## FW

**Agency:**

1. **Kant states that being able to reflect on our ends and then trying to pursue these ends makes us an agent as all agents need to be capable of setting and pursuing ends. Even if they do not have the ability to do so at the time, they still have the *capacity* to.**
2. **This doing of setting, pursuing, and reflecting on ends is what constitutes being an agent.**

**Universal maxims:**

#### We must also all follow the same universal maxims which are actions that can be repeated infinitely without generating contradictions. Korsgaard.

In the Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, Kant’s purpose **is to** seek out and establish the supreme principle of morality. The first two sections of this work are written in an what he calls an “analytic” style: one that starts from what we suppose we know and uncovers what that knowledge presupposes. In Section One, **Kant begins from the idea that only a good will and actions expressive of such a will have unconditional value**. Since **a person of good** will **acts from the motive of duty, analysis** of actions done **from this motive will show** us what **the principle of a good will** is. Acting from duty is not a matter of having certain purposes, Kant argues, for a good purpose, such as helping others, may be adopted either from duty or from natural inclination. **The distinguishing feature of an action done from** 4 **duty** **is that the agent** **sees doing the action or promoting its purpose as something that is required of him**; something that it is necessary for him to do. **This feature is captured in the maxim**, or subjective principle**, on which the agent acts**: **Kant says that a person who acts with a good will sees his maxim as having the form of a law**. **The principle of a good will**, therefore, **is** the principle of **adopting** only those **maxims** **which you can will to be laws**.

1. **To test a maxim, we have to imagine a world where everybody does the action. For example, if everyone lies and does it all the time, lying will fail the universalizability test. This is because in order for a lie to work, for the ends to be achieved, the other person has to believe it. If everyone starts lying, no one will trust each other, and lying will become inconceivable.**

**As we are all equal agents, we should not infringe on the freedoms of other agents. All agents should have equal access to resources and we cannot impede on their ability to pursue ends. Agents should not treat other people as a means to our ends, they should treat them as ends in themselves.**

**To be moral you must 1) follow universal maxims 2) respect the formula of humanity and 3) respecting other agents’ ends (kingdom of ends).**

**Also consider:**

#### Isolating unconditional worth within the other is uniquely liberatory and the basis from which other theories begin, so my offense turns and outweighs yours.

#### Farr 02 [Arnold Farr [Professor of philosophy at University of Kentucky, focusing on German idealism, philosophy of race, postmodernism, psychoanalysis, and liberation philosophy]. “Can a Philosophy of Race Afford to Abandon the Kantian Categorical Imperative?” JOURNAL of SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY. Vol. 33, No. 1. Spring 2002.]

