

CRITICAL THINKING

Lecture #6

Dispute Analysis

Professor David Emmanuel Gray



Disagreement #1



Pumpkin

The people who built the pyramids were slaves because they were forced to do the work.

No, they were not slaves. They were given food, clothing, and lodging while they worked.



Snowflake

Analyzing a Dispute: *Instructions*

Analyzing a dispute between two opposing viewpoints works as follows:

1. Indicate the disputed statement,
2. Specify each disputant's position concerning that statement along with the reasons (if given) each offers to justify their respective positions, and
3. Explain whether the dispute is primarily (A) obviously genuine, (B) merely verbal, or (C) apparently verbal but really genuine (it will only be *one* of these).

If it is type (A), then explain whether the dispute is over beliefs, attitudes, or both. If it is type (B), then indicate the ambiguous key word or phrase and explain how each disputant understands that key word or phrase differently. Or, if it is type (C), then indicate the ambiguity and explain why resolving that ambiguity is not likely to resolve the dispute, being clear to explain whether the dispute concerns beliefs, attitudes, or both.

Disagreement #1: *Setup*



Pumpkin

The people who built the pyramids were slaves because they were forced to do the work.

No, they were not slaves. They were given food, clothing, and lodging while they worked.



Snowflake

Disputed statement:

Positions:

Dispute type:

Analyzing a Dispute: *Step 1*

Remember, a dispute is always about something!

This means that when analyzing a dispute, the first thing you do is clearly identify the statement that is in dispute. This is the statement that one party is affirming while the other party is denying. It is the source, or crux, of the parties' disagreement.

With this statement identified, the dispute will be much easier to analyze because you can constantly refer back to that specific statement.

Disagreement #1: *Step 1*



Pumpkin

The people who built the pyramids were slaves because they were forced to do the work.

No, they were not slaves. They were given food, clothing, and lodging while they worked.



Snowflake

Disputed statement: The pyramids were built by slaves.

Positions:

Dispute type:

Analyzing a Dispute: *Step 2*

Once the disputed statement is identified, it should be relatively easy to specify each party's position concerning that statement. More importantly, during a dispute, the parties may also offer *reasons* or *evidence* (premises) in order to justify their respective positions (conclusions).

This means that when analyzing a dispute, you should consider any reasoning (if any) each party gives to justify their position concerning the disputed statement.

Disagreement #1: *Step 2*



Pumpkin

The people who built the pyramids were slaves because they were forced to do the work.

No, they were not slaves. They were given food, clothing, and lodging while they worked.



Snowflake

Disputed statement: The pyramids were built by slaves.

Positions: Pumpkin affirms this statement because the builders were forced to do the work, whereas Snowflake rejects it because the builders were given food, clothing, and lodging.

Dispute type:

Analyzing a Dispute: *Step 3*

Determining the dispute type is a bit more complicated since it involves two aspects:

1. Specifying the role (if any) that *ambiguity* over language is playing in the conversation, and
2. What the dispute is actually about.

While this may seem intimidating, the previous two steps will help tremendously.

Types of Ambiguity: *Verbal & Genuine Disputes*

- (A) **Merely verbal dispute:** When the disagreement between the parties rests primarily on *different understandings* of a word or phrase. The conflict is resolved by having them agree on how they should use this word or phrase. (Or they can easily admit that they are both right because there is no deeper disagreement between them.)
- (B) **Obviously genuine dispute:** There is a *very real* disagreement between the parties, and it does not rest on any confusion concerning ambiguous words or phrases.
- (C) **Apparently verbal but really genuine:** There is *some ambiguous word or phrase* without a shared understanding, but resolving that ambiguity is *not likely to settle* a deeper, but all too real, disagreement between the parties.

Genuine Disputes: *Over Beliefs & Over Attitudes*

Disputes of type (B) and type (C)—the ones involving a *genuine* disagreement—are about something substantive concerning beliefs and/or attitudes:

Disputes over beliefs (facts): When the parties disagree over what they take to be the *correct facts* of some given situation.

Disputes over attitudes (values): When the parties disagree in their *evaluations* or *prescriptions* for some given situation.

