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POLICY ARGUMENT - TOWARDS PRACTICAL THEORY & TEACHABLE TOOLS

Des Gasper
January 1989

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POLICY ARGUMENT - TOWARDS PRACTICAL THEORY & TEACHABLE TOOLS

1. ARGUMENTATION AND POLICY ANALYSIS

This paper gives a critical introduction to some of the recent work on methods for analysing policy arguments. Strangely, much higher education fails to look at explicit principles and formal methods for analysing arguments. Perhaps it is held that the area is just commonsense. Yet Scriven notes that much of even the formal literature on logic has "vastly underestimated the complexity of everyday reasoning" - especially so for practical reasoning, which takes actual current problems rather than abstracted simplified systems (1976:23). People argue away, believing that argument itself is straightforward even if its premises are in dispute. But practical reasoning involves drawing conclusions from varied and incomplete materials, and also more extended argument than in the neat syllogisms and truth tables seen in logic textbooks. Its analysis therefore requires more than the clarification of terms, and more than the understanding of how words can be combined in single sentences (i.e. more than semantics and syntax). Discourses - stretches of language larger than the sentence - are of course made up of words and sentences, but those occur within broader systems and patterns. One needs to consider the various parts of a position together, and examine how they are interrelated (or inconsistent).

The next objection to analysing practical reasoning may then be that, far from the area being trivial, it is too difficult. Linguistic analysts have demonstrated the great complexity of discourse; and many studies have shown the notable degree of non-communication in official discussions, let alone informal ones. Even the game of chess, which has fewer stages and fewer moves available at each stage, is seen to offer virtually endless riches. Mary Farmer therefore comments sceptically on Jon Elster's "remarkable confidence in the ability of 'correct reasoning', in the light of 'available evidence', to unmask 'illusion' and 'bias'" (1984:203). Her scepticism holds good at the frontiers of debate; but less so when we come to routine argument on strategies, policies, programmes. Time and again one finds that some systematization of argument generates new insights and important modifications, though certainly not necessarily consensus. It is not too difficult to improve proficiency in reasoning, without having to

impart a super-complex theory. Simple tools and general sensitization are well worth conveying. Further, it is unlikely to be a coincidence that:

> "Philosophy students do better in examinations for business and management schools than anybody except mathematicians - better even than those who study economics, business or other vocational subjects. Between 1964 and 1982, philosophy students scored at least five percentage points above average in admission tests for professional and graduate schools in America. No other subject matches that" ('The Economist', April 26, 1986, p.101).

While training in systematic practical argument is valuable for almost any subject, it may be especially important for policy- and decision-oriented work. Hodgkinson's remarks on administration apply here:-

> "...administration is in large part the clarification, declaration and objectification of value propositions. Certain components of philosophy therefore have significance...1. a concern for language and meaning, since the administrative universe is semantic... 2. some of the disciplines of formal logic...3. [more] general critical skills...4. a major concern with value" (1978: 196-97).

The last of these components leads us to the question of whether there is anything distinctive in the discourse of policy discussion and decision-making. The previous argument was that policy discourse - even more so than most real world argumentation - is <u>complex</u>, so that its examination and construction can gain from using systematic methods and tools. The second claim is that policy discourse has important <u>distinctive</u> features, which deserve special attention. In looking at these two propositions I will suggest that we should stress not only any distinctive <u>structures</u> of policy argument (let alone just one supposedly correct or master structure), but also some <u>themes</u> that reflect the field's characteristic complexity. These themes include the underdefinition of problems and of criteria, and correspondingly, the importance of activities of problem formulation and problem closure. I will further suggest that these themes are especially important at the level of more general policies.

In developing this sort of case for a discourse-theoretic approach in policy analysis and planning, one can plunge deep into philosophy. Yet the test does not lie in the elegance of an abstracted case, but instead in our ability to provide new insights in particular instances, and especially to develop and convey, to students and others, tools by which they can generate insights themselves. The approach I take is to try to identify some usable tools and "warning lights" that can be conveyed in teaching. It aims to draw forth skills, rather than depress them with a supposedly total map of

policy argumentation. Sensitivity needs to be established with regard to definition and handling of concepts, and to patterns and types of inference, but also in less familiar areas; firstly, in "formulation" - the overall shaping of extended arguments in complex fields, which involves issues such as the specification of boundaries, alternatives, base cases and constraints; and secondly, in "colligation" - the pulling together of various available elements towards a conclusion.

Section 2 looks at formats for analysing and assessing policy arguments. In addition to noting general skills in informal logic and argument analysis, and various proffered lists of policy argument elements or structures, it presents an approach that highlights the stages of formulation and of colligation and synthesis. The approach aims to be workable, and flexible on matters where there may be differences in structure and elements between different cases; but also to stress the issues of "opening" and "closing" which are found in every case.

Section 3 illustrates the approach, by discussion of a set of warning lights that are of great importance, especially at policy level: namely, performative essentialism, i.e. the treatment of a policy-means as having "inherent" performance attributes, particularly inherent strengths or weaknesses; and prescriptive essentialism, i.e. treatment of a means as being inherently appropriate or inappropriate. The topic is a useful one, for it involves first looking carefully at definitions and concepts and then leads into broader analysis of discourses, including of the mechanics of debate and the interconnections of different components in policy positions.

Section 4 sums up, and looks further at the possible distinctiveness of policy argument. The appendix sketches a wider theoretical perspective in which to place the practical approach that has been introduced, and relates it to attempts at methodological synthesis that have been made by some recent writers on policy analysis.

Argument analysis is not a "soft" subject. It covers challenging tools, and amusing tactics; but understanding the tricks and tactics requires careful use of the tools. An introduction is inevitably somewhat technical. The paper does though give a series of illustrations; and, in contrast to the existing work on policy argument, they are from development studies literature. The paper is not a case study or on a single narrow issue, and so readers are free to pick out the sections of interest to them.

2. SOME USABLE METHODS FOR POLICY ARGUMENT ANALYSIS

> From Collins English Dictionary:- Articulation: i. the act or process of speaking or expressing in words; ii. the act or state of being jointed together; iii. the form or manner in which something is jointed; iv. a joint or jointing. Articulate: distinct, clear or definite; well-constructed. To articulate: i. to speak or enunciate clearly and distinctly; ii. to express coherently in words; iii. (intransitive verb) to be separated into jointed segments.

2.1. Elements of argument analysis

Toulmin (1958) and Scriven (1976) propose that when we try to upgrade practical argument we must largely look to areas other than formal logic. The subject of formal logic has been concerned with laws, not with maxims or tentative generalizations. It rarely analyses multi-part actual arguments, but instead takes readers through exercises in which they nearly always know what parts they're being tested on. [1] In contrast, Scriven notes that practical argument analysis has two parts: firstly, drawing out an argument's content and structure, and secondly their assessment; and the first part is neither trivial nor already given to us.

This process of specification draws out the premises and inferences that the argument itself requires. A careful, or even plodding, approach is justified here by the complexity of argument. Scriven indicates the following steps (which can be iterative):

1. Clarification of meanings (not "essential" meanings but distinctions sufficient to the use-in-context).
2. Identification of conclusions (including unstated implications).
3. Portrayal of structure (the precise connection of premises, inferences and conclusions).
4. Identification of unstated assumptions (the most defensible premises needed to make the argument complete and consistent).

The merit of this approach is that it helps us to look for components and structures, but does not preempt our findings.

Typically it will be worth first enumerating significant propositions and leading terms (e.g. concepts like "efficient", "fair", or "selfish" may need examination). Next one constructs a diagram or set of diagrams to show interconnections in the overall argument.

> "After carefully reading [an]...article advocating a certain policy position, the student is asked to ...find specific phrases, sentences or paragraphs used by the author to defend [her] proposals [and to then transcribe them]... Next, the student converts those transcribed statements into propositional "if..

> ..then" form.... [This is] the critical task of uncovering and explicating hypotheses from statements where such propositions are frequently well hidden... This is not a talent often stressed in courses and texts on political science methods... Having thus completed a 'propositional inventory'...the student is next asked to 'link' the various propositions, thereby making explicit the logical form or 'theory' underlying an advocate's proposal... [preferably in flow chart form. This] provides the basis for comparisons [with other positions] which would highlight points of agreement and disagreement" (Dubnick, 1978:370-3).

Sillince gives examples of a similar sort of probing, in his chapter on "The underlying assumptions in planning arguments" (1986, Ch.15).

Argument <u>assessment</u> involves criticism of the premises and inferences that have been identified. Reference is made to criteria of:

1. (sufficient) clarity;
2. consistency (both logically and with accepted facts);
3. scope (the range of the consistency);
4. simplicity (including absence of special pleading);
5. applicability and refutability;
6. comparison with other relevant arguments.

The final criterion here, of comparison with other relevant arguments, might appear to unduly extend the scope of assessment. In fact it instead keeps matters both more manageable and more relevant, by setting practical parameters, and making assessment relative not absolute. It is easier to

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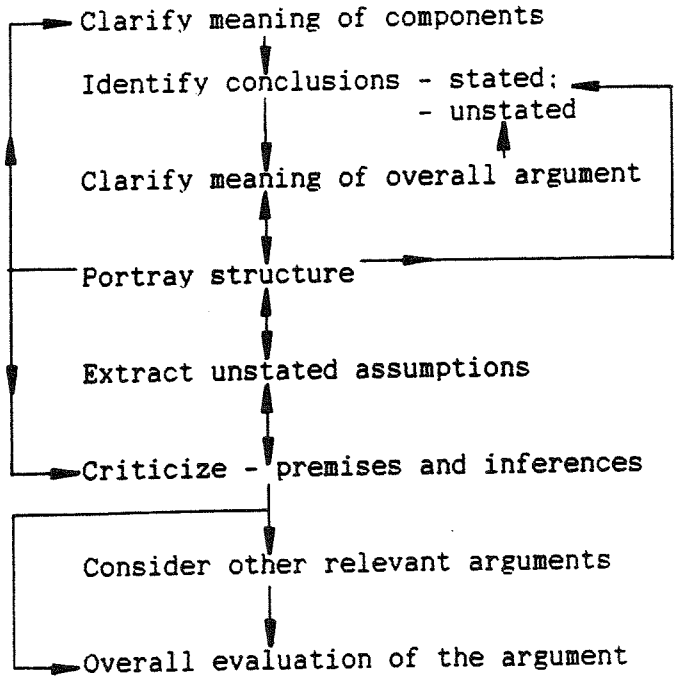
FIGURE 1 - SCRIVEN'S SCHEMA FOR ARGUMENT ANALYSIS (1976, CH.3)



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defend or attack things when they are considered in isolation; but to reject one argument may mean having none or implicitly accepting another, and it should be assessed in that light.

I have presented Scriven's overall format in a diagram, as Figure 1. The emphasis on assessment as well as description distinguishes his approach from the sort of flow-diagram techniques for note-making which have become popular. While those techniques help in clear presentation and summary of a line of argument (see e.g. Cole et al, 1983), they do not in themselves make one study the logic of the connections and choices. Further tools are needed for that.

Having introduced argument specification and assessment we can look at each in more detail. Before that though, there is an important addition to be made to Scriven. He has stressed that before we can assess arguments we need to work out what they are saying. But even before that we first need to find and identify them. Part of the answer here was implied by Dubnick, when he spoke of comparing competing points of view. Dunn (1981) and others use the term "stakeholder analysis", which means identifying the different viewpoints and interested parties that are involved in an issue. It is a mistake to analyse a debate as if it was a single body of argument, rather than a number of partly competing positions. Sillince (1986) illustrates stakeholder analysis in his Ch.16 on "Arguments in Planning Debates". He looks at ten different parties in a particular planning conflict, and tabulates their particular concerns, and strengths and weaknesses in their perspectives. Gasper (1988) gives another example. One's initial identification of different positions may of course be modified during the later detailed analysis.

2.2. Argument specification

> Discourse analysis is "the study of those linguistic effects - semantic, stylistic, syntactic - whose description needs to take into account sentence sequences as well as sentence structure" (Fontana, 1977:175).

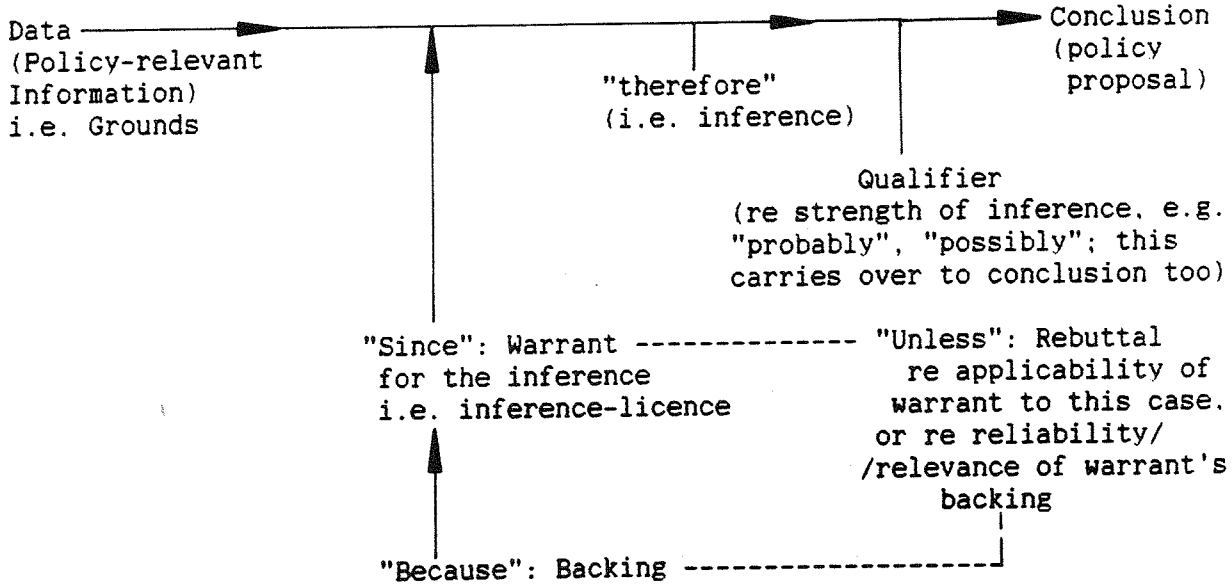
Pen (1985) provides one useful list of types of policy argument component:

1. Proposed observations (which may be defective, and are bound to be selective).
2. Logical statements.
3. Empirical statements - on relations between observables.
4. Methodological statements.
5. Images and metaphors (as are used for integration or "colligation" of the above elements into "stories").

