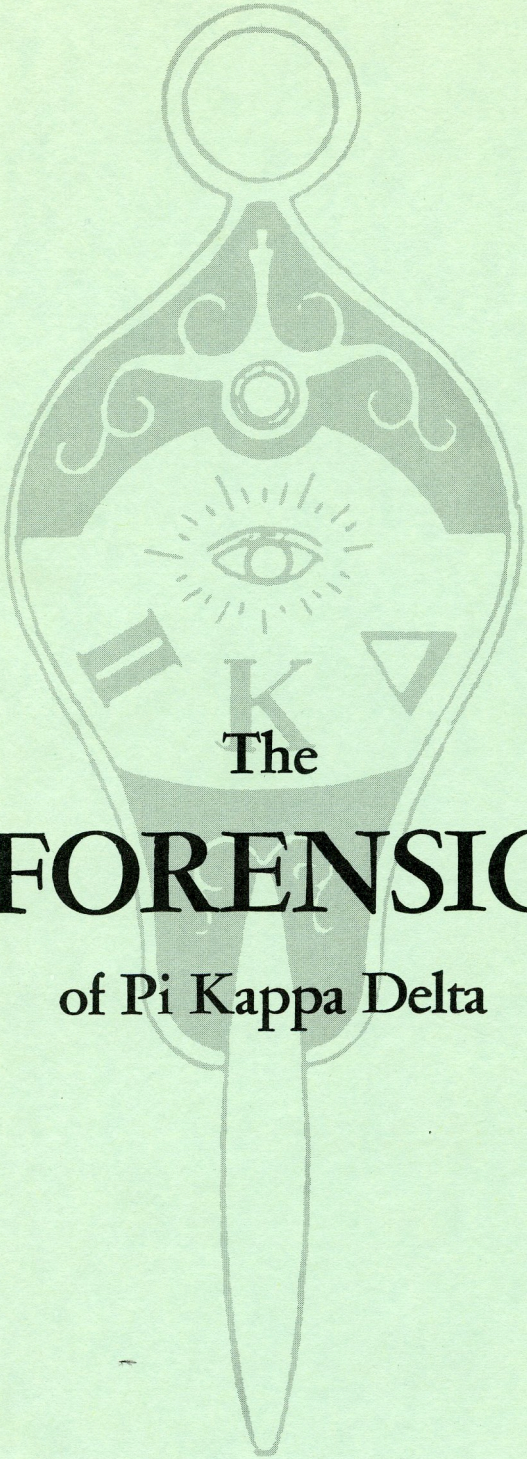

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RHETORICAL CRITICISM AS AN INDIVIDUAL EVENT: CURRENT PRACTICES AND CONCERNS

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At one time or another, nearly everyone in collegiate individual events forensics competition hears the words "rhet crit" or "rhetorical criticism." Often these words are a threat ("Look, either you work on this speech harder, or I'll make you enter rhet crit at the next tournament."), or a euphemism for boring, dull, and egg-headed. Generally, however, rhetorical criticism is viewed as one of the most specialized, selective, and difficult to prepare of the individual events.

More attacks have been leveled at rhetorical criticism in forensics than against any other single event. The attacks include specific problems with the way in which the event is defined, conducted, and judged—and everyone seems to have some idea which will improve rhetorical criticism in forensics. In this way, this paper is not new—it looks at the individual event of rhetorical criticism; nor is it different — it examines the problems in the event; and it is most certainly not astonishing, as it proposes some changes which might improve rhetorical criticism as a forensics event.

Problems

The problems of rhetorical criticism in forensics range from a lack of definition of the event,[1] to problems with the way the event is structured in competition,[2] to the standards used to judge whether a speaker has or has not done a satisfactory job of writing and delivering the speech.[3] Each of these areas merits concern here.

