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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the newly emergent trend of audience-centered debate paradigms, such as the narrative and the issues-agenda paradigms, in light of an informal logic perspective on the argumentum ad populum fallacy. The paper demonstrates the complexity involved in the evaluation of ad populum arguments as well as the care which must be taken in evaluating paradigms. The paper also explores the inherent deficiency of audience-centered debate paradigms and develops standards for the demonstration of arguments as inappropriately ad populum involving an emphasis on context and function. Following a consideration of the special constraints on paradigmatic evaluation, the paper concludes by applying contextual and functional standards to the ad populum appeals in the issues-agenda and the narrative paradigm. The conclusion reached is that the ad populum appeals within this trend of audience-centered debate are inappropriate to the activity: they are descriptive rather than normative, rhetorical rather than dialectical, and interventionist rather than critical. Fifty-one references are appended. (MS)

The Ad Populum Fallacy in Paradigm Constructions: A Reconsideration of 'Audience-Centered' Debate

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The Ad Populum Fallacy in Paradigm Construction: A Reconsideration of 'Audience-Centered' Debate

Both the theory and the practice of academic debate are molded by the acknowledged or unacknowledged influences of paradigmatic choices.[1] Judicially constructed paradigms operate as a set of propositions which give meaning to argumentative endeavors: selecting and emphasizing some aspects of the contest, while de-emphasizing or ignoring others. Donn Parson (1983) describes the academic debate paradigm, following Burke, as a "terministic screen" which serves to "reflect, select and deflect reality" (p. 796). The paradigm selectively observes the debate process while to a large extent molding the process to its own assumptions. Obviously, the most successful debaters will adopt their own behavior to the paradigms that their particular judges are known to use (Rowland, 1981). Younger debaters can also be expected to mimic the behavior of more experienced and successful debaters with adaptation to paradigms playing a significant role in determining who will or will not be successful. Robert Rowland (1982a) offered perhaps the definitive characterization of the practical weight of paradigms:

> In sum, debate paradigms are important because they provide rules to which debaters adopt in their quest for ballots. As long as debaters prefer winning to losing, those rules will play a major role in shaping debate priorities. (p. 134)

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[1] In this paper I will be using the term "paradigm" to refer generally to judging perspectives, models, or exemplars.

and the limitations of argument designed to reveal an underlying ad populum structure. After a relatively brief demonstration of the prima facie relationship between argumentum ad populum and the general trend of audience-centered paradigms, this paper will turn to more precise discussions regarding standards for ad populum evaluation and for paradigm evaluation. Finally, these standards will be employed in a more systematic and specific criticism of the narrative and the issues-agenda paradigms.

Audience-Centered Debate and the Ad Populum Fallacy

A modern interest in critical thinking has led to a renewed emphasis on the role of informal fallacies in argument evaluation (Damer, 1987). The fallacy is normally considered to be a particular form of faulty reasoning. Some have argued that a distinguishing characteristic between the fallacy and the argument that is simply incorrect is that the fallacy deceptively appears valid while actually lacking validity in some covert way (Church & Wilbanks, 1986).

The ad populum fallacy appears to have validity due to its implied consensus, but lacks validity due to its lack of logical grounding. This fallacy is usually defined as an appeal to "mass enthusiasms or popular sentiment" (Walton, 1987, p. 33-34), or more specifically as the acceptance of an argument based on popular acceptance or conversely as the rejection of an argument based on popular rejection (Damer, 1987). It would be a mistake, however, to think of the fallacy as simply a bias for the majority's opinion. This appeal to popular sentiment does not

Such priorities have been the subject of considerable controversy in the past decade. Any frequent reader of JAFA or the AFA conference proceedings has witnessed numerous disputes over various debate paradigms. Proponents of paradigms have consistently been forced to defend the educational value and utility of their preferred paradigm in response to criticism (see Rowland, 1987a, 1984a, 1984b; Ulrich, 1987; Zarefsky & Henderson, 1983). Other arguments have occurred regarding the nature of paradigmatic evaluation itself (see Rowland, 1982a, 1982b; Ulrich, 1982; Zarefsky, 1982). The context that emerges in both the attack and the defense characterizes paradigms as meta-arguments which bear some burden of rational defense and which are also open to some forms of criticism. As functional components of the activity, paradigms operate as claims which define debate as a contest within the larger context of argumentation and which normatively promote certain behaviors while discouraging others. As will be further discussed below, these claims can themselves be evaluated and criticized.

This paper will review the newly emergent trend of audience-centered debate paradigms, such as the narrative and the issues-agenda paradigms, in light of an informal logic perspective on the argumentum ad populum fallacy. This criticism will seek to promote an evaluative discussion of a new wave of judging perspectives which have, up to this point, flourished in an atmosphere surprisingly free of criticism. Additionally, it is hoped that this discussion will illustrate both the possibilities

need to consist of an appeal to a numerical majority, but can also consist of an appeal to "the gallery" or to a particular audience (Damer, 1987, p. 115). To condition arguments on the sentiments of a specific powerful audience can then be considered ad populum. While acknowledging that it is often acceptable to reason from premises not known to be true, Douglas Walton (1987) notes that selecting premises conditioned on a particular audience's prior beliefs is non-the-less characteristic of ad populum argumentation:

> It is sometimes pointed out that the ad populum arguer adopts a strategy of selecting premises specifically so that they will be accepted enthusiastically by the audience that is being addressed. The fallacy here would be scheming to convince an audience by appealing to assumptions that appear tolerable to that audience rather than arguing from premises that are known to be true, or at least that came from premises that can be shown to be true independently of their appeal to a particular audience. (1987, p. 45)

It does not require a great deal of argument to demonstrate that the emergent trend of audience-centered paradigmatic thinking is premised on the value of arguing from premises that can be expected to be enthusiastically accepted by a particular powerful audience: in this case the judge. Audience-oriented paradigms institutionalize the practice of playing to a judge's known predispositions on the issues debated. While such a practice of argument selection may seem basic to persuasive

discourse, this explicit turning away from the debate activity's conventional stress on objectivity is actually a fairly recent development (Roderick, 1987). Complete objectivity is, of course, impossible and judges will necessarily interpret arguments in light of their pre-existing understanding of issues, but the emergent trend in audience-centered judging differs sharply from previous practice by neglecting even the goal of relative objectivity (grounding interpretation in the discourse of the debate) and by actively utilizing pre-existing judicial attitudes as a system of argument evaluation. Thus, the main difference characterizing audience-centered judging lies in the re-definition of judicial subjectivity: from a liability to be acknowledged and, as much as possible, avoided, to a tool which is actively used in the evaluation of arguments.

A pre-cursor to this trend can be seen in the argument for natural presumption. Sproule (1976) argued that this form of presumption, existing in the mind of the audience as distinct from assigned or formal presumption, could be utilized as a tool for audience analysis. At the initiation of the debate, then, natural presumption would rest with the attitudes that a judge has when she or he walks into the room.

While natural presumption embraces judicial bias as a default status, the issues-agenda model advocated by Michael Bartanen and David Frank (1983, 1987) goes further by using popular attitudes to determine issue-importance, or salience, in the debate round. Bartanen and Frank adopt Cobb and Elder's (1972) analysis of political participation to academic debate,

arguing that the issues selected by advocates "must be molded to the beliefs and values of audiences" (1987, p. 411). The model is plainly ad populum in its prescription that advocates "insure that the correct 'number' of people perceive the issue [as] important enough to join the battle" (M. Bartanen, 1987, p. 44). Thus, if most Americans do not recognize the existence of a crisis in resource depletion then, given the issues-agenda model, that fact may be used to prevent the introduction of that issue into the round. In addition to appealing to the general popular sentiment, this model urges that advocates use the "predilections of particular audiences" (M. Bartanen, 1987, p. 44) in deriving in-round criteria for determining the importance of arguments. If the judge is a Republican, for example, advocates might argue that fiscal responsibility and a strong defense are the most important values in the round, but if the judge is a known member of the Sierra Club then it may be more productive to argue for the value of environmental preservation. The Issues-agenda model's turn away from the tradition of objectivity is clear in its characterization of the judge as a participant in the round:

> The critic would need to become a more active participant in the debate by giving the debaters insight into her preferences about the issues as well as preferences about debate style. (M. Bartanen, 1987, p. 50)

Robert Weiss (1985) in his articulation of "the audience standard" echoes the concern of the issues-agenda model by advocating that debaters should discuss issues that an average

audience would naturally think of when presented with the debate proposition. Additionally, Weiss anticipates an additional step in the trend toward audience-centered debate when he suggests that a new standard of rationality, a 'public' standard, should be used in evaluating debates (p. 44).

This public standard of rationality can be found in the narrative paradigm, a paradigm developed by Walter Fisher (1984), not as a standard for academic debate, but as a broader standard for communication and the evaluation of public moral argument. Fisher sees people as essentially story-telling animals operating on the basis of "good reasons" (p. 7). In this capacity, people possess the ability, through "universal faculty and experience" (p. 15), to use the two standards of narrative rationality in evaluating claims. The first standard, narrative probability concerns that which "constitutes a coherent story" (p. 8) and is similar to the test of internal consistency. The second standard, narrative fidelity, risks the ad populum as individuals ask "whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives" (p. 8). As a descriptive account of how people operate in the world, the narrative paradigm is well supported (see Bennett & Edelman, 1985; McGee & Nelson, 1985; White, 1980), but as a normative prescription of how people <u>should</u> evaluate argumentative claims, the paradigm runs the risk of appealing to ad populum argumentation.

This risk becomes evident upon consideration of the application of the narrative paradigm to academic debate as developed by Thomas Hollihan, Patricia Riley, and Kevin Baaske (1985). Hollihan et al. want to promote a "citizen advocacy" exemplar in academic debate (p. 808-812). Toward this end, they embrace Fisher's (1984) standards of narrative probability and fidelity. Under the narrative perspective, debate critics will determine "whether arguments hang together as stories" and will evaluate arguments "in terms of their own cultural beliefs, values, and experiences" (p. 818). This perspective goes beyond natural presumption, which uses audience attitudes as an initial starting point or default position, and beyond issues-agenda, which uses audience attitudes to evaluate criterion or salience claims. With the narrative paradigm's test of narrative fidelity, the judge is encouraged to use his or her pre-existing biases to test the validity of all arguments in the round. It is not hard to see how such a perspective fosters ad populum argumentation: success can be measured by the extent to which debaters have presented "stories which confirmed people's values and social understanding" (p. 818). Thus, the paradigm attempts to foster "real world" arguments (p. 816), or arguments which appeal to already held dispositions rather than arguments which might challenge the way that a given audience thinks about an issue.