Of course, many (B) and (C) disputes may involve disagreements over *both* beliefs and attitudes.

Disagreement #2: *Analyzed*

A: Key West, Florida is much more beautiful than Doha, Qatar.

B: No it isn't. Doha is way more beautiful!

Disputed statement: Key West is more beautiful than Doha.

Positions: **A** affirms this statement, whereas **B** rejects it. (Neither gives reasons for why.)

Dispute type: This is best described as an *obviously genuine* dispute because there are no ambiguities. It is a dispute over *attitudes* concerning an *evaluation* of Key West compared to

Doha: **A** is more positive about Key West than **B**.

Disagreement #2: *Analyzed*

A: Key West, Florida is much more beautiful than Doha, Qatar.

B: No it isn't. Doha is way more beautiful!

Disputed statement: Key West is more beautiful than Doha.

Positions: **A** affirms this statement, whereas **B** rejects it. (Neither gives reasons for why.)

Dispute type: This is best described as an *obviously genuine* dispute because there are no ambiguities. It is a dispute over *attitudes* concerning an *evaluation* of Key West compared to

Doha: **A** is more positive about Key West than **B**.

When a dispute is *genuine* (type (B) or (C)) be clear whether it is about *beliefs* or *attitudes* (or both).

Disagreement #2: *Analyzed*

A: Key West, Florida is much more beautiful than Doha, Qatar.

B: No it isn't. Doha is way more beautiful!

Disputed statement: Key West is more beautiful than Doha.

Positions: **A** affirms this statement, whereas **B** rejects it. (Neither gives reasons for why.)

Dispute type: This is best described as an *obviously genuine* dispute because there are no ambiguities. It is a dispute over *attitudes* concerning an *evaluation* of Key West compared to

Doha: **A** is more positive about Key West than **B**.

When a dispute is over *attitudes*, be clear whether the different attitudes involve *evaluations* or *prescriptions* (or both), and what they are about.

Disagreement #3: *Analyzed*

A: You really should move to Key West, Florida.

B: No I shouldn't. I should stay right here in Doha.

Disputed statement: **B** should move to Key West.

Positions: **A** affirms this statement, whereas **B** rejects it. (Neither gives reasons for why.)

Dispute type: This is best described as an obviously genuine dispute because there are no ambiguities. It is a dispute over *attitudes* concerning a *prescription* for **B**: **A** claims **B** should move, whereas **B** wants to stay.

Disagreement #4: *Analyzed*

A: Key West, Florida is further south than Doha, Qatar.

B: No, it is Doha that is further south.

Disputed statement: Key West is further south than Doha.

Positions: **A** accepts this statement, whereas **B** denies it. (Neither gives reasons for why.)

Dispute type: This is best described as an *obviously genuine* dispute because there are no ambiguities. It is a dispute over *beliefs* concerning a simple geographic *fact* about the relative location of the two cities: **A** thinks Key West is further south, while **B** says it is Doha.

Disagreement #4: *Analyzed*

A: Key West, Florida is further south than Doha, Qatar.

B: No, it is Doha that is further south.

Disputed statement: Key West is further south than Doha.

Positions: **A** accepts this statement, whereas **B** denies it. (Neither gives reasons for why.)

Dispute type: This is best described as an *obviously genuine* dispute because there are no ambiguities. It is a dispute over *beliefs* concerning a simple geographic *fact* about the relative location of the two cities: **A** thinks Key West is further south, while **B** says it is Doha.

When a dispute is over *beliefs*, be clear what *facts* are involved.

Disagreement #5: *Partially Analyzed*

Finish analyzing the following dispute:

A: Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

B: Out of sight, out of mind.

Disputed statement: Physical separation of two persons increases the fondness between them.

Positions: **A** affirms this statement, whereas **B** rejects it. (Neither gives reasons for why.)

Dispute type: This is best described as an *obviously genuine* dispute because there are no ambiguities. It is a dispute over...

Disagreement #5: *Analyzed*

A: Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

B: Out of sight, out of mind.

Disputed statement: Physical separation of two persons increases fondness between them.

