

it appeared. This will help you reach a wider audience, and help other readers to keep abreast of work in the field.

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Make a note of the (Second International) Symposium on Informal Logic, tentatively scheduled for June 20-21-22-23, 1983 at the University of Windsor. The time will be ripe for a review of the progress of the informal logic movement since the first Windsor symposium in June 1978. With two years' lead time, we hope there will be ample opportunity for people to work up papers. We herewith issue the first call for papers. Papers on any and all topics related to the theory and teaching of informal logic are welcome. Inexpensive on-campus accommodations and meals will be available. We will keep you posted as more detailed plans develop.

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With this issue we complete the third year of publication of the Informal Logic Newsletter. The Newsletter has tripled, since its first year, in the amount of material included. We are sorry that the increase in the amount of material, plus rising costs, have prevented us from issuing an Examples Supplement with this volume: we have simply run out of money. However, we do have a supply of examples--many with accompanying analyses--on hand, and we will be printing as many of these as we can in the Fall 1981 number (Vol. iv, No. 1) which will be coming out early in the fall--in time for first-semester courses. It would help a lot if you would comb your last-year's stock of examples, and this summer send us a few juicy ones for inclusion in that issue. Include your own (succinct) analyses of them if you can.

Note that subscription renewals are now due. It has been necessary to increase our rates to \$6 (individuals) to cover increased costs. We hope you will agree that this is still a modest amount for the value returned. It will enable us to maintain the increased volume of material, and to have Vol. iv set in type so it will be much easier to read. Please send your renewal cheque or money order as soon as you can, so we won't have cash-flow problems.

Have a pleasant summer. \*

Thanks to Vi Smith and Midge Mailloux for typing this issue. Without the (unpaid) editorial and production assistance of June Blair, this issue would not have seen the light of day; we are grateful for her help. Our Managing Editor, Peter Wilkinson, leaves for a well-earned sabbatical as we go to press.

# articles

## Worries About Tu Quoque as a Fallacy

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Traditionally, the tu quoque argument has been regarded as a kind of fallacious ad hominem. A classic form of this consists in attacking someone for not practicing what he preaches, and then going on to impugn on these grounds the content preached.<sup>1</sup> For example, several years ago Ontario and Federal government officials in Canada, having exhorted Canadians to spend winter holiday money at home in Canada, nevertheless abandoned our northern country for winter vacations in Florida and the Caribbean. From such a discrepancy between preaching and personal practice, one might be tempted to infer that what is preached is false, wrong, or unimportant. If one did this, then, traditionally, one would have committed an ad hominem fallacy of the tu quoque variety.

One may feel doubts about this case. Somehow, one feels, critics of government ministers have got some kind of valid point here. The matter has perplexed me for some time, and I'd like either to generate a similar perplexity in others, or to find someone who can rid me of my own.<sup>2</sup>

We may look at such cases in an abstract way. A person, A, holds a principle, P, which is of the form "People in circumstances of type (c) should do actions of type (a)". He affirms this principle, communicates it to others, advocates that they follow it, argues on its behalf, and so on. But A himself, when in circumstances of type (c) does not do actions of type (a); he performs, on the other hand, actions of type (x)--quite contrary to (a)--and thus fails to conform to his own principle. Now consider another person B who has been part of A's audience on some of the many occasions on which he has exhorted others to conform their actions to P. B, let us say, points out to A in no uncertain terms that his action of type (x) is in violation of his own principle, P. So far, B certainly has not committed any fallacy. He has merely made a

true comment about A, and voiced it to A in emphatic language. B may go on and use this true comment as a basis for criticism of A. A does not practise what he preaches, and this fact, which strongly suggests that he is either hypocritical, unserious, or weak-willed, could relevantly and appropriately be used in an argument to one of these conclusions. If B, in criticizing A, were to construct such an argument, he would not necessarily commit any fallacy.

