

# **Textual Interpretation**

**PHL 308**

**Elementary Ethics**

# **A Mysterious Sign**

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS ONLY**

- **Faculty Club**
- **What does it mean?**

# **Evidence for Reading of a Text**

- $e_1$ . The “text” is on a sign.**
- $e_2$ . The sign is on a door.**
- $e_3$ . The door is to the Johns Hopkins  
University Club.**
- $e_4$ . The “text” reads “PRIVATE  
MEMBERS ONLY.”**

# Possible Explanations

- t<sub>0</sub>. Only those persons who belong to this club may enter it.**
- t<sub>1</sub>. Only those who are secretly and not publicly members of this club may enter it.**
- t<sub>2</sub>. Only the genitalia of members may enter.**
- t<sub>3</sub>. You may bring in your own genitalia.**
- t<sub>4</sub>. Only genitalia may enter.**
- t<sub>5</sub>. The sign was intentionally designed with double meaning by witty intellectuals.**

# **Evidence for Reading of a Text**

- e<sub>1</sub>. The “text” is on a sign.**
- e<sub>2</sub>. The sign is on a door.**
- e<sub>3</sub>. The door is to the Johns Hopkins  
University Club.**
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MEMBERS ONLY.”**



- t<sub>0</sub>. Only those persons who belong  
to this club may enter it.**



# Rank Order

- t<sub>0</sub>. Only those persons who belong to this club may enter it.**
- t<sub>5</sub>. The sign was intentionally designed with double meaning by witty intellectuals.**
- t<sub>1</sub>. Only those who are secretly and not publicly members of this club may enter it.**
- t<sub>4</sub>. Only genitalia may enter.**
- t<sub>2</sub>. Only the genitalia of members may enter.**
- t<sub>3</sub>. You may bring in your own genitalia.**

# **Evaluation of the Evidence for an Interpretation**

**Since the common sense interpretation of the text provides the best explanation of the text and other relevant data, the evidence in support of the interpretation is strong.**

# **The Constitution**

- **History**
- **Written document**
- **Interpretive theories**
  - **Plain meaning**
  - **Originalism**
  - **Concrete intentions**
  - **Abstract intentions**
  - **Non-originalism**
- **Constitutional precedent**



# **The Supreme Court**

- **Nine Justices**
- **Chief Justice**
- **Majority rules**
- **Majority opinion (opinion of the Court)**
- **Concurring opinions**
- **Dissenting opinions**