

ISSA Proceedings 2002 - The Interaction Between Critical Discussion Principles And The Development Of A Pluralistic Society



In this paper we intend to draw some consequences for the development of a pluralistic society from the principles that should regulate a critical discussion as described in the pragma-dialectical approach (PDA) (Eemeren, F.H. van & Grootendorst, R. 1992). We intend to unveil some presuppositions underlying Chilean public debate and to show some contributions that can be made to the development of a more alert civic consciousness in Chile. The most recurrent public controversies in Chile since the restoration of democracy in 1989, after seventeen years of military dictatorship, are controversies over moral values which reflect a social tension between those who want to develop into a modern pluralistic society and those who want to arrest all changes and to maintain traditional values.

As the analysis show, in most cases these controversies and the discussions involved are not really “resolved” but “settled” in the sense in which the PDA contrasts to “settle” a discussion and to “resolve” a difference of opinion (Eemeren, F.H., van & Grootendorst, R. 1992, 32). This is usually achieved by the intervention of what we should term “factual powers”, meaning groups or organizations that have the power to impose decisions upon society without having to enter into debate.

From the numerous public controversies that have taken place since 1989 in Chile, we have selected a few that seem to us to reflect best the issues related to moral values and to reveal the core of the disagreement: the death penalty, the divorce law, the so called “pill for the day after”, and the controversy between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry.

The controversy between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry seems to us to be the most representative of the issues that are at stake in Chilean public

debate, while at the same time enables us to hint at some general conclusions regarding what a critical discussion about values and moral principles entails. In what follows, we shall present some of the controversies that have been the object of interest in public debate in Chile such as they appeared in the press, that is to say, as they were available to every citizen and not as they may have been treated in specialized literature. Next, we shall introduce some necessary distinctions in order to clear the way towards a possible solution of the conflicts presented, and we shall reflect on the ideal of reasonableness underlying the PDA critical discussion principles and on Ernst Tugendhat's ethical ideal of a moral community of universal mutual respect and their application to the building of a pluralistic society in Chile.

1. The death penalty

Although, since its abolition by Parliament in 2001, the death penalty no longer represents a central concern for public opinion in Chile, we consider that an analysis of the controversy about it provides a good starting point to reflect on the moral principles that are presupposed on each side.

The following is a summary of the main arguments, as they appeared on several letters to the editor or columns of opinion in the leading Chilean newspaper, *El Mercurio*.

The first project of a law for the abolition of the death penalty was presented in 1990, during the first democratic government to rule after the military. From that moment on the different views expressed have centered on two main principles. According to a newspaper article (Pamela Aravena, *El Mercurio*, April 8, 2001), the two standpoints can be summarized as follows: The first, in favor of abolishing the death penalty, is based on an appeal to the obligation of respecting the criminal's right to life and rehabilitation. The opposite standpoint, in favor of maintaining the death penalty, is based on the right of society to defend itself from the most perverted criminals. This position was also backed by at that moment recent decisions by the law courts to condemn to death offenders that had been found guilty of the rape and murder of children.

In a subsequent moment, the discussion focused on the effectiveness of the death penalty. Those in favor of abolishing it argued that the death penalty lacked the dissuasive power that its supporters attributed to it. Due to the unfavorable climate around it, the law project of abolishing the death penalty did not prosper and the controversy remained unresolved. It was reactivated, however, shortly

before its abolition in April 2001. The new context was provided by the decision of subscribing the American Convention for Human Rights (“Pacto de San José”), which entailed the abolition of the death penalty. Part of the debate centered on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the death penalty from a Catholic perspective. For Catholics who oppose the death penalty, the foundations of their standpoint are in the Bible, insofar as it establishes that life is sacred and that to impose the death penalty is, therefore, to seize and hold a right that belongs only to God (Sergio Peña y Lillo, *El Mercurio*, July 18, 2001). For other Catholics, however, the Bible allows the death penalty. In fact, Jesus himself would have recognized this in accepting Pontius Pilate’s right to judge and to condemn him. (Hugo Tagle, *El Mercurio*, August, 14, 2000). The trouble with this presentation is double, since it not only presupposes the authority of the Bible, but also requires reaching an agreement about its interpretation.

