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Bruce E. Gronbeck retains all original rights as author of his sections of this dialogue.

From: W C Adams

Sent: Thursday, June 24, 2010 1:37 PM

To: Gronbeck, Bruce E

Subject: NCA paper revisited

Bruce,

You were kind enough to respond to my request that you read a paper of mine and Sam Cox's, presented in San Diego. You thought that you might see Sam there; but, you never crossed his path in San Diego. I'm wondering if you might revisit the paper and share with me your thinking about it. I have attached a copy for your convenience.

The NCA paper was summarily dismissed by the reviewer in San Diego. He had already accepted Eemeren's position that one cannot distinguish between data and warrant. I have difficulty accepting that Toulmin categorically meant that arguments start (and only start) with claims. Toulmin has moved beyond considerations of his model and did not respond to my email. I thought that Richard Rieke might offer his opinion, but again, he did not respond to my inquiry.

Do you agree with Eemeren, as many obviously do, that the difference between data and warrant depends on (and only on) when it occurs in an argument once a claim is questioned? I've always taught (as I believe I was taught) that a warrant is more general, indeed general enough to link the other two parts. Have I been wrong in my teaching all these years?

Really, Toulmin is a small part of the NCA paper. The linkages that I make there could be important without Toulmin's terminology. In that regard, I have recast Toulmin's Model into Bridge Models of Reasoning. I presented a workshop on them at ILA in 09. I have attached a copy of a handout for that discussion for your consideration.

YES, I'm frustrated because I think I'm correct here. All these years, I thought my understanding of Toulmin was that of the field. The example in McCroskey's text probably should have been a bigger red light to me. Obviously I was too quick to conclude that it was just McCroskey. (He, also, chose not to respond to my email). As indicated in the paper, Brockreide & Ehninger's writings are at odds with Eemeren. However, their extension of Toulmin to the three proofs is flawed, given that a warrant needs to link the other two parts. Obviously (from my perspective) there is widespread misunderstanding of reasoning and how it works in language and speech. I know that work with reasoning has been a major part of your writings and indeed I don't remember being as significant odds with your thinking; so, I hope you can tell me that I'm not too far removed from the core of our discipline.

In any case, I'm not sure what to do next. If my perception is correct, it's a big knot and too many factors (including my own shortcomings) may be involved for me to be a change agent in this regard. At this point, any support for my position would help, but

I'm open to any criticisms and/or suggestions.

Any help, suggests or advice will be appreciated.  
clifton

--- On Thu, 6/24/10, Gronbeck, Bruce E. wrote:

From: Gronbeck, Bruce E.  
Subject: RE: NCA paper revisited  
To: "W C Adams"  
Date: Thursday, June 24, 2010, 5:44 PM

Hi Clifton--

A pity that I finally tossed my materials from the San Diego, as I had marked up the paper you sent me. And in my advanced stage of decrepitude, I can no longer remember what I thought about it. Actually, I did say hi to Sam at the convention, and remember commenting upon an interesting part of the paper, but, alas, I can't remember what that was about.... Sorry. I'll try to get to it again. I'm reading quite a bit of student dissertations right now--summer's the time--but am sure I can find some reading time--just not exactly sure when. I've downloaded the paper and the accompanying workshop material, however, so that I can get to it sometime when I'm carrying my laptop around. I hope soon.

--Bruce

From: W. Clifton Adams  
Sent: Thursday, June 24, 2010 9:30 PM  
To: Gronbeck, Bruce E  
Subject: RE: NCA paper revisited

Bruce,

Thanks so much for your kind reply!

Sam failed to mention your visit in San Diago. Soon thereafter, he was off for 18 mos. teaching in Holland. He is just back now; perhaps he'll recall the conversation for me. Given the neg. reaction to my rendition of Toulmin, he quickly decided to separate from me on exploring the resolution of the issues involved. Since then, I've been fighting other fires.

Alas the timing; too bad Sam couldn't have got your comments on the paper. Of course, I'd gladly paid the COD to have gotten your feedback. Nothing ever saddened me more than to see a student throw away after only seeing the grade a paper on which I'd spend time and thought -- often, I'd think more than the student!

