

toward the discovery of the truth of the conclusion, or as having as its goal the discovery of a good case which could be made out for the conclusion. But I believe that my view of the purpose of argument analysis and appraisal is a natural, and fairly common view. And I do not believe that PC2 is a useful principle to adopt for this purpose. This is because it tends to confuse the construction of an argument (by the critic) with the appraisal (again by the critic) of someone else's argument. It is not up to the critic to figure out a good argument based on someone else's materials, by leaving out irrelevancies and inserting the most plausible supplementary premises he can possibly think of! The critic's task is to understand and evaluate what someone else has put forward as an argument. Adopting PC2 makes it all too easy to read one's own ideas into the works of other people, under the guise of "charity". One can read enough extra premises into fragmentary pre-Socratic writings to turn these into interesting arguments which would be plausible to some modern philosophical minds. Suppose we do this with, say, Heraclitus. Are we then analyzing the arguments of Heraclitus? I think not. Rather, I think that we are reconstructing Heraclitean arguments (arguments incorporating some of Heraclitus's key themes), using some original materials. We better understand thinkers of the past when we limit the amount of *reading in* we do, and distinguish interpretation from reconstruction. Understanding charity as PC2 leads us away from this distinction.

Between PC1 and PC2 in its thrust stands another possible Principle of Charity. This one, which I'll refer to as PC3, would urge us to endorse the more plausible of several distinct interpretations *equally licensed* by the actual text or discourse. If we can extract from a text several different arguments — call them A*, A**, and A*** — we should regard that text as expressing whichever of those arguments is the *best*. It is worth remarking here that such a principle would not give entirely determinate advice, for A* may be the "best" argument in one respect, and A** "best" in another. (For instance, A* may be inferentially perfect due to the insertion of supplementary premises; but A* may have *problematic* premises. Whereas A** may be inferentially weak, because of a hasty generalization from a few premises, but be strong as far as the acceptability of its premises is concerned. This is a common situation — one which will wreak havoc, incidentally, for Johnson's proposed Principle of Discrimination, unless he imposes severe restraints on adding premises.) However, I shall ignore this problem for the moment. PC3 may well be a reasonable principle to work with, although it would require considerable clarification. However it is not as strongly charitable as PC2, due to its insistence that interpretations be licensed by the actual text. That is, in adding or deleting, one will seek a basis for one's decisions in the discourse as given, and its context. One will not delete purely on grounds of irrelevance, nor add purely on grounds of weakness, strength, or plausibility.

Perhaps the Principle of Charity which Johnson extracts from Scriven is triply ambiguous (triguous?), for it could be taken to express PC3, as well as PC1 and PC2. However, it is clear that both Johnson and Scriven work with PC2 as the primary meaning. I suggest that the Principle of Charity, in this sense, is implausibly strong in

its charity. I suspect that it owes the plausibility and the wide acceptance it appears to have to its being easily confused with either PC1 or PC3. Instead of restricting the application of PC2 to serious contexts, as Johnson recommends, we could drop PC2 altogether and endorse either PC1, or PC3 (or, with suitable qualifications, both) as rules of charity. PC2 undercuts a primary purpose of argument analysis, is inefficient, leads to whitewashing of poor arguments, confuses interpretation with reconstruction, and licenses too much reading into others' material. Perhaps the best strategy for charity at home would be to dispense altogether with *this* kind of critical charity. *

note

Charity Begins Much Earlier Than Supposed

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Ralph Johnson in his article "Charity Begins at Home" (*ILN*, iii.3) says that the first use of the term 'principle of charity' of which he is aware is Stephen Thomas's *Practical Reasoning in Natural Language* (1973). In fact the term has been around for considerably longer than that. To the best of my knowledge, it was introduced by Neil Wilson, "Substances without Substrata", *Review of Metaphysics*, 12 (1959) in pp. 521-39. In this version it was a rule for translators:

We select as designatum that individual which will make the largest possible number of . . . statements true. (p. 532).

