**Rehabilitating Intrinsicness**

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For no good reason, the intrinsicness argument as affirmative disadvantage response has fallen out of vogue in recent years. While the intrinsicness response is still frequently made by 2ACs everywhere, the argument typically has a life span of exactly one speech. The 2AR giving more than cursory attention to even the most well placed intrinsicness argument is a rare breed indeed. I am unsure whether this sad state of affairs is due to widespread hostility to intrinsicness on the part of judges or to weak-kneed affirmative teams who abandon ship in the face of four or five meekly mumbled negative objections to the theory. Whatever the reason, the disappearance of intrinsicness as a powerful arrow in the affirmative quiver is as great a loss to affirmative teams as it is to the quality of debate itself.

We shall venture no further without a clear understanding of the concept of intrinsicness. The essence of intrinsicness is that the affirmative plan must be a necessary causal agent for both the achievement of advantages and the occurrence of disadvantages. The core of intrinsicness is the idea of necessary linkage between the affirmative plan and alleged results. More tangibly, intrinsicness means that affirmative advantages must accrue only from plan action while disadvantages must be the inevitable and unavoidable result of plan affirmation. If, for example, the negative argued that the affirmative plan made the deployment of S.D.I. more likely by enhancing President Bush's popularity, the affirmative could respond: "The disad is not intrinsic: Our plan could be done while cutting funds for S.D.I. and making its deployment illegal." But, as our definition indicates, intrinsicness is a double-edged sword in that it involves both rights and responsibilities to the affirmative.

While the theoretical legitimacy of intrinsicness may seem controversial at first glance, its theoretical underpinnings have been widely accepted for some time. I find it strange that the affirmative intrinsicness argument is viewed with such skepticism when, at the same time, negatives are given almost carte blanch to employ the same tactic which differs in name only.

For at least five years, the practice of "counterplanning out advantages" has been a favorite for thoughtful college debaters when defending the negative. Affirmative cases will often claim advantages which, while they may be achieved by the affirmative plan, may also be solved in other, non-topical ways. Wily negatives have, in such cases, combined a counterplan which solves the extraneous affirmative advantage( s) with a disadvantage which links to the affirmative plan but not to the counterplan. In this instance, the negative can win more easily since its DA must now outweigh only the portion of the case not solved for by the counterplan. This type of counterplan is the negative's version of the intrinsicness argument: by counterplanning out the affirmative advantage, the negative has shown that there is no necessary linkage between plan and advantage. Should not disadvantages not be held to the same rigorous test of necessary linkage that affirmative plans routinely are? I submit that they should.

I shall resist the temptation to pontificate on the alleged shortcomings of debate now that my career is water under the bridge. It has, however, been frustrating to see wisely conceived affirmative cases lose to tenuously linked disadvantages that are not inevitable results of adopting the affirmative plan. One would, I suspect, be hooted off the floor of congress were he/she to insist that many of the so-called "good disads" were real reasons to reject the affirmative plan. The rational policymaker would, of course, argue that the affirmative plan should be done if feasible accompanying measures can also be adopted to prevent unwanted side effects (e.g. SDI deployment because of higher Bush popularity, space budget cuts because of fiscal tradeoffs, etc...). I find it axiomatic that academic debate should mirror rational decision making processes as long as fairness of the competition can be maintained. The affirmative intrinsicness argument offers the prospect of restoring the argumentative symmetry now lacking, while, at the same time, making the debate more rational.

Now that I have presented the compelling philosophical justification for affirmative intrinsicness, I shall address the typical theoretical objections. By means of some inscrutable transformation, these negative protests have been elevated to the level of Newtonian wisdom in the minds of all too many judges. But, as Einstein demonstrated, even Newton could use a little refinement. I shall proceed from the wildly confused to the merely misguided.

**MOVING TARGET**

Conceivably, intrinsicness could be criticized on the grounds that the added flexibility which it gives to the affirmative team unfairly hinders the negative by making the affirmative plan a moving target. Actually, this objection is difficult to understand since, assuming the affirmative does not change its intrinsicness answer from speech to speech, the intrinsicness argument will not move and neither has the affirmative plan. The negative is free to run what are essentially disads to the (unmoving) intrinsicness argument in the 2NC and to attack the affirmative plan which is, as the Talking Heads might argue, "the same as it ever was."