Anyway, it is super of you to plan to revisit it. And, I'm glad to wait, in general; however, could I ask you to take just a moment to tell me if you agree that the primary distinguishing feature of data and warrant is the level of abstraction?

clifton

On Fri, 6/25/10, Gronbeck, Bruce E wrote

From: Gronbeck, Bruce E  
Subject: RE: NCA paper revisited  
To: "W C Adams"  
Date: Friday, June 25, 2010, 8:24 AM  
Clifton--

I'll probably have trouble with the word "primary," though I won't judge that until I read the argument. For me, the central characteristic of an argument as a form of discourse (vis-a-vis, say persuasion or explanation) is the centrality of an inferential process, a commitment to using language/mental operations (there are proponents of both of those sources-of-inference) that produce "rationality" that the Greeks worked so hard to understand. Certainly one of Toulmin's most important contributions to our understanding of inference was that there are many different kinds or sources of them, which of course he broke into the two categories of field-dependent and field-independent. In making a space especially for a variety of field-dependent sources of inferential machinery, he drastically broadened our understanding of inference. His use of the word "warrant" seems an attempt to unlock the limiting force of traditional ideas of deduction and induction, because "warrant" carries with it a sense of permissiveness--what human beings are "allowed" to think and do. (Remember that he associates the word with being allowed, thanks to one's warrant, to hunt in the king's forest.) Therein for me (1) lies the radical departure that Toulmin was attempting and (2) his reassertion of inferring--warranting--as the heart, the primary distinguishing characteristic, of argumentation. You certainly don't need to use inferences/warrants when trying to convince somebody of something; it's just not arguing if the discourse doesn't depend upon warranting for its uptake or force.

So, that's the position from which I'll be reading, though I'll give you every opportunity to dislodge me from it. Abstraction, I think, is important in argumentation operationally; warrants do tend to be more abstract than that which we call data or evidence. That is because, I think, warrants often are rule-like statements: logical rules such as "Every syllogism must have at least one universal premise" or field-dependent rules such as this one from law: "A child under eight cannot commit a crime." Or statistical rules about degrees-of-freedom, or political rules such as "Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely." In our modernist ways of thinking, "data" or "evidence" generally carries the suggestion of concreteness, lower-level abstraction. I think that is true about how Toulmin conceived of his layout and, for that matter, how human beings have been taught to think thanks to acculturation processes.

What I'm probably sneaking up on is the idea that abstracted rules-of-thinking are important to argumentation because they represent the wisdom and/or rule-based obligations that a society relies upon for thinking-aloud and for attempting to exert cognitive pressures on another. And, concrete, even materialistic, dimensions of human experience are likewise important because of verifiability--they're aspects of human perception that can be shared phenomenally by observers: do we have four or five cats here? We both can count, can verify. Not all evidence is material/concrete, of course, but it often or even usually is.

Wow. Now you got me talking. At least you'll know against what kind of background your paper will be read. As you can see, I certainly believe that levels-of-

abstraction (unless you're talking about such specialized, field-dependent arguments as those in philosophy or theology) are important to arguing, even as I'm someone who believes that warranting is the central move that defines a discourse as argumentative.

Amen. --Bruce

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On June 28, I wrote:  
Bruce,

Thanks for your perspective. Perspectives, as W. Fisher very clearly illustrated, are most important in the "theories" we develop.

I'm glad that I "got you talking," to the extent that it keeps you energized in reading those graduate-student papers. This email may elicit similar behavior; so, feel free to wait to read it until you're comfortable in meeting other obligations. I am grateful that you will correspond with me and do not wish to abuse that willingness.

Overall, your perspective seems congruent with mine. Certainly it's more so than is Eemeren's, which for some is the definitive word on Toulmin. I'm beginning to see Toulmin much as I see the Bible: Everyone has his take on the work.

As your discussion moved to a broader focus: "What I'm probably sneaking up on is the idea that abstracted rules-of-thinking are important to argumentation because they represent the wisdom and/or rule-based obligations that a society relies upon for thinking-aloud and for attempting to exert cognitive pressures on another," your thinking, I believe, clearly coincides with the heart of our NCA paper. As we internalize these abstractions, starting at the earliest moments of our lives, we begin using them, not just to put pressure on others, but to guide and regulate our own behavior. Our desires and motives become data (premise in my terms) that are regulated (using the word loosely; we – also (?) -- use the abstractions to help us fulfill our desires). It is from that perspective that "motivational reasoning" uses a BRIDGE that is either substantive or authoritarian or both. The drive state provides the power, but the 'rule-based obligations' (our societal knowledge) provides the bridge (the warrant; does the warranting?). In our present context of discussing the inferential process, the more abstract thoughts are important because they can and do connect the more specific beliefs with other specific factors about which we are uncertain, giving us a basis to act on those uncertain factors with a greater degree of certainty.

