

Volume 33, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, Fall 1995/Winter 1996/Spring 1996/Summer 1996 Speaker and Gavel

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Recommended Citation

(1996). Volume 33, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 Speaker and Gavel. Speaker & Gavel, 33 (1-4), 1-73.

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et al.: Volume 33, Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, Fall 1995/Winter 1996/Spring 1996/

FALL 1995/WINTER 1996
SPRING 1996/SUMMER 1996
Vol. 33, Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 4

SPEAKER AND GAVEL

Quarterly Journal of
DELTA SIGMA RHO-TAU KAPPA ALPHA

Published by Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University

speaker and gavel

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SPEAKER AND GAVEL

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2: Winter 1996

3: Spring 1996

4: Summer 1996

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Published by Delta Sigma Rho—Tau Kappa Alpha

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SUNDERED BY A MEMORY: VIETNAM AS A RHETORICAL CONSTRUCT

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Throughout the military skirmishes of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s the political leaders of the United States assured the American public that each conflict would not be "another Vietnam." Their appeals seemed to be predicated on the existence of a fixed image of the Vietnam War.

All historical events are subject to interpretation. For example, running concurrently with the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of V-J Day were debates regarding the morality of President Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. One can reasonably assume that the final interpretation of American military intervention in Southeast Asia will also be long in coming. As Doherty commented:

Television documentaries, exploitation films, autobiographies, photobooks, histories linear and oral—after a decade of relative oblivion, the Vietnam War is back on the national agenda. A rhetorical conflict now, the war is refought in words and images with history the prize (1985, 3 May, p. 49).

This current essay is an amalgamation, a bringing together of various academic and nonacademic texts which contain opposing interpretations of the Vietnam War. After examining these rhetorical artifacts, one could safely characterize the American approach to assimilating the events of the Vietnam War as something analogous to a multiple personality disorder. One enclave encompasses those who are afflicted with "collective amnesia," people who wish to permanently consign the war to oblivion (Clark et al, 1987, p. 326). A second group, the historical revisionists, is actively engaged in a renewed analysis and explication of historical facts. The third and final group is comprised of various Administration rhetors who have reworked the meaning of "Vietnam" to suit their immediate political exigencies.

I. The Amnesia Thesis

Speaking in general terms, Americans do not want to remember the Vietnam War; they "have tried to bury the mistakes of Vietnam and have stopped looking for lessons" (Coming home, 1983, p. 196). Herring (1984) reminds us that the Vietnam War was one of the most divisive events experienced by Americans since the Civil War. Yet, in comparison to World War II, only a small percentage of the American population had any direct connection with the war's prosecution. For many people in the United States, life went on after the war much as it had gone on before the war.

Unlike the nostalgia surrounding the events of World War II, there is no longing among Americans for any introspection or analysis of the Vietnam era. Herring writes: "Most Americans have little desire to discuss it, even to recall it. It is an episode from the past well-forgotten" (1984, p. 217). Early

SPEAKER AND GAVEL, Vol. 33, Nos. 1–4 (1996), 1–8.

Published by Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University

in the 1992 presidential primary, a Democratic strategist noted, "If you offer a plate filled with Vietnam memories, people are going to push that plate away and look for something else. It's the last thing they want to think about" (Lawrence, 1992, February 13, p. 1A).

Not only is the citizenry afflicted with amnesia concerning Vietnam, but the leadership as well. This fact is readily apparent when one reflects on the years of the Reagan Administration. There are those who argue that Reagan's popularity and his "Teflon-like ability to remain impervious to criticism" were based on his talent for giving American voters what they want, i.e., "a leader who affirms not only that this country is not now sick, but that it never was" (Becker, 1985, May 25, p. 561). Former President George Bush (1990) demonstrated in his 1989 inaugural address that he too was not interested in rousing the public to consciousness regarding Vietnam:

That war cleaves us still. But, friends, that war began in earnest a quarter of a century ago, and surely the statute of limitations has been reached. This is a fact: The final lesson of Vietnam is that no great nation can long afford to be sundered by a memory (p. 3).

In recounting his tour of Central America in the mid-1980s, director Oliver Stone (1988) remarks that he was taken aback by the distinct similarities between Central America of the 1980s and South Vietnam of the 1960s. The young American troops stationed in Honduras exhibited the same "gung-ho" attitude of their predecessors in Vietnam; they were there to "save" Central America from Communist aggression. Stone writes of the puzzled and enigmatic expressions on the soldiers' faces when he questioned them about Vietnam. Stone charges that the current generation is afflicted with a "moral amnesia" because

the guys who run the country don't remember Vietnam! They don't remember what war means, in terms of suffering, to the body and the soul. The power of forgetting, I have found out, is *not* to be underestimated—ever (p. 425).

There are three possible explanations for this cultural amnesia concerning Vietnam. First, the American collective consciousness is reacting to a trauma. The events of the Vietnam War demonstrated the weaknesses of the American system, and so they represent a threat to the core assumptions of strength and moral superiority Americans have long cherished. Like a victim of a violent assault who claims to have no memories of the attack, the American collective consciousness is in the process of repression and denial. In order to be psychologically healed, a victim of a violent act must remember and accept those memories. "But we are speaking of a nation and its denial of traumatic news about itself," Becker writes. "Hence moving beyond denial is far more difficult and complex" (1985, May 25, p. 561).

The second possible explanation for the collective amnesia is that the Vietnam War was and still is too much of an abstraction for many Americans. As Roche (1985, May 3) notes, Americans fought in Southeast Asia for "the freedom of a bunch of unfamiliar Asians at the end of the world" (Roche, 1985, May 3, p. 44). How can Americans remember and analyze an event they never understood fully in the first place? The answer may lie in the Burke's concept of consubstantiality. Americans operate with a construct, a model of what "good, decent, loyal Americans" should look and act like. In

picking and choosing allies, Americans compare and contrast the peoples of other nations with the "good, decent, loyal American" construct. The closer the other culture is to the American model, the greater the possibility that those people will be accepted as an ally. One can foresee the difficulties for Americans in aligning themselves with an Asian culture. Americans never fully accepted the South Vietnamese as an ally because they were "geographically, ideologically, religiously, culturally, and perhaps most important, racially not consubstantial with us" (Brummett, 1989, p. 146). Thus, Americans were never emotionally or psychologically attached to the Vietnam War. They lack the motivation to appraise and comprehend wholly an historical event they never cared about in the first place.

The third possible explanation for collective amnesia is political expediency. Ehrenhaus (1989) posits that the cessation of a war brings with it the commitment to remember. The wartime events are absorbed into the larger cultural narrative and used to legitimate the social and political institutions. The ceremonies commemorating the end of a war maintain

the legitimacy of purpose for which a community has issued its call for sacrifice; it further endows meaning to the sacrifices of those who fought and died. Moreover, remembrances reaffirm the hierarchical relationships and obligations of each individual to the larger political community, reminding all of the responsibilities and obligations of each to the other (p. 97).

Those at the top of the hierarchy are empowered with the authority to shape the substance of the larger cultural narrative. In order to possess the requisite moral authority, this narrative must be free of complexity and contradiction. The events of the Vietnam War are rife with complexity and contradiction. Thus, Ehrenhaus posits, to commemorate the Vietnam War brings with it the remembrance of its ethical and political conundrums, which ultimately lead to questioning the legitimacy of our civilian and military leadership. In order to avoid such questioning, the Vietnam War narrative must never achieve closure.

II. The Historical Revisionism Thesis

There is no fixed or stable image of the Vietnam War for a second reason: The process of writing the history of the Vietnam War has not yet run its full course. Twentieth-century American diplomatic history, Divine (1988) writes, follows a specific cycle of analysis after each significant confrontation. This analysis runs from "contemporary support through a critical revision and finally culminates in a synthesis that incorporates elements of both earlier views" (p. 79). The pattern following the Vietnam War is slightly skewed. The initial scholarship was highly critical of American foreign policy. The second stage, the period of revisionism, runs from the late 1970s to early 1980s. This period of the historiographic cycle produced an analysis which has been highly supportive of a American involvement in Southeast Asia. This period of Vietnam revisionism

reflected a growing conservative mood in the United States, symbolized by the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, and a belated national effort to come to grips with the Vietnam experience . . . Rejecting the prevailing view that the Vietnam War was an unmitigated evil, revisionists defended and justified

American involvement. . . . There is still considerable disagreement among these writers on many points, but they share a common desire to treat the American effort in Vietnam more sympathetically than earlier historians (pp. 84–5).

The third stage of the cycle runs from the mid 1980s to the present day. Diplomatic history written in this final stage is a synthesis of both the critical and revisionist views.

Despite the ongoing efforts of historians, some argue that their efforts will be of little consequence. Paterson (1988) writes that Americans are “notoriously lacking in an informed historical consciousness, and they shun close historical analysis.” Errors are soon forgotten, treated as “mere aberrations in the march of progress” (p. 1). Fromkin and Chace (1985) argue that no lessons will ever be learned from the Vietnam experience because there will never be an agreement on what actually happened. Appealing to the “lessons of Vietnam” when constructing foreign policy positions on the Middle East and Central America do more to confuse than to clarify. They conclude: “If we could all look at that terrible experience through the same pair of eyes, it could teach us much. But we cannot, so it cannot. That may be the final tragedy of the Vietnam War” (p. 746).

III. Administration Rhetors

The Vietnam War has no fixed image or stable meaning for a final reason: various Administration rhetors have reshaped the image and redefined the meaning to suit their conceptions of the conflict.

Extension of the American Frontier Myth—Gustainis (1989) writes that President Kennedy’s solution to the exigence of worldwide Communist aggression through “wars of national liberation” was counterinsurgency. Kennedy’s task was to sell his solution—i.e., to present this same exigence rhetorically—to those audiences whose support he needed to carry out his plan: Congress, senior military officials, and the American people. Kennedy and his public relations minions mounted a public relations campaign that presented the abstract concept of counterinsurgency in a more concrete form. The P.R. campaign used a mythical symbol from American popular culture, the frontiersman, and portrayed the Green Berets, at the time a little known U.S. Army commando force, as the more updated version. The Green Beret myth proved to be a successful rhetorical appeal. The news media were sold on the image, so much so that with America moving closer to war in South Vietnam the press was not asking many questions concerning the wisdom of Kennedy’s interventionist foreign policy. The Green Beret myth may also have inspired many young men to join the Army, but senior military officials were not completely supportive of the counterinsurgency program. When Lyndon Johnson came to power, he was told by the Pentagon brass that Kennedy’s Vietnam strategy had failed and more conventional methods of waging war were necessary.

The frontier myth may not have been successful as foreign policy, but it is the dominant narrative framework used in more recent and successful film depictions of the Vietnam War. Schechter and Semeiks (1991) write that the Hollywood establishment was extremely apprehensive about producing films

"using Vietnam as a metaphor for Something Significant." *The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now*, both produced in the late 1970s, were notable exceptions. In general, "cinematic depictions of America's most unpopular war were regarded as box-office poison" (p. 17). In the 1980s, that situation changed substantially with the release of *Rambo* and *Platoon*. Though *Rambo* is a "comic-book fantasy" and *Platoon* "quasi-documentary," both owe their success to their reshaping of the Vietnam War to fit the format of the archetypal American frontier hero myth. This singularly American version of the classic hero myth serves as the prevalent theme in many works of American popular fiction and focuses on "civilized heroes who undergo a deep inner transformation through their descent into a terrifyingly savage wilderness" (pp. 19–20).

In addition to following a classic American formula, there is another reason for the success of *Rambo* not mentioned by Schechter and Semeiks. This film spends little time muddling over political abstractions, though its political leanings are readily apparent. *Rambo* compresses a library's worth of scholarly discourse into an elementary narrative. The villains are plainly obvious—the Vietnamese and their Russian puppetmasters, and corrupt Washington bureaucrats.

Containment Vessel—A second image of Vietnam forwarded by Administration rhetors was that of Vietnam as a containment vessel, one in which the United States would "bottle up" the advance of Communism. Ivie (1989) writes that Lyndon Johnson's choice of a master metaphor of containment to describe and justify his Vietnam policy was contradicted by other key terms also employed by the Administration—i.e., birth, risk-taking, strength, and savagery. The Johnson Administration attempted unsuccessfully to match a moderate foreign policy to fit its strong rhetorical appeals. Several attempts were made to introduce alternate metaphors or images to describe the situation in South Vietnam. One which had great potential was the "pro-freedom birth" metaphor in which South Vietnam was a non-communist nation laboring to be born. The South Vietnamese government may not have fit the American model of democracy, but the "pro-freedom birth" metaphor would have allowed for some discrepancies; one cannot expect democratically mature actions from a "nation-child." However, the Johnson Administration continued to rely on the containment metaphor to explain why military intervention in Southeast Asia was in the national interest of the United States. Ivie writes that this rhetorical strategy presented the administration with several problems:

The national interest was defined negatively and indirectly, thus engaging the cause of freedom ambiguously; the enemy was the entire communist world, thus risking an unthinkable third world war in order to achieve some kind of a victory; and the rest of the administrations's rhetoric was constrained accordingly—projecting a confused image of firmness modified by softness, risk-taking without the promise of a clear reward, and savagery without the full satisfaction of victimage" (pp. 138–39).

By choosing a different "God term," Ivie suggests Johnson could have avoided the above mentioned difficulties.

Quest Story—Nixon's contribution to the images of Vietnam comes from a traditional literary genre—the quest story. In an analysis of Nixon's Vietnam rhetoric, Stelzner (1971) writes that all of the traditional elements of a quest story are present in Nixon's November 3, 1969 address to the nation: a precious object or person, a long journey, a hero, guardians of the object, helpers.

Despite the presence of the essential ingredients, in the final analysis, however, Nixon's speech is not a good quest story. A quest suggests great moments and great risks. Nixon's political narrative contains none of these. There is no ultimate conflict between Nixon as hero and the North Vietnamese, the guardians of the precious object of peace. Instead, Nixon confronts and challenges American youth, a possible constituency who could be potential helpers, choosing to destroy their arguments instead of North Vietnam's. Nixon's language is flat and unimaginative, devoid of Biblical imagery. Nixon wanted to keep the war secular and contained. Biblical imagery would be too grand for use in justifying a limited war and might even invite an ethical judgment of the president's policy, giving the opposition a possible issue.

These fundamental flaws may be of importance to a literary critic, Stelzner writes, but Nixon's purpose was not to create a great literary text. His Vietnamization speech had practical ends. First, Nixon gained an audience, the Silent Majority, a group of indeterminate size who responded to his imagery. Second, Nixon gained time to prepare for next series of foreign policy growing out of Vietnam.

Noble Cause—The final image or meaning Administration rhetors have tried to affix to Vietnam is that of the Noble Cause. The image figures as a central feature of former Secretary of State George Shultz's (1985, June) speech "The Meaning of Vietnam." In their critical analysis of this address, Dionisopoulos and Goldzwig (1992) argue that Schultz's speech represented the Reagan Administration's attempt to revise the history of American involvement in Vietnam in order to make it useable in justifying its Central American policies. Americans view history as a narrative containing "object lessons" and "historical truths." When we seek to legitimate our current policies, we look to the past and see those events as analogous to current conditions; therefore, what worked then will work now. The Reagan Administration was finding it difficult to justify American intervention in Central America because of the "lessons" of Vietnam. It was necessary for them to "revise" history.

In this speech, Shultz placed himself in the position of a cultural historian, one who was offering the public a revised historical narrative. Dionisopoulos and Goldzwig argue that Shultz followed a three-part strategy in his process of historical revisionism. First, Shultz used the tenth anniversary of the fall of Vietnam as justification to reexamine the past—the passage of time allowed for a more dispassionate and objective look at past events.

Second, Shultz offered a retrospective view of events in Southeast Asia since 1975. After describing the atrocities suffered by the people of Vietnam, Shultz presents a new perspective from which to see the past, removing the received view. He chose the Noble Cause theory. The inhumanity of the Communists was exactly what America's Vietnam policies were attempting

to prevent. The execution of those policies may have been less than faultless, Shultz acknowledged, but "the *morality* of our effort must now be clear . . . our sacrifice was in the service of noble ideals—to save innocent people from brutal tyranny" (p. 14).

Third, Shultz shifts his attention to Central America and applies the lessons of the revised history to current events. Central America is another South Vietnam, but that stance cannot be used as an attack against Reagan Administration policy. The goals of the United States in South Vietnam were noble ones—"democracy, economic progress, and security against aggression." The same goals apply to Central America. The programs for implementing those goals, for "nurturing the forces of democracy," have been working without the need for American combat units. "And by virtue of simple geography, there can be no conceivable doubt that Central America is vital to our own security" (p. 15).

IV. Conclusion

When one speaks of the "lessons of Vietnam," one is speaking of a very rhetorical construct. Vietnam has no fixed image or stable meaning. In this essay I have outlined three possible reasons.

First, America is suffering from a "collective amnesia." The events of the war are so painful and traumatic that much like the victim of a violent assault we are blocking or repressing our Vietnam memories. The amnesia may not be due to trauma, but due to a conscious decision to forget what we did not fully understand at the beginning. Perhaps our amnesia is a matter of political expediency; to remember Vietnam would call into question the authority of our civilian and military leadership.

Second, there is no fixed image or stable meaning to Vietnam because the "final" or "complete" history has yet to be written. Following the war, historians wrote a history of Vietnam that was critical of American policies. In the 1980s, the history being written was very supportive of those same policies. Currently, historians are writing a history of the Vietnam War which combines elements of the two earlier views.

Finally, there is no fixed image or stable meaning to Vietnam because various Administration rhetors have reshaped the image and redefined the meaning to fit their conceptions of the war. Kennedy described Vietnam as an mythical extension of America's frontier. The containment metaphor served as the Johnson Administration's template in formulating a rhetoric that described Vietnam as a vessel to hold the forces of Communism in check. Nixon borrowed from a traditional literary form, the quest story, in describing his policy of Vietnamization. Reagan Administration officials reworked the history of Vietnam in order to use it as a justification for the Central American policy needs.

The question remains: Will there ever be a fixed image or stable meaning of the Vietnam War? Inevitably, yes, there will be. The combined elements of collective amnesia and historical revisionism along with the alchemical incantations of future Administration rhetors will ultimately produce a vision of the Vietnam War, a somewhat more insipid and diaphanous version of the original event. Necessity dictates that if we are to be active participants

in the New World Order, then we truly cannot afford to be "sundered by a memory."

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GIVE ME SOME OF THAT OLD TIME RELIGION: CONSTITUTIVE AGENTS AND THE PROBLEMS OF FIAT

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Introduction

My fear is that one day I will wake up and it will be a different world. I look back on history and this is pretty much what I see: one day a person goes to sleep in the Roman Empire, the most powerful empire in the world to that point, and the next day wakes up and is in the midst of a barbarous anarchy. It is not so much that I fear that our institutions will disband and we will be left to live on nuts and berries. It is only that I can understand how such a thing could occur. Even within our beloved debate we sense the potential. One day you go to bed and most of the judges are policymakers and all of the rules seem pretty clear. The next day, you get up and the world seems to be thrown into an anarchy where paradigms are dismissed as historical oddities and everyone feels free to reinvent debate for themselves in any way that seems expedient. The thought is a little terrifying: that our game could get out of our own control. But it may be misplaced.

If recent thoughts on the nature of debate are any sort of judge, the sense of impending anarchy seems to be peculiarly felt in regard to questions of fiat and especially in regard to questions of negative fiat.¹ What is interesting about these musings on the nature of fiat is how despite their radically independent perspectives, each senses the same problem. "In what way can we limit the negative's counterplan ground?" Or, "how is it we can better facilitate discussions of the resolution?" Each of them feel that the debate discussions are unfocused and that they often seem to reward negatives for unreasonable or utopian strategies at the expense of a reasonable and sincere discussion of the affirmative case or the "affirmative resolution."

Well, responses to anarchy have been consistent across the ages; to forestall anarchy we must install discipline. However, debate has notoriously resisted disciplining. One of academic debate's ironic qualities is that the activity is constituted in resisting any type of dogmatic discipline. The key question for those who want to stop debate anarchy, then, seems to be one that regards implementation more than ends: "how do we get people to play

¹ Gordon Mitchell. "Time for an Activist Outward Turn in Academic Debate, Roger Solt, ed. *Debater's Research Guide 1995: United States Foreign Policy: China Cards* (Winston-Salem, NC: Wake Forest University, 1995): A4-A7; Alan Coverstone. "An Inward Glance: A Response to Mitchell's Outward Activist Turn," *Debater's Research Guide 1995: A7-A10*; Doyle Srader. "Fiat as Parameter: Facilitating Discussion by Excusing Non-germane Issues," Paper presented at the 1995 SCA Convention, San Antonio, TX, 1995; Jon Sharp and Michael Hester. "Fiat from a Resolutional Perspective," Paper presented at the 1995 SCA Convention, San Antonio, TX, 1995; Marcia Tiersky. "International Fiat: A Moderate Proposal," Paper presented at the 1995 SCA Convention, San Antonio, TX, 1995.

by the rules?" The resolution to this question demands both a discussion of the ends of debate and the means by which we reach them. Here I will look at debates about the scope of fiat in terms of their construction of the problem of fiat in academic debate and will end by suggesting an alternative conception of debate.

