

INTRODUCTION

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“Argument evaluation” refers to rendering an explicit judgment that an argument is valid or invalid, sound or unsound, good or bad, strong or weak, ethical or unethical. One can make judgments about aesthetic considerations or the effectiveness of an argument with a particular audience, but that is not what is generally meant by the term “argument evaluation” in this book. Even so narrowly described, most argumentation scholars would agree that one appropriate and important function of criticism is to render judgments of the worth of individual arguments and that argument evaluation is an important part of argumentation studies. Argument evaluation has many uses, including improving argumentative competence, teaching critical thinking, and improving decision making. The benefits of argument evaluation are coterminous with the benefits of the study and practice of argumentation itself, for one cannot be successful at either without the ability to recognize the difference between good and bad arguments.

If it is agreed that argument evaluation is an important task for argumentation scholars, it follows that argument evaluation should be published. Argument evaluation is not something fit only for the privacy of the classroom; rather, evaluation is a function of criticism that deserves recognition *as* scholarship. Publication of argument evaluation can be defended as a means of testing argument theory, for furthering pedagogical goals by providing exemplary work, or it can be defended as a valid end in itself; that is, as scholarship, argument evaluation is at least as valuable as other sorts of criticism.

Despite the common view that argument evaluation is a very important function of argument analysis and criticism, there are

remarkably few examples in the scholarly literature of argumentation studies that represent argument evaluation qua argument evaluation (Schiappa 1991). Argumentation studies recently has been dominated by theoretical and descriptive work that generally sidesteps the sort of explicit normative judgments that are unavoidable in argument evaluation. If one is reasonably strict about differentiating argument evaluation from other activities sharing the “argument criticism” umbrella, then argument evaluation will be found to be, by far, the least popular *modus operandi* of the publishing argument scholar. This book is intended, in part, to further the process of correcting this imbalance.

FINDING A PLACE FOR ARGUMENT EVALUATION

The factors rendering argument evaluation a relatively unpopular scholarly endeavor are, no doubt, numerous and complicated. Some causes may be clearly personal, such as the fact that some scholars may find argument evaluation insufficiently challenging or interesting. Some factors combine the personal and the material, such as the fact that more professional journals in the field of communication studies focus on rhetoric than on argument. Even in conferences and publications self-identified as committed to argumentation studies, argument is often “translated” as rhetoric. All too often, unfortunately, once a text is designated for the purposes of study as a rhetorical artifact as opposed to an instance of argument, our critical expectations are altered. The questions we ask of an instance of rhetoric are usually different than those we ask of argument. Typically, from the standpoint of argument evaluation, our standards are lowered once a text is dubbed rhetoric. For example, Robert Rowland advocates a three-part test for the evaluation of an argument, including a test of internal consistency, a test of evidence, and a “dialectical” test for the cogency of warrants and consideration of “reasonable alternatives” (1985, p. 130). Certainly these are very reasonable minimal standards for an argument to meet. Yet such questions are rarely relevant when a text is approached as a rhetorical artifact. For example, Thomas Kane’s essay “Rhetorical Histories and Arms Negotiations” argues that “the use of historical events as rhetorical artifacts has served to sustain cold war assumptions and attitudes” (1988, p. 143). Arguing that “the cold war is a rhetorical enterprise,” Kane

undermines the persuasiveness of cold war “rhetorical histories” in part by calling attention to their rhetorical nature. At the same time, by characterizing rhetorical histories as part of an ongoing process of symbolic inducement, Kane conceptualizes rhetorical events as objects whose meaning is independent of “reality” and of truth considerations: “whether American or Soviet, these events acquired their meaning less from what really happened than the collective set of assumptions and perceptions about them that have been handed down from previous discourse, arguments, experiences and interpretations” (p. 144).

Kane’s essay thoroughly documents the symbolic power of interpreted historical events. However, from the standpoint of argument evaluation, a distinctly rhetorical analysis relieves the discourse under consideration of certain burdens. When historical events become “rhetorical histories” used in the process of symbolic inducement the issue becomes primarily one of *effectiveness*: rhetorical histories are persuasive even if they are unreasonable. By contrast, if one were to examine, say, Jack Kemp’s use of historical “examples” as “evidence” for specific argumentative “claims” he has set forth, a very different evaluative picture would emerge. Put a different way, rhetorical criticism and argument evaluation represent different sets of “terministic screens”; hence what the critic looks for and finds may differ depending on which screen is employed.

