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BOOK REVIEWS

Nicholas F. Burnett, Editor

Christopher W. Tindale. *Acts of Arguing: A Rhetorical Perspective of Argument.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. 1999. $18.95 paper. ISBN 0791443884. 245 pages.

While teaching argumentation and debate courses, there is often a tendency to overlook how competing perspectives of argument inform our understanding of what argument is and how it should be evaluated, performed, and taught. But this is not completely our fault. Introductory textbooks often move carelessly between different perspectives of argument without recognizing that each offers fundamentally different starting and ending points. Christopher Tindale's *Acts of Arguing: A Rhetorical Perspective of Argument* claims that contemporary approaches to argument foreground either the logical or dialectical perspectives of argument at the expense of the rhetorical. Such a move, he argues, thwarts the development of a comprehensive theory of argument.

At times, *Acts of Arguing* will seem strange to members of the Communication discipline because it is directed primarily toward scholars and students of Philosophy. While Philosophy has traditionally privileged the theorizing of transcendental "Truths," the field of Communication Studies has long invested itself in understanding the temporary, partial, and often-contradictory effects and effectiveness of public discourse in relation to particular audiences. With this in mind, it becomes easier to recognize that many of the battles that Tindale is fighting have already occurred, or are at a different stage of development, within our field. This is not to say that *Acts of Arguing* has nothing to teach us; rather, its philosophical leanings offer unique insight into how we, as Communication scholars and students, have much to share with, learn from, and teach our colleagues in other disciplines within the academy.

Acts of Arguing is a reader-friendly book that is organized into three major sections. The first section clearly and succinctly describes the logical and dialectical perspectives of argument and explains how their failure to take rhetoric into account ultimately undermines their usefulness. The second section lays out the major tenants of a rhetorical perspective of argument by synthesizing the writings of Aristotle and Chaim Perelman. The final section illustrates the rhetorical perspective's superiority through the examination of two case

studies – a reworking of fallacy theory, and accounting for recent feminist and postmodern critiques of reason.

The logical perspective of argument is concerned with judging the product of argument. Accordingly, arguments are evaluated as valid or invalid, strong or weak, by the formal relationship between premises, evidence, and claims. A logically valid argument must therefore conform to the appropriate form without regard to the audience's reactions to it. While Stephen Toulmin and other informal logicians expanded validity beyond formal deduction, Tindale claims that they still fail to incorporate the contingent, incomplete, and temporary nature of context and audience into their models of argument. Even Toulmin, "freezes statements into timeless propositions before admitting them to logic" (Tindale 29).

The dialectical perspective of argument, forwarded by the pragma-dialecticians, is concerned with the rules or procedures necessary to perform argument correctly and to achieve the goal of resolving disputes and promoting critical discussions. Tindale argues that this perspective forwards a normative model for resolving disputes which is concerned not with describing "*how* disputes take place, but how they *should* be performed if the optimal chance for their resolution is to be achieved" (italics in original 47). The downfall of the dialectical perspective is its failure to address the role of argumentation beyond conflict resolution because it ignores the fact that participants in argument do not necessarily follow rules, or if they did, can still overcome disagreement in irrational ways. The dialectical perspective of argument, according to Tindale, ultimately places too much emphasis on establishing rules for resolving conflict and not enough on actual use of argumentation in relation to actual audiences.

Tindale offers the rhetorical perspective as a model of argument that emphasizes the centrality of process in argumentation. The goal of argument, accordingly, is "the creation or strengthening adherence of the minds of the two audiences [actual and universal] to the claims presented for their assent" (17). Tindale does not want to collapse to a sophistic theory of argument which champions any rhetorical means that successfully gain adherence from one's audience; rather, he relies heavily on Perelman's universal audience to establish an objective standard of evaluation while examining particular argumentative acts. The universal audience is "the distillation of the concrete audience, comprised of the common features as imagined by the arguer (speaker)" (90). In other words, the universal audience allows the rhetor and critic to craft and evaluate an argument according to the qualities of a particular audience while considering a more common, objective, and transcendent criteria

of reasonableness found in the universal audience. This model tries to balance the strengths of the logical and dialectical models by establishing an objective criteria to judge arguments against the idiosyncrasies of particular audiences.

