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## SPECIAL RESEARCH EDITION

### *Response to Hahn and Gustainis*

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The recent *Forensic* article by Professors Hahn and Gustainis, "Rhet Crit: It's Not Rhetorical Criticism," is welcome for a variety of reasons. It focuses attention on an event which merits further discussion and development. It raises serious questions about the viability of this individual event. Some of its conclusions are, at least to me, undeniable: this is an extremely difficult event, especially given typical time limits (pp. 16-17); many competitors and coaches lack adequate grounding in rhetorical theory and criticism (p. 15); competitors ought to enroll in relevant coursework where available (p. 17); and coaches and judges should "be more demanding" of these competitors (p. 17). Despite these significant points of common ground, their essay seems to demand a response on other issues.

First, the entire essay is predicated on an important assumption: *competitive rhetorical criticism should be scholarly rhetorical criticism*. Support for this crucial assumption takes two forms. First, anyone who would take a contrary position is ridiculed: "Some may argue that the forensics tournament should not be held up to 'real world' standards. We see such arguments as hogwash" (p. 16). Since they do not bother to examine any of these arguments, we are unable to evaluate their grounds for this conclusion.

They also draw for us an analogy between rhetorical criticism and other events: "A good informative speech from a tournament would be likely to be informative in other contexts. A good persuasive speech would be likely to persuade others besides forensics judges. A good interpretation of literature would be likely to move a wide

audience. Why then should the forensics event known as rhetorical criticism not be held up to standards similar to those which exist outside of tournaments?" (p. 16). Well, at first glance this sounds persuasive. Unfortunately, this analogy falls apart upon closer examination.

First, I reject the conclusion of the analogy as unreasonable. Several key differences between competitive rhetorical criticism and professional rhetorical criticism mitigate against the use of the standards of the latter for judging the former. Two are even present in this article, although the authors do not recognize them as such. They quote a personal communication from David Thomas to document obvious differences between these two activities: "rhetorical criticism suffers from time limits too severe to enable students to do more than, say, 1500 words at most. Published critical essays range from a minimum of double that to as much as book length works". So, competitive rhetorical criticism labors from two significant constraints which do not adhere to professional rhetorical criticism: the former is limited to no more than ten minutes, and it is limited to undergraduate students. Should we then be shocked to discover that ten-minute undergraduate efforts fail to measure up to standards drawn from professional scholars with a minimum of double that space up to as much as book length efforts to work out their criticisms? I hardly think so.

A further distinction, that of purpose, can not be found in their essay, so I will briefly develop it here. Professional rhetorical criticism has a number of possible purposes. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell has suggested that it has both "Ephemeral and Enduring" purposes,<sup>1</sup> the former having generally to do with enlightening mass audiences on the issues and approaches to



those issues found in discourse, so as to facilitate their evaluations for the issues and speakers, participating in the give-and-take of public debate; while the latter makes contributions to rhetorical inquiry on a more general level, contributing to the on-going scholarly dialogue on the nature of rhetoric and criticism. Competitive rhetorical criticism, of course, is an educational tool, designed to give undergraduates an opportunity to learn about this activity. As such, it must take place within limitations imposed by pragmatic considerations, such as tournament format. The point is, it is unfair to impose on undergraduates the same standards used to judge scholarly endeavors, given their differing limitations and purposes.

I want to be careful to avoid being misunderstood here. I firmly believe, for instance, that competitive rhetorical criticism should render a judgment on the discourse(s) at hand, and I coach my students to do so. I encourage them to read journal articles about their approach and to take classes in rhetorical criticism. I hold up scholarly rhetorical criticism as an ideal, a model to strive for. At times I even encourage them to rewrite a competitive rhetorical criticism and submit it to a convention. But I recognize that competitive rhetorical criticism is simply not professional rhetorical criticism, even if we employ the latter as a model for the former to strive toward. I can not judge and condemn them for not having fully met the standards not meant for their educational activity.

I also want to avoid being accused of making a straw-man argument here. Hahn and Gustainis do not simply see scholarly rhetorical criticism as an ideal to emulate. They quite explicitly make a much stronger claim: "rhet crit is not rhetorical criticism. But we believe that it should be, and that it can be" (p. 17). Further evidence of this attitude can be found in other places in their essay. Their condemnation of the student who misunderstood Perelman is expressed in this fashion: "If this young lady's rhet crit had been submitted to one of our journals,

her misunderstanding of Perelman would have garnered her a quick and volatile rejection letter" (p. 16). As mentioned earlier, they declare that it is "hogwash" to argue that "the forensics tournament should not be held up to 'real world' standards" (p. 16). Finally, their entire basis for condemning competitive rhetorical criticism stems from the "three distinguishing qualities" of rhetorical criticism: "it is analytical, it is judgemental, and it is contextual [sic]." These are, we are told, drawn from the "writings of a number of scholars, including Cathcart, Campbell, and Bryant, as well as our own training" (p. 14). So, I do not think that I am misrepresenting their position when I argue that they wish to judge and condemn our undergraduates for not meeting the standards of professional rhetorical criticism. While it is a good ideal, a good model, it is an unreasonable criterion.