As another example, Rebecca S. Bjork’s “Reagan and the Nuclear Freeze: ‘Star Wars’ as a Rhetorical Strategy” is a provocative portrayal of how Reagan’s campaign for the Strategic Defense Initiative undercut the persuasiveness of the nuclear freeze movement (1988). Once again, the results of the study are somewhat different from what the perspective of argument evaluation would have provided. Examining Star Wars as a rhetorical strategy leads Bjork to focus primarily on the effectiveness of Reagan’s manipulation of symbols rather than the soundness or validity of specific arguments. The arguments of the nuclear freeze movement are characterized as “vocal demands.” Star Wars is a “vision” that renders the arguments of the freeze movement “not appealing” or “not believable” to the general public. Bjork makes at least a dozen references to Reagan’s rhetoric as “effective,” “successful,” “accomplished,” “masterful,” and as possessing “advantages.” Bjork’s analysis is solid as rhetorical criticism, but by focusing primarily on “effectiveness,” the strength or weakness

of Reagan's arguments escapes close scrutiny. Even though Bjork makes her negative feelings toward the arms race fairly clear, no sustained case is made that there is anything unsound or invalid about Reagan's position.

Argumentation scholars also have been discouraged from publishing explicit evaluations of arguments by disciplinary norms that can be described as "methodological injunctions." These norms are sometimes made explicit in argumentation studies' "social knowledge" (Farrell 1976), but mostly function implicitly as a "tacit component" of the "personal knowledge" gained during socialization as graduate students and young scholars (Polanyi 1958).

There are at least three identifiable methodological injunctions that function to discourage argument evaluation. The first can be described as the "enduring versus ephemeral" injunction. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's argument is that scholarly rhetorical criticism ought to focus on "enduring" analysis in which "what we learn about the specific rhetorical acts is secondary; they become illustrations or means through which the reader apprehends the nature of symbolic processes themselves" (1974, p. 12). Such studies are enduring "because rhetorical theory deals with symbolic processes that are inherent in the human condition and recur in different times, in different places, and in response to different issues" (p. 12). As important as evaluation of contemporary communicative acts may be, Campbell suggests that their study is usually inappropriate as a scholarly exercise: "the social criticism of ephemeral, contemporary events belongs in the mass media, where much of it now appears, and the audience it needs to reach is the general public" (p. 10).

Campbell's position is widely shared in our field (whether specifically acknowledged in individual essays or not), and functions as a sort of methodological injunction. A specific example can illustrate how the "enduring versus ephemeral" injunction discourages argument evaluation. If during the Reagan Administration a critic were to evaluate Ronald Reagan's time-bound arguments in support of Star Wars, that critic would be engaging in ephemeral criticism. Within such a perspective one could make the case that some of Reagan's arguments were weak or misleading. For example, as Bjork points out, one of Reagan's key arguments in favor of Star Wars was that it can "save lives" by rendering nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete" (1988, pp. 187-88). In

fact, Reagan consistently argued for Star Wars on the grounds that it could offer successful population defense. As an argument such a claim is open to serious challenge. William Broad's research has documented that from the start advisors and SDI researchers have acknowledged the impossibility of successful population defense and have advocated SDI as missile defense (1984, pp. 206-20). Since 1983 the SDI program has been redirected to focus on missile defense, though this reorientation is rarely acknowledged by the White House (Waller and Bruce 1987). Nonetheless, Reagan's arguments on behalf of SDI continued to stress the virtues of total population defense (Schiappa, 1989). As an argument, Reagan's position can be judged as weak and misleading. Such a judgment, however, is clearly "ephemeral" criticism since the only "enduring" principles involved (arguers should not mislead) are obvious and "trivial" when viewed as contributions to theory. By contrast, the ability to describe Reagan's strategy as "transcendence," the "stealing of symbols," and "casuistic stretching" (Bjork 1988) allows a critic to move from a time-bound evaluation of arguments to the description of timeless "processes that characterize human communication" (Campbell 1974, p. 12).