If you're yet to reread our NCA paper and do read it expecting to find an argument to support the positions that warrants are abstract, you may be disappointed. The paper blatantly asserts that warrants are abstract. To me, it was (and remains) a self-evident belief, very zero-ordered in my understanding of how we communicate with ourselves and with others. So, you'll understand why I was "blown away" to learn that Eemeren had popularized the position that warrant and data were only distinguished by their order of presentation in a discussion (that either could a warrant?).

I agree with you that Toulmin helped (at least some people in) the field better position our thinking in terms of argumentation. I saw his model as unlocking the limiting force of the traditional distinction between induction and deduction by allowing for probability, but obviously failed to appreciate the complexities with which he colored "warrant."

At some point, as indicated by the introduction of the Bridge Models of Reasoning, I felt the need, as your perspective reinforces, to say one may not be able to be derived my position from (or fit it to any particular interpretation of) Toulmin.

To me, a statement cannot be a warrant in an argument one day and be the data in the same argument on another day. Such encouragement of equivocation does not seem conducive to building an understanding of argumentation, certainly not of thinking. In like manner, to say that

a warrant has a different **characteristic** depending on the circumstances in which the same argument is used seems likewise counterproductive. If the **characteristics** of the parts of an argument are different in one field than in general, let us develop a vocabulary to reflect that difference. That development would surely contribute to the understanding of the particular field. Similarly, if only experts in argumentation can identify the warrant in an argument after examining it in context and can't tell other people what characteristics are involved, the utility of having named the parts of an argument is limited at best. To be of most value to help us evaluate arguments and reasoning, **the characteristics of the parts of an argument need to be intrinsic to the process of all argument.** If the characteristics change, but I don't think they do, we need to develop terminology to reflect that change. As I read arguments across disciplines, I see the same process of providing evidence to support a conclusion based on the rules established by that discipline. My Chinese students told me, "we don't reason like that," but as I listened to them, they did; as I talked to their Chinese teachers and read (in translation) the thinking of their Chinese leaders, their claims were supported by the same inferential process, often with the steps more clearly stated than we find in the western world.

**We have 'warrant' as a part of an argument, but then we have the concept of warrant which seems to transcend the functioning of the warrant in the argument. To illustrate, Brockreide & Ehninger could categorize as "motivational warrants" statements that reflected a viewpoint of reality (substantive) because the "warranting"** (I guess; at least the driving force) for the conclusion was a desire of the US government. Cronkhite wanted to overlay a motivational concept as a correction. That which drives does not provide the justification; yet, what drives, or gives impudence seems to be equated with warranting (in one case), overshadowing how the part 'warrant' operates in their other types of arguments.

That's why I have some problem with equating warrant and infer. I like better the term inferential process. The inferential process, in its simplest form (which we seldom see in communication) has two "steps," one is supplied by the specific and one is supplied by the more abstract that permits a link from the "observation" to the conclusion. To have only the warrant, in my terms, is to have a bridge from nowhere. In that regard, Brockreide and Ehninger's positions that the process begins with 'data' reflects how it often seems to work. Of course, the person has to already have the rule or the observation doesn't register; the person has to already 'know' the importance of what she or he is seeing to make the inference.

**Yes, concreteness is important, but in our present discussion of understanding the nature of arguments or reasons, it not because they permit verification.** When I want something, I may not be able even to define what I want, much less verify the drive in any construct-validity sense. Still, that desire will be instrumental in many of my inferential processes. Indeed, the less verifiable it is, the more bridges (warrants) I may use in my reasoning in wasted attempts to satisfy the desire.

Anabel Hagood reinforced in me the sense of probability. "All statements" are generally not valid. In the case of my blatant assertions, there may be "exceptions to prove the rule," but I've yet to see one: Bridges are by their nature abstract; they must be abstract to link premise to conclusion in the inferential process. The basic logic of how the process works is so clear, I don't know how scholars missed it. Thus, I remain incredulous.

Okay, now you see how far off base I actually am! Hopefully, I'm not so far gone that you can't pull me back to reality.  
clifton

On June 28 Gronbeck wrote:

Ok, only a quick reading. Three points:

1. So, in asserting warrants as self-evident, are you explicitly rejecting the idea that you've learned them through acculturation, that they are what Mary Douglas called "tacit conventions"? And, are you asserting that Toulmin need not have bothered to put "Backing for the Warrant" into the model? Careful.... Self-evident warrants are regularly challenged--otherwise Galileo would not have to have recanted and we'd still be blithely assessing people largely or solely by skin color. (Remember that I'm a thoroughgoing culturalist. That's why I got so excited by the idea of field-variant warrants when I first read Toulmin. My position on this stuff was articulated in the '70s in the book that Ray McKerrow edited in honor of Ehninger.)

