

Rather than a literal interpretation of Kuhn's perspective, Dempsey and Hartmann seem to use Kuhn's arguments concerning the search for objective knowledge as a metaphor for the processes used in arriving at social knowledge. By using this metaphor, they artificially derive the benefits of being associated with the truths discernable by reliable and consistent measurement schemes. Furthermore, Dempsey and Hartmann use this metaphor to blame those practicing "revolutionary" science for "evolutionary fragmentation" - read: the break up of NDT in favor of CEDA (see 1986, pp. 170-171), reducing participation by confusing novices with theory debate within rounds (see 1986, p. 171), and reducing the need for audience analysis by depending on emergent voting criteria (see 1986, pp. 171-172). These arguments deserve examination by those coaches who are being indicted.

Dempsey and Hartmann's first contention is that debater-supplied paradigms produce an evolutionary fragmentation of debate (1986, p. 170). This, they claim, is due to the fact that judges who do not acquiesce to emergent paradigms are outcasts whose ballots become meaningless as instruments of influence. Here the Kuhnian metaphor is misapplied. Kuhn does claim that when a new paradigm emerges, "those unwilling or unable to accommodate their work to it must proceed in isolation or attach themselves to some other group" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 19). But even Kuhn does not infer that their work is without merit or without influence, particularly when that person retains the power of the ballot. Yet these authors claim that "once people conclude that their input is always ignored, we should expect that they would leave the forensic community" (1986, p. 170). If nothing else, CEDA debate is a tribute to those who would not leave the community and sought alternative ways of voicing their opinions over issues that were continually ignored. Perhaps this is where the metaphor of a paradigm shift is most rightfully applied.

Dempsey and Hartmann finally come to what seems to be the substance of their arguments when they indict those who allow theory debate within competitive rounds. Perhaps this is where the article should have begun since, as Kuhn contends, "any study of paradigm-directed or paradigm-shattering research must begin by locating the responsible group or groups" (Kuhn, 1970, p. 180). Although the authors spend most of their time attacking the use of **tabula rasa**, the problem seems more clearly addressed to those coaches who allow theory debate in rounds. The effect, they claim is that allowing theory debate into policy rounds drives coaches and their teams to seek alternative formats (read: CEDA). Consider this passage:

A second effect [of the **tabula rasa** paradigm] may be increased frustration for judges who find themselves voting on emergent criteria because they believe it to be procedurally correct, yet recognize it may result in harmful educational practices. Feeling compelled to engage in behavior you perceive to be counter-productive is uniquely aggravating (Bostrom, 1983, p. 92).



This frustration may harm the activity directly. Surely it is no mere coincidence that simultaneous with the growth of **tabula rasa** there has been a decline in policy debate and growth in alternative formats (Dempsey and Hartmann, 1986, p. 170).

The authors continue the paragraph by charting the growth of CEDA since 1971. Perhaps I missed a causal link here. Although theory debate was among the many perceived abuses of the NDT format which lead to the growth of CEDA, to attribute the decline of NDT to this one issue is inappropriate. Further, nowhere in their analysis do Dempsey and Hartmann present evidence that indicates CEDA judges abstain from theory debate or the **tabula rasa** paradigm. Certainly such abstinence is not an unwritten code of behavior in CEDA. Moreover, I find it odd that these judges would comply with an educational practice they found to be "counter-productive" merely because it is popular. In any case, the authors fail to articulate why this paradigm (?) is harmful to **debate**.

Finally, I must conclude that the introduction of the Kuhnian metaphor itself must be challenged as being merely a smoke screen for an oversimplified explanation of NDT's decline rather than providing a substantive position on the issues. Although the authors contend that we have "evolutionary fragmentation" because of the division between NDT and CEDA, they demonstrate no **harm** that has resulted except, perhaps, that NDT is no longer in control of the debate community. If harms are indeed present, they should be articulated more clearly.

The authors also contend there is waning participation by novices who have left the area because they are confused about theory debate within rounds. Yet the authors provide no evidence to support this stand. The argument could be made that the reduction in numbers of students is confined to NDT and may stem either from the corresponding growth in CEDA or the decline in enrollment at universities in general. No causal link is provided to show that novices are avoiding debate because they do not understand debate theory. Indeed, I would suggest that few coaches would condone a student's participation in absence of some understanding about what it is they are trying to do.

