

death of the organization itself, CEDA in its current state seems quite healthy in an organizational sense, though CEDA debate practice bears little resemblance to the debate that its founders envisioned.

PERFORMING THE AUTOPSY

CEDA debate is a [sic] variance with NDT debate in three major respects: 1) in its attitude towards evidence; 2) in delivery techniques; and 3) in its emphasis on an audience-oriented approach to debate. Both debaters and their judges should remember that unless these distinctions are observed, there may be a debate in progress, but it is not a good CEDA debate (Howe, 1981, p. 1; emphasis in original).

If any single statement could succinctly summarize the originary ideology of CEDA, it is this quotation from an essay by Jack Howe, widely perceived to be the "founder of CEDA." In practice, if not in the official statements of the organization, CEDA has abandoned its founding principles and is unlikely ever to return to them. Hence, we argue that CEDA is dead, and the corpse cannot be revived. Reading Howe's (1981) article (or even his later essay co-authored with Brownlee) now seems an antiquarian exercise with little relevance for a CEDA coach or debater in the twenty-first century. For all practical purposes, CEDA was ideologically homogeneous in 1979; ideologically heterogeneous in 1989; and ideologically homogeneous in 1999, albeit for very different reasons than in 1979. The arguments in this section suggest that Howe's ideology now has very few spokespersons left in CEDA, and it has essentially no impact on CEDA debate practice.

Several explanations might be offered for the death of CEDA, though no single explanation will be exhaustive, just as the autopsy results for a long-decaying corpse are sometimes inconclusive. Ideologically, pragmatically, and argumentatively, we see several issues as having contributed to this death.

Initially, as new CEDA member schools came to CEDA in the 1980s, they often did so out of a need for regional tournaments to attend, rather than because their students or coaches had any substantial commitment to CEDA's founding ideology. Some old CEDA schools, further, would hire new coaches whose backgrounds were in NDT debate, rather than in CEDA debate. These students and coaches brought research habits and argumentative practices with them, and we perceive that these habits were more often admired and duplicated than reviled. The judges supplied by relatively new CEDA member schools were often committed to judging models brought over from NDT, including variations on what Walter Ulrich (1984) labeled the "tabula rasa" judging paradigm. This paradigm purported to discourage judges from imposing their own norms for good argument on student debates, at least in terms of making the win-loss decision. James Hallmark (1990) would assert that the tabula rasa approach was the most widely used judging paradigm in CEDA by 1990, and James

Brey's (1989) review of the judging philosophy booklets used at the CEDA National Tournament seemed consistent with Hallmark's impression. Tabula rasa and its descendants still have many faithful adherents in the CEDA community, though individual understandings of the commitments required by the tabula rasa approach and its variations like "least intervention" appear to be inconsistent (see Bunch, 1994; McGee, 1998; Winebrenner, 1994a).

The tabula rasa approach was strongly disliked by many of those committed to CEDA's founding principles because judge intervention was widely perceived as the only enforcement mechanism available for making students toe the line where the balance thesis was or is concerned. For example, Horn and Underberg (1993) complain about judges who repeatedly condemn the content thesis while rewarding "spread debating, convoluted arguments, trick cases, and abuse of evidence" with tournament wins (p. 49). Instead, Horn and Underberg maintain that judges should vote against such practices as counterintuitive argumentation, even when debaters in a given round never raise this issue. They insist that judges "should reclaim the activity" to protect "the goals and aspirations" of academic debate in a fashion that a tabula rasa or least intervention critic never would endorse (Horn & Underberg, 1993, p. 56). Nevertheless, tabula rasa and its variations became dominant, and Horn and Underberg's became a minority viewpoint in CEDA.

