

chestnuts & paradigms

difficulty of establishing motherhood. From paternity suits, we know that genetic evidence of fatherhood is imprecise; I presume, however, that such evidence is no more precise in establishing motherhood. So once the child is born it may be as hard to discover the female parent as the male. Still, the father's role in having a child is comparatively brief and private, thus easier to conceal. But if mothers tried to conceal their pregnancies (and surely fear of forced sterilization would be a powerful motive) it would require as invidious a trespass of privacy to establish motherhood as it does to establish fatherhood. Biology does not settle the issue.

Objections to D. and E. lumped together.

I have two main objections here: a right to have children (in the relevant sense) implies nothing about ownership of children and, even if the ownership issue is germane, Hardin's reasons for denying parent's ownership are off the mark.

To the second point first; I grant that parents do not own their children but this is not because of the proportion of costs paid by the state. Undertaking maintenance payments does not make one a part-owner. For example, if I negligently smash into your car, I could end up paying a larger portion than you of the total maintenance costs of your auto; that does not make the car any less yours. (Note, by the way, the ambiguity of statement 12a.--"an ever larger share": than what the state used to pay? than what parents pay?...) Nor can ownership be biologically determined; it is a matter of property rights and thus a social construct. It is wrong to suppose that parents own children because people--including young people--are not the sorts of things that are owned.

Now, is ownership relevant? Before turning to that question, we need to shed some light on the right to have children. Two interpretations come to mind: first, a right to conceive and bear children and second, a right to raise the new being one brings into the world. (It is sad to note we often think of fathering in the first sense and mothering, always, in the second sense of having children.) Ownership, if relevant at all, is relevant to the right to raise children and not the right to conceive them. On the other hand, objections to forced sterilization are based on a right to conceive, or at least a right to be free from intrusions on one's body. Forced sterilization after n children (where n is greater than 0) hardly even conflicts with a right to raise one's natural children. Hence the relevant sense of a right to have children does not depend upon parents owning their children.

Summation

Hardin here is, as always, provocative but that may be the only virtue of this passage. His proposal is hard-hearted and his argument sterile; he makes sexist assumptions, he introduces a new fallacy, he ignores relevant distinctions and he begs crucial questions. *

Has C. L. Hamblin, in Fallacies, cornered the market in venerable examples of fallacies? He certainly has located a warehouse full, but we are not convinced that there are no more to be found. As evidence, we pass on an example sent to the ILN by Robert W. Binkley of the University of Western Ontario (and editor of the London Close Reasoner--see ILN, ii/Supplement; pp. S22-S28), who wrote: "I came across the enclosed argument of Horace's concerning the veneration of ancient authors It is an example of Sorites or (by some definitions) Slippery Slope. Perhaps it might qualify as a chestnut."

With Horace's Sorites we initiate a column (suggested by Professor Binkley) which will appear from time to time in the ILN--as frequently as readers send in items for publication. To give access to this column to readers who are not antiquarians, we propose to twin with chestnuts examples of paradigms of given fallacies. By a paradigm example we have in mind one that fits this characterization: "If there ever was an example of Ad Hominem [or whatever fallacy] this is it." Sometimes--and this issue's example from Horace may be one of those--a chestnut will also be a paradigm.

Horace's Sorites

If poems are like wine which time improves, I should like to know what is the year that gives to writings fresh value. A writer who dropped off a hundred years ago, is he to be reckoned among the perfect and ancient, or among the worthless and modern? Let some limit banish disputes. "He is ancient," you say, "and good, who completes a hundred years." "What of one who passed away a month or a year short of that, in what class is he to be reckoned? The ancient poets, or those whom to-day and to-morrow must treat with scorn? "He surely will find a place of honour among the ancients, who is short by a brief month or even a whole year." I take what you allow, and like hairs in a horse's tail, first one and then another I

pluck and pull away little by little, till, after the fashion of the falling heap, he is baffled and thrown down, who looks back upon the annals, and values worth by years, and admires nothing but what the goddess of funerals has hallowed.

—Epistles, II. l. 34-49. Taken from, Horace, Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica, with an English translation by H. Rushton Fairclough (London: William Heinemann Ltd; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 399-401.

To the phrase, "after the fashion of the falling heap," Professor Fairclough appends this footnote:

Horace makes use of the logical puzzle known as sorites (σωροίς, a heap). How many grains of sand make a heap or pile? The addition of no one grain will make that a heap which was not a heap before. He also seems to have asked how many hairs make a tail. See Plutarch's story of the two horses in his Sertorius. (Ibid., p. 400.)

Professor Binkley very kindly also supplied the passage from Plutarch referred to here:

So after a few days he called a general assembly and introduced before it two horses, one utterly weak and already quite old, the other large-sized and strong, with a tail that was astonishing for the thickness and beauty of its hair. By the side of the feeble horse stood a man who was tall and robust, and by the side of the powerful horse another man, small and of a contemptible appearance. At a signal given them, the strong man seized the tail of his horse with both hands and tried to pull it towards him with all his might, as though he would tear it off; but the weak man began to pluck out the hairs in the tail of the strong horse one by one. The strong man gave himself no end of trouble to no purpose, made the spectators laugh a good deal, and then gave up his attempt; but the weak man, in a trice and with no trouble, stripped his horse's tail of its hair. Then Sertorius rose up and said: "Ye see, men of my allies, that perseverance is more efficacious than violence, and that many things which cannot be mastered when they stand together yield when one masters them little by little. . . ."

—Sertorius, XVI. Taken from Plutarch's Lives, with an English translation by Bernadotte Perrin, Vol. VIII (London: William Heinemann Ltd; Cambridge, Mass.; Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 41-42. *

announcements

"The New Logic Course" Program: APA Western Division

The Western Conference on the Teaching of Philosophy solicits papers on teaching informal logic and practical reasoning for its program "The New Logic Course" to be presented at the APA Western Division meetings in Milwaukee, April 23-25, 1981. Selected papers will be published in Teaching Philosophy and will vie for a \$200 prize. The deadline for receipt of papers is 15 December. Papers and queries should be addressed to Prof. Arnold Wilson, University College 206, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio 45221. *

TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

Beginning in 1981 Teaching Philosophy will be published quarterly. Subscription rates are US\$12 for individuals, US\$20 for all others (libraries, departments, institutions, corporations, etc.), for four issues. Subscriptions for individuals must be paid in advance by personal cheque or money order. Add \$2 to these rates for postage outside USA. Overseas air rates on request. Single copies are \$4 individuals; \$6 others. Address all subscription, advertising and circulation correspondence to the publishers: Philosophy Documentation Center, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403, USA. *

Australian Logic Teachers' Journal

The Australian Logic Teachers' Journal is now appearing in a new, upgraded format. The 8 1/2" x 11" mimeographed format that was used up to the February 1979 issue (Vol. III, No. 2) was replaced by the 5 3/4" x 8" (14.5 cm x 20.5 cm) typeset format of the August 1979 issue (Vol. IV, No. 1).

The ALTJ, still edited by R. A. Gírlé and T. A. Halpin, now has an editorial board