Finally, the Catholic Church supported the abolition of the death penalty, although it did so from a pastoral point of view and not from a dogmatic one (Alejandro Guzman, *El Mercurio*, July 22, 2000).

Another part of the debate centered on whether, despite its abolition, the death penalty could be restored. According to the Agreement of San José (“Pacto de San José”), once the death penalty is abolished it cannot be reinstated. The problem with this is that, as some have argued, the death penalty has not been really abolished in Chile. It was only abolished for civil trials, but not for military trials under a state of war (Hernán Montealegre, *El Mercurio*, August 19, 2001). This is a fact that reveals the absence of a serious discussion and the presence, instead, of a decision considering “the country’s best interest”, which means projecting a better image in the international forum. On the other hand, since a state of war in Chile is something that seems absolutely unthinkable these days, it is understandable that this part of the controversy has ceased to attract public interest, despite the fact that during the military regime over 2000 people were executed in Chile aside of any legal procedure (Jaime Castillo, *El Mercurio*, April 19, 2001). The fact that this issue has not been taken up reveals the shallowness of the debate. One should expect a much deeper discussion about the foundations that should lead to maintaining or abolishing the death penalty.

2. The divorce law

The controversy over a divorce law has a long history. Since 1940 many law projects have been presented and rejected in Parliament. It may seem strange

that Chile lacks a divorce law, but this doesn't cause much trouble in practice, since it is not so difficult to get an annulment of the marriage contract by a legal trick consisting in both members of the marriage couple agreeing to declare that the address stated in the marriage act is not the correct one. In practice, what we have is a very permissive annulment law.

The controversy has been reopened by the fact that the presentation of a project of law concerning divorce has been in the political program of the three governments of the "Concertación" (the coalition of parties that have governed the country since the restoration of democracy). The need to have a divorce law has been argued precisely on the grounds that it is necessary to put an end to the annulment fraud, and also that in the present situation the children of annulled marriages are left in a state of disprotection. The Catholic Church, however, has persistently opposed the divorce law project.

The controversy centered around two issues. One of the central issues taken up in the discussion is the impact of a divorce in the children. The other central topic is whether the Catholic Church's opposition to legislating about the divorce is an intolerable imposition on the non Catholic members of society. Concerning the influence of divorce on the children, those against the divorce law argued that divorce destroys the family and harms the children, especially so from a psychological perspective. (Father Jaime Fernández, pastoral Vicar for the Family, *El Mercurio*, Sept. 11, 2001). This view has been opposed arguing that the empirical evidence on which it is based is rather questionable for various reasons: *First*, to determine the effect of divorce on the children is difficult, since it does not affect them in the same way. Some children suffer very much; others adapt themselves to the new situation and recover themselves with little difficulty. (Psychologists Carmen Luz Méndez and Fernando Coddou, *El Mercurio*, May 18, 2001).

Secondly, the effect of divorce on children has to be compared with what happens to the children of annulled marriages and not only with the children of stable marriages (Ignacio Salas, *El Mercurio*, Nov. 18, 2001).

Thirdly, a correct evaluation of the effect of divorce on children requires to measure also the psychological impact that living in a home where the members of the married couple don't get along well may have on the children (Jorge Gómez, *El Mercurio*, July 12, 2001).

Fourthly, the conclusion that divorce harms the children is based on studies that have been carried on in societies with a cultural context very different from the

Chilean. For instance, effects of the divorce law in the US are presented without comparing the text of the law or the cultural differences in both situations. Or correlations are presented which appear to be extremely far fetched, as for instance a correlation between the divorce rate and the suicide rate, or the divorce rate and the economic development in Denmark (Jorge Vásquez, *El Mercurio*, Nov.11, 2001).

