Use of Force

Name:

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Introduction

The exertion of physical force over someone can be criticized if used for wrongful intentions, but is of great aid if used for the person’s own gain. For instance, using physical superiority to rob a civilian of his belonging is evil and wrong, but forcefully evicting civilians from the region where continued residence is dangerous and detrimental to their health is necessary. Use of force can therefore be viewed from different perspectives and merit either credit or criticism, based on the primary intention of the force. Although some forces used are primarily targeted at helping the one being forced, they end up hurting the target just because the force was applied in a wrong way. For instance, the force applied might by far exceed the resistance given (DuCharme, 2002).

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Williams (1938) gives a practical example of how force can be used with an intention of helping the one being forced, but at the end of the day, it might harm if not administered carefully. It is a story about a doctor who makes house calls to treat his patients. In this case, the doctor was called to attend to a certain girl, who was suspected to suffer from diphtheria.

According to DuCharme (2002), the force used should be equal and in proportion to the resistance given by the person whom the force is applied to. Besides this, the force should be directed towards mitigating the dangers. Williams (1938) explains that the doctor is tasked with a responsibility of ensuring that the normal health status of the child is reinstated. This can only be achieved through proper medication and only if the disease is accurately diagnosed. The child was, however, not ready to give room for proper diagnosis procedures. She refused to open her mouth so that the doctor could examine her tonsils. The doctor therefore had to forcefully open the girl’s mouth. Although the doctor, with the aid of the girl’s parents, had to struggle so much,
at the end of the day they managed to open up her throat. Through this struggle, both positive and negative results were achieved (Williams, 1938).

Initially, the doctor was able to access the girl’s throat and noticed the thick membrane covering her tonsils. This is one of the signs and symptoms of diphtheria; thus, without using force the doctor could not have accurately diagnosed the malady. Secondly, the discovery of her sick tonsils saved the life of the girl. She had previously lied to her parents that she had no problem with her throat. If the doctor had fully relied on this kind of observation, he could have ended up giving medication for another kind of disease, but not diphtheria (Williams, 1938).

Thirdly, those applying force learn several lessons from it. If not done carefully and cautiously, they might badly injure the one being forced or harm themselves in the process. Mathilda’s parents could not believe that their daughter could pose a risk to the doctor. They were further astonished to note that she was ready to defend herself to an extent that she broke a wooden spatula inside her mouth. This could have injured the patient if the doctor had not been very cautious and used a glass or metal spatula instead of the wooden one (Williams, 1938).

Additionally, the use of force enabled Mathilda’s parents to understand that it was not wise to make assumptions. It was very wrong for them to assume that their daughter was telling the truth. They seemed to believe that their daughter had no problem with her throat just because she had said so. What could be the repercussions if the doctor had made his conclusions just from what he had heard from Mathilda and her parents? Mathilda could have possibly died of diphtheria (Williams, 1938).

DuCharme (2002) explains that, besides the gains that come with exertion of force to a person, there are several dangers that the parties involved in the struggle expose themselves to. The one being forced to do something will obviously resist it. In so doing, the one being forced
as well as the one forcing might get hurt. In some cases, the injury incurred might be so bad that it exceeds the gains intended. Were it not for the doctor’s fast move, he could have lost his sight. Mathilda made a move to threaten and coerce her assailant not to make any further progress. The doctor explained that “with one catlike movement both her hands clawed instinctively for my eyes and she almost reached them too” (Williams, 1938). She only managed to reach his glasses that went flying and fell some few feet away, as explained by Williams (1938).

This was a warning to the doctor and the girl’s parents. They had to be smart so as to avoid any injury to Mathilda and themselves. The doctor, who loved the struggle with the “savage”, had to device other safer methods to launch his attack. The more the struggle intensified, the more weirdly Mathilda behaved and expressed her urge to terrorize her assailants. Just before the doctor managed to reach her throat after inserting a wooden spatula behind her molars, Mathilda had managed to clench her teeth so hard as to break the spatula in her mouth. This made her bleed badly but the doctor had to go on since he had not achieved his goal (Williams, 1938).

Similarly, Mathilda had a reason to hate the doctor. This might be because the doctor exposed her to what she had never wished to encounter or because of the physical displeasure she had to undergo in his hands. She did not understand that, in trying to open her mouth, the doctor was helping her. At the start of the struggle, she was very defensive but she resorted to attacking as the struggle progressed. She even expressed her frustration by deliberately crashing the wooden spatula in her mouth. After the doctor had examined her tonsils, she made an effort to escape from her father’s lap and attack the doctor (Williams, 1938).

Luckily, the doctor was brave enough to achieve his primary goal without hurting his patient much. In some cases, excess force is used with the intention of helping the one being
forced and, at the end of the day, it harms him or her a lot. For instance, Brubaker (2002) explains that a father made his son blind in an attempt to forcefully convince him to accept the fact that school was laying a firm foundation for his future life. He caned his son but unfortunately a piece of the cane struck his son’s both eyes and permanently damaged them (Williams, 1938). DuCharme (2002) also explains that in order to be very certain of the benefits or failures of the use of force, one should critically compare and contrast its benefits against its shortcomings.

In conclusion, credit or criticism can be given to the use of force only after its outcome is ascertained. It therefore fully depends on one’s own understanding based on the facts given in a particular case. However, it is wrong to believe that the use of force is good or bad.
References

