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Fighting Rhetoric And Training Composition: Theory And Pedagogy Of Mixed Martial Arts Argument

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FIGHTING RHETORIC AND TRAINING COMPOSITION: THEORY AND PEDAGOGY
OF MIXED MARTIAL ARTS ARGUMENT

by

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the connections between martial arts training, rhetorical theory, and composition pedagogy. The central focus of this project is the common understanding of an argument as a “fight,” and by investigating the training practices of fighting arts, this project expands and complicates what an agonistic orientation can offer argument, teaching, and writing. This inquiry has two parts. Part one explores the importance and influence of ancient Greek martial arts practices in Platonic, Aristotelian, and Sophistic argumentation. By focusing on the “mixed” martial art of *pankration*, I challenge the pervasive binary of “open hand” and “closed fist” as a way to categorize and characterize arguments that conflates their technical and ethical differences. Part two turns to Japanese martial arts training for approaches to foundational problems in writing instruction: basics of grammar and syntax, form of writing assignments, and the practice of peer critique. By using the threefold method of *kihon*, *kata*, and *kumite*, I defamiliarize and provide a different orientation for discarded current-traditional rhetoric approaches. By investigating martial arts training practices as an approach to rhetoric and composition, I offer a theory and pedagogy of *affirmative contention* that challenges problematically reductive views of conflict and argument, provides skills and tactics for rhetorical self-defense, and encourages an ethical orientation to language-work that challenges injustices both inside the classroom and “on the street.”

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Introduction

Mixed Martial Arts Rhetoric: Striking, Grappling, and Pankration

Courses of training in the martial arts often constitute exemplary educational programs, and...we might learn something of value for the liberal arts by examining them closely.
Donald Levine, "the Liberal Arts and the Martial Arts" 1

An original part of the earliest Olympic Games, pankration has influenced modern combat competition throughout the world to a degree that few of today's practitioners are aware of. The popular Ultimate Fighting Championships and other similar mixed-martial arts events are modeled after the ancient Greek combat sport.
Grandmaster Jim Arvanitis, *Pankration* 1

I. Argumentation is/as Fighting

We all know the commonplace metaphor "an argument is a fight" or Lakoff and Johnson's related-yet-more extreme "Argument is War" (*The Metaphors We Live By* 4). The pervasiveness of this commonplace metaphor affects the way many students and teachers approach argument. For students, it might mean seeing argument as zero-sum, the goal being winning at any cost at the expense of someone else. Students might then engage in argument aggressively and viciously, or shy away from or reject argument altogether. Even if instructors might not share this perspective, we recognize the problems of having many students understand argument in this way, and we seek to disabuse them of this misunderstanding. The majority opinion in rhetoric and composition seems to see this connection and conflation of argument and fighting as a problem to solve, a history to transcend, or simply an uncomfortable reality that we should just ignore. But rather than seeing this popular metaphor as an inherent problem, this project explores and affirms this metaphor, thinks through it seriously, and outlines

the possibilities it affords. That is, if an argument is a fight, then what kind of fight is it, and what then can the fighting arts teach us about articulating, practicing, and training argumentation? To answer this question, I turn to martial arts training for different ways to approach foundational problems in rhetoric, writing, and argumentation, and this introduction will therefore do four things.

First, I outline the popular conception of Greek *agonism*, an ideology of contestation, through which rhetoric and all other arts were understood, practiced, and trained. By looking at Aristotle’s own articulation of rhetoric as a fighting art, we can see that he creates rules to govern such fighting to combat the influence of figures like the Sophists. However, there are challenges to this emphasis on “agonism” that argue promoting conflict leads to destruction and despair. Second, I then turn to other primary sources to show that this image of “agonism” is based on an image of war, while the Greeks saw it as something different, but related. To address these challenges, I connect Greek agonism to the larger, global tradition of “martial arts,” even though the term is usually understood to mean those of East Asia. By doing so, I complicate the notion of conflict as purely destructive by illustrating an affirmative orientation to conflict as generative of virtue, skill, and subjectivity.

Third, I examine the specific fighting arts of the Greeks, the Olympic “heavy events” of boxing and wrestling, which form a dualistic model of violence. This dualism in turn creates a metaphor we use to distinguish and evaluate argument: the “open hand” and the “closed fist.” Boxing as a closed fist striking art is understood to be bad, violent, and destructive, while wrestling as an open hand grappling art is understood to be good, gentle, and honorable. In turn, this mutually-exclusive binary informs contemporary

discussions about argument and violence; some arguments are aggressive and destructive, while others are deliberative and productive. However, looking at the fighting arts themselves complicates this otherwise simple binary.

Fourth, to address these complications, I turn to a third and less well-known “heavy event” that combined both striking and grappling: *pankration* or “all powers.” Because it combines mutually exclusive modes of contest, *pankration* refuses the either/or choice of the dualistic model; it is neither wrestling nor boxing because it uses both striking and grappling. In so refusing, *pankration* is not reducible to the binary of boxing or wrestling nor the logic of the “open hand” and “closed fist,” even though *pankration* often can only be understood in terms of this binary, as “wrestling with some striking” or “boxing that has grappling”. By exploring a fighting style that troubles the binary, I offer an approach to argumentation based on *pankration* that accounts for both deliberative and expressive arguments, both “open hand” and “closed fist,” rather than a reductive choice between a “good” kind of fighting and a “bad” kind.

Finally, I outline this project, which has two parts. In the first part, consisting of this Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2, I explore, perform, and unpack the concept of pankratic argumentation by reading a Platonic dialogue featuring *pankration* and exploring the structure and function of rules of argument. In the second part, consisting of Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I turn to some concepts from Japanese martial arts—*kihon*, *kata*, and *kumite*—to apply this agonistic framework to foundational problems in teaching composition: grammar, syntax, and the problematic of language difference, the form and function of the curricular writing assignment, and the challenges of peer critique. Finally,

in the conclusion I offer a few principles to develop a more agonistic orientation to conflict, what I term *affirmative contention*.

II. Fighting (the) Sophists

Before his more famous definition of “rhetoric” as “the ability to see in any given case the available means of persuasion,” Aristotle first notes that all people use the art—and its counterpart (*antistrophoi*) dialectic—“to defend themselves and to attack others” (*On Rhetoric* 1.1, 2). Whether making cases or defending propositions, the engagement between people in these arts is agonistic, contestatory, in nature. But not only are rhetoric and dialectic connected by their contestatory nature, but they are also not limited to one specific discipline or area of study, but inherent in and applicable to any and all. That is, all inquiry and argumentation is a matter of contest and a manner of fighting.¹ Aristotle makes this quite clear when explaining his motivation: “it is absurd to hold that a man ought to be ashamed of being unable to defend himself with his limbs, but not of being unable to defend himself with rational speech, when the use of rational speech is more distinctive of a human being than the use of his limbs” (*On Rhetoric* 1.1, 5). His work is a manual in how to fight better, fighting with words and proofs, fighting in a distinctly-human way, but fighting nonetheless.

In his attempt to “give some account of the systematic principles of rhetoric,” Aristotle is developing principles to help train future fighters in the arenas of rhetorical contention, the courts and the assembly, so that they might succeed through merit and skill, rather than through privilege, brute force, dishonest trickery, or simple luck (*On Rhetoric* 1.1, 1). While “things that are true and things that are better are, by their nature,

practically always easier to prove and more persuasive,” Aristotle writes, this is not always or necessarily the case (*On Rhetoric* 1.1, 1). The techniques of the Sophists, called “wrangling,” or *erizō*, which is an “arousing of prejudice, pity, [and] anger” within a judge, audience, or interlocutor, was often more effective than factual evidence or solid reasoning, allowing for the “weaker” argument to be the “stronger” (*On Rhetoric* 1.1, 5). This accusation of “weaker over stronger,” Edward Schiappa explains, “allegedly represent[s] the worst aspirations of the sophistic movement and perhaps of the art of rhetoric itself” (*Protagoras and Logos* 103). This accusation presumes that the “naturally” better will inevitably prevail over the worse, unless the worse employs unfair trickery, fallacious argument, and dishonest deception.

However, even though rhetoric can be used toward unsavory and destructive ends, Aristotle explains this danger of misuse “is a charge which may be made in common against all good things except excellence, and above all against the things that are most useful” (*On Rhetoric*. 1.1, 5). The problem isn’t rhetoric, or other “most useful things” like strength, health, and generalship, but rather how they’re used. Aristotle’s project then, which extends beyond the *Rhetoric* into his works on logic collectively called the *Organon*, is one of establishing the rules so that only the best will win and the worst will lose, or at least be disqualified. As Susan Jarratt explains “after the complete formulation of logic by Aristotle, rhetoric appears to employ distorted versions of that logic used in ethically questionable ways to sway ignorant audiences” (*Rereading the Sophists* 39). Indeed, Aristotle’s project asks us promote and practice proper argument, training people to be less ignorant and more able to counter these “ethically questionable” forms of persuasion when they are encountered.

However, Aristotle's logic relies on a strict division between logical and illogical argument, meaning an argument cannot be both, and this binary also has a concomitant ethical charge. That is, an argument that follows Aristotle's rules is a logical and moral argument, while one that rejects or flouts these rules is not only illogical, but immoral, even "absurd." Because the rules for argument are established as universal, totalizing, and absolute, following them allows for the "naturally superior" to win out. But this singular and absolute model, assured of its natural superiority, is a form of wrangling too, a "one-sided, combative form of discourse: one that completely shuts out any opposing view" (Jarratt, "Feminism and Composition" 274.) That is, in establishing the rules of argument as unquestionable and unquestionably ethical, Aristotle creates a situation in which the rules are only questioned or questionable by those who would prey on the ignorance of others or those too ignorant to know otherwise.

But the "superior" ideals that Aristotle argues by "nature" and "reason" are themselves the product of a time and place. We might see such ideals differently today: oligarchy over democracy, a patriarchy justified by nature, a slave economy, and a Greek sense of superiority that certainly resembles ethnocentrism.ⁱⁱ These cultural values have formed a large part of the Western intellectual tradition, but more recently they have been viewed with suspicion because they justify massive social injustices in the treatment of women, people of ethnic difference, and those outside the class of culture, wealth, and influence. This unquestionable ethicality of such logics is troubled when we question them on ethical grounds. Alongside this dominance of white male elites, the traditional agonistic orientation to questions of power, conflict, and inquiry is suspect as well.

In *Agōn Culture*, Claudio Colaguori argues that Western agonism is the central cause of “global poverty, crime, material deprivation, murder, rape, self-abuse, suicide, self-cutting, depression, anxiety, psychosis, alcoholism, multiple hatreds including sexism, homophobia and racism, war and destruction, and all manner of human rights abuses” (30). In *Argument Culture*, Deborah Tannen also cites an overemphasis on agonism as a root of many cultural problems, defining it specifically as “automatic, knee-jerk aggression” (58). The form of agonism that Tannen identifies pervades political discourse, news media, and academia, which sees “intellectual interchange as a metaphorical battle” pitched between two sides seeking to destroy one another (267). Indeed, Colaguori and Tannen both see agonism as an image of two warriors (or armies) aimed at mutual destruction, the result of a pervasive “habit of seeing issues and ideas as absolute and irreconcilable principles continually at war” (284). If this is agonism, then the best solution might be to reject it altogether as the central motivating force of the racist, sexist, and imperialist ideology and the motivating force behind the history of oppression inherited by those in the West.

However, throughout her book, Tannen is clear that she is not anti-conflict, but rather against the particular kind of conflict that is binaristic and only interested in the destruction of opposition as a way of demonstrating superiority. Instead, she argues that “the point is to distinguish constructive ways of doing so from nonconstructive ones” (272). Furthermore, Tannen notes that constructive forms of conflict already exist, arguing that “Asian philosophy and culture suggest alternatives to the polarization that typifies Western culture: accommodating more than one religion, avoiding rigid dualisms, and subscribing to an ethic of victor without vanquished rather than winner

take all” (221). By looking outside the Western tradition, we might find alternative ways to conceive of conflict and argument outside our history of genocide, slavery, and oppression.

III. “Martial Arts” and Agonism

In his “The Liberal Arts and the Martial Arts,” Donald Levine argues that the liberal arts tradition of the West and the martial arts tradition of the East are corollary *paidea*, ideals for and forms of education. They focus on both individual and community well-being, and do not rely on religious dogma nor simply function as vocational or technocratic training, as well many curious parallel historical developments.ⁱⁱⁱ Both traditions seek to provide a person with necessary skills and to help them develop an ethical comportment to others and the world. We might then look to the East Asian tradition for alternative approaches to the challenges of Western education, and different models of conflict, fighting, and argument. Even though these non-Western cultural practices offer an alternative view of conflict, they are still subject to the Western views of conflict that we inherit from antiquity.

Western audiences have historically had trouble with the term “martial arts” because it combines two seemingly “opposed” concepts (Levine 2). The Latinate “martial” invokes Mars, a Romanization of Ares, the god of war and slaughter, and conversely the Latinate “art” connotes skill, training, and production of poetry, painting, sculpture as the trappings of civilizations, embodied in the goddess of wisdom, Athena-become-Minerva. This term then combines destruction and creation, inhumane brutality and humane civility, making the term seem paradoxical or nonsensical. However, even

though there is a long-standing tradition of Western *ars martiales*, “martial arts” in common parlance is understood to refer to those from East Asia, and so the paradoxical nature of the term is not something inherent in the arts themselves, but rather a problem of translation. This contemporary sense of “martial arts” appears in 1909 as a translation of the Japanese *bujitsu*, “warrior art,” referring to practices in swordsmanship and unarmed combat derived from the training practices of the *samurai* (*Etymonline*).^{iv} The Japanese warriors saw conflict philosophically and aesthetically through *bushido*, “the way of the warrior,” which emphasized discipline, respect, and honor as much as and as a necessary part of excellence in warfare. Even if the warrior had to kill an enemy in battle, it was not because of glory or pride or even hatred, but rather a solemn duty to serve and to perform that duty as excellently as possible. That is, “martial arts” names an approach to conflict does not seek it out, nor does it shrink away, but affirms it as part of existence and how we create, know, and develop ourselves.

However, even if we might cite *bushido* as an alternative to what we see as the fundamental violence of Western thought, the Greek agonistic training practices were not merely militaristic either, but aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual as well; “they were the vehicles of that supreme educational effort, the cultivation of the virtues, and of the journey to transcendence” (Levine 2). That is, an agonistic orientation to conflict is not primarily concerned with the destruction of an enemy nor the victory and acquisition of a prize, but the opportunity to contend, to either win or lose, but to do so excellently, honorably, and beautifully. That is, if we posit Greek agonism as the winner-take-all, warfare mentality that Colaguori and Tannen do, we risk fundamentally misunderstanding this important and influential cultural and spiritual practice.

According to Pindar, the *agōn* was established when “Heracles divided up the gift of war and offered the choicest part” (*Olympian* 10). The *agōn* was not identical to war, but a particular part removable from it. The *agōn* was the choicest part because it was the site of the Greek cultural ideal *arête*, excellence, which could only be acquired, exhibited, and maintained through agonistic conflict. While this was certainly possible in war, the material cost made it less accessible and viable for the training and generation of excellence in and of a society. In *Bodily Arts*, Debra Hawhee argues that rather than “virtue,” some static internal “goodness,” *arête* is more properly understood as “virtuosity” or “excellence” (17, 25). Virtue isn’t something gotten or possessed, but rather strived for, quested after, and sought without any certainty of success, so “what matters for *arête* then is not victory *per se* but rather the hunt for victory” (Hawhee 23). This questing allowed *arête* to move through a whole host of discourses.

