

OF ELEPHANTS AND ONIONS

by Dale McCall

December, 1979 -- NFL ANNOUNCES THE CREATION OF LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE. The interp coach groped the elephant and said, "Oh, I know what this is; it will be an actor and emote the part." "No," said the extemp coach, (Feeling the elephant's tail) "It will be analytical and well organized, no emotion for me." "Aha," proclaimed the oratory coach, (groping the elephant's trunk), "This will be easy, just give it a thesis, a little reason, a little emotion, and we'll be winning this event in no time." "No," commanded the Debate coach, (Groping the ear of the elephant), "This will be a cinch. Why, it's nothing more than one-man policy debate without the plan."

Well, our journey to "see" the elephant has been full of groping and hoping to find the real meaning of L/D. "Yes, the interp coach is right -- persuasion does have an element of the theatrical; but the extemp coach is right as well -- this is an analytical, well-organized event; the oratory coaches' points are well-taken -- a thesis, a reason and emotion are all necessary ingredients. The policy coach is quite correct -- there must be clash and cross-examination in L/D. But, wait, we've missed something in our groping, the body of the beast." Consequently, I would like to focus on the area of L/D that seems to be most troublesome, the manner of reasoning process employed in this values argumentation. It is my thesis that values resolutions cannot be approached with the same line of reasoning used for other types of propositions. This contention arises from the exploration of the "body of the beast" itself. First, we will explore what values are, why they have significance for us, and what type of reasoning process is a natural outgrowth of the intrinsic nature of values in conflict.

Body of the Beast

William Frankena, Professor of Philosophy, writes in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, that in its widest use, value is the generic noun for all kind of critical or pro and con predicates, as opposed to descriptive ones, and is contrasted with existence or fact. In Social Science, literature such as *The International Encyclopedia of Social Science*, we find values referred to as conceptions of the desirable, influencing selective behavior, regulating impulse satisfaction in accord with a whole array of hierarchical enduring goals. Even further, logicians such as Robert Paul Churchill of George Washington University writing in his book, *Becoming Logical*, tell us that value judgments are assertions either that an action is right or wrong, or ought to be taken or not taken. Sociologist, Milton Rokeach, in his book *The Nature of Human Values*, tells us that values can best be defined by looking at their function which is to serve as standards that guide ongoing activities and as general plans employed to resolve conflicts and to make decisions. Rokeach goes further to explain that values are cognitive representations and transformations of man's needs.

Thus, we see across the spectrum of disciplines from the philosopher to the sociologist, to the logician; value judgments are acts of evaluating, recommending and prescribing. The "body of the beast" becomes more visible, for what many consider to be one of the central issues surrounding how values arguments are to be debated is that last word in the previous statement -- prescribing. The PRESCRIPTIVE NATURE of value judgments indicates a need for a different kind of thinking than that to which we are accustomed in debate.

Prescriptive Nature

It is vital at this juncture that we explore this prescriptive nature if we are to find out how to reason in L/D Debate. Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown University, Thomas Beauchamp, writes in his book, *Philosophical Ethics*, that value judgments are seen as having a prescriptive nature or action-guiding function that is totally absent in purely factual judgments. Factual discourse, by contrast, is not action-guiding but dealing, instead, with descriptions and casual explanations of human or natural phenomena. Beauchamp goes on to tell us that the statements in these two domains (fact and value) display an unbridgeable logical difference. Thus, the prescriptive element is a necessary condition of a moral judgment, principle, or ideal.

Throughout the disciplines there seems to be unanimity that value judgments are prescriptive or "ought" judgments. Sociologist, Milton Rokeach, concludes that values have an "ought" character; Churchill, the logician, says that value judgments purport to say what "ought" to be and not what is the case; even those in the world of Forensics seem to concur. Professor of Communications, Ronald Matlon, from the University of Massachusetts, wrote in *The Journal of the American Forensics Association*, Spring of 1978, that a normative (value) generalization expresses a value judgment, not a statement of fact.

Furthermore, as reported by the University of South Florida February, 1988 newsletter for Florida Forensics, not only are value propositions normative in nature, but that the word "ought", although not always explicit, is lurking beneath the surface. There is no "ought" word in 'stealing is wrong'

but the ought is implied just as has been the case with so many resolutions we have debated such as 'liberty is more precious than law.'