The final section of the book attempts to illustrate the superiority of Tindale's model to address and explain specific case studies, fallacies, and recent critiques of reason. While this section offers a unique and new way to explain fallacies, it fails to live up to Tindale's promises of a theory of argument which is grounded in actual audiences while embracing an objective notion of reason. Despite all of his efforts, Tindale ends up advancing an admittedly flexible, prescriptive, *a priori* criteria for evaluating argument. While the majority of the description of Perelman's theory of universal audience insists that a notion of reasonableness is found in particular audiences, Tindale's applications end up stripping audiences of their particularities. His fatal flaw is that his applications are unable to focus on particular audiences while utilizing an emergent notion of a reasonable universal audience. For example, he argues that one can imagine the universal audience by bracketing the "unreasonable members [of an audience] and focusing on those who remain," or by imagining an audience "distributed across time" (123). Reasonableness is operationalized as knowledgeable, critical of evidence, educated, dispassionate, objective, logical/rational, and reflective (118, 120, 144, 178). In addition, the universal audience would be "alert to anything not acceptable to a middle-ground position, and anything that contradicts its own inherent sense of reasonableness" (141). A universal audience, accordingly, "would never be convinced by a potentially fallacious argument" (178). Tindale's notion of reasonableness becomes an a-priori standard of rationality, which appears to be just as a-contextual and void of the actual audience as the logical and dialectical perspectives. By stripping audiences of everything that appears, on face, as unreasonable, irrational, uneducated, and extreme, Tindale fails to recognize that all claims of rationality and reasonableness are bound up in a power/knowledge relationship where power is enforced by determining the boundaries of what is accepted as true and untrue, reasonable and unreasonable.

Instead of "identifying the 'highest' or most reasonable elements within the audience, [and] excluding those that are clearly unreasonable" (118), we need to recognize that particular discursive regularities, norms, practices, modes of deliberation, and other taken-for-granted, commonsensical, and naturalized conceptions of reason are embodied, problematized, and transformed in argumentative practices (see Goodnight; Phillips). In

other words, we need to recognize that argumentation is the site where com rationality and reasonableness struggle against each other for acceptance. T instead of bracketing irrational or extreme arguments and audience membe establish an objective criteria to evaluate argument, we should examine the seemingly irrational, incommensurable, and irreconcilable speech a problematize and reinforce generally accepted norms of argument and rea Olson & Goodnight; Ono & Sloop). We are more likely to develop a comp of argument if we recognize that notions of reasonableness are power-lad are open to change.

The strength of Tindale's book is its ability to clearly explain assumptions and weaknesses of the logical and dialectical perspectives of offering a rhetorical theory of argument that synthesizes Aristotle and Pere *Acts of Arguing* valiantly attempts to bridge the objective criteria of judgme the logical and dialectical perspective with a contextual and audience based of argument. Unfortunately, Tindale is unable to cover the distance bet perspectives of argument, but this book does illustrate what is lost when w one perspective and what is at stake in the possible union of all three. Ultim is worth reading because it reminds us of the importance of recognizing that we implicitly or explicitly begin our study of argumentation often determines end up. Just as important, *Acts of Arguing* points to the unique role that the discipline can play in forwarding a rhetorical theory of argument.

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Fisher, Alec. *The Logic of Real Arguments*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988. $17.95 paper. ISBN 0521313414. 190 pages.

If you have ever tried to teach your students basic argument analysis, Alec Fisher proposes to have the book for you. He explains that the book's objective "is to describe and demonstrate a systematic method for extracting an argument from its written context and for evaluating it. We want a method which will apply to a wide range of both everyday and theoretical arguments and which will work for ordinary reasoning as expressed in natural language" (128). The focus clearly is on breaking down arguments into their conclusions and premises or reasons, rather than on utilizing the terms of formal logic (although in the Appendix, he does provide definitions of some terms). In fact, Fisher comments in the Preface that the tools of formal logic do not seem to apply to the arguments students actually evaluate outside of their logic classes (vii). While Fisher's method of identifying arguments may be useful, if also a bit overdone, his system may fall short in actually providing students with a means to evaluate these arguments.