6. Value judgements (which could be expressions of taste, or judgements in the real sense).
7. Policy recommendations (which are generated by a further stage - which Pen calls "normative super-colligation", with the pulling together of values and facts towards normative conclusions).

What we need besides lists like Pen's is an integrated way of looking at how elements function and connect within an argument as a whole. Toulmin (1958) offered something more useful here than classical logic, and this has been taken up in recent policy analysis theory (Dunn, 1981; Mason & Mitroff, 1981). Classical logic's preoccupations with mathematics and determinate inference mean that it is less relevant for us than is jurisprudence, where one finds non-definitive and partial conclusions, exceptions to rules, and so on. Toulmin therefore added the categories of "qualifier" and "rebuttal" to the standard syllogism. His format also goes beyond classical theory by distinguishing types of premise ("grounds" and "warrants"). Figure 2 shows the format as adapted by Dunn for policy analysis.

FIGURE 2 - TOULMIN-DUNN SCHEMA FOR ANALYSING POLICY ARGUMENTS



Toulmin and Dunn's format is not a complete layout for arguments. It is too simple for that. There is a danger that students will try to force everything into a single straitjacket, and be diverted from analysing the particular features of particular arguments. One must stress that the format is just a starting point or illustration. [1]

Apart from indicating that arguments have structures, the main interest of the format is in helping to highlight how the content and character of common categories (like "grounds" and "warrants") vary between fields. Toulmin concludes that: "all the canons for the criticism and assessment of arguments are in practice field-dependent" (1958:38); and he illustrates this at length in a later textbook. It can be misplaced to, for example, criticize ethical or policy arguments for not being mathematical or natural science arguments. "Context determines criteria" (Toulmin et al, 1979:120).

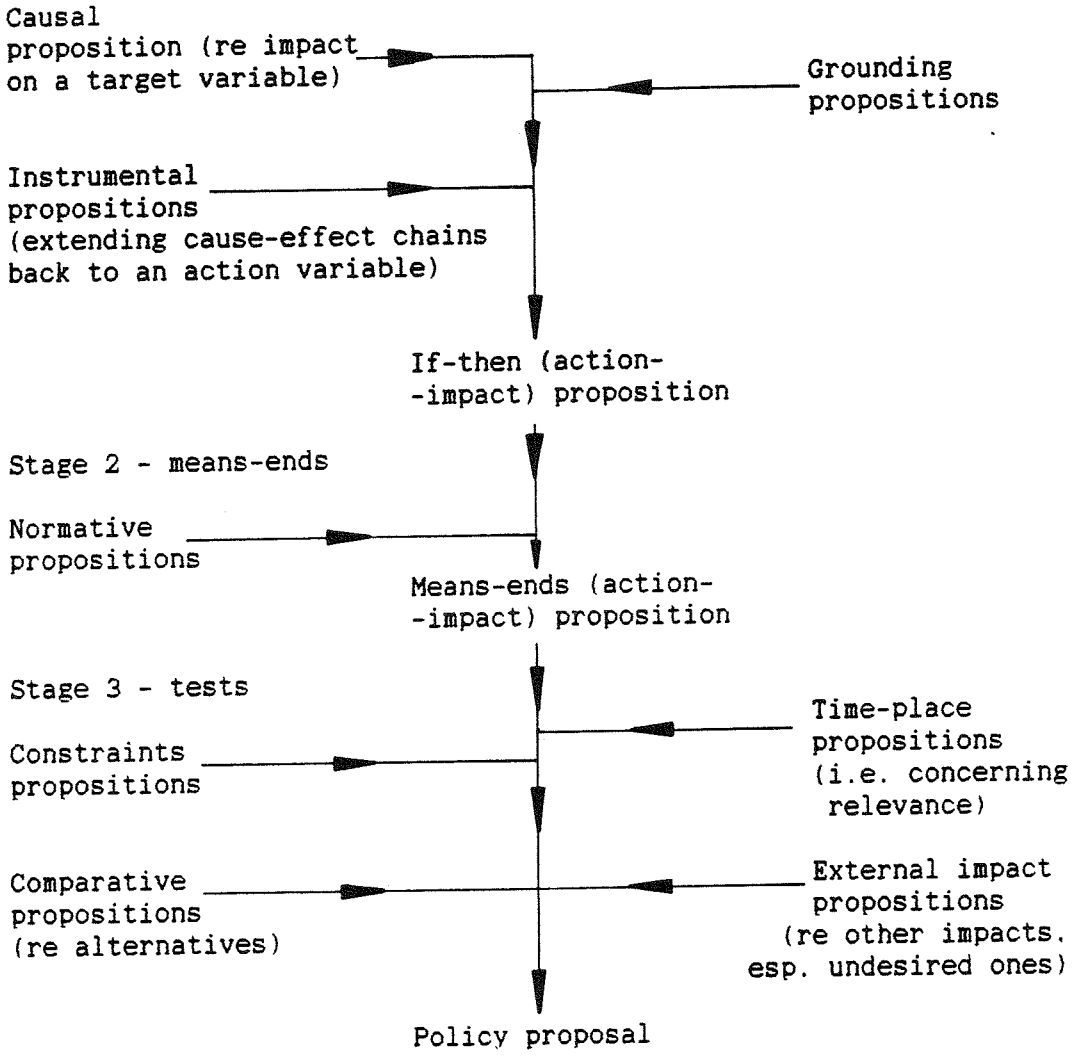
Even within one field there are various types of warrant. For policy analysis, Dunn (1981) notes: i) authority; ii) insight, judgement and intuition; iii) use of established analytical methods; iv) use of standard general propositions (e.g. "laws"); v) pragmatic comparisons with other cases; vi) ethics. He illustrates the use of each of these in policy arguments. A worthwhile student exercise is to look for the types of warrant used in a particular study or report.

What we now have are:

a. From Pen, Dunn and elsewhere, a sensitivity to the types of element that may enter policy arguments;
b. from Toulmin and Dunn, a way of looking at a particular proposition or well-knit set of propositions, that is more relevant than the standard syllogisms in logic texts;
c. the formal logic texts - which do still offer us something useful; and
d. from Scriven and Dubnick, an approach to analyzing whole sets of propositions such as make up broad arguments.

We still need methods that tie together the practical approaches to argument (in b and d) and the specifics of the policy analysis field (in a). One helpful contribution is Hambrick's "Guide for the Analysis of Policy Arguments" (1974), which I have restated in Figure 3. It includes the usual breakdown of action proposals into propositions about the impacts of specified actions on specified goals, and the identification of associated normative inputs and of propositions concerning cause-effect chains and impacts on other goals. But in addition it highlights four key categories: (a) "grounding propositions", i.e. intellectual background; (b) "time-place propositions", i.e. the context of application for the proposed claims; (c) "constraints propositions", i.e. claims about feasibility; and (d) comparison with alternatives. We will look at background perspectives and at constraints and alternatives in the next sub-section (2.3.).

FIGURE 3 - HAMBRICK'S GUIDE FOR THE ANALYSIS OF POLICY ARGUMENTS



Again a useful exercise is to ask students to study a policy report and identify examples of Hambrick's types of proposition.

Fischer (1980) has gone further than Hambrick, to look at normative inputs in a more adequate way. He proposes "A Logic of Policy Questions":- 12 groups of questions that are involved or implied in policy arguments. As the main thrust of his format is in assessment rather than in description, one can leave it to a later stage in the discussion (subsection 2.5. below). However, checklists of the elements or issues that policy arguments should cover can certainly help us also in description, for they give us questions

with which to probe what is covered in an argument and what not. Conversely, Hambrick's format can also be used in assessment.

A possible danger with some of the approaches above is that once students have seen them they will insist on "finding" examples of their categories in every argument, and of only those categories; in other words that they will neglect the particularity of the arguments they encounter. I suggest that a complement for those approaches is provided by a picture of imputable sequences of argument in actual project and policy analyses. This raises questions to use when characterizing positions but tries to minimize leading people towards preset answers. It emphasizes the creative and variable stages of initial formulation and final synthesis, which can produce a range of structures and tactics. Hopefully this approach effectively balances specificity (and hence practical usefulness) with generality (and hence a wide range of application).

Here is a possible set of stages for evaluation arguments:

1. Formulation and framing
   - 1a - definition of the exact type of assessment question being asked
   - 1b - defining the scope of materials to which the question is put (this involves further questions about alternatives, constraints, boundaries)
   - 1c - interpretation of key terms and categories.
2. Objectives and criteria
   - 2a - specification of objectives and criteria
   - 2b - justification of them (but the presence and form of this depend on 1a above).
3. Data collection: on outcomes, etc.
4. Data analysis and interpretation.
5. Synthesis
   - 5a - partial synthesis; as in making predictions, or in interpretation of costs and of benefits; etc.
   - 5b - full synthesis: evaluation, prescription, conclusion.

The stress on formulation and synthesis is seen in stages 1 and 5. Those areas are looked at in the next two subsections - 2.3 and 2.4. below.

The breakdown could be useful in both analysing and improving how conclusions are reached. It is not a necessary sequence for actually constructing or assessing positions; those sequences could well be more complicated. [2] Instead it is more of a sequential format for grouping the multiple strands and clusters that argument analysis will reveal. Its use is illustrated in Apthorpe & Gasper (1979, 1982; mainly with reference to assessments of service cooperatives in LDCs); in Gasper (1987) on project analyses; and indirectly in section 3 later.

The stages are interactive (so that reference fore and aft is needed) and are not completely separate. The stages that are worth distinguishing depend on the case. For example, interpretation of costs and benefits draws on all the previous stages and is often sufficiently creative to deserve separate note (ibid.).

Apart from looking at all the stages, one should look broadly at a position in each of its stages, not only at isolated statements. A central issue in real-world argument analysis, away from tidy logic texts, is that positions are not perfectly defined. They are frequently vague, complex and marked by internal tensions. One part seems to say one thing, and another part to say something different. [3]

> "In a way, their reconstruction of Frank's work is a caricature, but that amounts to saying that ice is cold. The tricky thing about reconstructions of any theory cum methodology is that they are unavoidably artificial. The aim is to show and to clarify the basic essentials of a particular view, but this can only be done by abstracting from the many particulars, in the fact the richness of that view..." (Coppens, 1984:301).

One might be able to go deeper than Coppens. The problems in representing an intellectual position or policy position are parallel to those in identifying the goal- or value-system of a person or institution, and include all the standard identification problems in sociometry. Post-structuralist thought has come round to a position similar to the pragmatism of C.S. Pierce, being mistrustful of strong general claims and of alleged simple "basic"/"essential" structures (Norris, 1986). The broader the position being characterized (e.g. a "paradigm" or "orthodoxy") the greater are the difficulties; but some writers lack conceptual equipment to handle these. Assertions as to the "basic essentials" of other views sometimes concern "the bits convenient to my argument" or "the parts that I have not ignored". (E.g.: "The 21st century visions of Herman Kahn and those of the Soviet futurologists are in essence the same" - Seers, 1983:42). A few examples in this area can help put students on their guard: against authors, who always need to be queried; and against tactics of pigeonholing and pejorative labelling similar to those in sectarian debate, where they may serve in identity-shoring, self-congratulation and power-struggle.

Kitching's widely-used textbook (1982) claims to know better the "essentials" of others' positions than they do themselves. He argues that: "None the less, even when all these discontinuities have been recognized... the <u>essential</u> populist 'vision'", as discerned in various thinkers from the

1810s to the 1930s, is still held by leading current developmentalists, including in the International Labour Office (ILO) (p.101; emphasis added). Kitching has difficulties easing ILO into his neo-populist category; for example: "in its recommendations on agriculture as on everything else, the ILO shows firmness about the general objective (maximizing productive employment) with a marked pragmatism about the means to be used" (p.73). But, hey presto: "despite all these differences we should note that the essential vision of development remains unchanged... A world of small enterprise...of small towns and cities...etc." (p.83; emphasis added). ILO advocated more small enterprise, more emphasis on small towns and so on, within a mixed approach (walking-on-many-legs); but the invaluable word "essential" (which is used similarly by Kitching at other points - see Box 1) helps one to downgrade those parts of a position that are inconvenient for one's interpretation.

