

## PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS AS PARADIGMS FOR VALUE DEBATE

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The recent use of value-oriented topics by CEDA has stimulated a great deal of interest in value argument.<sup>1</sup> While policy debate often involves a questioning of values and frequently addresses the issue of how values should be weighed, value topics have focused the attention of many individuals on the nature of value inquiry, which has been neglected by many contemporary debate theorists.<sup>2</sup> While much has been written on value topics in the past few years, many theorists have simply attempted to transpose rules from policy debate to value debate without recognizing that value debate differs in some very fundamental ways from policy debate.<sup>3</sup> Value debate seems to be searching for a new paradigm to assist in guiding debaters and judges in the evaluation of value debate and to help organize argument on value topics.<sup>4</sup> This paper will examine four dominant themes in the CEDA literature that attempt to establish paradigms for value debate, analyzing the weaknesses of each approach. It will then argue that we need to promote a wider range of paradigms to evaluate value argument based on various philosophical systems.

### Current Paradigms for Value Debates

There are four dominant philosophies of value debate that have emerged in recent years.<sup>5</sup> The first view suggests that any evaluation of values should be based on current social values. The second view, drawing from Zarefsky's work on hypothesis testing, suggests that presumption is always against the value implied by the resolution. The third view suggests that the values of the individual judge should be presumed to be valid until a reason is given to discard those views. The final approach, drawn from Utilitarianism, assumes that the value that promotes the greatest good for the greatest number of people should be promoted. While each of these views has some value, they reflect a limited view of the nature of value disputes.

The first view suggests that we should judge action and values according to contemporary values.<sup>6</sup> Debaters are expected to locate the current values that Americans share, and they are then asked to related those values to the topic under discussion.<sup>7</sup> The assumption is made that current values reflect what should be our values.

This view reflects an inappropriate view of the way that values should be evaluated.<sup>8</sup> Initially, it is often difficult to evaluate precisely what are the dominant American values, especially since America contains many diverse cultures.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, just because Americans may share a value does not mean that we should hold that value. Long ago Hume observed that what is is not always what should be. Contemporary values are not necessarily the correct values. Argumentation theorists have long recognized the fallacies of the appeal to tradition and the fallacy of the appeal to popular opinion,<sup>10</sup> which is the basis for this view of value. This view could also lead to absurd conclusions. For example, if we were debating in Germany during World War II,

then genocide could be justified since the German culture at the time sanctioned those actions.

If we were debating in the South in the early 1800's, the institution of slavery would be seen as having a value. Even today, many individuals are attacking current values. Liberals attack our values as being too conservative. Others attack our values as being too self-centered. The Moral Majority attacks contemporary values as being too immoral. It is simplistic to view existing values as being inherently the best values; rather we need to seek ways to evaluate claims about what our values should be.

The second approach to the examination of values is the hypothesis testing approach. This view was developed by David Zarefsky<sup>11</sup> and has been extended to value debate by several individuals.<sup>12</sup> The assumption behind hypothesis testing is that the value specified in the resolution acts as a hypothesis to be tested, and that we should accept that value only if we are sure that the value is correct. Thus, presumption is against the resolution, and the negative team can suggest multiple counter-values that could be superior to the value in the resolution. This insures a rigorous test of the resolution.

This view of debate is inadequate for a number of reasons. First, it is internally inconsistent. The statement that value debate should be evaluated as a hypothesis is, in itself, a hypothesis (or else there is no way hypothesis testing can be applied outside the debate setting). This requires that all supporters of hypothesis testing demonstrate the inherent superiority of hypothesis testing over all other judging philosophies, which would be difficult to do, especially since Zarefsky himself argues that a diversity of paradigms should be used by debaters.<sup>13</sup>

Second, hypothesis testing is an inappropriate model for value debate. One assumption behind hypothesis testing is that debate is a search for the truth. The truth, in an absolute sense, is impossible to establish. Philosophers have argued for centuries about the nature of values and ethical inquiry and still have not reached a conclusion on these topics. It is unreasonable to expect debaters to discover and prove this truth in one hour. Instead, we must seek a truth that is less than absolute.<sup>14</sup> The level of truth that is acceptable cannot be established by a universal, arbitrary standard; rather it must be established by comparing the systems of value evaluation that are suggested by the advocates in the debate. This is the method of science. Zarefsky bases his theory of hypothesis testing on his vision of the nature of argument in science, and the only scientist he cites is Kuhn. Kuhn, however, does not share Zarefsky's view of argument. Kuhn argues, for example:

