

JUSTIFICATION OF VALUES IN TERMS OF ACTION:
 A RATIONALE FOR A MODIFIED POLICY-MAKING PARADIGM IN VALUE DEBATE

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Bruce Gronbeck has observed that when "a debater is challenged for a 'why?' he should be able to say more than 'because Dr. X says so.'"1 Gronbeck's advice given over a decade ago could very well apply to present-day CEDA debaters. Although members of the CEDA community continue to formulate ways to argue values, they have failed to develop adequately a decision rule which clearly dictates criteria to judge value propositions. Most debate rounds conclude with surface arguments initiated only by mere opinion; the debaters tend to ignore demonstrating the worth of value statements. This essay posits such a criterion: values must be examined in terms of action.

BASIS OF THEORETICAL APPROACH

Values defined in terms of action. Although values are difficult to define, most authorities view them in terms of action. For example, Louis E. Raths, et al., base criteria for the selection of values on three processes: choosing, prizing, and acting. They believe, "Those processes collectively define valuing. Results of this valuing process are called values."<2 Such a process arises when values are in conflict and one is cognizant of the need to change existing conditions.³ The values then become decision rules, defined by Carl Flaningam as guidelines indicating "which of several courses of action should be adopted once an argument has been completed."<4 He explains further:

...[A] primary function of value-centered arguments is the generation of decision rules.... While value-centered argument produces decision rules, policy-centered argument is based upon them: the issues of the latter focus on the risks associated with courses of action, while the issues of the former focus on the determination of the probable truth or acceptability of rules to disputants.⁵

Because value judgments are the basis for policy implementation, consideration of values is dependent upon policy directions; thus a need exists to examine values in a conditional or hypothetical policy realm. As Ronald Matton acknowledges, "Value propositions are also intertwined with attitudes about policies insofar as they often lead to or are embedded in policy suggestions."<6 Flaningam agrees, stating, "[V]alue statements guide policy decision-making (through the production of decision rules)."<7 Gary Cronkrite goes a step further. He sees very little distinction between propositions of value and propositions of policy:

Thus it appears that a proposition of policy is merely a proposition of value extended into the future. To our analysis of a proposition of past value we must add the assumption that a need demonstrated to exist in the future, and the assumption that a

proposal (or its analogue, or its constituents) demonstrated to be satisfactory in the past will continue to be satisfactory in the future.⁸

Cronkhite's viewpoint is similar to Robert Hartman's. Hartman divides propositions of value into two main categories, logical propositions and axiological propositions. Policy propositions as argued in academic debate would be considered, according to Hartman's classification, as axiological value propositions.⁹

POLICY-MAKING PARADIGM EXPLORED

Applying borrowed policy debate theoretical concepts to value debate is not a new idea to the CEDA community. For example, Don Brownlee has suggested application of traditional policy stock issues as appropriate for value propositions.¹⁰ Although Brownlee's theory has made a significant contribution to value debate, advocates of CEDA should go one step further. A more appropriate way to argue values is demonstrated through use of the policy-making paradigm. According to Tammy Sweet, the paradigm in policy debate

establishes a comparison between at least two systems. The systems are analyzed through advantages and disadvantages which are presented to all of the systems. When the debate ends, the decision is made through a summation of positive and negative factors. The system with the greatest positive factors should be the one receiving the favorable ballot.¹¹

Sweet claims, however, that this paradigm is unsuitable for value debate:

In addition to superficial analysis, the policy maker's paradigm allows for the 'two ships passing in the night' syndrome. Because the policy makers weigh the end results debaters don't necessarily have to clash, they simply must outweigh their opponents. Specific to value debate is the problem of providing weight to qualitative harms, a direct result of this syndrome. Take for example the question, 'What is more important, democracy or capitalism?' You cannot compare these two unquantifiable variables without an established standard for measurement. Since the harms and benefits cannot be compared, the result is argumentation that is unclear and debates which become muddled.¹²

However, when arguing values in terms of action, the policy-making paradigm should be the only model used to debate value propositions. Justification of this position is based on Walter Fisher's theory of the transcendent issue.

Transcendent issue. According to Fisher, there are five criteria or questions to apply to value statements to determine their worthiness. Those five criteria are 1) consideration of fact, 2) consideration of relevance, 3) consideration of consistency, 4) consideration of coherence, and 5) consideration of the transcendent issue. The most important of these five is the transcendent issue, explained as follows:

Even if a prima facie case exists or a burden of proof has been established, are the values the message offers those that, in the estimation of the critic, constitute the ideal basis for human conduct? This is clearly the paramount issue that confronts those

responsible for decisions that impinge on the nature, quality, and the continued existence of human life, especially in the fields of biology and weapons technology and employment.¹³

Joseph Wenzel clarifies Fisher's criterion when he states:

The question then becomes, not which rule is better, for both may be perfectly sound rules, but rather which course of action is likely to produce the least harm (or greatest benefits) in this specific situation. One thus proceeds to weigh the consequences of particular acts in order to reach a decision in the given situation.¹⁴

Application of a modified policy-making paradigm. As teams debate values in terms of action, a hierarchy of issue resolution becomes evident. This is to say, reason requires that the issues of a round be resolved in a logical sequence. The three steps are:

- 1) Debaters should resolve any conflicts which arise from criteria used by a team to support its value. (Criteria may or may not become an issue in the round.)
- 2) Debaters should resolve any and all value conflicts.
- 3) Determination of the higher or highest value in the round allows the judge to render logically the final decision relative to the resolution.

