#### Debate is a process of utopian imaginaries – utilizing it as a space for criticism is comparatively more valuable

**McGee and Romanelli 97** – Assistant Professor in Communication Studies at Texas Tech AND Director of Debate at Loyola University of Chicago

(Brian and David, “Policy Debate as Fiction: In Defense of Utopian Fiat”, Contemporary Argumentation and Debate 18 (1997) 23-35, dml)

Snider argued several years ago that a suitable paradigm should address “something we can ACTUALLY DO” as opposed to something we can MAKE BELIEVE ABOUT” (“Fantasy as Reality” 14). **A utopian literature metaphor is beneficial** **precisely because it is within the power of debaters to perform the desired action suggested by the metaphor**, **if not always to demonstrate that the desired action is politically feasible.**

**Instead of** debaters **playing to an audience** **of those who make public policy,** **debaters should understand themselves as** budding social critics in search of an optimal practical and cultural politics. **While** **few of us will ever hold a formal policy-making position, nearly all of us grow up with** the **social and political criticism of the newspaper editorial page, the high school civics class, and, at least in homes that do not ban the juxtaposition of food and politics, the lively dinner table conversation**. We complain about high income taxes, declining state subsidies for public education, and crumbling interstate highways. We worry about the rising cost of health care and wonder if we will have access to high-quality medical assistance when we need it. Finally, we bemoan the decline of moral consensus, rising rates of divorce, drug use among high school students, and disturbing numbers of pregnant teen-agers. From childhood on, **we are told that good citizenship demands that we educate ourselves on political matters and vote to protect the polis**; the success of democracy allegedly demands no less. **For those** who accept this challenge instead of embracing the political alienation of Generation X and becoming devotees of *Beavis and Butthead*, social criticism is what good citizens do**.**

Debate differs from other species of social criticism because debate is a game played by students who want to win. However, **conceiving of debate as a kind of social criticism** **has considerable merit**. Social criticism is not restricted to a technocratic elite or group of elected officials. Moreover, **social criticism is not necessarily idle or wholly deconstructive**. Instead, **such criticism** necessarily is a prerequisite **to any effort to create policy change**, whether that criticism is articulated by an elected official or by a mother of six whose primary workplace is the home. **When one challenges the status quo, one normally implies that a better alternative course of action exists. Given that intercollegiate debate** frequently **involves exchanges over a proposition of policy by student advocates who are relatively unlikely ever to debate before Congress, envisioning intercollegiate debate as** a specialized extension of ordinary **citizen inquiry and advocacy in the public sphere** **seems attractive. Thinking of debate as a variety of social criticism gives debate an added dimension of public relevance**.

One way to understand the distinction between debate as policy-making and debate as social criticism is to examine Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder’s agenda-building theory.5 **Cobb and Elder are** well **known for their analytic split of the formal agenda for policy change**, which **includes legislation or other action proposed by policy makers with formal power** (e.g., government bureaucrats, U.S. Senators), **from the public agenda for policy change, which is composed of all those who work outside formal policy-making circles to exert influence on the formal agenda**. Social movements, lobbyists, political action committees, mass media outlets, and public opinion polls all constitute the public agenda, which, in turn, has an effect on what issues come to the forefront on the formal agenda. From the agenda-building perspective, **one cannot understand the making of public policy in the United States** **without** comprehending the confluence of the formal and public agenda**.**

**In** intercollegiate **debate, the policy-making metaphor has** **given primacy to formal agenda functions** at the expense of the public agenda. **Debaters are encouraged to bypass thinking about the public agenda in outlining policy alternatives; appeals for policy change** frequently **are made** by debaters **under the** strange **pretense that they and/or their judges are members of the formal agenda elite**. Even arguments about the role of the public in framing public policy are typically issued by debaters as if those debaters were working within the confines of the formal agenda for their own, instrumental advantage. (For example, one thinks of various social movement “backlash” disadvantage arguments, which advocate a temporary policy paralysis in order to stir up public outrage and mobilize social movements whose leaders will demand the formal adoption of a presumably superior policy alternative.) **The policy-making metaphor concentrates on the formal agenda to the near exclusion of the public agenda**, as the focus of a Katsulas or a Dempsey on the “real-world” limitations for making policy indicates.

