

Notes

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THE FORENSICS CRITIC AS AN "IDEOLOGUE-CRITIC": AN ARGUMENT FOR IDEOLOGY AS A NEW PARADIGM FOR ACADEMIC DEBATE

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The applicability of forensics tournament events beyond the competitive environment has been a relatively enduring concern. In an attempt to reconcile the role of method in forensics competition with the educational and societal benefits of the activity, this paper will examine Wander's (1983) ideological criticism perspective and its application to the forensics critic. Philip Wander (1983) suggests that debate is more than just informed talk about matters of importance. Rather, criticism and debate enable society to recognize good reasons and engage in right action: "What an ideological view does is to situate good and right in an historical context, the efforts of real people to create a better world" (p. 18). Wander's perspective is relevant to forensics if one assumes that forensics are a testing ground for important socio-political ideas. Rather than focusing only on methods and strategies, debate should challenge existing orders and resolve important conflicts.

Currently, academic debate does not promote the discussion of substantive issues. This paper argues that judges need to be more ideological in their evaluation of debate contests. Indeed, this paper analyzes a number of commonly used paradigms identifying potential abuses that are common within each paradigm. Finally, this paper does not suggest that current paradigms cause the abuse, but an "Ideologue-Critic" paradigm would solve debate's problems. By identifying the tenets of the "Ideologue-Critic" debate can become more ideological and therefore more educational.

In organizing the role of ideology in current communication research, this paper suggests an application of ideology to the forensics situation. Second, the paper suggests that the judge is the most influential part of debate. Because of judging rewards, certain uneducational practices are reinforced in academic debate. Finally, this paper outlines the "ideologue" paradigm suggesting its theoretical and practical tenets as well as answering possible criticisms. Indeed, I would be naive to assume that the "ideologue" paradigm would serve as a "cure all" for every problem in academic debate. Instead, the "Ideologue-Critic" paradigm is a starting point for the betterment of academic debate.

The Role of Ideology

Many divergent conceptualizations of ideology exist. For example, Black (1970) defines ideology as "the network of interconnected convictions that functions in a man [sic] epistemically and that shapes his identity by determining how he views the world" (p. 112). Additionally, Balthrop (1984) contends that ideology functions as a bridge

between specific events and cultural myths that seek to establish order. Ideologies, according to Balthrop, are interconnections between politics and other spheres of activity, furnishing guides for action. Wander's (1983) view of ideology is consistent with that developed by Black and Balthrop, but he adds that ideology refers to the critical study of ideas. Wander posits that, currently, scholars often critique rhetoric that is social and politically meaningless. Instead, we should critique discourse ideologically by examining socially important issues.

Wander (1983) further argues that an ideological critique situates knowledge in an historical context, analyzing the impact of society on rhetorical discourse and, in a broader view, societal issues. Wander also suggests that ideology directs our attention to human beings beyond the claims of morality and the bonds of compassion. It bursts the limits of technical reason to join the intellectual and the artistic with the political and social. Ideology therefore involves the unity of humanity and the wholeness of the human problem.

Theobald and Weitzel (1986) suggest that the focus of an ideological criticism should be on the socio-political implications of the discourse being studied. They note that at the heart of Wander's conception of criticism is the notion that the critic is in a uniquely powerful position to uncover and utilize arguments and data that affirm or negate the ideological nature of the discourse.

Wander's work on ideological criticism has provided rhetorical scholarship with a renewed vitality. Bruce Gronbeck (1985) describes Wander's view of criticism as "a sign of robustness" and "rebirth" for rhetorical study. However, not all scholars agree with Wander's perspective (e.g., Hill, 1983; Rosenfield, 1983). These scholars object to the subjective nature of the ideological perspective. Hill (1983) argues that rhetorical criticism should be distinct from the social criticism of a rhetorical act. However, Wander's "Ideological Turn" has been supported (Corcoran, 1984; Francesconi, 1984; McGee, 1984). Wander (1983) cogently summarizes the supporting views toward ideological criticism:

