

A REPLY TO COX

I recently finished reading the article in the January edition of the *Rostrum* by Randy Cox (The Naturalistic Fallacy in Value Debate.) I was very interested to see that Mr. Cox, with all of his debate experience, was willing to dismiss the entire premise we currently use to evaluate Lincoln/Douglas debate. I would have thought that someone with his experience would have offered this as merely another way to approach value debate, which is very legitimate if it can be proven to be an effective way to evaluate a value debate. Actually, many of Mr. Cox's claims are either misconstrued or absolutely untrue. In fact it appears that Mr. Cox is very "out of touch" with what really happens or should be happening in a debate round. Many of the examples that he gives are examples of bad core-value debate and should not be used to dejustify this type of L/D debate. Since I do not have Mr. Cox's experience, I am going to have to use logic to explain my position.

The first thing that I would like to take issue with is the first concept that Mr. Cox addresses in his article. He assumes that we are evaluating the "object/s of evaluation/s" by comparing them to some random value. This is probably the biggest and most fallacious argument that Mr. Cox uses against the core-value approach. It is my understanding that in a value debate we decide upon the value criterion for the debate round based upon the "evaluative term" given in the resolution. For example in the sample resolution that is given in the beginning of his article, "Resolved: That euthanasia is justified", he assumes that we would just begin evaluating the value of "euthanasia" as it pertained to some value that is unrelated to the resolution. If this were the case, then we would be

committing what he refers to as "naturalistic fallacy." However, when we use our value to modify the word "justified," the evaluative term, we are then using a value that is very much related to the resolution. In other words, I would be using a value such as "quality of life" to determine what is "justified," because I would argue that whatever best allows for "quality of life" is what is "justified." It is then up to the negative to prove that "quality of life" is not a good way to measure what is "justified" or that not allowing euthanasia would better provide for "quality of life." In light of this idea alone, Mr. Cox's assertions opposing a core-value case have little, if any validity,

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because we can now see the correlation of the value as it pertains to the resolution. However, we should also take a look at some of the other theory arguments that Mr. Cox tries to use.

The second claim that Mr. Cox makes is that a core value case looks at "values in a vacuum." This is derived from the oversimplification of the way that core-values are argued. He asserts that to present a core-value case asks us to only look at the superficial element of that value. I'm not sure how many rounds of L/D debate Mr. Cox has judged, but in the rounds that I have seen, this does not occur except in really bad debates (which is not a sufficient dejustification to core-value debate.) In most of the value debates that I have judged, I have

seen debaters argue that their value "subsumes" the other value or that one value is essential for the existence of the other value. Sometimes they even argue that both values have the same intent so whoever best meets the common criterion would win the debate. None of these approaches lends any credibility to Mr. Cox's notion that core value looks at values in a vacuum. In fact, it seems to prove that value debaters understand and use "value systems" (as I understand them in regards to Mr. Cox's article) very effectively. It would be absolutely impossible to establish value hierarchy in a round by only considering values in a vacuum. You would essentially wind up with two cases and no clash. Speaking of "no clash," let's move to the next problem Mr. Cox's analysis runs into with his presentation of the premises of the "unified analysis" case.

First of all, I'm not quite sure how the "unified analysis" case is any different than the "multiple valued" cases that are used frequently. The main difference is that Mr. Cox seems to think that a criterion is not necessary for determining the winner of the debate even though he does agree that we should still use values as the main thrust of our arguments. He argues that because the ballot contains nothing pertaining to the criterion that it should not have any determination of who wins the round. I hope that this is not the way that he believes a policy debate round should be evaluated. If so, then we would still be debating "stock issues." In fact, if you look to the issues that he does state are on top of the ballot to determine the winner in an L/D debate, the whole course becomes very ambiguous. I would also have a very difficult time bringing myself to vote on "organization" and "delivery" (while I would agree that they ultimately

