



Burning Bridges

Zen and the Art of Judge Adaptation

by
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The following trip is fictional. Only the names are real to embarrass the guilty. Though the subject may appear to be policy debate, LD'rs, Extempers, Orators and Congress competitors might also profit from this article. If anybody can.

First Constructive

It is 5:30 a.m. and three people have yet to show for the departure of the bus ten minutes ago. If we don't make it to Fort Scott on time they will gladly save their judges, make us forfeit the first round and the novices will be crushed. They're all here, looking distinctly green at the prospect of their first tournament. I smile- by Monday the miracle will have happened and they will mystically be debaters.

It's the advanced debaters that are late. This isn't too surprising, either. Two of the three are vastly under-prepared for the first tournament, and the third is a four time lifer who is probably going to live down to everyone's expectations. This does not make me smile.

It's going to be a long day.

Now, Dearest Reader, if your state doesn't do its tournament season much like ours, I still think you will see a close comparison to the opening weekend in your state. You probably have I.E. folks on the bus, and like most of that species they are bouncing off the wall like the wonderfully strange people they are. Instead we have only policy debaters, and the advanced debaters are right now terrorizing the novice debaters with how hard debate will be. Stories are gleefully told of youngsters fainting; of losing control of vital functions and puddling the floor. This is the type of institutionalized child abuse that is hazing,

competitive speech style.

We have had all of one month of school to prepare for this tournament. Naturally, some of the advanced debaters have gone to debate camps of various "power" and some of the others waited till last night to begin their affirmative cases. This is all part of growing up; off we will go, the prepared and the unprepared, the clean and the unwashed, and the young and not so beautiful and hopefully all of us will return.

There are a pair of headlights entering the parking lot- another sheep or two are entering the fold.

It is the beginning of my twenty-third year of debate coaching. There is absolutely nothing new here that I haven't seen before, but the tumult of adolescent angst around me could make a rock tremble. So I am nearly as out of control as my students.

But this day will give me an opportunity to do some reflecting upon the Great Schism that has grown larger and deeper during my long career. The split, already formed by the time of my rookie year of teaching, is between the Young Lions and the Old Bears; the College Crazies and the Old Fogies; the New Wave and the Guys With Their Fingers in the Dike. It has grown from a minor nuisance to a real obstacle in the way of doing my job; the education of the drastically unprepared to play the most difficult game that our schools offer- policy debate.

All three ne'er de wells stumble out of the newly arrived car. They enter the bus, each with a different excuse of why they are late. Each of them lay the blame on somebody else. Ignoring the fact that this is impossible, I give them The Glare. They shut up and sit. I tell Justin, our Debate Soccer

Dad, to close the doors and floor it for Fort Scott, well, at least as much as a twenty-year-old bus loaded with twenty students and a couple of tons of tubs can be floored.

You see, I'm not looking forward to this day. I know that the results of the tournament will be disappointing for some of my students, but that's the point of the game. It's why I'm being paid about a dollar an hour to preside over this activity with one hundred and fifty debaters. But I am not looking forward to explaining to my debaters why their judges acted in the manner that they did.

This is not to say that judges used to be straight arrow members of the First Church of Conformity. In every state there are legends of freaks and geeks and the terminally confused that suddenly appeared at tournaments on a mission to do the inexplicable. Among many, my favorite is the judge who smiled and nodded all the way through a hard fought round conducted at the pace of a raging river, only to stand up at the conclusion and state "I speak no English. And dude, if this English, I never do."

Or the judge whose cell phone rang in the first speech of a semi-final round. "Yes?" What's he doing out there? All right, put him on. Honey, get off the bridge. You know we can't afford for you to die right now." Waving the speaker on, she eventually reached a satisfactory conclusion by the end of the speech, which the debaters believed was giving her hubby her blessing to take the plunge. She voted negative because the affirmative was confusing.

I really have nothing against these judges; twenty-three years proves we do survive them. But the truly disturbing trend involved the comments on the ballots; the

four letter words, the personal insults, the "nice tie- you lose" comments, and most infuriating- "Oral".

Sarah, who everyone says is anal compulsive, but whom I prefer to call a worry wart, appears by my shoulder asking to read me her IAC again. "Is it any different from yesterday?" I ask.

"No," she whispers, "but I'm afraid if I stumble I'll go overtime."

"Sarah, yesterday it was five minutes long. If you stumble that much today you'll need a podiatrist." She retreats. Sometimes a good word like podiatrist shuts up a freshman.