A second reason to reject the analogy drawn from the other individual events to rhetorical criticism concerns the soundness of the analogy. For any analogy to be sound, the instances compared must be alike in all essential regards.<sup>2</sup> However, competitive rhetorical criticism is held up to higher standards than are the instances in the premises. All that is asked of them is that they be informative, be persuasive, or be moving. Hahn and Gustainis do not hold them to professional standards (e.g., an interpretation must be capable of meeting the standards of the Academy Awards or of Broadway). Rhetorical criticism must meet journal standards, the standards of practicing professionals (Cathcart, Campbell, Bryant). Surely this analogy is invalid on its face.

It is important to realize that I am not merely arguing that these standards are unreasonable. If so, this reply would be appropriate but not necessary. Unfortunately, when professional rhetorical criticism is used as a standard to judge, and not as a model to emulate, it could be seriously detrimental to the activity if accepted by the forensics community. If undergraduates use scholarly rhetorical criticism as an ideal, it



gives them direction, examples, advice. If they do manage to approach or actually achieve this ideal in this learning activity, we should heap praise upon them. But for us, their coaches and judges, to condemn them, criticize them, for failing to produce journal-quality rhetorical criticism, is to risk creating tremendous disillusionment and frustration. I'm sure that Professors Hahn and Gustainis would not really have us viciously berate our undergraduates, that they would not have us give our students the sort of "quick and volatile rejection" they seem to admire in a journal. But no matter how kindly we impose these standards on our own students in the attempt to realize this unreasonable belief that "rhet crit . . . should be, and . . . can be" rhetorical criticism, these standards may discourage potentially good students from pursuing this activity.

A few other minor points deserve brief mention. The authors are unhappy with both the practice and judging of competitive rhetorical criticism. But they never make clear the extent of their dissatisfaction. Do they argue that *some* speeches and judges are weak? I know of no one who would dispute this, yet presumably they perceive themselves to offer a controversial position. Do they assert that *all* speeches and judges are weak? Given the fact that both authors have coached and judged this event, this is a preposterous claim. The remaining possibility, that *most* speeches and judges are weak, is simply not established on the basis of the evidence presented here. This is a serious indictment, not one to be advanced on the basis of two examples and scant testimony.

Furthermore, they obviously believe their criticisms unique to competitive rhetorical criticism (and not endemic to all individual events), for they use the existence of purportedly good speeches in informative speaking, persuasive speaking, and interpretation as premises of their analogy. This assumption requires support as well.

Our authors also fail to demonstrate that professional rhetorical criticism is of gen-

erally such high quality as they seem to assume. I use selected theoretical treatments and rhetorical criticisms as models and ideals, as mentioned earlier. But I could easily point to numerous examples of rhetorical criticisms in dissertations or journal articles which are quite weak. They never attempt to demonstrate that all professional rhetorical criticism is good; they never even bother to provide examples of what they want our students to measure up to.

But enough of these quibbles. As educators, we should certainly strive to improve our abilities as coaches and judges, and the performances of our students. We ought to consider and possibly experiment with some of the specific suggestions presented here. Other possibilities include provision of bibliographies and sample coaching materials to coaches, or to offer seminars or short courses on various individual events. We should selectively employ professional rhetorical criticism as an ideal for our students to learn from. But we must recognize that, as a learning tool for undergraduates, we should not impose professional standards on competitive rhetorical criticism. To do so, no matter how carefully and well-intentioned, runs a grave risk of frustrating our students and discouraging them from pursuing this valuable and exciting activity.

#### ENDNOTES

1 Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Criticism: Ephemeral and Enduring," *Speech Teacher* 23 (January 1974): 9-14.

2 For a discussion of reasons for rejection of the other commonly asserted standard for evaluating the soundness of an analogical argument - that essential similarities outweigh essential differences - see William L. Benoit and John S. France, "Analogical Reasoning in Legal Argumentation," *Proceedings of the 1979 Summer Conference on Argumentation*, eds. Jack Rhodes and Sara Newell (Falls Church: Speech Communication Association, 1980): 48-60.