**Debate as social criticism** **does not entail exclusion of formal agenda concerns** from intercollegiate debate. **The specified agent of action in typical policy resolutions makes ignoring the formal agenda of the United States government** **an impossibility**. However, **one** **need not be able to influence the formal agenda** **directly in order to discuss what it is that the United States government should do**. Undergraduate **debaters** and their judges usually **are** far removed—both physically and functionally—**from the arena of formal-agenda deliberation**. What **the disputation of student debaters most closely resembles**, to the extent that it resembles any real-world analog, is public-agenda social criticism**. What students are doing is something they really CAN do as students and ordinary citizens**; they are working in their own modest way to shape the public agenda.

While “social criticism” is the best explanation for what debaters do, this essay goes a step further. **The mode of criticism in which debaters operate** **is the production of utopian literature**. Strictly speaking, **debaters engage in the creation of fictions** **and the comparison of fictions to one another**. **How else does one explain the affirmative advocacy of a plan**, a counterfactual world **that, by definition,** does not exist? Indeed, traditional inherency burdens **demand that such plans be utopian, in the sense that current attitudes** or structures **make** the immediate enactments of **such plans unlikely in the “real world**” of the formal agenda. **Intercollegiate debate is utopian because plan** and/or counterplan **enactment is improbable.** **While one can distinguish between incremental and radical policy change proposals, the distinction makes no difference in the utopian practice of intercollegiate debate.**

More importantly, **intercollegiate debate is utopian in another sense. Policy change is considered because such change**, it is hoped, **will facilitate the pursuit of the good life**. For decades, **intercollegiate debaters have used** **fiat** **or** **the authority of the word “should” to propose radical changes in the social order**, in addition to advocacy of the incremental policy changes typical of the U.S. formal agenda. **This wide range of policy alternatives discussed in contemporary intercollegiate debate is the sign of a healthy public sphere**, where thorough consideration of all policy alternatives is a possibility. **Utopian fiction**, in which the good place that is no place is envisioned, **makes possible** **the instantiation of a rhetorical vision prerequisite to building that good place** **in our tiny corner of the universe**. Even Lewis Mumford, a critic of utopian thought, concedes that we “can never reach the points of the compass; and so no doubt **we shall never live in utopia; but without the magnetic needle we should not be able to travel intelligently at all**” (Mumford 24-25).

An objection to this guiding metaphor is that it encourages debaters to do precisely that to which Snider would object, which is to “make believe” that utopia is possible. This objection misunderstands the argument. **These students** already are writers of utopian fiction **from the moment they construct their first plan or counterplan text. Debaters who advocate policy change announce their commitment to changing the organization of society** in pursuit of the good life, **even though they have no formal power** **to call this counterfactual world into being. Any proposed change**, no matter how small, **is a repudiation of policy paralysis and the maintenance of the status quo**. As already practiced, **debate revolves around utopian proposals**, at least in the sense that debaters and judges lack the formal authority to enact their proposals. Even those negatives who defend the current social order frequently do so by pointing to the potential dystopic consequences of accepting such proposals for change.

Real World—no vague sentence shapes policy, mandates and context always matter—our critique explains the reasons why particular policies are privileged.

Valdivia-Sutherland, 98 (Cynthia - Professor at Butte Community College - “Celebrating Differences: Successfully Diversifying Forensics Programs,” National Communication Association’s 84th Annual Meeting.)

