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INTRINSIC JUSTIFICATION: MEANING AND METHOD

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T he theoretical issue of intrinsicness has been emerging in an increasing number of debate rounds. Basically, the argument from intrinsicness states that the benefits or harms claimed by one side must flow intrinsically (necessarily or essentially) from that side's resolutional ground. On the Fall 1987 CEDA topic for example, negatives argued that the affirmative indictment must be based on some necessary aspect of U.S. covert involvement in Central America (like secrecy or deception) rather than upon some accidental or contingent property (like sponsoring torture or funding operations through illicit arms sales). In short, non-policy debaters did not want to be stuck defending a specific and coincidental (albeit, at times, current) policy arrangement and they began to make use of the intrinsicness argument as a shield.

Ulrich (1984a) has defended the debate round as an excellent forum for the development of theory, but this should not cause us to neglect the literature. One function of a literature on debate should be to evaluate and improve upon theory that has emerged from rounds. Ideally, there should be a dialogue about theory as published and theory as argued in rounds. This article will attempt to promote this dialogue by considering the round-developed issue of intrinsicness in non-policy debate. Reconstructing intrinsicness in phenomenological terms will provide the argument with a language, a goal, and a means of testing. After an initial look at some applicable concepts of phenomenology, attention will turn to the harms of contingent justification and the solutions offered by a phenomenology-based approach to intrinsicness.

Phenomenology: Separating the Essential from the Accidental

Polkinghorne (1983) defines phenomenology as "the science of the essential structures of consciousness" (p. 41). Merleau-Ponty (1962) elaborates on the scope of this perspective: "Phenomenology is the study of essences, and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences: the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness" (p. vii).

Phenomenology holds that sense-data are constituted in meaningful configurations within our consciousness. In other words, meaning is an organized system. Language is considered to be a prime organizing principle, and this leads Wittgenstein (1975) to refer to phenomenology as primarily a grammatical exercise. Phenomenology then aims at a discovery of the essential structures of language or grammar. In this way phenomenology's emphasis on deriving invariant structures of meaning closely parallels the objective of intrinsicness, which is to discover essential definition or interpretation. This commonality of purpose should allow phenomenology to serve as a useful

guide for the development of the intrinsicness argument.

Fundamental to both phenomenology and intrinsicness is the distinction between the accidental and the essential. For our purposes, the same distinction can also be referred to as contingent versus necessary, or non-intrinsic versus intrinsic. There are some properties that a concept must have for it to remain the same concept (essential properties) and there are other properties which a concept may or may not have (accidental properties). Intrinsic properties can then be thought of as features which are definitionally a part of the concept (Brody, 1980) and which are also invariant and temporally unbounded (Butchvarov, 1979). For example, without secrecy, it might be argued, covert involvements would no longer be definitionally covert, thus secrecy is an intrinsic feature of covert involvement. But since covert involvement could arguably remain true to its definition without necessarily involving aid to the Contra rebels, such aid might not be an intrinsic feature of covert involvement. Intrinsic justification would look at features of the resolution which do not vary from time to time and situation to situation.

Multistability and the Problem of Contingent Justification

Current practice allows both sides in a debate the power to choose issues with a considerable amount of discretion. While it is often argued that the affirmative side has the right, and duty, to interpret the resolution and to place parameters on the issues in the round (Gill, 1986) seldom does this power deprive the negative of their ability to select from a variety of possible issues and impacts that lie within the parameters of definition. In practice a number of different resolutional manifestations with a wide variety of effects are available for introduction into a round. This variety is not bad, but the failure to clash that often results from it can be. Take for example the Fall 1986 CEDA topic requiring affirmatives to support improved relations with the Soviet Union and negatives to support increased military preparedness. Even an affirmative who has made every effort to carefully define may find itself supporting a Comprehensive Test Ban while their opponent is advocating increased NATO troop strength. The two positions do not clash in the sense that they are not competitive choices. Weighing the impacts of one against the other is a patently artificial activity. This same problem can be seen in the Spring 1987 CEDA topic on drug testing. Many rounds found the affirmatives arguing that drug testing without due process for the purpose of firing workers is bad, while the negatives argued that drug testing with due process for the purpose of rehabilitating workers is good. Again, the two positions were not in conflict. Debaters could, and often did, clash with each other at the micro-level of each argument, but at a macro-level no debate was taking place.

The cause of this problem can be seen in contingent justification. Since each side is free to select the manner or form of military preparation, drug testing, covert involvement, or press freedom, each side has good reason to choose the optimal illustration. But in the process, clash, which is clearly a central objective of debate, is systematically avoided. When the universe of possible operational meanings is open, either side has the capacity to become an elusive moving target—a condition which clearly does not serve the interests of clash. While a strict parametric focus demanding that negative's ground be restricted to an affirmative's example would arguably solve this problem such a focus is itself problematic for a number of other reasons (see Bile, 1987). As long as definitions function as mere parameters, the potential exists for the two sides to choose meanings within the parameters which avoid confrontation.