The first two chapters lay out his method for identifying and marking the parts of an argument, what he terms "extracting arguments" (21). This method begins by circling in the text all inference indicators, words that designate conclusions, such as "therefore" or "thus," and words that designate reasons, such as "because" or "firstly" (16-17). Fisher's method proceeds on to underline conclusions, bracket reasons, mark the main conclusion with the letter "C," and mark the reasons offered for this conclusion with the letter "R" (21-22). There are, of course, further steps and a diagramming schema, but his emphasis on the systematic nature of analyzing arguments should be clear. Once the conclusions and reasons are identified, Fisher offers "tests for a good argument" which essentially propose to evaluate the argument by asking two questions: are the premises true and if the premises are true, does the conclusion follow from the premises (25)? To his credit, he realizes that some

arguments require different standards of evidence and formulates what he terms the "Assertibility Question" to deal with these instances.

Teaching students to identify conclusions and premises is a necessary objective, and to this end, Fisher provides well-explained examples of how one might locate the reasons being offered in support of a conclusion. Argumentation instructors may find Fisher's method easily transferable to teaching students how to offer a thesis and support, as well as how to identify these parts of an argument. Along with this, Fisher does a good job pointing out the distinction between a conclusion and an assertion (58), something many students fail to grasp. Yet, instructors should keep in mind that this is definitely not argumentation theory; Fisher even wants to avoid the distinction between deductive and inductive arguments in terms of finding conclusions (138).

Another advantage to this text is his attention to providing multiple examples of the application of his method. The introductory chapter looks at several passages to explain how reasons and conclusions function together, and subsequent chapters examine longer arguments to illustrate how a student might use his method to identify and evaluate arguments. Fisher disapproves of the hypothetical examples that often occur in argumentation and logic texts, thus he makes use of well-known historical arguments such as Pascal's wager, Malthus's population-resources thesis, and an excerpt from John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*. Additionally, he provides more examples at the end of the book for students to utilize as exercises in applying his method. Many argumentation texts use examples developed by the author, which easily illustrate the ideas being discussed but provide little guidance for encountering the complexities of real arguments. Looking at actual arguments definitely adds to the usefulness of Fisher's method, as students would have to locate conclusions and reasons in passages where the conclusions and reasons may not be as readily identifiable.

Yet, by the same token, the usefulness of his examples is limited in some regards. Fisher's book was reprinted as recently as 1997, but it was first published in 1988, and because this is not a new edition, the examples used in early chapters to explain the method (e.g. the discussion about Ronald Reagan seeking a third term) have not been updated. The historical examples clearly do not lose their familiarity or historical relevance with age, but there is a potential language problem. In reading the passage by Malthus, for example, a student would first have to figure out what Malthus (worded in the language of the late 1700s) was saying before being able to start marking and diagramming the argument. The

implication is not that the usefulness of the method is negated per se, but additional examples or additional instruction on the provided examples may need to be supplemented in order to ensure the method's illustration.

Despite Fisher's hopefulness, a further question arises over whether the evaluation portion of his method would be entirely feasible in practice. He states that the object of the book is "to demonstrate that one does not need to be an expert in the field" in order to evaluate complex arguments (2). On face, the two tests he offers seem straightforward, and in the chapters illustrating the method, his application of the tests makes sense. However, it is unclear whether on other examples, students using the method would be able to evaluate the reasons and conclusions in similar ways, or whether being able to come up with the conditions that would prove a conclusion false depends upon an understanding of the subject matter. For example, in examining Caspar Weinberger's argument for nuclear deterrence, Fisher notes that Weinberger's conclusion that the Soviet military buildup proves that they regard nuclear war as winnable fails to account for Soviet reasoning about an American military buildup. He comments about the United States: "they too have far more nuclear weapons than are necessary for deterrence; that many of their submarine-based missiles are more survivable and more powerful than the Russians'; that they too have elaborate civil defence plans and that their writings and military doctrine also emphasize a nuclear war-fighting scenario" (64). As a way to evaluate Weinberger's conclusion, Fisher's evidence proves his point, but to make the point, he had to know a good deal about U.S. military preparations and doctrine, not contained in Weinberger's argument. As the evaluation portion of Fisher's method hinges on being capable of seeing whether other conditions might exist to prove a conclusion false, it seems as if the method alone without knowledge of the context or the subject matter might be insufficient means to accomplish this task.