And like I noted before, the relationship between the two camps are not getting any better. In the natural scheme of things, the Old Fogies either die out or take up careers of selling insurance, and the New Wave wins until they become the old Fogies. But not so, the Old Members of the New Wave (I guess the ones that crashed on the beach a few years ago) quickly pick up the flow sheets of the fallen and refill the crotchety ranks of the Good Old Boys. This happens about the time they start paying Serious Taxes. And war begins anew.

And this puzzles me. It seems so childish, so unprofessional to blame every bad decision on the perceived bullheadedness of the other camp. It is disgustingly common to witness coaches going bonkers over ballots; behaviors which the debaters watch, make note of and imitate.

I'd have to say that of any career, debate coaches get less respect from their peers than any other I have encountered. There aren't that many of us, and you would think we would find ourselves on the plus side of the activity. And call me insecure, but it bothers me that somehow I missed being the Old Sage on the Mountain and went straight to Fool on the Hill.

"Yo," quoth Justin, his eyebrows arched at me in the mirror. I turn and a novice lady is bent over a seat, her skirt somewhere around Tennessee, quickly crossing the Mason Dixon Line. "Ashley, sit in your seat like a safe baby." She pops back with her mouth full of cereal. I don't want to know why.

I guess I can live with professional jealousies. But mostly all this tumult bothers me because I feel like I'm failing as a teacher. It is not my nature to write off either camp of coaches and judges as beyond understanding, and I refuse to deny the ballot to the "lay" judge, which from the size of debate programs in Kansas must judge a

majority of rounds. I'll admit that I have a good scratch for the itch of the lay judge, and we have more than our share of success with them (perhaps explaining the Fool status). But the others, the very people who also love the activity upon which my livelihood depends, still remain a mystery to me. And hostile. Very unpleasant indeed.

So, on this trip to Fort Scott, the third weekend of September Two Thousand and One, I want you to climb on the bus with me and see if we can try to find common ground in the judging of policy debate. If we can, then those of us who believe that judge adaptation should be part of our expertise might find some ground to begin to do our jobs again.

Prep Time

Of course, some of you have caught the echo of my essay. In the mid 1970's, a very brilliant man published a book titled *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. The book remains a solid seller, a for the best of reasons; it is well written, astoundingly wise, and packs a punch in its final pages that denied me a night's sleep even the third time I read it. This summer I was blessed to teach a summer school class with ZMM as the text. This was a teacher's dream; six excellent students for four hours a day, four days a week for fourteen sessions. I felt like I was stealing money.

Towards the end of the book, Robert Pirsig states that the reader is now prepared to write a book dealing not with motorcycle maintenance but with some issue of the reader's concern. I'll take him at his word, and write an essay that will shamelessly steal his ideas and in tribute title it "Zen and the Art of Judge Adaptation." If he sues me, his lawyers will starve.

Second Constructive

It really shouldn't surprise us that debate is divided into two warring camps. In fact, even the briefest study of the history of interscholastic debate reveals a bitter conflict between advocates of "rhetoric" and proponents of "substance." I once listened to a college coach complain how Larry Tribe (now Laurence Tribe to you buddy- media source and guru of constitutional law) ruined debate by his excessive speed in the final round of the college National Debate Tournament. That was in the early sixties.

But our clash only mirrors a wider split within our society. This is between two "learning platforms" called classical and

romantic. A learning platform is the starting place for us in our approach to our thinking. It is the launching pad of our rationality.

This platform is largely constructed for us by our parents, our families, friends, and culture. We interviewed a young mother during our class, while her enchantingly beautiful one-year-old daughter charmed the room. I asked her if she saw any resemblances between her daughter and any other member of her family. "Oh, yes," she said, "Everyday she is more and more her Grandma Katie." Katie was a feminist when feminism wasn't cool; who started her own funeral parlor, and who learned from a young age if you wanted something and you're a woman, you have to go out and get it." Looking fondly at her daughter she said, "And Lydia is going to be exactly the same way." When she left, one of my students said, "Lydia is doomed to be Grandma Katie."

So, here in the land of the free and John Rucker used to be a Brave, much of our choices in life are among those that we have been conditioned to see as choices.

The squad nerd is asleep, which is a blessing. But his mouth is open and he is drooling on the lace covered shoulder of his unsuspecting debate partner. I toss a mental coin as to what to do and it lands on edge. I do nothing.