Phenomenology provides a label and an explanation for this problem. The label, "multistability," refers to the idea that perceptual objects vary according to their context (Ihde, 1986). Objects of consciousness take on varying manifestations across multiple contexts while at the same time remaining consistent with their definition, or "stable." Ihde explains multistability with regard to language: "It [the word] is multistable. At the semantic level, in ordinary language, there are a multiplicity of possibilities determined by contexts, the contexts of speech acts. Such contexts are temporal and situated, and therefore open . . ."(p. 175).

An understanding of multistability most basically involves the recognition that language is loose: a concept can vary considerably from situation to situation while structurally remaining the same concept. Within the context of academic debate, this principle allows for contingent justification: since "overemphasized freedom of the press" can be operationalized in at least a hundred different ways and still be "overemphasized freedom of the press," advocates on each side can avoid each other entirely while still purporting to be debating the same resolution. When the multistable universe of possible operational meaning is open, debate is not bound to the shared meaning which makes clash possible.

A Loophole in Current Theory

Current theoretical mechanisms have not been completely helpful in dealing with multistability and the problem of contingent justification which accompanies it. While a number of articles written in the context of policy propositions have advocated an intrinsic focus, the explanations and rationales contained in these articles have yet to be applied to non-policy propositions.

One step in the right direction is Dudczak's (1987) attempt to reinterpret the issue of inherency in a non-policy context. Dudczak claims that many non-policy arguments (such as hierarchical comparisons and decision rules) collapse down to an issue of definitional characteristics, and hence to an issue of inherency: whether harms or benefits inhere in the concepts being evaluated. Dudczak's approach, however, assumes that definitions are necessarily based on essential characteristics. This assumption fails to recognize Zarefsky's (1977) distinction between peripheral characteristics and core characteristics, a distinction between what is essential and what is incidental. As a result, Dudczak does not attempt to justify essential characteristics as being definitionally more valid than contingent characteristics.

The theoretical mechanism which clearly comes closest to bolstering an intrinsic focus in non-policy debate is the argument for a holistic resolutional focus. The demand that the resolution be addressed at a general level (Biggers, 1985; Bile, 1987; Tolbert & Hunt, 1985; Ulrich, 1984b) can act as a counter to over-specific or particularized justifications. But at its current state of development, the whole resolution perspective does not make a distinction between a necessary effect and an effect which is contingent. An admonition to approach the resolution holistically, in other words, does little to tell a debater whether she should indict the covert policies of the current administration or the necessary effects of a covert policy. Current versions of the whole resolution argument (with the exception of Bile, 1987) leave open the question of temporality leading debaters to default to present circumstances: debaters assume that if they are holistically approaching the current set of circumstances, then they are being holistic. Consequently, debaters end up evaluating the accidental arrangement of current policy priorities and ignoring the essential features of the concepts under discussion. Furthermore, locking debate in at the level of the *status quo* has the additional effect of forcing one side or the other (usually the negative) to defend the present system without the traditional benefits of minor repair or counterplan (which have yet to gain widespread acceptability in CEDA). Only Bile (1987) removes this implicit temporal limitation and in doing so he argues that the, "[h]olistic-resolution focus buttresses this intrinsicness argument in cases when an advocate utilizes a relatively narrow temporal, spatial, or political context when the resolution makes no such limitation" (p. 13).

While the notions of whole resolutional focus and intrinsic justification may have some areas of commonality, the problems of multistabilty and contingent justification cannot be dealt with through a holistic focus alone. For example, if we removed temporal limitations from the concept of covert involvement we might still find that over time we have generally supported anti-communist forces. But the support of anti-communism is by no means intrinsic to covert involvement. Thus even with a 'temporally free' holistic focus debaters could still find themselves debating contingent or accidental properties. While it is possible to imagine the two standards being used together to demand a justification of the whole intrinsic resolution, the use of the whole resolution standard by itself does not fully address the problem of contingent justification. Current mechanisms of resolutional interpretation have not offered clear means of combatting multistability. In response to this need the construct of intrinsicness has been developed in debate rounds themselves. As might be expected, intrinsicness is argued in a variety of ways: sometimes as a one-line press, other times as a highly developed argument. But all current expressions of intrinsicness suffer from a lack of clear standards, justifications, and means of testing.

Reduction and Variation

Phenomenologists use the concept of reduction as a way of combatting multistabil-ity. Reduction describes the goal of trying to see past the multistability of a concept to its essential, invariant structure. This reduction has the purpose of separating the essential from the non-essential (Gier, 1981). In this separation, concepts are removed both from their historical context (Ihde, 1986) and from what might be a common-sense view of the concept (Gier, 1981).