BOX 1: ON LABELLING - KITCHING ON POPULISM AND NEO-POPULISM

Several reviewers identify Peter Bauer as a mis-"labeller" in development economics (e.g. Thirlwall, 1985; Riddell, 1985). This is even after making allowances for the problems when attempting his type of broad critique. Similar points can be made on Gavin Kitching's discussion of populism in development studies (1982). In both cases an arguable position suffers from excess. A semi-pejorative label is taken and applied according to convenience, with claims to know the "essentials" of others' views, even if these are in direct contradiction to what the people referred to say themselves. [4]

The earlier thinkers whom Kitching discusses are presented as arguing that material progress "can come about without large-scale industrialization and urbanization" (p.2), but instead by small-scale individual enterprise (p.19) and cooperative marketing. (P.29 claims that the latter became "restricted almost entirely to the agricultural/peasant context", thus ignoring e.g. the consumer cooperative movement.) In inter-war "neo-populism", the proposed "essential features" (p.59; emphasis added) were different, for now it was only held that "large-scale industry...must be supplemented by cooperative rural industrialization" (loc. cit.; emphasis added). Elsewhere there is a cruder definition: that neo-populism "opposes all forms of large-scale industrialization" (p.42).

It is claimed that "both populism and neo-populism share an overriding concern with problems of inequality in distribution" (p.99); (likewise Byres, quoted on p.92). However the examples that Kitching discusses treat this concern as one that has to be balanced against others, not as overriding. This includes Nyerere, who is even quoted to that very effect (p.70) - but then disbelieved. (Bauer is equally adept at this tactic.)

Selective belief is applied to Lipton too: "I have presented Lipton as an anti-industrialist [though] he goes out of his way to deny this" (p.90). Similarly "Byres [as quoted on p.91] simply disbelieves the sincerity of Lipton's protestations". Kitching and Byres claim that neo-populist theories have "vague time horizons" in which industrialization is reserved for "some distant future" (loc.cit.). It may be more accurate to suggest

that Lipton is impressed by the patterns of dramatic industrial and national development on a small-farm basis that have been seen in East Asia, and that appear contrary to Kitching's claim that "there is no historical or contemporary example of this combination" (p.136). Lipton is one of several authors who make a claim for a particular sort of path to interdependent industrial/agricultural development.

If ILO and Lipton are "neo-populists", then Kitching himself seems to end up in neo-populist positions at various points (see box 6, in section 4 below). He seeks to distinguish his position as follows. He claims that ILO and Lipton grasp only the importance of "static efficiency" not "dynamic efficiency". Of the latter: "In its most developed form this idea is known as the 'Dobb-Sen' thesis on choice of techniques" (p.138). That 1960 thesis was superseded by more general formulations of investment choice (by Sen et al; e.g. UNIDO, 1972) that were drawn on by ILO (including through Sen's participation! - e.g. Sen, 1975) and others. These formulations do refer to possible future trends, as do market choices and East Asian strategies. The cases made by ILO, Lipton et al clearly go beyond static efficiency.

Defining an easily demolished neo-populism allows Kitching to also show China is not neo-populist, and "so" its areas of success do not in any way support arguments from writers whom he has stipulated as neo-populist.

Without Kitching's "essential vision" one might not lump together Nyerere with Lipton and the ILO. Kitching's Ch.4 quotes Nyerere in the 1960s, and presents his view of Tanzania's future as "essentially an agricultural one...[with] a mass of self-reliant rural villages...producing and consuming cooperatively, and dependent on agriculture at least for the foreseeable future" (p.66; "essentially rural and agricultural" - p.122; emphases added). In practice Nyerere supported policies for state farms, large parastatals, priority to industrial and infrastructural investment, etc.; and this (inexplicitly) is the policy whose record is criticized in Kitching's Ch.5. (See Box 6.) Kitching's characterization of Nyerere's intentions is outdated or too simple, and/or his assessment of 70s Tanzanian policy as having followed Nyerere's 60s intentions is wrong. He does later note that "Nyerere has had...considerable latitude to make state policy...[but less to] have that policy implemented" (p.119). For "policy" one should here read "official statements of national ideals". Nyerere also fails to fit in a populist slot which (as characterized on pp.137, 175) excludes an interest in collectivization of agriculture and also excludes a stress on ownership of the means of production as a source of exploitation. That his 1960s discussion of nationalization (quoted by Kitching on p.70) emphasized distribution sectors more than production was because Tanzania at that time had little manufacturing to speak of - but the existing agricultural estates were nationalized.

Specifications of positions can reflect an approach to their assessment, e.g. a predisposition to defend or condemn. Scriven argues that one should lean toward charitable interpretations and hence more defensible specifications. The reasons for this are, firstly, to give priority to developing knowledge rather than to criticising as an end in itself; and secondly, because attacks on weak specifications of arguments are more easily dismissed.

2.3. Formulation and framing

"Framing" in policy analysis has been discussed by Martin Rein (1983). He uses "frame" as a comprehensive category like "paradigm" (in its disciplinary-matrix sense). This reflects a view that theories, values and acts must be understood as an experiential package. Examining "paradigms" in this sense has become common, at least in universities. There is a danger though of this comprehensive sense of "paradigm" being used in claims that only a small number of "package deals" are available, with all one's choices then flowing from a single choice. People can then label each other as "liberal", "Marxist", "neo-populist" or whatever, and neglect the variety, individuality, novelty and overlaps within or between positions. This is not conducive to careful probing of particular arguments. (Kuhn's "exemplar" sense of "paradigm" is more helpful here.) [1]

"[Further,] the university environment and culture support scholarly rather than critical [evaluation- or action-oriented] inquiry. This has the tendency of driving value-critical inquiry into a metalevel where the philosophical assumptions of the whole process of inquiry and thinking can be examined... and runs the risk of deepening the separation between thought and action" (Rein, 1983:106). Given that danger I prefer to emphasize aspects of framing which have a more active and practical nature: matters of inclusion, exclusion and attention - notably the perception of alternatives and constraints, and the theme of focussing: where one looks, and how the burden of proof is distributed. Indeed there is a case for limiting the term "framing" to these areas, for it helps to differentiate terms. This narrower meaning seems better fitted too to the metaphor for framing that Rein starts from - that of visual perspective (1983:96-7) - than is a sense that covers every aspect of approach.

With Dunn and others, I consider that this sort of differentiation is helpful. We earlier distinguished a "formulation" dimension. That covers at least: (a) the present sense of "framing"; (b) choice of terms and categories; and (c) the choice of purpose and standpoint of an argument. The last of these is now a relatively familiar issue; it concerns, for example, at what level of a logical framework is one presently arguing, and why? who is the client/audience, and what is the context? Also familiar is the issue of defining key terms. Here we can look instead at issue (a) and at the boundaries adopted in analysis.

One question worth asking of assessments is how far they trace causes and effects, and why, and how consistently. These are the sort of often unstated assumptions that were referred to earlier in Scriven's checklist (2.1. above), and which one needs to draw out. There are issues both of contemporary scope and temporal scope, and they lead into other aspects of framing. [2]

(i) Issues of time horizons and discount rates have become very prominent thanks to environmentalists' attack on the procedures and valuations in mainstream economics. Elster suggests that "any argument can be turned to any effect by juggling with the time scale" (1984:34). All institutions and movements argue for example that bad short-term effects will be outweighed by longterm improvements. In the extreme, a supposedly infinitely better future justifies anything that furthers its eventual attainment; "infinite" superiority wards off the inroads caused by discounting of delayed benefits.

(ii) The proper current scope of analyses has been much considered in planning theory, in the arguments about comprehensive versus bounded rationality, "disjointed incrementalism", the range of factors to include in project analyses, and so on. This is certainly valuable material for policy analysis students. Also valuable, I suggest, is work by those historians who are conscious of the inevitable selections in accounts and assessments, and are explicit about their corresponding guiding criteria and beliefs. Some connections are traced, not others; some contributory factors are highlighted as causes, not others. The issue is not that this is done - since selection is inevitable - but how consistently and defensibly (Carr, 1961; Stretton, 1969). The convenience of an author, rather than his or her special insight, may underlie claims of necessary bounds to the argument, as signalled by "in the final analysis" and similar phrases. These need probing to see if they have more content than just "where I want to stop (or happen to have stopped) the analysis".

(iii) Another aspect of attention-focussing is how the burden of proof is distributed. Certain things are taken as not needing explanation: as being "normal" or "natural" or so on.

Such designations of a "base case" are of particular interest in valuative argument: what is the baseline against which something is judged to be positive or negative, an improvement or a retrogression, or as needing justification or not? It is a commonplace that revolutions are more likely

after a period of improvement - just as loneliness can become intolerable after a taste of contact, and mental breakdowns more common when winter snaps back after a fleeting glimpse of spring. The conceived alternatives determine the evaluation of a situation. Similarly, conflicts often involve differences over the base case, i.e. how it is held that things would be in the absence of the feature that is in dispute, and this can much depend on conceptions of how they could and should be. In looking for example at bids for how to define the term "justice" (which usually are also bids for control over resources), one is led to examine their associated specifications of base case and of historical alternatives. (See Box 2.) In project analysis too, the base case taken is frequently more important in determining the results than are most of the cost-benefit refinements, even if those are often given more prominence (see e.g. Stewart, 1978).

BOX 2 - BASE CASES AND PROPERTY RIGHTS

In the classic liberal view of John Locke, a man has exclusive right to the products of his own labour, including land that he opens up, provided that there be "enough and as good left in common for others". But if the resources are scarce, this would set a limit upon private appropriation, or imply the right of others to be compensated. A key issue is whether Locke's principle would legitimate the continuing holding of resources that were formerly abundant but are now scarce. There are many reasons to think it does not (see e.g. Gasper, 1986).

However the influential modern theory of Robert Nozick seeks to extend property holders' rights, by a conservative interpretation of the proviso that enough and as good be left for others. The relevant baseline is posited as being the previous standard of life of those who are excluded by the privatization. Many enclosure movements have in fact reduced the standard of life of those who had benefited from communal rights of access. To avoid the implied threat to property, Nozick and others use a story of an original "state-of-nature", in which resources were not scarce, and/or where living standards were conveniently low. By taking this as the baseline by which to judge whether others have lost or not, it becomes easier to defend privatization of resources ("the baseline for comparison is so low"; Nozick, 1974:181). Almost anything could be defended in this way. Rawls comments on David Hume's similar sleight-of-hand: all persons, including the slaves, may be better off under a system of slavery than they would be in an anarchic state-of-nature - but why should that be the relevant comparison?

Further, if one argues - as may the defenders of privatization of resources - that the long-run position of the excluded be considered, and that short-term losses may be outweighed by longer-term gains, then the baseline used for the comparison should not be static. It should be what others' standard of life would be over time without the privatization - e.g. with socialization when that has been a historically relevant alternative. In other words, the baseline will frequently be one which rises over time and therefore does not flatter private holding in the way that Nozick does. (See Cohen 1977, Paul ed. 1982, and Gasper 1986, for fuller analysis.)

(iv) Ideological struggles, to legitimate one base case and set of categories rather than another, can involve controlled comparisons of the performance of different systems, but with the control being used to ensure particular conclusions. The (capitalist/socialist/...) alternative to the inherently efficient and enlightened system that one favours is often depicted as a a collage of its bad features, so that it can be ruled out from further consideration. The actual performance of one's own preferred system can then be defended along lines such as we will see in section 3. Rulers have a fondness for TINA ("There Is No Alternative"). TINA is also an assertion about constraints, and leads to the Panglossian proposal that one is in the best of all possible worlds.

(v) Definition of constraints is thus the other crucial aspect of framing. Layard (1972) suggests that underlying most disputes about normative questions is the question of which factors are to be taken as constraints, as given. The answers necessarily reflect theories and values - for to say that something is a constraint can be read as claiming that there is an unsatisfactory rate-of-return from trying to change it - and therefore they are frequently controversial. One needs to be suspicious of alleged constraints; but assertions, or presumptions, of absence of constraint must be treated sceptically too (Goodin, 1977; Gasper, 1986 & 1987). In both cases the allegations are likely to be emphatic, in an attempt to avoid debate.

> "The government of India, for example, simply cannot command the resources that would guarantee each one of [the] inhabitants of India a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of himself and his family" (Cranston, 1973:67; emphasis added).

Yet the governments of Sri Lanka or China can substantially do it. Bentham noted long ago how "the plea of impossibility offers itself at every step, in justification of injustice". (One can similarly identify other forms of emphatic assertion, which for example turn objectives into requirements.)

Compared to the project level, it can be argued that at general policy levels the criteria of efficiency and optimization become more obscure and potentially misleading, whereas constraints are more numerous, so that analysis can usefully center on constraint identification and definition (Majone, 1975; Seers, 1983). The following points are a few illustrations.

> (a) It is not correct in description or assessment to ignore actual constraints just because they are held to be legitimate or illegitimate (though it is indeed an effective ruse; as in Nozick's defining away of the constraints that private property

sets on others - [3]). This is illegitimate moralizing on constraints.

(b) The same applies in prescription. It is ill-advised to ignore world market constraints on the grounds that they "should not be there", when they clearly and foreseeably are there.

(c) But it is legitimate and sensible to moralize on constraints which one believes might be changed by others.

(d) One must beware of letting a refined specification of constraints remove attention from the possibility of changing them, which is a possibility that can be more important at policy level than at project level.