Now this platform is critical because it dictates where we start to reason. Let's take the scientific method. We are told that after observation, the next step is the proposal of the hypothesis to be tested. What the method doesn't tell us is where the hypothesis comes from. Let's say I am standing with my team outside a room, and the stereotypical "little old lady" toddles in. "Easy," I say, "Slow down." I just doomed my team, because I told them to treat the judge like a mental defective. My hypothesis, which gets only one test, is based on a learning platform of snap judgments and surface appearances. This is the romantic platform; surface appearance is all-important, gut emotion is key to decisions, and to delve too deeply into anything is to invite in the arch demon BOREDOM.

The droolee has noticed the puddle on her shoulder. She slowly reaches down and places a plastic sheet cover between the shoulder and the flood. Grace is found in the most unusual of places.

But this is not to say that the romantic platform is wrong. It works very well for most of the population, because it encour-

ages art and awe. There are debaters on my squad who are romantics that do very well, because they appeal to the vast majority of the judges. In a state where the judge is more like to be a "civvie" than not, the chances that your judge will understand your classical "analysis" is small.

Because analysis is what constructs the classical platform. Classical reasoning looks beneath the surface; in fact the surface interests it not at all. Classical reasoning wants to know how things work. Classical reasoning loves kritiks, disadvantages, and quotations the length of *War and Peace*. Romantics think funding arguments are really cool. And deep.

Is it any wonder that we can't get along?

You see this division in the judge's lounge of every tournament. The group of judges over snarfing the Oreos are not talking style, they're talking arguments. Naturally they think that their decisions are the proper ones, or they wouldn't be discussing them. Now toddling into their midst is the little old lady after doing her duty and casting a ballot- a blank ballot. She watched the debate as if it was in another language, and at the end she voted, and can't really say why because the experience was so baffling.

And much to the rage of the debaters and the disgust of the New Wave, she was right. From her learning platform, from the way she approaches the very act of thinking, the debate was in a different language. For this she pays the price of disrespect.

We are thirty minutes down the road to Fort Scott and the top of the sun has struck Justin's face, making him squint with one eye like Long John Silver. Soccer Dad is a science teacher, and when he judges debates he is most enraged when some debater tries to tell him about species extinction and global warming. "You want me to vote for ignorance?" he growls. The debater tells him he shouldn't intervene. "I'm not a fool. I'm a science teacher."

The problem now shifts to the fact that rational argument can never prove which platform is better. The fact that most of the best debaters in college are classical thinking does not deny the validity of the romantic platform. Coaches who teach judges clinics often try to turn romantic thinkers into classical thinkers in one easy lesson. The result is a completely confused judge, who is as random as any judge can be.

Why is it irrational? Because the

learning platform is the final stage of our thinking before rationality kicks in. Our platform tells not only how we think, but also what is worth thinking about.

Please forgive me for my non-scholarly approach, but I read the following in a textbook on group discussion by Diana Prentice and Jim Payne. It was called "The Hierarchy of Processes" and it said that the first process is:

1. **The Senses**- these are constantly on the prowl, looking for sensations. When a sensation happens there is

2. **Perception**- hey, there's something that may be going on! Still at the subconscious level, this perception battles its way through our raging brains mulling sex, dinosaurs and Nutter-Butters to perhaps reach

3. **Awareness**- This is something I had better do something about. It is only then BUT AT THE SAME MOMENT that we begin

4. **Cogitation**- we think about what we are becoming aware. It is this initial approach that begins with our learning platform. If I'm a romantic, I will observe the surface, the presentation and the style. If I am classical, I will begin immediately to dissect what I am aware of. This is the split that frustrates us; the source of all our conflicts in which we condemn the other camp for being dolts or nitpickers. It is truly a division that is beyond debate, because it occurs before the split occurs.

5. **Evaluation and Action**- at the end of the process, we do what rationality tells us to do. It's pretty rare to find a judge so perverse that she makes a decision against what she thinks rationality tells her is right.

I turn to look behind at the bus, now suffused with an amber glow that makes my students younger, like escapees from fifth grade on a field trip. The exception is Matt, a senior who has high expectations for this year. The light catches him frowning; grimacing- he looks like a soldier about to enter battle. I hurt for him, because I know that he is thinking this day rests in his file boxes and his classical mind, and many of his judges will not agree.

Third Constructive

So far I have painted a grim picture that seems to prove that we are doomed forever to condemn each other for our foolishness, when foolishness has nothing to do with it. But what we have already observed, if you agree with it as a reasonable description of what occurs when we watch

a round of debate, or watch a movie, or decide whom we shall marry, contains the seeds for a solution. And to plant those seeds, we have to understand some of the truths of Zen.

