Introduction to Lincoln-Douglas Debate

John R. Prager

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INTRODUCTION

This text developed in response to the needs of my own students during my tenure as a coach of a small school in Michigan. At the time, Michigan did not have a statewide program of competition in Lincoln-Douglas, but a handful of invitational tournaments were experimenting with the form. There were no good options for textbooks on the subject at the high school level, and so my teaching notes gradually evolved to become this text.

As of 2007, which this book was last revised, Michigan continues its exclusive commitment to policy debate at the high school level. The experiments with Lincoln-Douglas at tournaments have largely stopped.

Yet I remain convinced that there is great worth for the high school student in learning about value debate, both for its own sake and for spillover benefits on policy and legislative debating. For this reason, I have made this text available online as an introduction to the subject for students and coaches.

If you are approaching Lincoln-Douglas after experience with policy debate, you may wish to begin reading with Chapter 10, which has been written to ease the transition between the two forms of debate. After reading that chapter, you can turn to the earlier chapters in the book.

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— John R. Prager
Chapter 1

LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE FORMAT

The Evolution of Value Debate

In 1858, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas began a series of seven public debates before the citizens of Illinois. Touring by train from city to city, each attempted to clarify his stand on the issues of the day. In fact, the debates tended to center around a single issue: whether the federal government properly had the authority to forbid slavery in new states joining the Union. The debates were the heart of the campaign strategy to win a position in the U.S. Senate for the candidates.

It is worthwhile for us to take a look back at the format of those early debates. Each presentation began with one candidate speaking for an hour. His opponent then had 90 minutes to respond to the initial speech and present his own side. Finally, the first speaker had 30 minutes to deliver a rejoinder and summation. To make the contests more equitable, Lincoln and Douglas alternated in the first speaking position.

A series of three-hour public addresses strikes the modern student as outrageous. After all, sometimes it’s hard to stay awake through a one-hour classroom lecture. But in the days before television, the Lincoln-Douglas debates created a nationwide stir. The speeches were published and reprinted in newspapers across the nation. Although Stephen Douglas was widely conceded to have outperformed Lincoln throughout the debates — and, in fact, Douglas was chosen Senator — the contests earned Lincoln a national reputation, and positioned him for his later presidential campaign.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, college policy debate was suffering a crisis. The practices of the National Debate Tournament (NDT) organization dismayed a number of coaches and judges. Specifically, complaints were lodged against the complex theory involved in policy debate; against the spreading and speed that was perceived to undermine effective communication skills; and against the practice of debaters being required to speak on both sides of the resolution, which supposedly promoted insincerity and sophistry instead of conviction. A search began for an alternative to policy debate — “value” debate, so-called because called for a philosophical approach, rather than a legalistic approach, to argumentation. The result was the creation of a new form of college debate — team-oriented value debate — sponsored under the authority of the Cross-Examination Debate Association (CEDA). While the CEDA program is not identical either to current high-school value debate (much less the initial Lincoln-Douglas debates of a century earlier), the idea that an alternative to policy debate could be viable would profoundly influence subsequent high school developments.

Today, the college debate circuit is still in a state of transition. Both the CEDA and NDT programs survive, although CEDA no longer confines itself exclusively to value topics. Value topics thrive, however, in a number of other debate programs, using a variety of formats.

In 1976, high schools throughout the United States began a series of Bicentennial Youth Debates to celebrate the two-hundredth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. This program comprised both the customary team-oriented policy debates and also “Lincoln-Douglas” debates: one-on-one competition focusing on philosophical issues rather than
government policy. This was the first nationwide instance of non-team value debate throughout America. The name “Lincoln-Douglas debate” was chosen to reflect the continuity of style from the original Senatorial contests to the present day.

The success of the Bicentennial Youth Debate program inspired the National Forensic League — a nationwide high school honor program promoting speech — to add Lincoln-Douglas debating to its roster of sponsored activities. The 1980 NFL endorsement also encouraged a number of state speech organizations to incorporate Lincoln-Douglas debate into their programs. Since then, value debate has grown in popularity nationwide, even to the point of attracting more students than policy debate in some areas.

However, the NFL adoption of Lincoln-Douglas has not been without controversy. Critics pointed out that, despite ten years of college history with value debating, there was no clear body of debate theory dealing with value resolutions. In fact, the initial rules adopted by the NFL didn’t seem to define what L-D was so much as what it wasn’t: it wasn’t policy debate, everyone was sure of that, but all distinctions became vague beyond that point. Besides specifying the time limits and number of debaters, the 1980 NFL document provided just four rules. Paraphrased, they were (1) that emphasis in the debate must be on abstract reasoning; (2) that evidence is less important than in policy debate, and should be applied much as in oratory and extemporaneous speaking contests; (3) that only major positions should be signposted; and (4) that decisions should be awarded based on a system of values. Clearly, L-D was to be construed as a form of value debate — but nothing beyond that point was clear at all.

Since 1980, there has been a torrent of publications in learned journals searching for a consensus on value debate theory. In many cases, authors each advocated their own particular jargon while dismissing that of others. The coach, student, or judge searching through the literature is more likely to come away confused, rather than enlightened. Yet at the same time high school Lincoln-Douglas debating has flourished. Debaters haven’t necessarily waited for the theory to evolve; they just want to debate!

The present text endorses this pragmatic approach. The confusion in L-D theory is akin to the state that policy debate was in by the 1960s. It remains to be seen what paradigm(s) will emerge from the rubble. In the meantime, this textbook suggests a conservative approach that is acceptable to most judges and to some debate theorists. Other possible approaches to Lincoln-Douglas may emerge in the course of the next decade, but the pattern included here is likely to be among them.

Lincoln-Douglas Format

Imagine that we have been assigned the task to devise a format for Lincoln-Douglas debates: that is, to set the time limits and patterns for speeches. How would we begin? After all, policy debate experimented with a variety of formats before settling on the now-standard four-person cross-examination contest in the mid-1960s.

Let’s begin by retaining the number of debaters from the original Stephen Douglas-Abraham Lincoln debates: two debaters, one Affirmative, one Negative. Since a four-person debate takes involves an hour of assigned speaking time, we’ll be striving to set time limits for speeches of about half that length. This means that one L-D debate will require about as much time investment for each speaker as policy debate. Fifteen minutes or so of speaking time is still much more than other speech contests demand of their participants — we don’t want to burden the contestants with more. As an added bonus, a complete Lincoln-Douglas debate will easily fit
into most school class periods, even allowing for a critique; few schools now have class periods long enough to accommodate a policy debate round.

There are five principles from our policy debate heritage that we’ll wish to retain for Lincoln-Douglas debating. First, we’ll keep **cross-examination** periods, in which the speaker who just completed a constructive speaker is interrogated by his or her opponent. These periods allow for direct investigation of the opponent’s arguments. Probing for weaknesses through direct questioning would seem critical in this form of debate, given the brevity of the contest.

Second, we’ll retain the tradition of the Affirmative having to start and end the debate. This makes sense for reasons dealing with the burden of proof, a subject that is considered in chapter 4.

Third, we will want to give each side of the debate equal speaking time. This seems critical to insuring fairness. Fourth, and also for reasons of fairness, we will wish to alternate speeches from one side to the other. In policy debate, alternation is not strictly followed (the First Negative Rebuttal follows the Second Negative Constructive), but with only one debater on a side, it seems foolish to schedule back-to-back speeches by one person.

Fifth, and last, we will partition the debate into **constructive speeches** (where new arguments are presented and developed) and **rebuttal speeches** (where the prior arguments are weighed against each other, evaluated, and refuted). To assure that the debaters focus on increasingly narrower issues as the debate progresses, we will require that speeches get progressively shorter for each debater. In policy debate, rebuttals are about half the length of constructive speeches, requiring the contestants to identify and concentrate on the most important points. While we may not be able to split speaking time so neatly for L-D, the principle of shorter rebuttal time is one worth retaining.

We cannot be sure that these considerations were the ones used by the experts who devised the modern Lincoln-Douglas format. A good deal of experimentation has gone on with specific time limits. But the five principles we identified as worth retaining have been embodied in the conventional L-D structure:

6 minutes Affirmative Constructive
3 minutes Cross examination of Affirmative by Negative
7 minutes Negative Constructive
3 minutes Cross examination of Negative by Affirmative
4 minutes First Affirmative Rebuttal
6 minutes Negative Rebuttal
3 minutes Second Affirmative Rebuttal

Note how this pattern retains our principles. We have two cross-examination periods, one following each constructive speech. The Affirmative both starts and ends the debate. Each debater has equal speech time — 13 minutes — plus both share in the six minutes of cross-examination presentation. Speeches alternate from one side to the other; this means that the Negative must have two substantive speeches to the Affirmative’s three, since the Affirmative must both initiate and conclude the debate. Finally, the Affirmative speech times of 6-4-3 minutes and the Negative’s times of 7-6 minutes preserves our concept of steadily diminishing speaking time as the debate narrows its focus.

In addition, each debater is allotted a few minutes of **preparation time** to plan his or her next speech before rising. In policy debate, you can often work on your next speech while your
partner is speaking or conducting cross-examination. Since you have no partner in Lincoln-Douglas, the use of prep time assumes greater importance. While each tournament may set its own rules regarding preparation time, three minutes per side is the customary amount given. Adding together speaking times, cross-examination periods, and prep time, we see that the entire debate requires only 38 minutes from start to end — short enough for both a round and an oral critique within the average classroom period.

And let’s not forget the final component in L-D debate: in addition to the Affirmative and Negative debaters, there will be a judge in the room — sometimes a panel of judges for elimination rounds. The judge will listen carefully to the arguments presented, and later complete a written critique of the round explaining why a particular side won.

It is customary for Lincoln-Douglas contestants to debate on both sides of the resolution during a tournament, alternating between Affirmative and Negative positions as equally as the schedule will allow. This serves to place all debaters under an equal burden. If the topic is not perfectly balanced — if one side has an advantage over the other — alternating sides between rounds allows the inequities to even out over the course of the contest day.

Complaints about swing-side debating, although common a few years ago, are rarely heard anymore. Coaches have come to realize that teaching the debater disinterested advocacy is probably more important than making sure the student only supports a position in which he or she genuinely believes. In policy debate, this viewpoint has been complemented by choosing complex topics about which the debater is not likely to have strong personal beliefs, at least at the outset of the year. Likewise, it is hoped that through Lincoln-Douglas debating — which does involve strong personal beliefs — the debater may be able to clarify his or her own convictions after examining both sides of the issues.

Still, the question of integrity of beliefs versus educational merits is disturbing to some coaches and parents. Which side of the dilemma is given greater weight depends on the individual’s personal values. Curiously enough, that leads us to our next chapter, in which the idea of “values” will be explored more deeply.
Philosophy 101: The Nature of “Good”

So far, we have identified Lincoln-Douglas debate as a variety of value debate, and we have implied that this means it deals with philosophical issues. Let’s go a step further in defining “value debate”: value debate is a variety of debate that deals with human values and/or deals with the process of valuation.

No. That’s not much of a help, is it? We’ve heard politicians exhorting us to promote family values, to honor middle-class values, to preserve social and political values, and so on, but the word “value” itself is a little hazy — and so are these “values” we’re supposed to be supporting. And what is this “process of valuation” stuff?

Well, the process of valuation is the act of ranking things better or worse: to assign a value (here used in its sense of “rank” or “level of merit”) to things. It’s a term derived from philosophy. Even if you have never consciously considered the notion of “valuation,” it is something you do every day. When you decide that you prefer Mocha Nut ice cream over Maple Raspberry, or when you decide that an evening watching television is better than an evening doing homework, you are engaged in valuation — in making a “value judgment.”

Whenever we make such a decision — ranking one thing above or below another — we are really pegging our concept of that thing on an imaginary scale of goodness. Deciding to vegetate in front of the television is ranked higher, in our earlier example, than deciding to crack open the history book; leisure is perceived to be a greater good than work, at least in the context of this particular choice. The yardstick we measure these things on may not have clear labels, but it extends from ultimate goodness at one end to its opposite — ultimate badness — at the other.

The nature of goodness — the meaning of the word “good” — is an issue of particular importance to philosophy. If we can pin down a meaning for “good,” we can hope to derive meaning for other important terms: right, moral, ethical, proper, and desirable, among others. Also, if we are able to understand goodness, this will serve as a guideline for human behavior; by always seeking what is good, or by seeking the better of two competing good things, we will be maximizing our own personal goodness.

We use the word “good,” though, in several different senses. Pizza is good. This light bulb is good. My sister is good. Honesty is good. Does “good” mean the same thing in all these cases?

Consider the sentence, PIZZA IS GOOD. This seems to be grammatically simple: noun, verb (a special type of verb, called a copula, which equates two things), and a predicate adjective which describes the noun. In saying this, we seem to be assigning the description GOOD to PIZZA. But are we really? If “good” has a definite, permanent, imperishable meaning, then everyone (or virtually everyone) would agree that PIZZA IS GOOD. But many people dislike pizza; some are allergic to wheat, or cheese, or tomatoes; some people would say that PIZZA IS BAD is a more accurate sentence. But if pizza is both GOOD and BAD, then we are left with
chaos. Maybe “good” has no definite, permanent meaning — but to suggest that its meaning is so vague that GOOD can sometimes mean BAD is contrary to our experience.

Perhaps, though, the situation is not so simple as it first seemed. Perhaps when you say PIZZA IS GOOD, you are not really talking about pizza at all. Rather, you are talking about yourself. I ENJOY PIZZA. PIZZA APPEALS TO MY SENSE OF TASTE. I APPROVE OF PIZZA AS NUTRITIOUS ITALIAN FOOD. Each of these sentences, we sense, in some way preserves the meaning of the original sentence — yet they are talking, not about some abstract quality of the pizza, but about personal taste and preference.

Much of the informal usage of the word “good” — that is, in casual conversation — falls within the domain of aesthetics: appreciation of beauty and sensation. Our comments on pizza, on television programs, on art and music do not attempt to establish a formal standard of goodness, but merely express our personal taste.

Let’s look at the sentence THIS LIGHT BULB IS GOOD. In this case, we do actually mean “seem to be talking about a quality of the machine rather than about our own impressions. But here, “good” probably means “fit or suited for its purpose.” A light bulb with a broken filament is “bad,” not in any moral sense, but in the sense of being unfit for its intended purpose. Again, this is meaning of the word “good” familiar from our everyday experience. While “good” here represents an innate quality of the thing being evaluated, the context of function is critical. A balloon inflated with helium is “good” if you want to give a festive atmosphere to a birthday party for a four-year-old child; the same balloon is “bad” if you want to drop water balloons from a fourth-floor window.

We have seen, then, how “good” can be used in an esthetic sense and in a fitness sense. Now consider the sentence MY SISTER IS GOOD. This usage, again, seems different from the others. Perhaps you do not like your sister; certainly, when you say the sentence, you are not judging her fit or unfit for any particular use. Rather, this use of “good” is in a sense of moral worth. A sister is good if she conforms to rules of proper behavior. While we may not always be able to specify what those rules are, we feel comfortable that most people, knowing my sister, would agree that she follows the rules and thus deserves to be called “good.” Of course, some people change over time — a criminal can reform, a saint can become a sinner — so evaluations of moral goodness are still dependent on the contexts of time and circumstance. But the link between context and goodness is less for moral claims than for fitness claims.

Which brings us to the sentence HONESTY IS GOOD. Here, we don’t mean “honesty” as deliberate bluntness or hurtful truth-telling, but charitable truth and fairness in dealing with others. Honesty is a virtue that seems wholly admirable. Indeed, one could persuasively argue that honesty is one of the characteristics of a morally good person, and that dishonest person is less “good” than an honest one. This is not an esthetic judgment: we may not always like the obligation to be honest (say, at tax-time). This is not a fitness judgment: honesty is not “good” for a particular purpose. This sentence seems closest to a moral judgment, but honesty is not “good” only in a certain context. We have the feeling that honesty has a goodness that applies under all circumstances, at all times, in every human interaction.

In this sentence, the word “good” is being used in a value sense. Honesty is a value.
Values and their characteristics

Values are standards for determining the relative worth of conditions, situations, people, or things. They are abstract concepts, commonly accepted as enduring goods. They are the ideals which people consider to be of outstanding and lasting importance.

That does not mean that they are absolutes. Although honesty is a value, it may not be the greatest good possible at all times, and circumstances may force us to abandon honesty temporarily to achieve some greater value. For example, lying to an unarmed mugger — saying that you are an expert at karate — and thus convincing him to flee rather than rob you violates honesty, but preserves the values of property, nonviolence, and personal security.

We cannot expect all values to be achieved, equally, at all times. For this reason, value debate deals with identifying the values that are important in a given situation and deciding which ones are more important in the particular context.

All values are perceived as good, but not all are good in the same way. A few values are innate or intrinsic goods: that is, they are worthy in and of themselves. Frequently, such values as justice, freedom, and equality are cited as intrinsic goods. On the other hand, many values are instrumental goods: that is, they lead to other things that are perceived as good. Some possible examples of instrumental goods are property, altruism, progress, and work. To choose one of these, we could argue that the work ethic in isolation is neither good nor bad, but that work is an instrumental means to obtain food, shelter, independence, self-confidence, and creativity. To be sure, several values — for example, equality — are not only good in themselves, but also enhance other values as well; they are both intrinsically and instrumentally good.

This suggests that values are not independent of each other. Indeed, they are interdependent: whenever we choose to elevate one over another, this will produce conflicts among a host of subsidiary values.

To truly qualify as a value, it is not enough that a thing be instrumentally useful. It must be desirable in the abstract. For instance, while fraud can be instrumental in obtaining property, money, or recognition, nobody would say that fraud is desirable in itself. Therefore fraud is not a value.

Many values are paired with an opposite: philosophers call these disvalues, dysvalues, or negative values. Violence is the counterpart of peace; injustice the opposite of justice. Sometimes, though, two values, each identified as good, stand in opposition; for instance, the value of community is often in conflict with the value of individualism.

Core values common to Lincoln-Douglas debate

We probably have hundreds of values that are important to us. And the list of values (and the order in which they are given priority) would be different for each person. However, there are a few dozen values that most people in American society can be presumed to share. They are our common heritage; a different society might have a different set of core values. The list below suggests 25 values which are among the most likely ones to appear in a round of L-D debate.

Philosophy tries to reduce ambiguity as much as possible, but some vagueness still remains when we talk about core values. Partly this is because language is an imprecise tool; and partly because the concepts we’re discussing are so abstract; but much of the problem stems
from the interdependence of the values themselves. So the following list involves substantial overlap from topic to topic.

- **ALTRUISM** is the deliberate sacrifice of something — property, life, or an intangible (such as time) — by one person for the benefit of another, without expecting an immediate return.
- **BEAUTY** is one of the intrinsic values, desired for its own sake rather than for its instrumental effects.
- **THE CHURCH** — that is, religion in a general sense — is arguably a value that subordinates the community to a nobler cause.
- **COLLECTIVE GOOD** is the well-being of the greater mass of humanity as opposed to that of the individual.
- **COMMUNITY** is, perhaps, a limited form of collective good; but here, we consider the individual as a part of a society, nation, or other delimited area.
- **EQUALITY** encompasses the notions of political, social, and economic parity between individuals.
- **FAMILY**, as a value, suggests that our interrelationships with those people to whom we have the closest ties become models for all our dealings with other people.
- **FREE EXPRESSION** has a long history of support in our culture; the ability to communicate as we like is essential to our self-image and the image other people have of us.
- **FREEDOM** is a broad value, one that arguably encompasses many others on this list. The word can mean absence of compulsion — freedom not to do something — as well as the opportunity to do as one wishes. The term may or may not be synonymous with Liberty. (Your author prefers “freedom” when used to mean *absence of compulsion or restraint*, and “liberty” to mean *the ability to act as one pleases* — but there are no universal definitions.)
- **INDIVIDUALISM** encompasses the desire of each person to create an identity as a unique individual.
- **INTEGRITY** comprises the virtues of personal character: honesty, loyalty, a sense of honor, and so on.
- **JUSTICE** is the giving of each person his or her due: a noble ideal, but exceedingly difficult in practice.
- **KNOWLEDGE** is an innate value to those who desire learning for its own sake, and an instrumental value for everyone: we can never act wisely unless we know the facts.
- **LEISURE**, time to spend as we please, allows us to enjoy life and have a sense of personal identity apart from the demands on the rest of our time.
- **LIFE** is indeed precious. But is it a value? Certainly, there can be no other values without it. Yet life does not obviously fit our criterion of being an abstract concept. And while everyone
can always seek more knowledge, or justice, or freedom, any quest for more (or unending) Life is fated to fail.

- MAJORITY RULE ensures social stability by seeing that the wishes of most people are carried out by the community. This value also includes respect for the opinions of the minority.

- NATURE, as a value, entails a respect for the natural environment and a sense of human connectedness with other living creatures.

- PEACE is not so much cherished for its own sake but rather because the opposing dysvalues — war or violence — are so universally repugnant.

- PRIVACY is in many ways similar to leisure: it allows us to have a sense of self away from the scrutiny of others.

- PROGRESS is a relatively new value: prior to the Industrial Revolution, people cherished their connection with the past more than their hopes for a better future.

- PROPERTY is one of the ways people establish their identity in society: by ownership and control of material goods. A person without property lacks the elements necessary for a good life.

- QUALITY OF LIFE includes all the elements that distinguish between enjoying life and “merely surviving.” This value can include such notions as freedom from pain, social companionship, possession of property, and so on. Interpreted broadly enough, quality of life can include most other values, except, perhaps, life itself.

- SECURITY defends the notion that individuals, communities, and nations have the right to seek self-preservation and freedom from fear.

- SELF-ACTUALIZATION is the individual’s ability to control his own life and live it as he or she sees fit. This not only includes some of the elements discussed under Freedom and Leisure, but also the opportunity to exercise one’s talents, skills, and abilities to their maximum. This value is sometimes opposed to Equality: since some people have greater native talent than others, they may need greater opportunities for self-expression than others.

- WORK is not merely joyless drudgery: it is a means of creative expression, too, and a way to develop one’s talents. At the same time, work is an instrumental value, since the paycheck that comes from work allows access to many other good things in life.

**An ultimate value?**

Some philosophers suggest that there is one value that can be considered primary: the wellspring from which all other values flow. That value is HAPPINESS. It meets our criteria for being a value: an abstract concept commonly recognized as good. Happiness qualifies as an intrinsic, rather than an instrumental value: we want happiness for its own sake, not for any other benefits it may lead us to. In fact, it seems reasonable to believe that every instrumental value
ultimately leads to happiness: work, leisure, property, beauty, freedom — all of these, regardless of how else they may affect human life, increase happiness for somebody.

You won’t find happiness on the list above, however. Its nature as a primitive (in the sense of “simple” or “deep-rooted”) value makes it too elusive for Lincoln-Douglas debate. Everything potentially increases happiness for somebody, somewhere. As we will find in the next chapter, though, happiness can be used as a standard for evaluating which values should have priority in a given context.

One distinction is worth noting here: Happiness does not necessarily mean “pleasure.” The Hedonists were a group of ancient Greek and Roman philosophers who believed that pleasure was the greatest good. But their definition of the word “pleasure” went far beyond mere sensation to include the satisfaction of doing good works, of promoting the well-being of the community, and so forth. In other words, their view of “pleasure” was quite similar to our understanding of “happiness.” Nowadays, we tend to call those who live for sensual excitement “hedonists,” which is a distortion of the philosophical concept. The (capital-H) Hedonists would doubtless be as dismayed by the activity of modern (small-h) hedonists as we are.

**Quasi-values**

There are a number of abstract concepts which are, strictly speaking, not values. Nevertheless, they represent ideal goods similar to values. We will call these concepts “quasi-values” here (there is no standard terminology). It is important that the debater know the difference between true values and these quasi-values; in many cases, success in the debate will hinge on subtle distinctions between the classes of abstract concepts.

**RIGHTS** are not values. One reason is that rights are not universally recognized as good. For example, many people believe that there is a natural right to abortion for women; but few people would argue that abortion is good. Indeed, many ardent sponsors of abortion rights would concede that abortion is nasty. Additionally, rights tend to be much more narrowly defined than values — rights are usually quite specific, while values are broad.

The fact that our culture has decided something is precious enough to confer a right to it usually suggests, however, that there is a core value imbedded within the right. Thus the value of free expression has led to Constitutionally-guaranteed rights of free press and association. These rights, in turn, are limited by other rights: for instance, libel laws limit the right of a free press. But the limits on these specific rights do not always mean we cherish the notion of the core value — free expression — any less. Society can revoke even the most basic rights under extreme circumstances: for example, though we believe in an inalienable right to life, our government nevertheless will execute convicts guilty of heinous crimes. Neither the right to life nor its termination by the state alters the value of Life.

**PRIVILEGES** and **DUTIES** are not values. Privileges can be thought of as weak forms of rights: one may exercise a privilege, or not, as one wishes, if certain circumstances are met. But privileges are considered less important than rights, and their exercise is more easily revoked. For example, the privilege of voting is denied to the young, to the mentally incompetent, and to those who have been convicted of a felony. The privilege of serving in elected office is limited (depending on the office) by a number of restrictions and qualifications. As with rights,
privileges usually have values associated with them, but they are not values in and of themselves. Duties can be thought of as obligations on the part of individuals or the community. Those committed to a duty must either perform an action, or refrain from acting, based on the behavior of others or of themselves. These duties are usually linked to corresponding privileges and rights, but some derive from legal, moral, or ethical codes. Duties, like privileges, are not absolute; overriding concerns may nullify the duty. Some examples: the right of a free press generally bars the government from prior censorship of publications (the government has the duty to respect the press), but this duty is waived to allow censorship if a magazine plans to publish troop positions in wartime. The privilege of voting implies a moral duty that the voter vote wisely, after due consideration of issues and candidates. Physicians are often considered to have the duty to treat the injured in an emergency, regardless of whether they are able to pay; such a duty derives from a professional code of ethics. As with rights and privileges, the existence of a duty usually suggests that a value is nearby, but the duty is not itself the value.

NEEDS are not values. One of the hallmarks of values is that they are not coerced: even though society as a whole may believe that justice is an important, abstract good, each person has the opportunity to accept or reject that value. There is no such opportunity with needs. If you need something, it is foolish to consider whether you ought to want it. Conversely, then, needs do not have to be good. A heroin addict may need his drug, but that does not imply that heroin is a good. Like the other factors we have discussed, needs are intimately related to values, despite not being them. A drowning woman may need oxygen — and quickly! — but the need is not identical to the value, Life, which is threatened here. A man lost in the jungle, pursued by tigers, may need to be rescued; but the value here is not rescuing, but Security. Needs tend to be narrow and specific; values, as we have seen, are broad and general.

Finally, POLICIES are not values. Policies — the general rules and laws we live by — are the products of our most cherished beliefs. In other words, values generate policies; values must be recognized and accepted before we can embody them in laws. For example, only after the notion of equality of all persons regardless of race was accepted as a value did we pass the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which provided for equal protection under the law.

This discussion of values still leaves one important question unresolved: faced with a multitude of values, all “good,” how can we ever know which ones are most important in a given situation? Choosing between competing sets of values is the essence of Lincoln-Douglas debate. One of the duties of the debater is to advance a system that organizes values into a pattern of priority; such a system is called a value hierarchy. Value hierarchies will be discussed at length in the next chapter.
Weighing values

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the essence of valuation is making decisions on the relative worth of things. As guidelines to this practice, we appeal to abstract concepts of good, known as values. But often, seemingly attractive values will be in conflict with each other. Therefore, before we can resolve the relative worth of substantive issues, we must first decide the relative priority to be given to the values underlying those issues.

This is done by establishing a value hierarchy. A hierarchy is a sorted list in which items are placed by priority. A value hierarchy is a list of values arranged by priority.

In Lincoln-Douglas debate, you will often be called upon not only to identify the values implied by the topic but also to show how one value outweighs another. You will select a priority based on the context of the resolution. Nobody uses the same value hierarchy at all times, for all circumstances. Therefore, in the debate round, you will need to defend the hierarchy you have chosen to use. You will argue that the values you place highest on the list are, in this context, closer to ultimate goodness than those placed lower on the list.

Given that there are dozens of potential values, and uncountable possible contexts in which they come into play, you are not expected to prepare a sorted list showing every conceivable value and its relative worth for every situation. And even if you could prepare such a list, the time limits of Lincoln-Douglas debate would not give you an opportunity to present it. Usually, when you use hierarchies, you will offer a general rule for deciding between values — and the rule can be applied as needed to decide which values deserve priority, on a case-by-case basis.