# *Interpretation of Literature Begins Before the Performance:*

## *Hints on how to improve your prose performance.*

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Interpretation of literature appears to be lacking the fundamental element of analysis. Many readers appear to be handed a script or cutting. The readers work for a smooth and pronunciation or error free reading. Some of the more experienced readers even develop focal points for the characters. However these same "error-free" readers seem to lack any in-depth understanding of the author or the work they are performing.

What is interpretation of literature? This question needs to be addressed for the competitive readers. Interpretation is more than grammatical and phonetically accurate reading with focal points. The reader should attempt to display an understanding of the author, the author's works and the message within the script.

Before discussing the vital elements of analysis it is necessary to discuss the requirements of prose interpretation. What is prose? A quick check of oral interpretation texts provide no clues, while Morris (1973) in the American Heritage Dictionary defines it first as "ordinary speech or writing" and later "to speak or write in a dull, tiresome style." Contest rules of the American Forensics Association and the National Forensics Association make no attempt to define prose, however they do state that play cuttings are prohibited.

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Prose is more easily defined by what is not, such as it is not verse and it is not a play but we have not defined its style. Prose is the most common literary form of expression and includes the lecture, sermon, novel, essay, and short story. Prose should be thought of as narration, the telling of a story. Narrative is defined by Morris (1973) as "a story or description of actual or fictional events." Prose is expository. The expression is direct and lacks rhyme as terminal words of lines. Generally a more complicated sentence structure is characteristic of prose. Enough, the issue is defining prose for selection purposes. Common elements to be considered when selecting a reading for prose are plot, action, characters, narrator, confrontation, climax, and resolution. This may appear as a description of either a short story or novel, as both involve the reader in the resolution of the conflict. To be a success in interpretation of prose you must think in terms of the story teller. How will you involve the hearer? Action! The only way action can take place is for at least two characters to be involved in some sort of confrontation that results in a climax. A monologue is uninteresting because it lacks character interaction.

Now to the issue of analysis of the literary piece that you have selected to read. First, the reader must read a variety of stories with the idea of seeing how the elements are dealt with by the various authors. A reader with a deficient background in literature reveals that deficiency to the judge or critic by the poor quality of literature selected for performance. The interpretative reader must be a judge of literary quality. Quality implies some standard or measure by which the piece can be evaluated, these are the elements that were referred to previously.

The perspective used in selecting a piece should involve images. What images were created by the writer when you first read the



story? Can you create those images for the hearer of your story? This question addresses the craft of the writer and of the performer. Mattingly and Grimes (1970) make reference to the literary object arguing that the reader must understand the components of communication. The first item is the plot. To understand the plot of the story the analysis should reveal the basic strategy used by the author. How will the action develop? Realize that the author must construct an environment for the conflict to develop, within this same environment the author is introducing and developing the role and expected behavior of each character in relation to the environment and to other characters. Thus, what is the environment? How is the conflict introduced? Who is the agent introducing the conflict? What is the motivation of this character for introducing the conflict? A clear understanding of these questions can lead the reader to the second item, action.

How is the action brought about? It is important to note that almost all authors use a cause-effect view of the world. What action starts the building of conflict? Is it a single sentence said in an innocent manner, or an act designed to bring attention to the agent? The reader must determine definitively when cutting the piece for the hearer ears what steps of action are vital to the building of conflict. Each step of the action or reaction is there to build the sense of

The third item is the character development. To understand the development of the character the reader should be able to describe the characters and their motivations. What does each character want out of life? How will each behave to reach their goal? How will each character react to others? Create in your mind this person or persons. See them, watch them, and listen to them, for this is the image you will give the hearer. If you fail to see them, the hearer can not see them or feel them. Your ability to create this character in your mind is vital. Parrish (1941) paraphrasing Richard Whately suggests “. . . to dwell as intently as possible on the sense, trusting to nature to

suggest spontaneously the proper emphasis and tones.” This sense is in reference to the image of the words or lines spoken by the characters.

The narrator, says Heston (1973), is “the eye which sees” and provides to the hearer of the narration an understanding of what is important, i.e., an explanation of some step of action, or the motivation behind the act. According to Heston “. . . there are only the narrator’s perceptions, as he exists in the timeless present of his own consciousness.” The reader must make use of the narrator to create for the hearer a consciousness, the consciousness of the author revealing the importance of the literary message. Heston notes that the narrator is curiously undefined. The reader must define the narrator and use the narrator to provide insight into the confrontation. Ask yourself, what is the role of the narrator in this story? How can the role of the narrator be maximized without damaging the characters? Who is the narrator? What does he see and how? How does he speak and why? “In negating himself in the text, the narrator conveys himself. How is the performer, who is inevitably present, to enact a narrator who is both present and absent?” Heston is here referring to the merging of the reader and the consciousness of the narrator.

