How to Select a Value

In Lincoln-Douglas debate, we use values to judge, whether or not something is good, right, or of worth. Values can be an end in an of themselves, as an ultimate aim of existence such as peace on Earth, or a means of behavior to reach that ultimate end, such as sacrifice.

Values are belief systems or principles. Like attitudes, they are abstract and physically intangible, but they affect behavior and impact human interactions. Values such as freedom, justice, and peace cannot be touched, but people generally agree they know when those values are granted, denied, or restricted.

When building a debate case, students usually select one or two values which they consider to be more important or more desirable than all others based upon the resolution being argued. Although there is no rule that says debaters must select only one or two values, it becomes increasingly difficult to defend more.

If the resolution argued were, "Resolved: That the values contained in the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution ought to outweigh all other legal values," debaters Should first ask them what is being evaluated. What is it is that the First Amendment grants citizens? If the First Amendment grants individuals freedom of speech, press, and religion, and assembly, then debaters need to ask which values are at stake when judging the worth of those freedoms? Why can First Amendment freedoms be considered more important than other legal values? Because they guarantee civil rights, liberty, freedom of choice, individualism, or quality r f life.

If building a negative case for the same resolution, debaters might argue that equality or fairness ought to be of ultimate value because it is only when all individuals have equal access to these freedoms or receive fair treatment whereby all of society benefits.

Partial List of Values

Altruism
Cooperation
Duty
Equality of Condition
Equality of Opportunity
Equality of Results
Ethical Egoism
Feminism
Freedom
Human Dignity
Individualism
Justice/Fairness
Knowledge
Law & Order
Liberty
Life
Majority Rule
Meta-Rights
Minority Rights
Nationalism
Natural Rights
Peace
Pleasure
Privacy
Progress
Property
Pursuit of Happiness
Quality of Life
Retribution
Sacrifice
Safety/Security
Self-Actualization
Social Diversity
Sovereignty
Sympathy
Trust
Truth/Honesty

Definitions of Values

Altruism - a regard for the welfare of others that overrides concern for oneself. Ideally, altruism is regarded as a selfless behavior, although arguments against it sometimes claim that no behavior is entirely altruistic, that there is always an underlying, self-serving motive behind all actions. Altruism's counter-value could be ethical egoism.

Cooperation - joint effort or association for a common purpose. A spirit of cooperation is generally called for when a scarcity of resources exists, when a team effort is needed or when the results can be mutually beneficial to all those participating. Cooperation usually takes coordination, communication, and agreement, so while a group effort can be time-saving and it can be Argued that it is key to survival, individual choice and self-will may have to be subjugated. A counter-value to cooperation could be individualism.

Duty - moral or legal obligation or action that is required by one's position, membership in a group or society, or by conscience. It can be argued that if people accept the benefits of membership, they also have a duty or responsibility to the group. Laws can be used to enforce a legal obligation, but they are generally followed to avoid penalty. Instilling a moral duty in people instead may promote voluntary, goal-oriented compliance. In this case, moral duty and legal duty can be counter-values, or the overall sense of duty to society can be offset with the counter-value of individualism.

Equality can be defined in at least three ways which can be used to counter each other, or used to offset numerous other values including justice and retribution.

1) **Equality of Condition** - fairness that grants the same rights, privileges and immunities to people similarly situated or in similar circumstances. Social welfare programs are designed to enhance equality of condition. Arguments against this are that by human nature, the motivation and skills levels of people are different, so conditions can never be equal, or that government intervention to distribute benefits to the poor or elderly amounts to paternalism . . . government treating adult citizens like children-assuming they are incapable of caring for themselves and perpetuating dependence.

2) **Equality of Opportunity** - fairness that grants everyone the same chance to rise in the economic and social system regardless of circumstances of birth. This is the idea behind public education and a graduated income tax. A major argument against equality of opportunity is that it may be considered unfair to charge or tax everyone to support social services if they do not partake of them or directly benefit from them.

3) **Equality of Results** - fairness that occurs by assuring that the ends are the same for all, regardless of the means or conditions. By assuring equality of results, everyone achieves the same goal or end, regardless of the distance or effort it takes to reach that goal. The argument can be made that this discourages individual motivation and leads to mediocrity or even communism.