Robert E. Rosenthal has called rhetorical criticism the "Lost Child" of individual events, and blamed the lack of student entries in part on problems of definition.[4] Rosenthal comments,

> Too many of us do not understand the nature of the rhetorical-critical act. Without a basic framework from which to work, it is difficult to come to grips with either coaching or judging the event.[5]

Rosenthal continues by offering a definition of rhetoric based on the Burkean tradition which embraces all symbolic forms as rhetorical vehicles or rhetorical acts. Because of an expanded notion of what rhetoric encompasses, Rosenthal claims, the field of criticism proportionally increases in focus and scope. The author, like many in the area of forensics in individual events, sees a need to move away from traditional, suasory-speech oriented focuses; it is a need which allows for "communication analysis"—which takes as its object of criticism any "rhetorical act" which has suasory nature.

Sadly, our standards of judging

are usually not nearly so flexible as the theories in our field. "Communication analysis" irks me — especially when it is, say, an analysis of the "Rocky Horror Picture show" or the 1960's TV show "My Favorite Martian." Yes, I know that both of these are suasory vehicles at one time or another; ory vehicles at one time or another; yes, I realize that by treating them with less dignity than they deserve I am being unyielding. Still, I cannot understand why these were chosen as unique rhetorical acts, how they are to be viewed as rhetorical overall, etc.

Aristotle first formulated the divisions between poetic and rhetoric —divisions which, at times, are none too clear. Just what is literature? More importantly, when is literature not literature — when does it enter the realm of rhetoric? When is "Rocky Horror Picture Show" a rhetorical act? How do we distinguish a "communication event" from one which isn't? And, as Suzanne McCorkle notes, just what *is* a communication event, anyway? Well, McCorkle contends, "The problem can be conceived of in several ways, including that the problem is the event descriptions . . . we can also describe the problem in the lack of qualified judges, or in the way in which students approach the event."[6] Yes, description of the event is a problem, but more commonly the problems exist in the interpretation of those descriptions by judges, contestants, and coaches.

Norbert Mills supports the notion that event description and judging criteria are not isolated problems in rhetorical criticism. Mills notes: "Serious problems exist not only with the judging criteria but with the category itself. Space does not allow the investigation required, but the problems appear to be interrelated."[7] While event description is a problem interrelated with judging criteria, the expectation level of the judges has a lot to do with the difficulties that many students encounter when faced with this event. Indeed, the rhetorical criticism contestant is placed under close scrutiny and given a high level of expectations to fulfill.

> Judges expect expertise in speaking, and organizing and detailed knowledge of not only the method employed, but of other methodologies as well. We expect not only the ability to apply the method and reach conclusions, but also to defend the method chosen as being appropriate and intellectually legitimate. We expect not only analysis of the artifact under investigation, but an in-depth knowledge of the author or presentor of that artifact. We expect not only an analysis of the factors impinging upon the rhetorical occasion, but detailed knowledge of the historical, cultural, and social factors of the broad context of the occasion. And all in ten minutes.[8]

Indeed, we expect much of our students—perhaps too much. As judges, we have specific ideas of

what we expect the students to do in the speeches we hear. We judge them as our doctoral advisors judged us in orals—somewhat harder, in fact, because our advisors were usually on our side.

One of the favorite tools of torture used by rhetorical criticism judges is the infamous "question." The question, claims Edward Harris, has failed to serve the function for which is was designed, and should be dropped.[9]

Harris notes that the question judges are permitted to ask followlowing a rhetorical criticism speech is used inappropriately and to the detriment of the event. The question was originally included in the event to ensure authorship of the speech: students who wrote their own speeches would surely be able to answer a question about the speech. However, Harris comments,

> The question is rarely used for determination of authorship and it is applied unevenly and hence unfairly by judges. In the most serious case of authorship violation in Rhetorical Criticism that has come to my attention, the student involved competed for an entire year presumably with judges asking a multitude of questions and was never detected. It was at a scholarly convention that her plagiarism was discovered.[10]

Harris claims that much confusion could be eliminated (and many tournaments could function more smoothly) if the question were to be removed from the event rules.

