

A SINGLE SWALLOW AND OTHER LEAPS OF FAITH

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We have all heard the old saying that "A single swallow doth not a summer make." More recently we may have heard the corollary that a single country doth not a resolution defend. During the Spring 1985 semester we confronted, more than ever before, the situation in which an affirmative team defended a CEDA resolution with one example. Many rounds featured argumentation about the appropriateness of such approaches. This paper will attempt to examine the approach, detail requirements for such argumentation and offer some guidelines for the future.

One of the tenants of CEDA debate has long been that the affirmative has to defend the entire resolution (Brownlee, 1982). Supposedly, this approach reduces the probability of squirrel cases and makes debate more fair. The resolution is seen as a statement to be proven true and not merely a jurisdictional boundary as in other forms of debate. Any argument that can be linked to the resolution is part of the ground that must be defended by the affirmative. Theoretically, affirmatives might be best served by defending the entire resolution at an abstract level rather than arguing detailed specifics.

Other have contended, however (Berube, 1984), that one example is all that is needed to support the entire resolution. If the resolution were jurisdictional, clearly this would be true. In that approach the topic merely operates to delineate the area from which the affirmative must select a case. The entire topic is not defended by just one example. If the entire topic is to be defended, one example can only accomplish this task if we are using inductive reasoning. Other reasons for the acceptance of this approach (time limitations, research limitations, tradition from NDT and so on) are logically unsupportable.

The resolution that we just finished debating, military support to non-democratic nations, has brought the issue into greater focus. Many affirmative teams simply defended one or two nations as examples of justified military support and then asked us to accept the concept that military support to all nondemocratic nations was justified. In justification of the approach, most affirmatives would read evidence suggesting that the approach was legitimate. The evidence was usually conclusionary and the affirmative offered little reasoning to support the claim.

Many negative teams objected but few gave a persuasive reason to vote on this issue alone. The usual negative response was that examples must be

typical, but again the reasoning behind this statement was ignored. Certainly, examples in inductive reasoning must be typical but there is a great deal more to inductive reasoning. It is this great deal more that we need to examine before we can conclude if and when argument from example is appropriate for CEDA debate.

Characteristics of Argument from Example

Inductive reasoning moves from a statement about a sample of items in a class to a statement about others in that class (Ehninger and Brockriede, 1963). It is also called generalization and its rhetorical equivalent is argument from example (Corbett, 1965). The thesis of such an argument is that, if a conclusion can be drawn about examples of a class of things, then the same conclusion is true of all of the members of that class. The argument consists of evidence (examples from a particular class about which a particular conclusion can be made), a warrant (a statement to the effect that what is true of a sample from the class is also true of the class as a whole), support for the warrant (a belief that the examples in the evidence are germane to the claim, adequate in number and fairly selected), reservations (any instances that reduce our faith in the probability of the conclusion) and a conclusion (the idea that what is true of the examples is also true of the class as a whole) (Toulmin, 1958). Each element in this chain of reasoning is critical and must be supported if the argument as a whole is to be accepted.

Inductive argumentation has several important characteristics. Induction can only be perfect when all of the cases in the class to which the generalization applies are examined (Simmons, 1976). This would mean that during the last semester we would have had to examine all military support to all nondemocratic nations before we could have a perfect inductive argument. Aristotle realized, as do we, that this would be impossible in a speaking situation (Corbett, 1965). So, as he suggested, we use a few examples and draw our conclusions about the class based on these. This means that our conclusions are always imperfect and the result can only establish probability not absolutes (Simmons, 1976). But probability has persuasive value (Corbett, 1965). The non-absolute nature of conclusions drawn from inductive reasoning seemed to bother some judges. The issue was often called solvency on ballots and the substance had to do with whether or not the adoption of the resolution would yield the benefit that the affirmative claimed. A conclusion drawn from induction can only be a probability statement so the affirmative can only suggest that there is a certain probability that the benefit will occur. Many judges seemed bothered by this characteristic-wished absolute assurance and

called the issue solvency. If absolute assurance is the goal, induction can never attain it.