There is a lot of running to be had in raising questions about how alternatives and constraints are hypothesized and defined. Having now noted some key structural elements in argument, we can look next at overall style.

2.4. Style, story-telling, and colligation

> To colligate: "to connect or link together, tie, join, to relate (isolated facts, observations etc.) by a general hypothesis" (Collins English Dictionary).
> "...that is not to say that I recommend the extensive reading of methodological works. But I feel that economists must be aware of at least one methodological problem, and that is their attitudes to colligation and political engagement" (Pen, 1985:32).

Policy guidelines are often defended as being useful judgements synthesized from a variety of experiences and a variety of types of argument. The latter type of synthesis is common in practical argument - even if it is especially notable at policy level, where one seeks to relate disparate and often vague sets of ideas (e.g. economic and sociological and political and administrative factors). Colligation, as discussed by Pen, Ward and others, is central to this construction of overall arguments. In policy argument it acquires further layers, as implied in Pen's ugly label: "normative super-colligation". It "is ubiquitous .... because only [so] can one tie...research to the uses to which [social science] is put" (Ward, 1972:181). This pulling together of different strands is central in the "articulation of modes of discourse" (though it may not be a great respecter of the disciplinary divisions that mode divisions sometimes mirror).

Two linked themes that naturally emerge are "style" and "story-telling". "Style" has of course been subject to vast analysis in literary criticism. There is also a recent literature on "the rhetoric of the human sciences" (e.g. Nelson et al, 1987; McCloskey, 1985); but much of that is still at the stage of broad philosophical discussion. I suggest that, as with "framing", we need to specify aspects that could be focussed on in

policy analysis training. One possibility is to identify language forms corresponding to different contexts in policy and planning. For example, Sillince (1986) discusses four language styles that he sees in urban and regional planning - hortatory, legal, administrative, and bargaining.

Another possibility is illustrated in section 3 on "essentialism" - to look for the hypotheses (or, in that case, prejudgements) which have guided colligation. Again this is to complement the usual reference to various common policy paradigms; for while that is vital, we suggested that it brings a danger of prejudging arguments and of diverting us from exact probing of particular proposals.

BOX 3: PURPOSEFUL TALK - THE BOTSWANA TRIBAL GRAZING LAND POLICY

"Efforts will be made to develop means for the progressive restriction of TGLP herds to their ranches" - i.e. for enforcement of a longstanding legal condition in the ranch-leases - says the sixth National Plan for Botswana (1985: para.4.65). We could break this sentence into three parts:-

1. Efforts will be made
2. to develop means
3. for the progressive restriction of...

Each of these parts contains words of action, and the overall effect is thus one of purposefulness. (Mention of the past non-implementation of legal requirements is left until later.)

But suppose we remove the first part of the sentence, to leave something like "Means will be developed for the progressive restriction of TGLP herds..." Interestingly, the result now seems more purposeful, not less. Alternatively we could remove the second part, which gives us "Efforts will be made to progressively restrict.." Finally, suppose we remove both the first and second parts, and just say "TGLP herds will be progressively restricted to their ranches [as required by law]..." There are now fewer purposeful words and yet a more powerful meaning.

A third possible focus is to list some stylistic devices, though this would be for sensitization not memorization. McCloskey (1985) amongst others gives illustrations. National Plans would be one rich source. (See Box 3.) Of special interest are the devices by which authors rule out certain things as needing to be discussed or taken further. Sometimes this is done tacitly, but sometimes by invoking precedents, authority, likeliness, plausibility, "obviousness", or so on (McCloskey, 1983). While this sort of exclusion is also part of "framing", it may be especially marked in the concluding stages of arguments.

The term "storytelling", as used for example by Ward, captures the importance of the required selection and organization from whatever

materials are available (rather than just hoped for), although its connotations of casualness and of narrative sequence are too strong to make it an ideal general label. (Mathematical economists' use of the term "stories" is even less satisfactory, since what they tell are fables.)

Story-telling is not merely one more technique, but instead the purposeful knitting together and application of all those techniques that are available and relevant. [1] Narrative, selection and "story-telling" are relevant themes in social studies given the self-consciousness, meaningfulness and intentionality in human action. Explanations are often teleological (referring to intentions) and are always partial and non-definitive. Explaining actions requires relating them to contexts which can never be fully or non-interpretively described. These partial explanations are then colligated together into an overall account of behaviour. Thus in Runciman's presentation of activities in social studies (1983), description comes after explanation, not before. The study of history is a classic location for this sort of interpretive analysis.

In policy argument as in history, systematic examination of cases is vital in training. Usually all one can do in teaching is to examine some currently presented arguments on an issue (e.g. via Dubnick's format in 2.1. above), rather than build up an independent investigation. This is not an intolerable limitation since it matches the nature of most of the students' future work.

Analysis of the available story-telling simply involves the analysis of arguments by means such as we mentioned earlier. Criticism and improvement of "story-telling" require awareness of its character and components:- especially an awareness that selections, and hence criteria of selection, are inevitable and should be clarified; and that the same applies for the stitching together of incomplete materials towards conclusions. "Storytelling" is certainly still empirical, for without data there is little to select or stitch. The term's associations, including of deception, might cloud all this (e.g. to Blaug, 1980; [2]); but since the activity is inevitable, various authors have gone to lengths to indicate ways of countering its dangers and for assessing accounts (e.g. Ward (1972), Rein & Schon (1977), Wilber (1978)). [3]

The criteria in their lists are largely familiar - though not all of them (e.g. fertility, elegance, consistency with felt convictions and expert belief) are part of older philosophy of science, and several of them were

ignored by Blaug in his attack on Ward for supposedly rejecting criteria. In effect the proposal is to make our actual practice more explicit and sytematic. Assessments may not be absolute, but they can clarify differences and their sources, shift balances, and help sift out arguments which are competing for the service of supposedly agreed ends - which are themselves open to assessment.

2.5. Argument assessment

Having arrived now at argument assessment, much of its content follows fairly directly from careful argument specification: e.g. seeing whether or not terms are clear. One may take it as a compliment to be told one has "only" identified "simple" errors - as if no intelligent reader could have missed them. For in reality, inconsistencies and failings often involve elements which are spread wide and deep within positions, amongst many thousands of words, and not conveniently collected, collated and displayed. "Showing up simple errors" means showing errors clearly. All errors are simple when broken into steps, but that identification and exhibition may be far from simple; so having some tools and system are important for even the intelligent reader. Flawed policy arguments are not in general knowingly constructed step-by-step and then defended; instead, appealing or convenient arguments are defended, and then need to be deconstructed.

Corresponding to universal criteria of assessment are standard lists of fallacies. Toulmin et al (1979:158-185), following Aristotle, divide their list into "fallacies of ambiguity", which trade on obscurity in key terms; and "fallacies of unwarranted assumptions" or unwarranted inferences, which involve inconsistency with rules of logic or accepted facts or other premises. Thouless (1974) and others provide similar compilations. It is not sufficient, nor absolutely necessary, to study one or two such lists; but it is helpful - as much because it can increase alertness as because it provides specific tools. I am puzzled by their common neglect in education. (This is notwithstanding an awareness that much of the important "pitfall-orientation" is subject-specific and has to be conveyed in a different manner.) The neglect may be a symptom of top-down education, and of the rush to inform rather than to help learn. Toulmin for example lists 18 fallacies, with a number of sub-variants; and Thouless gives 38. These are helpful lists, neither uselessly vague nor immensely academic. A recent application to planning is in Sillince (1986). (See Box 4.)

BOX 4 - SILLINCE ON FALLACIES IN ARGUMENTS IN PLANNING

Sillince gives 18 types of fallacy, mostly based on Thouless' list. I have slightly amended some of his titles, or commented in brackets.

1) Making a statement where "all" is implied but "some" is true.
2) Proof by selected instances.
3) Extensions of an opponent's proposition by drawing contradictions from it or by misrepresentations of it. (The former case is not always a fallacy.)
4) Diversion to another question, to a side issue, or by irrelevant objection. (Or diversion to "look instead at the good features of my proposal").
5) The argument that we should not make efforts against X which is admittedly an evil, because there is a worse evil Y.
6) The argument that we should not be overwhelmed by fear of risk A because of the existence of risks B, C, etc.
7) The recommendation of a position because it is the mean between two extremes. (A further issue is whether those really are the relevant bounds.)
8) Proof by inconsequent argument. (This is perhaps better described as the "post hoc, ergo propter hoc" fallacy" - that B comes after A, therefore B is caused by A.)
9) The naturalistic fallacy. (The problem here is better described as the introduction of values inexplicitly.)
10) Begging the question, or assuming what is to be proved.
11) Putting forward a tautology (such as that too much of something is bad) as if it were a substantive statement.
12) The use of a speculative argument. (This is better described as the use of inappropriate metaphors and analogies.)
13) The use of a contrast which ignores a continuous series of possibilities between the two extremes presented.
14) The 'Catch-22' trick. (A better description of the example given is 'changing the rules', or 'moving the goalposts'. In Catch-22 there is no switching between definitions, but instead a biased set of definitions.)
15) Illegitimate demands for perfect definitions.
16) Leading questions. (E.g. 'Do you still beat your wife?')
17) Creating a smokescreen to blur an issue on which one's arguments are weak. (Sillince's example is of concentrating on discrediting alternatives to one's proposal.)
18) Circular arguments.

The interest of Sillince's presentation is that in each case he tries to give examples from urban and regional planning. In a number of cases one might query whether the type of fallacy is made clear and is properly labelled, whether there is no repetition or overlap, whether the example given is apposite, or even whether what is described is always a fallacy. This is probably partly inevitable when one comes to complex real examples; and on the other hand, it offers an opportunity to engage students more actively in class, and not spoonfeed them a set of examples. For each of Sillince's types, students can be asked to write or comment on: (i) is it clearly stated? (ii) is it well named? (iii) is it well exemplified? (iv) what type of fallacy is it? (e.g. 1. conceptual, 2. inferential, 3. failure to look at relevant factors, 4. introduction of irrelevant factors). Grouping the fallacies can help both in discerning some order in a long list, and in seeing how at the same time the groups inevitably overlap.

There may also be more specific criteria that are implicit in a particular context of policy argument. Of interest here is the claim that: "Political evaluation, as a [specific] subuniverse of evaluative discourse, specifies a 'point of view'" (Fischer, 1980:113). There are various interpretations of what this entails: for example, reference to "the public interest". Anderson (1979) proposes that it entails reference to "efficiency", to "justice", and to appropriate authority (though the meaning of each of these is of course much debated). Dunn (1981:232-9) has a similar list of criteria; he is less committal on their necessity. In his "A Logic of Policy Questions", Fischer endorses lists from Leys and Kaplan, based on pictures of human needs, which are proposed as being required (even if not highly specific) parameters of political assessment. [1]

Fischer's "Logic" is a useful overview of types and levels of questions that can be put to policy arguments and proposals (see Table 1). In assessing policy proposals one would certainly draw on questions from this list. A number of caveats should be noted. First, full operational guides or classifications of questions have to be specific to particular policy contexts. Second, this proposed structuring of argument partly reflects a specific philosophy of valuation. (This is shown in the Appendix, which discusses Fischer's approach more fully.) Hence Fischer speaks of "A" rather than "The" logic of policy questions. By going in depth into one (well-argued and widely used) philosophy he is able to give more precise, even if particular, illustrations of how policy argument can synthesise positive and normative aspects. Third, the model's emphasis on desirable elements of an assessment needs to be complemented by other methods for identifying and describing actual mechanics, structures and tactics in existing arguments.

After noting possible canons of assessment, one should also raise practical matters of strategy. Firstly, outside the closed worlds of mathematics and formal logic, and given multiple criteria, assessment is a matter of reasoned judgement and not always of decisive demonstration. The assessment is relative rather than absolute; and what is reasonable

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TABLE 1 - FISCHER'S 'LOGIC OF POLICY QUESTIONS'
(1980:206-212; paraphrased. Comments in brackets are Fischer's, on how to tackle the questions.):

Level 1:-

1) Program Objectives - Is the program objective logically derived from the relevant policy goals? (Refer to logical rules of normative analysis.)
2) Empirical Consequences - Does the program empirically fulfil its stated objectives? (Refer to empirical knowledge of consequences.)
3) Unanticipated Effects - Does the empirical analysis uncover secondary effects that offset the program objectives? (Refer to knowledge of consequences.)
4) Alternative Means - Does the program fulfill the objectives more efficiently than alternative means available? (Refer to knowledge of alternative means.)

Level 2:-

5) Relevance - Are the policy goals relevant? Can they be justified by appeal to higher principles or established causal knowledge? (Refer to knowledge of established norms and to causal conditions and laws.)
6) Situational Context - Are there any circumstances in the situation which require that an exception be made to the policy goal or criterion? (Refer to particular facts of the situation.)
7) Multiple goals - Are two or more goals equally relevant to the situation? (Refer to normative logic.)
8) Precedence - Does the decision-maker's value system place higher precedence on one of the conflicting criteria? Or does it lead to some contradictory prescriptions? (Refer to normative logic.)

Level 3:-

9) System Consequences - comparison of goal-system's consequences with accepted social ideals in the situation. (Refer to causal conditions and laws.)
10) Equity. (Refer to normative logic.)
11) Ideological conflict. (Ditto).

In 10 & 11, there is discussion of how far the policy's goals and the supporting social ideals are compatible with equitable resolution of conflicts.