The second methodological injunction that functions to discourage argument evaluation can be described as the "truth-avoidance" criterion. The foremost spokesperson for this criterion is Forbes Hill, though his articles have been cited with approval by others. Hill argues that assessments of the truth-content of speakers' arguments are inappropriate in scholarly criticism in part because such assessments assume that the critic knows "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" (1983, p. 122; 1972). Hill charges that, at the very least, assessments of truth privilege the critic's claims over the rhetor and therefore require detailed arguments that fall outside the scope of scholarly criticism.

It should be noted that Hill's arguments are directed toward rhetorical criticism and not argument evaluation. Also, Hill's case has been answered, at least to some critics' satisfaction, by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1972, 1983) and Philip Wander (1983, 1984). Nonetheless, there is some indication that his truth-avoidance injunction is at least an implicit part of our field's social knowledge and that it has discouraged argument evaluation. Often various topics investigated by rhetorical or argument critics are por-

trayed as highly contested, with strong advocates on both sides. The implication is that "the truth" is in doubt; therefore, the analysis that follows can "bracket" truth as an issue and avoid ethical judgment or an evaluation of argumentative soundness.

For example, consider two articles published in a special issue on nuclear criticism in the journal now called *Argumentation and Advocacy*. The essays, by Thomas J. Hynes and Cori E. Dauber, are predominantly descriptive, though both make certain critical judgments. After describing the "stratified and highly differentiated group of audiences" for arguments concerning arms negotiations and the presupposition-bound nature of the evidence in such disputes, Hynes draws the conclusion that rational evaluation and resolution are highly unlikely (1988). Similarly, Dauber's study suggests that the interdisciplinary nature of arguments over Soviet nuclear policy intentions makes the development of "validity standards" difficult and that absent such standards "resolution is in fact impossible" (1988, p. 176). Dauber also analyzes a debate over Soviet naval strategy and suggests that one author's position is more probable than another's based on the thoroughness of his methodology. Based on the two examined debates Dauber concludes that work by argument scholars "cannot be of real help" since the determination of appropriate validity standards must be established by "the peculiarities of the dispute at hand" (180). In short, both Hynes and Dauber conclude that, in some cases, argument evaluation is pointless if not impossible because the critic cannot claim to know the truth of the matter.

Obviously the force of my claim that argument evaluation would provide a unique and valuable perspective is undercut if it is concluded that argument evaluation is not a live option with respect to certain public issues, such as those regarding nuclear policy. It can be argued, however, that useful argument evaluation is possible with respect to any issue that is actually argued in the public sphere. Even if a specific clash of arguments cannot be resolved, it does not follow that the debate cannot be usefully evaluated. Speaking of nuclear policy debates Goodnight has suggested that dead-end arguments must be transcended by the critic in order to "open up new possibilities for understanding" such that we "reconstitute the confidence necessary for sober public appraisal and decision" (1983, p. 320).

Hynes and Dauber are quite right to point out that what constitutes evidence for nuclear policy arguers is often bound up with

the arguers' presuppositions concerning the Soviet Union and the general desirability of arms control. However, such evidentiary problems are not unique to foreign policy disputes, nor is it evident that they are a barrier to argument evaluation. In the philosophy and history of science, for example, the theory-dependency of observation, data, and empirical evidence is well known. Yet this does not stop scientists from making reasoned choices of theories (Kuhn 1977). Similarly, the influence of presuppositions on the interpretation of evidence in some nuclear policy disputes has not stopped nuclear policy "experts," politicians, and concerned citizens from engaging in argument and making better or worse reasoned choices. Hynes is able to describe some uses of evidence and argument as "Wonderland like," "easily refuted," and dependent on suspect sign reasoning (1988, pp. 165-66). Furthermore, Dauber's suggestion that one writer's arguments concerning Soviet naval policy are more probable than another's is based on the field-independent values of thoroughness and rigor, even if the instantiation of those values is field-specific (1988, pp. 179-80). Argument evaluation is not the explicit purpose of either scholar's essay. Nevertheless, even as the authors describe the difficulty of providing "easy" resolution to the issues, they provide indications of how they have, apparently, already evaluated the probable truth of some of the conflicting arguments. What an argument evaluation can seek is not necessarily a definitive, final, or "clear" resolution of a controversy, but a comparative assessment of which advocate has made the best case. Accordingly "validity" and "truth" become relative constructs that the argument critic judges at a given point in time. From the perspective of argument evaluation, to do any less is to admit that a preference for a position is arbitrary and nonrational.