Solutions Proposed

Professor Rosenthal demands a more expanded theoretical base with a larger variety of objects of study considered; Professor Mills notes that more carefully delineated judging criteria will help; and, finally, Professor Harris' solution to some of the confusion in rhetorical criticism is to remove the question period. In part, each of these proposed measures solves some of the problems with rhetorical criticism as an individual event. Is nothing, however, a panacea? What will "cure" the event? Sadly, I fear I must agree with Dan F. Hahn and J. Justin Gustainis when they note that the forensics event "which calls itself 'rhetorical criticism' bears little resemblance to the academic discipline which also goes by that name."[11]

In "Rhet Crit: It's Not Rhetorical Criticism," Hahn and Gustainis quote Leanne Wolff: "We seem to encourage students to concentrate on fitting speeches to someone's 'methodology' rather than evaluating speeches . . ."[12] This is sadly true: we have lost the original meaning behind the critical act and, rather than looking for social responsibility and theory-building functions, have instead returned to the cookie-cutter approaches so vehemently decried by Edwin Black in *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method.*[13]

Black has claimed that the rhetorical critic must understand his method of analysis and make it into an extension of his own con-

sciousness. Indeed, then, the critical act, while it may use a particular method, is a part of the critic in a very real sense. Further, a good, solid working definition of rhetoric must be adopted by those individual events groups (NFA and AFA) which choose to include rhetorical criticism as a competitive event.

So we have two parts to the needed "cure": an understanding of rhetoric and of what it means to do criticism. One of the most useful insights into the nature and scope of rhetoric is a fifteen-year-old essay by Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic."[14] Scott articulates a view of rhetoric consistent with Aristotelean thought. "In human affairs, then," notes Scott, "rhetoric . . . is a way of knowing; it is epistemic."[15]

If rhetoric is a way of knowing, it is not always an articulation of "fact." Rather, man "must consider truth not as something fixed and final but as something to be created moment by moment . . ."[16] This truth-creation is the responsibility of rhetorical action; rhetorical criticism seeks to unfold the creation process and determine whether it was good or bad, effective or ineffective, successful or unsuccessful. Rhetoric as epistemic forces new kinds of critical evaluations since the current trend in individual events rhetorical criticism sees rhetoric as ontic: something known, an object of study, etc.

Removing the study of rhetoric from the realm of "thing-ness" brings a new kind of life to rhetorical criticism. Ernest Bormann's fantasy theme analysis comes close to explicating the creation process involved in rhetorical acts, yet even Bormann's theoretical discussion objectifies and makes static what rhetoric *does* into a form of what rhetoric *is*. If rhetoric is the creation of truth, then much which is conceived of as "literature" or "poetic" is obviously rhetorical in nature.

What, then, is the critic's job, given this notion of an epistemic view of rhetoric? Edwin Black highlights the importance of an understanding of the critical act in order to do criticism. Black primarily discusses criticism as it is seen through the meeting of certain goals, and not simply as a method of inquiry. He seems to say that, certainly, we can get a better understanding of how criticism works by doing it; however, we do not know what criticism *is* except by reflection upon a critical act. Because the rhetorical critic must be able to justify his results, he must also understand what he has done.

Well, what is done? Quite simply, it is not a given "methodology" which is the instrument of criticism—it is the critic himself. The critic must be the embodiment of the method and the theoretical assumptions that go with the method. The critic's job, in Black's view, is to open new vistas to the consumers of criticism, to give new insights. The critic must judge a

thing "justly," and still give "us *singular* access to its subject."[17]

How, then does the critic proceed? What is offered here is a goal-directed approach: the methods applied depend on what the critic wants to get out of the criticism. If he is mostly interested in exploring the basic interplay of language in the text, for instance, he might look to metaphors and metaphor clusters. On a general level, it is necessary to describe, record and evaluate. More specifically, the critic's own methods for doing that description, so long as they are personalized and appropriate, should be satisfactory.

A view, then, of rhetoric as the creation of truth, as a dynamic process we may examine (rather than a static object of study), coupled with an attempt to see what it is we do in criticism and then do it in a personalized way, may help to deal with some of the concerns voiced in rhetorical criticism for competition. The cookie-cutter approach treats rhetoric as dead cookie dough and a method of study as a cutter or tool used without knowledge or concern for its appropriateness.

Finally, the rhetoric as epistemic view can help to solve at least one other problem: no longer will the field grope for an understanding of what can be accepted in "communication analysis" or "rhet crit" since anything which creates a truth or some form of reality is, to that extent, a form of rhetoric — even the "Rocky Horror Picture Show."

