

INTRODUCTION TO LOGIC - HOMEWORK #5 – Due March 24

1 THE WASON'S SELECTION TASK [100 POINTS]

The Wason's selection task is a well-known psychological experiment involving four cards. Here is how it works. First, the participants in the experiment are told that the four cards have a number on one face and a color on the other face. Next, the four cards are displayed in front of the participants, with each card showing only one face. One card shows an odd number; one card shows an even number; one card shows the color red; and one card shows the color blue. Finally, the participants are asked to turn as few cards as possible in order to check whether the following if-then statement is correct:

If the card shows an even number on one face, then its opposite face is red.

If we interpret the if-then statement as containing an implication (in symbol, \rightarrow), the correct answer would be that one should turn the card showing blue and the card showing the even number. There is no need to turn the card showing red or the card showing an odd number. The vast majority of participants, however, give a different answer. It is not clear why.

- (a) Suppose we understand the statement '*If the card shows an even number on one face, then its opposite face is red*' as an implication. Explain why in this case the correct answer is that one should only turn the card showing blue and the card showing the even number. [*Hint: think about the truth table for the implication.*]
- (b) Pick two friends and ask them individually to perform Wason's selection task as described above. Pick two friends who have not seen the Wason's selection task before and who have not taken logic before. Record their answers, but please emphasize that there is no right or wrong answer, so that your friends won't feel intimidated.
- (c) Once you have recorded the answers, please ask your friends why they gave the answer they gave. Summarize their explanation as clearly as you can. Feel free to ask follow-up questions if this helps you become clear about why they answered the way they did. A few written paragraphs for each friend are sufficient.