

Quick Introduction to Value Debate



“...fairness, justice, and freedom are more than words; they are perspectives.”
-V, *V for Vendetta*

Why settle for defending chocolate ice cream when you could defend liberty?

Value-oriented debate is focused on the present-tense (Heinrichs, 2007), wherein the speaker attempts to convince the audience to accept their claims based on the alignment to or attractiveness of their belief systems. Ideally, the speaker will convey an intense virtue that draws the audience in to accepting additional—and otherwise unconvincing—claims or requests (Sinek, 2009) and is thus a useful skill to cultivate.

Since we agree on the importance of liberty, you should also agree with my conclusion about the ice cream.

A value-oriented argument has three key components, commonly presented in this order: the value, the criterion, and the points of contention. These can be thought of in terms of: *Why* we care about anything, *How* we know we care about the topic, and *What* the impacts of the topic are (Sinek, 2009, p 38).

Liberty means being free to extend your arguments to anything, demonstrated here with ice cream.

The next page is a sample worksheet to help you practice this structure of thinking using a sample argument from *Thank You for Smoking* (Sacks & Reitman, 2005) for guidance.



Figure 1 © 2005 Fox Searchlight Pictures

References

- Heinrichs, J. (2007). *Thank you for arguing: What Aristotle, Lincoln, and Homer Simpson can teach us about the art of persuasion*. Three Rivers Press, Kindle edition.
- Sacks, D. O. (Producer) & Reitman, J. (Director). (2005). *Thank you for smoking* [Motion picture]. USA: Fox Searchlight Pictures.
- Silver, J. (Producer) & McTigue, J. (Director). (2006). *V for Vendetta* [Motion picture]. USA: Warner Bros.
- Sinek, S. (2009). *Start with why: How great leaders inspire everyone to take action*. New York, NY: Penguin Group, Kindle edition.

Structure

Your goal is to convey an intense virtue that draws the audience in to accepting your claims.

Value: is *Why* we should care about anything; it's a big vague motivating concept.



Criterion: is *How* we know we care about the topic; it will connect the contentions to the value.

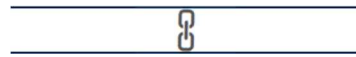


Contention: is *What* the impacts of the topic are; this is claims of what happens when people agree with your side.

Sample

Resolved: Chocolate is not the best flavor of ice cream.

Value: *Liberty*. This is the freedom people fought for this nation's in-dependence for in the first place.



Criterion: *Choice*. We know we have *Liberty* when we have freedom to make *choices*.



Contention: having a variety of ice cream flavors increases *choice* while being stuck with one ice cream flavor—even if it's chocolate—inhibits *choice*.

Practice Space

Resolved:

Value:



Criterion:

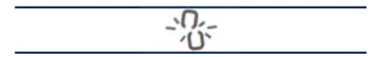


Contention:

Common Gaps

Listen for your opponent to make these mistakes and exploit them!

Value: will be something they don't care much about, can't really define, and never refer back to; often "Morality."



Criterion: will be given as a nebulous second value—like "social welfare"—that their evidence might abstractly support.



Contention: will support their side but not their value or criterion. It may be true, but it won't get us anything we want.

Hint: when writing a case, start by selecting contentions that speak to you and then choose a criterion and value that they're pointing to.