The rules for induction are imprecise but some guidelines do exist (Simmons, 1976). Induction always requires a leap of faith because we are asked to jump from known ground across unknown territory to a conclusion (Corbett, 1965). Induction is most problematic when we are not sure what the premise means in operational terms (Simmons, 1976). In the case of the most recent topic we must be very sure what operations constitute nondemocratic nations and what constitutes military support. This then means that definitions of these terms become critical and the truth or untruth of the argument is judged in terms of these agreed upon standards (Simmons, 1976). This would suggest that if the affirmative defines the key terms of the resolution poorly, we cannot make a judgment about the truth of the resolution based on induction.

The fact that generalization requires an inductive leap brings us to one final characteristic about claims drawn from such argument — they must always have qualifiers (Ehninger and Brockriede, 1963). Since there is only probability generated by induction the qualifier first serves to identify the degree of probability. Secondly, the qualifier may limit how far we are willing to leap based upon evidence we have available. The claim will always need terms like "most," "generally," "often," "many," or other means of expressing the limits of the argumentative form.

Criteria for Argument from Examples

Many in CEDA have suggested that teams need to advance criteria for the evaluation of the arguments presented in each round. This is no less true in the case of argument from example. Inductive logic, even though imprecise, does have some rules. These rules can be set up by a team as the criteria that should be used to evaluate the case presented. A team would probably not present all of the following criteria but would select those that were most relevant. General criteria for evidence (reliability, bias, recency and so on) certainly apply here but more specific criteria apply as well. Criteria for examples are used to determine if the warrant is justified. Evidence in this type argument consists of examples. Examples can only support the claim if the warrant is justified by the nature of the examples (Ehninger and Brockriede, 1963). The warrant asserts that what is true of the sample is probably true of the rest of the class as well. The truth of the warrant is established through three tests of the examples.

The first test of examples is the degree to which they are germane to the class about which we wish to generalize (Ehninger and Brockriede, 1963). This

is the argument that was dubbed typicality during the last semester but really goes beyond that label. The term *germane* implies that the examples selected reflect the nature of the class to which we wish to generalize. If we wish to generalize about a class that is very homogeneous, then we need examples that are typical. If the class that we wish to generalize about is heterogeneous then we would need examples that are diverse in the same manner as the class. This would suggest that we need a large enough random sample to be representative of the class. Examples in the former case should all be similar in major particulars to the rest of the class. Examples in the latter case should vary in major particulars along the same lines as the class varies. Representativeness and typicalness have two very different and specialized applications. Each may be part of establishing the *germane* nature of the examples used. Which is required depends on the nature of the class of things that we are discussing. If, however, the examples fail the appropriate test, the warrant cannot be supported and the argument fails (Ehninger and Brockriede, 1963).

The second criteria has to do with the number of examples that are required. Ehninger and Brockriede (1963) suggest that a useful rule is that the predictive value of a generalization is the ratio of adduced instances to the instances possible. Recall earlier that we suggested that example argumentation can only suggest the probable truth of a proposition. Ehninger and Brockriede say that this probability figure is a ratio that can be calculated. If we have 150 nondemocratic nations and two are used as examples to show that military support is justified to all 150 of them, proof about these two would render a 1 in 75 probability that the resolution is true (instances adduced/instances possible = probable truth; $2/150 = 1$ in 75 chances).

Three sub-criteria can be used to determine if the number of examples are adequate to accept this proposition. First, the number of examples required varies in direct proportion to the degree of heterogeneity of the class to which we wish to generalize. If the class is very homogeneous (all nondemocratic nations are very similar) then few examples are needed. If the class is very heterogeneous, then a large number of examples is required to create representativeness and warrant the claim (Ehninger and Brockriede, 1963).