The narrative perspective has also been applied specifically to value debate by Kristine Bartanen (1987). Here the two standards of narrative probability and fidelity are also embraced

as "stock issues" (p. 419). Ad populum appeals are similarly encouraged: before advocating any values debaters are instructed to ask, "are those values ones which coincide with those held by the audience?" (p. 423).

A clear trend emerges: judges were first asked to assign presumption based upon their personal biases, then to use those same attitudes to evaluate criteria, and finally to use predisposition as an all-embracing standard for determining the rationality of every argument in the debate. These perspectives form the structure of audience-centered debate: the opinion that debate should both originate and find final evaluation in the natural state opinions of the particular audience, which is in this case the judge. It is clear that this trend advocates "a strategy of selecting premises specifically so that they will be accepted enthusiastically by the audience that is being addressed" (p. 45) which is Walton's (1987) characterization of the ad populum fallacy.

The advocates of these perspectives would probably not deny that they encourage the embracing of audience values, but they probably would deny that such an embrace is necessarily fallacious. In that they would be correct. A complete ad populum critique requires a closer examination of the conditions under which the argumentum ad populum is acceptable and when it should be avoided.

Ad Populum Evaluation

The designation of an argument as fallacious need not be fatal to that argument's validity. While an argument's status as fallacy can certainly be construed as a limitation, it can rarely be considered an absolute indictment. As Walter Ulrich (1985) has noted, a fallacy can be characterized as "an argument, supporting a degree of probability for a conclusion, that suffers from a generic weakness" (p. 111). This generic weakness makes the fallacious argument worthy of systematic study (Walton, 1987) and can act as a topoi for critical evaluation of the argument (Ulrich, 1985). In numerous situations a fallacious claim can add a small degree of probability to a conclusion, but in other situations an argument's status as fallacious can lead to the discovery of flaws which may invalidate the potential conclusion. In either case, the key seems to be looking at the effect that an argument's status as fallacy has on its conclusion (Ulrich, 1985). Thus, no family of argument is intrinsically fallacious. A proper evaluation depends upon an examination of the context of the particular practice (Toulmin, 1976).

This uncertain effect of fallacious designation applies to the argumentum ad populum as well. In some cases, simple popularity might allow us to legitimately add some increment of support to a proposition. As Ulrich (1985) explains, the opinion of several people that a certain diner serves good food, might add a modicum of support to the proposition that the diner does indeed serve good food. But the strength of the claim deserves to be questioned because the ad populum argument can be seen as

having a generic weakness. Howard Kahane (1980) explains that the generic weakness of the ad populum is that the argument usually contains a questionable premise. He presents the following example:

> More people in America drink Budweiser than any other beer (Premise).
>
> The most popular beer is the best beer (Premise).
>
> You should drink the best beer (Premise).
>
> So you should drink Budweiser (Conclusion). (p. 36)

The second premise is obviously the questionable one. There will be many situations where the most popular will not be the best. The possibility also exists that the standard of popularity will substitute for other, more appropriate standards of quality. This is consistent with Walton's (1987) characterization of the ad populum as a diversionary argument: a popular appeal often combined with an avoidance of other forms of justification.

Viewed in this light, a complete ad populum evaluation requires more than the simple demonstration that an argument rests on popular appeal. A more reasonable indictment requires a showing that a given popular appeal is inappropriate, relative to other potential appeals, in its specific context. In the present case, an evaluation of audience-centered paradigms as <u>inappropriately</u> ad populum requires a demonstration that argument selection and evaluation based on popular appeal is improper in the context of academic debate. Ad populum characteristics must be shown to not only exist, but to also be unwarranted in the

context of the activity. A contextual evaluation of audience-centered paradigms implies the functional evaluation of paradigms vis-a-vis the goals of the debate activity itself. But such an assessment requires the prior consideration of the possibility of functional paradigm evaluation itself. If these issues seem to be a diversion from the main intent of ad populum criticism, then it must be remembered that the evaluation of an argument as inappropriately ad populum cannot be made independent of context and function. The point here is to use the goals of the activity itself to permit a functional evaluation of the appropriateness of ad populum argument in audience-centered paradigms.

Functional Paradigm Evaluation

The literature on academic debate has often featured articles attacking or defending particular paradigms, and at times such disputes have focused on the nature of paradigmatic evaluation itself. Most notable is the clash on hypothesis testing between David Zarefsky (1982) and Robert Rowland (1982a). This clash can be summarized as a dispute between ad hominem criticism and functional criticism. Zarefsky argued that criticisms of paradigms must be essentially ad hominem, in the sense that they should be comprehensible within the constraints and presuppositions of the perspectives which they evaluate. In other words, criticism must be internal. Rowland, on the other hand, argued that the functions of the debate activity act as the best tool for evaluating paradigms. He noted, "Competing debate paradigms could be evaluated based upon their ability to meet the

goals of the debate activity itself" (p. 136). William Balthrop (1987) concurred noting that the major paradigms seem to share the assumption that "the essential attributes of debate, or the overriding purpose of the activity" provide the best basis for evaluation (166).