12) Alternative Social Orders - comparison with alternative social orders, if 10 & 11 so imply. (Refer to knowledge of fundamental needs and to normative logic.)

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generally depends on the context. Secondly, for real-world debates, where the strands of argument may spread virtually without limit, Scriven advises focussing one's energies. Concentrate on those parts of an argument which support the main conclusions, not necessarily on the weakest parts; and also, as seen earlier, concentrate on strong variants of positions. Given that positions are underspecified, it was argued earlier that often priority should go to encouraging their improvement rather than attempting to totally

tie them down for assessment. And in practice most positions will implicitly accept some criticism and an assessment of "could do better" - as is seen by their evolving after the criticism.

Thirdly, immanent criticism is often helpful, i.e. criticism of a position that still uses the position's own terms, as opposed to transcendent criticism, which draws on clearly external criteria and intellectual resources. Immanent criticism works within a position, but does not imply acceptance of the whole position. Parts of the position, like methodological criteria, can have priority and be used to rule against some other parts. Also the immanent/transcendent distinction is not an absolute one, since positions are not sharply defined and bounded; instead they are layered systems with fuzzy bounds. Positions exist as both (A), the stated representations, and (B), the representations' sources, which are somewhat vague, being neither totally stated nor perfectly represented by (A). [2] Appeal to the (quasi-) internal resources in (B) is an important aspect of criticism which aims to persuade. Whether that criticism is then called immanent or transcendent might tactically vary with context. In Scriven's terms, one should give less priority to judging the stated representations than to improving the representation of their sources, since those are a more important target for assessment and for improvement. Improvement of positions is more important than absolute judgement on them at one moment. Rigorous criticism is still important for this improvement, but some of the emotions it arouses might then be reduced.

3. ESSENTIALISM, PREJUDGEMENT AND DEBATE

3.1. The imperfection and "open texture" of concepts

3.1.1. Section 2 has given an overview of policy argument analysis. It has emphasized looking at the overall structure and context of an argument. This is different from the old-fashioned stress on initially "defining one's terms", which has put many people off argument analysis. The problem with that approach is not just that it seems pedantic, but that it is misleadingly narrow:- for there are limits to how far one can usefully go in definition, and terms must be viewed in context and with an eye to how they evolve in use. Evolution is inevitable and not due to a failure to define terms with proper rigour. While we do not have to start argument analysis

by looking at definitions, we still have to turn to them at some point. Section 3 will do so though in a way that illustrates how definitions affect and are affected by the overall argument of which they are a part.

We will take up the idea of "essentialism". The original source of the "essentialism" is in discussion of definitions. However when a policy-means becomes effectively defined as necessarily possessing certain performative attributes, and more especially as being inherently appropriate, we see a syndrome of prejudgement which spans most aspects of policy evaluation, not only definition (Apthorpe & Gasper, 1979). Pre-judgement is one type of "anti-evaluation", and is a danger to be guarded against whatever policy paradigm one holds. The topic is then of universal relevance.

One can distinguish various types of anti-evaluation. Arguments can call on several of them together, and they also connect up. One type is simply assiduous fudging and excusing. (See Gasper, 1987, for an inventory of excuses.) In any list of "warning-lights" one must include those positions which claim to win every argument and hold that every issue works out in their favour. [1] Another type of anti-evaluation is to place absolute weight on a single value, for that in effect downplays all other considerations. Thirdly, there is the type that we will look at most here. This does not explicitly claim that a particular policy-means leads to or is itself an overriding value, but instead claims that this means is always the best way of furthering common non-absolutized values. [2]

3.1.2. Definitions.

One often encounters the defence that indicated examples of failure of a policy or programme did not concern "real" or "true" exemplars. This can be valid, but it is another "investigate-with-care" warning light. It is also a good starting point for discussion. Without an awareness from the outset of the imperfection of terms, and particularly of the pitfalls associated with performative concepts, one can be led into much confusion.

Consider four stances:

	Essentialist	Nominalist
Full definitions	A	B
Partial definitions	C	D

Nominalism holds that our conceptual divisions are humanly made, not independently determinate, although the divisions set by each language community become commitments for their members. Essentialism in definition holds that

there are well-defined and obligatory definitions, reflecting the essential truths of reality. In position A it is held that one can attain the ideal definition: a set of necessary conditions which together are a sufficient condition for use of a term (Scriven, 1976 - on which I draw further in what follows). In practice we find we cannot do this, except for some new or rarely used terms, particularly those in specialized fields. These cases anyway correspond as well to position B, as being clearly man-made stipulations. [3] Usually one can state some necessary conditions, plus other "criteria" which individually are not necessary but of which one or other sufficient combination is necessary. The set of such sufficient combinations is unlikely to be completely definable. "Criteria" fade off into "connotations" - properties which just happen to generally apply in practice. There is no hard dividing line between criteria and connotations; the latter anyway carry important information and it is unreasonable to try to excise them. And that's all there is: there is no "buried secret formula which encapsulates the meaning in a more precise way" (ibid.:130). One may seek to enforce one definitive set of usages, as in position B, (and may believe them to be essentially correct, as in position A), but one will usually neither succeed nor increase insight.

Certainly there are patterns in reality which conceptual divisions should try to respect. But position C is more reasonable than A - especially if it holds only that there are some necessary conditions, some essential features. Often though it goes further and implies that the set of these conditions is fully-defined, and constitutes an "essence" - a clear-cut core - of the concept, even if not quite a complete definition. In practice even such cores are typically not well-defined. One reason is that much of our perception and application of categories is through reference to concrete examples and the patterns that are imputed from them. A range of related imputations are possible, not just one; and they further evolve in use. The evolution is aided by their remaining partly implicit.

One can illustrate these points for many a focus of discussion: "ownership", "socialism", "equality", "cooperatives", and so on. Frequently the terms span multi-dimensional activities or entities for which generalized labels will be "loose concepts" (Kamarck, 1983), i.e. implicitly weighted indexes which aggregate and simplify and are unlikely to support very strong behavioural generalizations. Connolly (1983) speaks similarly of "cluster concepts". For example production systems usually involve

numerous activities and inputs, and for each of these the ownership, management and operation may in turn each be private or collective (of various types). One needs more than the two categories "private" and "collective". (See e.g. Blecher (1985) on China.) [4]

So we are led towards position D; but that would go too far if it denied the presence of patterns in experience. Some imperfect definitions are notably better than others. Taking a C-cum-D position therefore seems reasonable. Incomplete definitions still have important content, for they exclude many things. This is the contrast theory of meaning (Scriven, 1976). [5]

The "open texture" of concepts relates to their incompleteness of definition. Brennan indeed fully equates it with this inability to state necessary and sufficient conditions for use (1977:104). [6] One instead refines a definition only as far as is required to establish a relevant difference in a particular use-situation. A <u>new</u> term in a specialist field can be free of connotations, and so it has a temporary apparent perfection of definition. But, once it is put to use, it soon "develops a life of its own", even in mathematics (Scriven, 1976:131). The history of its applications colours the inevitable gaps left by its defining conditions, and in effect modifies them. Openness is of course a matter of degree, and is usually greater for generalized and abstracted theoretical concepts, like those noted above from social and ethical theory. Sen notes that one often cannot get strong commitments to general criteria for collective choice because it is not clear what all their implications will be: "these conditions are essentially opaque"! (1970:197). In administration and law, ordinary terms are given restricted meanings in order to reduce their openness of definition (Brennan, 1977:96ff).

In contrast, proverbs in unrestricted everyday language trade on the gnomic force of brevity. For short statements can be read with whatever contextual conditions, refinements or qualifications one likes or finds convenient. Precision of language should not though be judged according to an unattainable perfection, but by reference to what is attainable and needed in a given context. Ability to make such judgements is the mark of expertise in a situation. Proverbs are often on the surface mutually contradictory, but this need not make them false or vacuous. It is worth saying both "look before you leap" and "he who hesitates is lost", if there are not too infrequent circumstances where there is real danger of leaping

too soon, and others with real danger of hesitating too long. The proverbs can have value as pitfall markers. They can have negative value if they are treated as laws; for example the adages seen in traditional theories of planning and administration - "Coordinate! Collect information! Clearly specify objectives!" etc. - which have been systematically criticized by Caiden & Wildavsky (1980) and Simon (1976).

3.2. Talking about policy-means and policy-ends

3.2.1. Concepts that include performance features.

Commonly and naturally enough some of a concept's conditions, criteria or connotations can be behavioural/performance features. Some concepts are behavioural (e.g. "an outgoing man"). Yet with behaviour we come to something more contingent than, say, material attributes. [7] So behavioural features might sometimes best figure as "criteria" or "connotations" rather than as core "conditions". When talking of policy-means one may particularly wish to avoid performance features in definitions, as these could become prejudgements of actual performance. Yet it is a natural part of everyday language; e.g. if a cooperative is not functioning co-operatively, it may seem natural to call it "not a real cooperative", with the feature of co-operative functioning being viewed as in the core of the term. But note then how an asserted attribute is felt both to be an empirical truth and yet is liable to resist empirical test. In other words it may be felt that "cooperatives function cooperatively" is an empirical truth, and yet cooperatives have been defined in such a way that this is incapable of refutation.

A corollary of this is that a variety of conflicting attributes can be asserted. For example:

> Schumpeter claimed as "an historical observation [what] to his critics...seems a childish trick of definition" (Stretton, 1969:120), namely that capitalism tended to generate liberty and peace. In contrast "Lenin was the first to discover that capitalism 'inevitably' caused war" (A.J.P. Taylor, 1963).

Probing their uses of terms can be revealing. [8] One can similarly note the welter of views on men's essential nature, or how views on the impacts of foreign aid can reflect views on the essential nature of the State, as either parasitic or promotional.

Peter Bauer has repeatedly attacked the "axiomatic case" for international aid, indeed the very term "aid" which "prejudges the results [and ensures] that there is an automatic case for further and increased aid". He complains that specific examples of damage caused by "aid" are dismissed by reference to the corrections and "reforms which are always promised" (Bauer & Yamey, 1981:2). The irony is that Bauer himself shies away from systematic survey of actual impacts, preferring the safe haven of an a priori logic of negative impact:- (1) specific results are held to be untraceable because of "shunting" (i.e. aid funds release local funds for unknown other uses, with net impacts that cannot be confidently identified); but what can be known is (2) that aid channels resources through governments, which are (supposedly) inherently pernicious, and so...

Since behaviour is contingent on many things, it can become critical which contingencies are taken as the universe of observation when making particular claims of essential character. For pet policy-means, favoured tame settings are usually taken. It is then argued that undesirable effects are not inherent to the approach, but are only seen in unrepresentative settings; though if we took the range of actual settings these might suggest that some undesirable effects are presently inevitable. Persuasive descriptions emphasize as "essential" those potentials of favoured systems which are liked, and for non-favoured systems those potentials which are disliked. Non-favoured systems may be considered in wild settings, or at least in actual settings; here their essence is held to be revealed, unlike the pet system's, which is held to be concealed by some distorting factors.

The tame/wild settings chosen for analysis may even be purely abstract and artificial, as in traditional economic theorizing. Since there is an immense range of choice amongst specifications of variables and assumptions, the temptation arises to elaborate those specifications which suggest the strength of liked systems (or weakness of disliked systems), with observation being mainly called upon only when convenient in order to back up preformed conclusions. Other systems' actual performance may be compared with a preferred system's abstract charms; and the preferred system's actual performance may then be assessed only after the other systems have been ruled out on a priori grounds of their "inherent" defects or grounds of their actual imperfect performance.

3.2.2. Concepts that include positive or negative valuations.

Value attributes too can be incorporated into the intuited essence of a policy-means. Consider the following:

> "The censored press remains bad, even if it brings forth good products, for these products are good only insofar as they represent the free press within the censored press....The free press remains good, even if it brings forth bad products, for these products are apostates from the character of the free press" (Marx, quoted by Kamenka, 1962:27).

The valued essences tend to be strong - no half measures. Belief in an essential virtuousness may, non-coincidentally, be linked to belief in essential definitions; for both stances give reassurance.

It is quite in order that some concepts be valuative, and that intrinsic value be attached to particular things. What is problematic is when this is done without clarity and limit, and in the conceptualization of a policy-means. A non-absolute value may be placed on freedom of the press in its own right, i.e. regardless of its effects, as an independent value; and a limited - even if great - instrumental value may be attached to it insofar as the freedom helps bring good products; but not more than that, otherwise prescriptive questions become settled in advance of any evidence. Proclamations of overriding value figure in attempts to gain not just reassurance but also resources and privileges.

Sometimes things are given an extreme positive valuation because the goals they espouse are felt to be so good, or even felt as objectively binding; but sometimes because they are felt to be so effective in advancing accepted goals. This last case, of instrumental worth, will be considered further here.

3.2.3. "Inherent strengths/weaknesses".

The notions of "inherent strengths" and "inherent weaknesses" combine behavioural and valuative essentialism:- entities are held to have inherent behavioural features which are also valued as good or bad. For example Duelfer feels he must deny that service cooperatives have such weaknesses:

> "The failures of cooperatives in some instances are often attributed to a 'structural weakness' of the cooperative society as compared with other organizational forms. Detailed study of these cases shows however that failure was in every instance conditioned by a lack of preparation, planning and 'take-off' in the newly created cooperative" (1974:164).