The second part of the controversy centered on the legitimacy of a divorce law. The position against a divorce law argued that the thesis would be a law against the indissoluble character that marriage should have as a commitment for life. Among the arguments presented by those in favor of this view are the following:

1. The indissolubility of marriage rests on basic moral principles that all people must respect, so that not respecting it would lead to a moral weakening of society in general, which “would be equivalent to accepting the violation of a norm such as the one that prohibits murder” (José Joaquín Ugarte, *El Mercurio*, Nov. 21, 2001).

2. Even a restrictive divorce law (that is, one that admits only a very specific reasons for it) would not be acceptable, even as a lesser damage, because any form of divorce would open the door to marriage forms that debase it to the mere satisfaction of subjective desires and necessities, such as a marriage between homosexuals would be (Cristóbal Orrego, *El Mercurio*, Sept. 16, 2001).

3. Divorce is not acceptable because marriage, by its own nature, implies a commitment for the whole life (José Joaquín Ugarte, *El Mercurio*, Nov. 21, 2001).

The weakness of these arguments is manifest. They don't even attempt to justify the assumptions on which they are founded, with the result that they incur in circular reasoning. If marriage is defined as a commitment for life, it is indissoluble by definition, and divorce (the dissolution of marriage), of course, is not acceptable. The questions that the arguers do not address are the following: What are the basic moral principles obligatory to all on which the indissolubility of marriage rests? Why would a divorce law weaken society morally and lead to debased forms of marriage?

This position has been much criticized also for its lack of realism, since in the face of the obvious number of marriage ruptures they still maintain that “there are very few ruptures that cannot be remedied inside the marriage itself” (José Joaquín Ugarte, *El Mercurio*, Nov. 21, 2001).

The position in favor of the divorce law argues that the law is required precisely

because of the numerous marriage ruptures and that these should be regulated in order to protect the rights of the spouses and the children.

Those in favor of a divorce law argue that it is senseless to think, as the people who are against it do, that the existence of a divorce law would cause or stimulate marriages ruptures (Carlos Peña, *El Mercurio*, July 3, 2001). In fact, empirical observations would show that ruptures are inevitable, and this is the reason for wanting to regulate them by law. Moreover, failing to do it could mean a submission to a particular group, with a particular conception of marriage. Favoring this conception and arbitrarily imposing the idea of an indissoluble marriage to the whole of society, instead of making room for a more flexible idea that admits the possibility of a rupture, would be attempting against the conception of a pluralistic society (Jorge Gómez, *El Mercurio*, July 12, 2001).

Underlying this debate is the issue of personal autonomy. Those in favor of a divorce law consider that the people who are facing a rupture are the best qualified to judge for themselves what they ought to do. Society's failure to respect their right to decide in this matter would mean that society exercises a sort of moral tutelage on them, which would contradict the principles of pluralism and respect for autonomy.

3. The "pill for the day after"

The controversy began in 2001 when the government, through the Public Health Institute (Instituto de Salud Pública, IPS) authorized the use of the drug *Levonorgestrel*, better known as "the pill for the day after", an emergency contraceptive to be taken after having sexual intercourse. ISP officials justified the use of the pill in extreme cases such as rape or incest.

The Catholic Church expressed its disapproval of the measure and some conservative groups presented a case before the tribunals arguing that the pill was abortive, not just contraceptive. This made it possible to start an indirect public controversy over abortion, which had not been possible before, since abortion is explicitly prohibited as homicide in the 1980 Constitution.

Before the Court's decision that pronounced *Levonorgestrel* illegal (August 30, 2001) on the grounds that it was against the right to life, some members of the scientific community had pointed out that the judges were not taking into consideration all the scientific evidence available (Fernando Zegers, *El Mercurio*, March 18, 2001).

The debate turned out to be somewhat confuses, since many different issues were

being discussed at the same time.

One of the important issues has become to determine whether the pill is abortive. Scientific studies on the effects of the pill had led some people to maintain that it is not abortive, because it only prevents the nestling of the fertilized ovum, and, according to the *World Health Organization*, human life starts with this nestling, since only then the fertilized ovum becomes viable as a human being. Moreover, human reproduction experts have claimed that the pill does not interfere with the fertilized ovum's development once it is already nestled (Dr. Ramiro Molina, *El Mercurio*, March 20, 2001).