One strategy that is common to most discussions of fiat is to attempt to use a variety of social compact to discipline users of negative fiat. In both cases theorists suggest that problems stem from the lack of a structural distinction between what is legitimate and illegitimate. The solution, therefore, demands a more militant defense of the resolution's fragile borders.

How do we know where the borders are? How does anyone find their borders? For most fiat theorists, fiat's borders seem to exist somewhere in the no-persons land between legitimate international actors and illegitimate personal action. The sextant that we use to identify the specific border lies, however, with some sense of what constitutes "good debate." For each theorist the decision on where the border lies is part of the compact that makes the game of debate possible. Just as time limits, the forced decision of a neutral judge, and the right to rebuttal, fiat takes the form of a constitutive rule of the game. There could be many possible rules to the game, chosen on the basis of their ability to create a game that is fun or useful to play. Most discussions of fiat are constituted in suggestions regarding their own versions of the three point line or designated hitter. They just happen to be in regard to our perception of what makes a good debate rather than an interesting basketball or baseball game.

Embedded deep within the substrata of these types of argument and almost unseen, lies a metaphoric structure which makes the activity meaningful—debate is a game. At no time do these theorists talk about debate as a game or advocate that we should look at debate as a game that has useful spin-offs. They take the debate-game equation as such a given that they do not even have to overtly acknowledge it.²

It is at this point of debate's hypotheticalness that Gordon Mitchell's observations on the utility of the game become important. He is interested in the effects of the game, and most interested in the ways that we can assess the utility of the game by external means. For Mitchell, the stakes are high. Rather than seeking to create a game that is interesting or fun or has a large audience or complies with some sense of consistency of logic, Mitchell is most interesting in creating a game that instills in its practitioners a sense of power and responsibility. He questions the utility of a game where participants role-play for the sake of the game and then retire later in the day to lives that are completely alien to their advocacy. Mitchell seems especially concerned for the sincerity of players' performances. His solution is to reward

² For an extended discussion of the debate-game equation, see Charles Arthur Willard. "The Nature and Implications of the 'Policy Perspective' for the Evaluation of Debate," David Thomas, ed. *Advanced Debate* (Skokie IL: National Textbook Company, 1979): 438–444; Alfred C. Snider. "Games without Frontiers: A Design for Communication Scholars and Forensic Educators," *Journal of the American Forensic Association* 20 (1984): 76–88; Stephen Wood. "Normative Expectations and Codified Rules: Problems in Judging Academic/Competitive Debate." *CEDA Yearbook* 13 (1992): 70–82.

sincerity and activity and to allow players to integrate their own action in the world as a conceivable solution to problems. In simplistic terms, he is in favor of a loop-hole in the fiat rules that would allow individuals to propose their own action, so long as their proposals were sincere. In other venues he has coined the term "action plan" to get at the empowering principles that undergird his hybrid of hypothetical and actual political action in debate.

Mitchell's concern for the ends of the game, even his acknowledgment of a standard by which we could judge worthy ends, is intriguing. Whereas the other theorists absent the issue of ends in favor of a discussion of the debate as an end in itself, Mitchell is willing to engage the ends of debate as a product of the debates themselves. However, even in unmasking debate's ends, he continues to employ the game-debate equation; debate continues as it currently does. Fiat is limited by the no-persons' land that separates legitimate international actors and illegitimate individuals, except where the individual sincerely suggests their own action as a solution.

The vision of fiat as rule-governed is firmly rooted in a vision of debate as a game. The debate-game equation is something that has become particularly powerful during the last half of this century. A variety of factors help to explain the equation's rise and continuing utility.

One Story of Debate and Fiat

Charles Arthur Willard wrote in 1976:

Academic debate is a game in the most rigorous sense of the term. Competing teams seek favorable decisions from the neutral judges through the use of oral argument. The argumentation occurs in an artificial context which is defined by certain rules and traditions designed to enhance the educational benefits of the game. In theory, the game teaches research skills, rhetorical criticism, resource evaluation, and oral delivery skills. These skills are theoretically sharpened as the disputants are forced to operate within the parameters of the game's rules—rules which are brought into practical application by the critic.³

Was debate always a game? True, players have, from near the beginning, vied for points and wins, trophies, hardware, national standings and recognition. They are coached and play for the glory of their school. But, are these the ends of debate, or ends to a game, or both? To understand how points, and trophies, and strategy, and glory became central to debate it is first necessary to understand where debate came from and where it has been going.

One night, in the early 1960s, debate coaches went to bed in a world where all of the rules seemed to be clear and woke up the next morning in debate anarchy. However, as most anarchies, the change was not immediately apparent. Instead, it occurred over several years and seemed to be backed by the best of intentions and the most rational of arguments.

If you had read a justification for supporting debate in the immediate post-war period, it would probably have had very little to do with teaching argument or even principles of persuasion. Instead, it located its primary function in less abstract concerns. For example, A. Craig Baird laid out this primary justification for studying debate:

³ Willard, 1979: 439.

At the bottom yours is government by talk. Literally, it is government by argumentation, discussion, and debate. As one educator put it, "we can no more dispense with legislative and forensic debating in a democratic society than we can take a walk to the moon . . . The surest way to throw ourselves into the hands of a dictator is to outlaw debate."⁴

Baird goes on to isolate other valuable justifications for academic debate, but the democratic function is the most important. Now, it is easy to become confused at this point. We are so inundated with the concept that debate is a game that we could read Baird as just another attempt to explain why playing the game is a useful exercise. However, Baird does not ever talk about debate as a game. In fact, the game idea would probably be alien to his justifications for debate. For him our government is one of "talk." Debate and government are the very same thing. Debate is not a means to some other end. Instead, it is the end.

This initial construction of debate as an end in itself is interesting when viewed against the Social Compact position that the ends of the debate are the debate itself, and Mitchell's concept of the end of debate lying in some kind of political empowerment. For Baird, there is a bit of both positions. The act of participant in the game is an act of empowerment. There is no hypothetical or sophistic intermediary.

How did we move from this idealistic and empowering vision of debate to the game metaphor. It did not happen overnight. Instead, it is a product of economic, political, and theoretical changes.

In 1963, Douglas Ehninger and Wayne Brockriede published *Decision by Debate*. The book offered as its unique addition to a bloated academic market a vision of debate as an investigative exercise. In his editor's introduction to the book, Karl Wallace wrote:

The authors, in my opinion, have not written merely another book in argumentation and debate. They see clearly that debate is an instrument of critical thought, that it requires its practitioners to think reflectively and calls upon the audience as judge to weigh and consider. Its methods are self-critical and self-correcting of error because the form of debate demands that contending ideas be systematically examined. Indeed, the habit of the debater is no less self-critical and self-regulative than the habit of the scientist. Both expect and invite rigorous judgment from their fellows.⁵

The scientific method of debate, proposed by Ehninger and Brockreide, was rooted in the very latest work by Stephen Toulmin. By applying the Toulmin model to academic debate, the two helped to transform debate from a democratic exercise into an investigative one.⁶ Armed with an abstract model of argument, debate moved from a context-driven exercise into a body of atemporal knowledge. Debate's decontextualization mirrored the move of debate coaches from the fringes of adjunct-driven extracurricular employees to the tenure-tracked center of the emerging discipline of Speech Communication.

⁴ A. Craig Baird. *Argumentation, Discussion and Debate* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1950): 4.

⁵ Karl Wallace cited in Douglas Ehninger and Wayne Brockriede. *Decision by Debate* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1963): v.

⁶ James Golden, Goodwin Berquist, and William Coleman. *The Rhetoric of Western Thought* 4th ed. (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1989): 353.

Integration of the scientific method and debate through the Toulmin model had other effects. It facilitated debate's move from context-driven political action to a hypothetical game. Just as the Roman sophists used historical topics for their debates in an effort to avoid impolitic debate topics, the investigative model helped turn academic debate to a hypothetical rather than political enterprise.

The application of the scientific method to debate is not the only force behind the move to depoliticize debate and to institute debate as a hypothetical game. There were other forces afoot. In 1954 the debate topic was that "the United States should extend diplomatic recognition to the Communist government of China." While this topic would seem to be as abstract as the recent high school topic, it was not. Many schools, including the military academies, refused to debate the topic and there were plenty of stories of winning affirmative teams being reported to the government for anti-American activities. The politicization of a debate topic created a market for a less political, and more abstract, justification for debate. For, if debate is simply a hypothetical exercise in argument study, then it has no overt political content. This same contest between debate as a political activity and debate as the study of argument has periodically raged since. During the 1991–92 N.D.T. season arguments raged about whether it was appropriate for judges to refuse to judge cases that sought to limit abortion rights.⁷ In both the China and the abortion instances, a quick use of the scientific instead of the political rationale proved a handy defense to ideological pressure.

These pressures have changed the way that we argue about debate and the means that we use to reach our ends. However, while there have been changes that have altered our conception of debate, my argument is that we hold on to our old baggage. Most debaters and educators have never really embraced debate as a hypothetical game that seeks only to test knowledge. Instead, our practice reflects a different agenda and, deep down, every director of forensics has felt the need to justify debate as creating empowered citizens and taken pride in the fact that debate students tend to feel more politically active and able than others. While Gordon Mitchell believes that the age of empowered students has passed, I believe that it is still with us and is deeply embedded in the way that we think about debate.

The Roots of Affirmative Fiat

N.D.T. Debate, high school policy debate, and even recent propositions of policy by C.E.D.A. debate have all taken the United States federal government as their actor. How can we explain this consistency of phrasing? Certainly, the United States is not the only actor in the world? The reason

⁷ Cecelia Graves and David Cheshier. "Forum: Objectivity, Convention, and Fair Warning: Judging Philosophies and Prior Judgment," *The Policy Caucus Newsletter* 2 (November 1991): 3–5.

lies with one of the elements that make clash possible; the existence of a relevant frame of reference.⁸

In order for a debate to have clash, there needs to be some point at which the affirmative and negative have an overlapping concern for the topic. In Roman times this common point would be called the stasis of the argument. In regard to debates over propositions of policy, this overlap is most easily ensured by having the affirmative argue from a mutual constitution. By the term “mutual constitution” I mean that the actor of the resolution is in some way constituted by the two teams in the debate; that all of the parties to the debate help to make up the actor.

The parties to a debate are only constitutive members of a finite number of acting organizations. They are usually constitutive elements of the United States government in that it is a democracy where they have some say about the actions of the government which are only authorized by the assent of a majority. Parties to a debate are also constitutive elements of the states where they live, the organizations that they have in common (most students belong to university communities), treaty organization such as N.A.T.O. or the U.N. that count the United States as a member, or members of states. In each constitutive organization they are members with standing. They have the ability to speak and their voices are important to the legitimation and functioning of these organizations.

It seems to me that this has been an assumption in our construction of topics. The affirmative should advocate change where they have the ability, standing, and the right to make changes. In fact, our construction of resolutions has been so constrained that there would be some kind of visceral reaction to any attempt to debate a policy resolution that did not include a constituted actor. For example, it would be inconceivable for us to debate the topic that Japan or that some Non Governmental Organization should change their policy toward the People’s Republic of China. It may be true that Japan or the N.G.O.s should change their policy—but we would never debate it because we have no influence or relation with those actors. This inherent limitation is the heritage of our pre-argument debate history.

Questions about Negative Fiat

The fact that affirmatives tend to view constitutive agents as legitimate topics of debate is something that is firmly established. Despite the fact that many advocates of kritiks have questioned affirmative fiat to make the point that debate is no more than a hypothetical argumentative game, no negative would deny the affirmative’s obligation to defend constitutive action. What lacks a firm foundation, however, has been the idea of a negative fiat. While most judges now accept competitive counterplans as legitimate alternatives to the affirmative actor, there seems to be little agreement as to the scope of the competitive action that judges can evaluate. As other papers on the topic illustrate, many debaters and coaches are frustrated by the seemingly bot-

⁸ The only exceptions that I have found are some high school topics from the 1930s and 1940s that use “the several states” or “every able-bodied male” as their agents of action. As I shall demonstrate later, even these agents are constitutive of the population that debated the topics.

tomless list of potential negative actors and the tendency for this situation to leave debates unfocused and unfairly tilted against the affirmative. Negatives usually respond to such attacks by pointing that affirmatives still win a majority of the debates. But, when has equity had anything to do with justice?

The most useful out-of-round public discussion of this problem occurred at the 1982 Central States Speech Communication Association Convention when Robert Gass and Walter Ulrich each offered a substantive discussion of fiat.

Ulrich argued that because the agreed upon resolution specifies an agent that it should provide the bounds for legitimate fiat. The judge should take the role of the agent of the resolution and this assumption should limit the discussion to things that the agent of the resolution could legitimately accomplish. This view of fiat has the effect of limiting negative fiat to actions that are reciprocal with the affirmative.⁹ Ulrich identified three benefits to this proposal: first, it would make debates more "real world;" second, it would prevent obscure debates on the exact limits of fiat power, preventing people from fiating that good people act nice and that SOx become good for the environment; and third, it would prevent debates from degenerating into debates about the minor differences between different actors.

Robert Gass took Ulrich to task for each of his promises. In the place of the reciprocal action fiat, Gass suggested some guidelines for the use of negative fiat. Gass argued that fiat should be limited to what could be implemented or adopted, that it should use normal democratic processes, and that it should be constrained by the affirmative's identification of inherent barriers.¹⁰

If current debate practice is a guide, then neither suggestion had a revolutionary impact. They are, however, useful as guides to the logic of fiat as we have inherited it. They reflect the same ideology as the companion pieces here: the solution to fiat anarchy is the imposition of more finely tuned discipline. What is most interesting in all of this are the attempts to get at the logic of what is a legitimate debate. Both Gass and Ulrich wish to limit the discussions to a finite number of actors and have some sense that it should be the United States Government. Both see something in the internal logic of the debate to suggest that this can be done. Ulrich sees the solution in placing the judge as the agent of action and Gass sees it in the imposition of guides for fiat use. However, both of these suggestions begin with the premise that debate is a game. They try to determine the outcome of the game by playing with the rules to make it a more or less productive discussion.

Gass' idea that discussion should be limited to democratic processes is most interesting here. If debate is an exercise in constitutive action, then the democratic principles seem to be embedded even here. To this end, Gass only offers this justification:

⁹ Walter Ulrich. "Limitations on the Options Available to the evaluator of Policy," Paper Presented to the Central States Speech Communication Association Convention, Milwaukee, WI, April 1982.

¹⁰ Robert Gass, "On Fiat Power," Paper Presented to the Central States Speech Communication Association Convention, Milwaukee, WI, April 1982.

Such channels of action, I believe, constitute a legitimate domain for the exercise of fiat power. These are the mechanisms and processes that give rise to, or prevent the solution of, problems in the status quo. These are also the avenues of change open to real-world policymakers. To allow debaters to transcend normal democratic processes is to invite comparisons based on a double standard: that of the real vs. the ideal.¹¹

In debate practice this norm has usually taken the form of a cryptic statement that the plan will be enacted through "normal democratic means." What is troubling here is that Gass warrants his suggested rule through little more than his own belief about what is legitimate and some suggestion that debate would be unfair if we were to break the world into "real" and "unreal" suggestions. However, even his suggested fiat is admittedly unreal. It relies upon a vision of debate grounded in hypothetical. The judge acts as a policymaker—the judge *is not* the policymaker.

As Gordon Mitchell claims, we can have an empowering policy debate that teaches about and utilizes our constitutive agent. The solution does not lie, however, in increasing rewards for personal action, nor in sharpening the compact that governs debate. Instead, it may be found in some return to the logic that has undergirded and justified debate in the United States for more than two hundred years: a vision of debate as a type of critical practice.

Rhetoricians Take the Field

In recent years most disciplines have problematized their language. The Project on the Rhetoric of Inquiry at the University of Iowa, for example, represents one of many movements to understand the role of language in constituting academic disciplines. It is not surprising, then, that academic debate, which is populated by more than its share of rhetorical critics, has not been immune to "linguistic turn." Through the proliferation of kritik-type arguments, most of policy debate has become aware of the implications of the language that we use in our advocacy.

However, the full force of kritik arguments has been blunted by the very ideas that have allowed them to prosper. Initially, many kritik impacts gained their weight from the hypothetical nature of the game. The thought was that if the role of the game was to teach people to be better arguers, then what better venue could there be than a debate round to punish or reward one's advocacy skills.

In addition to increasing debaters' appreciation for their language, kritiks have allowed debaters to unmask our utilitarian assumptions in order to engage the ideological dimensions of policy debates. However, while kritiks have offered a valuable experience for students to uncover some of their own ideological baggage, they have also questioned some of the core principles of academic debate.¹²

In particular, the principle that a kritik absolves negatives from having to advocate positive programs has been poorly received in some areas. For

¹¹ Gass, 1982.

¹² William Shanahan. "Kritik of Thinking," *Health Care Policy: Debating Coverage Cures*, Roger Solt and Ross Smith, eds., (Winston Salem, NC: Wake Forest University, 1993): A3–A8.

some judges, utilitarianism under the guise of policymaking has been hard to shake and kritiks have not been universally hailed or used to their greatest degree.¹³

In addition to their tendency to avoid clash, there are other forces that have slowed acceptance of kritiks. In particular, the game metaphor that initially nurtured kritiks has also slowed their progress. The idea of debate being a rule-governed game with utilitarian ends has not sat well with many judges. Instead, they generally want to know what utility will be served by a particular punitive action. Oftentimes, it is difficult to associate a unique harm to a unique game or player. Instead, those that use kritiks generally try to take examples from the world of constitutive political action and apply them to the hypothetical instance. In this case, the idea of punishment seems to be the best warrant for making a kritik a voting issue. The concept of punishment for breaking a rule that is emergent in a particular debate strikes many judges as somewhat unfair.

Independent of the fairness and unfairness of kritiks as a source of debate rules, the fact of the matter is that kritiks have been useful in interjecting political ideology into debates. Rather than taking debate as a model for future political action, effective kritiks take debates as a form of political action. In this situation, and outside of the hypothetical domain, kritiks have their intended effect; which is to question the limited assumptions of debaters.

The move to appreciate the linkage of ideology and language reflects moves in the communication discipline, which, in many instances, plays the role of parent to debate teams. Rather than engaging the scientific model that has given us the Toulmin model and emphasized the metaphor of debate as game or science, the linguistic turn promises us a debate future that emphasizes political empowerment and participation over some sense of scientific description. In this sense, debate is moving into a truly post-modern era.

In the discipline of rhetoric, which is largely populated by former debaters, the idea of a critical rhetoric has become an important idea. Rather than taking the criticism of language as an attempt to generate positive knowledge about the ways that language works, the critical rhetoric movement has sought to view the critique of language as a political act in itself.¹⁴ In simplistic terms, it works like this: if I choose to analyze the conservative rhetoric of Preacher A, then I am not only learning about the way that their language works to gain its effect, but I also unmask the message of Preacher A to make it more explicit and to render some judgment about its ethical, aesthetic, or ideological foundations. In this sense the analysis of language is itself a political act. This political act takes the form of a critical rhetoric.

¹³ Matthew Shors and Steve Mancuso. "The Critique: Skreaming Without Raising Its Voice," *Health Care Policy: Debating Coverage Cures*, Roger Solt and Ross Smith, eds., (Winston-Salem, NC: Wake Forest University, 1993): A11-A18.

¹⁴ Raymie McKerrow. "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989): 91-111; Raymie McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric in a Postmodern World," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991): 75-78; Kent Ono and John Sloop. "Commitment to *Telos*—A Sustained Critical Rhetoric," *Communication Monographs* 59 (1992): 48-60.

Debate as a Critical Rhetoric

We can take some of the insights of the critical rhetoric movement and apply them to academic debate as we have come to know it. Rather than taking the dominant metaphor for debate as a means of scientific investigation that emphasizes the hypothetical and game-like qualities of debate, we may do better to return to the early concept of debate as a type of political action in itself.

While the game model of debate is useful because it comports with a vision of debate as a substantive academic program that produces positive knowledge, excuses debaters from arguing against their own political orientation, and permits students to experiment openly with new theoretical positions, it also has its weaknesses that, ironically, flow from these strengths. The current emphasis on a game model encourages students to be disingenuous in their argumentation, to stretch the limits of evidential credibility, and to avoid clash by choosing from a nearly random list of comparative agents of action. Most importantly, the game metaphor has the effect of disempowering students by making their own arguments irrelevant to their lives.

Contemporary debate practice encourages debaters to do whatever it takes to win. This strategic posturing has the effect of breaking the relationship between debaters and their advocacy. Instead of advocating solutions that flow from their convictions or that they believe will solve problems, they are choosers who are encouraged to free-float from solution to solution without much thought for what they are saying and without any sense of firm conviction. This is particularly the case when students use agent counterplans without reference to the initial agent of action. So, for example, on this past year's high school debate resolution, the agent counterplan that had the Chinese government do the affirmative plan was a popular strategy. When employed, to a case that had the United States encourage China to stop importing cigarettes, for example, a negative team could counterplan that it would be better to have China do the plan.