ENDNOTES

[1]Robert E. Rosenthal, "Rhetorical Criticism: The 'Lost Child' of Individual Events." Paper presnted to the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Louisville, Kentucky, November 1982.

[2]Edward Harris, "Criticizing the Critic: Judging Standards in Competitive Rhetorical Criticism." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, Louisville, Kentucky, November 1982.

[3]Norbert H. Mills, "Judging Standards in Forensics: Toward a Uniform Code in the 80's," *National Forensic Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1. Spring 1983, pp. 19-32.

[4]Rosenthal, p. 2.

[5]Rosenthal, p. 1.

[6]Suzanne McCorkle, "What Place Do Rhetorical Criticism and Communication Analysis Have in the New Forensics Decade?" *The Forensic*, Vol. 68, No. 1, Fall 1982, p. 19.

[7]Mills, p. 27.

[8]Harris, p. 3.

[9]Harris, p. .

[10] Harris, p. 4.

[11]Dan F. Hahn and J. Justin Gustainis, "Rhet Crit: It's Not Rhetorical Criticism." *The Forensic*, Vol. 68, No. 1, Fall 1982, p. 13.

[12]Hahn and Gustainis, p. 14.

[13]Edwin Black, *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).

[14]Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric As Epistemic," *Central States Speech Journal*, 81 (Feb. 1967), pp. 9-17.

[15]Scott, p. 17.

[16]Scott, p. 17.

[17]Black, xii.

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THE THEORETICAL BASE OF STOCK ISSUES

By
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Although many writers on argumentation develop, describe, or criticize systems of stock issues for public policy, the fundamental nature of stock issues remains inadequately explored. What are the stock issues? What is their philosophical or rhetorical origin? What are their foundations? It remains as true today as in 1958 that:

> In glancing through the indices of current texts dealing, in whole or in part, with preparation for deliberative speaking, one will usually find page references to "stock issues." No formal treatment of debate, for example, is considered complete without a set of such issues in one guise or another; the number may vary from two to seven or more, but it seems that the debaters cannot get along without these standard approaches to the analysis of a proposition.[1]

This paper discusses the assumptions lying behind modern conceptions of stock issues for deliberative policy. These systems lack a consistent, generally acceptable rationale. Instead, authors defending very similar systems often have widely divergent justifications for their theories. I will first consider the nature of issues in general and the various efforts to systematize analysis of issues and then will discuss at some length the justification of stock issues based on grounds of social and psychological validity, logical value, self-evidence, and practical efficacy. Essentially similar conceptions of stock issues have been based on a wide variety of theoretical assumptions, none of which are sufficiently developed to establish the adequacy of stock issues analysis. If indeed the theory of argumentation should give a central place to some generalized set of issues or comparable principles of analysis, those principles should be firmly grounded in theory.

Stock issues result from a view of an issue as a point of fundamental disagreement between two opposing sides in a dispute. Usually, issues are considered to be in the critical matters involved in accepting or rejecting a proposition: "*the issues* are those main questions of fact or theory arising in controversy upon the settlement of which depends the establishment or disestablishment of a proposition."[2] Most writers consider that the debaters merely discover issues already present. Thus, the human beings seeking to reach a policy decision do not, according to this widely held opinion, contribute their own viewpoints, ideals, desires, or needs to the debate except in relationship to inescapable, objective issues. Mills expresses this viewpoint when he defines an issue as "an inherent and vital question within a proposition: inherent because it exists inseparably and in-

evitably within a proposition, and vital because it is crucial or essential to the meaning of that proposition. Ziegelmueller and Dause even more forcefully state that the proposition, not the debaters, determines the issues: "Issues are *inherent* in the proposition for debate or discussion. This means that issues are not created by the participants in the dispute, but rather exist within the statement and historic context of the resolution."[4] This model has great impact on the theories of stock issues. Since issues are supposed to be objective, there must be some objective and systematic means by which to uncover them.