While it may seem that these two perspectives on paradigm evaluation are competitive, a closer examination of the unique character of paradigms in academic debate should reveal that they are consistent. While paradigms in other fields, such as hard science, may have a purely descriptive or analytical function, paradigms in academic debate share the normative function of the debate activity itself. If a paradigm is a way of interpreting and, more practically, judging the event, then the rationale for the paradigm cannot be logically considered independent of the rationale for the event itself: the paradigm identifies and implements the activity's goals. The present analysis views function, not as a meta-paradigmatic level, but as an essential component of every paradigm. From this perspective, then, functional criticism of a paradigm is ad hominem criticism.

While very specific functional standards for paradigm evaluation have been suggested (Rowland, 1982a, 1987a) and attacked (Zarefsky, 1982) these specific standards are simply operationalizations of the more general tenet that evaluation should center on the educational goals of the activity. In support of this tenet, Ulrich (1983) has argued that paradigms are generally developed in an attempt to promote the educational

functions of debate. This suggests that paradigms should be assessed with regard to their utility as teaching devices. As Rowland (1987a) notes,

> If the purpose of the judge is to teach argument skills, this in turn means that the judge should choose that paradigm which best serves the teaching function. (p. 191)

Unfortunately, a definition of the teaching function of debate is not self-evident or universally recognized. Views on the most important educational goals of debate are generally recognized as diverse (see Zarefsky, 1982; Hollihan et al., 1985). But this lack of agreement should not prevent the advancement of arguments regarding the primacy of particular purposes of the debate activity. Zarefsky's (1982) assumption that f ctional criticism cannot be engaged in absent some consensus on function commits the ad populum fallacy itself. A lack of consensus does not refute a particular functional argument anymore than the presence of consensus would affirm it. In the forensic tradition, the emphasis should be on reason-giving. As Ulrich (1982) argues, even the purpose of debate should be debatable.

Since function must be examined prior to paradigm evaluation, the next step in functional criticism must regard the functions of academic debate itself. Three qualities seem to be especially salient in the present context: first, debate should be seen as primarily normative rather than descriptive; second,

debate should be seen as primarily dialectical rather than rhetorical; and third, debate should center on critical thinking by students rather than intervention by judges.

Debate is obviously a laboratory simulation that has the purpose of teaching students an understanding and appreciation of argument (Balthrop, 1987). Those familiar with this laboratory activity know that the simulation can often be highly specialized and opaque to the lay observer (Sayer, 1985). This is due to the fact that debate ideally seeks not a mere reflection of ordinary discourse but a <u>normative</u> evaluation and exploration of argument. This uniquely critical function of the activity should not be ignored or over-shadowed by description.

> It is not enough for a teacher of forensics to tell students how argument occurs in everyday discourse or in some specialized arena. The teacher has a critical function as well. In addition to the "is" question, the educator must also be concerned with the "should" question. (Kay, 1983, p. 932)

If debate's critical function leads to the adoption of styles and practices different from those found in everyday speech, that in itself can <u>only</u> be considered an indictment if debate is seen as functioning primarily as a mirror up to society. Given the primacy of the critical function, the <u>results</u> of an educational technique are a far better measure of its success than the appearance of that technique to the lay observer (Ulrich, 1983).

Consistent with the normative emphasis of academic debate is its tendency toward the dialectical (Rowland, 1982b, 1984a; Sayer, 1985; Shiffren, 1972; Ulrich, 1984). While some have argued or assumed that debate is by nature primarily rhetorical (see Fisher, 1981) this position fails to uniquely justify the activity. As long as rhetoric is defined as "the general rationale for persuasion" (Natanson, 1955) a primary emphasis on rhetoric, as persuasive presentation, fails to capture those elements which make academic debate a unique and important laboratory exercise in normative discourse. Certainly, debate involves more than skill in the available means of persuasive presentation:

> Although debaters improve very much in delivery, skill in presentation is always a means and not an end. Several types of speech activity may result in better speaking; the distinctive value of debate lies elsewhere. (Thompson, 1944)

As noted by Lee and Lee (1987) using 'improved communication skills' as a central justification for debate is analogous to using 'improved reading skills' as a central justification for the study of American literature. Even the format of the activity suggests that it centers on more than skill in persuasive communication: the demonstration of <u>persuasive</u> skill hardly requires eight alternating speeches and four periods of cross examination. As Thompson (1944) suggested, the form of the activity is ideally suited to the "careful testing of a

proposition and the suspension of judgement" (p. 294): qualities which are not normally considered components of rhetoric.[1]

A more appropriate grounding for debate can be found in the investigative counterpart of rhetoric: dialectic. Steven Shiffren (1972) defines dialectic as "the process of arriving at conclusions" (p. 189) and argues that it seems to be a primary practical interest in academic debate:

> Most directors of forensics seem primarily interested in training students in dialectic rather than in rhetoric. They are primarily interested in developing students skilled in research, analysis, and organization; students capable of testing evidence skeptically and reasoning precisely. (p. 189-190)

The sequenced speeches characteristic of the debate format clearly promote a continuing, alternating burden of rejoinder. This burden corresponds well to the principle of dialectical interchange which has the function of promoting quality argument and the questioning of underlying assumptions. Debate should then be thought of as a dialectical process with the object, not of 'truth,' but of a process-oriented critical understanding. This implies that the debate activity should prefer reasons to non-rational devices. Reason-giving as an emphasis is consistent with the developing "argumentative perspective" (Balthrop, 1987) as well as with the above characterization of debate as a

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[1] If more expansive definitions of rhetoric are utilized which include the critical focus which I am advocating, then my distinction between rhetoric and dialectic would be better framed as a distinction between two subsets of rhetoric.

laboratory exercise that seeks normative evaluation, not simply the reflection of everyday styles of argument. As Sayer (1985) comments, "In a world given to form and image, we can be thankful that our forensic activity is committed to substance" (p. 5).