Originally, Homer uses *arête* to refer to Achilles’ beautiful body and skill in warfare, later it was applied to athletic contests and even “skill in political matters,” and then still later the term is applied metaphorically to an “interior” morality as an excellent soul (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 22, Wilcox 133). That is, the word for virtue in philosophical discourse does not begin in the Lyceum or the Academy, but on the battlefield and in the fighting ring. Because these martial training practices preceded training in other disciplines, “the Greeks produced themselves through active struggle; pedagogy [itself] depended on agonism,” and therefore, new types of training, like that in rhetoric and argumentation, were agonistic as well (Hawhee 16).

However, Hawhee further distinguishes *agōn* from *athilos*, the root of *athletics*, as “the more explicit struggle for a prize” (15). The exclusive material benefit of the *athilos*

prize creates a binary outcome: one won or one lost. One only wins at the other's expense. Victory is achieved through the negation of the other. This zero-sum, all-or-nothing logic of *athilos* relies on the same zero-sum logic as war does. "Whereas *athilos* emphasizes the prize and hence the victor," Hawhee argues, the *agōn* emphasized the "contestive encounter rather than strictly the division between opposing sides," and an excellent performance was valued more highly than victory (15, 16). That is, *athilos* is the more appropriate term for a war-mentality practiced outside of armed combat, that criticized by Tannen and rejected by Colaguori, while *agōn* seems to be something else.

In sum, agonism is not warfare and it is not even sport, but something closer to the *bushido* espoused by Japanese samurai and the accompanying East Asian ideals to which Tannen and others look to as a solution to our destructive and violent native Western tradition. However, in light of Hawhee's analysis, we can see that the common negative conceptions of agonism espoused by Colaguori and Tannen do not holistically reflect the ideals of the Greeks regarding war or contest. I argue that such attitudes are rather the result of later Roman, Christian, and Enlightenment ideologies, but that's another line of inquiry altogether.^v However, if we can look at the Greek agonism as "martial arts" in more detail, perhaps we can see the philosophical and ideological practices that developed alongside and are developed from such martial arts differently, and in so seeing we might dis- and re-articulate these ideologies of argument and conflict differently as well.^{vi}

IV. Two Heavy Events: Wrestling and Boxing, Open Hand and Closed Fist

In the West, the ancient Greeks adapted the techniques for fighting in war in the three Olympic "heavy events": the striking art of boxing (*pyxmachia*), the grappling art of

wrestling (*pale*), and a third that combined the two: *pankration*. The Greek martial arts have a complex relationship to battlefield practices and fighting outside battle, with Plutarch and Philostratos advocating for the battle utility of the ‘heavy events’ and Alexander the Great, Plato, and Xenophon arguing that such training could not adequately prepare for real life-or-death situations (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 46, Dervenis and Lykiardopoulos 19). Some saw agonistic training as preparation for war, while others saw it as something similar, but not sufficiently so.^{vii} But beyond the tension between practice and application, the problem of *transfer* inherent in all education, these three heavy events have complex and difficult histories.

One of the reasons for this difficulty is that “the precise origin of athletic competition in Greece is lost in time,” with the specific events and the Games themselves being “invented” by various mythological figures like Herakles, Theseus, and others (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 34). However, we do have evidence of contests during the Mycenaean and Minoan periods (2600 BCE to 1100 BCE), which can be traced to earlier contests in Egypt. But following the establishment of the Panhellenic Games, of which the Olympics was simply the biggest, we have records of three heavy events and their progressive introduction and development as the central part of the Games: Wrestling was first in 708 BCE (18th Olympiad), boxing came next in 688 (23rd Olympiad), and *pankration* in 648 (33rd Olympiad) (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 34, *Pankration* 3). All three of these arts are part of Greek culture by the time we reach the Classical period, and thus they would have influenced the ways people understood conflict. However, because these are the arts of the ancient Greeks, from whom we trace the rhetorical tradition and who have been cited as an exemplary

civilization in the history of the West, these martial arts have a deep, intertwined relationship with our notions of argument, violence, and education.

Invented by Theseus, Herakles, Hermes or his daughter Palaistra, wrestling, *pale*, was introduced in the very first Olympics alongside the footrace in 708 BCE, and it was most specifically lauded as training for combat (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 4).^{viii} Orikadmos the Sicilian established the rules of the contest: no striking, grabbing the groin, or biting, so matches consisted of arm-holds, shoulder-throws, foot-sweeps, among other techniques like the waistlock (*mesolabe*) throw. If the wrestlers went out of bounds, the referee stopped the match, returning them to the center and the hold they were in (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 52). *Pale* “did not rank as brutal combat sport by the Greeks,” who emphasized grace and precision even over victory, and “few stories present an image of it as being particularly bloody and violent or having been the cause by numerous fatalities to athletes.” (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 8). As argued by Plato and others, wrestling was considered the honorable form of unarmed combat because wrestlers win by stretching, turning, and twisting each other in an intimate contest; they struggle together, rather than smash each other: *contention*, not *conflict* (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 56). Divinely created and humanely regulated, *pale* was the original form of noble contest of skill and technique with an equal opponent, all for the honor of the olive branch and the respect of peers. This form of fighting seems to reject violence altogether.

Conversely, boxing, *pyxmachia* or simply *pyx*, “was initially introduced into the Olympic Games of 688” from the Cretans, and “the first victor was Onomastus of Smyrna, who was said to have drawn up the rules for the sport,” which banned throws, but allowed striking, even to the groin or a downed opponent (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 8).

Even though boxing emphasized “skill and strategy over brute force,” albeit to different degrees at different times, “boxing was considered by the Greeks to be the most hazardous [contest]...[as they said] ‘a boxers victory is gained in blood’ (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 61). Unlike wrestling, successful fighters in *pyx* relied “more on their ability to withstand punishment and dish out more than their adversaries. Backing away from blows was considered a sign of cowardice. The victor of a match often emerged bruised and bloodied but in far better shape than his defeated rival” (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 8). Alternatively, boxers might agree to a *klimax*, with both fighters trading stationary blows until one fighter fell. In contrast to *pale*, *pyx* is brutal bloodsport, a knock-down drag-out *fight* that leaves participants bruised and broken. When Tannen and Colaguori reject conflict, they do so because of this image of the broken boxer, presuming that boxing can adequately represent all of “agonism.”

These two contests, these two different ways of fighting have been extremely influential not only as martial arts practices native to the West that are still practiced today, but specifically, these ancient Greek arts inform the foundational metaphor that we have used to evaluate and justify particular kinds of argument. One example is Edward P.J. Corbett’s 1969 essay, in which he uses a metaphor for describing acceptable and unacceptable modes of argument: the “Open Hand” and the “Closed Fist”. The “closed fist” is a common symbol of conflict paired with the “open hand,” which is usually understood as non-conflictual. Here we can see the inheritance of the Greek heavy events: the “closed fist” is the style of arguing like a boxer and the “open hand” is arguing like a wrestler. “Closed fist” argument emphasizes expression and force, launching our claims out and onto our opponents, hitting them as hard as we can to make

them concede, while “open hand” argument emphasizes deliberation and control, incorporating the bodily systems of opponents, grappling them gently to see where they might bend or break.^{ix} Alongside and intertwined with these different modes of engagement is an ethical tenor that values the “open hand” over the “closed fist,” in the way that the Greeks valued wrestling as more honorable and less violent than boxing.

While Corbett himself practices “the open hand,” understood as accepting, rational, and non-violent argument, he contrasts this with the “closed fist” style practiced by Civil Rights protestors, which is seen as aggressive, irrational, and violent. He describes this conflict as one “between an older mode of discourse which was verbal, sequential, logical, monologist, and ingratiating and a newer style of communication which is often non-verbal, fragmentary, coercive, interlocutory, and alienating” (Corbett 295). In this, Corbett doesn’t simply see the “closed fist” as a different style of fighting than the “open hand,” but rather that one as violence and the other as non-violence, the same logic by which Aristotle might disqualify all arguments that don’t follow his rules. “Fighting” is what “those people” with closed fists do, not what “we” do with our open hands, which cannot be fighting; “the open hand has at least the chance of being grasped cordially. The closed fist just prompts another closed fist to be raised” (295). This metaphor presents a simple, obvious, and *value-laden* choice: we should use the “open hand” rather than the “closed fist.” We need to use gentle discussion rather than forceful debate. We can also see this dualism function when scholars look outside the fighting arts of the Western tradition, a similar root as the trouble with the term “martial arts” itself.

In his own development of “tactical communication,” a rhetoric for police officers, George Thompson uses the same logic as Corbett, even though he turns to

Japanese martial arts, calling the modes Verbal Karate and *Verbal Judo*. Verbal Karate is the form of argument that increases tension and the possibility of physical conflict, closed fist/boxing rhetoric, while Verbal Judo redirects aggression and succeeds through subtlety rather than outright force, open hand/wrestling rhetoric. That is, Thompson's metaphor of Japanese martial arts sees them as Japanese versions of the existing Western arts, which move and orient to victory in similar ways. While it's certainly problematic to see all other cultures in our own terms, importing our history and values into them, the connection between the "gentle way" *ju-do* and gentle wrestling and the connection between the Japanese hand *te* and the Greek hand *pyx*, illustrate that these modalities of fighting and senses around them are not merely Western, but perhaps something inherent in all traditions of martial arts, which must necessarily operate on the same commensurable basis: the human body and the limited ways it can move, suffer, and generate power.

Building on Thompson, Barry Kroll in *The Open Hand: Argument as an Art of Peace* also turns to the Japanese grappling arts as a model for non-conflictual argument, but focuses on *aikido* rather than *judo*. However, Kroll explains that his project sees "an open hand not simply as a gesture of peaceful intent but also as an instrument of contact, a way to connect with an opposing force and, ultimately, control it. In a conflict, this open hand provides a way to establish a connection with an adversary in order to receive aggressive energy and redirect it" (*The Open Hand 2*). While he draws on Tannen and others who reject "conflict," his "project is not about rejecting the closed fist but rather about recognizing the possibilities of the open hand that connects and controls" (5). That is, even though it does not fight in the way we normally think about fighting, because we

normally think about fighting in boxing terms, *aikido* is still an approach to adversative situations that intends to win, to survive, and to defeat an opponent as much as defeat the aggression in the self.

While we might prefer wrestling as a comparatively gentle and productive mode of argument to boxing as forceful and destructive, both forms of engagement are equally forceful, but in different ways. While any fighting art would teach students to avoid needless conflict, the different modalities of particular arts are simply different ways of dealing with conflict. Boxing is concussive, striking surface with surface, doing more damage than suffering it, while wrestling is coercive, manipulating the structure, twisting it to a breaking point. At this point, we might ask whether a punch to the face is really more violent than a throw to the ground, but the particular ethical valence of these techniques requires seeing much more than just which technique was actually performed, and in the end will fall into the same problems as the initial binary of “open hand” and “closed fist.” This alignment of striking with violent conflict and grappling with ethical contention is certainly more complicated when we more closely attend to the physical practices, and this in turn might allow us to complicate our understanding of closed fist and open hand when concerning discourse and argumentation.

We can use this metaphor to think through the contrast between an Aristotelian “open hand” rhetoric, motivated by rules of conduct and norms of civility, that allows for the true, right, and good to win the day, while the false, wrong, and evil Sophist must resort to “closed fist” techniques to succeed. Where Aristotle grapples with the logical connections between concepts, the Sophists strike with the affective force of words. But if we reject the ethical overtones of “closed fist” as evil and “open hand” as good, but see

them instead as different modalities appropriate for different situations, then we have a different way of articulating this division and practicing argument as we have inherited it. We don't have argument and non-argument, violence and non-violence, but two different modes of engaging in argument: either expression or deliberation, making claims or asking after evidence.

However, as Corbett notes, this metaphor has shifted from its original coinage by Zeno, who saw that “the closed fist symbolized the tight, spare, compressed discourse of the philosopher; [and] the open hand symbolized the relaxed, expansive, ingratiating discourse of the orator” (Corbett 288). While Corbett’s “open hand” emphasizes pacification, Zeno’s emphasizes movement. If we maintain the notion of expression as striking another with rhetorical force, we here have the open hand slap or palm strike, which can either be much less or far more dangerous, respectively, than striking with the closed fist.^x Conversely, Corbett’s “closed fist” emphasizes the raised knuckles ready to strike the face of white supremacy, while Zeno’s focuses on the tightness and enclosure. If we maintain the notion of deliberation as grappling with another, then the fist of philosophy is closed in a submission hold: the tight fingers grasped around an airway or joint, torqueing the body position to its material breaking point, or forcing a reductive binaristic logic on a monism that resists easy division.

An open hand can be used to strike as well as grab, and a closed fist can hold as well as punch, but striking and grappling still operate as distinct and mutually exclusive modes of argument, even if the binary oscillates ethically. If we simply express our views, then we are practicing a different kind of argument than asking questions. If we espouse certain logical rules, then not abiding by them would be illogical. But if such

illogic is more persuasive than the logical rules, then they are not as totalizing and universal as they claim to be. If there's no firm ethical ground to stand on and a need for both modes, then we cannot simply stay within the binary. That is, if I am training my students in argument, I need to teach them how to account for and use both "open hand" and "closed fist" as needed. Indeed, the Greeks did have such an art that provides a model, called *pankration* or "all powers."

V. The Third Heavy Event: *Pankration*, Both and Neither

Even though it was deemed "too violent" to be included in the modern Olympiad, in the ancient Games *pankration* was valued beyond all other contests as the highest expression of Greek *arête* (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 2). The *pankration* tournament happened last on the last day of the Games; it was the main event. We might understand *pankration* as a combination of boxing and wrestling, what we today call "mixed martial arts," with fighters using a combination of punches, chops, kicks, knees, and elbows alongside throws, lifts, and holds, aiming for the highest form of victory with the submission.^{xi} Unlike boxing and wrestling, *pankration* did not persist as a stable tradition, and it's not until the mid-20th century that we see this "all powers" approach again.^{xii} In the 1970's, Grandmaster Jim Arvanitis created the "nucleus of modern *pankration*'s toolkit" by combining "Western boxing and Thai boxing's stand-up fighting" with "wrestling and combat judo's ground combat" and "studied anything that described the ancient art," translating the movements described by Philostratos and Homer and analyzing "friezes, artwork, vases, and frescoes," to incorporate extinct moves into his own vast bodily vocabulary (*The First Mixed Martial Art* 102-3).^{xiii}

In contrast to his own expansive study, Arvanitis saw most martial arts practitioners as “incomplete fighters,” by having no ‘real world’ experience beyond sparring in a *dojo*, arguing which style was the strongest, and limited by the constraints of their specific styles and traditions. The martial arts world of the mid-20th century was dominated by the division between striking and grappling. Students in grappling styles, like *judo* and wrestling, could roll and throw, but were not trained to deal with striking because grapplers don’t strike. Likewise, students in striking styles like boxing or *karate* couldn’t deal with being thrown because strikers don’t grapple. From his years of experience street-fighting in Boston, Arvanitis knew that these limitations would leave even the most seasoned veteran unable to fight in situations where striking and grappling were all allowed. That is, when no holds nor strikes are barred, full-on, all-powers, street fighting was well beyond the *ken* of most martial arts students. Arvanitis designed his own style to bridge this division and filled in the gaps to produce the most effective and comprehensive form of unarmed combat that he could, whether the fight was in the *dojo* or on the street.

However, while *pankration* used techniques from both boxing and wrestling—and some not part of either, like kicking—it was ultimately reducible to neither. *Pankration* is *neither* striking *nor* grappling because it is *both* striking *and* grappling. That is, each art is created by the exclusion of the other: boxing is a striking art that (and because it) forbids grappling and wrestling is a grappling art that (and because it) forbids striking. When someone breaks these constitutive rules, punching in a wrestling match or grabbing in a boxing match, they are not participating in wrestling or boxing anymore, respectively, but are either simply cheating or doing something else entirely. These modes of engagement

are mutually exclusive, but because they are two different approaches to the same problem of physical conflict, they are also mutually exploitative.