Further, admiration for hard work and the implicit endorsement of the Horatio Alger myth contributed to the decline of CEDA's founding principles. If debaters wanted to succeed in CEDA, they were told to work harder. While sometimes this meant speaking drills or practice rounds, more often "hard work" was defined by the late 1980s as acquiring more evidence and more recent evidence, with "recent" often meaning published in the last week. As one younger debate educator interviewed by McGee in 1991 explained, when "I was around [as a CEDA debater], a team could get by by being pretty smart and by being fairly well-spoken. . . . The research burdens have increased, the stylistic demands as far as minimum level of competency, mental quickness, as well as verbal quickness, the demands have increased to a very large extent" (qtd. in McGee, 1993, p. 150). Tellingly, the same respondent concluded that, although the new expectations in CEDA were much more demanding, "I think it [CEDA] seems to be a higher quality activity as well" (qtd. in McGee, 1993, p. 150). Eventually, we perceive that all students in CEDA grew to understand this work ethic, and many grew to admire and adopt it as well. Those students who adhered to the new CEDA work ethic would grow to value the acquisition of large quantities of recent evidence as they sought competitive success and intellectual stimulation. Competitive pressures and time limitations would also encourage them to adopt jargon and delivery practices consistent with the full utilization of this evidence and the more complex argumentation that it allowed.

That delivery practices suited to auditors without special training in

debate took a back seat to the content thesis under these conditions is scarcely surprising. Even some students of the most orthodox of CEDA coaches grew to admire this work ethic and, eventually, endorsed the content thesis, as one of us was surprised to learn when debating such students in the 1980s. Advances in information technology and electronic databases during the 1990s further increased this research burden (see, e.g., Wastyn & Stables, 1995). Students who resisted the content thesis were eventually outnumbered at many tournaments across the country, and they faced a cadre of judges who were proponents of the work ethic. The position of these students was further complicated by the fact that many debaters who favored the content thesis were able to adapt to the demands of balance-thesis judges, but debaters who favored the balance thesis frequently could not produce the evidence they needed or make use of the required delivery practices if they were going to be competitive in a debate decided by a content-thesis judge.¹¹ In other words, it was easier for content-thesis debaters to adapt to their audiences than it was for balance-thesis debaters to adapt to theirs, given the specialized audiences frequently used in debate adjudication. That "work" was defined so narrowly and harshly is undoubtedly regrettable, a subject to which we return below, but students whose practice would have been admired by Jack Howe had an increasingly difficult time winning rounds at many tournaments. Perversely, by 1991 the recipient of the Jack Howe Award for top speaker at the California State University-Long Beach CEDA tournament would exemplify the sort of debate style and evidence use that Howe despised (Brossmann & Biermann, 1991). How many students left CEDA in the 1990s because research burdens were too high or such burdens seemed inconsistent with their vision of debate we will never know, but, anecdotally, rumors of such students were common.

The influx of new coaches, judges, and students into CEDA also made it impossible for those committed to CEDA's founding ideology to retain organizational control over CEDA and its organizational narratives. Competing narratives about work ethic, argument selection, delivery practices, and judging philosophies began to circulate, with resulting implications for perceptions of CEDA. Eventually there would be no single master narrative that explained CEDA to the satisfaction of its diverse constituencies. Instead, by the early 1990s there were multiple factions, each of which created its own totalizing narrative to account for all that was good and bad about CEDA. CEDA became ideologically coherent only when most of those committed to the founding ideology eventually left CEDA or gave up the public defense of that ideology, leaving CEDA to those who endorsed the

¹¹ Horn and Underberg (1993) maintain that the ability of debaters to "slow down and adapt to a general audience is a poor justification for the practice of speed debating," since anecdotal evidence suggests that some college debaters later have to unlearn many of their delivery habits (p. 51). We argue only that making arguments at a conversational delivery rate (as measured in words per minute) is easier for a "fast" debater than is a rapid delivery rate for a "slow" debater.

content thesis or, at least, were unwilling to dissent given the costs of resistance. From this perspective, CEDA's death was the result of an opportunistic infection that the body could not fight off. Perhaps observations about this phenomenon in CEDA explain why NEDA, which was founded as a reaction against CEDA, has constitutional provisions for the tight control of its membership and demands that its programs share common ideological commitments that are manifested by the practice of both judges and debaters.