The problem with this strategy is not that it is not net-beneficial, or even that it is not competitive. It is easy to prove that it meets both of the rules-based criteria we apply to counterplans. The problem with an agent counterplan like this is that it is disempowering to the debaters and the judge. The fact that some third party, on whom no one in the room has any influence, could solve the problem better seem to me to be an excuse for the type of inaction that Mitchell identifies. It is akin to saying in a debate between me and another coach about who should take out the trash that George Bush should take it out. While it would meet all of the criteria of a good plan, the fact that I am not former President Bush and that former President Bush is no longer even a constitutive agent of mine means that saying he should do it is just an excuse to do nothing. In the end the agreement that this is the best policy is an agreement to nothing except that I can do nothing to solve the problem. This is debate at its politically disempowering worst.

The most obvious solution to this problem is to institute a rule that people can not use third party agents. But, a rule is only as good as its legitimation in the eyes of students or coaches and such rules have proven more of an

incentive to revolutionary action than a deterrent. A stronger restriction is something that, by its own logic, compels an action. In debate, the logic of constitutive agents means that such solutions would be outside the scope of our empowered discussion. If we are constrained to discussions of relevant issues, we are more likely to come up with a satisfactory solution to our dilemma while maintaining a high level of clash.

Mitchell's loophole is another possible solution to this problem. While his recourse to individual action is appealing, it is not viable if we are to maintain the high standards we have for discussion in a liberal society. As a coach at a conservative religious school, my fear is that the "action plans" that many of my students may offer from their own genuine involvement may not fit with the ideological leanings of their judges or their opponents. In a world where prayer is a significant form of social action and where missionary work is a primary means for making social change, my fear is that the fiat loophole for individual action may encourage judges to judge students ideas more on the basis of who is taking the action rather than the benefits of the action itself.

Similarly, the focus on individual action also has the limitation of, ideally, making it impossible for students to actively debate topics for which they have little personal interest—or demonstrate little personal initiative. In a system that rewards constitutive agents, each topic is important because all individuals, by necessity, must take some responsibility for all of its actions. The constitutive agent system rewards all actions at all levels of political involvement. Perhaps the heyday of debate-inspired political action was a consequence of the close relationship of debate with democratic action and personal responsibility.

The theory of constitutive agents also deals with some of the other problems that plague contemporary fiat debates. Its logic limits the scope of debate to a few possible agents without forcing everyone to use the same agent. It has the effect of limiting the range of clash in a debate without sacrificing creativity. And, it has the effect of obviating discussions about what is "real" and "unreal" for the sake of a hypothetical discussion. Instead, the theory of constitutive action encourages debaters to explore the outer limits of their own political power. Finally, the theory of constitutive action helps to limit and enhance the force of kritiks in debate while making them more closely fit their disciplinary context. Rather than flowing from the nature of hypothetical discussions and a need to punish and reward, they can perform as ideological constraints on what are essentially political discussions.

Conclusions

Science's ethos overwhelmed academic debate in the middle of this century with promises of substantive knowledge and an escape from the political demands of real advocacy. In return for these promises, debate had to sacrifice much of its relevance as a forum for political action by becoming a hypothetical game.

Recent developments in rhetorical theory and debate theory have brought us to question the utility of debate as a source of knowledge and as a hypothetical exercise. In the place of the contemporary system of debate I have

advocated that we abandon the paradigm of debate as a hypothetical game and replace it with the earlier model of debate as a form of political action. This model, which I term constitutive action, would have the practical effect of limiting both affirmative and negative actions to actors that are constitutive agents of the parties to the debate. This change will make debate practice relevant to the parties involved, enhance clash in the debate, and improve debaters' sense of political empowerment. This move will also improve debate by replacing the random system of rules that govern our game, with a system of logic that compels particular actions, and encourages debaters to establish emergent criteria within the debate while supplying a yardstick to govern their effectiveness. Finally, this proposal has the benefits of comporting with many of the ideas that most debaters deeply harbor about debate and appropriate subjects of debate.

POSTMODERN POSTMORTEM: PARADOX AND PARADIGMS

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A recent article in this journal (Kramer & Lang, 1993) proposed a "Post-modern Decision making Paradigm" as an argumentative method and as an evaluative tool. Careful consideration of the suggested paradigm occasions reflection on the role paradigms and postmodernism might have in academic debate. This essay explores the proposal that debate should be conducted according to a postmodern perspective. After defining postmodernism, its relationship to sophistic rhetoric is examined. This historical retrospective reveals that postmodern tendencies, particularly advocacy of inconsistency, run counter to the goals and conduct of argumentation. Next, the relationship between postmodernism and paradigms is explored. Third, the purported advantages of postmodern perspectives are subjected to critical scrutiny. Fourth, the repercussions of postmodernism for academic debate are discussed. Finally, a reduced emphasis on paradigms and a re-emphasis on communal bases for decision making are suggested as remedies for problems attendant to a "postmodern paradigm."

Throughout this discussion, the term *debate* applies generically to any rule-governed argumentative exchange. Specific applications to competitive debate are identified as *academic debate*. As employed in this essay, the issues regarding postmodernism in academic debate represent a particular context for confronting postmodernism beyond the forum of debate rounds per se.

A definition of postmodernism is much more problematic. It is difficult to identify the species of postmodernism Kramer and Lang (1993) advocate, because they do not link the postmodern characteristics they identify with a particular intellectual tradition. Defining postmodernism is difficult, for it does not describe a methodology, doctrine, or any static body of theory. It "remains, at best, an equivocal concept" that defies pigeonholing (Hassan, 1987a, p. 23). The varieties of intellectual projects and artistic objects labeled as postmodern cast some "doubt [as to] whether the term can ever be dignified by conceptual coherence" (Boyne & Rattansi, 1990, p. 9). Instead, postmodernism qualifies more as a spirit of inquiry, an attitude that distrusts universalization and promotes the revelation of internal inconsistencies. Hassan (1987a) has inventoried the prominent characteristics of postmodernism in its various incarnations. These qualities include:

1. Privileging indeterminacy instead of finality. This resistance to finality also implies a rejection of historical teleology (Zavarzadeh & Morton, 1991).
2. Recognition that reality is fragmentary and disconnected.
3. Opposition to all canonical authority.
4. The free mixture of styles, genres, and traditions.
5. Emphasis on the conditionality and historicity of theories, which offer perspectives rather than ultimate answers.
6. Focus on the processes of creation and interpretation instead of on static objects or ideas.

SPEAKER AND GAVEL, Vol. 33, Nos. 1-4 (1996), 21-41.

Each of the preceding qualities invites appropriation by debaters.

1. Precedents and model programs are treated with suspicion, since they imply continuity with the past. If an affirmative plan has worked as a pilot project, that success may have been due to the monopolization of funds and skewing of reporting by the dominant power interests than to the merits of the program.
2. The critique of causality is subsumed by postmodernism, because assertions of causal linkage are questioned. Furthermore, definitive knowledge is disavowed.
3. There is no decision rule that transcends the individual round.
4. Multiple paradigms can co-exist productively.
5. Claims are evaluated not as true or false in themselves, but are contextualized as having truth-value only within specified parameters. Not only are conditional arguments recommended, but all arguments are subject to revisions that restrict their domain of applicability.
6. Instead of evaluating the resolution or affirmative plan as a concrete proposal, debate would focus on the assumptions behind the way terminology is employed. The argumentative process becomes the center of attention, not supposedly completed proposals offered for wholesale adoption or rejection.

When postmodernism is suggested as a model or mindset for the practice of debate, it may be imported in one or more of the preceding ways.

There is a big difference between observing what could be called a postmodern condition and elevating that condition to an “-ism” that would regulate argumentative practice. Marshall (1992) understandably recommends erasing the -ism suffix because it “suggests that here is something complete, unified, totalized” (pp. 4–5). Postmodernism, in a word, resists specification as a doctrine or method. Richard Bernstein (1991), frustrated with the inchoate ways that ‘postmodernity’ has been used, suggests abandoning the term altogether. Instead, he recommends further investigation of the issues raised under the rubric of postmodernism. To clarify those issues, we must examine the assumptions and implications of postmodernism.

Postmodernism and the Sophistic Tradition

Postmodernism sometimes gets touted as a dramatic rupture with the past, a radical discontinuity with Enlightenment traditions of rational discourse. In this sense, it is tempting to label the postmodern movement a paradigm shift in argumentative rationality. That label, however, would generate more confusion than clarity. As will be seen later, postmodernism opposes the regulative functions that lie at the heart of paradigms. More generally, postmodernists could contend that the traditional ideals of debate were valid but have outlived their usefulness. If this were so, then proponents of postmodernism would be advocating a form of historicism that presumes an ability to judge (on heretofore unidentified grounds) the compatibility of theories with events (Crook, 1990). That is, postmodernists would presume to know the moment in history when an idea no longer serves a function. Such a claim runs counter to the postmodern enthusiasm for indeterminacy. On the other hand, if traditional argumentative rationale is wrong or undesirable in principle, then postmodernism’s opposition rests on the very sort of universal standards or truths that postmodernism decries.

The pre-Socratic *logos* that emerges in Gorgias could qualify as a progen-

itor of postmodernism. Gorgias has been identified as a source for many postmodern sentiments. The skepticism Gorgias exhibited toward absolute knowledge "has resurfaced in the theories of postmodernists and poststructuralists such as Lyotard and Foucault" (Sandmann, 1993, p. 100). Certainly it would be anachronistic to label Gorgias a proto-postmodernist. Gorgias does, however, problematize the unity and consistency of language and thought, disrupting logical order. Furthermore, Lyotard and Foucault focus on the same issue that Gorgias contemplated: the centrality of temporally bound language instead of timeless epistemological systems in legitimizing knowledge claims (Sandmann, 1993). In this respect, the Gorgian style and concept of rhetoric raise questions about the need and desirability for consistency—the very questions postmodernism poses. The Gorgian conception of rhetoric presages postmodernist views of argumentation in "privileging no position . . . and staking out no ground of knowledge" (Sandmann, 1993, p. 99). In his self-labeled postmodern "pastiche," Vitanza (1994, p. 183) adopts the Gorgian view that language does not serve as an orderly guide or model for a linearly progressing history of rhetoric. Some scholars have recommended a return to sophistic rhetoric, identifying Gorgias as the proper philosophical springboard for rhetorical theory. With his opposition to Plato's idealism, Gorgias becomes especially attractive to postmodernists as a rhetorician whose practice did not require or posit universal, logically grounded axioms (Enos, 1976; Gronbeck, 1972; Sutton, 1994). Postmodernism rehabilitates the sophistic bases of rhetoric by revivifying the sophistic endorsements of many possible truths. The problem is how to bridge the gap between an utter denial of truth (probably the basis for Gorgias's refusal to claim that he taught *arete*) and a dogmatic assertion that a single truth should reign. Placed in the context of debate, the question arises as to how a middle ground might be constructed between (1) an overly stringent and perhaps irrelevant paradigm that stifles creativity, and (2) the abandonment of fundamental logical and ethical standards that would render decision making chaotic and unjustifiable. Postmodern theorists still grapple with that task.

A somewhat different reading of the history of rhetoric is possible, however. This interpretation finds greater divergence between inconsistency and the sophistic tradition. Kramer and Lang's historical justification for inconsistent argumentation invokes Gorgias and Protagoras, who supposedly endorsed the simultaneous advocacy of mutually exclusive positions. Upon closer examination, however, sophistic argumentation reveals much deeper epistemological roots. The sophists often did deny the existence of a single, universal *logos* that would ground any one position as immutably true. The ability to prove one position as easily as one can prove its opposite does not entail an epistemological commitment to both positions as equally true.

The series of challenges Gorgias levels in *On Non-Being* proceed logically: Nothing exists; if it did, it could not be known; if it could be known it could not be communicated; if it could be communicated it could not be understood. These contentions never commit Gorgias to upholding mutually exclusive positions simultaneously. Instead of the tactic of inconsistency, where the argument proceeds a $\bullet \sim a$, Gorgias sets up a gauntlet of internally consistent disjunctions and causal chains. Gorgias uses the mutability of truth to deny the existence of a "normative natural order," (Kramer & Lang, 1993,

p. 59), not to sanction internal contradiction at will. Far from endorsing inconsistency, Gorgias highlights the risk of relying on "delusive and inconsistent" opinion (Wheelwright, 1966, p. 250). Instead of contradicting himself, Gorgias poses dialectical oppositions in order to ascertain truth, although these truths themselves are mutable and contingent (Enos, 1976). The contradictory character of Gorgian philosophy, far from praising inconsistency, uses inconsistent conclusions as an indictment of Eleatic reasoning and the prevailing epistemology that propounded universal truth (Versényi, 1963). Schiappa (1995) reads Gorgias as a progenitor of rational argumentation, an interpretation supported by Gorgias's identification of his own technique as a form of reasoning (p. 316).

Inconsistency must be distinguished from relativism, especially since confusing them easily renders the sophists and thereby the early history of rhetoric as maneuvering for personal advantage and little else. Even the arch-relativists Protagoras and Gorgias present their cases logically and consistently. When Protagoras declares that "man [sic] is the measure of all things," he does not discard all epistemological yardsticks and endorse inconsistency. Instead, Protagoras points to the dependence of ethical, perceptual, and epistemological statements on the specific human conditions to which they refer (Versényi, 1963). For example, the attribute 'cold' is meaningful only in relation to the person experiencing it and to the parameters people set for measuring temperature. At no point does Protagoras claim that the same sensation qualifies as simultaneously hot and cold to the same person.

Gorgias also separates relativism from inconsistency, arguing quite consistently for relativism. The Gorgias antinomies show how any moral proposition is as easy to prove true as its opposite. The variability of virtue denies its universality and immutability. These antinomies reveal that an equally strong case can be made for opposing sides on an issue. Gorgias demonstrates what any debater recognizes: every argument has an equally strong counterargument. Such a position employs logically consistent arguments on either side to reveal the antinomy as unresolvable. The only inconsistency is the opposing sides of the antinomy.

Besides having problematic historical roots, postmodernism and the attendant emphasis on inconsistency pose difficulties when forwarded as a paradigm. To examine the role of postmodernism as a paradigm requires clarification of how paradigms operate and their role in debate.

Postmodernism and Paradigms

Exactly what paradigms are and how they function remain controversial. Margaret Masterman (1970) identifies twenty-one senses in which Kuhn employs the term. This ambiguity led Kuhn to reduce the "more fundamental" meaning of 'paradigm' to exemplars and models shared as patterns of approaching problems indigenous to a field (1977b, p. 463). Two senses of 'paradigm' bear special relevance to debate: its status as a regulative standard and as a label for the underlying assumptions of argumentation (cf. Masterman, 1970).

A paradigm as an exemplar or model structures debate by providing an activity or process that serves as a controlling metaphor (Berube, 1994). For

a paradigm in this sense to guide debate, participants must recognize similarities between debate practice and the exemplar, much as a scientist tackles new problems by recognizing their analogues in the exemplary problems shared by members of the field (Kuhn, 1977b). Paradigms help define what counts as legitimate and illegitimate argumentation, and they delimit the field of argumentation by offering grounds for decision-making criteria. This regulative role links debate paradigms with paradigms employed in other academic contexts such as science.

Postmodernism in debate might seem to be a *fait accompli*. After all, the multiplicity of paradigms could testify to the localization of epistemological claims, thereby enacting the postmodern admonition to “give up the luxury of absolute Truths, choosing instead to put to work local and provisional truths” (Marshall, 1992, p. 3). This point invites two responses. First, a plurality of paradigms does not require or prove the presence of postmodernism. The conditionality and multiplicity of truths can be and is accomplished without any need for abandoning a progressive ideal of *better* argumentative practice. Ideas and practices can improve without positing a singular epitome of perfection. Second, the presence of multiple paradigms and their tendency to proliferate testifies to the problematic epistemological status of research in debate. An invitation to construct ever more “new and improved” paradigms—what debaters might label “paradigm prolifer”—undermines claims for debate to acquire scholarly legitimacy. Let us consider each of these points. This point receives further development in the final section of this essay.

To place postmodernism in the context of paradigms, it is useful to turn to figures such as Rorty and Lyotard, considered “the original sources of postmodern philosophy” in America (Lemert, 1991, p. 181). Lyotard “remains today perhaps the most influential theorist of postmodernity” (Boyne & Rattansi, 1990, p. 13). In most of its incarnations, postmodernism designates the distrust of comprehensive rational foundations of knowledge. The rejection of foundationalism often targets scientific reasoning, which has epitomized ultimate explanations in the absence of authoritarian pronouncements (the ultimatums of autocrats) or divine law. The fact that science bears the brunt of postmodern wrath will loom large when we reconsider paradigms.

The advocacy of a postmodern paradigm strikes a discordant note because postmodernism and paradigms as employed in academic debate are incompatible. Postmodernism as an epistemological orientation rejects transhistorical criteria for what counts as truth, knowledge, or meaning. Put succinctly, a postmodern attitude fosters “incredulity toward metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv). Surprisingly, Kramer and Lang defend postmodernism while offering it as “an overarching argumentative strategy” (1993, p. 58). Any attempt to construct an argumentative framework that has universal validity no longer qualifies as postmodern, but falls squarely within the conventionally modernist mission of modeling debate after science (hypothesis testing) or legislative deliberation (rational policy making), or storytelling (narrativity).

A less relativistic version of postmodernism would not undercut the employment of paradigms per se. Instead, it would pose paradigms provisionally, advocating the reflexive recognition that one is operating within the constraints of a culturally and historically specific “paradigm of thought” (Marshall, 1992, p. 3). In short, any theory operates “within a certain para-

digim" of background assumptions (Marshall, 1992, p. 187). This version of postmodernism offers cumbersome theoretical baggage that acknowledges what current debate practice already takes into account. Does any debater or critic claim that a paradigm offers a path to ultimate truth? Probably not. Explaining hypothesis-testing, Zarefsky characterizes the knowledge available through debate as probable truth which, like scientific knowledge, is not "eternal and unchanging" (1992, p. 255). Instead, paradigms lend structure to argumentation by providing models for the argumentative process. Depending on the paradigm employed, different criteria for assent will receive more or less emphasis.

The theoretical basis for postmodernism as a paradigm appears shaky. Ihab Hassan says on behalf of postmodernists: "*In absence of a cardinal principle or paradigm, we turn to play, interplay, dialogue, polylogue, allegory, self-reflection—in short, to irony*" (1987b, p. 170, emphasis added; cf. Hassan, 1987a, p. 20). A postmodern approach develops as a response to the absence or deconstruction of paradigms. Postmodernists seek to expose paradigms as untrustworthy and unnecessary normative structures, not rebuild these same epistemological edifices.

Hypothesis Testing and Postmodernism

Might hypothesis testing open the door for postmodernism to enter debate? For several reasons, it is problematic to claim that hypothesis-testing permits inconsistent argumentation and thus sanctions a postmodernist approach to debate (Kramer & Lang, 1993, p. 59). First, the theoretical basis for the hypothesis-testing paradigm is scientific reasoning, the evaluation of alternative hypotheses as explanations. The word 'alternative' plays a key role here. When multiple mutually exclusive or incompatible counterplans are advocated under a hypothesis testing paradigm, they are run conditionally—hence the phrase "hypothetical counterplans" (Kramer & Lang, 1993, p. 59). In scientific practice, incompatible hypotheses are entertained, but as alternatives. Logically, the proposal of alternative hypotheses proceeds by disjunction rather than conjunction. Where A and B are inconsistent hypotheses, the choice of hypotheses employs disjunctive syllogism unless the inconsistency can be resolved by a higher-order theory that integrates both hypotheses. The arguments about the nature of light furnish an excellent example. The particle and wave theories of light were deemed irreconcilable unless (1) light had properties that could be explained by some third theory, (2) the particle and wave theories could be subsumed under a theory that rendered them consistent, and/or (3) light took on the properties of a particle or a wave depending on specific circumstances. A postmodern approach would recommend settling for paradox while denying the desirability or perhaps possibility of searching for further explanations that would resolve the conundrum.

A second curiosity attendant to linking postmodernism with hypothesis testing is that postmodernism is incompatible with any theory that uses science as an authority or model for reasoning. An editor of *Science* magazine lamented that postmodernism "is decidedly antisience" (Nicholson, 1993, p. 143). Lyotard, whose *The Postmodern Condition* "enjoys a certain defin-

itive status in discussion[s] of postmodernism" (Callinicos, 1990, p. 3), targets science as the focus of his attack on authoritative explanations. Far from endorsing science as a model for reasoning, as hypothesis-testing does, Lyotard (1984) emphasizes the limits of science and implies its elitist reliance on expertise reduces opportunities to form social bonds. Exactly how postmodernism might be incorporated into a hypothesis-testing approach remains puzzling.

In fact, postmodernism seems to undercut the basis of scientifically grounded judgments. Zarefsky (1992) points to the virtues of using science as a model for debate: science "yields knowledge that is reliable and consistent" (p. 253). Consistency is the primary target of Kramer and Lang's (1993) attack on overly restrictive argumentative practices. Reliability suffers from similar limitations, since postmodernists would claim that the standards of reliability are generated by those who hold the power to define acceptable levels of deviation from a norm. Furthermore, if creativity is a virtue, then uniqueness and not replicability of results should be encouraged.