The steps of action develop the confrontation. The narrator can describe the events leading up to the climax or the narrator in combination with the characters can work through each event by a series of acts to the climax. What is important now is mood, have you given the hearer the image that the confrontation is nearing? Lee (1959) offers this advice: A writer may build to his climax in a number of ways, and the interpreter must coordinate his technique with the author’s. There must always be a high degree of concentration and mental directness at the point of climax so that the audience will be held by it.” Ask yourself what actions contribute to the nearing confrontation? How will these actions be best presented for dramatic effect? What kind of confrontation will it be, and why?



What values are involved in the confrontation? How can the voice be used to create the tension, anger, fear or whatever emotion necessary to develop the pending confrontation or climax?

The climax is the high point of the performance. The true nature of the characters is generally revealed for all to see and comment on because the deed is known. Lee (1959) suggests that the "climax may be built orally by an increase or decrease, abrupt or gradual, of any one or any combination of the aspects of physical and vocal communication." The reader must focus on the event that is the climax of the confrontation. The hearer needs to be brought or carried to this point and then allowed to slide to the resolution. The reader's task of analysis is near complete. Attention now needs to be given to the resolution. How is the conflict resolved? How does the story end? Do the main characters live happily ever after or does one of the main characters die? Most important

is the question, is there a misleading ending? What actions paint the lasting image you want to leave the hearer.

This article is intended to provide some insight into the most important part of interpretation, the analysis. An understanding of the vital elements and the motivations of the characters will help reader create the image that gives the hearer pleasure.

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## A Judicial Paradigm for the Evaluation of Debates

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The issue of paradigm evaluation has become one of the most important theoretical issues in debate during the past few years.<sup>1</sup> While many judges feel that the paradigm to be applied in any given round should be decided by the arguments advanced by the teams in any given round,<sup>2</sup> judges are often forced to apply a paradigm to a debate when there is no theoretical dispute or tacit agreement upon a paradigm by the debaters involved. In addition, while several theoretical models of debate have

been advanced in the past few years<sup>3</sup> these models are by no means a comprehensive list of the ways that debate can be evaluated. This paper will attempt to address the issues of how paradigms should be evaluated, and then it will suggest that the best model of debate is one that is drawn from legal reasoning. Finally, it will attempt to outline the major features of a paradigm of argument drawn from law.

## THE NATURE OF DEBATE PARADIGMS

One of the major points of dispute in the Rowland-Zarefsky dispute over the evaluation of debate paradigms is the relationship between academic debate and argumentation. Rowland argues that the constraints of debate should guide us in the selection of a debate paradigm.<sup>4</sup> Zarefsky concludes that such a strategy is misguided. He suggests that debate is to argumentation as the species is to the genus, and that we should start with general principles of argumenta-

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tion to establish a paradigm for argument, and then apply those guidelines to the debate situation.<sup>5</sup>

Zarefsky's position assumes that all argumentation situations have certain similarities that enable us to develop a broad theory of argumentation.<sup>6</sup> If a theory does not fit the model of debate, however, that would indicate that the theory is not a general theory of argumentation but rather is a special theory of argumentation applicable to some argumentative fields but not to all argument. If one accepts Zarefsky's genus/species analogy, if a paradigm does not adequately describe *all* of the species of argument, it cannot be a general theory covering the genus. While Zarefsky is correct in arguing that debate is not all of argument, he forgets that debate is *a* type of argument, and if *any* paradigm does not apply to all argumentative situations, then the paradigm covers only a special case of argumentation and is not a universal paradigm for argumentation. Thus, if any paradigm is not suited for the debate setting, we must either decide that it is not a universally applicable paradigm (thereby indicating the paradigm will not help us understand the general nature of argumentation) or else that debate is not a form of argumentation (in which case argumentation rules need not apply).