This argument should not be taken to mean that debate does not fulfill a rhetorical function. Clearly debate contains both rhetorical and dialectical dimensions (McBath, 1975). But debate's dialectical function is more unique to the event as well as necessary if debate is to play an investigative function within a larger social rhetoric (Shiffren, 1972).

Perhaps the best support of debate as dialectic lies in the fact that debate does not aim for persuasion so much as it aims for the creation of a dynamic form of knowledge: critical thinking. The forensic educator seeks to promote in students a capacity to evaluate evidence and arguments critically. This emphasis on rational decision-making (Sayer, 1985) characterizes the practice of debate as a uniquely critical way of knowing:

> Debate is a special type of symbolic interaction, a way of knowing with special emphasis on the creation, practice, and evaluation of message units - the materials, form, and argumentative inference patterns - as they affect decision making. (Douglas, 1972, p. 180)

This development of critical thinking patterns among debaters has been called "one of the most extensively documented benefits of the debate activity" (Colbert, 1987, p. 194). But the realization of these critical thinking benefits depends on

the placement of the burden of rejoinder on the debaters rather than on the judge. Judicial intervention is inconsistent with the development of critical thinking abilities in debaters. If the judge can introduce argumentation on a ballot, or ignore argumentation in the round, then the central burden on the debater to introduce and refute arguments is proportionately reduced. When substantive intervention is allowed or encouraged, the debater is able to rely on the judge's decision, rather than upon reason-giving. Debaters should not be encouraged to take things on faith, or to believe a proposition simply because a judge or traditional practice supports it. As Walter Ulrich (1987) notes:

> Argument should be a discussion among equals with open minds. To ignore arguments just because they do not seem reasonable without allowing their advocate a chance to defend them against an attack seems to undermine the whole purpose of testing ideas in an open forum. (p. 189)

While even Ulrich (1983) admits that a certain amount of subjectivity is inevitable, that conclusion should not lead to an embracing of subjectivity. Even if a certain amount of discretion and interpretation must exist, it still makes sense to speak of illegitimate discretion and over-interpretation. Given an interest in the promotion of critical thinking, the judge would continue to seek a minimization of the influence of his or her bias on the round. The act of evaluation need not introduce illegitimate intervention. The forensic community establishes,

intersubjectively, a set of standards on quality of argument and evidence (Balthrop, 1987). This fact is supported by Cross and Matlon's (1978) finding of a high degree of consistency in judging philosophies. Thus while subjectivity in standards of argument certainly exists, this subjectivity is predictable and "moored" within the field's standards of appropriateness (Balthrop, 1987). But a productive distinction can be drawn between a judge's default use of intersubjectively held standards of argument and a judge's use of very individual biases and attitudes about the substantive issues being debated. While the first is simply the, hopefully flexible, application of technical knowledge that a field expert would predictably possess, the latter involves the judge advancing topical claims which would be best handled by the debaters in dialectical fashion.

The introduction of the substantive attitudes of the judge causes a de-emphasis on reason-giving since the reasons behind the judge's attitude cannot be evaluated within the confines of the debate round. Absent support and the possibility of evaluation, the attitude of the judge must be considered a non-argumentative appeal. For this reason, debate as an argumentation lab should prefer critical thought exercised by debaters over intervention exercised by judges.

To summarize the paper up to this point, an ad populum indictment requires an in-context criticism of the audience centered paradigms; paradigmatic criticism in turn requires an analysis of the functions of the activity; three very salient characteristics of the activity include its normative status, its

grounding in dialectic and its preference for critical thinking over intervention. At this point the standards are complete. The audience-centered paradigms can now be evaluated as paradigms and as ad populum arguments.

Application:

Audience-Centered Paradigms as Inappropriately Ad Populum

Consistent with the standards developed above, a criticism of audience-centered debate paradigms as inappropriately ad populum now requires a showing that the paradigms' appeal to popularity (described in the first section) is inconsistent with the most important functions of the activity. This section will present the argument that two of the more well-known audience-centered perspectives, the issues-agenda model and the narrative paradigm, institutionalize functionally inappropriate popular appeals to the extent that they are descriptive rather than normative, primarily rhetorical rather than dialectical, and interventionist rather than critical.

The Issues-Agenda Model

The issues-agenda model advocated by Michael Bartanen and David Frank (1983, 1987) uses the attitudes of both general and particular audiences to determine issue-importance, or salience, in the debate round. To develop this focus, Bartanen and Frank looked to natural state situations as a heuristic. The authors argued that in the search for rules for academic debate, "we should look to the literature which attempts to describe and

analyze how values are debated in legislative and in public realms" (1987, p. 410). Missing in this emphasis on the description and analysis of communication is any consideration of evaluation. It is certainly difficult to conceive of debate as a critical laboratory activity if it merely seeks to observe and copy natural state argumentative styles.

