-consideration: As the passage indicates, Alaska's experience suggests that eliminating plea bargaining might not place an unbearable burden on the courts.

Promoting the counter-consideration: Given the difficulty that courts already have in handling their caseloads, it might be fool-hardy to take the plunge of eliminating plea bargaining based on the Alaska experiment alone. Other steps might first be taken to reduce caseloads, and courts might experiment with eliminating plea bargaining for only some particular categories of offenses rather than eliminating it completely.

Reconstruction of Passage Ex 3.3 1b.

- 1b. (1) Human life has a moral claim to protection from the moment of conception.
- (2) If (1), then we shouldn't permit anything that does not protect life from the moment of conception.
- (3) The harvesting of stem cells by either of the two currently proposed methods does not protect life from the moment of conception.

∴ We shouldn't permit harvesting of stem cells by either by the two currently proposed methods (IMPLICIT)

Criticism (Evaluation) of Passage Ex 3.3 1b.

The first premise that human life has a moral claim to protection from the moment of conception is, of course, a matter of considerable debate. It is at the core of arguments about abortion. The second premise is overly broad. It is not clear that if the first premise is true, we shouldn't permit anything that does not protect life from the moment of conception. If that were true, we would have to prohibit any activity of the pregnant woman that didn't protect the life of the conceptus. Driving a car, for example, even though it doesn't unreasonably risk harm to the conceptus, can't be said to protect the life of the conceptus, so

it would have to be prohibited. The collection of embryonic stem cells might have some moral claim to protection, but the morally relevant consequences of permitting embryonic stem cell research might be morally more important.

3a Criticism of “The price of Beauty is Too High”

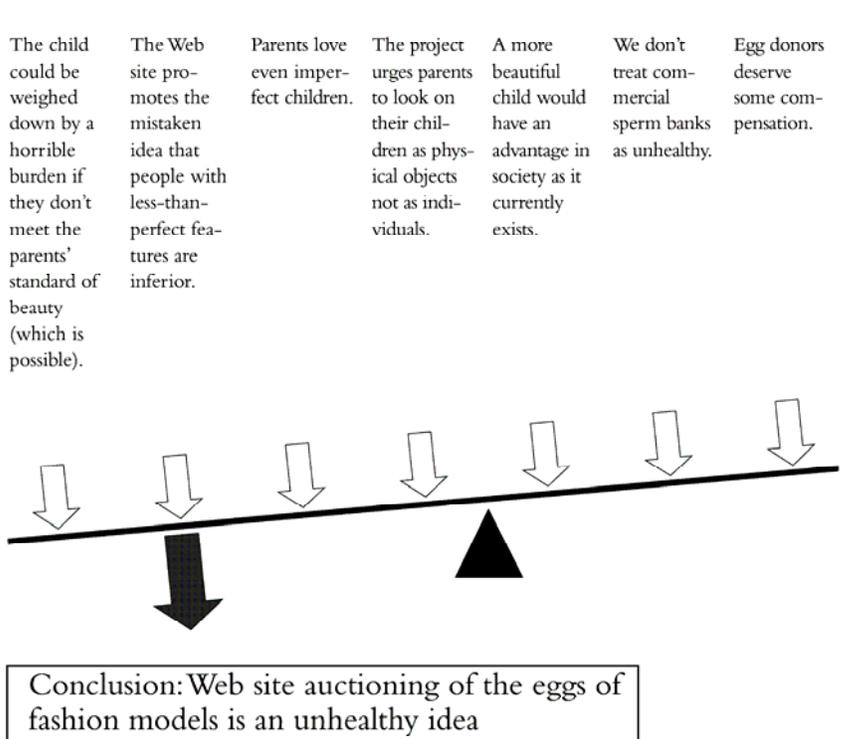
The passage can be interpreted as hybrid with an implicit linked argument suggesting that we shouldn’t allow the (Web site) auctioning of eggs of fashion models. Although this is an extension that uses both an implicit linking premise and a conclusion only suggested by the editorial title, it is useful to demonstrate the “policy context” in which editorials are typically lodged.

(1) Web site auctioning of eggs of fashion models is unhealthy.

(2) If so, we shouldn’t allow it.