Indeed, without stock issues, uncovering issues in a debate is problematic. Non-stock issues approaches tend to suggest finding out everything about the subject, then winnowing the materials down. Baker and Huntington's approach is typical; they suggest beginning by investigating the clash of opinion to find areas of dispute. Then, the debater should cut the material down by eliminating the trivial, excluding the extraneous, excluding uninteresting waived matter, excluding admitted matter, and finally excluding what can be safely granted. What remains are the issues.[5] Stock issues theorists do not so much seek to destroy this complex and haphazard process as to guide it. Shaw summarizes such positions, then responds: "Such directions, however, are neither systematic nor logical. . . . They give the student no definite standard for determining when he has learned all there is to be known about the question; and what is much worse, by demanding a separation of the relevant from the irrelevant matter, they presuppose a knowledge of the very issues for which a search is being made."[6]

Stock issues, on the other hand, are general issues that apply to all propositions of some type. Mills defines them as "potential issues in a preliminary, generalized form."[7] For a policy proposition, the stock issues are usually something like these:

1. Is there a need for change?
2. Would the proposal of the affirmative meet the need?
3. Would it produce benefits rather than harmful results?[8]

Pelsma, probably the first modern writer on stock issues, explains that

> "The body of the oration should be divided into two parts, (1) the problem; (2) the solution. (Here is where we cinch the saddle of our hobby.) The problem deals with some past or present need. Something which was or should be changed. Some wrong that should be righted. It presents a dark picture. The blacker this can be painted the better."[9]

Pelsma comments on his stock issues-oriented model of oration:

> The model suggested may seem staid and formal. Granted. Contest orations are so because of "the nature of the brute." Everyone knows they are for exhibition purposes. There is no intention of fighting a real

battle. They are merely playing at the game of oratory. It is a "cut and dried" affair.[10]

Be that as it may, the general value of stock issues analysis itself quickly became a subject for debate. Given the stock issues, theorists devised various means to account for them. I will therefore turn to the various justifications offered for stock issues analysis.

Social and psychological explanations. Some writers claim that stock issues accurately describe either real decision-making or real audience responses to persuasive discourses. The validity of stock issues, in such a view, lies in their relationship to actual standards of decision-making and genuine expectations that an audience may have of a speaker seeking a decision from them. Pelsma, apparently repenting the statement quoted above, expressed this view:

> When a proposition is up for debate, it usually, if not always, rises from an attempt to remedy some manifest evil, that is, the usual question for debate has its origin in the fact that it is a measure at one time or another debated in Congress or some other legislative or administrative body to eliminate or correct defects in our body politic, or in our social, political, or ethical life. It is obvious, therefore, that those in favor of the measure must establish two points, namely: (1) That there are such defects or evils, and (2) That the proposed measure will remedy the defects or cure the evils. If these two points can be established beyond a reasonable doubt, he has gained his purpose; for pray, what else is there to prove?[11]

Pelsma indicates that problems occasion oratory and furthermore suggests that a legislator advocating some measure will "(1) point out the necessity of the present bill, and (2) show that this particular bill will prove a reparation."[12] . B. Gough, one of our discipline's founding fathers, agrees on the ground that the debater must show the necessity for change in order to overcome the cries of subversion raised by conservative factions.[13] In order to substantiate this position, Pelsma has recourse to a faculty psychology view that "the will is not stimulated to activity without an incentive," and unless a solution is seen, "the will still refuses to act."[14] These two early theorists, then, advocate stock issues as effective devices to achieve favorable decisions from the audience. They do not, however, explain in detail the political and psychological theories upon which stock issues are apparently based, or present evidence to show that speeches making use of stock issues analysis are particularly effective.

