

A METAPARADIGM FOR JUDGING CEDA DEBATE:
ON VIEWING THE JUDGE AS AN ASSESSOR

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There are a number of paradigms available to help judges evaluate debates. Unfortunately, the accepted paradigms have generally, if not exclusively, evolved with reference to NDT style debate. As has been argued elsewhere, debaters tend to adjust to their judges,¹ hence, the use of NDT paradigms can be expected to promote NDT style debate, even in rounds of CEDA.

Consider some of the most popular judging paradigms. Freeley lists five: the skills judge, the issues judge, the policy maker judge, the hypothesis testing judge, and the tabula rasa judge.² Patterson and Zarefsky list three basic paradigms: hypothesis testing, policy making, and public speaking; all other paradigms are included in a miscellaneous category.³ And Wood and Goodnight list two basic paradigms: the "better job of debating" judge and the "balance of arguments" judge; they also include a miscellaneous category which they call the "maverick" judge (and vaguely imply that such judges are crackpots but are as apt to vote for a team as against it).⁴ It will be observed that there is a good deal of overlap among these paradigms and that the skills judge, the public speaking judge and the "better job of debating" judge are highly similar, if not functionally identical. This composite paradigm is the only one which permits the judge to seriously weigh such factors as delivery, courtesy, wit and emotional impact into the decision. All of the other paradigms are based almost exclusively on logos. The judge who uses one of these other paradigms in making a decision is more or less committed to downgrading the importance of ethos and pathos in evaluating the debate. This obviously runs counter to the basic philosophy of CEDA.

The solution would seem to be for all CEDA judges to adopt the composite paradigm mentioned above. Unfortunately, this paradigm has been criticized, and rightly so, for downgrading the importance of logos in a debate. In describing this paradigm, Wood and Goodnight state, "the 'better job of debating' judges do not weigh the arguments to determine which team was more effective in the round; they base their decisions solely on which team did the better job of debating. Their decisions may be totally subjective or even impressionistic...."⁵ Patterson and Zarefsky say of the public speaking judge, "According to this view, the merits of the resolution — either as a statement of probable truth or as a policy to be implemented — are not the primary considerations in the debate. Rather, the discussion of a specific resolution is only a convenient way to permit the judge to evaluate the two teams' public-speaking abilities."⁶

What is necessary is an alternative paradigm for CEDA debate which will permit judges to effectively weigh both argumentation and delivery into their final decision. Such a paradigm, or rather metaparadigm⁷, should be accessible as well as encompassing. That is, it should be simple enough to be of practical value in judging debates rather than so complex as to be of only theoretical interest. It is the purpose of this essay to suggest such a metaparadigm for CEDA judges.

A Generalized Prima Facie Paradigm

Perhaps the most encompassing way of examining current judging paradigms is by considering a generalized prima facie model. The affirmative team has the burden to present and defend a prima facie case and the negative team's goal is to prevent the affirmative from meeting this burden. From this perspective, the issues in a round of debate can be weighed with reference to the prima facie elements. In a policy debate this refers to the stock issues of harm, significance, inherency, plan and advantages. This can be graphically represented as an affirmative structure (see figure 1). The ultimate goal of

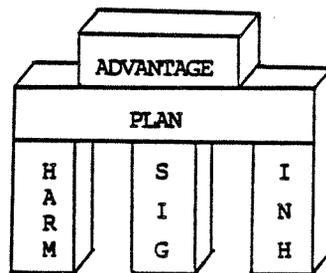


Figure 1. The Generalized Prima Facie Paradigm (Policy)

the affirmative case is to support some advantage to adopting the resolution; the advantage is supported by the affirmative plan and the plan in turn supported by the case consisting of harm, significance, and inherency. The negative attempts to undermine this structure by attacking the case, to subvert the advantage by attacking the plan (workability and plan-meet-need), and to bring the whole business crashing down by overloading the structure with disadvantages. Based upon this paradigm, the judge's responsibility at the end of the debate is to decide whether or not the affirmative structure still stands. This generalized prima facie paradigm is highly logoi oriented and encompasses most of the generally used paradigms listed above. Whether one is an issues judge, a hypothesis tester, a policy maker, etc. the same basic prima facie considerations apply.

