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ADAB's Reflections on Prof. Jacobs' comments

Thank you for your kind and informative responses, they were really very helpful for us to think further on several issues. Below we provide a summary of our reflections, mainly in Mali's and Rahmi's words.

1— I'd like to start from where you took a step back and clarified "**our purposes with respect to the design of debate**", namely the pedagogical, practical, and analytic purposes. In our discussion, we sort of concluded that we have all three: we all came to this point from the analytic "side" - except one of us, no one in our group has a debate background. We also see analytic purposes at the core of the three, them being clearly connected. Our project has a clear pedagogical aspect, perhaps with too ambitious goals of critical thinking and virtuous conduct. And to make the most of it, we wish to offer some procedural "innovations" to the machinery of salient contemporary designs. Before we delve into those, I'd like to say that the meta-level considerations of the purposes behind such an endeavor are extremely helpful, perhaps the best place to start.

2— Another illuminating distinction has been the **practical contingencies, such as time, fluency, and memory**, associated with "the purpose of conducting enough debates to hold a tournament over a weekend during the school year", and the *procedural rationality* of a debate, where our "innovations" should aim. In this regard, it is best to imagine and aim at a *minimal* and a *fully-fledged* version of munazara protocol. We are somewhat divided among our group about how to

envisage it, I am mostly for the minimal version or the procedural core of the design (for the coming months), and other friends rightfully emphasize the interconnectedness with practical requirements - the need to come up with something that is applicable. Our goal for the Symposium then is to distinguish the discussions focused on the minimal and the fully-fledged munazara protocols.

3— The suggestion of limiting debate speeches to a fixed number of moves concerns a host of issues and challenges, not just spreads. We would very much like to focus on this suggestion, as you have done already in your response, and specifically on your point that this “assum[es] one could define, identify, and keep track of single units”. Would you say exploring flowsheets or some written form of the moves involved could alleviate the troubles that would crop-up with such a decision? We’d hope to get your advice on this matter in one of the sessions, or wherever you see that suits.

On this issue of fixed number of moves, you wrote “...from an analytic perspective, the technique zeroes in on the requirement for rebuttal and extension, showing just how far this process can go in debate.” We could continue, from a pedagogical perspective (of avoiding argumentative vices and nurturing argumentative virtues), the technique zeroes in on learning or habituating how to engage with the other party’s arguments as they unfold, and perhaps jointly create a coalescent argumentative encounter.

In this regard, our colleague Danish writes:

This is a dynamic model meaning that the moves of one party might change according to the moves of the other party. In this sense the moves are correct/virtuous relative to the

moves of the other party and not in an absolute sense. The challenge here can be resolved, i think, by using a scribe and displaying and asking the parties to label their moves which can be monitored using the Online Munazara Interface. Also I believe this brings speech to a textual realm which is easier to evaluate by both the second and any third party (audience or judge).

4— In the same line of thinking, our colleague Rahmi writes:

In the Munazara tradition, this move-/unit-based argumentation is viewed to allow the breadth of inquiry and interaction between arguing parties. For instance, if the opponent makes an objection (questioning the acceptability/truth of a premise), -disregarding another obscure case,- the proponent basically has two options: Defending her premise with an argument or coming up with a new argument for the same motion. This move/unit-based approach is in quite a contrast to the time-restriction-based turn-taking procedure prevalent in contemporary debate models. In the face of these two extremes, Prof. Jacobs writes:

If the procedural logic of the debate model is correct in principle, then we can't really know which, if any, of a range of objections and counterarguments are telling until they are made and answered. Since, at a practical level, unit restriction is just a proxy for time restriction, we wind up substituting depth for breadth of inquiry (think search algorithms in computer science). The trick is to find the balance.

Over time I personally came to the conclusion that asking debaters and judges to behave like machines capable of following the logical machinery of a Munazara is extremely tasking. Likewise, it might not be the best option for the educational purposes of the ADAB project. The ADAB aims to intervene in competitive debating with a new model (MEM) where both act-based and agent-based considerations will reflect in "winning" the

debate. Finally, the logical and dialectical flow is important but it might not be the end of the story. Following the pragma-dialectical terminology, the rules and norms of a critical discussion constitute the first-order conditions. There are also second-order conditions related to the state of mind of the debating parties and third-order conditions concerning the institutional context.

I will offer my preliminary proposal for the “problem” of designing an analytical and virtuous debate model, especially in terms of unit/time restriction dichotomy. But first some introductory remarks. During my visit to Malaysia and Indonesia, I had the opportunity to meet with competitive debaters who follow some form of the British Parliamentary Model. When I introduced them to the general machinery/flow of a Munazara, i.e., challenges made through objections, refutations & counter-arguments, and the defenses made according to those moves, they rightly observed that a Munazara is actually not that different from the model they follow. They also offer rebuttals or counter-arguments, and they too defend their positions in the face of attacks. I think, the question, then, becomes the second-order and third-order conditions in which a new model can flourish. ADAB project aims to create an environment of analytical competence and virtuous interaction in which the debaters will not only acquire reliabilist skills but also other-caring responsibilist virtues. It is true that all models, however ethical-cognizant they are, are prone to abuse. It might be the case that debaters will in fact recourse to some procedural tricks to give the impression of a virtuous debater. Nevertheless, in my eyes, such tricks are better than others.

