

DEVELOPMENT OF THE METHOD OF EVALUATION IN CEDA DEBATE¹

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In many debates on the CEDA resolutions it seems that the debaters have forgotten the importance of a sound method of evaluation. While recent articles have pointed to the necessity of further practical development of criterion (Cole, Boggs & Twohy, 1986; Church & Wilbanks, 1986; Church, 1986; Gill, 1988), few debaters seem to be using the criteria to lend coherence to the debate. As Gill (1988) pointed out, in some instances the criteria has degenerated to catastrophic arguments. In other debates, judges are being asked to accept some ludicrously narrow "highest value" as the only important issue in the debate. Rather than developing a method of evaluation which delineates the competing issues at hand, debaters are highlighting the impact they wish to debate. This leaves some of the critical substantive issues absent in the final evaluation of the debate. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: First, to question the necessity of criteria in quasi or pre-policy debates and; Second, to provide standards for a useful method of evaluation.

THE NECESSITY OF CRITERIA

The necessity of presenting a criteria has been argued by many scholars. Church and Wilbanks (1986) concluded that, "without criteria or equivalent arguments defining the key evaluative terms, non-policy propositions would be neither understood nor debated" (p. 50). Cole, Boggs and Twohy (1986) agree with this evaluation and add that "a criteria does not simply name a value that one team wishes to defend, but rather, sets up standards to weigh competing values proposed by both teams" (p. 37). An obvious conclusion is that the importance of a criteria in modern CEDA debate cannot be overlooked.

Some theorists have made the presentation of a sound criteria a heavy affirmative burden. Church and Wilbanks (1986) argued that "the affirmative team has the burden of defending the proposition and therefore must provide and defend a criterion or set of criteria" (p. 50). In essence Church and Wilbanks (1986) define the criterion as a stock issue per se. Young and Gaske (1984) further punctuate this by concluding that, "the negative team may present arguments that the affirmative has failed to meet its prima-facia burdens -- it has failed to present and justify a valid 'decision rule' or value system..." (p. 26). Cole, Boggs and Twohy (1986) distinguish the importance of criterion in stating that the, "criteria should be treated as <a> jurisdictional issue." (p. 38).

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In short, they argue that the criteria helps define ground in a debate and is therefore essential.

While I understand that development of a sound criteria can aid a judge in making a decision, I am not inclined to place a "prima facia" burden on the affirmative team. In discussing this approach we must first analyze the reasons behind criteria being a fundamental requirement of the affirmative.

The first reason for criteria being a prima facia burden is based largely on Matlon's (1981) analysis of definitive and designative issues. Matlon's (1981) approach assumes that a proposition of value is being debated. In fact, much of the work presented is based on Matlon's (1981) analysis of definitive and designative issues. Matlon (1981) defined them as;

They [the stock issues of value consideration] are most often called the "definitive issue" and designative issue." The first issue poses this question: "Are certain specific definitions or criteria available to justify the judgement claimed in the propositions?" Here, value standard(s) are made explicit...The second issue poses this question: "Do the beliefs, values, or facts in the proposition conform to the definitions or criteria?" Here, the characteristics of the person, object, event, etc., must fulfill the conditions for the assignment of the value standard(s) (p. 496).

In utilizing this approach several authors have concurred with Matlon's (1981) burdens. The acceptance of Matlon's prima facia issues has become virtually universal. Because Matlon's discussion is based on the acceptance of a value resolution, the burden established on this basis should be focused on value debate. Unfortunately, these burdens are used on all debate topics. For this reason, I will look at the application of these arguments in to other resolutional forms.

Young and Gaske (1984) base their supposition of a prima facia burden on the assumption that presumption lies against the resolution. Therefore the affirmative has the burden of proof, which would include a burden to provide a system to evaluate the debate. The burden of proof analysis is quite persuasive in requiring the affirmative to justify the acceptance of the resolution, but there is no reason to assume that this includes a method of evaluation. An example of this can be found in the operation of our own congress. Representatives propose resolutions that are debated and analyzed from a number of viewpoints. Eventually a decision is made concerning the resolution, all without an explicit criteria. Certainly representatives are using an implicit form of Cost-Benefit Analysis, but it is up to those debating the resolution to provide reasons for one set of issues to take precedence over the opposing issues. Utilizing an implicit assumption of criteria would have the effect of easing a critic's job. Both teams would have an incentive to weigh issues that are discussed and explain why their particular arguments should take precedence. In fact, historically debates have required critics to make similar decisions practically all of the time, without any noticeable ill effects.