The authors further contend that **tabula rasa** reduces the need for audience analysis by depending on emergent voting criteria rather than judge-supplied paradigms to which the debaters must adjust. This is, perhaps, their strongest argument, and yet it also does not serve them well. **Tabula rasa** does not infer the absence of values or standards, merely the temporary suspension of narrowly defined ones. This suspension allows, as in court cases, the fair hearing of information before judgment is applied. No ethical scholar would condone the "refusal of academic judges to intervene when argumentative practices are perceived to be counter-productive" or when they "threaten the educational integrity of academic debate" (1986, p. 172) as Dempsey and Hartmann suggest. The fact that a critic suspends his/her judgment pending a fair hearing does not suggest that the critic has no standards or that they will not be applied during the evaluative process.



This position is even more strongly stated by the "Critic of Argument" paradigm (see e.g. Balthrop, 1981) which also allows for theory debate but which is never attacked at all by these authors.

Dempsey and Hartmann's arguments are not, however, without merit - for who of us would want to hear metadecbate throughout a round with no reference to topic content? These authors seem to be concerned with what Toulmin calls "an exclusive preoccupation with logical systematicity" (1972, p. vii). Rationality, as Toulmin reminds us, is more often demonstrated by judges "preparedness to respond to novel situations with open minds - acknowledging the shortcomings of their former procedures and moving beyond them" (1972, p. viii) than to remain blindly loyal to a paradigm that may have outlived its usefulness. This is not true for Dempsey and Hartmann because the "ideal standards" that are "dictated by the judge's own argumentation paradigm" are the only significant standards in the round (1986, pp. 171-172).

These standards are also non-debatable issues merely by their status as "ideal" in the judge's mind. This position seems misguided since criticism is a tool for providing greater or a better understanding of the topic which we are viewing; it seeks enlightenment, and in the critical practice of debate, it seeks to challenge not only the conclusions we reach, but the assumptions we bring with us and the process we use to arrive at opinions.

The final blow for the argument against **tabula rasa** supplied by Dempsey and Hartmann comes at the end of their position statement. Even though they argue throughout the article that strict judicial paradigms should be used rather than emergent paradigms, in their "alternatives" section they contend that strict judicial criteria should be used "unless a round present[s] anomalies with which a given paradigm could not deal" (1986, p. 172). And what should they do them? **Rely on emergent paradigms.**

### THE PROPER PLACE OF THEORY DEBATE

Though this article provides an attack on the position offered by Dempsey and Hartmann, it is also necessary to examine the rationale for accepting for theory debate as a sound argumentative practice. In order to evaluate if theory debate is indeed a valid practice for debate, we must address five questions. First, how can we define theory debate in terms of its current use? Second, is such debate appropriate as an issue? Third, is it widely accepted by critics as appropriate? Fourth, is it founded in theory? And finally, is it a good message strategy? These questions permit us to consider the controversy surrounding theory debate in light of sound rhetorical principles.

**How can we define theory debate in terms of its current use?** The first half of Dempsey and Hartmann's definition provides an excellent place to begin. They see theory debate as "the clashes occuring during a round over the argumentative



practices and standards debaters would like to see applied during that round . . .” (1986, p. 186). Though this paper is directed toward the defense of decision standards as issues in a round, there are times when a team could show that argumentative practices are debatable issues as well. At such times, the debaters act as litigants and the critic acts as a judge in court determining what behaviors, lines of argument or types of evidence are the more reasonable ones.

I object to the false dichotomy presented when critics like Dempsey and Hartmann attempt to define theory debate in contrast to “discourse relative to the resolution’s content area” (1986, p. 168). The distinction between topical content and the standards and practices through which that content is expressed is often very difficult to determine. Further, instead of removing the topic from the standards and practices through which it is deliberated, it would make more sense to expose those processes, modify them when they are misguided, confirm them when they are appropriate.

As currently practiced, theory debate requires the judge to be willing to suspend judgment pending a fair hearing on the validity of a particular message strategy or line of argument. It also enables the negative team to question affirmative practices if they are perceived to provide an unfair advantage or unwarranted burden. Considering the lack of established conventions for value debating, this method of inquiry is especially useful for determining what constitutes a fair burden for each team. Policy debate also employs this practice for purposes of testing new assumptions and challenging the validity of conventions that seem outdated or cumbersome.

**Is theory debate appropriate as an issue?** If we view debate as a deliberative process, controversy over the paradigm to be used in a round is an appropriate issue. A team cannot expect to know what paradigm is actually operative for either the other team or the judge unless somewhere within the round the paradigm is articulated. Because each debate is a communication event influenced by a host of factors including the teams competing, their level of experience, the judge(s) and their level of experience, the observers present, time of day, fatigue, and a host of other factors, both the teams and the judge know very little about what is to unfold during the course of the round. As such, debate is an architectonic process - one that is generative. Each debate fulfills different goals and purposes not only for the debaters and judge but for the observers as well. Arguments emerge which are unique to the case at hand, and the clash of positions and personalities engaging one another produces a different product. Articulating the paradigm can help provide constancy and internal direction for the debate by reminding the participants of what constitutes a “good reason” for the adoption or rejection of the resolution.