Far from hypothesis-testing allowing a postmodern perspective, postmodernism provides the critical resources for undermining the epistemological assumptions at the foundation of scientific rationality. A central lesson of postmodernism has been its denial that science should serve as the controlling model for all rational activity. Considerable doubt has been cast on whether a single scientific method exists at all (Feyerabend, 1993), and even if it did it has not established an enviable track record for improving the quality of life. Academic debate rounds furnish ample testimony to this point, with their plethora of arguments about the evils of technology. Scientifically authorized decisions do not necessarily operate in the best interest of non-scientists. The reification of scientific method as a regulative ideal for rationality has been criticized roundly by those who harbor suspicions that technocratic imperatives do not improve the quality of life (Horkheimer, 1974).¹ Recent sociological examinations of science have questioned whether science's epistemological dominance in modern Western culture has been due to methodological strictures. Researchers such as Latour (1988) point to individual and institutional conflicts and alliances, not methodological unity, as the root of science's hegemony over Western thought. The focus on historically specific and material sites of scientific power accord with Foucault's (1980) observation that proclamations of methodological rigor and postures of impartiality stake claims to power more than they index science's privileged access to truth. As a whole, these criticisms of scientific rationality are compatible with postmodern tendencies of thought but inimical to any paradigm dependent on scientific rationality.

Purported Advantages of Postmodernism

Zavarzadeh and Morton (1991) contend that cogent arguments against postmodernism can arise only from considering its "consequences and ef-

¹ These criticisms do not distinguish between science and technology, since the theorists cited treat technocracy as an outgrowth of the hegemony of science over public policy. Whether such domination of science is a fact in public affairs is another question.

fects" (p. 121). In other words, what sorts of attitudes and practices would result from a postmodern perspective? The emphasis on effects is prominent because, the authors contend, any logically based arguments (e.g., accusations of logical inconsistency or fallacious reasoning) would attempt to subject postmodernism to the strictures of the very logical framework it rejects. Taking this point a step further, "the very deployment of logical argumentation against (post)modernism would unfortunately legitimate a rather reactionary notion of truth" because it would presume universal criteria for rationality that restrict innovation and invest only one disputant with The Truth (Zavarzadeh & Morton, 1991, p. 121). Zarefsky (1992) makes a similar point in the context of debate. He explains that the choice among paradigms is difficult because none can be attacked except on the terms it recognizes as legitimate. Zarefsky suggests examining how a paradigm might undermine its own purposes. Let us consider how postmodernism might do just that.

Social Emancipation

The varieties of postmodernism share a political focus (Boyne & Rattansi, 1990, p. 23) in their goal to recover discourse that has been marginalized or silenced by hegemonic ideals of argumentation. In debate rounds, the advantages associated with postmodern critiques, for example, usually stem from giving "voice to the powerless and marginalized" (Lake & Haynie, 1993, p. 17). In fact, postmodernism may be characterized as "a shifting and differential cultural site of social struggles" rather than a "settled or stable" set of doctrines (Zavarzadeh & Morton, 1991, p. 106). If postmodernism *per se* has a project, it is to disrupt the argumentative ideals that constricted discourse to conform with Enlightenment models of rationality. In the context of public or academic debate, a postmodern project would involve a revision of the canon of "classic" argumentative exchanges to include discussions that fall outside the mainstream political parties and campaign issues. The question arises, however, as to why postmodernists would recommend such revisions.

The inability to find an answer in postmodernism has made some feminist theorists uncomfortable with a postmodern emancipatory project. Since postmodernism devalues consensus as a central objective, it falls short in explaining why any underrepresented group such as women might merit recognition as a *group* (Lovibond, 1990). By placing highest priority on continuance of discourse, postmodernism cannot identify or endorse material signs of progress toward reducing oppression. Quite the contrary: by aiming for continuance instead of closure, disagreement and contentiousness (not concessions or acts of liberation) have intrinsic merit (Lovibond, 1990). Postmodernism leaves the deeper questions about the roots of oppression and marginalization unanswered. What resources does postmodernism offer for expanding the ranges of options open for underrepresented populations (Lovibond, 1990, p. 172)? To expand available opportunities requires more far-reaching social actions than individual deviations from norms or distrust of totalizing narratives. Postmodernism in any of its incarnations has failed to give methods for dealing with uncertainty, the distrust of timeless truths, and the decay of universal values. Postmodernism provides insufficient inventive

resources to provide solutions for the narrow epistemological habits it criticizes.

If postmodernism can earn its keep as a productive or advantageous mode of thought, it must offer some methods for resolving disputes and reaching decisions. Postmodernism offers few recommendations for improving the means to effect social change or render judgment. This lack of a critical edge has led Rorty (1991a) to criticize postmodernists such as Foucault for revealing the methods of social manipulation without providing routes to escape them. Similarly, James L. Marsh finds in postmodernism "no criteria to indicate whether or why we should move forward, no groups identified whose position in the social structure presents a possibility or probability of transcendence, no identifiable crisis points within the system" (1992a, p. 94). Postmodernism ultimately endorses "a stance of pessimism and quietism" on social issues since "it can offer no positive, constructive ethics or politics" (Marsh, 1992a, p. 94; 1992b, p. 208).

It is inappropriate to discuss postmodernism as "an overarching argumentative strategy" (Kramer & Lang, 1993, p. 58) since postmodernism is directed against the very notion of such all-encompassing discursive strategies. Lyotard's opposition to Habermas's advocacy of universal consensus lies in the denial of "metaprescriptions regulating the totality of statements circulating in the social collectivity" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 65). Lyotard enjoins his readers to "wage a war on totality" (1984, p. 82), a call that does not sound conducive to paradigm-building, or to sweeping reforms that would target the institutional bases for repressive social practices.

Postmodernism, unlike critical theories such as feminism or socialism, provides few if any resources to counter institutionalized forms of oppression that might be pervasive but exist in several forms and on several levels of society. The distrust of grand explanations generates a suspicion of universals but leaves untouched "the complexities of the social, political and economic formations that exist as part of a heterogeneous but interdependent global configuration" (Boyne & Rattansi, 1990, p. 19). In other words, repressive forces can be manifested in ways other than the unitary, overarching, grand narratives that Lyotard and other postmodernists target. For example, how could postmodernism offer a means of redressing economic elitism, racism, or sexism in competitive debate? Phrased in the language of policy debate, what potential for solvency does postmodernism offer? Because of its elusive character, postmodernism cannot be instituted in any case because it is not a body of doctrine but a critical attitude.

Two tendencies of postmodernism render it ineffective in accomplishing the very political tasks that supposedly lie at its core: "an inability to specify possible mechanisms of change, and an inability to state why change is better than no change" (Crook, 1990, p. 59). The first difficulty has been encountered in the inability to instigate or even take account of a need for broad-based social reform. The second point, advocacy of change, raises another set of issues.

It is difficult to envision how postmodernism could justify any social reforms, even the most localized changes in debate practices. If the quality of discussion hinges on the multiplicity of viewpoints articulated, then expressions of intolerance such as sexism, racism and homophobia presumably

deserve encouragement because they add to the plurality of perspectives (Crook, 1990). Debate conducted in a postmodern manner would not and could not justify ruling out offensive *ad hominem* argumentative practices. Even if such intolerance were not sanctioned by a postmodern mindset, it should be unacceptable. Although proponents of postmodernism might agree, the decision to restrict available argumentative tactics runs counter to the cardinal postmodern value of creativity. Paradoxically, the most intolerant and repressive social agendas become legitimate even if not explicitly endorsed under the postmodern rubric of creative expression.

Enhanced Creativity

One argument Kramer and Lang (1993) suggest to support a postmodern paradigm cites the value of creativity. Allowing inconsistency would open the floodgates for debaters' creative juices to flow freely, thus irrigating parched argumentative ground. Does relaxation of strictures encourage creativity? The lesson from paradigms in science shows the opposite to be the case. In an often overlooked early essay, Kuhn (1977, pp. 225–239) remarks on what he calls the “essential tension” in science. Paradoxically, the tradition-bound nature of science with its preservation of “normal science” obedient to paradigmatic strictures has been conducive to innovation. Only when the boundaries of normal science are clearly articulated in a paradigm do practitioners begin to question the paradigm's articulation. Who are the innovators? Kuhn explains that “the productive scientist must be a traditionalist who enjoys playing intricate games by pre-established rules in order to be a successful innovator who discovers new rules and new pieces with which to play them” (1977, p. 237). Applying this principle to debate, the innovators can redefine the game only if the game already has set boundaries and rules. The test of creativity lies in the ability to improvise within guidelines, not rewrite the guidelines to accommodate novelty.

We now confront the question: “Why artificially limit the size of the playing field” (Kramer & Lang, 1994, p. 67) by prohibiting inconsistency? First, no clear distinction has been made between “artificial” versus “natural” limits, and no reason has been given to prefer one over the other. Second, preserving the game metaphor, all games have rules or they cease to become games. The reason for regulative paradigms that limit argumentative options is both logical and pragmatic. If all argumentative options are allowed, then an infinite regress occurs because no standards emerge from the paradigm to evaluate the quality of the arguments (Panetta & Herbeck, 1993, p. 26). The regress turns vicious in debate or in any deliberative forum because decisions must be made and justified.

Pragmatically, the procedural regulations in debate rounds mitigate against unconstrained invention. In competitive debate these constraints are designed to achieve definite closure if not definitive solutions. Strict time limits and zero-sum decisions mimic how deliberation often must proceed because policies must be formulated and issues decided under the pressure of the moment. Contrary to this realistic albeit imperfect scenario, “resolution and closure are not goals of the postmodern moment” (Marshall, 1992, p. 13). Panetta and Herbeck (1993) observe that the intellectual grounds of post-

modernism are so alien to those of policy debate that it is not possible to reconcile these incommensurable perspectives. Since postmodernism condemns two-valued thinking, it cannot in principle qualify as a clear-cut alternative to other orientations. The more that advocates of postmodernism portray it as a dramatic rupture with other modes of thought, the more they exemplify the very all-or-nothing mentality they condemn as elitist and exclusivistic. This inconsistency is not simply logical, but instead constitutes a failure to reconcile proclaimed goals with actual argumentative practice.

The Employment of Postmodernism in Academic Debate

It is difficult to justify how postmodernism could be argued in debate rounds without undermining its own decision criteria. Before delving into the mechanics of postmodernism in academic debate, one key point merits attention. Postmodernism cannot and should not be advocated as a voting issue. The "thoroughly hierarchical constructs" of winning and losing "are fundamentally incompatible with the post-modern agenda" (Lake & Haynie, 1993, p. 19). To qualify as a "voter," postmodernism would have to function as a decision rule. This role could be fulfilled in two ways, both of which reduce postmodernism to incoherence or pernicious relativism. If a team deserves to lose because it fails to foster creativity by allowing paralogical argumentation (e.g., inconsistency, non sequitur, etc.), then creativity and freedom are being postulated as values sufficient to merit voting for the team that best promotes them. That being the case, postmodernism is reducible to traditional liberal values. More problematically, postmodernism appeals to creativity and related values as sufficient criteria for rendering decisions. Bernstein (1991) observes that postmodernists such as Lyotard and Rorty resort to "a universal 'letting be' where difference is allowed to flourish" (p. 222), a laissez-faire epistemology just as sweeping and potentially just as constraining as conventional rationality. In other words, this version of postmodernism relies on normative criteria accepted as inherently desirable—the very sort of grand standards postmodernism is designed to combat.

Postmodern argumentation could assume a more critical edge that might not commit its proponents to indefensible universal decision criteria. This version of postmodernism would recommend at least suspending judgment (i.e., not voting for the opposing side) because the opposition fails to account for the "other" in its argumentation. Employed by the negative, postmodernism could underlie either a resolutionally-focused or case-focused critique. The basic argument would be for rejection of the resolution or the affirmative plan because its very language or assumptions exclude social forces or people that, despite their marginalization, should count as significant stakeholders in decision making. Of course, if the critique is argued as an independent voting issue, then it falls prey to the reification of values just discussed. On the other hand, a postmodern critique could carry an impact similar to a studies counterplan that urges a negative ballot in lieu of sufficient information to vote affirmative. Failure to account for marginalized social groups leads to decisions that are myopic at best and often paternalistic or destructive toward those who are excluded. The postmodern position would not presume that the voices of the marginalized are *ipso facto* liberating or ben-

eficial. Instead, a much more modest claim emerges: irrespective of its actual impact, hitherto suppressed perspectives deserve inclusion.

The claim that postmodern perspectives would liberate decision making, however, relies on the premise that inclusiveness in rendering decisions is desirable. If, for example, it is argued that formulation of foreign policy toward Mexico should include more Mexican or Hispanic participation, the advantage would be more participatory decision making. The advocate of postmodernism, however, has no grounds for claiming that participation would render better decisions, especially since a postmodern foreign policy would deny any single, overarching value that would guide policymaking. Present American foreign policy toward Mexico, Latin America in general, or toward the world for that matter, already qualifies as thoroughly postmodern. Without the guiding influence of containing communism, foreign policy decisions are made on an ad hoc basis. Inconsistent policies, contrary to the supposed virtues of postmodernism, have caused international embarrassment and public disgrace to the United States in Haiti, Somalia, and countless other locales. Inconsistency per se is no more a virtue than rigidity.

For a postmodern view to generate advantages, it must assert *what counts* as an advantage. Postmodern critiques do little to replace current patterns of thinking, although they question and criticize those patterns relentlessly. Exactly what sorts of reforms would postmodernism promulgate? Postmodernism has not generated coherent strategies—even provisional ones—for coping with change and uncertainty. McGee (1990) states the point unequivocally: "I think it is time to stop whining about the so-called 'post-modern condition' and to develop realistic strategies to cope with it as a fact of human life, perhaps in the present, certainly in the not-too-distant twenty-first century" (p. 278). The problem is not so much that postmodern perspectives have arisen, but that they have failed to offer productive alternatives to excessive rigidity of thought.

Postmodern Critiques

Many critiques in debate rounds have been launched under the banner of postmodernism. Run as a critique, postmodernism typically emerges as follows: The opposing team (not merely their case but their entire mode of argumentation) exemplifies an undesirable way of thinking. From a postmodern perspective, such undesirable thought patterns typically involve marginalization of oppressed populations, cultural imperialism, masculinist agendas, anthropocentrism, all-or-nothing mentalities, etc. By voting for the affirmative, the critic would endorse these undesirable thought patterns. Critiques typically ask the critic to make a personal decision against the affirmative, since any implications of setting a precedent for making policy run counter to the postmodern rejection of linear reasoning and trend-setting. I quote from one such brief: "All the critique asks is that you make a personal, conditional moral choice to inform your action."² The critic, therefore, operates as a lone voice whose vote represents nothing more than a personal

² All the quotes from debate brief are from materials generated at the 1995 National Debate Institute at the University of Vermont.

commitment against the affirmative and for the liberating benefits attendant to postmodernism.

Now is not the time to enter into a detailed discussion of critiques, a subject beyond the scope of this essay. Some remarks on postmodern critiques, however, will illustrate the problematic infusion of postmodern thinking into competitive debate. To begin, postmodernism cannot be advocated as a voting issue. Arguing postmodernism as a basis for decision-making presumes a hierarchy of values, a method that the advocate of postmodernism forwards as a decision rule. Many postmodern critiques, for example, rely on a simply punishment paradigm: punish the team that advocates the undesirable way of thinking by voting against them. Notice, however, that a notion of desirability lurks behind the postmodern critique. The critique must presume a standard for decision making that transcends the individual round; after all, the postmodern arguments almost always are found on shells that are employed virtually unchanged round after round. The use of such standardized argumentative tactics shows a commitment to the critique as a constant. The more a standard critique is used, the less credible is its link to postmodernism, which advocates creative, individual argumentation—exactly the values that prefabricated arguments do not foster.

An advocate of postmodernism might respond that the critique invokes and applies values only locally. A negative brief on the subject states: "... we ask you [the critic] to generate morals within the context of this debate, not enforce them universally." The localization of advantages resembles the argument Zavarzadeh and Morton (1991) make in defending postmodernism against the charge of political quietism. They distinguish ludic postmodernism, which seeks local, small-scale political change, from resistance postmodernism, which "works not simply for an ideological intervention and a change of social practices, but for the transformation of the economic structures that bring about those local conditions to begin with" (Zavarzadeh & Morton, 1991, p. 128). The specification of economic structures reflects a lingering Marxist strain that presumes economic factors lie at the core of social problems. Such a Marxist remnant is troublesome given the postmodern denial of economics (or any other single principle) as the basis of social relationships.

Either variety of postmodernism, ludic or resistance, spells trouble for the team employing it in a debate round. Ludic postmodernism promises nothing in the realm of solvency because its only mode of addressing problems is piecemeal. Furthermore, even if solvency could be obtained, it would be inefficient because it would consist of a conglomeration of decentralized, overlapping, and probably poorly funded efforts. These difficulties, of course, should not discredit small-scale problem solving, but they cast serious doubt on whether any definite, positive social impact can be expected from adopting a postmodern perspective. Since implementation of any postmodern program would be a purely individual matter (given the postmodern praise of individuality and creativity), the results would be unpredictable and compliance could be mandated only at the expense of sabotaging the premise of epistemological liberation that drives postmodern thought.

Resistance postmodernism, in turn, is problematic because postmodernism undermines the very sorts of concepts that would foster the formation of

social movements. Individuals coalesce into a movement for the sake of something greater than themselves. Social action is instigated for the sake of a cause that transcends the individual social agent. Although universal ideals have been invoked to justify horrendous injustices, postmodernism fails to offer any means for catalyzing social change via concerted action.

Hassan (1987a) suggests a way to sidestep postmodern relativism while retaining the useful spirit of distrusting purportedly universal and ahistorical theories. He proposes a "critical pluralism" that would encourage interpretive diversity, highlight the cultural and temporal limits to theorizing, and "attempt to contain" postmodernism's relativistic tendencies (1987a, p.23). Hassan confesses, however, that no means of establishing consensus emerge within a postmodern framework. The critical pluralism Hassan proposes, which resembles Habermas's ideal speech situation, offers no checks on the exertion of power or on degeneration into relativism that fails to resolve—even provisionally—any issues (Hassan, 1987a, p. 32). We are left, then, with a renunciation of power and domination but without an affirmation of shared methods, traditions, or other bases of community for resolving conflicts, redressing grievances, or rendering decisions. Postmodernism purchases individual freedom at the cost of communal foundations for action.

Postmodernism is particularly unsuitable as a critique because it falls prey to a false dichotomy, treating postmodern perspectives as clear alternatives to inflexible thought patterns. Debaters seem to run postmodern critiques and cases as if they offered clear alternatives: either modernism or postmodernism, but not both. The choice is not whether to opt for postmodernism because, as McGee observes, the postmodern era is upon us. The unresolved challenge is to go beyond the postmodern distrust of epistemological rigidity. Goodnight (1995), although he might disagree with the reading of Gorgias offered in this essay, traces the epistemological roots of postmodernism to the ancient Greek skeptics. Goodnight (1995) labels postmodernism "a skepticism sweeping into and out of the academy for well over two decades" (p. 269). Postmodernism easily degenerates into a pernicious skepticism by revealing overly restrictive thought patterns without *redressing* them.

A postmodern critique supposedly offers improved ways of thinking, yet it presents no means of translating thought into action. Without some kinds of ideals beyond the celebration of individual creativity, postmodernism deconstructs social practices without offering anything in their place (Fairlamb, 1994). Exactly what would a critic be voting *for* if deciding in favor of a postmodern critique?

Repercussions of Postmodernism

The allowance of inconsistency, while apparently a positive step, actually removes a basis for decision making without proposing any productive alternative to replace it. A crucial weakness of postmodernism arises here: the tendency to place itself in opposition to supposedly dominant practices and intellectual currents without going beyond them. A postmodern outlook works well as a means of inquiry, questioning the grounds and usefulness of discursive and political institutions. It falls short, however, in offering correctives that redress the harms of these institutions (Kuspit, 1990).

Far from presenting means to escape repressive social practices, postmodernism could fuel the very repression it criticizes. By negating the role of public deliberation, postmodernism replaces rationality with will power as the means for deciding controversy. Explaining the postmodern aspects of *Jurassic Park*, Goodnight (1995) observes that "it is will, not reason, that confirms genius in the postmodern moment" (p. 275). In debate rounds, therefore, intellectual acumen would not reap rewards under a postmodern view. Instead, the ability to impose one's will on another, be that through persuasion or physical force, would merit praise. Lest this conclusion seem far-fetched, recall that within a postmodern framework there are no *a priori* preferences for persuasion over coercion. From a postmodern perspective, there is no "unique value to 'rational' as opposed to other forms of justification" such as force (Harris & Rowland, 1993, p. 31). Postmodern heroes, for example, are not necessarily technical experts, but they do know how to manipulate the resources at hand (Goodnight, 1995). Is this the primary lesson debaters should learn from the activity?

