THE THEORETICAL ILLEGITIMACY OF SPECULATIVE VALUE OBJECTIONS

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Brownlee observes that the function of 'value objections' or 'counter-justifications' is to argue by example that the specific proposition has not been justified.[1] For example, he notes that under the resolution "Resolved: that activism in politics by religious groups harms the American political process" negatives presented examples of the positive contributions of religious groups; e.g., their promotion of civil rights. However, negative teams often shift the time frame of comparison to examine future examples of value induced behavior. Negatives speculate that support (or ballots) for resolutions will actually generate future behaviors of the sort identified in the value objections. For example, under the resolution described above, negatives suggested that if a judge votes for the resolution religious groups would cease their positive contributions to civil rights and race riots would result.

Regardless of what speculative arguments are called (e.g., value objections, counter values, value manifestations, etc.), their shifting the focus to outcomes speculated to occur after (and often because of) a given debate round transform these arguments into pseudo-policy disadvantages. Sweet describes the impact of the increasing use of what this essay will call 'speculative value objections':

> These so called values, value objections, and counter values are really nothing more than renamed advantages and disadvantages which may be either qualitative or quantitative in nature, or with a little more structure, counter plans and counterwarrants. A clear line between the value oriented arguments and policy arguments of this nature is almost impossible to draw.[2]

While theorists have recognized this phenomenon, few have developed clear theoretical rationales for interpreting the nature and impact of the illegitimacy of speculative value objections. Given the growing desire within the CEDA community for more definitive theoretical foundations for value debate practices[3], this essay will identify two potential theoretical abuses of speculative value objections.

First, future oriented or 'speculative' value objections introduce a magical fiat into value debate. What the negative is doing in such arguments is seizing a power to assume, for the purpose of argument, that consequences would occur in the future because of positions taken during a debate round. When the negative (or any team) assumes that the resolutional value would be expanded beyond its current dimensions, they are assuming 'fiat-like' powers. Not only does fiat have no role in value debate, because value debate lacks the normal theoretical conventions to control fiat, legitimizing this power (via

speculative value objections) threatens to legitimize magic in CEDA. Development of this argument demands we initially examine the conditions under which academic debate normally allows analysis of events or behavior that will occur in the future as a result of positions taken during the debate round.

Theorists recognize that at times cogent analysis of the merits of a proposal or position requires that we deal with what the adoption of the resolution implies for the future. Yet it is generally acknowledged that academic debaters are exempt from proving the scenarios they defend actually would happen in the real world. For example, in policy debate, the affirmative team must only prove that the plan SHOULD, not WOULD, be adopted. Patterson and Zarefsky indicated that:

> ...one way to explain this convention is to say that it is assumed for the purposes of testing the resolution, all participants in the debate stipulate that the plan is in effect. This stipulation (is) often referred to as fiat...[4]

However, since fiat power is easily abused via its application as a 'magic wand' to enhance a team's position[5], theorists attempt to impose strict rules on its use. The key to effective control of fiat is to insist that only the agents of action defined by the resolution, and not debate teams, possess fiat.[6] Thus the agent of action becomes the only legitimate means to project 'how' speculated (or fiated) behavior could occur.

Fiat is thus limited to mimicking the real world powers of an agent of action.[7] The failure to confine fiat to such real world models opens academic debate to magic.[8] In value debate control of speculator powers is limited by the absence of resolutionally defined agents of action. The point made here is not that because value propositions lack agents of action (and thus legitimate fiat), that analysis of the future is precluded. Rather, the lack of agents of action means that allowing debate teams to insist that future consequences will occur, is to allow teams (versus agents) fiat. This is dangerous and this essay suggests it is not worth the ramifications. Not only is there no apparent theoretical support for such a convention, but it opens up a Pandora's box of potential magical abuses - because you have moved beyond the known means for limiting fiat. Given the almost universal support for reciprocity of fiat powers[9], smart affirmatives may see the negative use of speculative value objections as an opportunity to ask the judge for the right to similar magic. They might, for example, suggest that only evidence or examples from certain years be introduced into the debate; years in which only results which support their value position were observed.

Advocates of value objections may argue that this paper has confused fiat with simple causal reasoning. In value objections where the negative confines itself to historical examples this is no doubt true. However, when negatives insist the value defended by the affirmative will be extended (in any manner) beyond its existing dimensions their speculation (reasoning) becomes analogous to fiat and should be limited by the same theoretical conventions.

Thus value debate faces a dilemma: either we conclude that value objections as future speculations have no acceptable theoretical justification, or we conclude that projection of future consequences as generated by positions taken during a debate can be allowed without limitations as defined by real world agents of actions; i.e. MAGIC.

In addition to the potential for abuse which magic injects into debate, the need for fairness in debate as a competition suggests that the first condition of the dilemma is preferable. Without a plan, the affirmative is open to attack against every form of behavior associated with their value position the negative may choose to project. For example, if a team were to defend the right of a nation to kill to defend national security, it does not necessarily follow that they wish to defend preemptive nuclear strikes to defend national security. Some suggest operational definitions circumvent this problem[10], but the analysis above suggests such projections are as illegitimate as speculative value objections.

The second theoretical abuse involved in speculative value objections is the prediction of behavioral, rather than attitudinal consequences. This error results from the combination of three conceptual mistakes. First, it is probably erroneous to assume any consequences at all to the adoption of the resolution. Why should there be any reaction given that there is no triggering mechanism, such as an affirmative plan? How does the negative even assume anyone will be aware that the resolutional values have been declared superior?

