

The notion that debaters ought to consider what constitutes "good argument," and that such consideration could work its way into the substance of academic debates, is not inherently bad. However, as Broda-Bahm admits, much of what has passed for meta-argument is not fundamentally sound (32). While he chooses to place the blame on locating meta-argument at the "margins" of academic debate, he begs the question of whether "centrally" located meta-argument would be much improved.

Norms for arguing about arguing must emanate from legitimate authority — which in the case of academic debate is vested in teachers and critics. In recent years, it has become increasingly popular for critics to reject the authority the community has entrusted to them. Hiding behind the semantic screen *tabula rasa*, and uttering platitudes such as "it is the student's activity," teachers and critics have transferred the mantle of their authority to national-circuit debaters. If there is a message to be heeded from the St. Paul Conference, it is that it is time for educators to reclaim their citizenship in the community, and to participate once again in constructing norms for academic debate.

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"IMAGING OTHERWISE: A RESPONSE TO BAHM"

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Ken Broda Bahm has clearly articulated important flaws in the nature of CEDA debate as practiced by "national" level teams. The observations he makes are not news, but by framing these observations with relevant scholarship on argument norms and argument communities, he challenges us to examine closely the very core of what we claim to be about: educating students to become better arguers. I hope his article is widely read and discussed.

I am, however, deeply troubled by four assumptions of this essay. First, Bahm defines directors and judges out of "the debate round itself." This assumption is reinforced when he discusses "external regulation" and states: "Most often that form of control [needed to arrest CEDA's 'going down the wrong path'] is to be exercised by non-debaters – judges and directors who are encouraged to play a greater role in determining what practices will be considered acceptable."

While I have on some recent judging occasions felt entirely uninvited to participate in the debate occurring at the opposite end of the room from where I sat, I refuse to be assumed out of my role as judge or defined out of my profession as a forensic educator. Most debate texts distinguish between discussion and debate as communication forms by indicating that debate includes a judge who makes a decision at the end of the discussion; by definition, then we must consider judge-educators as part of the argument community, even at the "national" level. Recognizing the judge as part of the debate round means recognizing that students do not have "the freedom to decide their own fate." By definition, academic debate is not a free marketplace but a controlled one; internal control (as opposed to external regulation) can, for example, raise the cost of dehumanizing discourse and lower the risk of comprehensible analysis if judges act as educators.

If this simple definition differs from the current practice constituting the community, then we know where to begin to make change. Helpful in that reform process are questions legal rhetorician James Boyd White (*Heracles' Bow*, 1985) would have us ask about constitutive discourse: What voices are heard in the community? What are the relationships between them? What silence exists beyond the discourse? As judges, we need to encourage and empower a wider range of student voices; as a community, we need to remedy the silence that has allowed definition by an insular subgroup and a narrow range of examples to determine "how debate 'should be,' or what it is to be a 'good' debater."

A second troubling assumption concerns what is accepted as argument in "national-level" debates. While Professor Bahm clearly wants meta-level debate to become relegitimized, and urges that the national circuit permit a *broader* spectrum of argumentative response, other educators might concurrently ask for a traditional but *narrower* definition of argument (e.g., a claim with reasons). "That's a 'time suck'" or "No 'theory goo'" and "They watched us in outbounds..." are not arguments. "Substantive arguments

outweigh procedurals. Negative has a burden to respond to case. They should not shirk that burden by hiding behind arguments based on semantics" is only a series of assertions. "A file of faded response blocks" is not original scholarship by student participants. Verbal harassment is not only inappropriate and inhumane, it is not argument. James Boyd White would have us consider the question: What is the ideal arguer our discourse asks us to become? We should be critics of "argument" which lacks reasoning, or is fallacious, or is unoriginal, or fails to respect members of the community as persons.