The failings are always merely contingent, never structural. Yet Duelfer does not always exclude notions of structural weaknesses, which he vigorously alleges for collective farming (ibid.:Ch.4); and he suggests that service cooperatives have structural strengths, when he argues that there are social prerequisites for economic development which cooperatives enable to be fulfilled (ibid.:189). [9]

Similar points arise in the assessment of complex systems of cost-benefit analysis. These systems have various impacts, many of them good, but also some biases towards persons and sectors well situated for manipulation of the categories and procedures involved (Gasper, 1987). All such biases could, notionally speaking, be countered by case-by-case adjustments and supervision. Thus Alan Williams claims that biases are "not inherent in the method of analysis, but only in the way in which it may be used by some practitioners" (1972:529). He underplays the scarcity of resources for planning, and confuses inherent bias with the inevitable biases that are produced under the constraints that are current and will long remain in force. One is not arguing that cost-benefit is "on balance" inherently bad, only that it inevitably has some bad effects, and that, contrary to Williams, it is not inherently and always desirable.

If one is to use the language of inherent features one must accept both structural weaknesses and structural strengths stemming from an approach's particularities. Any feature could be the source of both. Better still might be to recognize that all strengths and weaknesses are conditional: they are manifested in certain circumstances but not others. A particular feature may on balance be a strength in some circumstances but a weakness in others. Contrary to Duelfer, this conditionality does not imply that failings which are conceivably remediable are not real failings and that they cannot affect the overall prescriptive ranking of the policy-means. How strong that effect is depends on the likelihood and cost of fulfilling the conditions for achieving strengths while avoiding weaknesses. Overall prescriptive ranking should reflect these patterns of conditional appropriateness, rather than an alleged inherent general appropriateness or inappropriateness.

3.2.4. Inherently appropriate policies?

Prescriptive essentialism means to hold that a policy measure is inherently appropriate. We have suggested how common this is, given the

fairly natural inclusion of valuative and performance features into concepts, and given also organizations' needs for self-belief. (A weaker variant involves the presumption of appropriateness in broad but unspecified 'normal'/'representative'/'fair'/'proper' circumstances. Indeed arguments on those lines might sometimes be acceptable, as not too untrue; though Henderson in his 1985 Reith Lectures resists this when discussing essentialism in economic policy. [10])

Belief in the inherent suitability of certain policy-means has several dangers. Presumptions about appropriateness can influence the conduct of assessments in nearly all stages. In framing the assessment there is the tendency to neglect possible alternatives. In specifying objectives there are dangers of the means coming to dominate more general ends, with an insistence on accepting the specific form and traditions of a preselected means. In identifying performance, failures may be disowned (as not "real" cases) and successes adopted, by switching between definitions; plus successes may be unduly brandished, since success is assumed to be the normal and representative case (that is seen whenever the means is "given a fair chance"). Next, in explaining performance, including failures, there is the selective attention to seeking out mitigation for only one approach, not for others; and also the divesting of blame and responsibility from the favoured approach, across to other forces and to misfortune. These sorts of apologetics arise with many a problematic or controversial policy. Box 5 looks at one standard pattern.

BOX 5 - SHARING THE CREDIT AND SHIFTING THE BLAME

An important policy pattern is the unforeseen avalanche, illustrated by collectivization/communization/villagization in the USSR in 1930, China in 1955/6 and 1958, and Tanzania in 1974/5. The programmes were originally envisaged to take years but raced ahead to implement most of their targets within months, i.e. in a time span leaving no possibility of serious evaluation and feedback. Apologists rightly note the role of local initiatives here, but not their context. The vanguard centre doesn't and cannot know exactly what is the situation and what is possible in each locality, but it has some broad picture and wants to lean in a particular direction at a particular time. So it holds up examples for emulation and tells local cadres and officials: "Don't fear to press ahead with policy X". At the same time it covers itself by also saying "Follow the mass line". While the vagueness in instructions is partly unavoidable - for decisions must be made on the spot - it conveniently allows the centre to criticize cadres after they have acted, for having "misinterpreted" instructions and lapsed into "commandism" or "tailism" (whichever suits the occasion). Alternatively, the local cadres will be left just sharing the credit for any success, and

in second place to the farseeing centre, for they "only" correctly interpreted its instructions (Frank, 1959).

The centre pays a price too. Local cadres do not know how true are the centre's examples. Nor may the centre itself, but it needs to have some. Even if the examples are completely true, little may be known about how generalizable they are. (Jack Gray was careful for these reasons to call the internally brandished Chinese examples "myths".) Local cadres no doubt still give some credence to what the centre tells them is possible. They also wish to perform, and don't want to be open to the accusations of "tailism" which others could use against them at this stage of the policy cycle (i.e. prior to feedback from experience). The centre can start receiving reports from areas where conditions have proved easier for pressing ahead, plus some optimistically slanted reports; overgeneralize from them; decide it has underestimated mass enthusiasm, and redouble its pressure. Excesses and problems are later held to have "resulted not so much from senseless directives from bureaucrats of the centre but rather from over-enthusiastic local cadres, many of whom took the prevailing rhetoric...too literally", i.e. literally (Sklair, 1977:10). The policy is still held to be essentially correct, when divorced from its "contingent excesses" (ibid.:2).

Apthorpe & Gasper (1979, 1982)'s examination of a body of cooperativist literature suggested, amongst other features: (i) persistent neglect of important alternatives to cooperatives; (ii) a permissive extension of the definition of cooperatives, to cover certain alternatives when those are successful; (iii) a rigorous exclusion of many failed official cooperatives as not being "real" cooperatives, whose definition in practice leans towards exclusion of the possibility of failure; or, whose failure is never their fault, but instead (iv) the fault of absent "prerequisites" for success; leading to (v) a policy recommendation of "fulfill the missing prerequisites".

It is a classic overall excuse to say that the "prerequisites" for success had not been provided (and that this is no fault of the policy); for example: "The absence of the conditions necessary for successful cooperatives was erroneously identified with failures of the cooperatives themselves" (International Cooperative Alliance; quoted in UNRISD, 1975). Das Ding an sich (the worthy essence of cooperatives) survives unscathed - but only through an implicit admission of limited powers and relevance, which stands in contrast to both the talk of inherent strengths and the claims to credit in cases where the prerequisites were present. In prescription itself, the essentialist style is not just to call for the virtuous policy-means but also for provision of its "prerequisites for success", with little reference to cost and opportunity-cost. (World Bank.

1981:131-2, discusses this syndrome - the argument that "the policy was good, only the implementation and management were bad; therefore we must provide more and better management" - i.e. provide better and better conditions, as if management was a non-scarce resource.)

In sum, the danger is of self-reinforcing prejudgements, with criteria being applied and evidence and argument selected and interpreted in ways which "confirm" the initial stance.

In one way we can be indulgent; making excuses ("anyone can make a mistake") and giving and taking credit are socially and psychologically required. Institutions and people need to survive and go on. This does not remove the requirement in some instances to make summative assessments and choices. Policies (and planning) cannot be judged primarily on their good intentions, their inherent worthiness regardless of their performance. [11] While action needs supportive beliefs, problems arise if "fideistic" motives become central in policy discourse, with needs for meaning being heavily expressed through attachments to particular policy-means. There is then a danger of disappointments only intensifying the attachment, since sunk costs and past sacrifices cry out to be vindicated. Criticism becomes perceived as a rejection of all aspects and as across-the-board. The essential worthiness of the policy-means is felt to have been impugned; and correspondingly there is an impulsion to across-the-board-defense.

3.3. Debating and inconsistencies

3.3.1. This debating aspect to policy evaluations is fundamental. These exercises involve different parties and their interchanges, where "face" can be even more important than "faith". Debate is of particular importance at the wider policy level, where the great complexity of the issues implies that statements of positions are necessarily incomplete. Often too the recipients of statements will demand brevity. Follow-up discussion of these statements will then be focussed by what others' reactions are, which will themselves be focussed according to the context and by particular hopes and fears. This use of selective interchange in debates is potentially a way of identifying and concentrating on matters that are more important in the particular context; but the selectiveness can also facilitate conflict (Adelman & Hammond, 1975). Instead of concentrating on main features of a

position, people usually cannot resist concentrating on others' peripheral apparent inconsistencies, to obtain instant gratification and to imply their own superiority (which is often easier than demonstrating it). Also common are "crossed transactions", where responses are directed against the implications it is feared others might draw from a statement, rather than being directed (as in complementary transactions) to the statement's actual content.

Examples of complementary transactions:
Stimulus - cooperatives aren't suitable in cases A to G.
Responses - (i) I agree; (ii) I don't agree; (iii) I agree for cases A to C, but not for cases D to G; (iv) for reasons x,y, and z, I think you should consider your arguments and criteria more carefully.

Examples of crossed transactions:
Stimulus - cooperatives aren't suitable in cases A to G.
Responses - (i) cooperatives aren't to blame for lack of suitability; (ii) I deny that cooperatives are a flawed and inferior form of organization; (iii) so you reject cooperatives.

It is perfectly common for transaction to reinforce differences in view rather than reduce them; hence some policy analysis techniques keep parties out of direct contact, to reduce the peripheral conflicts. Looking at a few examples, as above, can help in recognizing these dangers. More generally, we need to stress that debates are social and political as much as they are intellectual matters; and to go beyond just recognizing this, and acquire relevant tools, such as stakeholder analysis. This is vital for both understanding and influence; but it has to be the subject of another paper.

3.3.2. The socio-logic of inconsistency.

Logical inconsistencies can co-exist within a "socio-logic" of advocacy. On one occasion one thing is said, on another something apparently inconsistent; but the two may have a common inspiration: a belief in the essential desirability of the policy or institution being discussed, and also a common effect and purpose - namely, its vindication. Even a feeling of consistency may then be retained.

In the short run the vagueness allowed by open texture can help cover up inconsistencies and defence of essences; but in the longer run it can provide a yet more valuable service. When adaptation is felt advisable, the open texture of terms facilitates an evolution under cover of claiming - indeed perhaps even comfortingly feeling - that one's essential position has

not changed, even though by operational tests one's effective position clearly has. "But of course we have always believed in [our new position]".

This section has moved through from looking at single concepts to overall debates. Two themes were that some concepts incorporate valuative and performance claims, and that they are not totally defined and do evolve. There are many good discussions of political concepts which stress the importance of "secondarily evaluative" terms (i.e. those which combine descriptive and valuative content; e.g. Barry, 1965; Connolly, 1983). I suggest though that it can be worth taking the vivid case of prescriptive essentialism before more subtle instances of "secondary evaluation". Further, the available discussions of concepts do not always proceed on to analysing extended arguments and debates. Section 3 tried to overcome this limitation, using some of the tools for tackling wider discourses that were provided in section 2.

4. CONCLUSION

> "..argument is more unified than is commonly understood, and far more unified than the fragmentation of academic fields might imply... [At the same time] argument is more diverse than is commonly understood, and far more diverse than the official philosophies of science or art allow. Every field is defined by its own special devices and patterns.." (Nelson et al, 1987:4).

The implications of Nelson's statement are that we need to study both some of the principles of argument in general, and the specifics of argument in our own fields of interest. This paper has tried to give an introduction to both, but with the emphasis on policy argument, and without looking for its own sake at general argument analysis.

In the Appendix I go on to suggest that the distinctive terrain of policy analysis is at the intersection of two strands, namely the attempted framing-of-techniques and the attempted application-of-philosophies. Techniques can only operate within a frame of assumptions; and on the other hand, general principles only become operational through many technical steps. This intersection needs to be handled in an orderly consistent way; and argument analysis tries to unravel and comment on some of the linkages that can be involved. Otherwise there is the danger that important issues will fall neglected between the disciplinary stools of the social scientist

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BOX 6 - KITCHING ON TANZANIA

Kitching's popular text (1982) seems as concerned with propounding a particular thesis (that "neo-populism" doesn't work) as with clarifying issues and difficulties (both in explaining events and choosing policy). It repeatedly asserts that Tanzania after 1967 adopted a "neo-populist" anti-industrialism. This claim is in tension with studies that indicate the presence of disincentive agricultural pricing and a strong weighting to industrial investment through the 1970s (e.g. Bienefeld, 1982; ILO, 1982; Dolman et al, 1984; and studies by Alan Amey and Frank Ellis). Kitching also attacks neo-populist dissipation of resources across the whole country (p.121), though p.118 notes that "a very conventional" concentration of state agricultural investment was resumed from 1974.

Kitching concludes that: "there is no doubt that overall results have been very disappointing" (p.108). The sources above note that economic and social results were in fact clearly better than the African average in the period to 1978, in a country rather poorly placed at independence. It was on the basis of such results that in 1976-8 "decisions were...taken, which either ignored foreign exchange implications, or considered them on the basis of absurdly favourable assumptions" (Bienefeld, 1982:309), and stepped up import-intensive industrialization plans while continuing the relative neglect of agricultural production and marketing. The warning of the balance-of-payments and food-supply crisis of 1973-5 was not taken, which exacerbated the crisis initiated by external shocks from 1979.