2. I don't get too excited by matters of ordering the parts of an argument. The data-warrant-claim sequence carries with the patina of coherence and rationality, but certainly is not a requirement. In many ways, for example, Obama's speech on race begins with a legal (constitutional) warrant and then works data-piles in the process of arguing his claims. Or, his habit during the campaign of finishing speeches with a selective historical litany of examples suggest that one even can end an argumentative discourse with data. To see Ehninger expand on some of this stuff, see if you can find an old copy of Influence, Belief, and Argument (1974), which is far more detailed in varied examples than the work he did with Wayne Brockriede. (Cronkhite, by the way, grumbled about Ehninger the entire semester when we both took Doug's "Logic of Argument" seminar. NOT good friends!)

3. While warrants often live high up on the ladder of abstraction, they nonetheless sometimes dwell on the lower rungs. Take this argument: DATA: "U.S. unemployment stands at 9.5%." WARRANT: "Because the Full Employment Act of 1946 mandates government creation of jobs when the unemployment rate exceeds 3%," CLAIM: "Therefore the federal government should institute governmental work programs." That is a comparatively concrete warrant, useful only in highly limited cases to be sure, but still a warrant in a reasonable argument. That's probably why I would not argue that level-of-abstraction is THE primary differentiating characteristic of data and warrants.

Time to get busy--the guy who pumps out my septic tank is on his way out.... You always need to be ready for . . . you can finish the sentence.

--Bruce

On June 28, I responded

Quick readings are appreciated, but they do often produce inaccuracies, especially when the context is so "future tense." 1. Such is the case in the first point of your response. I never assert that warrants are self evident. Warrants are learned and are found in the complexities of our belief systems. A belief, as we both know, may be the conclusion build from other beliefs that serve as premise (data) and bridge (warrant). That conclusion, then, may serve as either a premise or a bridge for other conclusions. The most abstract bridge serves as an extension (backing) for the less abstract conclusion, which in turn becomes the foundation bridge for continuing the extension. In the NCA paper which you are yet to read, I nakedly assert, like the little boy at the royal parade, that given the three essential parts of a single level argument (using Toulmin's terms then of warrant, data, and claim), the most abstract (or general) is the



warrant. With that assertion, I was soon to learn that the assertion would not be accepted within the fabric of literature currently explaining Toulmin's system.

2a. Glad that you don't get too excited by matters of ordering an argument! It is Eemeren's et al.'s position that the order must start with 'claim' and whatever comes next is the 'warrant.' That position gives me problems; thus, I feel the need to respond to it. D. Hitchcock, up in Canada, and I went back and forth (on email) about it without any of my examples, similar to your Obama ones, moving him. Of course, both you and they are using discourse as your focus. That tendency, in examining discourse, is to base the start of arguments on the time sequence, as in which is presented first. That tendency unto itself accounts for some of the misunderstanding of the process of argument.

2b. O, yes, the Influence, Belief, and Argument is one of my favorite books. Still, in it exists what I view as inconsistencies in the treatment of the working of warrants.

3. Really back to the assertion in 1: If you examine your example as it relates to the full 'employment act and its application to the current unemployment situation, you'll find that what you identify as 'warrant,' isn't simply the warrant, but a truncated argument. This truncated argument serves as an extension (backing) anticipating a challenge to the bridge (warrant). Broken down the extension runs: 'extended bridge' (unstated but implied): the Exc. Branch will obey the law; the 'extended premise' (data): the specific law, the Full Employment Act establishes the law (principle/rule) relating to unemployment that states the Exc. Branch (government) will create jobs when unemployment exceeds 3%. Therefore, 'extended conclusion:' The Exc. Branch will create jobs whenever (relatively general in time) unemployment exceeds 3%. This 'extended conclusion' then becomes (was all along) the 'warrant' /'bridge' of your example. It is more general than either the 'data'/'premise' or the 'claim'/'conclusion' which are both more restricted in time (to like now,). If you will make this analysis, as I'm sure you must intellectually do, you're sure to admit that this example does not negate my principle that warrants (or if I must bridges) are relatively more general than the corresponding data/premise or claim/conclusion. The bridge must be more abstract to encompass both premise and claim to make the reasoning complete. Clearly, you are correct that 'warrants' may exist at lower levels of abstraction; it's just that the corresponding 'data' and 'claim' must be at a still lower level. Hitchcock also provided me with several examples in attempts to show exceptions to the principle; however, after a few failures he shifted his attack and finally turned his attention to the Canadian elections. It was fun while it lasted, but, in the end unsatisfying because he would not leave the safety provided by agreeing with the established order.

