ON NEGATIVE STRATEGY IN VALUE DEBATE

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> One way to judge the quality of the negative team is to watch what happens in the first rebuttal speech. Because the negative speakers follow each other, teamwork is extremely important. If the second constructive speaker has already said all there is to say about the affirmative's case, the first rebuttalist will have nothing to add to the debate. It is a sign of a weak team if the second negative constructive speaker merely summarizes what the previous speaker has said. Also, it's a sign of a weak team if the first negative rebuttalist has been left with too much to say in the short rebuttal speech.
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> —From Strategic Debate, Wood and Goodnight[1]

Once students have been introduced to the fundamentals of college debate, one of their first concerns is invariably "what do we do during the negative block?" In policy debate the answer is clear and consistent: divide the affirmative arguments into case and plan.[2] A well organized policy debate will flow as follows:

1AC	1NC	2AC	2NC	1NR	1AR	2NR	2AR
Problem (Case)	No	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes
Solution (Plan)			No		Yes	No	Yes

Or, when the negative employs the Emory Shift Strategy of presenting plan attacks first:

1AC	1NC	2AC	2NC	1NR	1AR	2NR	2AR
Problem (Case)			No		Yes	No	Yes
Solution (Plan)	No	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes

In either case, the negative in a policy debate has an unambiguous strategic mandate. But what is the negative to do in a value debate? In the absence of some division of labor, the negative runs into the following situation:

1AC	1NC	2AC	2NC	1NR
Case	No	Yes	No	?

And what is the first negative rebuttalist to do? If the first negative is to avoid raising new arguments in rebuttal, he or she must either:

1. Downgrade the 2NC—"My partner blew it, so let me correct..."
2. Be redundant/summarize—"My partner already told you this, but let me say it again."
3. Embellish—?

Since the first two strategies are obviously poor, the 1NR should develop the negative position with greater force. But what are the rules/strategies/tactics of embellishment? Perhaps we need more theory on the subject. Another problem with embellishment is that it runs counter to the idea that rebuttals should limit and synthesize issues (embellishment sounds more like an NDT than

a CEDA strategy). On the other hand, I do not believe embellishment is the strongest use of the negative block. The most intelligent alternative, to my way of thinking, would be to develop a value debate counterpart for the case/plan strategy in policy debate. The problem becomes how to divide a value attack into two parts which meet the following criteria:

1. The division should result in approximately equal burdens for the two negative speakers,
2. The two negative positions should be non-redundant,
3. Both negative positions should be relevant to the resolution,
4. At least one of the negative speakers should address the affirmative case directly,
5. The negative division should appear reasonable to the audience/judge, and
6. The audience/judge should be able to follow/flow the negative arguments without undue confusion.

This essay will suggest three basic negative strategies which meet these criteria.

Types of Value Debate

For the purposes of discussion I will make a distinction between two "types" of value propositions, "true-value" propositions and "policy-value" propositions. A true-value proposition takes the form X=Value. In this form the resolution identifies an existing event (using the term "event" in the scientific sense) and assigns a value to that event. The event may be an existing policy (Reaganomics is bad), an existing institution (The Supreme Court is bad), an existing issue (Abortion is bad), or any other debatable event.[3] The core expression in any true-value proposition, however, will always involve the X=Value form. All other terms in the resolution will serve as modifiers for one or another of these three core terms. For example, if we take the core "Reaganomics is bad," it can be modified in three basic ways corresponding to the three terms:

X—Domestic Reaganomic policies are bad.

=—Reaganomics is usually bad.

Value—Reaganomics is bad for foreign investments.

The test of a true-value proposition is that it can always be reduced to the core X=Value form by eliminating modifiers and that X will always represent an existing event.

True-value propositions should be worded in the negative to allow proper division of presumption and burden of proof between the affirmative and nega-

tive. If X is currently sanctioned we must presume the present system supports it and thus the affirmative has the burden to prove the present system is bad in this particular and the negative enjoys the presumption that X is good, or at least not bad. Conversely, if X is currently proscribed we must presume the present system opposes it and the affirmative must take the position that X is in fact good.