When asked about solving the problems related to some procedural tricks, Prof. Jacobs makes the following remarks:

Of course, the practical problem of spreading could also be solved by taking advantage of the fundamental motive of tournament debaters—to win. Judges could simply tell debaters to slow down or they lose, to fully spell out and explain their arguments or they lose, not to spread or they lose. Interestingly, debaters in audience judged

formats rarely spread, and when they do, they learn quickly that they lose. They also extend arguments much less consistently, no doubt because an audience without a flowsheet cannot keep track of the arguments.

In that case, providing debaters with some norms like the Ten Commandments of pragma-dialectics and exclaiming that they will lose the debate if they do not follow those rules is possible. If these rules are tailored toward ethical interaction with act-based and agent-based norms in mind, we might be one step closer to its goals of analytical competence and virtuous interaction.

A traditional Munazara procedure consists of three stages: Opening, argumentation, and concluding stage. I will now offer proposals only for the argumentation stage¹.

We describe the Munazara debate procedure to the participants, and also provide them with easily memorable principles for virtuous conduct. That is, a pamphlet² detailing the original, late-stage Munazara procedure revolving around the proponent's argument for the claim and the opponent's response with master-category critical moves (e.g. objection, refutation, and counter-argument). We could use the most cooperative version of a Munazara procedure. That is, for instance, when the opponent makes an objection, we expect that objection to be followed by a backing (sanad), explaining why the objection is made. No sheer objections! These act-based norms should be accompanied by specific agent-based principles regulating practical and epistemic wisdom, such as:

"be succinct, don't talk too much, don't talk too less",

"be patient: stick to premises, don't jump to refutation and other arguments hastily",

"make sure your moves are in line with your opponent's move",

"don't shift from one claim to another claim",

¹ In his answers, Prof. Jacob's offer insightful recommendations for the opening stage. For instance, he advises that parties present their sources to the other party. This is actually quite in line with the traditional Munazara procedure.

² Danish thinks this should not be done at this stage: The other models have been put online for the participants to study and practice much before they come to the competition itself. Knowledge of these should be available online and could be assumed when the participants sign in to a MEM debate.

"be courageous enough to accept defeat",

....

These simple ethical guidelines can act as regulatory principles according to which the judges will decide the "winner"³. In this proposal, debate would be an endeavor where the arguer should be in *a state of mind* in which she knows when to speak and when to remain silent (Taia & Oruç 2021). With such regulatory principles, in my proposal, much of the burden is on the participants and the judges. We as normative-theoreticians do not intervene much in the process (hopefully, we will do empirical research and further adjustments in later projects).

Notice that we do not put time limitations, nor do we force the minute turn-taking procedure. We remain loyal to the norms and principles of Munazara; we do not make changes to the procedure. I think this model is the best for virtue development as you make the agent take the call, and behave accordingly. Moreover, the time-limitation problem here becomes our advantage, because it is easy to judge someone and say "you spoke more than you should", or "you spoke less than you should have" and "Munazara requires the agent to know when to speak and when to remain silent"⁴. In this option, the judges have the right to say: "Your arguments were better, but you were not a virtuous arguer. So you lost the debate based on the following reasons....".

I believe this proposal is also along the lines of Prof. Jacobs' suggestion "to loosen the time constraints". The definition of an argument can vary from a simple statement giving reason for a claim to Johnson's dialectical tier where the proponent has to adequately account for possible

³ The evaluative rubric should have some weight for reflexive knowledge of the moves being performed, ie whether the participants can make the correct moves on the correct occasions. Succinctness could be a value that may be evaluated. The Munazara debate should be won through performance in multiple factors one of which can be winning the argument. Maybe we can have a discussion on what 'winning the argument' means.

⁴ Also please note that calibrating the length of a speech according to requirements of a certain move is both a reliabilist skill, also a responsibilist virtue: Speaking succinctly, according to the requirements of the occasion (Ījāz). It is also the most important component of public speaking from a balagha/rhetoric standpoint. Moreover, Ījāz and its contradictories are linguistic behaviors. They are externalized- therefore a pathway to access some mental states both related to reliabilist skills/failures (such as focus) and responsibilist virtues (such as patience) in the form of practical wisdom.

objections, refutations and counter-arguments. With that spirit, we should not force any further limitations on the arguers apart from the norm to be “succinct”. Succinctness or speaking according to the requirement of an argumentative situation⁵, here refers to paying adequate respect to both the procedural rationality of the argument and to the boundaries of ethical interactive engagement.