A better way to evaluate paradigms is to cease to search for a universal paradigm to govern all argumentation, and to shift our examination to the nature of fields of argument that combine to form the larger genus of argumentation.<sup>7</sup> Debate offers us an opportunity to examine in depth one field of argument, and the theoretical discussion of that field can assist us in evaluating the way that the forum of argumentation should affect the way argument progresses and the way that argument should be evaluated. We can then compare and contrast the debate setting and the debate paradigms with other fields to examine the nature of fields. How does limited time affect a decision? What happens to argument when it is repeated in several debates? These and other issues can

be discovered by emphasizing as a field in itself and by applying these conclusions to other fields.<sup>8</sup>

This does not mean that rules governing debate need not have some relationship to other fields of argument; if debate is a totally isolated field of argument then learning about debate would not train our students about argument in any other field. It does mean that seeking universal rules for argument may be futile. Rather, we should seek to draw rules for debate from fields that are similar in terms of goals, format, etc., and to deviate from those fields only if the unique characteristics of debate justify the deviation.<sup>9</sup>

The study of any field should start with the identification of two features of that field: the goal of the field, and the forum in which argumentation takes place.<sup>10</sup> While there may be some dispute over the goal of debate,<sup>11</sup> the use of goals to evaluate paradigms does eliminate some potential paradigms. Some goals (training students to be political, training students to manipulate audiences) are unlikely to be articulated or defended in debate rounds. In other cases, differing goals may not be mutually exclusive.

The restrictions of the forum on a debate (or argument) may provide even greater limits to any theory on debate. It could be argued that time limits prevent truth from being an objective of debate. The bilateral nature of debate might place other constraints on the debaters.<sup>12</sup> The discussion of the restraints that the forum places on a theory of argumentation can not only help us evaluate paradigms, but it can also encourage us to examine how other forums that are not as structured as debate are affected by the lack of these restrictions.

#### JUSTIFICATIONS FOR A LEGAL MODEL OF DEBATE

There are several reasons for developing a paradigm for evaluating debate from legal argument. First, legal argument (especially appellate argument) has many similar characteristics of academic debate. Legal



argument is bilateral. The judge is external to the deliberation. The judge is expected to refrain from deciding a case based upon any issues other than those raised by the litigants. The Supreme Court even limits oral arguments before it to one hour. Legal reasoning has also developed standards for assigning presumption,<sup>13</sup> determining the wording of a policy,<sup>14</sup> and defining terms.<sup>15</sup> If there is a genus/species relationship between argumentation and debate, then law is the species closest to debate. In addition, it is worth noting that the current interest in the development of a Science Court<sup>16</sup> suggests both that the legal forum (and procedures) may be the best way to evaluate scientific disputes, and that when a field of argument is shifted to another forum, the way the argument is evaluated changes (in this case when the scientific controversy moves to a legal setting, it acquires the legal procedures for evaluating argument).<sup>17</sup>

A second justification for drawing from legal argument for a paradigm for evaluating debate is that it would enhance our understanding of argument. Two of the major theorists of argumentation in the twentieth century, Toulmin and Perelman, have drawn extensively from legal reasoning in developing their theories of argument. By attempting to discover the nature of legal reasoning and applying it to a similar forum, we can help test the appropriateness of legal reasoning for other fields of argument. The applicability of legal reasoning to other fields of argument should be relatively easy. Legal reasoning has always been viewed as being very rational and as being one of the most developed systems of argument.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, legal argument addresses many of the issues that we discuss in debate, including issues of ethics, political philosophy,<sup>19</sup> science (whether nuclear plants are safe), psychology (is a defendant sane?), and sociology (is discrimination harmful?). In short, if there is any way of looking at argument that has been successfully applied to a wide range of arguments, it is legal reasoning. In addition, unlike

science (which emphasizes what is), legal reasoning attempts to discover what should be, making it very appropriate for policy decisions.<sup>20</sup>

### THE NATURE OF A LEGAL PARADIGM

The close analogy between academic debate and courtroom argument makes it easy to develop guidelines for academic debate drawn from legal material. While some details of this paradigm may be open to dispute, these disputes can be resolved by examining primary legal materials, as opposed to relying on the judgement of the initial proponent of the debate paradigm. In the legal paradigm, the debate judge acts as an appellate court judge (the best analogy might be that the judge becomes a judge on the Fourth Federal District Court of Appeals hearing, on original jurisdiction, a case involving public policy). The debaters become the litigants in the dispute, with the affirmative team defending its plan and the negative team defending non-resolutional ground. The goal of the argument is to reach a decision, and the forum in which argument takes place is an adversarial forum. As a judge, there are several implications of this view:

1. *The role of the resolution.* In the legal paradigm, contrary to the speculation of many, the resolution does not specify the jurisdiction of the judge. If this were the case, all non-resolutional counterplans would be outside the jurisdiction of the judge and thus would be irrelevant to the debate. There are two potential ways to examine the function of the resolution in a debate. First, the resolution could be viewed as indicating the options open to the two teams. It would serve a similar function to the assignment of a client to a public defender or the assigning of a case to a moot court participant (this view would obviously rule out topical counterplans); the resolution limits the options available to both teams. The affirmative team can defend any resolutional option, while the negative team is limited to competitive non-resolutional policies.