That is, the boxer might punch a wrestler and the wrestler might throw a boxer, and because striking is forbidden in wrestling and grappling in boxing, neither have the training to account for or counter the other. In a sanctioned and regulated contest, we can certainly rely on these rules, but as Arvanitis argues, without them, our training for self-defense that restricts us to one or the other leaves us even more vulnerable than we might be otherwise. We cannot simply be grapplers or strikers, Aristotelian dialecticians or Sophistic orators, we need to be both, and in being both, we become neither. That is, a *pankratist* rhetor might grapple the boxer or strike the wrestler as needed, and we can use this form of fighting as a way of practicing the art of finding and using *all* the available means of persuasion in a given case.

However, in advocating for a “mixed” mode of argument, I am not calling for the abandonment of Aristotelian logic, even though mixing in illogic with logic is against its own rules. Instead, I am arguing that Aristotelian logic needs to be supplemented with a different mode of engagement, a Sophist “illogic,” even though the term only applies when we presume the Aristotelian perspective. Rather than Sophists being simply charlatans, they are instead rival thinkers advocating a philosophy and rhetoric different from Aristotle. We see this difference as deviance because Aristotle and others have become hegemonic and therefore legitimate in the subsequent philosophical tradition. Indeed, rearticulating the Sophists as offering positive contributions and unique ideas has been a project in rhetoric and composition over the last forty years.^{xiv} If the Sophists are not simply villains, then the accusation of making the weaker argument the stronger

would be more than simply damning as well. Instead, Sophists adapt to the foundations upon which a particular argument stands and adopt the accepted premises of the interlocutor (and audience) in order to make their arguments effective. In so doing, they might be victorious over dominant ideals, making the weaker argument the stronger. The Sophistic “weaker over stronger” is a way of dealing with arguments without relying on established foundations and universal premises, which is what makes something “naturally stronger” in the first place. Indeed, if a “weaker” case defeats a “stronger,” then by the logic of the contest it would be the “stronger” instead.

Furthermore, this practice of “weaker over stronger” is instead a valuable resource in the rejection of the negative fruits of the “agonism” criticized by Tannen and Colaguori. Such “agonism” is not actually the *agōn*, but the result of a history of oppression and violence that marks the Western tradition and motivates the logics in place to rationalize that violence. Indeed, when people of color demanded equal treatment under the law, proponents of slavery and segregation had a “stronger” case rooted in longstanding tradition and Holy Scripture. The case for equality of all people regardless of skin color was a “weaker” argument that was not supported by legitimate systems of power, but instead Civil Rights were achieved through the “closed fist” arguments described by Corbett. The case for gender equality too fights against the “stronger” conception of patriarchy, a long standing belief in not only the “natural” strict difference and division between men and women, but a divinely ordained superiority of men over women. We still see battles in these wars for equality today, and we still see the negative perspective of their tactics on the part of their opponents as well.

If we believe that everyone deserves the same respect and has the same value, regardless of whether the particular qualities of individual bodily subjectivity mark them as part of the “stronger” or “weaker” group in any given oppressive structure, then we should not simply rely on the “stronger” arguments that have become the dominant ways of thinking. Indeed, breaking the law is act with rhetorical import, a sophistic attention to the words is what allows it be either “criminal” as it is when people value the law more or “civil disobedience” when people reject such laws as unjust. Any identification and rejection of oppression relies on challenging the oppressive practices that are seen as natural, objective, and obvious by positing a “weaker” who has been subject to this oppression by the “stronger” and who must overcome these practices in the fight for greater justice and equality.

With the election of Donald Trump and the dawn of our so-called “post-truth” era, we might not want to abandon traditional notions of logic and argumentation, but they’re not simply stable assumptions to work from, universal rules to follow, or unquestionable techniques anymore. We cannot let ourselves be limited by the metaphors we have inherited, a series of limits that prevent students from conceiving and practicing argument in an effective and ethical way. Rather, with the change to the ways that argumentation is seen, thought, and practiced, and with the suspicion of traditional forms of argumentation as biased and deceitful, we can’t simply train students in the old style any more. This project offers one possible new style of fighting which combines grappling with structures of logic and striking with the affective force of words, a combination like *pankration*, valued by the ancient Greeks, lost, and recreated by Arvanitis. To develop

this style, I have followed Arvanitis’s method as well: build on what we have, remember what we have forgotten, and look elsewhere to fill in the gaps.

VI. Chapter Outline

In the following two chapters, I extend and explore this concept of pankratic argument. In Chapter 1, I turn to an often ignored Platonic dialogue, *Euthydemus*, in which Socrates engages with and is ultimately “defeated” by two sophists. The titular Euthydemus and his brother Dionysodorus also happen to be skilled in all manner of fighting, “perfect pankratists” who see their skills in refutation as the “finest point” of their art. In my reading, I both outline the arguments in the dialogue as different types of fighting techniques and perform the kind of pankratic argument I have outlined here. In doing so, I trouble the strict division between Socratic Philosophy and Sophistic refutation, reading both against each other. Building on my reading of the *Euthydemus*, Chapter 2 explores the power of rules in agonistic contention as both absolutely necessary and yet impossibly fragile. That is, even though mutually agreed upon rules of conduct, space, and time are fundamental for any exchange to be productive, at any moment, in fighting or in argument, the rules might be broken or simply ignored, which means the rules of fallacy and how we deal with such fallacy are more important and complicated than we have traditionally understood.

In the rest of this project, I turn to Japanese martial arts training practices to apply these theories of agonistic rhetoric and pankratic argument in pedagogical approaches, strategies, and exercises to address the foundational challenges of teaching writing. I make this move for two reasons. First, the training practices in martial arts are

surprisingly consistent across different traditions, meaning that the Greeks most likely trained their fighters using the same pedagogical structures as the Japanese did. Second, although these structures are consistent, the Greek practices are both difficult to research and their descendants are so overcoded by subsequent developments in the Western tradition that I need to look at them through the lens of the Japanese arts to see them differently, and perhaps closer to the ways the agonistic Greeks practiced them as well. Just like Arvanitis had to incorporate non-Western martial arts practices to fill in the gaps in resurrecting pankration, I too turn to Japanese pedagogy to fill in the gaps of my sophisticated, agonistic approach to argument and writing.

In Chapter 3, I begin with striking, giving students specific tools to use when using words, like etymology and basics of grammatical structure, and training such basics, *kihon*, through repetitive practice, as in pankration and other arts like *karate* or *judo*. We drill not so that students can learn “clear prose” or “correct grammar,” but so that can develop effective, precise expression and strong logical support. That is, I address the problems of classicism and ethnocentrism at work in traditional understandings of “error,” and offer an alternative approach that achieves the goals of “correctness” without uncritically promoting an exclusionary model of what “good writing” is and can be.

In Chapter 4, I engage the question of the first-year writing assignment, in terms of authenticity and the development of student disposition. While it might be called formalist, I argue for writing assignments to be recursive practice sequences, *kata* in Japanese, which allow students gaining a sense of how their moves work in larger, more complex, and interconnected ways. To develop this recursive assignment, I modify the

classical argumentative form, supplementing it with subsequent forms. In training the essay as *kata*, students not only practice skills, but they develop different dispositions toward argument, writing, themselves, and others.

Building on drilling in basics and practicing forms, in Chapter 5 I address how students learn by working with others in something we call peer critique or peer review, which I articulate as sparring, *kumite* in Japanese. While most scholars reject the conflict endemic to peer review, I build my pedagogy around it. In this sparring, students conflict not to try to destroy each other, but so that they might become mutually vulnerable, learning the pain our words can cause and the pain our words can feel, making others better and allowing others to help us better ourselves.

Finally, in my conclusion, I offer some principles teachers might employ in their classes, scholarship, and practice that could help generate this agonistic orientation toward argument. That is, I do not embrace conflict nor glorify violence, but rather affirm it as a constitutive part of human experience and endeavor to provide my students and myself the best tools and strategies to encounter it productively, engage in it ethically, and use it as the ancient Greeks and medieval Japanese did in the generation of excellence.

ⁱ Furthermore, these arts are also counterparts regarding minor premises—what Stephen Toulmin more recently calls the Warrant—in that dialectic generates these premises, seeking the foundations on which to build other inquiry, while rhetoric works out from them. In this way, these two arts function through and with each other, dialectic builds the premises on which rhetoric depends, and this powerful dualism not only establishes a distinction that is borne out through the rhetorical tradition, but is also troubled, as when rhetoricians question commonplace assumptions or philosophers base their discussions on problematic assumptions. Roberts-Miller also complicates the binaries surrounding *agōn* in *Deliberate Conflict* by illustrating not only the difference between pro-conflict and anti-conflict, agonism and irenicism, in political spheres, but also by the ways they go about those arguments, either by expression and deliberation.

ⁱⁱ Indeed, the rejection of racial integration and gender equality in the United States in the mid-20th century was justified by social custom and religious authority, which saw such ideals as newfangled notions aimed at destroying “Western civilization,” as detractors still claim. In light of this, those fighting for racial and gender equality had to go out of accepted bounds, resort to “weaker over stronger” tactics like sit-ins, marches, and rallies, using affective means to overturn the established logics of how people are supposed to act and interact. The fight for justice required breaking the law. I return to this point later in this essay.

ⁱⁱⁱ “1) By the sixth century B.C., both in Greece and China, an ideal and a program of liberal training had evolved, which included both intellectual and martial components. 2) In both cases, this ideal became corrupted in later centuries, as combative arts became commercialized in the Hellenistic period, and as Confucian training became bureaucratized. 3) During the sixth century A.D., a liberal component of the older curriculum became codified and institutionalized in those havens of ideal pursuits, the monasteries. 4) In the medieval period, these paedetic curricula became enriched and extended, with the firm establishment of the trivium and quadrivium in medieval universities, and of the arts of kung fu and tai chi chuan in Chinese monasteries. 5) In the late nineteenth century, mainly in the United States and Japan, the ideals of those curricula were revived and propagated in the form of new secular programs of liberal training” (7).

^{iv} However, this ideal of *bushido* was just that, and the *samurai* were sometimes nothing more than aristocrats using their power, influence, and skills of war to gain more power and influence, and it was also part of the nationalism employed by Tojo and Hirohito in popularizing the war effort of Imperial Japan. As I have been arguing, the Greek *arête* has likewise suffered from the uses to which it has been put, and the historical-cultural conditions surrounding it, meant that only those with property and leisure were able to partake in it, and later the professionalization of martial arts and combat sports made it lucrative career path in itself. That is, both *bushido* and agonistic *arête* are examples of an ideal of nobility, trained and enacted through contest, conflict, and contention that failed to always live up to or encourage the best lives and courses of action. However, despite this failure both remain some of the longest standing and effective forms of education, and ones that have much to learn from one another.

^v In *Contesting Nietzsche*, Christa Davis-Acampora claims that Paul is the origin of the shift away from the Greek notion of struggle as positive and productive to emphasizing the pain, *agony*, in the contest. It is this Christian ideology that motivates the negative view of conflict in the Greeks, and even of Nietzsche as well, who not only uses the Greeks as a model, but also employs their agonistic approach as we can see in his *Rules for Kriegs-Praxis* in *Ecce Homo*. Furthermore, Tannen also cites Walter Ong’s investigation into the roots of Western education, an all-male situation, which draws from the contentiousness of the Ancient Greeks and the disputation tradition from medieval monasticism, those that serve as the origin of modern education. Tannen also cites David Noble who posits the Aristotelian investment in formal, binaristic logic and the Christian

Church, with its evil enemies and incontrovertible “good,” and the development of modern science out of these styles of inquiry to account for the agonism in education.

^{vi} I use this term *articulation*, in the sense of Sharon Crowley in *Toward a Civil Discourse*, in which she uses the term to describe the connections of ideas in an *ideologic*. By changing these connections, by taking apart and putting together differently, we can change the force, effect, and meaning of these ideas.

^{vii} In this, the ancient Greeks are attentive to the binary model espoused by the modern *hoplogists*, scholars of warfare. They delineate between martial arts as training practices for and by the military, while everything else are civilian combat sports. Their division has a definite sense of superiority, and I see a sneer on their part toward those who study civilian martial arts as quaint and not worth taking seriously. There are other methodological and ideological problems I have with *hoplogy*, but they’re really irrelevant for my present purposes.

^{viii} “There were two distinct versions of the sport, differing according to the holds employed and the methods of deciding the victor of a contest. *Kato pale*, or ground wrestling, was decided when one competitor acknowledged defeat by raising his right hand with the index finger pointed. In *orthia pale*, or upright-style wrestling, the objective was simply to throw the opponent to the ground. Three falls constituted a loss for a fighter, with the winner declared the *triakter*...a fall was defined as touching the ground with the knees. Once a wrestler threw his opponent, he would pin his foe’s shoulders, thereby winning the contest” (4). This distinction between Up and Down will become more important when we return to *pankration* in Chapter 2.

^{ix} In the *Love Fighting, Hate Violence Manifesto*, written by a non-profit organization dedicated to using martial arts and combat sports study as a way to combat assault, ethical problems, and rhetorical demonization, we have a differentiation of violence as something occurring against or without consent, while fighting is something taking place within mutually agreed upon rules.

^x Slapping distributes the force of a strike over a wider surface area, making it less impactful and damaging than a closed-fist punch, while the palm heel is much harder and stronger than the fist: a well-aimed palm strike can shatter the bones of the nose and launch them into the brain, causing instant death.

^{xi} While today, “mixed martial arts” is the product of combining distinct cultural traditions into a singular fighting style—combining Japanese *judo* throws with the complicated Brazilian *jujitsu* ground-fighting and the hard strikes of Muay Thai “kick boxing”—, the “mixing” of *pankration* came from the mix of modalities rather than traditions.

^{xii} In the 12th century and post-Byzantine era, “pankration experienced a revival and became known as *clotsata* (to cry out). It later spread to Western Europe, where it was known as *lactes* during the Middle Ages and *patso clotso* during the early 19th century. We only have poetic verses and accounts by early scholars and the numerous vase

paintings, coins and frescoes that suggest the techniques of antiquity. For this reason alone, there are many interpretations of what pankration is today. To some, it is just a convenient label for combining techniques for sport fighting, while others have developed it into a karate system complete with preset forms based on what they think is depicted in artistic renderings” (Arvanitis *The First Mixed Martial Art* 14-15). However, others challenge this conception. Kostas Dervenis and Nektarios Lykiardopoulos note that popular media has attempted to connect modern mixed martial arts to classical pankration, and they consider this a theft of Greek culture. They cite the authority of their personal connection, Lykiardopoulos’ grandfather was a champion wrestler and Dervenis’ village had vestiges of 19th century martial arts. But because traditions are traded between generations, handed down, traditions’ original form are lost. “Certainly this is the case of Greek martial arts, which did not survive, generally speaking, even in Greece itself” (xi). There’s evidence of unarmed combat practiced around the turn of the 20th century, and most can be traced back to the 14th century. “As can be clearly seen by any experienced hoplologist, the techniques exhibited have nothing to do with Mixed Martial Arts, and look more Eastern than Western (in fact, the movements have to do with use of weapons)” (xi). Furthermore, these scholars have an investment in showing the Greek origin of martial arts writ large, which is a problematic project, one with arguable grounds, as well.

^{xiii} Alongside this globally-informed, pseudo-neo-classical mode of combat, Arvanitis incorporated cross-training, fitness, and diet, which was both historically accurate for the Greeks and quite prescient of mixed martial arts training in later decades.