#### Whereas most criticisms are aimed at the formulation of universal law and the formula of autonomy, our analysis here will focus on the formula of an end in itself and the formula of the kingdom of ends, since we have already addressed the problem of universality. The latter will be discussed ﬁrst. At issue here is what Kant means by “kingdom of ends.” Kant writes: “By ‘kingdom’ I understand a systematic union of different rational beings through common laws.”32 The above passage indicates that Kant recognizes different, perhaps different kinds, of rational beings; however, the problem for most critics of Kant lies in the assumption that Kant suggests that the “kingdom of ends” requires that we abstract from personal differences and content of private ends. The Kantian conception of rational beings requiressuch an abstraction. Some feminists and philosophers of race have found this abstract notion of rational beings problematic because they take it to mean that rationality is necessarily white, male, and European.33 Hence, the systematic union of rational beings can mean only the systematic union of white, European males. I ﬁnd this interpretation of Kant’s moral theory quite puzzling. Surely another interpretation is available. That is, the implication that in Kant’s philosophy, rationality can only apply to white, European males does not seem to be the only alternative. The problem seems to lie in the requirement of abstraction. There are two ways of looking at the abstraction requirement that I think are faithful to Kant’s text and that overcome the criticisms of this requirement. First, the abstraction requirement may be best understood as a demand for intersubjectivity or recognition. Second, it may be understood as an attempt to avoid ethical egoism in determining maxims for our actions. It is unfortunate that Kant never worked out a theory of intersubjectivity, as did his successors Fichte and Hegel. However, this is not to say that there is not in Kant’s philosophya tacit theory of intersubjectivity or recognition. The **abstraction** requirement simply **demands that in the midst of our concrete differences we recognize ourselves in the other and the other in ourselves**. That is, **we recognize** in others **the humanity that we have in common**. Recognition of our common humanity is at the same time recognition of rationality in the other. We recognize in the other the capacity for selfdetermination and the capacity to legislate for a kingdom of ends. This brings us to the second interpretation of the abstraction requirement. To avoid ethical egoism one must abstract from (think beyond) one’s own personal interest and subjective maxims. That is, the categorical imperative requires that I recognize that I am a member of the realm of rational beings. Hence, **I organize my maxims in consideration of other** rational **beings**. Under **such** **a principle** other people cannot be treated merely as a means for my end but must be treated as ends in themselves. The merit of the categorical imperative for a philosophy of race is that it **contravenes racist ideology** to the extent that racist ideology is based on the use of persons of a different race as a means to an end rather than as ends in themselves. Embedded in the formulation of an end in itself and the formula of the kingdom of ends is the recognition of the common hope for humanity. That is, maxims ought to be chosen on the basis of an ideal, a hope for the amelioration of humanity. This ideal or ethical commonwealth (as Kant calls it in the Religion) is the kingdom of ends.34 Although the merits of Kant’s moral theory may be recognizable at this point, we are still in a bit of a bind. It still seems problematic that the moral theory of a racist is essentially an antiracist theory. Further, what shall we do with Henry Louis Gates’s suggestion that we use the Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime to deconstruct the Grounding? What I have tried to suggest is that instead of abandoning the categorical imperative we should attempt to deepen our understanding of it and its place in Kant’s critical philosophy. A deeper reading of the Grounding and Kant’s philosophy in general may produce the deconstruction35 suggested by Gates. However, a text is not necessarily deconstructed by reading it against another. Texts often deconstruct themselves if read properly. To be sure, the best way to understand a text is to read it in context. Hence, if the Grounding is read within the context of the critical philosophy, the tools for a deconstruction of the text are provided by its context and the tensions within the text. Gates is right to suggest that the Grounding must be deconstructed. However, this deconstruction requires much more than reading the Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime against the Grounding. It requires a complete engagement with the critical philosophy. Such an engagement discloses some of Kant’s very signiﬁcant claims about humanity and the practical role of reason. With this disclosure, deconstruction of the Grounding can begin. What deconstruction will reveal is not necessarily the inconsistency of Kant’s moral philosophy or the racist or sexist nature of the categorical imperative, but rather, it will disclose the disunity between Kant’s theory and his own feelings about blacks and women. Although **the theory is consistent and emancipatory** and should apply to all persons, Kant the man has his own personal and moral problems. Although Kant’s attitude toward people of African descent was deplorable, it would be equally deplorable to reject the categorical imperative without ﬁrst exploring its emancipatory potential.

1. **Performativity: when you enter debate, you presume that you will be free to set and pursue ends in the round. This means denial of my framework is impossible and all objections should be ignored on face because responding to my framework requires my framework to do so.**

#### There is an intent-foresight distinction. Multiple people can intend the same action looking for different consequences i.e. going home to avoid work vs to see family

## TJF

#### A. There are resource disparities in most debate rounds. School that have 10 coaches and lots of prep will always have an advantage over smaller schools. A Kantian debate can be won without prep since there are only analytical arguments. This controls the internal link to other voters because accessibility is a prerequisite to debate.

#### B. Real world education—an understanding of Kantianism is key to understanding the law in the real world because most states abide by inviolable side-constraints in their constitutions—Germany proves.

**Ripstein**, Arthur. Force and Freedom: Kant's Legal and Political Philosophy. Harvard University Press, 2009. \*bracketed for clarity and grammar\*

Strictly speaking, the right to dignity is not an enumerated right in **the German Basic Law**, but the organizing principle under which all enumerated rights—ranging from life and security of the person through freedom of expression, movement, association, and employment and the right to a fair trial to equality before the law—are organized. It appears as Art. I.1: **“Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority.”** Art. I.3 explains that the enumerated rights follow: “**The following basic rights shall bind the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary as directly applicable law.”** Other, enumerated rights are subject to proportionality analysis, through which they can be restricted in light of each other so as to give effect to a consistent system of rights. **The right to dignity is the basis of the state’s power to legislate and so is not subject to any limitation,** even in light of the enumerated rights falling under it, **because—to put it in explicitly Kantian terms—citizens could not give themselves a law that turned them into mere objects.**

#### C. Kant is the only author which has free literature that can be accessed online (courtesy of Koorsgard) or within the facilities of a public library. Debate cases are usually structured upon briefs, paid literature, and online databases. A Kant debate frees this structural skew against poorer debaters within the round.