Once a first paradigm through which to view nature has been found, there is no such thing as research in the absence of any paradigm. To reject one paradigm without simultaneously substituting another is to reject science itself.<sup>15</sup>

Presumption, according to Kuhn, is not against any paradigm; indeed, once a paradigm has been proposed, presumption is with that paradigm until another paradigm is proposed. Kuhn argues "once it has achieved the status of paradigm, a scientific theory is declared invalid only if an alternative

candidate is available to take its place."<sup>16</sup> Nor does Kuhn argue that a paradigm is evaluated against all alternative theories; Kuhn argues that science has advanced by the "competition between two rival paradigms for the allegiance of the scientific community."<sup>17</sup> This is even more applicable for scientific disputes. As individuals, we are faced with choices every minute of every day. To fail to make those choices is to fail to face the responsibilities of being human. Just as one cannot not communicate, we cannot fail to have a moral and an ethical system, even if the system is not a conscious product of thought. To reject one system of values is to tacitly accept another system which may be inferior to the system that was articulated. To suspend judgement is not an option; it is to tacitly accept current values that may not be articulated or defended by any advocate. In our efforts to avoid accepting a false conclusion, we may set our standards so high that we fail to embrace a true value.<sup>18</sup> For all of these reasons, hypothesis testing does not appear to be an adequate theory to apply to value argument.

A third approach to the judging of value arguments holds that judges should evaluate debates from the ethical perspective that the judge personally supports.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the judge is allowed to permit his or her personal bias on the resolution guide him or her in establishing presumption and in selecting the winner. This position suffers from several weaknesses. It is often impossible to know exactly what is the bias of the judge. In addition, this view of debate is contrary to the notion of a neutral judge. In fact, it encourages dogmatic judges. For example, if I believe there is no justification for violating individual liberty, I would never vote for a team that is forced by the resolution to argue that individual liberty is not absolute. This is unfair to the teams involved, since my decision would be based on a factor outside the control of the debaters.

A final approach to the judging of value debate is the Utilitarian approach to debate.<sup>20</sup> This approach argues that a value is justified if, on balance, the advantages of that value outweigh the disadvantages of that value. While there may be some basis for this view of judging debates, it should be recognized that the Utilitarian viewpoint is only one of many philosophies that have been advocated by philosophers. As with the first approach to judging value debates, this position has been attacked by many individuals.<sup>21</sup> Some argue that it is impossible to weigh values, or that this view tends to emphasize benefits to the majority over the rights of the minority. Others argue that there are some rights or moral obligations that do not fit into the Utilitarian matrix. My argument is not that there is no use for a Utilitarian framework; it is simply to note that the theory is just one of many theories on how values should be established.

I recently saw a debate that illustrated this limitation. The second negative speaker presented a disadvantage that was developed with extensive references to Ayn Rand. The disadvantage argued that the sole purpose of government was to protect property rights and that the plan would curtail these rights. The affirmative team, arguing from a Utilitarian perspective, pressed the negative team to quantify the impact of the disadvantage. I think that

they missed the thrust of the argument. The position was (or should have been) not that you should place Rand's value in a Utilitarian matrix, but rather it was that the judge should judge the round as if the judge were Ayn Rand. From that perspective, the issue is not how to weigh the disadvantage; rather one would view the proposed action as being outside the power of a legitimate government and one would rule out the plan regardless of its consequences. This would be true for other philosophical systems. A devout Christian, for example, would not base the decision on whether or not to sin on the cost/benefit analysis of the action; another rule would govern the action.

#### Alternative Paradigms for Value Debate

The weaknesses of current paradigms of value dispute is that they have attempted to develop their assumptions from policy debate. A much more logical approach to value debate is to draw more from philosophy. This would indicate that a large number of potential paradigms are available to the advocate. All philosophical systems attempt to develop standards for determining what is good and what is not, and thus each system is a potential paradigm for a value debate. Debaters should read Mill, Rawls and Dworkin to develop a framework for analyzing values, and they should realize the implications of these theorists in debate rounds. For example, if a topic requires that arguers evaluate an ethical problem, there are a large number of perspectives that could be used to support a conclusion on the topic. If a debater operates under Utilitarian assumptions, then the action would be justified based upon the ends of the action; the ends would justify the means. If the arguer were to operate under the Judeo-Christian ethical system, the problem would be solved based upon an interpretation of the Bible. If the judge was an egoist, the decision would be based upon what was in the interests of the individual judge. Depending upon the wording of the topic, the theories of Mill, Hume, Locke, Spinoza, or Rawls might be used to create an ethical system that is then applied to the dispute in question. A team might defend a liberal view of the world to justify a value in one round, and defend anarchy or Marxism in another round. The resolution of the round would depend in part on the worldview that the judges accept; current debate theories would be only a small part of the wide range of paradigms that would be open to a debater.

