

Braybrooke

YALE PHILOSOPHER SPEAKS ON ETHICS AND DEMOCRACY

By SHEILA RUSSEL AND DON BRAZIER

"There exists an indivisible connection between emotions and moral judgments." This was the view expressed by Prof. David Braybrooke of Yale University in a lecture given at Dalhousie last week, entitled, "Ethics and the Emotive and Imperative Theories." Prof. Braybrooke, now teaching philosophy at Yale, is a graduate in economics from Harvard. He also has degrees from Cornell, Oxford, and Cambridge.

Prof. Braybrooke concentrated on the relationship between the moralistic ideas of man and the subsequent attitude they bring about in a situation where these particular ideas intrude into man's reactions. He considered the two prevalent theories in current vogue regarding the "Emotive-Imperative Theory", as put forth by A.J. Ayers and C.L. Stevenson. It is Ayer's contention that the E-I Theory is good only for ethical judgments, which have no factual implications. By this Ayers means that there is no relation of the sort mentioned above.

Stevenson's view, however, is that of the fundamentalist Christian doctrine, i.e. "X is good; I approve of X; therefore do so likewise." The rest of Prof. Braybrooke's lecture was taken up with a discussion of this case, and its antithesis, that of a classless society, where, "if one person has no right to do X, then no one has the right," or, to see its converse, everyone may act as he wishes. This is the liberal, extremist, Dewey-like viewpoint. Prof. Braybrooke felt that neither idea was valid.

"The fallacy in Stevenson's theory is, that in a democracy, majority or minority groups do not have, or should not be allowed to

have, their own idiosyncracies universalized. Should this happen, then power cliques would develop.

"As for the antithetical theory, we do not live in a classless society. Therefore, people should not have equal rights, for though people may be considered equal, some are more equal than others."

Prof. Braybrooke finished his talk with a discussion of the traditions in morals. He concluded: "Some judgments are more suited to some periods than to others."

Speaking on representative democracies Wednesday evening, Dr. Braybrooke told faculty and students, "They have done pretty well, but they won't do at all unless they do better."

Dr. Braybrooke's second lecture dealt with "The Current Rationale of Democracy and its Limitations." Discussing first the "primary rationale" for the democratic system, he claimed that it has been more successful than other systems in satisfying "vital needs" and "natural rights". The "repdems" offer "persistently more attractive social environments".

He went on to say that "comparative virtues do not suffice. The current systems might be held to fail both vital needs and natural rights. In the United States there are many people in poverty and human rights are infringed upon." He pointed out that there are still unsolved problems with regard to freedom, welfare and justice.

Among the natural rights under discussion, "the right of political participation forces an investigation of democratic procedure." Here Dr. Braybrooke moved into what he termed the "secondary rationale".

"We must explain what a 'republic' means"; he said, "it is a government whose procedures respect the right of political participation. These procedures include universal suffrage, choice of candidates at periodic elections, and the right of free association."

"The object of this system is to have the policies of the government reflect the desires of the people. But the people usually disagree." The result is a policy of majority rule.

The major political parties are non-ideological", said Dr. Braybrooke, "They do not present distinct or clearly defined programs. Each is influenced by diverse interest groups, and the best they can do is to straddle issues."

"As instruments for seeking a majority policy, the parties are hamstrung by interest groups". The policy which is adopted is that "of the interest group which lobbies most effectively. This is a minority group."

Dr. Braybrooke then discussed the two major schools of political theory about the democratic system. He combined these two lines of thought in a "common rationale" of his own. This rationale establishes "a sort of equilibrium" between election and "bargaining" (by interest groups) as complementary methods of reflecting the desires of the people and executing a majority policy.

"Only a complex combination of institutions can adequately reflect the desires of the people."

Dr. Braybrooke commented on "the tendency of the rationale to find embarrassing features inevitable and then to show them advantageous." For example, he cited a "cascade of arguments"

to show that the ignorant voter is essential to the democratic system. He quoted William Jennings Bryant, "The people have a right to make their own mistakes", and remarked that "ignorance has its virtues".

At this point he urged the audience to "Notice the limitations of the secondary rationale; these are very serious."

He noted that the rationale cannot cover up the deficiencies in the system. "There is a large proportion of the population whose vital needs are disregarded and natural rights abrogated. This is not an accident, but the result of the system."

Every political system was described as "a machine for dealing with issues". These are combined and recombined to form an output of issues, some of which have become transformed in the process. The rationale does not answer for those issues which are neglected.

Charging that the rationale "has too loose a fit on the democratic systems," Dr. Braybrooke said that the system works best with short-term issues, but is inadequate regarding such problems as disarmament, or the population explosion, problems which could result in the destruction of the system. "Here the rationale must accept a very serious defeat."

Among the questions asked following the lecture was one regarding the ignorant voter who had been mentioned as essential to the system. "If these are a good thing, why not have more of them?"

"Let's have a nice balance," said Dr. Braybrooke.



The whole idea's dangerous! Why, smoke will contaminate all mankind!



Bah! I hope you're burned at the stake!



By George! So I have!



O Zeus!... Is anything more vicious than an outraged idealist?!



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