

# AN INTRODUCTION TO THE "KRITIK"

by William Bennett

The kritik (spelled "critique" in some other writings) originated in philosophy. In 1991 it was introduced to policy debate as a form of attack that attempts to redirect the focus of debate to whether or not to reject ideas which support or uphold undesirable ideology, language, institutions, or world views. In doing so it inherently rejects the power and worth of fiat. Instead the kritik argues that ideas which will never be implemented are not as important as "real" ideas and impacts. Roger Solt (p.ii) defines a kritik as "an argument operating outside the framework of normal, comparative policy debate, attacking a (usually implicit) assumption of an opponent's analysis."

Shors and Mancuso (p. A-15) write "The Critique rejects many of the assumptions of traditional policy debate, and posits. . . (that) 'Fiat' is a meaningless construct. Affirmative plans are never really implemented, and voting for a plan to gain an advantage is illogical. After all, why vote affirmative if nothing really changes? By implication, therefore, the Critique theory maintains that given that plans are never implemented, it is useless to discuss the benefits of what would happen were plans really to be implemented." Instead, argue the advocates of the kritik, the ideas and words and attitudes in a debate are far more real and of more importance in the lives of the debaters and judge. Kritiks attack the assumptions of debate and/or assumptions about what the debaters are debating about.

Kritik thinking is drawn primarily from a small number of noted philosophers. Hegel's works initiate this strain of thought. It has been carried through to Heidegger's more recent work. This German approach holds that the way we think is more important than the end or goal of our thought. Foucault and Derrida are also used as the basis for some kritiks or kritik theory.

To be valid in a debate the kritik must be shown relevant, and it must be understandable (Shanahan, p. A-7). A kritik can be introduced by either team. In practice the kritik is almost always in-

troduced by the negative team. The negative, after all, reacts to the affirmative and chooses the ground(s) for its attack. And the almost endless number of possible kritiks plus their usually generic nature makes them easy fodder for a negative team.

The kritik argues that there is a harm created by the assumption created or used by the other side. The harm may stem from the resolution or the approach used by the opposition. The kritik attacks as untenable and destructive one of the assumptions behind the opposition's position. While this approach appears similar in intent to a disadvantage it differs in two ways: it looks at core assumptions whereas disadvantages most often look at policy implications, and the kritik tries not to assume the burdens (e.g., uniqueness, threshold) of a disadvantage.

## Differences From Other Issues

The kritik is different from other possible voting issues in at least three ways. First, it is based on a challenge to fiat. Concurrently kritiks often reject the common acceptance of the intent of the word "should" in the resolution. A kritik does this by arguing that what participants do in the debate can or will have real impacts, while fiat means most of the debate focuses on imaginary power and policy changes that will never really occur. Thus, argues the kritik premise, any kritik is more important than anything that is said under the cover of fiat affected issues.

An integral and second implication is that, advocates of kritiks claim, they are more "real world," and because of that, their proponents argue, they must supersede even *a priori* issues. The reasoning stems from the claim that what the debaters are doing (e.g., their language or adherence to value norms) can have real repercussions. Debate is, the reasoning goes, utopian because it argues what should happen rather than what will or can be made to happen. Kritiks improve debate, supporters claim, because they force participants to confront

and argue about things that may really happen because the debate occurs. The kritik, as Jinks notes (p. A-12), "alters the level at which argumentative clash occurs."

Unlike other potential voting issues some users of kritiks argue that they need give no option or alternative, much less defend that option. If, for example, it is harmful to discuss a certain debate topic or word in the topic the kritik user would identify why and then argue that debate about that word or topic should cease because the people in the debate and some segment of society might be hurt by the debate occurring. No alternative policy or word would be proposed and debated as a better option. In this example the negative would hope to win on the basis of presumption and/or the urge to punish those who first created or argued for the offending topic or phrase.

## Types of Kritiks

Kritiks vary significantly. Solt (p. A-9) writes "Some critiques are epistemological; others are moral, political, or even metaphysical. They can attack opponents' premises, opponents' method of reasoning, even opponents' language choice."