## Contentions

#### I affirm the resolution as a general principle, that the member nations of the World Trade Organization ought to reduce intellectual property protections for medicines.

### C1 – Violation of Freedom

#### Death is the ultimate restraint on autonomy – constraining rights on medicine for external reasons falls in the face of respecting the formula of humanity. Merges 11 [ROBERT P. MERGES, “JUSTIFYING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY,” 2011, Robert P. Merges is Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati Professor of Law and Technology, University of California, Berkeley, School of Law, and co-founder of the Berkeley Center for Law and Technology, <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/JIP-Chapter-9.pdf>] //TJHSSTAP

Under Kant’s Universal Principle of Right (UPR), “**laws secure our right to external freedom of choice to the extent that this freedom is compatible with everyone else’s freedom of choice under a universal law**.”8 As I explained in Chapter 3, Kant’s theory of property rights expresses **a special instance** of this general principle: **property is widely available, yet denied when individual appropriation interferes with the freedom of others.** Kant says that although the need for robust property drives the formation of civil society, property rights are nonetheless subject to this “universalizing” principle. Under the operation of the UPR, **property rights are constrained:** they must not be so broad that they interfere with the freedom of fellow citizens. In a Kantian state, individual property is both necessary— **to promote autonomy and self- development**; see Chapter 3— and necessarily restricted under the UPR.9 **Death is the ultimate restraint on autonomy**; there is no more “self” to guide after a person dies. So **when a claim to property by person A leads to the death of person B, Kant’s** Universal Principle **would seem to rebut that claim.** As with other issues, however, Kant’s views in this regard are not so simple. In particular, he expressed complex views on the legal defense of “necessity,” which bears a close resemblance to the property- limiting principle I am attributing to him here.10 Kant says, in effect, that in at least **one important example of necessity— where A kills B, or at least puts B in immediate grave danger, to save A’s own life**— one who commits a necessary act is culpable but not punishable.11 As with so much in the Kantian canon, there is a great deal of debate over just what Kant was trying to say about necessity. One view— at least as plausible as most others, and more plausible than some— holds that Kant thought of necessity as something like an excuse or defense: a wrong act is not made right by necessity, but it is insulated from formal legal liability.

#### Transformative works are exclusive from the intrinsic rights given to individuals, intellectual property rights inhibits the broader pursuit of ends. Kanning 12 [Michael A. Kanning, “A Philosophical Analysis of Intellectual Property: In Defense of Instrumentalism,” (January 2012), Graduate student at the University of South Florida, <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=5290&context=etd>] //TJHSSTAP

Because of the similarities between Merges’ Kantian account and the Hegelian personality theory detailed above, many of the same criticisms of the personality theory apply to the Kantian theory. But another, more important criticism arises when Merges makes clear in his argument that intellectual property must first and foremost focus on the concerns of the individual creator. The Kantian account offered by Merges holds the right to property to be a presocietal, intrinsic right. Recall that rights such as these are demanding of protection even if they are shown to have detrimental effects on society or other individuals. As Merges makes explicit, “**society ought to bear [the] slightly higher transaction costs” that result from a focus on the exclusive rights of individual creators (82). But such a narrow focus on the autonomy of the individual creator hides the extent of the costs imposed by exclusive property rights on the autonomy of other potential creators. Property rights**, by their nature, **inhibit the freedom of others by disallowing them from accessing or using the things covered by property rights**. While Merges’ focus on enabling the highest degree of freedom for individual creators can plausibly be seen to help achieve the highest degree of freedom, **it also at the same time inhibits the freedom of creators**. Merges’ frequent example is that of the sculptor Michelangelo and a piece of stone. In order to realize his freedom as an artist, he needs to have control over the stone so that he may fully realize the project of turning that stone into a finished sculpture. This also requires the need to prevent others from altering or destroying the stone. In this example, prohibiting other creators from messing with Michelangelo’s stone is a reasonable infringement on the freedom of others. But **intellectual property rights represent a more significant impact on the freedom of others because they are not limited to particular entities**. Copyrights and patents involve exclusive ownership of broad categories of things, and **can result in severe restrictions on the freedoms of creators who engage in transformative works**. This objection will be covered in more depth in Chapter 2