Additionally, there is a material explanation for the decline of CEDA's original ideology. As described most recently by Jack Rogers (1999), there are substantial resource inequities when one compares travel funding, scholarship opportunities, and support staff among different forensics programs. If the acquisition of a national reputation helps a team to be competitively successful, then extensive travel will be required. If substantial resources are available to large programs, we should not be surprised that "hard work" and competitive excellence will eventually be defined by those programs in ways that give large programs the competitive advantage. Because such programs are more likely to offer graduate degree-earning opportunities, they also will produce future coaches who often have assented to the content thesis, even if they personally go on to direct small forensics programs with limited resources. From this materialist perspective, the subversion of CEDA's founding principles was inevitable, since those principles were not consistent with the interests of the moneyed class.

Finally, as suggested by Treadaway and Hill (1999), the balance thesis always was undertheorized in such documents as the CEDA Constitution. How was "balance" to be determined and operationalized among competing teams when those teams had different strengths? In comparison with the balance thesis, the content thesis has a certain judicial economy: Form is irrelevant as long as arguments meet minimal (and sometimes very minimal) standards for comprehension. In comparison with the balance thesis, it is simply less difficult for a judge to evaluate argument salience by primarily assessing evidence quantity and adherence to the technology of an exotic note-taking system (i.e., "flowing") once that technology becomes familiar. That the assessment of argument salience is defined in an exceedingly narrow way is rarely acknowledged. As Treadaway and Hill (1999) note, debaters now very infrequently compare source quality, as at least occasionally happened a decade ago in CEDA. Also, we perceive that depth of analysis is not often prized except in the very best and exceptional debates today. The typical, mundane debate emphasizes breadth over depth. Notwithstanding these concerns, however, current practice in CEDA provides much clearer guidance for debate adjudication than does the balance thesis, and the content thesis has been privileged accordingly.

The combination of these influences explains why the balance thesis has been ignored and belittled to the point that it is practically

meaningless for CEDA practice. By the end of the 1990s, even students and judges sympathetic with the balance thesis inevitably must comply with the prevailing ideology of the content thesis if they do not wish to be condemned to the margins of life and work in CEDA. The content thesis—that quality of argumentation is the only thing that matters in debate adjudication, as measured by a set of fairly well defined standards—is the dominant ideology of CEDA and has been so for some time. Resistance to this ideology exists, but resistance is rare, is more often found in journal articles and conference papers than in actual tournament practice, and always comes with the threat of sanction (e.g., judges are widely “struck” or given a “C” ranking on the mutual preference sheet). The content thesis, for all practical purposes, is hegemonic.

IDEOLOGY, ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY, AND CEDA

Twenty years ago, in a journal article on the future of forensics in the 1980s, David Zarefsky (1980) worried that the growing number of forensics-sponsoring organizations “harms us more than it helps. It fragments our loyalties and our energies, and it causes us to spend more time than we need on housekeeping, business meetings, committee assignments, and administrative detail” (p. 124). Zarefsky’s hope that some forensics organizations could be consolidated is not without sympathizers today (e.g., Hunt, 1997; Preston, 1997; Preston & LaBoon, 1995)), but there is little cause for optimism on this point. Rather than being consolidated over time, the number of debate-sponsoring organizations has proliferated in the 1990s. By our count, there are over ten different ways that a U.S. collegiate debate team or program can claim to have won “the” national (or international) debate championship, thanks to the existence of myriad debate-sponsoring organizations. The number of “national debate champions” in the U.S. each year balloons to almost 20 when one includes novice and junior-varsity titles. As we noted above, at least one of growing number of forensic organizations in the 1990s, NEDA, was founded as a direct consequence of dissatisfied balance-thesis advocates fleeing CEA, thus fulfilling Willard’s (1985) and Dittus’s (1991) separate predictions that a new organization would emerge if CEDA and NDT continued to be substantively identical in debate practice.

We have argued to this point that CEDA’s old ideology has disappeared and that CEDA’s current ideology is functionally identical to that of the current National Debate Tournament circuit. The differences between these two organizational cultures today have more to do with interpersonal relationships, established travel patterns, and idiosyncracies of jargon and tournament practice than with core ideological divisions. Over time, Zarefsky’s wish may be fulfilled in ever-closer cooperation and coordination between CEDA and NDT. However, the proliferation of NEDA, IPDA, and NPDA have made for an increasingly fragmented forensics community in which a common mission and purpose (other than competitive success) are difficult to

discern. One wonders what outsiders would make of a discipline called "communication" that cannot decide how to operationalize the practice of student tournament debating.