The advantages of allowing students to enter into the debate over decision rules are numerous. It allows debaters to enter into academic debate at its most critical stages because these issues require the debaters know something of the ways in which critics make decisions. It challenges them to find and apply values that the judges



can vote legitimately for or against. It helps them learn how to cast arguments in light of conflicting and often deep-seeded values. Moreover, within the context of value topics, it enables them to attempt to introduce a rational standard for the settlement of claims.

Theory debate also requires coaches to instruct students in debate theory and not merely coach to the topic. Walker and Congalton describe the process of determining a decision rule the establishment of "the most critical lens for appraising the debate" (1987, p. 133). To follow the analogy, debaters cannot advocate a particular lens unless they have some understanding of the types of viewing patterns that predominate the judging field.

To my understanding, paradigmatic debate is a sign of debate coming of age. We can no longer consider a student well-coached who does not have some grasp of argumentative theory as well as topic understanding. This position allows us to open a new chapter in argumentation. Not only are we returning to a type of debate which is more audience-centered (and the associated values that come from an art which is both useful and beautiful in a real-world context) but we discover the development of understandings which are within the province of rhetoric. Many disciplines, such as political science or history could teach students by intensive training on a particular topic. Many, at varying levels of sophistication, also cast the learning environment in oral mediums such as Model United Nations or other programs supply. Yet debate can offer substantive topic depth as well as theoretical insights to a student. To sum the argument, and to do it from the Kuhnian perspective, "the study of paradigms . . . is what mainly prepares the student for membership in the particular scientific community with which he will later practice" (Kuhn, 1970, pp. 10-11).

**Is theory debate widely accepted by critics as appropriate?** This question is important if we concur with Douglas Ehninger that "debate is what we say it is" (1958, p. 30). There is much accumulated evidence which suggests that judges are now saying how they view paradigmatic debate. Cross and Matlon found empirical verification that coaches were using this practice in the conclusion of their study: "judges have shown a willingness to accept many new theoretical arguments in a debate if the theory is cogently defended by the team presenting it" (1978, p. 123; see also Patterson and Zarefsky, 1983, pp. 289-99). It seems clear that as critics we are finding the practice at least academically sound enough to allow debaters to pursue it despite the occasional abuses that inevitably arise with any argumentative strategy.

Students may also find theory debate to their advantage. If we accept the conclusion that judges are willing to work with emergent criteria within a round, then it follows that debaters would privilege their own case by stating the paradigm that would best work in their favor. Indeed this strategy is encouraged by Freeley who maintains that "the debater should know argumentation theory and be prepared to argue that the judge should serve, for example, as an issues judge for



'this' debate if the debater intends to argue the case on issues" (1986, p. 286). Essentially, critics tend by and large to assert that debate is a critical deliberation not one in which some ideal standard is imposed against a surely imperfect product. This strategy allows them to operationalize the deliberative process.

**Is theory debate founded in rhetorical theory?** Yes. Aristotle argues in the *Rhetoric* that "of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself" (1356 1-4). It is the second mode of persuasion that provides the foundation for theory debate. Putting the judge into the proper frame of mind is not intended to be demeaning to a critic. It is designed to remind the judge what is at issue during the course of the deliberation. Lest we assume that judges are innately aware of decision standards, we might recall the writings of Quintilian. He enlightened our understanding of the decision process when he claimed that "proofs, it is true, may induce the judges to regard our case as superior to that of our opponent, but the appeal to the emotion will do more, for it will make them wish our case to be better, and what they wish, they will also believe" (VI. 2. 5). Awareness of these tendencies accompanied by a gentle reminder to the judge of a more appropriate standard for reaching a rational judgment might allow a debater to rectify the process when body counts and pathetic stores clutter the flow and seem to be unduly swaying the judge. Grounding debate in rhetorical theory not only allows students to understand which standard is more likely to succeed in winning a particular case, but it also enables the student to view the intervening factors influencing the reasoning process.

**Is theory debate a good argumentative strategy?** Competing teams should find it advantageous to establish the evaluative paradigm to be used during the round at the beginning of the debate. Just as definitions delineate the boundaries and intent of the affirmative case, so the paradigm offers focus for the context within which the case will be evaluated. And, just as with definitions, this strategy is best utilized when it is "designed and advanced to maintain a strategic advantage" (Walker and Congalton, 1987, p. 133).