Sorry about your septic tank! We replaced ours when we left to teach in Beijing in 2000; so far, so good. I did just buy a box of Rid X on Sunday! I hope that the whole process of dealing with the tank doesn't eat too heavily into your time. I take it that you live out of the town proper? Do you have acreage? We have seven, but I'm not much of a farmer – but I'm learning.

On July 3, I wrote a p.s. to the above

Bruce,

Hope this exchange is stimulating to you! As I was mowing my grass, I kept generating examples to illustrate your statement that warrants reside at low levels of abstraction, like:

Teen thinks, 'if I want Mary Martin to go to the prom with me, I need to ask her today.' This thought is likely to find (within him – where it was already), 'I do want her to go with me.' And he concludes, 'I'll ask her after Biology today.' The first statement serves as a warrant as I

understood Toulmin, certainly 'bridge' in my system. It is very specific with a specific person, a specific event and today. Still, it is broad enough to encompass both the other two parts.

A businessperson thinks, 'if I'm going to be able to eat lunch today, I'd better focus on getting this task done.' Etc.

People in my age group (well perhaps a year older) think, 'if I'm going to make the early-bird special, I can't have another cup of coffee.'

These examples of 'bridges' are typical as related to our thinking involving our motives, as discussed in our NCA paper.

It seems that Toulmin used the word 'link' to describe how the warrant relates to the other two parts. To me, that had always been clear. To make the whole process work logically, the warrant had to 'link' the other two. However, Eemeren sees the work 'link' as having no logical properties; warrants only link in the sense that a newscaster uses a word to move from one story to another. Thus, I use 'encompass.' Warrants, to work to help the listener, thinker, to move from what is known/accepted (premise) to what isn't known/accepted (conclusion), must encompass the other two parts. The only way for the warrant to make this logical link, it must be more general than the other two. That's my argument which I felt no need to make in San Diego.

Perhaps you meant your unemployment example simply in the same way that my "if I want..." examples above to show that the encompassing statement could be fairly concrete. However, similar examples, too often, illustrate the complications that result when 'warrant' is used to mean both the linking part of an argument and something that gives power to something else. Being a law does give a warrant more force; but the force has no direction without the substance that is the warrant. Examples similar to this one in texts fail to help the student understand the reasoning process.

Taking the example down from the top (as in the abstraction ladder) or up from the core as in beliefs structures, it looks like this:

The executive branch should obey the law in all areas.

The law as it applies to unemployment is the Full Employment Act.

Therefore, the executive branch should obey the Full Employment Act in matters of unemployment.

According to the FEA, whenever unemployment exceeds 3%, the executive branch must create jobs.

Unemployment current exceeds 3%.

Therefore, the executive branch should create jobs.

Even in your form, "Because the FEA mandates government creation of jobs when unemployment exceeds 3%..." the statement is more abstract than either of the two other parts. It contains both the trigger, which includes the current situation identified in data, and the action which is the conclusion. Bruce, isn't that simply the way we reason? Even when we reason inaccurately?

Clifton

On Sat, 7/3/10, Gronbeck wrote:

From: Gronbeck, Bruce E

Subject: RE: May be safe to read at this time

To: "W C Adams"



Date: Saturday, July 3, 2010, 5:41 PM

The if-then examples are a bit confusing to me because you're then arguing with a classic hypothetical syllogism: If A, then B. A, therefore B. This form, in turn, in the '60s becomes the basis for R.M. Hare's understanding of moral argumentation: If you believe in justice, you ought to support a two-state solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. You believe in justice. Therefore, you ought to . . . Hypothetical syllogisms, to me, are examples of reasoning based on linguistic meanings--the meanings of "if" and "then"--or so-called logical operators. The warranting, therefore, is actually in the meaning of "if" and "then" rather than the motive per se. Linguistic meanings, therefore, are the links. And, to me, the meanings of "if" and "then" are NOT matters of level-of-abstraction per se; they're definitional. –Bruce

On July 12, I responded:

The Bridge, The Syllogism and The Warrant

Bruce,

I regret that my last email was confusing to you, but your response may have given me insight as to why I needed to justify (in the San Diego paper) that warrants are abstract/general.

My if-then examples are classic hypothetical syllogism ONLY if you see them as being. (You're not just playing with me, are you? You really don't understand how these are arguments from contingency warrants?)

Before I go further, is it alright with you if I share our correspondence with others? I believe several people might find it of interest and to provide insights.