In *ZMM*, Pirsig early writes that the book has very little to do with Zen. Most readers take him at face value, as we tend to do when we are romantics and a novel is in the first person. But the book is loaded with Zen, because Zen is the only way we can enter the emptiness of Awareness and leave rationality behind. Reason, even though it occurs at the same time as awareness, is not awareness, and without awareness reason does not even begin.

This is going to be difficult. It's tough for an Old Foggy to explain a new concept, especially when he has accepted spiritually (an irrational act) that rationality is supreme. But here goes.

The definition of Zen, according to Bodhidharma, the Twenty-eighth Patriarch is

A special transmission outside of scriptures.
No dependence on words or letters.
Direct pointing to the soul of the human.
Seeing into one's nature and becoming Buddha.

As Bill Cosby would say "RIIIGGHHT!" What does it mean?

We start with the first line. Zen really is a tool to find spiritual enlightenment. We may be wandering around in any part of our existence, wondering how the heck we got there and begin wondering- why am I here? It doesn't have to be the meaning of life, or death. It may be on any troubling idea or action. There is enlightenment to any problem, and this enlightenment is so hard to grasp because it cannot be written down. You can claim any book (including *ZMM*) has all the answers, but everyone else is going to look in vain except for some enlightenment.

The example is the book itself. I read *ZMM* just after college and I was pretty impressed with it. But I put it away and didn't pick it up again for 25 years. I traveled a much longer road, and the next time I picked up the book it was if it was rewritten for me. I underlined passages, scribbled in the margins, determined that I had gleaned its wisdom and then put it away again. Then this summer I was asked to teach the book. I got out my dog-eared copy and was appalled by all the important stuff I missed.

Now, I could give this copy to you, and you could admire all the highlighting, brackets and the mustard smears from Burger King (I'm the type that thinks best

with food in my mouth). But until you can reach past the words as words, you will understand nothing. The enlightenment lies not in the scriptures (the writing), but in the contemplation of them.

As long as you think you understand that, let me tell you a story.

There was a judge in the Topeka area many years ago named Horace Ewbanks. Horace was about as old as the Buddha when I started coaching, and he absolutely infuriated me. He was completely unpredictable, and my teams seemed to provoke him to scrawl in a shaky hand, "Affirmative team should read Aristotelian rhetoric," and then drop us on a 3-4. "Right," I would snarl, "I'll dedicate a couple of months to it in class."

Finally, about a year ago, I realized that Horace was talking Zen. He really didn't think we would read Aristotle now- we were far too cocky and sure of ourselves to lower ourselves to read rhetoric. He knew we would see absolutely nothing in it- yet. IT WOULD BE WHEN, DRIVEN BY DESPERATION, WE WOULD PICK UP ARISTOTLE LOOKING FOR ANSWERS; the very moment we became AWARE enough to understand the point of the game. It is the judges that you are trying to understand and impress. If we had ever picked that up, we would have picked up Horace. Bless him!

That takes us to the third line of the poem. We can whine about all we want about our "unreasonable" judges, like Horace, but the fact remains that the control over the debate does not rest in the mouth of the speaker, it is clutched in the perception of the speaker in the mind of the judge! Now slow down and consider that again. The power of the decision of the debate is not in my files, or my 1AC, or in my super-fast tongue, or even in my manly fleck of spit on my bottom lip. The decision is outside of myself, in the soul of my judge. And what the soul of the judge perceives is not just my arguments, the judge perceives me. That is what is being judged, regardless of any paradigm you wish the judge to claim. Judges MUST judge on what they perceive, and therefore I must learn what they perceive. I must learn myself.

This is NOT what we are doing now. We are missing the point by spending hours on our tubs, practicing speeding with pencils between our bleeding lips, and cursing the judge when we lose. This is the false path. The Enlightened Path is to discover what judges perceive in us and to follow two regimes - Strengthen Our Strengths and

Lessen Our Weaknesses.

Let me get corny and rewrite the poem of Zen and Judge Adaptation

A mystical exchange that is more than just argument.

No amount of evidence or analyticals may change it.

It is a direct opening of the self to the critic.

Letting the Other into yourself and being Better.

Yeah, I know it's not very mystical to write this, but Yee-Haw! Contemplate it, and find Enlightenment. Until you do, the rest of this will be Non-Sense.

The sun shines in my eyes as we pass by a town where debate died. A fine coach presided over a successful program that challenged much bigger schools for years. But a couple of years ago she gave up, saying she was tired of her kids being heckled by judges who said her kids were stupid because they didn't give standards when they ran topicality, and for other such heinous sins. There was no one really to replace her, and certainly no one who wanted to give up their weekends. So the program died.