Let’s consider a situation where you are arguing that coerced medical experimentation on human beings is immoral. You choose to support Life as a value. You claim that life is so precious that it is wrong to endanger it by subjecting a patient to a risky, experimental procedure without the patient’s consent. Your opponent, however, chooses Progress as her value; she argues that waiting for patients sufficiently desperate to consent to dangerous experiments means that the progress of medical science will be stifled. You appeal to medical ethics (specifically, the Hippocratic Oath) as the basis for a value hierarchy. “First, do no harm” is the very first command of the Hippocratic Oath. You then argue that, since the rules of medical ethics are clearly applicable to the debate topic, and since the oath places first priority on the well-being of the patient, then we must esteem Life as superior to Progress in this circumstance, and therefore reject coerced experiments as morally wrong.

This example shows two important points. First, the particular rule you use to establish the value hierarchy may be the key issue in a debate. Many debates will narrow down to hierarchy issues rather than values. Secondly, you must be prepared to defend the hierarchy rule (or set of rules) as appropriate to the subject discussed. In the example, it was obvious that the rules of medical ethics have relevance to medical problems, but often you will use more general rules that may (or may not) apply to the specific situation.
Every Lincoln-Douglas debate topic will touch on a historical legacy of ethical and moral rules which could become the basis for developing value hierarchies. It would be futile to try to list those here. On the other hand, a number of philosophers have considered how values can be weighed: they have produced sets of general rules which are applicable to many situations. Through research, you should become aware of the philosophical background specific to the value topic you will be debating. Often, though, the topic-specific rules will be narrow instances of more general hierarchy rules. Some of the potential general rules you can use for building a value hierarchy are listed below.

A few warnings before you take a look at the list. First, many of the rules contradict each other: one will suggest a certain ordering of values, while another will reverse that ordering completely. Don’t get confused: in a debate round, use the justification which advances your case. Most of the rules take one of two forms: either instrumental values ought to be preferred, or intrinsic values ought to be preferred. And, as with the value list in Chapter Two, the list below is not intended to be complete. Finally, as with so much of philosophical discussion, the terms used here may not be the same terms you find in the course of reading and research to encompass the same concepts.

**Absolutism**

This rule suggests that the best way to determine the superiority of one value over another is by giving precedence to the one with greater ultimate worth. According to this precept, values that have intrinsic goodness would have priority over values with only instrumental goodness. Of course, in a debate, you would then have to defend the value you propose as innately good, while downgrading the value your opponent prefers as merely instrumentally good.

Consider this example: you are arguing that government has the moral right to transfer wealth from rich people to the poor. Poverty implies lack of food, shelter, and medical care. You defend Life as your value, saying that poverty threatens the lives of the poor. Since transfer payments preserve the lives of the poor, they are morally justified. Your opponent promotes Property as his value, saying that robbing from the rich violates their legitimate control over their own money. Fortunately, you also have defended a value hierarchy based on absolutism. In your rebuttal, you point out to the judge that Life is an intrinsic value: we treasure the life of everyone, rich or poor. On the other hand, Property is only a instrumental value: we esteem property because it can be used to bring happiness, but we condemn the miser who does nothing with his property. Since your innate value has priority over your opponent’s instrumental value, you ought to win the debate.

**The Categorical Imperative**

Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher of the Eighteenth Century. He attempted to derive a system of moral behavior based on reason alone. Ultimately, he classified the motivations behind human actions as a variety of imperatives, or principles. Kant’s notion was to produce a universal rule for human behavior: a **categorical imperative** (using “categorical” in its sense of “absolute or without exception”). Thus, the phrase “categorical imperative” can be considered equivalent to “universal moral principle.” The result of his investigation: the
categorical imperative subsists in actions which we would be willing to have universally established as law. That is, we can justify actions if we believe that all persons ought to act the same way under similar conditions.

The rule of the categorical imperative implies many corollaries. One of these is that people must be treated as if they had value in themselves, rather than as a means to an end. Another is that the motivation of any act determines its moral worth: if the act is intended out of good will, then — even if it has unpleasant side-effects — it must be given a higher moral standing than an act stemming from baser motivations. Why? Because we want other people to act benevolently toward us, we must act with good will toward them, regardless of any inconvenience to ourselves.

Let us pretend you are debating against the resolution “Violence is a moral response to oppression.” Your opponent, supporting the topic, defends the value Quality of Life and argues that, through violence, an oppressed people can enhance the quality of their lives. You defend pacifism (Peace as a value), and argue its superiority through the Categorical Imperative: violence uses the enemy as means, because it treats them as targets to be injured, not persons of equal humanity; and violence is not an act of good will. But pacifism, the rejection of violence, does not use people as means; therefore, by the categorical imperative, we must give Peace a higher standing on the moral scale than Quality of Life, even if this requires rejecting a desirable good. That means the resolution should be rejected.

It is possible that you can use the categorical imperative as a value in a debate round, rather than as a rule for generating value hierarchies. This is especially applicable when the resolution being debated contains a term such as moral, for we have seen that Kant’s position concentrates on moral assessments of human actions.

**Consequentialism / Pragmatism**

Under the doctrine of pragmatism (sometimes called consequentialism), things are assigned priority based on their effects. Thus, values should be ranked according to the merits of their instrumental worth. This is a direct rejection of the Absolutist hierarchy standard presented earlier.

It’s easy to see why relying on pragmatism has appeal. After all, how can one assess the true “worth” of something that has only intrinsic value? We’ve seen, for example, that Happiness is a value with only intrinsic goodness. Faced with two alternatives, both of which could conceivably raise or lower the happiness of people subjected to them, how could we choose? We can’t hook somebody up to a meter or monitor in a science laboratory and say, “Aha, this fellow has a happiness reading of only 23, and the earlier patient had 98.”

In contrast, focusing on the results of actions and beliefs does allow us to assess their particular merits. Let us consider a debate round where you are arguing that government restrictions on news-gathering during peacetime are undesirable. Your opponent suggests that news gathering undermines our trust in our leaders, hampering their ability to govern; for the sake of (value) the Collective Good we should limit newsmakers’ access to government leaders. You choose the value Knowledge, and you argue that without understanding of what our government officials are doing, we can fall into tyranny. Using the pragmatism doctrine to establish your hierarchy, you point out that promoting Knowledge in this way enhances responsible government, democratic decision-making, and accountability. (You probably would even argue that, without the media’s ability to ferret out government corruption, we will believe
our officials to be honest when they are not, and that shielding corrupt officials undermines your opponent’s own Collective Good value — but that’s something we’ll discuss in Chapter Six.) Once again, strategic use of a hierarchy doctrine can win the debate.

**Divine Injunction**

This hierarchy rule is rarely used, but it may be appropriate for some cases. Basically, divine injunction means, “God says so.” You will use the doctrines of a particular religion, or quotations from the Bible, or statements of an acknowledged religious leader to support placing one value over another.

It is likely that the divine injunction option is overlooked because the debater may be forced to defend a particular religion against attacks, and many of us are embarrassed to do so. This seems especially true of public-school students, whose secular education makes them uncomfortable defending religious values. As a debater, you have a responsibility to overcome this shyness. Even if one ignores the religious content, the Bible is a great source of wisdom, and the values it espouses have been essential to the development of Western culture.

**The Golden Rule**

“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Popular folklore asserts the Golden Rule — or something close to it — is known in every human society as a rule of proper behavior. In general, the Golden Rule serves as a restatement of Kant’s categorical imperative, discussed above. Use the Golden Rule in debate rounds if you think the judge may be inexperienced and perhaps bored by deep philosophical arguments; use the categorical imperative if you wish think the judge would prefer a more formal approach.

Relying on common platitudes may be risky. When using the Golden Rule in a debate, be prepared to respond if your opponent challenges it as too informal. Use some time in the rebuttal to defend it as a variation of the categorical imperative, with a rich history of support by philosophers.

**Maslow**

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) developed a formal theory to explain people’s motives and actions. His central argument was that every human has an innate set of fundamental needs, and that humans act in order to satisfy these needs. Moreover, these fundamental needs are sorted into a definite hierarchy of five levels.

The primary set of needs in Maslow’s hierarchy consist of the physical needs for survival, such as food, drink, air, and sleep. At the next higher level are the needs of safety and security — freedom from immediate threats. The third level consists of social needs, such as friendship, love, and a sense of belonging. On the fourth level is esteem: both the respect we get from others and self-esteem. Finally, the summit of the hierarchy is the need for self-actualization. By this, Maslow meant the drive to develop skills and talents, to act as one wishes, and to explore one’s destiny.

Maslow argued that, the higher up on the needs hierarchy we go, the more the needs represent the ultimate in human nature. We share physical and survival needs with all living
things; even pet animals have third level needs; but only humans can self-actualize. He also noted that unmet lower needs thwart our attending to higher needs. A drowning poet doesn’t fret about the difficulty of composing her next sonnet (a part of the creative aspect of level 5 needs), but upon her imminent death from lack of air (a level 1 need).

In other writings, Maslow takes a slightly different approach. He admits that his taxonomy of needs is not sufficient in itself to decide the merits of human values. He suggests an empirical method that could derive a system of values: locate as many persons as possible who are the best of humanity — those who consistently operate at the level of self-actualization — and survey them to find out what their values are. Since the best people can be presumed to have the best values, we could therefore derive a list of the values to be given priority.

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs can be of immense value to the Lincoln-Douglas debater. The need quasi-values can be readily converted into true values. For example, the value of Life correlates to level-one physical needs; Peace, Privacy, and Security to safety needs; Family and Community to the level-three social needs; Individualism and Integrity (and maybe Knowledge and Freedom) as part of the esteem needs; and Quality of Life and Self-Actualization (and possibly Free Expression and Beauty) at the pinnacle of the list.

Let’s try an example: you want to argue that educational programs targeted to gifted students are more important than equality of educational opportunity for all students. You note that core programs help everybody, serving the value of the Community; this correlates to level three, social needs, on Maslow’s hierarchy. But advanced programs for elite students promotes the Self-Actualization value, linked to Maslow’s level five. Since level five needs are superior, we can infer that Self-Actualization ought to have priority, and that elite programs are more important.

Ah, but your opponent is crafty! She points out that failure to attend to lower needs on Maslow’s hierarchy blocks satisfying the higher ones. Thus, if we ignore the social need of core education, we thwart the self-actualization of all students. So the more basic need, and the matching value of Community, must be given priority. Suddenly, your position in the debate looks much weaker; you may well lose this round.

**Natural Law**

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Thomas Jefferson’s words in the Declaration of Independence reflect a philosophical concept that had gained popularity during his lifetime: the idea that certain rights were grounded in nature. The values associated with these rights, then, ought to be given priority, because those values are the common heritage of all people; values which are not derived from natural law should be considered less important, because they are artificial conventions. In a debate round, you could support the argument that capital punishment is morally wrong by showing that capital punishment threatens the value of Life, even though it supports, say, Security. But since life is a right derived from natural law, this makes Life (the value) superior to the notion of Security. Therefore capital punishment ought not be permitted, since it reverses the proper ordering of values.
**Relativism**

This standard for weighing values argues that priority should be given to the value which is most fundamental. Where one value depends on another, we obviously must give preference to the independent one. This rule, then, is another variation on the effects-based, or “instrumental values are best,” position. As an example, you wish to argue that euthanasia (mercy killing) is unjustified for terminally ill people. Your opponent says that suffering destroys the Quality of Life for the terminally ill, and therefore they should be released from their misery. Not so, you respond: euthanasia destroys the value, Life. And without life, we cannot have any other values, including Quality of Life. So we must give precedence to Life as a value, and agree that euthanasia is not justified.

**Social Contract / General Will**

We owe this concept to John Locke (1632-1704), a British philosopher. He began his analysis by admitting that certain human rights derived from natural law. But, left in a state of nature, without government, some unscrupulous people would inevitably try to deprive other people of their rights. Life in the natural state is destined to be “nasty, brutish, and short.” Locke therefore concluded that governments are created to defend the rights of citizens. Locke’s central parable was of a bargain — a contract — between citizens and their government: “We will surrender a portion of our freedom,” the citizens say, “in order to gain protection from one another’s lower impulses.” Thus, Locke concluded, government derives its legitimacy from the will of those governed by it, and that government must strive to minimize its restrictions on the liberty of its citizens. If the system works as it should, the only liberty denied the citizens is the liberty to hurt one another. If the system fails, then citizens have the right to overthrow their government. This makes the social contract, as an element of stability for human relations, instrumentally good: a value in itself.

A related view was expressed by the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rosseau (1712-1778). He also argued that government arose by individuals surrendering their sovereignty to guarantee a quality of life not available in the natural state. The social order, according to Rosseau, is the product of the “general will” of the people, and it is through society that people realize their ambitions. But Rosseau rejects the notion of a natural law. Since there are no natural rights, the social order is created because it has pragmatic benefits, but it is not innately desirable and is not a value. For example, governments can be representative of the peoples’ will and still promote bad causes; the case of Nazi Germany comes to mind.

By rejecting the idea of natural rights, Rosseau also suggests that governments, once formed, can never be deprived of sovereignty. Under Locke’s social contract, a government that infringes on legitimate freedoms of the citizens loses its legitimacy and can be supplanted; under Rosseau’s conception, there are no such innate freedoms, so a government cannot lose its legitimacy. The only alternative is to revert to the anarchy of the state of nature. Rosseau’s conception of the relations between the social order and citizens is usually called the doctrine of the general will to distinguish it from Locke’s social contract.

In arguing against the proposition that suspension of civil rights is justified during a military emergency, you could choose to support to the value of Freedom over that of Security. The social contract doctrine supports this hierarchy, because infringing on citizens’ freedom destroys the legitimacy of the government, regardless of a military emergency. On the other
hand, if you were arguing in favor of the proposition, you could use Rosseau’s general will doctrine to place Security over Freedom: the government retains its legitimacy even if Freedom is limited, and Security has the benefit of preserving both the government and its citizens, so the best instrumental approach would be to give priority to Security.

**Subjectivism**

The doctrine of subjectivism denies that any value has absolute, innate worth. Instead, the goodness of a particular value depends on how it is perceived by the society. This rule acknowledges that, from time to time, a culture may shuffle the priority of values or adopt new ones. Subjectivism suggests that we may obtain a hierarchy of values by asking average citizens what they prefer — possibly even polling the public about their priorities. We concede that values are what are perceived as good, so, in the face of changing public perceptions, we should ask the public which values are better than others.

Thus, in supporting the topic that candidates for elective office ought to be judged on the basis of their character, you may support the value of Integrity. Your opponent suggests that corrupt or immoral politicians still can govern effectively and can benefit the population, so she supports Progress as a value. You could then point out that a recent poll of voters shows they are more concerned about a candidate’s private behavior than his or her proposed government policies. By invoking subjectivism, you could then argue that Integrity ranks higher than Progress.

There are some pitfalls in this approach. A recurrent theme in philosophy, especially in discussions of values and morals, concerns the division between the realm of *is* and the realm of *ought*. Most philosophers concede that the two domains are separate when we speak of the behavior of humans: no matter how people do behave, or what they do believe, we cannot necessarily draw conclusions about how they ought to behave or believe. The stark truth is that people sometimes behave poorly. They act out of insincere or ignoble motivations. They want things which they ought not to want. We would like to believe that values represent things that are not merely desired, but desirable — that is, worthy and good in their own right. Subjectivism muddles the realms of *is* and *ought* by assuming that how people rank values (an *is* question) accurately reflects how values should be ranked (an *ought* question). Indeed, the fact that these subjective rankings change so much as each new poll is released suggests that the true worth of the value is not being determined. The debater wishing to use a subjectivist approach probably can respond to this argument only by saying that values have no absolute worth, or that values do not exist apart from the priority society gives them.

**Utility / Utilitarianism**

These related doctrines both conceive of an instrumental role for values: results count, not innate goodness. The British philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) proposed the principle of *utility*, which uses happiness as its standard. If human happiness is taken as the greatest good, then acts are moral if they promote human happiness. Of several possible courses of action, the one which increases the sum of human happiness the most should be given preference.
John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), esteemed as one of England’s greatest philosophers, enlarged upon Bentham’s concept. His doctrine of utilitarianism acknowledges that happiness may be the ultimate personal value, but since individual tastes differ, it is not at all clear how a course of action may affect the happiness of everyone who may be affected by it. And it is undeniably true that something that makes one less happy now may produce greater happiness ultimately; for example, students find attending high school a chore, but attendance is eventually rewarded with a diploma that unlocks all sorts of future possibilities. So, unlike Bentham, Mill acknowledged greater and lesser forms of pleasure: the sum of human happiness has both an amount (quantitative) dimension and a degree (qualitative) dimension. Utilitarianism is usually summed up as promoting “the greatest good for the greatest number.” Note the difference: greater GOOD, rather than greater HAPPINESS; this reflects the idea that delaying happiness now may be a positive good, if it results in more happiness later. Mill contends that actions which advance the development of the individual most readily increase the complex sum of human happiness. For that reason, maximizing liberty is central to his viewpoint.

Utilitarianism is probably the most often used standard for establishing a value hierarchy. The debater argues that preferring one value over another will maximize total benefits for humanity. Thus, if supporting the resolution that disobedience to unjust laws is proper, you could argue that the values of Individualism and Majority Rule are in conflict, but that — since the law supported by the majority is unjust — giving higher priority to Individualism is likely to lead to reform, maximizing human happiness in the long run.
**Chapter 4**

**FUNDAMENTAL THEORY OF LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE**

**Types of Resolutions**

Academic debate is a method of presenting arguments on both sides of an issue before an impartial critic: the judge. He or she will weigh what has been said and, after the round is over, decide which side did the better job of debate. In part, this is an attempt to discover the truth. But in high schools, the greater importance of debate is in training students to advocate the side to which they have been assigned, and to allow them to investigate important issues in the course of research and competition.

In order to allow all contestants a fair chance in the debate round, a single topic is announced to all contestants before debate begins. This topic is called the **resolution** or the **proposition**. It takes the form of a sentence, beginning with the word “resolved.” Regardless of the type of debate, the Affirmative side is expected to uphold the resolution as basically true; the Negative has the duty to deny that the resolution is true.

There are three types of resolutions which could be debated. Propositions of fact deal with what **is**; propositions of value deal with what we should **believe**; and propositions of policy deal with what we should **do**. As we explore these, we will notice that debate has certain similarities with other types of persuasive communication in the “real world” outside the classroom.

**PROPOSITIONS OF FACT.** It seems silly to many new debaters that “facts” could be worthy of debate. In some cases, that would be true: the topic “Resolved: that the sun came up at 6:03 AM today” could be settled by consulting a newspaper or almanac, without any persuasion being necessary. But many “facts” are actually human interpretations based on incomplete data. Sometimes we don’t have all the evidence, and we know it’s unlikely that more evidence will show up later, but we still have to make a decision. Under these circumstances, arguing the merits of both sides of the issue — debate — is worthwhile and productive.

Our legal system spends most of its time debating what we would call propositions of fact. A customer claims to have found a dead mouse in her bottle of root beer; is the Fizzy-Soda Bottling Company negligent? Is Mr. X guilty of embezzling funds from his company? In each court case, lawyers for the prosecution (or for the plaintiff) argue the Affirmative side of the case, and defense lawyers are Negatives. Factual disputes are also important in such areas as science and medicine: Does taking large doses of vitamin C prevent cancer? There are some researchers advocating each side.

Fact propositions usually concern whether something exists, whether something is true, or whether one thing causes another. Factual disputes are either very simple or very difficult to settle. For this reason, it is rare to see a fact resolution in academic debate.

**PROPOSITIONS OF VALUE.** Value resolutions assess the merits of things, either by comparing them to a certain standard or by comparing them to each other to determine which is better. The resolution **Resolved: Liberty is more precious than law** asks us to compare two
concepts, weighing them against each other. Value propositions are used in value debate, such as Lincoln-Douglas debate.

The models for discussions of values are many. Advertisers exhort you to “buy new improved Swisky-Brisky because it gets your pans cleaner than the leading brand.” Here effectiveness is used as a standard to compare things. A clergyman condemns Playboy magazine as immoral; here morality is used as a standard to judge the absolute worth of things. A candidate for the Senate tells prospective voters, “I’m for a strong defense, and my opponent is weak on defense. Because national security is important, you should prefer me.” In this case, a value—Security—is being used as a standard to decide between two people.

Note that value questions also imply some factual issues. Is the Senate candidate really on the record as favoring a strong national defense? Does Swisky-Brisky really make your dishes sparkle? Such side issues are important to the overall credibility of the argument.

**PROPOSITIONS OF POLICY.** Policy questions concern actions—what we should do as individuals, or as a community, or as a government. Decisions of this sort are made by everyone, every day. Your family must decide whether to buy a new car or to pay the $800 needed to repair the engine on your current one. Tomorrow, you may have to decide whether to save or spend the money you earned from your summer vacation—and, if you spend it, what should you buy? Unlike factual topics, which either require a yes-or-no answer, and unlike value topics, which boil down to a choice between a limited number of preferences, policy questions can involve a wide variety of alternatives.

Policy resolutions are addressed in high-school and college policy debate. Here, the topics provide a specific subject matter but still leave plenty of room for different approaches. Consider the proposition Resolved: that the U.S. jury system should be significantly changed. Someone advocating change could propose to expand the grand jury’s powers or size, or to abolish it altogether; to eliminate jury trials in favor of judge trials, or to ban judge trials and require juries in all civil and criminal cases; to extend juries to military trials or to juvenile justice proceedings; or thousands of other variations.

Policy questions also have value and factual issues within them. Let’s return to the dilemma about saving or spending your vacation money. Factual questions arise: how much money? How much interest would you earn in a year if you saved it in the bank? How much does that new computer game cost? Value questions also arise: Is it right to spend this money now rather than save it for college? Is there a moral obligation to donate some of my income to charity? Fact and value questions are present in every policy decision, whether in debate or in real life.

**Analyzing Value Resolutions**

The resolution is the centerpiece of Lincoln-Douglas debate. Since the resolution determines what is the common ground to be discussed by the two sides, it is essential that every term be inspected carefully to determine its implications. Pay particular attention to the meaning of specific words, and watch how the terms relate to each other.

In policy debate, we are accustomed to seeing the word “should” in every resolution. That function is usually filled in value debate by either the word “ought” or the word “is” (or another inflected form of the verb “to be”). OUGHT suggests moral obligation, propriety, or
correctness of attitude. IS — and its variant forms — will always be used with another word that makes a similar evaluative judgment as OUGHT. Some value resolutions used in the past suggested that human genetic engineering is immoral; that the U.S. is justified in aiding undemocratic governments; and that the individual rights of privacy are more important than any other Constitutional right. A resolution with “is” could conceivably be a proposition of fact, but placing a term which forces a value judgment into the resolitional sentence anchors the resolution firmly in value debate territory.

In general, there are four different types of resolutions used in value debate. Various debate authorities assign them different names. The jargon is not really important; what is important is that you understand the functional difference between the types of propositions.

ABSOLUTE or VALUE JUDGMENT resolutions suggest a single subject and propose an evaluation of it. The subject of the resolution will be assessed as either good or bad in itself. The resolution, “Violent rebellion is a just response to oppression,” for instance, asks us to decide the absolute morality of violent rebellion. “Resolved: The use of animals in scientific testing is unjustified,” demands that we assess animal testing as proper or improper. Note that the subject being evaluated is not necessarily a value itself — although it may be. Even though this type of resolution is called an absolute one, that doesn’t restrict debaters to using absolute (or intrinsic) values in their analysis of the topic. The animal testing resolution, for example, would probably have both debaters arguing over whether animal testing improves human health and well-being, clearly an instrumental analysis of the subject.

COMPARATIVE or VALUE CONFLICT resolutions propose two subjects and ask the debaters to choose between them. “Honesty is superior to loyalty when the two are in conflict” and “Competition is of greater value than cooperation” are two sample resolutions here. Comparative resolutions are somewhat more likely to match pure values as subjects. Our first example weighs honesty against loyalty, and both of them are likely to be considered values. The focus of debate rounds under such resolutions is often on the hierarchy rule — the method of assigning rankings to the values — rather than on the values themselves.

QUASI-FACT resolutions mimic the propositions of fact we discussed earlier. A good example is “Resolved: that protectionism is a positive trade policy for the United States.” Without the word ought in the resolution, and without terms such as moral, ethical, justified, proper, and so on, it isn’t clear that we are supposed to be dealing with values in approaching this topic. Probably the debaters could analyze this resolution by comparing the merits of protectionism (such as preserving U.S. jobs by raising the price of imports) against the problems protectionism entails (such as the risk of triggering trade wars between nations). Of course, as we learned in the last chapter, the utilitarian effects of policies does link this topic to philosophical issues, but the connection is rather feeble. Most organizations which sponsor Lincoln-Douglas debate are aware of the problems posed by quasi-fact resolutions and will avoid them.

QUASI-POLICY resolutions have some characteristics of the topics of policy debate. Consider the resolution, “Increased restriction of immigration into the United States is justified.” The word increased presents problems here. It suggests that the Affirmative debater is not
arguing about beliefs — the normal realm of value debate — but about action, the realm of policy debate. Some coaches might suggest their debaters approach this as a policy topic entirely, presenting a plan and advantages stemming from it. An Affirmative debater trying to analyze this from a value perspective would be shouldering unique burdens: he or she might have to prove that certain values are threatened by new immigration while being compatible with the immigrants we already have.

This is a worst-case scenario. Usually, quasi-policy resolutions could be analyzed as policy questions but are equally or more amenable to value debate analysis. Examine this one, used in NFL competition in the spring of 1991: “Resolved: that the pursuit of scientific knowledge ought to be limited by a concern for societal good.” If we take the word limited to require additional limits beyond those already placed on scientific research, this is a policy resolution. But if we adopt a more conventional meaning, where limited requires some limits — possibly those under which scientific research already operates — then we are in the value debate realm. In the latter sense, the resolution is functionally equivalent to “Resolved: that societal good is more important than unlimited pursuit of scientific knowledge,” or something along that line.

Another quasi-policy resolution, “Resolved: that the primary duty of government ought to compensate assistance for its disadvantaged citizens,” could be analyzed as a policy question. If government really accepted that this was its primary duty, then responsible governments would have a far different domestic policy than they do today; so an Affirmative debater could argue that the topic implies a change in action, requiring policy debate rules. But the resolution does not expressly state that government policy should be changed to focus on the aiding the disadvantaged. The Affirmative would also be free to argue for the benefits of policies which are already in place. The real issue is not whether government policy is meeting its goal, but whether we should believe that the basic goal of government ought to be aiding the needy. Like most other quasi-policy questions, then, this one could be construed as a policy topic but is better addressed as a value resolution.

**Presumption**

What does it take to persuade you that something is true? Most of us have some natural skepticism. When we read the headline, “ELVIS REBORN AS GUITAR-PLAYING KANGAROO, SIGNS RECORDING CONTRACT” on a supermarket tabloid, we do not automatically accept this as factual.

This has implications for any contest of persuasion. When a judge is assessing a round of debate, he or she will hear claims from both the Affirmative and Negative sides. Should one side be given preference over the other? What if the debating is evenly balanced — who should win? Neither one of the debaters would be happy to know the round was a tie. Should we give some advantage to one side or the other, just so that ties do not occur?

Such an advantage is called **presumption**. We presume that one side has a slight advantage over another. Presumption is naturally part of our lives. Because of our experience with animals, we automatically doubt stories about musical kangaroos until some proof is given — for instance, seeing the animal play “Heartbreak Hotel.” But sometimes presumption is artificial. In a courtroom, we artificially assume that a person accused of a crime is innocent at the start of the trial; we put aside any natural initial suspicion we may have about him. If the prosecution and the defense do an equally good job, the presumption of innocence we use in
such cases means that we must give the benefit of the doubt to the defendant. He will be released. This artificial presumption stems from our belief that it’s better for the guilty to go free than the innocent to be imprisoned.

In policy debate, presumption favors the Negative side. Any time we decide to change from our usual course of action, there is a risk that unexpected problems may arise. So any change involves a certain amount of risk. This tiny sliver of risk means that a policy debate judge will give preference to the Negative. To win in policy debate, the Affirmative must prove that the resolution (and their proposal for putting the resolution into effect) would be significantly better than what we have now: so much better that even the tiny sliver of risk would be outweighed by the benefits of change. If the Affirmative and Negative were equally persuasive in the debate, then that tiny sliver of risk would be enough to give the Negative side a victory.

But we can’t really apply this rule to value debate, because there is no risk involved. Value debate deals in what we should believe, not what we should do, and no risk arises unless we turn our beliefs into action. Assigning presumption according to risk just doesn’t apply here.

There are other natural ways to assign presumption. We could favor the side which is supporting the position that most people believe. For some topics, we would favor the Affirmative, and for others, the Negative. Or we could assign presumption based on the judge’s preconceptions of the resolution — so that presumption would shift from round to round, as a new judge replaces the old. Or, in those cases where an audience is listening to the debate, we could favor whichever side has the greater support of the audience at the start of the round.