The thing that I appreciated about Ehninger's Influence, Beliefs & Argument was that it substantiated what I'd been teaching since 1969: For each of the five types of classical syllogisms, there is a corresponding type of warrant. I'd been indecisive about what to call the warrant corresponding to the disjunctive major premise. I started with an 'elimination' warrant; but, had shifted to a 'division' warrant. You can appreciate my glee when Ehninger used the same term. That's why I figured the scholars, at least, in the area shared my understanding. You referenced the book in an earlier email and, yet, you don't see it my way?

As I stated in an earlier email, I saw Toulmin's major contribution, in moving us from a rigid view of the classical syllogism, was in breaking its 'absolute' nature by adding parts to his model to permit exclusions. I know I've read of this being a major contribution elsewhere. R.M. Hare's and others' attacks on the classical syllogism are possible because of a rigid adherence to the position that deductive reasoning must be absolute.

We are talking about, and my goal has been to understand, how people reason, even when they reason incorrectly. People use contingency warrants often. Indeed, it may be the most logical of the types of warrants. Your example of 'WHEN unemployment... THEN government action,' is just in a more realistic form of IF ... THEN. Several respected individuals, on yesterday's talk shows, made statements of the nature of, 'if you set a deadline for withdrawal, then you booster the enemy's resolve to last past the deadline,' and 'if you don't set a deadline then you invite fears of occupation.' I think neither side believes their principle to be absolute. However, if they do, that's the way they reason. (I reason, in an IF ... THEN manner ☺).

I know I use IF...THEN reasoning in using Rid-X. AND, believe me, I know that is a highly probabilistic area and that my conclusion will, at best, be true only for my life time! I have until recently thought that I was reasoning using a contingency warrant, following Toulmin's

model. However, given the ugliness in the interpretation of Toulmin, I have shifted to saying that I'm using a 'contingency bridge' which I've defined as relatively abstract, but only probably true.

Now, Bruce, please be serious with me! Please don't feel the need to argue just to hold a position. Did I twist Ehninger's work just to fit my understanding? Or, is there a correspondence between types of syllogisms and types of warrants? If not, why couldn't there be between five ways of thinking and my five bridges?

Shifting to the other issue: I'm glad you see the warranting in the contingency warrant as being the linguistic relationship between IF and THEN. Of course, in your position, I'd hope that you'd recognize that it can serve as a warrant and, in the linguistic nature of the IF/THEN is the necessity that it be more abstract than both its IF and THEN parts? We are together, I hope, in using abstract in Hayakawa's sense of inclusiveness? If not, that understanding could clarify much.

I do appreciate your willingness to consider these matters with me. I have written you quite a bit across my several emails, during an exceptionally busy time for you. I do have respect for all the work you've done and do have considerable hope that you'll give my questions serious consideration, even to the extent of revisiting the emails that you only had time to scan at the time ... when you have time.

--- On Mon, 7/12/10, Gronbeck, wrote:

From: Gronbeck

Subject: RE: The Bridge, The Syllogism and The Warrant, a serious read

To: W. Clifton Adams

Date: Monday, July 12, 2010, 8:20 PM

Before I can respond, Clifton, I'm afraid I'm going to have to find my copy of Ehninger's Influence, Belief, and Argument. I think that I still have a copy in an office in town. I want to examine more carefully what my dear M.A. adviser says about contingency warrants.

The conceptual problem I can address without re-reading him, and it is this: is inference, even warranting, a matter of linguistic or mental operation? (It's something that I remember working on a bit, I think in my second Alta conference paper back in 1981.) So: if the essence of inference in a hypothetical syllogism is a matter of language, of our understanding of the "logical operators" if and then, then what you're calling contingency warrants are not applicable to the reasoning pattern itself. If A, then B. A, therefore B. Linguistically, that holds true and has force whether or not As and Bs exist, yes? BUT, if we understand the if-then relationship as a matter of contingency--what traditional logicians such as Irving Copi (my undergraduate logic textbook) called "existential import"--then the form If A, then B, A therefore B depends for its force upon the actual existence As. If there are no As, then that particular if-then statement is not contingent and so makes no sense.

So that basic question goes back to Aristotle's Organon and the matter of whether propositions are defined by their operators--all, some, are, and are not--rather than the actual existence of that which is being subjected to those operators. And it is in the existence of the subject matter that contingency becomes crucial, yes?

Before I can answer that question, I'll have to re-read Master Ehninger. State tuned.

And no, I don't care if others read this stuff.

Bruce

From: W Clifton Adams  
Sent: Tuesday, July 13, 2010 12:40 PM  
To: Gronbeck, Bruce E  
Subject: This much

Thanks for your last response.