Using this analysis we might criticize our most recent CEDA resolution as unfairly distributing the affirmative and the negative burdens or at least in being overly ambiguous. The resolution, "that federal government censorship is justified to defend the national security of the United States," when reduced to the X=Value form is "Censorship is Justified." As an existing event (e.g. the government censorship of the Grenada invasion) this resolution asks the affirmative to support the present system thus giving them presumption and requiring the negative to shoulder the burden of proof. As a non-existing event (e.g. the government would be justified to, or should, censor publication of the names and addresses of our overseas agents) the resolution has become a badly worded policy or policy-value proposition. In either case, many or most of the debates I listened to on this topic became bogged down in extensive discussions of definition and of who should have what burdens.

Policy-value debate takes the form Y would=Value, where Y represents a proposed policy change as in "No fault insurance would be desirable." In this form the resolution identifies a proposed policy change and assigns a value to that change. In the case of the policy-value resolution, the wording should be positive to allow proper division of burden of proof and presumption; i.e., any proposed change from the present system is de facto suspect. The affirmative should have the burden to prove such a change would be desirable and the negative enjoys the presumption that it would not be.

The policy-value resolution differs from the policy resolution in one important respect: the affirmative only defends the general concept of change and not a specific proposal. The key distinction in terms of the wording of the proposals is that policy-value resolutions take the form "A proposed change would be desirable," whereas the policy resolution takes the form "A proposed change should be adopted."

Some resolutions, such as "Censorship is justified," are ambiguous. "Justified" can be interpreted to refer to either existing or proposed events. In this case it is important for the negative team to determine what interpre-

tation the affirmative has used and to launch an appropriate attack. Many of the debates this season suffered because the affirmative was defending one kind of resolutional interpretation and the negative was attacking the other. This produced either endless quibbling about who had the right to do what, or, more often, two ships which passed on the flow.

Given these three forms of proposition — true-value, policy-value, and policy — I will suggest three negative strategies for debating value resolutions to parallel the case/plan strategy used in policy debates.

Negative Strategies for True-Value Debates

I believe that there are at least two legitimate strategies which may be used by the negative in debating propositions of true-value: Theoretical Division and Counter Resolution.

A Theoretical Division might take any number of forms. These would vary from topic to topic and case to case and would serve to divide the affirmative ground into two theoretical areas or conceptual levels. A generic theoretical division might be philosophic/pragmatic. For example, if the resolution were "Reaganomics is bad," the first negative might defend Reaganomics in terms of economic theory while the second negative defended Reaganomics in terms of economic conditions. The illegal immigration topic could have been divided into Human Rights/Economic Effects or into State Considerations/Federal Considerations. In any case, the negative team has the burden of satisfying the six criteria listed above. One pragmatic consideration is how the negative team can clash directly with the affirmative case <u>and</u> keep their arguments well organized, clear, and distinct on the audience/judge's flow. One possibility is to have the negative speaker with less material incorporate that into an affirmative case analysis/attack. Another possibility is to have that negative speaker present an on-case analysis/attack and then an off-case theoretical division analysis. The best answer may be to develop one theoretical division as anti-case and the other as anti-resolution, this being the basis of the Counter Resolution strategy.

The test of the appropriateness of a theoretical division lies in the subjective opinion of the audience/judge — that is, in whether the auditor intuitively grasps and accepts the theoretical distinction being made by the negative team. The theoretical division strategy can, therefore, carry a certain risk for the negative. The audience/judge may reject half of the negative arguments if the division is not acceptable. The theoretical division

strategy would take the following form:

1AC	1NC	2AC	2NC	1NR	1AR	2NR	2AR
Case	No with or and Division I	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes
			No going off-case Division II		Yes	No	Yes