Essence of Ought

This prescriptive quality, this "ought" essence, has led many philosophers, logicians, social scientists, and people in our own discipline to conclude that you can't get to ought from is; to put it rather bluntly as does noted German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, no greater disservice can be done to values than to try to derive them from examples (is). Beauchamp writes that a fact may be an empirically confirmable or falsifiable statement about some aspect of the world; thus factual statements are either true or false. A value, by contrast, is taken to be an evaluative statement. David Hume, noted philosopher of the Enlightenment, has called this gap between fact and value the entailment gap and explains that you can't leap it logically speaking. As a result of this "gap" between Is and Ought, many in our field of Forensics have agreed with philosophers, logicians, and social scientists that factual statements cannot "prove" value judgments. Maridell Fryar and David Thomas tell us that it is fruitless to try to prove a value judgment with the facts. Erwin Chimmerinsky of Northwestern claimed that values can't be discussed in empirical terms. William Frankena writes in his book, *Ethics*, that our basic ethical norms and values cannot be justified by grounding them in the nature of things in any strict logical sense. This can be done only if right, good, and ought can be defined in non-ethical terms which they cannot be. It then follows that ethics does not depend logically on facts about man and the world, but how that world ought to be. The rules of ordinary inductive or deductive logic tells this. To try to bridge the gap is essentially to argue that A is B, A is C, without

introducing any premise connecting B and C.

Fact and Value

Beauchamp goes on to tell us that no list of facts or descriptions of what is the case could ever determine what ought to be the case or what is good. It is fallacious to deduce value statements from factual statements because value predicates are not identical in meaning with factual predicates. Therefore, no factual term entails a value term and *visa-versa*. Beauchamp illustrates for us with the following: McFall cannot survive without Shimp's bone marrow, therefore, Shimp ought to donate his bone marrow. The sheer fact that McFall cannot survive is not alone logically powerful enough to entail anything about what Shimp ought to do. A further value premise is needed to make the argument valid. McFall cannot survive without Shimp's bone marrow; everyone ought to help others survive through transplant donations involving minimal risk; therefore, Shimp ought to donate his bone marrow. Logician Churchill, agrees. Moral judgments possess a sort of immunity to direct factual confrontation; they cannot be refuted by ordinary confrontation of counter evidence. Professor of Communications Barbara Warnick, writing in *The Journal of the American Forensics Association*, Fall of 1981, concurs and tells us that the kinds of issues arising in a value dispute are more or less distinct from those in fact and policy disputes.

Let us suppose for a moment that we, the blind groping to "see" the elephant, can agree that the preceding construct of value judgments is "seen" by all. If value judgments are normative in nature and therefore prescriptive and therefore not to be derived from facts, what do we do? How do we teach our students to think about the arguments in L/D?

How to Argue

I suggest, along with dozens of others who have explored values theory in terms of argumentation, that a new (although already suggested in the NFL Lincoln Douglas principles) approach is needed. Let us look at what some of the prominent literature has to say. Barbara Warnick tells us that the central focus of argument on a values proposition ought to be on the values which the respective advocates are defending. The advocates purpose is to provide listeners with good reasons for evaluating the topic in the same way they have. Rather than providing conclusive empirical verification for a single interpretation of the proposition, advocates in a value dispute are making recommendations and justifying their interpretation of the principle(s) contained in the proposition. This commonly referred to as the open-ended defense of moral principles. Professor Warnick goes on to state that a characteristic of value claims arises from the nature of proof used in their support. She concludes that values cannot be proven with facts.