When one is judging a value debate rather than a policy debate, the structure may be slightly different (see figure 2) but the analogy is the

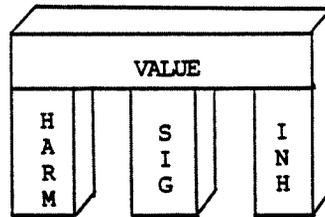


Figure 2. The Generalized Prima Facie Paradigm (Value)

same: the affirmative is attempting to support a logical structure and the negative is attempting to subvert that structure. The affirmative in a value debate is called upon to defend the resolution by demonstrating that some significant harm (or benefit, depending on the wording of the resolution) is inherently linked to some specific event.⁸

An issues judge makes a decision based upon how the sum total of issues affected the affirmative structure. A policy maker judge is doing exactly the same thing, only casting him- or herself into the role of policy maker while doing so. And a hypothesis testing judge is assuming a perspective of scientific examination of all relevant possibilities, which implies a comparison of the affirmative structure to other reasonable structures.

The problem with the generalized prima facie paradigms, from the CEDA viewpoint, is that they leave no room for ethos and very little room for pathos in decision making. Rather than being weighed into the final decision of which team wins the round, ethos and pathos are relegated to the relatively insignificant role of influencing speaker points. The suggested metaparadigm which follows is a method of mentally compensating for this bias in current paradigms.

A Metaparadigm for CEDA

The judging metaparadigm which follows isn't a new way of organizing the prima facie elements of a debate so much as a new perspective from which to view those elements.

Imagine the affirmative prima facie case (whether it involves a value or policy topic) as a three dimensional structure. That is, think of the two generalized models in figures 1 and 2 as physical objects. The affirmative has built this structure out of evidence and reasoning and the negative hurls

missiles composed of counterevidence and reasoning to topple the structure. It's almost as if the debate could be likened to a booth at an amusement park: the negative pays a quarter to throw three balls at a structure of affirmative milk bottles and wins a kewpie doll (the debate) if it knocks the structure down. From this perspective, ethos and pathos could be envisioned as follows:

AFFIRMATIVE ETHOS would be represented by the foundation upon which the structure is built. High ethos would be like a strong and solid table; Low ethos would be like a weak and flimsy table. Given a strong and solid foundation, the affirmative structure would be more likely to survive the negative attacks. A weak and flimsy foundation would cause the entire structure to tremble with every negative assault. A high-ethos affirmative team would enjoy presumption that their case was built upon solid ground. A sufficiently obnoxious affirmative team might lose before the end of the first speech (e.g. a first affirmative who spoke so quickly that the judge and the other team were unable to understand the presentation). It would be as if the affirmative foundation were so flimsy it gave way under its own weight.

AFFIRMATIVE PATHOS would be represented by the density of the affirmative structural materials. High-pathos would be like a structure constructed of gold; low-pathos would be like a structure constructed of balsa wood. Negative missiles would bounce off of a high-pathos case where they might topple a low-pathos case (e.g. an affirmative case with such insignificant support that it failed to meet its prima facie burden — and it is important to note that significance here does not refer so much to the significance of the affirmative claims as to the impact of the evidence and reasoning used to support those claims).

NEGATIVE ETHOS would be represented by the negative team's pitching ability. High-ethos would be likened to extreme speed and accuracy; low-ethos would be likened to the reverse. A high-ethos negative team would be expected to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the affirmative structure correctly, to select arguments appropriate to the weaknesses, and to apply those arguments effectively. A low-ethos negative team would be expected to misanalyze, mispresent, and misapply (e.g. negative speakers who were so obnoxious the judge was unwilling to accept anything they said).⁹ A low-ethos negative would be like the fellow at the amusement park who did not know what to aim at, who couldn't hit anything but the ground in any case, and who threw like a wimp.

NEGATIVE PATHOS would be represented by the density of the negative team's missiles. A high-pathos negative attack would be like a heavy rock; a low-pathos attack would be like a nerf ball. When a negative argument has high pathos it has impact — it can be expected to damage the affirmative structure.

When an attack lacks pathos it becomes insignificant (e.g. an argument without the proper support to lend it credibility). A sufficiently low-pathos argument would bounce harmlessly off of an affirmative case, even in the absence of refutation.

LOGOS, both affirmative and negative, would be represented by the judge's assessment of the status of the affirmative structure. The 1st Affirmative begins by setting up a case. The 1st Negative responds by attempting to knock down its underpinning. The 2nd Affirmative, post facto, tries to bat away the negative missiles and patch up the case where it was damaged. The 2nd Negative aims missiles at the superstructure and tries to toss heavy disadvantages so that they land on top of the structure. Well-argued rebuttals would involve each team's interpretation of what the structure now looks like along with extended negative attacks on the weakest affirmative issues and affirmative defenses of those issues. Existing logos-oriented paradigms could be used within this metaparadigm to assess the logical elements of the debate.