Bartanen and Frank (1987) find their natural state model in Cobb and Elder's (1972) expression of the issues-agenda model which consists of an ordering of issues based on popular perceptions of importance. But the agenda is limited to description: it only expresses what a given audience or public thinks at a given time. The issues-agenda is not a normative standard, and as a result it is justified predictably in terms of its "real world"/descriptive value (M. Bartanen, 1987, p. 45).

The absence of a normative emphasis becomes most clear when Bartanen and Frank (1987) admit the often irrational and capricious nature of public attitudes regarding issue importance: "For example, airline safety is rarely perceived as a part of the systematic agenda until people are killed in an air disaster" (p. 414). Issues, according to Michael Bartanen (1987), rarely achieve agenda status on their own merit. Yet rather than making any statement on the desirability of this style of public decision making, the authors simply institutionalize a blind reliance on the standard of salience.[1] Such a focus serves merely to reflect, rather than evaluate, the structure and priorities of ordinary discourse. The issues-agenda model, thus, departs significantly from Kay's (1983) emphasis on "the 'should' question" (p. 932).

This descriptive analysis of audience preference additionally makes the model more suited to rhetoric than to dialectic. The model's claim to descriptive validity rests on the fact that it is grounded in the predilections of audience members.[1] According to the agenda model, these predilections grow out of an exigence or a perceived imperative (M. Bartanen, 1987, p. 43). This reliance on that which is presently perceived leads the model away from a logical grounding in reason giving, as Bartanen explains,

> Audiences do not always make "logical" decisions about what issues are important. More often, it is the power of persuasion that causes an audience to perceive an issue as salient. Sometimes the public ignores highly significant issues (e.g., safety in the workplace) while devoting attention (and consequently agenda recognition) to much more "visible" if less-significant issues (e.g., violence in professional sports). (p. 47)

These assumptions, which may arise in purely accidental ways, form the basis of arguments when they become "criteria by which subsequent arguments about the relative importance of issues may be weighed" (Bartanen & Frank, 1987, p. 414). The

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[1] The model, as recently extended to stock issues, admits that arguers may present counter-values as arguably more important than the "germane values" on the current agenda. But this move results in the loss of the model's identity. The introduction of standards other than salience would subvert what seems to be the central thesis of the paradigm (that matters of issue importance are derived from audience predilections). One thesis of this essay is that such a subversion is good.

existence and the quality of the reasons behind these assumptions are not questioned. Clearly this undermines debate's dialectical role. The role of the debater is now expressed as being similar to that of the advertiser, "attempt[ing] to determine what criteria consumers use to decide which soap to buy" (M. Bartanen, 1987, p. 45). It is difficult to see how this view of debater as soap-salesperson is consistent with the reason-giving inherent in the "argumentative perspective" (Balthrop, 1987).

A final functional deficiency in the issues-agenda model can be seen in its emphasis on judicial intervention at the expense of student-centered critical thinking. While the perspective rests on popular opinion it also elevates the judge to the level of "opinion leader or gatekeeper" (M. Bartanen & Frank, 1987, p. 412). The judge is allowed to act as a representative of a larger audience in determining whether an issue will achieve agenda status. This would, Michael Bartanen claims, make the judge an "active participant" rather than a neutral observer (1987, p. 50). He goes on to note that the judge's participation would relate to issues as well as style. Surely, this perspective encourages judges to utilize, and debaters to play to, known predispositions. The burden of proof is proportionately displaced. The model encourages the introduction of arguments into the round which have no discoverable reasons behind them - they exist because they judge believes them. As Ralph Dowling (1981) notes, this utilization of bias "introduces a priori truth into a realm which denies that such truth exists" (p. 237).

The Narrative Paradigm

Thomas Hollihan et al. (1985, 1987) and Kristine Bartanen (1987) separately apply Walter Fisher's (1984) concept of the narrative paradigm to academic debate.[1] The most important implication of this adoption is the use of narrative fidelity as a standard for narrative rationality. Both Hollihan et al. and Kristine Bartanen embrace this standard which evaluates the strength of claims by comparing them to "the truths we know to be true from our own lives" (Fisher, 1984, p. 17). It is this consciously self-referential method of argument evaluation which makes the narrative paradigm's ad populum appeal functionally inappropriate in the field of academic debate.

The first level of inappropriateness can be found in the fact that the narrative paradigm is fundamentally descriptive rather than normative. As Fisher (1984) himself claims:

> it [narrative rationality] is not normative in the sense that one must reason according to prescribed rules of calculation or inference making... Narrative rationality is, on the other hand, descriptive, as it offers an account, an understanding, of any instance of human choice. (p. 9)

This important distinction does not seem to have been accounted for by those who sought to apply narrative rationality to the normative laboratory of academic debate. The rationale of

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[1] Hollihan et al. (1987) do not favor the use of the term "paradigm" but their concept of the narrative as exemplar is consistent with my use of the term "paradigm" to refer to any conceptual framework for debate.

Hollihan et al. (1985) for the application of Fisher's (1984) work seemed to be based simply on Goodnight's (1981) injunction that debate theory and argumentation theory should form a closer relationship. But Hollihan et al. do not account for the fact that theories of communication often seek only description and analysis while theories of debate seek the promotion of good argumentation.