^{xiv} Susan Jarratt’s *Rereading the Sophists* argues that their attention to cultural context, *nomos*, rather than Truth, *logos*, resembles the anti-foundationalism of the 20th century, that the Sophists were ancient post-moderns, opponents of what would become Eurocentrism, and even the first feminists. Edward Schiappa’s *Protagoras and Logos* examines the author of the famous maxim, “man is the measure of all things,” who provides a different approach to metaphysics, truth, and reality, one against which the younger Socrates set his own thought. Debra Hawhee’s *Bodily Arts* shows how the Sophistic pedagogy of rhythm, response, and repetition was based on and understood as physical training, making a nature (*Physiopoiesis*), a far more attractive and nuanced pedagogical approach than the reductive straw man we inherit from the anti-Sophist classical tradition.

Chapter 1

Fighting *Euthydemus*: Rhetorical Dialectic and/or Dialectical Rhetoric

The contest itself continued uninterrupted until one of the combatants either surrendered, suffered unconsciousness, or expired.
Grandmaster Jim Arvanitis, *Pankration* 13

Which is “is” is very important, but it seems like laughable sophistry, or perhaps merely an ‘academic’ or ‘philosophical’ (i.e. irrelevant) question, and thus a difficult move to employ. Although such common ignorance makes it a useful ambiguity to exploit.

Trevor C. Meyer, Fighting *Euthydemus* 16

I. Transition and Summary

In my introduction, I outlined the “open hand” and the “closed fist” as a potent metaphor of how we understand, practice, and evaluate argument, as well as how the possible origins of that metaphor in ancient Greek boxing and wrestling might illuminate the complexities and problematics of the easy division of argumentation into two, ethically unambiguous modes. However, I also illustrated the mutually exploitative and exclusive nature of those modes. So rather than champion one over the other, I instead argued that we need an argumentative mode that can do both. Just like *pankration* as an art uses both striking and grappling, this mode can account for and perform both expressive, possibly fallacious or “merely rhetorical” argument as well as deliberative, dialectical argumentation. That is, we need an argumentative mode that is both rhetorical and dialectical, but ultimately reducible to neither. We need a “complete fighting system” that prepares students better than more limited systems, especially if students argue in realistic, practical contexts, argument “on the street,” not just in the Lyceum.

To illustrate rhetorical *pankration*, in this chapter I turn to Plato's *Euthydemus*, a dialogue often overlooked or thought to be mere parody. In it, Socrates refutes, learns from, and is refuted by the titular sophist and his brother, themselves martial arts experts, and the argument itself is presented as a *pankration* match with punches, throws, knockouts, and submissions. The conclusion is even more interesting: Socrates is defeated, knocked out, by the sophists. That is, here sophistry overcomes philosophy, fallacy defeats argument, and the gathered crowd cheers in recognition. This illustrates that we cannot be successful in "any given case" if we limit our training to traditional standards of argument when arguing with others who have different metaphysics, tactics, and ethics. Because such a project shifts foundational assumptions about argumentation, it's difficult to conceptualize and articulate, so here I perform this mode of argument in my interpretation and analysis of the dialogue. That is, I engage with the fallacious and logical argument of all parties, whether hero or villain; it's not enough to simply analyze the moves, but I must enter the contest myself.

The *Euthydemus (On Refutation)* begins at the Lyceum with Crito asking Socrates with whom he was speaking the day before. In response, Socrates describes the extended conversation between himself, young Cleinias, and the brother-sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, surrounded by a crowd of Cleinias' admirers and the brothers' followers. Already familiar with these men, Socrates persuades them to demonstrate to everyone their great wisdom and persuade Cleinias to study virtue (Lamb 273c).^{xv} They obligingly engage Cleinias in a series of sophistic refutations, using the ambiguity of words and amphiboly of grammar to bring him to contradictory conclusions: for instance, that both

the “wise” and the “foolish” are those who “learn.” After exposing this trick, Socrates demonstrates his own method, persuading Cleinias to study philosophy and to love wisdom with all his heart.

Satisfied with himself, Socrates asks the sophists to do the same and persuade the boy to wisdom. Dionysodorus responds that in wanting the boy wise, Socrates and the others want him dead, and Ctesippus, one of Cleinias’ lovers, angrily calls Dionysodorus a liar. Defending his brother’s honor, Euthydemus refutes Ctesippus, proving that “lying is impossible.” Socrates again steps in, and demonstrates his method, persuading Cleinias that wisdom is the only way to happiness, although they are unsure of what that wisdom specifically consists. Crito here interrupts, incredulous at the young man’s wise responses and Socrates wavers, unsure who exactly said such wise things, but he is sure it was not either of the sophists. Returning to his story, Socrates again asks the brothers to follow his example or otherwise provide the wisdom that leads to happiness.

The brothers respond that Socrates, and everyone else too, always already knows everything. Ctesippus, incredulous, jumps in again, and begins adopting the methods of the sophists, and uses it against them, striking Euthydemus silent. Turning next to the brother, Ctesippus asks whether all things speak or are silent, and Dionysodorus responds “both and neither.” The hot-blooded youth laughingly declares victory, Cleinias along with him. However, Socrates chides the boy for laughing at such beautiful wisdom, and Dionysodorus questions Socrates whether indeed beautiful things exist. Socrates eagerly contends with him, “attempting to imitate the cleverness of these men” (301b). This last refutation concludes Socrates’ account.

In the end, Dionysodorus argues that if something is ours we can do whatever we want with it and also that all living beings are animals. Therefore, if we have animals that are ours, then we can kill or sacrifice them. Socrates has gods that are his, gods are animals, and their being his means he can do whatever he wants with them, therefore—Socrates doesn't answer, so Euthydemus does for him—if Socrates has gods, he kills them. He is stunned silent and thus refuted. Seeking to help the brave hero, Ctesippus attempts to intervene, only to admit defeat also and declares the brothers “invincible,” and “everyone present without exception” cheers until the very columns of the Lyceum shake with laughter (303a-b). Begging to be their student, Socrates praises the victors for their “amazing genius,” caring “not a jot for the [opinions of the] multitude” and seeing “no difference of things at all” (303d-304b). Ending his story, Socrates tells Crito that he too should join as a student of sophistic refutation.

Having heard the story, Crito explains that he spoke with a man the previous day who saw the sophists' “refutation” as an “inconsequent ado about matters of no consequence” and Socrates as foolish for wanting to follow them, before angrily storming away from the crowd (304e). Identifying this unnamed man (a speech-writer widely thought to be Isocrates^{xvi}) as half-philosopher and half-statesman, Socrates explains that such “middle men” will always be half as good as the ones they middle between. Crito asks Socrates whether his own son Critoboulos should study philosophy, considering the refutations, Socrates' defeat, and the angry middle-man. Letting philosophers and sophists be as they will, Socrates tells Crito “when you have tested the matter itself, well and truly, if you find it to be a poor affair, turn everyone you can away from it, not only your sons: but if you find it to be such a thing as I think it is, pursue and ply it without

fear, both you, as they say, and yours” (Lamb 307c). In the end, the dialogue asks us to figure it out for ourselves.

II. Ignorant Introductions and Bracketing the Corybantes

Traditionally, this text is seen as a satirical demonstration of the inherent ethical and effective superiority of the Socratic *elenchus* over the sophist *eristic* (*Eris* or “strife”). Indeed, Georgia Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi argues that *Euthydemus* is “structured as a crescendo,” escalating in tension to a conclusion that “presents the reader with some of the most absurd sophistic claims,” like rejecting the Principle of Non-Contradiction (Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 84). That Socrates is refuted and defeated is variously understood to be Platonic irony, only apparent (i.e. sophistic) refutation, or downplayed in favor of focusing on the character of the characters. While sophists are rhetorical bullies only interested in haughty superiority, bandying words and employing absurdity to achieve victory, Socrates is kind, generous, and his *elenchus* leads people to true wisdom and real goodness.

As Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi explains, philosophers generally ignore this text for lacking a unique and positive contribution to Platonic doctrine, classicists see it simply as Plato’s poor imitation of Aristophanean satire, and rhetoricians likewise have only alluded to this dialogue briefly, as it’s generally assumed there is nothing beyond the obvious here.^{xvii} Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi argues this oversight is due to our academic “division into separate fields with separate methodologies, [which] gives us insufficient tools to work with Plato” (1). As a field with strong interdisciplinary reach, pervasively influenced by and interested in the classics, and the sophists in particular, rhetoric is

uniquely suited to engage with this dialogue, and the dialogue too is uniquely informative to rhetoric. We should be interested in this juxtaposition of Socratic and sophistic methods, their combination and interplay, and especially that Socrates himself is stunned silent by the sophists, a rare occurrence in Plato, even after combining sophistic methods with his own.^{xviii} Indeed, we too might have much to learn from, the all-wise (*pansophoi*), all-powerful (*pagkratiastai*), all-fighting (*pammachon*) demi-gods, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus (Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 128).^{xix}

However, this whole exchange with the sophists is contained in a story that Socrates tells Crito within a fiction authored by Plato, which complicates Socrates' defeat as literal, but it doesn't negate that it happened either.^{xx} At various points in the text, Socrates shifts his role in the refutation, sometimes acting as participant, engaging with the sophists, but elsewhere acting as judge, chiding Ctesippus for being hot-blooded or the sophists for their insufficient methods, and even stopping the contest itself, but he is also the overall source of the argument. He is fighter, referee, and commentator. Furthermore, Socrates cannot remember many details of his own story, possibly serving as evidence of Plato's satirical intention but also troubling the reliability of Socrates as narrator, beyond the (unprovable and irrelevant) intention of Plato.^{xxi}

That is, the refutation presented through any Platonic dramatic frame like *Euthydemus* is necessarily fixed and predetermined, like a *kung fu* movie fight scene or a professional wrestling match, rather than a real contest, like a street-fight or boxing bout. While all these contests are "real" in the sense they take place, have bodily risks and material rewards, the contest is not determined by the effort of the competitors in this dialogue, but rather dictated by a narrative arc. It's "fake" with each player playing along

and playing their part.^{xxii} The arguments here are not refuted by merit, but because the game itself is rigged. Fixed fights produce clean, easy, comfortable narratives like “good guys defeat bad guys” or “bad guys win by cheating,” but real fights are messy, disorienting, and difficult to engage with certainty, as well as perhaps tedious and boring for those without the requisite fighting experience needed to pay attention to detail.^{xxiii}

Furthermore, all written arguments are necessarily Corybantic, framed and directed toward some conclusion, constrained by the fixedness of writing, rather than the dynamic orality of a “real fight.”^{xxiv} But just as the Corybantes fighting-dance was useful training for actual fighting, an ancient Greek *kata*, so too the fighting-dance of written argument is useful and necessary for training students in the real fights of live argument, whether oral debates, coffee shop or barroom discussions, or even Facebook fights. While some might see the “fight” of this dialogue and argument more broadly as purely metaphorical—another Platonic inheritance—it is productive to read *Euthydemus* on its own terms as a Nietzschean *kriegs-praxis*, a fight-argument.^{xxv} Finally, this isn’t just any fight, but a fight with all powers, a *pankration* match.

III. Arguments Full of Fighting and Agonistic Excellence

Socrates identifies Euthydemus and Dionysodorus to Crito—and Cleinias within the story, as well as the reader—as the perfect *pankratists*, skilled experts in armed combat (*hoplomachia*), generalship (*strategon*), and legal battles (*dikasteriois machen*), having the “finishing touch to their [fighting] skill” in refuting any claim, whether it is true or false (271d-272b).^{xxvi} Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi identifies these arts all as sub-sets of *pankration*, which she translates as “an art of constant victory,” omitting the obvious

connection Lamb notes to “the very vigorous sport which combined wrestling and boxing” (Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 128, Lamb 380 n1.). The popular “heavy event” was added to the Olympic Games in 648 BCE and this dialogue is purported to be written around 384 BCE, so the allusion to literal *pankration*, especially with the brothers’ expertise in related arts, makes sense here, although there doesn’t appear to have been Olympic *pankration* that year (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 38).^{xxvii}

Furthermore, the argument itself is set specifically in fighting terms throughout the text. The refutations are a series of falls (*kataballontes*), the Protagorean Maxim “there is no falsehood” is a “sacrifice throw,” overthrowing opposing views yet falling itself (*anatrepo*), and Socrates says he was “knocked out” (*plēgeis*) by the sophists, among many other examples (Hawhee 36-7, Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 71, 80, Lamb 286c).^{xxviii} However, the sophists tell Socrates that the fighting arts are mere “diversions” for them now, having devoted themselves full time to the teaching of virtue (*arête*), which they can teach to anyone faster (*tachista*) and better (*kallist’*) than anyone else, regardless of whether or not the student believes virtue can be taught or that the sophists themselves are capable of teaching it (273d-275).^{xxix} If we consider the arguments here as a form of fighting, the entire dialogue itself hinges on *arête* as a term and its connection to Greek agonism.

As I argue in the introduction, *arête* is only achieved through a questing, constant agonistic enactment, through contest as the sophists exemplify here, rather than some static internal “goodness” or “grace” (Hawhee 17).^{xxx} Therefore, *arête* is more properly translated as “virtuosity” or “excellence” rather than “virtue,” and so the sophists offer excellence in skill that can only be acquired, enacted, and maintained through agonistic

conflict, just like any other fighting skill (Hawhee 25). So rather than the sophists being bombastic charlatans for claiming to teach goodness, we must understand them as expert fighters providing expertise *in fighting through fighting* itself, their previous diversions being how virtue/excellence itself is taught, enacted, and recognized.

Socrates doesn't seem to see it that way though, initially chiding them for being too playful, fallaciously striking with/at the mere surface of language, and offers to demonstrate his own clumsy but superior method, which gets deeper into the structure of the arguments, grappling with the warrants rooting claims and the data used to support them. However, Socrates also uses ambiguity and amphiboly to refute a claim or forward an argument, fallaciously arguing in his own right, and indeed he becomes more sophistic as the dialogue progresses.^{xxx} While the sophists are usually derided as only interested in victory at all costs, this accusation equally applies to Socrates here, although charitably justified by scholars because he does so "for good reasons."^{xxxii} Furthermore, Socrates tells Crito that Ctesippus also adopts the techniques of the sophists later in the dialogue, having "picked up these very words by overhearing the men themselves" (300d). That is, over the course of a single conversation, the sophists have taught their *arête* to Ctesippus, who didn't even believe them real teachers, and even to Socrates, who isn't sure it can even be taught at all. Over the course of this dialogue, the *pankratists* teach their *arête* of refutation *through* refutation, so that by the end, even Socrates is a *pankratist* to some degree, but ultimately still not good enough to escape defeat.

Also, and perhaps more interestingly, the sophists themselves become more Socratic as the dialogue progresses, using moves that they had chided Socrates for using earlier: asking for clarification, posing qualifications, and questioning the warrants of

the interlocutors.^{xxxiii} While initially they use sophistic techniques like striking on the surface of a claim and playing on the ambiguity of a word, they later delve deeper, grappling with the warrant and backing, unbalancing the structure of the argument: the *pankration* method of engagement that starts with striking before moving to grappling (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 63, *Pankration* 12, 20, Dervenis and Lykiardopolous 36). As the sophists shift from surface to structure, they show themselves capable of philosophy as well as sophistry, skilled grapplers and strikers both, the perfect *pankratists* as Socrates describes them to Crito.