5— To close with one final point, **about truth in argumentation** (back to Mali’s words). I don’t have enough epistemology background to discuss here the distance between the correspondence and deflationist theories of truth. I’d just say the notion of acceptability emphasizes that, in an argumentative framework, the status of “truth”, or being true, belongs strictly to propositions. This apparently minor point may be important for ADAB project, as I hope to briefly discuss.

Let me try to distinguish two meanings of truth as used in argumentation. First, truth can be a property of statements, or propositions, and as such enter the picture, so to say, “from below”. This means that certain statements will be considered as correct, true (for a time, at least), so that some other statements can be doubted, questioned, and interrogated on the basis provided by the former. Here, the truth of an utterance is granted by the agreement it accommodates in a particular setting. Hence, the alternative concept is acceptability. For Perelman (1969, 1979), argumentation replaces the rational by the reasonable, namely, by what can be regarded as plausible and acceptable by the participants on a given question. Thus, argumentation is not defined as the art of putting forward formally valid arguments leading to Truth, but as the use of verbal means to ensure a partial, by definition fragile, consensus on what

⁵ Concerning the list of norms/principles, I’ll prefer to call guidelines... we probably would need to be a bit more precise, or less ambiguous than “speak according to the requirement of an argumentative situation”. That seems to be too wide open to misinterpretation?

can be considered reasonable by a group of people, or by what a given society would define as a reasonable person (p. 317). This does not necessarily mean to lose sight of the “real”, or the universal as an ideal category (of audiences), but it is just a sight, and that’s it. I like that, and what I understand from deflationism is somewhat close to this.

The second way truth enters argumentation is, to use the same spatial metaphor, “from above”. The - if I may say so, highest - goal of munazara is the manifestation of truth (*izhār al-ḥaqq*) and while *haqq* is normally translated into English as truth, it also means, right, just(ice), and a series of other concepts. Perhaps more crucially, it is also one of the names of God. So, when taking inspiration from *Ādāb al-Baḥth wa-l-Munāzara* tradition, we are receiving a particular view of truth⁶. And I am not sure to what extent it is continuous with the propositional or “from below” view of truth. In my short intervention at the Symposium, I will try to question maintaining truth (or, Truth?) as the ultimate goal of present-day munazaras.

Let me right away recognize that, truth (or the seeking of Truth) was at the time – and still could be – sort of a “guiding light” that stabilizes the argumentative procedure and the code of arguers. As I understand, it is the inquiry (*al-Baḥth*) facet of munazara. I’m just not sure whether inquiry is a viable goal for public argument today. That was the reason I insisted “a divided world” in the name of the Adab project. Still, expecting historians and scholars of munazara to be very much keen on the goal of *haqq*, I think perhaps the best way may be to imagine two - or perhaps more - munazara motion types.

⁶ Admittedly, I may be focusing on a particular interpretation of *izhār al-ḥaqq*, as our colleague Karim, for instance, thinks that that the notion of *izhār* - becoming visible, manifest, manifestation - is even more crucial than *haqq*. I can connect to such delightful ideas through Heidegger’s concept of unconcealment (or unveiling) of Being, which, in turn was basically his translation of the Greek word *alêtheia*. Still, I remain skeptical about the contribution of such a framework in developing a fruitful approach to argumentation today.

Among the dialogue types (Walton, 2007) that have some degree of affinity with *Ādāb al-Baḥth wa-l Munāẓara*, we could consider inquiry, persuasion, and deliberation dialogues⁷. One well-established munazara motion type being inquiry is pretty clear: not just for historical reasons, but also, for those arguers who share sufficient common ground of knowledge on a particular subject it would be welcome to “make truth manifest” by testing one another’s positions.

My preoccupation is with those arguers who have a series of incompatible starting points on a particular subject. If through some procedural/agential guidelines, they could listen, recognize, and perhaps even understand, one another’s *concerns* (on that particular subject), I’d say that’s already an amazing thing. Here, I think, the view of truth towards “above” - a common goal - is too far that it would be an absurd goal. Probably, in such contexts, truth in argumentation is almost ordained to a view from “below”, and in the negative, where the testing positions will soon “turn our spade” (Godden & Brener, 2010).

I use *concerns* in a way similar to interests, I guess, and particularly to refer to consequences in deliberation dialogues, as in “if we do X, I am concerned that Y”. I am not at all sure whether deliberation as a munazara motion would help in overcoming some problems associated with the lack of common ground. I am not even sure whether we could find a midway between persuasion and deliberation dialogues to establish a motion type with coherent goals and “guiding lights” for the code of arguers. These are certainly the questions at least I will be grappling with at the Symposium. Perhaps there are straightforward answers...

⁷ I suppose the reasons I discard information-seeking, negotiation and eristic dialogues are clear.

Let me close by answering your call to “at least acknowledge the idea of truth or having to acknowledge that epistemic values are part (but not all) of the constitutive qualities that make something an argument in the first place”. In sum, I acknowledge the epistemic value of an argument, but I doubt it will help us in the cases where ethical/critical argument is needed the most - across the identity conflicts, ideological divides, ways of life, in short “in a divided world”.