The second negative strategy in debating true-value resolutions involves the defense of the Counter Resolution. This strategy is based upon the premise that one cannot assess the "value" of X unless one examines both the harms and benefits of X. When the resolution is of the form X=Bad, the negative may legitimately argue that X=Good (and vice versa). In fact, the negative could argue that an affirmative team which only presented the harms of X without explaining why X (which has the presumption of the present system) has no redeeming benefits has failed to present a prima facia justification of the X=Bad resolution. If the affirmative presents a case in the form:

I. X causes significant harms

II. X results in insignificant benefits

III. Therefore X is Bad

the two negative speakers should have no tactical or strategic problems in dividing the case along the harm/benefit lines as naturally as a policy case would be divided between case and plan. If the affirmative presents a case in the form:

I. X causes significant harms

II. Therefore X is Bad

the negative should have the right to argue prima faciality and to introduce arguments concerning the benefits of X off-case. Introducing the benefits of X is synonymous with defending the Counter Resolution, X=Good, or at least X≠Bad. Such a defense could take either of two forms depending on the nature of the affirmative case:

1AC	1NC	2AC	2NC	1NR	1AR	2NR	2AR
X causes harms	No	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes
X has no benefits			No		Yes	No	Yes
∴X=Bad	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

1AC	1NC	2AC	2NC	1NR	1AR	2NR	2AR
X causes harms	No	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes
∴X=Bad	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
			No going off-case X causes benefits		Yes	No	Yes

In both defenses the negative has the option of arguing the counter resolution in either speaker position. Indeed, if the affirmative remains silent on the subject of X's positive values, it makes sense logically, rhetorically, and strategically for the first negative to defend the counter resolution, probably in conjunction with a prima facie analysis of the affirmative case.

The Counter Resolution strategy is based on the assumption that if the counter resolution is true (or at least as true as the resolution), then the resolution cannot be accepted as an accurate value claim. This strategy has the advantage over the Theoretical Division strategy in being more universally applicable and potentially more acceptable to a wide range of audience/judges. Most values in X=Value resolutions have a polar negative (Reaganomics is bad/good, deleterious/beneficial, inefficient/efficient, etc.) and resolutions which do not have polar negatives could always be presented in an X=Not Value form. The negative, in adopting the Counter Resolution strategy, has the burden to propose and defend an acceptable counter resolution. And while this burden is subjective in terms of what the audience/judge will accept, it is not nearly as subjective as the burden to present and defend an acceptable theoretical division. (I should also like to note in passing that the stock second negative issues in a policy debate are all counter resolutional: "The plan should not be adopted because" it is unworkable, will not meet the need, will result in unacceptable disadvantages, etc.)

Negative Strategies for Policy-Value Debates

Both the Theoretical Division and Counter Resolution strategies are appropriate to use against policy-value resolutions. The Theoretical Division strategy is just as idiosyncratic and problematic for policy-value topics as for true-value topics. And the Counter Resolution strategy still involves presenting and defending an acceptable counter resolution (i.e., the policy change would not be desirable). The Counter Resolution strategy on policy-value topics can focus on either the proposition in general or the policy effects of that proposition. (The proposed policy would not be desirable because the present policy is better, as opposed to, the proposed policy would

not be desirable because that policy would have detrimental effects.) It is the latter, policy effects, aspect of the Counter Resolution strategy which is the proper home for "value objections."