Ethical Egoism - the idea that all actions should be taken only if they are good for oneself. Although this initially sounds selfish as it seems to disregard the welfare of others, it can be argued that ethical egoism is actually enlightened selfishness because people would never be motivated to perform actions against their own best interests. People would not harm others just because they felt like it because they know they might have to suffer legal consequences or social ostracism, and that would not be in their best interests. Counter-values could be altruism, human love, or moral duty.

Feminism - the principle that women should have political, economic, and social rights equal to those of men. This is not just a cause promoted by women, but by anyone proposing equal rights for all. A challenge to any argument for equal rights can be that rights have to be exercised and maintained to have substantial impact, not just granted. Counter-values could be ethical egoism, individualism, justice, majority rule, etc.

Freedom - a state where there is an absence of restraint, confinement or repression, or the quality of being free from the control of some other person or arbitrary power to exercise self-will. Because people do not operate in a vacuum, it can be argued that all freedom is subject to some form of restraint Freedom's counter-values could be cooperation, duty, equality, or sacrifice.

Human Dignity - the idea that every human being is entitled to both the freedom and the responsibility to develop his/her personality with rights to life, liberty, property, political participation, security of person, and the fundamental freedoms of opinion, expression, thought, conscience, and religion common to all human beings without discrimination. It can be argued that there may be times when other compelling moral claims may require that each individual's desires be subject to a duty to society or to cooperation for a common cause. For that reason, duty, cooperation, and law & order may be counter-values.

Human Love - tender feeling of affection or devotion to another person, or a feeling of brotherhood and good will toward other people. It can be argued that decisions based upon human love may be blinded by emotion rather than objectively evaluating all consequences. Human love's counter-values could be ethical egoism, individualism, justice, progress, or retribution.

Individualism - the idea that individuals should have freedom of choice and freedom to make decisions that are subject only to the reciprocal obligation to respect the rights of others. This proposes that rights should not-be restricted by government because self-interest is the proper goal of all human actions, and that the real security of every nation lies in its respect for individual rights, and that democracy would be meaningless and unworkable without guarantees for individualism. It can be argued that individualism may have to be subordinate to counter-values such as moral and legal duty, cooperation, law and order, progress, or sacrifice.

Justice/Fairness - the quality of being impartial, fair, correct and right John Locke maintained that without justice, each man is his own judge and executioner, and that natural rights could not be protected. Aristotle considered justice to be treating equals equally, and unequals in proportion to their relative differences. John Rawls advocated distributive justice based upon need, arguing that the less wealthy deserve more help. Although the principle that equal rights before the law is at the core of the U. S. system of justice, arguments about what is fair generally come down to two precepts:

1) If justice is not proportional to the situation, it can be considered unfair and vindictive; or *(continued)*

2) If justice is not absolute, it can be considered arbitrary, situational, capricious, and inconsistent. It can also be argued that justice cannot always be achieved. Counter-values could be altruism, duty, individualism, progress, or sacrifice.

Knowledge - having an understanding or a familiarity with a body of facts or principles. Knowledge is necessary for informed decision-making, and is important when weighing all variables or predicting long-term effects and consequences. It can be argued that there may be times when ignorance is bliss or when access to knowledge needs to be limited for national security. Counter-values could be safety/security or trust

.

Law & Order - a system of rules of conduct established and enforced by authority, legislation, or custom to maintain peace and serenity in a community or society by imposing limits on individual behavior. Law & order are considered to be the tools for securing individual liberty and protecting members from anarchy. A concern with granting so much power to government is that government itself can become tyrannical and oppressive, arbitrarily violating individual will and subjugating liberty. Counter-values could be ethical egoism, human dignity, individualism, and liberty.

Liberty - regarded as one of the three natural rights inherent in all humans, liberty is regarded as freedom from arbitrary restraint. Although individual liberty is considered vital to personhood, it can be argued that if individual liberty is not balanced with societal good, people will resort back to a state of nature. Counter-values could be altruism, cooperation, duty, human love, or law & order.

Life - biological state of existence generally regarded as necessary for any other human values to be of worth. Arguments can be made that under certain circumstances where freedom and liberty are restricted, or when survival depends upon a tortured existence, life is not worth living. The counter-value of life in a debate could be quality of life, which ranks the worth and condition of existence.

Majority Rule - where the laws are made by, or at least reflect the wishes of the majority of society, or rule by the choice of the majority of those who can actually vote. Unless there is unanimous consent or a dictatorship, without majority rule, every individual would act on his own. Majority rule rests upon superior force, a commonly accepted practice, and is considered a logical means for making decisions. Maintaining the social contract depends upon majority rule. Arguments made against rule by majority are that it can lead to rule by tyranny if it uses its numbers to oppress or silence minorities, or in some cases, if the majority is unreasonable in demanding uniformity and intimidating to those who dare to be different Counter-values to majority rule could be duty, ethical egoism, human dignity, individualism, or justice.