Unbridled argumentative inclusiveness also invites abuses. Some viewpoints, such as fascism, have been marginalized in order to *encourage* participation. I submit, with Hirst (1993), that certain practices such as blatant intolerance, racism, sexism, and homophobia have no justification and deserve no place in argumentation. Such means of "arguing" should be marginalized. Without some criteria for distinguishing justifiable versus unjustifiable marginalization, blatantly abusive behavior in debate rounds could be tolerated or even promoted in the name of free expression. Not all "otherness" qualifies as virtue (Bernstein, 1991). Designation as an oppressed group does not constitute a *prima facie* case for status as righteous but unfairly persecuted.

The fundamental problem in applying postmodernism to debate is that postmodernism functions best as a critical tool, not as an evaluative method or a set of adjudicative standards. It is designed to expose and question unquestioned assumptions. The supposedly radical break postmodernism makes with previous epistemological practice makes it unsuitable for use in an activity such as academic debate, which is thoroughly modernist in its practices, especially if viewed as advocacy of truth or as discovering which side does the better arguing. Debate in general qualifies as a "traditional (modernist) mode" (Zavarzadeh & Morton, 1991, p. 120) of contesting ideas, to be contrasted with the postmodern accommodation of differences and tolerance of unresolved (thereby unresolvable?) disputes. The avowal of inconsistency, therefore, reverberates beyond academic debate. Once inconsistency is institutionalized, it dissolves the desirability and perhaps even the possibility of converging viewpoints and stable social relationships. Instead, perspectives multiplied while remaining incommensurable. The postmodern praise of contradiction "underlines the insurmountable differences that make for a lack of social and personal cohesion" (Kuspit, 1990, p. 59). In an activity that could use greater emphasis on cooperation, why should debate theory undermine unity by underlining heterology? Debaters, judges, and coaches must ask themselves whether rejecting the basis of communal values serves an educational purpose. It seems far more productive to balance practices that foster community with a respect for diversity. Why further isolate

members of the debate community from one another by enshrining inconsistency?

Some strains of postmodernism seem to advocate disengagement, an almost neo-positivistic isolation from all epistemological assumptions. Consider the example of art. In privileging the interpreter's response instead of the work's presentation of an ultimate solution, postmodern art would maximize interpretive latitude. For this expansion of interpretive possibilities to occur, "the audience must free itself of all inhibitions and presumptions of meaning" (Klinkowitz, 1988, p. 5). So far, such shedding of intellectual baggage seems to link postmodernism with the *tabula rasa* view that debate judges often adopt to prevent them from undue intervention (Harris & Rowland, 1993, p. 31). The argument continues, however. The more radically postmodernism supposedly breaks with tradition, the more audiences must sever their ties to traditions that shape attributions of meaning. To maximize the inventive capacity of debaters, postmodernism would need to gravitate toward the rejection of *all* argumentative strictures. Certainly Kramer and Lang want to prevent this slippery slope, otherwise each debate round would have to reconstruct argumentation from its very foundations. On the other hand, it is difficult to see how postmodernism could impose limits on contestable territory. To maximize the opportunity for creativity, everything should be up for debate.

The thoroughly modernist activity of debate is structured according to a division of ground informed by Aristotelian logic. Most prominently, the distinction between affirmative and negative sides presumes incompatible positions as the basis for forced choice that leads to a decision. Debate actually emphasizes argumentative incompatibility in order to facilitate choice. The intolerance of inconsistency is logically and procedurally necessary in a zero-sum game atmosphere where decisions must be rendered for one side only. If inconsistency were encouraged as a component of a postmodern perspective, then counterplans need not be competitive. Furthermore, the more inconsistency is tolerated, the *less* reason there would be to vote for postmodernism as an alternative to the rational methods employed by the opposing team. As inconsistency becomes more acceptable, it undermines the grounds for claiming that any argument could qualify as a voting issue. Ultimately, if inconsistency is desirable, then any particular debate could and should end in a tie.

Beyond Embracing Paradox and Paradigms

The purpose of this essay extends beyond exploring the explanatory limits of specific paradigms that have been proposed as models for debate. I aim to question the necessity of paradigms, especially if the intellectual climate indeed qualifies as postmodern. Postmodernism introduces a much-needed note of skepticism regarding the need for and usefulness of paradigms.

The proliferation of paradigms in debate should serve as a warning sign. Exactly what role do paradigms play? Perhaps more important, what role should they play? Debate theorists should be wary of force-fitting debates into paradigms without examining the analogies between debate as it is or should be practiced and the paradigmatic model (cf. Snider, 1992, p. 321).

No specific paradigm, be it hypothesis testing, narrativity, policymaking (systems analysis), game theory, stock issues, or postmodernism, offers a decision-making calculus with guidelines sufficient to resolve individual controversies. The fundamental problem is that no paradigm does or can set priorities among the decision-making criteria. Using cost-benefit analysis as an example, systems analysis can tell us that benefits should exceed costs. No form of systems analysis, however, can legitimize a hierarchy among values that would enable critics to evaluate the relative merits of preserving individual liberties versus preventing debilitating disease. When it comes to rendering decisions in debate rounds, all paradigms eventually collapse into prioritizing values, a task that no paradigm makes any pretense to address and a problem that no paradigm successfully resolves.

The inordinate attention devoted to paradigms may contribute to clarifying the nature of debate, but it also marks debate theory as epistemologically immature. Toulmin (1972) notes that the realms of inquiry that make the most obvious and rapid progress toward resolving central issues in their fields also expend the least effort in examining their own epistemological underpinnings. This lack of self-examination, far from an avoidance of reflection, demonstrates confidence in the unity of the field and a shared commitment among members of that field to address core problems. Toulmin's praise of these "compact disciplines" (1972, p. 379) relies on the linkage of progress with outer-directedness, a concern for solving problems facing the field rather than the field undergoing a continuous identity crisis. Compact disciplines look out the window instead of looking in the mirror.

Undue focus on paradigms encourages an epistemological narcissism that restricts access to substantive issues that could be enlightened through debate. It is no coincidence that debate rounds where paradigms form the argumentative focus attenuate the case-centered arguments in order to dispute procedural issues and—sometimes—try to create rules for deciding the round. In social argumentation, prolonged periods of controversy about the nature of argumentative activity remain rare. Indeed, Kuhn (1970) points out that the vast majority of scientific activity occurs during the extended periods of "normal science," where paradigms are not foregrounded, not questioned, not the focus of attention. Paradigms come into question only when major anomalies arise that cannot be explained adequately in the prevailing paradigm.

Given the conditions under which paradigms do become objects of focus, why discuss paradigms in debate? As far as I can tell, paradigms are discussed primarily because there is little or no consensus about exactly what function debate serves or what status it has, especially in its competitive incarnation. As Toulmin and Kuhn suggest, concentrating on paradigms means either that the field is absorbed in a crisis that it cannot resolve under present conditions, or that the field is not sufficiently compact to devote attention to what it should do. Theoretical discussions about debate are dominated by ontological concerns: what debate is, how it should be. The predominance of these ontological discussions reveals what Toulmin would call the non-disciplinary status of debate. One specific indicator of this situation is "the absence of a suitable professional organization" (Toulmin, 1972, p. 380) that would unify members of the debate community by articulating their shared

concerns and methods for approaching these problems. Instead, the proliferation of organizations dealing with academic debate and the continued posing of ontological questions ("Who are we?") inhibits the establishment of common goals the debate community might pursue.

A proper application of postmodernism to debate would dissolve the notion of paradigms. If the search for paradigms is abandoned or curtailed, what lessons do postmodernism hold for debate? Postmodernism offers debate primarily negations: opposition to unitary evaluative standards and rejection of scientifically based means of adjudication. From a postmodern perspective, any attempt to place facts "within some larger, more ambitious explanatory paradigm—is ignoring the weight of *de facto* evidence" that shows the historical failure of grand explanatory schemes (Norris, 1990, p. 7). If a postmodern perspective could be applied to debate, it would not take the form of a paradigm or other normative structure. Postmodernism might simply counsel us to recognize our interpretations as limited, thus enabling political engagement without hegemonic claims to know an ultimate Truth (Marshall, 1992). Such self-imposed restrictions on the scope of claims would introduce a welcome tone of modesty into competitive debate rounds.

The choice is not whether or not to "adopt" a postmodern perspective, but to decide how postmodern conditions could affect the assumptions and conduct of debate. Postmodernists along the lines of Baudrillard discard the qualification that contradictions should not be obvious and embrace paradox. In contrast to Rorty, Baudrillard recommends: "Distrust campaigns of solidarity at every level," because all sense of unity and permanence is designed to disguise the erosion of referentiality (1983, p. 110n). This strain of postmodernism abandons criteria for valid argumentation, instead judging argumentative quality on the aesthetic merits of the rhetorical strategy irrespective of normative standards (Norris, 1990). The *raison d'être* of debate would become the satisfaction of individual taste, since aesthetics no longer would have any transcendent grounding in human values or fidelity to anything beyond the representation itself. Such a change harbors serious implications. Argumentative acumen is reduced to knowing how to best one's opponents, so the hope that argumentation can enlighten arguers and audiences vanishes because enlightenment is illusory.

The political consequences of postmodern debate do not sound enticing, either. The promise of argumentation serving as an intellectually and socially liberating force—an agenda adopted by Habermas, for example—relies on rationally grounded critique that exposes distortion and internal contradiction. Without an understanding of what would constitute argumentative progress or communicative value, postmodernism fails to offer grounds or explanations of change. In essence, postmodernism sounds the call for political involvement while leaving a blank slate when called upon to produce a vision of productive social engagement for intellectuals (McGowan, 1991).

These considerations leave at least two choices for those involved with academic debate. First, debaters and critics can adopt a postmodern mindset but at the cost of undermining procedural foundations and social relevance. Harris and Rowland (1993) note that academic debate already exhibits some postmodern tendencies, such as in the detachment from analogues and applications beyond the rounds themselves. The independence of debates from

"real world" concerns such as face validity of arguments bring debate ever closer to Baudrillard's simulacra, where external reference dissolves. In a word, academic debate becomes more postmodern the more it grows irrelevant to the world beyond the round.

On the other hand, the practice of debate might be understood as anathetical to postmodern tendencies. In policy debate, how could argumentation have any significance once the relationship between intellectuals and social change becomes ill-defined and idiosyncratic? In value debate, how could values be weighed when the standards for evaluating values have evaporated? In any form of debate, how could decisions be rendered when the very criteria for making those decisions no longer stand?

Recognizing the influence of postmodernism still can allow for some explanation of how agreement could be reached and how decisions could be justified without appealing to universal, immutable standards. This task is akin to the project Rorty has undertaken since writing *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. At the core of postmodern thought lies a concern for relationships instead of facts or representations of reality (Klinkowitz, 1988, p. 8). Such a shift in orientation drives Rorty (1979) to reject the epistemological goal of accurately representing nature. Instead, he envisions epistemology as a continuing conversation in which claims are posited, tested, and revised consensually. Worthy as the goal may be, Rorty and others have yet to explore in detail the means for engineering consent and achieving community. Rorty (1991, p. 174) criticizes Lyotard and Foucault for engaging in penetrating social critiques without articulating the basis for the "we" of human solidarity. Debate theorists can take up the same challenge: to elucidate the symbolic and other means for solidarity that permit rational decision-making.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE 1984 AND 1988 DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORMS: CASE STUDIES IN CONSUBSTANTIATION

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Although they served only limited functions in their origin, party platforms have a long tradition in American politics. The forerunner of the party platform was "an address to the people," simple orations in praise of candidates and parties (Pomper, 1963). It was not until the 1840 convention when the Democratic-Republicans, soon to be called Democrats, adopted basic party principles and labeled them a "platform" (David, Goldman, & Bain, 1960).

Since the 1840 Democratic platform was drafted, many changes have occurred in the complexity, design, and functions of these party statements. Due to the rapid dissemination of information to the public during the middle and later 1900's, controversial issues received much more immediate attention; political parties had to address many people and their concerns. For example, in 1840, the Democratic platform was only 400 words in length, but by 1968 the Democratic platform had grown to be 20,000 words long; by 1984 the Democratic platform was about twice that size. Despite over 150 years of evolution in platform construction and convention modification, platforms have always served as important rhetorical opportunities for political parties to shape a vision of their political community. This vision results from, as Smith (1992) suggests, an "ideological compromise" among a party's factions, coming together to create a unified message. These documents, as a result, make important ideological distinctions between parties for voters.

Arguably, party platforms are considered successful if they persuade interest groups and individual voters to support their candidates. Organized groups have to be motivated to give financial assistance and develop large voting blocks; likewise, individual voters, including both the electoral college and the mainstream public, need to be promised various benefits in return for support. Appealing to a diverse populous is a monumental task requiring many ideas and plans, and understanding one specific way that partial identification is achieved, particularly through a platform from a political party known for its wide-stretched arms, may shed insight into how strategic that party must be. The 1984 and 1988 Democratic Party platforms serve as two documents with a similar goal yet radically different means. Analyzing the way each set out and executed that goal serves as the gist of this essay, suggesting the need for further inspection into platform communication.

Platform Analysis: Approach and Focus

Many scholars in the recent past (Cooke, 1956; Johnson and Porter, 1973; Pomper, 1963 and 1970; Sorauf, 1968) make note of platforms but all have one major shortcoming: they do not focus on the rhetorical nature of these

SPEAKER AND GAVEL, Vol. 33, Nos. 1-4 (1996), 42-58.

party documents. Most currently, Smith (1989 & 1992) conducted such analyses. Utilizing a narrative perspective he, first, compared the two 1984 major party platforms and found that even though both party platforms had similar structure and addressed similar issues, their stories were radically different, an obvious conclusion. Second, he compared the 1988 Democratic and Republican platforms emphasizing ideological compromise within the respective parties, thus finding unique stories for each party, a similar study as his first. What may be interesting to consider beyond just what the story is, is how the story is told and regarded by the public, a somewhat risky yet unexplored endeavor, but one that is encouraged by Miller and Stiff (1993) who promote research in deceptive communication, specifically that which deals with a more interactive paradigm "rather than focusing on just, let us say, a liar or liee" (p. 104).

Further focusing and justifying this study is the fact that the 1988 Democratic convention marked a turning point in that party's construction of a very short 3,000-word platform. Prior to that year, the Democrats produced lengthy platforms, such as the 1984 45,000-word party promise. As Smith (1992) points out, the 1988 Democrats issued a platform "that rivaled their initial 'address' in that the document was a mere seven pages long" (p. 532). In 1992, the Democrats produced an approximately 5,000-word platform, highlighting a trend toward brevity.

Before continuing, a concern should be addressed. One may argue that post-McGovern-Fraiser Commission platforms, those after the 1968 reformations, have been diminished due to the fact that the party presidential candidate is already chosen prior to the final draft of the platform, thus allowing it to be tailored to that candidate. However, such a narrow-sighted argument neglects to account for what Smith says about contemporary—and for that matter older—platforms:

Few political entities hold regional hearings in order to solicit their constituents' opinions and mold those perspectives into a single expression of resolve that is eventually ratified by the membership. Platforms, then, reflect the ideological diversity of the institutions that produce them as they facilitate the syntheses of interests necessary to sustain their creators and, in turn, the American political system (p. 532).

No matter *when* the candidate is chosen, the platform must still bring together factions lest the drafters offend too many groups—an elementary political faux pas.

With that out of the way, an approach to analyze the anomalous 1988 Democratic platform should be one that focuses on what brevity, or better yet *ambiguity*, in language does for a pluralistic institution. As Pomper (1963) write, "The degree of ambiguity [in platforms] depends on party strategy" (p. 69). Allowing for multiple interpretations may be crucial for a party to achieve unity, the primary function of a platform. Ambiguity, which allows for multiple interpretations of a text, may also include vague language which, usually, precludes a specific reading altogether. Vague, or unclear, language perhaps can lead to ambiguity depending on how the receiver comes to understand the message or is told how to understand the language. A sender may, for example, tell different receivers how to interpret a vague message differently, thus, giving way to multiple readings. These varying interpreta-

tions could, perhaps, allow for the public to identify with a party. Identification, by way of Burke's (1950) definition, is a way of matching "A" to "B" which are not identical but have interest together. A body is identified by its properties, and in the case of rhetoric, Burke tells us that "A" may persuade "B" only insofar as "A" can talk "B's" language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying "A's" ways with "B's" ways (p. 55). Simply put, political identification results when a politician's opinions and needs adapt to a public's opinions and needs. This is a process of matching a rhetor's cause with the audience's interests.

Borrowing from Cheney (1983), identification is "compensatory to division" (p. 145). That is, the major requisites for identification to occur include "segregation and congregation" (p. 155). A party and voters may be brought together, in part, by a platform. Yet, identification through ambiguity cannot be found in Cheney's classificatory system of identification: common ground, an overt link between sender and receiver; antithesis, uniting against a common enemy; or the transcendent "we." A case could perhaps be made for one or all of these approaches to be found in any particular platform, but the concern of this study focuses on how *ambiguity*, or lack of it, affects identification between a party and its constituencies, thus giving way to a sense of consubstantiality.

Burke says that once "A" is identified with "B," they become consubstantial. In other words, if identification is successful, a sense of substantive togetherness is achieved, such as a viable political community. An integrated or consubstantial body, with varying degrees of separation, forms to complete tasks in pursuit of common goals.

This notion of substance, as Durham (1980) suggests, is more than the relation between a symbol and thing or idea, a referential function some scholars might promote. Durham agrees that Burke's concept of substance is much more and should deal with ambiguity. He states:

Substantiation is thus a process of relating one order of experience to a higher or lower order. Ambiguity is the spark of contact between higher and lower. . . . Ambiguity fires the mind and illuminates the world. It is the quality of language that makes the verb mightier than the surd (p. 360).

The union of substantive togetherness, created by effective identification is beyond just a matter of reading an agreement on common symbols; it is a teleological outcome that ultimately creates a relationship or structure. Burke himself argues that substantiation ". . . occurs at the point of contact between the finite and the infinite" (Durham, 1980, p. 355). Identification through ambiguity may help us to understand how a diverse political institution may obtain a sense of consubstantiality with a diverse populous.

Such an analysis, as Edleman (1964) would suggest, must operate on at least two levels simultaneously. A critic must examine how political actions get, or at least promise, groups things they want and what these actions mean to those groups and how such actions are placated or aroused by them. Of course, identifying with multiple audiences is perhaps the greatest problem in political communication (Hart 1983), but that is just what a platform does on two levels. Analyzing interest group promises in platforms may be done by asking questions dealing with statements of recognition about these

groups in a platform, the language choices of those statements, and the impact of such statements on the interests. An interest that reflects a party's line of thought and has the ability to give substantial financial and/or voting support would, in all likelihood, be mentioned, but promises made to interests can be somewhat problematic for a party in that other voters and groups may be turned away if they felt alienated. Politicians may use ambiguity in platform communication as a strategic device to appeal to traditional party interests without alienating others. As Bennett (1975) says, "[Politicians must] locate the most universally satisfying definitions for potentially alienating events" (p. 23). This creates what Eisenberg (1984) calls a "unified diversity" that allows groups to maintain identity under a unified party umbrella. Clearly, then, the positive or negative response of a particular interest becomes important to consider.

Platforms must, in addition to interest appeal, attract mainstream voters. Broader national issues that concern the diverse populous and not just a single interest become important to consider. For example, if a platform explicitly states that its party officials support a five percent income tax increase, many voters would probably be turned away by such a blunt remark. However, a platform plank that says its party officials believe in a tax system that is fair to all leaves much unsaid. What is a fair tax system? Will the party increase or decrease taxes? Such statements in a platform keep a party's officials and candidates from binding themselves with specific, unpopular, and perhaps variable opinions.

With a perspective for analysis established, one final note must be revealed about identification and consubstantiality. Some may approach these terms as a "means to end" relationship. That is not always the case. Identification itself may be a means of an end, wholly or partially, as Nichols would agree (Brummett, 1993, p. 8). So it will be interesting to find out the impact of platforms, particularly the 1984 and 1988 Democratic platforms.

The 1984 and 1988 Democratic Party Platforms: Background and Analysis

The Jeffersonian party was the forbearer of the Democratic Party, and it became the party of the common person, including "the frontier settler, small farmer, unskilled laborer, craftsman, enlisted soldier, immigrant, debtor, poor, and disenfranchised" (Goldman, 1986, p. 58). Because of such a collection Kayden and Mahe (1985) easily argue that Democrats have a long history of trouble creating unity—especially in the last half of this century. Diverse constituencies usually spark a great deal of dissent in large organizations and parties like the Democrats (Rutland, 1979). As Kutner (1987) states, "The party of all the people, which made room for factory workers, urban bosses, uptown reformers, Southern racists, socialist intellectuals, rural populists, diverse ethnic minorities, and more, was bitterly divided over ideology, class, cultural style, and party rules" (p. 3).