From our current vantage point, and remembering that the co-authors disagree on the relative merits of the content and balance theses, we can discern several options to pursue. Initially, one could endorse the content thesis and dismiss other options as unsound on pragmatic and/or pedagogical grounds. For the reasons rehearsed above, it seems to us wildly unlikely that a consensus could or would ever emerge in support of the content thesis. The balance thesis or something similar to it, however difficult to enact in practice, is simply too compelling for many of those trained in the rhetorical tradition to reject, even for the limited purpose of facilitating classroom debating (e.g., Bartanen & Frank, 1999). Beyond the well-known complaints about delivery practices in CEDA and NDT, the association of the content thesis with jargon and arcane disputes about the finer points of governmental policy simply does not and will not inspire much enthusiasm among those who prefer rhetorical training for the public sphere over the technical sphere (Hollihan, Baaske, & Riley, 1987). For example, while there has been an effort of late in CEDA to create separate divisions in which adherents to the balance thesis could compete (e.g., "public sphere debate"), there is little evidence that those who have left CEDA would be eager to return (e.g., Cirlin, 1998). Indeed, we speculate that it is years too late to make CEDA into the diverse, big-tent organization for which some debate educators once hoped (McGee, 1993), and some current CEDA adherents object to the effort to make the organization diverse for a variety of ideological and practical reasons (e.g., Klemz & Simerly, 1998).

Another alternative would be to seek out a disciplinary consensus in favor of some variation on the balance thesis. Our review of arguments made for the content thesis suggests that a wholesale rejection of this thesis is not immediately likely, since supporters of the content thesis do not concede the possibility of "a world that is essentially different from the present one, and at the same time better" (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 46). Also, even for those multiple organizations that now allegedly exist in part to promote the balance thesis in debate practice, all is not sweetness and light. For example, a proponent of the balance thesis, Kristine M. Bartanen (1997a), has complained about the lack of expert evidence in parliamentary debate as being pedagogically problematic and notes that parliamentary debate is "at times . . . a sophistic rather than rhetorical event" (p. 58). Darrin Hicks (1998), a parliamentary debate coach with a CEDA background, also worries that "some parliamentary debaters, like some politicians, often confuse 'public' communication with 'mass' communication and reduce complex public problems to ideological slogans and issue soundbites instead of arguments" (pp. 353-354). For Bartanen, Hicks and others (e.g., Cirlin, 1998), the concern appears to be that parliamentary debate sometimes models the worst of contemporary public discourse by privileging form above content, rather than striving for

balance.

Nor are complaints about alternatives to CEDA and NDT limited to parliamentary debate. NEDA by all accounts achieves ideological purity in favor of the balance thesis by becoming a closed system that basically forbids dissent (e.g., Preston, 1997), while complaints about the Lincoln-Douglas and IPDA formats also are not difficult to find (e.g., Miller, 1996). The organizational unity in intercollegiate debate that existed 40 years ago is long gone, and little evidence exists that such unity can ever be restored beyond putting together the occasional panel at a national convention or working together on a very few, shared objectives through an umbrella organization. While Willard (1985) was undoubtedly right to conclude that founding new organizations will not make our problems go away in the forensics community, neither is it productive to fervently wish for a consensus to come into being despite ample evidence that no consensus is in the offing. The best we can hope for is the inter-organizational cooperation for which Willard argued, and even such cooperation depends on our ability to get together long enough to agree on common interests. At worst, we can look forward to a future in which, as Abraham Lincoln warned the secessionist states in his First Inaugural Address, the logic of fragmentation is unending, as each new problem leads to the proliferation of ever smaller, ever weaker nation-states (or organizations) as the older, larger units fall apart at the first sign of serious disagreement.