Kritiks are more easily understood and discussed by dividing them into three commonly used categories: thinking, rhetoric and/or language, and values. Thinking kritiks look at presuppositions and assumptions about rules, frameworks, structures, and systems of thought. Language kritiks examine use of rhetoric that is sexist, bigoted, or dangerous. Value kritiks challenge the premises or expose contradictions at either external or internal ethic levels.

Language kritiks are usually simple and easily understood. The kritik attacks the opponents for using words in a harmful or risk creating way. If the opponent talks about nuclear war the other team might respond with a kritik which argues that debaters' prolific use of nuclear war scenarios desensitizes part of our culture to the horrors of nuclear war and thus makes it more

likely. If a word in the resolution can be interpreted as arguably racist or sexist the negative could argue that the resolution must not even be considered because the debate would signal toleration of such language.

Thinking kritiks challenge the way participants construct and/or systemize their reasoning. This type of kritik sometimes challenges the framework or structure of debate (e.g., by arguing for the narrative or storytelling approach to competition). Other examples include challenges to rational thought, and challenging the validity of the western world view as proper premise for debate.

Value kritiks include a large variety of methods to identify and attack ethical or moral beliefs found behind what debate teams do and say. Included are many shades of axiological (the nature of values including morals, religion, and metaphysics), and deontological (ethics, the theory of issues and positions) issues. Examples of such kritiks are the ethical imperative categories (e.g., the statism kritik which argues that government action is inherently immoral), and normative kritik categories (taking a value and making it context specific so that it can be debated; see Irizarry and Schag articles).

Of course these three types are not mutually exclusive. They can be mixed together. If the affirmative is, for example, talking about United States policy toward China the negative could run a kritik claiming that their logic is flawed because it analyzes Asian actions using western translations and thought patterns. This example combines language and thinking elements in the kritik.

### **Advocating and Defending the Kritik**

A good kritik must be (1) well presented, and (2) must serve a useful function in the debate. What is required in order to present a kritik well? First it should be presented as early as possible in the debate. This gives every participant the maximum chance to explore it, analyze it, and extend clash pertinent to the issue. Secondly, it must have demonstrated relevance to the specific debate. And, finally, it must be understandable. In competition un-

derstandability has been a problem, partially because of the new and therefore variable structure of the issue, and because some users regrettably seek to mask the issue or sacrifice clarity for a different goal.

Evolution of the kritik in policy debate has already begun. One change has been that some users are now assuming some of the burdens of a disadvantage. Uniqueness and threshold are sometimes included in a kritik presentation in order to preempt these opposition responses.

When and/or how will a kritik serve a useful function in a debate? There are at least six major arguments in favor of the kritik in policy debate.

First, as Irizarry (p.iv) argues, it is useful anytime it questions an underlying assumption about debate or the presuppositions being used in the specific round. A kritik is also defensible when it deepened or broadens the validity of other issues in the debate. (Irizarry's article, for example, makes a good case for using kritiks in conjunction with utopian counterplans.)

Shanahan (p. A-4) offers a slightly different and broader answer: "The kritik is *not* the new way of debating, out to become the new debate dogma, to replace the old guard. The kritik joins policy debate. If along the way one helps the other, if the kritik opens up another way through debate, if policy debate provides the framework in which the kritik can flourish, wonderful. If, however, the only result is debaters are exposed to different ways of thinking. . . then the kritik has served one of the major purposes: to expand the realm of critical thinking."

And most proponents argue that the kritik serves a useful function in a debate when it reminds us that at least some issues should be tied and/or viewed in relationship to the "real world." By testing the validity of fiat and the willing suspension of requiring demonstration that actions will be taken, any understandable kritik can serve a valid educational function.

The fourth benefit is important; kritiks introduce ideas worthy of discussion. Misuse of language is a dangerous tool. It should be confronted. Values are not just the focus of L. D., they are the underlying premises of every argument made

in policy debate. The way we think, our world view or event view, is improved when we must confront and respond to a challenge about our method(s) of thinking.

Fifth, it is a form of inquiry and clash. To restrict or abolish it would demean the very intent of debate. If everything is debatable then kritiks remind us of methods and arenas that participants too often forget, ignore, or never even learn about.