Against this view, it has been objected that scientific studies do not show conclusively that the pill does not interfere with the fertilized ovum already nestled and that, therefore, it cannot be considered proven that the life of a future human being is not endangered by the use of the pill. As long as there is doubt, the use of the pill should be prohibited (Juan Ignacio Donoso, *El Mercurio*, Oct. 10, 2001).

To make things worse, human reproduction experts do not agree on whether the fertilized ovum, before its nestling, should be considered a future human being. For some of them, a fertilized ovum is an individual of the human species (Carlos Valenzuela, *El Mercurio*, April 23, 2001), but for others it is not possible to determine this on a purely empirical basis, so that the scientist has to reach a conclusion based on his own personal ethical convictions (Enrique Castellón, *El Mercurio*, April 8, 2001).

Since the dispute between the scientists remained unresolved, the discussion moved to a legal and ethical sphere, trying to define whether the fertilized ovum is a human being or not and what its rights would be before the law.

Some lawyers have argued that the state is under the obligation to protect the life of the *nasciturus* (the one who is going to be born), therefore, the Supreme Court's decision that declared illegal the pill is correct and well founded (Angela Vivanco, *El Mercurio*, Sept. 2, 2001). In addition to this, it has been argued that the fertilized ovum is *ontologically* a human being and has, therefore, the same rights as any other human being (Jose Joaquin Ugarte, *El Mercurio*, May 28, 2001).

Against this, it has been argued that this statement presupposes the acceptance of an ethical doctrine that it is not necessary to accept: "Chile it is a democratic republic and not an Aristotelian one" (Antonio Bascuñan, *El Mercurio*, June 2, 2001).

Besides, since an embryo's death could only be established when the fertilized ovum has been nestled, and a right can only be protected when there is a subject to whom that right belongs, it would not be possible to protect the right to life before nestling. Moreover, although there is an obligation of protecting the *nasciturus's* rights, these have to be balanced against the women's rights to autonomy (Antonio Bascuñan, *El Mercurio*, June 2, 2001). Therefore, preventing a woman from using the pill in cases of rape or incest would be against the principles of a pluralistic society.

As in the cases analyzed earlier, the controversy was ended externally by a Supreme Court's decision. As it was to be expected, the government appealed the former Supreme Court's decision that had pronounced *Levonorgestrel* illegal. The main argument used was the pill contained, in a larger dose, the same components that were already in use in other milder contraceptives. In fact, in emergency cases, when they have forgotten to take the regular pill or when the condom fails, many women take the so called "cocktail" of contraceptives, consisting of several doses of the regular pill. In the face of this new evidence the Supreme Court approved the use of a new pill, *Postinol II*, that contains the same substance and produces the same effects as *Levonorgestrel*. The irony of this is that the final decision that settled the discussion was taken without paying any attention to the important scientific and ethical issues raised in the controversy.

4. The Catholic Church and the Freemasonry

In order to understand the context of the controversy between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry in Chile it is necessary to understand the importance that the Catholic Church is given in the Chilean society. This is due to two reasons. First, the Catholic Church is perceived as a moral authority because of its strong and courageous defense of human rights during the military government. Second, the vast majority of the population identify themselves as Catholic, even when they have ceased to practice the Church's rituals and commandments. This is apparent in the fact that, for most Chileans, all important moments of their life are marked by Catholic rituals, such as baptism, first Holy Communion, marriage and funeral, even when the participants, their parents or their relatives no longer believe in or practice the Church's commandments in everyday life.

Other important thing to notice about this controversy is that this is the first time since the 1973 Coup that the Catholic Church has been so openly and publicly

attacked in Chile.

For our purposes in this paper, the importance of the controversy is that it shows the tension between an authoritarian conception of morality and an autonomous one.