The second of these sub-criteria has to do with one's knowledge of the cause that is responsible for the characteristic one wished to generalize about. If it is obvious to the listener why we need to give military support to nondemocratic nations then it will require fewer examples to persuade the listener (Ehninger and Brockriede, 1963).

A third sub-criteria for number of examples has to do with the care of the observation of the examples. A few well documented cases will be far more acceptable than a great many examples documented carelessly by untrained observers. This criteria deals with the general quality of the evidence offered in support of the examples themselves. A lot of poor evidence will require more examples while a lesser amount of good evidence will require fewer examples.

A third general criteria has to do with the way in which the examples have been selected. If the examples are selected in a non-random, biased manner so as to load the evaluation, then the argument is much weaker. This is the point at which almost all debate cases fail as sound inductive reasoning. This criteria would require that the affirmative debater select examples that are typical or representative rather than ones that are biased toward an affirmative conclusion. Affirmative debaters are simply not going to operate in this manner. They wish to win and will therefore select examples specifically because they support the resolution. This suggests that an argument by example may always be a poor way to determine the truth or any debate resolution.

In summary, the critical part of an inductive argument lies in the warrant which allows one to conclude that what is true of an example of the class is also true of the class as a whole. The warrant of generalization is supported by applying criteria for the evaluation of the evidence sample (examples). Examples must be germane to the class generalized to in the claim, adequate in size, and fairly chosen. If the examples fail these tests then the warrant cannot be supported and the inductive leap is not justified (Ehninger and Brockriede, 1963).

Even if the warrant can be supported, there are two kinds of situations which require that reservations be appended to the claim (Ehninger and Brockriede, 1963). The first situation would require that the claim be set aside completely. If the negative team offers examples that better meet the criteria outlined above and that support the counter-generalization, then we would reject the affirmative generalization and accept the counter-generalization. In practical terms this would mean that we reject the truth of the resolution and accept its opposite or an alternative.

The second situation would not require that the resolution be rejected but that we reduce our estimate of the probability of truth of that statement. If we find that negative instances exist we have to deal with them by adding reservations to the proposition. A negative instance would be an example (as opposed to a sample of them) in which the claim is not warranted. With the

military support topic this would be one nondemocratic nation for which support could not be justified.

The existence of the negative example does not require the rejection of the claim but must be dealt with in one of two ways. First, one might show that every negative example results from some special cause that does not negate the general truth of the resolution. Second, one might simply accept the negative instances and qualify the claim. One might suggest that there are a few nondemocratic nations that we should not support militarily but that in general the resolution is true. When we consider that induction can never produce absolutes, this seems more reasonable (Ehninger and Brockriede, 1963).

Conclusion

The use of argument from example to support a debate resolution has been with us for a long time. During the last semester we were confronted with serious argumentation about the appropriateness of such an approach. The arguments were usually superficial and lacked the force to win many ballots. Many debaters presented some of the criteria for the evaluation of example argumentation but they did little else. This article has outlined the positions that can be defended by either team in this theoretical dispute.

A word of caution must be offered to those who wish to attack the inductive approach of other teams. Setting out the criteria for evaluating such arguments is not enough. Often we heard teams suggest that an example must be typical and nothing more. This is simply inadequate. A team will then need to prove that the example offered by the other team does not meet the standard — is not typical. We often heard the standard set and then the assertion that the example was not typical but no support was given to this position. Establishing the standard alone is not enough.

Argument from example is an acceptable method of supporting a debate resolution. The approach carries with it several burdens which an affirmative team needs to be prepared to deal with. The conclusion to such an argument can only be a probability. The degree of probability can be reduced in a number of ways. Multiple negative approaches exist for attack, particularly concerning the fair selection of affirmative examples.

If we again have a topic that so easily lends itself to argument from example, hopefully the quality of argumentation about the appropriateness of such an approach will be aided by this article. We can and should argue theory in debate but we need to do it in an informed manner.

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