

Thinking Straight Critical Reasoning Workshop 1-2 (Friday April 1, 2011)

I Small Group Exercise

- A. In your table groups, read out your assignment results for Exercise 1.1 #1 (descriptions of disagreements you have participated in).
- B. In your group, make a list of factors that either promote or hinder critical reasoning as described in the text. (Areas you might explore: manner in which views are expressed; relationship between participants, etc.) Decide on one or two factors that you think are the most important.
- C. Discuss your results for Exercise 1.2 A2, A4, B1, B2, B3 as well as C on “Truth about Assistance” Try to decide on a consensus response.
- D. **Plenary** (full class) discussion

II. Review: Critical Reasoning as a two-step procedure

- I)
- 2)

A Sample Argument: *We should continue the practice of plea bargaining in the criminal justice system, because if we eliminate this practice, then many more cases will go to trial. If this occurs, then an overwhelming burden will be placed on the criminal justice system.*

- A. **Individually**, fill in the other supporting reason(s) and the conclusion. For the sample argument, that is, RECONSTRUCT it by identify the position being supported and supporting reasons)

Supporting reasons:

Premise 1. *If we eliminate plea bargaining, then many more cases will go to trial.*

(Other Premise(s)

Position being supported:
(Conclusion)

- B. **Small Group** Discuss your answer with your group.

- C. **Plenary** discussion of answers and how we might evaluate the supporting reasons

III

- A) **Individually**. Read the editorial “Your pharmacist should dispense drugs, not morality” on the back of this sheet

B) **Small Group**

- a) Determine the main claim. or conclusion
- b) Determine the reasons offered in support of the conclusion.
- c) If the passage contains an argument does it have independent premises or is it linked?

- C) **plenary** discussion of the editorial

Your pharmacist should dispense drugs, not morality

Leonard Pitts Jr.
Syndicated columnist

Let's say you join the Army.

You go through basic training and are sent to Iraq. One day, your unit comes under fire. Everybody shoots back except you. When your commanding officer demands to know why, you explain that as a Christian, you have moral objections to killing people.

I'd wager most of us would think you a couple of companies short of a full battalion. If you agree, then you're going to love — by which I mean, hate — what's happening with your local pharmacist.

Well, maybe not your personal pharmacist. Maybe yours isn't one of those who are refusing to fill prescriptions on religious grounds, imposing their moral decisions on your medical decisions. Maybe yours isn't, in other words, one of the crazy ones. If so, count your blessings. Some of your fellow Americans are less fortunate.

I give you the state of Illinois by way of illustration. On the first of this month, Gov. Rod Blagojevich felt compelled to issue an emergency rule requiring pharmacies to fill prescriptions for the so-called morning-after anti-contraceptive pill that works by preventing ovulation but can also block fertilization and keep already-fertilized eggs from implanting



in the uterus. He acted after a pharmacist in his state refused to provide the pills to two women. This week, Blagojevich moved to make the rule permanent.

But this isn't just Illinois' headache. Though no one seems to have hard numbers, published reports suggest a widespread pattern of "Christian" pharmacists refusing to fill prescriptions with which they disagree.

And a chilling report last month in the Washington Post suggests that some have gone even further. It told of pharmacists who refuse to dispense birth-control pills to unmarried women, of those who will not sell contraceptive devices to anybody, period, and of those who not only won't fill morning-after prescriptions, but who hold the prescriptions hostage, refusing to return them to customers, knowing time is of the essence because the pill is less effective if taken too long after intercourse.

As maddening as all that is, what's more galling is that laws have been passed in four states — and are under consideration in 12 others — that legitimize this lunacy, allowing pharmacists with moral objections to refuse to fill contraceptive prescriptions.

In words of one syllable: What a crock.

People have an absolute right — indeed, an absolute duty — to oppose abortion if conscience so dictates. They have the right to pen letters to the editor, to support politicians who share their views, to demonstrate and agitate.

But no one has the right to refuse to perform some foreseeable aspect of their job. I mean, if pharmacies of the future began dispensing crack, OK I might sympathize with the pharmacist who refused on moral grounds. How was she to know that would become part of the job description when she signed on?

However, just as the soldier in the scenario should have known that shooting people might be part of his day's work, so should a candidate for a pharmacy job understand that she might have to hand out contraceptive pills and devices. She should either resolve to mind her own business or keep searching the want ads.


I mean, what's next? Can the clerk at Blockbuster refuse to rent R-rated movies because he objects to explicit language? Can the vegan who works at McDonald's refuse to take orders for Big Macs? Tobacco kills 440,000 Americans a year. If I work at 7-Eleven, can I refuse to sell Marlboros?

Of course not. So by what right do these "activist" pharmacists get to impose their morals on the rest of us? And by what logic do lawmakers legitimize their ability to do so?

There's no moral puzzler here, folks. In fact, the solution is real simple. You don't like what the job requires? Fine. Get another job.

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 **Critical Reasoning Assignment** for Tuesday April 5: Read the rest of *Critical Reasoning*, Chapter 2 and work out Chapter 2 Exercise 2.1 **even** items. Review, and modify the results from the small group exercise **III** and write a short statement of the main argument.

BRING YOUR CRITICAL REASONING AND ETHICS TEXTS TO ALL CLASS SESSIONS