Overall, as a tool for teaching students to identify the parts of an argument, namely the premises and the conclusion, Fisher succeeds even if he is a bit more methodical than some might be comfortable with. However, the ability to evaluate arguments using his method without any expertise in the argument's subject matter appears to be overly optimistic.

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Freeley, Austin J. and David L. Steinberg. *Argumentation and Debate: Critical Thinking for Reasoned Decision Making* 10th edition. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2000. $61.95 hardcover. ISBN 0534561152. 478 pages.

Rybacki, Karyn C. and Donald J. Rybacki. *Advocacy and Opposition: An Introduction to Argumentation* 4th edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2000. $55.00 paper. ISBN 0205295835. 292 pages.

The preface of *Argumentation and Debate*, now in its tenth edition, proudly proclaims that four generations of students have been educated by the text. It has been my choice for a debate text since it was in its fifth edition for both Argumentation and Debate and Introduction to Debate courses. The text has an equal division of chapters focusing on argumentation and debate. I highly recommend this book for courses with the goals of providing an introduction to argumentation and training students to learn and/or participate in intercollegiate debate.

The Freeley and Steinberg text has several advantages over other argumentation and debate texts that motivate student to want to learn more about the subject. The first two chapters address the benefits of debate by focusing on critical thinking and decision-making. These two chapters include the most complete listing of the benefits and values of learning to debate that I've found in a debate text. Assigning these chapters as the first reading articulates clear benefits students can gain from taking the course. The remaining chapters provide clear explanations and examples of debate theory. Freeley and Steinberg excel at simplifying theories that may seem complex to beginning argumentation and debate students. The voluminous appendices serve both educational and motivational objectives. Appendix C lists all intercollegiate resolutions debated since the 1920's. Students remark that they are amazed by the diversity of controversial issues debated by college students throughout history. One helpful addition to this edition is a listing of web citations for debate organizations. While the previous editions have always included a more recent final round from NDT and/or CEDA nationals, this edition adds the ballots and a flowsheet of the debate. A comprehensive bibliography is provided and divided into topics, so that students can easily identify where to find more information on topics such as counterplans, critiques, research, ethics, cross-examination and parliamentary debate.

The most recent edition reflects the changes in NDT and CEDA . Previous editions had separate sections of each debate theory chapter devoted to value, CEDA and NDT debate. The 10th edition combines CEDA and NDT debate sections into policy debate. Having separate theory sections for value and policy debate allows the professor the flexibility to assign chapter sections relating to the style of debate the student will participate in. One text can meet the needs of both value and policy debaters. The text has chapters at the end of the book devoted to mock trial, town hall, and parliamentary debate. A section on how to adapt a debate for the media is also included.

I've found that the text can be tailored to meet the needs of different types of argumentation and debate students. For the undergraduate, basic material is provided to meet the needs of introductory courses yet, the text provides enough of a challenge for students at the advanced level. I've also used the text for the debate portion of a Coaching and Directing Forensics course targeted at secondary teachers and for graduate assistants assigned to work with the debate program who do not have previous debate experience. Relevant exercises are provided at the end of each chapter.

The most recent edition provides a good start at updating debate theory. Three paragraphs are devoted to critiques (or, at times in the text, kritics) at the end of the negative strategies chapter. Given the prevalence of these arguments in current academic debate, more time needs to be devoted to critiques. Counterplan theory now mentions permutations, plan-inclusive counterplans, and exceptions counterplans, but coverage of these issues needs to be expanded even further.

Another weakness is in the definitions provided in the debate appendix. While students do find this helpful, some definitions are not accurate or use the term to define the term. Rebuttal speeches are described as containing no new evidence or new arguments, when it should be defined as no new arguments--new evidence is often introduced without objection.