As an argumentative strategy, the benefits are quite clear. First, the paradigmatic statement reminds the judge from the outset that a decision is going to be rendered and, as such, that there should be some commonalty of understanding among all the principles of how that decision should be made. Thus, the teams are able to begin the process of establishing some objective standards for making a decision. Second, used in this fashion, theory debate functions as a decision rule which allows teams to clash on substantive issues - "substantive" being defined by the impact the issue has upon the deliberative process. This permits teams to repel a spread by sticking to decision-issues. Thus, by upholding good speaking practices throughout the rebuttal period, debaters can focus on issues without fear of "dropping" an issue that the other team suddenly cries is "the most significant issue of the round." Finally, it provides the judge into how these two teams evaluate arguments. As such, the



the paradigm is certainly subject to critical evaluation. Judges may still very well claim that the paradigm is counter-productive, weakly stated, not useful in determining a decision, or maintain a host of other evaluative postures. Thus, we begin to define debate as a process which examines more than public performance and more than issue agility. We begin to define debate as a rhetorical process designed to answer the essential question "What constitutes a good reason for upholding this decision?"

## CONCLUSION

We are all aware of the opportunities theory debate - or any other argumentative strategy for that matter - presents for avoiding real clash. We may even cringe on occasion as some novice with good intentions mauls debate theory. But these behaviors can be moderated by the power of the ballot and critical evaluation from the judges. Let us hope that our colleagues will not consider it too idealistic when we assume that debaters can indeed learn that theory and argument practice are intertwined and equally critical to an understanding of the rhetorical process.

Debate is, in its truest and most beneficial state, a laboratory setting where each person (yes, including the judge and timekeeper) are participants in a rhetorical experiment. It allows us the opportunity to test strategies of argument as well as presentational skills. By addressing the claims made by Dempsey and Hartmann and answering some of the questions which allow us to determine the validity of theory debate, perhaps we can enter into more careful deliberation about the future of this message strategy.

This paper has argued that theory debate is a valid strategy currently being tested on debate circuits throughout the country. I have taken issue with the position taken by Dempsey and Hartmann which found the practice responsible for the decline of policy debate, confusion among the participants, and harm to the practice of effective presentational skills.

<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1987 Speech Communication Association Convention in Boston, Massachusetts.

<sup>2</sup> As a feminist, I take issue with the Dempsey and Hartmann's term "judicial impotence" as a descriptor of a judge's status when theory debate is initiated. Aside from its sexual implications which effectually exclude women from positions of influence in the province of rhetoric, the term connotes a lack of power and strength. Even the most casual observer would have to note the power of the ballot to deter rapid-fire delivery, shoddy argument development, weak evidence or other poor deliberative practices.



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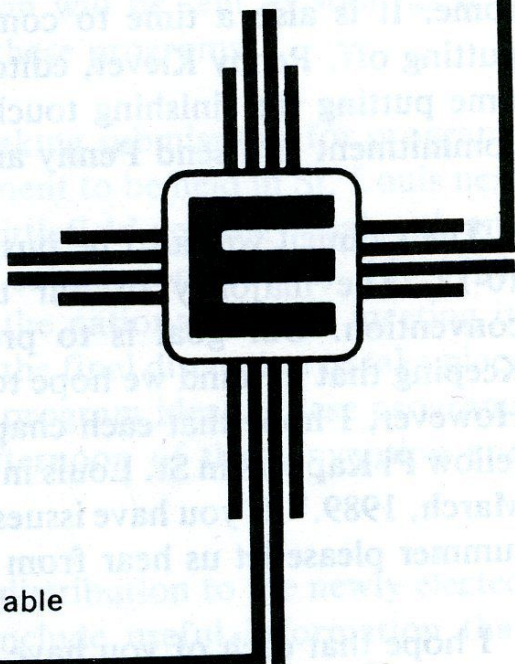
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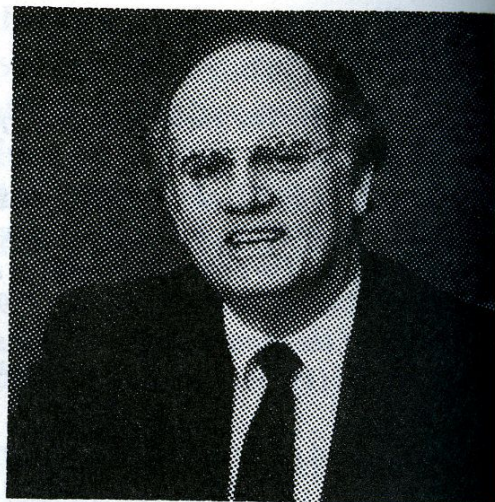
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## PRESIDENT'S PAGE

The springtime of the year is wonderful and exciting. There seems to be a new vitality with the warming temperature and the greening of the land. It is also a special time for forensics and especially Pi Kappa Delta. The uniqueness of the Pi Kappa Delta Province Tournaments and Conventions offers regional gatherings of those dedicated to the principle of "the art of persuasion, beautiful and just".