### C2 – Intellectual property is nonexclusive

#### Intellectual property is not the same as tangible property – they are neither perpetual nor exclusive and policy surrounding them fails the universalizability test. Chopra 18 [Samir Chopra, “End intellectual property,” (12 November 2018), Samir Choprais professor of philosophy at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. He is the author of several books, including A Legal Theory for Autonomous Artificial Agents (2011), co-authored with Laurence White. He lives in Brooklyn, <https://aeon.co/essays/the-idea-of-intellectual-property-is-nonsensical-and-pernicious>] //TJHSSTAP

The US Patent Act of 1870 and Copyright Act of 1976 treat patents and copyrights as kinds of property, therefore suggesting that intellectual property rights should be akin to tangible property rights: that is, ‘perpetual and exclusive’. But legal protections offered to **intellectual property assets are** utilitarian grants – they are **neither perpetual nor exclusive**. (Tangible property is said to be perpetual because it is yours till you dispose of it.) **Their terms are limited and amenable to nonexclusive use**. Patent law offers exceptions for experimental use, and prior-use rights for business methods; copyright law for fair use; trademark law for nominative use; trade secrets for reverse engineering and independent discovery. **Intellectual property rights are granted reluctantly: here is your limited property right with exceptions for nonexclusiveness, so that your knowledge can flow back into the public domain, there to be built upon by others. Intellectual property assets are interlinked and interdependent. Granting exclusivity rights increases transaction costs in those domains. Whatever kind of property ‘intellectual property’ is, then, it is not like ‘tangible property’, a fact recognised in these differential legal regimes.**

#### Ideas under intellectual property fall under *ius personale*. Ideas cannot be subjugated by a singular entity. Pievatolo 10 [Maria Chiara Pievatolo, “Freedom, ownership and copyright: why does Kant reject the concept of intellectual property?” (2 July 2010), Maria Chiara Pievatolo is professor of political philosophy in the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Pisa. She has been theorizing and practicing the open access publishing in the field of humanities since the 90s of the last century, first as political philosophy editor of the Sito Web Italiano per la Filosofia (SWIF) founded by Luciano Floridi, and then as curator and founder of the "Bollettino telematico di filosofia politica", of the "Giuliano Marini" Archive, and of the book series Methexis. She is also a member of the open access Crui committee and one of the founding members of the Aisa (Associazione italiana per la promozione della scienza aperta). Since the end of 2014 she has been one of the associate editors of the Directory of the Open Access Journals (Lund University). Since 2015, she has been the vice-president of the Associazione Italiana per la promozione della scienza aperta. <http://bfp.sp.unipi.it/chiara/lm/kantpisa1.html>] //TJHSSTAP

Although he defines things as res corporales, Kant determines the rightful possession of a thing as a possession without detentio, by ignoring all its sensible facets. Such a possession - a **possession of a thing without holding it - is exerted on an object that is "merely distinct from me", regardless of its position in space and time.** **Space and time**, indeed, **are sensible determinations and should be left out of consideration.** According to the postulate of practical reason with regard to rights, property is justified by a permissive law of reason: 33 if a rightful possession were not possible, every object would be a res nullius and nobody would be entitled to use it. Kant implicitly denies that a res nullius can be used by everyone at the same time. His tacit assumption suggests that the objects of property, besides being distinct from the subjects, are excludable and rivalrous as well, just like the res corporales. Kant asserts that something external is mine if I would be wronged by being disturbed in my use of it even though I am not in possession of it (AA.6, 249:5-7). **If property is a merely intelligible relation with an object that is simply distinct from the subject, we have no reason to deny that such an object might be immaterial as well, just like the objects of intellectual property.** Why, then, does Kant refrain from using the very concept of it? According to him, a speech is an action of a person: it belongs to the realm of personal rights. A person who is speaking to the people is engaging a relationship with them; if someone else engages such a relationship in his name, he needs his authorization. The reprinter, as it were, does not play with property: he is only an agent without authority. **Speeches, by Kant, cannot be separated from persons: he has seen the unholy promised land of intellectual property without entering it. According to Kant, before the acquired rights, everyone has a moral capacity for putting others under obligation that he calls innate right or internal meum vel tuum** (AA.06, 237:24-25). The innate right is only one: freedom as independence from being constrained by another's choice, insofar it can coexist with the freedom of every other in accordance with a universal law. Freedom belongs to every human being by virtue of his humanity: in other words, it has to be assumed before every civil constitution, because it is the very possibility condition of law. **Freedom implies innate equality, «that is, independence from being bound by others to more than one can in turn bind them; hence a human being's quality of being his own master (sui iuris), as well as being a human being beyond reproach (iusti) since before he performs any act affecting rights he has done no wrong to anyone, and finally his being authorized to do to others anything that does not in itself diminish what is theirs, so long as they do not want to accept it - such things as merely communicating his thoughts to them.**» (AA.06, 237-238) 34 In spite of his intellectual theory of property, 35 Kant does not enter in the realm of intellectual property for a strong systematic reason. **Liberty of speech is an important part of the innate right of freedom.** It cannot be suppressed without suppressing freedom itself. If the ius reale were applied to speeches, a basic element of freedom would be reduced to an alienable thing, making it easy to mix copyright protection and censorship. 36

