

1.

The Ethics Cup aims to inculcate certain virtues (truthfulness, insightfulness, civility) in participants, and participants are evaluated based on exhibiting such virtues. How do you think the Ethics Cup procedure inculcates, reflects, or expresses said virtues?

The Ethics Cup inculcates virtues such as sincerity and truthfulness by allowing the competing teams to argue for the perspective on each issue that they actually believe.

As to the other virtues it inculcates, such as civility, tolerance, and intellectual humility, it does so by requiring the judges to score the competing teams based on whether their contributions to the debate embody those virtues.

Relatedly, is any of the guidance, assistance, or training that participants receive, geared towards developing the sought-after virtues? (Are the virtues in question, for example, defined, explained, or demonstrated? Is there at any point talk of the role of, say, one's emotions and attitudes in one's ability to exhibit civility?)

No such resources exist, but I'm developing some.

2.

Did the Ethics Cup procedure undergo any revisions or adjustments over the years? If yes, which ones and for what purpose?

Sometimes I change the judges' scoring criteria so as to ensure that the right virtues are being rewarded. Examples:

- In 2020, for the first time, I included the following question as a criterion for scoring the Commentary phases of the match: "Did Team [A/B] ask team [B/A] at least one good question?" This reflected my judgment that the asking of good questions is a skill in itself.
- In 2023, for the first time, the score sheet requires judges to score each team on intellectual humility and concern for the truth. This reflects a change in my understanding as to what the central civic virtues are and a change in my ambition in terms of which traits of character The Ethics Cup might help to inculcate.

Relatedly, in your own opinion, how can the Ethics Cup be improved? In this regard, we are specifically, but not solely, interested in the role, function, and benefit of the "dialogue phase" and the possibility of participants contesting, on the bases of reasons, a judge's rationale behind their judgment?

I struggle with this. Each Ethics Cup match takes about 75 minutes. That's a long time, especially when you're trying to run a tournament over the course of a single day. (Each regional tournament, as well as the final tournament, is run over the course of a single day.) But all of the improvements I can think of would involve extending the matches. In particular, I'm interested in the idea of giving teammates longer to confer with each other in advance of the Commentary and Response periods. I'm also interested in extending the Commentary and Response periods. I hadn't considered changing things to allow the participants to contest the judges' rationales.

3.

Would you agree that the requirement of different teams “presenting” different cases mitigates conflict in the sense that at no point will different teams defend opposing positions on the same issue?

Ideally, yes. However, sometimes a team will use the Commentary period to present its own position on the same issue instead of commenting on the other team’s position on the issue. If a judge notices that a team is doing this, then the judge should penalize the team.

If yes, would you say that the Ethics Cup bypasses clashing encounters where contenders have something at stake?

My answer to this is a qualified “yes”. I think there’s still a “clash”, in a qualified sense of that word, even when person B raises objections to person A’s point of view without person B arguing for his own point of view.

Do you think that bypassing conflict can, or has the potential to, hinder the development of virtues such as truthfulness, insightfulness, and civility, to the extent that they would be in the context of high-stakes encounters?

Yes. The Ethics Cup is low stakes, not just because it avoids clashing encounters, but also because the issues that appear in the case set might not be ones that the participants feel strongly about and also because no policymakers are resting their decisions on what the participants say. I do think that any encounter with higher stakes would present an opportunity for more rapid development of the civic virtues, though of course in such situations it would probably be more difficult to exercise them.

Do you have any suggestions on how to structure conflictual argumentative encounters in a way that is conducive rather than inimical to the development and exercise of the virtues?

I think it would be important in such an encounter that the participants are required to identify points on which they agree. This would help to humanize them in their opponents’ eyes, and help them to realise that sometimes we wind up on opposing sides of an issues because there’s one small thing on which we disagree.