It has been argued that forensics is (or should be) primarily an educational enterprise, rooted in pedagogy, rhetoric, and research. If this is so, then in advancing into the 21st century, an era in which societies will increasingly become multicultural, it makes sense to adopt Albert and Triandis' (1985) [the] objective of effectuating intercultural education within a multicultural society. The aim of this objective is "to prepare individuals to function effectively in both their culture of origin and in their new culture" (p. 391).Implementing this objective in forensics will not be easy. Change never is. However, while human beings do not automatically embrace the unknown, **inability to move beyond a** state of **stasis equates to stagnation in** human **development**. Within the world of forensics, coaches, critics, and competitors must continually adapt, evolving in their interactions with an ever-changing environment, or risk extinction. The possibility for forensic multicultural evolution can be strengthened in several ways. First, those of us involved in the activity must hone our self-diagnostic skills; in other words, we must **consistently and honestly examine what we are doing, why, and with what effect**. Are we "doing the greatest good for the greatest number?" If not, why not? Second, we must recognize the potential for educational gain when we expose ourselves and our students to multicultural awareness, knowledge, and acceptance. Not only will our learning experience be enriched, but we may also be led to explore identities and to question cultural domination, thereby increasing acceptance of differences. Finally, we must begin to begin. We cannot advance beyond our current state until we initiate action. This can be accomplished in many different ways. Here are a few: a. Recruitment of forensics competitors through on campus multicultural clubs and organizations. b. Development of non-traditional forensics programs. For example: a one-unit non-traveling team that exposes students to and educates them about forensics and/or the use of intramural competitions. c. Adoption of debate topics centered on global rather than national concerns. d. Expository speeches geared to inform about other cultures. e. Interpretive programs adopted from another culture's canons of literature. f. Creation of new events or a return to old ones (such as oratorical speeches which harmonize with African speaking styles). g. Experiential activities designed to expose individuals in forensics to other cultural views. h. Research assessing current forensic multiculturalism.

#### The mechanism for evolution of such systems --- Your ballot is the currency of debate – vote for us to increase political salience

**Ansary, 05** – (Alex, 12/29/05, *Mass Mind Control; Through Network Television; Are Your Thoughts Your Own*?, http://www.rense.com/general69/mass.htm)

Some people are wrong about 5% of the time. Some are wrong most of the time. I wish I was wrong all the time. A lot of people deal with these intense realities, by asking me rhetorically, "What is the solution, smart guy?" Remember, **it's** the viewers, the consumers and **all the** other **little votes** called dollars that helped this oligarchy system lay its concrete foundation in our backyards. We must **recognize the truth about why the system is flawed** and enslaving us if we wish to beat it. The most important solution to fighting this type of brainwashing and mind control is to start with ourselves and our own awakening in the smaller things. In this case, it's brainwashing but after awhile we break Outside the Box and begin venturing outside the system and into unknown terrain. Fighting with people and forcing them to understand 'our truth' is not a solution. If our collective free will created this nightmare, than only our collective free will change it. The battle **begins in the heart and mind of the beholder, and** then **extends** outward from there, only **to those open to the information**.

### resources

**Strong incentives exist to deescalate energy conflicts**

**Gupta 11** - Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (Rukmani, “The South China Sea Disputes: Why Conflict Is Not Inevitable? – Analysis,” Eurasia Review, http://www.eurasiareview.com/17102011-the-south-china-sea-disputes-why-conflict-is-not-inevitable-analysis/)

These suggestions to recalibrate Indian policy towards the South China Sea and its relationship with Vietnam as a linchpin in the process, are premature at best. Despite the rhetoric, conflict in the South China Sea may not be inevitable. If the history of dialogue between the parties is any indication then current tensions are likely to result in forward movement. In the aftermath of statements by the US and skirmishes over fishing vessels, ASEAN and China agreed upon The Guidelines on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea at the Bali Summit in July 2010. Recent tensions may well prod the parties towards a more binding code of conduct. This is not to suggest that territorial claims and sovereignty issues will be resolved, but certainly can become more manageable to prevent military conflict.

There is a common interest in making the disputes more manageable, essentially because, nationalistic rhetoric notwithstanding, the parties to the dispute recognize that there are real material benefits at stake. A disruption of maritime trade through the South China Sea would entail economic losses, and not only for the littoral states. No party to the dispute, including China, has thus far challenged the principle of freedom of navigation for global trade through the South China Sea. The states of the region are signatories to the UNCLOS, which provides that “Coastal States have sovereign rights in a 200-nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) with respect to natural resources and certain economic activities, and exercise jurisdiction over marine science research and environmental protection”; but that “All other States have freedom of navigation and overflight in the EEZ, as well as freedom to lay submarine cables and pipelines.” The prospect of threats to SLOCS thus seems somewhat exaggerated.