In a struggle for power, real interests exist, life and death decisions are made, and there are those who believe that reasoned and vigorous debate is an important means for clarifying the issues and directing the struggle. (p. 10)

By analyzing forensics from an ideological perspective, we can understand better the importance of substantive issues without the constraining effects of existing rules and procedures. By substantive issues, I mean those issues at the center of the resolution, that a normal decision-maker outside the forensics context would consider when discussing any particular resolution. Moreover, the analysis of forensics through Wander's ideological perspective provides critical insight into current forensics practice, leading to suggestions for change more consistent with the values/ideals of the forensic activity. Currently some scholars have prioritized method and winning over the educational experience and ideological tests that forensics offers.

The Role of the Judge

The choice among paradigms is now a dominant theoretical issue in debate (Rowland, 1982a; Rowland, 1982b; Ulrich, 1983). Additionally, the ability to adapt to the critic and understand the critic's frame of reference is critical in constructing strategies and arguments (Brooks, 1971; Miller, Gates & Gaske, 1987; Patterson & Zarefsky, 1983; Rowland, 1982a; Ulrich, 1982).

The role of the critic in directing and shaping the forensic activity is substantial. If we accept the notion that forensics is an educational activity that teaches students to argue (McBath, 1975; McBath, 1984; Rowland, 1982b; Rowland, 1985), then an analysis of paradigm theory would lend greater insight into the debate judge's behavior. Buckley (1983) suggests:

Judging continues to be the focal point of improving debate quality for any proposition. Debaters adjust to their judge-audiences. The win or loss of the ballot, and the accompanying critical ratings are the key influence for any progress in intercollegiate debate. Any ways we can understand and adjust to judging preferences is a help to our students. (p. 868)

Other scholars (Allen & Dowdy, 1984; Bauer & Colburn, 1966; Berthold, 1970; Brooks, 1971; Congalton, 1987; Hollihan, Riley, & Austin, 1983) agree that the judge is the most critical feature in debate. Howe (1981) argues that debaters are a product of judges who reward the debaters for various behaviors. If we are interested in promoting an ideological setting for forensics, the way to change debaters is through judge rewards. If judges emphasize substantive issues over method/stylistic considerations, then debaters will tend to emphasize substantive issues in order to win. Unfortunately, judges are currently, unwilling to take a strong ideological stance and punish debaters. In support of the aforementioned view, Riley and Hollihan (1982) suggest:

While public discussions of goals, standards, and education abound in our convention programs and journals, when the time comes to sign the ballot, peer pressure and the desire to belong to the elite cadre of the community requires adherence to the new "everything is debatable" communication style—there is nothing worse in this community than being an anachronism. (p. 17)

Indeed, judges constantly complain about the practice of academic debate, yet find it difficult to use the only mechanism that will change the activity—the ballot. Instead, judges are more likely to vote on a missed turnaround than punish debaters for actions the critic finds inappropriate.

Role of Paradigms in Debate

An easy way to conceptualize debate paradigms is as a "lens," or set of assumptions and blinders that a critic uses in evaluating arguments (Patterson & Zarefsky, 1983;

Rowland, 1982a), or a shared perception providing constraints and rules to which debaters adapt in their quest for ballots (Rieke & Sillars, 1984; Patterson & Zarefsky, 1983; Rowland, 1982a). Obviously, paradigms have a profound influence on the issues of a debate. Rowland (1982a) argues that judges accept and reject different issues based on their paradigms. Additionally, paradigms influence all aspects of the debate, including organization and refutation (Burgoon, 1975), justification of various theories (Rowland, 1982a), and certain tactics and strategies (Miller, Gates, & Gaske, 1987; Zarefsky, 1982). Clearly, the importance of debate paradigms cannot be overemphasized.