Perhaps most damaging to the moving target plea is the realization that the affirmative plan has not, strictly speaking, moved anywhere. More accurately, it has expanded (old plan + intrinsicness answer), presumably providing a more succulent target for hungry negatives.

Finally, fairness dictates that all of these objections be applied to the use of the counterplan to solve for affirmative advantages which is, as I explained above, essentially negative intrinsicness, No tears were ever shed when negatives "moved their targets" by adding a counterplan to their original target, the status quo.

**BLIPPY AND UNDERDEVELOPED**

The charge that many intrinsicness arguments are presented in a shallow manner and without sufficient proof is self- evidently not a reason to reject all intrinsicness arguments. To my mind, the affirmative response" ours isn't" should (if true) be sufficient to respond to this negative objection to an argument you haven't made. Admittedly, many affirmative intrinsicness arguments are made without proof in ways which hold no weight, and perhaps this is the reason the concept has fallen from grace. Nevertheless, I would recommend an improvement in the quality of the response, and not a removal of the baby along with his proverbial bath water.

It may be helpful to think of two species of intrinsicness answers, one requiring a lesser burden of proof than the other. Applying Roger Solt's nomenclature of competitiveness to this issue, we can classify intrinsicness arguments into two types: logical and empirical. The logical intrinsicness argument is one whose solvency is almost self-evident and is a product of fiat. The empirical variety would not necessarily solve by virtue of fiat and its efficacy is a disputable claim subject to empirical evidence.

For example, if the affirmative claimed to save aquatic ecosystems by reducing acid rain-causing sulfur dioxide emissions, the negative might counterplan the advantage out by liming lakes. This intrinsicness argument would not necessarily be solvent, but would require supporting empirical evidence. In a different situation, the negative could link the affirmative to the deployment of ASAT weapons because it helped Bush get reelected. The affirmative could respond with a logical intrinsicness argument along the lines of "Not intrinsic: Cut funding for all ASAT projects and make their deployment by the U.S. illegal." Such a mandate would be logically solvent and, if well worded, would require no evidence.

**UNFAIR TO HELP THE AFF BY KILLING ALL NEG DA GROUND**

Negatives have been known to cry foul in the face of the intrinsicness argument on the grounds that the affirmative would always win since no disadvantage could be truly intrinsic. Actually, the affirmative intrinsicness power is only reciprocal with the negative ability to test the intrinsicness of the affirmative advantages via counterplan. We should encourage the same level of scrutiny for disadvantages as we already have with advantages.

In fact, slightly reworded, this objection becomes a restatement of intrinsicness' s greatest benefit: the removal of weak disadvantages. Where did the notion that the negative has an inherent right to run generic disads originate, anyway? If intrinsicness forces a shift to more specific disads, securely linked, the activity will be on surer footing. Disadvantage ground would remain. The intrinsic disad is one where possible intrinsicness arguments are either themselves disadvantageous or not workable. For specifically linked disads, most intrinsicness answers will nullify the affirmative advantage because if the DA is linked to plan action, the only way to counteract the effect is by some action in the direction opposite of the affirmative plan. Intrinsicness will not necessarily end the generic disad, although life will be more difficult for meatballs everywhere. A heavily armed negative team might be prepared to prove that the possible ways to avoid Malthusian overpopulation, for example, are all ineffective (birth control won't solve in time, religious barriers block it, etc...).

**INFINITE REGRESSION**

Critics of intrinsicness have long observed that, theoretically, the 2AC intrinsicness argument could initiate an infinitely regressive sequence (repair, disad to the repair, new repair to solve new disad, etc...) which would be ultimately irresolvable and would leave the affirmative with the last move in the 2AR. As the argument goes, this unsatisfactory chain of events begins with the 2AC intrinsicness answer to the disad. The 2NC might then counter with a disad to the intrinsicness answer which legitimizes a new 1AR intrinsicness answer to what is essentially a new disad in the 2NC. Of course, the 2NR could then run a disad to the 1AR's repair which would be followed finally by the 2AR repair of the 2NR disad.