Logical explanations. Another school of thought develops a more complex explanation: stock issues are the logical constituents of policy propositions. This group of thinkers takes most seriously the view that the proposition determines the issues. They argue that

a policy proposition imposes certain requirements on the debater and that these requirements are subject to logical analysis. Shaw uses such a justification for his early set of stock issues: "a proposition, in itself, must be the key to the solution of the problem it contains, because it is obvious that the proposition is all that is given us from which to work."[15] Wagner summarizes this position effeectively in suggesting that stock issues enable us to "discover all the logical possibilities on both sides," to identify the main points, and to determine what each side has to prove. One we identify the nature of the proposition, we can apply the correct logical standards.[16] Ziegelmueller and Dause also hold that issues lie in the proposition. Thus, a system of stock issues must develop from the very nature of policy propositions "in order to be universally applicable." What this means is that stock issues *"correspond to the inherent logical obligations of the advocate of change."* For example, the issue of *ill* arises because the speaker is logically required to establish some harm.[17]

This position, that the nature of the proposition leads to logical requirements, influences writers to share in common a desire to reduce debate to some sort of science, or at least to uncover objective and logical requirements for debaters. Since issues are objective, a systematic process will reveal all of them. Shaw so argues without shame; he says that debate analysis should be scientific because it involves logic and that debating should "not tolerate haphazard methods of procedure in its analytic operations." He explicitly and proudly points out that stock issues permit a mechanical process of analysis.[18] The survey of proof through stock issues guarantees that every point has been found because all logical possibilities have been examined.[19] Wagner agrees that the stock issues survey "provides us with a complete, logically related set of main contentions or sub-propositions . . . all related to the main proposition" and continues that "without such a survey argumentation is time-wasting and futile.[20]

None of these writers adequately explain *why* stock issues are a logical system. That is, they do not show how stock issues fit a definition or concept of logic. Nor do they explain in any detail why they chose the particular issues they did as stock issues: if they are the logical components of a proposition, there must have been some procedure by which these issues were developed. In other words, a philosophical basis ought to lie under any logical system, but these authors provide none.

Bauer, on the other hand, provides a contemporary justification for stock issues that ties the concept of stock issues together with the presumption and burden of proof. The presumption always lies with the continuation of the present system; it is the affirmative's burden to introduce an argument

of significant harm in order to overcome the presumption. Thus, "these issues . . . arise in part from the relationship between the burden of proof and the presumption."[21] Even so, Bauer explains *why* his three stock issues and no others analyze the proposition.

The real problem here is that stock issues do not derive from any logical system. These authors apparently find that stock issues grow out of the very form and meaning of a proposition of policy. But how can this even be plausible? Why should one accept even one prima facie, for example, that the most *logical* solution to a problem is that which best meets the need—rather than the solution that is the most just, or the easiest to put into effect, or whatever? The conception of logic that would justify such a claim is never presented.

Overall, the logical explanation of stock issues seeks to provide a firm basis for the analysis of propositions of policy. The emphasis is on the comprehensiveness, exclusivity, and indubitability of the stock issues. This approach makes great claims for stock issues, and puts them into a significant intellectual context. But to no acceptable degree do this approach's adherents explain, or in most cases even address, any rationale for their particular systems of stock issues as the comprehensive schemes with which to analyze the proposition of public policy.[22]

The explanation of self-evidence. I recall my debate teacher drawing the stock issues into a chart on the blackboard and bellowing repeatedly, "there is *no other way.*" That is, stock issues yield directly obvious procedures for evaluating arguments. This position by no means is ridiculous; stock issues no doubt survive largely because they seem so reasonable. (At least, they seem reasonable in the hands of their more perceptive advocates.) After all, no one will consider some change unless there is a reason, and no one will want to adopt a solution that will not really solve the problem at hand. Serious writers on the subject often use such a common-sense justification. Smith and Hunsacker, for instance, justify stock issues by writing that "several stock issues present themselves" and that the stock issues are "recurrent in controversies."[23] Hultzen's scholarly, detailed analysis relies on much the same position. He briefly repeats the political notion that society abhors change and will allow change only if conditions are unsatisfactory. He continues that "we would say that it is common sense, i.e., in our social nature, to adopt only such a proposal for reform as can be expected to remove the unsatisfactoriness from the state of affairs."[24]

The common-sense position is, however, not self-evident to everyone; Newman responds that the debater "should not be required to show that the world is going to hell in a wheelbarrow."[25]