In the end, the obvious and inherent divisions between philosophy and sophistry become blurred, indistinct, and perhaps indistinguishable in the agonistic mixing-in of refutation. The differences between the sophists and Socrates seem to be the emphasis of their *pankration*, either striking with grappling or grappling with striking, but ultimately both and neither (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 15). However, rather than choosing sophistry or philosophy, or bemoaning the difficulty in separating them, we should attend to their differences as modes of engagement, which are ultimately two poles of emphasis in a singular “all-powers” argument that is truly “invincible.”^{xxxiv}

To analyze the fighting moves in *Euthydemus*, I bring in Aristotle’s treatise on *Sophistical Refutations*, a useful complementary resource written some thirty years later, in which he addresses the specific moves sophists use and how to counter them. Interestingly, he uses the same or very similar examples as those in the dialogue to illustrate his points, even specifically referring to Euthydemus himself.^{xxxv} For Aristotle, the ambiguity of words and amphiboly of grammar are obvious fallacies, linguistic errors in the representation of ideas, what we call barbarism and solecism. However, by

adopting a Sophistic perspective on language—it is not merely or only a representational medium, but an affective force—and by changing the ideology that grounds Aristotle’s treatment of fallacy we can use his work to help rearticulate the moves of this dialogue in a different way. The first refutation in the *Euthydemus* is a perfect example, and thus a perfect place to start.

IV. Five Moves of Sophistic Pankration

α. Latching on Ambiguity: Basics of Engagement

First, Euthydemus asks Cleinias: “what sort of men are the learners, the wise or the foolish?” (275d). Everyone has already assented to the Principle of Non-Contradiction by this point, and so Cleinias cannot answer “both” because one cannot be both foolish and wise at once, so “whichever way the boy answers, he will be [refuted]” (Lamb 275e).^{xxxvi} Initially, Cleinias answers commonsensically that the wise learn, but Euthydemus shows him that students have not yet acquired what they’re taught, so rather than the wise, those that have already acquired it, the foolish are the ones who learn.^{xxxvii} Next, Dionysodorus asks Cleinias which students learn the recitations of the teachers, the wise or the foolish, and Cleinias responds that the wise students learn their recitations, rather than the foolish ones. Thus, he has refuted his previous response, yet confirmed his original, refuted response. As Socrates explains to him later, Cleinias is trapped because “learn” means both acquiring knowledge and possessing knowledge (277d). Also addressing “learn,” Aristotle admits: “inevitably the same formula, and a single name, have a number of meanings” (1). That is, “learn” is only ambiguous as a word, not the

thing itself—a fault of language as a medium of transmission—and so a precise dose of “language medicine” would clear the whole mess right up (Ranciere, *Dissensus* xi).

Aristotle identifies that such “language dependent” fallacies occur when we are unaware of or inattentive to the correct/proper name of a thing or willfully reject such propriety (*Sophistic Refutations* 3). However, because “it is impossible in a discussion to bring in the actual things discussed,” Aristotle acknowledges, “we use their names as symbols instead of them; and therefore, we suppose that what follows in the names, follows in the things as well” (2). If things don’t actually appear in argument, then all argument only operates on the level of names. To deal with this limitation, we must then make language singular in meaning, use it precisely and regularly as possible, and reduce ambiguity to prevent such fallacious arguments from having any force. No more silly poetry or obscene figuration.^{xxxviii} But there’s no necessary reason why learn *must* mean only one thing or mean one of its meanings more than any other, except as argued by traditional usage, historical etymology, or unprovable intention.^{xxxix} But as we will see here, and can see elsewhere, Socrates shows that such *endoxa* can be easily refuted through questions, and that tradition, history, and intent crumble when pressed (Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 12).

But not only is the word itself slippery like an oiled wrestling opponent—words mean many things with some more widely meaning than others—, but the meaning also changes through the grammatical form in which they are written, both temporally (one has not learned before one has learned) and completion (learning is a process, while learning is a product). Above we have “learn” in the simple present with two meanings, but we might also differentiate them by grammatical aspect: the present progressive

(“learning”) and the present perfect (“have learned”), as Mary Margaret McCabe argues (81). Rather than “learn” being a single entity with multiple meanings, it is a dynamic process. Once it has been completed, one is no longer “learning” but has “learning,” or one has “learned” and is therefore “learned.” One name stands for many things, one thing can have many names, the names and things are further complicated as entities subject to time and change, and all are affected by the necessity of engaging with them in language itself. Ambiguity, lexical and structural, is not a *fault* of language, but an inherent *feature* of language to which any interlocutor must attend as well as an opening any other can latch onto and twist.^{x1}

The fighting body is ambiguous; it is both a mechanism for the enactment of force and the vulnerable target of that force, and this true is for words as well. If we are to be word-fighters, we must first train to become attentive to and knowledgeable about our language, how it moves, and how it can move, the basics (*kihon*) and form (*kata*) that are necessary preparation for the fight (*kumite*). However, we might also jump right into the fight (*kumite*), and learn like Cleinias: by being knocked around (275e). By forcing a division and coercing a choice, the sophists trap Cleinias in a structure that is, as Dionysodorus whispers to Socrates, “inescapable” (*afukta*) (276e).^{xli} Preemptive cutting into the coming answer with the blade of *or*, “Splitting the Wood” of the matter so that whichever side Cleinias chooses, the sophists are ready to refute him.

β. “Splitting the Wood”: Distinction, Opposition, Binary

While the sophists’ choice, the wood they split, can be argued both ways, as Socrates explains both the wise and the foolish might be said to learn (in difference senses of course), Socrates also uses this technique, but with more speed and intensity.

Socrates asks Cleinias whether those who have knowledge of something, such as flute-players or grammarians, will be more successful and have more good fortune than those who do not. Here, we see Socratic fallacy. Initially, Socrates states success is the result of good fortune, then success *is* good fortune, then he makes good fortune the necessary result of wisdom, shifting from the wise as more *likely* to be successful to the wise being *necessarily* more successful, moving from arguments of probability to arguments of necessity (Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 16).^{xliii} He concludes that wisdom precludes error because error would mean that the person wasn't wise because if they were, they would not have erred. Aristotle points out that such circular arguments "depend on the assumption of the original point to be proved...[and] appear to refute because men lack the power to keep their eyes at once upon what is the same and what is different" (5). Here, Socrates has shifted his kinds of arguments and concluded in a circle, a skillful combination of fallacy. Then, Socrates asks Cleinias whether a man without wisdom, who must necessarily err, would err less if he did less, and do less ill, and therefore be less miserable, and Cleinias assents (281b-c). This move is Socrates' characteristic flurry of blows, and like Bruce Lee, his punches are too fast to see.

Rather than having Cleinias choose between options, Socrates splits the wood in rapid-fire combination as complex answers and has Cleinias agree. Who then does less, Socrates asks, the weak or the strong, high or low class, brave or cowardly; idle or busy, slow-minded or quick-witted, dull-sensed or sharp-sensed? (281c-d).^{xliiii} Each of these terms is presented as a binary choice, like the sophists do, but Socrates' alternatives are not simply alternatives. Rather, they are a conflation of an evaluative binary (a desirable and an undesirable) and a qualitative binary (a having and a lacking). In the structure of

the Principle of Non-Contradiction, by asking a series of comparative questions with binary choices with only one option having some desirable quality, Socrates leads Cleinias to another tautological consequence: the lesser do less. Already held by Socrates, Cleinias himself doesn't think to ask "do less of what?" and the sophists politely remain silent. However, just as Socrates points out the ambiguity of "learn," here we might point out the ambiguity of "less."

In each of Socrates's cases, as with the wise and the foolish being those who learn, the binary might function differently; the strong might do more *or* do less than the weak, depending on the doing in question. For example, the weak, lower class, and cowardly might all *compromise* or surrender more than the strong, high class, and brave do. The strong might fight more than the weak, while the weak flee more than the strong. The high class might be strong in coin and influence, but weak in body, lacking the robust musculature of the poor plowman. The slow-minded might agree more than the quick-witted, as the dull-sighted squint more than those who see more clearly, or the idle sleep more than the busy. Therefore, the lesser do both less and more than the greater, who also do both more and less than the lesser. While Socrates might ask such questions of the sophists and be celebrated by scholars for doing so, in asking these questions of him about how "lesser do less" we might be chided by Socrates (and scholars) for "wrangling" or "prating" rather than answering or frustrate our readers by "not moving the argument forward." We might be said to be missing the point or not understanding it.

However, Socrates is not really concerned with "doing less" in each of these different cases. His concern is not attending to the differences between "less" for weaker/stronger and "less" for the rich/poor. Rather, he is interested in "doing less" in

general or “less-ness” itself. He was likewise concerned with “success” in general, as seen above, conflating Cleinias’ preference of a wise general or wise doctor with the technical expertise of the flautist or grammarian in promoting or guaranteeing success. He also neglects the possibility that the wise could not succeed or err at all, thus ignoring chance or accident. In this, Socrates is using the converse of division: combination. By erasing or ignoring the differences between the weak and the poor, Socrates creates a new, common concept that then “includes” success in each particular case. Rather than simply articulating differences, splitting the wood, Socrates is “Smashing the Clay” of radically different cases together to throw on the wheel into a new artful vessel that we all have been told (and may presume) will hold water.

γ. “Smashing the Clay”: Combination, Conflation, Confusion

Demonstrating how he wishes the sophists to proceed, Socrates begins by asking Cleinias what leads to happiness, turning first to the *endoxa* that the possession of many good things brings happiness (Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 12). However, other than these “good things” being “good”—the positive side of an evaluative binary—they fall into four very different categories: material goods (wealth), bodily goods (health, beauty, talent), social goods (power, class, honors), and moral goods (temperance, justice, courage, and wisdom) (279a-d, Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 12). For Socrates, rather than just possessed or acquired (another ambiguity he exploits), all these goods are only good when used, and then only truly goods when “used rightly,” i.e. led by wisdom, and not goods when not guided by wisdom, neutral when not used, and great evils when “used wrongly.”^{xliv} Moving to (right) use, we can see the differences more starkly, and Socrates

smashes even more goods together, adding a great deal of food and drink, and the tools and materials of carpentry to the above list.

The goods only benefit us when they are used, and used rightly, but what *use* means is different in each case: when food and drink are used they are consumed and destroyed to become bodily tissue, tools of carpentry persist throughout the carpenting while the materials do not, and using the other goods is complicated. For things like justice and temperance, “wrong use” is quite quizzical because “having justice would mean acting justly,” having temperance acting temperately, and having bravery is acting bravely; if we don’t act in these ways, then we don’t have these qualities (Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 24). It’s also unclear what “wrong use” of health or the other bodily goods might be besides a certain style of living, contrasted with another that constitutes “right use.” However, “right use” is never explicitly defined, which leaves an unresolved ambiguity at the heart of this dialogue, troubling whatever rightness can accomplish. That is, such “right use” is not obvious or natural, but the product of rhetorical work, especially collapsing distinctions, even as it works as the foundation for future rhetorical work. But this doesn’t trouble Socrates because “right use” is obviously use when guided by wisdom, which will always be good and successful.

Furthermore and likewise, capital (wealth, power, class, and honors) might be used wrongly to forward one’s own personal agenda as much as it could be used rightly to help the “common good.” But in doing so, ignoring potential opportunities to increase our own capital might likewise be considered wrong use of wealth, especially if “common good” means supplementing the wellbeing of the undeserving, idle, and wicked. What is “right use” for one is “wrong use” for another. By glossing over these

perhaps obvious differences, Socrates can eliminate alternatives to his own argument for Cleinias: that wisdom is the only true unconditional good, the point that began the argument in the previous section. The sophists also erase difference, but do so differently.

After everyone agrees that they seriously want Cleinias to be wise, Dionysodorus argues that if Cleinias is not now wise (i.e. ignorant), and his friends want him to be wise, they want him to be not what he is now. Therefore, he says “since you wish him to be no longer what he now is, you wish him, apparently, to be dead” (283d). Dionysodorus presents a binary of wise/ignorant and combines not being ignorant with not being in general, smashing together “is” (*estin*) in the predicative and existential senses (Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 76).^{xlv} If Cleinias is, then if he isn’t, then he would not be. While “good in general” for Socrates is allowable, body and society being only accidental qualities of good, “*is* in general” seems to only be subject to a Clintonian question about “what the meaning of ‘is’ is.” Which “is” is is very important, but it seems like laughable sophistry, or perhaps merely an “academic” or “philosophical” (i.e. irrelevant) question, and thus a difficult move to employ. Although, such common ignorance makes it a very useful ambiguity to exploit.

However, if Cleinias were to become wise, he would no longer be the same, ignorant Cleinias, but a different, wise Cleinias, and the ignorant Cleinias would certainly be vanished “into the void of what is not” (McCabe 82). Socrates himself acknowledges this, offering himself to be “killed” like Cleinias if only he could be wise afterward (285c). In response, we might follow Aristotle, identifying arguments from accidental qualities as sophistic refutation and defining true argument as that which concerns essences, and contend that Cleinias is more essentially Cleinias than he is essentially

ignorant (30). But this split requires additional rhetorical work, distinguishing between Cleinias' essential "Cleinias-ness" that persists through his education from his ignorance and other qualities, perhaps even his name "Cleinias," as merely accidental.^{xlvi} Although, if there's no things but names, as we said above, then accidental qualities might actually be all we deal with in argumentation: there's no Cleinias but "Cleinias."^{xlvii}

Although, we might then be chided for not being precise enough, and need to further specify the difference of such differences, but then be considered potentially wrangling, making unnecessary divisions, and then told to ignore more differences, and back and forth and on and on, again and again. Aristotle also identifies these techniques as characteristic of sophistic refutation: "if the argument depends upon combination, then the solution consists in division; if upon division, then in combination," which also goes back and forth and on and on, again and again (23). In sophistic striking, we can hit and block on the surface of our language with the surface of our language, cutting and smashing words. However, the useful opposites of Splitting the Wood and Smashing the Clay are not only mutually destructive, each using concussive force to negate an opponent, just as a hard block negates a strike, but are mutually enabling as well, as a block negates by striking the strike itself. That is, Splitting the Wood requires allowing previous smashes to remain unsplit and Smashing the Clay requires allowing previous splits to remain unsmashed. Ultimately both opposites require both opposites, only differing in specific emphasis and tactical relation.

Not limited to claim-based arguments, Aristotle also suggests we attack opponents' warrants using opposites in the same way. If a person is arguing from Nature, then oppose them with Law, and if by Law, then by Nature. If their ideology might lead

them to use or rely on paradoxical or contradictory opinions, then attack those grounds. While we might begin by engaging opponents on their own terms, we might tactically decide to use the opposite instead.^{xlvi} Everyone in an argument is engaging with others and must latch onto the responses they're given, but by engaging with what we're given, by latching on and drawing in, we make ourselves vulnerable to our opponent's counters. When we close into warrants, rather than just claims, just as in *pankration*, the lines between the tactically distinguishable but fundamentally indistinct moves becomes blurred, as do the distinctions between rhetorical striking and dialectical grappling.

δ. *"Burn the Earth": Counter Clarification, Reversing Qualification, Feigning Exception*

Identifying the sophists as using a Protagorean (or Antisthenean) Maxim "there is no such thing as speaking false," Socrates gently attacks their paradoxical foundation (Lamb 286c).^{xlix} As he did with Cleinias, Socrates has Dionysodorus assent to a chain of equivalences (the links of which we might break if we were so inclined): if there's no false speech, there's no false thought, no false opinion, no ignorance or ignorant men, and thus no mistakes.¹ In doing so, Socrates brings Dionysodorus to a point of contradiction. If Socrates is mistaken and can be refuted, then the Protagorean Maxim is false, but if Socrates is not mistaken and he cannot be refuted, then Dionysodorus loses his earlier claim that he can refute anyone. If the sophistic questions are inescapable submission holds, then Socrates here has found a way to likewise apply his own submission, arguing that their maxim "still suffers from the trouble of knocking others down and then falling itself" (288a). By using the Principle of Non-Contradiction to establish the bounds of the contest, the sophists set up an absolute binary, using this structure to refute but are also themselves subject to being refuted by it. However, we can side-step contradiction as

Socrates and Ctesippus do in latter parts of the dialogue, finding counter attacks to the sophists in disrupting the refutation by asking for clarifications, posing qualifications, and finding exceptions.