A number of problems have been identified with current paradigms. Benoit, Wilson and Follert (1986), and Hallmark (1984), argue that ambiguity in paradigms and diversity of opinion creates a situation where debaters do not know how the debate will be decided. Moreover, some scholars (Cirlin, 1985; Dunne, Mack & Pruett, 1971; McCroskey & Camp, 1966) suggest that little agreement exists over the appropriate method of judging debates. Indeed, many debaters do not understand the decision-making role of certain paradigms (Benoit, Wilson & Follert, 1986), causing debates to become confusing and disorganized.

A final problem is the difference between paradigms in theory and practice. Indeed, current debate paradigms do not cause debaters to ignore substantive issues. Instead, paradigms do not offer judges any criteria in how to evaluate a debate round while encouraging only substantive issues.

The Debate Judge as an "Ideologue-Critic"

Wander (1984) argues that choices of rewarding and criticizing speakers are up to the critic. He further suggests that the rhetorical critic is the most important part of criticism:

the critic as a real person who listens, speaks, studies the speaking situation, who meditates on purpose, considers the audiences, examines the issues, who does his or her best to say something worthwhile about matters of (f) importance, and who recognizes that there are times when words are not enough. (p. 203)

An ideological critique of forensics would situate the debate critic in the same perspective as the rhetorical critic. The critic becomes the adjudicator of the issues presented in the competition. To accomplish this, the critic needs to assess the "central" issue inherent in each resolution. For example, the CEDA resolution, that continued U.S. covert involvement in Central America would be undesirable, seemingly focuses on the relative worth of covert involvement. The central question for an "Ideologue-Critic" would be to answer the question of whether covert involvement is good or bad. Similarly the central issue of the NDT resolution, that the U.S. should reduce substantially its military commitments to NATO, revolves on the relative worth of our military commitments to NATO. The question for an "Ideologue-Critic" is whether military commitments are good or bad.

The difference between the ideological view and hypothesis-testing is that, in the former, the negative also must focus on this question. Instead of arguing any position in an attempt to reject the resolution, the negative must provide sufficient realistic examples.

The "Ideologue-Critic" also would base his or her decision on intuitive positions, while rejecting counterintuitive arguments. The "Ideologue-Critic" would further ask the question: "Is the argument consistent with expected arguments in another context?" (e.g., in legislative discussions). I am not certain that Senators would discuss the usefulness of the U.S. becoming a totalitarian regime, when assessing the relative worth of the First Amendment. My position is that arguments should focus on the central elements of the resolution, and be only those arguments that people in other areas would probably discuss.

Furthermore, an "Ideologue-Critic" would reject repugnant argumentation. Currently, repugnant positions are regularly advocated by debaters. Arguments such as, start a nuclear war to allow evolution to start again, thereby breeding a higher order of human beings, or a nuclear war would be beneficial because the war would cause the second coming of Christ, are arguments that an "Ideologue-Critic" would reject. The rationale behind rejecting this strand of argumentation resides in its inapplicability in other nondebate contexts. Normal decision-makers would not be persuaded by the second coming of Christ and neither would the "Ideologue-Critic."

The ideological perspective also alters the role of presumption in topicality. Currently, the affirmative is "presumed" topical until proven otherwise. In consequence, tangential affirmative positions are accepted, generating a number of problems. For example, negatives who are unable to research all of these affirmative positions resort instead to preparing huge "mass destruction" disadvantages (e.g., growth, beef, and domestic malthus, and utopian counterplans—socialism, totalitarianism, and anarchy). The "Ideologue-Critic" would assume the affirmative is nontopical until proven otherwise. Hopefully, this would force affirmatives to defend positions more at the heart of the resolution. Additionally, the reversal of topicality presumption would also make critics more likely to vote on topicality.

In an attempt to make affirmatives deal with the central questions of the resolution, the "Ideologue-Critic" also would reject the reasonability standard for assessing definitions, instead supporting a limiting standard. The "Ideologue-Critic" would support the definition that most restricts the potential discussion of the resolution. This would also force the affirmative to be more general in supporting the resolution.

The "Ideologue-Critic" also would evaluate the socially significant arguments in the competition. The critic should not reward speakers only because they sound persuasive. Instead, the critic should listen to the issues presented in the round and judge the forensic event based on the clash of those issues. This is not to say that forensics should cease to become an oral activity. Indeed, forensic competitors need to be adept at delivery. However, the ideological judge must be more concerned with the issues presented, not the style of delivery.