### biofuels

**Multiple alt causes for international hunger**

**Shah, 08** http://www.globalissues.org/article/7/causes-of-hunger-are-related-to-poverty Causes of Hunger are related to Poverty Author and Page information by Anup Shah Last Updated Sunday, July 06, 2008

In a world of plenty, a huge number go hungry. Hunger is more than just the result of food production and meeting demands. The causes of hunger are related to the causes of poverty. One of the major causes of hunger is poverty itself. The various issues discussed throughout this site about poverty lead to people being unable to afford food and hence people go hungry. There are other related causes (also often related to the causes of poverty in various ways), including the following:

Land rights and ownership

Diversion of land use to non-productive use

Increasing emphasis on export-oriented agriculture

Inefficient agricultural practices

War

Famine

Drought

Over-fishing

Poor crop yield

Lack of democracy and rights

**Their morality claim is so divorced from real world policymaking it’s completely useless, legislators have an obligation to ALL of the population, which requires weighing all conflicting values**

**Fletcher**, **91 –** professor of Religious Studies and Internal Medicine at the University of Virginia, and winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities (Joseph, Population and Environment- “Chronic Famine and the Immorality of Food Aid: A Bow to Garrett Hardin”, Volume 12, Number 3, http://dieoff.org/page91.htm)

It is indeed a fact that sometimes sharing threatens the survival of the generous, unless the givers carefully calculate what they can afford to give. At what point does sharing become hurtful, yet bearable? When does it become not only a loss to the giver but mortally dangerous' I can see no moral objection to giving to others even when it hurts to do so, nor in some conceivable cases to giving even if it entails a calculated risk of not surviving, but surely giving when it is clearly suicidal is not morally required of those who would otherwise be willing to help.

It is the second of our two limiting principles on famine aid which is more significant ethically, namely, that we should not give it when the foreseeable consequence would be to make things worse for the recipients. For example, this second principle forbids giving food as famine relief when it can be foreseen that the recipients will thereby live on to reproductive years and thus increase the number of starving people, plus the predictable diseases that go with starvation, because their country has already exceeded its carrying capacity. Here again we can look at Ethiopia.

In the uproar following Hardin's essay in Psychology Today there was one discussant, more simple-minded than thoughtful, who was prepared to give aid regardless of the consequences. A philosopher actually declared, on the grounds of an absolutistic moralism, that we should share all food on the global scale even if it means that all mankind would starve and the human species become extinct (Watson, 1977). This is a sense of obligation so undiscriminating that it takes our breath away. It is reminiscent of Cardinal Newman's grim opinion, in a religious controversy in 1870, that to prevent the commission of even one petty little sin it would be better that the whole world and all the people in it be incinerated.

In moral philosophy the issue at stake in this discussion is not merely the age-old one of absolutism versus relativism, nor of the one (or a few) versus the many, but also whether we are able to make rational and responsible value judgments without accurate measurement -- measuring not only the factors involved and the options available, but the probable consequences of alternative courses of action.

I have myself for a long time now insisted that not to measure, not to have the relevant numbers, is ethically slipshod and disingenuous. Indeed, many years ago I coined the term ethimetrics. in a conscious imitation of the way that classical economics has had to come to terms with the measurement of material values and their exchange, in the newly christened discipline of econometrics" (Fletcher, 1976; 1979).

After all, values (and in some cases conflicting values) are the parameters we have to identify when we make moral choices and decide our obligations. By such standards we also determine whether an act or policy is right or wrong. In mathematical language we might say our values are the independent variables we use in any set of ethical equations. My own training in moral philosophy was done within the context of the humanities, and such was the case for most of my colleagues in the field. Our lack of scientific and mathematical appreciation leaves us at some loss when we have to deal, as we do increasingly in our mass society, with the measurement requirements of just distribution. We lack the requisite quantifiers or any methodology of quantification.

Back in the seventeenth century such social analysts as Sir William Petty and Sir Dudley North were on much sounder ground (although they were not yet able to perceive that it was so) when they thought of themselves as engaged in political arithmetic.. In modern times legislators in democracies have as their primary goal the framing of laws which aim at the greatest good of the greatest number, and how else can they do it but by measuring the presumed consequences of their statutes on all the individuals and groups affected? How else' can they determine a just allocation of society's limited resources? Distributive justice is the core problem of politics, and politics in its turn is inseparable from ethics as Aristotle made abundantly clear a long time ago.