Prep Time

I'm pretty dense. Everyone who knows me will cheerfully tell you that. But when I get a good idea it generally really is a good idea. This has been my one salvation from getting fired for denseness. And as a survival tactic, not getting fired is a great idea. So I'm about as serious about this Zen stuff as I can be.

Now you may say that everything I've told you is Painfully Obvious, but my answer is that you do not understand it. I can almost guarantee that you don't, and we have never met.

I can make this claim because

1. Debaters have egos (one of the more classic understatement)
2. Ego always interferes with communication and is
3. More basic than your rationality. You can tell me you KNOW that you must adapt to judges, but you still don't DO it, so you do NOT know it.

Example - one of my graduated debaters is on the college circuit, and this summer she returned to tell me about a current college debater (Andy Ryan of the University of Iowa)

who is widely feared and greatly impressive. "He doesn't like, talk fast! He talks, like about as fast as I am talking, like, to you now!" (Um, yea, she does like, speak pretty fast).

Wouldn't the obvious lesson be that speed is irrelevant to brilliance in some debaters? Yet why did all my debaters report that at college debate camp they were coached in how to speed? Hmmm.

Fourth Constructive

So now we step back a step in the Hierarchy of Processes, from Rationality to Awareness. Remember that cognition (thinking) starts at the same moment as awareness, so if we want judges to appreciate our brilliance we must increase their awareness of us.

No, not by shouting, or interrupting our opponent, or tag team cross, or any of those other dirty tricks which debaters have invented that irritate judges just far enough from losing the ballot that debaters think they work. Zen says we must open our soul to the judge, and that means another enlightenment. I hope we survive it.

The bus is waking up. There is a growing muttering and chuckling. This is one of my favorite moments of a debate trip. The warriors are getting ready for battle.

ZMM spends about half of the book talking about the concept that I will try to explain now. I'll pop it on you quickly, and then I'll discuss it at some length so that in some explanation I might surprise you with what is meant. The concept is Quality. In the great paradox of Zen, I cannot define it for you. All I can do is talk around it so that you may catch its essence.

Explanation one: Return to the Hierarchy of Processes, where the romantic and the classical thinkers take their leaves from each other, the simultaneous stages of Awareness and Cognition. Remember that the romantic thinker and the classical thinkers both reach the stage of Awareness and begin Cogitation at the same moment, but they go different directions. The key to understanding Awareness is to recognize that Awareness is from recognition of Quality. In this sense, Quality demands our attention. Of all the events and sensations bombarding us at any particular moment. THIS ONE needs to be dealt with.

Mundane example - I walk into the teacher workroom at lunch. Someone is eating spicy left over Indian cuisine. Of all the

possible smells, this one demands attention. It has Quality. I might begin to analyze the smell (is that curry?) or remember fond memories of spicy meals past. But it is the Quality (not just the perception - there are many smells) that attracts my Awareness.

Specific Example - I am listening to a debater spew her IAC. I am lost, and even though I drop my pen and all but shout my confusion, she tumbles on, out of control. I become fascinated with her right hand, cutting up and down like a precise meat cleaver. Why do I focus on that? Because it is the only Quality I understand.

Explanation two: All judges judge on Quality. It is absolutely inevitable. A debate speech is an explosion of sensations, or worse, very few sensations that register at all. This can be because there is too little Quality, or possible (not very often) too much. I have been overwhelmed with fabulous debaters, so much so that they almost lose the round because I cannot grasp them. You've had the same experience with teachers, right?

Explanation three: All right, teachers. You've had good ones and bad ones, and hopefully at least one great one. How do you judge teachers? You may give me adjectives, obscenities or stories, but you cannot tell me precisely why a teacher is great, good or bad. The essence of a teacher is Quality, and Quality is inexpressible.

Over there is Rob. I absolutely adore him. He is completely cool. He is also on probation and I am the only teacher in the school who would allow him to escape unscathed from a dark alley. He is still asleep, a leer upon his lips. You may say that I see a Quality in him that other teachers (and prosecutors) do not. I completely disagree. He lets me see Quality in him and refuses to let other authority figures see it.

On the first day of class, teachers and students do the dance of Quality. Is this going to be a good class? Is the hard work worth the benefits? Counselor appointment, please! The counselor asks why you want to change, and you make some lame-o excuse like "it doesn't seem like fun" or "it's boring." I'm not saying you are right or wrong - I'm saying you know why the class is good or bad but are unable to express it. That is Quality.