It’s obvious that all these proposals have severe flaws. Under most resolutions, it’s not easy to tell which side “most people” would favor; generally, the clash in the debate involves values which have had widespread support throughout our culture, throughout history. Basing presumption on judge preferences is also undesirable — we would prefer our judges to be impartial critics of argumentation who discard their prejudices before beginning to judge. But using judge preference to determine presumption flies in the face of impartiality, and not only encourages judges to retain their prejudices but even asks judges to render decisions based on them. Finally, assuming we could survey audience preferences before every round (and further assuming that each round would have an audience other than the judge), we must admit that most audiences attend because they are supporters of one debater of the other; their surveyed positions on the issues are more likely to reflect partiality for the contestants.

In Lincoln-Douglas debate, we probably have to abandon the idea of natural presumption and instead use an artificial presumption. Thus, we will decide to give a slight advantage in favor of one side over the other, not necessarily because it is right, but because it makes for better debate. It is widely (though not universally) accepted that Negatives should be granted the advantage of presumption in Lincoln-Douglas debate.

Why? There are several reasons. The first is laziness: Negatives have presumption in policy debate, and so — since we’re free to assign artificial presumption to either side — we might as well give it to the Negatives in L-D debate as well. This will avoid confusing judges who switch between the two types of debate from tournament to tournament.

A better reason deals with the nature of advocacy. The Affirmative side is responsible for gaining acceptance of the resolution. But a famous dictum of argumentation is that “he who asserts must prove.” It’s not enough merely to say that the resolution is a good idea; there must
be some sort of rationale to support this claim. Before a debate even begins, there is only one claim we are certain will be made, and that is the Affirmative’s claim that the resolution ought to be accepted. On the basis of that claim, then, we can decide that presumption ought to oppose the Affirmative side.

Consider this from another perspective: suppose that, instead of debating, the speakers just stood up in turn, said, “I have nothing to say,” and sat down again. Who ought to win this debate? Without any arguments, the round would have to be settled on the basis of pure presumption. And there is no reason given to accept the resolution as true. Admittedly, the Negative hasn’t said anything to oppose the resolution, but the Negative speaker could easily assert that the Affirmative, speaking first, hasn’t presented any arguments to be opposed. On the basis of “he who asserts must prove,” the lack of proof means that we cannot accept the resolution. Presumption says, “Vote Negative.”

**Burdens of Proof and Rejoinder**

As we have seen, the existence of presumption imposes a duty on the Affirmative. This duty is called the burden of proof. The Affirmative has the obligation to support the resolution with reasoning and evidence.

This is not as ominous as it sounds. We let the Affirmative speak first in the debate in order to present the best possible set of reasons — the Affirmative case — for accepting the resolution. And we allow the Affirmative the last speech in the debate to summarize the issues and to put the Affirmative arguments in their strongest possible context.

The Negative side of the debate also has its duties. The main obligation on the Negative speaker is called the burden of rejoinder, or sometimes the burden of clash. The Negative has the duty to disagree with what the Affirmative says. He or she does not have to object to all the Affirmative positions, but to at least one. As we will see in Chapter Six, this leaves the Negative with a wide range of options. However, a Negative speaker who talks only about irrelevancies must lose the debate, because he or she has not clashed with any of the Affirmative arguments.

The Negative also has a burden of proof: the duty to prove (with evidence and reasoning) the arguments he or she claims to be true. This is not the same as the burden of proof that the Affirmative has. But, just as the Affirmative cannot expect unsupported assertions to be accepted, neither can the Negative.

Let us look at how presumption and burden of proof interact to guide the judge’s decision. At the end of the round, the judge will weigh the arguments presented and the proof used to support these arguments. Where there is dispute over specific points, the judge will rely on the better supporting proof. Notice that this does not mean that the Affirmative case must be proven “beyond the shadow of a doubt,” or “beyond a reasonable doubt.” In every debate, the Negative should be able to create some doubt in the judge’s mind, so holding to this standard would make it impossible for the Affirmative to win! Instead, the judge will decide the debate’s issues based on the preponderance of the evidence presented. Most often, the balance of evidence and arguments will clearly fall to one side or the other. Only if all the arguments seem — as far as the judge can determine — equally balanced between the two sides will the judge have to turn to presumption. In this instance, since the Affirmative fails to show his or her position is superior, presumption dictates that the Negative ought to win.
One final warning here: some judges reject the reasoning behind artificial presumption. Many believe that the Affirmative has a natural burden of proof to support the resolution and the Negative an equal burden of proof to oppose it. Other experts believe that presumption can only apply in policy decisions, where there is a true element of risk. The National Forensic League seems to endorse this view; their 1992 Tournament Manual says “There are no prescribed burdens in L-D as there are in policy debate; no ‘burden of proof’ and no ‘presumption.’ There is no status quo” (page TA-2).

You are certainly within your rights as a debater to ask about a judge’s position on the presumption issue before the round begins. However, you may not need to do so. As we have seen, presumption only becomes important if the balance of arguments between Affirmative and Negative are at a virtual tie. But your strategy as a debater will not be to balance your opponent, but to do better than him or her — and you will use this strategy regardless of whether the judge accepts presumption. In practical terms, the judge who rejects presumption is probably slightly more likely to vote for a tie decision than one who accepts presumption. This should have no influence on how you debate (although it may make some of the decisions you get easier to understand).

**Stock Issues**

As with other forms of debate, Lincoln-Douglas has a set of recurring issues which seem to arise in every round. These are called the stock issues. Students who come from a policy debate tradition should be wary here: the L-D stock issues are not necessarily voting issues. In other words, there is likely to be dispute between Affirmative and Negative approaches on the stock issues — but the side that “wins” each of the stock issues does not necessarily win the debate.

There are four generally accepted stock issues in a round of Lincoln-Douglas debate. They can be considered as questions:

1. What is the proper definition for the object(s) of evaluation and the evaluative term? (The DEFINITION issue)
2. What value criterion is appropriate? (The VALUE CRITERION issue)
3. Is there a warrant for the resolution under the value criterion? (The WARRANT issue)
4. How do we decide between competing values? (The HIERARCHY issue)

**Definitions.** Recall our discussion of how to analyze value propositions. In each case, the topic asks us to assess the worth of something — or, in value conflict resolutions, the relative worth of two things. Those “things” being evaluated are called, in L-D jargon, objects of evaluation. So, in the resolution Resolved: that possession of nuclear weapons is immoral, the idea of “possession of nuclear weapons” is the object of evaluation.
It will not surprise you to learn that the word or phrase in the resolution which forces a value decision is called the **evaluative term**. In our example, the word “immoral” serves that purpose.

Debating without understanding what the debate is about is a futile effort. In most rounds of Lincoln-Douglas debate, both sides make an effort to specify precisely what they believe are the proper definitions of the critical terms of the resolution. Generally, the two opponents agree on interpreting the terms. But sometimes one side or the other tries to use an unusual definition for strategic advantage; a battle of competing definitions may erupt. For these reasons, the definition of key terms is a stock issue in Lincoln-Douglas debate.

**Value Criterion.** As we have seen throughout the last few chapters, Lincoln-Douglas is intimately concerned with questions of values. In the first speech of the debate, the Affirmative will advance a single value as the best guideline for evaluating the resolution. This becomes that Affirmative **value criterion**. In essence, the Affirmative speaker supports this value as a “yardstick” to measure all value claims — and, in particular, the value claim of the resolution. Of course, the Negative debater is free to argue that the value supported is an unworthy one, or even to suggest a different value be used instead. Deciding which of the suggested values ought to be used becomes the second stock issue in the round.

**Warrant.** When somebody presents a conclusion without giving an adequate defense of the chain of reasoning leading to that conclusion, we say that the conclusion is “unwarranted.” In rhetoric, when a speaker presents a logical and consistent chain of reasoning leading to a conclusion, we say that this reasoning constitutes a **warrant** for the result.

The warrant portion of a value debate concentrates on whether there are sufficient reasons to link the suggested value criterion to the resolution. Specifically, the Affirmative has to show that the value forms a linkage between the object of evaluation and the evaluative term in the proposition. Even if both debaters agree that a certain value is a desirable one, they may dispute over whether it is relevant to the resolution. For example, debating the resolution

*Resolved: human genetic engineering is immoral*, the Affirmative may advance the value of Beauty. In response, the Negative speaker may admit that Beauty has intrinsic worth, but he could deny that it is relevant to the topic. To carry the warrant issue, the Affirmative would have to show that human genetic engineering reduces the total of Beauty in the world, and that reducing Beauty constitutes immorality. This would be hard to do — the Affirmative debater would have had an easier time had she chosen a different value.

A few paragraphs ago, we said that the value criterion issue is like asking, “Is this value a good yardstick?” To extend the analogy, the warrant stock issue asks, “Is this value-yardstick appropriate for measuring this subject?” It is often the case that defense of the warrant is the most important part of the Affirmative case.

**Hierarchy.** In the last chapter, we discussed the importance of value hierarchies, so they should be familiar to you. Unless the resolution being debated is a value comparison proposition, it may not be clear how hierarchies come into play. Nevertheless, they do. As we will learn in Chapter Five, one very powerful Negative tactic is to propose a value different from the Affirmative’s, and to show that this value is damaged by the resolution — in other words, providing a warrant against the resolution based on that value. The judge would be presented with two competing values: one supported, and one damaged, by the resolution. It should be
clear that the winning of the round will be based on whichever value is more important — and, as you will recall, hierarchies (and hierarchy rules) are the tools used to decide that.

In many rounds, it is true, the debate is decided on one of the other stock issues. But the more sophisticated and competent the debaters in the round, the greater the likelihood that the hierarchy stock issue will be the critical one.

A Concluding Note About Jargon

We’ve learned a number of new terms in this chapter: presumption, evaluative term, quasi-policy resolution, warrant, and many others. Remember the concepts. But do not get into the habit of using these jargon words in the course of a round. One of the goals of Lincoln-Douglas debating is to make each round understandable to the intelligent lay member in the audience. Jargon words definitely hurt this effort at communication. Also, bear in mind that your opponent in the round may not be familiar with the terms — and if you use them, you may appear to be showing off in front of the judge. So, when necessary, use the specialized words when discussing strategy with your coach or teammates, but be very reluctant to use them before a judge. If it ever becomes absolutely necessary to use a jargon term during a debate, define it as you are using it, so that everyone will know what you mean when you refer to, for example, the object of evaluation.
**Chapter 5**

**THE AFFIRMATIVE CONSTRUCTIVE SPEECH**

*Planning Ahead*

As an Affirmative speaker, you have several key advantages over any Negatives you encounter. You get to speak first; that allows you to set the ground for the debate. You will be the first to isolate and lay claim to the key issues of the topic. And best of all, you can be fully prepared before the round begins. All speeches after the Affirmative Constructive (AC) will be reacting, in some what, to what the opponent said in the prior speech; they will have to improvised, at least in part. But the AC can be completely scripted in advance, and practiced to achieve smooth delivery and perfect six-minute timing.

Of course, you can benefit from these potential advantages only through careful preparation. You can choose strategically from all the possible case options only if you have conducted thorough research into the topic area. You can deliver a polished speech only if you prepare one in advance, and use in classroom practice against your teammates.

Don’t bother trying to research the perfect, unbeatable case. It does not exist. The resolutions we debate are chosen because of the wealth of supporting arguments and evidence on both sides of the topic. There is no case which is guaranteed to win every round. Once you accept that there will be flaws and weak areas in every case you develop, you can concentrate on locating these trouble spots and on defending them. A well-defended case, even if not perfect, can still be a regular winner.

Developing several cases is often critical to outstanding performance by your squad. Every debater from your school should develop his or her case, at least initially, without help from other debaters. In practice rounds, you will begin to see the diversity of the possible case approaches, and this may help you to perfect your own case. In fact, you may want to develop several Affirmative cases and use them in rotation at tournaments. After all, you may find yourself paired against a Negative from Ultimate High School in the first round, and then — perhaps after lunch — you may be going Affirmative against a debater from Ultimate High. Perhaps the two teammates discussed your case during the lunch hour; maybe, even, the debater you’re now meeting has a complete record of your first-round debate. In this circumstance, wouldn’t you like to be able to pull a completely different case from your briefcase? Wouldn’t that smug Negative be surprised? You bet.

*Haystacks and Needles*

Let’s assume that you found out the resolution four weeks ago: *Resolved, that interventionism is desirable for United States foreign policy.* You have had plenty of time to do some preliminary research, cut evidence, and discuss the issues with your teammates. Now it’s time to develop a complete Affirmative case. How?

The initial decision to make is whether to cover the entire potential topic area, or to focus on a limited number of concrete examples. This “haystack” approach, covering the entire topic area, allows you to present values and arguments with a greater emotional depth to them. U.S.
economic assistance to poor nations can save lives; U.S. military intervention against oppressors can end tyranny; U.S. educational aid can enrich the quality of life for American citizens as well as foreign students. The downside of the broad approach is that you may be forced to defend the entire topic, as well, following Negative speeches. The Negative will bring up instances where U.S. intervention was misguided, or prompted by evil motives, or unfortunate in its results. And, with only six minutes of Constructive speech to cover the entire U.S. record, you may be forced to rely on evidence that is very general in nature.

The alternative we can call the “needle” approach: a case targeted to specifics as sharply as the point of a needle. You will use one or two specific examples to show how U.S. intervention achieved limited policy ends. You may even begin by defining “interventionism” as only economic intervention, excluding military aid. This approach also has pitfalls, ones that match the strengths of the broad, “haystack” case. The Negative may argue that the examples you give are not representative of U.S. intervention, and propose counter examples. Or the Negative may argue that the examples are too narrowly defined to constitute support for the resolution as a whole. Or you may be pinned down with such narrow evidence that you lose all emotional impact in your arguments.

This just reinforces the statement made before: there are no perfect cases. Choose the approach you want for each case you develop based on the evidence you have available and your own personal preference. The case you write will be an extension of your personality: don’t attempt an uncomfortable approach just because you believe it will give you a strategic advantage.

Most resolutions will allow you plenty of options in approaching the topic. Consider Resolved: the primary duty of government is compensatory assistance for disadvantaged citizens. The Affirmative would be able to focus on a variety of (potentially) disadvantaged groups: women, racial minorities, the young, the elderly, and so on. Under the topic Resolved: that pursuit of scientific knowledge ought to be limited by a concern for societal good, the Affirmative could concentrate on numerous areas where scientific inquiry may have dubious worth: nuclear weapons research, experimentation using animal subjects, medical experiments on human prisoners, and many others.

Building the Prima Facie Case

The Constructive speech must sustain the burden of proof — it must be sufficient to overcome the presumption against the Affirmative position. The body of the speech — the Affirmative case — thus must provide good reasons for initial acceptance of the resolution. Such a presentation is called a prima facie case. Prima facie (PRY-mah FAY-shah) is a Latin phrase meaning “at first glance.” It means that the arguments are sufficient to convince a reasonable person before they are refuted. If the Affirmative presents a prima facie case, then the burden of proof for the first speech is fulfilled. If the case is not prima facie, then there is a “hole” somewhere in the logical arguments the Affirmative presents. All the Negative speaker needs to do to win the debate is point out this logical hole.

The easiest way for the Affirmative speaker to present a prima facie case is to address all the stock issues within the Constructive speech. Let us consider the resolution on interventionism for our example. The Affirmative debater is obliged to maintain that interventionism is a desirable foreign policy. Our debater, Myra, decides that a good case area
for this topic would be focusing on how U.S. dealings with the Soviet Union tended to promote democracy. In writing the case, she will first compare definitions of “interventionism” and “desirable,” to determine the meaning of the object of evaluation and evaluative term. Perhaps she decides that interventionism is “external relations between nations in order to promote desired internal reforms” — a definition that would exclude military action by the U.S. in another country. “Desirable” could be construed as “beneficial.”

Having chosen definitions, Myra considers the best value to support this case. Collective Good, Individualism, Majority Rule, Quality of Life, and Freedom all spring to mind. She chooses to make Freedom her value criterion. Our debater decides that Freedom is a broad enough concept that it can include most of the other values. She prepares arguments that Freedom is both innately and instrumentally good.

Next, she considers the warrant. Here, her choice of U.S./USSR relations will provide direction to the argument. America’s dealings with the Soviet Union were designed to produce internal reforms in the USSR, so they qualify as interventionism. The net effect was to increase Freedom, a value already shown to be good. Increasing Freedom (or any comparable good) is beneficial, so the U.S. action is “desirable” in the sense of the resolution. This shows a clear linkage between the value criterion and the resolution — that is, the resolution and the value rise and fall together.

This leaves the hierarchy stock issue. Myra has prepared arguments to support Freedom both on an absolute and a pragmatic basis, so she could choose almost any of the hierarchy rules we discussed in Chapter Three. She’ll take a safe route, and choose Utilitarianism as her hierarchy rule. Because Freedom increases the sum of all well-being in the world, it is high on the hierarchy list.

Myra has assembled all the arguments that will go into her Constructive speech. Now she will put them into order, supply evidence where needed, and type up a first draft.

**Definitions**

You will probably begin your research on a new topic by accumulating definitions of all the important terms of the resolution. This may mean making use of college-level general dictionaries, legal reference works, social science encyclopedias, and dictionaries of philosophy, as well as specialized reference works depending on the topic area chosen. Don’t expect all definitions to be identical. It’s quite likely that, for instance, “interventionism” would be defined far differently in a general dictionary than in a dictionary of political science or foreign relations.

In choosing definitions, you will want to select those which are reasonable, but which reduce the scope of what you need to defend as an Affirmative. For instance, Myra would reject a definition of “interventionism” that said, “any action by one nation which has an effect on another nation” as too broad to be useful. By this interpretation, a U.S. presidential election would count as intervention, since the election could conceivably have effects in other countries. If Myra used this definition, she would really be trying to support the resolution that all U.S. government action, anywhere, at any time, is desirable — and it would be extremely difficult to win such a debate.
While the Affirmative wants to minimize the exposure given by definitions, it’s also important to play fair. Definitions must be reasonable. Obscure interpretations of words in the resolution will be challenged by the Negative as invalid.

If you are very sure that you are using a reasonable, mainstream definition, then you probably do not have to provide a direct citation for the definition; that is, you do not have to quote the source directly in the text of the AC speech. But you will still want to prepare a defense of this definition with both evidence and reasoning, in case the Negative debater challenges it.

**Value Criterion**

When first analyzing a new resolution, take a moment to refer to the list of values presented in Chapter Two. Consider each one in turn, and ask yourself how each could relate to the resolution. Sometimes, the value will be irrelevant — for instance, there may not be much connection between Beauty and interventionist foreign policy. At other times, you will find surprising (and unexpected) connections appearing — some of which might be fruitful enough to develop into an Affirmative case.

Depending on the resolution, you may have many or few options in selecting a value criterion. However, since many of the values we have examined overlap, you may be able to use one value to encompass several others. It could be argued that Freedom, for example, includes Individualism, because only through liberty to control our lives can we truly be said to have individuality; similarly, Free Expression is another component of Freedom; and arguably, Privacy can be a component of Individualism, and so it falls under Freedom, too. Thus supporting Freedom as a core value allows you (if needed) to later claim other values which derive from the value criterion you have chosen.

At this point, you will also want to develop arguments to support your value as “good.” Briefly outline ways you could show this value is instrumentally and/or innately desirable. This will become important when developing your ideas into a formal case.

**The Warrant**

Debate about the warrant — the linkage between the resolution and the value criterion — will often be the most critical part of any Lincoln-Douglas round. How you develop the argument is dependent on the specific terms of the resolution, the value you have chosen to support, and the approach (haystack or needle) you are taking to the resolution. No hard-and-fast rules may be given.

However, one method that often works is to develop two lines of reasoning. The first will connect the evaluative term to the criterion; the second will connect the object of evaluation to the criterion. From that, we can deduce the link between the resolution as a whole and the value.

Let’s take an example, using the value judgment proposition *Resolved: war is immoral*. Obviously, WAR is the object of evaluation, and IMMORAL is the evaluative term. We’ll choose Life as the value criterion here.

Our first argument in establishing the warrant could be that **Anything casually endangering life is immoral**. We would support that with analysis and evidence, as appropriate. The second argument, of course, would be that **War casually endangers life**. Again, that would
need to be supported with proof. Together, these two arguments are sufficient to establish that (provided the value, Life, is truly important), the resolution is true.

Value conflict resolutions are only a little more complex. Consider Resolved: that competition is superior to cooperation. You will have begun by defining the objects of evaluation (COMPETITION and COOPERATION) and the evaluative term (SUPERIOR). Here, how you define the word SUPERIOR will determine the thrust of the debate: let’s say you decide that SUPERIOR means “better able to accomplish fixed goals.” Perhaps, then, you choose Progress as your core value. Your first argument will link the value to the evaluative term: Progress determines what is superior. You could adduce examples showing that the net effect of progress is to enable us to do routine activity faster, more efficiently, and more thoroughly. The second argument would be that Competition advances progress more than cooperation does, linking the objects of evaluation to the value. To support this, you could use the example of biological evolution through competition between animals, or even the improvement of the economy through competitive capitalism. The final result is that, because competition outpaces cooperation in producing progress, and because progress is the hallmark of superiority, competition is superior. The resolution is affirmed.

As we have suggested before, the most difficult topics to analyze are the quasi-policy resolutions. Let’s look at Resolved: The primary duty of government ought to be compensatory assistance to disadvantaged citizens. The object of evaluation here is COMPENSATORY ASSISTANCE; the evaluative term is the phrase PRIMARY DUTY. Let us assume that you choose Equality as the value criterion for your case. The first warrant argument will have to link the value to the evaluative term: something like Government’s basic responsibility is ensuring the equality of its citizens could work here. The secondary argument would link the value and the object of evaluation: Compensatory assistance is how equality can be guaranteed. Of course, each of these points will be supported by reasoning, quotations from experts, and concrete examples. The net effect is to show that government’s central duty is to ensure equality by helping the disadvantaged, and that is what the resolution requires the Affirmative to prove.

The Value Hierarchy

Sometimes the hierarchy will be of great importance in a round. If your Negative opponent’s main attack is to suggest a competing value, most of the debate will focus on arguments as to which value is superior. If you have presented a solid hierarchy rule in the Affirmative Constructive speech, you merely need to show that the hierarchy puts the Affirmative value higher than the Negative value in order to win the round.

Sometimes, the hierarchy will assume an even greater role. The Affirmative could always construct a case where the hierarchy itself is defended as the Value Criterion. For instance, the Affirmative could argue that Utilitarianism is not only a method of deciding between competing values, but that it is a good thing in itself — that is, Utilitarianism encompasses the notions of Justice, Equality, Happiness, and a host of other values, so it can be treated as a value criterion in and of itself.

But, sometimes, the hierarchy will end up being irrelevant to the decision. The Negative and Affirmative may end up supporting the same value and arguing, instead, over whether the resolution is hostile or amicable to that value. Or the Negative may stake his entire case on showing that the Affirmative definitions are poor ones. In such cases, time spent in the Affirmative Constructive presenting and supporting a hierarchy rule is wasted.
All of this has implications for Affirmative strategy. Sure, the Affirmative speaker will know in advance if he or she will be using the hierarchy as a value criterion. But, in all other cases, the importance of the hierarchy is very much dependent on what tactics the Negative chooses, and this is a mystery at the outset of the round. How can the Affirmative prepare?

The Affirmative debater must remember that all new arguments have to originate in Constructive speeches. If the Affirmative wants to present a hierarchy rule, it will have to appear in the Affirmative Constructive speech. If the Affirmative fails to present one in the AC, then the only hierarchy that could be used is one that arises in the Negative Constructive. Affirmatives can assume that a hierarchy chosen by the Negatives will not be helpful to the Affirmative side. So completely ignoring the hierarchy issue is unwise.

On the other hand, there is enough time in the six-minute AC for the Affirmative to briefly outline the core idea of a hierarchy rule and explain its importance. If the Negative decides to make this an important issue, fine: the Affirmative can defend the hierarchy more fully in the Rebuttal speeches. If the Negative more-or-less drops the issue, that’s fine, too: the Affirmative can bring it forward as an unrefuted argument without wasting time extending it further.

The best argument in favor of the Affirmative’s hierarchy position actually may appear when the value criterion is presented. It’s at this point the Affirmative debater will argue that the criterion is a philosophical “good.” The canny Affirmative will present reasons why this value is good both instrumentally and intrinsically. If the Negative debater later supports a hierarchy where values are rated based on their effects, why, the Affirmative has already shown that this value is instrumentally good. If the Negative proposes a hierarchy based on absolute merit, again, the Affirmative has already shown the value is innately worthy and therefore deserves a high spot on the hierarchy. It is possible that an Affirmative who clearly defends both types of “goodness” for the value criterion could safely omit presenting a formal hierarchy rule in the Constructive speech; instead, the debater would rely on meeting any hierarchy rule presented in the Negative Constructive. This course is suggested only for experienced debaters. In most instances, the Affirmative is best prepared by arguing both for the twin goodness of the value and also — briefly — for a specific hierarchy rule.

Putting It All Together

This chapter has shown how the Affirmative develops the arguments which will evolve into a Constructive speech. The only remaining task is to show the final process of condensing the ideas into a polished form.

Begin with an introduction. This should be a brief paragraph hinting at the approach you will be taking. It may consist of a quotation from an eminent authority, or a startling historical fact, or a personal commentary of some sort. Keep it short, interesting, and to the point. The purpose here isn’t to provide a point that will become debated later on; it’s to grab the attention of the judge and the audience.

You will end this introduction with a formal statement of the resolution. Quote it exactly, word for word: don’t paraphrase.

The next thing to present would be definitions of any critical terms in the resolution. While you must define the object of evaluation and the evaluative term, you may also want to
define other terms in the proposition, if there are any. You never know what may become important later in the debate.

Presenting this introductory material will probably take anywhere from 90 seconds to two minutes. Fine. That gives you at least four minutes to cover the remainder — the heart of the Affirmative case. How you arrange the arguments is up to you, and it really is a matter of taste and personal style. The simplest way is to cover the stock issues, in order. Present your value criterion. Come right out and say something on the order of, “In this round, I will be supporting the value of LIFE” — or whatever — “as the most important criterion for assessing the resolution.” Explain why this value is good.

Present your warrant for the resolution. If you follow the examples shown above, that means you will be giving two main arguments — or contentions, as they are frequently called. It is helpful to the judge if you begin each argument with a headline or label to identify the major claim. For example, you could say, “I will present two contentions which show how the value of Life supports the resolution. My first contention is: Anything casually endangering life is immoral.” You would then proceed by supporting this point by quotations from experts, references to historical circumstance, or something similar. When this argument is completed, you would introduce the second contention, again giving it a headline, followed by analysis and proof. The Warrant portion will probably take up two minutes, or slightly more, of your speaking time.

Next, present the hierarchy rule you will be using. This may require a brief explanation. Or you may choose to omit this point, confident that your earlier claim that your chosen value criterion was both intrinsically and instrumentally good will allow you sufficient room to escape Negative attacks. Experience, your stylistic preferences, and the exact wording of the resolution will be your guidelines here.

In the concluding half-minute of the speech, summarize the main points of the argument. If possible, show how the entire case develops the idea presented in the opening introduction. Conclude by asking the judge for preliminary acceptance of the Affirmative position, and announce your readiness for cross-examination.

That’s it! With all the components in place, you have created a prima facie case in support of the resolution. Of course, since you have lots of preparation time in advance of the debate, you will want to type or word-process this into a polished form. Check the script for accuracy in grammar and diction, and practice it several times before your first round of real competition.
Chapter 6

THE NEGATIVE CONSTRUCTIVE SPEECH

Planning Ahead

Writing an Affirmative case is a good way to prepare for your Negative duties. After all, under the standard Lincoln-Douglas format, you can expect to debate as many rounds on one side as on the other. Researching and developing an Affirmative case first will get you familiar with the issues pertaining to the topic area. This, in turn, gives you insight when it comes to developing your Negative strategy.

As a Negative speaker, you have the duty to oppose the resolution — to clash with the Affirmative analysis at one or more points. This is the only restriction incumbent on you. As we will see later in this chapter, there are a full dozen tactics which you can apply to countering the Affirmative position. You won’t use them all, of course, in any given round. But you will have a large toolkit of options to apply to the Affirmative case. This illustrates one of the key benefits of debating Negative: while the Affirmative — in choosing a particular case — gets to determine the precise subject matter dealt with in the round, the Negative speaker selects the specific issues that will be disputed.

There are other advantages to debating Negative. Since you open with a Constructive speech, you can freely enter new issues into the round — issues that, perhaps, the Affirmative debater has not anticipated. Maybe most important of all, your Constructive speech is a full minute longer than the AC was! You can use your extra time to steal away the initiative from the Affirmative, forcing your opponent to react defensively for the rest of the round.

Matched with these advantages are certain drawbacks. The chief one of these is uncertainty: you cannot know for sure in advance the details of the Affirmative case you will be debating. There is always some risk the Affirmative approach will take you by surprise. For this reason, advance preparation is crucial for the Negative debater. In advance of the debate, you will want to draw up lists of likely Affirmative case areas, values, and hierarchies, and prepare arguments to refute them.