In contrast to *Argumentation and Debate, Advocacy and Opposition* by Rybacki and Rybacki is clearly a text designed for an argumentation or critical thinking course . The preface to the fourth edition states that the text aims to provide an approach to argumentation that preserved the essentials of theory and practice as it existed in competitive debate, but tailor those concepts to meet the needs of the student who is not on a debate team. The text provides an introduction to argumentation for the non-debater, but does not meet the goal of preserving the essentials of competitive debate practice in its approach to

argumentation. The authors claim that Appendix A is included for instructors who want to focus on debating, but they fail to meet the needs of this audience.

One brief appendix on the rules and format of competitive debate is included, but this seems insufficient to prepare the student for debate competition. While the publication date is 2000, the competitive debate section reflects debate rules and formats abandoned as early as the 1970's. Time limits are listed as 10-5 for "traditional" debate or 10-3-5 for cross examination debate. NDT abandoned 10-5 in 1974 to add cross examination. The 9-3-6 or 8-3-5 formats have been in use for nearly a decade and are the most two most commonly policy debate formats. The speaker duty section states that the 1AC in the traditional need-plan policy debate focuses on one stock issue: the reason for change. The 2AC is responsible for presenting the plan. While the authors mention that if other organizational formats are used, the plan appears in the 1AC, no other formats are discussed in the appendix. This creates the false impression that in most policy debates, the plan is presented in the 2AC. Negative speaker duties are also outdated, stating that the 1NC argues the first stock issue and the second and third stock issues are left for the 2NC. The discussion of CEDA debate states that topics are changed each semester and that value topics are debated. This appendix does not reflect the current practice of debate and provides inaccurate information for the instructor who wants to focus on debating. The chapter on policy debating needs to be updated to reflect current policy debate practices and theories. One example is that counterplans are listed as counterproposals, which must be non-topical and mutually exclusive. More time is devoted to a discussion of minor repairs than counterplans. The chapter on policy debate and the appendix simply do not reflect current practices.

Despite the inaccuracies in the competitive debate sections, *Opposition and Advocacy* offers many benefits for argumentation and critical thinking courses. One benefit is the annotated bibliographies at the end of each chapter in addtion to the traditional suggested readings. The annotation provides enough detail about a few selected readings to stimulate an interest in reading more and to focus the reading on selected chapters. In addition, summaries are provided at the end of sections on how to argue from cause, sign, etc. The summaries are clear, concise, and useful for the beginning student of argumentation.

The authors provide examples throughout the book that are relevant to the daily lives of college students, such as examining university parking problems in the policy debate section. The text covers arguing propositions of fact, value and policy, providing a

multitude of examples drawn from a variety of subjects. Sections entitled, "Argument in Action" highlight current debate subjects and forward controversial issues throughout the text. A section on the limitations of getting evidence from the internet provides useful considerations for source quality. While many argumentation texts have a section on ethics, Rybacki and Rybacki wisely position this discussion in the first chapter of the text.

Finally, the text provides a good general overview to a number of topics related to argumentation, such as audience analysis, targeting messages, building credibility and style. The Toulmin model is clearly explained and used as the basis for examining how arguments are created.

The text is concise (247 pages) and available in softcover, which is ideal for several introductory level courses. In addition to an introduction to argumentation course, the text is appropriate for a core curriculum course that has a component on critical thinking. The text targets an examination of the nature of argument in our society, which fits the goal of a variety of introductory core courses designed to promote critical thinking.

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Herrick, James A. *Argumentation: Understanding and Shaping Arguments*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1995. $53.00 paper. ISBN 0137765274. 280 pages.

The majority of students, when confronted with the study of argumentation for the first time, seem to approach the subject as if they are learning a foreign language. Frustration is a common reaction. When argumentation content is presented along with debate terminology and theory, this frustration can become overwhelming. James Herrick's text, *Argumentation: Understanding and Shaping Arguments*, is a valuable resource for instructors seeking ways to ease students into the study of argumentation. The text is clearly aimed at an introductory level student. At a very manageable 280 pages, however, there would be time remaining at the conclusion of the term to move into more advanced argumentation concepts, or beginning debate skills. The text is extremely well organized, with clear headings and internal signposting used throughout. Additionally, clear examples

are provided to help clarify concepts and terms. Each chapter ends with a series of exercises for students that help them to understand and apply the information discussed in the chapter. Unlike many texts, these exercises are well constructed, challenging, and effective in their illustration of key concepts. Although some of the exercises may seem dated, a new edition could easily address this shortcoming.