Explanation four: Of course, Quality can be good or bad. If I make you angry the first day of class, you drop it because it has Bad Quality. If on the other hand you are intrigued with the idea that here is a teacher who not only wants to argue with you but

insists on it, you have perceived Good Quality. Obviously, as debaters, we want judges to see Good Quality, so they want to vote for us. We agree on that, right? Nothing revolutionary so far. Even though we cannot define Good Quality, we still want it.

Explanation five: Now comes the hard part- almost all of us agree on Quality - whether it is good or bad, whether it is the same as what other people call Quality. This is because Quality is something we see indirectly, out of the corner of our eye.

This isn't mystical. Look at my hand. Right now it has a nasty scar on the back of it from an unfortunate encounter with a pair of scissors (my mommy told me, but did I listen?). You also note the chewed fingernails, and the black nail I smashed it in a car door). Some klutz huh? You may say, 'ugly hand you got there.' But how do you know that? Only by comparison with other hands you have seen. In the great spectacle of hands that have marched past your eyes, you have created a view of Quality of hands, and mine is definitely below par. When something is taken completely by itself, in comparison with nothing, it can have no Quality.

Explanation six: Ah, you say, Quality comes from experience, and therefore it is different in each individual. You are only partially right. Actually our experiences are really quite similar - it is how we USE them that makes the difference between us. Thus, every judge has a relatively similar view of what logic is; a relatively similar view of how important clarity is to making a decision in debate (VERY important - you will never read a judge declaring that the best debating was done by the team that she least understood, unless the debate was otherwise very, very bad. Caught out of the corner of our eyes, we vote for the team that gives us Good Quality. It is in the explanation of our decision that we judges suddenly differ in all the ways that infuriate debaters.

For all of our differences, judges still often agree on some team that, for all our differences, pick up our ballots. There are in our area a couple of fabulous teams from Shawnee Mission East that can make the dumb talk and the blind see. Grandmas, college frat boys, real estate agents - everyone votes for them. Judges are lined up for blocks with the ballots already filled out (I may be exaggerating a wee bit). Your best hope to beat them is that they will forget the purpose of a debate is show Quality to the judge and thereby hide the Quality that they normally display.

Explanation seven: if you're still uncertain what Quality is, answer these questions for me. What do you want from your life?

What would make your life better right now?
What would make your life worse?
What drives you crazy about your debate colleague?

Voila! A list of Qualities, some Good and some Bad, and none of them actually precisely summing up what you really meant to say! Yet you understand exactly what these qualities are, and to much the same extent, so do I. Therefore, if you were trying to convince me to vote for you, or give you a loan, or hire you for a job, or to refrain from convicting you for a crime, you would greatly desire that I see the Quality in you that will fulfill my expectations.

Fort Scott in sight! There is great stirring as file boxes are collected, esteemed colleagues are awakened by the application of wedgies, and nervous laughter erupts up and down the aisle. Even Justin is smiling. It is time for industrial strength coaching.

Prep Time

There are many people who would cut through everything I have told you by saying that judge adaptation is merely doing what a judge wants you to do, and better than the other guy. My friend Kapfer says he someday wants to judge two of my teams so he can make ridiculous demands on them just to see them try to do them.

But that is not what I have proved to you. I have shown you that ALL judges have a relatively similar view of Quality, and that this will make their decisions predictable if you project that Quality. I've shown that Quality is the reason why judges react as they do even before they begin to rationalize why they like or don't like the debate. Thus, we conclude at the end of constructives that the process of becoming a great debater is the development of Quality in such a manner that it is clearly displayed for all judges. Not only do I believe that this is possible, I think I can propose a system for you to do it.

First Rebuttal

Back on the bus, heading for lunch. Three rounds down and one to go. Everyone in the bus thinks they are 3-0. Of course, they aren't, but they don't know that and neither do I. Even though tab is open I have stayed out, much preferring to enjoy my day. "You know how we did?" they ask. "Nope," I say, and we all feel better. I'll go look dur-

ing the next round, so I can let some folks down easy and not make them suffer through the assembly. The people who might win, though, I tell nothing so they can be surprised.

The process of learning Quality has three steps. The first is to decide what are the qualities that make up the overall impact of a speaker - the *arete* in the Greek - that a debater displays to a judge. This step requires some thought and argument. I'll give you my ideas in the last three rebuttals, but you can probably make a better list because you will understand it better.

The second step is to create a rubric that describes each quality so that others will have a good idea of what the debater wants to project. If you just write "clarity" you'll get an answer that is yes or no, and you are gambling that your critic knows what you mean by clarity. But we already established that language operates on a level above awareness, so you must describe "clarity" so the critic can evaluate how well you did it.