Finally, new idea-generating tools are very beneficial. They are good for any topic, and they are certainly good for debate as a competitive activity. The kritik reminds participants of the need to examine and consider the implications of values, language, and thought processes. Those are three very important skills, goals, and argument construction techniques. In competition coaches must test new tools and tactics, to do less is to limit the realm of knowledge and deny that one of our key goals is the expansion of the power of the human mind.

### **Extension Ideas**

Opponents have raised a large number of objections to kritiks as a debate issue. To defend the concept against this plethora of attacks is difficult.

Three of the most common attacks are that kritiks are generic, they are infinitely regressive, and they are inconsistent with other traditional negative issues and positions. Being generic is not necessarily bad. If our focus is on the resolution or on debate as a game then generic issues offer a true test of truth or desirability. And, as Irizarry reminds us (p. vii), many generic issues run for decades in debate. Kritiks can join generic disadvantages, utopian and agent-of-change counter-plans, and topicality violations as generic issues without doing irreparable harm to the activity.

Infinite regression is a strong anti-kritik response. Its logical premise reveals the same intellect and challenge to enthymatic or unchallenged reasoning that kritik supporters use. If we can debate and defeat a case by challenging assumptions then the good debater will respond by challenging the assumption behind the challenge to the assumption. And the response

to that tactic is to challenge that assumption at a deeper level and so we encourage infinite regression.

But, say the defenders, of kritik, at least the first part of this process is good. It teaches or reminds us that everything is debatable. And this helps students break out of the straightjacket of classroom or western thought. And to this response can be added that traditional defenders of debate have encouraged at least limited regression from the start of competitive debate by giving great early emphasis to logical forms and examining the premises of arguments. Toulmin logic, syllogisms, and other teachers and texts used to examine the basis of argument, all imply that contesting the premise is a crucial way to defeat an argument; Kritik opponents use a double standard.

Are kritiks inconsistent with other issues and positions? If they are, that does not invalidate their use; it only says that those who use kritiks must make a choice in each debate as to which tactic to use and not be internally contradictory.

But kritiks are not always inconsistent with other issues. Irizarry's article shows how they support utopian counterplans. And the non-policy element of a kritik is acceptable. As Prof. Solt reminds us (p. A-9) ". . . we do sometimes evaluate and vote on non-policy issues even within our current debate conventions, topicality arguments and ethics challenges to evidence being the two most prominent examples."

### **When Should a Kritik Be Used?**

At least three of five conditions should exist before either side introduces a kritik. The key requirements are: there should be an important flaw in the topic or the opposing team's position, the judge should be receptive, the team introducing the kritik should have both the knowledge and research base to launch the attack, the attack should fit a kritik issue format noticeably better than a more traditional voting issue format, and the attack should be understandable both in intent and structure.

The flaw can take any one of at least three forms. The topic or opposition may use bad language or word choice, the other side may premise what they say on a weak

or unproven value basis, and/or there may be a system of thought which when introduced will improve the quality of the debate.

Not all judges are receptive to kritiks as important or positive issues in a debate. Some judging paradigms are antithetical to kritiks, e.g., those used by many policy and stock issue judges. Lay judges can be easily confused by many kritiks. Some judges have a philosophical or educational distaste for kritiks. Questions before the start of the debate, prior experience with the judge, reports from other competitors who have encountered this judge, and/or published judge paradigm records can be useful in determining what type of judge is being confronted in any debate.

A kritik is rarely successful when offered as a casual or "created in the heat of the round" issue. While challenges to unproven assumptions and/or inappropriate language are almost always worth launching there are other voting issue formats (e.g., disadvantages or causal link attacks) available to introduce the point. A commendable kritik almost always requires knowledge and research from violation specific sources before it can become a compelling attack. Given the generic nature of many kritiks this does not represent a heavy burden, but it does suggest that debaters considering using a kritik must use libraries and other research tools before fully committing to this strategy.

The kritik should have an easy and often obvious good answer to the question "why was this attack put into kritik format?". Many kritiks imply that something harmful is created by the thought or action of the other team or the topic. Since disadvantages and harm turns stem from the same premise a constructive critic could well expect at least an implied reason for the kritik form rather than other possible options. If the only clear reason appears to be an inability to meet the logical and/or evidentiary requirements of other possible attack forms, the credibility of the attack may be significantly diminished.

