

The principle of charity in critical thinking

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The Principle of Charity is an important critical thinking method wherein a person is expected to become “charitable” toward the position and arguments that he or she opposes, which means that a person must give opposing views and arguments fair and honest interpretation. This principle does not imply that one should agree with an opposing view but rather a person should apply a wide discretion in interpreting contradicting or opposing statements.

Contradicting statements may, by all means, be subject to all forms of scrutiny and criticism. In comparison, one can say that the purest of gold shines only through the fire (Waller, 2008). A person must fully understand the principle of charity when coming to terms with other people’s views. Several principles may be applied as guides to understanding the principle of charity.

When the pieces of evidence allow a person to attribute him to a stronger argument, one should not point him to a weaker argument. One also must not interpret a statement as a bad argument when an ordinary prudent may reasonably interpret is as not an argument at all (McGraw Hill, 2006, p. 38-43). The importance of this principle can be greatly appreciated in conjunction with the Strawman fallacy which happens when a person twists an idea or distorts a statement to make it more vulnerable to attack.

The application of the principle of charity is the best way to avoid this policy because it always represents arguments and views in their strongest and most credible form (Waller, 2008). This principle is important because it enables a person to inspect fully and consider all the aspects of an argument

before making another statement or conclusion. There is great challenge in the application of this principle because in doing so, the mind opens itself to a world of creative thinking thereby allowing a free-falling and continuous cycle of arguments.