A second reason that the "definitive issue" analysis fails a stringent test is because it assumes that a value resolution is being debated. In other words a criteria would only be a prima facia burden when the affirmative team is defending a specific value, rather than a pre-policy option. For instance, the recent Foreign Investment topic asked debaters to evaluate the worthiness of allowing investment. This topic hardly asks for a comparison of values. An assumption that all CEDA debates are value debates shows an incomplete analysis of the current situation and recent practice as Dixon and Leslie (1984) noted it is a "misconception that CEDA debate is limited to exclusively debating values" (p. 16). In fact, very few of the resolutions used in CEDA take the form of a value resolution. It is illogical to require that the burdens specific to a value resolution be placed on the affirmative if a value resolution is not being debated.

A second reason for the criteria to be a prima facia burden stems (Young & Gaske, 1984) from the notion that, in order for an advocate to defend a particular value hierarchy the advocate must provide the value system necessary to evaluate that hierarchy. Therefore, it can be argued that in instances where the proposition warrants development of quasi-policy options or fact analysis, a criteria is no longer a necessary burden. Brownlee (1986) concurs with this analysis in suggesting that, "...the value comparison proposition requires that a decision rule be established for weighing the comparative merit of the two values. This decision rule may be unnecessary for other proposition types" (p. 32).

A notable exception to this is offered by Church and Wilbanks (1986) and Church (1986) who argue that all non-policy propositions require the affirmative to provide a criteria. Church and Wilbanks (1986) base this requirement on the issue of understanding. Similarly, Gill (1988) argues that a criteria is a necessity because no replacement has been found. A burden based on understanding is not persuasive considering the fact that similar propositions are understood when debated in other forums. Also, there is no justification for a burden of understanding to apply exclusively to the affirmative. The negative is also advocating a position, or at least should be, and should also have a burden of understanding. Even some of the theorists who argue for a stronger burden on the affirmative conclude that the burden of proof associated with a criteria does not necessarily lie against the affirmative. Church (1986) concluded "It should be noted that I am suggesting this constitutes a burden and not necessarily the burden of proof" (p. 33).

A third justification for the criteria to be a prima facia burden stems from a jurisdictional issue. As with the prima facia burden, the jurisdictional requirement (Cole, Boggs, & Twohy, 1986) of a criteria fails to withstand logical analysis. First it is necessary to note what is meant by a jurisdictional issue. This would indicate that a criteria is necessary to fall within the parameters of the resolution. While a criteria is helpful to the sound evaluation of issues, it is not an issue that would prove whether or not a certain case would be within the parameters of the

resolution or define the boundaries of the resolution. In fact, it could be argued that a criteria has nothing at all to do with the affirmative being within the parameters of the resolution.

It might seem that I have taken positions on both sides of the fence. I began by demanding that a sound method of evaluation is essential in CEDA debate and finished by saying that there is no burden for the establishment of a criteria. Quite to the contrary my argument is that criterion at best help us understand debates, and that this necessity to understand can be fulfilled by other means. At this point it would seem that I have left non-policy debate in a somewhat precarious place. Not only have I argued that we should remove a traditional burden on the affirmative team, I have also called for a return to the days when debates were evaluated by simple impact. Fortunately, my argument would not be finished without one more point. My point being that the criteria should be viewed as a strategic choice for teams. It is not hard to imagine that the criteria used can help a team promote their view of the resolution. By employing this view there is some risk that some rounds will be adjudicated without a criteria. But with this risk there is an incentive for debaters to employ methods to weigh competing issues. One need only look at the proliferation of topicality standards to see the inventiveness of debaters when given an incentive to use various issues. Weighing mechanisms and standards for weighing mechanisms could proliferate in a similar way. Additionally, the tradition of arguing about highest values in pre or quasi-policy debates could be set aside for the more important process of evaluating competing issues.

The second half of this project will be discussion of some standards for an evaluative method, should one be provided.

STANDARDS FOR AN EFFECTIVE EVALUATIVE METHOD

As was discussed in the first portion of this paper there has been a tendency for affirmative teams to provide criterion which suggest a one-sided value that they hope to maximize. This form of criteria seems to lead to debate that Gill (1989) refers to as "catastrophic" in nature. The establishment of a sound method of evaluation that allows two sides of an issue to be debated would remove some of this tendency. The final section of this paper will be an explanation of four standards that could be used in evaluating the worth of a particular method of evaluation.

1. Field Context

One of the first steps an advocate must take is to determine in what field the topic belongs. As Windes and Hastings (1965) pointed out, "Most of the value judgments in argumentative analysis will be grounded in the immediate field of argument... Birth control may be viewed from the vantage points of more than one set of values and arguments may be constructed on the basis of each system" (p.165). It is necessary for the advocates to assume a field perspective in order to form the method used to evaluate the

debate.

It is equally important for the advocate to assume the correct perspective. For instance, it would seem meaningless for a team to evaluate the proposition "Resolved that foreign investment is detrimental to this nation" using standards of medical excellence. This is initially true because a doctor is not particularly an expert in the field of foreign investment. Also, the criteria a doctor would use to evaluate foreign investment would be totally irrelevant to the issue at hand. A better standard would be one that came from a field actively involved in investment issues, such as one based on legal standards or economic standards. While this may be an extreme example of abuse, it certainly illustrates the issue of field context.