The lack of any yet agreed upon organizational "requirements" and substructure standards for a kritik present the potential user with a few special challenges. Cre-

ating a new attack is invigorating. It reflects thought and creativity. But it also presents to the judge a new idea combined with a new structure. It is incumbent therefore that the team introducing the issue present it in as clear and easily understood format as possible. An inability to do so does not say that a kritik should not be used, but it does warn the speaker that a higher risk of failure exists. That which is not fully understood is less often used as a basis for a debate decision.

### **Tactics for Defeating a Kritik**

The debater should have four goals: to argue why policy and fiat-based arguments should be the paradigm or framework for the debate, to defeat the idea that the kritik is an acceptable form of attack, to defeat the idea or criticism contained in the kritik, and to kritik the kritik so that the negative is defeated at its own game (or at least the absurdity of infinite regression is exposed and discussed). As a tactic, therefore, the debater responding to the kritik wants to organize his or her responses into two categories. The first argues that no kritik should be a voting issue (at least for the opposition), while the second gives specific reasons why the specific kritik should be rejected.

To make this bifurcated strategy work the competitor must be sure of two things. That s/he understands what the kritik is saying, and that the opponents do not alter its intent or "do a disco" as the debate proceeds. Early and repeated use of cross-examination is especially good to assure that these factors are well controlled.

Direct attacks on the specific kritik should incorporate the common methods of defeating opposition blocks: using evidence, contradictory analysis, and pick and press tactics. Four specific tactics will augment the likelihood that the specific kritik will be defeated.

First, the team that is attacked can introduce a counter-kritik. One easy way is to indict the language used in the kritik. Another method is to identify and kritik an assumption of the kritik (e.g., that deconstruction is good, that all assumptions should be questioned, or that values need to be identified and defended).

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Second, the responding team can permute the kritik. It is often possible to accept the core idea of the kritik without rejecting the affirmative case. Roger Solt (p.xxi) explains it well: "This can be accomplished in at least two ways. First, some kritiks will prove susceptible to fairly standard policy permutations. This is because a number of kritiks (such as statism) do, in effect suggest alternative policies, such as anarchy. If there is an implicit alternative lurking within the kritik, then you may well want to make that alternative explicit in order to permute. In the case of statism, the obvious permutation is to abolish all government except for those portions needed to carry out the plan. Second, in the case of kritiks which do not contain implicit policy alternatives, it is still possible to employ a kind of conceptual permutation. Even if rationality is rejected, it might still be possible to justify an affirmative plan on emotional grounds. The argument is that the judge can embrace the kritik and still have a reason to vote affirmative."

Third, the responding team can argue that the kritik is not absolute, that even if the attack is true it does not fully defeat the affirmative reason for change. If it's a language kritik, the affirmative might argue that the offending language can be changed or dropped from the debate without nullifying the desirability of policy action. Or the kritik might challenge the assumption behind a causal link or advantage value. But, since most kritiks give no alternative value or causation, then only uncertainty or a useless void is created by adopting the kritik. In this situation, the affirmative can argue, there is no reason to vote against the case since no disadvantage has been given and there is still at least a slight chance that the link or value is valid.

Fourth is to think of the kritik as a policy argument. This will very often help debaters who are not experienced at attacking kritiks find good winning responses. The affirmative for example, might see if the kritik suggests or implies an idea akin to a disadvantage. If so this offers attacks based on uniqueness, brink, causality and links, time frame, and impact. If in the respondent's mind the attack seems

similar to any more common issue (solvency, harm turn, causal link denial, counterplan) then common response possibilities usually used against those attacks can be easily plugged into place. This position can sometimes be amplified or improved by pointing out that the social contract of the tournament and the tournament invitation presupposes policy debate; by implication the negative accepted the policy format by accepting the tournament invitation.

#### **Attacks on the "Kritik"**

Detractors and critics of the kritik are numerous and have a great number of issues on their side. It is possible to divide their attacks into five categories: (1) kritiks harm the traditional educational worth of policy debate, (2) kritiks are logically flawed, (3) kritiks are unnecessary, (4) kritiks are unfair, and (5) true believers have other options.

