

All debaters, whether debating questions of value or policy, must concern themselves with value assumptions. This is true because of the inevitable gulf between “is statements” and “ought conclusions.” Philosopher David Hume was the first to fully explain the problem of the “is-ought gap” in his 1739 work *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Most questions of public policy involve “ought questions”—we are asked to decide what ought be done. Should handguns be restricted? Should the government restrict the burning of fossil fuels? Is capital punishment morally justified? “Facts” can never, by themselves, answer these questions.

The problem is that a great logical gulf exists between “is statements” (facts) and “ought conclusions.” It is logically impossible to cross this gulf without the injection of value premises.

PATTERNS OF ARGUMENT

Debaters create the sense that something has been logically demonstrated by following systematic reasoning processes or patterns. In each case, these logical patterns answer the three key questions asked by the Toulmin Model: (1) Claim: What are you trying to get me to believe? (2) Data: What have you got to go on? (3) Warrant: How does the data lead to the claim? Each pattern, however, answers the questions in somewhat different ways.

DEDUCTIVE REASONING

The first pattern for argument is *deduction*—meaning a type of reasoning that derives claims from premises. This is the method of the syllogism. Using deduction, a debater might argue as follows: “Citizens should have a right to defend themselves and their families from attackers. Handguns are necessary as a means of self-defense. Therefore, citizens should have the right to possess handguns.” To establish the probability that the claim is true, the debater would have to offer support for the two premises. Authoritative quotations or explanations could be offered to support the premise that citizens should have a basic right to self-defense. The premise that “handguns are necessary as a means of self-defense” would be more difficult to prove. The debater would need to offer an authoritative quotation or explanation as to why rifles or passive security systems (locks, motion detectors, and so on) could not take the place of handguns as means of self-defense.

There are two primary tests of deduction: (1) Are the premises sound? and (2) Do the premises lead to the conclusion? In the case of the self-defense example, the first