A third troubling assumption is Professor Bahm's insistence upon seeing self-regulation by debaters and external restraint as the only two choices available to improve CEDA debate practice. There are other choices. Even if one accepts the narrative that judge-educators are "outsiders," the assumption of rules/restrictions/punishment as the only choice available to them recognizes only one type of power that could be brought to bear to alter community norms. Yes, judges sometimes have *power* to enforce preferences with ballot decisions and speaker points. Yes, formal procedures can be invoked for ethically questionable behavior. Forensics educators, judges, and students who desire normative change, however, also have *power over* the community through force of rhetoric. White tells us that "rhetoric [is] the central art by which culture and community are established, maintained, *and transformed*" (p. 28, my emphasis). Many voices can facilitate reflection through discourse in rounds and in hallways. Many voices can argue for change in meetings, in coaching sessions, on the internet, and in print. Many voices can praise preferred norms in celebrations and recognition ceremonies.

The final troubling assumption with which I take issue is the description of the nationally competitive level of CEDA debate as "a thriving argument community." Does a thriving argument community reduce its argumentative options and decrease its capacity for self-regulation? Consider the parallels in the following two excerpts:

The existence of a close-knit network of "national" level debaters creates a way of thinking, a way of including some arguments and styles of arguments while excluding others. The force of conventional practice is to impart a sense of normalcy. Further, the force of conventional practice by a perceived leadership community imparts a sense of acceptability...It is not plausible in today's national-circuit climate to envision a team with credibility using the debate forum to argue that speed limits comprehensibility, that casual analysis needs to account for complexity, that militaristic discourse decreases critical thinking, or that argumentative aggression and dehumanization should not be tolerated. In making such arguments, national circuit teams would be violating strong norms, risking their standing and raising questions regarding their motives.

"Groupthink"...refer[s] to a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override

their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action...Loyalty to the group is the highest form of mortality...The more amiability and esprit de corps among the members...the greater is the danger that independent critical thinking will be replaced by groupthink, which is likely to result in irrational and dehumanizing actions directed against out-groups. (Irving L. Janis, *Groupthink*, 1982, pp. 9-13)

The story of national circuit CEDA debate told in this article is of an exclusive group which limits its membership has lost track of (or was never taught) the nature of debate and argumentation, and fears the change that self-reflection, internal control, or external intervention might bring. The CEDA community must have the courage to imagine itself otherwise. There are many resources and many voices to help us in our work. James Boyd White is one who suggests the following:

We need not fear the claims of authority we make for what we admire but should always be prepared to qualify them; and should in addition always recognize that what is truly authoritative, not authoritarian, is so only by the free and informed acquiescence of others. Whatever presumptive authority we claim for ourselves and others is thus radically conditioned by our recognition that we always speak to those who are entitled to be persuaded, not commanded; that the most we can ask is a fair hearing; and that (whatever we may claim) whenever we speak we can never ask less. What our claims of presumptive authority call for...is not presumptive submission, not obedience, but trusting and responsible engagement. (p. 137)

I appreciate Professor Bahm's request for our engagement in constructive discourse about CEDA debate.

COMMUNITY CONCEPTS OF ARGUMENTATIVE LEGITIMACY: AN INAUSPICIOUS APPLICATION BY BRODA-BAHM TO NATIONAL-CIRCUIT CEDA DEBATE

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There are a multitude of questions that should be asked about the contemporary state of intercollegiate debate. But there are few forensic scholars who seem willing to write about the tough questions or apply the evolving theory of argument to debate practice. This may be because they are focused on other academic pursuits, or because they are dispirited and sense that their ideas will fall on the deaf ears of many in the intercollegiate debate community who do not wish to consider or heed argumentation theory, and time honored principles and practices of debate in democratic societies. In the preceding issue of *The Forensic* (Spring, 1994), Broda-Bahm provides an important service with his essay, "Community concepts of argumentative legitimacy: challenging norms in national circuit CEDA debate," by focusing the concept of argument communities on the intercollegiate debate community. He appropriately notes that in the contemporary academic sphere "argument is increasingly being viewed in the context of community." This is appropriate because emerging concepts in linguistics and argumentation have moved from classical analytic systems to employing paradigms of reality and relational events. Broda-Bahm asks us to view the argument community of intercollegiate debate in a manner that enlightens us regarding the phenomena of change and evolution of CEDA debate, and the practices of a dominant group within the activity. A case is made for the thesis:

The current norms of the national-circuit CEDA community operate to limit creativity at the highest levels of competitive debate, and to severely restrict the possibilities for those forms of argumentative self-regulation which offer the best hope for maintaining the health of the activity in an environment relatively free of externally imposed norms (Broda-Bahm, 1994, p. 26).

I have a number of difficulties with Broda-Bahm's essay, primarily because of what it does not acknowledge, rather than for what it does address, and I also have difficulty with his largely unsupported conclusion. The essay effectively describes a rhetorically disabled argument community that is incapable of healing itself and yet concludes that the dilemma of how to promote change should be answered by a continued lack of guidance from the academic discipline. A false dichotomy of choice is posited and it badly mars the essay with the conclusion that: "The central dilemma is that we either

allow the debate process to become more self regulative or we accede to the demands of those who would like to reform the process from the outside" (Broda-Bahm, 1994, p. 34).

My initial reaction to this article was that it was a clever, and circuitous justification of the status quo phenomena of a limited subset of intercollegiate debaters promulgating norms for the game of academic debate, to the chagrin of forensic educators whose vision of the activity is seldom in congruence with the debaters.

Broda-Bahm does provide an excellent description of the weaknesses in the national circuit CEDA argument practices:

It is not plausible in today's national circuit climate to envision a team with credibility using the debate forum to argue that speed limits comprehensibility, that causal analysis needs to account for complexity, that militaristic discourse decreases critical thinking, or that argumentative aggression and dehumanization should not be tolerated. In making such arguments, national circuit teams would be violating strong norms, risking their standing and raising questions regarding their motives (1994, p. 33).

The arena of "national circuit debate" appears to be an entity unto itself with mores and standards determined by the student participants who are reinforced by the clatter of claqueurs who judge the competition. Success on the national circuit is singularly defined as winning ballots in CEDA debate competition. Evidently the mission of the national circuit is to perpetuate itself in a manner that satisfies the psycho-social needs of its members who appear to be desirous of fostering eccentricity, when compared to the broader community of educational debate that defines the mission of intercollegiate debate as providing a laboratory for learning principles and pragmatic skills of argumentation and rhetoric.

Perhaps there is a problem with elevating the group called the "national circuit" to the status of an argument community. By gaining the reader's assent to the assumption that the national circuit should be considered as an "argument community," the implication is that it is appropriate for national circuit participants to fit McKerrow's conceptualization:

That is, communities are typified by the specific rules which govern argumentative behavior, by social practices which determine who may speak with what authority, and by their own "display" of these rules and social practices in response to challenges from within or outside the community (1990. p.28).

Thus, just the act of labeling it so tends to justify the national circuit standing alone from what Broda-Bahm refers to as the "dispersed argument communities" of debate. This labeling neglects the broader whole of intercollegiate debate and neglects any focus on the commonalities, the principles that bind all intercollegiate debate together, vis-a-vis the idiosyncrasies of a limited group. The essay pays scant attention to the existence of a traditional pedagogy of argumentation and debate. The

discussion founts from some disturbing assumptions about the argument community that the author and McGee label and define as an exclusive and elite national circuit argument community that has the power to globally define: "debate success," the qualities of a 'good' debater, "a way of thinking," "styles of argument," and "a sense of acceptability" (Broda-Bahm, p. 29).