A sample debate scenario which follows the structure of the given hierarchy of issue resolution further clarifies the argumentation of values in terms of action. (For purposes of clarification and simplification, we chose a resolution which addresses the flaws in Sweet's analysis of the policy-making paradigm.) In a round debating, "Resolved: That democracy is the best form of government," the affirmative team offers democracy as its value. Instead of presenting democracy as an end in itself, the affirmative demonstrates the merits of the value through action that the value elicits. Accordingly, the affirmative advocates that a democracy supports the majority's views; therefore, democracy is good. However, the negative team counters the argument claiming that a republic is superior to a democracy. The negative proceeds to justify its claim by stating that in a republic, minority rights are protected from the majority; therefore, a republic is superior to a democracy. At this point, a subordinate value conflict emerges and must be resolved before other issues can be considered.¹⁵ That conflict stems from the criteria utilized by the two teams to support their corresponding values. Majority views of society are now pitted against minority rights of society. This subordinate value conflict once resolved allows the teams to continue in accordance with the hierarchy of issue resolution. Upon determination of the least consequential

action, i.e., protection of minority rights, the main value conflict may now be resolved, e.g., a democracy vs. a republic.¹⁶ The judge then renders his decision for the value (or decision rule) based on the better course of action presented in the round.

SECONDARY CONSIDERATIONS

Action-inherent value. Too often debaters attempt to argue values as ends in themselves. In so doing, they present a value which they believe is justified in itself and requires no delineation into the action it represents. For example, a team might support democracy as the higher value, but fail to support the value's worthiness in terms of action; the team claims that democracy is good simply because it is democracy. This use of implied action-inherent values should have no place in academic debate. As in the stated example, it is difficult to empirically weigh a democracy against a republic. Until we can weigh the actions which the values direct, no reasonable determination can be made as to the value's worth. Therefore, action-inherent values are actually non-existent, and if offered in a round as such, they should not be allowed to escape unargued.

Competitiveness. Presently, no criteria exist for offering counter values. One criterion should be mandatory, that of competitiveness. The issue is best explained in a sample debate scenario. In advocating the proposition, "Resolved: That capital punishment in the U.S. is desirable," the affirmative team states that protection of its members is the highest value of our society. The negative team counters, arguing that protection of first amendment rights is the highest goal or value of our society. The negative's position might be true, but the value presented is outside the realm of the resolution at hand. First amendment rights, in this case, are non-competitive and should be argued as such by the affirmative team. Thus, to be competitive, the counter value must be relative to the resolution, and the judge must not be capable of accepting both values relative to the resolution.

SUMMARY

This essay posits a criterion to debate value propositions. Because value propositions are considered potential decision rules for policy implementation, they must be argued in terms of action. Criterion to examine values should be a modified policy-making paradigm which is based on Walter Fisher's concept of the transcendent issue.

Debaters should follow the hierarchy of issue resolution which requires 1) resolution of any conflicts which arise from criteria used by a team to support its value, and 2) resolution of any and all value conflicts. The third step is the determination of the higher or highest value which allows the judge to render logically the final decision relative to the resolution.

Debaters should avoid presenting implied action-inherent values. Likewise, debaters should be aware that if counter values are offered in the round, the values must meet the standards of competitiveness.

NOTES

¹Bruce E. Gronbeck, "From 'Is' to 'Ought': Alternative Strategies," Central States Speech Journal, 19 (Spring 1968), p. 38.

²Louis E. Rath, Merrill Harmin and Sidney B. Simon, Values and Teaching, Second Edition (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1978), p. 28. Acting in this sense means "doing something with the choice repeatedly, in some pattern of life."

³John Dewey, "Theory of Valuation," in Otto Neurath, ed., Foundations of the Unity of Science (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 413.

⁴Carl D. Flaningam, "Value-Centered Argument and the Development of Decision Rules," Journal of the American Forensic Association 19 (Fall 1982), p. 107.

⁵Flaningam, p. 107.

⁶Ronald J. Matlon, "Debating Propositions of Value," Journal of the American Forensic Association 14 (Spring 1978), p. 195.

⁷Flaningam, p. 110.

⁸Gary Cronkhite, "Propositions of Past and Future Fact and Value: A Proposed Classification," Journal of the American Forensic Association 3 (January 1966), p. 15.

⁹Robert S. Hartman, "Value Propositions," in Ray Lepley, ed., The Language of Value (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), pp. 197-321. Hartman equates "should" with "ought;" thus any proposition with such implications would be classified as an axiological value proposition.

¹⁰Don Brownlee, "Advocacy and Values," The Forensic 65 (January 1980), pp. 4-5, 7.

¹¹Tammy Sweet, "Debate Paradigms: An Analysis as They Apply to CEDA Debate," The Forensic 68 (Spring 1983), p. 18.

¹²Sweet, pp. 19-20.

¹³Walter R. Fisher, "Toward a Logic of Good Reasons," Quarterly Journal of Speech 64 (1978), p. 380.

¹⁴Joseph W. Wenzel, "Toward a Rationale for Value-Centered Argument," Journal of the American Forensic Association 13 (Winter 1977), p. 158.

¹⁵This value conflict is subordinate to the main value conflict of the resolution only in terms of issue resolution. One value conflict is never of greater or of lesser importance than another in a debate round. All must be resolved to render a final decision.

¹⁶It is important to note that in the example given, the value to be defended is inherent in the resolution, e.g., democracy, and therefore, the scope of the debate is sufficiently narrowed to one subordinate value conflict. However, many times this is not the case.