The 1984 Democratic platform serves as a model contemporary party platform that sought unity. It contained five sections: the Preamble; Economic Growth (Chapter One), Prosperity and Jobs (Chapter Two); Justice, Dignity, and Opportunity (Chapter Three); and Peace, Security and Freedom (Chapter Four). Each chapter has multiple subsections that explain policies, ridicule

Republican rule, and present Democratic alternatives (Democratic Party Platform, 1984). The chair of the platform committee, New York Representative Geraldine Ferraro, appealed to platform drafters to keep specific plans of action in the document at a minimum due to "complaints from state and local elected officials that they needed a platform that they could actually run on" (p. 5). However, as Treadwell (1984) stated, "The new Democratic platform is the longest ever submitted, reflecting a growing trend to accommodate as many desires of particular interest groups as possible . . ." (p. 5).

Soon after Mondale lost, party leaders met in the Virgin Islands to discuss the state of their party. Party leaders in the Islands sought to discuss how to gain control of their masses and steer away from divided interests. This was a goal for the next major presidential election and the next party platform.

The official 1988 Democratic platform, "The Restoration of Competence and the Revival of Hope," was an attempt to articulate a new vision of the party's principles. This platform is not like other contemporary party documents; it contains just over 3,000 words—15 times smaller than the document created four years earlier, and the document does not have the outlined structure found in previous platforms. Of course, one must remember that quantity does not necessarily make quality. In the case of the 1988 Democratic platform, quality of content seemed to be a major issue.

Democratic platform committee chairperson, former Michigan Governor James Blanchard, made clear his goal for the new image of the party in their official document. He said, "I want to come up with something that is readable, hard-hitting and substantive, and not a laundry list of demands by this or that association or group" (Love, 1988, p. 12).

The 1988 Democratic Party platform drew much attention from the media and political leaders—even more so than past platforms because of its ambiguous nature. Editorials had mixed reviews of the 1988 Democratic platform. The *Chicago Tribune* stated: "All political platforms come sugar-coated, but this year, the Democrats have turned their platform, the shortest in half a century, into baklava—layers of puff pastry . . ." (Beck, 1988, p. 17). The *New York Times* had another view: "The 1988 Democratic platform represents a tactical triumph for Governor Dukakis. Rarely has a nominee left a platform fight less burdened with potentially embarrassing baggage" ("Painless Platform," p. 24). Political leaders also had mixed reviews. Jesse Jackson, one the major critics of the platform, voiced his concerns about the document by stating, "I do not think that bland is beautiful. People ought to be specific, ought to make promises, ought to make commitments, ought to gain a mandate" (Margolis, 1988, June 27, p. 5). However, other political leaders found this platform to be rather remarkable in the way it prompted unity in the party; there were only two floors fights (both defeated) after the platform was drafted. Bill Holayter, the chief political operative of the machinists union, witnessed the drafting of the platform and said, "I think the last time a platform committee was so peaceful was 1944" (p. 1).

Although an analysis of these documents could fill many pages, space forces brevity here. Therefore, two topic areas, one concerning an interest group, blacks, and the other concerning the public at large, taxes, may serve as examples to conduct this analysis. The black interest group will be used

during the two platform analyses because this interest is historically large and powerful, illustrating a faction with stability.

Even more interesting was the newly forming relationship between blacks and the Democratic Party. Mondale, in 1984, followed party tradition by storing up the " 'Roosevelt coalition,' consisting . . . of labor, blacks, Jews, ethics and the poor . . . " (Pomper, 1985, p. 44). Unfortunately, Mondale ran up against the new mood of the disenchanted black bloc; even though the Republican Party was not a viable choice for blacks, their enthusiasm for Mondale and the Democrats was highly questionable. As McWilliams (Pomper) notes, "Jesse Jackson campaigned in 1984 on the premise that blacks should approach the Democrats as outsiders, a pressure group that cannot be 'taken for granted' " (p. 169). For Dukakis in 1988, the situation remained unstable. While Dukakis responded with reconciliation and "healing from the wounds of Reaganism," Jackson's divisive tactics from 1984 continued (Blumenthal, p. 200). Jackson's rhetoric echoed black America, focusing on what social scientist William Wilson in his book, *The Declining Significance of Race*, described as the blacks' "cycle of pain" (p. 200).

Aside from the current woeful relationship between blacks and Democrats was the broader negative public rage Democrats had concerning economics, chiefly taxes. In 1984, a *Los Angeles Times* poll identified taxes as one of the top eight issues that concerned all Americans; five of the top eight were economic issues (Pomper, 1985, p. 96). The deficit and inflation skyrocketed; voters, many of them reluctantly agreeing with higher taxes, blamed Democrats (Pomper, 1985, p. 81). Four years later, Lee Atwater, when asked by author William Carrick, identified the top issues in the election: "taxes and national defense" (Runkel, 1989, p. 113). As Blumenthal notes, Reagan's "military buildup and regressive tax cuts had fostered an unprecedented deficit" and with looming public fear of higher taxes, politicians had to tread water or, as George Bush found out later, drown in statement like "no new taxes" (p. 336). Examining this timely issue of taxes may reflect the manner in which the platforms deal with broader mainstream topics.

One major issue that was heavily debated by Jackson was the elimination of the runoff primary used in nine southern states and Oklahoma. Jackson held that runoff primaries "hurt black office seekers in the South by forcing them to get an absolute majority of the popular vote even when they placed first in the initial election" (Shogan and Mayer, 1984, p. 3). The debate over this issue turned into a floor fight and initiated much division at the 1984 Democratic Convention before the platform was ratified by delegates. Jackson and his supporters pushed for the Party's support for a ban on runoff primaries, but they met with opposition. White Southern Democrats, including Mondale supporter and general campaign chairperson Bert Lance, said that such a clause "would be very costly to their region [the South]" ("In Shaping," 1984, p. 11). As such, the proposal was rejected by delegates, 1,500 to 1,253, but the final clause agreed upon was still somewhat specific in a 1,000-word plus section of voting rights. Even though Jackson's wish to explicitly promote a runoff ban was defeated, the platform did promise studies into the primaries. This section on voting rights concluded by giving specifics on how the Justice Department would be implemented to investigate questionable voting practices, how the Democratic Party would imple-

ment a "massive, nationwide campaign to increase regulation and voting participation," and other such items (p. 22).

Black interests were also concerned with various civil rights issues such as affirmative action and quotas. The majority opinion wanted the platform to state that even though the party rejected quotas it "strongly reaffirms its long-standing commitment to the eradication of discrimination . . . though the use of affirmative action goals and time-tables" ("In Shaping," 1984, p. 11). Minority interests, led by blacks, wanted the platform to say that the party endorsed quotas as a whole but "opposes quotas which are inconsistent with the principles of our country" (p. 11). After a great deal of debate and emotional outbursts, the two camps agreed on a clause that read, "The Party reaffirms its long-standing commitment to the eradication of discrimination in all aspects of American life through the use of affirmative action, goals, timetables, and other verifiable measurements . . ." (p. 20). That change, according to many, was little more than a poor play on words, for as Walter Fauntroy, a delegate from Washington, D.C., said, the phrase "'other verifiable measures . . . means quotas without using the word" (p. 10).

The Platform went on to promise a Democratic administration would "reverse the decision of the United States Supreme Court in the Grove City College case in order to prohibit any financial assistance to an educational institution that discriminated against minorities" (p. 20). In addition, the platform specified that "Democratic Administration will return the Commission on civil rights to an independent status and increase its funding" (p. 20). There is also a section on sickle-cell anemia, a promise that many blacks wanted. The platform promises "that a Democratic Administration will restore the National Sickle-Cell Anemia Control act . . ." (p. 23).

Despite some very specific promises to blacks, total unity among the party and the black interest was questionable due to the heated debate over the hotly contested issues of runoff primaries and quotas. After the election, many Democrats voiced concern over racial topics—those specifically dealing with blacks. Mississippi Democratic Chairperson Steven Patterson said in regard to the low number of white Southern voter support, "The Democratic Party has become the party of the needy, their platform one of redividing the pie" (Peterson and Russakoff, 1984, November 12, p. 16). He added that Democrats failed to attract the black vote because the party did not offer them exactly what they wanted. Alabama Governor George C. Wallace said in regard to the low white Democratic support that the party must "start paying more attention to the average citizen and to begin to reflect the thinking of those who work for a living, pay the taxes, fight the wars and hold this country together" (p. 16). Black issues in the platform failed to contribute to Democratic unity, and the platform did not allow for effective identification to occur between blacks and the party. The platform attempted to combine the party's needs and black's needs—a necessity for identification. However, the specificity in the language only turned away party officials and blacks by attempting to reflect inconsistent needs such as the different opinions on quotas. Quantification, such as voter response to individual issues in relation to specific passages in the platform as read by the voters or told to them by their leaders or the media, could be desirable at this point, but aside from the fact that such microscopic statistical research is unavailable,

unmanageable, or inane one must strongly consider that when party officials such as Patterson, Wallace, and Jackson, voice opposition, their faithful do also. Of course, general statistical research showing black party affiliation and voter turnout polls would illustrate little.

The 1988 Democratic platform is not as specific as the 1984 document concerning interest representation. Important interest groups are scattered throughout the 1988 document, scarcely given mention of specific policies and/or action with respect to the factions' wishes that are given. Paragraph nine of the platform reads: "We believe that we honor our multi cultural heritage by assuring equal access to government services, employment, housing, business enterprise, and education to every citizen regardless of race, sex, national origin, religion, age, handicapping condition or sexual orientation . . ." (p. 3). The platform goes on to explain that the present administration's party is "increasingly monolithic both racially and culturally" (p. 3). These statements allowed Democrats to portray themselves as a party that held true to its constituencies; however, the platform gave no specific promises to any of the groups mentioned. The platform merely states that the party "believes" that all Americans deserve equal treatment—a statement that few politicians could argue against. Despite a high degree of ambiguity, the platform does reveal a few points to its major constituencies. For example, blacks are mentioned in the 1988 platform: "Our [the public] machinery for civil rights enforcement . . . should be rebuilt and vigorously utilized . . . the voting rights of all minorities should be protected, the recent surge in hate violence and negative stereotyping combated . . . and the lingering effects of past discrimination eliminated by affirmative action, including goals, timetables, and procurement set-asides" (p. 3 & 4). These passages are very ambiguous when compared to the issues covered in the 1984 Democratic platform. Whereas the 1984 sections on blacks say that the party "will return the commission on civil rights to an independent status and increase funding," the 1988 platform says that public machinery to combat discrimination "should be rebuilt." No specific names or promises are given to blacks in the 1988 version; the document simply says that something "should" be done rather than saying we "will" do it.

These general comments in reference to black groups prevented division from taking center stage replacing it with a unified body. Again, as with the 1984 analysis, we find strong qualitative evidence supporting this claim. For example, Richard Hatcher, former mayor of Gary, Indiana and a Jackson supporter, said, "This meeting [platform adoption by delegates] has some of us absolutely surprised. Ninety-five percent of all the issues that came up . . . have been resolved in a peaceful and unified way" (Dillin, 1988, June 27, p. 3). Other Democrats, outside of the black interest group, were also pleased about platform's success and the unity between blacks and the party. Florida Senator Bob Graham said that blacks and Democrats were truly united and committed themselves to win together in November (Rosenbaum, 1988, June 27).

Republicans did not have much to attack in the platform or in Dukakis' campaign because the language in the platform functioned in three very important ways. The language was ambiguous enough to, one, pledge support to interests, and, two, ensure their support. Furthermore, the language

was ambiguous enough to prevent the opposition from going through a laundry list of promises and pointing out that the Democratic Party is a body of divided parts. Arguably, the 1988 platform helped in allowing for successful identification to occur between the party and its interests to take front stage while pushing division backstage as the many testimonials make clear. Of course, as noted earlier, interest groups are not all that must identify with a platform. It is necessary to consider broader national issues in both platforms in order to examine how the language of each document created a vision of a political community that appealed to mainstream voters. One very important traditional mainstream issue that the 1984 Democratic platform addressed is taxes. Traditionally, the Democrats have been labeled the party of more taxes (Rutland, 1979), and their 1984 platform supports this tradition. The platform states:

By broadening the tax base, simplifying the tax code, lowering rates, and eliminating unnecessary, unfair, and unproductive deductions and tax expenditures, we can raise the revenues we need and promote growth without increasing the burden on average taxpayers . . . We will cap the effect of the Reagan tax cuts for wealthy Americans and enhanced the progressiveness of our personal income tax code, limiting the benefits of the third year for the Reagan tax cuts to the level of those with incomes of less than \$60,000 . . . Under the Reagan Administration, the rate of taxation on corporations has been so substantially reduced that they are not contributing their fair share to federal revenues. We believe there should be a 15% minimum corporate tax (p. 6).

The 1984 Democratic platform is very specific as to how a Democratic Administration would deal with the issue of taxes. During his campaign Mondale stressed the need for higher taxes and supported a tax-increase proposal—a move that Reagan countered with attacks throughout the Presidential race (Roberts, 1984). The specificity of language in the platform gave little room for any maneuverability in Mondale's rhetoric concerning taxes.

The specific plans of action in the platform did not set well with many. Roberts (1984), an economist from Georgetown University, wrote that although Democrats illustrated the essence of leadership by proposing something different than Republicans, such statements were probably not what mainstream American voters want to hear. Telling voters that they will pay more taxes if a certain party or individual is given power may result in political suicide. As *TIME* commented, "Mondale has to preach sacrifice, a sermon difficult to deliver from any political pulpit" (Andersen, Bolte, and Yang, 1984, p. 21). Peter Peterson, former Secretary of Commerce and one of the founding members of the Bipartisan Budget Coalition, said that such specific proposals from Democrats turned away needed support because of specificity concerning higher taxes (Berstein, 1984). Detailed language, as found in the 1984 Democratic platform, limits political mobility, and change, according to Burke (1950), Eisenberg (1984), and Edelman (1977), is crucial for politicians in potentially dividing situations.

In contrast, the 1988 Democratic Platform covered a wide range of issues, both domestic and foreign, but this party document has much less depth than the 1984 version. A traditional and long-standing issue to the public in 1988, just as in 1984, was taxes. The 1988 platform mentions taxes but once in the whole document, and it reads, "Investing in America and reducing

the deficit requires that the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share . . ." (p. 2). This passage was successful in that Dukakis was not as restrained on the issue as Mondale had been in 1984; the 1988 nominee did not have to tell mainstream voters what they apparently did not want to hear in 1984 and arguably so in 1988. Dukakis was allowed to avoid the subject of higher taxes and stress his tax laws enforcement program to control the deficit (Beck, 1988, p. 17). This move was crucial to gain mainstream support. Janice Thurmond, an Athens, Georgia lawyer and Jackson supporter, stated that the move to remain ambiguous concerning taxes would only help Dukakis:

We need him [Dukakis] to give an answer that is believable where he is not accused of being a 'tax-and-spend' Democrat. It is irresponsible for us not to give him an answer so that he can look any Republican straight in the eye and say, "I am not a tax-and-spend Democrat, I am a raise-revenue Democrat" (p. 20).

As Rachelle Horowitz, political director of the American Federation of Teachers, said, "One of the reasons I support Michael Dukakis is that as a governor and as a President he is the kind of man who will not tax and spend, tax and spend in the way the Democrats have been accused of doing before" (Shogan, 1988, June 12, p. 20). Dukakis never backed himself into a corner by saying that he would or would not raise taxes; whereas, the 1984 platform's and Mondale's forced frankness did not set well with the public. Dukakis avoided specifics about reducing the deficit other than his idea of aggressive tax enforcement (Barrett, Beckwith, and Riley, 1988, p. 26). This latitude of meaning seemed one effective manner in bringing back many mainstream voters Democrats lost in 1984. Lawrence Katz, a criminal lawyer from Prescott, Arizona and a Democrat who was disillusioned with the party for over 20 years, said, "The Democratic Party is getting its act together. It's better organized" (Schmich, 1988, p. 1). As far as broad-based appeal, *TIME* (Barrett, 1988) observed that middle American voters—especially the Reagan Democrats—were not as divided as they were in 1984, and they began to identify with the Democrats once again. One factor that seemed to help this new found unity was the platform in that it was non-restrictive and more inclusive because of its ambiguity.

So, the 1988 Democratic Platform seemed to achieve a stronger sense of identification as compared to the 1984 version. But what of this "matching" of causes and interests? How did unambiguous and ambiguous language impact the party and its supporters during the respective elections? Those questions strike at the heart of analyzing the "offspring of the parents," as Burke would put it, or the sense of being substantially one.

Consubstantiality: Democratic Political Communities

What is of importance to platform analysis is how a platform functions to create a political community formed by public and party unity. The 1984 platform merely reflected a torn and disunited party without a clear national vision for two major reasons. First, interest groups got their wish lists, such as the case with black interests, and the Democrats were perceived as a party trapped by interests. When the election was over and Mondale had lost, Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt commented on the Democratic Party's

image. He said that the party was in an identity crisis composed of a loose confederation of interests unable to fully unite under a guiding set of issues and principles—an image forged and reinforced in their platform. Second, the party platform failed to allow mainstream Americans to identify with the party concerning broader national issues. The language of the platform was too specific, such as the plank on taxes, and it did not provide for identification to occur between the party's principles and mainstream voters creating obstacles to consubstantiality. Mondale advisor Richard Moe commented after the 1984 loss: "The party is in transition because the country is in transition. The Republicans understand this better and they're setting the national political agenda" (Dickenson, 1984, p. 6). Traditional issue representation has been a long-standing mark of the Democratic Party (Goldman, 1986), but this tradition, as reflected in their platform, restrained the party from adapting to a changing nation and contributed to loss of support. Language specificity can result in the breakdown of a pluralistic political community.

On the other hand, the 1988 Democratic platform functioned successfully for Democrats, and it helped the party and public achieve a sense of consubstantiality by producing a viable political community in three very important ways. First, the platform was ambiguous enough so that the candidates remained relatively in agreement concerning potentially divisive issues. Since the platform did not get specific in any areas, Dukakis was shielded from potentially alienating situations such as the issue of taxes. Jackson, the runner-up in the nomination, was pleased with the platform because his views were not explicitly rejected in the document. After all, it is more pleasing to have nothing said about an unpopular position one may hold instead of a blunt rejection. For example, Dukakis and Jackson had different views on taxes. Dukakis built much of his campaign, both before and after his nomination, on how he could help reduce the deficit by enforcing existing tax laws more strictly. Michael Barns, a former Maryland Representative and platform monitor for Dukakis, said, "We [Dukakis campaign] won't accept a tax increase [in the platform]" (Shogan, 1988, June 12, p. 1). Jackson, on the other hand, called for tax increases to help solve the deficit problem. His platform monitor, Norton, said in reference to a tax hike proposal in the platform, "We can't drop that" (p. 1). However, after the vague statements were revealed in the final platform as illustrated earlier, both candidates were pleased by the language (Apple, 1988 and "Democratic Bargaining," 1988, June 14). In fact, Norton said shortly after the ratification of the platform that the Jackson camp could accept such platform ambiguity rather than an outright rejection of their stand ("Democratic Bargaining" June 14). The language of the platform, in essence, allowed the two candidates to keep their individual national visions within the context of the larger party vision revealed in the platform.

Second, the 1988 Democratic platform appealed to traditional interests in a way that reflected a unified whole that was acceptable to both interests and the party. Bill Galston, a Democratic consultant, said, "In 1984, Mondale had every group with a letter head hammering on him. Those groups have been much less vociferous this year; 1984 was a chastening experience for all concerned" (Broder, 1988, July 17, p. 1). Once platform drafters put out the word that no interest groups would be given wish lists in the party

platform, self-restraint by interests kept the document from sagging under the weight of over-specific planks. Alvin Fromm, director of the Democratic Leadership Council, said, "The government party [of the Democrats] has defeated the constituencies party . . . [Democrats] whose priority is the governance of the general society [defeated those] whose priority was a specific cause" (Margolis, 1988, July 20, p. 12). Ambiguous language functioned successfully in creating a national vision by not giving in to the many specific lists and plans of actions of the interests but still recognizing their existence. Democrats definitely needed to keep and enhance traditional support, but they also needed to attract middle American voters in order to win the presidency. The party could no longer ignore the growing homogenization of the country.

Third, the 1988 Democratic platform appealed to mainstream voters, and it gave them a platform they could identify with and accept. For example, the platform did not contain a list of expensive proposals concerning national issues—a move that proved successful. Republicans traditionally accuse Democrats of being big spenders (Ware, 1985), so platform drafters avoided any direct proposals to increase budgets—something the 1984 drafters did not do. The platform contextualized important party issues without being too specific thus allowing political maneuverability for Dukakis during the presidential bid. This move also allowed protection from Republican attacks about the costs of proposals. Chuck Robb, former Virginia governor, praised the platform drafters and Dukakis for focusing on mainstream issues. Robb added that Dukakis "came closer to running a general-election approach during the election than any Democrat in a long time" (Broder, 1988, July 17, p. 26). The language in the platform was instrumental in the way it shaped a Democratic political reality that did not portray the party as a stagnant and unchanging body of old principles. It was ambiguous enough so as not to reflect a party of unwanted and outdated policies giving way for Dukakis to shape his own policies during the campaign that could please mainstream voters within the context of a broader, less defined party vision.