Obviously, if one strictly applies Hill's truth-avoidance injunction to the study of argument, then argument evaluation is virtually impossible. One cannot weigh the soundness of competing claims and evidence without some notion of probable truth. Fortunately, scholars like Kane have not completely refrained from comparative assessments such as between rhetorical histories and "what really happened" (1988, p. 144). Also, evaluations such as those gathered in this book either assert truth-claims or at least cite the deficiencies of selected arguers' truth-claims. Nonetheless, on balance, it is likely that another factor in the relative scarcity

of argument evaluation is the sentiment reflected in Hill's truth-avoidance injunction.

The third methodological injunction that functions to discourage argument evaluation can be described as the nonadvocate stance or the principle of nonpartisanship. The clearest exposition of this position is by Rowland, who warns that "the danger in criticism is that the critic will become so involved in the evaluation that he or she will become an advocate for a position. Thus a liberal might not merely critique the arguments of the Reagan administration, but implicitly advocate a Democratic alternative" (1985, p. 129). The solution, according to Rowland, is to avoid "partisan advocacy" and to adopt Scriven's "Principle of Charity" when interpreting and evaluating an argument. The "problem" of advocacy "can be controlled if the critic remembers that his or her role is not to label a claim as wrong, but to expose weaknesses in the argument both to aid the audience in judging the argument and so that the argument can be improved" (p. 129).

Sentiments similar to Rowland's can be found also in recent works by V. William Balthrop and David Zarefsky. Balthrop describes partisan evaluation as reducing the scholar from "sage" to "hack." The hack "is clearly and irresolutely grounded in the political, at least at first appearances. The ideal partisan is concerned with advocacy, with promoting a particularly ideological stance; but the discourse allegedly 'criticized' functions only as pretext and not as exigence" (1987, p. 27). Zarefsky has helped sound the alarm against the "dangers" of partisan ideological criticism by warning that locating critical authority "in the person of the interpreter" can lead to an "extreme nihilism" and a "vicious relativism" (1987, p. 54).

The combined weight of such diatribes is a strong presumption against evaluative judgments by critics that could be called "partisan" or "advocacy." The problem with such a presumption is that—taken at face value—it rules out argument evaluation as such. How can one evaluate an argument as ethical or unethical, good or bad, sound or unsound, without at least implying a preference for certain values, views of reality, or courses of action? A cautious reader might object at this point that the distinctions among advocacy, partisanship, ideology, and value-preference are being blurred here. But in the act of argument evaluation these seemingly separate categories become difficult to distinguish: all evaluation expresses values; all language use is sermonic and

advocates a partial point of view; and, if the argument under assessment is of public interest, the values and point of view cannot help but have a political dimension. Challenging the belief that there is an amoral, nonideological language for scholars to use, Michael Shapiro has suggested that "standard disciplinary practices have made us obtuse to the political content sequestered in the subjects, objects, and relationships we have inherited within both our ordinary and our disciplinary ways of speaking and writing" (1987, p. 366).

Significantly, Balthrop and Zarefsky provide important qualifications to the warnings quoted earlier. Both acknowledge that *all* criticism functions ideologically on one level or another and thus involves partisanship. For example, as Philip Wander has argued, even the act of selecting a text for study has an ideological dimension (1983, 1984). If one selects a text that is not relevant to contemporary issues, one is "choosing" to use criticism in a way that serves to preserve existing social order and power relations. If one selects a politically relevant text, then *any* stance the critic selects will function in a partisan manner. Zarefsky acknowledges this and advocates a stance that is presumptively sympathetic to the speaker; he calls for a "melioristic bias" that "privileges the rhetor's point of view" (1987, p. 56). In short, the notion of value-free, nonideological, nonadvocate, nonpartisan criticism is admitted to be illusory even by those who fear the excesses of the hack.