I am interest in your thinking on the locus of warrant: linguistic or mental operation. Sam had some parts of the Alta series, but when he left debate, he left all those type volumes with the team and it seems their location is now unknown. I recognize that you are interested in what is reasonable; my focus is more on what is the nature of human reasoning. What from a pure logical standpoint may not make sense does not seem to be excluded from how people think. The nonexistence of A (say Joe getting a date with Alice) does not prevent people from reasoning about A. :-)  
clifton

On July 13, Gronback wrote:

Once you open the door to a discussion of the reasonable vs. the rational vs. the logical, you've entered the important territory of post-WWII thinking. Another piece I wrote, for the Amsterdam conference on argumentation, was a review of the systems of three of the important non-logical/but-rational figures--yes, Toulmin, and then Perelman and your friend Eemeren. Toulmin came the closest to seeing inference as a mental operation; both Perelman and Eemeren tended to see inference in language.

Hope that I can get into town tomorrow with time to find Ehninger. --Bruce

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On July 16, I wrote:

Thinking Aloud

Bruce,

My mind is abuzz. I feel the need to put some of it in writing.

I have treated the thought-language question as low priority because I did not see it as most germane to my central argument that if warrants provide a relationship between evidence and conclusion, warrants must be most general than the other two major parts of an argument. However, this locus issue keeps bubbling up while my central argument lies dormant.

Carol Benton once told me, 'Cliff, you see the world too much as "either-or," more often the world is "both-and.'" She even gave me an article expanding on that theme. Obviously I'm missing something that divides this area into two sections so that one has to operate from one position or another. Eemeren does, and did in his email to me, stress that he studies argument, an expressed content. It limits his domain of study. He did concede that I could define parts of

reasoning differently than he did parts of an argument because of the difference in its locus. However, most of the people that I've valued over my years have stressed important relationships between language, thought and action. This issue of locus spins in at least two important ways in my thinking.

First is the issue of inference vs. warrant. You seem to equate the two, or if anything warranting is something somehow greater. Somewhere in your statements there seems to be more 'force' associated with warranting than I would give to the linking 'power' of a warrant. An inference IS a mental activity that, when stated in full form (seldom), HAS two linguistic parts even in the internal (thought) world of a being. One of these two parts serves as a bridge from (1) what is possibly (or stronger) true to (2) something that is less certain. I probably often use 'inference' to signify the establishing of this bridge; but the inference isn't just this bridge – really. This bridge, which I believe is very close to Toulmin's warrant, doesn't give force unto itself. It gives uncertainty reduction that does give the belief that one is being reasonable which, in turn, gives people a sense of legitimacy. People have the need to be 'reasonable,' and to provide justifications for behaviors, or beliefs. In so doing (giving the justifications), we can 'see' something of their thought processes. All three of the essential parts of an argument exist in thought and these thoughts are often in linguistic form.

The second issue is your contention that the reasonableness of a contingency warrant depends on its locus. You say, as I understand your statement, that in thought procedures, since B depends on A, in the absence of an actual existence of As, there can be no contingency. That logic works better in the 'referent' domain of the thought-symbol-referent triangle. The mind is capable of forming contingencies in all type of hypothetical worlds, even nonlinguistic ones. Certainly, contingency management is based on that recognition. BP may have thought that it did not make sense to think about events that they never envisioned and, thus, thought were not possible.

Of course, to me, all of this discussion of contingency warrants is an aside. I like contingency thinking; so, I provided examples using that type. The examples made your point that warrants can reside at lower levels of abstraction. Had I used a genus/classification type example (Howard Ward's family lives in Iowa City; Jim is (or even, may be) part of the Howard Ward family; therefore, Jim Ward lives (may live) in Iowa City), the point would have been the same: Warrants can be (in relationship to the lofty ideas of academe, are usually) specific; however, they must be sufficiently abstract to include the other two parts. That's the heart of the question I asked of you after you gave me your perspective: Don't you agree that warrants are by their nature abstract. I have concluded that you, still yet, don't accept my reasoning?

I thought I might be able to save you a trip to the library for the little Ehninger book, but as I reread my 6/12 memo to you, I may not be able to do so. I asked if I distorted Ehninger's work just to fit my understanding. To answer that question, you may need to consult the book.

