

THE PROBLEM OF VALUES AS END STATES IN L/D DEBATE

Through Shane's personal insight and competitive experience, he discusses two value paradigms. Looking at values as external rewards or advantages and suggests looking at values as internal ethical impulses.

"I achieve the value of _____," is a statement made all too often in high school Lincoln-Douglas Debate. It assumes that values are end states or advantages to be gained or lost by affirming or negating the resolution. I contend that this end state paradigm is not how values work in life, moral philosophy, or debate. Rather than an external motivation in the form of a goal, values are internal motivations in the form of ethical impulses.

Let's begin, like any good L/Der, by defining terms.

What is a Value?

This is a question for which I will not pretend to have a complete or comprehensive answer. For the purpose of this article, however, it helps to think of a value as a *principle of worth that motivates action*. This functional definition has three parts.

First, a value is a *principle*. The computer on which I am typing has value but is not a value.

Second, this principle has *worth*. Tyranny is a principle, but most will agree that it does not have worth and, therefore, is not a value.

Finally, this principle of worth must *motivate action*. This last part goes toward possession. In order to say that I hold a certain value it must motivate my action. I may claim to value knowledge, but if I decide to sleep in rather than attend my 7:30 AM statistics course it is clear that I value leisure over knowledge. Having set these standards, let's discuss values as internal rather than external motivations.

Values as Motivations

An argument is often made that Lincoln-Douglas is debate for the common person. If this is the case, then values ought to be used in L/D Debate the way that they are used in "real life." In life, we do not "achieve" a value by one action or a narrow set of actions. Arguably, we never attain

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values. Rather, we act in such a way that is consistent with the values that we hold because we feel that it is the right or ethical way to act. Looking back to my 7:30 AM statistics course, I do not pretend that by showing up there half asleep for eighty minutes I gain the value of knowledge. The professor does not hand out that value of knowledge to everyone as they leave the class. I do not take the value of knowledge home, polish it, and put it on my shelf. In contrast, I got to class (most of the time) because the value of knowledge that I already hold compels me to do so. In real life, values are not treated like the free *Beanie Babies* that they give away at baseball games. So let's stop treating values like prizes to be won in L/D as well.

If Lincoln-Douglas is not debate for the common person, then it is debate for moral philosophers (or perhaps both). Moral philosophy does not teach us that values are advantages to be gained either. John Stuart Mill does not claim that the *Harm Principle* grants us liberty like a Fairy Godmother. Nor is Rawls a genie distributing justice along with two other wishes. Immanuel Kant is not the Tooth Fairy handing out dignity via the *Categorical Imperative*. In fact, Kant concedes that the *Categorical Imperative* is a necessary but insufficient criterion for determining morality. Philosophy does not claim that we ought to follow these rules and systems in order to attain an external goal. Plato would contend that these perfect forms cannot be achieved. On the contrary, the bulk of moral philosophy will argue that we ought to behave in certain ways because it is the right or ethical thing to do. We ought to internalize certain key values, and use them to guide our actions. For debaters, treating values in this way will allow a smoother integration of philosophy into cases.

Even in a vacuum, debate is an activity immersed in logic. It simply does not make sense to claim that affirming or negating any single resolution will acquire any given value. Resolutions in Lincoln-Douglas Debate are becoming increasingly specific. The 1998-1999 list is no exception. Campaign finance reform, immigration, and Native American policy all have values inherent within them. However, deciding on any one of these issues in any particular way will not "get" a value. Campaign finance reform alone will not achieve democracy. Immigration laws will not attain equality of opportunity. Native American policy will not produce justice. It is vital that we weigh and test value claims to determine our ethical impulses, but values should not be treated like advantages.

What effect will treating values as ethical impulses have on L/D debate? None for the many people whom already hold this theoretical belief. For those who may be beginning to consider it, there are important theoretical implications and subtle pragmatic ones. On the theoretical level, we need to find values implicit within issues as opposed to those that we may "attain" through some lengthy string of cause and effect. The link between values and the behavior that they compel must also be scrutinized. On the pragmatic level, in place of "I achieve the value of _____," is "the value that compels my position is _____." When weighing competing values in the round, do not assume that either are gained. Instead, argue that the more important value compels the most ethical behavior. In the increasing number of cases where both debaters hold the same value (for example...oh... maybe... JUSTICE) examine which behavior (affirmation or negation) the value truly compels.

Values are conceived of as either internal or external motivations. The conception of values as internal motivations is more accurate in context of real life, moral philosophy, and debate logic. Considering these theoretical issues before diving into the specifics of a particular topic helps to stabilize the activity and makes for better Lincoln-Douglas Debates.

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