Second, even if there are consequences, it is erroneous to assume a consistent link between the values people hold and their behavior.[11] Empirical research suggests there is a complex and tenuous relationship between values and behavior. Bostrom explains:

> The traditional definition of a debate over policy centers on some future actions, such as 'Resolved: abolish capital punishment in our state'.
>
> This seems to mean that we are going to contend that no one should henceforth use the electric chair, the rope, or that firing squad in our state and we are apparently talking about the future because we cannot amend past actions.
>
> Clearly, a question of value is implied by the statement, which is that capital punishment is immoral. This assertion ought to be

> enough to create a behavioral intention - to need more is to say that we often hold values that do not influence actions. However, you will remember that very often that is exactly the case.[12]

While it is apparent affirmative teams often make the same mistake in value debates, this in no way alters the conclusion that the negative is also mistaken in its assumptions.

To demonstrate the unique implications that this tenuous attitude-behavior relationship has for speculative value objections, one need only view the influence of a typical intervening variable upon this relationship. For illustrative purposes, we will briefly sketch how 'cognitive complexity' might influence the interpretation of a speculative value objection's impact. O'Keefe argues that:

> ...persons with relatively more developed systems of personal constructs within a given domain will be less likely to rely upon a principle of evaluative consistency within that domain than will persons with relatively less developed cognitive systems in that domain. Moreover,...persons with relatively developed systems will be less likely to manifest a uniform evaluative orientation toward the object as reflected in their behavior.[13]

In oversimplified terms, generally only cognitively simple people have great consistency between their beliefs and behaviors.

How does such a variable relate to speculative value objection use? When negatives present such value objections, they describe people who represent a certain attitude-behavior linkage. Then the negative implies this linkage will somehow be extended to more/new groups of people if the resolution is adopted. However, an equally valid scenario might suggest that the only people who will ever demonstrate the specific behavior-attitude linkage described in the value objection are those who are cognitively simple (for example) and they already act in this manner. Value debating is even more susceptible than policy debate to the problems such interpretations of behavior suggest; since without a plan for people to react to, the only causal factor available to explain behavior consequences is the predictive power of the attitude-behavior relationship.

The final misconception involves the assumption that any behavioral consequences would be perceived as relevant given the value consequences that would accompany any reaction to the resolution's adoption. If we must speculate on such consequences, it is more realistic to assume that if the affirmative's values do become predominant, no one will care if the negative's speculations occur since the affirmative value will be viewed as the only significant consideration. Alternatively, the value objection's consequences would not be perceived as negative since they are inherent aspects (according

to the negative view) of the resolution's value. Thus, those with the supposedly changed cognitions would probably view them as positive outcomes.

Indeed, if a ballot cast for the affirmative's value does result in value change, it can be argued that EVERYONE will have the affirmative's values and no discrepant behaviors will ever be observed again. For the negative to argue that only SOME people will be affected, means any response to the cognitive complexity issue raised above becomes problematic at best.

There are, of course, problems in the translation of existing policy debate theory to a relatively new format such as CEDA. The application of 'fiat' to speculative value objections is obviously awkward at times. However, the intent here is not to produce definitive theoretical paradigms for such practices. Rather an attempt has been made to develop potential theoretical bases for the analysis of value debate practices. Even if the above analyses are rough in their translation to CEDA strategies, the responses of value objection advocates should advance the theoretical evolution of the CEDA format.

NOTES

[1]Don Brownlee, "Debating Value Propositions", in Carolyn Keefe, Thomas Harte, & Laurence Norton, ed., Introduction to Debate, (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc, 1982), p. 292.

[2]Tammy Sweet, "Debate Paradigms: An Analysis as They Apply to CEDA Debate", The Forensic, 68 (Spring, 1983), p. 18.

[3]Sweet, p. 14; Brownlee, p. 287.

[4]J. W. Patterson and David Zarefsky, Contemporary Debate, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983), p. 154.

[5]For discussions of 'magic wand' uses, see David A. Ling and Robert V. Seltzer, "The Role of Attitudinal Inherency in Contemporary Debate", Journal of the American Forensic Association, 7 (Spring, 1971), pp. 278-283. See also, John Schunk, Speaker and Gavel, (Spring, 1981), p. 87.

[6]Patterson & Zarefsky, p. 156.

[7]For typical treatments, see Austin J. Freeley, Argumentation & Debate: Reasoned Decision Making, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1981), p. 47-48; see also Douglas Ehninger and Wayne Brockriede Decision by Debate, (NY: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1963), p. 226.

[8]Richard H. Dempsey, "State Counterplans: A Case for a Topical-Magical Dilemma", paper presented to the Central States Speech Association Convention, April, 1984, pp. 6-8.

[9]Patterson & Zarefsky, p. 155. They view even abuses of fiat as reciprocal.

[10]Brownlee, p. 291.

[11]For an overview, see Robert D. McPhee and Donald P. Cushman, "Attitudes, Behaviors, and Messages: An Introductory Overview", in Message-Attitude-Behavior Relationships: Theory, Methodology & Application (New York: Academic Press, 1980) pp. 1-38.

[12]Robert N. Bostrom, Persuasion, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1983), pp. 134-135.

[13]Daniel J. O'Keefe, "The Relationship of Attitudes and Behaviors: A Constructivist Analysis", in Cushman & McPhee, p. 124.