∴ We shouldn’t allow the Web site auctioning of the eggs of fashion models.

The author presents the following convergent argument in the first paragraph



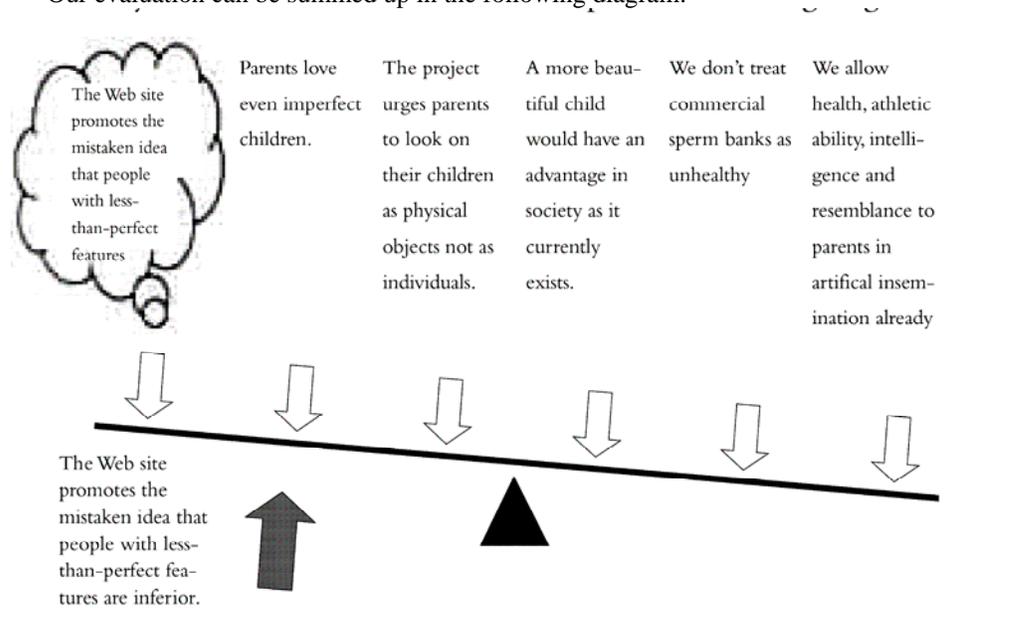
Evaluation of the Convergent Argument:

We can insert an additional counter-consideration by notion that beauty is not different from considerations of health, intelligence, musical talent, athletic ability or physical resemblance to parents in artificial insemination which we routinely permit and don’t consider unhealthy. We can eliminate pro consideration 1 which is at odds with pro consideration 3. If a parent who produces a child in the standard way can love a child that turns out not to be perfect, why can’t the parent that artificially inseminates do so as well. Finally, we can raise doubts about consideration 2. Such a Web site is unlikely to have any appreciable influence in general on people’s beliefs concerning say intelligence

and beauty—we won't be likely to reconsider our assessment of a Nobel prize winner because of their less than perfect features. The argument might be defended by pointing out that a person who had beauty as the only desirable characteristic of the child (rather than one of many) would likely not be a good parent. The author of the argument does not indicate this direction very explicitly. We

might also object to the commercialization of both eggs and sperm, but this would not call into doubt the fashion model Web site specifically.

Our evaluation can be summed up in the following diagram:



3e Criticism of "Legal Drugs Unlikely to Foster Nation of Zombies":

Reconstruction:

- (1) Prohibition of drugs has wasted money, prison space, and police time and has spawned violent crime.
- (2) Legalization of drugs would not result in a significant increase in use.
- (3) Legalization of drugs would not result in a significant increase in addiction.
- (4) If prohibiting a substance produces substantial harm (of the sort cited in premise 1) and legalizing does not produce substantial harm (as indicated in premises 2 and 3), then the substance should be legalized. (IMPLICIT)

∴ Drugs should be legalized.

Criticism: The argument as reconstructed is valid. Perhaps the most questionable premise is 2. Chapman cites a poll in support, but people may not have answered it honestly or may fail to know how they would act if tempted by legal drugs. The statistics from the Netherlands have to do with marijuana, but cocaine is probably more tempting.