When asked whether he knows with that with which he knows, Socrates asks for clarification: “I think you mean my soul, or is that not your meaning?” and Euthydemus chides him for answering a question with a question (295c). Socrates sees the ambiguity in the refutation and refuses to answer until he himself has been answered. Euthydemus presses him to engage with the terms he is given and calls him a driveling “old dotard” for refusing to follow the rules (295c). Socrates might very well be innocently asking for clarification so he can make sure to answer correctly what Euthydemus is specifically asking, as “knowing with that with which you know” is certainly a feat of linguistic acrobatics (295c).^{li} Alternatively, he has already seen the sophists use “learn” to catch, trap, and strangle Cleinias in characteristic *pankration* fashion, so Socrates counters and blocks Euthydemus’ “name stranglehold” (*Onomata peristēsas*) before he can lock it in tightly (Arvanitis, *First Mixed Martial Art* 63, Lamb 295d).^{lii} As we saw earlier, Cleinias is refuted by the binary of wise and foolish if he accepts the terms and the structure of the refutation, but here Socrates uses clarification to disrupt the very terms on which he would be refuted. As Euthydemus begins closing his arm around his opponent’s neck, Socrates pushes it up and spins away.

Breaking from the story, Socrates then tells Crito that he saw Euthydemus become frustrated with his questions, and so he asks Euthydemus to start over, even though he continues to refuse to be taken in (295e). Instead of answering a question with a question, Socrates imposes his clarification within his answer, qualifying that he knows

“by means of [his] soul,” and is again chided for not following the rules, until he finally retracts, concedes, and admits he does know everything (295e, 296d). Similarly, Aristotle suggests: “whenever one foresees any question coming, one should put in one's objection and have one's say beforehand: for by doing so one is likely to embarrass the questioner most effectually” (17). Not only do we need to make sure our own techniques don't have any obvious openings or weaknesses, but also we should be able to know the weaknesses of any responses we can predict in advance. If a term is ambiguous, then ask for clarification or include a qualification within the answer. In addition to clarification and qualification that disrupt the terms of refutation, we can also disrupt the structure of the refutation itself.

Late in the dialogue, Ctesippus begins finding “ridiculous” exceptions to the sophists' binaries that disrupts their refutations. When asked whether a cartload of medicine is enough for a sick man, Ctesippus returns that it is, were the patient “as big as the Delphian statue” (299c). When asked by Dionysodorus whether it is proper to have many spears and shields in battle, like Socrates he preemptively counters the refutation, confirming that Euthydemus would argue for one person only, and posits the mythical giants, two-bodied Geryon and hundred-armed Briareus, as needing far more than one spear and shield, thus silencing Euthydemus because a “man-at-arms...should know better” (299c-d). When Dionysodorus posits that talking about iron is Ctesippus speaking of the silent, Ctesippus retorts that he hears iron cry out whenever he walks by a smithy (299b-300c). By bringing in myth and metaphor, Ctesippus is not refuting, but disrupting the refutation. While the sophists start out the dialogue being ridiculous, here the sophists

are serious, Socratic questioners berated by an eristic interlocutor, who uses absurdity to disrupt the discussion.

We can also get our interlocutor to disrupt the refutation for us. We see these two moves in basketball as the juke and “drawing the foul.” When Dionysodorus claims that Cleinias’ nice friends want the boy dead in being wise, Ctesippus is drawn in to defend his beloved and his own honor, only to be refuted by Dionysodorus. “By offering him what appears to be an opening, you force the opponent into ‘taking the bait.’ Even though it is a deliberate error, it must never appear this way to him, since an experienced fighter seldom, if ever, falls prey to a ‘setup’” (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 95). Socrates also uses this technique, stating that if he knows everything, then he knows “the good are unjust” which prompts Dionysodorus himself to jump in and ruin the argument and be chided by his brother (297a-b). Here Socrates is feinting, which “cannot look like a feint; it must appear to be an actual attack” (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 82). At other points, Socrates acts as a judge to stop the refutation, worrying Ctesippus has become too aggressive and abusive to the sophists (285a, 288b).^{liii} Lucky Socrates is there, lest the boy learn first-hand about the fighting expertise of the brothers.

After Ctesippus asks whether all things speak or are silent, Dionysodorus responds: “neither and both [*oudetera kai amphotera*]...an answer that will baffle you!” and Ctesippus laughs and declares himself victorious (300c-d). Dionysodorus does not respond, but nor is he struck silent. While here the response is laughed away, later in the dialogue Socrates outlines an acceptable example of “both and neither.” The unnamed “middle man” is both and neither statesman and philosopher, only half as good as and worse than each in their respective ways, which is the case when one middles between

two good things. But when one middle between two evil things (and how these evaluations are made is of course left out), then one is only half as bad as each in their respective ways, and therefore much better than both (306a-c).

In both cases, both elements have the same evaluation, either good or evil, and so the middle is a mix: one is blue and one is red, both/neither is purple. *Pankration* itself is a purple mix of angry, violent striking and calm, gentle grappling. But if we pursue a middle between a good and an evil, a different kind of binary, then we are half as good as the good and only half as evil as the evil. When the binaries have the same evaluation, but are qualitatively different, the middle is the opposite evaluation; but when they have a different evaluation, but are qualitatively the same, then the middle is the middle. Unlike red or blue, we might see it as hot or cold; the warm is half as hot and half as cold, but is both and neither cold and/nor hot.^{liv} That is, the imposition of a middle term, whether better than two evils, worse than two goods, or lukewarm and neutral, is a middling, a both-and-neither that disrupts the absolute binary.

If we grant the Principle of Non-Contradiction and are presented with only two mutually exclusive absolute choices, then we have several options. We can trouble the terms provided, either questioning our questioner or qualifying our answer. We should either refuse to grant what is granted or give well more than is needed to obviate any additional attack. We might find an exception to the absolute that ruins the refutation, regardless of the exception we use. If we can get an opponent to make a misstep or foul, we also benefit. Besides exceptions to absolute terms, we can also posit situations of contradiction that disrupt the Principle of Non-Contradiction itself, rejecting the ground on which we are challenged and throw the opponents and ourselves to gain a better

tactical position. Sometimes such throwing is strategic and other times foolish, but we might throw either way and still end up on top.

ε. “*Shifting the Stones*”: *Throwing Principles and Twisting Topoi*

After Dionysodorus responds “both and neither,” an obvious contradiction, Ctesippus considers himself as having performed the “a clean decisive [wrestling] throw,” which forms the Platonic image of victory (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 56). However, the sophist brothers are not wrestlers, but *pankratists*: “A wrestler who was thrown to the ground was defeated but a pankratist might deliberately fall on his back (*hyptaismos*) in order to throw his opponent more heavily or to gain a better strategic position,” then the *pankratist* can mount his opponent and rain down blows, something the wrestler cannot do (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 14). That the sophists fall when throwing is not a failure or a fallacy, but the strategic use of a move characteristic of a different game altogether. We might then back-fall, mount, and rain down blows here as well.

As we have already seen, Dionysodorus has any number of possible responses: all things speak and are silent in different senses, thus both and neither. All things might speak at some times and might be silent at others, thus both and neither. There might be silent speech and speaking silence too. What do we mean by speaking and silence anyway? Perhaps we mean the inaudible resonance of Cosmic Being beyond human perceptions and understanding? If a sophist speaks and no one hears it, then has he truly made a sound? Maybe Ctesippus is just too stupid to see the insightful point Dionysodorus is making, Socrates too cowardly to relate what was *really* said to Crito, and Platonic scholars too limited by Eurocentric logics to account for such great wisdom.

Regardless of the infinite possible unsaid answers laughed over by the haughty youth, the sophistic silence speaks volumes.

Even though they have used the Principle of Non-Contradiction to refute their interlocutors, the sophists themselves are not bound by it, because they have instead a Heraclitean-Protagorean world-view, which grounds the maxim “there is no falsehood” (McCabe 76).^{lv} Indeed, Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi claims “consistency need not be assumed in principle or forced on the texts,” so we shouldn’t force it on the characters in the texts either (4). In *pankration* submission is defeat, forcing concession is victory, nothing else. Without believing in an absolute, absolute arguments are no more than effective fallacies to use on those inattentive to particularity, just as arguments that require absolutes see inconsistency as self-evidently fallacious. Although, from a tactical standpoint, argument and fallacy can accomplish the same end. Consider the *topos* of general and specific, where the general logically and causally precedes the specific

In this deductive metaphysics, The Platonic Form of Justice generates the multiplicity of specific just acts, which can only ever resemble, but never actually be Justice itself, which we know by recalling it from within our souls. However, this is not necessarily the only way this *topos* can function. We might see a sophistic metaphysics instead, and rearticulate the *topos* in a different way. Rather than specifics, there are only episodes of radical singularity and entities with *haecceity* that cannot be totalized by a general category, but can and must be violated and coerced into the construction of larger assemblages. That is, there is no “Justice,” but only specific justifications in each instance induced together over time until there’s an *abstraction* that is then posited to be the thing in common to these various heterogeneous cases in the Heraclitean-Protagorean-

Antisthenean flux. However, it doesn't matter for the judge whether Justice is a foundational and unquestionable principle from which all specific just decisions derive (*general/specific*) or that 'justification' is a socio-cultural construct abstracted from radically singular cases by erasing differences in ways that follow traditionally acceptable rules that are themselves socio-cultural constructs (*haecceity/abstraction*). In a court of law, the result is still the same: guilty or not guilty, Life or Death. How we get there may be different, but these two, irreconcilable metaphysics are not incommensurable.

In the end of the fight, Socrates is knocked out, Ctesippus gives up, and the only consistent judge, the gathered crowd and the words of the text themselves, laud the brothers as victors. While before "previous successes had been highly acclaimed one by one," with each side cheering their own champion, now both sides and "even the very pillars of the Lyceum" cheer the brothers' beautiful defeat of Socrates (303b-c).

Although, we might easily say that Socrates doesn't *really* kill his gods and that Ctesippus could refute the brothers as easily he does earlier, that he's just tired of the game. But the fight still ends, the sophists still win, and the crowd still goes wild. Socrates indeed was executed for killing his gods and Ctesippus' frail constitution and lack of stamina led to his concession and defeat. Sure, we can grumble and sneer at such a conclusion all we want, think it ironic as scholars have for centuries, or we can think more deeply about our means of rhetorical fighting, the practical needs for efficacy, and how we establish and judge such fights as productive of truth or dictating the course of action. Rather than cry foul or argue with the results, we can stand up, dust ourselves off, and take defeats as lessons in how to fight better, how to fight rightly.

V. The Irrelevance of Truth, the Necessity of Rules, and the Reality of Death

Sometimes contradiction is contradiction and sometimes it's not, depending on the case, sense, and context, and without consensus, there *is* no contradiction, not really. Sometimes we can ask after specificity upon specificity with no issue, at other times we'll be called dotards for asking stupid questions, laughed at for questioning common sense, or forcibly rejected for not understanding what "argument" means. This is especially true if we are presumed, from the onset, to be villainous and not worth taking seriously. Such is the case for the sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, who can refute any claim "whether true or false" and stun Socrates to silence, a conclusion presumed impossible from the outset. That the great gadfly is defeated must be a joke.

If we take the sophists' victory over Socrates seriously, then truth value or "strength" is irrelevant in word-battles. Indeed, the "winner in battle is not necessarily the stronger individual," not the "bigger" or "better" person, but always the better fighter, the one who uses all available means, all powers to achieve their end, "the fighter with better technique and strategy" (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 81). We therefore need an unarguable standard to "analyze all the aforesaid modes of fallacy into breaches of the definition of a refutation," a stable point from which to argue safely and enact judgement, by preventing the worse from defeating the better (*Sophistical Refutation* 6). Aristotle specifically claims that "the art of contentious [*eristic*] reasoning is foul fighting in disputation," and so anything that violates the rules is cheating or a crime, and the cheater should be excluded and the criminal punished (*Sophistical Refutations* 11). We need Justice.

However, how we define argument and fallacy can also be achieved through argument or fallacy, and the accusation of fallacy itself can be made, refuted, or justified

by fallacious means. Furthermore, depending on the sense, case, and context, whatever we might “logically” argue could be nonsensical babble, irrelevant and eristic wrangling, or seen as inherently biased against our interlocutor. Indeed, interlocutors might not share the same warrants or methods, metaphysical or epistemological assumptions, and our investments might be as unjustifiable to our interlocutors as theirs might be to us, meaning “the charge of ‘foul!’ is vacuous” and unjustified (McCabe 77). Likewise, we might be refuted by irrelevant nonsense and fallacious innuendo because the most effective arguments are not necessarily the most virtuous nor the virtuous necessarily effective (McCabe 77). So, what does it do or matter if an argument is fallacious if it is successful? If an interlocutor “didn’t really win” yet wears the laurel of victory? What do we do when fighting fair is foolish and cheating the best way to prosper? Here at last is the unresolved ambiguity at the heart of *Euthydemus*: What is ‘right use?’ What does it mean to fight rightly?

On the one hand (*men*), right use is a matter of ethics. Such “righteous use” would be identifying the manner or mode, as well as the contexts, in which fighting and argument would be acceptable: when, where, and why fight, and then how to fight? (*Jus ad bellum et jus en bello*). However, ethical right use is a matter of much negotiation and argument, and thus vulnerable to all the above moves, fallacy or otherwise. There is no unarguable, no unquestionable grounds from which to base our claims and definitions. Recall, there are no heroes or villains in real fights, only any number of interlocutors with any number and types of intentions, metaphysics, and skills in fighting, all who comfortably justify their own means by their self-proclaimed “noble ends” whether

sincere or not, and demonize those of their inherently-evil and obviously-fallacious interlocutors. So again, how do we fight rightly?

On the other hand (*de*), right use is the most effective and efficient use. Right use of fighting and argument is defeating an adversary in the quickest and safest way, using all our powers and available means to refute, persuade, coerce, and destroy via the physical limitations of the human body, from appealing to cognitive biases and affective investments to the extremely persuasive rhetorical appeals of fear and pain, all the way to the edge of Death. The only true absolute and necessity, the only totalizing boundary of argumentation, the only consequence without contradiction, the only unqualifiable and unexceptable conclusion, Death is the foundation for all binaries, that and its otherwise, Life itself. So aside from death, which words cannot directly achieve, everything is all a matter of rhetoric and refutation, fighting right and fighting rightly.

Therefore, what matters are the kinds of rules that are made, what those rules can accomplish, how such rules produce victory or defeat, how such rules are enforced, and most importantly, how such rules can be contested. We must be able to fight back using all our powers, so next I turn to the rules of *pankration* itself, as a contest very close to real fighting for life and death. Without rhetorical *pankration*, being able to use all available means and all our powers, we may very well end up like Socrates, dead on the floor of our prison cell with hemlock dripping from our lips, or perhaps trapped in a political system, run by an incompetent avaricious megalomaniac with devious, inept, and corrupt advisors who systematically erode our ability to dissent, fight, or escape the ultimate refutation: “submit or you will die.”

^{xv} I have consulted both WRM Lamb and Benjamin Jowett's translations, and I use Lamb's throughout. However, in future instantiations of this project, I intend to translate the text myself, because I have found both Lamb and Jowett insufficient. My corrections and Greek are from the Perseus Project.