Remember, too, that although the Affirmative has the burden of proof in the round, you also have a burden to prove what you say is true. You will have to present logical reasoning, examples from history or current events, and/or quotations from experts in order to support the claims that you make.

A Bewildering Menu of Options

There are at least a dozen basic tactics the Negative speaker can use in the Constructive speech. That doesn’t mean you will use them all! Indeed, some are very specific to certain kinds of resolutions, and therefore — if you never are faced with that sort of topic — you may never use them. The ones you will choose will vary based on your own talents and interest, the resolution, and the specific approach of the Affirmative case.
Looked at from another perspective, there are only two general tactics. The first is the *refutation* approach. After all, as a Negative, you only have to deny that the resolution is viable: you don’t have to be for anything in particular. To point out the fatal flaws in the Affirmative analysis can be enough for you to win the debate. With the Affirmative case canceled out, the Negative should win by presumption.

The other approach is constructing a **Negative case**. Here, you would not be content just to point out faults in the Affirmative’s position — you would present new arguments that build to a substantive position of your own.

Most Negative debaters find that success lies in combining the two approaches. If you rely on refutation alone, occasionally you will meet a judge who rejects the notion that presumption is always stacked against the Affirmative. Also, most of the time refutation will not completely cancel out the Affirmative position, but only weaken it. Many judges would still feel compelled to vote for a weak Affirmative position if there were no Negative substance to weigh against it, because the Affirmative is supported by the best evidence presented in the round — even if that evidence wasn’t very good.

On the other hand, if you rely solely on a Negative case, without confronting the Affirmative issues, this leaves the judge too much discretion. The Negative speaker may propose a new value and argue that the resolution would endanger that value. That’s fine, as far as it goes: the judge would then have both an Affirmative and a Negative value to consider. But if the Negative has never addressed the Affirmative case to show the Affirmative value to be unworthy (or the case flawed in some other way), then the judge would still be free to decide that the Affirmative value is superior, and award the decision to the Affirmative.

Therefore, in most Lincoln-Douglas debate rounds you will spend part of the Constructive speech reviewing and refuting what the Affirmative speaker has said, and part of the speech introducing new issues to advance your own substantive position.

As we noted before, there are a number of different tactics which you can use in the Negative Constructive speech. They could be listed like this:

- **TACTICS USABLE AGAINST ALL AFFIRMATIVE ANALYSIS**
  - *Refutation*

- **TACTICS WHICH APPLY TO THE DEFINITION STOCK ISSUE**
  - *Topicality*

- **TACTICS WHICH APPLY TO THE VALUE CRITERION STOCK ISSUE**
  - *Denial of values*
  - *Degrading the Affirmative value*
  - *Alternative value*

- **TACTICS WHICH APPLY TO THE WARRANT STOCK ISSUE**
  - *Flawed warrant*
  - *Counter-warrant*
Refutation

Refutation is the act of countering what your opponent says in order to neutralize his or her argument. Refutation is especially powerful in the hands of the Negative, however, because use of this tactic clearly upholds the Negative duty to clash with the Affirmative. Nevertheless, the Affirmative debater can use refutation in the Rebuttal speeches as well, in order to offset the Negative’s arguments.

Proof, in a debate, is a combination of reasoning and evidence to form a conclusion. The debater refutes the opponent’s position by showing that the proof is faulty — that the evidence or the reasoning is defective. The results can vary from showing the initial claim is dubious, to showing it is probably false, to showing that the opposite of the initial claim is true.

Since refutation is targeted to a position made by your opponent, it is critical that you link the argument you make to your opponent’s initial claim. This is called signposting. First, identify the argument your opponent made by its label or number (for example, “Let’s turn to contention two, which says JUSTICE IS A PRIMARY VALUE”). Next, tell the judge the argument you’re about to make in reply — try to summarize it in a brief headline or label of its own (“My response will be that JUSTICE HAS NOT BEEN PROVEN TO BE IMPORTANT”). Then, present your own argument in detail. This will certainly require your own reasoning, and you may need to present evidence, too. Finally, summarize the point in a sentence by showing the impact of the argument on the debate (“Since the Affirmative has not shown the core value to be truly important, there will be no reason to vote Affirmative at the end of the debate.”)

Directly quoted evidence is less important to Lincoln-Douglas than it is to policy debate. Nevertheless, debaters are free to challenge the evidence used by their opponents. Material that is old may no longer be relevant, especially if this quotation deals with the topic itself; on the other hand, quotations from the great philosophers of the past are always acceptable, so claiming that evidence is old is sometimes a weak challenge. Challenges can also claim that the author of the evidence is not competent in the particular field under discussion — a nuclear physicist, for example, may not be a credible source for evidence on nuclear arms policy. More convincing is a demonstration that a particular source is biased, though this is often difficult to prove.

It is frequently more persuasive when you challenge the reasoning behind the argument, rather than the evidence. Show how the supporting material — expert quotations, or historical and contemporary examples — does not really apply as your opponent claims. Showing inconsistencies, contradictions, or vague areas not covered by the opponent’s arguments is usually quite effective here.
Topicality

Challenges of topicality directly apply to the Definitions stock issue. Here, you will argue that the Affirmative debater is trying to elude his or her fair responsibility by twisting the meaning of terms in the resolution.

Over the years, a fairly rigid formula has evolved for topicality challenges in policy debate. In Lincoln-Douglas, we can take a simpler approach. Every Negative Constructive topicality challenge must have two essential components: a new definition for the term or phrase under dispute, and a reason why the Negative definition should be accepted over the Affirmative one.

The first hurdle is to present a **counter-definition** for the term(s) under attack. This will usually require reading a formal definition of the term from some reference source: a general-purpose dictionary, perhaps, or a dictionary of legal or scientific phrases. In some cases, you might even read an expert quotation to show how authorities use the term in its proper context. Next, the Negative will demonstrate the **violation** on the part of the Affirmative, by demonstrating that the Affirmative’s use of the term is substantially different from the Negative definition. This part is very important! Let us assume, under a particular resolution, the Affirmative defined **PEACE** as “the absence of war or other hostilities,” using a general dictionary definition. The Negative speaker proposes a topicality charge and quotes a political scientist to the effect that **PEACE** is “a period without international hostilities.” Functionally, both sides are defining **PEACE** in virtually identical concepts (though the words are different). There is really no dispute over what **PEACE** means. Should we then punish the Affirmative for using a general-purpose source, even though the result is just as good as the Negative? Most judges would say no. So the Negative obligation is two-fold here: to present a new definition, and to show a substantive difference in definitions.

The second hurdle is to present some justification for rejecting the Affirmative definition and taking the Negative one. This may require suggesting certain specific criteria (called **standards** in policy debate) that a good definition must meet. Here are some of the most commonly used reasons for preferring one definition over another:

- **SENTENCE CONTEXT** says that each word has a distinct meaning in the resolutonal sentence. The words must relate to each other independently, in that each term must add something to the proposition; if a definition of one term makes another term redundant, the definition must be in error. The words must also relate interdependently, so that no terms can contradict each other. Finally, the words must be joined together through proper grammatical rules.

- **COMMON USAGE** says that, since the resolution is supposed to be debated by non-experts, the common meaning of the words should apply. Thus, dictionary definitions would be preferable to other ways of defining terms.

- **FRAMERS’ INTENT** argues that the people who created the resolution had specific goals in mind, and this implies that terms should be interpreted one way rather than another. This can be a hard standard to defend. Sometimes you can point to a news-making event that was the likely stimulus for the resolution. More often, though, there is no conclusive evidence to link current events with the topic. Unless the people who developed the
resolution you are debating make their deliberations public, the resolution must be considered on its own merits.

- **EXPERT CONTEXT**, as a standard, notes that general-use dictionaries are designed to collect all the possible meanings of a term, rather than find the best meaning to fit in particular circumstances. A better approach would be to see how experts use the word. In Lincoln-Douglas debate, the Negative debater may propose using a *legal context* (since there are parallels between debate and courtroom action, using legal definitions may be best), or *field context* (relying on definitions from experts in the given field under dispute in the resolution), or *philosophy context* (a variation of field context, where it is claimed that philosophers provide the best definitions for value-related terms). Let’s look at an example. In the resolution *Socialism is more just than capitalism*, a Negative may choose to support the field context rule to argue that terms such as *CAPITALISM* and *SOCIALISM* are best defined by economists or political scientists, rather than by the use of general purpose dictionaries. Alternatively, the same Negative could suggest that philosophers are best equipped to define the term *JUST*, using the philosophy context rule.

- **FAIRNESS** is the final common Negative standard. The terms used in the resolution serve to divide Affirmative territory from Negative. It is vital, then, that these terms are defined in such a way as to give fairly equal area to each side, and to set clear boundaries. Any definition which fails to set specific limits must be rejected. Consider the resolution *U.S. military interference in the affairs of other countries is justified*. The Affirmative chooses to define U.S. military interference as “invasions or wars.” The Negative debater, however, reasons that U.S. military aid or arms sales also should be considered as part of military interference. He may choose to challenge topicality on the basis of fairness, claiming that the Affirmative definition is so narrow as to unfairly duck the Affirmative’s duty to defend arms trading as justified.

Obviously, you are not expected to support every one of these standards in every round. And these specific standards are merely examples. It’s more important that you complete the sentence “The Negative definition must be preferred because...” with a cogent reason than for you to provide any specific jargon term.

Is the topicality argument complete? Not quite. Finally, the Negative speaker must demonstrate the **impact** — the effect this argument will have on the rest of the debate. In Lincoln-Douglas debate, winning a topicality challenge means that your definition will be used to assess the rest of the debate. This does not automatically mean that the Negative will win the debate if that side wins a topicality argument. It’s in the impact portion of the topicality challenge that you show how much the Affirmative case is hampered if the Negative definition is used. You may choose to argue that a too-narrow Affirmative definition fails to support the entire resolution, so that the Affirmative burden of proof is not met. Or you may argue that a too-broad Affirmative definition only seems convincing because it includes elements outside the topic as part of the object of evaluation. Or you may concede that the Affirmative and Negative definitions are fairly close to each other, so that accepting the Negative term will only weaken (but not destroy) the Affirmative position. It’s important that you give a fair assessment of the effects here.
Let’s look at a complete topicality argument. The Affirmative, on the resolution *Abortion is immoral*, has defined abortion as “the murder of a human being.” Our Negative debater begins:

“To start off, let’s look at definitions. How should we decide between competing definitions? I would suggest using two standards: first, we should choose the definition that preserves the common meaning given to the word, because the generally accepted meanings of words are critical to communication. Second, we should choose the meaning that gives fair ground between Affirmative and Negative in the debate, because the purpose of the resolution is to divide ground.

“For the term ABORTION, we can find it defined in the *American Heritage Dictionary*, Second College Edition, 1983, as ‘induced termination of pregnancy before the embryo or fetus is capable of survival.’ This is indeed the common meaning of the word, and relying on the general definition lets both debaters know what to expect, so it’s also a fair definition.

“But what are we to make of Roger’s definition that abortion is ‘the murder of a human being’? It’s not the common meaning: it’s not clear to everyone that a two-week old fetus is fully a human being capable of being murdered. And the phrase ‘murder of a human being’ is far more extensive than ‘abortion’ denotes. We would never call a political assassination in Latin America an ‘abortion,’ yet Roger’s definition would say it is. But the definition also is unfair, because it fails to set limits and because it includes the emotional word ‘murder.’ Nobody, not even the Negative, should be forced to argue that murder is moral.

“What effect does this have on the debate? As you can see, much of Roger’s case actually uses my definition of abortion. But when it comes to the issue of values, Roger argues that because abortion is murder, it hurts the value of Life. When we properly use my definition of abortion, there is no such victory by definition: there is no link between abortion and the value of life in the round, and that means a crucial part of the Affirmative case falls apart.”

One final caution about topicality. It is common in policy debate for Negatives to run a topicality challenge every round, because a victory on this issue means an automatic Negative win. Do not try to mimic this practice in L-D debate. Running an abusive topicality attack erodes your overall effectiveness with the judge, and it sucks up time better devoted to more substantive issues. And the Negative cannot lock in a debate victory by winning this issue. By all means, challenge topicality when the Affirmative distorts definitions, but avoid topicality when all the definitions are reasonable.

**Denial of values**

This is a difficult stance to take — your author has never seen it effectively done in the course of a round — but, potentially, denying the existence of values could have devastating effect against an Affirmative position. This tactic has the Negative argue that values do not exist.
There are several possible approaches here. The Negative speaker could argue, for instance, that there is no absolute standard of “goodness” — that, when we speak of the goodness of Justice, we are actually only expressing a personal preference or an esthetic conception of Justice. Recall our analysis of the claim PIZZA IS GOOD back in Chapter Two. If our notion that there is an imperishable good which stands outside human preferences is merely a delusion, then clearly all “values” just express human whims. In particular, that means that the value criterion anchoring the Affirmative case has no particular demonstrated worth.

Another potential approach shows that notions of goodness are tied too closely to particular cultural systems. For instance, the qualities which we esteem as values in Western culture are not necessarily those exalted in Eastern philosophy (Zen Buddhism in particular). But most debate propositions do not limit themselves to Western value systems; they ask us to evaluate a resolution without consideration of particular times and places. Unless a resolution specifically ties itself to Western culture, the Negative can suggest that it must be supported by values which are universal. Otherwise, the Affirmative defense of the resolution must be considered incomplete, since even a prima facie case would apply only to a few circumstances. But, since there are no universal values, the resolution must be rejected. Recent social concerns about multiculturalism and the need to go beyond Western belief-systems could provide the Negative much evidence to argue this point.

A denial of the existence of values would work very effectively in conjunction with a Negative attack on the particular value the Affirmative supports, of course. On the other hand, the Negative could not both deny that values exist and later propose an alternative to the Affirmative value — this would be a contradiction that destroys the Negative credibility.

Degrading the Affirmative Value

This technique is simple: argue that the Affirmative’s value criterion is lousy — that it has not been proven good; or that it is not good (neutral, rather than a positive value); or that it is actively bad (a dysvalue). Of course, if the Affirmative case fails to provide reasoning why the chosen value criterion has merit, the Negative has an easy response: “It’s not proven.” But often you can do better than this.

Consider the topic Resolved: That capitalism is superior to socialism. Perhaps the Affirmative identified Property as the core value here. The Negative could argue that Property is neither innately or intrinsically good. The reasoning would be as follows: “If Property is a value, then we would see it as a blessing. But do we? Consider the case of a miser, a person who has — and retains — great wealth. His avarice does not bring him happiness, and we can conclude that property doesn’t have intrinsic worth. How about instrumental worth? As the miser gains more wealth, he feeds his greed rather than satisfies it; and the miser’s wealth certainly doesn’t bring happiness of any sort to anyone else. The only time we really appreciate property is when we spend our wealth to a good purpose — and then, of course, it’s no longer our property at all. Since property has neither intrinsic nor instrumental worth, we must conclude that it’s not a value.”

Sometimes the Negative can push the matter further, not only neutralizing the Affirmative value criterion, but reversing it to a dysvalue. Consider the same case on capitalism vs. socialism as before. The Negative speaker continues: “And what is the effect of Property on the miser? He becomes obsessed with material things. He becomes divorced from society, from friends and family, and from matters of the spirit. He ceases to be fully human. From this, we see
that Property not only fails to qualify as a value, but that it is actively malign. ‘The love of money is the root of all evil,’ the Bible says. Because the resolution promotes the dysvalue of Property, it should be rejected.”

**Alternative value**

This tactic is easy to understand: the Negative speaker proposes a different value to be used as the value criterion in the round. Next, the Negative must show that the resolution opposes this value. Finally, the Negative will then go on to show that this value is equal to or superior to the Affirmative value, either by using the Affirmative hierarchy rule or by downgrading the Affirmative value directly. If the two values are equal in importance, and one is opposed to the resolution while the other supports it, then the judge will decide the debate in favor of whichever side is viewed to have presumption; thus, it’s better for the Negative to argue that the counter-value is better than, not just equal to, the Affirmative’s value.

Let’s take a look at this in practice. The resolution says *Resolved: that voluntary euthanasia for the seriously ill is justified*. The Affirmative, of course, supports the value Quality of Life: euthanasia eases needless pain and suffering for those about to die. The Negative Constructive speech proposes an alternative value: Life. Clearly, euthanasia ends life — or at least shortens it for the terminally ill patient. But Life, the Negative speaker will argue, is superior to Quality of Life. Without life, there can be no other values; it is silly to speak of the Quality of Life of a dead person. On that basis, then, the resolution should be rejected.

**Flawed warrant**

You will recall that the warrant is one of the critical parts of the Affirmative case. It links the value the Affirmative supports to both the object of evaluation and the evaluative term in the resolution. In using the flawed warrant tactic, the Negative speaker points out defects in the Affirmative argument: defects serious enough to reject the entire Affirmative position.

Consider the resolution that *Government has the moral duty to aid its underprivileged citizens*. The Affirmative speaker chooses Equality as his value criterion, and argues in the warrant portion of the speech that charitable aid to the poor enhances equality, and that promoting equality is a moral position. The crafty Negative speaker, however, notices that the word charity is a broad one. Sure, it can include government-sponsored welfare and other “safety net” programs. But charity also means the actions of individuals and private organizations to alleviate misery. Private charity increases equality as much as government largesse. The Affirmative warrant only shows that there is some obligation to aid the underprivileged; it does not show that governmental aid, specifically, is required. Therefore the warrant is defective. It does not support the whole resolution, and the Affirmative has failed in his duty to show why the resolution should be believed.

**Counter-warrant**

The Affirmative warrant, you will recall, links the Affirmative’s value criterion to the object of evaluation and the evaluative term. In proposing a counter-warrant, the Negative speaker flips this argument to show that the value chosen by the Affirmative really opposes the
resolution rather than supports it. Usually, this will require reversing the link between the object of evaluation and the value criterion, accepting both the Affirmative value and the other half of the Affirmative warrant.

Let’s consider an example using the resolution discussed above: *Government has the moral duty to aid its underprivileged citizens.* The Affirmative debater chooses Equality as his value and argues that government aid for the underprivileged (welfare money for the poor) promotes equality, and that promoting equality is a moral duty for government. The Negative speaker accepts Equality as a value and accepts the second warrant argument, that government has a duty to promote equality. But in opposition to the first warrant argument, he claims that government aid for the underprivileged undermines equality. How? Well, first, because the knowledge that government aid is available produces dependency: people stop making efforts to advance themselves, and so fall further behind. Inequality increases. But the second reason is more direct. In deciding to aid the poor, the government immediately begins treating people unequally, as opposed to the hands-off policy that a *laissez-faire* government would adopt toward everyone. The Negative position, then, is that since government has a duty to promote equality, and because aid to the underprivileged interferes with equality, therefore government has a moral duty not to aid underprivileged citizens. The resolution should be rejected. This counterwarrant actually allows the Negative to claim the reverse of the resolution. The rest of the debate will be centered on whether the positive effects of government aid on equality are greater than the negative effects.

Let’s look at another example under the same resolution. The Affirmative chooses Freedom as the value criterion, and argues that giving money to the poor gives them freedom in the marketplace, and that government’s duty is to enhance freedom. The Negative could accept freedom as a value and accept that enlarging freedom is government’s duty. But on the critical link between the object of evaluation and the value criterion, the Negative debater would argue that aid to the poor must reduce the economic freedom of the rich and middle-class at the same time as it increases that of the impoverished. So there is no overall increase in freedom, and (since government’s duty is to increase freedom, not just preserve or redistribute it) thus aid to the underprivileged is not justified morally. While the earlier example served to reverse the entire resolution, this one just neutralizes the Affirmative case — but it does so very strongly, and the Negative speaker is likely to win.

**Flawed hierarchy**

This Negative strategy involves accepting the Affirmative hierarchy rule, but then demonstrating that rule assigns a low worth to the Affirmative value. Of course, this tactic is most effective in rounds where hierarchies are extremely important, particularly with value conflict resolutions (see page 22). This is because “flipping” the implications of the hierarchy will not only degrade the value the Affirmative supports but will simultaneously elevate the competing value. For value judgment resolutions — where the merits of only one thing are being weighed — this strategy has less to recommend it. Even if the Negative proves that the Affirmative hierarchy would assign a low worth to the Affirmative value, as long as that worth is positive, there may be enough merit in promoting the value for the judge to vote Affirmative. In this case, the Negative debater would probably combine a flawed hierarchy attack with support of an alternative value criterion that is given high priority by the hierarchy and which is in opposition to the resolution.
Let’s look at an example under the resolution *Honesty is superior to loyalty when the two are in conflict*. The Affirmative case deals with officials of the U.S. Executive branch lying to Congress, with the chosen value of Knowledge. Governing, the Affirmative claims, requires competent understanding of what is going on both in the government and outside it. When an official testifies falsely to Congress out of loyalty to the President or to preserve the reputation of a friend, Congress no longer has a true understanding of the world’s affairs. This damage to the value Knowledge therefore cripples our ability to govern. The hierarchy, either explicit or implied, is pragmatism: the instrumental application of values to practical ends.

The Negative debater accepts this hierarchy rule, but argues that pragmatism forces us to rank loyalty higher than honesty in this scenario. After all, the Executive branch is responsible for the daily operation of the federal government, much more than Congress is. If the Executive were run with honesty but no loyalty, every appointee would have to conduct daily business at all times alert for betrayal from disloyal coworkers and underlings. Everyone would be paralyzed by the fear of being denounced to Congress. In such an atmosphere of suspicion, none of the real work of governing would get done. Even if we that government loses some legitimacy because of lies told to Congress, a sacrifice of Executive branch loyalty poses the greater pragmatic consequences. Therefore, by the Affirmative’s own value hierarchy, loyalty outweighs honesty.

**Alternative hierarchy**

This technique, too, is of greatest use under value comparison resolutions, when two potential values are available for consideration. The Negative speaker presents a different hierarchy rule, arguing that it is superior to the Affirmative’s. He or she then shows that this new, better rule would place less importance on the Affirmative value and greater importance on the competing value, and therefore this rule shows the resolution should be rejected.

Let’s return to the honesty vs. loyalty debate described in the previous section. Again, the Affirmative case deals with government deception opposed to pragmatic consequences. The Negative speaker chooses to sponsor the Absolutism rule (a good contrast against the consequentialist Affirmative position). The Negative argues that relying on pragmatic consequences to guide us leads us to do evil things for good motives, despite our knowing the ends do not justify the means. By attending to the ultimate worth of values, however, we will always follow the moral course. Therefore absolutism provides a better hierarchy rule than pragmatism.

Next, of course, the Negative applies the rule to the competing values. On an absolute scale loyalty must be given priority over honesty, he claims. Trust and loyalty go together; together, they bond individuals into a community. Without them, no one would care whether other people were honest or not, since we would not trust their honesty in any case. Since loyalty is thus proven to have a more fundamental worth than honesty, the resolution is false.

**Value implication**

Policy debate offers Negative speakers the opportunity to go beyond the framework of the Affirmative claims to suggest **disadvantages** — harmful side effects — that would result from the proposed policy change. In Lincoln-Douglas debate, the **value implication** (sometimes called a **value objection**) argument serves a similar function. This argument asks us to consider
the (nasty) drawbacks that would manifest outside the topic area if we really believed in the
importance of the Affirmative value and hierarchy and acted on that belief. To an extent, then,
the value implication also considers not just the philosophical basis of the Affirmative position,
but also the real-world applications implied by Affirmative arguments. By exposing the
disastrous and extreme implications of Affirmative positions, the Negative speaker asks for a
rejection of the entire Affirmative analysis as basically unsound.

Let’s look at an example: The Affirmative proposes that equality should be our value
under the resolution that The primary duty of government ought to be compensatory assistance
for disadvantaged citizens. Equality, the Affirmative says, is best assured by guaranteeing that
the poor, the handicapped, and the excluded are brought into the mainstream.

The Negative speaker chooses to present a value implication attack. If we believe that
equality is the highest goal of government, she says, then this would lead to a radical
transformation of society, because there is no limit to the Affirmative goal of equality. We are
forced to pursue it everywhere. And there are limits to our ability to compensate the
disadvantaged. We can’t make stupid people smarter. We can’t make champion sprinters out of
slow people. The logic that drives the Affirmative case, though, says we must promote equality
of circumstances everywhere, and that forces us to compensate for the advantages gifted people
have. And that means dispensing with their gifts. Smart people must be made stupid — either by
giving them deliberately inadequate education, or by forbiding them to use their intelligence to
its best ability, or by drug therapy to suppress their intellects. Fast runners would have to wear
heavy weights. The medical profession would have to have as many fumble-fingered dropouts
from medical school as it has skilled surgeons. Society would have to be reduced to the lowest
level of incompetence in all areas, so that the naturally untalented would be equal to the naturally
gifted. Since this conclusion is absurd, we have to reject the notion that equality ought to be a
goal of government policy — and that, in turn, means we have to reject the Affirmative position
on the resolution.

Another example: An Affirmative debater supports the supremacy of the community over
the individual. A Negative value implication could be that this puts any minority at the mercy of
the majority — for the rights of individuals would, by the Affirmative logic, always be
subordinated to the beliefs of the community. Under such reasoning, the torture of Jews in the
Nazi death camps would be morally acceptable, since the larger community was expressing its
anti-Semitic resentment of a minority, and the Affirmative analysis says the majority is always
right. Of course, the validity of the Affirmative position becomes doubtful if it leads to such a
monstrous conclusion, and the Negative speaker will use this to ask the judge for a Negative
ballot in the debate.

**Counter-case**

This is precisely what the name suggests: a complete case opposed to the resolution.
First, the Negative speaker either accepts the Affirmative hierarchy of values or provides a new
hierarchy rule and shows that rule to be a better one. Then the Negative presents an alternative
value criterion and proves that the Negative value is better than the Affirmative one, because it
ranks higher on the hierarchy that will be used (i.e., either the Affirmative one or the new,
improved, Negative hierarchy). Finally, the Negative debater demonstrates a warrant against the
resolution under this value: that is, belief in the resolution would oppose or diminish the
Negative value. The upshot of all this is that, even if we concede the Affirmative is basically
right, belief in the resolution hurts a value which is more important than the value promoted. So, reluctantly, the resolution has to be jettisoned.

Does this all sound very difficult? Well, yes, it is. But the complete counter-case is often the most persuasive and powerful of all Negative attacks. And it combines well with selective refutation of Affirmative positions. The counter-case can be viewed as the most comprehensive assault on the Affirmative case available in most rounds. Moreover, this approach will find favor with judges who believe that the Negative’s duty extends beyond questioning the Affirmative burden of proof.

Let’s see how it works in practice. Resolved: *Capitalism is immoral* will be the proposition. The Affirmative speaker defends the value of Equality, arguing that capitalism denies equality (by producing a class system of rich and poor) and that equality is critical for a moral society. The relevant hierarchy rule is Absolutism: morality is an absolute, therefore we must reject any economic system that is immoral. In reply, the Negative speaker proposes Relativism as a competing hierarchy; after all, we cannot always be certain of the absolute goodness of any act, so we have to weigh the benefits against the costs in a practical way to determine whether actions are moral or not. He then proposes a counter-value: Freedom. Freedom is better than equality, because freedom allows the individual to guide his own course in life, he argues. But freedom also enhances the community good, by allowing collections of individuals the ability to advance one another’s interests. In contrast, equality is merely static, with no rewards for greater effort. Finally, the Negative speaker will provide two arguments to form the warrant: First, that increasing freedom increases the morality of a social system, and second, that capitalism enhances freedom.

Our example shows a Negative speaker well poised to win the debate using this tactic alone. But presenting a counter-case will still leave him a few minutes to make further inroads against the Affirmative — perhaps by applying refutation to the Affirmative’s case structure.

**Counter-proposition**

In most debates, the Negative speaker can be considered to be arguing in favor of a negated version of the resolution. Thus, if the Affirmative is arguing that *capitalism is immoral*, the Negative can be considered to be arguing in favor of *capitalism is moral* — or, at the very least (but more confusingly), *capitalism is not immoral*.

But some resolutions — those which have a term narrowing the debate to examining a unique relationship between two elements — allow for slightly different strategy. Here, the Negative can present the equivalent of an Affirmative case to argue that the unique relationship applies between one of the elements and something else not mentioned in the resolution. We call this approach a counter-proposition.

Look at the resolution Resolved: *That the primary duty of government ought to be compensatory aid to the disadvantaged*. The word “primary” here requires the Affirmative to defend a unique relationship between compensatory aid and government duty. Words such as “most,” “always,” “exclusive,” “only,” and a handful of others would function similarly in the resolution. Against this particular topic, the Negative could first argue that the words “the primary duty” means one, and only one, duty must be identified as paramount. Then he would argue in defense of a different primary duty, perhaps that *the primary duty of government ought to be national defense*. This would require presenting the equivalent of a complete Affirmative case — much as we saw under the counter-case example — in support of this new resolution.
Special emphasis would be given to those points which differ between Affirmative and Negative proof of where “primary duty” rests. If, for instance, the Negative supported National Security as a value and the Affirmative supported Equality, the Negative constructive would probably devote most of its time between the conflict in value criteria.

