

THE LOGIC OF CRITERIA FORMATION*

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The concept of criterion (or criteria) is widely used in philosophical analysis as well as in science and in everyday thinking, and yet there has been hardly any attempt to clarify its logic. Headings such as "the criterion of truth," "the criteria of adequacy for an axiomatic system," "the criteria of acceptability for a scientific explanation," etc., indicate familiar topics in logic and philosophy of science. But one looks in vain for any discussion as to how a particular criterion or a set of criteria is formed and validated in a given context. Philosophers seem to have ignored this question, but their reason for doing so is not immediately apparent.

My purpose in this paper is to draw attention to this question, and to offer some preliminary analysis of it. But first a point should be noted: the occasion for introducing a criterion is always evaluation. Now the act of evaluation in any context is an act of comparison - a comparison between the object (this object may take the form of a performance, process or thing) under evaluation and some criteria relevant to it. These criteria provide tests which the object must pass if it is to be considered good or adequate. But on what grounds are these criteria invoked? What makes them relevant to the object under evaluation?

Broadly speaking, we may distinguish two radically different approaches to the problem. On the one hand, there is the claim that assertions of value are not factual but only 'emotive.' (Ayer; Stevenson). When we say something is good or bad, we simply express our feelings or taste. On this view, the criteria introduced in any evaluative situation merely reflect our personal feelings or attitudes. They have no objective basis whatsoever. In contrast, we have an approach prevalent among empirically minded social scientists. According to this a thorough survey or examination of the object under evaluation will somehow yield the criteria relevant to its evaluation. Indeed in some areas of the social sciences criteria formation

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is thought to consist of deriving certain descriptive statements by empirical procedures such as job analysis, collection of critical incidents, or questionnaire surveys. However, in other areas of the social sciences such as law, politics and religion, criteria formation is sometimes thought to be a matter of 'decree' rather than 'discovery.' Here again it appears to be divorced from empirical research.

From our present stand-point, all these views suffer from a common shortcoming, namely, each emphasizes one aspect only while overlooking the other aspect of the matter. The empirical approach overlooks the fact that the criteria invoked in any act of evaluation are essentially relative to what one conceives to be **significant** or **desirable**. Even if the object of evaluation lends itself to direct observation (which is not always the case), a full description might still fall short as an adequate basis for criteria formation. Merely analysing and describing an object would not in and of itself yield criteria for its evaluation. Following the empirical description of the object (or rather the class of objects to which it belongs), we need to designate some features or characteristics thus described as significant. This clearly involves certain value considerations on the part of the evaluator. That this is the case is clear from the fact that any given object can be differently evaluated depending upon the criteria we have in mind. Thus, however empirical the procedure may seem to be, the appeal to criteria in any evaluation always involves the entry of a value judgement, though this entry may be quite surreptitious.

As to the 'emotive' view, it also requires drastic modification. The claim that criteria introduced in evaluation have no basis other than what is agreeable to one's feeling or taste is, to say the least, misleading. It overlooks the factual aspect of the matter. Its implication is not only subjectivism but also arbitrariness. If this claim were the case, in evaluating some object, anyone's criteria would be as good as anyone else's, and no valuation could lend itself to intersubjective justification. But value judgements do in fact lend themselves to such justification, and in practice, we tend to rely on the judgement of experts rather than that of laymen.

Thus we see that formation of criteria presupposes an empirical analysis of the class properties of the object under evaluation. But this analysis, though necessary, is not sufficient. Selecting and designating one or more of these properties as significant or valuable is also required. This is where our value consideration comes in.

The fact that a criterion is one of the properties which the object under evaluation shares with its kind determines its field of relevant application, and the fact that it is identified as **significant** makes it relevant to the purpose.

The dual nature of a value judgement as is embodied by a criterion is revealed by the distinction maintained in criminal law cases. The following quotation from Northrop illuminates this point :

In a jury trial, the question of fact is assigned solely to the jury, the question of evaluating the facts being left to the judge who appeals to the norms of the legal and political system in question as the criterion of this evaluative judgement of the described facts after the jury's specification of them (Northrop)

Now it may be said that "the norms of the legal and political system" to which the judge appeals as his criteria are established as a matter of decree. However, this is not the case. Even a cursory examination of the procedures through which a law comes into existence will suffice to show that a legal norm, like any other value judgement, involves factual as well as value consideration. Without a proper factual basis no law or legal norm can be relevant to a given society.

Any act of evaluation, we have said, requires the use of one or more criteria; but a criterion itself is a product of evaluation. In other words, every criterion embodies a value judgement, and as such it is neither purely descriptive nor purely prescriptive, but a mixture of both. The fact that it is in part descriptive saves it from being irrelevant or arbitrary; and the fact that it is in part prescriptive determines its normative character. Hence a criterion is valid only if it is a correct expression of both a property describing the object under evaluation and also a value consideration in virtue of which that property is held to be significant. To the extent to which this value consideration obtains community acceptance, to that extent the validity of the criterion becomes general.