To say that all criticism and all evaluation are necessarily partisan does not imply that "anything goes." Argument evaluation, like any good scholarship, demands careful attention to the text, defensible methodology, and well-reasoned arguments. At the same time, the methodological injunction identified here as the nonadvocate stance or the principle of nonpartisanship is clearly in need of amendment lest it function as a prohibitive presumption against the value of argument evaluation. Otherwise we risk reducing the role of the argument critic to that of the argument "consultant." It is arguably the case that a self-conscious partisan evaluation of a politically significant argument by a "hack" is preferable to scholarship that *pretends* to be value-free or nonpartisan, but is not.

The norms I have described here may be appropriately labeled *modernist* in orientation. Interestingly enough, despite the deep suspicion of rationality one finds in most postmodernist writings,

most argumentation scholars have relatively little difficulty reconciling argument evaluation with postmodern theories. As pointed out in a number of essays in *Argument and the Postmodern Challenge* (McKerrow 1993), argumentation studies has long embraced most of the antifoundationalist, antiessentialist tenets embraced by postmodern theorists. Furthermore, it is not uncommon to find prominent postmodern theorists that champion the preservation of “practical reason” to continue what they feel is the best of the Enlightenment project. In “What Is Enlightenment?” Michel Foucault calls for a radical continuation of the “critical task” of the Enlightenment project (1984). Jacques Derrida (1988, pp. 111–54) defends the ability to evaluate arguments—including the strength and truth of claims—and denies that he is an irrationalist: “To the contrary, I am for a certain type of reason, *Aufklärung* [Enlightenment] rationality” (in Gonzáles-Marin 1987, p. 181, translated by Ramsey Eric Ramsey). And Ernesto Laclau claims that, in the absence of any “ultimate ground” for argument, we need to return to the “Aristotelian notion of *phronesis*” to evaluate claims since it is through argument that we construct “social reality” (1988, p. 79). To be sure, the “rationality” sought here is more modest than that envisioned in the past; postmodern theorists are more conscious of historical and cultural contingency, more cautious of power and privilege, and more suspicious of claims of what is “normal” and “natural,” than their Enlightenment foreparents. But it is clear from a brief reading of any postmodern author that one can admit that one’s arguments are only *probably* true, time-bound, and thoroughly ideological and *still* want to make claims—including claims about the usefulness, validity, or strength of other arguers’ claims.

I will resist the temptation to provide further theoretical justification for the project of argument evaluation. The point of this book is to feature case studies of argument evaluation, not add yet another volume to the “theory wars” of argumentation studies. Argument theory is important, but the ability to utilize and apply a theory to explicate and evaluate an argument is even more important. Unless scholars and students of argument can *use* a theory, such a theory is—by definition—*useless*. It is at that point that argument scholars end up quite literally just talking to themselves.

THE CASE STUDIES

This book brings together a set of exemplary essays that demonstrate the art of argument evaluation. Collectively the essays serve as a bridge between more abstract, theoretical works, such as those found in Cox and Willard's *Advances in Argumentation Theory and Research* and Williams and Hazen's *Argumentation Theory and the Rhetoric of Assent*, and the many argumentation and debate textbooks on the market. Too often, provocative theories of argument are generated that never engage historically situated examples of argument. Or, in the case of most textbooks, the examples of fallacies provided are so patently problematic that they can be critiqued with little to no familiarity with advanced argumentation theory or other sorts of scholarly literature. The virtue of the essays assembled in this collection is that they apply a variety of theoretical approaches to specific, historically situated arguments in order to render a specific normative judgment. Furthermore, by bringing to bear knowledge of argumentation theory along with expertise pertaining to the specific arguments under investigation, the essays illustrate the utility of argument evaluation as a discrete mode of scholarly engagement.

The essays are divided into four parts. The first three gather together works that share common presuppositions concerning the purpose of argument evaluation. The fourth pulls together three different approaches to a single, extended argument. Part 1, *Epistemological Approaches to Argument Evaluation*, brings together three essays that are fueled by the premise that argument is epistemic (cf. Thomas). Believing that argumentation is a useful process through which to produce knowledge about the world, each essay purports to assess the epistemic usefulness of a particular set of arguments. Marilyn J. Young and Michael K. Launer bring to bear a traditional set of evaluative criteria on conspiracy arguments in general, and conspiracy arguments regarding the shooting down of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 in particular. Following David Zarefsky, the authors believe that conspiracy argument has become a "staple of American political discourse" and hence demand the attention of argumentation scholars. Focusing on David Pearson's influential article, "K.A.L. 007: What the U.S. Knew and When We Knew It," the authors identify argumentative moves that made the article persuasive as well as critique what they believe to be crucial flaws in Pearson's argument. By analyz-

ing Pearson's sign reasoning, methods of amplification, and quasi-logical arguments, the authors provide a convincing critique of Pearson's case. Equally important is their move to situate their "formalist" critique as an alternative to Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm as a means of understanding conspiracy discourse.