But (and here this gets really tricky) it can be that the Negative ends up supporting the same value criterion that the Affirmative does. Let’s suppose that the Affirmative selects Community as her core value, claiming that compensatory assistance from the rich to the poor binds the community into a happier whole. In support of the national defense counter-proposition, the Negative also chooses Community as a value. The main focus of the round would then be on the warrant claim linking the value to the two objects of evaluation. The Negative, of course, will claim that survival of the community through national defense is a more fundamental concern than the happiness of the community, making defense the truly “primary” duty.

This type of analysis is complex, and it requires a talented debater to guide the judge through the thicket of arguments without getting everyone lost. Also, of course, this strategy can only be applied to certain resolutions. On the other hand, a well-supported counter-proposition approach, especially when the Negative speaker has used the Affirmative value, can cause the Affirmative to collapse in panic through the rebuttal speeches.

**Putting It All Together**

So far, we have examined the twelve tactics that fill the Negative arsenal. How does this evolve into a polished Constructive speech? Well, advance preparation counts for a lot. You will want to develop several sets of arguments in anticipation of the Affirmative cases you will find. Such pre-written material, known as a **brief**, will develop an argument against particular values or in favor of counter-values you may wish to propose. In fact, it is certainly possible for you to block out a complete Negative counter-case and practice it in advance. You will want to strive for about three to five minutes’ speaking time worth of new issues to raise in each Negative round.

You will begin the Negative Constructive with a brief introduction to present your specific approach to the debate. This, too, can largely be prepared in advance. As with the introduction to Affirmative cases, keep the introduction short and, interesting, but not debatable in itself.

If you plan to mount a topicality attack, it is usually best placed immediately after the introduction. Your position on definitions will be crucial to understanding the remainder of your arguments, so you will want to specify your stance near the outset of the Constructive speech. If the Affirmative definitions are reasonable and fair, tell the judge that you accept them.

The bulk of the speech will be divided into two parts: your responses to issues that the Affirmative raised, and new issues you originate (the Negative case). Be systematic: either present all your new issues first, then refute the Affirmative case, or handle the Affirmative case first, and then present new positions. Do not flip between Affirmative and Negative cases at random.

Whether you choose to attack the Affirmative case first or to present the Negative case first, you should be aware of the benefits and drawbacks to each approach. Starting with an attack on the Affirmative can gain you a psychological advantage, in that you weaken the material that is freshest in the judge’s mind and conclude the speech on Negative turf, your own
strongly-held position. But if you don’t budget your time well, you may not be able to present all
the new positions you would wish. Many debaters prefer, instead, to present their new positions
at the top of the speech, but this forces them to conclude the speech by reminding the judge of
the Affirmative positions. Moreover, time pressure may force dropping an Affirmative argument
that may prove critical later in the debate. Before deciding what style you will adopt, consult
with your coach, who may be able to tell you which order is conventional in your geographical
area.

When attacking the Affirmative case structure, use the techniques of signposting we
mentioned earlier in this chapter. Cover the Affirmative arguments once, in order. Note which
point you will address, and — if making several responses to a particular point — number and
give brief labels to your arguments. Likewise, when presenting your own case, number and label
your positions as well, and try to arrange them in a logical order.

Reserve the last minute to summarize the debate so far and to begin construction of the
Negative decision rule. The decision rule is a brief explanation of why your winning particular
arguments justifies awarding the debate to the Negative. It’s a summary of what impact your
positions will have on the debate. Something like this: “Let’s look at how my arguments have
affected the course of this debate. First, my topicality position shows that Affirmative use of the
word ‘economic’ is a distortion of the term’s true meaning, and this renders much of my
opponent’s Constructive speech irrelevant to the resolution. Secondly, I have shown that Jerry’s
value of Justice is actually a dysvalue, and so promoting it is against our interests. Third, I have
shown that my value, Property, is superior to Jerry’s, yet opposed to the resolution. So the only
way we can maximize Property — the most important value in today’s debate — is through a
Negative vote in this round, a vote against the resolution.”

In the concluding few seconds of the speech, if time permits, refer back to the
introduction you made. This gives a sense of closure and completeness to the speech. With your
Negative Constructive speech finished, you can then await cross-examination.
Chapter 7
THE REBUTTAL SPEECHES

A Rebuttal Overview

Debates are won and lost in the rebuttal speeches. That fact cannot be emphasized too strongly. Many of the well-crafted arguments that formed your constructive position will end up lost in the shuffle, irrelevant to the decision. But every argument that carries over to the rebuttals — by definition — is one that will have crucial weight on the judge’s ballot.

Don’t confuse the terms refutation and rebuttal. Refutation is the technique where the flaws in your opponent’s arguments are pointed out. Rebuttal is the technique of assessing those flaws and weighing the merits of competing viewpoints. While you may use the tool of refutation in the course of your rebuttal speech, the main focus of that speech will be on comparing Affirmative and Negative arguments to persuade the judge that your side has the greater merit.

No new arguments are permitted in the rebuttal speeches. This means that neither debater can open a completely new line of analysis. This can be a tricky point, for new evidence is permitted, as is an extension of the reasoning that originated in a constructive speech. In fact, new evidence and extensions are often the key to winning rounds of debate. But anything new that appears in a rebuttal must be rooted in one of the two constructive speeches. If your opponent tries to offer a new argument in his or her rebuttal, the best technique is to point out during your next speech that this new argument doesn’t require a response. Then, if time permits, answer the argument anyway.

During the rebuttals the debate condenses down to the issues which each side considers important. Some of the material from the constructive speeches will be relegated to lesser importance. That’s okay. The reduction in speaking time from constructives to rebuttals is designed to force you to make choices. This narrowing of the debate should help the judge form a decision.

Unfortunately, while it’s easy to give advice about the structure and goals of the rebuttals, only general guidance is available. What goes on in rebuttals reflects the issues developed in the constructive speeches, so the specifics will vary widely from round to round. Adaptability is the key to presenting winning rebuttals, just as good rebuttal speaking is the key to winning debates.

The First Affirmative Rebuttal

The time constraints of Lincoln-Douglas debating assume great importance beginning with this speech. The Affirmative debater has two rebuttal periods to the Negative’s one, but both Affirmative speeches are very short. Only a strongly presented First Affirmative Rebuttal (1AR) can hope to survive the onslaught that is likely to follow in the Negative Rebuttal. You have four minutes.
The primary focus in this speech should be on the Negative case — that is, the new arguments which first arose in the Negative Constructive speech. The judge has never heard the Affirmative’s position on these issues, so emphasis is required on these issues.

You may wish to begin with a brief introduction, perhaps one or two sentences long. Time pressures won’t allow for more. Some experts suggest that, instead of a formal introduction, the best strategy gains the psychological advantage by capitalizing on an easy Affirmative win on one issue. This may involve pointing out an essential point of the Affirmative case that went unattacked, or showing a contradiction in the Negative’s arguments, or just assessing the Negative position in its entirety to show how the Affirmative arguments have not been seriously damaged. Other experts say that no introduction is really needed for this speech, so it’s best to press directly into the substance of the round.

If topicality has become an issue in the debate, turn there immediately after the introduction. Only after the meaning of terms of the resolution are decided can the judge really assess the importance of the arguments purporting to apply to the resolution.

You will recall that the key elements of the topicality attack were the Negative’s presenting a distinctively different definition, and showing that definition to be preferable to the Affirmative one. There are essentially two Affirmative tactics to counter topicality challenges: you could show that the Affirmative use of terms is consistent with the Negative definitions. Or, as an alternative, you could argue that the Affirmative definitions are at least as good as the Negative’s. Obviously, these two tactics are targeted at the specific points the Negative speaker must win in order to win the topicality challenge. Showing the definitions to be functionally identical is usually an extreme condition: either it’s easy, or it’s virtually impossible. Showing the Negative definition to be no better than the Affirmative one is the more customary course.

Remember, tradition gives the Affirmative debater the right to select the particular issues to be debated at the outset (that’s why Affirmatives speak first) and the right to choose definitions of terms, as long as such definitions are reasonable ones. Negatives should not win topicality challenges merely because their definitions are “just as good as” the Affirmative ones — the definitions must be persuasively superior. Refute the Negative’s reasons why his definitions are innately better, or provide reasons why Affirmative definitions are innately better. Then, remind the judge that tradition favors Affirmative definitions if the issue is unclear. That should be enough to win the topicality issue.

Where to go next? You’re probably best to turn to the Negative case next, since that needs to be the prime focus of this rebuttal. As briefly as possible, refute the major new Negative arguments in the order in which they were presented. Remember to use signposting techniques: restate the Negative claim, give a brief label for your response, and then explain your reasoning. As discussed in the previous chapter, refutation means giving reasons why the Negative claims don’t stand up under scrutiny, or by providing evidence and reasoning to show that the Negative claims are absolutely false. Depending on the depth of the Negative analysis, you may have to spend nearly two minutes on this. But try to keep at least one minute of time in reserve.

Next, you will rebuild the Affirmative case. Even if you budget your time carefully, you probably cannot afford point-by-point defense. But you will want to point out to the judge those arguments that the Negative dropped completely or slighted. If any Negative attack seriously damaged your case, you will also have to spend the time to patch that up, too. For example, if the
Negative speaker directed half of his constructive time to showing how your chosen value criterion of Justice is really a dysvalue, you must spend some time to respond here. When covering the Affirmative case in general terms is not sufficient — when you absolutely must address specifics — then cover specific issues in the same order they were originally presented in your first speech.

Almost through! The last few seconds of the 1AR have to respond to the decision rule position. You can take either of two approaches here. If the Negative has begun developing a decision rule (“I ought to win for these three reasons: First, I win topicality...”), you can directly refute that (“My opponent asserts that winning topicality will win him the round, but that ignores the nature of topicality in L-D debate and ignores the fact that the Affirmative is topical. Next, he says he ought to win because...”) . Be careful with this approach; poorly handled, the review may only serve to reinforce the Negative decision rule in the judge’s mind. As an alternative, you could simply summarize the reasons for an Affirmative victory: you are still supporting an important value, and only by accepting the resolution can we capitalize on that value.

Your four minutes are over; sit down.

The Negative Rebuttal

Two facts figure prominently in planning strategy for this speech. First, the Negative speaker has a luxury of time available — six whole minutes. That’s just a minute shorter than the Negative Constructive was allowed! Second, since this is the last Negative speech, the debater has the responsibility to frame the round in the terms most favorable to a Negative victory. Ideally, if the Negative uses the time to the best advantage, the Affirmative will not be able to recover in his or her final rebuttal.

Begin with a brief introduction, a recapitulation of the introductory material used in the constructive. Then turn to topicality, if that has become an issue in the debate. Weigh the 1AR objections and show how they fail to overcome your initial analysis. Or, if you think that it is not possible to win topicality after the 1AR’s masterly response, tell the judge you are conceding the topicality issue.

Turn to the Affirmative case next. Point out the critical flaws in the case, repeating and extending upon your original analysis and refuting the 1AR positions. Cover only those arguments which you believe you can win. As always, follow the original order that arguments were presented in the Affirmative Constructive.

Next, go to the Negative case. Go point-by-point down your original arguments. Highlight the points that the Affirmative debater dropped or misconstrued in the rebuttal. Where your initial analysis was attacked, refute the Affirmative’s reasoning and extend the argument further.

If you budget about two minutes to cover the Affirmative case and about three minutes on rebuilding the Negative case, you’ve apportioned the time as well as can be hoped. One minute of time remains. Use this to weigh the overall thrust of the Affirmative and Negative arguments, showing how the Negative positions ought to carry the debate. In other words, show why winning certain arguments means that you should win the round. This will be your formal decision rule, and the first steps you made in that direction at the conclusion of the Negative Constructive should guide the approach you make here. Pretend you are dictating to the judge.
how he should complete the ballot — “The Negative wins because of these reasons.” End the round saying something like, “Because the Affirmative position is conclusively outweighed by my arguments, I ask for a Negative decision in the round.”

That’s the end of the debate, as far as you are concerned. Sit down. As a point of courtesy, listen appreciatively to the final Affirmative speech; do not use the time to pack up material, daydream, or doodle. Your courtesy will be noted.

The Second Affirmative Rebuttal

It all boils down to this speech. Yeah, with only three minutes, the time pressure is intense. But you can do it! Really, you have the advantage here, if you’ve done everything right so far. The Affirmative case is true, and it was complete in the Constructive speech; most of the Negative attacks against it have been pretty feeble. The Negative is more concerned about his own case, and you demolished that thoroughly in the First Affirmative Rebuttal. So you have three minutes to clear up any loose ends and win this round: a piece of cake.

There’s no introduction to this speech. You don’t have the time. Begin with topicality, if that’s still an issue, and dispose of that as quickly as possible. Then turn to the Negative case. Summarize everything from an Affirmative point of view, following the original Negative structure as much as possible. Don’t worry about carrying everything; just address the fatal flaws in your opponent’s arguments. You will want to concentrate in particular on any Negative position that seriously seems in danger of winning the round, of course. Try to budget one minute to 75 seconds for this portion of the speech.

Next, turn to the Affirmative case. Budget a minute to pull the original analysis from your first speech, point-by-point. Take the time to demonstrate to the judge that, despite the Negative objections, your initial viewpoints still are in good shape.

You now have something between 45 seconds and one minute remaining. This is the time to capitalize on the decision rule you began to formulate in 1AR. Weigh the total thrust of the Affirmative case with that of the Negative and explain to the judge why the Affirmative must win. This may require you to weigh competing values, or explain one last time why the resolution is really in favor of both the Affirmative and Negative values. Although you will not want to use the jargon, at a minimum you will need to claim that your definitions of terms are best, that your value hierarchy is best, that the value criterion you have selected is the best according to the hierarchy, and that there is a clear warrant for the resolution using the value — a summary of the stock issues. Finish by asking for the judge to deliver an Affirmative ballot.

And The Round Is Over

It’s traditional after the debate is concluded that the Affirmative and Negative opponents shake hands. Try to look sincere when you say, “Good round.”

If time allows, the judge may want to give an oral critique of the debate. He or she will give general comments on your performance, and may give helpful guidelines for future debates. The judge should not announce the decision. That’s okay; you’ll find out later who won. Listen to the judge respectfully and take note of any specific comments about your performance; discuss these remarks with your coach later. Do not automatically believe everything a judge tells you. On the other hand, never argue with a judge. Nod, and smile, and wait until you have
privacy with your coach and teammates before you announce how biased and ignorant that particular judge is.
**Cross-Examination**

We have noted that both speakers in Lincoln-Douglas debate have an opportunity to question their opponents. The two cross-examination (CX) periods, each three minutes long, follow the two constructive speeches. During these time periods, the debater who just concluded the constructive speech responds to questions from his or her opponent.

Cross-examination is vitally important to your debating strategy for several reasons. First, the time is unassigned. Unlike the formal speeches, the time for CX is jointly shared by both debaters. Each debater would like to use this period to impress the judge. The questioner would like to puncture holes in the opponent’s case; the witness would like to demonstrate that his or her analysis stands up — or even advances — in the face of scrutiny. Given that the time limits of Lincoln-Douglas are so constrained, this additional chance to develop your position becomes precious.

Second, but no less important, is the fact that the cross-examination period is divorced from the substance of the debate. Nothing revealed during CX should have a bearing on the judge’s ballot until it is introduced into a later speech. In fact, most judges will lay down their pens and not take notes during cross-examination periods. The Affirmative might, for example, get the Negative to admit that the Affirmative value is far superior to the Negative one — but if this admission is never entered into a subsequent Affirmative rebuttal, the concession has no impact on the round. There are two components to effective use of cross-examination: gaining concessions, and then using what you have obtained.

**The Questioner’s Perspective**

Cross-examination serves three principal goals for the questioner. The first one is **CLARIFICATION**. You may ask for an explanation of the case structure, a restatement of a particular argument, or a re-reading or re-interpretation of a particular quotation your opponent used. The purpose here would be to make sure you have not misunderstood some aspect of the witness’ arguments.

The second goal is **EXPOSURE OF CASE FLAWS**. You may use some of your questions to expose errors of fact and reasoning, to highlight weak analysis, and to disclose unlikely assertions by the witness. Did the Affirmative speaker really say that “89% of all Americans would prefer suffering to improvements in their quality of life,” for instance, without citing a source for this dubious statistic? These questions often grow directly out of clarification questions, and the responses can directly be applied in the next opposing speech.

The third goal is **GAINING DAMAGING ADMISSIONS**. Usually this is accomplished by asking a series of probing questions designed to test the reliability of the witness’ analysis. Each question by itself may seem insignificant, but the overall thrust will trap the witness in a dilemma. He must either make a distasteful admission or contradict his earlier testimony.

You should adopt a formal poise when conducting cross-examination. Look at the judge. Don’t pretend the witness is invisible, but focus your attention away from him or her. This
guarantees that the judge (and other spectators) will hear the questions and answers, and it seems to reduce the risk of angry shouting that sometimes comes from a face-to-face confrontation. At all times, be polite and courteous. Address the witness by name.

Your duty is to ask questions. Don’t make speeches; don’t read evidence. And don’t try to skirt around these guidelines — for example, by asking “Can you refute Dr. Hacklemeyer, who says...” and then going on to read the text of the evidence. Similarly, you should not comment on the responses you get from the witness. Since CX is not recorded on the flowcharts, any speeches you make or any evidence you read would not become part of the judge’s record until you presented the same material all over again in a later speech. That means the first reading of the evidence during the questioning period is a waste of precious cross-examination time.

As the questioner, you have the right to control the time. If the witness is giving vague, roundabout answers — or is deliberately stalling — you have the option of interrupting him or her and pressing on to a new question. You can also ask the witness to be brief, or to give “yes” or “no” answers. However, you still are obliged to respect a witness who wants to qualify the answer, and you should avoid complex questions that couldn’t fairly be answered YES or NO. Fairness should be your watchword. You are not a district attorney; you are not a prosecutor of the Spanish Inquisition. You will do best by projecting a friendly, considerate, and guileless attitude. With some witnesses, you will have to be firm; you should never badger.

Be orderly in your questions; don’t skip around from one part of the opponent’s case to another. Rather, cluster questions that relate to the same point. And — to enlarge on a point made in the previous paragraph — use specific and concise questions to keep the focus on the specific subject matter you want discussed. Avoid complex questions with many parts. Adopting these strategies will naturally lead to brief answers from the witness, increasing the range of material you can cover in the three minute period.

Except when you are seeking to clarify information you have missed, you should anticipate what response you will be getting. An unexpected answer may signal a line of inquiry that merits further probing. Along with this, however, you must prioritize your questions. Ask important things first. You want to begin by clarifying points you may not have understood. Only after you’re sure you understand your opponent’s position should you go searching for weak spots in the case.

And above all — use what you elicit in later speeches!

**The Witness’ Perspective**

Relax. You are not on trial. And your views in the debate have been well expressed, so there’s really nothing to fear from the cross-examination by your opponent. The first step in functioning well as a witness is psychological: project a confident attitude, and you will find your responses become more articulate and persuasive. Even if you make a damaging admission during CX, your poise may scare the questioner from using the answer in a later speech. The questioner may think, “Hey, he just admitted his value is pretty crummy. So why is he smiling? What does he know that I don’t know? Maybe that’s a trap! I’d better lay off this point in my rebuttal!”

As a witness, you too should adopt a formal attitude during cross-examination, facing the judge rather than the questioner.
Your duty here is to answer questions, not ask them. Certainly you can ask the questioner to clarify an ambiguous question. But most of the time you will give a brief response, directly to the point. Since some questioners will rudely cut you off without giving you the chance to make a full reply, qualify your answers first. Don’t say, “Yes, but...” — the questioner may never let you list the exceptions. Instead, say, “Except for the case where...my answer is yes.” If you make a habit of answering briefly and directly, any questioner who protests that you’re delaying will only look foolish. On the other hand, if you have been wasting your opponent’s time, the judge is certain to consider that when awarding speaker points at the end of the round.

Be honest. Admit errors, if you have made them. Don’t be afraid to confess that you don’t know an answer, on occasion. Don’t try to evade a legitimate question.

Anticipate the direction the questions are leading. If the questioner asks a series of questions, each building on previous replies, he may be trying to guide you to a conclusion you would rather not admit. If you can determine what result the questioner is seeking, you can frame your answers to minimize the damage to your position. This is a skill that only develops after plenty of practice.

Remember that you do not have to be content with just a defensive role in cross-examination. If the question is trying to point out a weakness in your case, focus your answer to show how the case is strong. The technique of using the strengths of the case to deflect objections is sometimes called a retort. This doesn’t mean that you will go into expansive detail about the merits of your arguments in response to every question, but you will wish to highlight the merits of your case when questions try to assail your position.

Prep Time

As we saw in Chapter One, each Lincoln-Douglas debate allows the contestants a limited amount of preparation time to be used in the course of the round. Each debater will have an equal amount of time. Three minutes of prep time for each contestant is the usual allotment, but some tournaments will allow a greater amount. You should plan on a three-minute prep time allotment unless the invitation to a particular tournament specifies otherwise.

Use of prep time is optional. You are not required to use any of the time, or you may use any portion of the time remaining before any of your speeches. Obviously, the Affirmative speaker will not need to use any prior to his constructive speech. But it’s common for the Negative to use some of the allotment before each of his two speeches, and for the Affirmative to use some before each of the rebuttals. If you wish to use some of your prep time before speaking, just inform the judge of the fact. The judge, or the timekeeper, will then announce out loud the total time you have used (or, sometimes, the total time remaining), usually at half-minute intervals.

Commonly, following a constructive speech by your opponent, you will choose to conduct cross-examination first, and then use some prep time to prepare your own speech, but there is no hard-and-fast rule in this regard. Politeness, though, suggests that if you do want to use prep time before conducting cross-examination, you should tell your opponent, who may wish to sit down while you prepare. The prep-time clock keeps running until you speak the first word of your next speech (or ask the first question of cross-examination).

If you run out of prep time, the timing of your next speech will begin. So if you are the Negative speaker, and you need to prepare for four minutes following the Affirmative
constructive speech, you will have exhausted your prep time allowance and you will have only six minutes left in your own constructive speech.

Prep time is important. It gives you additional opportunities to gather together material and to make notes for the upcoming speech. It’s prudent, therefore, to reserve some prep time that can be used before your final rebuttal.

Some Negatives try to exploit prep time rules — by using virtually no prep time before beginning their constructive speeches. This tactic can dazzle some judges and intimidate some Affirmatives: “Gosh, that debater is so good that he didn’t need to use any prep time at all!” But this approach can be a strategic disaster. By refusing to spend time to analyze the Affirmative case in depth prior to speaking, the Negative will end up indicting that case only on a few general points; the bulk of the NC will be spent on presenting a pre-written Negative case designed to take a generic position against the resolution. Much of the Negative case will fail to apply directly to — will fail to clash with — the specific Affirmative arguments. With a weak presentation against the Affirmative case, and with a Negative case that is irrelevant to the substantive issues in the round, the Negative speaker will be at a disadvantage in the rebuttals. Sure, he has the full three minutes’ prep time available before the Negative rebuttal, but to what benefit? He can’t bring up any new arguments against the Affirmative case in the rebuttal speech. The best he can hope for is that a few of the points in the pre-written NC case will have been relevant enough to allow him a victory.

The lesson here is twofold. Yes, you must reserve some prep time for your final speech. But that shouldn’t dissuade you from using a reasonable amount earlier in the round, as circumstances dictate.

Flowcharting

Up to this point, we have been concentrating on the speaking skills used in Lincoln-Douglas debate. However, we should never lose sight of the fact that communication has two components — listening as well as speaking. Before you can rise to refute what your opponent has said, you need to have an accurate summary of his or her claims. Accurate note-taking is essential for all the participants in a Lincoln-Douglas round: for the judge, as well as for both debaters.

A written record of the debate is known as a flowchart or flowsheet, terms sometimes shortened to a “flow.” The act of producing this record is called “flowing” the debate. The analogy to moving water is appropriate; by studying the flowchart, you should be able to see how arguments arise, split into streams, and merge together in the final speeches.

Most debaters prefer to use legal pads (8½ inch by 14 inch) to flow speeches. The pad is turned sideways with the binding to the left or the right, and marked off into five columns. Since it works best if there is plenty of room for later notes, you may need to use several pages of paper for each round of debate — so you may record definitions (and topicality arguments) on the first page, the Affirmative value criterion argument on the next, and the Affirmative warrant argument on the third. Many debaters prefer to record Affirmative and Negative arguments in contrasting colors — red and black inks, for instance — to further clarify who said what. In a pinch, plain typing paper or notebook filler can be used as a substitute for legal pad, but the smaller size of the paper makes this a less desirable alternative.

The flowchart is divided, as we noted, into five columns: one for each of the constructive and rebuttal speeches. Arguments which arise in the Affirmative constructive speech are
recorded in the first column. You will wish to record as much as possible about the content of
the speech, in the order it is presented. The purpose of signposting — the numbering and
labeling of major arguments — during the debate is to make it easier to place these arguments on
the flowsheet. In addition, when evidence is read, you will wish to record the source and a
summary of what the quotation said.

Later speeches will be flowed in the other four columns — the Negative Constructive in
column two, the First Affirmative Rebuttal in column three, and so forth.

Abbreviations are the key to successful flowing. Some abbreviations are obvious: the
letters “VC” for value criterion, an upward-pointing arrow for “enhances” or “promotes,” a
down-arrow for “degrades,” and so on. With experience, you will develop your own lexicon of
symbols and abbreviations. Just make sure you use these signs consistently, so you can decipher
the notes you have taken. At a minimum, you will want to be able to find places where evidence
was presented (even if you don’t record what the evidence said); places where no evidence was
read and the speaker merely asserted a critical point; places where arguments were dropped by
one debater or the other; and places where clarification will be needed in the next
cross-examination period.

In addition, both debaters are able to prepare part of the flowchart in advance.
Affirmative debaters can complete the full first column, since the entire Affirmative constructive
speech is pre-written. Negatives who use a pre-written Negative case can fill in parts of the
second column in advance, too. To avoid the tedious job of recopying everything round after
round, it’s easiest for both debaters to flow their prepared cases on strips of paper equal to one
column-width of the flowpad. These slip sheets can then be fixed in place on the flowchart by
paperclips or removable tape.

A Weapon For The Offense

We have seen how the flowchart of a round serves as a record of what went on during the
debate. In the skilled hands of a debater, the flow also serves as a vital tool for developing
offensive strategies. At the same time you are recording your opponent’s arguments, you should
prepare and write down your responses at the same spot in the next column — the column that is
reserved for your upcoming speech. Perhaps the speaker provided no evidence on a crucial
point? Good! Put your symbol for “assertion” in his column, and in the column for your next
speech, you can write “1. ASSERTION” and maybe “2. NOT TRUE (ev.).” When the time comes to
deliver your next speech, you will take the flow chart to the podium with you. When you get to
the portion of your speech where you refute the previous speaker’s arguments, use the notes you
have taken to extemporize a response. Use the techniques of signposting: note what the opponent
said, forecast your responses, and then provide the full responses, with evidence as needed. For
example: “The Negative speaker next argued that life is a primary value for guiding social
policy. I will have two responses. First, note that Jerry relied on an assertion only. He gave us no
evidence from a competent authority to support this crucial point in his case. But second, this
just isn’t true — life is a relatively minor value. Everyone dies eventually, so efforts to preserve
life are all ultimately doomed to fail. Our better course is to resign ourselves to the inevitability
of death by lowering our valuation of life. Support for this is drawn from Charles Bray, professor
of philosophy at Baylor University, who writes in his 1976 book ETHICAL DILEMMAS...”

Of course, about half of the Negative constructive will probably consist of a Negative
case — new issues that do not directly respond to Affirmative positions. The case structure is
still flowed in the second column of the flowsheet, but there will be nothing in the first column matched to these points. That makes sense — and it explains why some debaters start original NC arguments on a new page of flowpaper.

As your debate career progresses, you will become more familiar with the evidence you have on hand and the arguments you can support. This will allow you to write your speech outline more or less completely as you flow your opponent’s speeches. At the very least, you will be able to minimize the prep time used between speeches.

What happens if you don’t use your flowchart as an offensive weapon in this manner? You might be able to extemporize a brilliant speech. But, without any notes on your flowpad, you won’t be able to recognize when your opponent drops several of your most important arguments. Or maybe you’ll realize that some points were dropped, but you won’t be able to recall what you said in the earlier speech. So a clear victory may slip away from you.

Flowcharting is a skill like any other in debate. Constant practice during classroom debates and actual tournament rounds will hone your skills. You may not be able to record everything perfectly (not even the judge can do that), but your flows will get better as time goes on. Remember, your opponent is having just as much difficulty as you are.