In adapting to the "Ideologue-Critic," debaters would impact their arguments by suggesting the social benefits of their positions. Critics then would evaluate the issues based on the realistic societal benefits of each position, thereby better situating forensics as a forum for testing substantive issues and advocating possible social changes.

As argued previously, judges risk losing their status among the elites by punishing debaters through losses and low speaker points. While theoretically attractive, the goal of allowing debaters to decide on the argumentation it fails both ideologically and educationally in practice:

Thus "everything is debatable" became a trend that enlarged the number of tactics available to debaters and further diluted the reasoning offered for arguments. Rather than carefully choose their best, most applicable arguments and tactics, debaters tend to "throw out" as much as possible in rounds and find out what "sticks." Arguments often are presented as "time sucks," or because their opponents are not "deep" on a particular issue, not because they are meaningful in any real sense. (Hollihan & Riley, 1987, p. 401)

An "Ideologue-Critic" is perhaps risky. As judges begin to punish debaters for practices they find ideologically inappropriate, judges risk being named to a great number of strike sheets. However, the potential benefits to an Ideological-Critic perspective go beyond situating debate in a real-world frame. The perspective moves debate back on an educational path.

One qualification is necessary. An ideological critic need not reject all issues and strategies that catch one's opponents off guard. This paper merely suggests that we need to move debate toward discussion of the central issues of the resolution, that are clearly articulated by debaters.

Criticisms

Undoubtedly a number of criticisms can be leveled against the "ideologue" paradigm. Initially, one might argue that the paradigm unduly restricts the potential issues in a debate. Obviously, counter-intuitive positions, utopian counterplans, generic mass destruction disadvantages, and narrow affirmatives would be rejected. Some might argue that these issues are important to debate, and perhaps warrant discussion. While this argument might seem useful at the outset, ultimately the criticism must be rejected. The argument that these positions are educational is a "wolf in sheep's clothing." Indeed, the use of these positions serves to divert attention from the important issues of the resolution. The "Ideologue-Critic" paradigm would serve as a starting point to make debate a forum for testing important issues.

Moreover, by reversing topicality presumption and forcing affirmatives to defend more realistic interpretations, negatives will be able to research specific affirmative cases. Currently, academic debate is caught in a vicious circle, affirmatives are becoming narrower and narrower, prompting negatives to prepare more generic positions. As

negatives prepare more generic positions, affirmatives attempt to avoid these negative arguments by researching narrower cases. Hopefully the "Ideologue-Critic" paradigm would be the start of reversing the aforementioned trend.

A second criticism might be that the debate judge as an "Ideologue-Critic" is not a new paradigm, but merely a modification of existing paradigms. This criticism also applies to all other paradigms. Current paradigms overlap resulting in few (if any) judges that adhere to rigid perspectives (Cox, 1974; Lybbert, 1979; Sproule, 1979; Ulrich, 1983). Simply put, the rejection of the "Ideologue-Critic" should not be the rejection of the application of ideology to forensics. All paradigms can be moved in an ideological direction. However, the ideological paradigm's tenets inherently differ from those of other paradigms, e.g., the more restrictive definition standard, rejection of counter-intuitive arguments, and the acceptance of only those issues at the center of the resolution.

Moreover, the "Ideologue-Critic" does not simply resituate debate. For example, policy-making and hypothesis-testing paradigms offer judges a different setting (e.g., legislative or scientific forums). While these paradigms have merit, they ignore the "needs" of debate resituating the critic in another context. Instead, the "Ideologue-Critic" assesses debate practices and offers a "debate" paradigm that remedies current problems.

A final potential criticism argues that limiting debates would be boring, and would reduce innovation. This criticism is partly true. It is doubtful whether one could ever become an absolute ideologist, just as few are rigid Tabula Rasa critics. Furthermore, debaters will undoubtedly be able to justify certain practices (argued as unacceptable in this paper) as acceptable within an "Ideologue-Critic" perspective. However, this paper argues that the benefits of such a paradigm would encourage debate to be more educational and thereby more desirable for debaters.