Still within the second step, make sure your descriptions are meaningful to both learning platforms, to the romantic and the classical. OK, you say, show me.

CLARITY

0 The speaker is unintelligible. I hear, but don't understand. (Wouldn't that just make your day to get this comment?)

1 The speaker presents ideas but they cannot be noted or remembered. Impossible to flow. Poor signposting. Bad tags. No impacts.

2 The speaker's ideas are understood most of the time, with occasional breakdowns. Hard to flow, with occasional breakdowns. Signposts are insufficient most of the time. Tags too long or do not identify the argument. Impacts inconsistent.

3 The speaker's ideas are understandable almost every time. Most are remembered. Consistently easy to flow. Sign posts clearly to lead to arguments. Tags easy to flow. Arguments are impacted consistently.

4 The speaker's ideas are concise and memorable. Each idea is clearly identified. Flows perfectly. Signposts are quick and concise. Tags are memorable and concisely describe the argument. Impacts are offensive (in the debate sense, jerk!) and match the argument.

Now step three; after copying off a bunch o' these rubrics, give practice speeches to as many critics as you can. Tell

them to circle the parts of the rubric that apply - it may be that your arguments are tagged well (3) but that you never impact (1). Average it out for your score, and by reading the rubric you will also clearly see the learning platform of your critic. If your critics are being truthful and you are scoring threes, I think you'll win most high school debates on clarity alone. If you can approach a perfect four, then clarity is one of your strengths, and that should greatly influence your strategy you choose in debates.

Of course, to make this work, you must accept this critical idea; you do not know if you have clarity until several critics all agree that you have clarity. The clarity is in the minds of the critics, not in your own.

Or not. Just do what Matt is doing right now, telling me how he ran a great argument and the judge laughed. Matt thinks laughter equals "points scored". If you put together a list of what makes up Quality and the rubrics for each, I think humor will be in there. But is it critical? Maybe if you are a really funny person, and then it's a strength. But humor by accident? I wouldn't bet the round on it.

Back for the last round. The debaters are running to their rooms and I am summoning up my strength to go to the tab. I'm serious- I hate the results. Right now I can peacefully delude myself into thinking we are doing great. But when I see reality I will at the same time experience the disappointment that my students will feel, and it hurts. Ain't I childish? I wish I could not care and yet care.

The good news is that Quality is fairly easy to observe and describe (but not define) in speaking. In fact, I'll turn to a Very Dead White Guy, Aristotle, to provide a framework for Quality. He observed speakers and decided that their impacts upon their audiences, what he called *arete*, could be divided into three components.

Prep Time

I spent a lot of time wondering if I should quit right here and let you do the rest of the job. I mean, if you're still with me, then it should be clear that you have a great deal of meditation to do about what Quality you want to project as a debater, and my ideas might actually confuse you rather than help you. So, if you agree, good-bye and may the arete be with you.

But maybe you want to see how it all turns out. Will Matt overcome his personal demons? Will Sarah have a nervous col-

lapse? Will Rob's probation officer send a warrant for his arrest for leaving the county? If so, then stop. Until Matt learns Quality, his demons will hound him (he's 1-2). Until Sarah realizes that ultimately the decision is out of her sweaty palms, she will collapse (she's 3-0, and meeting the top seeded team in the power match). And Rob's on probation because he is so confused about Quality that it makes me weep. But maybe we will agree on a few ideas.

Second Rebuttal

The area that we flatter ourselves we know the most about is called *logos*. Logic, riggghht! The belief is that if we could somehow judge debates purely on the arguments, that debate would no longer be subjective - we could have scoreboards! The overall trend within debate in my 34 years of participation has been faster delivery, but only because judges have permitted it and voted for it. Therefore, judging has been changing, and debaters have followed. The judges have been trying to standardize their judging, and of course that is a rational process. Voila! Paradigms, hypothesis testing, narratives, *ad nauseum*.

But what is great *logos*? I turned to my college guru, Eric Morris of Kansas and asked him what qualities he looks for in a debater.

1. clarity

2. **strategic anticipation** - the debater is planning ahead and is able to see and use the simplest path to victory

3. **effective use of language** - I think every judge enjoys this. I think word economy (but still using complete sentences for most judges) is one of the most ignored qualities for high school debaters. It's easy to learn to talk fast. It's harder but much more effective to learn how to say more with less words.

4. **synthesis** - everything is coming together into a story

5. a **wide base of knowledge** - The smartest debater usually wins. I know you think you are the exception, but if you are truly displaying a keen intelligence, it is very difficult to vote against you.