The principle has seen considerable use (and alteration) since then. But, apart from acknowledgements by Quine (*Word and Object*, [Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1960], p. 59n; *Ontological Relativity* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1969], p. 46n) its provenance has not been widely recognized. *

reply to Griffin

I am happy to take note of the information sent along by Professor Griffin. It is interesting to learn that the Principle of Charity has been enunciated in other contexts — e.g., as a rule for translators proposed by Wilson. However, I am mainly interested in its use by informal logicians as a principle of argument analysis. It is clear that such is not the use to which Wilson's principle is geared. Hence I would like to amend my original assertion to read: "So far as I am aware, the first mention of this principle as a principle of argument analysis is to be found in Thomas's . . ."



Ralph Johnson

To us the most striking feature of this chart is its distinction between "surface analysis" and "depth analysis". We may have it wrong, but we take this to refer to the distinction between what someone's discourse may be made out to mean when taken literally, or better, when the person is taken at his word (which may certainly allow and call for interpretation), and what we may safely infer the person's underlying or deeper message is. Irony and sarcasm are perhaps the clearest examples of discourse whose meaning may be missed by a surface analysis. Humour is another.

A "surface" argument may be so wildly illogical that literal interpretation would be not only uncharitable, but stupid: such illogic could only be the product of wit; hence the need for depth analysis and its verdict: "No serious argument intended here. It's a joke." (Without this distinction Binkley's cartoon would be seen as an example of a logical fallacy. So it's vital.)

The unclosed side-boxes — "Charity, Fidelity and Discrimination" and "Relevance, Sufficiency and Acceptability" — merit glosses.

By "Charity" and "Fidelity", we presume that Binkley was referring to the Principles of Charity and Fidelity found in, among other places, Scriven's *Reasoning*. The Principle of Fidelity means that the critic must be faithful to the original argument; the Principle of Charity requires that one provide the best possible interpretation of the argument; and the Principle of Discrimination (though not explicitly so referred to by Scriven) requires the critic to "go to the heart of the matter", i.e., give prominence to the strongest criticisms and not nit-pick or waste time on minor points.

About "Relevance", "Sufficiency", and "Acceptability", since they come from our text, we can add this: we hold in *Logical Self-Defense* that in a logically good argument the premises are relevant to the conclusion, together they provide sufficient support for the conclusion, and each must be worthy of acceptance by the audience of the argument.

2. *Surface Analysis Flow Chart*. This is pretty self-explanatory, but we have one comment of explanation and one *caveat*. At the bottom of the chart the path of analysis branches, going to either "Draw Diagram" or "Standardize", or to both. By "diagram" we believe Binkley had in mind tree diagrams of argument structure such as those used in Scriven's *Reasoning* and Thomas's *Practical Reasoning in Natural Language*. By "standardize" he is referring to the system introduced in *Logical Self-Defense* consisting of writing the premises above the conclusion they are put forward to support, and numbering them for convenience of reference (P1, P2, P3, etc.). The point of making the two alternative argument-structuring methods available is that tree-diagramming is easier and more perspicuous for longer and more complicated arguments, standardizations can be made immediately for simpler arguments, and a standardization can be written up off a tree diagram. (Metanote: We have come to think the standardizing tech-

teaching note

A System of Rational Appraisal

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editors' note

A couple of years ago, Professor Robert Binkley shipped us a bundle of material from a logic course he was teaching at the time. We've dug out yet another useful item from that bundle: his graphic for his "System of Rational Appraisal." We've added a few comments of our own.

1. *System of rational appraisal*. The flow chart above the cartoon represents the whole appraisal system in broad strokes. The first four boxes — Discourse, Surface Analysis, Classified Non-argument and Representation of Surface Structure — are spelled out in fuller detail on the second page, in the "Surface Analysis Flow Chart" (see below).