A fallacy seems to be committed by B in this sort of context only if B wants to argue from A's failure to practice what he preaches to the erroneousness of what A preaches. Such an argument, if used by B, would be typical of fallacious ad hominem arguments insofar as it would contain an inference from a personal defect to the erroneousness of a view held by the "defective" person. Certainly if B were to argue as in

- \* 1. A advocates that P be followed.
- 2. A does not himself follow P.
- 3. P is false.

he would be committing a blatant fallacy of relevance. My own experience suggests, however, that we are unlikely to find instances of tu quoque which are so grossly simple. Of course, where P is a perfectly general principle about what people should do, and A is merely one individual, no facts about A will be relevant to the truth/falsity, unimportance/importance...of P. The connection, if any, between A's performance and the soundness of P is a connection which B makes in this kind of context because it is the particular person A who is telling him to follow P. B may ask, plaintively and rhetorically, "Who is he to tell me to follow P, when he doesn't even conform to it himself?". For B, there is certainly a very natural tendency to associate the character of A with the principle, P, insofar as it is A who is telling him to conform to P.

Something is going wrong when one receives moral or prudential directives from the very people who do not follow these themselves. In such contexts, one has a kind "gut reaction", amounting sometimes almost to rage. Most people--even philosophers well indoctrinated by traditional accounts of the fallacies--will admit to feeling this. Yet, it is quite obvious that the simple argument (\*) has no merit. Perhaps one's very natural "gut reaction" should be discounted as a natural emotional response of no logical relevance. Or should it? This is the question which has so puzzled me about the tu quoque fallacy.

In such argumentative contexts one can readily construct more subtle and more plausible arguments than (\*). Consider:

- \*\* 1. A advocates that P be followed.
- 2. A does not himself follow P.
- 3. A does not take P seriously.
- 4. Others need not take A's advocacy of P seriously.
- 5. Whatever reason people may have for following P, it does not presently come from A.

Here, (1) and (2) are the basic premises; (3) is inferred from them by a kind of inductive step; (4) is inferred from (3), and (5) from (4). Now none of these inferences is deduc-

tively tight--nor does the sort of conclusion adduced suggest that they should be. And surely, several of the inferences are open to criticism. The move from (3) to (4) would be an interesting one to study, as it would seem somehow to depend on general assumptions about trust, integrity, and communication. Granted, the argument (\*\*) does not look so impeccable as to be immune to all rational criticism. But it is not overtly fallacious either. (Is it?) The materials present in (1) and (2), and the subsequent moves do seem to me to give support to the conclusion (5). I suspect that in many contexts where we might at first be inclined to see a tu quoque fallacy, an interpretation of what is going on along the lines of (\*\*) would be quite plausible.

Often, real materials do not contain an explicit inference from personal failings to the falsity of principles, as in (\*). Given the obvious, blatant erroneousness of that argument, this is scarcely surprising. Real or realistic arguments wherein people point out the failure of others to practice what they preach are more plausibly seen as giving the moves in (\*\*) than in (\*), and when they are cast into this more subtle form, there is either no fallacy at all, or a rather unobvious one.

For an application to some real cases, consider the following: (i) In 1978, Calgary outdoor workers went on a bitter seven week strike and eventually settled for a wage increase of 7.5%-8%; they were told by aldermen that wages had to be kept down, in order to control inflation. When these same aldermen voted themselves a 48% increase a year later, the outdoor workers were so enraged that they launched a campaign to bring the matter to a public referendum. Their leader said, "Council should remember when they drove us out for 55 days on the line" (reported in the Toronto Globe and Mail, January 15, 1979).

The point here would seem to be not that council members are shown by their actions to have said something false when they said it was important to keep down inflation, but rather that the inconsistency between their advocacy of that principle and their quest for a fat raise for themselves makes it hard to accept from them either the initial principle or the subsequent demand for their own higher wages.

(ii) In May, 1980, Conservative members of the Canadian parliament denounced patronage by the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau. Joe Clark, Conservative leader, called Treasury Board President Donald Johnston "the president of the pork barrel". Writing in the Calgary Albertan, columnist Doug Small said,

One Tory we haven't heard from is the party's sole MP from Quebec, Roch LaSalle. Why haven't we? By our reckoning, he's one of the leading authorities on the subject. Remember last summer? Shortly after Clark named him minister of supply and services?