If ideological disagreement is unavoidable at the present between and among an array of debate-sponsoring organizations, one would expect that those organizations would be ideologically coherent, at least. After all, such coherence ought to be one of the few advantages of organizational fragmentation; as organizations become smaller and less diverse, ideological consistency ought to be increasingly less difficult to achieve. In a recent article, Treadaway and Hill (1999) make a compelling and thoughtful case for such coherence in their study of CEDA. Like us, Treadaway and Hill (1999) found that the "macro-narrative" of CEDA in such formal organizational documents as the CEDA Constitution and Bylaws is inconsistent with the "social reality" of debate practice at debate tournaments. Because macro-narratives are found in the "formal communication" (p. 2) of the organization and an understanding of the macro-narrative is necessary to have a "meaningful understanding of the organization" (p. 3), Treadaway and Hill (1999) recommend that CEDA have an "intra-organizational dialogue to arrive at consensus about its major purpose," with the aim of constructing a macro-narrative that "'rings true' to those within as well as outside the organization" (p. 23). Treadaway and Hill close with a call for an "open, honest, and involving" dialogue on CEDA's purpose and fundamental principles (p. 23).

Despite the intuitive merit of a call for self-examination and assessment, we believe that Treadaway and Hill may overstate the importance of formal structure for the members of large organizations in

general and for CEDA in particular, as well as the likelihood that such self-examination would like to meaningful changes. To development this argument, we need to explain that, where internal constituencies are concerned, the CEDA Constitution and Bylaws largely are irrelevant unless someone has a question about mundane issues of tournament administration or student eligibility (Cross Examination, 1998). Those most deeply involved in an organization are the least likely to read, let alone be guided by, any formal document, since they know how CEDA "works" and what CEDA "means" already. For them, CEDA has become what Stanley Deetz, following Berger and Luckmann, would describe as "the social equivalent of a personal habit" arrived it over time and with which those still committed to CEDA debate are quite comfortable (Deetz, 1992, p. 126).

As we explain above, CEDA does not lack for a coherent organizational identity and ideology. It has one, which is manifested in debate practice on almost every single weekend of the academic year in one or more parts of the country. The great majority of CEDA debaters, coaches, and judges are not looking for direction by going through their file drawers in search of CEDA's Constitution and Bylaws (Cross Examination, 1998). Instead, they are getting the direction they need by examining the public performances of respected CEDA coaches and judges and competitively successful debaters. Every student observer of an elimination round is learning how one day to be debating in rather than watching that elimination round by getting a demonstration of what counts as good, right, and proper debate in CEDA. Formal communication in documents like a Constitution or mission statement do not normally have a substantial impact in an organization like CEDA, where identity is constituted through shared stories of debates past and present, judging and coaching idiosyncrasies, and successful and unsuccessful argumentative strategies. The "quotidian, taken-for-granted realities" of CEDA are grounded in the content thesis propounded weekend-after-weekend, hour-after-hour at debate tournaments, rather than in a formal document that is almost never read (Mumby, 1997, p. 344). The realities of CEDA for its practitioners are not found in the formal communication of CEDA, however much the professionals who crafted those documents might wish to believe otherwise.

Should an intra-organizational dialogue take place for the purpose of creating ideological unity, moreover, our sense is that such a dialogue would be unproductive. We assume that story-telling is "not a simple representing of a pre-existing reality, but is rather a politically motivated production of a certain way of perceiving the world which privileges certain interests over others" (Mumby, 1987, p. 114). In crafting a new, formal narrative that makes the CEDA Constitution and Bylaws ideologically consistent with debate practice, the majority of CEDA proponents-who we perceive as endorsing various versions of the content thesis-would have every motivation merely to assert the value of their current practice and to make modest changes

that depict current practice in the most favorable possible light. Further, an even more economical move would be to ignore the calls for such a meaningful intra-organizational dialogue. The detritus of the content thesis and its entailments may remain in the CEDA Constitution and Bylaws, but the balance thesis is dead where the everyday, lived experience of CEDA is concerned. Content-thesis advocates know that the balance thesis has no meaningful impact on debate practice, yet it tells a compelling story to those not familiar with the organization. The obvious complaint is that the deliberate adoption of a public relations message incommensurable with intra-organizational practice is ethically problematic, but the fundamental vagueness of constitutional language means that those defending CEDA will advance interpretations of the Constitution and Bylaws that reduce perceptions of incommensurability.