The heart of my reference to Ehninger, however, was the mutual parallel nature between syllogisms and the logic of warrant/data/claim with ALL five of the types of syllogisms/warrants. Your need to consult Influence, Belief and Argument suggests to me that you did not see that as true, and aren't prone to accept it. If the complication of the 'warrant' as is now commonly understood complicates it to the point that one can't structure reasoning, with a recognition of qualifiers and reservation, using warrants, data and claim in a way that reflects a modern syllogism, then my constructing the Bridge Models of Reasoning was the correct move on my part.

To Ehninger's Influence, Belief, and Argument:

In chapter 2, he discussed the three basic (and essential) parts of an argument in a way (fairly clearly, I think) as to place them in the belief system of people:

'Every argument ... always consists of three basic parts or elements. For reasons which will become clear in a moment, we shall label these parts E, W, and C

'Part E consists of one or more items of belief or knowledge the person addressed is willing to accept or, at least for the moment, assume to be true. Part C consists of one or more similar items the person addressed does not accept or is not willing to assume as true. Part W asserts that a relationship of some sort exists between what is accepted or assumed and what is not accepted as assumed.'" (p.10)

Sounds very much like our NCA paper. We just made the mistake of saying that the W had to be broad enough to encompass both E and C. How can it assert a relationship between the two without including both in a general principle? But, then, Eemeren says it is a matter of when they were presented. On pages 11-13, Ehninger arranged the same argument with the parts coming in different orders.

Okay, to the types of relationships represented in types of warrants: Ehninger did validate my 'division' warrant. We were close in three of the other four (his chapter 6 Relating the Evidence to the Claim: Warrant; pp 67-88). Using that some Copi text, I believe, I had looked for five types of warrants to correspond to five types of syllogisms. I got

- A. Classification or Categorical or Generalization or Genus: A relationship is established by membership in a group and the group's characteristics. I selected Classification for my term for this relationship. Categorical sounded to absolute and suggested the problem with the classical syllogism. Generalization, included here because texts generally discussed it in these terms, was excluded because any relationship could be established through generalization. Ehninger also selects the word Classification for this relationship. He, however, chose to have a separate type termed Generalization which does a good job of discussing the ideal process of generalizing from particular observations to relationships. Then, he had only three categories of relationships left, where I had four; his combining of two of mine into one explains the remaining difference in our lists.
- B. Similarity or Comparison or Analogy or Parallel Case. A relationship because two phenomena are alike. Ehninger chose Comparison for the name of this relationship; I chose Similarity.
- C. Division: A relationship is established by limiting the possibilities.
- D. Co-occurrence or Contingency. A relationship is established because two phenomena by linking them in either time or space or both. Yes, this is 'if A then B.' But it could be "When A... then B," or "Since A... then B."
- E. Cause. A relationship is established because one thing produces or makes another thing happen. This is 'if and only if A, then B.

Ehninger combined D and E above into 'Connections.' There he discussed two subcategories, Cause and Sign. Perhaps he opted for 'sign' because he had the same intellectual/academic concerns with 'Contingency' as do you. His discussion in this chapter is much more 'argumentation' based (as in focused on what is said). So, he never uses the If... Then, structure, but the Since... Then structure. To me, the sign is the A in If A, then B. However, if contingencies are a poisoned relationship, please switch to another type and discuss my argument that the relationship must be broader than the parts of the relationship it establishes.

Finally, to your last point: "Once you open the door to a discussion of the reasonable vs. the rational vs. the logical, you entered the important territory of post WWII thinking." To me 'reasonable' and 'rational' and 'logical' are in the same camp; and it is a different camp than that of 'reasoning.' The first camp speaks to criteria for judging the process or for including samples in the domain. The second camp recognizes and attempts to describe, perhaps regardless of quality, the process. So, I'm not sure that I've opened the door you mentioned. Are you familiar with the work of Lance Rips in Psychology up at Northwestern? To my regret, I only

came across his work in '08 when attempting to find the roots of my beliefs about reasoning. I hope you do know of his work since it is extensive in the area of reasoning. When I learned that Eemeren was a guest professor at NWU, I mentioned it in one of the few email exchanges that I had with Rips. Rips had heard of Eemeren, but was on leave away from campus that semester. Still, in the reading I've done of Rips and others in the area (admittedly limited since I only found references to Rips 24 months ago), I've seen no reference to Toulmin, Perelman or Eemeren. I guess if Eemeren can bracket his area, Rips and others can do likewise. I don't mean to defend the practice. Indeed, my desire remains to make connections between areas. However, I tend to think at the moment that some perspectives are designed to prevent integration.

As I say, I'M just thinking out loud! I do, however, hope that you'll find time to speak to my argument that for a statement to relate two other statements, the first statement must be broad enough, general enough, to link the other two.

clifton