Pragmatic Considerations

The purpose of this metaparadigm is not to replace current paradigms, but to supplement these paradigms by transcending them.¹⁰ Rowland has argued that, "not only do debate paradigms provide the standards by which judges evaluate debates, but paradigms actually determine what the judge perceives."¹¹ Pragmatically, this metaparadigm is merely intended as a way of getting ethos and pathos into the judge's mind when making decisions, out of the judge's mouth in oral critiques, and onto ballots. No judge is being called upon to change, in the slightest, the methods he or she uses to assess the logical elements of a debate.

If widely adopted, this metaparadigm might prove extremely useful in discouraging that great and insidious threat to high quality presentations, "the spread." Spread tactics are based upon the assumption that logos is the sole, or at least the overwhelmingly important, factor in determining who wins the round. Debaters spread to introduce as many logical considerations as possible into the judge's decision. Negatives use the spread to defeat the affirmative case and affirmatives use spread tactics to defeat individual negative attacks. But using the metaparadigm offered above, a team using spread tactics would be perceived as throwing dozens or hundreds of nerf balls rather than three or four baseballs. No matter how potentially significant these attacks might be, in application they would have no impact.

This metaparadigm might also prove useful in encouraging higher ethos presentations. Debaters would know that judges who subscribed to this

metaparadigm would weigh rapid-fire delivery, abusiveness, and other low-ethos practices against them in making a decision. In this context, it is interesting to consider the pragmatic relationship between a debater's performance and the generation/attribution of ethos. A debater's ethos is, of course, determined by the judge, based on that debater's performance in the round. On the other hand, the assessment of the debater's performance is heavily colored by the judge's perception of the debater's ethos. The metaparadigm offered above allows this relationship to become an explicit part of the the decision-making process.

Finally, since the purpose of this metaparadigm is to be a positive influence on the actual practice of academic debate, it should have a label by which its adherents can be identified. Since the job of the judge using this metaparadigm is to observe the debate and to assess the status of the affirmative case once the smoke has cleared, I have chosen to call this type of judge an "Assessor," one who estimates the value of a thing.¹² The Assessor Judge may be what the skills judge, the public speaking judge, and the "better job of debating" judge are frequently trying to be without losing the logical rigor which these judges are all too frequently accused of losing. The Assessor Judge can evaluate ethos and pathos in making a decision without becoming a "maverick" in the negative sense of the term.

Dr. Howe, in a call to remember the original objectives of CEDA, reminds us that "fast-talking, evidence-happy" debaters are a product of "judges who reward them and the directors who contenance them."¹³ It is hoped that the widespread adoption of the Assessor Metaparadigm would be a significant step in the pragmatic return to the original objectives of CEDA.

ENDNOTES

¹Cf. W. Barnett Pearce, "Communicating the Reasons for Decision by Ballot," Journal of the American Forensic Association, 1969, 6, pp. 73-7 and Alan Cirlin, "Judging, Evaluation, and the Quality of CEDA Debate," National Forensic Journal, Spring 1986 (in press).

²Austin Freeley, Argumentation and Debate: Reasoned Decision Making, 5th Ed., Wadsworth: CA 1981.

³J.W. Patterson and David Zarefsky, Contemporary Debate, Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston 1983.

⁴Roy Wood and Lynn Goodnight, Strategic Debate, 3rd Ed., National Textbook Company: IL 1983.

⁵Wood and Goodnight, *ibid.*, p. 193.

⁶Patterson and Zarefsky, *ibid.*, pp. 297-8.

⁷I am using the term "meta-" to mean "higher" or "transcending" (Cf. Webster's definition) as opposed to the commonly used meaning of "a higher order logical type"; that is, a more general paradigm, not a paradigm about paradigms.

⁸Cf. Alan Cirlin, "On Negative Strategy in Value Debate," CEDA Yearbook 1984, p. 32.

⁹In this context, ethos should not be confused with logos. Ethos, in this sense, implies "credibility" or the expectation of logical rigor. Cf. Judge Burgeon and Charles Montgomery, "Dimensions of Credibility for the Ideal Debater," Journal of the American Forensic Association, 1976, 7, pp. 171-177.

¹⁰Other writers have used the term "transcendent" to refer to broader logical paradigms rather than paradigms which "transcend" mere logic and allow for the assessment of ethos and pathos. Eg., V. William Balthrop, "The Debate Judge as 'Critic of Argument': Toward a Transcendent Perspective," Journal of American Forensic Association, 1983, 20, p. 1-15.

¹¹Robert C Rowland, "Standards for Paradigm Evaluation," Journal of American Forensic Association, 1982, 18, p. 133.

¹²There can be "Issue-Assessor Judges," "Policy Making-Assessor Judges," as well as "Hypothesis Testing-Assessor Judges," etc.

¹³Jack H. Howe, "CEDA's Objectives: Lest We Forget," Contributions on the Philosophy and Practice of CEDA, Cross-Examination Debate Association 1981. p. 3.