In policy debate the affirmative is forced to defend a specific plan and the negative can attack that plan in detail (plan objections or plan attacks). In true-value debate the affirmative argues X=Value but makes no claim as to what should be done about it. Negative attempts to issue value objections against a true-value case should run into serious trouble because the affirmative has so many options for evading the objections. All value objections are based on assumptions about what the affirmative plan would be or must be if, in fact, there were an affirmative plan (i.e., "O.K., so you don't like the present system—what's the alternative?). When presented with a would be attack the affirmative may argue that the would be assumption is in error, that the plan would not take the form assumed by the negative, and that even if the assumption is correct, the attack is not significant (would not be accurate, serious, unique, uncorrectable, etc.). When presenting a must be attack, the negative has a tremendous burden to prove the truth of the assumption that any affirmative plan must of necessity involve some specific objectionable aspect. The negative attack must be general enough to cover all possible affirmative plans and yet still be specific enough to demonstrate unique and significant harms. The negative is called upon to carry the burden of proof on both the necessity and objectionability of the value in question. It is relatively easy for an affirmative to turn even the most determined must be attack into a would be attack by merely suggesting some example of a plan which would not involve that value objection (and then disclaiming any intent to offer that example as the affirmative position) or to suggest possible minor repairs which would ameliorate the value objection (and again disclaiming this position). Such an analysis proves that the value objection must not be inherent in the affirmative position and leaves the affirmative free of defending a plan. And it is relatively easy in a true-value debate for the affirmative to completely disarm would be attacks by arguing that X is still bad whether or not anything can be done about it and therefore the resolution, X=Bad, is still true. For example:

Aff: Resolved: Cancer is Bad. (true-value)

Neg: Value Objection—Any attempt to cure cancer must be worse than the disease.

Aff: In the first place this is not always true; in some cases it would be true but it must not always be true. (Examples/ evidence of cures that have worked).

> Furthermore, cancer is bad whether or not it can be cured — all the negative is doing is demonstrating just how bad it really is; i.e. all attempts to cure are bad.

In policy-value debate, though, the affirmative is forced to defend a general policy direction if not a specific plan. In a well-written policy-value resolution the details of that general policy direction are clear and unambiguous enough that both teams have equal access to information about the system in question. In a true-value debate that system is the present system, in a policy debate the affirmative has the burden of presenting a plan which specifies the system they intend to defend, but in a policy-value debate the resolution must specify the system to be defended by the affirmative. The negative may not offer plan objections, but may offer value objections based on the parameters of the policy inherent in the policy-value resolution. In debating the resolution, "that Federally set minimal educational standards would be desirable," the negative would have a difficult time raising the value objection that the committee which set these standards would be unworkable, since no committees are mandated by the resolution and the affirmative is <u>not</u> called upon to defend such; but the negative could raise the objection that <u>any</u> standards would tend to work a selective hardship on minorities and would therefore represent a serious threat of discrimination, since the setting of standards <u>is</u> inherent in the resolution.

The question of resolutional inherency of value objections should, of course, always be a stock issue in policy-value debates. In issuing value objections, the negative has the burden to prove that the policy being objected to is inherent in the resolution and that the policy is seriously objectionable. So in addition to the Theoretical Division and Counter Resolution strategies appropriate for use in true-value debates, the negative in policy-value debates may employ a Value Objection strategy:

1AC	1NC	2AC	2NC	1NR	1AR	2NR	2AR
Case	No	Yes		No	Yes	No	Yes
			No going <u>off-case</u> Value Objections		Yes	No	Yes

As in the case of the Counter Resolution strategy, either negative may raise the value objections, however, using policy debate as an appropriate model we would generally expect to see the case argued by the first negative. The three strategies of Theoretical Division, Counter Resolution, and Value Objection may, of course, be used in combination, but it is a negative burden

to insure that their attacks are well coordinated and presented from a consistent philosophic position. The pragmatic criteria for consistency was outlined at the beginning of this essay, i.e., an approximately equal division between the two negative speakers, non-redundancy, relevancy, refutation, reasonableness, and clarity. I believe the strategies outlined above may be considered legitimate for negative teams to employ in debating propositions of value.

Endnotes

[1]Strategic Debate, Roy Wood and Lynn Goodnight, National Textbook Company: Illinois, 1983, pp 141-142.

[2]Ibid., pp 13-141. See also Basic Debate, Maridell Fryar and David Thomas, National Textbook Company: Illinois, 1982, pp 126-131.

[3]For discussions of what is meant by "a debatable event" see Strategic Debate, ibid., pp 10-12, Basic Debate, ibid., pp 6-21, and Academic Debate: Practicing Argumentative Theory, 2nd Ed., Donald Klopf and Ronald Cambra, Morton: Colorado, 1979, pp 9-18.