## Method

#### Methodological pluralism is necessary to any sustainable critique – impact turns your notion of severance of exclusivity.

Bleiker ’14 [Roland, professor of international relations at the university of Queensland. “International Theory Between Reification and Self-Reflective Critique” International Studies Review, Volume 16, Issue 2. June 17, 2014] TJHSSTAD

This book is part of an increasing trend of scholarly works that have embraced poststructural critique but want to ground it in more positive political foundations, while retaining a reluctance to return to the positivist tendencies that implicitly underpin much of constructivist research. The path that Daniel Levine has carved out is innovative, sophisticated, and convincing. A superb scholarly achievement. For Levine, **the key challenge in international relations (IR) scholarship is what he calls “unchecked reification”: the widespread and dangerous process of forgetting “the distinction between theoretical concepts and the real-world things they mean to describe or to which they refer”** (p. 15). The dangers are real, Levine stresses, because IR deals with some of the most difficult issues, from genocides to war. Upholding one subjective position without critical scrutiny can thus have far-reaching consequences. Following Theodor Adorno—who is the key theoretical influence on this book—**Levine takes a post-positive position and assumes that the world cannot be known outside of our human perceptions and the values that are inevitably intertwined with them. His ultimate goal is to overcome reification, or, to be more precise, to recognize it as an inevitable aspect of thought so that its dangerous consequences can be mitigated.** Levine proceeds in three stages: First he reviews several decades of IR theories to resurrect critical moments when scholars displayed an acute awareness of the dangers of reification. He refreshingly breaks down distinctions between conventional and progressive scholarship, for he detects self-reflective and critical moments in scholars that are usually associated with straightforward positivist positions (such as E.H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, or Graham Allison). But Levine also shows how **these moments of self-reflexivity never lasted long and were driven out by the compulsion to offer systematic and scientific knowledge.** The second stage of Levine's inquiry outlines why **IR scholars regularly closed down critique**. Here, he points **to a range of factors and phenomena, from peer review processes to the speed at which academics are meant to publish.** And here too, he eschews conventional wisdom, showing that work conducted in the wake of the third debate, while explicitly post-positivist and critiquing the reifying tendencies of existing IR scholarship, often lacked critical self-awareness. As a result, Levine believes that many of the respective authors failed to appreciate sufficiently that **“reification is a consequence of all thinking—including itself”** (p. 68). The third objective of Levine's book is also the most interesting one. Here, **he outlines the path toward what he calls “sustainable critique”: a form of self-reflection that can counter the dangers of reification.** **Critique**, for him, **is not just something that is directed outwards, against particular theories or theorists. It is also inward-oriented, ongoing, and sensitive to the “limitations of thought itself”** (p. 12). The challenges that such a sustainable critique faces are formidable. Two stand out: First, **if the natural tendency to forget the origins and values of our concepts** **are** as **strong** as Levine and other Adorno-inspired theorists believe they are, **then how can we actually recognize our own reifying tendencies**? Are we not all inevitably and subconsciously caught in a web of meanings from which we cannot escape? Second, **if one constantly questions one's own perspective, does one not fall into a relativism that loses the ability to establish the kind of stable foundations that are necessary for political action**? Adorno has, of course, been critiqued as relentlessly negative, even by his second-generation Frankfurt School successors (from Jürgen Habermas to his IR interpreters, such as Andrew Linklater and Ken Booth). The response that Levine has to these two sets of legitimate criticisms are, in my view, both convincing and useful at a practical level. **He starts off with depicting reification not as a flaw that is meant to be expunged, but as an a priori condition for scholarship.** The challenge then is not to let it go unchecked. **Methodological pluralism lies at the heart of Levine's sustainable critique.** He borrows from what Adorno calls a “constellation”: an attempt to juxtapose, rather than integrate, different perspectives. **It is in this spirit that Levine advocates multiple methods to understand the same event or phenomena.** He writes of the need to validate “multiple and mutually incompatible ways of seeing” (p. 63, see also pp. 101–102). **In this model, a scholar oscillates back and forth between different methods and paradigms, trying to understand the event in question from multiple perspectives.** No single method can ever adequately represent the event or should gain the upper hand. But each should, in a way, recognize and capture details or perspectives that the others cannot (p. 102). In practical terms, **this means combining a range of methods even when—or, rather, precisely when—they are deemed incompatible.**