The explanation of practicality. Writers of this school hold either

that stock issues are pedagogically valuable or that they are strategically wise. Shaw begins his explanation of stock issues by pointing out the necessity of giving students some system with which to analyze propositions. He concludes his essay by quoting his students' favorable comments on the system and lists many of the intellectual skills that stock issues analysis develops in the young debater.[26] Gough also indicates that he first used "the special issues" in response to the need to limit the number of issues in a debater's brief to some manageable level. He indicates that his experience in debate shows that the special issues stand up well under fire.[27]

Indeed, the tone of pedagogical experience in the early articles on the subject implies that stock issues were passed on to students and exchanged among faculty colleagues for some time before being formalized in print; very likely they developed their strength through oral tradition.[28] The practical justification includes the use of stock issues as a strategy to preclude likely counterargument; for instance, if the affirmative has claimed the existence of an inherent need to change, their position will be less vulnerable.[29] In general, the practical justification for stock issues may seem to lack system or deep thought, but I suspect that they are the most important reasons for the survival of stock issues.

This view survives to the present days; Patterson and Zarefsky find that " . . . there are recurrent patterns, and resolutions of the same type will suggest similar issues. These issues fall into categories of questions that a reasonable person would naturally ask when containing a resolution of a given type" and that "Stock issues should function as aids to analysis."[30] Nadeau takes a similar position in asking:

> "What is a *stock* issue? In his preparation for deliberative speaking (as well as for forensic and epideictic occasions), man long ago discovered that certain question occurred so frequently that an orderly listing of them provided a convenient pattern for analysis as well as a guide to the proper phrasing of specific issues related directly to a particular proposal. . . . A stock issue, then, is a *possible* issue, general in its phrasing, which may or may not become an actual and specific, main or secondary issue in the discussion of a definite proposition.[31]

Nadeau relates the stock issues to the ends of the genre of speaking, and says that:

> It is not surprising, then, that for each end of speaking, a stand set of subordinate headings (K E J X d l d) crept into common usage very early in the history of rhetorical theory and practice. . .[32]((61))

A stock issue is an issue which experiences teaches us is likely to recur over and over as a key item of controversy in debates.

The lack of a sound, generally

accepted theoretical justification makes stock issues analysis, in its presentation, a questionable part of the theory of argumentation. Writers on the subject find stock issues to be too valuable to ignore but have little idea what to do with them. The stock issues are certainly not a logical system in any reasonable sense. The psychological and political views of stock issues fail to relate stock issues to any remotely systematic theory of social science. Some set of stock issues, whether the accepted one or not, *could* be related to a sound theory of philosophy or social science. But so far, none has been. So we are left with dozens of debate texts, each of which dutifully instructs the debater to ask, "is there a need for change?" or the like. Debaters find that these issues seem reasonable or self-evident in some common sense way while their coaches (myself included) discover the burden of teaching students how to find the crucial issues has been greatly lightened. But the explanations of self-evidence and practicality do not tell us how stock issues might be related to a *theory* of argumentation.

Three options seem to be open. First, stock issues analysis could be abandoned. This would solve the whole difficulty, but we would be back to the stage of haphazard analysis that Shaw found unacceptable. Newman suggests this approach on the ground that issues arise from the subject-matter.[34] Newman, however, concludes his discussion without considering at length how issues arise or how they are tested. Second, debaters can continue to use stock issues just because they work and make sense, leaving the scholars to continue wondering why stock issues seem to work. Third, debate can seek grounding in a theory of political decision-making, political ethics, psychology, or rhetoric. The modern text on systems analysis and debate seeks to follow this course by replacing stock issues analysis with systems analysis.[35] Stock issues would be generalized sorts of issues that are usually persuasive. Rhetorical theorists might seek to develop a coherent theory of deliberative argumentation around stock issues in much the way Cicero developed his system of legal arguments around the notion of *status*.[36] This would make stock issues part of a general theory of communication and social influence through reason-giving discourse. Argumentation theorists might advocate particular ethical theories: the utilitarian ideal of producing the greatest good for the greatest number might, for example, lend itself to a sort of comparative advantage analysis. Argumentation would then take on a normative flavor, with speeches built on issues about what sort of justification for change an audience *ought* to accept. If there are general principles by which decisions ought to be made, these principles might well guide reason-giving discourse. Such an approach