So why did the Democrats fail in 1988? I dare not argue an either/or fallacy, that ambiguity will equal success and its corollary. One must keep in mind the variance of identification among groups. Two people may "come together" on a few issues, many issues, or no issues. Ambiguity may foster a stronger union given the right circumstances, but differentiation may still be stronger than any integration. Was consubstantiality reached? That is difficult to argue as one must recall what "Nichols says about 'means and ends.' A platform is never the end of an election; it is part of a process, part of the means to an end. Still, it is also part of an end of a separate process, the rallying of constituencies.

What is interesting about this analysis, and hopefully future studies, is how the relationship between voting audiences and a party, through one particular channel of communication (a platform), highlights shifts in party ideology or at least the presentation of that ideology. Studies may illuminate the nature of the evolving nature of constituencies and their representation in platform communication. Further, as this study suggests by examining these two platforms, scholars might focus on how audience targeting, appealing to a diverse populace at once with one simple message, is arguably more

effective than audience segmentation, appealing to a diverse populace at once with one message composed of separate appeals for each group, in given situations.

These political communities of 1984 and 1988, though both on the losing side, were formed differently—especially in regard to their respective platforms. Perhaps most interesting is how the 1988 platform utilized what some may perceive as an unethical rhetorical tactic, ambiguity, and this strategy is worthy of a few final comments.

Conclusion

Huntington (1985) says that a political party may choose one or a combination of two strategies in an election. He states: "It [a party] can attempt to reach out to broaden its appeal . . . Or it can attempt to reach down, to intensify its appeal to groups normally identified with it . . ." (p. 69). Democratic platform drafters in 1984 attempted to reach down and pay less attention to broader appeals, while the drafters in 1988 took a broader approach. The political community created by the 1984 platform was restricted by the direct and unambiguous language in that document. This analysis found that the 1984 platform drafters did have a choice of linguistic features early in their project, but once they gave in to certain groups, their choices were limited as they were forced to give specific promises and detailed plans which resulted in a breakdown of their political community. As Ben Wattenberg, chairman of the coalition for a Democratic Majority, said, the more the 1984 drafting committee and Mondale gave into Gary Hart, Jesse Jackson and others, the more the party was hurt ("The Differences" 1984, p. 74).

The language of the 1988 Democratic platform was manipulated to affect the public's decision-making, and public interests were held in some degree of check. Democratic platform drafters in 1988 achieved this by keeping their platform general and ambiguous. Former Michigan Governor Blanchard, said:

We've talked with women's groups, with civil rights groups, with the AFL-CIO, and with teachers' unions, and they all say, 'Your idea of a statement of principles is great, but if you get specific, then we're going to have to have our lists. We're not going to let somebody else come in there and get their's and we don't get ours' (Love, 1988, p. 12).

This strategy to keep the 1988 platform as unspecific as possible while still representing important Democratic interests and major issues was a risk, but the public seemed to accept the platform drafters' strategy more easily in 1988 than they did in 1984 probably because the loss in 1984 was such a blow to all involved. As Jim Bloom, a top Democrat and aide to former San Francisco mayor Dianne Feinstein, said in regard to the mellow mood among interests and the party, "Amazing! What is this, the Republican Party? I haven't seen this kind of harmony since Mitch Miller" (Dillin, 1988, p. 3). An aide to defeated Democratic Presidential candidate Albert Gore, Jr., Roy Neel, said that the platform's approval was very calm, and everyone left "with good feelings" (p. 3). Indeed, the ambiguous language of the 1988 Democratic platform seemed to allow for the public to identify with the party without requiring specific commitments. The 1988 Democratic platform,

then, helped contribute to the formation of a viable political community by achieving a state of consubstantiation. As the *Christian Science Monitor* (Ingwerson, 1988, June 22) stated, "The hallmark of convention '88 turned out to be unity and togetherness. There were no rules fights, no credentials fights, and only two platforms minority planks were brought to a floor vote" (p. 14).

In sum, it is important to note that the 1988 platform was not the only means used to create unity. Other factors surely played roles in this party image. However, the platform did contribute to the formation of a viable political community in the way it allowed the public to identify with the party. Highly ambiguous language in platforms, such as that found in the 1988 Democratic platform, may be successful when it creates a party image that the public can identify with, accept, and support. After all, Burke (1950) says that political rhetoric may reassure the public and allay their fears and resentment: "What handier linguistic resource could a rhetorician want than an ambiguity whereby he can say 'The state of affairs is substantially such-and such,' instead of having to say 'The state of affair is not such-and-such'" (p. 52).

But what of the ethical ramifications of ambiguity in a platform and, for that matter, other political communication? How can one justify strategic ambiguity, what some researchers of deception and ethics would regard as a form of lying, purposely creating multiple interpretations so as not having to be specific. As Miller and Stiff (1993) argue, very few scholars would say it is never justifiable to deceive. They state: "... even though many pay lip service to the ideal rule of absolute truth, few argue that there are no exceptions to it" (p. 2). For example, pledging "no new taxes" is extreme, but such a statement should not be "cast in stone." Change is inevitable; policies in politics and the greater society change. Timeless accusations, or static evaluations, of a politician or a political body's platform are detrimental to our governing system.

So, is ambiguity the solution to sidestep static evaluations? It may seem, although the shift of our society from "norms of honesty to norms of deceit" (Miller and Stiff, 1993, p. 4) when regarding political communication seems itself ambiguous when looking at history. Nevertheless, most would agree that "the need for an informed populace and the debate about issues is threatened by deceptive communication" (p. 5). Such a "chicken or the egg" issue goes beyond the scope of this study, but given the social context of current American politics, ambiguity may indeed be a justifiable means. Miller and Stiff argue that a sender has a choice, to deceive or not to do so, and an audience, especially current American society, has a level of motivation to detect deception. Each party must measure the consequences, or outcomes, of the communicative situation. At this point, one must consider what Michael McGee (1978) writes concerning political communication.

Ambiguous platform communication serves to condense complex political data for the public. As McGee (1978) argues, although the public has been conditioned to prefer "issue" politics, "image" politics are inescapable; the public cannot make decisions on complex issues because, as McGee posits, the public has neither the ability to process the necessary information, nor the time to properly judge an issue. Ambiguity can please the public's ap-

petite for participation, and by comparison platform communication should not contain specific promises or plans of action when unity is at risk. In fact, as McGee might argue, platforms should be constructed for images rather than explanation of issues when taking into consideration the context of the party and the complex issues of the time. The use of language without specific promises or plans of action can be a mark of competent political communication that may be justified as being a helpful tool in justifiable context, as Miller and Stiff might argue. The consequences of being ambiguous in platforms seem to be less detrimental than being specific, something a candidate must do after a platform helps bring factions together.

Such a conclusion may be regarded as an unusual statement because strategic ambiguity is often viewed as antagonistic to the belief that communication competence, especially in the political arena, is equated with clarity and openness (Levine 1985). However, taking a similar stance as McGee, Elder and Cobb (1983) agree with the notion that the public, for the most part, does not make politics a major priority in life and dismiss or ignore much political communication. Politicians need not always reveal complex issues to a public that is usually unwilling to listen. Ambiguous messages can serve to inform people and satisfy their basic needs for knowing without turning them away with detailed information they usually do not want. Connelly (1987) goes as far to say that ambiguity in political communication "keeps alive that which might otherwise be killed by the weight of authority or necessity" (p. 141). One might argue that platforms contribute to the identification process, but the candidate must then work on consubstantiality. The choice of remaining unspecific in platforms does address the quality of language in political communication, and this analysis reveals that such strategy may be justified when addressing pluralistic public with diverse needs and opinions. Further research into platforms should attempt to, as Richard Johannesen (1983) suggests, ". . . [help] formulate meaningful ethical guidelines, not inflexible rules, for our communication behavior and for evaluating the communication of others" (p. 9).

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THE "FAITH OF FREEDOM" VS. THE FREEDOM OF FAITH: EXPLORING THE TOTALITARIAN DISCOURSE OF J. EDGAR HOOVER *

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J. Edgar Hoover was director of the U.S. Bureau of Investigation from 1924 until his death in 1972. Under his leadership, the Bureau became internationally known as an exemplary law enforcement agency. Paralleling the success of the agency in fighting crime, however, there rose another side to the federal police—a dark side that exemplifies limitations in American political democracy.

In his capacity as director, Hoover received criticism for his relentless attack on social/political deviance that involved the severe repression of popular dissent in this country (a dissent that is protected by the federal Constitution). This repression involved the harassment of civil rights leaders and leaders of the anti-Vietnam War movement. In addition, Hoover authorized the surveillance of outspoken Americans, generally, and he kept secret files of people he considered to be enemies of the state. In other words, Hoover, as leader of the highest law enforcement agency in the nation, sanctioned a pervasive disregard for constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties. "Even today the extent of the F.B.I.'s illegal activity in the 1960s isn't fully recognized" (1972, 206), remarks Hank Messic, one of Hoover's biographers.¹

Hoover's political legacy may or may not involve systemic tendencies in American law enforcement to use the legal system in a manner that exceeds its legitimate authority; governmental abuse of American civil liberties may have ended with the Nixon administration and Hoover's death. If that is the case, this essay is merely a historical exercise, an example of an ideological analysis, a small but necessary reminder of our inglorious political past. If governmental abuse continues into the present, however, this essay takes on a greater social significance by restating the important rhetorical observation that totalitarian discourse can be recognized by certain language strategies that persuaders use to gain support for otherwise unpopular and repressive political positions. Given the current political environment, I suspect that this political lesson continues to be relevant.

In this essay, I explore the totalitarian tendencies in Hoover's speech and illustrate how his "Faith of Freedom" address (1965) is really a challenge to the American potential of the freedom of faith. By "faith," I do not necessarily mean faith in God; rather, by "faith" I refer to the freedom of faith that

* An earlier version of this essay was presented in the Public Address Division of the 1993 Speech Communication Association Annual Convention in Miami.

¹ Government lawlessness is not limited to the national level. As Mark Zepezauer (1994) documents, the Central Intelligence Agency has played a major role in propagating international terrorism and in subverting human rights around the globe. This critique is extended by Chomsky and Herman (1979) and Zinn (1980).

America promises to each of its citizens, a faith that its political system can be modified and challenged to meet the growing needs of the people who constitute American society. Hoover represents a challenge to that faith, by substituting the freedom to debate and dissent, on the one hand, with a political vision and climate of intolerance, of nationalism, of labor repression, and of increased government domination of the American people, on the other. In America, the freedom of faith is, first and foremost, the belief that all Americans have the right to stand and voice what they believe and to join with others in political discourse to effect directly conditions so as to improve their lives. It is against this freedom that Hoover strikes, in the name of the vengeful American God.

Ostensibly, Hoover's speech is about crime in America. As F.B.I. director, Hoover should have had much to say about the topic of crime; yet, the problem of crime is not the main concern of his speech. Hoover's discourse is concerned with the accumulation and maintenance of power, both for himself and for the government oligarchy for which he works. To support his search for power, and to develop a legal infrastructure by which to prosecute more effectively government dissenters, Hoover uses the excuse of the "Communist enemy" as a way of consolidating and legitimizing state repression. In my analysis, I utilize the critical/theoretical framework of ideology developed in Swartz (1997). In short, I argue that rhetorical scholars, by being sensitive to what Edwin Black calls "the association between an idiom and an ideology" (1970, 119), are in an excellent position to criticize the specific relationships between ideology and language, and to produce studies that serve as cultural interventions. Aiding me in this task is Gordon Allport's psychological "programs," easily reconceptualized as rhetorical topoi, that characterize language strategies among totalitarian discourse communities.

This paper has three main sections. In the first, I discuss what I call "the totalitarianism topoi" or stock argumentative structures that totalitarian speakers frequently employ. My purpose in doing so is to establish firmly Hoover's totalitarian credentials. It is one thing to claim that political figures who represent policies that are personally disliked are "totalitarian" or "fascist," especially when those people represent venerated American institutions. It is another thing, altogether, to offer strong arguments for the position. This is especially pressing since labelling Hoover as a totalitarian speaker has obvious political implications for understanding the U.S. government, a political institution that professes norms of "democracy" and "equality." In the second and third sections, I provide a more detailed ideological analysis of Hoover's speech and describe his implied audience. My analysis provides the subtext of the speech: the history, the assumptions, the ideological manipulations that gave this speech a live and cultural resonance at the time at which it was delivered.

Totalitarian Topoi

Hoover delivered the speech under analysis before the Freemason Supreme Council on October 19, 1965. In many ways the Freemasons are an ideal audience for Hoover's speech. Conservative and patriotic, this organization represents the type of power structure Hoover supported and for

which he spoke. For instance, *The New Columbia Encyclopedia* reports that thirteen U.S. presidents have been Freemasons, and a large number of Congressional representatives have belonged to this order (1975, 1007). Given his immediate audience, Hoover's speech was well situated in its expectations; however, it would be a mistake to assume that the speech met its primary audience on this occasion. Hoover's speech, after all, is a public document. Hoover spoke as a high-level representative of the U.S. government. In a sense, Hoover was speaking to the nation. The words "the nation," however, are meaningless; there is no American nation outside of the discourse that calls that nation into being with ideological significance (McGee, 1975). Hoover's larger audience, then, was rhetorical—yet rhetorical arguments do not exist outside of history. Thus, in a very real sense, the words of his speech, the metaphors utilized, and the arguments positioned all existed prior to that context and, most likely, continue to exist today (for examples of these language strategies in other contexts see Casmir, 1966; Perkins, 1948; Rosenfield, 1969; Raum and Measell, 1974; Sewart, Smith, and Denton, 1989; and Thompson, 1966).

Generally speaking, the above studies discuss totalitarian speakers, elucidating their strategies and appeal. My study of Hoover joins with them in a further attempt to understand the totalitarian speaker. To gain a better understanding of totalitarian rhetoric, we first need to understand the totalitarian persona more clearly and to examine how Hoover's discourse in the speech under analysis situates his ideology within the totalitarian perspective. Psychologist Gordon Allport (1954) aids us in this task.

In his landmark treatise on the nature of prejudice, Allport identifies the totalitarian persona as one that believes in a society that is authoritative, orderly, and nationalistic in nature (1954, 407). More specifically, Allport lists a series of "programs" that delineate the authoritarian personality (1954, 414–16). These programs can be reinterpreted as the argumentative topoi of the authoritarian speaker.²

The first program, or topoi, Allport lists is the feeling of being cheated. The totalitarian feels insecure because other people (Jews, Blacks, etc.) are unfairly taking advantage of the "honest" folks. In this vein, Hoover communicates a sense of national frustration:

In Europe and the Near East, our country's patience and determination are constantly being strained by taunts and provocations of Iron Curtain slave masters who talk of peace while clandestinely plotting to spread their godless creed of utopia-in-chains (1965, 71).

Hoover suggests that U.S. economic interests abroad are threatened by the spread of a Marxist consciousness. Overseas, American markets and labor have fallen out of U.S. control. Thus, American business interests are, in a sense, "cheated" out of their "rightful" resources.

The second topoi is the prevailing sense of a widespread conspiracy. Conspiracy appeals are a functional tool in persuasion. By creating a perceived threat, appeals to conspiracy argue for a new epistemology within a social

² The topics, according to classical rhetoricians, are the "seats" of an argument, stock positions that are used to generate lines of reasoning (Dick, 1964).

community. As G. Thomas Goodnight and John Poulakos explain, “[a] theory of conspiracy discourse must account for the possibility that those upholding an unpopular or presumably lunatic point of view may be participating in the restructuring of social consensus” (1981, 300). Totalitarian speakers project a view of the world as a dangerous place where civilized people are threatened by irrational yet powerful forces. Hoover promotes this fear in his discourse:

Communism is a vast international conspiracy which today dominates one-third of the earth's people. Here in our own country, that conspiracy is represented by the Communist Party, USA, a bold and defiant band of anti-American turncoats whose operations are directed and controlled by the Kremlin in Moscow (1965, 71).³

The third topoi is a threat of destruction at the hands of the enemy if immediate preventative action is not taken. In this case, military action in the Third World and the support of fascist dictatorships is justified:

Throughout Central and South America, we have had to erect guard posts of freedom against the sinister efforts of communist henchmen to spread the malignant cancer of Marxism across the Western Hemisphere (1965, 71).⁴

The fourth topoi is the lack of middle ground between divergent interest groups. Hoover defines the world in black-and-white terms; he is the only one who represents law and order and the “true” American faith. Any deviance from his political doctrine is interpreted as a complete social upheaval, anarchy in its negatively articulated sense; thus, other valid interests are immediately denied.⁵ The “denied interest” has been identified by Philip Wander (1984) as “the third persona.” As Wander argues, “What is negated through the Second Persona [the audience implied in a discourse] forms the silhouette of a Third Persona—the ‘it’ that is not present, that is objectified in a way that ‘you’ and ‘I’ are not” (1984, 209). In the case of Hoover, the “it” missing from the discourse is the middle ground, the liberal persona that abhors Stalinism as much as it abhors imperialism. In addition, the liberal persona is typically one that believes in the American potential for economic democracy and a wider commitment to civil rights and social equality. This persona is clearly marginalized in Hoover’s speech.

Hoover’s Manichaeon thinking is pervasive in the text. Communism is “a dark world” devoid of truth, freedom, decency, and God (light). There is no middle-ground as Hoover goads his audience into a primordial battle with the devil. Hoover explains that “[w]e must choose between law and anarchy, freedom and chaos” (1965, 73). Nothing exists between the two conflicting poles. Hoover sets up an unrealistic dichotomy, forcing his audience into his camp by providing no alternatives between the two extremes.

The fifth topoi is the metamorphosis of the enemy into animality. In Hoover’s

³ For a more realistic appraisal of the situation described by Hoover’s narrative, see Klehr and Haynes (1992).

⁴ For more context, see Chomsky (1985).

⁵ Kropotkin (1995), the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century social theorist, provides a comprehensive and more historically accurate discussion of anarchism than the “anarchism” implied by Hoover to scare Americans into submission to state authority.

er's world, the Communists are "hordes" (1965, 71) and come from "the jungle" (1965, 74) like wild animals. The reduction of the Communists to base savagery is a vilifying act: by attributing a limited rational capacity and a violent inhumanity to the Communists, Hoover magnifies the threat that he wants to convey to his audience.

The sixth topoi involves a temporal urgency that leaves no time for hesitation and deliberation. The illness that is attacking Hoover's ideological body is rapidly reaching a terminal stage. Hoover warns, "Today there is the most urgent need for Americans to dedicate themselves to the strong moral principles upon which our Nation was founded" (1965, 73). With this tactic, Hoover's political audience is urged to seek solutions from a valorized past to meet the challenge that Hoover creates. In a literal sense, however, Hoover is privileging the ethical standards that were in effect nearly two hundred years ago. Since the founding of the United States, there has been a significant development in social and ethical awareness. Does Hoover imply that the heightened social/ethical awareness should be rejected? Presumably, Hoover's rejection includes forfeiting such "communist" tainted projects as the abolishment of slavery, civil rights for women and minorities, social security, the eight hour work day, and other privileges that go against the grain of the "moral principles" of our nation's foundations. At the time of its founding, the United States of America was structured on the principles of class privilege and racial inequality, not to mention its dedication to genocide and expansionism (Zinn, 1980). The seventh topoi is the glorification of force. In this case, the concept of "faith" takes on an aspect of aggression. Hoover writes, "Faith is our mainstay in the ideological struggle now raging between the camps of God-less communism and human freedom" (1965, 74). The metaphor Hoover uses to describe the power of faith is that of the "fortress" from which the true believer goes forth to do battle. Thus, Hoover justifies the use of divinely sanctioned violence in order to fight Communism.

The eighth topoi is belief in a single party or governing system. For Hoover, an authoritarian government would be ideal, but because he is a part of the democratic establishment, however broadly we stretch the term, he faces constraints in his ability to dismiss democratic dialectics. As a way of silencing opposition and achieving more power for his political authority and for a government that often places itself outside or above popular politics, Hoover blames the unknowing "intended victims" of the Communists for aiding the Communist plot:

I refer to the pseudoliberals of the extreme left, as well as to the misguided zealots of the ultra right—modern-day Don Quixotes who mistakenly fight the transparent shadows of imaginary enemies rather than meet the challenge of the real and awesome problems confronting our beloved United States (1965, 72).

In this passage Hoover marginalizes all political views that oppose his own. Furthermore, he mutes the champions of alternative positions by negating their importance. Liberals become "pseudoliberals" who fight false battles, presumably the battles for racial integration, legalized abortion, social welfare, and the like. As for the "ultra right," I am not sure to whom he is referring, as Hoover's language itself, by any reasonable standard, places him

in that very category. By dissociating "real" from "imaginary" problems, Hoover restricts the field of responses the nation has available to deal with the social problems of the day.⁶ In other words, the political sphere has been narrowed—acceptable politics is defined as Hoover's politics.

The ninth topoi is red-baiting. Allport explains how the totalitarian "indiscriminately labels all opponents as communists" (1954, 416); in doing so, these speakers make themselves appear morally superior to those whom they attack. Hoover uses red-baiting to justify his Constitutionally-strained law enforcement tactics. As the Communist "menace" is so extreme, extreme actions are justified in order to counter it.⁷ As Noam Chompsky observes:

With broad liberal support, the Red Scare succeeded in undermining the labor movement and dissident politics, and reinforcing corporate power. Two lasting institutional developments from that period, of great consequence, are the rise of the Public Relations industry, dedicated quite openly to controlling "the public mind," and the national political police (the F.B.I) (1988, 33).