A Weapon For Defense

Sure, the flowchart can be used offensively during the round. However, flows also have enormous worth after a round is over. This is your record of what went on in the debate, after all. You probably will need to consult your flowchart to make sense of the judge’s comments on the ballot, when you receive it. If you lost the debate, you can identify precisely which arguments defeated you; if you won, you need to recall what your strongest points were, so they can be applied to other rounds. To better prepare the rest of the squad, Negatives will want to review with their teammates the Affirmative cases they have met. Affirmatives will want to share the Negative approaches they have encountered, so that these arguments can be refuted — or even adapted for their own team to use. If you have recorded the sources of evidence during the round, this may help your squad do research in between tournaments. Flowcharts can even be useful for defensive purposes during a tournament: often, during the meal break, you can hear about arguments that your teammates encountered in early rounds, and this will enable you to defeat those arguments when you are matched against opponents from the same school in afternoon rounds.

It’s good policy, therefore, to keep your flowcharts on file all season long. Write the date, round, and opponent’s name (and school, if you know it) on the flowchart for easy reference later. Use these records as learning tools throughout the debate season.
Evidence

In a courtroom, opposing lawyers can call witnesses and experts to testify. This testimony becomes the set of facts that the advocate can use to justify the position of his side. In a round of academic debate, we don’t have the luxury of calling experts to speak on our behalf. As your debate career progresses, you will become more knowledgeable in handling philosophical ideas. Nevertheless, we can’t expect that you will become an expert philosopher — or, even if you are, that your opponents and your judges will believe everything you assert.

We are left with a puzzle: if your unsupported word isn’t good enough, and if you can’t bring in witnesses to support your positions, how can you ever be expected to persuade the judge that your claims are true? The solution, in all forms of academic debate, is the use of evidence. As needed, you will read quotations from published works written by experts to support your own positions.

The style of Lincoln-Douglas debate preferred in your area will determine how much evidence you will want to accumulate. In some regions, L-D is primarily a contest in persuasive speaking using the basic core of knowledge every well-educated citizen is assumed to possess: evidence is relatively rare. In other regions, you may be expected to cite expert support of any claim that isn’t immediately obvious. Debate in most areas falls somewhere between those extremes. Your coach will best be able to tell you what evidence standards prevail in your debate circuit. If your school is just beginning a Lincoln-Douglas program, it’s best to be over-prepared rather than under-prepared: you will want to collect a lot of evidence, even if most of it is never read in any round. As we will see below, the real benefit of researching for evidence is the insight you gain on the topic.

Perhaps the simplest way to accumulate evidence is through a card file. For this, you will need a supply of index cards and a suitable box to hold them. The ruled (lined) 4-inch by 6-inch cards work better than any smaller size.

When, in the course of researching, you come upon a quotation that you think will be useful in debate, you will write it on an index card. Print neatly in ink, or type — you want this to be legible, and you may want to share this evidence with your teammates. Near the top of the card, record bibliographical material for the quotation, so that anyone could later look up this quotation and verify its accuracy. Typically, this consists of: the author’s name; his or her credentials or qualifications as an expert, usually recorded in parentheses; the source (the name of the book or magazine); the complete date of publication; and the page number. News magazines which report factual data without an author’s byline, of course, will force you to omit some of this bibliographical information. Evidence should be taken from published works only.

Skip a line after the bibliographical citation, and record the body of the text in quotation marks. Do not cut any material from the body of the text. Some debaters will delete material that seems unimportant, substituting an ellipsis (...) for the omitted material. This is unwise; you may later have difficulty proving to an opponent that the omission did not refute what the remaining material claimed. If you want to use only the first and last sentences of a paragraph, either record
the sentences separately on different evidence cards, or put the whole paragraph on one card and use a highlighting marker to indicate the important parts. You may add explanatory words, if needed, by enclosing them in square brackets ([ ]) — but only do this as a last resort, if the evidence really needs this to clarify the context.

You will prefer to gather concise evidence; as a rule of thumb, each quotation should be only one to four sentences long. Only one quotation should ever be on each index card. Leave the very top line of the card blank. Later, you will make notes to assist you in filing this evidence. Here’s what an evidence card will look like:

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There are some special cases where your citation of evidence will need to be somewhat different. If you are quoting a classic work of philosophy that is now in the public domain, you will want to specify what edition you are quoting — and possibly the name of the translator, for works not originally in English:

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The growth of online material has made the Internet a treasure-trove of material for debate. Unfortunately, along with material of the highest quality, there is a lot of nonsense available on websites. You will need to be careful in selecting quotations from people who have expertise in the field they are writing about.

Citing online evidence requires taking a few special steps. The citation should have the author’s name and credentials; the title of the web-page (which may require both an article and a publication title); the date the information was placed online or revised, if that can be discovered; the phrase “Online: Internet”; the URL or website address where you found the material; and the date you accessed the information. So a complete Internet citation might look like this:


“Typically, when we talk about fighting ‘discrimination,’ we actually mean replacing bad discrimination (based on race or sex and so on) with good discrimination (based on ‘merit’). Maybe the next phase of the struggle should concentrate less on which specific forms of discrimination are intolerable and more on where discrimination itself may be unnecessary.”

When you present the evidence in a round of competition, you would not have to read all the citation material. You would say something like, “Michael Kinsley, founding staff editor, writing in Slate, online, May 10, 2000.”

Filing Evidence

Accumulating a pile of evidence is just a start. You need to be able to find any specific card you need at a moment’s notice. For this, you will have to devise a filing system.

One easy approach is as follows. First, you will need a box of an appropriate size for the cards you’re using. You may wish to invest in a metal or fiberboard box designed for index cards — but you can even use a shoebox. You will also want dividers to separate your cards into categories. You can purchase inexpensive dividers at office-supply stores or fashion your own from durable cardboard. It’s best if the dividers have blank tabs that can be labeled as you wish.

There will be five large divisions for your file, for the five broad categories of evidence you will be accumulating. One section will be devoted to specific values; a second to value hierarchies; and a third to philosophical theories of values. Evidence which says that justice is a meaningless and futile value would be filed in the first category; evidence saying that utilitarianism is the best way to decide between courses of action would go into the second section; and evidence which says that rights and values are two different things would be filed in
the third category. These three sections of your file will always be useful for every resolution you debate, so you can continue to add evidence to them throughout your debate career.

The remaining two sections will deal with specifics relating to the resolution you’re currently researching. Section four will hold definitions of the terms in the resolution, while section five will hold evidence specific to the topic area of the resolution. For example, if the topic was “Resolved: capitalism is immoral,” definitions of the word IMMORAL would end up in section four, and cards showing that capitalism oppresses the working class would be filed in section five. The evidence in these two sections will be replaced every time you begin research on a new resolution.

As you accumulate evidence, you will need to be much more specific than these five broad categories allow. First, label each card at the very top — in pencil, so you can make changes later if needed — with a summary of what the card says. For a card which says that the value of equality is instrumentally good because it enhances all other social values, a label like EQUALITY INSTR GOOD TO ALL VALUES would be appropriate. This card would be gathered together with other evidence claiming that equality is good, to form a block within the section of your file dealing with values. Another block of evidence in that section, of course, would consist of evidence that equality is worthless or evil.

You are not required to use this filing system, of course. You may use any system you like, provided that you can find the evidence you need in a jiffy, and can refile it easily at the end of a round.

The card and block method is one way of classifying evidence. Later, after you and your teammates begin to have lots of material, you may want to develop a system of briefs. Your entire squad will pool together the best evidence gathered on a certain argument you may wish to make: for example, the idea that equality is bad. From the evidence that you have accumulated, choose the best quotations to support this argument; each card should take a different approach. Then prepare a typed outline of the points made by the evidence. For example, you may develop something like this:

**EQUALITY IS A BAD VALUE**

1. All humans innately unequal.
2. Forced equality is against human nature.
3. Forced equality defeats justice.
4. Forced equality stifles progress.
5. Equality hampers all other values.

Following each of the six headlines in this outline, you would type the citation and the body of the evidence which proves the point. Once the whole brief is typed, it can be photocopied and distributed to all the members of the team. You will want to keep your briefs neatly organized in a folder or binder. During a round of debate, if you need to refute the value of equality supported by your opponent, it is easy to pull out the appropriate brief and read the evidence that most directly applies.

Unfortunately, you can’t start off debating with a big bunch of briefs. It’s useless to prepare briefs until you know what arguments your opponents are likely to advance. And, of
course, you need to gather a quantity of evidence before you have enough related material to make a brief worthwhile.

Card files can be more flexible than briefs, because you can draw out precisely the right evidence you need. Briefs can help you present a more polished speech, and briefs can be easier to file than a stack of index cards. Successful debaters have used both approaches as well as a combination of the two; which method of sorting and storing evidence you should use is a matter of your preference and the style of debate your coach prefers.

Evaluating Evidence

How do you know what to excerpt from a book or magazine for your evidence file? Traditionally, there are several tests for evaluating the worth of evidence. Consider these before you write out any card:

- **TIMELINESS.** The material should be current. This is especially true of the factual evidence dealing with current events and society; for this, a good rule-of-thumb is to prefer evidence that is five years old or less. Dates are much less important for philosophical evidence. After all, we still find the philosophical writings of Aristotle and Plato relevant.

- **CREDENTIALS.** Is the author qualified to give an opinion on the matter under discussion? A physician writing about medical ethics is probably more reliable a source than a politician expressing a similar opinion, for example. Reporters for newspapers and magazines can be trusted to report statistics and factual information with as much credibility as the publication deserves (high credibility for *TIME*, low for the *National Enquirer*, for example), but a general-affairs reporter would have less credibility offering an opinion.

- **PREJUDICE.** The author should be free of any particular bias. Expert opinion should be based on facts, not prejudice. However, sometimes this works to increase the credibility of the conclusion: for example, if an official of the American Civil Liberties Union were to claim that, under specific circumstances, the privilege of free speech should be limited, the fact that the ACLU is known to support free speech would make this quotation compelling. In summary: evidence consistent with prejudice is discounted, but evidence contrary to the author’s prejudice is elevated in value.

- **CONCISENESS.** Good evidence makes its point quickly. A quotation that takes two or three long paragraphs to reach its conclusion probably isn’t worth committing to an index card, because you would almost never want to take that much time in the debate round to read the evidence.

- **BREADTH.** The conclusion should be broad enough to be generally applicable. Evidence hedged with too many words like “may,” “sometimes,” and “could be” is too limited for most rounds of debate.

- **RESEARCH VALIDITY.** If the information is factual data drawn from research studies, you will want to be sure that the research is valid and broadly applicable. For instance, if you are debating a gun-control topic, a study reporting that 95% of the people surveyed believed gun ownership deters crime might seem reliable — until you find out
that the survey only questioned twenty National Rifle Association members. Scientific study evidence is not as widely used in Lincoln-Douglas as in policy debate, but it does show up from time to time.

- **CAUSAL REASONING.** The best expert opinion does not just present a conclusion — it also reveals the author’s reasoning that leads to that conclusion. A missile-systems expert claiming that “decreasing the U.S. nuclear arsenal would lead to nuclear war within five years” seems at first glance to be a worthwhile quotation. But since the expert just presents his opinion and not the reasons behind it, the evidence has lesser value. Evidence which fails to establish a cause-and-effect relationship is called **conclusionary evidence.** Remember, you need evidence which will persuade, and evidence which explains its reasons has high persuasive value because it supports itself.

- **RELEVANCE.** Even if the material passes all the other tests, you don’t want to bother collecting it if you will never use the quotation.

As the discussion on the dates of evidence shows, all standards for the worth of evidence are relative. The primary consideration should be whether you are likely to use the evidence in a round of debate. If the answer is “yes,” copy the evidence onto a card.

**Applying Evidence In The Debate**

Again, how much evidence is required during a Lincoln-Douglas round is highly dependent on the prevailing style of debate in your area. But even when you want to apply evidence top back up a certain argument with expert support, how you do that can be affected by circumstances and regional judging standards. It is always acceptable to read the full bibliographic information (you can omit the page number, if you like) and then the body of the quotation. If you want to read evidence by the same author later in the round, you can just give the author’s name, and say the full source was presented earlier; e.g., “Evidence comes from Immanuel Kant, previously cited in my constructive speech,” or “Support comes from TIME magazine, previously cited in May 1993” in case you have cited several different dates of the magazine already.

Sometimes — and here, you will need guidance from your coach as to whether this practice is acceptable in your region — it will serve merely to **paraphrase** evidence, rather than quote it outright. For example, rather than read a lengthy quotation from John Stuart Mill on the principle of Utilitarianism, you can just explain in a few sentences who Mill was (that is, present the author’s credentials, the source, and the date of the work you’re citing) and give a summary of his ideas. This can be especially effective when you are presenting a philosophical argument that the judge may not immediately recognize by name; remember, some L-D judges are laypersons, neither coaches nor former debaters. You still need to have directly quoted evidence available to prove that your summary is a fair representation of the author’s opinions.

Finally, you can always **assert** that some particular fact is true or false. This is the weakest variety of “evidence,” but many assertions go unchallenged in all forms of debate simply because they truly are common knowledge. Any assertion that your opponent agrees with (or, at least, fails to challenge) is considered as well-proven as if you had read evidence from the best authorities. Of course, there are limits to what you can get away with; your best bet is to rely on assertions that something does or doesn’t exist, rather than cause and effect relationships. For
example, you can reliably assert that there is a federal deficit of \( X \)-billion dollars; you would probably be challenged if you asserted (without evidence to back up your opinion) that federal deficits are the primary cause of America’s economic problems.

There is another side to the use of evidence in debate: refutation. The tests of evidence we looked at earlier not only apply to the information you gather, they also apply to the quotations read by your opponent during the debate round. If you are confronted by evidence that fails one or more of these tests, then you will want to point out this failure to the judge as part of your refutation of the opposing case. Similarly, if your opponent summarizes evidence rather than reads it, and if you have grounds to believe this is a distortion of the author’s views, you can challenge him to read quotations to support his interpretation. (Of course, a stronger approach is to read quotes from the cited author that contradict your opponent’s interpretation.) It should be obvious that you should also challenge any of your opponent’s assertions that are unreasonable, also, by providing reasonable counter-assertions or opposing evidence.

**Researching The Topic Area**

L-D topics are deliberately selected so that evidence on the subject matter is readily available. This is an advantage over policy debate, which often entails abstruse arguments which can only be evidenced at a large university library. In contrast, Lincoln-Douglas debaters can probably gather most of the evidence they need by consulting their nearest public library and the high school bookshelves.

Researching should be an ongoing process throughout your debate career. As new resolutions are announced for upcoming tournaments, you will certainly concentrate on researching the specifics of the topic area. However, at all times you can improve your understanding of philosophical concepts by reading key works of leading philosophers. We’ll suggest some approaches to philosophical research in a moment; let’s talk about researching specific topics. Of course, the hints we discuss here can only be general, since the precise wording of a resolution will determine the sources most relevant to your reading.

Do you have good library skills? If not, this is the time to develop them. Ask the librarian (or your coach) to show you how to find periodicals and books, how to use the microfilm and microfiche readers, and how to requisition materials through interlibrary loan. You must have these skills if you intend to research effectively, and — incidentally — knowing how to find information in the library is a vital talent for any informed adult.

Books are good sources for your initial research into the topic, and they can provide in-depth coverage of a subtopic better than any other source. There is a substantial publication delay for books, however: the book may have been completed up to three years before the copyright date. This means that the most current information on a subject will rarely be available in book format. That’s okay, since most Lincoln-Douglas resolutions do not demand up-to-the-minute timeliness of research.

Newspapers and magazines are the best sources for recent developments. Except for the editorial pages, newspapers provide mostly factual data, rather than opinion and analysis. The four mainstay newspapers in debate are *The Christian Science Monitor, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Washington Post*. Major regional newspapers, such as the *Detroit Free Press* or *Detroit News* are acceptable, but you will want to avoid local papers. Magazines are a mixed lot, but can be the most productive sources of topic background. News magazines such as *TIME, Newsweek,* or *BusinessWeek* can give you some background in current
events, but they often have dubious analysis. Political magazines — *Washington Monthly*, *The New Republic*, *National Review*, and so on — specialize in analysis, but you need to be wary of the particular biases of each one. Depending on the topic, you may also find it useful to consult specialty and technical magazines or academic journals. Some of these (for example, *Scientific American*) are written to be accessible to the general public; others may only be found in large college libraries.

You will want to begin your search by compiling a bibliography of material to read. Consult a magazine index, such as *READER'S GUIDE TO PERIODICAL LITERATURE*, to begin developing a bibliography. Ideally, your entire team will divide the effort of reading magazines, so that everything is surveyed by somebody and the best articles are called to everyone’s attention.

If time permits, you may also find it useful to write for specific information to organizations outside your state. Writing to your U.S. Congressperson or Senator can get you government documents that may be relevant to an upcoming debate. Special interest groups may also be able to provide useful brochures and publications; often, there will be no charge if the material is to be used for educational purposes. For instance, for a resolution dealing with the propriety of gun control, it would be worthwhile to write both to the National Rifle Association and Handgun Control, Inc. Whether you will want to write to federal agencies or private organizations will be determined, in part, by the likely time it will take to process your request (often several weeks).

Don’t forget vertical files! Most libraries maintain a file of pamphlets, newspaper cuttings, and promotional materials from the business and academic worlds. Most libraries gather related clippings in file folders, storing these in cabinets accessible to patrons. See if your library maintains such a file, and then browse through it.

The key word in that last sentence is “browse.” The best evidence often comes through serendipity — as a complete surprise while you are skimming through a dozen magazine articles during a library session. One secret to effective research is to read as much as possible in the topic area. This means that you will read a few articles in depth, but you will also skim dozens more, in the course of the season. Don’t stop once you start debating the resolution; reading needs to be an ongoing process. Read relevant articles even if they are unlikely to have usable quotations. Once in a while, your random reading will bring you the perfect piece of evidence that a more deliberate search never would have found.

One final point that, sadly, has to be made: you must be an *ethical* researcher. There is never any justification for fabrication of evidence, taking evidence out of context, or rewording the text so it better suits your needs. A debater who is caught with invalid evidence is going to lose the round — most judges see that as a minimum penalty. But gossip travels quickly through the debate circuit, and this debater will also find his ethics (and his evidence) questioned in every subsequent round. Probably, his career as an effective debater is over. Even if the fraudulent debater is not caught, his reliance on bogus evidence destroys the educational value of the exercise both for himself and his opponents.

Ethics in research also goes beyond the validity of the evidence, though. You also have the duty to respect your fellow researchers. That means taking proper care of library resources, returning them promptly, and never, *never* defacing, writing in, or cutting material out of books and magazines that are not your personal property. Respect for the needs of other people is a first step toward self-respect and maturity.
Researching Philosophical Issues

In principle, researching philosophical issues is no more difficult than topic area research: just find an appropriate book and begin reading. Unless you have access to a nearby college library, you probably will find more philosophical material in books rather than in periodicals. However, both your school library and your local public library are virtually guaranteed to have something relevant to your search. Philosophy is one of the underpinnings of our culture; the classic works are so important that almost every library will carry them.

Most students do not get a significant exposure to philosophy in high school. So you may be taken aback by the need for philosophical research. Where should you begin? Well, there’s some good news and some bad news. On the positive side: start anywhere. Whatever you read will increase your understanding of the rich philosophical tradition of Western civilization. The productivity of browsing is far higher for philosophical research than for topic-specific research. No matter what you read, you will be able to find an application for it somewhere — if not under this Lincoln-Douglas resolution, than under the next one.

The bad news is: philosophy is hard. Up through high school, we are exposed to an empirical vision of the search for truth — a model that favors experiments to determine the truth of an idea. Philosophy doesn’t work that way. No experiment can tell us whether the duty of government is more to ensure justice than enforce order, or contrariwise. Philosophy operates on the basis of reflective thinking, not empiricism. Your first exposure to this novel way of thinking is likely to be a shock. In addition, many of the classic works (and not only the ones that have to be translated into English) are dense and difficult to understand. It often helps, not only to read the original work of classic philosophers, but to read modern works that summarize and explain the classical texts. And — surprise! — this helps your L-D debating, too. For instance, by reading a modern critique of John Stuart Mill’s UTILITARIANISM along with Mill’s text, you not only get evidence in favor of utilitarianism, but also debate evidence to show that Mill’s reasoning was unsound.

One place to start would be reading a survey of philosophy — perhaps a textbook for a college-level introductory class — which would present extracts from classical philosophers as well as modern essays analyzing the ideas presented. Or you could begin by tackling one of the values or hierarchy rules introduced earlier in this book — justice, perhaps, or the social contract — and begin by looking up these terms in your library’s catalogue.

For the student who really doesn’t want the shock of plunging into heady waters right away, there is the following annotated bibliography:

- Martin Gardner, The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener (New York: Quill, 1983). Gardner, a former columnist for Scientific American, here examines and defends his own philosophical views — a modern version of the classic “apology.” Only a little of this is directly applicable to L-D debate. However, Gardner’s expository style is flawless, and there is no better introduction to the way thinking about philosophy differs from the empirical search for truth we see elsewhere.

- Paul Edwards, ed., The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (New York: Macmillan-Free Press, 1967). Originally published in eight volumes, but reprinted a few years later in four volumes, this is a mammoth but indispensable reference work. Most public libraries (and
some school libraries) have it on the shelves. This is the best reference work available, with lengthy essays on major philosophers and their ideas. It’s especially good at summarizing the debate on both sides of philosophical controversies, and at providing references to the classic philosophy texts you will want to consult for reading in depth. The Encyclopedia is written for philosophy professionals, though, so sometimes its style is a little dry. For a starter, try the chapter on “Values.”

- Mortimer Adler, *Six Great Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1981); *Ten Philosophical Mistakes* (New York: Macmillan, 1985). Adler is highly regarded as one of the popularizers of philosophy. Both of these books serve as excellent introductions to the field — and the first one listed is especially appropriate to Lincoln-Douglas value issues. Adler doesn’t just summarize controversies here: he aggressively defends his own position on the issues.

- Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1933). During the 1930s there was a fad for historical summaries of various sorts, and this book became a bestseller. As of this writing, Durant’s book is still in print as an inexpensive paperback. You will probably not use this as a primary source, but it does effectively show how philosophical ideas developed over time, and it does give references to the important works you may wish to read and cite as primary sources.

There is no real core reading list for philosophy. Any attempt at such a list would be incomplete. But, for the student who is ready to try reading “the hard stuff,” here is a beginning list of sources which are widely available and which have been frequently cited in value debate. Remember that many of the works were not originally written in English, so translations (and even the titles of the works) may vary.

- Thomas Aquinas: *On Being and Essence*
- Aristotle: *The Ethics* (sometimes titled *Nichomachean Ethics*)
- Jeremy Bentham: *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789)
- Ralph Waldo Emerson: *Nature* (1836)
- Thomas Hobbes: *Leviathan* (1651)
- Sidney Hook: *Paradoxes of Freedom* (1963)
- David Hume: *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1785); *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40)
- Immanuel Kant: *The Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785); *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781)
- John Locke: *Two Treatises of Government* (1689); *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690)
- Niccolo Machiavelli: *The Prince* (c. 1513)
- James Madison (et. al): *The Federalist* (1787-1788)
- Abraham Maslow: *Motivation and Personality* (1970); *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1968)
- John Stuart Mill: *On Liberty* (1859); *Utilitarianism* (1863)
Handbooks

A few commercial companies have begun publishing handbooks for the Lincoln-Douglas debater. These are collections of evidence cut from books and magazines, usually with accompanying analysis; a few handbooks organize evidence into briefs. Some handbooks specifically deal with a wide range of philosophical arguments, but do not deal with the specifics of any resolution. Other companies will publish handbooks targeted to a particular resolution — for example, each of the resolutions used by the National Forensic League during a single school year — and will have both topic-specific and philosophical evidence.

While policy debate is now dominated by handbook evidence, we have not reached that point in Lincoln-Douglas debate. Many of the resolutions used in L-D debate are used only for a limited number of local or regional tournaments, and it’s not economically feasible for the major handbook producers to develop materials for use on such a limited scale. Topic-specific handbooks are generally available only for resolutions with national or statewide scope.

If your coach invests in Lincoln-Douglas handbooks, treat them as resources to be used, but do not become dependent on them. The evidence they contain is often irrelevant, and sometimes distorted from the intent of the author. Depending on the ethics of the publisher, handbook evidence may have poor citations, such as incomplete dates, unnamed authors, or authors whose credentials are not noted. The chief value of any handbook is to remind you of issues you may have overlooked and to suggest other primary publications worth consulting. Above all: never let handbooks replace your duty to research your own evidence and to develop your own ideas.
Chapter 10
FROM POLICY DEBATE TO LINCOLN-DOUGLAS

New Challenges

This chapter is addressed to the student who has had some experience with policy debate, and wants to enlarge his or her repertoire. Congratulations! It takes courage to explore any new discipline. You will find that many of the skills you developed in policy debating have direct application to Lincoln-Douglas. The abilities to research, organize your thoughts, signpost and structure arguments, conduct and respond to cross-examination, and refute your opponent’s positions are immediately applicable to your L-D career.

But there are some important distinctions between policy and L-D debate. We will use this chapter to outline some of the more fundamental differences. Where appropriate, the chapter in which new material is introduced is noted. You may wish to begin by reading this chapter first, as a survey of the material which will be covered in the rest of the book. And, especially if you are debating policy and L-D tournaments concurrently throughout the season, use this chapter to review before each Lincoln-Douglas tournament; it will help you switch from “policy mode” to the new parameters of value debate.

Theory and the Real World

It is natural for policy debaters to feel uneasy — even isolated and defenseless — when essaying Lincoln-Douglas for the first time. In policy debate, you gradually accumulated a vast body of theory: you knew when to apply a disadvantage or counterplan argument, you learned why topicality could be viewed as a voting issue, and so on. In essence, policy debate theory gave you a conceptual enclosure to give you a sense of security.

Lincoln-Douglas theory is much less sophisticated and complex. There are a few rules, but far, far fewer than ones you know from your policy debate experience. The emphasis here is more on debating the substance of the topic, less on arguing about debating rules. Theoretical issues, such as charging your opponents with violating the conventions of the debate, are extremely rare.

On the one hand, that means you have less new theory to learn. On the other, that means you may have to get your hands dirty arguing actual issues, rather than whether (for example) legal definitions provide better limits than topic-contextual definitions.

Policy debate often takes place in a fantasy world. Every government policy seems to entail the risk of global nuclear war, famine from Malthusian population surges, and tyranny as political elites overthrow representative democracy in the United States. Forget that. In Lincoln-Douglas debate, the thrust is on more realistic approaches. Counter-intuitive arguments would have to be explained in great detail; given the time limits, usually it is preferable to stick to straightforward approaches. Thus, Lincoln-Douglas lacks much of the “free-wheeling” fun of some policy debate rounds. At the same time, L-D debate avoids the feeling — common in policy rounds — that no conclusion is reached, that no learning occurred, because the debate was focused on arcane arguments and megadeath counts that have no connection to the way the world really works.
There is a strong bias against trickery. Of particular importance here is the reliance on unusual definitions to generate “squirrel” cases. You score more points with judges by proving you can debate on the issues than by proving you can defend against a topicality argument.

Some policy debaters (those hostile to Lincoln-Douglas) see value debate as substituting opinion and emotion for hands-on, verifiable “truth.” This exaggerates the situation. Lincoln-Douglas is a variety of value debate. Its subject matter consists of philosophical issues and concepts rather than government programs. At issue is not what we should do, but what we should believe. The evidence used in L-D is less oriented toward empirical studies; few statistics are cited. Since the values being discussed reflect an ultimate standard of goodness, such policy debate tools as cost-benefit analysis are discarded.

**Speaker Burdens**

There is no status quo in Lincoln-Douglas. Since the topic is based on how we should think, not act, we would normally look to what people currently believe to identify a “present system.” But L-D resolutions cover issues that are genuinely in dispute by people of good will: you could marshal considerable belief both for and against the resolution. Without a distinct mind-set to serve as a status quo, we cannot give natural presumption to the Negative.

But, since the Affirmative speaks first, we can (somewhat artificially) impose a burden of proof on that side. Since somebody advancing a position has a duty to prove it, we can claim that the Affirmative has a greater duty to support the resolution than the Negative has to attack it; thus a tie debate would be awarded to the Negative. The Negative has the usual burden to prove his or her own positions, and the burden of rejoinder (the duty to clash with some element of the Affirmative position). Some judges, however, feel that apportioning speaker duties arbitrarily is unfairly harsh on the Affirmative; these judges impose a resolitional burden of proof on the Negative equal to that on the Affirmative, making tie debates possible. The matter is controversial. [Chapter 4]

**Stock issues**

Since the Affirmative is not proposing a policy change, no plan is presented. Okay, some authorities have argued that there is a very tenuous implicit plan: the Affirmative is saying, “We should believe the resolution,” and that is the plan. Of course, without a plan, there is no need to prove solvency. Inherency also becomes irrelevant as an issue. Both sides of the debate may be supporting beliefs which exist now. Indeed, the resolution may be written to promote what seems to be conventional wisdom.