Because I believe a traditional pedagogy of argumentation and debate exists, and the numerous argumentation and debate texts on my bookshelf attest to that existence, I consider debate pedagogy and rhetorical principles as a foundational basis for the practice and evaluation of all intercollegiate debate. Winebrenner (1994) begins his recent examination of the role of argumentation theory in debate by stating that: "The notion that academic debate is indissolubly connected to the study of argument is such a long standing tradition in the forensics world as generally to be accorded the status of a professional presumption" (p. 1). Applying argument and debate pedagogy to provide standards for all of the "dispersed communities" of intercollegiate debate practice is appropriate. But I fear that the national circuit "community concept of argument legitimacy," envisioned in this essay, ignores pedagogy by dismissing it as "external restraint." The connotation of the phrase "external restraint" casts negative aspersions on traditional pedagogy and equates the national circuit as the norm and the forensic scholars, (Horn, Underberg, 1993, Frank, 1993), are characterized as representing "the demands of those who would like to reform the process from the outside" (Broda-Bahm, p. 34). But I would posit that the "outside" in this discussion is really the inside. Traditional long term forensic educators, represented in this essay by Horn, Underberg, and Frank, who could be joined by a variety of others, whose CEDA 20th Anniversary Assessment Conference papers are published in the proceedings, have a desire to preserve rhetorical principles and debate pedagogy as the basis of the activity and should be referred to as the real insiders in the community of intercollegiate debate. The essay employs some brief 1989 references from Willard to indicate that argument communities develop "rules roles and relations," and that argument within those communities should be open to change. I doubt that many mainstream forensic educators would disagree with Willard, and would most likely subscribe to his 1990 conclusions:

Communities are organized around the conservation of a body of trusted knowledge; they tend toward conservatism; they resist change in principle. Yet they do accept new ideas, even ones that jeopardize old ideas. Their conservatism is overcome when imported ideas offer more attractive puzzles or solve problems which have obstructed progress in the community (p. 230).

Conservation of key principles of debate, together with change that improves the critical thinking and rhetorical qualities of the intercollegiate debate discourse, should be supportable by all forensic educators.

As I read the essay I hoped to find a plausible course of action. How can the myopia of national circuit debaters be cured? Broda-Bahm does not tell us. He quotes the theory of Maier and is careful to be creatively ambiguous in discussing a solution, but the essay is incomplete because it fails in its

introductory promise to significantly justify a continued lack of "external restraint." Instead he argues that : "External restraint, the logical alternative to self regulation, cripples the argument community" (Broda-Bahm, p. 34). The only forensic related support for that claim is the briefly mentioned experience of the failed rules approach of the National Debate Tournament, as reported by Herbeck and Katsulas. Surely there must be some value to a more complete examination of that unique NDT forensic experience, and its multiple causal factors, to discover clues to effective remedies.

The dichotomy between self regulation and external restraint is a false dichotomy that neglects other solutions and seems to be presented to solely justify the status quo situation. The dichotomy only applies if we assume that the functional approaches to change can be generated exclusively by national circuit participants. There is a major workability problem with Broda-Bahm's suggestion that change in national circuit debate practice can occur when "teams with credibility are capable of arguing that they should change." I ponder the question: how will teams evolve from the morass of closed system conformity unless there is a renaissance of the teaching of argumentation and debate principles that produces a renewed student respect for argument scholarship and sound rhetorical practices?

As should be clear from earlier comments I react to "external restraint" as an inappropriate and offensive choice of phrase. Since I interpret "external restraint" to mean judges expecting adherence to a basic set of argument and debate principles, it raises a very basic question. Isn't the argument community of national circuit CEDA debate so crippled by it's vision of community standards that it is incapable of interfacing successfully with argument scholars, students of argumentation, and listeners interested in the process of advocacy? If the national circuit cannot view itself as a part of the larger whole, the community of intercollegiate debate, and if the national circuit is so limited that it is a closed system, then systems theory would indicate that it is moving toward entropy. It will require input from a broader sphere in order to survive.