This view of value debate would call for some major changes to be made in the way debaters argue value topics. The debate would consist of three sets of arguments. First, each advocate would outline the ethical (or political or social) system that they wish to defend, outlining its central features. Second, each team would explain why their paradigm should be used in that debate. It is possible that both teams may agree on the philosophical system to be used in the round. If this were the case, that paradigm would locate presumption and provide guidelines for resolving arguments.<sup>22</sup> If a Utilitarian paradigm were used, for example, the judge would simply weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the value that are argued in the round. If an anarchist perspective is used, then presumption would be against government involvement. A natural law perspective would argue that the ends of a law may be irrelevant if the means are contrary to natural law. The paradigm chosen would provide guidelines to help set standards to evaluate the values.

If the two teams disagree on the philosophical system to be utilized, then a portion of the debate should be devoted to comparing the two paradigms to allow the judge to decide which of the two paradigms is superior to the other. Unless there is some agreement on the philosophical system to be used in the debate, the debate is unlikely to be productive, since evidence and arguments that may be persuasive to one philosophical viewpoint may be of no relevance to a person from another philosophical perspective.<sup>23</sup> If I am an extremely religious individual, for example, utilitarian claims will be irrelevant to my value system, while an appeal to the Bible would carry no force for a Utilitarian. Debaters thus must demonstrate that their view of the world is superior to the alternate philosophical system advocated by their opposition. They can do this by reducing their opponent's position to an absurdity, or by noting that their system is superior since it is more complete, comprehensive, consistent, etc., or they can use any other means of logical persuasion to establish their paradigm as being superior. The judge would then be forced to decide which position, as argued in the round, is the superior philosophical system and, once that has been decided, the judge would then adopt that system as a paradigm for the evaluation of the value argument. The judge would thus apply the philosophical system to the arguments in the round to decide if the statement of value implied in the resolution would be true or false for an individual accepting the philosophical position advocated who heard the arguments in the round.

This approach to debating values may call for a shift in the responsibilities of speakers in CEDA debate. The first negative speaker, for example, may wish to devote part of that speech to developing an alternative philosophical system from the system implied by the affirmative case. The speaker would then indicate why the negative paradigm is superior to the affirmative paradigm. In addition, he would indicate why, given the negative paradigm, the value implied in the resolution is false. The second negative speaker could then devote that entire speech to indicating why, even if the judge were to accept the affirmative team's value system, the resolution should be rejected. The affirmative team may want to respond to this strategy by devoting more of its time to articulating and justifying the philosophical position that forms the basis for their case.

This view of value argumentation will enable debaters to more fully recognize the assumptions that they make in arguing values, and it will also place those assumptions under critical examination. It will also help debaters (and coaches) to learn more about values. It is absurd to think that our debaters could debate values for four years without even knowing what Natural Law or Utilitarianism refer to (or what the strengths or weaknesses of these views are). If we are interested in training students about philosophy, we need to draw more from philosophers and we need to help our students understand the major ethical and political theories so that they can compare these systems and apply these systems to contemporary disputes over values. CEDA debate is the ideal way to conduct this exploration, and if CEDA moves in this direction, the only result can be a greater understanding of philosophical systems and values by both debaters and coaches.

NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Ronald J. Matlon, "Debating Propositions of Value," Journal of the American Forensic Association, 14 (Spring, 1978), 194-204; Don Brownlee, ed., Perspectives on Non-Policy Argument (Cross Examination Debate Association, 1980); Don Brownlee, ed., Contributions on the Philosophy and Practice of CEDA (Cross Examination Debate Association, 1981); and George Ziegelmueller and Jack Rhodes, eds., Dimensions of Argument: Proceedings of the Second Summer Conference on Argumentation (Annandale, Virginia: Speech Communication Association, 1981).

<sup>2</sup>See Michael R. Hagan, "A Missing Chapter in Argumentation Texts," Journal of the American Forensic Association, 9 (Summer, 1972), 274-278.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example, Don Brownlee, "Advocacy and Values," Forensic, 65 (January, 1980), 4-7, and Barbara Warnick, "Arguing Value Propositions," Journal of the American Forensic Association, 18 (Fall, 1981), 109-119.

<sup>4</sup>For the importance of paradigms in conducting research, see Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, second edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970). The application of paradigms to debate is discussed in Robert C. Rowland, "Standards for Paradigm Evaluation," Journal of the American Forensic Association, 18 (Winter, 1982), 133-140.