*Kritiks harm the traditional educational worth of policy debate.* First, say the scholarly censors, kritiks decrease the marketplace of ideas. By demanding that all assumptions are identified and defended kritiks pull energy away from possible policy improvements to focus instead on arcane, cumbersome philosophical ideas. Kritiks discourage research on the topic, decrease the variety of cases and attacks, and substitute in their place an increased emphasis on deconstructing ideas and language. Constructive thought is replaced by critical thought. The worlds' problems remain but the debate ignores them and replaces attempts to solve those problems with carping over premises. Kritiks do not require an alternative to be identified. Policy debates do. The constructive and more encompassing nature of policy clash increases the discussion of multiple ideas and is more educationally worthwhile.

Second, the different world view inherent to many kritiks reduces or eliminates clash. Jinks writes (p. A-12): "In seeking to invalidate the systematic assumptions of the affirmative, negatives must either employ the same system of thought as the affirmative or an alternative system. On the other hand critiques may employ an alternative system of thought to

invalidate the system used by the affirmative. This approach, however, cannot hope to discredit the affirmative approach. One system of thought cannot critique another while remaining completely separate from it. If two world views remain autonomous critique is not possible."

Third, kritiks require that no alternative be identified and defended. This gives the negative an unfair advantage. Without comparison between options the worth of ideas and policies cannot be rationally determined. The judge's job also becomes harder. Kritiks attempt to show flaws in logic without giving an alternative; but there is no reason to reject the plan when the alternative is unknown. How can a judge evaluate a plan without knowing what s/he is voting for if the plan is rejected?

Fourth, kritiks are too generic. They fit almost every case on every topic. Originality of thought and clash becomes less important because it is less likely to be rewarded. Policy implications, contemporary knowledge of current events and recent history are no longer rewarded as debaters search for the most esoteric and obscure philosophical references with which to confuse their opponents.

Fifth, kritiks decrease research on the resolutorial area. To reward their use is to decrease the motivation for research, and to decrease the knowledge gathered and exchanged about the controversial (and, one hope, interesting) topic selected for debate. The research skills attached to debate decrease as judges award ballots to generic arguments. Even advocates of kritiks acknowledge that the type of research changes. Reduced or gone are the plethora of indexes and data bases covering history, political science, economics, philosophy, and psychology. Instead philosophy and semantics research become the only areas that reward most competitors. Hard work would also seem unrewarding since only a few kritiks could suffice to serve a debater throughout his or her entire competitive career.

Sixth, kritiks increase talk while they decrease progress. Schlag (p. 170) puts it well: "Given the obvious bankruptcy of abstract value talk, the talk-talk genre has become very popular recently." The

main point of this strategy, claim Prof. Schlag and others, is to make thought so small that it will contribute nothing to progress. The kritik is poorly placed. The "rules" of kritiks, to the extent there are any, do not promote good ideas. Instead kritiks restrict and reduce meaningful discussion of important issues. And kritiks try to reject ideas with merit because the ideas are attached to questionable institutions. "By avoiding discussion of actual policies, the rules of the Critique sterilize even the ideas it advocates" (Shors, p. A-17).

Seventh, kritiks increase complexity and obscurity. Kritiks almost always function outside the usual conceptual categories that create and evaluate debate arguments. The kritik stems from German and French philosophical traditions alien to almost all coaches and debaters. To use Foucault and/or Heidegger is to implement a philosophical school infamous for its vagueness, difficulty, obscurity, and complexity. And it is done in an arena alien to the purpose or intent of these strands of philosophy.

*Kritiks are logically flawed.* As a tactic, a stratagem, kritiks are both internally and externally flawed. First, because their use, if accepted, invites or creates infinite regression in debate logic and argument kritik answers, and because the concept itself ignores its own implication of endless deconstruction and regression. At its simplest level a kritik can just ask "why" of any affirmative assumption or supposition. When the affirmative answers the negative again asks "why" and this silly kritik game goes on until the time expires. Or the affirmative might answer a kritik with a kritik of the kritik. And then the negative might answer the affirmative kritik of the kritik with a kritik of the kritik that kritiks the original kritik. And so it can go until time expires.