A value of the Broda-Bahm essay is that it causes us to acknowledge the key features that motivate a major contemporary social clique of debaters, who "share a consubstantial similarity." Debaters naturally focus on garnering winning ballots and conforming to the expectations of their peers. Does this mean that debaters must ignore basic sets of argumentation and rhetorical principles, that are inherent to the academic discipline of speech communication, and conveyed by revered texts and a scholarly and honored Professorate? According to Broda-Bahm the national circuit teaches debaters to ignore argument: "The irony is that we have a thriving argument community which at the most nationally competitive level seems to have an active and enforced hostility toward consideration of argument, per se (1993, p. 32). Perhaps debaters don't intentionally ignore, perhaps they function out of ignorance. Broda-Bahm gives passing mention to the problematic and inadequate nature of argument community instruction in the norms of academic debate, and then asserts that the "debate round itself," (the national circuit debaters and judges), are not incapable of addressing their own problems (1994, p. 33). But I wonder how they can address problems that they have never learned to consider as problems, because they don't know and respect the historical, philosophical, and pragmatic theory and technique that

underlies the practice of debate in a democratic society? It might be enlightening to conduct a survey to discover the percentage of active intercollegiate debaters that have taken an argumentation course, read an argumentation textbook, or studied rhetorical theory. I venture the hypothesis that very few "national circuit debaters" have pursued the kind of study in the discipline of speech communication that should precede intercollegiate debating. Instead I would guess that most national circuit debaters have relied on learning "debate" through the process of modeling peers who are "successful." McKerrow points out that : "Communities are composed of individuals who ascribe to the rules either as a matter of choice, a matter of conditioning, or as a result of an edict from others in a position of authority" (1993. p. 29). If more debaters become learned in the principles of argument, the conditioning might be modified, and if those in academic authority, the Professorate, apply basic rules of argument sufficiency, the change that Broda-Bahm claims to desire may be possible.

The effective debate coach and judge in the argument community of educational debate brings extensive knowledge and skill of rhetoric to the task. But as my study for the 1991 CEDA Assessment Conference demonstrated, the bulk of judging done at the national level is conducted by youthful graduate students whose peerage is really the debaters, rather than the seasoned forensic educators (Swanson, 1993). Thus it is easy to understand why these judges frequently function as mere sycophants, rather than as forensic educators who teach principles of argumentation. Broda-Bahm supports this conclusion with excerpts from the 1994 CEDA nationals judging booklet that demonstrate a clear disdain for argument and debate theory. As an active CEDA coach from 1971 to 1991, who always taught my debaters that there were basic standards of argumentative justification, I deeply resent the sort of contemporary judging philosophy that dismisses me as a resident of "the trash heap of CEDA history."

I must confess that I am one of those forensic educators who I earlier referred to as "dispirited." After twenty-seven years of debate coaching and twenty years of CEDA coaching I left the active realm of the intercollegiate debate circuit and moved to teaching public forum audience oriented debate. It's exhilarating to be able to teach students, who are truly interested in improving their advocacy skills, to debate in a manner that will illuminate significant public issues and move an audience. When we announce a topic to the public, that is really the topic our debate cases address. We work to develop the most significant issues inherent in the topic. No longer do I need to be concerned with my debaters being aware of some new bit of trivia that has been extrapolated into a case, or a new counter-intuitive argument that no reasonable listener would ever expect to hear applied to the debate proposition. Now I can amplify the teaching of the concepts the student has learned in my argumentation, persuasion or public speaking class. Now I sense that the debaters and the debate audience have encountered relevant and significant issues as they participate in our debates. It causes me to remember, that in the 70s and 80s, many of my CEDA debate students experienced a high degree of motivation from the development of skill in audience oriented debate.

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A BROADER RANGE OF ARGUMENTATIVE RESPONSE: BRODA-BAHM RESPONDS

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It is one thing to argue that debaters should have a broader range of argumentative response and another to argue that critics and coaches should have a higher degree of pedagogical influence. The first is the thesis of my essay on argumentative legitimacy (Broda-Bahm, 1994), while the second is the common theme in the responses of Winebrenner (1994), Bartanen (1994), and Swanson (1994) to that essay. The two arguments are not the same, of