have some impact on the outcome of the "real" issues.) This is the most ludicrous of all of Mr. Cox's suggestions for evaluating a value debate round. We have to remember that we are dealing with a "value" debate. This requires the assessment of objects as they relate to values. I cannot clarify my value position unless I assign a criterion to this value. For example, if I use "Justice" as my value, I must clarify through my criterion exactly what I mean by Justice. Mr. Cox adamantly claims in his article, "there are no absolutes," therefore I must give a criterion that determines and measures what I consider to be just. Aristotle did not have the same sense of justice as Adolph Hitler, so, it really doesn't matter if you claim fifty values. If you have no way of proving that your position fulfills (i.e. the criterion) these values, you cannot win.

The next issue that needs to be addressed, by those who claim unified analysis to be the answer to value debate, is the issue of conflicting values. Mr. Cox never explains what would happen to the unified analysis case if a debater could prove that in the circumstances of the resolution, that two of your values come into conflict. For example, in the capital punishment example Mr. Cox gives, I think it would be very easy to prove that of his three values he establishes: life, individual liberty, and affirmation of autocracy (which is not really a value), that at least two would come into conflict. For example, if I proved that not allowing capital punishment has a greater impact on the liberty of the victims and individuals in society and because of this your values of life and individual liberty are in conflict. How do I evaluate this negative position now? If you support one value, you decrease the other. Which value does the judge vote for? This very situation forces you into the position of establishing a value hierarchy, and in this case you would be forced to defend a core-value to have any

chance of winning your position. Also, what would happen if I proved that my position best upheld the value of life but your position best upholds the other two value positions? Do you win simply because you have two values and I only have one? (Who is arguing "my value is bigger than yours" now?) Couldn't I prove that the value of life is more important than the two values that you are supporting? If this is the case, am I not arguing the same thing that I would be arguing in a core-value case? Or would you argue that because you showed that it was justified in at least one instance you should win the round, regardless of the fact that

### **What would happen to the unified analysis case if... two of your values came into conflict?**

I showed that it was unjustified in several other instances? This is a question that must be answered before the unified analysis can be considered the "end-all and be-all" of L/D debate. The terminology that Mr. Cox uses to indicate the criterion for a unified analysis includes phrases such as "provide sound reasons or proofs," "persuasive scope," and "demonstrated to be justified in great measure." These terms could mean anything to different judges.

The final thing that must be addressed is the ideas that seem to be promoted through the acceptance of using unified analysis to justify or dejustify your position in debate. The first thing is that Mr. Cox's uses analysis that is appropriate for taking a position of opinion in extemp to show "burden of proof" in a debate round without ever explaining why this would fulfill the burden of proof. The thing that I dislike about this idea is that it deduces debate to

what many people call "dueling oratories." This is a definite indicator of a lack of respect and knowledge regarding this very valuable activity. The second assumption that I take issue with regarding the unified analysis debate as a whole, is that it allows for debates to try to fulfill their burden of proof by exemplifying their position through random isolated examples (parametric cases) that merely have values attached to them. This will definitely harm the amount of clash that we see in L/D debate. I also feel that you cannot fairly qualify or disqualify the validity of value of an object in a resolution without looking at the topic in general. I think all value debaters who choose to run a unified analysis case should ask and get answers to these questions before running this type of case.

These are my views regarding Lincoln/Douglas debate. They are not meant to be taken as the ONLY way to conduct L/D debate, but as a viable way to conduct L/D debate. They are and should be open for discussion. Many theories of L/D debate should be discussed openly so that we all may learn. Hopefully, we can become a bit more informed and realize a new respect for Lincoln/Douglas debate through these discussions. In fact the next issue I would like to see addressed is, why so many people feel that the valuing of the negative side of the debate "equally" is not a valid refutation of a resolution that asks the affirmative to prove that something is "valued greater." Why is it assumed that the negative has an inverse burden of proof? I look forward to this and many more discussion.

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