More Values

Meta-Rights - right lo waive ex- transfer basic rights to life, liberty or property. William Irvine, philosophy professor at Wright State University, wrote on page 486 of the December 1989 issue of The Freeman. "Basic rights are worth having because we can relinquish them." On the same page he provided this example: "Even my right to life is more valuable if I have the meta-right to waive this basic right Those who would deprive me of my meta-right to waive my right to life have done me a great disservice: They have transferred my *right* to live into a *duty* to remain alive." It can be argued that nobody has the right to waive life itself because in doing so, society could be deprived of a valued member, a slippery slope might occur where respect for all life declines, and if this happens, civilization will be destroyed. Counter-values to meta-rights could be duty or life.

Minority Rights - a group with a smaller number of votes than the majority, or a racial, religious, ethnic or political group differing from the larger, controlling group in a community or nation. The voice of a minority serves as a Constitutional check on the power of the majority, and is considered crucial because it offers the criticism and alternative program suggestions that democracies thrive upon. The U. S. government has long attempted to operate on the principle of: "Majority rule, minority rights, and laws for the good of all." An argument against minority demands is that they can be unrealistic. Counter-values could be duty, ethical egoism, human dignity, or justice.

Nationalism - devotion to one's nation in a union formed from bonds of geography, religion, language, custom, race, tradition, or shared experience. Especially

Nationalism is stressed and valued. This makes the "America first" type argument. Taken to extremes, nationalism can develop into a real or imagined fear and shared hatred for others. Arguments against nationalism are that it is isolationist and ignores the interdependence of nations, offering tunnel vision rather than a global outlook. Counter-values could be altruism, ethical egoism, or duty to a world society.

Natural Rights - John Locke referred to the rights to life, liberty, and property as natural rights, those basic rights with which a person is born. (Thomas Jefferson substituted pursuit of happiness for property). Both rs. n maintained that these were inalienable rights, not bestowed by any government, but issued at birth, and that without these, humans would not survive. As with human dignity, it can be argued that there may be times when other, more compelling moral claims require that the rights of the individual be subject to a duty to society or to cooperation for a common cause. For that reason, duty, cooperation, law & order, and sacrifice may be counter-values. *Nolan's Lincoln-Douglas Debate Resource Guide*

Peace - state of harmony and freedom from war, public disturbance, or disorder. Arguments could be made from a Hobbesian viewpoint, that peace is against human nature, or that it simply does not last when resources are scarce. Counter-values might include justice, retribution, or safety/security.

Pleasure - state of satisfaction that avoids pain and is self-gratifying. Taken to extremes, or if it ignores societal consequences, this value can seem hedonistic and self-centered. Counter-values to pleasure could be altruism, duty, or sacrifice.

Privacy - the right to be let alone, to be free from unwarranted publicity, and to live without unwarranted interference by the public in matters with which the public is not necessarily concerned. The dilemma here is where a private issue ends, and a compelling public right to know begins. Counter-values could be justice, the right to know, law & order, or safety/security.

Progress - belief that human nature can be improved and that society is moving toward a better form of life. Arguments against progress are that it sometimes creates such substantial harm that its costs exceed its benefits, as in the case with atomic and nuclear bombs. Even if we can develop a new technology, this doesn't necessarily mean that we ought to use it. Counter-values could be moral duty, knowledge, peace, or quality of life.

Property - considered by John Locke to be one of the three essential natural rights along with life and liberty. Property is an individual's exclusive right to ownership and unrestricted use or disposition of objects <u>and ideas</u> that is protected by the government Arguments against property are that it may lead to an inordinate focus on materialism and may not be equitable. Counter-values could be altruism, justice, equality of condition or equality of results, quality of life, and sacrifice.

Pursuit of Happiness - the right to seek satisfaction and contentment in life. Although John Locke said all men were born with natural rights to life, liberty and property, Thomas Jefferson emphasized in the <u>Declaration of Independence</u> that man's inalienable rights included life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In this sense, the pursuit of happiness meant people had a right to pursue any lawful business or vocation in any manner they chose that was not inconsistent with recognizing the equal rights of others. Obviously, if one person's pursuit of happiness interferes with that of another, then conflict results, or it can be argued that there may be times when society's needs outweigh an individual's right to pursue happiness. This is why counter-values that emphasize societal rights or altruism, cooperation, duty, law & order safety/security, or sacrifice could be appropriate.