This picture is rather far from Kitching's. He defends his thesis of anti-industrialism by claiming that producer good industries were neglected, and quotes Plan rhetoric of putting "particular emphasis" on basic-needs related industries (pp.123, 139). One should note that the latter included construction materials; that perhaps few sectors will in practice fail to receive such epithets; and that the record of the major "basic" producer goods projects which in fact were started was very disappointing (see e.g. Coulson ed., 1979; Coulson, 1982; James, 1983). While Kitching quotes Nyerere from 1965 as calling for many small factories dispersed around the country, rather than a single large factory (p.67), in industry after industry the studies of investment choices show the selection of the single large factory, often taken "off-the-shelf" from a foreign supplier. Kitching's criticism becomes "not...simply of an inadequate investment in industry but rather of investment in the wrong sort of industry and of the very inefficient manner in which all Tanzanian industries...are managed and operated" (p.122) - which are just the sort of criticisms he elsewhere labels neo-populist. (See Ch.4, e.g. pp.82-3 on ILO's "sophisticated critique of large-scale industrialization as this has occurred...in developing countries".)

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and the social philosopher. Sophisticated lower-level materials and higher-level philosophies can be sloppily combined.

Bienefeld (1982) comments on how relatively casual were some academic ssessments of Tanzanian performance; he draws out the variety of tacit and underargued assumptions used by various critics from Left and Right, on matters such as the feasible alternatives that were available. Box 6 looks at a later example than those which Bienefeld questioned.

The aspects of intersection and colligation of philosophy and techniques are particularly worth stressing for the levels of policy and strategy. One reason is that whereas both project and policy assessments might consider how valid was the derivation of project designs from policy principles, it is in policy/strategy assessment that one is more likely to consider also the validity of the policy principles themselves.

Secondly, at the multi-sectoral level the limits of project analysis methods are most apparent (e.g. in comparing sector-specific conventions), and problems are more "ill-structured". But, in taking decisions, problems are in effect structured, whether or not explicitly or thoughtfully. We need to study how this is done.

Thirdly, policy assessment notably seeks to generalize from whatever particular study sample becomes available of projects/programmes under the policy, and to extend conclusions from some conditions to others. Further, in considering the impacts of macro-policies that do not consist of individual projects, it becomes particularly important to see how impact assessments in non-experimentally framed conditions are intellectually framed; similarly so when considering the indirect effects of whole sets of projects, and in generalizing from particular experiences.

Finally, alleged intangible impacts can also be especially significant at strategy level. Whereas in project and programme analysis there is frequently a bias towards the quantifiable, the reverse can apply at strategy level where intangibles may be played up, for example as part of the construction of national identities. Policy arguments may even be deliberately vague or inconsistent.

Such factors lend a particular importance to procedures for systematic argument analysis. And while this evaluation of available discourses is not a full substitute for direct evaluation of practice, quite often in both training and professional contexts it is all that time and capacity allow.

We should add some caveats. Argument analysis is an exploratory and difficult field. None of the methods that we have mentioned, nor all of them put together, will guarantee correct or insightful analyses, and they may even be misused. But in general they can help us. They might be viewed as like the aids one uses in physical exercise to strengthen faculties, or in learning a language. Once one has mastered them one goes on to more novel and complicated tasks, and only refers back to them occasionally.

In training there is also often the problem of how to bring to life the available case materials, to audiences who have not been involved in them. (Robert Stake notes that for example evaluation case-studies are often "too long, too multi-purposive, too non-generalizable and too dull" for audiences outside the specific situation they considered; quoted in Soumelis, 1977:131). One part of the answer can be to provide skills that help students to analyse and grapple with the cases by themselves.

The perspective that I have sketched on the role of argumentation in policy analysis and planning presents it both as very important and as selective, creative, and non-mechanical. The paper has therefore tried to present an active and flexible approach to argument analysis; not a grand theory but instead some important themes and usable tools, that could be drawn on in teaching. I am sympathetic here to the sort of approach adopted by Berger (1977), when he was "In Quest Of A Method of Political Ethics" (by which he meant "policy appraisal"). He proposed not a "comprehensive doctrine or a summa of universally applicable principles", but a kit of rules of thumb, open-ended and corrigible.

The most important targets in teaching policy argument may be fairly simple ones. In contrast to teaching on appraisal systems and evaluation research, where one's priority may often be to get techniques into a realistic perspective, and stress that they can't do everything, the emphases here, as in discussions on ethics, can be that one can do <u>something</u>, and on introducing modest but helpful tools. Compared though to ethics, and to evaluation methods, the area of policy argumentation is not as highly developed, and presentation is more difficult.

I have considered priorities to be: first, introducing a practical approach to analysing arguments; and second, highlighting a few important issue clusters and associated warning signs that can be both vividly and usefully conveyed in a classroom. A kit of "watch-out-fors" and "think-carefully-abouts" - including flashing ambers like "basic essentials", "not real examples", and "contingent excesses" - should supplement the standard tools. Argument analysis must include sensitivity both to use of language and to wider structures. The issue cluster of essentialism and anti-evaluation was accordingly emphasized. It indicated how some understandable features of everyday language can become sources of pervasive confusion in evaluation - perhaps particularly so at wider policy levels, where socio-political identities are being sought and defended.

APPENDIX - THE INTERSECTION AND ARTICULATION OF MODES OF DISCOURSE - a critique of recent methodological discussion

1. The meeting of philosophy and techniques, and of values and experience.

This appendix relates the methods and themes in the paper to recent methodological discussions. We asked earlier whether there is anything distinctive in policy discourse; and have suggested that there is, notably in its practical concerns to synthesize from a great range of materials, including from various socio-political and value inputs. One major school holds that these features raise no special requirements. It believes for example that "one can simply add the ethics of different readers to [a] finished [explanatory] edifice like so many [alternative] coats of paint" (McKee, 1981:13). The school is well represented in positivist economics (e.g. Archibald, 1959; Hicks, 1975). Policy economics is seen as purely the positive derivation of implications from whatever value premises are given. Values are specified quite separately and are then just technically applied.

The limits of this "instrumentalist" view are twofold. Firstly, selection and interpretation in analyses of "the" facts is inevitable, so that value-"application" is not purely value-free (see even Machlup, 1969). Secondly, we are unable to provide or develop, in complete separation from cases, sets of values that can offer workable systems for facing the complexities of real world problems. Policy argument analysis certainly attempts to identify and specify value inputs. It does not however find them to be in general completely specified or specifiable, certainly not in isolation from contexts; it does find that they impinge in, and can be affected by, many supposedly technical phases. Careful attention may be needed in identifying, assessing and amending the connections involved.

The "essentialism" that was discussed in section 3 held in contrast that key categories - in particular, favoured policy-means - can be fully defined; but unlike in instrumentalism its value inputs were not abstracted out, being instead closely linked with a favoured means. Modes of language were conflated rather than articulated. Instrumentalism can be seen as one reaction to such distortions; but it presumes the connection of modes to be elementary, indeed all too easy, so that emphasis can go simply to asserting their separation. A helpful methodological maxim (to try to separate out values and facts as far as possible) becomes misread as an ontological dichotomy (concerning a supposed total separability of normative and positive statements). More subtle and less escapist responses are needed.

The approach I have forwarded is influenced by those of Peter Self, Martin Rein, William Dunn, and Frank Fischer, amongst others. Normative discourse is emphasized as being "practical", not merely "technical". "Technical" problems are those with well-defined functions to be performed, whereas normative and especially policy problems are frequently not well-defined. The reasons are the same as those just noted as the limitations of positivist instrumentalism - the nature of goals and criteria, and the nature of policy environments. (These two factors of course influence each other; e.g. if criteria are open-textured then so too will be our perception of problems.)

On the first count, values are not divorced from experience, and their "open texture" means that they can't in general be just technically

manipulated. Philosophy, and other sources, do not come up with methods or values so complete as to leave a purely technical task of application. They need instead to be interpreted, operationalized, combined and adapted. [1] One can see this for example in the working of legal systems:- the drafting of laws never foresees fully the circumstances in which statutes will be involved; new and unique cases always emerge, and judgements are required to relate them to the statutes' categories, which themselves can be affected in light of the cases. Progress in systems of law seems to involve at least as much the proliferation of rules and precedents as it does the reduction of rules to fewer and more precise general principles. Advocates of the settling of general values completely a priori, such as Nozick or MacRae (1976), have run into powerful criticism (e.g. in Paul ed., 1982, & Fischer, 1980).

On the second count, policy environments are complex open systems within which problems accordingly are not clearly given but instead require problematic further definition. Problems are also often generated politically rather than selected according to scientific convenience, neatness or tractability; and, as is well known, these "messy" issues then need further specification. Framing is needed before technical methods can be applied. Besides that initial stage there is a succession of choices, selections and interpretations throughout the process of problem handling and analysis, in particular when bringing matters towards an overall conclusion. The initial structuring and final synthesizing - into which philosophy, value inputs, and argumentative style enter - are at least as significant as the well-trodden more technical intermediate stages (Self, 1975).

A method like cost-benefit analysis, for example, is not purely a value-free technique that generates determinate recommendations from any given value inputs (nor is it just a mechanism of rationalizing any prejudgement). Its framework reflects one social philosophy (utilitarianism), and its application further involves many judgemental choices in specifying situations and criteria (Stewart, 1978). So analyses of policy arguments need to consider both the explicit methods and parameters that are adopted, and the implicit frameworks and judgements.

As was previewed by Braybrooke & Lindblom (1963), the distinctive terrain of policy analysis can therefore be described as the intersection of two strands, the attempted application-of-philosophy and the framing-of-techniques. This intersection needs to be handled in an orderly consistent way; and argument analysis tries to unravel some of the mechanisms that are involved. Otherwise there is the danger that important issues will fall neglected between the disciplinary stools of the social scientist and the philosopher.

2. Policy discourse as the interconnection of various modes.

One has to look more empirically at actual patterns in policy discourse, and consider where there are significant distinctions or not, rather than take an a priori stance such as we saw in instrumentalism. Alexey (1978) for example thus proposes a number of discourse modes:
(i) explanatory; (ii) conceptual; (iii) methodological; and (iv) normative or "general practical discourse", as opposed to (v) juristic or legal discourse. Other writers try to distinguish further within Alexey's

category of normative discourse, according to purpose or context, e.g. between prudential, ethical, policy-analytic etc. discourses.

Toulmin (1958, 1979) suggests that while there are indeed different fields or modes of discourse, with no doubt their own distinctive components, criteria and texture, there is not necessarily a difference in the structures of argument in them. His contribution is to emphasize the importance of looking at arguments in all fields equally critically and systematically, and also the presence of tools of wide cross-field application. However, although there is always some unity in variety, it is to be expected that in each particular field the distinctiveness of its components and setting will mean that some universal structural features of argument take on special aspects or importance.

What is distinctive in normative discourse is not just the particular importance of value inputs, but also the process of connecting them with factual evidence to draw normative conclusions. What Alexey called "general practical discourse" involves more than just painting value-inputs onto independently given positive explanatory structures.

One influential effort to sketch structures in these processes was made by Paul Taylor (1961). His proposal was that testing a normative judgement logically requires four stages, namely "verification, validation, vindication, and rational choice". (See Box 7.)

BOX 7 - VERIFICATION, VALIDATION, VINDICATION AND RATIONAL CHOICE

(i) "Verification" means seeing whether a judgement is a correct application of one's currently held criteria. (This is comparable to asking whether an advocated programme is in fact fulfilling its stated operational objectives).

(ii) "Validation" means seeing whether the specific criteria are a correct application of the more general criteria that constitute a value system, e.g. perhaps the criteria of a broader policy. (This is similar to working out the middle levels of a programme's "logical framework".)

(iii) "Vindication" means seeing whether the value system itself is an appropriate embodiment of an accepted "way of life", or set of ideals, e.g. perhaps a particular "development path". (This has similarities to elaborating the highest levels of a programme/policy's "logical framework".)

(iv) "Rational choice" means assessing a "way of life", in view of the alternatives, and of their respective conceptions of life, humanity, reason, etc. This is elevated social philosophy, and thus outside most definitions of policy analysis.

A belief in clear distinction between these four levels can partly rest on an assumption that endorsement flows only downwards, from the more general category. But the underdefinition of more general principles suggests that this cannot be so. The levels may both interact and overlap.

Fischer (1980) has applied Taylor's framework to policy evaluation, in a study which some judge to be the most important effort yet towards methodological synthesis in policy analysis (e.g. Amy, 1987). He suggests which types of social science and social philosophy correspond to the four

Taylor levels. His model of "The Levels of Evaluation" shows how far policy evaluation is from a positivist picture of just a direct application of given values. It is an important step towards "the articulation of modes of discourse" - for "articulation" implies the making and clarification of both distinctions and connections.

TABLE 2 - THE LEVELS OF EVALUATION AS SOCIAL SCIENCE METHODOLOGY (from Fischer, 1980:175).

Levels of evaluative logic	Social science methodology	Role of empirical science	Mode of inference
Level 1 Verification	Evaluation research	- emphasis on controlled experimentation - statistical analysis - knowledge of secondary consequences	- causal explanation - knowledge of facts sufficient - formal inference
Level 2 Validation	Phenomenono-logical analysis	- description of sitn. - application of causal knowledge about consequences of following a rule	- interpretive understanding - knowledge of facts necessary but not sufficient
Level 3 Vindication	Positive general theory	- descriptive knowledge of group & individual values - empirical data on instrumental and contributive consequences	- causal explanation - knowledge of facts sufficient - formal inference
Level 4 Rational Choice	Political philosophy	- experiential knowledge about alternative ways of life - knowledge of human nature	- interpretive speculation - vision, logical speculation & imagination - knowledge of facts necessary but not sufficient

It would be questionable though to take this one structuring of policy evaluative discourse as being a universal prescription, let alone a universal description. What Alexey called "general practical discourse" will probably be just as varied (nor will it be exactly the same) as juristic discourse, which one knows to be quite varied itself. The Taylor-Fischer model reflects particular strands in formal moral philosophy. Taylor's work grew out of that by the philosophers Kurt Baier, Herbert Feigl, and R.M.