The controversy was originated by the words of Cardinal Jorge Medina, who declared that Chilean Catholics should vote for the political candidates who are against abortion, the “pill for the day after”, the divorce law and euthanasia. Cardinal Medina’s words were considered to represent an unduly intervention of the Church in politics and produced strong reactions, especially because Cardinal Medina holds a high office in the Vatican.

The Chilean Church declared that Cardinal Medina’s sayings did not represent the Church’s official position, but were only his personal opinions, to which he was entitled as any other Chilean citizen. Also, he was in Chile on vacation and not in an official visit.

The strongest reaction against Cardinal Medina’s words came through a public statement by the “Gran Maestro”, the Head of the Freemasonry, protesting for what he considered an unduly intervention over the citizen’s consciousness: “There has always been in Chile a religious [i.e. Catholic] pressure on the civil society, but never before has there been so open an interventionism” (Jorge Carvajal, Head of the Freemasonry, *El Mercurio*, Oct. 23, 2001). According to the Freemasonry’s view, the Catholic Church, just as any other member of society, can express their opinions concerning any issue related to moral values, but they should not interfere with the civil society.

A telephonic poll conducted shortly after the Freemasonry’s statement was published, showed that 77% of the people consulted strongly agreed with it. The outcome was surprising even for the Freemasonry.

The Freemasonry’s main thesis, is that the Catholic Church’s intervention represents a threat against the moral autonomy to which every citizen is entitled and that this issue should be made the object of an open public debate (Jorge Carvajal, Head of the Freemasonry, *El Mercurio*, Nov. 18, 2001). This raises the question about the limits of personal moral autonomy and the extent to which the state and social institutions such as the Church are entitled to exercise an influence on it.

As the strong unexpected approval from the people to the Freemasonry’s statement seems to show, this is precisely the issue that has been bothering

Chilean society and has been implicit in the controversies over moral values analyzed in the previous sections. It also shows that the reaction against Cardinal Medina's words was really a reaction against several more or less direct interventions of the Catholic Church and of conservative Catholic laymen, seeking to influence policies and decisions involving moral value issues, as the controversies discussed earlier permit to appreciate.

We think that the controversy between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry shows a tension between the Catholic Church and civil society which is too complex and which, obviously, has not developed into a critical discussion. Only some discrepancies concerning a few specific topics have been expressed.

The main issue that has been debated is whether the Church has the right to demand from Catholics that they vote for candidates that defend the Church's position concerning moral values. According to the most conservative sectors of it, the Church has the right to demand from its flock that they be coherent with the Church's moral principles.

The Freemasonry's objection to this is that, although the Church has the right to express its opinion, it does not have the right to exercise its power to the point that it results in an interference of the civil consciousness. In a pluralistic society, every citizen should feel free to decide according to his or her consciousness and to vote for candidates that better represent the common good. To put pressure on them so that they vote for candidates who represent a particular group's interests would be against the foundations of a pluralistic society.

The Catholic Church conceded this point. However, since the issue of the limits of personal autonomy has never been debated, it is not clear whether new discrepancies concerning other moral topics are going to come up.

On the other hand, the Freemasonry has not established the foundations on which personal autonomy rests, it has simply defended the right to have a personal ethical option, but it has not clarify whether this implies the recognition of moral norms that everybody must respect. If this remains unclear, the danger of moral relativism is latent, and this is what the Catholic Church criticizes. In fact, in the absence of certain basic moral norms that all people must respect, it is difficult for a pluralistic society to subsist.

5. Some necessary distinctions and reflections towards a resolution of the controversies.

As we have seen, the Chilean controversies over moral value issues are far from

being resolved, in a pragma dialectical sense. This is due mainly to the fact that they reflect the tension between two different conceptions of morality.

In order to show how the controversies between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry, as well as the other controversies over moral value issues, could be approached in the direction of a resolution we think that it is necessary to introduce the following distinctions concerning ethics. In this we follow closely Ernst Tugendhat's ethical theory (Tugendhat, E. 1988).