Herrick's text is divided into three major units: the components and contexts of arguments, the standards of sound arguments, and argument types and audience adaptation. The first unit introduces students to the general principles and basic vocabulary of argumentation, as well as the common ethical concerns one confronts when engaging in argumentation. A strength of the first chapter is that it clearly explains how one must approach the study of argumentation with the understanding that we live in a pluralistic society. Rather than tucking the discussion of diversity into a concluding chapter, or nifty dialog boxes strewn throughout the text, Herrick chooses to use diversity as a base on which the rest of his discussion will be grounded.

Although Herrick's opening unit does a nice job of providing students with a general understanding of the principles of argumentation, it does become somewhat confusing when introducing terminology. The first chapter initially refers to the three basic elements of an argument as "reason, inference and conclusion." Yet, later in the same chapter he refers to these elements as "evidence, connective and conclusion." The Toulmin model is then introduced in chapter two. By the end of the second chapter of the text, students have been given three different sets of terms to use when referring to the elements of an argument. There is a risk that such inconsistencies will frustrate students.

The second unit of the text is the strongest. Chapter Four outlines what Herrick believes to be the three criteria of a reasonable argument. These are support, definitional consistency, and validity. The remaining four chapters in this unit discuss each of these criteria in more detail. Chapter Five explores issues of validity in the basic structure of arguments. Herrick looks at both deductive as well as inductive arguments. The examples provided at the end of this chapter are especially useful. Chapters Six and Seven explore issues related to the use of evidence. Herrick's explanation of the standard tests of evidence, in chapter six, is extremely easy to follow. This chapter also provides excellent advice to help students evaluate the quality of periodicals as sources for evidence. The potential commercial, as well as political, biases of both popular and scholarly journals are candidly explained. Despite this extremely frank discussion of print sources, Herrick does not

include any information on how one should evaluate Internet sources. As students depend more and more on electronic sources for information, it is imperative that they gain an understanding for how they should evaluate the strength of these information sites.

In addition to Herrick's already strong overview of the use of evidence, he also includes, in chapter seven, a much more detailed explanation of the use of statistics and testimony. His explanation of sampling, and how inappropriate sampling procedures can skew the effectiveness of an argument, is easy to follow even if students are unfamiliar with basic research methods. The section on testimony is, unfortunately, not nearly as well developed. The final chapter in this second unit explores the importance of linguistically consistent definitions in the construction of arguments. Herrick is careful to explain the difference between using definitions to establish clarity, and using definitions tactically.

The final unit in the text explores different types of arguments, fallacies, as well as the significance of conducting audience analysis. Chapters nine, ten and eleven cover different types of arguments. Arguments of analogy, arguing from example, and causal reasoning are each discussed thoroughly in the first two chapters of the unit. Chapter eleven, however, is a more cursory look at different argumentative settings and the nature of the arguments that may be successfully used in these settings. Specifically, Herrick covers arguments of origin, quantity, quality, principle, intent, and function. Chapter twelve is a very comprehensive overview of common fallacies. What Herrick gains in breadth in this chapter, he loses in depth. The definitions of each fallacy are rushed, and unlike the other chapters in the text, the examples are brief and somewhat vague. An instructor could probably limit the number of fallacies to be discussed, and bring in supplementary material to flesh out Herrick's explanations.

The last chapter in the text teaches students the basics of case construction, and explains the process of audience analysis. The inclusion of audience analysis seems inappropriately placed into this section of the book. Although it is certainly an important concept to consider when writing a case, by placing the discussion of audience analysis in the final pages of the text, Herrick has failed to highlight its importance to all levels of argumentation. Most likely, audience analysis would logically fit better into the first chapter when Herrick discusses diversity.

Overall, *Argumentation: Understanding and Shaping Arguments* is a strong introductory text to the study of argumentation. Some of the material might overlap with content taught in a basic public speaking course, but Herrick is careful to always link key concepts back to

the specific practice of argumentation. The text will provide students with a solid grounding in the area of argumentation. This grounding will make for a much smoother transition into one's comprehension of debate.

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