Chapter 1
Connections

CHAPTER SUMMARY
To begin our open rational dialogue, we must begin somewhere. The alternative would be to reason “backward” forever and never come to an end/beginning. We must choose between reasoning on and on, never coming to a conclusion or we must begin to reason from some claim for which we give no reasons. Neither alternative is very satisfactory. One is endless and the other is arbitrary. The “Big Bang” theory about the origins of the universe discussed by Lewis Thomas, which you will read about in Chapter 2, exemplifies this age-old problem. If you want to know what there was in the universe before the big bang, physicists cannot tell you. The laws of physics as we know them began with the big bang. One is left to wonder: If reason is so limited, then why try so hard to be rational? People are usually better off trying to be reasonable. Open rational dialogue and critical thinking lead to more successful anticipation of future events and happier outcomes than does assuming that the world is a mystery and unknowable.

The rational open dialogue also has the advantage of being a good way of persuading others to join us in our plans. It is less likely to have the unpleasant consequences attendant on the use of force, or threats of force, which historically have often been used to persuade others to accept or believe mystery. These uses of force include excommunication from the “tribe,” burning at the stake, threats of death by lightning, etc. The rational dialogue invites, but does not force, agreement. It relies solely on the power of evidence. It allows—and even encourages the other party to think critically and to respond critically to that evidence.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
• Define critical thinking.
• Explain the role of reason in the expression of cultural values.
• Explain why reasoned dialogue cannot solve all disagreements.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS
1. What is the most important feature of a discussion that uses critical thinking? Describe how this single characteristic enables critical thinking to continuously take place.
2. In the Euthyphro dialogue, what is Socrates’ objective in the discussion? Describe how he uses his method of dialogue to pursue his objective.
3. In the Euthyphro dialogue, how does Euthyphro respond to Socrates’ questioning? Explain how Euthyphro ends up missing the point of Socrates’ overall line of questioning.
4. What are the advantages to favoring reason over mystery? Describe the mindset of someone who favors the use of reason, as contrasted with preferring to maintain mystery.
5. What are the limits of reason? Describe how the use of reason works characteristically within its limitations.
SOLUTIONS MANUAL

Study Questions I

1. Obviously the desired answer is Socrates but students do not always respond with that answer. Socrates is striving to learn more about himself and to become a better person. In this sense he is pious or devout. Euthyphro is too busy to question his own judgment and too much in haste to carry out the rituals of piety. Once students see the difference between reverent concern for living the good life and the empty performance of ritual, they better understand the two characters and the nature of piety. They become open to becoming better critical thinkers.

2. This definition of an act’s being good because God wills it has the same problem as that of an act’s being pious because it is pleasing to the gods. That is, it makes sense to ask: Is the act good because God wills it or does God will it because it is good?

3. Being a good listener, being patient, being able to disagree without getting angry, and (surprisingly!) talking. It’s the easiest and least dangerous form of human interaction.

4. The definition will determine who is punished, possibly by death. This is not just the case for the dialogue but has also been the case historically. People seen as impious have often been given the death sentence. Salman Rushdie is an example. The definition of piety is also important for religious believers who want to be devout and for the nonreligious who wish to understand the behavior of the religious person.

Study Questions II

1. Students may identify with one or the other parent for a variety of reasons. It is both interesting and important to articulate what those reasons are. The next step might be to have the class attempt an evaluation of the reasons, considering whether all the reasons are equally good.

2. Shamans know their environment better than outsiders. Perhaps the shamans have a natural antidote to the poison in Ruschi’s body. For example, curare, now used for deep sleep during very fine surgical procedures, was first used by indigenous hunters as a poison for spear tips. Perhaps Ruschi felt better because of the hallucinatory cigar smoke he has inhaled.

3. The person asking the questions has asked for reasons or an argument in response. In a most important way, then, the person asking the question has already answered it. In the presence of another, the alternatives to reasonableness are a sock on the jaw or slamming the door. Analogously, the same is true when an individual considers an issue by herself.

Exercises

1–I

1. The willingness to keep the discussion/dialogue open.

2. Reasoning must begin by assuming something. The use of reason does not always lead to agreement. Agreement often demands more time than an urgent situation allows. Reason ignores the emotional side of being a human being. Reason is goal-directed and limited by what we value.

3. Rational approaches enable people to predict and therefore anticipate what is going to happen. They also persuade other rational people without using force. While emotional approaches can also persuade, appeals to emotion tend to overwhelm others and generally show them less respect.
4. a. Since computers generally behave as they are instructed to behave, the explanation would generally be framed in terms of cause and effects, proceeding in a logical order. One could say it would be a rational explanation.
b. Why one person buys one make of car and another person buys a different make is a matter of taste, emotional attachment and appeal, and rational judgment based on performance records, etc. In the case of a Corvette one would expect the decision to be based much more on emotional appeal than on rational judgment since the cost is high and the general utility is low compared to other makes.

1-II

1. It is important to distinguish here between reported events whose causes are currently unknown (such as a recent murder) and events attributed to mystery (such as a religious apparition). Uncanny coincidences may fall between these two categories (see “The Day-Care Deaths: A Mystery” in Chapter 4).
2. Foreign newspapers in the library or accounts in textbooks are good sources.
3. This will vary with the person. Most students will believe their answer should not be too rational. One might explore the reasons for this.
4. Students usually believe that Mr. Ruschi has been cured. That he was not is a surprise to them. The best answers would acknowledge that it was not unreasonable for Ruschi to try alternative medicines since Western medicine could no longer help him. However, that would be a bad place to start treatment, given the track record of modern medicine.
5. Again, it is important to distinguish between events for which we currently have no rational explanation and events for which there is/can be no rational explanation. Events in the latter category would be described either as chance or accident or as miraculous. Most students believe in universal causal determinism. They then have to deal with the issues of free will and supernatural intervention in the world.
Test Bank

The following assessment has been created for in-class use. This assessment is available through Pearson’s MyTest website—allowing for easy access for creating your own tests. Please contact your local Pearson sales representative to learn about the options available. Visit http://www.pearsonhighered.com/replocator.

Multiple Choice Questions – 20 per chapter

Essay Questions – 5 per chapter

Instructors, to access the full Test Bank, please download the complete Instructor’s Manual and Test Bank at www.pearsonhighered.com.