Despite this, Kristine Bartanen (1987) and Hollihan et al. (1985) consistently emphasize the paradigm's descriptive validity. Bartanen explains narrative rationality as an articulation of "how choices between stories are made" (p. 418, emphasis added), while Hollihan et al. defend their construct as promoting "real world" (p. 816) argumentation. Both Hollihan et al. and Kristine Bartanen make central use of the same argument: due to a lack of descriptive validity, current debates lack meaning to those outside of the small and highly cohesive forensic community. The present state of academic debate is described as "elitist" and "isolated from the passions of the broader public" (Hollihan et al., 1985, p. 811). The fear is that "real audiences" (K. Bartanen, 1987, p. 425) will react negatively to the discourse of academic debate which is far removed from the discourse of ordinary language. Hollihan et al. insist that debaters need to realize that the general public engages in "reality testing" (1985, p. 817) when exposed to new arguments. I believe that debaters presently understand this very basic notion. The germane question is whether debate, as a normative laboratory, should mirror that notion.

The failure of academic debate to mirror ordinary discourse is not a condemning criticism. The results of an educational technique are a far better measure of its effectiveness than how that technique in operation might look to the uninitiated observer. It should be the resultant critical thinking skills which have meaning to the outside community, and not the methods of the activity itself. By analogy, speech therapists do not expect that their phonetic drills will be meaningful to outside observers. Rather they hope that the resultant improvement in articulation will be meaningful. Debate educators should drill the mind just as speech therapists drill the tongue.

Like the issues-agenda model, the narrative paradigm seeks justification based upon its descriptive relationship to natural state communication. Such a rationale ignores the normative function of the activity. Also like the issues-agenda model, the narrative paradigm assumes that rhetorical persuasion is the primary goal of the activity. Narrative rationality itself is centered on persuasive effectiveness, depending as it does on "identification rather than deliberation" (Fisher, 1984, p. 9). Consistent with this emphasis is Kristine Bartanen's (1987) stress on arguing values which "coincide with" (p. 423) those held by the audience, as well as Hollihan et al.'s (1985) stress on presenting stories which "confirmed peoples values and social understandings" (p. 818). The paradigm is clearly justified in rhetorical terms by Hollihan (1983) who sees debate as a "laboratory in advocacy" (p. 190) and Kristine Bartanen who refers to the debate judge as the "audience/judge" (p. 427).

Obviously, effectiveness within this described "rhetorical community" (Hollihan et al., 1985, p. 812) is served by playing to the critic's known biases. But this institutionalization of bias fails to distinguish between attitude change and argumentation, as Dowling (1981) explains,

> An argument could be made, however, that the omnipresence of ideological bias in the world compels us to teach debaters how to play upon or overcome such bias. Besides prohibiting fairness, this argument fails to distinguish between the <u>product</u> known as attitude change and the <u>process</u> we call quality argumentation. (p. 236, emphasis added)

The argumentative perspective is further threatened by the use of rhetorical standards which do not center on clash: the narrative judge chooses between scenarios based upon her own interpretations of their consistency and fidelity. The role of the debate judge becomes very similar to the role of the individual events judge, making isolated preferences for one persuasive speech over another.

Hollihan et al. (1987) see this emphasis on the rhetoric of citizen advocacy as necessary to train debaters "for life in a democracy" (p. 185). It is, however, easy to argue that the promotion of a critical and investigative (dialectical) stance is more essential to democratic politics in today's information society. Students must be able to sift through a myraid of diverse claims, selecting those which can be justified and exposing those which can be seen as fallacious. In light of

this, the function of debate should be to "strengthen democracy through making each individual an investigator and decision-maker rather than a pawn of rival persuasive forces" (Thompson, 1944, p. 296). This perspective is obviously not an artifact of contemporary society. Writing near the end of World War II, Thompson (1944) advocates a form of academic debate which finds its democratic strength in the fact that it is not a form of persuasion, but is instead a form of critical inquiry which "makes difficult the practice of demagoguery and authoritarianism" (p. 294). Promoting the utilization of unquestioned assumptions hardly promotes this critical function.

In their emphasis on the need for persuasive effectiveness, advocates of the narrative paradigm ignore the important issue of veracity: that which is popularly believed is not always accurate. As Rowland (1987b) notes, a story can hang together and ring true yet still be false. Certainly the story offered to co-opt and mobilize Hitler's Germany may have evinced a high level of consistency and fidelity. The historical persistence of both highly questionable and harmful beliefs is an open record:

> History is riddled with the carcasses of theories and beliefs which, though dear to the majority of the population, were proven unequivocally false. [The Earth is flat, the Earth is the center of the universe, there are only five planets, black people are subhuman, women are inferior to men, atoms are the smallest particles, use both hands when shooting a

> basketball, you can't get pregnant the "first time", the horse will never be replaced, if man was meant to fly he'd have wings, man will never exceed the speed of sound, masturbation causes insanity.] (Bile, Keehner, & McGee, 1987, p. 2)

On the other hand, many very worthy ideas have not always passed this test of public acceptability. As Bender (1986) notes,

> An important lesson of history is the eventual acceptance of many unpopular and even despised opinions. The ideas of Socrates, Jesus, and Galileo are good examples of this. (p. 9)

Certainly no one is privileged to hold an unimpaired view of what is true and what is false. The harm comes when these determinations are removed from the critical process of the debate round and placed in the hands of the judge. The final factor which renders the narrative paradigm inappropriate is its emphasis on judicial intervention. The neo-interventionist bent of the narrative paradigm is plain in its defense. Hollihan et al. (1987) blame debate's elitism partially on judges' reluctance to intervene. Kristine Bartanen (1987) is more blunt in her description of the tabula rasa judge as "non-sensical" (p. 425) within the structure of the narrative paradigm. Of course both embrace the standard of narrative fidelity, which tests arguments in reference to the judge's predispositions. This precludes even the goal of avoiding substantive intervention.