To illustrate the dual nature of a criterion and the conditions of its validity, let us look at two examples - one simple and other somewhat more complex.

Example 1 : This apple is good because it is tender, juicy and delicious.

The valuation, "This apple is good," rests in this case on three distinct criteria : that it is tender, that it is juicy, and that it is deli-

rious. Now each of these criteria represents a descriptive property of the class of objects of which our apple is a member. But they are not exhaustive. There are other properties that could be applied. For instance, size, shape, color, brightness of skin, etc. What makes us single out the ones given in our example is our feeling or taste which may be personal or may represent a more or less general consensus. In no case, however, are they necessary. Depending on our value considerations, properties other than those three could be selected as significant. If, for instance, we considered the same apple as an object for decoration rather than one for eating, we might perhaps use properties such as color, size and shape as the criteria of goodness.

This example dealing with the evaluation of a concrete object readily reveals the logic of criteria formation. In many cases the object may be a human performance or a more or less abstract conceptual system rather than a physical object. Example 2 is in this latter category.

Example 2 : Mr. A's teaching is good because he encourages pupils to think independently.

Here, "encouragement of independent thinking" is used as the criterion of good teaching. As a type of performance, teaching is comprised of a number of activities. Only if "encouragement of independent thinking" is included among them can it be said to be factually based and, therefore, as a criterion to have relevance of application. If, on the other hand, it is not a member of those activities (as it might not be in some traditional cultures or under modern totalitarian systems), then, as a criterion, it would be irrelevant even though we may personally value it very highly. As a matter of fact, an empirical study of teaching in different cultural or ideological contexts will soon show that "encouragement of independent thinking" is not a generic feature of teaching. Thus, whether this criterion is factually based or not depends on our concept of teaching or philosophy of education.

Whenever the factual relevance of a criterion is in doubt, a simple test called "the argument of open question" may help to clarify the situation. Applied to our example it runs as follows: Mr. A. encourages his pupils to think independently, but is he teaching? Now if this question is open, that is, if it does not sound redundant, then "encouragement of independent thinking" is not amongst the activities that comprise teaching **for us**. But if the question sounds re-

dundant in the sense that the answer is implicit in the antecedent part of the sentence, then the question is a closed one, and, therefore, our criterion does have relevance of application.

As in our first example, when the property singled out as a criterion is a generic feature of the class of objects to which the object under evaluation belongs, the relevance of application is obvious, and hence there is no need for the test just mentioned. But a property singled out as a criterion, need not represent an empirically generic feature of a class of things; it may be a conventional or definitional property as it is in our second example. But whether a given property is empirically generic or merely definitional, it must represent a constitutive element of the concept of things under evaluation if it is to function as a relevant criterion.

REFERENCES

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ÖZET

Ölçüt Oluşturmanın Mantığı

Bilimsel arařtırmalarda olduđu kadar, felsefe ve günlük düşünmede de çok yaygın kullanılan ölçüt kavramının, literatürde mantıksal bir açıklamasına rastlamak güçtür. Bu kısa çalışmanın amacı ölçüt kavramının yapı ve niteliğini aydınlatmak, geçerlik koşullarına işaret etmektir.

Basit bir irdeleme, ölçüt kullanımının deđişmez bağlamı olarak **deđerlendirme**'yi karşımıza çıkarmaktadır. Bir nesne veya süreci "iyi" ya da "kötü" diye nitilemede bazı ölçütlere başvurulduđunu görmekteyiz. Arařtırmacının çođu kez üstü-örtük varsaydıđı, bazan da açıkca belirlemek zorunda kaldıđı ölçütün kaynađı nedir, geçerliđi nasıl saptanabilir?

Bu soruya ilk bakıřta bağdařmaz görünen iki yanıt verilmiřtir :

(1) Deđerlendirme konusu ne olursa olsun, başvuru olan ölçüt kişisel eğilim ve duyguları yansıtmaktan ileri geçmez. Başka bir deyiřle ölçütlerin olgusal ya da nesnel bir temeli yoktur. (2) Ölçütler olgusal niteliktedir; deđerlendirmeye konu nesne veya süreci kapsıyan türün tanımlayıcı özellikleri, türü oluřturan öğelerin deđerlendirilmesinde ölçüt işlevi görür.

Dikkatli bir eleřtiri iki yanıtın da tek yanlı kaldıđını göstermektedir. Birinci yanıt dođru olsaydı, ölçütler kişiye göre olmaktan öteye geçmez, dolayısı ile deđer yargılarımızda anlaşmazlıkları giderme çabasına inandırma dıřında olanak kalmazdı. İkinci görüře gelince, deđerlendirmeyi tümüyle betimlemeye indirgemekte, ölçüt diye seçilen özelliklerin kişinin deđerlendirme bağlamında neyi **önemli** saydıđına bađlı olduđunu gözden kaçırmaktadır. İncelememiz, bu iki görüřün daha kapsamlı bir görüře birleřeceđini, somut örneklere giderek, temellendirdiđi savındadır.