William Shanahan, a defender of kritiks, states the problem clearly (p. A-7): "If you allow certain fundamental assumptions to be debated, then you open the way for all assumptions to be debated: infinite regression. This response presupposes the legitimacy and rules of logic. Infinite regression actually might parallel the experience of all seeking after knowledge:

withdrawal. Fine for thinking, but what about debate? Without limits, debate is impossible. The ground made available by the kritik is literally limitless."

Secondly, impact comparisons between kritiks and more traditional issues are oversimplified or invalid. If the negative wins a language kritik and the affirmative logic wins its claim to reduce the risk of world war kritik advocates would expect the negative to win because fiat is not real world. But what reason is there for a policy paradigm judge to vote for a team that offers no policy? If a value kritik succeeds in defeating one of the many values reflected in an affirmative case should the judge vote for the negative? Or are the unattacked values enough to warrant an affirmative ballot? What is the advantage to debate, if any, to give kritiks omnipotent status? Do kritiks supersede *a priori* status, or are they another *a priori* issue on an equal plane with topicality? If a kritik does not explain why it is a voting issue how should the judge make a decision? If the team winning the kritik claims it has voting issue status are they guilty of accepting the traditional assumptions of policy debate and therefore guilty of contradicting the premise of running a kritik?

Third, most kritiks do not pass a key test, the threshold of certainty. Kritiks, as Heidegger wrote about them, are much more about encouraging us to ask questions and examine our assumptions than they are about providing answers. Thus even justifiable kritiks do not mean that a decision is bad or should be changed. There is no *certain* harm that will result from a valid kritik. In their philosophical nature it is reasonable to argue that kritiks are as speculative and lacking of "real world" status as fiat premised arguments are.

Fourth, kritiks are not valid because they are not unique. Assuming that the negative does not introduce a counterplan then the judge has only two choices or comparisons: the affirmative plan and the present system. Unless the negative shows that the kritik does not occur in the present system then there is no reason to vote on the basis of the kritik. (For a longer explanation see Solt, p. A-10.)

Fifth, kritiks are a dead end.

Heidegger himself described them exactly that way. The questioning of all assumptions leaves no belief to hold onto. It leads to belief in nothing, nihilism. This can and often does produce a "paralyzing skepticism." Those who use kritiks are guilty of trying to convert a constructive exchange over how to best solve problems into a nihilistic deconstructive disaster that teaches students nothing but how to rationalize avoiding making decisions. A kritik never encourages or even allows complete examination of an issue because a kritik insists on rejection, on destruction.

*Kritiks are unnecessary.* A good kritik, a kritik with at least a touch of constructive content, can easily fit into the form of a stock voting issue. Hopes to obscure, or to avoid traditional argument burdens, may motivate some who refuse these more usual forms of argumentation. As Jinks persuasively tells us (p. A-16): "Arguments which can easily be made as conventional debate positions have become Critiques, not because the Critique is particularly meaningful, but because it is easier to win if a substantial portion of the responses suddenly do not apply."

A sound kritik can easily become a disadvantage, a major solvency attack, a harm turn, or another issue. If using language a certain way is harmful then make the argument as a disadvantage. If values underlying the affirmative plan are wrong then bring forth solvency attacks and disadvantages. If thinking is flawed then causal link attacks, harm turns, and solvency attacks are all possibilities.

*Kritiks are unfair.* First, because they are not a stock issue. If proponents of kritiks were willing to argue how and why they should be a new stock issue then they might be legitimate. Instead kritiks reject fiat, thus rejecting stock issues, and try to win by changing the premise of what policy debate should be about.

Second, kritiks are not voting issues. And they rarely claim to be. Instead they argue that what has been said has a major flaw and, by implication, the participants should start again with a more correct assumption or premise. But a false assumption does not always invalidate a conclusion. And starting again is not an option in a rule re-

stricted competitive setting.

