Appraisives in the Early Constitution: An Introduction

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[2 OCL 193]
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ABSTRACT.
The vocabulary of the federal constitution includes appraisives such as ‘needful’, ‘comfort’ and ‘good.’ These are words employed when the writer is making a value judgment and wants the reader to know that a judgment has been made at the time of the communicative act. In addition, these words can be employed when the writer seeks to permit, command, or prohibit the reader’s conduct in the future. Appraisives used in the Early Constitution are surveyed.

KEY WORDS: appraisives, Philadelphia Constitution, Bill of Rights, Early Constitution

A. INTRODUCTION. The Philadelphia Constitution, the Bill of Rights Constitution and the Early Constitution have been named [1]. Constitutional documents referenced therein (the Philadelphia Constitution and the first [adopted/ratified] twelve amendments) have been parsed into Constitutional Text Units [2] and machine-readable text presented for the reader’s use [3].

The vocabulary employed in the federal constitutional text may be divided into the mundane (definite articles, helping verbs and so forth), the workaday noun (law, court, regulations), names and titles of offices/institutions (Supreme Court, Congress, President), and terms of art: some remembered (fords, magazines, arsenals), some forgotten (Letters of Marque and Reprisal). This is not to mention adverbs, adjectives and, of interest to this study, appraisives.

B. THE CONCEPTS OF VALUE. 2 OCL 197 [4] introduces (to the study of constitutional history) K. Aschenbrenner’s The Concepts of Value [CoV] (1971) and its lists of appraisives in the English language, along with divisions grouping words (by topic area = ‘characterizations’) with comments on word usage in these topic areas; further subdivisions and comments are supplied. The list itself appears at Machine-Readable List of 4,062 Appraisives in the English Language Based on The Concepts of Value, 2 OCL 507 [5].

C. METHODOLOGY. The approach taken is described as follows. Start with the Philadelphia Constitution. Each of its 4,321 words was compared to each of the words in CoV [5]. Many of the matches were ‘one to one’ hits, such as ‘danger’ and ‘comfort.’

The total of different appraisives employed was 34; with repetitions (‘necessary’ appearing six times and ‘public’ nine times for example), the appraisives were employed 67 times. The division of net and gross number of appraise ‘hits’ into the word counts yields (for the Philadelphia Constitution) scores of 4321 / 34 = 127.09 and 4321 / 67 = 64.49.

By way of comparison: in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus (1818) the author employed 813 appraisives in 75,066 words for a 92.33 net score; Jane Austen permitted herself the (almost) identical number of appraisives (803) to charm readers of Pride and Prejudice (1797, pub. 1813) in the 121,927 words she penned. Austen’s 151.84 score compares with Mrs. Shelley’s more aggressive 92.33. Novels bracketing the efforts of our Eighty-Niners will be scored in a future article.

D. TABLE ANNEXED. On SelectedWorks, the table appears as a separate file. See Table Annexed to this Article. For this and other works see http://works.bepress.com/peter_aschenbrenner/

The reader will note that the Tables annexed cover not just the Philadelphia Constitution but all constitutional text (including text in the Corrective Constitution); hence, the Early Constitution is analyzed in detail.
E. SOFTWARE APPLICATION. A future article will detail the Java programming. The application matches source words in the CoV dictionary (discussed in detail in 2 OCL 197 [4]) and the target text. The output appears alphabetically. Proprietary or freeware programs should be able to supply similar results if the programmers provided a dictionary or allow users to custom-build one; but these threads have not been fully tested. Readers are invited to offer suggestions.

F. ‘HITS.’ The ‘hits’ the software generates are listed in Tables 193D and 193E, which cover the Philadelphia Constitution and, on the other hand, the Bill of Rights and Twelfth Amendment.

The Eleventh returns a null result; at 43 words the text includes no appraisives.

The federal convention was studiously measured in its employment of appraisives in crafting the Philadelphia Constitution; 34 different terms were employed 67 times. Thus, each term was used, on the average, twice, with significant usages for ‘public’ (=8) and ‘necessary’ (=6), noted above, swelling the average.

It is the dramatic uptick in usage scores, both gross and net, that will draw the reader’s attention. More James Madison’s product – and project – than anyone else’s, the Bill of Rights (we speak only of the ten amendments adopted September 25, 1789 and finally ratified December 15, 1791, excluding what is now numbered as the Twenty-Seventh Amendment) employs twenty-three different appraisives a total of twenty-nine times. For the vast majority of instances in which an appraisive is employed, it is rarely called upon to serve the author’s needs a second time.

Hence the crafting Frankenstein’s creation obliges the writer to employ a different appraisive once every ninety words; Madison’s Bill of Rights effort is four-and-one-half times richer in value judgments than Shelley’s Frankenstein.

More comparisons are on the way, the conceit being to construct a machine-readable target of the most significant texts in American constitutional history; at a million words, one should be able to develop, with confidence, baseline appraisive scores (net and gross) for the Eighty-Niners, OCL’s official handle for the Founding Generation.

G. NOTES TO TABLE.
(1) PC spells ‘tranquility’ with one ‘l’.
(2) Two of the usages of ‘particular’ (in PC) were evaluated as not making value judgments and were flushed from the results. One usage in the Bill of Rights was classified as value judgment.

H. SCREENING FOR FALSE POSITIVES. There were two words in the CoV inventory that triggered a ‘hit’ in the Early Constitution, which was determined to be a false positive. ‘Credit’ appeared three times; two were in the term of art ‘bill of credit’.

‘Deprived’ requires more comments. True, a state is secure against being ‘deprived’ of its Senatorial representation without its consent; true, being ‘deprived’ of anything must involve a value judgment on the part of some actor or institution. But deprived is more a term of the legal arts and therefore lacks the texture and color of ‘reasonable’ and ‘necessary.’

The requirement that the investigator read the target text, before and after the software generates its ‘hits,’ is an important brake and disciplines the scholarly effort. Searching for ‘value judgment’ vocabularies involves making value judgments.

There is a role for the mindless application of pitiless logic, but this isn’t it.

I. PREFERRED CITATION FORMAT. Please cite as 2 Our Constitutional Logic 193 or 2 OCL 193. For other works in the series see the following website.
http://works.bepress.com/peter_aschenbrenner/

J. REFERENCES TO OTHER OCL ARTICLES.
[1] Naming the Constitutions, 2 OCL 378
[2] Introducing Constitutional Text Units, 2 OCL 126
[4] Appraisives from The Concepts of Value, 2 OCL 197
K. Server Location. This file is maintained on the I/D server.

L. Last Revised. This file was last revised on August 7, 2012; it is version 023.

M. File Format. The format of this file is MS Word 2010; the format of the associated table is also MS Word 2010.