Arguably, the need/harm stock issue of policy debate is still present, though greatly transformed. The Affirmative will claim that failure to support the resolution is morally, ethically, or pragmatically repugnant. This becomes the center argument of the debate. A Lincoln-Douglas round is concerned only with evaluating the relative harms on each side of the resolution, much as the impacts of Affirmative harms are weighed against Negative disadvantage impacts in a policy debate round.

There are no disadvantages as such. However, a Negative strategy called the value implication may be used to much the same purpose. The Negative speaker also is still able to
challenge topicality by suggesting that Affirmative definitions are inferior. In Lincoln-Douglas, topicality may not be a voting issue; the Negative may win the argument and still lose the debate. Lincoln-Douglas does have stock issues, in the sense that there are certain positions the Affirmative is expected to support in the course of the debate. But as a rule, these are not voting issues. The Affirmative may omit one of these points and still win. It is the duty of the Negative to point out any logical flaws which result from such omissions. [Chapters 4-6]

**Evidence**

Evidence is still used in Lincoln-Douglas, but the emphasis is shifted relative to policy debate. Fewer direct quotations and a greater reliance on paraphrasing evidence is used. The evidence sources may be philosophers, religious leaders, sociologists, and psychologists, rather than the field experts common in policy debates. Evidence dates assume far less importance, since the concepts discussed presumably are long-lasting values. Of course, arguments relevant to the particular field of the resolution will probably be supported through contemporary quotations, but even here, the evidence dates assume reduced importance. Just because you postdate your opponent’s evidence by a few years does not necessarily mean you will win the argument.

In policy debate, we become so involved with getting the arguments out that we tend to reduce debating to presenting headline-style tags and the supporting evidence. Lincoln-Douglas debate encourages a more deliberate and reflective approach. You must interpret the evidence you present — explain what it means and why it supports your argument. Do not expect the evidence to make the argument for you! The use of analogy and references to commonly known historical examples is often a good technique in L-D; of course, such approaches would be greeted with suspicion in most policy rounds. [Chapter 9]

**Delivery**

Attention to the quality of your speech enhances your overall standing with the judge, by adding an emotional element to the logical arguments you are presenting. Among other reasons, Lincoln-Douglas was established as an alternative to policy debate in order to encourage good speaking skills in a competitive situation. You may have noticed that policy debates are not easily understood by non-expert audiences. Lincoln-Douglas debaters are expected, by contrast, to place some emphasis on eloquence, rhetoric, and oratorical skill. This doesn’t mean bombast, but rather a concern for the meaning and beauty of words. Some judges prefer a conversational, though not casual, style; others prefer a little more formality. But no judge will punish you for using the full richness of your vocabulary. Keep in mind that the letters L.D. can also stand for “Lucid Delivery.”

A few words about speed. It is probably permissible to speak a little faster than normal conversational speed. But racing through your speech is inexcusable. Judges will give losses based entirely on poor communication skills.

Do not use jargon. None. Maybe you can get away with contention, hierarchy, and topicality, though the last one is risky. But the following words and phrases should not be used: value criterion, object of evaluation, prima facie, status quo, counterwarrant, decision rule, and evaluative term. If you feel you absolutely must use one of these, define the term clearly for the
judge when you introduce it. There is a bias on the part of most judges against jargon and technical terms — “That’s a policy debate thing,” judges have told me — and using an arcane vocabulary unnecessarily will reduce your credibility.

**Structure**

Arguments in L-D debate generally have simpler structure than their counterparts in policy debate. You will continue to label your major positions and forecast the coming speech (“I will have four major arguments to present...”) . Do not attempt to develop substructure more deeply than this! The baroque frameworks common to policy debate (“Let’s turn to little-D under subpoint 3 of point B of Contention four”) look monstrously out-of-place in a value debate round.

Minimize your use of the language of outlining. Since you will have just a handful of main arguments to present, with little or no substructure, this should not be a temptation. You should still identify these major arguments with labels (sometimes called *tags*, *headlines*, or *slugs*) which summarize the argument in a brief sentence.

Negatives: if lots of substructure is a bad idea, what does that tell you? Right: No spreading. If the Affirmative drops an argument, that doesn’t necessarily mean the argument becomes a winner for you — so there’s no reason to give seventeen weak responses to each Affirmative claim, in hopes that one of these will be dropped. Confine yourself to your few best responses against Affirmative positions. Especially if you give several responses to one Affirmative argument, you may wish to ignore other Affirmative issues entirely. Of course, this ban on spreading applies equally well to Affirmative refutation of Negative positions. [Chapters 5, 6, and 7]

You will still wish to prepare a flowchart of the debate to keep track of the arguments presented. Failure to do so will mean a weak, disorganized presentation. Your policy debate experience will help you here. Since the pace of L-D is slower, you should be able to record good summaries of the evidence presented as well as the case structure on your flowsheet. [Chapter 8]

**Judging**

One of the basic concepts underlying Lincoln-Douglas debate is that is ought to be comprehensible by an ordinary mortal. Some tournaments even try to fill out the judging pool with laypersons: intelligent people who have had some training in timing speeches and active listening to arguments, but not debate specialists. During the course of a tournament, then, you may have judges who are L-D coaches, policy debate coaches, speech (but not debate) coaches, and even people with only limited prior contact with debate. That’s okay. You can always ask an unfamiliar judge prior to the round what approach he or she prefers. You may have to explain some philosophical concepts in greater detail for a judge new to Lincoln-Douglas, but that is about the only distinction between professional and layperson judges. Avoid “talking down” to the judge in any event. As in policy debate, treat your judge (as well as your opponent and any audience) with courtesy and respect.
Proof, Reasoning, and Fallacies

We have noted, in earlier chapters, that proof is needed in all forms of debate to back up the claims made by the debaters. But what constitutes “proof?” How can we tell if the evidence in support of a claim is strong enough?

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to these questions. In mathematics, and to a lesser extent in the hard sciences, we do have definite criteria for establishing the truth of inferences. We know that a rhombus inscribed in a circle must be a square because this conclusion can be deduced from a limited list of geometric axioms. Botanists can compare test and control populations of a certain plant to determine whether a chemical applied to the test group aided their growth. But our gains in precision and offset by losses in generality: mathematical and geometric proofs are only valid for a given set of axioms, and thus may not reflect “the real world.” And scientific papers never claim that their conclusions are absolutely and unvaryingly true; rather, scientists specify the likelihood that their results could have been a matter of chance, with full realization that later experiments will fail to support the conclusions some of the time.

Outside these specialized disciplines, we have to fall back on inference as our method of proof — gathering evidence and hoping for the emergence of a pattern that is consistent with all the evidence. Of course, the more evidence that emerges, the stronger is our confidence in the conclusion. Absolute certainty is never possible.

Evaluating the strength of a proof is a personal judgment. Some proofs — some chains of reasoning — are so obvious that most people would accept the conclusion instantly. If we know, for example, that all living creatures need to eat food, then when we find something that does not consume food (a rock, perhaps), we can instantly decide that the object is not a living being. Of course, the validity of this proof depends on the assumption that, indeed, no non-eating living creature exists, and this in turn may call into question what we mean by “living” and “eating food.” At the other end of the spectrum, some chains of reasoning are riddled with gaps in reasoning and inconsistencies; we reject these as bad examples of reasoning.

One caution is important at this point: even though a chain of reasoning is invalid, the conclusion it reaches may be true. Consider this argument: “All Germans are evil, and since Hitler was a German, he was evil.” The premise here, that all Germans are evil, is merely an appeal to prejudice, not a true example of evidence. As we will learn below, this is an invalid argument. Nevertheless, most people would agree with the conclusion, “Hitler was evil,” but for other reasons not contained within this argument.

Over the ages, philosophers have compiled lists of common ways that arguments and inferences may easily go astray. These patterns of invalid arguments are often called logical fallacies. In this chapter, we will examine some of the ways that reasoning can go wrong. By learning to recognize fallacious arguments, you can be more effective in debate refutation. This will usually involve pointing out the fallacious argument of your opponent, naming and explaining the fallacy behind it, and pointing out to the judge that the claim supported by the argument must be considered a mere assertion. As we examined in the previous paragraph, we
can’t automatically assume the conclusion to be false just because the argument has a fallacious form, but we can strip away the seeming reasonability supporting the deduction. It would be best, of course, if you could follow this with your own proof showing that your opponent’s claim is false, but sometimes that is not possible.

Of course, emotional arguments have their role in Lincoln-Douglas debate, too. In the absence of any better argument to the contrary, a judge might well accept an appeal to prejudice or a hasty generalization as the best substantiation for a point available within that particular round of debate. Don’t expect that expertise in detecting fallacies will be enough to carry you through every debate.

A final word about ethics is appropriate here. Understanding logical fallacies also gives you the power to use them. You may be able to win a particular argument — perhaps the critical argument in a debate — by presenting a chain of reasoning you realize is flawed, if your opponent fails to detect the fallacy and the judge does not intervene in rendering his or her decision. Deliberately abusing your powers of reasoning this way is both unethical and hurtful to the educational benefits of debate. Do not exploit your knowledge and skill in this way.

**Ad hominem**

This Latin phrase translates as “against the man.” An *ad hominem* argument attacks the person against whom you are debating, not that person’s arguments.

Example: “My Affirmative opponent supports free expression. Need I remind you that groups such the ACLU has long fought for free speech — and for whom? Not decent Americans, but Communists and Nazis and the American Ku Klux Klan. My opponent is associating himself with every despicable hate-mongering group in the Northern Hemisphere. Why, it’s even possible that he is a Communist or a Nazi himself!” Needless to say, the Negative speaker here is not refuting the Affirmative argument; his rant is directed at the personal character of the opponent. The original argument stands in the face of this attack.

**Affirming the consequent**

This is a fallacy of cause and effect reasoning. It is a close relative of denying the antecedent, described below. In this fallacy, the advocate notes that one factor (A, the antecedent) causes another (C, the consequent). He then notes that the consequent — C, in our example — exists, and therefore concludes that the antecedent (A) must also exist. But this is a violation of the formal rules of logic (specifically, the rules of implication). It is possible that many, many different causes could lead to the same effect. Just because the results that would flow from one potential cause are manifested, that doesn’t mean we can automatically affirm that this potential cause provided the trigger.

Example: The Affirmative speaker first provides evidence for a causal link: Lack of quality education causes high unemployment. He then notes that we now have high rates of unemployment. His conclusion is that we lack quality education. The critical flaw here is that it has not been proved that lack of quality education is the sole cause of unemployment, just that it is one potential cause. Unemployment rolls may have swelled because of a general economic decline, or because of massive layoffs in one business, or because of a natural disaster, or any of a dozen more reasons. We cannot deduce anything by noting that the unemployment is high.
The rules of mathematical logic are too complex to be covered in this text. Advanced students may have realized that it is legitimate to deny the consequent. This means (using the above example) if unemployment is low, then none of the potential triggers of high employment could be operating; specifically, we must have adequate education, since poor education would have caused high unemployment.

**Ambiguity**

The fallacy of ambiguity relies on words with vague or shifting meanings. The advocate will use the word in two different senses. This is sometimes called the fallacy of *equivocation*.

Example: The Negative speaker is trying to explain why Justice cannot be a value in our legal system. “Our legal system tries to implement justice by relying on an impartial judge or jury. But when the judge finally renders a verdict, he is forced to agree with one side or the other. He is no longer impartial. So the entire basis of justice has to be discarded.” The debater is using the word *impartial* in two different senses here. In the first usage, it means “without prejudice”; in the second, “without favoritism of one side or the other.” In fact, an informed, honest opinion by a judge is still “impartial” (in the first sense of the word) at the conclusion of the trial. Only by allowing an ambiguous word to slip in meaning between usages does the Negative speaker seem to win a point.

**Appeal to authority**

In this fallacy, the advocate avoids examination of the issues by citing a proverb or the opinion of a renowned person. The advocate refuses to go further into the merits (or otherwise) of his position, asserting that the common sense of the adage — or the recognized wisdom of the person quoted — is sufficient to carry the point.

It’s easy to see how substituting proverbs and maxims for rational argument is detrimental to developing effective positions. Proverbs are vivid, and they appeal to common sense; they add to the rhetorical impact of any speech. But human experience is so varied that no proverb serves as an exact analogy to every situation. That’s why it’s so easy to find contradictory proverbs: “Look before you leap,” advocates caution, while “He who hesitates is lost” advocates swift decisiveness. Proverbial wisdom can buttress a speech if used along with other arguments showing how the proverb applies in this particular circumstance.

The other source of authority, expert opinion, is more problematical. Since we tend to use quotations and paraphrases from eminent people to support our claims in Lincoln-Douglas debate, how does this differ from an appeal to authority? Often, this is a matter of personal judgment, and as such is open to dispute. A fallacious use of authority will often cite a famous person who is not an expert in the particular field under discussion. Another warning sign is that the biases, motives, and underlying reasoning of the person cited are never questioned in the appeal to authority: the fact that this individual took a certain position is enough to forestall further argument, according to this fallacy.

Example: In justifying the morality of nuclear weapons, a debater cites the fact that Albert Einstein urged President Roosevelt to develop the atomic bomb, arguing that, since so eminent a thinker as Einstein supported nuclear weapons, we should too. This is probably an appeal to authority rather than a legitimate use of expert opinion. Einstein, after all, was not an...
expert in the field of moral philosophy. His recommendation was based on the assumption that Germany was working to develop the bomb, and hence is based on pragmatic grounds rather than moral ones.

**Appeal to emotion, pity, and prejudice**

Several related fallacies ask the listener to discard logical reasoning and base a conclusion on personal feelings. The *appeal to emotion* asks for a decision rooted in fear, loyalty, or some other non-rational basis. The *appeal to pity* asks for a decision based on sympathy for the speaker rather than on the merits of the argument. The *appeal to prejudice* asks for a decision based on a shared bias against something or some person who is perceived as opposing the argument.

It is true that, in Lincoln-Douglas debate, the speaker should engage the judge’s emotions as well as intellect. But an emotional appeal, if used, should complement the rational arguments, not replace them. Most judges will accept an emotional argument — even though it is fallacious — but only when there are no better substantive arguments opposed to the position.

Examples: “I’ll give you three reasons why, as Americans, we have to hold patriotism to be the highest value. First, unless we are loyal to our nation, we risk having the country overrun by Communists and socialists and Nazis. Embrace patriotism, or America will be destroyed! Second, think of all the American patriots who gave their lives for this country. Only by reaffirming their patriotism can we make their sacrifices meaningful. Third, we have the example of the Catholics, whose ultimate loyalty is not toward their country but to the Pope. Nobody would like to be like they are. So for all these reasons, we must realize that patriotism is the greatest good.” The first reason is an appeal to fear; the second reason is an appeal to pity, and the third an appeal to prejudice.

**Appeal to ignorance**

A fundamental rule of reasoning is that claims must have proof behind them. The appeal to ignorance turns this rule on its head: this fallacy asserts that something is true unless proven false. In effect, the debater advocating this fallacy is trying to shift the burden of proof onto his or her opponent. Of course, it is hard, and often impossible, to prove a negative, especially when the evidence or our knowledge is incomplete. But there’s another reason to rule that appeals to ignorance are invalid: if such reasoning were accepted as valid, all theories would have equal credibility.

Consider one notable example from real life: Some advocates of the idea that UFOs are spacecraft from beyond the earth sometimes defend their position by arguing that “skeptics can’t prove UFOs aren’t extraterrestrial.” If we accept the appeal to ignorance as a valid argument, then UFOs ARE SPACECRAFT becomes a tentatively viable hypothesis. But the same reasoning also supports the hypothesis that UFOs ARE MESSENGERS FROM GOD IN DISGUISE. And the same reasoning even supports UFOs ARE SECRET CRAFT DEVELOPED BY THE NORWEGIAN MILITARY. If we accept a lack of evidence against a claim as reason to support the claim, then any number of mutually contradictory ideas must be accepted as equally true. If we are to retain the common meaning of “truth,” then, we must be conservative and demand evidence in support
of a belief before it can be even provisionally accepted. This requires rejecting appeals to ignorance as invalid arguments.

Example: “In my Constructive speech I used the examples of slave societies — such as ancient Greece and the ante-bellum South — to show that periods of great inequality have been associated with flourishing economies and culture, in order to argue that inequality is a moral good. In his Affirmative rebuttal, Bernard challenged me to prove that this inequality caused the prosperity. I don’t have the evidence with me, but it’s worth noting that Bernard could not prove that slavery is not the cause of social renaissance, so the point will still fall to me.” No, it won’t. It’s critical for the Negative position here to demonstrate that inequality causes prosperity, rather than, perhaps, that prosperity is possible despite inequality. The burden on proof is on the person asserting the claim; the fact that the Affirmative debater, Bernard, cannot provide evidence to refute the position doesn’t make any difference.

**Attacking a straw man**

Attacking a straw man consists of refuting a flimsy and inconsequential version of the opponent’s arguments, and thereby claiming that opponent’s full position has been discredited. This often occurs in one of two ways: either the advocate rewords his opponent’s position to make it weaker (and thus easier to refute), or he refutes a small part of the opponent’s argument, and then claims that the whole argument falls because a vital portion of the thesis no longer stands.

Be careful when accusing an opponent of this fallacy. Sometimes a seemingly minor point actually is a critical link in a chain of reasoning, and the entire argument will collapse if this point falls. Often, however, refuting a minor sub-argument has no real effect on the main position, and this should be pointed out to the judge. Example: “Sandra has presented three reasons purporting to show that work is an important value: Instrumentally, because work leads to income; instrumentally, because labor enhances our ability to enjoy leisure; and intrinsically, because work strengthens the character of humans. But in my constructive speech, I showed that work destroys our ability to enjoy leisure time, rather than enhances it. So Sandra’s defense of the work ethic must be considered refuted.” In fact, the speaker here only refutes one small part of the argument supporting the value of work.

**Begging the question / Circular argument**

Both these terms refer to the same fallacy: assuming the truth of the thing you want to prove, and using that to “prove” the conclusion.

Example: “The Affirmative speaker says that progress is unimportant, because it’s just change, and change by itself is neither good nor bad. I’m going to give two reasons why progress is an important value. First, progress means positive change: change for the better, change from a low estate to a higher one. On the face of it, progress is improvement and thus a positive value. Secondly, progress is proven good by negation. The opposite of progress is stagnation, and we know that stagnation is bad. So progress, by avoiding a bad thing, becomes a positive value in its own right.” Both of the arguments given here are circular. The first one relies on the assumption that “progress” means “positive change,” and then uses that assumption to “prove” that progress is a positive value; see also the victory by definition fallacy, below. The second argument is a
little more subtle; the assumption here is that “stagnation” is a dysvalue, a fact that is not proven, and then this “fact” is used to show that the opposite of a dysvalue is a positive value.

**Composition AND Division**

These related fallacies both deal with dubious inferences about how individuals and groups interact. The first, composition, claims that if each member of a group has a certain characteristic, then the group as a whole must have that characteristic. The second fallacy, division, claims that if a group has a characteristic, then every individual must have that characteristic. Both of these are variants of the hasty generalization fallacy that have become widespread enough to merit their own names. Of the two fallacies, division arises more often in debate rounds.

Example: From a debate on race relations, the Negative argues: “We know that the white race is biased against persons of color. Now, my Affirmative opponent quotes Ashley Montagu several times. Despite his impeccable credentials for sociological commentary, we must discard this evidence as biased, for despite all his virtues Mr. Montagu is white, and therefore his opinions on race cannot be trusted.” This is an instance of the fallacy of division. Even if we grant the premise (that whites as a whole are biased), we cannot make any claims about the biases of any specific white person.

**Denying the antecedent**

This is a fallacy of cause and effect reasoning. It is a close relative of affirming the consequent, described above. In this fallacy, the advocate proves that one factor (A, the antecedent) causes another (C, the consequent). He then notes that the antecedent does not exist, and therefore concludes that the consequent (C) cannot exist. But this is a violation of the formal rules of logic (specifically, the rules of implication). It is possible that many, many different causes could lead to the same effect. That one factor which could trigger a certain result is not operating tells us nothing about whether other potential causes are active — and, if they are, the result may very well be true.

Example: The Negative speaker first proves the causal link: that political equality improves the quality of life for the country’s whole population. He then notes that a specific country does not have political equality. His conclusion is that this nation must have low quality of life. Of course, the crucial flaw here is that political equality is not the *sole* determinant of high quality of life. Many other factors, such as low crime rates, good economic performance, domestic peace, political stability, and a host of other things can raise the quality of life for a nation’s citizens. We cannot deduce anything based on the fact that political inequality exists.

Although we have not covered formal mathematical logic in this text, some students may have realized that it is legitimate to affirm the antecedent. This means (using the above example) if political equality does exist, quality of life will be high. That is precisely a restatement of the causal link.
**False analogy**

One of the most powerful tools of human reason is to note the similarities between something unknown and something known well, and from this to guess at other similarities which may exist. Comparisons of this sort are called “analogies.” However, there is always the risk that such comparisons will lead to wrong answers. The fallacy of false analogy occurs when two essentially different things are treated as if they were essentially similar.

The most effective ways to reveal the fallacy is to show how treating the two things similarly in all cases would lead to absurd results, or show that consistent application of the analogy actually works against your opponent’s conclusion. Then, explain that the incomparability of the two things requires us to throw out your opponent’s argument (which treats them as equal).

Example: Jeremiah is arguing that teaching creationism as an alternative to evolution by natural selection is warranted in public schools. One of his reasons is as follows: “The American diet is varied. We enjoy the dietary heritage of many cultures. We eat tacos, pizza, and chow mein as the mood suits us. Just as diversity at the table enhances our appreciation of life, so does diversity in our intellectual menu enhance our appreciation of the physical world. The young need to be exposed to a variety of viewpoints, and the contrast between creationism and evolution provides an excellent opportunity for this.” In refutation, Mohammed suggests this is a false analogy: “First, diversity in menus, and in school, is a good idea only if the choices have roughly equal worth. If diversity itself were all that we required, we would be happy to have menus of pebbles, shaving cream, ball bearings and paste for dinner. Secondly, we cannot trust the young consumer to be discriminating. The high school cafeteria may offer a variety of foods, but the adults in charge make sure that all of them are nutritious. Left to himself, the young student may eat only candy. So the Affirmative analogy is incomplete, because it fails to take into account the risks of consuming that which seems worthwhile but is truly worthless. In the matter of science education, clearly we should give higher value to that which has greater scientific support. Using this standard, we see that evolutionary theory is intellectually nutritious, while creationism is junk food for the mind.”

**Hasty generalization**

Our process of drawing inferences from examples has an element of risk: there may be a counterexample lurking somewhere just beyond our sight. For instance, suppose you were trying to prove that all birds can fly. Over the course of your lifetime, you will see any number of flying birds, and each example tends to add a little bit of confirmation to the “All birds can fly” hypothesis. If you never encountered reports or photographs of ostriches or penguins or other flightless birds, you might decide at some point that the hypothesis is true.

The fallacy of hasty generalization consists of drawing a conclusion based on too few examples. In value debate, this charge may be applied when your opponent is relying on a handful of atypical instances to prove his or her point. Ideally, you will be able to show a counterexample that suggests the generalized conclusion is wrong.

Example: The debater claims there is no global poverty problem: “Parts of Asia are reputed to be the most impoverished in the world. Yet I visited India — a country notorious for its poverty — with my parents last summer. While the average citizen we met was certainly not wealthy by American standards, I did not see anyone starving or homeless. Since this is one of
the prime examples of global poverty, I think we can conclude that poverty is overstated.” Of course, deeper exploration of this speaker’s experience might reveal that he spent most of his brief time in upper-class New Delhi hotels, rather than on the streets of Calcutta. His experience is not broad enough or typical enough for conclusions to be drawn from it; any such conclusions are a hasty generalization.

**Naturalistic fallacy**

This is sometimes called the “Get on the Bandwagon” appeal. The speaker urges us to accept his conclusion because a great number of other people have already done so. We see this fallacy in advertisements every day: we are urged to buy a particular product because it is the leading brand, or to view a certain television show because it has high ratings. Of course, we know that often the mob is foolish in its choices; merely because something is popular is no guarantee that it is good. Great numbers of people have approved of slavery in the course of human history, for example.

In philosophy, this same error in thinking is known as the Naturalistic Fallacy — the identification of something as desirable because it is desired. But, as we saw in the first chapters of this textbook, there is a gap between the realm of “is” and the realm of “ought.” The fact that people want something is no indication that this is a good thing for them to have. This has profound implications for Lincoln-Douglas debate. It is extremely difficult to prove that any value is ultimately desirable, rather than merely desired. Philosophers have wrestled with this central problem of values for centuries; in fact, the movement called logical positivism rejected the notion of any absolute values.

Example: A debater argues that work ought to be valued more highly than leisure by citing a recent poll showing that most Americans spend more time thinking about work than about any other activity. In another round, she argues that liberty ought to be considered one of the highest values because it has been considered a central component of American political thought since the founding of the United States. Both of these arguments are examples of the naturalistic fallacy. The first relies on a preponderance of contemporary support, and the second on extensive support through historical time, to prove the worth of the value. That most people like something now, however, or that many people have liked something for many years is not sufficient to prove that they ought to like it.

Be cautious in applying this argument in debate. While it can neutralize your opponent’s value criterion, it applies equally well to your own. And some judges will accept a value proven only to be desired, if there are no conclusive arguments about the value’s desirability. Before such judges, you would have to prove both that the opponent’s value is supported only by the naturalistic fallacy, and that the value is really detrimental (a dysvalue).

**Non sequitur**

This Latin phrase translates as “it does not follow.” This is a catchall term for any failure of reasoning where the conclusion does not flow from the arguments developed.

Often a non sequitur results from the advocate’s omitting a few intermediate steps in his argument — steps that may seem obvious to him. Without those steps being explicitly shown, however, you (and possibly the judge) only see a leap in logic. If you suspect this may be the
case, try to have the debater explain his reasoning more carefully in cross-examination. Sure, this risks that the judge will gain a more favorable impression of your opponent’s arguments. But it is critical that you understand the opponent’s reasoning, too. If the argument truly is fallacious, this is an excellent way to point out the leap to an unjustified conclusion.

Example: The Affirmative speaker, defending the morality of physician-assisted suicide, argues as follows: “Rights are different from duties, in that society cannot force rights on the person. It stands to reason that anybody who assists in a suicide is abetting a right, and so is acting morally.” Here, we have a non sequitur: the initial arguments are not sufficient to pull us to the conclusion. Compare this with a more elaborate explanation: “Rights are different from duties, in that society cannot force rights on the person. Among the most widely accepted rights is the right to life. But a right is not a duty: there is no obligation to live, and a person always has the moral option of terminating his or her right. Suicide is moral. But what about assisting suicide? Uncoerced assistance in this cause means helping someone to exercise his or her choice to die. It stands to reason that anybody who assists in a suicide is abetting a right, and so is acting morally.”

Post-hoc reasoning AND Concurrency

These related fallacies deal with matters of cause and effect. The Latin phrase post hoc, ergo propter hoc literally translates as, “after this, therefore because of this.” The person committing this fallacy argues that because two events follow each other, the former must have caused the latter. This should always be viewed with suspicion. Obviously, such a sequence is possible. However, it is also possible that the two events are not related by cause-and-effect, and their time-ordered sequence is purely coincidental.

Concurrency is a related fallacy, where the advocate asserts that because two things happen at the same time, one causes the other. This relationship is never valid. Causes must always precede effects; if two things happen at precisely the same time, then neither one precedes the other. It is possible that a third, independent factor is the cause of both events, but it is also possible that coincidence is at play. If your morning alarm clock rings at precisely the instant of sunrise, then it’s neither true that sunrise caused the alarm to ring nor that the alarm’s ringing caused the sunrise.

Examples: In a debate about the morality of war, the Affirmative argues that war is always followed by political oppression in the losing nations; therefore war is immoral because it causes oppression. The Negative speaker argues that wartime is associated with economic booms in the aggressor nations, and therefore war is moral because it simultaneously causes economic progress. The Affirmative speaker is engaging in post-hoc reasoning; just because oppression commonly follows war doesn’t mean it was caused by war. The Negative debater is using the fallacy of concurrency. Given that war and economic growth happen at the same time, there is no reason to believe that war causes economic growth rather than economic growth causes war; there is no causal relationship proven here.
Victory by definition

This fallacy is akin to the circular argument or begging the question, in that it assumes the truth of the conclusion in order to prove the conclusion. Here, one or more key terms are defined in such a way as to force the result desired. Debaters will frequently need to challenge such definitions as part of a topicality argument, by showing the definitions are incomplete or incompatible.