In an important sense, the F.B.I.'s harassment of social movement leaders becomes sanctioned as an extension of the international fight against Communism. Hoover claims that the Communists are training American youths to help overthrow the U.S. government. To validate this "fact," Hoover points to the political unrest among civil rights and anti-Vietnam War protesters as instances of "Communist-inspired" agitation. Hoover concludes, "Already, this fall, there are signs that those training sessions have begun to bear fruit—in the form of defiant protests against law and authority" (1965, 72).

The last topoi is paranoia. Paranoia is perhaps the master topoi that accentuates the other nine strategies. Paranoia is an emotional reaction that prevents rational discussion. It is a language strategy which takes "facts" out of context and applies them to the orator's ends. In the following instance, Hoover reinterprets college activism and its relationship to the university establishment:

Today, as never before, the Communists are confident of their ability to win recruits among this country's youth. That is why the party has placed such intense emphasis upon its campus speech program—a program that has seen skilled hucksters of atheism and treason appear at scores of colleges and universities from New York to California, without objection by the authorities of those institutions of higher learning and often with positive encouragement by members of the faculties of such universities (1965, 72).

Notice the association of "atheism" with "treasons" by a man who is charged by the public trust to protect our country. Treason is one of the more serious charges that can be leveled against a citizen, although it seems to make little sense to talk about "treason" outside of a military context. At any rate, if "treason" is a crime, then it is literally Hoover's job to arrest the perpetrators—a scary thought when this man of the law associates "treason" with

⁶ Originally discussed in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969), an illustration of "dissociation" in public argument can be found in Zarefsky, Tutzauer, and Tutzauer (1984).

⁷ For example, during the Iran-Contra hearings, Oliver North defended his unlawful actions by claiming to protect the very Constitution he was actively subverting.

"atheism" in a country that has a formal separation between Church and State. This collapsing of the space between the religious and the political is an important theme in the speech and it is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

The above ten "programs" are not a definitive list of the totalitarian topoi, nor does the list exhaust the examples of totalitarian argument in Hoover's speech. What the list fundamentally does is to illustrate a resource of inventional material that totalitarian speakers may draw upon in creating their discourse. For example, scholars familiar with Nazi discourse recognize many of these traits.⁸

From the brief examples taken from Hoover's speech, I have shown that each topos can be found in Hoover's discourse. Now that I have established a connection between Hoover and a totalitarian ideology, I turn, in the next section, to a more detailed analysis of his speech, accentuating the relationship between his persona and the audience that such a personal implies. This is especially important because totalitarian speakers need audiences, and totalitarian discourse is still persuasion. The following criticism speaks to this relationship.

Hoover's Persona and Its Implied Audience

In addition to meeting the parameters of the totalitarian personality as outlined by Allport, Hoover's speech fits the paradigm that Edwin Black (1970) offers of the Radical Right. Black explains that there is a common topos among the Radical Right. These topoi serve as a reference point because of their idiomatic nature, and they imply "that there are strong and multifarious links between a style and an outlook" (1970, 119). Black's study of the John Birch Society reveals that a common topos employs disease metaphors, such as the cancer metaphor; the metaphors stress the need for immediate action and desperate medicine (1970, 115).

Utilizing a rhetoric similar to the rhetoric of the John Birch Society, Hoover presents a diseased, assaulted, and violated America that is torn from within by weakness (civil-liberty), and threatened from without by "Communist hordes" (1965, 71). The governing constructs of Law, Order, and God from the classical heritage of America are being openly assaulted by the "godless creed of utopia-in-chains" (1965, 71). Hoover reminds his audience that the current conditions equal a state of disease. Similar to the doctor who prescribes chemotherapy in a last ditch effort to ward off a patient's cancer, Hoover argues that the nation's ideological health is in need of desperate and immediate medicine: inertness serves only the interest of the enemy.

A "free nation," one under siege, needs a "fortress" and that fortress is, according to Hoover, "Faith in God" (1965, 74). However, it is a specific God, and a specific freedom, that Hoover exalts. Hoover has deposited a persuasive definition whereby he retains the connotative sense of popular references to God (the Universal Being) but substitutes a different referent

⁸ The following studies explore, in some fashion, this topical pattern in Nazi discourse: Bosmajian (1965); Bosmajian (1960); Bosmajian (1974); Delia (1971); Scanlan, (1951); and Wilkie, (1966).

(patriotic Christianity), which is unnoticed (or under-noticed) by his audience. Persuasive definitions are defined by Charles L. Stevenson, who explains: The purport of the definition is to alter the descriptive meaning of the term, usually by giving it greater precision within the boundaries of its customary vagueness; but the definition does not make any substantial change in the terms' emotive meaning. (1944, 210) Hoover limits his evoked God, and the freedom to worship that God, to what I call "the God of George Washington." The God of George Washington is what the founders of this nation had in mind when they evoked a divine spirit in the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and the Pledge of Allegiance—documents (and deities) created to serve the interests of the white colonists, and not of the African slave or Native American. Hoover is up in arms because the God of Washington is under siege by another God, one of political liberty and economic justice. Due to the threat to his God, Hoover seeks to erect a "fortress" so that the ideologies of other faiths can be kept from interfering with the rule of Washington's God. The "Faith of Freedom," then, is the faith in a specific God whose adherents have dug into the trenches for a long territorial fight. Hoover celebrates this particular and exclusive faith while the warriors of this faith fight and die, and the leaders supplicate themselves to the ideology that "dominated the atmosphere at Independence Hall, Philadelphia when the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were framed" (1965, 74). Meanwhile, Hoover excludes the freedom of faith, that is, the freedom to imagine a better life, while privileging the "faith of freedom," or subservience to the status quo.

The distinction between the "faith of freedom" and the freedom of faith is central to understanding Hoover's totalitarian persona and the persona of his implied audience. The "faith of freedom" implies an autocracy, while the freedom of faith is democratic in nature. To gain a clearer understanding of the politics implied in Hoover's world view, consider his following remarks: "[F]aith remains our strongest bulwark against the criminal and subversive enemies who would destroy our priceless heritage of liberty and justice for all" (74). The all-encompassing ideographs "liberty" and "justice" are misnomers.⁹ Ostensibly, the two reflect a democratic politics; however, since Hoover privileges a faith specific to a particular brand of patriotic Christianity, the range of Hoover's polis is severely limited.

As a result of the narrowing of the acceptable political field, the justice that derives from his concept of faith is ideologically mediated. This is particularly clear as Hoover discusses "crime and immorality" (1965, 73) in a single breath, as if they were one and the same. In a democratic and secular society, such as what the United States purports to be, a person is free, in fact, even encouraged in many ways, to be immoral; laws, for the most part do not directly govern value-orientations (such as greed, for example). In theory, a person's character is not subject to legislation; the de-criminalization of homosexuality is based upon this principle. While this ideal separation between law and morality is not always maintained in our society, it is beside the point: in Hoover's discourse, the two are completely collapsed. Under the justice of the God of Washington, crime and immorality are one

⁹ See McGee (1980) for a discussion of ideographs in public argumentation.

and the same. This is another example of Hoover's use of a persuasive definition; he takes a common value, "justice," and assigns to it an uncommon referent, "aristocratic justice," as opposed to "utilitarian justice" or an equality that mediates across social-economic and cultural boundaries.

By collapsing the moral with the legal, Hoover subjugates his audience to his persona as a priest/prophet/crusader—calling the faithful to arms against the heathens. He asks his audience to join a sacred crusade to protect the American Holy Land and to reassert the full dominance of America's ideological supremacy. In so doing, Hoover evokes an audience that has its roots in colonial America with "the brave patriots" of Valley Forge, grounding his audience in the myth represented by the so-called Golden Age of America. This myth is exemplified in the figure of George Washington:

George Washington, the Father of our Country, was a master Mason—a statesman of greatest courage and dedication who envisioned America as a land where men of all creeds might live together and worship together in freedom under God (1965, 71).

In his mythical reconstruction of American history, Hoover presents a radically selective narrative. For instance, he neglects to mention the forced conscription of soldiers into Washington's army. Conscription, by itself, is not necessarily damning of a young country struggling for its survival. What is alarming for people critical of Hoover's persona and the audience it implies in American politics are the reasons why the common soldier did not appreciate Washington's "courage" and "dedication."

As historian Howard Zinn argues, the average American did not want to serve the economic interests of the power-elite that started and benefitted from the War for Independence. In lending evidence to his argument, Zinn documents the conditions of the average soldier during the American Revolution. First, "general enthusiasm for the war was not strong" (1980, 76). Second, conscription of the poor was the norm (1980, 78). Third, army discipline, which included lashings and executions, were frequent, as were mutinies and rebellions (1980, 78–80). Last, Zinn documents the merchant and ruling class origins of the revolution: "George Washington was the richest man in America. John Hancock was a prosperous Boston merchant. Benjamin Franklin was a wealthy printer" (1980, 84). More importantly, however, Hoover does not accurately represent Washington's "America"—there is no mention of slavery, of the rigid class structure of indentured servants, or of the genocide of the Native Americans. Instead, Hoover presents a mythic scene of America's "abiding faith in man's ability to guide his own destiny with the help of God" (1965, 71).

In an important sense, Hoover sanctions inequality by substituting a historical consciousness for a ahistorical transcendence to God. If God guides the destiny of humans, then the material world is simply a manifestation of the spiritual world, the status quo is thus reified. In addition, Hoover neglects to mention that "man" was taken literally to mean the biological male, and not "human beings"—a broader, more encompassing construct that recognizes women as political entities. The "man" that Hoover appeals to is even more limited than in a gendered sense: the concept of "man" denoted both whiteness and wealth. In their study of the expatriation of African-Americans,

Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites illustrate that membership in the class of "man" was "interpolated by the Anglo-American who shared religion, values, and customs, in addition to language and daily habits" (12). In other words, the eighteenth and nineteenth century concept of "man" was interpreted as a specific "people" in terms of cultural communities. African-Americans, Native Americans, the landless, and working classes were systematically excluded from these communities and were still excluded, in many real senses, at the time that Hoover delivered his speech.

A member of the audience that Hoover constructs can sense (along with the rest of us, but in a less-than-positive light) the nostalgic undertones and rhetorical appeals that Hoover cultivates in order to perpetuate his myth. Perhaps the musical score of John Phillips Sousa can be heard amidst the background of Hoover's narrative (as a subtext) and "Old Glory" can be seen raised against a cloudless blue sky. This is the narrative of America as it was in a mythical past, and the America as it ought to be in Hoover's mythical future. The America of the present, however, is different, and Hoover's narration reflects this divergence.

In the present, as Hoover would lead us to believe in his rhetorical subtext, the ruthless screams of millions acting in brainwashed unity shatter the tranquility of the classical myth. The blue sky of Hoover's idealized past becomes clouded and stormy. Soot from the charred flag litters the ground and mixes with the scattered bodies of young children, violated and torn apart by Marxist bullets, their Sunday clothes spoiled by blood; the town church burns with its Bibles. These images come from Hoover's narration and can only be read from the perspective of an audience ignorant of U.S. history and of the political reality that defines a Communist ideology. Comprising a subtext, they lie parallel to, but just outside the actual text. Wander sanctions such a reading by explaining that "texts and events not mentioned in the text may be linked" (1984, 207). This linkage arises when critics make an "ideological turn" and recognize the conflicting interests that become posited in every text (Wander, 1983). In linking ideas to text, the ideological critic names the implications that a discourse has or could have on an audience.

Contrast the images of Hoover's subtext with those of the actual text, and the congruence between the two is clear:

Today, our priceless heritage of freedom is under relentless attack both at home and abroad. In the jungles and rice fields of southeast Asia, Americans in uniform maintain a constant vigil against the communist hordes of a modern day Genghis Kahn to whom no commodity is cheaper than human life (1965, 71).

For an audience that falls outside the parameters of Hoover's implied audience, the argument is childish and the metaphors absurd; little in that previous fragment from Hoover's speech has any referent for an audience member to grasp and analyze as part of a rational discourse. Rational people would condemn this speaker, as I am doing now; yet Hoover had power, and part of that power was grounded in the fact that people accepted his oratory. But why? Was it the fact that he had a comprehensive narrative? In the above example alone, the reader can find an inclusive Weltanschauung

of ideology and myth.¹⁰ Was Hoover successful because we, as human beings, like simplistic, but complete stories? Or was it the particular story he told—a totalitarian story of hate and fear to which many Americans resonated? Are we that kind of people?

Explicating Hoover's Argument: The Quest For Power

In the above passage, Hoover contrasts the phrase "priceless heritage of freedom," a string of four positively infused and emotive words, with a string of roughly forty words that are negatively infused and equally emotive. The God-term, "freedom," is in this instance literally surrounded and overpowered by a host of Devil-terms. As this polarity suggests, "God" and "Devil" terms represent ultimate ideological positions within a discourse and speaker's world view: they announce and demarcate a dialectical tension between the extremes of good and evil (Weaver, 1953). In accentuating this dialectical tension, Hoover illustrates how his concept of "freedom" is under "relentless" attack and is threatened with ideological annihilation.

Hoover argues that the God of Washington is besieged in the Third World. He ignores the obvious question of how the God of Washington can be attacked overseas when the domain of this God is the United States. The God of Washington cannot be attacked abroad unless some unwelcomed manifestation or influence of this God is overseas. Thus, the God that rose out of the original U.S. colonies and manifested itself during the War for Independence has now become the God of U.S. imperialism in the Third World. The presence of this force in Southeast Asia did not raise any questions for Hoover and his implied audience; the hegemonic impulses of their ideology appear natural. For Hoover and his implied audience, the God of Washington is the only True God; all the other Gods or ideologies are false, perverse.

Now that Hoover has established the primacy of his God, and illustrated that this God is being threatened, it becomes important to delineate the attackers. The threat stems from the Communists, a sub-human race of beasts who come from jungles and rice fields like animals, not from cities, shopping-malls, T.V. studios, or universities, the proper domains of "civilized" people. The agents of this upheaval are dehumanized which makes them all the more menacing. Confronting the Communists are American soldiers "in uniform"; presumably the ill-equipped Communists do not have uniforms. Uniforms denote civilized fighters, respectable people, a professional army. In brutal contrast, the Communists are armed hoodlums. The American soldiers are portrayed as standing "vigil" against the Communists, a religious metaphor signifying that the American "protectors" are serving in the name of Washington's God. Sadly, these soldiers are going to be slaughtered because they face "hordes" of animals who show no restraint in perpetrating violence.

¹⁰ In terms suggested in another context by Fisher, elaborative myths function to insure that a strong "narrative probability" and a high "narrative fidelity" are maintained within the particular ideological constraints of an audience. Fisher explains that narrative probability and narrative fidelity denote coherency and believability in an argument (1984, 8).

The Communist "hordes" literally represent an incarnation of Genghis Kahn, a figure from distant history who represents the extreme of baneful aggression. Why did Hoover not compare the Communists to Hitler, a much more vivid and archetypal evil? Hoover could not choose Hitler because Hitler is too similar to himself and his audience. Hitler was a man of this century, thus allegedly part of the modern paradigm of rationality. In some sense, Hitler was "Christian," like those who serve the God of Washington. Similar to Hoover and others of his ilk, Hitler led a Christian nation by perverting the basic tenets of Christianity, while retaining the pretense of its virtues (Burke, 1973 [1941], 219).

Two examples illustrate the above point. First, Hitler's honorific title, Fuehrer, means "guide," in a quasi-messianic sense of one's having knowledge of a higher, heavenly truth. Hitler presented himself as anointed by God with the responsibility and sanction to lead the German nation. Second, Hitler made fundamental Christian appeals in promoting his agenda of genocide as the following passage from *Mein Kampf* illustrates: "Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord" (emphasis his, 65). In addition, Hitler abided by the rules of war in treating captured American soldiers. Genghis Kahn, on the other hand, is seen as a beast from the past, an irrational killing machine. Kahn, therefore, is a convenient referent with which to associate the Communists. In the idiom of American politics—at least according to Hoover and a nation that believes in his reasoning—Communism is worse than Nazism (a point that is a travesty of historical consciousness).

Hoover's narrative continues to contrast America's moral superiority with the plague-like infestation of immoral Communism. The Communists are "henchmen" spreading "malignant cancer." Their "treachery" is only countered by "fast action taken by a courageous president and alert Americans" (1965, 71). "Fast" and "alert" are adjectives that do not denote contemplation, mediation, discussion, or democratic dialectic. No citizen wants to self-identify as an "unalert" American. However, the thinking and questioning individual—as opposed to the passive and obedient one—is positioned by Hoover as being "unalert." Discussion and criticism, by preventing action designed to defend American ideology, serve as tools of the enemy.

During the early sections of the speech, the narrative is concerned with the Golden Age of America and the dark threat from Asia. Yet, as discussed in the background section of this paper, the real focus of this speech is power—both institutional and individual. Hoover's quest for more power as director of the F.B.I., as well as his larger quest for authority and control on behalf of the government, begins in the eighth paragraph. Here, he moves from the international threat (the Cold War) to the domestic threat (civil unrest). Hoover defines the domestic threat as originating from the Communist Party of America, whose members are "bold" and "defiant" "turn-coats" who represent a "foreign" enemy "outpost" on sovereign soil (1965, 72). The reduction of all U.S. dissidence to mythical origins in Communism is evident in the following quotation, in which Hoover transforms a common antiwar demonstrator into a Communist agitator:

In the State of Washington, one Communist speaker loudly condemned the United States for its actions in helping to defend the cause of freedom in the Far East. He charged his audience that it was their duty to demand immediate withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam (1965, 72).

By blaming American social unrest on Communism, and associating Communism with the horrors and evils that he outlines in the first part of his speech, Hoover undermines the legal rights of protestors who seek to express grievances about governmental or social policy. In effect, Hoover moves this country closer to a totalitarian model that benefits him personally as head of the federal police. In addition, this social model benefits the status quo (in particular business and industry, traditional supporters of fascism) by providing internal stability in this country and a dependable cheap labor force.

Another example of linking deviance with Communism is Hoover's attack of civil disobedience as "a seditious slogan of gross irresponsibility [that] has captured the imagination of citizens who are morally, mentally, and emotionally immature" (1965, 72). Hoover is specifically addressing his comments to the civil rights movement and its leaders who encourage people to disobey "unjust" laws. This appalls Hoover who, as an authoritarian, maintains, "The citizen has no latitude as to what laws he must obey" (1965, 72).

Hoover's condemnation of civil unrest leads to his discussion of crime. He calls attention to the polarity between "law" and "anarchy" by placing civil disobedience in Marxist-inspired anarchy. According to Hoover, political dissent creates social unrest; this state leads to crime and to the breakdown of society. Inevitably, this condition leads civilization to a jungle-like existence. Hoover's implicit argument is that without God, humans degenerate into beasts, which is why faith is central to his world view.

In his specific discussion of crime, Hoover complains of leniency in the judicial system, which he causally connects to anarchy and the killing of police officers. More specifically, Hoover's argument can be reconstructed in the following way. First, civil liberty implies the freedom to worship Gods other than the God of Washington. Second, these other Gods tend to be Marxist. Third, the less civil liberty, the more power Hoover, as F.B.I. director, has in fighting Communism in America. This means, in effect, that popular dissent on real social issues involving racism, poverty, and war will be marginalized from the public sphere. Hoover's conclusion is that civil liberty, while appropriate in theory, serves to the advantage of America's Communist enemies. He explains, "Certainly civil rights and individual dignity have their vital place in life, but what about the common good and the law and order that preserve us from lapsing back into the jungle?" (1965, 74). In other words, as the "jungle" must constantly be kept at bay, "civil rights" and "individual dignity" have no role to play in Hoover's political world.

Hoover makes it clear that lawlessness is the result of Communist agitation, as opposed to more systemic problems in our culture. Furthermore, this Communism has been tolerated for too long under the American commitment to civil liberty. According to Hoover, the reason police are being killed in America is because there is a lack of law and order. In order to regain control of the country from the criminal agitators, Hoover advocates the suspension of civil liberty. He reasons that such suspension is necessary in order to implement more efficient law enforcement. In short, Hoover's thesis is that "We

must have a world ruled by law" (1965, 74). Hoover grounds his law in the "fortress" of "faith" and the ideological privilege of Washington's God. This fortress is a prison for those outside the privileged faith that rules from within.

Conclusion

Hoover's text may be considered an extreme and obvious example of ideologically-saturated oratory. Furthermore, it may be equally obvious that Hoover was an excessively dogmatic and paranoid figure in recent American history. However, the fact that Hoover wielded power for almost fifty years as director of the F.B.I. suggests that it would be unwise to take his discourse for granted. The example of Hoover commands the attention of critics to study carefully the social reality that he symbolically created. In recognizing the rhetorical strategies Hoover utilized to promote his ideological agenda, in particular the "totalitarian topoi," students of rhetoric may gain critical strength in their ability to confront totalitarian speakers in the future.

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