2. Justification

Gill (1988) suggests that the criteria need to meet a standard of justification. Expanding upon the ideas of Wassertrom's (1961) work on justification, Gill argues that the process of justification will remove much of the emphasis on "catastrophic impacts." Following Gill's original idea one could apply this conception of justification to the philosophical underpinnings of the criteria provided. Ulrich (1983) noted that the importance of the philosophical "view" and that this "view" would effect the eventual understanding of the topic. Additionally, it is naive to assume that a method of evaluation does not embody some implicit philosophical view. Consider a topic which brought into question the inherent friction between collective needs and individual rights. A team could approach the topic from a liberal perspective on rights and argue that rights are the most important issue. Similarly, the opposing team could argue that the use of a philosophical system consistent with utilitarianism is a better way to evaluate the round. Clearly, the acceptance of either would significantly affect the outcome of the debate. It should be incumbent upon the teams to indicate why the method of evaluation they provided is justified in terms of its philosophical view. The process of justification alone will lead to further development as Gill (1989) noted:

Insistence by judges on the articulation and justification of criteria thus will help to solve the problems created by inappropriate catastrophe arguments. Justification of criterion makes clear which arguments are irrelevant to the topic area and focuses research efforts and debates themselves more squarely on the issues at hand (p.43).

The process of justification will lead to an understanding the issues leading to the acceptance of a particular philosophical system and to the decisions that are implicitly made when such a decision is made.

3. Division of Ground

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Since the function of the method of evaluation is to test resolutive validity, it is necessary for the method to provide ground for both sides of the issue to be debated.

A one-sided method of evaluation would lend itself to analysis that would bring to light only the advantages or disadvantages of a proposition. Take for instance the Fall 1990 resolution; Resolved: that government censorship of public artistic expression in the United States is an undesirable infringement of individual rights. In presenting their case an affirmative could simply offer an absolutist rights approach. In essence, the affirmative would be arguing that individual rights are the only issue of any importance. This form of evaluative method would leave the negative without ground since their side of the topic requires that individual rights be restricted. To compete on these grounds the negative is given the incentive to provide an equally one-sided method of evaluation. The debate then degenerates into a two one-sided discussions without clash. Each side is simply trying to get a critic to believe that the issue they choose is more important. In this case the level of infringement occurring versus the good obtained need never occur. Therefore, the issues important to censorship may never be debated.

A fairly simple way to force the discussion to the issues embodied in the resolution is to require that the method of evaluation provided gives a method to evaluate issues inherently competing in the resolution. In the example provided the affirmative need only give a standard by which individual rights can be weighed against a competing need for societal control.

Many debaters will argue that this is their prerogative to narrow the topic to a point at which they could easily succeed. This argument fails to acknowledge that a method of evaluation is a way to evaluate the round. Without a method which gives both sides of the debate some ground there is no evaluation occurring.

4. Proper Proposition Classification

Important to a set of evaluative method standards is the fact that non-policy debate is not restricted to purely value resolutions, in fact criteria standards should force participants to be contextual to the type of proposition in use. This is especially important since not all of the propositions debated by CEDA participants are of the value genre. In fact many of the past resolutions have been of a fact or quasi-policy nature. Dixon and Leslie (1984) concur "...that CEDA propositions tend to vary in their nature from topic to topic, ranging from value to quasi-policy" (p. 17).

Proper analysis of the type of proposition being debated is a necessary requirement for evaluative method selection. This analysis is necessary for meaningful discussion. Mills (1964) brought this to light in concluding that, "In practice, the classification of a given proposition is an almost indispensable step in analyzing it, because each kind of proposition has distinctive proof requirements" (p. 42-3). Propositional

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classification is also necessary to enhance clash. Dixon and Leslie (1984) argue, "The result of improper or non-existent propositional classification is two teams interpreting a proposition differently, resulting in a debate without clash where debaters develop their argumentation on entirely different planes and a judge is left with no way to objectively adjudicate the round" (p. 16). The offshoot of this is that the method being submitted by the different teams must be consistent with the type of proposition being used.

The focus of the prior sections of this paper has been to propose a new perspective on the use of criterion in pre or quasi-policy debate. Disposing of the prima facia burden of criteria in the debate is an attempt to increase the depth of the debate on substantive issues. It is my contention that this lack of depth is the cause of many problems in non-policy debate. One symptom of this lack of depth is the use of poorly analyzed criterion in an attempt to get on to the "big impacts" or "highest value."

It is certainly not my argument that CEDA should rid itself of all "big impact" arguments, but rather that some of the focus should return issues more closely relevant to the resolution. The burdens and standards provided here are one method to do just that. Hopefully, by removing the need for a criteria and replacing it with a choice between a nothing and an evaluative method we may return to a substantive debate of important issues.

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