If we can't use facts and examples for proof what do we do? How do we teach our students to reason about value judgments? One of the most well thought out articles I have encountered on this issue was written by Professor of Philosophy, Chaim Perelman, in the *Journal of Philosophy*, December of 1955. In this article he tells us that we cannot hope for any appreciable progress in the study of the manner in which we apply reason to values by supposing, *a priori*, that such reasoning conforms to the modes furnished by mathematical demonstration, or even by the inductive method. Our reasoning is certainly not limited to the application of the deductive schemata of formal logic or even to the application of the rules of the inductive method. Actually, he says to reason is not only to demonstrate, it is also to deliberate and to argue. Our

reasoning about values is essentially a process of argumentation. This broadening of our concept of reason, which no longer limits the rational to the analytical, opens a new field of study to the investigations of the logicians. "It is the field of those reasons which, according to Pascal, and according to contemporary logicians, reason does not know." With an argument contrary to formal logic there is always something to say in favor of the opposite thesis. We cannot imagine two mathematicians starting out from the same coherent axiomatic system, with one demonstrating a theorem and the other its negation. But we can perfectly well conceive the possibility of two people of good faith arguing on opposing sides of a thesis, without either of them having the assurance of convincing the other.

Raphael Demos of Harvard, also writing in the *Journal of Philosophy*, tells us that a scientific hypothesis is predictive, there is no prediction where moral decision is involved. There can be no decisive validation of a moral decision. What is a validly acceptable hypothesis for one scientist is so -- or tends to be so -- for all. This is not true of moral decision. We may measure the weights of the principles involved in a different fashion and, therefore, arrive at different decisions. There is no objective measurement of moral weight. Moral reasoning is, indeed, a unique type of reasoning with moral principles functioning as justifying reasons.

Function of Ethics

And, so, the elephant is slowly becoming more visible. But, what is our next step? As Stephen Toulmin wrote in his book, *An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics*, "On what foundation can we build a rationale of value argument?" He urges that we recognize the function of ethics as different from, but not inferior to, the function of science. The function of

our most disciplined empirical language is to correlate our experiences in such a way that we know what to expect. The function of ethical discourse is to correlate our feelings and behavior in such a way as to make the fulfillment of everyone's aims and desires as far as possible compatible.

We are now faced with a values proposition and have to coach our students to debate it -- 'liberty is more precious than law', 'violent revolution is a just response to oppression', 'when conflict exists, a public official ought to follow the law, rather than his conscience'. Values are in conflict -- liberty vs. law, justice vs. societal order, duty vs. duty. What do we do now? Rokeach tells us that a given situation will typically activate several values within a value system and it is unlikely that we will be able to behave in a manner that is equally compatible with all of them. Particular acts or sequences of acts are steered by multiple and changing clusters of values. At times we must reorder our priorities. We can conclude from this that the arguments on a value issue would focus on which values outweigh other values. Debaters would be obligated to work out a hierarchy of values and explain why their hierarchy should be favored. Professors Facione, Scherer and Attig of Bowling Green State University, write in their book, *Values and Society*, that when values are in conflict we can resort to three basic methods for rational normative resolution: hierarchy building, compromise, and problem dissolution. These are excellent strategies for any L/D debater to explore in his search for rational approaches to values in conflict. I specifically recommend the reading of their chapter on these three approaches.

Standards

One of the most widely accepted criterion for moral

judgments I have encountered is the concept of universalizability. According to this criterion, moral considerations should apply in a similar way to all people situated in relevantly similar circumstances. The demand that morality be regarded as objective was emphasized by German philosopher, Immanuel Kant. For him a value judgment is objective when it is valid for any rational being. His most well-known auxiliary of this is the famed categorical Imperative which is one of the many standards that can be applied in values debating: act only according to that maxim by which you can will, at the same time, that it become universal law.

Churchill in his book, *Becoming Logical*, devotes an entire section to moral reasoning on value judgments in which he lists nine standards for judging the morality of actions. The nine standards follow:

1. Natural Law Standards: Moral actions are those that are in harmony with nature or with universal laws of nature.

2. Divine Command Standards: Moral actions are those commanded by God.

3. Subjectivist Standard: Moral actions are those one personally likes or approves of or that make one feel good or happy.

4. Egoistic Standard: Moral actions are those that maximize the individual's own long-term interests or well-being.

5. Relativist Standard: Moral actions for a given society are those that a majority of the members of that society accept as right or obligatory.

6. Intuitionist Standard: Moral actions are those that are consistent with the individual's conscience or that the individual intuitively feels as a duty or obligation.