Some years ago, I believed that the infinite regression dilemma was the death knell for intrinsicness. After several years of reflection, I now find it not quite so troubling. In the first place, such a regressive scenario is little more than a theoretical possibility. To get some idea of the extreme implausibility of such an occurrence, try to construct a hypothetical example of infinite regression. The difficulty which one has constructing a possible regression even with the use of all of history's greatest meatballs should be enough to relegate this objection to the status of interesting hypothetical with little practical relevance. I, for one, have never actually seen an intrinsicness argument lead to this type of event in seven years of debate.

The proper response for affirmatives to make to the challenge of infinite regression is that no regression will occur in this debate. If the affirmative does not make new repairs in the IAR, then the hypothetical possibility that they might have done so is hardly grounds for rejecting intrinsicness in every case. Abuse should be punished when it occurs, and if the affirmative agrees to a standard limiting itself to repairs made in constructives, regression should not be a real problem.

Finally, the regression argument applies equally well to negative counterplans. Theoretically, the affirmative could make a 2AC permutation to a counterplan, and the negative could respond with disadvantages to the permutation. The 1AR could then present new permutations subject to new disadvantages, etc The fact that infinite regression has never become a problem for counterplans implies that it is not a serious objection.

**IT'S NOT TOPICAL, SO THE AFF CAN'T ADOPT IT**

A fifth objection to intrinsicness is that, since it is not a topical mandate, the affirmative cannot fiat that the intrinsicness answer be passed since it is out of the judge's jurisdiction. Why the judge's "power" should be limited to topical actions is difficult to understand. The fact that negatives frequently present counterplans which are not topical as alternatives to the affirmative plan demonstrates that the judge must be assumed to have fiat power over non-resolutional ground as well.

A closely related but stronger objection is that the intrinsicness argument is non-topical and the affirmative should not be allowed to fiat it. Negatives might object that they should not have to be prepared to defend against all possible topical and non-topical proposals since the research burden would be overwhelming. The affirmative can answer this in two ways. First, the resolution's purpose is merely to initiate discussion: it serves as a parameter within which the affirmative must chose its plan. After the affirmative has demonstrated an advantage from topical action, the resolution falls away, and both sides are freed from it. The affirmative would, therefore, allow the negative to defend topical counterplans on the grounds that "negative-land" is not all that is non-topical, but rather all (whether topical or not) competitive alternatives to the affirmative plan. In return, the affirmative would be able to advocate non-topical intrinsicness arguments.

Second, affirmatives could counter by observing that non-topical intrinsicness answers do not unreasonably increase the negative research burden. It is not entirely accurate to say that allowing non-topical intrinsicness arguments would force the negative to be prepared against all possible plans whether topical or not. Actually, affirmative intrinsicness requires only that negatives must be prepared against all possible means of avoiding their disadvantage. It seems reasonable to say that negatives must show that no feasible and desirable means exist to prevent the affirmative plan from causing the scenario they predict. If they cannot demonstrate this necessary linkage, a disadvantage does not truly exist.

It should also be remembered that intrinsicness only adds fiat to a normal disad takeout. A negative team defending an overpopulation disad, for example, would have to be prepared to disprove all the potential means of preventing or solving the impacts of overpopulation in any event. The answer "Not intrinsic: Provide birth control to the third world" differs from the normal takeout "no link: birth control will solve" only in that the intrinsicness answer allows the affirmative to dispense with questions of the likelihood of adoption. The negative would most likely have to debate the solvency of birth control (and other such takeouts) in either case.

**ARGUMENTATIVE RESPONSIBILITY**

Yet another jab frequently taken at intrinsicness is that it encourages argumentative irresponsibility since it is a no risk argument for the affirmative. Here I admit that the intrinsicness argument does take on some of the more ominous overtones of the conditional counterplan. To those who accept conditionality, affirmative intrinsicness would certainly present no problem, but for die-hard conditionality opponents, intrinsicness may be objectionable. At the very least, I should think that affirmative intrinsicness would improve the quality of debate more by pruning the tenuously linked disadvantages than it would damage it by argument proliferation.

On a more principled level, I find this standard most satisfactory for all concerned: each side should be limited to one specific intrinsicness response for every major position presented by the other team. In real terms, this standard means one affirmative intrinsicness answer per disad. Likewise, the negative would be allowed one case specific counterplan per affirmative advantage. Lest this standard sound contrived, I should point out that it is really a codification of the presently existing reality in college debate. For at least the last several years, case counterplans and affirmative intrinsicness arguments have rarely been abused, and do not usually exceed one per position. If intrinsicness arguments are kept low in number and are specifically applied to the affirmative plan (whether through evidence or logic), there should be little unfairness to either side.