A first necessary distinction we want to introduce is that between beliefs that ought to be respected and beliefs that ought to be debated. By beliefs that ought to be respected we understand all beliefs that every one of us is entitled to hold in the intimacy of his or her consciousness and should not be forced to defend if he or she does not want to. In opposition to these, there are beliefs that concern the way we understand our relationships with other people and the obligations we assume they have towards us. We think that beliefs concerning moral norms belong to this group and are, therefore, beliefs that ought to be debated. Since moral norms consist of reciprocal demands to limit each other's autonomy, they and their foundations must be open to debate, unless we were in favor of a non egalitarian system in which one party imposes his or her will arbitrarily upon the other.

In the Chilean controversy between the Catholic Church and the Freemasonry, both parties appealed to the principle of toleration and accused each other of being intolerant. The distinction just made shows that it is not being intolerant to request from the Catholic Church that the moral norms based on religious beliefs be open to debate before they are imposed to the whole of society. It is not a question of preventing the members of the Catholic Church from holding their religious beliefs, but of preventing them from imposing those beliefs and their consequences upon other (non believer) members of society

A second necessary distinction is that between *moral* norms that are obligatory for everyone and *prudential* norms that are reasonable guidelines for conducting a better life.

In our opinion, the Catholic Church, and many of the conservative groups that support it, favor a conception of morality that is closest to ancient rather than to modern ethics. According to Tugendhat (1988, 52), one of the main differences between ancient and modern ethics is that the latter is concerned with the foundation of moral norms, whereas as the former is concerned with happiness,

as equivalent to leading a good life. Tugendhat further explains that while the question concerning the word “good” referred in ancient ethics to what is good (agathon) for the individual, i.e., to his or her happiness (eudaimonia), in modern ethics it is referred to intersubjective norms answering the question of what to do with respect to others (Tugendhat 1988, 52). Although the Greeks also had a concern for morality in this sense, but called it “beautiful” (kalon) rather than “good” (agathon), they finally equated morality and happiness, establishing that what is good in the first sense (kalon) in what is truly good in the second sense (agathon) (Tugendhat 1988, 53). According to this view, no one can truly be happy who is not at the same time a moral person. This conception seems to be quite similar to those held by traditional or religious systems of morality, such as the Catholic Church’s.

This makes it possible understand why the Catholic Church and its followers are so anxious to have an influence on the decisions that affect the whole of society. They are convinced that by following the Church’s moral principles the people are going to reach their true happiness.

However, as it should be clear from the next distinction we makes it is no longer possible to found moral obligations appealing to beliefs that not everyone shares in. As Tugendhat points out the question of the foundation of moral norms introduced in modern ethics can no longer be avoided. This leads to our third distinction.

A third necessary distinction is the one, already mentioned, between an authoritarian and autonomous conception of morality. According to Tugendhat, an authoritarian conception of morality is one that is founded in an appeal to “superior truths”, that is, an appeal to non empirical proposition that are presupposed to be true and are used to found ethical propositions, although they themselves can only be founded on religious or traditional beliefs (Tugendhat 1988, 141). An autonomous conception of morality, on the other hand, is one that rests on the individual’s personal decision of putting him or herself under the obligation of respecting moral norms in order to belong to a moral community determined by universal mutual respect.

According to Tugendhat (1988, 142), the only possible foundation for morality in modern times is the autonomous one, because they appeal to “superior truths” would inevitably lead to relativism, since the idea of a rational confrontation between the competing founding predicates would be illusory. Therefore,

although the foundation on a personal decision is weak, in that it lacks the necessity of a foundation on superior truths, it is the only one left in modernity. The alternative would be to renounce the goal of founding moral norms. But to choose this alternative would be equivalent in practice to favor ethical relativism and, as a consequence, to accept that the stronger impose their norms upon the weaker members of society.

The obvious consequence of this is that neither the Catholic Church nor any other “factual power” has the right to impose upon the whole of society moral obligations that are not founded autonomously, i.e., that are not of the kind that anyone would voluntarily subject himself to in order to belong to a moral community. This means that moral norms should be able to be argued for in a rational environment, and all members of society, especially children, should be helped in making a decision in favor of morality. This represents a challenge for the whole of society, but especially for educators who want to prepare citizens to be able to participate effectively in public debate and to influence decisions that affect all people.