7. Act-Utilitarian Standard: Moral actions are those that produce the greatest amount of happiness or well-being for the greatest number of people.

8. Rule-Utilitarian Standard: Moral actions are actions consistent with rules that maximize the overall happiness or well-being of those to whom the rules apply.

9. Kantian Standard: Moral actions are those for which the maxim, or rule, governing the individual's action could be willed to become a universal law for all rational beings.

Levels of Justification

Churchill continues to lift the "blinders" from our eyes as he indicates to us that moral reasoning often involves different levels of justification. (I will apply this reasoning for you when I return to Professor Beauchamp's reasoning process which coincides with Churchill's.) Churchill goes on to tell us that moral disputes can also be based on controversies over the application of moral standards. He claims, first, there may be disagreement over which moral principle is applicable (which is relevant justice or liberty). Second, there may be dispute over the proper interpretation of a particular principle. What does 'equal treatment' mean? Third, there may be disagreement over which of several moral principles should be given precedence, honesty above loyalty?

We finally arrive at what one author refers to as the 'onion-peeling method' of value justification. Professor Nicholas Rescher of Lehigh University writing in the *Journal of Philosophy*, explains that we confirm or validate our conclusion (in our case, this is our debate resolution) through an 'onion-peeling' process. "Justification in ethics is always reasoned but is not rooted in some basic list of axiomatic proposition, it is not deductive. In successfully justifying a moral judgment we occupy a sequence of defensive positions that lead us from judgment, to rule, to principle, to ethical theory." He illustrated that a person cannot evade reply to a question, the truthful answer to

which he has good reason to believe will abet or contribute to a wrongful action by the questioner. Here the rules of truthfulness, and promoting good, stand in conflict. The resolution of this problem requires us to find a test based upon a broader criterion which overarches both conflicting values; perhaps we could resolve this by means of the Test of Conscience, selecting that course of action in which we feel greater clearness of mind. If the matter cannot be resolved by the test of conscience, then a search for a broader principle must continue. The discovery of a more general reconciling test is no mechanical matter; it requires insight into particular cases and circumstances and admits of no ready general treatment, the mediation and resolution of critical conflicts by more general test renders the business of ethical judgment in difficult cases a matter of art rather than of science.

Finally, we arrive at what I think is one of the easier methods to teach our students concerning levels of justification. Professor Beauchamp tells us that a moral judgment expresses a decision or conclusion (our values resolutions are such conclusions). The next step in his process is for us to find a moral rule that defends our conclusion. This moral rule is broader in scope than our conclusion. If we were debating "violent revolution" topic we might decide that a rule that caused us to arrive at the affirmative conclusion would be that injustice is wrong. The next step in the process is to find the broader principle that guides us; injustices to man ought to be corrected, and finally Beauchamp urges us to apply an ultimate ethical theory; in this case or ultimate theory might well be the Kantian standard. Actually, I would probably reverse the rule and the principle and make the more general statement that injustice is wrong the principle and the less general statement that injustices

to man ought to be corrected should become the rule. Beauchamp's illustration would also be helpful to us at this point. He discusses the case of Myron Farber, the news reporter to whom the court demanded that records be turned over or face contempt of court. Farber judged that he ought not submit to the court's demand for his records. (This was the ethical judgment.) The rule Farber applied in this case was his right to protect freedom of the press (the press ought to be free to protect confidential information). The general principle was the right of the public to be informed and the ultimate ethical theory was that of utility.

At this point I think if we reread those L/D principles and ballot as adopted by the NFL, we can see that 'what ought to be, is' for if we follow those basic tenets that have been described in this paper as the methods of reasoning about value judgments we will, at the same time, be following those concepts as set forth in the L/D principles: clear use of values argumentation throughout the round, establishing a values premise to support the debater's position in the round (ultimate ethical theory), establishing values criteria based upon the values premise (the principle and the rule) validity of logic in relation to the values as applied to the specific topic, logical chain of reasoning using the values, no isolated examples, no factual, statistical evidence, no is. Hopefully we won't have to grope much longer and one day our elephant will be visible for all to "see". Maybe we won't get too teary-eyed from peeling onions.

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