

**I. Introduction** Chapter 7 looks at three kinds of problems that occur when we try to evaluate arguments that employ words or phrases that are unclear in meaning. The first is one that we discussed on Friday is *equivocation*--where there might be a shift in meaning of an expression from one premise to another, so that what might superficially seem like a valid argument is actual invalid. Second, the premises of an argument might support the conclusion only if an expression is given a special meaning. Unless this special meaning is made clear, the argument's conclusion is misleading. We call this kind of shortcoming in an argument *misleading definition*. Third an argument might contain a premise that asserts or assumes a claim about the meaning of an expression. We call this assumed meaning a *conceptual theory*.

**II.** The chapter introduces a standard form for reconstructing conceptual theories even when they are fragmentary. The chapter contains the following example (p. 194)

*When can we consider two people to be married? This is a particularly difficult question in this age which has seen the rise of self-styled marriage contracts and even homosexual marriage. I would venture to say that marriage requires cohabitation. But it also requires having the intention of sharing love – by which, to be explicit, I mean sexual love.*

This passage contains an apparent conceptual (definitional) theory that can be reconstructed into standard form as:

Two people are married if and only if

(1) They live together.

AND (2) They have the intention of sharing sexual love.

**A. In small group** reconstruct the conceptual theory in the following passage

*A work of art can be characterized by noting two features. First, works of art are the product of man's activity, i.e., they are artifacts. But unlike most tools, which are also artifacts, a work of art is an artifact upon which some society or sub-group of a society has conferred the status of candidate for appreciation.*

**B. Plenary Discussion**

**III . Three ways of criticizing a conceptual theory:** presenting a counterexample; showing that the theory fails to elucidate; and showing the the various conditions cited in the theory are incompatible.

Counterexamples may be generated in two ways:

(i)By describing an uncontroversial example to which the concept applies but that does not satisfy at least one condition.

(ii) By describing an example that satisfies all the conditions, but to which the concept does *not* apply.

**Sample:** An action is morally right if and only if it is legal.

**Counterexample:**

(i)	Jay walking in order to give first aid	is morally right	but is <i>not</i> legal
(ii)	Insulting a depressed friend to make the friend even sadder	is <i>not</i> morally right	but is legal

**A. In small group** criticize each of the following conceptual theories by finding a counterexample (actual or imagined) of either or both types.

a. A film is pornographic if and only if it explicitly depicts the sex act.

- b. An argument is valid if and only if it has true premises.
- c.. An object is a work of art if and only if
  - (1) It is made by humans;
  - (2) It resembles an object in nature; AND
  - (3) It is beautiful.

**B. Plenary Discussion** of Counterexamples

**C. In small group** Consider whether the following conceptual theories contain terms that fail to elucidate

- a. An argument is valid if and only if it follows from the premises.
- b An action is morally right if and only if it is the sort of action a morally upright person in possession of all the facts would choose.
- c. Something is good if and only if
  - (1) It is happiness itself; AND
  - (2) It produces happiness.
- d. A book is pornographic if and only if
  - (1) It offends standards of decency;
  - (2) It has no redeeming social value.

**D. Plenary** Discussion of failure to elucidate

**E. In small group** Indicate whether the following conceptual theory contains incompatible conditions. If so, discuss the character of this incompatibility.

A society is free if and only if

- AND ( ^ ) Everyone is permitted by the society to do as he or she pleases;  
 ( \ ) Everyone is encouraged by the society to realize his or her potential.

**F. Plenary** on incompatible conditions

**G. In small Group** Reconstruct and criticize conceptual theory in this passage (in one of the three ways discussed in the chapter

- a. Listen then, Thrasymachus began. What I say is that “just” or right” means nothing but what is to the interest of the stronger party. Well, where is your applause? . . .  
Plato, *The Republic*
- b. Love is a deep and vital emotion resulting from significant need satisfaction, coupled with a caring for and acceptance of the beloved and resulting in an intimate relationship. Lamanna and Riedmann, *Marriage and Families*

**H. Plenary**

**I. In small group.** he following passage contains an argument that depend on a definition or conceptual analysis. (1) State the underlying conceptual theory on which the argument depends. (2) Reconstruct the argument. (3) Criticize the argument by criticizing the underlying conceptual analysis.

The hope of computer scientists to create Artificial Intelligence is misguided. Computers must be programmed. If they’re programmed, they can’t be creative. If they’re not creative,

then they can't be intelligent. Perhaps *artificial* intelligence is the correct term. Computer intelligence must remain artificial, not genuine

**IV. Application to Ethical Theory.** As we have suggested in several previous workshops. The ethical theories we have considered could be construed as conceptual theories.

**A.** In small group. Present each of the following ethical theories in the suggested form.

Use what you take to be the most illuminating formulation you have found in the reading or that you can formulate on your own in accord with the reading. Fill in the right side

Divine Command Ethics

An action is morally right if and only if

Natural Law Ethics

An action is morally right if and only if

Ethical Egoism

An action is morally right if and only if

Act Utilitarianism

An action is morally right if and only if

Rule Utilitarianism

An action is morally right if and only if

Kantian Ethics

An action is morally right if and only if

Classical Social Contract Theory

An action is morally right if and only if

Rawlsian Contractarianism

An action is morally right if and only if

**B. In Small Group.** Discuss whether these theories can be criticized using the techniques discussed in the chapter (presenting a counterexample, pointing out that the theory does not elucidate, showing that the theory contains incompatible conditions). If so, how? Can the theory be improved to handle this criticisms. If so how? What other criticisms, if any do you have of these theories.

**C. Plenary**



**Friday May 2 Exam. 9-9:30 Pre exam Last minute Q&A. 9:30-12 Exam Friday afternoon video and discussion of ethical issues it contains.**

**Assignment for Tuesday May 6**

**Morning session . Read: *Critical Reasoning* Ch. 8 Submit Exercise 7.1 #1f,h;**

**Exercise 7.2 #6,#8; Exercise 7.3 #1j; #2 b,f,j, #3 b; Exercise 7.4 #1 d.f. #2 d.f.**

**Afternoon Session Read, *Ethics of Care*, Rachels Ch 11**