

I'm not sure where the big debate is occurring because I have not been privy to the discussion about my ballot. I also haven't been able to see what the ballot says again, but I'm pretty sure I wrote something like this:

- (1) "I am OK voting for positions that do not contain a moral theory that allows us to condemn obviously immoral acts such as genocide and rape."
- (2) I then believe there were some addendums such as "the other debater explicitly said that he does not endorse these views, and that his position is not his personal view."

I stand by this view and I will explain and defend it.

I will not speak at all about who won the debate round or the legitimacy of my decision. I don't think this is really what is in question, and besides my decision in that round was a correct one for reasons largely independent of whether I affirm the statement on the ballot. Norberto asked me to write that statement on the ballot and I agreed because it is true.

My reason for holding this view is a very simple one, fundamental to my firm beliefs about the intellectual, moral, and competitive value of debate. I will explain this reason and then explain the addendum to it that was written on the ballot and is part of my personal views.

The judge should decide who won the debate round.

Now, it is up to the debaters to tell me what it means to win the debate round. Debaters may advocate that the person who won the debate round is the person who is better at the electric slide, or they may tell me to vote for whoever has an advocacy that I would want to put into practice as a political platform. If the debaters don't set up something special like this, I assume that they want me just to decide who has made better arguments in favor of their side of the resolution as measured by the criterion or some other standard. However, the decision ultimately must stem from the arguments the debaters make: perhaps they make an argument that I should decide the round based on who's the better dancer. Perhaps they just make arguments under the criterion. The point is, ultimately my decision rests on a reasoned framework for voting (given from the debaters) and arguments that meet that framework.

Absolutely excluded from this process is my judgment of whether the debaters have established the optimal moral framework to live by, or what I take to be the optimal moral framework. It is NOT the judge's job to say whether the debaters have a TRUE conception of morality. It would be a stupid activity indeed if the game was just to run a moral theory that your judge happened to think was true. Let's look at the implications of not accepting (1). What if I were not OK voting for a position that did not allow a debater to always condemn rape and genocide? I could, for example, never vote for classical utilitarianism because classical util doesn't condemn rape or genocide in the case that they lead to greater overall happiness or moral good.

Let's look now at the broader principle that underlies my endorsement of (1), which is that I don't think judges should vote for the debaters they think have stumbled upon on moral truth. What if I held that view? I could never vote neg on the animals topic because I believe that animals should have rights (I am a vegetarian). And I could never vote for anyone that ran Korsgaard, because I'm not particularly

compelled by her.

These implications would be a disaster for the activity of debate. It would clearly destroy the competitive nature of the activity if the round weren't decided on the basis of the debaters' disagreement over the arguments but on the judge's views on their cases. But it would also harm the intellectual freedom of the activity. Although decisions in a debate round are inevitably subjective, and you would be wise to choose to run arguments that your judges will vote for, that should not be all there is to it. I loved debate because it was complete intellectual freedom for me to pursue and craft cases that I thought were cool and fun and stimulating. I put more work into it and it made me smarter than anything else I did in high school. But I would've hated it if it had been an extension of English class, where I just wrote papers that I knew my teacher wanted to read.

Let it be clear: if a debater wins an argument that says that I should vote for the position that I think is morally correct, I will vote for the position that I think is morally correct. However, this still exists in the framework of argument and relies on the debater actually winning such an argumentative framework. It would of course be vulnerable to the response that the judge should only consider whether the arguments in the round proved the resolution true or false, for my decision is ultimately based in the arguments of the debaters.

Now a brief discussion of the addendum (2). Although I think it is fine for a debater to advocate whatever position they want, I would not vote for someone who showed themselves to have a despicable moral character. Someone who was racist, homophobic, or sexist in the round, I would not vote for. This, however, would be an entirely interventionist decision in no way based on what I take the role of the judge in debate to be. Nonetheless, I would still vote against someone who flagrantly showed themselves to be egregiously homophobic because I don't want immoral people to succeed in this activity.

Let me reiterate: I have said nothing of the legitimacy of my decision in the round with Norberto, and expect similarly to receive no comments about the round in response. Nobody besides myself, Norberto, and his opponent were present in the round and hence I think discussion of it other than by the three of us would be unproductive, and beside the point. But, if you think I made a bad decision, and consequently that I am a bad judge, then strike me at the next tournament. This is not my concern.

What is very much my concern is an attack on my moral character. I dedicate my summers and a good chunk of my time during the year to fighting inequality and injustice in debate and in the world through my work at the Texas Debate Collective. I hold every staff member, including myself, to the strictest moral standards, as it is unacceptable to me that the image of TDC be hurt by any one of us. I am convinced that my position—that I should vote for the winning debater—is a correct and moral one. If you disagree with this, and think I am acting immorally, I will listen to your arguments and amend my behavior if I find you to be right. If, on the other hand, you do not have a reasoned argument for why I should change my approach to judging in order to be a more moral person, then I have no quarrel with you and you should have none with me.

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