The role of dialogue in developing critical thinking and reasonableness has been sufficiently established by the Philosophy for Children (Cf. Lipman 1991). Also our own work on education for democracy in Chile has been based on the influence that philosophical dialogue can have in developing rational and democratic attitudes in children (Vicuña & López 1994).

Underlying these educational approaches there is an ideal of reasonableness that is expressed in favoring critical discussion as the way of searching to understand and to clarify concepts, and to reach agreements in personal interactions.

This ideal of reasonableness is best summarized, in our view, in the PDA rules for a critical discussion. The PDA proposes to treat argumentation “as a rational means to convince a critical opponent and not as a mere persuasion” and establishes that the dispute “should not be just terminated, no matter how, but resolved by methodically overcoming the doubts of a rational judge in a well regulated critical discussion”. (Eemeren, F. H. Van & Grootendorst, R. 1992, 10-11)

An analysis of the rules for critical discussion as they are formulated in the PDA (Eemeren, F. H. Van & Grootendorst, R. 1992, 208-09) permits us to look at the principles on which it is founded. They are respect, honesty, consistency and rationality.

In the following charts we present a summary of the principles underlying each

rule as we see them according. The contents of the rules are indicated in parenthesis.

Rule:

1. (freedom of expression): Respect and Tolerance
2. (responsibility and consistency): Honesty
3. (relevance): Rationality
4. (relevance): Rationality
5. (truthfulness, avoidance of manipulation): Honesty
6. (truthfulness, avoidance of manipulation): Honesty
7. (using appropriate argumentation): Rationality
8. (using logically valid arguments): Rationality
9. (responsibility and consistency): Honesty
10. (avoidance of manipulation, truthfulness): Honesty and Rationality

We think that the commitment to rationality, the ideal of consistency, honesty, avoidance of manipulation, and the recognition of the other person's right to disagree or to think differently, that are the basis of the PDA rules for a critical discussion, represent ways of respecting other human being as such. Therefore, learning to respect these rules in arguing not only leads to the establishment of better conditions for achieving a resolution of the dispute, but also to the building of a community of mutual respect.

A society where citizens are willing to work out reasonable agreements about difficult issues that divide them is a society that has developed in itself the seeds for growing into a pluralistic and moral society. Our Chilean society is far from approaching these ideas, but we are certain that teaching argumentation following the PDA guidelines is a major contribution towards approaching these goals.

It is important to note, however, that a critical discussion can only exist when the two parties are willing to enter the discussion and to respect the rules in order to resolve it. It is in this sense that we consider that there is a limitation in the rules for a critical discussion, since no one can be forced to enter the discussion or even to be rational. In the controversies analyzed in this paper it is manifest that the parties are often irrational. Therefore, it is necessary to stimulate the development of a moral consciousness so that the people are more willing to participate in the building of a pluralistic society.

4. A last comment on the role of the Catholic Church in Chile

As a corollary, we would like to add that through the analysis of the controversies presented it is possible to clarify the role that religion, and especially the Catholic Church, can have in Chile. We think that religions aims at providing a more optimistic conception of life, answering to fundamental questions that have to do with the purposes of human existence. For instance, to believe that we were created by a loving God to be His or Her children and to build His Realm of Love here on Earth can be very comforting in a world that has become increasingly meaningless. Being able to distinguish this as a belief one may choose to have, but not an undeniable truth evident to everyone is an important step towards the understanding between believers and non believers.

Furthermore, being able to distinguish between what is a moral obligation (equal universal respect) for all members of a moral community and what is a generous response to a loving God, shows that the appeal to love is (a) more demanding than the appeal to respect, and (b) an invitation to imitate Christ, but not an obligation. Thus, if a person chooses to accept the invitation to sanctity, he or she is happy in the sacrifices involved, but if a person chooses not to accept it, he or she should not feel guilty about it. (Cf. Tugendhat E., López C. & Vicuña, A.M. 1998, 76-77).

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