Philosophy 101

(3/29/11)

- **I've posted solutions to HW #3 & HW #4.**
- **HW #4 will be returned today (end of class).**
- **Quiz #4 is *this Thursday***
  - **This will be *re-do* of the last quiz (on chs. 3&4)**
  - **I'll give you the higher of your two scores**
- **HW #5 is posted (see schedule page on website)**
  - **Due on Thurs. 4/7 (7 problems from Chapter 5)**
- **(Charitably) Reconstructing Arguments**
  - **Recognizing arguments *vs* non-arguments**
  - **Detecting argument structure(s) in a passage**
  - **Seeking the strongest arguments expressed**

Reconstructing Arguments 10

Adding Implicit Premises

- We have three basic principles to help guide us in the addition of implicit premises (when it is clear that this is needed).
- **Faithfulness**:
  - (**PF**) Add implicit premises that are *consistent with the intention of the author* of the argument.
- **Charity**:
  - (**PCI**) Add implicit premises that are *reasonable to accept* rather than implicit premises that are obviously false.
- **Generalization**:
- (**PG**) When adding a generalization as an implicit premise, add a *true wide* generalization rather than a *true narrow* one, and add a *true narrow* generalization rather than a *false wide* one.

Reconstructing Arguments 11

Adding Implicit Generalizations (Example)

Bar X. Am is a recent law-school graduate who has just been interviewed for a position in a law firm. The interviewer says, "Bar will be a successful lawyer. She's smart and articulate, and she likes to argue."

- As a first pass, we might try the following reconstruction:

1. Bar is smart.
2. Bar is articulate.
3. Bar likes to argue.

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4. Bar will be a successful lawyer.

- But, this reconstruction is *missing a generalization*.
- What generalization should we add here?

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Adding Implicit Generalizations (Example)

- The first thing to try would be something like this:

1. Bar is smart.
2. Bar is articulate.
3. Bar likes to argue.
4. All people who are smart, articulate, and like to argue will be successful lawyers.

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5. Bar will be a successful lawyer.

- At least the argument is *valid* now (assuming Bar is a person).
- But, the generalization we added is *too wide* to be plausible.
  - Why is it clear that this generalization is *false*?

Adding Implicit Generalizations (Example)

- This suggests the following amended reconstruction:

1. Bar is smart.
2. Bar is articulate.
3. Bar likes to argue.
4. Bar is a *lawyer*.
5. All *lawyers* who are smart, articulate, and like to argue will be successful lawyers.

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6. Bar will be a successful lawyer.

- This *narrower* generalization is more reasonable/likely.
  - (**PG**) recommends *true narrow* over *false wide*.

Adding Implicit Generalizations (Example)

- The principle of charity urges us to find *the strongest argument in the vicinity*. Consider the following *non*-deductive alternative:

1. Bar is smart.
2. Bar is articulate.
3. Bar likes to argue.
4. Bar is a lawyer.
5. *Most* lawyers who are smart, articulate, and like to argue will be successful lawyers.

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6. Bar will be a successful lawyer.

- This ***may*** be a *stronger argument* than the deductive rendition. This "most" generalization is *more plausible*, to be sure…

Adding Implicit Generalizations (Example)

- Why not go *even narrower*?

1. Bar is smart.
2. Bar is articulate.
3. Bar likes to argue.
4. Bar is a *lawyer*.
5. Bar is a *woman*.
6. All *lawyers* who are *women and* are smart, articulate, and like to argue will be successful lawyers.

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7. Bar will be a successful lawyer.

- (**PG**) favors *true wide* over *true narrow*, unless there is a specific reason to think the author intended the narrower generalization.

Adding Implicit Generalizations (Example #2)

- Two common mistakes here:
  - (a) leaving out a requisite general premise
  - (b) leaving the quantifier off a general premise
- Example:
  - Michael must be tall. After all, he's a professional basketball player.
- Mistake (a) would lead to this *incomplete reconstruction*:

1. Michael is a professional basketball player.

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2. Michael is tall.

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Adding Implicit Generalizations (Example #2)

• Mistake (b) would lead to this *incomplete reconstruction*:

1. Michael is a professional basketball player.
2. Professional basketball players are tall.

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3. Michael is tall.

• This is *still incomplete*, since (2) is *missing a quantifier*.

• Which quantifier should we add here?
  • All? Most? or some other quantifier?
  • Remember, we want the *strongest, plausibly true claim*…

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Cheap Validity

• One can turn *any* argument into a *valid* argument, just by adding a suitable *implicit conditional premise* connecting the explicit premises of the argument with its conclusion. *E.g.*:

		1. P1
1. P1		2. P2
2. P2		3. If P1 and P2, then P3.
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3. P3		4. P3

• This trick is called "cheap validity".

• You might worry that this is "too easy". But, in fact, there is no real danger in using cheap validity, since if the argument was weak before the trick is applied, it will remain weak, after the trick…
  • Here is an example to illustrate why…

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Cheap Validity

"It rained yesterday. Therefore, the Red Sox will win the World Series this year."

1. It rained yesterday.

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2. The Boston Red Sox will win the World Series in 2005.

• Clearly, this argument is *weak*. Using "cheap validity" yields:

1. It rained yesterday.
2. If it rained yesterday, then the Red Sox will win the World Series this year.

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3. The Red Sox will win the World Series this year.

• This argument is valid, but it has a rather clearly *false premise* (2). And, so, it is *also weak* (just for a different reason now).

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Two Example Argumentative Passages:

• God does not exist. For there is a tremendous amount of pain and suffering in the world. And if God existed, then there would not be this much suffering in the world. For God is supposed to be all-powerful. In addition, he is supposed to be all-knowing, and he is supposed to be all-good. And if he has these qualities, he wouldn't allow so much gratuitous suffering.

• Bush should not have won the election, since Gore should have won. For Gore won the national popular vote by some 300,000 votes. And he also would have won the popular vote in Florida if the Supreme Court had allowed the re-counts to continue, and surely this is something they ought to have done.