"Patronage", said LaSalle at the time, "is a fact of political life at all levels. Obviously it was a tool that was used by the Liberals during their tenure in office and I don't

intend to pass up our opportunity", Tory supporters in Quebec "can look forward to being on the receiving end of government work and service contracts", he went on. One of his mandates would be to "reward our friends".

For good measure LaSalle noted that Liberals appointed to boards, commissions and the like would be replaced by Tories (in his words "friends of our party") when their terms ran out. "That is the political way in Canada."

How easily one forgets.

(The Calgary Albertan, May 15, 1980)

Small suggests that the Conservatives' denunciation of patronage is not to be taken seriously. He is not, surely, contending that Liberal patronage is all right, because the Conservatives who are denouncing it were firm supporters of patronage when they themselves were in power. \*

#### FOOTNOTES :

<sup>1</sup>Cf. John Woods and Douglas Walton, "Ad Hominem", The Philosophical Forum, 1977. These authors distinguish three different types of tu quoque, only one of which is tu quoque in the sense I attend to here. They refer to this type as involving "deontic-praxiological inconsistency", say that it can sometimes constitute a good argument which will successfully shift the burden of proof, and report an interesting old dispute between Whately and De Morgan on one particular case. They themselves offer no account as to why the "correct" cases are correct, or what differentiates them from the incorrect ones.

<sup>2</sup>I dealt with this issue in a preliminary way in "Credibility and Fallacy: Thoughts on Ad Hominem", presented at the Canadian Philosophical Association meetings in Montreal in June, 1980.

# Charity Begins at Home

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Some Reflections on the  
Principle of Charity

## I. INTRODUCTION

Recent works on informal logic have made reference to something called The Principle of Charity. So far as I am aware, the first mention of this principle is to be found in Thomas's Practical Reasoning in Natural Language (1973):

- 1] When you encounter a discourse containing no inference indicators which you think may nevertheless contain an argument, stop and consider very carefully whether such an interpretation is really justifiable. . . . A good rule to follow is "the Principle of Charity": If a passage contains no inference indicators or other explicit signs of reasoning and the only possible argument(s) you can locate in it would involve obviously bad reasoning, then characterize the discourse as "non-argument." (9)

Thomas construes the Principle of Charity as a rule to be used in deciding whether or not a given passage is to be categorized as an argument.

The next mention that I'm aware of comes from Baum's Logic (1975):

- 2] The missing premise in this example is "Fido is a dog." A general rule of thumb for supplying missing premises is to add whatever premises are needed to make the argument as good as possible. The rule is sometimes referred to as the principle of charity.

Baum construes the Principle of Charity as a rule to be followed when adding missing premises to an argument.

One of the most complete discussions of the principle is to be found in Scriven's Reasoning (1976), from which the next two passages are excerpted:

- 3] Now it's time to introduce you to what we might call the ethics of argument analysis. The dominant principle here is what we can call the Principle of Charity. The Principle of Charity requires that we make the best, rather than the worst, possible interpretation of the material we're studying. (71)

Here the scope of the principle--not actually formulated--is very broad, for it covers every phase of argument analysis. However, Scriven very quickly narrows the focus and trains his sights on criticism:

- 4] The Principle of Charity is more than a mere ethical principle, but it is at least that. It requires that you be fair or just in your criticisms. They can be expressed in heated terms, if that is appropriate; they may involve conclusions about the competence, intellectual level, or conscientiousness of the person putting forward the argument, all of which may well be justified in certain cases. But your criticisms shouldn't be unfair; they shouldn't take advantage of a mere slip of the tongue or make a big point out of some irrelevant point that wasn't put quite right.

This brief survey has turned up four different formulations of the Principle of Charity, and that leads to my first point: there appears to be no one principle that informal logicians have in mind when they refer to "the