More Values

Quality Of Life - ranking or evaluation of a condition existence in comparison to others in a similar social or, civil position. Debaters can use this value in a dispute regarding topics such as euthanasia, (when a terminally ill patient is suffering) to determine whether biological existence has value without a dignified quality of life and whether or a not a patient should then be permitted to determine that value. Arguments against this are that all life should be considered worthwhile and that if a ranking can be assigned to the worth of life, this will result in a slippery slope to a devaluation of all life starting with the mentally or physically impaired, the old, weak, or different. The major counter-value to quality of life is life.

Retribution - a reward for doing some good or a pay back or deserved punishment for committing a wrong. It can be argued that retribution is a societal check necessary to maintain law & order and a sense of fairness, and that it allows for feedback and realignment of goals. It can be opposed by insisting that individuals should be independently motivated to act from a sense of moral duty, rather than acting from fear or expectation of retribution. Counter-values could be altruism, moral duty, or sympathy.

Sacrifice - to forego something of value for the sake of a more pressing claim. For example, parents may sacrifice entertainment today, to put money into a bank to guarantee their children's' higher education. Sacrifice for future generations or deferred gratification is a common claim of duty. The argument here, as in that against altruism, is whether or not the sacrifice is wholly selfless in motivation or a wise choice. Counter-values could be quality of life today or pleasure.

"Safety/Security - the condition of being guarded from internal or external danger, injury, or damage. Both individual safety and the safety of the nation tend to be highly valued as safety is one of man's most basic motivators. Arguments against safety are that people can avoid risk-taking to a foolish extreme because of it, violate the sovereignty of other nations in its name whether a threat is real or not, or place a disproportionate emphasis on possessing the physical safety provided by having a roof over their heads and a bed to sleep upon (which they can have even in a jail cell), and forsaking the emotional safety provided by such values as liberty or freedom. Counter-values can be individualism, justice, the pursuit of happiness or progress.

Self-Actualization - the complete development of one's ambitions, or in essence, "being all that you can be." One of the easiest, most pragmatic charges to make against self-actualization is that very few people in the population ever achieve this state, and if they do, that it sometime$4esults after abusing others in society. Counter-values could be cooperation or justice.

Social Diversity - population made up of a variety of people from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. In the U. S., social diversity has long been regarded as strength, combining the best of multiple worlds and the talents of numerous people. Arguments against promoting diversity often center on the fact that highlighting differences sometimes breeds intolerance and impatience, and prevents acculturation. A counter-value could be nationalism.

Sovereignty - a government position that is independent from foreign control or intervention and has the power to regulate its own affairs. Arguments can be made that some governments are not capable of self-regulation, or that some do not deserve sovereignty if they violate the human rights of their own or other citizens. Counter-values under certain conditions can be cooperation and human dignity.

Sympathy - compassion, understanding, and pity for the plight of others. If sympathy extends to mercy, it can involve forgiveness for an offense or the lightening of a sentence that would normally result in a harsher punishment Arguments against sympathy could be that it may not provide the societal check necessary to maintain law and order or provide justice. Counter-values could be justice and retribution.

Tolerance - state of recognizing and respecting views or customs of others that are different from one's own; being free of prejudice and bigotry. Although being tolerant is allowing others to coexist and have their beliefs, debaters can point out that under certain conditions, tolerance is abhorrent and criminal. Or Wrongful acts can have serious and permanent consequences. Counter-values can be human dignity, justice, and retribution.

Trust - belief or confidence in the honesty, integrity, reliability, or justice of another person or an institution. Having trust that is not misplaced allows a spirit of cooperation to flourish, but if that trust is unwarranted, it can lead to dependence and rapid decline. A counter-value to trust could be knowledge.

Truth/Honesty - sincerity and genuineness, when facts are in alliance with reality; not lying, stealing or cheating, but rather adhering to ethical principles that are expected; an incorruptible soundness of moral character. Arguments against truth claim that truth is always changing, that truth depends upon a person's perspective that it is often hard to verify, and that it can be brutally ruthless and have negative consequences on the people involved. Counter-values to truth/honesty could be ethical egoism, moral duty, and safety/security.