

argue that truth doesn't exist), why should it cause a judge to vote against the opposing team?

Cross-examination time is very important in a debate round when dealing with critiques. Consider, for example, the savage/victim/ savior critique described earlier in this chapter. This critique argues that increased public health assistance to provide safe water and sanitation in sub-Saharan Africa should be rejected because the case implies that Africans are victims needing to be saved. This savior metaphor promotes the recolonization of Africa. An affirmative debater can have great fun in cross-examination asking the negative debater to explain the meaning of this critique. Consider the possibilities:

- Please explain how providing assistance for safe water and sanitation recolonizes Africa.
- How many colonies did the United States have in sub-Saharan Africa?
- So, any effort to save lives in Africa should be avoided?
- Are you, then, advocating that the United States should stop all forms of assistance to Africa?
- Are you saying that the governments in sub-Saharan Africa can, without assistance, solve the problem of unsafe water, or are you saying that you just don't care if they die?
- Is the problem with the language or with the act? In other words, is it okay to preserve lives so long as we don't use the word *saved* or *savior*?
- You say that we don't dare refer to sub-Saharan Africans as victims—are you implying, then, that they are themselves to blame for their poverty?
- You say that colonization was responsible for most of the problems plaguing Africa, yet are you now saying that the colonizers have *no* obligation to help address these problems?

The truth of the matter is that most critiques are so counterintuitive that they fall under their own weight if inquisitive debaters can force the proponents of the critiques to explain them. So long as the debate remains at the jibberish level (the reification of social alienation, or we have to choose between Habermasian discourse and the subtextual paradigm of context), the critique is allowed to continue to wear the emperor's new clothes.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON CRITIQUES

Most debate teams who run critiques use the same briefs from year to year, ignoring the specifics of the particular debate topic. Often it is the case that critique briefs were