Carol K. Winkler shares the uneasiness of the authors of the previous essay with respect to the persuasive influence of narrative. Though Winkler does not deny the idea that narratives are epistemic, her study argues that some stories provide better ways of knowing than others. Specifically, Winkler critiques George Bush's use of a "terrorist" narrative to define, explain, and defend his military actions during the Persian Gulf War. Her argument is that by reframing the conflict between the United States and Iraq within a terrorist narrative, Bush was able to recast the arguments regarding military action in terms much more favorable for him that mark "an important shift in the conventional public debate about decisions to go to war." Winkler expresses concern that such a narrative positions the American citizenry as "onlookers to a terrorist event" rather than as active collaborators forging a national decision whether to go to war. Not only did Bush's argumentation shift the burden of proof to opponents of the war, but it sets the stage for similar "storytelling" in the future. Winkler sounds an important warning that "the redefinition of what constitutes an acceptable rationale for military engagement obfuscates a more conventional, cautious approach to entry into war."

Dennis S. Gouran's essay also focuses on argument in a decision-making process; in this case the decision to launch the ill-fated space shuttle *Challenger*. Gouran argues that the decision to launch the *Challenger* in the face of what now appear to be obvious risks was based on a combination of a gradual shift of presumption (that one had to prove a launch was *unsafe* rather than *safe*), faulty risk analysis, and fallacious reasoning on the occasion of this particular launch. In addition to failures that "even a beginning student in logic" should catch, Gouran suggests there was also a failure of persuasive argument. Different arguers' definition of their "place" and claims cast in pseudoneutral language, for example, encouraged a less than robust decision-making environment. Gouran's essay nicely illustrates the utility of social psychological research for the understanding and evaluation of situated argumentation, while simultaneously noting the importance of traditional models for evaluating specific chains of inference.

Part 2, *Axiological Approaches to Argument Evaluation*, is comprised of three essays that make ethical appraisals of arguments. Kathryn M. Olson's essay is an ethical appraisal of arguments among members of the Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC) regarding whether the new church should have mandatory "inclusiveness percentages" for church governing bodies. Weaving together elements of Henry W. Johnstone's "Basic Imperative" for ethical argument and Wayne Booth's criteria for an effective "rhetorical stance," Olson praises certain advocates for aligning "ethicality and effectiveness" in persuading the group to adopt inclusiveness standards. Through a judicious combination of Johnstone and Booth, Olson suggests that critics can avoid the apparent extremes of amoral descriptions of argument effects and normative yet pragmatically vacuous assessments. Two other aspects of Olson's essay are noteworthy. First, her essay examines "situated" argument in the most obvious sense of the word. That is, her study involved field work in which she tape-recorded and transcribed many hours of argument among the members of the CNLC. Such original research, especially in argumentation studies, is all too rare. Furthermore, her essay concentrates on the positive characteristics of the arguments she observed. Setting aside purely effects-oriented studies in argumentation, how many studies are there that result in positive assessments? Not many. Thus, Olson's essay is exemplary in terms of its theoretical contribution, data collection, and ethical purpose.

Ralph E. Dowling and Gabrielle A. Ginder offer a critical assessment of Ronald Reagan's arguments in defense of his decision to invade Grenada in 1983 based on a "democratic orientation" to argumentation. While Olson derives her ethical precepts from Johnstone's ontological approach to argument, Dowling and Ginder's are based on Dennis G. Day's and Thomas R. Nilsen's explication of ethical norms that are necessary for free and open political decisions. In a democracy, Dowling and Ginder maintain, one not only needs to produce defensible decisions (ends), but they must be arrived at through an ethical process (means). Dowling and Ginder contend that democratic decision making depends on an ethic requiring that important evidence is made available, that arguments are made clearly and understandably, and that arguments are directed toward audiences with respect for their well-being. Through a careful study of the arguments advanced by the Reagan administration on behalf of the military

action in Grenada, Dowling and Ginder suggest that they were the antithesis of ethical argument. The authors do not pull their punches: "the President lied" to the American people and concealed or withheld the information necessary for an informed public opinion. Their conclusion, which may seem obvious but is far from trivial, is that democracies cannot survive unless the ethical norms required for political argument are respected.