#### Policy debates motivate activism—apolitical approaches are coopted and cede the political.

Coverstone 05 [Alan Coverstone, “Acting on Activism: Realizing the Vision of Debate with Pro-social Impact,” (Nov. 17, 2005). Coverstone is debate coach at Wake Forest University.]

An important concern emerges when Mitchell describes reflexive fiat as a contest strategy capable of “eschewing the power to directly control external actors” (1998b, p. 20). **Describing debates** **about what our government should do** as attempts **to control outside actors is** debilitating and **disempowering**. **Control of the US government is exactly what an active, participatory citizenry is supposed to be all about.** After all, **if democracy means anything, it means that citizens not only have the right, they also bear the obligation to discuss and debate what the government should be doing. Absent that discussion and debate, much of the motivation for personal political activism is also lost.** Those who have co-opted Mitchell’s argument for individual advocacy often quickly respond that **nothing we do in a debate round can actually change government policy**, and unfortunately, an entire generation of debaters has now swallowed this assertion as an article of faith. The best most will muster is, “Of course not, but you don’t either!” The assertion that nothing we do in debate has any impact on government policy is one that carries the potential to undermine Mitchell’s entire project. **If there is nothing we can do in a debate round to change government policy, then we are left with precious little in the way of pro-social options for addressing problems we face.** At best, we can pursue some Pilot-like hand washing that can purify us as individuals through quixotic activism but offer little to society as a whole. It is very important to note that Mitchell (1998b) tries carefully to limit and bound his notion of reflexive fiat by maintaining that because it **“views fiat as a concrete course of action, it is bounded by the limits of pragmatism”** (p. 20). Pursued properly, **the debates that Mitchell would like to see are those in which the relative efficacy of concrete political strategies for pro-social change is debated.** In a few noteworthy examples, this approach has been employed successfully, and I must say that I have thoroughly enjoyed judging and coaching those debates. The students in my program have learned to stretch their understanding of their role in the political process because of the experience. Therefore, those who say I am opposed to Mitchell’s goals here should take care at such a blanket assertion. However, **contest debate teaches students to combine personal experience with the language of political power.** Powerful **personal narratives unconnected to political power are regularly co-opted by those who do learn the language of power.** One need **look no further than the annual state of the Union Address** where personal story after personal story is used to support the political agenda of those in power. The so-called role-playing that **public policy contest debates encourage promotes active learning of the vocabulary and levers of power in America.** **Imagining the ability to use our own arguments to influence government action is one of the great virtues of academic debate.** Gerald Graff (2003) analyzed the decline of argumentation in academic discourse and found a source of student antipathy to public argument in an interesting place. I’m up against…their aversion to the role of public spokesperson that formal writing presupposes. It’s as if such students can’t imagine any rewards for being a public actor or even imagining themselves in such a role. This lack of interest in the public sphere may in turn reflect a loss of confidence in the possibility that the arguments we make in public will have an effect on the world. **Today’s students’ lack of faith in the power of persuasion reflects the waning of the ideal of civic participation that led educators for centuries to place rhetorical and argumentative training at the center of the school and college curriculum.** (Graff, 2003, p. 57) The power to imagine public advocacy that actually makes a difference is one of the great virtues of the traditional notion of fiat that critics deride as mere simulation. **Simulation of success in the public realm is far more empowering to students than completely abandoning all notions of personal power in the face of governmental hegemony by teaching students that “nothing they can do in a contest debate can ever make any difference in public policy.”** Contest debating is well suited to rewarding public activism if it stops accepting as an article of faith that personal agency is somehow undermined by the so-called role playing in debate. **Debate is role-playing whether we imagine government action or imagine individual action.** Imagining myself starting a socialist revolution in America is no less of a fantasy than imagining myself making a difference on Capitol Hill. Furthermore, both fantasies influenced my personal and political development virtually ensuring a life of active, pro-social, political participation. Neither fantasy reduced the likelihood that I would spend my life trying to make the difference I