<sup>5</sup>A discussion of the first three views of value debate can be found in Matlon, pp.199-200.

<sup>6</sup>This view is supported by Warnick (p.113) and Matlon ("Propositions of Value: An Inquiry Into Issue Analysis and the Locus of Presumption," in Dimensions of Argument, p. 499).

<sup>7</sup>Edward D. Steele, "Social Values in Public Address," Western Speech, 22 (Winter, 1958), 38-42, and Edward D. Steele and W. Charles Redding, "The American Value System: Premises for Persuasion," Western Speech, 26 (Spring, 1962), 83-91.

<sup>8</sup>See, for example, Bruce E. Gronbeck, "From 'Is' to 'Ought': Alternative Strategies," Central States Speech Journal, 19 (1968), 33.

<sup>9</sup>Jan Vasilius, "Presumption, Presumption, Wherefore Art Thou, Presumption," in Perspectives on Non-Policy Argument, pp.36, 38.

<sup>10</sup>W. Ward Fearnside and William B. Holder, Fallacy: The Counterfeit of Argument (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1959), pp. 89-97.

<sup>11</sup>David Zarefsky, "Argument as Hypothesis Testing," in Advanced Debate: Readings in Theory, Practice and Teaching (Skokie, Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1979), pp. 427-437. For a critique of Zarefsky, see Robert Rowland, "Debate Paradigms: A Critical Evaluation," in Dimensions of Argument, pp. 448-475, and Kenneth M. Strange, "An Advocacy Paradigm of Debate," presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, November 13, 1981.

<sup>12</sup>See Vasilius, pp. 33-42, and Michael Bartanen, "The Criteria for a Good CEDA Debate Resolution: Some Problems, Implications," Forensic, 67 (1981), 16-19.

<sup>13</sup>David Zarefsky, "The Perils of Assessing Paradigms," Journal of the American Forensic Association, 18 (Winter, 1982), 144. Hypothesis testing is also inconsistent in its view of motivational inherency. If any advocate must address the motives behind a problem, then hypothesis testers must be able to explain why all judges (presumably rational individuals) are not hypothesis testers. (see David Zarefsky, "The Role of Causal Argument in Policy Discussion," Journal of the American Forensic Association, 13 (1977), 179-191.

<sup>14</sup>See Walter Ulrich, "Argument as Tragedy," unpublished paper, University of Alabama, 1981.

<sup>15</sup>Kuhn, p. 79.

<sup>16</sup>Kuhn, p. 77.

<sup>17</sup>Kuhn, p. 145.

<sup>18</sup>Social science has long distinguished between a type I error (rejecting a true null hypothesis) and a type II error (accepting a false null hypothesis). Zarefsky arbitrarily decides that a type I error is more serious, while it is equally possible to suggest that a type II error is more serious, in which case presumption should be for the resolution.

<sup>19</sup>Raymond Zeuschner and Charlene Arnold Hill, "Psychological Presumption: Its Place in Value Topic Debate," in Philosophy and Practice of CEDA, pp. 20-24. For a criticism of this approach, see Randolph J. Scott and Tony Wynn, "Avoidance of the False Claim: Some Considerations for Debating and Judging Propositions of Value," in Philosophy and Practice of CEDA, pp. 25-26.

<sup>20</sup>See Beverly Merrill Kelley, "An Alternative to NDT Debate," in Philosophy and Practice of CEDA, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup>For a criticism of Utilitarianism, see J. J. C. Smart and Bernard Williams, Utilitarianism: For and Against (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Michael D. Bayles, ed., Contemporary Utilitarianism (Garden City, N.Y.: Ancor Books, 1968); James M. Smith and Ernest Sosa, eds., Mill's Utilitarianism: Text and Criticism (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1969); and Samuel Gorovitz, ed., Mill: Utilitarianism: Text and Critical Essays (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1971). Any other philosophical system would implicitly provide attacks on Utilitarianism by suggesting other values besides utilitarian values exist.

<sup>22</sup>See G. Thomas Goodnight, "The Liberal and Conservative Presumptions: On Political Philosophy and the Foundation of Public Argument," in Proceedings of the Summer Conference on Argumentation, edited by Jack Rhodes and Sara Newell (Annandale: Speech Communication Association, 1980), pp. 304-337.

<sup>23</sup>For a discussion of argument between philosophical systems, see the works of Henry Johnstone, especially Philosophy and Argument (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1959), and Validity and Rhetoric in Philosophical Argument: An Outlook in Transition (University Park, Pa.: Dialogue Press, 1978).