Positions: **A** affirms this statement, whereas **B** rejects it. (Neither gives reasons for why.)

Dispute type: This is best described as an *obviously genuine* dispute because there are no ambiguities. It is a dispute over *beliefs* concerning a *fact* of psychology about the effects of separation between persons: **A** says separation makes people care about each other more, whereas **B** suggests this is not the case. It *may* also be a dispute over *attitudes* concerning an *evaluation* of separation: **A** generally approves of separation more than **B** apparently does.

Disagreement #6: *Analyzed*

A: Qatar is the most prosperous country in the world, just look at its GDP!

B: Whatever. The life expectancy of the average Qatari is lower than that of the average Albanian.

Disputed statement: Qatar is the most prosperous country.

Positions: **A** affirms this statement by appeal to GDP, whereas **B** rejects it by appeal to life expectancy.

Dispute type: This is best described as *apparently verbal but really genuine*. There is a verbal dispute over the ambiguous word “prosperous”, which is used by **A** in the sense of *wealth* and by **B** in the sense of *health*. However, the real dispute here seems to be over *attitudes* concerning an *evaluation* of Qatar: **A** seems to approve of Qatar more than **B** does.

Disagreement #7: *Partially Analyzed*

Finish analyzing the following dispute:

A: Majnun lives a long way from campus. I walked out to see him yesterday and it took me three hours to get there!

B: No, Majnun doesn't live a long way from campus. I drove him home last night, and it took only ten minutes.

Disputed statement: Majnun lives a long ways from campus.

Positions: **A** affirms this statement because it is a two hour walk, whereas **B** rejects it because it is a ten minute drive.

Dispute type: This is best described as...

Disagreement #7: *Analyzed*

A: Majnun lives a long way from campus. I walked out to see him yesterday and it took me three hours to get there!

B: No, Majnun doesn't live a long way from campus. I drove him home last night, and it took only ten minutes.

Disputed statement: Majnun lives a long ways from campus.

Positions: **A** affirms this statement because it is a two hour walk, whereas **B** rejects it because it is a ten minute drive.

Dispute type: This is best described as a *merely verbal* dispute over the ambiguous phrase “long way”. This is used by **A** to mean *a long time to walk* and by **B** to mean *a long time to drive*. Based on what is said, there is no reason to believe that there is any deeper, underlying dispute over attitudes or beliefs here.

Disagreement #1: *Partially Analyzed*

Finish analyzing the following dispute:

A: The people who built the pyramids were slaves because they were forced to do the work.

B: No, they were not slaves. They were given food, clothing, and lodging while they worked.

Disputed statement: The pyramids were built by slaves.

Positions: **A** affirms this statement because the builders were forced to do the work, whereas **B** rejects it because the builders were given food, clothing, and lodging.

Dispute type: This is best described as...

Disagreement #1: *Partially Analyzed*



Pumpkin

The people who built the pyramids were slaves because they were forced to do the work.

No, they were not slaves. They were given food, clothing, and lodging while they worked.



Snowflake

Disputed statement: The pyramids were built by slaves.

Positions: Pumpkin affirms this statement because the builders were forced to do the work, whereas Snowflake rejects it because the builders were given food, clothing, and lodging.

Dispute type: This is best described as...

Disagreement #1: *Analyzed*



Pumpkin

The people who built the pyramids were slaves because they were forced to do the work.

No, they were not slaves. They were given food, clothing, and lodging while they worked.



Snowflake

Images (from left to right: Gray, 2016A, B.

Disputed statement: The pyramids were built by slaves.

Positions: Pumpkin affirms this statement because the builders were forced to do the work, whereas Snowflake rejects it because the builders were given food, clothing, and lodging.

Dispute type: This is best described as *apparently verbal but really genuine*. There is a verbal dispute over the ambiguous word “slave”, which is used by Pumpkin to mean *someone forced to work* and by Snowflake to mean *someone denied compensation for their labors*. However, the real dispute here is over *attitudes* concerning an *evaluation* of Ancient Egyptian labor practices: Pumpkin disapproves of them while Snowflake seems less concerned.

Next Class...

We will have an in-class review session for unit exam #1.

References

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