

DONNELLY ON GEACH

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In [1], John Donnelly claims to show that Geach's distinction, in [2], between "logically predicative adjectives" and "logically attributive adjectives" is "bogus" (p. 127). However, Donnelly's attack rests on a serious misunderstanding of the grounds for the admissibility of a rule of inference in (formal or informal) logic.

Geach's distinction between the two sorts of adjectives is, it seems clear, one which has to do with their behavior in inferences: this is the force of his use of the word "logically." I take it, then, that his point in calling, say, "small" a "logically attributive adjective" is that the inference from a sentence of the form

(1) x is a small B

to one of the form

(2) x is a small and x is a B

is an invalid inference. And to say that an inference-form (i.e., the inference of a conclusion of a certain specified form from premises of a certain form) is invalid is to say that at least some inferences of that form have true premises and a false conclusion.

This being so, it is quite beside the point for Donnelly to ask that we "consider the indisputable claim that all cub-scouts are boys, from which it seems to follow quite anti-attributively that a small cub-scout is also a small boy" (p. 125), to then claim that the just-quoted example ". . . casts considerable doubt on the legitimacy of Geach's distinction, even on the level of informal logic" (p. 126), and to claim that the fact that the predicate calculus sanctions the inference from

$(\exists x) (Fx \ \& \ Bx)$

to

$(\exists x) (Fx)$ and $(\exists x) (Bx)$

shows that ". . . Geach's distinction between attributive and predicative

adjectives does not seem so intuitively plausible on the level of formal logic either" (p. 126). The cub-scout example has no bearing on the legitimacy of Geach's distinction, for the fact that some instances of an inference-form have true premises and a true conclusion does not show that the inference-form is not invalid. As to the fact that the predicate calculus apparently sanctions inferences from (1) to (2), Geach's distinction can be construed either as a counter-example to the legitimacy of distributing the existential quantifier across a conjunction, or as the claim that certain adjectives of natural languages are not symbolizable as normal predicate-letters in the formal language of the predicate calculus. Geach does not inform us which construal he intends, but I suspect that it would be the latter.

REFERENCES

- [1] Donnelly, John, "Some Remarks on Geach's Predicative and Attributive Adjectives," *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic*, vol. XIII (1971), pp. 125-128.
- [2] Geach, Thomas, "Good and Evil," *Analysis*, vol. 17 (1956), pp. 33-42.

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