In short, we suspect that the dialogue for which Treadaway and Hill (1999) call would not have a major or meaningful impact. Rather than being surprised that the ideology imbedded in CEDA's Constitution and Bylaws is incommensurable with the current ideology of the community, the community as a whole would be more likely to politely stifle a collective yawn and ask, "so what?" Again, ideological incoherence is not the problem with CEDA. By every relevant measure CEDA is ideologically coherent and growing more so with each passing year as disaffected coaches and students flee CEDA for other debate-sponsoring organizations (e.g., NPDA) or leave intercollegiate debate entirely.

Some might find our assessment to this point to be pessimistic. Surely the present situation is not hopeless, and we still admire much about intercollegiate debate in all its myriad forms. In attempting to get beyond the mutual contempt and inter-organizational hostility that pervades much of the world of intercollegiate debate, we could imagine an effort to call into question the dichotomy between content and balance that now exists in the various debate communities. After all, balance advocates do not advocate content-free debate, and content adherents are not usually comfortable with embracing incoherence in an activity that still relies on orality (see Weiss, 1998). One reviewer of an earlier draft of this essay suggested that the balance metaphor, undertheorized as we maintain it is, might be replaced by a "blend" metaphor, as references to a blend of argumentative competencies might less dogmatically account for the array of elements that together constitute our collective ideal for worthwhile debate. While something is either in or out of balance—demands for balance suggest that only one right option exists—a blend metaphor allows for a range of emphases and practices that would still be acceptable within the "framework of tolerance" advocated by Preston (1997, p. 31). *Contra* Preston, though, we see no requirement for this framework of tolerance to be organizational in character, since tolerance is an ideological commitment that need not lead to the creation of a unified debate-sponsoring umbrella group.

Because advocates of academic debate maintain in one way or another that debate is an activity dedicated to the rigorous testing of arguments in a way that stimulates critical thinking, those advocates do not wish to see debate become the worst sort of elocutionary exercise. However, advocates of debate as currently practiced almost always embrace the orality of the activity, which demands that students develop all of the classical rhetorical competencies-invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery-if they are to be successful. If advocates of academic debate recognized that a blend of all the attributes they wished to develop could be found across multiple tournaments and in participation in different forensic events, then an ideological rapprochement between balance- and content-thesis scholars might be possible, without any pretense that all disagreement will end. A blend metaphor might also encourage new experiments, like pairing some preliminary rounds at tournaments with a preference for mutual "B" or "C" judges. Such judges would not be the first choices of student debaters, but their presence might encourage debaters to work on diverse approaches to advocacy. Again, such a rapprochement and/or experimentation would not necessarily require any major reorganization of the debate communities, and such a reorganization seems improbable. The institutional and ideological commitments of both organizational officers and rank-and-file members, as Preston (1997) recognized, are simply too deep-rooted to make us believe that such a reorganization is likely in the near future.

CONCLUSION

As we completed the first draft of this essay, CEDA was studying a proposal to change its name, given the perception that "cross examination" in its organizational title seems anachronistic. From our point of view, such a change of name could not be more timely if it occurs, since the ideology once marked by the label "CEDA" has long since disappeared. A name change would symbolically complete the death of CEDA and indicate that a new organization has been born. In their current form, CEDA's Constitution and Bylaws and other public pronouncements may well be inconsistent more often than not with its practice. In the end, however, we doubt that CEDA will change its public face substantially, precisely because that public face is respectable on casual inspection and because changing that public face would be too much trouble. Why alter meaningfully the portions of a Constitution that would have absolutely no bearing on the actual practice of CEDA?

We wish to close on an optimistic note. We care a great deal about the future of academic debate, and we believe that CEDA and other debate-sponsoring organizations perform a valuable service for thousands of students each year. We cannot maintain, however, that a deceptively twitching corpse is alive and well when it has not been so for some time, and we ask the debate community to ponder the death of CEDA as an object lesson in the current divisions among forensics

students and professionals. That those divisions can be completely healed or rendered invisible we doubt, but a candid assessment of the reasons for those divisions would allow us to be more respectful of our differences and more reflective about where we should be going. If we are to make a compelling case for public and institutional support of academic debate, some middle position will have to be discovered between contempt for all that is "other" and calls for organizational unity that are not likely to capture the imagination of a fragmented set of debate communities.

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