

ADVOCACY AND VALUES

Don Brownlee
North Texas State University

During this decade the forensic community has experienced growing interest in non-policy debate propositions. The number of tournaments hosting debate on the Cross-Examination Debate Association topic, typically a value proposition, has risen from seven in 1971-72 to over 100 this year. The expansion of non-policy debating has spread to Pi Kappa Delta with at least two province tournaments offering a CEDA division this spring and a CEDA style debate division to be included at the next National Convention.

Despite the increase in non-policy debating, little has been written to offer direction to the participants in the activity. With respect to value propositions, Wenzel and Hample declared that "scholars in argumentation have provided little guidance for the person caught up in arguing about them."¹ The development of guidelines for debating topics of value has just begun.² This article will offer further recommendations for analysis of value propositions.

It is important to distinguish between propositions of intrinsic and extrinsic value. The proposition "Faith is a virtue" suggests that something is good in itself or for its own sake, it is intrinsically valuable. Extrinsic value may be typified by the resolution "The continued development of nuclear power is desirable." In such a debate, nuclear power will likely be valued, not for itself, but because it is instrumental to something else that is desired. Propositions that entail extrinsic value are most common in academic debate.

A debater confronting a value proposition need not begin in a state of confusion. Since value propositions are intricately woven into policy decisions,³ comparable issue analysis may be appropriate. The traditional policy stock issues of ill, blame, cure and cost⁴ have an application and are considered in the literature on value theory. The place of these stock issues will now be detailed.

According to some philosophers, questions of value occur when problems exist. John Dewey insists that "desires arise only when there is something the matter, when there is some trouble in an existing situation in which we find ourselves."⁵ The same reasoning was adopted by William Workmeister as he concluded that "when there is 'trouble,' some 'need,' some 'privation' or 'conflict,' then there is the desire to change the existing conditions, and there is valuation."⁶ The extrinsic value of an object or behavior may be based on its resolution of these troubles and may vary with the intensity of the needs. The value of nuclear power is related to the projected needs for power generation. This approach closely parallels the stock issue of ill.

If problems exist, then it is certainly critical that they not be the result of the object of valuation, the blame must rest elsewhere. One argument for the value of compulsory national service is that it offers a solution for youth unemployment. It may be vital for the advocate to link the failure to solve unemployment to non-compulsory or voluntary approaches to the issue. Even descriptions of the inadequacy of certain voluntary programs does not prove that voluntarism is inherently incapable of providing meaningful employment, the link must reach to the nature of voluntarism. The value of an entity may increase if its alternatives are to blame for recognized problems.

The next logical burden for the advocate is to establish the ability of the object to cure the trouble. The proverbial expression "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride" illustrates the necessity of searching beyond appearance and appraising the real consequences of policies or objects. Productive debate cannot concern mere whims and dreams.

The relevance of examining the real ability to produce results is well established in the literature on values. C.I. Lewis argued:

But with respect to those conditions which are beyond practical human control, the value-potentialities of the object will be judged within the limits of all pertinent facts known to be actual or probable.

That is, it will be a judgment of the value which is possible to realize from this object under those conditions which we cannot change, and will be relative to the probability of such conditions in the light of all available and pertinent data.⁷

Other philosophers share this important insight with Lewis. A.H. Johnson reached a similar conclusion that an entity only has value "when it is functioning so as to bring about an actual end (result)."⁸ If there is no evidence that the item under consideration can serve as a means to accepted end-states of existence, then the advocate cannot claim that the item possesses extrinsic value. "Otherwise," according to Dewey, "there is no genuine desire but an idle fantasy, a futile wish."⁹

Any activity that is capable of producing valuable results may simultaneously generate undesirable by-products. The costs of securing an objective must be compared with the value realized. This stage of value analysis was explained by Nicholas Rescher:

In the case of any value we can make a kind of balance sheet of (1) the balance of benefits - i.e., advantages over disadvantages - inherent in

its realization, as contrasted with (2) the various sorts of costs that would be entailed by the endeavor to bring this realization about.¹⁰ As Rescher indicates, not only is it vital to determine whether there are costs to achieving an objective, but the advocate must also judge the significance of those costs. Do the health consequences of the production of nuclear power reduce the value of the generated energy? When balanced with each other, do the costs diminish the projected value? "A survey of what takes place in any deliberative activity," concludes Dewey, "provides an affirmative answer to the question."¹¹ The concept of costs versus benefits, of advantages versus disadvantages, is hardly foreign to the student experienced only in policy debate.

The traditional stock issues have a sound foundation in the literature on values. This does not mean that either the style or arguments in a debate on a proposition of value must duplicate policy debate. Use of the stock issues is designed merely to indicate potential areas of controversy, possible grounds for argument in a value debate. If any of these issues is found to be universally applicable to debating questions of value, then it may become part of the standard burden of proof for an affirmative team. Such decisions may only be made after the forensic community has greater experience with these topics.

NOTES

¹Joseph W. Wenzel and Dale J. Hample, "Categories and Dimensions of Value Propositions: Exploratory Studies," Journal of the American Forensic Association, 11, (Winter, 1975), 121.

²Ronald J. Matlon, "Debating Propositions of Value," Journal of the American Forensic Association, 14, (Spring, 1978), 194-204.

³Matlon, 195.

⁴Glen E. Mills, Reason in Controversy (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1964), p. 66.

⁵John Dewey, "Theory of Valuation," in Otto Neurath, ed., Foundations of the Unity of Science (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 413.

⁶William H. Werkmeister, Historical Spectrum of Value Theories (Lincoln, Neb.: Johnsen Publishing, 1973), p. 58.

⁷Clarence I. Lewis, An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court Publishing, 1946), p. 41.

⁸Allison H. Johnson, Modes of Value (New York: Philosophical Library, 1978), p. 90.

⁹Dewey, p. 415.

¹⁰Nicholas Rescher, Introduction to Value Theory (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 133.

¹¹Dewey, p. 405.