The authors do not, however, ignore the issue of intervention. Hollihan et al. (1987) for example argue that,

> Judges would [under the narrative perspective] continue to answer the question "which team did the better job of debating?," and not the question "which team's arguments most closely correspond to my own personal opinion?" (p. 190)

But this seems to be an exercise in semantic camouflage: under the narrative paradigm, "a better job..." is determined with the aid of the test of narrative fidelity which, the authors admit, is maximized when claims correspond closely to or "confirm" (1985, p. 818) a judge's or audience's personal opinion. The second question above seems to be simply a more specific statement of the narrative paradigm. Kristine Bartanen (1987) engages in much the same maneuver. She claims: "An affirmative vote means that [a] judge chooses the resolutional story" (p. 424). Then, footnoting, she continues, "This decision rule does not require the judge to support personally either the affirmative or negative value" (p. 427). But again, with the test of fidelity the preferences of the judge become very relevant and possibly decisive. Both Kristine Bartanen and Hollihan et al. seem to implicitly recognize the dangers of explicitly promoting substantive judicial intervention, yet it is hard to see how the application of narrative fidelity, the test they advocate, allows for anything else.

Intervention is most disturbingly encouraged in the realm of the controversial or counter-intuitive argument. Hollihan et al. (1987) note that under the narrative paradigm, socially counter-intuitive arguments "generally face stronger explicatory and persuasive burdens..." (p. 189). While this argument is based simply on the value of mirroring society, it may also be a great understatement. For example, it may well be impossible to persuade a particular audience, such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, that the United States must cede sovereignty to a world government. But that fact, in itself, should not render world government an unacceptable argument. The authors are careful to note that they believe that such counter-intuitive positions, though they face extra burdens, should still be debated. But when the critic is not even being encouraged to set aside predispositions and approach the issue with an open mind (the critic is in fact encouraged to use predisposition as a test of good argument), it is hard to imagine the debater looking for a win to decide to advocate anarchy anyway. A more likely consequence would be that debaters would decide to stick to "safe" arguments, forsaking the critical function of the activity. Finding sanctuary within the warmth of commonly held truths is not in the spirit of the activity.

The narrative paradigm's emphasis on justification through descriptive validity, effectiveness though rhetorical persuasion, and operation through judicial intervention renders the paradigm inappropriate to academic debate. Surprisingly, Walter Fisher (1981) himself seems to agree with this conclusion, if not the

reasons behind it. When one judge incorporated Fisher's "logic of good reasons," a pre-cursor to the narrative paradigm, into a philosophy of judging, Fisher responded,

> I am pleased that someone read the article, but the logic of good reasons is not designed for contest debate evaluation. Like Perelman, Toulmin, Wallace and Booth, my concern is the use and assessment of values by individuals engaged in rhetorical transactions, where decision determines right conduct in practical affairs. (p. 1022)

Apparently, Fisher (1981) sees academic debate as a specialized laboratory which should not mirror social values. The description of the narrative paradigm as advocated by Hollihan et al. (1985) and Kristine Bartanen (1987) would, in fact, seem to be consistent with what Fisher calls debate structured along an "epideictic path" (p. 1015). Such debate, which, in Fisher's view, "seeks a celebration of a community's values rather than a war of words" would turn academic value debate into a "game for sophists" (p. 1015).

Summary and Conclusion

This paper demonstrates the complexity involved in the evaluation of ad populum arguments as well as the care which must be taken in evaluating paradigms. Even considering these barriers, the paper should also reveal the inherent deficiency of audience-centered debate paradigms. This paper began by arguing that audience-centered paradigms, such as issues-agenda and

narrative, are ad populum in their most basic appeals to judicial and societal attitudes. Following this, the paper developed standards for the demonstration of arguments as inappropriately ad populum involving an emphasis on context and function. Following a necessary consideration of the special constraints on paradigmatic evaluation, this paper then concluded by applying contextual and functional standards to the ad populum appeals in the issues-agenda and the narrative paradigms. The conclusion reached is that the ad populum appeals within this trend of audience-centered debate are inappropriate to the activity: they are descriptive rather than normative, rhetorical rather than dialectical, and interventionist rather than critical.

Since forensics forcefully shapes public conceptions of argument (Lee & Lee, 1987) forensics educators should pay careful attention to the conceptions that the debate forum promotes. If we are critical of a society of images that rests on empty appeals, then we should insure that our educational laboratory offers a difference. Debaters should not use logical fallacies in the construction of their arguments. Neither should forensic professionals institutionalize logical fallacies in the paradigms they develop and impose.

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