^{xvi} If this conversation historically occurred and we have evidence that everyone involved did exist, I like to think that it was the direct exigence for Isocrates' *Against the Sophists*, which is a tempting claim based on the similarities between the texts. That is, after speaking to Crito, he rushed home in a huff and angrily wrote his short speech in response. However, the identity of an unnamed character in a fictionalized depiction of long-dead people is truly irrelevant for any practical and productive inquiry, whether or not it is based on or intended to be another long-dead, but less well-known, person, and such a fact is truly impossible to prove.

^{xvii} Jarratt's *Rereading the Sophists* makes no mention of Euthydemus, Schiappa's *Protagoras and Logos* only discusses Euthydemus as a sophist and the evocation of Protagoras in this dialogue, Hawhee's *Bodily Arts* only touches on it briefly as I will discuss shortly, and Poulakos' *Sophistical Rhetoric in Classical Greece* cites the sophists' expertise in fighting and legal battles. While other sophistic dialogues, like *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, or *The Sophist* have been treated at length, there is no such attention paid to the *Euthydemus* and there has been no treatment such as mine in rhetoric, to my knowledge.

^{xviii} Furthermore, Dionysodorus might himself be caricature of the famous orator Lysias, as L.A. Post argues, which connects this dialogue explicitly to the practice of rhetoric in antiquity, as well as more standard rhetorically-focused dialogues, like the *Phaedrus*, in which the youth recites a speech by that same man. Post's evidence is ample and his argument very persuasive, but beyond the scope of my argument here.

^{xix} *Pammachon* is elsewhere understood to be the specific art of unarmed combat as it was used by Greek soldiers in war (Dervenis and Lykiardopoulos 15).

^{xx} This is especially the case in the *Euthydemus*, which is a "mixed dialogue"; it is neither a drama—a representation of a conversation among various interlocutors—nor a dialogue strictly speaking—the recollection of conversation by a single narrator—but uses elements of both (Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi 208). The *Protagoras*, the *Phaedo*, and the *Symposium* all fit within this category as well. Plato is telling a story about Socrates telling a story in which he lost an argument; if nothing else, cognitive biases, would affect how honest Socrates the character is or even can be.

^{xxi} Furthermore, when Crito interrupts incredulously at Cleinias' response to Socrates' question, he cannot recall if it were truly Cleinias who said it, but he is certain that it was not the sophists. How can he be sure who it wasn't, but not certain who it was, and shouldn't such ambiguity be suspect? Although, the dialogue does indeed become more bombastic and humorous as it progresses (play and seriousness are another theme

throughout). Additionally, at various points Dionysodorus is chided by his brother for “ruining” the refutation, making a fool of himself, and being generally obnoxious.

^{xxii} Indeed, throughout the Platonic corpus, the conflict is predetermined, the fights progress dramatically, and the jargon of professional wrestling is informative here: the good guy, “babyface,” wins over the bad guy, “heel,” on the surface, but really the participants “work” unseen to present the narrative cooperatively and the entire contest is dictated by an authorial figure, Plato here and the “bookers” in professional wrestling. This is contrasted with a “shoot” or “real” fight, such as UFC or boxing.

^{xxiii} Warfare is no different, which is why past battles can be idealized and glorified, but contemporary conflicts need framing to cut out the bloody, tax-funded death of children, unless useful for propaganda, votes/funds, and policy points. The details matter, as do footnotes, so please Dear Reader, pay attention.

^{xxiv} “Korybantes” were semi-mythical armored dancers in the Skiamachia or Pyrrichios war dance. They worshipped Rhea/Cybele, who was a Harvest Mother Goddess, and later the Magna Mater of Rome. Rhea, “flow, discharge” is a similar root as “rhe” or “flow of speech” that grounds rhetoric as a term. Elsewhere, in the *Republic* and *Laws*, according to Grandmaster Arvanitis, Plato is a great proponent of the war-dance, as best dancer makes the best warrior, but here he seems to be treating it as mere trickery.

^{xxv} I use Nietzsche’s term from *Ecce Homo*, elsewhere translated as ‘fighting-writing,’ or simply ‘war’ to describe the eristic, ‘strife’ based arguments here as well as the general provocative and polemic presentation by Plato here, as well as my equally polemic treatment. Nietzsche’s attempt at agonism and sophistry is limited by the intellectual and academic context in which he was trained and working.

^{xxvi} Post, who reads Dionysodorus as a caricature of Lysias, sees this expertise as sheer bombast and mockery, but has an interesting read on it: “Lysias formerly manufactured shields and put them into men's hands; now he manufactures speeches to put into their mouths; the use of his speeches makes men competent advocates and statesmen: ergo, the arms he gave them must have made them competent fighters and generals. If to manufacture speeches is to give instruction in oratory, then to manufacture shields is to give instruction in hoplite fighting and in strategy” (3).

^{xxvii} Actually, Socrates lists the fighting expertise of the brothers twice, first to Crito before beginning his story and also at the beginning of the story, when introducing them to Cleinias. Although, the art of the general comes first in the diegetic list, considered by Aristotle to be amongst the greatest of arts in *Rhetoric*, and one that shows up again later in this dialogue, and the *logon agones* drops out, having yet to be demonstrated. However, the two constants are fighting in armor and fighting in court, a repeated doublet that seems to reinforce the mutual connection of these two fighting arts.

Perhaps it is a remnant of the first law-courts being trials by combat, or the recognition that both *panoply* and law are violent instruments—weapons—of civilization, one against

enemies/others and the other against allies/fellow citizens. Perhaps it is a recognition that armed combat is the necessary precondition for the establishment of law, but also constitutes the failure or limit of law's power, even though law in the instance of execution uses weapons just as easily as the warrior, albeit less often.

^{xxviii} Hawhee's *Bodily Arts* uses this dialogue among many others to illustrate the agonistic connection of athletics and sophistry, but does not explore the specifics of pankration training, see 36-37.

^{xxix} My interpretation here contrast with the traditional understanding of the sophists as ignoring the necessary preconditions for the teaching of virtue. As we will see, they teach it anyway, not needing to waste time with the preliminary groundwork.

^{xxx} Indeed, much of our understanding of the ancient Greek terms has been corrupted by the foreign and anachronistic influence of Pauline Christianity in subsequent centuries. Paul wrote in Koine Greek and turned *kairos* in providence and *agōn* in agony.

^{xxxi} Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi rejects the principle of charity, by which scholars always give Socrates the benefit of the doubt when he uses fallacious arguments, which he does quite often. Scholars excuse it as "ironic," Plato not needing to believe something he argues, only "apparent fallacy," or poetic devices. Furthermore, "the view that the character Socrates will not have employed fallacious arguments is an assumption on the part of the interpreter which runs the risk of misreading the text" (4). Alternatively, Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi justifies the use of such fallacies because "even if the means by which persuasion is achieved are fallacious, the end is reached: Cleinias is convinced that he ought to practice philosophy" (42).

^{xxxii} The moral seems to be that if (we believe) what we're doing is right, then anything goes. When this ruthless pragmatism is coupled with an unwavering faith in the cause, and a cause that is absolute and unarguable, such as the Platonic Forms or their descendant in the Christian "Will of God," we have a dangerous Crusader Complex that can commit genocide without conscience, and even with glee and happiness in doing "God's will." This ethic is also extremely useful for those directing armed forces, even though the leaders need not actually believe in such things themselves.

^{xxxiii} Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi points out that they seem to adopt Platonic viewpoints as well, e.g. in claiming that everyone already knows everything when they're born, Sermamoglou-Soulmaidi identifies this with Plato's theory of Recollection.

^{xxxiv} We can defeat mere word-play with questions about warrants and backing, and such inquiry can be deflected by questioning meaning and seeking exception, which can be preempted by the construction of categories and consensus-based rules, which can then be shown to be insufficient for a particular case, which can then necessitate a questioning of the consensus of the warrants on which such rules are based, and generally most give up before we reach this seemingly academic or philosophical point. This is essentially the argument I will work through, so you're welcome to tap out here.

^{xxxv} Whether he knew of the dialogue, the conversation as it actually happened, or that these were simply common sophistical techniques are all possible, but again as all concerned parties are long dead and dust, it doesn't really matter. However, his reference to Euthydemus in *Sophistical Refutations* does not cite him as the source of any of the arguments presented by Plato. But he is the source for related, similar arguments that serve as examples of "arguments that depend upon the same point the solution is the same, whereas this will not fit all cases of the kind nor yet all ways of putting the questions: it is valid against the questioner, but not against his argument" (20).

^{xxxvi} *Exelegchthestai*, translated by Lamb confusingly as "confuted" also means "refuted" and "convicted." This is another reason we need updated translations that are not limited by anti-rhetorical bias and limited by archaic educational privilege.

^{xxxvii} The specific term in Greek is *amantheous*, which most literally, to me, is "not-knowers" especially when contrasted with the *manthoeus*, or "knowers." Lamb translates it as "foolish" and Jowett variously as "ignorant," "foolish," or "not knowing." However, the terms can also mean "learn," which makes Clenias' poor confusion understandable: "do the learners learn or do the not-learners learn?" Such complexity and inattention to language is another reason for new rhetorician's translations of the sophistic dialogues.

^{xxxviii} This is the approach of John Locke in his influential 1690 *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

^{xxxix} My argument here also resembles the claims of the proto-Cynic Antisthenes, a student of Socrates and contemporary of Plato. Sara Rappe makes the case that *Euthydemus* is rife with allusions to Antisthenes' doctrine, making it a satire by Plato at his rival's expense. Antisthenes believed that "there is only one possible way of referring to any object of discourse, and this by means of the *oikeios logos*, or proprietary account...Wherefore Antisthenes mistakenly thought that there is no reference, except by means of the proprietary account, one [word] referring to one [non-linguistic referendum]. From this it results that it is impossible to gainsay another's logos" (298-9). That is, there is no proper name of a thing unless it completely accounts for the totality of the thing in every aspect and detail, perhaps making the reality of reference itself impossible. My responses and critiques of Socrates might be seen as possible responses by Antisthenes, who was a teacher of Gorgias and Diogenes, an important and influential figure, but one shoved far to the right side of the School of Athens by Raphael.

^{xl} Other language dependent false refutations include accent and grammatical form, which are radically contingent on the language in question. Aristotle identifies both combination and division, moves I explain later, as language dependent fallacies, and he is constrained by the language-specifics of Greek grammar and lexicon, which varies greatly from English. That is, while all language-based arguments are fallacious for Aristotle, how the fallacies would specifically function would be different in languages with different practices and concepts of "word," and especially in those without "words," understood in the Indo-European language sense.

^{xli} Lamb has it as “leaves no escape,” which violently and cruelly rips apart *afukta*. I rather leave it whole and intact, the kinder and more ethical handling of the word.

^{xlii} Also, while he begins and ends his argument with necessity, in the middle he shifts to Cleinias’ preferences, whether he would prefer a wise general or wise doctor. While the commonsense response certainly holds, Socrates’ shift back and forth, bringing in Cleinias and changing tactics midway through, is fallacious by changing the terms of the argument midstream, but as elsewhere, some excuse them on account of his “good reasons.”

^{xliii} Midstream, Socrates switches the order in which the positive and negative terms are presented, and concludes with problematic terms that we might today identify as intellectual or sensory disabilities. While we cannot disregard that blind or deaf people certainly do less seeing and hearing, respectively, than others without similar conditions, the problem comes when placing them in combination with other positive/negative binaries, something we now call “ableism.”

^{xliv} Here, Rappe argues here “Plato anticipates the Stoic doctrine of *adiaphora*, that things are in themselves neither good nor bad, but good if led by wisdom and bad if by ignorance” (293). We might also see the echoes of this in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, about which he makes the same claim of right use having great benefits and wrong use producing great evils.

^{xlv} In addition to predication and existence, there are the veridical (It is!) and identity (Cleinias is Cleinias) senses of *estin*.

^{xlvi} Here too I resemble Antisthenes, as Rappe relates that he also questioned the differences between accidental and essential qualities (300).

^{xlvii} The sophists and Socrates later in the dialogue deal with the same issue, with Socrates’ family and friends who have the same names as Homeric demi-gods. Also, the final latch-on that submits Ctesippus concerns him saying “bravo brave Hercules” to Socrates, having been defeated, and Euthydemus questions whether Ctesippus is calling Hercules a bravo.

^{xlviii} For a wonderful visual representation of this combat philosophy, see Jet Li’s *The One*. The protagonist, Yulaw (Li), uses *bagua*, a soft style that works on a circle, while the antagonist Lawless (Li), uses *xingyi*, a straightforward and aggressive style. As might be expected the protagonist who uses soft force overcomes the antagonist who uses hard force.

^{xlix} Rappe states Aristotle, Alexander, Proclus, and Diogenes all attribute this doctrine to Antisthenes (287). Specifically, Socrates says he heard this spoken by the followers of Protagoras, and others well before.

¹ That false speech means necessarily that they're no false thought presumes a perfect transmission of thought-to-word, which not only relies on positing some causal primacy to extra-linguistic content, but also ignores the possibility of misspeaking, multiplicity meanings, and the existence of communicative disorders, which even the great Demosthenes was reported to have has. The same might be said about false action, which likewise presumes a perfect transmission of thought-to-action. Aristotle specifically says that distinguishing an expression of a thought and the thought so expressed, that "they are not the same," is "absurd," rather than explaining why or entertaining why not (10).

^{li} Here, the grammatical differences between Greek and English are evident. Euthydemus employs *episteme* in both the accusative (*epistemon*) and dative (*epistasai*) declensions, differing between object and means. Since we don't have noun declensions, and only eight inflections in English, it's difficult to translate this phrase adequately, and therefore difficult to read and engage with as well.

^{lii} Lamb translates this as "word snares," but the use of *onoma* here connects to the larger thematic of names rather than things and the nomological emphasis of the sophists in general. See Jarratt, *Rereading the Sophists*. Also, Arvanitis argues that the stranglehold, as well as the kick, was characteristic of pankration and not shared by wrestling or boxing. Since the sophists are perfect pankratists, their refutation is pankration, and they would therefore finish their opponents in that same way. The most famous finisher here was *klimakismos*, the ladder trick, what is understood in modern parlance as the sleeper hold with body scissors. That the perfect pankratists have been catching and refuting people, encircling them with words, the translation of *peristēsas* as stranglehold makes sense here, as does the use of the term in medical jargon for vasoconstriction, peristalsis, what the stranglehold accomplishes in a fight.

^{liii} Recently, a more nuanced version of this move, was identified as Trevor's Axiom, as a technique used by internet trolls in "The End of Serialization as We Know It" an episode of the animated series *South Park*. While the troll attacks one person for some quality, the goal is not actually the attack on their target, but rather to draw the ire of another observer, who jumps into defend the perceived victim. However, as this defense can appear to be unwarranted, an overreaction, or haughtiness in its own regard, this person is further attacked by others, which continues to spin more and more, gaining more and more interlocutors, all operating under a logic of righteous indignation. Undoubtedly, my Coloradan countrymen named it after me, a sophistic rhetorician, and I greatly appreciate the honor.

^{liv} The warm might also be said of the cool, which produces another possible middle term between cool and warm, and so on, and so on. That is, the imposition of a middle term complicates but does not prevent the binary from continuing.

^{lv} "all there are (in the end) are the episodes, momentary and discrete, so that there is nothing that persists, nothing that underlies change, no continuing subjects, and no continuing objects—there is no stability or persistence at all." (McCabe 76).