Jeffrey L. Courtright turns to a set of specialized texts that are too often neglected by scholars of argument: dissenting opinions in Supreme Court decisions. In addition to making the case that this much-maligned genre of argument deserves our careful study, Courtright provides a case study of an ethical assessment of one dissenting opinion in particular. Like Olson, Courtright turns to Johnstone's work for a set of ethical precepts with which to analyze his text; in this case, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's dissent in *Metro Broadcasting, Inc. v. FCC*. After carefully describing O'Connor's "rhetorical situation," Courtright analyzes her dissenting opinion in light of four ethical duties identified by Johnstone: resoluteness, openness, gentleness, and compassion. Courtright contends that O'Connor's dissenting opinion does, in fact, instantiate Johnstone's ethical duties—a conclusion made all the more compelling by a provocative conclusion in which Courtright contrasts O'Connor's dissenting style with that of Justice Anthony Kennedy. Courtright's and Olson's essays are useful complements as collectively they illustrate the utility of Johnstone's ethical framework for "lay" and "expert" arguers alike.

The essays that make up Part 3, *Ideological Approaches to Argument Evaluation*, are united by an interest in the political dimensions of argumentation studies. All three essays share the beliefs that public discourse is typically (or always) infused with ideological interests, that an appropriate task of the critic is to identify such interests and commend or condemn them, and that the critic's discourse is also infused with ideological interests. In the essay by Kathryn M. Olson and Clark D. Olson, the competing positions articulated by the prosecuting attorneys and the defendants in the so-called sanctuary trial are examined for their respective ideological commitments. Olson and Olson illustrate that the arguments proffered by each side represent incompatible constellations of ontological, epistemological, and axiological beliefs. They argue that the prosecution benefited by the judge's ideology which, after all, is the one most able to direct the course

and outcome of the trial. As a result, Olson and Olson suggest that “jurors may have been drawn to the prosecution’s ideology because it was the only complete, internally consistent position” allowed to be presented in court by the judge. In contrast, Olson and Olson provide their own, self-admittedly partisan, set of reasons for preferring the ideological commitments represented by the defendants’ position.

Mary Keehner’s essay is a feminist critique of current arguments that are framed as fetal “versus” women’s rights. Keehner examines the arguments concerning companies’ legal right to exclude women from jobs that may represent a hazard to future (potential) fetuses and suggests that they are infused with assumptions that are patriarchal, class-biased, and rooted in a gendered liberal legal theory. Such assumptions are harmful to women in three ways. First, important economic interests are obfuscated that impact women and men unevenly. Second, current arguments take the male as “normal” and define women as “other,” thereby reinforcing sexism in general. Third, current arguments pit women against their own potential unborn children, thereby framing other issues related to women’s rights as a zero-sum gain—what the woman gains, unborn children lose. Keehner’s critique is distinctive because she offers an alternative framework for understanding fetal protection; one that replaces the male body as “normal” with that of the pregnant female. Such a framework, Keehner suggests, would enhance workplace safety for men and women, cease to pit women against fetuses, and serve as a counterweight to seeing women as “other.”

Rebecca S. Bjork’s study identifies and critiques the ideological functions served by arguments concerning the desirability of the “Global Protection Against Limited Strikes” (GPALS) missile-defense program. Bjork contends that in post-cold war foreign policy, anticommunist ideology has been replaced by a political understanding that sees the most significant antiAmerican threats coming from the so-called third world. Drawing from Edward W. Said’s analysis of Orientalism, Bjork suggests that the argumentative discourse used to justify U.S. hegemony in foreign policy in general, and particularly to support the Persian Gulf War and the GPALS program, defines Americans and “others” with a set of overly simplistic dualisms (modern/backward, civilized/savage, rational/irrational, good/evil). Bjork suggests that arguments on behalf of the program perpetuate the ideology of colonialism,

“along with its racist and sexist implications.” Like the previous two essays, Bjork’s essay is explicitly self-reflexive. She notes her own ideological commitments and calls upon all scholars to be “vigilant and aware of the power and implications of their work.”