Third, kritiks violate the rules of the game. Participants enter a tournament knowing from its invitation, and from tradition, that they will be participating in policy debates. This implies that the topic and clash, the framework used by the judge and opponents, will focus on policy.

But kritiks break this contract. The kritik opposes policy debate, and thus reduces comparison and the quality of clash. A kritik breaks the rules (Shors, p. A-17); it ignores the agreement to debate the topic and rejects the basis and structure in which the debaters have agreed to debate.

Fourth, kritiks have no burdens. A kritik is an attempt to win without an equal division of burdens, research effort, and breadth of preparation. Whereas most judges expect the affirmative to launch and win between five and eight stock issues before earning a ballot, the negative and their kritik is trying to win the ballot without a clear victory on even one voting issue. Kritiks do not introduce a policy defense, a counterplan, or any type of alternative. Kritiks have no brink, no threshold, no probability obligations, no impact, no uniqueness, no time frame requirement, no empirical proof, need not be case specific, and have no traditional burden of proof or refutation requirement. Kritiks just reject. Kritiks criticize without offering a clear alternative.

Fifth, kritiks are unfair to the affirmative because the affirmative is bound to the topic's wording. If the judge accepts a kritik based on the wording or clear intent of the topic wording then no affirmative has a fair chance to win the debate.

Sixth, kritiks destroy the fair division of ground. Allowing kritiks means that the affirmative and **only** the affirmative must be prepared on every philosophical question implied by the topic, the topic wording, any value associated with any part of the topic, and the system(s) of thought reflected in the topic and/or in debate as an activity. The number of kritiks available to the affirmative is far smaller than the number the negative might offer. Thus, there is nothing near equality on the issue. If kritiks are accepted the affirmative chance of winning is almost

nonexistent.

Shors, (A-p.18): "In the end the affirmative must defend something, and the negative can Critique endorsement to death. Such one-sided arguments discourage research and hard work. Resolutions typically require endorsement, and any endorsement can be a target of a Critique. Affirmatives could do their best to anticipate the Critique and still be helplessly caught in its grasp."

Seventh, kritiks encourage trivializing debate as an activity. No longer is policy comparison and problem solution the focus. Kritiks invite trivialization because ideas considered comparatively unimportant by the general populace, and by most of the intellectual elite, become possible tools to obtain victory. Fluency, clothing, reputation of the participating schools, nonverbal skills, loudness or volume, cleanliness, and even ties have been suggested as possible kritik issues. There is no limit once the policy focus is removed from debate.

Eighth, kritiks lack fair prior notice. Debaters enter a tournament legitimately expecting to debate policy comparisons. Unlike traditional voting issues, a kritik cannot be defeated by strong case research and preparation of deep logical argument extensions. The sheer number and diversity of kritiks preclude fair prior notice of kritiks as a ballot decision rule. If judges award ballots based on kritiks debaters are forced to accept its principles or risk a loss. That "coercion," as Shors refers to it (p. A-17), is unfair.

Some participants who use the kritik believe in its worth and value. But for such people there are other options that do not impinge on competitive policy debate, or do not attract the problems associated with current kritik use.

True believers can hold kritik tournaments, tournaments whose invitations and rules make it clear that kritiks are to be the focus of the competition. They can start a new contest event or a new activity. They might lobby to include in topic ballots a resolution specifically and openly designed to promote kritik debates.

If the kritik user believes in the fair advocacy of the kritik, rather than just its use a strategy to gain an unfair advantage, these are

viable alternatives that solve most or all of the problems associated with this divisive tactic.

## Learning More About the Issue

Literature on the kritik is becoming more readily available. Philosophy books that include introductions to the writings of Heidegger and Foucault are useful. Anthropology texts that include a discussion of different "world views" as well as books on the use of language can introduce readers to important background concepts.

Debate handbooks have several useful articles. The 1993 edition of the DEBATE RESEARCHERS GUIDE (on the health care topic) has four fine articles. In 1995 both CDE and WEST COAST negative handbooks had kritik articles. The CDE books also include kritik blocks.

The most complete publications are two new books: THE ANTI-KRITIK HANDBOOK (Roger Solt, 1995, Paradigm Research), and the upcoming KRITIKS (William Bennett, 1996, CDE).

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