Reduction provides the intrinsicness argument with a goal: by arguing intrinsicness, debaters are seeking to focus debate on the reduced concept, or the concept separated from its multistability. A multistable concept of covert involvement in Central America might entail support of anti-communism, harm to our alliances, harm to the environment, destruction of democracies, or any number of concomitant effects. However a reduced concept of covert involvement in Central America would require that arguments link off of invariant structures such as secrecy, deception, and probably a lack of democratic accountability.

Reduction provides a goal for the intrinsicness argument, but we do not have a tool, or mechanism, for accomplishing reduction until we consider variation. Variation has been called the "central driving engine" (Ihde, 1986, p. 190) of phenomenological analysis. It involves the systematic consideration of a concept in a variety of contexts. For example, if a researcher were interested in reducing the concept of "apple" to its invariant structures, she would consider many types of apples: Winthrop, Golden Delicious, Jonathon, etc. The researcher would see that the characteristics of specific size, and color are not intrinsic features of apples, instead attention would be drawn to such factors as seeds, stem, skin structure, etc.

Two forms of variation are present in phenomenological literature: imaginative variation and perceptual variation. Imaginative variation involves varying the concept in every way possible. This would include proposing forms of the concept which might not exist. For example, the President of the United States could be argued to be not intrinsically male because one could well imagine Patricia Schroeder as President. Perceptual variation would, on the other hand, limit the researcher to examples which can be observed (past, present, alternate culture) (Ihde, 1986). In other words, perceptual variation limits one to examples which are "empirical" in the debater's sense of the term.

Variation is similar to the process of offering counter-examples (Gier, 1981). The debate forum offers two basic forms of counter-examples: the counterplan and the counterwarrant. Since a counterplan proposes something that does not now exist, it would serve the function of imaginative variation. Since a counterwarrant provides a separate empirical example, it would serve the function of perceptual variation. These two tools could clearly serve as tests of intrinsicness.

An extended example might help explain these different methods of testing intrinsicness. If an affirmative team on the 1987 CEDA drug testing topic argued that drug testing violates privacy when results are not kept confidential and the negative wanted to challenge this position as not being intrinsic, they could engage in imaginative variation by counterplanning (mandating that all drug test results be kept confidential) or they could engage in perceptual variation by counterwarranting (showing examples of alternate testing situations in which results are kept confidential). In either case, the negative would be showing that the harm to privacy claimed by the affirmative is not intrinsic to drug testing. While counterplan and counterwarrant variation could not be

independently used to necessarily discover what is intrinsic to the resolution, one successful variation could logically serve to reveal what is not intrinsic.

The ability to use counterplans and counterwarrants to test intrinsicness should not be considered unique to the negative. It is easy to imagine a negative value objection, or disadvantage, which presumes a particular manner of affirming the resolution, and as such is not intrinsic. In such a situation the affirmative can reveal the incompleteness of the negative argument by showing, in effect, alternative affirmative counterplans and counterwarrants which would not result in the disadvantage or value objection.

Some in the CEDA community may object to counterplans based on the idea that CEDA should not focus on policy concerns (Tomlinson, 1983; Vasilius, 1983). Similarly, many in the forensic community (both CEDA and NDT) have objected to the use of counterwarrants (Simon, 1984; Ganer, 1981; Keeshan & Ulrich, 1980). The ultimate acceptance or rejection of these positions is beyond the scope of this article. For the present purposes it is enough to note that these authors assume the use of the counterplan or the counterwarrant as a substantive issue in the round--an argument which is to be weighed against an opponent's argument. In contrast, the intrinsic counterplan or counterwarrant exists only to test the validity of the opponent's claim to resolutional truth or falsity. If a variation reveals that a certain claim made by the opposition is contingent, then that claim would be excluded from the debate. The variation, having served its function, would also cease to be a focus in the round. The impact of the test is only to reveal and invalidate contingent arguments, not to prove or disprove the resolution. Thus, rather than shifting the debate to a consideration of narrow examples, intrinsic justification would employ tests which reveal and invalidate an opponent's narrow and contingent claims. In doing so, intrinsic justification arguments would lead to a focus on those characteristics which are essential to the resolution and would promote clash at the resolutional level. Conclusions based on intrinsic properties would also be more generalizable since they would not be tied to and limited by the assumptions of a particular manner of resolutional support. Such a focus may also provide non-policy debate with a tool for promoting the evaluation of inherent values rather than incidental policy arrangements.

Since intrinsicness relates to the validity of resolutional interpretation, and since matters of resolutional interpretation often determine what issues will be considered in a decision, it seems that the issue of intrinsic justification, if developed in rounds, could be a central and decisive issue. As long as a claim of contingent resolutional truth is answerable only with a claim of contingent resolutional falsity, macro-level clash will be a scarce commodity and necessary conclusions regarding the resolution will be impossible to reach. References

Notes

[1]Analyses of intrinsic justification in the context of policy propositions can be found in Flaningam's (1981) distinction between concomitant and comparative advantages, Bryant's (1982) discussion of inherency, and Zarefsky's (1977) discussion of core motive.

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