Judges no longer should see debate as an end in itself. Critics should be social advocates making judgments about what would be best for society. Debate critics also should be social advocates, taking a strong stand on what is "best" for the forensic activity, namely the promotion of substantive issues in forensic competition. Judges also must remember that they are real people, with opinions and beliefs on the issues being discussed. It is therefore important for judges to speak their minds about the practices occurring in the debate process. By rewarding and punishing debaters with wins and losses, we can encourage more substantive issue discussion.

Even without adhering to the Ideologue-Critic paradigm, the role of ideology can still be increased in academic debate. An ideological view also emphasizes the value of lay judges in forensics contests. Lay judges would emphasize the substantive issues. Because of their unfamiliarity with paradigms, competitors couldn't use sophisticated technical strategies. Many of debate's current problems may be traced to the small number of people involved in making decisions (Brydon, 1984). The forensics community has become a "closed system." That is, the judging pool is not very diverse. Forensics should encourage the involvement of political science, sociology and other related

fields. It would be valuable to have the views of political scientists on political resolutions.

Conclusion

This paper suggests that the application of Wander's ideological perspective to the forensic criticism may be the important step toward changing the focus of debate. If we are interested in changing the focus of debate away from methodological and stylistic concerns, then the ideal avenue for change is to move the judge in a more ideological direction. By rewarding debaters and speakers who advance socially relevant issues, debate can be redirected toward the issues that inhere in the resolution. Indeed, Douglas (1971) argued:

If as John Dewey has suggested, we conceive of debate in terms of an inquiry method for examining and testing ideas of contemporary societal problems instead of as a pedagogical method for training skills of speaking, we may still yet establish a living bond between forensic and contemporary educational demands. (p. 41)

Any new decision-making model confronts problems. However, these criticisms should not mask the usefulness of the "ideologue" paradigm in moving debate back toward an educational activity.

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A COGNITIVE MODEL OF EVALUATIVE JUDGMENTS

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During the past decade arguments have been advanced for several models of decision making by debate critics. Ranging from the judge as hypothesis tester to policy maker, the various judging paradigms describe how the debate ought to be evaluated. They prescribe the critic's behavior. These paradigms are imposed from outside the context of the debate and intended to alter the activity of the judge, not the debaters. The advocates of these paradigms assume that decision making by the critic can be adjusted at will, that paradigm selection is voluntary activity. For example, Rowland (1984) suggests "the judge should choose that paradigm which best serves the teaching function" (p. 183). To Rowland, the power to decide upon paradigms is within the purview of the critic.

This article contends that a descriptive perspective, based on a model of cognitive activity, is both appropriate and useful in understanding the rhetorical aspects of interscholastic debate. A model of the thought processes of the judge more clearly identifies the argumentative burdens that naturally belong to debaters. This descriptive approach is not meant to replace prescriptive suggestions, but rather to recognize how debate critics do operate within the round.

This article begins with an exploration of two important concepts—categorization and prototypes—produced by theorists in cognitive psychology. The potential role of these factors is then applied to decision making by debate critics on issues of topicality. Topicality was selected to limit the exploration to one prominent decision making issue. The article concludes with the implications of this model for the argumentative strategies of debaters.

Cognition and Evaluative Judgment

Categorization

A major focus of cognitive theorists during the past two decades has been on the process of categorization. Though agreement is not universal on this point, many have accepted categorization as a fundamental unit of thought, the manner in which all stimuli are organized. At a minimum, categorization appears to be central to the interpretation of language. Michael Billig (1987) addressed the pivotal position of this concept:

(T)he notion (is) that as thinkers we impart meaning by categorizing the information which our senses provide. Accordingly, cognitive theorists in social psychology have tended to assume that categorization is a basic unit of thinking. At its simplest level, categorization involves the placing of a particular