Mr. Morris had more, but this is a fine start. Remember my claim that a debater who averaged a three in clarity would probably win? I think if you averaged a three in any two of the above you would be a highly successful high school debater.

The debaters are coming out of their

final round, and I take Matt aside and tell him his record. He goes through all the stages of grief except acceptance in a record fifteen seconds. I'm going to worry about this until I see him Monday.

I've got a couple more to add

6. **Surprise!** I love it when a debater gives me an argument that flows logically from another argument that I and the other team never anticipated.

7. **Clash!** I want the negative to plow into aff's case and not resort to the same tired off case crud. I think every judge likes this.

Prep Time

I would expect that you could draw up rubrics on each of the above qualities with very little meditation. After all, it's what we claim to do well, right? If you don't understand what these qualities mean, then it's pretty hard to blame a judge for not seeing them in your *arete*.

I would also observe closely how you feel about some of these qualities. If you think, well, this quality is not as important as the others then you have sent yourself the clear signal that this is a weakness for you.

For example, let's say you snort at #7. You've got a great kritik and a counterplan that you run every round and now you don't even flow the 1AC anymore. Maybe in your state or region, but judges around here really recent killing a bunch of trees for 1AC and never using those pages again. A wise 2AC starts on case and pulls through the strategic points that have been dropped - and that is strategic anticipation.

Third Rebuttal

The second principle of speaking as identified by Aristotle is *pathos*. The word is the source of our term pathetic, which many debaters are when they go off the deep end and start bawling over the dying children all over the flow. But pathos is making a comeback, largely thanks to LD and the value debate that is the source of kritiks.

For example, take justice. Now there is a Zen word - you can meditate on that one for years. Live a life of justice. Justice is the root value of most kritiks - the debater claims something is not fair. Well, so what? There is a limit to which reason (*logos*) can take us in this area; I either respond emotionally to justice or I don't.

The qualities here need more exploration than I will give you

8. **Appeal to humanity** - many debaters are making the critical mistake of treating victims of weapons of mass destruction as mere numbers. This is not a mistake because of the nuclearism kritik; it's a mistake because you look like a monster to the judge. It is also important that your arguments be grounded in humanity, though if you want to run "spark" its your funeral.

9. **Justice** - I think any argument which treats people unfairly gets a cold hearing. Conversely, any plan which successfully rights a wrong is appealing to the judge.

Once again, if you think that this is not important, you now know a weakness. I claim that debaters who average a three will win more debates, but more importantly debaters who are twos and ones will lose many more debates.

Fourth Rebuttal

The last principle is *ethos*. Aristotle defined this as "a good man saying good things." Yes, that was sexist. If you reacted strongly to that, you now know why *ethos* is so incredibly important. If you want *ethos* defined in a way you will remember it; "judges like to vote for debaters they like, but they never vote for debaters they don't like."

Qualities

10. **Passion** - judges cannot vote against a debater who is an advocate in the ethical sense of the word

11. **Credibility** - perceived truthfulness. Ethical behavior or lack of same falls here

12. **Organized** - judges watch you prepare. How many tubs you fumbling around in?

13. **Confidence** - no, this does not mean arrogant. Pay carefully attention to how you write this rubric. You might learn something.

14. **Grace** - how is this for a Zen term? A smile for the opponent; the look to the judge and "are you ready?"; the helpful response to c/x; respect for the opponent; and joy in just debating.

Again, there is much more here, but I think I'm stealing your work. You should talk to people while you are gathering up your rubric on these items. It may hurt a bunch to find out you are perceived by others as the read end of a horse headed south, but learning the truth in high school is a lot less damaging to your career.

Or not.

It's easiest to just go on blaming the judges, isn't it?

The Ballot, please?

We're home by 9 p.m. Some of the kids have cars, and others have parents waiting. Still others have worked me over by not telling their parents that they will need to be picked up, and I get to wait another hour for the last one to get away. We won more than we lost. Sarah won her first novice tournament, and now she will be a basket case every time she doesn't. Matt roars off in a cloud of despair. Rob gives me a look that makes me glad I don't have to throw his bail. The squad nerd went 2-2, which the first even record of his career. And Ashley got scolded by two judges for her short skirt, but collected three phone numbers; so she thinks she's ahead for the day.

I'm aware of my hypocrisy. I should be sitting down and composing rubrics for my teaching, and one of them would say "respect for the dignity of students", right? But the Zen master never said the way of Zen is easy. The master just said it is the right way.

(Bill Davis coaches at Blue Valley North (KS) HS and is district chair of NFL's newest district: Three Trails)

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