The fourth and final part of this book consists of three approaches to arguments in and about the 1986 *Final Report of the Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography* (hereafter *Report*). These three essays illustrate very different approaches to the practice of argument evaluation. Not surprisingly, the authors end up with distinct results. Ian Fielding focuses very specifically on the causal argument presented in the *Report* between exposure to pornography and subsequent acts of sexual violence. Fielding contends that the causal argument plays a crucial role in the overall *Report* and is decisive for determining its usefulness for public policy decisions. Fielding charges the *Report* with various weaknesses, including a lack of clarity in its definition of “pornography” and “harms,” and the lack of specific standards for assessing evidence, especially that provided by witnesses. Drawing on Stephen Toulmin’s model of argument, Fielding suggests that the crucial warrant and backing connecting the *Report*’s evidence of harms with the claim that pornography is the cause is simply inadequate for the purposes of public policy-making.

While Fielding’s concerns are epistemological, Catherine Helen Palczewski’s interests are ideological. Her essay is an in-depth feminist analysis of how “survivor testimony” regarding the effects of pornography is framed and assessed by different audiences. Criticisms such as Fielding’s, Palczewski suggests, are fueled in part by ideological commitments that devalue the concrete lived-experiences of women. For Palczewski, feminism “is defined by the politicization of the personal,” thus the assessment of testimony of witnesses who have suffered the effects of pornography is an inescapably political act. Palczewski’s response to critiques such as Fielding’s is straightforward: “personal testimony should not be dismissed so easily.” Palczewski traces the history of the *Report*’s survivor testimony back to similar hearings on an antipornography ordinance in Minneapolis (proposed by Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin). Palczewski sees important differences between the two hearings, however, which result in very different argumentative uses of the witnesses’ testimony. While leaving space for other forms of argument and evidence on the effects of pornography, Palczewski defends survivor testimony as a useful

form of argument from example that empowers survivors and speaks important truths.

Gerard A. Hauser's essay approaches the *Report* axiologically as an "argumentative instrument of legitimation" that functions to reconfigure public discourse. "The expressed hope of the commission," Hauser notes, "was to encourage public discussion on the issue of pornography's effects on its consumers and on the community." However, such discussion did not materialize. Hauser suggests there were, in effect, two reports by the commission. One was a digest of the commission's findings by Frederick Schauer. Hauser finds this report "scholarly," "evenhanded," and "reasonable," yet its substance received scant attention. The "second" report was that which was seized upon by the press. Hauser suggests that the media focused on such factors as the commission's composition, its scanty budget, the *Report's* methodological flaws, the *Report's* extensive sections that claimed to document the harms of pornography, and the perception that the *Report's* antipornography stance was a done deal even before they had begun work—all of which Hauser regards as fair game for criticism. Hauser suggests that if what he calls the first version of the report—the Schauer summary—had been the focus, a productive "national debate on pornography might have ensued." But because the *Report* was perceived by the press as a strident, all-out assault on freedom of expression, debate in the media focused on the propriety of the commission's activities and methods. Ultimately, Hauser concludes, the Meese Commission bears the responsibility for this misdirected debate: The *Report* "did not promote discussion on pornography because it did not provide insight into pornography."

As the preceding summary demonstrates, the essays collectively engage an important and interesting range of issues. Obviously, a number of senses of "argument" are at work, reflecting the variety of methods and theories now popular in argumentation studies in general. Yet all of the essays imply a commonly shared belief that argumentation is a type of discourse that we expect more of than other sorts of communication. Or, put another way, the argumentation *perspective* enacted in these essays encourages readers to ask more of the discourse they encounter.

Furthermore, all of these essays demonstrate the authors' fluency in the expert literature most relevant to the topic of their

essays. They encourage readers not only to learn more about argumentation theory, but to learn something more about the Supreme Court, foreign policy, feminisms, pornography, and a host of other topics. Most important, they encourage us to see the crucial link between what are often viewed as timeless, abstract theoretical principles and the timely, concrete practical questions that face us every day. By providing models for deciding how and when to grant our assent to argument, I can think of no better illustration of the usefulness of argument evaluation.

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