Hare; and Fischer's adaptation of Taylor is consistent with a type of rule-consequentialism. This is why they generate four rather than more or less levels. One would expect that this perspective fits some institutional and socio-cultural set-ups and issue areas better than others; and that political and cultural inputs in policy argument will affect form nor just content. Anderson notes that: "Because policy analysis is inevitably derived from political philosophy it is possible to have as many forms of policy analysis as there are systems of political thought" (1987:26). [2]

Even given its own philosophical perspective, the levels in Fischer's model will tend to overlap and flow into each other, rather than be sharply distinct. Fischer proposes how his four stages differ in terms of their reliance on (i) formal or informal inference, (ii) causal or interpretive explanation, and (iii) facts alone or more. Both verification and vindication are held to rely on the former in each pair, and both validation and rational choice on the latter. For the policy evaluation field these contrasts appear to be excessive. For example, the experience of evaluation research, the proposed analogue to Taylor's "verification", has not matched the description in the table. Quantitative measurement and formal inference have not sufficed (see e.g. Abt ed., 1976). Informal logic can be required in the practical closure of argument at each level, in drawing conclusions from formally indeterminate materials. [3]

Fischer's presentation of four well-separated levels did however allow saleable terms for a truce - on a basis of coexistence, cooperation and mutual respect - between four major strands in American political science - quantitative analysis, phenomenology, positive general theory, and political philosophy. Each is allotted its own level and not openly called on to seriously adapt its self-image when contributing to policy evaluation.

In other contexts a more general conception seems appropriate (as was used earlier in this paper): that while there are indeed different levels of objectives, premises and types of analysis, there is no universal requirement of four clear divisions (nor some other fixed number). Instead one needs to examine areas and cases of policy discourse individually and in their own right, and to try to identify the particular structures that are important in them. Using a single blueprint would be especially unwise for purposes of description.

Notes to appendix

[1] Gasper (1986) discusses how each individual theory of value is too underdefined and imperfect to do more than partly delimit the field for evaluation of cases. Case assessment then involves the combination of various theories and tools. The limits to consequentialist ethics (i.e. those which judge by consequences) include the need to define by non-consequentialist means the boundaries and parameters for the analysis and estimation of consequences (MacIntyre, 1977). The limits to rule-based ethics include the interpretation needed in matching cases to rules ("a middle term is required between theory and practice" - Kant, quoted by Rae, 1981:15) and in combining competing rules; Rae gives illustrations concerning rules of equality.

[2] Rule-consequentialism means that actions are judged ultimately by reference to their assessed consequences, but that since it is not feasible

to do a full assessment for every action, most or all actions should involve the application of rules, which are themselves selected according to their functionality on balance in furthering valued effects.

In the utilitarian variant of consequentialism there is only one category of valued effect - namely, utility, in terms of which all particular effects are thought to be measurable. Act-utilitarians hold that every act should be assessed by direct reference to its utility consequences. For them there are only one or two stages in assessment, not Fischer's four; because if the ultimate goal (utility) is held to be simple - unitary, universal and self-evident - then there is no significant stage of "rational choice", and all that remains is the direct application and pursuit of this goal.

Simple rule utilitarians recognize the need for two significant stages: selection of rules, and their application. In Taylor's rule consequentialism, where there is not only an intermediate category of currently accepted rules/criteria (applied in verification, and justified in validation), but also one of "ways of life" (applied in vindication and justified in "rational choice"), objectives are so situation-grounded and non-universal that overarching "rational choice" is a major separate stage, thus giving four significant stages.

And so on, according to how many specific working levels one chooses to distinguish. Rules about rules will mean more stages. The number of stages will surely depend on context.

[3] Nor is vindication as self-contained as the table indicates, for rules cannot be fully assessed by consequences. The consequences are often too obscure, and the boundaries to use in analysing effects cannot themselves be fully determined by consequentialist analysis. Besides, the inevitably incomplete definition of the "ways of life", which specify the <u>types</u> of consequences to be considered, can force vindication into an attempted rationalization and augmentation of them, so that it flows into the stage of rational choice. In the same way, application of principles in validation will partly become a creative interpretation involving vindication type judgements.

One would expect that at each level reference can be needed to each of: values, theories, methodological premises, and informal and formal inference, even though some will bulk larger in certain situations than do others. When Feigl wrote on vindication, he held that it had this mixed pragmatic character; Taylor partly dropped this, but he still held vindication to emphasize experience rather than reasoning.

Fischer does note in passing that "the levels of evaluation to some extent blend into one another", especially verification with validation and vindication with rational choice, "because [references] to empirical consequences are present in all four phases" (p. 173). I have suggested that the reason only the validation/vindication overlap is not emphasised is because of his implicit adoption of a legalistic type of rule consequentialism.

NOTES

This paper is a revised version of material from my Ph.D. thesis - mainly from Ch.7 - on "Policy Analysis and Evaluation", which was accepted by the University of East Anglia in 1986. Andrew Morrison, Bert Helmsing and Angela Cheater kindly commented on an early draft of the paper.

2.1. Elements of argument analysis

[1] "...the science of logic has throughout its history tended to develop...away from practical questions... [The] categories of formal logic were built up from a study of the analytic syllogism,...an unrepresentative and misleadingly simple sort of argument". This led to neglect of many important distinctions (Toulmin, 1958:144-7).

2.2. Argument specification

[1] (i) The diagram already refines the schema by noting that there can be a rebuttal not only to a warrant but also to a backing. (ii) Sometimes it appears that what is called Grounds could equally be called Warrant, and vice versa. (iii) Some of Dunn's examples and exercises can be confusing, through using terms like evaluation/description/prescription to refer to linguistic modes, and yet at other times to refer to intellectual activities or stages (which although they culminate in an output that is in a particular mode, may themselves previously also span other modes).

[2] L.G. Thomas (1972) presents a picture very similar to mine, and notes that it is a reconstructed logic. He then contrasts it with a pragmatic logic-in-use for actually making and testing value judgements.

[3] Following Mason & Mitroff (1980/1) one then needs to move to "plausibility analysis" and beyond classical logic, which cannot draw conclusions from inconsistent premises.

[4] I comment on the widely read first edition, rather than the new (1988) second edition. The issue here is the way Kitching criticizes, rather than whether his policy prescriptions are better or worse than those he attacks. See also Foster-Carter (1985), on looseness in Kitching's use of "populism".

2.3. Formulation and framing

[1] The interconnection of elements would lead to just a small number of "package-deals" only if, amongst other conditions, elements were precisely defined. Instead they can in general be variously formulated, developed and linked up. The literature on paradigms can do more harm than good when it ignores this. Attention must also be given to "exemplar" paradigms:- these are concrete instances of exemplary scientific practice, which embody ideas that can be recognized but that are not easily or satisfactorily formalizable, e.g. ways of "seeing" situations or of deciding which formalizations should be applied to them and how. These ideas are notably open-textured and open to evolution (Kuhn, 1977).

[2] I have not discussed the social framing of argumentation - the selection and grouping of participants, which is very important in debates and in argument generation. Mason & Mitroff (1981) put the tools of argument analysis into this perspective.

[3] Nozick defines an action as being voluntary if the constraints on it are set by the actions of people with the right so to act (1974:262). Therefore rightfully-held property limits no-one's freedom! But if justified interference is no interference with "true" freedom, then Nozick's attack on taxation - as infringing individuals' freedom - comes into doubt; so in that discussion he quietly switches back to the ordinary usage of "freedom" (Cohen, 1977 & 1981).

2.4. Style, storytelling, and colligation

[1] Helm (1985) misses this in his review of Pen. That Pen has a chapter on colligation separate from chapters on observation, logic, valuations, etc., and notes the scope for disputes within each of these chapter areas, does not imply that he overlooks disputes between areas. Since colligation involves the synthesis of different areas it also covers resolution of disputes between them.

[2] Blaug reports that Ward "denies that the failure to emphasize the empirically falsifiable consequences of theories is one of the major flaws of modern economics" (1980:123). On the page referred to Blaug, Ward stated that: "One might argue that this [failure] is a major flaw in the discipline; no doubt it is, but...it is not the central difficulty" (1972:173, emphasis added). Blaug further mistakes colligation for a notion from historians, not philosophers (namely, Whewell); and then attempts to dismiss story-telling by taking all of it as being the casual variety.

[3] Unfortunately the term "storytelling" seems to enrage some commentators into inattention, as does McCloskey's use of the word "rhetoric". See also the reviews of Pen (1985) by Cohen (1986) and Helm (1985).

2.5. Argument assessment

[1] Leys' six "basic value clusters" are: liberty and self-realization; justice and harmony; lawfulness and tradition; survival and security; community and fraternity; happiness and maximum satisfaction.

[2] Those sources cover: (B1) a foreground, which is better represented in A; and (B2), a penumbral "subconscious"/area-of-potential. Some considerations outside A may immediately be acceptable within B1, when they are brought to attention (e.g. perhaps the need for reference to other alternatives); i.e. some considerations transcend A but are still immanent to B. Others may not be immediately acceptable; but some of those may still be gradually acceptable through further exertion of attention in B. The layers in B partly reflect the layers of more passive compared to more active memory (i.e. ability to recognize rather than to independently specify). In general, positions can evolve and improve through the exertion of attention, which can modify the boundaries and content of A, B1 and B2.

3. Essentialism, prejudgement and debate

[1] These positions should be distinguished from more straightforward positive beliefs that all the good things go together, e.g. as in the Maoist theory of a virtuous spiral of by-the-bootstraps local development where everything facilitates everything else, in effect transcending scarcity.

On winning every argument:- Lipton (1974; in favour of distributivist land reform) and Tucker (1977; against redistributivist aid) sometimes come close to steering discussion of every topic to an endorsement of their stand: e.g. by claiming that if in some areas one's approach A may have bad effects, still if D is also done that will counteract them, "so" A stands unblemished.

[2] This acts equivalently to imputing ends from the specified means. A sister type is imputation of ends from outcomes. A weaker prejudgement is imputation of ends from one's approach more generally - "Empirical tests are not very relevant, anyway, because the objectives...are derived from the theories", claimed the later Dudley Seers (1983:33) - but one can still be assessed by those ends. Besides prejudgement there are other types of bias, e.g. from particular techniques; and other types of failing besides bias - for example random inaccuracies.

[3] In Lacey (1976)'s terms, nominalism at most asserts the existence of nominal essences; essentialism asserts real essences.

[4] (a) On property: one needs to go beyond "the Victorian and Marxist [and Nozickian] oversimplification that ownership is an unambiguous, all-embracing, absolute power to dispose of something"; it is "on the contrary...a bundle of particular rights" which may be dispersed between many persons and institutions (Wiles, 1977:35). (b) On equality: see Rae (1981) on the many dimensions involved. (c) On definitions of "cooperatives", see Apthorpe & Gasper (1982).

[5] To deny black/white dichotomies is not to assert a universal sameness. That would be the "no bald men fallacy": which is to argue that if all agree that a man with x hairs is not bald, then surely a man with (x - 1) hairs is also not bald; and so on, until "surely" a bald man is not bald.

[6] The phrase "open texture" was introduced by Waismann in the 1940s. "It is not, he explained [for reasons similar to in the contrast theory] to be confused with vagueness, being rather the possibility of vagueness. It characterizes most though not all empirical concepts. Take any material object statement. [For the] terms which occur in it...we cannot foresee completely all possible conditions in which they are used..." (Pan, 1979:238).

[7] Marney (1975) even denies that intelligent systems have "characteristic responses", for they can change their responses. This leads in to debates on "human nature"; see e.g. Forbes & Smith, eds. (1983). Marney's position seems overstated, but clearly there is a difference from mechanical systems.

[8] Taylor continued: "[Lenin] discovered this only when the First World War was already being fought. Of course he was right. Since every great state was capitalist in 1914, capitalism obviously 'caused' the First World War - but just as obviously it had 'caused' the previous generation of peace". Stretton (1969) and Apthorpe & Gasper (1979) analyse Schumpeter's contortions to defend ("true") capitalism against any claims of undesirable behavioural tendencies. The latter article also gives a fuller analysis of concepts of essentialism.

[9] Duelfer's study was the main background document for the 1972 FAO Rome conference on cooperatives and development.

[10] Henderson talks about "policy soap operatics". The variant that he calls "essentialism" is the presumption that some industries - which are "clear to any experienced person" - are essential. From his examples these are typically "basic" industries, e.g. energy. While he is rightly sceptical of such a simple investment criterion, there is a definite if limited (i.e. not overriding) case for national autarchy in such industries, in an uncertain, often conflict-ridden, world of nation-states.

[11] Williams partly defends cost-benefit analysis in terms of its intentions, rather than its actual procedures, and correspondingly makes a standard "adoption" bid for Wildavskyian policy analysis by claiming that it is just "cost-benefit analysis writ large" (1972:533). Fromm (1957) and Schumacher (1977) look at the possible narcissism in assessing oneself by different standards (one's good intentions, which can justify one's resort to any means) than one applies to most others (whom one judges by their actions). Enemies can even be judged by what one assumes are their bad intentions, and their good actions be seen only as devilish deception.

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