Example: The Affirmative debater is arguing that isolationism is the best foreign policy course for the United States: “We must select between the only two possible courses, isolationism and interventionism. Now what is interventionism? It is the unwanted and unjustified interference in the sovereign affairs of other nations. But since interventionism is unjustified — it has no positive use — it has to be rejected, leaving us with isolationism as the better course.” Of course, if we accept these definitions, the conclusion is forced upon us. But what about purposeful interference, or interference that is desired by another country? Under these definitions, this cannot count as interventionism, yet it also is foreign to the normal meaning of “isolationism,” suggesting that the two terms do not cover the entire spectrum of policy options. These definitions are either incomplete (by omitting some possible policies), or inconsistent (by defining “isolationism” as everything except intervention, the debater is evoking a meaning no expert would support).
Chapter 12

A SAMPLE LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE

Resolved: that possession of nuclear weapons is immoral.

My thanks go to Jennifer A. Dukarski, my former student, who developed the initial analysis for the Affirmative case presented here. This resolution was used by the National Forensic League for its officially sanctioned tournaments in April and May, 1993.

The Affirmative Constructive

Good afternoon. A cynic once defined the word “peace” as “a period of waging war without actual bloodshed.” And, though we grin, we recognize the kernel of truth to this statement — a truth that is all the more appalling during this transition from Cold War infighting toward proliferation of the weapons of mass destruction throughout the Third World. This period gives a context to my defense of today’s proposition, Resolved: that possession of nuclear weapons is immoral.

I will begin by offering definitions of critical terms in the resolution. Possession: the holding of something as one’s own; ownership, as opposed to use. Nuclear weapons: explosive devices whose destructive power comes from atomic energy. Immoral: opposed to the values of right behavior.

Before plunging into my case analysis, I wish to offer an overview as to how the terms of the resolution interact. Possession of nuclear weapons confines our debate to considering the morality of nuclear deterrence. This is a natural implication of the distinction between “possession” and “use” of nuclear weapons. The nature of atomic bombs is such that, once you have used them, you no longer can be said, in any meaningful way, to possess them. The resolution therefore limits us to considering these weapons before they are used.

But the resolution also specifies “weapons,” not general nuclear “devices.” There are no purely peaceful uses of atomic weapons. In fact, the single function of possessing nuclear weapons is to deter the use of similar weapons by other nations. Indeed, some authorities have gone so far as to argue that these weapons have no strategic value in wartime, either. Admiral Noel Gayler, the former commander in chief of U.S. Pacific forces, is quoted in Robert McNamara’s 1986 book, Blundering into Disaster, as saying, “There is no sensible military use of any of our nuclear forces. Their only reasonable use is to deter our opponent from using his nuclear forces.” Seize the last phrase as critical — “possession of nuclear weapons” is equivalent to “nuclear deterrence.”

The purpose of my speech will be to argue that nuclear deterrence is immoral. To do so, I will be presenting two specific claims. My first argument will be that Kant’s categorical imperative provides the best guide to determining morality; my second argument will show that nuclear deterrence violates the categorical imperative and therefore is immoral.

Let’s turn to my first argument: The categorical imperative provides the best guide to determining morality. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant tried to develop a rational basis for human morality, an absolute commandment — or, in other words, a categorical imperative — to guide our actions. The result he obtained was similar to the Golden Rule. Philosophy
professor John Davidson acknowledged the importance of Kant’s reasoning to the theory of morals in his 1961 book *Philosophers Men Live By* when he wrote, “Now the one basic and universal categorical imperative of duty which is independent of all experience is this: ‘Always act on the maxim which can at the same time be made a universal law of conduct.’ This principle lies at the heart of rational morality.”

Kant also noted a corollary to his imperative — another way of expressing the same idea. It is our moral duty to treat people as ends in themselves, rather than as means to our ends. That is, we must respect the individuality and personhood of every human being as much as we respect our own.

This brings us to my second major argument: **Nuclear deterrence violates the categorical imperative.** Nuclear deterrence forces us to plan retaliation for a nuclear attack, to threaten all humanity with radioactive doom. Whether or not such a plan is ever carried out, our mere willingness to commit such an act puts us beyond the boundaries of morality. Jonathan Schell, a former writer for the *New Yorker*, puts it eloquently in his 1982 book *The Fate of the Earth* “For if we try to guarantee our safety by threatening ourselves with doom, then we have to mean the threat; but if we mean it, then we are actually planning to do, in some circumstances or another, that which we categorically must never do and are supposedly trying to prevent — that is, extinguish ourselves. This is the circularity at the core of the nuclear deterrence doctrine; we seek to avoid our self-extinction by threatening to perform the act.”

But the situation is not just paradoxical — it is immoral, by the standards of Kant’s categorical imperative. In amassing nuclear arms, we are attempting to control the behavior of the citizens of other nations. We see those citizens either as targets of our hypothetical nuclear attack, or as pawns to be coerced as our foreign policy directs. We do not treat them as discrete, intelligent entities whose worth is as great as our own; we esteem them less, we grant them a lesser right to thrive. The mind-set that deterrence requires frustrates the noble ideals of the categorical imperative, and prevents us from living morally.

Let us summarize. Morality is not a spectrum; it’s a black-or-white, yes-or-no state. Paul Weiss, a philosophy professor at Yale, reminds us in his 1967 book *Right Or Wrong* that, “Whatever is right to do is absolutely right, says Kant; what is wrong is absolutely wrong regardless of its instrumental value. No circumstances will change it.” Use this principle as the scale to weigh nuclear deterrence, and you see that deterrence is absolutely immoral because it violates the categorical imperative. But, since deterrence is the sole reason for — in fact, is identical to — the possession of nuclear weapons, it follows that possession of nuclear weapons is immoral. The resolution is affirmed. And on that basis, I stand ready for cross examination.

**Cross-Examination by the Negative**

Neg: Okay, let’s take a look at your definitions. You define possession as “ownership,” as distinct from use, right?

Aff: Yes.

Neg: Is use of nuclear weapons immoral?

Aff: The case doesn’t really go into that…

Neg: I know that, but you state later in the case that deterrence involves willingness to use weapons. Does that imply that you believe the use of nuclear weapons to be immoral?
Aff: Sure. It’s not central to the resolution, but use of nukes is clearly immoral.

Neg: Okay. Read me your definition of “immoral” again, please.

Aff: “Immoral: opposed to the values of right behavior.”

Neg: How do we know when behavior is right?

Aff: Kant’s categorical imperative determines absolutely when actions are right or wrong.

Neg: And things that are morally wrong…

Aff: …are immoral, yes, that’s what the word means.

Neg: Is there any middle ground? Do some actions count neither as morally good nor morally bad, but neutral?

Aff: I’m not sure. Like what, for instance?

Neg: Okay. It’s generally considered wrong to kill, right?

Aff: Yes, as a general rule.

Neg: But there could be exceptions. It could be morally permissible to kill in self-defense, couldn’t it? Killing in self-defense wouldn’t be a good thing, but it wouldn’t be evil; could it be considered morally neutral?

Aff: I think I would consider it still a bad act. But I know some people would agree that it was neutral, yes. Umm...no, by the categorical imperative an evil act is always evil. Killing in self-defense is still wrong.

Neg: How about this situation. A terrorist is holding a busload of children hostage; it is certain, absolutely certain, that these innocent kids will be killed by the terrorist. Is it morally permissible to shoot the terrorist to save the kids? If you could shoot him safely, with no risk to the children?

Aff: Umm. It wouldn’t be a moral good, certainly. I’m not sure you could be certain that the terrorist would kill the children. I don’t think I can take a stand one way or the other on this question; it’s too hypothetical.

Neg: Let’s move on. In your overview, you essentially equate possession of nuclear weapons to nuclear deterrence, correct?

Aff: That’s right.

Neg: Does nuclear deterrence work?

Aff: No.

Neg: But you haven’t proven that, have you?

Aff: No, it’s not part of the Affirmative case. I expect that the evidence may come out later in the round, though. [Audience laughter]

Neg: Okay, if deterrence doesn’t work, why haven’t we had any nuclear wars?

Aff: We have. World War Two ended as a nuclear war.

Neg: Okay, but there’s been a lot of proliferation since then, and there have been a lot of conventional wars since then. Why haven’t they gone nuclear?

Aff: Look, nobody can explain why something doesn’t exist. Maybe people have come to their senses. A lot of things have happened since Hiroshima; any one of them could be
the reason why nuclear weapons haven’t been used. The space race began in the 1950s — maybe that’s what is preventing nuclear use. I don’t know.

Neg: You don’t know.

Aff: Well, I haven’t taken any evidenced position on it in this debate. Maybe after your constructive I’ll dig out some evidence, and then we’ll both know. [Audience laughter]

Neg: Okay, we’re running out of time, so one last question. Why is this person in the room with us?

Aff: The judge? She’s judging the debate. What does that have to do with anything?

Neg: Bear with me. Is it appropriate that we have somebody here to evaluate our debate?

Aff: Well, sure. That’s how we know who won or lost, afterwards.

Neg: Thanks.

The Negative Constructive

The idea of morality will be central to today’s debate. The word “moral” isn’t limited to just a positive and negative: morally good versus morally bad, or immoral. There’s a third way: morally neutral, an act that is neither good nor bad, neither forced upon us by moral obligation nor forbidden to us by moral repugnance. The resolution requires the Affirmative to uphold possession of nuclear weapons as morally evil. If, instead, at the end of the debate you find it to be morally good or neutral, the decision will have to go Negative. And I intend to show you just why possession of nuclear arms is, at worst, morally neutral.

Let’s begin by considering the first elements of the Affirmative case, the definitions. I’ll gladly accept the Affirmative definitions of “possession” and “nuclear weapons.” But the definition of “immoral” given here — “opposed to the values of right behavior” — bears some examination. I’ll have three responses to this definition. First, the definition allows for three levels of morality, the good-neutral-evil moral scale. It does not require us to evaluate everything as good or evil only. We could define positive morality as “promoting the values of right behavior” and neutral morality — amoral conduct — as “irrelevant to moral values, or beyond the scope of moral values.”

Second, this definition does not take an absolutist position on morality. My opponent would have us accept Kant’s view that actions are good or evil regardless of circumstances. The definition used here does not require absolutism.

Third, I will argue that morality is never absolutist. Sometimes we’re forced into situations where all our choices, including inaction, have dubious virtue when considered in isolation. Take the instance mentioned in cross-ex of the terrorist holding a busload of children hostage. To kill the terrorist violates some moral standards; to do nothing and allow the children to be slain violates others. But we must make some choice! Following strict, absolutist rules, though, denies us any choice, even the choice not to act; we become paralyzed by our own ethics. This is not morality. Morality is rooted in doing the best we can depending on the situation, not clinging to arbitrary rules. Morality is not absolutist, but situational, intimately tied to practical necessities. Kai Nielsen, professor of philosophy at the University of North Carolina, writes in “The Problem of Ethics” chapter in The Encyclopedia of Philosophy, edited by Paul Edwards in 1967 that “Traditionally, moral philosophy has a practical purpose: moral knowledge
was not conceived as purely theoretical knowledge of moral phenomena but as a practical knowledge of how we ought to live.”

Proceed down the outline of the Affirmative case. My opponent’s next point is her overview that the phrase “possession of nuclear weapons” equates to “nuclear deterrence.” Fine; that seems a reasonable position, and I’ll grant that. Note, however, that the point does not claim to evaluate how effective deterrence is; I plan to address that later in my speech.

Meg next presents the two arguments at the core of her case. Let’s look at the first one, that the categorical imperative defines morality. I will have two responses. First, **morality is greater than any single rule.** Cross-apply my argument concerning definitions. While a moral rule may be helpful in assessing the moral worth, every situation must be assessed on its own unique merits. A fixed rule cannot substitute for situational morality.

But how useful is this moral rule? My second response: **The categorical imperative serves poorly as a moral guideline.** Meg would have us believe that treating other people as means, rather than ends in themselves, is the pathway to perdition. Nonsense! We use other people as means all the time. We use the clerk at the shoe store as a means to getting footwear; he, in turn, uses us as a means of getting money. Children use parents as means from infancy through adolescence, and even as adults we rely on their wisdom and experience as a means to help our way in the world. In cross-examination, Meg admits that using the judge as a means to obtaining a decision in the debate was a legitimate function — not especially an exploitation. This corollary of the categorical imperative sounds nice, but it’s too divorced from practical reality to be a moral guidepost. Drop it from the round.

Look at Meg’s second core argument, that deterrence violates the categorical imperative. Well, since the imperative is valueless, there’s no big deal there, even if it is true. But, of course, it’s not true. We’re talking about deterrence here, not use of weapons. Nobody is actually being materially harmed. At worst, we are bluffing the citizens of other countries about our willingness to retaliate. This argument, too, can have no weight in the round.

I would like to advance two arguments that will construe the Negative case against the resolution. My first argument: **Nuclear deterrence is a successful and valuable strategy in today’s world.** Former National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy is quoted in Lord Solly Zuckerman’s 1982 book, Nuclear Illusion and Reality, as saying “The fact is that deterrence has worked, in all directions, since 1945. It is indeed a balance of terror...The one moment of relatively high danger, the Cuban Missile Crisis, proves the rule, for in that case no one on either side appears to have been close to giving, or recommending, and order for nuclear action; it was precisely because of their well-justified fear of any such action that the main actors on both sides were so cautious.” Even those who oppose nuclear weapons agree with the effectiveness of deterrence; William Arkin, director of Greenpeace’s nuclear information unit, joins with colleagues in the December 1991 issue of Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists to write, “If nuclear weapons kept the peace, it was because they were very much in evidence, and because the nuclear adversaries were all too conscious of each other’s possible inclination to use them.”

So nuclear deterrence preserves peace. And what has that gained us? By averting nuclear war, we save individual lives. But by providing for the collective defense of the nation, deterrence also increases national security; the benefits accrue both to individuals and to society as a whole. We can even see how deterrence captures the ideals — weak though they are — of the categorical imperative: by deterring an atomic onslaught, we prevent persons from being used as nuclear targets, as being thought of as just-so-many megadeaths. So, from a pragmatic viewpoint, nuclear deterrence is a positive good.
Which brings me to my other major line of analysis. **Pragmatic results, and the consequences of acts, is the better guide to morality.** We’ve already seen how the true meaning of morality forces us to look beyond static principles. We have to consider the results of our actions. In a nuclear world, possession of nuclear weapons saves lives; and that pragmatic result justifies deterrence.

Let’s summarize the debate so far. The term “immorality” in the resolution forces us to look beyond academic principles to specific situations. Deterrence is the specific situation. According to the Affirmative, deterrence blocks the categorical imperative, but we’ve seen that this static, academic rule isn’t really applicable to moral decisions, anyway. On the other hand, deterrence does have immediate pragmatic benefits. Only by proving that deterrence is a moral evil can the Affirmative win, but, in contrast, I’ve argued that deterrence is probably a moral good, and at worst morally neutral. The ballot at the end of the debate will have to be for the Negative.

**Cross-Examination by the Affirmative**

**Aff:** What value are you supporting in this debate?

**Neg:** There’s a lot of them: life, national security, individualism — just about any value you care to name. We both support morality — it’s a value.

**Aff:** What evidence did you supply to support any of these as a good thing?

**Neg:** Well, you never read evidence to support any value besides the categorical imperative. I think we take it for granted that these are all good things.

**Aff:** Let’s look at a question you asked me in cross-ex: Is use of nuclear weapons immoral?

**Neg:** We can’t really say until we know the situation. It seems likely that, in most instances, use of nuclear weapons would be immoral…

**Aff:** Okay, now…

**Neg:** No, wait, I’m not done. Use **could** be immoral in most instances, but it is conceivable that under some circumstances use of nuclear weapons could capture some greater good. The situation changes the ethics. Use of nuclear weapons would be moral then.

**Aff:** So killing innocent people with bombs could be a good thing?

**Neg:** In some extreme circumstances, yes.

**Aff:** Now that confuses me. Here you say that killing people is potentially good, but you’re also claiming that saving lives through deterrence is always good. Isn’t that inconsistent?

**Neg:** Hmm. Not really inconsistent, no. We just can’t follow any fixed rule. Preserving the lives of innocents is good, as a general rule, but situations may arise that force us to overlook that rule.

**Aff:** Let’s look at these general rules of morality, then. As a general rule — and bearing in mind that you say there might be exceptions — you would agree that killing innocent people is immoral?

**Neg:** Sure.

**Aff:** How about theft?
Neg: Yeah, with the possibility of exceptions.
Aff: Lying?
Neg: Yes, lying is usually immoral.
Aff: Is there anything that is always immoral?
Neg: Umm...to be consistent, I’m going to have to say no. If there’s no absolute rule for morality, then nothing can be called absolutely immoral.
Aff: You cite two pieces of evidence to prove that deterrence has been effective. The first card was from McGeorge Bundy, right?
Neg: Yes, that’s right.
Aff: And the second card was from somebody named Arkin from Greenpeace?
Neg: William Arkin et al., it says on the evidence.
Aff: Would you please re-read the body of that card?
Neg: “If nuclear weapons kept the peace, it was because they were very much in evidence, and because the nuclear adversaries were all too conscious of each other’s possible inclination to use them.”
Aff: Thanks. I know it’s getting late in the debate, but would you tell me how you interpret the phrase “nuclear deterrence?”
Neg: Explain it, you mean?
Aff: Yes.
Neg: Okay. A nation with nuclear weapons capability threatens to retaliate with its stock of weapons for any nuclear attack against its territory. In the case of the U.S. and the former Soviet Union, the nuclear threat is so great as to be called “mutually assured destruction.” But even smaller nuclear powers can threaten some response to an attack by another nation, and that threat is enough to prevent any first strike.
Aff: What happens if a first strike happens anyway?
Neg: Nothing.
Aff: Nothing?
Neg: No. The purpose of nuclear weapons is deterrence. If deterrence fails, then there’s no reason for our nuclear weapons. Certainly we’re not obligated to launch them in retaliation.
Aff: Even though that’s what we’ve threatened to do all along?
Neg: Despite the threats. It’s all a bluff; if our bluff is called, then we might as well fold our cards.
Aff: Is it generally known we are bluffing?
Neg: Well, some military experts have debated for years whether the U.S. really would retaliate against a first strike. There’s no absolute consensus, but a lot of experts say we wouldn’t.
Aff: Isn’t that like trying to rob a bank by handing the teller a note saying, “I have a gun. It isn’t loaded. Give me your money?” [Audience laughter]
Neg: No, it’s not like that at all. But I see our time is up.

**The First Affirmative Rebuttal**

The Negative position is a fruit with a rotten core: under the guise of morality, it advocates abandoning all moral guidelines whatsoever. And that’s the primary reason why an Affirmative ballot is going to emerge from this debate.

Go to the two Negative contentions that arose in the last speech. First, George tells you that deterrence has succeeded in halting war. I’ll have three responses here. First, **this is as plain an example of the post-hoc fallacy as you could ever see**. Just because proliferation has been followed by a period of nuclear peace does not prove there is a cause-and-effect relationship. There’s no reason to believe deterrence caused peace. Secondly, **the evidence George reads for this point is not conclusive**. McGeorge Bundy isn’t credible as a source, since he is an architect of deterrence strategy; this is his pleading the case for his own policy. And the Arkin evidence doesn’t admit that deterrence works; instead, it says that “if” deterrence has been effective, it’s because of the fear in imposes on the masses. These cards don’t prove deterrence. Finally, **deterrence hasn’t worked**. Turning to Lord Solly Zuckerman, formerly the chief science advisor for the British Defence Ministry, in *Nuclear Illusion and Reality*, 1982: “There have been scores of wars since the advent of nuclear weapons. The nuclear arsenals of the great powers have not prevented them.” That’s just conventional war, true, but there’s no reason to believe deterrence will prevent nuclear escalation in future wars. Lord Zuckerman says, from the same source: “The fact that the powers which already possess nuclear weapons have not used them in the ‘hot’ wars into which they have been drawn over the past two decades is no guarantee that they would not be used by poorly informed and less sophisticated countries.”

Turn to George’s second argument, that pragmatism guides morality. Here George admits there are general rules for guiding behavior, but he wants to dispense with them whenever they become inconvenient. This is monstrous: this is “the end justifies the means” blown to giant proportions. Moral rules are absolute. They tell us how to behave always so we won’t be tempted to drop them when it looks like we can profit by slippery ethics. Timothy J. Cooney, a former staffmember of the New York Commission on Human Rights, writes in *Telling Right from Wrong* in 1985: “Morality is universal and timeless, because if it were not, we would need a higher-order criterion for judging the ‘morality’ of our time and place, and our ‘morality’ would not be an ultimate guide. It would not, therefore, be morality, but ‘just our way of doing things.’”

Turn back to the Affirmative case. On definitions, George first makes his claim that morality is fluid. That ignores the meaning of the word. The Unabridged Second Edition of the *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, 1987, defines the term moral as “Founded on the fundamental principles of right conduct rather than legalities, enactment, or custom.” We need fixed principles.

On the overview: deterrence equals possession. We agree on that point.

Onto my first argument, where I say that the categorical imperative is the standard to use. George’s point here is that we use people as means, rather than as ends, every day. Even so, that doesn’t make it right! Only if he could show that everyone acts morally all the time would this argument be valid. But consider this, too: George admits that fixed rules do have a purpose in guiding morality, but he provides no principles in his speech. He gives us no solid, supported
values, just a vague notion of pragmatism. The only rule we have to decide the debate is my categorical imperative.

My second principal argument is that deterrence violates the categorical imperative. Here, George argues that nobody is really hurt because deterrence is just a bluff. I have two responses: first, that a **bluff is immoral**. George admits in cross-examination that lying is, as a general rule, morally bad — so the fact that deterrence is a bluff cannot support its morality. Second, though, I will argue that **this cannot be a bluff**. If we have no intention of carrying out the threat, then the threat is useless. Nobody would believe it. Nobody would be deterred. So, really, on some level we must be willing to use nukes in retaliation, because only that makes deterrence credible. So we must be committed to use of weapons — which George agrees is immoral — to make deterrence plausible. It is immoral to intend to do what it is wrong to do. Jonathan Schell, cited previously in my constructive, makes this point eloquently in 1982: “The deterrence doctrine seeks to rationalize this state of affairs, but it fails, because at the crucial moment it requires nations to sacrifice mankind for their own interests — an absurdity as well as a crime beyond reckoning.”

To summarize: Deterrence fails as a practical solution, but even if it didn’t, we have to look beyond pragmatics to absolute morality. The only absolute moral rule in the round in Kant’s imperative. But deterrence violates the imperative because it treats people as objects, not as people. The Affirmative arguments justify belief in the resolution.

**The Negative Rebuttal**

At this point, the debate has spread in all sorts of unexpected directions. I’d like to use my rebuttal period to see if I can highlight what are the critical issues in the round. As we shall see, there are sufficient gaps in the Affirmative analysis to require a Negative decision today.

Let’s start with definitions. The critical issue in handling the definition of “immoral” is the third position developed in my constructive speech: that morality has to be rooted in the practical world in which we live. Now, Meg never refutes the quotation from Kai Nielsen. She never really responds to my position that following any single rule blindly will get us in trouble. Nor does she respond to my position that, if deterrence is found to be morally neutral, then the decision will have to go Negative. Grant all these arguments Negative. Meg’s new definition of morality has to be discarded; the definition is not consistent with that in her first speech, making this a new argument in rebuttals.

Now, travel down your notes to the first Affirmative argument, which tries to link morality and the categorical imperative. The critical issue here is that Meg never demonstrates the moral worth of Kant’s imperative here. Now Meg would like us to believe that we’re being immoral when we buy shoes, because we’re treating the sales clerk as a means — as an object. Under this view, all commerce, family life — most of our daily lives — would be viewed as morally bankrupt. Is this reasonable? Remember, the real definition of morality says to look at practical living. Since using people as means is an intimate part of daily life, we have to conclude that it’s morally good or neutral, not evil. So this formulation of the categorical imperative is not a useful moral rule. Meg’s right that there’s only one valid moral principle in the round, but as we shall see, it’s the Negative one.

Turn to the second position, the link between deterrence and the categorical imperative. Remember my original claim that deterrence is a bluff that does not commit us to using weapons. Drop out Meg’s position that such a lie is immoral; it’s a new argument in rebuttal, and she
never links lying with the categorical imperative, her only standard of morality. The critical issue left is that a bluff never commits us to anything. Meg tries to argue there’s an evil intention here, but her argument fails to show material harm to anyone. There is no evil to deterrence.

Let’s review my two positions. First, I demonstrate that deterrence is effective. Meg tries to indict my evidence, but there’s no better source than Bundy, who was involved with analyzing deterrence effectiveness at the highest levels of government. She cites two pieces of evidence from Lord Zuckerman, but the first is irrelevant — it deals with conventional, not nuclear war — and the second is highly speculative, claiming that deterrence may break down at some future point. Even if you accept that my evidence is post-hoc, you have to accept that no nuclear wars have occurred since deterrence policy was enacted in the 1950s. The best evidence presented in the round establishes that deterrence works.

My second argument was that pragmatism has to drive moral decision-making. Meg tries to distort this into a claim that the end justifies the means, but of course my point was nothing of the kind. Rather, it was an acknowledgment that sometimes you have to weigh the potential goods and evils of moral decisions; you have to anticipate the results, not cling blindly to academic rules. Her quote from Cooney is a circular argument; it assumes that there are universal rules for moral behavior, and then “deduces” that moral rules have to be universal and timeless. But with the straw-man argument and the flawed Cooney quotation out of the way, we realize there’s no valid Affirmative attack against my position.

Okay. Time for a final summary. We’re discussing the morality of deterrence, and the best definition in the round says we have to look at practical effects to determine morality. On the positive side, deterrence works to save lives and preserve national security. On the minus side, it’s possible that deterrence infringes a little on people’s rights to be treated as people — but we’ve seen that the categorical imperative really carries little moral weight. How do we balance practical benefits versus rights? By my second argument, pragmatism has to determine morality. Kenneth Kemp, of the U.S. Air Force Academy, summarizes this in the July 1987 issue of The Monist: “We need not be enthusiastic about deterrence. Like every other policy it has its risks, risks which must be minimized through all possible means, political and technical. One might even say that it is not a good policy, but it is not intrinsically immoral, and it seems at present to be the best, if not the only, way to keep democracy safe in an imperfect world.”

And that is the bottom line here. What works? The pragmatic benefits overwhelm any theoretical harms. Possession of nuclear weapons is not immoral.

The Second Affirmative Rebuttal

The “bottom line,” as my opponent puts it, is that sufficient ground still exists to require an Affirmative decision in the round. We can see that best by starting at the claims of the Negative case. George is reduced to saying that the best evidence presented in the round suggests that deterrence works. However, recall that the Negative initiated this argument, and so the Negative has the burden to demonstrate a compelling causal link. He has not done so; the only evidence relevant to his point is the self-serving McGeorge Bundy quotation. We need to have better proof than that. Even if this is the best evidence he can muster, it’s not good enough to be persuasive. There is no reason here to vote Negative.

George’s second major claim is that pragmatism is the better guide to making moral decisions. He says that we must be ready to jettison fixed rules of morality in order to pursue what is the greater good. But here he completely misconstructs the Cooney evidence. Cooney
says that if we don’t have fixed rules, we can’t tell good from bad. Fixed rules have their use because they prevent us from making decisions based on our imperfect anticipation of the consequences. **Morality requires fixed rules.** There is no reason here to vote Negative.

Now let’s look back at the Affirmative case, beginning with definitions. Sure, I read you two definitions — one of “immoral” and the other of “moral” — but they’re consistent in pointing that moral rules need underlying principles. Sure, morality is rooted in real-world situations, but morality uses rules to guide us through real-world confusions. Situational ethics — the Negative’s “end justifying the means” — leave us in a moral vacuum.

My overview, that possession of nuclear weapons is the same as nuclear deterrence, has never been at issue in the debate. It goes Affirmative.

My first argument is that the categorical imperative determines morality. People must be considered ends, not means or objects. George says we do that all the time — but that just shows how casual some people are in allowing their moral duty to lapse. The fact that an action is common doesn’t make it right. There is no reason here to reject the Affirmative analysis.

My second argument was that deterrence violates the categorical imperative. Let’s drop my rebuttal position on lying. On its face, deterrence treats people as targets at ground zero, and thus demeans their humanity. George protests that this is just a bluff, but he drops the fact that for the bluff to be credible we really have to intend — on some level, to some degree — to commit a monstrous crime. It is wrong to intend, even in the smallest degree, to do what it is wrong to do. It is wrong to make preparations for a crime if there is the slightest chance you will carry out the crime. “I didn’t really mean it” is never a defense. The central Affirmative analysis holds.

So where does this leave the decision? If we accept that moral rules need to be absolute, the decision is clear — deterrence violates the moral rule of the categorical imperative, and so it is immoral. But even if we prefer George’s pragmatism, because there is no proven benefit to deterrence, the violation of the imperative still outweighs the phantom practical benefits. By either standard, deterrence fails. Possession of nuclear weapons is immoral, both absolutely and pragmatically.
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