

Argument Analysis #2

PHI 370/SPM 370

Due January 29th, 2014

Please write approximately 2 pages stating, in your own words, the argument contained in the following passage and critically analyzing it.

If doing Y is constitutive of doing Z, then if I authorize myself to be moved by the desire to do Y because I mistakenly believe that doing Y is a way of not doing Z, then there is an obvious sense in which I have not authorized myself to do what I am now doing when I am moved by the desire to do Y. So, if I have a general desire to do what is right and prudent, or, even more generally, a desire to do what I can justify to myself (and others), or, more generally still, a desire to be responsive to reasons, then insofar as I am moved to act in ways that are, in fact, incompatible with satisfying these desires, there is a sense in which I — who am committed to doing only what I have good (enough) reason to do — have not really authorized my action.

Buss, "Personal Autonomy" pg. 8

You should first reconstruct the argument in the passage. Make clear what you take the conclusion of the argument to be, and what you take the premises to be, both explicit and suppressed, by setting them off from surrounding text and labeling each premise and the conclusion. Premises and conclusions should not be quotes; they should be stated in your own words. They should not be questions. It is best to do this both in prose and in standard form. Below is an example of an argument in standard form (but you needn't have only two premises).

Premise 1: Every claim with a truth-value is either analytic or empirically verifiable.

Premise 2: No moral claim is either analytic or empirically verifiable.

Conclusion: No moral claim has a truth-value.

Explicit premises are premises the author explicitly states; suppressed premises are premises that he or she is assuming to be true without explicitly stating.

Next, critically analyze the argument. What is the best objection to the argument? Is it to one of the premises? Is the argument valid? Ultimately, can the argument be successfully defended against the objection?