The 1988 Pi Kappa Delta province Tournaments and Conventions are now a part of history. It is a time that many of us look forward to every two years. The esprit de corps established at these gatherings lasts a lifetime. The tournaments offer spirited competition resulting in regional champions. The conventions offer spirited discussion and debate on subjects relevant to Pi Kappa Delta in settings that offer everyone the opportunity to be heard. This year has been no exception.

The National Council extends a note of thanks to all students and coaches who participated in the Province Tournaments. A special thanks to all who planned and directed the Province gatherings. We know that it is no easy task. Likewise, the Council extends a hearty welcome to the new Province leadership. Your efforts are vital to the well being of our organization. The Council looks forward to sharing the leadership of Pi Kappa Delta with you. Together much can be accomplished. The Council salutes the Province leaders of 1986-88 for a job well done.

Each year Pi Kappa Deltans participate in a number of national tournaments. The Council congratulates the PKD students and coaches for their success at these tournaments. We are proud of you.

Summer is not far away and hopefully this will allow a measure of leisure for some. It is also a time to complete some important projects that we have been putting off. Penny Kievet, editor of **The Forensic**, hopes that you will spend some time putting the finishing touches on an article for the journal. Why not make a commitment and send Penny an article for review this summer.

The Council will also be busy this summer. We will meet in St. Louis on June 10-12. The majority of our time will be spent finalizing plans for the 1989 convention. Our goal is to provide a quality forensic experience in St. Louis. Keeping that in mind we hope to have information to each chapter early in the fall. However, I hope that each chapter has already begun to make plans to meet their fellow Pi Kappars in St. Louis in 1989. I look forward to "Meeting You in St. Louie, March, 1989." If you have issues that you would like for the Council to consider this summer please let us hear from you.

I hope that each of you have a most enjoyable summer. You have earned it.



## PROVINCE NEWS

Robert Littlefield, Province Coordinator

With the end of the 1987-88 school year close at hand, thoughts turn to 1988-89 - the year of the national convention and tournament - when all roads will lead to St. Louis! As of now, state liaisons have been named for most states, province officers for 1988-90 have been elected, and the national council has begun work on the "finishing touches" for what will hopefully be a very memorable event. All Pi Kappars should promote the national tournament and convention at invitationals and within state and league organizations. The fellowship of the entire organization is enhanced through the promotion of increasing attendance at the national event.



Pi Kappa Delta submitted six programs as principle sponsor and co-sponsored two other programs to the national selection committee for the 1988 Speech Communication Association Convention set for New Orleans in November. A special thank you to the following individuals who are involved in some way on these programs: Terry Cole, Ralph Carbone, David Waite, Bill Hill, Robert Rosenthal, Michael Kelley, James Pratt, Joyce Carey, Michael Nicolai, Colan T. Hanson, Ed Hollatz, Don Swanson, Vicky Bradford, Kevin Twohy, Gary Horn, Margaret Greynolds, Timothy Sellnow, Todd Lewis, Guy Yates, Kristine Bartanen, Larry Richardson, Doug Duke, Dick Finton, Jack Rhodes, Pam Joraanstad, Deanna Sellnow, Sally Ray, Kelley Dillon, Barbara Cichy, Robert Wayner, Cindy Larson-Casselton, Joel Hefling, Bob Derryberry, and Marty Birkholt. It was **great** to see so many interested in the Pi Kappa Delta programs. All six programs were co-sponsored by other affiliates (CEDA, AFA, or Forensics Division), thereby enhancing the likelihood of acceptance. Notification will be sent as soon as it is received to the persons responsible for submitting these programs.

The Research Committee of Pi Kappa Delta is seeking submissions for programs at the 1988 PKD National Convention and Tournament to be held in St. Louis next March. Proposals should be submitted to Robert Littlefield and may deal with any aspect of forensics and/or PKD. Deadline for submission is May 15, 1988. However, all program ideas will be considered at the national council meeting in early June, so late proposals will be included during the final discussion to take place at that time. Students and/or faculty may submit program ideas. These programs are scheduled to take place on the Wednesday afternoon of the convention and tournament week.

**A Handbook for Province Officers** is ready for distribution to the newly elected officers and state liaisons. This handbook will include useful information that