Finally, as I alluded to earlier, the affirmative intrinsicness answer will not usually add new issues into a debate that would not have otherwise appeared. Since the intrinsicness answer is merely a normal disad takeout with fiat ("not intrinsic: do birth control" vs. "no link: birth control is coming and it will solve"), the fact that it is mandated by the affirmative only removes the issue of probability of adoption. In our hypothetical Malthus debate, the negative position would be weakened to the extent that it could not answer the intrinsicness takeout with "the federal government will never support birth control," but it could argue the efficacy and desirability of birth control. Intrinsicness only allows the affirmative to fiat in takeouts that would most likely be discussed in any event

**NO FIAT POWER EXISTS FOR THE INTRINSICNESS ANSWER**

Perhaps the most sophisticated objection to intrinsicness that 1 have heard was passed along to me by Roger Solt The crux of this argument is that the proper analogy for debate is not that of Congress voting yes or no to the affirmative plan, but that of one congressman deciding whether to endorse the affirmative plan. If the debate is, as Roger postulates, the decision of a lone Congressman, then the intrinsicness answer provides no comfort to the Congressman since he has no guarantee that if he votes for the affirmative plan, the necessary additional measures will also be adopted. Such an objection would invalidate affirmative intrinsicness of all types, whether topical or not.

While novel, this protest fails as well. 1 see no justification for the basic premise that the debate should be seen through the eyes of a single congressman. If the congressman paradigm were accepted, it would invalidate all counterplans with one fell swoop. A competitive counterplan that is more desirable than the affirmative plan provides a reason to reject the affirmative plan because it demonstrates that adopting the affirmative is unwise since to do so would preclude the adoption of a superior alternative (the counterplan). If the debate were seen as the decision of a single policymaker with less than absolute authority, a judge would never vote negative on a counterplan unless he thought the counterplan was likely to be adopted by the present system lest he forgo the desirable affirmative plan in lieu of the counterplan which might never be adopted. A counterplan without fiat, as would be the case under the congressman paradigm, would no longer be a counterplan but a mere disadvantage. Suffice it to say that any paradigm which destroys the counterplan should be rejected outright for reasons which are solid but do not belong in this article.

Arguably, affirmative intrinsicness makes sense even in the congressman paradigm. Instead of affirming the plan as presented in 1AC by itself, the congressman-judge would intellectually endorse the affirmative plan contingent upon adoption of the intrinsicness repair as well. Such a convention has the virtue of reflecting actual congressional decision- making processes ("I could, Mr. Chairman, only vote for this bill if the displaced workers were guaranteed retraining ... ").

One afternoon several months ago, I was listening to a guest lecturer who had been an influential person in the CIA for many years. At different points in his speech, he insisted both that the Soviet Union was using espionage to bolster its economy by stealing industrial secrets and that economic failure in the Soviet Union would be dangerous to world peace since declining empires usually go to war. I then asked him why he supported better counterintelligence to stop Soviet espionage if this would damage the Soviet economy and thus threaten world peace. He answered by saying that there are better and safer ways to help the Soviet economy than letting them steal our most valued secrets. In retrospect, I realized he had essentially made a perfectly reasonable intrinsicness response ("not intrinsic: beef up counterintelligence but also give the Soviets economic aid, loans, etc...).

The functional equivalent of the intrinsicness argument is made constantly, not only in policymaking circles but also in the every day logic of individual decision making. How many times have fun-loving nine year olds promised to do their homework at 7 :30 if they could just watch the Simpsons at 7:00? This, friends and countrymen, is nothing more than an intrinsicness argument ("Mom, please vote for my plan [the Simpsons], and as for your 'fail the fourth grade' disad, studying at 7:30 will solve that").

Debate without intrinsicness is artificially divorced from real decision making processes. Cases are voted against on the basis of objections that no rational policymaker would consider because they are only incidental and not inherent results of adopting the plan. A vigorous revival of well reasoned and evidenced intrinsicness arguments by the affirmative should go a long way toward chopping the meatball down to size and stimulating more case specific debate, goals toward which all those concerned with quality debates should strive.

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