Chapter 2

Articulating Agonism: Rules of Engagement and Modes of Argument

Just relations between and among opponents are also difficult to establish when the argumentative goal is consensus, when everyone begins with the knowledge that the positions taken by some or all must be eroded or forgotten if deliberation is to succeed. Indeed, the achievement of consensus can simply mean that the most powerful interests managed to silence all other parties
Sharon Crowley, *Toward a Civil Discourse* 22

Pankration, from the Greek words *pan* (all) and *krates* (powerful), was the earliest no-holds-barred combat sport... Victory was determined when a contestant either held up an index finger or was unable to continue. Fatalities were common.
Grandmaster Jim Arvanitis, *the First Mixed Martial Art* 62

I. The Necessarily Coercive Foundation of Contestation

At the beginning of the exchange with Socrates, Euthydemus establishes the boundaries for their refutation. First, Euthydemus explicitly asks whether those assembled believe in the Principle of Non-Contradiction”—that something cannot both be and not be—and the group responds resoundingly in the affirmative, as rejecting such a principle is understood to be ludicrous. Second, Euthydemus requires Cleinias to only answer when he is asked questions and the Sophists will answer in kind, as we can see when they are questioned by Socrates. These two rules illustrate the foundational necessity of rules for any contest to be productive, but they also illustrate that there are different ways of inhabiting the space created by these rules, and that these inhabitations have different affordances, ones that complement and contradict one another.

The first rule, the Principle of Non-Contradiction, limits the claims because something cannot both be and not be, except when it can, as we see in the first exchange.

When the Sophists ask Cleinias “who are the ones that learn, the wise or the ignorant?” the fluidity of language and multiplicity of meaning allows learners to be both those who know and those who do not, both the wise and the ignorant. This seemingly obvious contradiction, as Socrates explains, is actually the result of two different *senses* of the word “learn.” That “learn” can mean both the acquisition of knowledge and the possession of knowledge has two contradictory consequences. The view of Socrates (and Plato) is that these two senses of “learn” are two different concepts that unfortunately have the same name (*homonyms*).

Alternatively, in what seems to be the view of the Sophists, “learn” does not have a singular essence, but multiple and even contradictory ones, meaning that the principle upon which the Principle of Non-Contradiction rests is itself instable. However, even though this principle is not strictly adhered to throughout the course of the dialogue, since the Sophists reject the Platonic perspective, all parties still use the Principle of Non-Contradiction as the metric of victory and defeat. That is, even though this principle is troubled almost immediately after it has been assented to, it is still the means by which the refutation continues, develops, and concludes with the sophists ultimately defeating Socrates. Even if the sophists don’t “play by the rules,” it is still based on these rules that they achieve victory, or rather cause another’s defeat.

Second, like the Principle of Non-Contradiction, the question-answer rule only allows certain discourses. Indeed, as we see from Socrates in the beginning of the dialogue and the Sophists near the end, not responding directly, qualifying the response, or asking for clarification is considered outside acceptable bounds, as the Sophists and the Socratics argue in their respective turns as questioners. Furthermore, the question-

answer form is used by both the Sophists in their refutation of Cleinias and by Socrates in his *elenchus* with the boy, but like the Principle of Non-Contradiction, they do not inhabit the rules in the same way. The sophists ask questions they know the likely answers to, while Socrates asks questions without any easy answers. However, the traditional ethical distinction between what the Sophists and Socrates both do to Cleinias is not so simple; the Sophists ask balanced questions, offering choices, while Socrates asks weighted questions in a series that pushes Cleinias to certain answers, the answers that seem to support the perspective of Socrates (and Plato). That is, both sides provide Cleinias the illusion of choice, but because of the skills of the Sophists and the subtle phrasing of Socrates, the boy ends up in both instances exactly where they want him: silenced by refutation or seeking after wisdom.

Even if these rules aren't followed faithfully over the course of the dialogue, they still determine the conditions for the argumentative victory, or more properly, the manner of defeat: if I cannot answer a question or my answer contradicts another answer or itself, then I am defeated, and whoever defeated me is the victor, regardless of whether the rules were strictly adhered to throughout the course of the contest. Socrates is still defeated by being struck into silence, by being knocked out, and Ctesippus is still defeated by giving up, tapping out, admitting his own defeat. The truth and logic of the arguments are irrelevant here, because what matters for the sophists is the force and effect. As I argue in the previous chapter, the sophists don't claim to offer any truth or foundational understanding, but simply a better set of fighting skills. Fighting skills, however, are purely instrumental; the punch or throw can be performed in self-defense or assault, and the ability to be successful at fighting, to be a good fighter is not reducible to the ethical

justifications for the fighting. Those whose motives and goals we find abhorrent don't necessarily suffer from our low judgment of them, and if they are well-versed in the arts of argument, our low judgment, our inability, or unwillingness to take such villains seriously, will lead us, like Socrates, to defeat.

But in light of the efficacy of the Sophistic wrangling over the Sophistic *elenchus*, the question about "right use" becomes much more complicated. On the one hand, "right use" can be understood as "righteous use," following particular ideological goals or working within particular moral bounds. Using rhetoric to persuade the people to follow a policy that would serve the common good, even if they bristle at such persuasion, might be called "right use" by Aristotle. Since the Sophists have ideological goals that differ from, or even oppose, those of Aristotle and his Platonically-inflected argumentative frame, they cannot be using rhetoric rightly since self-enrichment and victory are, by themselves, not true good and real wisdom.

On the other hand, "right use" might be understood as a more technical "correct use," or using rhetoric to achieve our ends in the most efficient and effective way. Such tactics like using ambiguous words, empty signifiers, or enthymemes with polyvalent minor premises that allow people to be persuaded without recognizing the full extent of the argument, allow the rhetor using this ignorance to achieve argumentative victory or even public office. But what happens when the norms of argumentative discourse, the rules for virtuous use (logical rigor, empirical verification, openness and uncertainty) are drastically ineffective when faced with those who reject such norms, employing a whole host of *ad hominem*, *tu quoque*, *red herring*, and other fallacy to dazzle, distract, and ultimately destroy any other argument in the eyes of a captive audience.

In a similar situation, Aristotle sets out to defeat eristic, and in order to do so, he must first define it. In *Sophistical Refutations*, he outlines thirteen types of fallacious arguments. While there are many different types, in the final chapter “Aristotle describes all the preceding false arguments, whether deceptions or errors, as paralogism” with *ignoratio elenchi*, ignorance of refutation, as “the way of accommodating all the other twelve” (Tindale *Reason’s Dark Champions* 48, 49). The primordial fallacy is the refusal to accept the rules of argumentation that Aristotle outlines, meaning that rhetors either accept and enact the proper rules of argument or are not actually arguing at all.^{lvi} In each of these cases, arguments are evaluated through a metric of necessity. An argument is only acceptable if the conclusion necessarily follows from the premises, and fallacious if it does not. Everything that is different from a necessary argument is the same in being wrong, and it is necessarily wrong because it doesn’t follow the rules of necessity. By having such an exclusionary structure, Aristotle’s own rules are eristic in their own right. By establishing a strict division between logic and illogic, they completely shut out any opposing view. If we don’t follow the rules of a contest, then we are not participating in that contest.

However, as we can see in *Euthydemus*, the rules of necessity are not themselves necessary for refutation. That the Sophists can argue and win without using a logic of necessity means that the Aristotelian logic of necessity is not itself necessary in Aristotle’s sense. Put differently, the rules of argumentation are not necessary for argument, but nor are they arbitrary, *per se*, but rather they are *arbitrated*. That is, the rules of necessity laid out by Aristotle are not inherent and obvious, natural and divinely ordained, but the result of human work, human constraints, and human enforcement. The

sophists and Socrates respect the rules for the force they provide, the direction and limitation that allows the force to work, but also work around them when necessary, and only change tactics when such working is called out.^{lvii}

While there's no necessity at work in an *ad hominem* argument, it can still effect persuasion, and quite effectively too. Absent formalized constraints, without a referee or judge to dictate and enforce boundaries, using the *ad hominem*, as all the interlocutors in the dialogue do, whether directly or indirectly, has no value beyond what it accomplishes and no risk beyond what it cannot accomplish. Once we move beyond the rules of logic, we turn to a logic of practical force: it doesn't matter that *ad hominem* is illogical, what matters is what it can do. In this case, we might be doing students a disservice in rejecting fallacious argument or demonizing it in moral terms. Instead, we might teach students how these rules work, why they might be useful, and how to respond when someone doesn't use these rules, when the institutions that establish, espouse, and enforce these rules cannot be relied upon. Put differently, we must account for the Spartan Critique of Elean *Pankration*.

II. The Spartan Critique and the Rules of Agonistic Logic

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the warlike Spartans were fierce competitors in the Pan-Hellenic Games. The combination of civic pride, even a zealous sense of superiority, and a harsh training regimen beginning in infancy made those who survived to adulthood some of the most effective warriors of theirs or any period, as famously described by Herodotus in the battle of Thermopylae. Their investment in physical fitness and ruthless aggression made Spartan athletes extremely successful, especially in the "heavy events,"

which they rightly understood as training for war, as martial arts training in a strict sense. It is said that Spartans even eschewed safety gear when boxing, which “was seen as a method to harden their faces in order to effectively ward off blows” (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 90). However, they did not participate in *pankration*, the closest contest to actual combat, and they declined to do so for two reasons.

Explicitly, the Spartans did not compete in *pankration* because the rules against biting and eye gouging made the contest too far removed from actual combat. Following rules that are not reflective of reality makes the contest of *pankration* a poor training model for warriors and even trains them at a disadvantage. Because warfare has no rules, any training for it should also lack such rules, except obeying the trainer, *paidotribes*, who backs up etiquette with the harsh strike of a staff. However, other writers and scholars posit that the Spartans avoided *pankration* lest a Spartan be defeated in a combat sport by another, “lesser” Greek, and touted their concern for authenticity to obscure this insecurity. If a Spartan lost in an open contest with free and equal rules in the view of their fellow Greeks, then all of Sparta would lose face; their claim to Herculean lineage and the accompanying divine superiority would be tarnished. There’s no reason why these are mutually exclusive, and however much they overlap is as unknown as it is irrelevant. However, the Spartan Critique does provide a powerful opposition to the traditional understanding of and orientation toward rules of engagement.

In war and self-defense on the street, gouging the eyes, biting, attacking the groin or other vulnerable areas is explicitly part of the repertoire people should use because they are extremely effective. Even the largest fighter will still be vulnerable in their soft, squishy bits, and absent other advantages, attacking these weaknesses might mean the

difference between survival and death. While in argumentative terms, we cannot kill with words directly—the judge’s verdict of guilt in capital offenses does not itself kill the defendant, someone else does the deed—we can still cause great psychological and emotional harm to others by likewise violating the integrity of their argumentative bodies, by attacking them as people, rather than their positions as interlocutors. That is, the *ad hominem* fallacy is not simply outlawed because the person delivering the argument doesn’t necessarily have any bearing on the truth and logic of it, but because it violates the boundary between the argument and the person delivering it. It goes beyond the bounds of the contest, even though it is immensely effective and perhaps because it is so.

It might not be effective at generating some common ground or creating good will, but goading someone into a misstep, coloring them as villainous and their positions likewise, and making them look bad before a lay audience can certainly be more effective than a logically-informed, mathematically-precise proposition with each specific nuance laid out in detail, which might lead a lay audience to become bored or confused, lacking the necessary experience and knowledge to attend to the fight closely. Certainly, we might see such tactics as dishonest and ill-suited to the *ethoi* we hope to generate in students, but unless everyone participating in a particular contest knows and believes in the rules of proper argument, and those rules are explicitly and vocally defended, then they don’t matter. Therefore, training students to act only within these rules puts them at risk in future arguments, unpracticed at and vulnerable to tactics that might lead them to defeat.

Even still, this mutual respect and adherence to the coercive foundation is what allows for agonistic logic to function, for victory to bring value and legitimacy.^{lviii} For example, in a foot-race, a literal *competition* and the simplest form of *agōn*, the distance, course, and start time are the same for everyone, so that what would lead to victory might be the same for all participants.^{lix} Put simply, the fastest person wins the race, and the best runner wins the most races. These superlative labels are the result of the contest, the value of the particular capacity the rules are designed to measure and establish: the best runner is simply the one who wins the most races, and the fastest person is the one who covers the most distance in the shortest time. Anything that muddles this measurement, any extraneous factors that might disrupt the fastest runner from winning the race, troubles the entire agonistic assemblage and must be excluded; rules against false starts, leaving the course, or harassing fellow competitors, all ensure that only speed achieves success. Without these limitations, whoever gets to the finish first, by whatever means, is the victor, although they might not have been the fastest runner. In such situations, we might then cry foul and claim that the victor didn't "really win" and they aren't "really" the fastest, but absent the strict establishment, enforcement, and acceptance of those rules such cries would simply be those of a sore loser. However, agonistic rhetoric is not based on the competition but the fight.

As in the foot race, rules in fighting are established to make sure that the one who wins is the "best fighter," that "fighting skill" is the measurement of victory. However, "fighting skill" is a far more complicated and nebulous quality than "speed," and therefore that much more complicated to measure and establish through contest, which makes the rules defining victory, and mutual adherence to them, that much more

important. In argumentative terms, Patricia Roberts-Miller suggests this as a “minimalist notion of rationality,” one in which “a line of argument is rational if the person using it applies it consistently, that is, if it is not rejected in other places in the argument and if s/he considers it a valid line of argument when used by an opposition” (*Deliberate Conflict* 214). A fighter would only use moves the same way throughout the fight, and only if they would accept such moves being used against them. In such cases, when mutually-agreed boundaries are established and respected, the best argument will be successful and the best fighter will win. But like in the foot race, the winner of the fight might not be the “best fighter” in terms of the outlined rules, but simply the one who wins by whatever means, and this risk is exacerbated by the manifold complexities that make up “fighting skill.” Furthermore, because a “real fight” has no rules beyond survival, as the Spartans note, part of “fighting skill” includes winning when the rules of contestation are not present, respected, or relied upon. This contingency and complexity means that in any given fight, not only is the evaluation of “fighting skill” at stake, but the terms of engagement in the contest are as well. That is, whenever we fight, we don’t just fight about something, even if just deciding whose “fighting skill” is more or better, but we also always fight about fighting.

In argumentative terms, whenever we engage in an argument outside of a formalized debate attended (to) by people knowledgeable about and experienced in the rules of argument, we are participating in a fight that can become “real” at any moment. In these cases, calling out someone for an *ad hominem* or other fallacy has no bearing unless the interlocutor recognizes, accepts, and agrees with the evaluation. If they don’t—and participants that employ fallacy in street-fight arguments might have little

compunction is doing so—, then we have reached the end of argument. The boundaries that enable an agonistic assemblage to measure skill, to grant legitimacy to victory, fall away. When the best argument is not ensured to be most successful, then the most successful argument is the best. We must then consider what options we have when we find ourselves in such a street-fight argument, whether online or IRL.

Initially, we might abandon righteousness in favor of results, seek to shut down opponents and their argument through whatever means necessary, fallacious eristic certainly, but perhaps also with the inarguable force of the fist, blade, or bullet. After using dirty tricks to achieve hegemony, we might then outlaw them, as both history and the rules of conduct are written by the victors, looking back at the necessary evils committed in service of peace and goodness. An uncomfortable option indeed. Alternatively, we might hold to our principles, going “high” in response to underhanded or overreaching tactics, regardless of how much damage is done, believing that the righteous will win out in the end. But if we take this tact, then we might very well fall victim to the same underhanded tactics, again and again, until the only means by which such tactics might be judged as dishonest or out of bounds—the rules themselves—are rewritten so that the only discourse out of bounds is that which contradicts the word of those in power, the only cheat a rejection of established hegemony, legitimized models of argument, and orthodox ideology. Perhaps this is the only result that ever happens.

However, we have a third option: we might very well value the principles of traditional argumentation, a reasonable articulation of needs and desires in a deliberative, compassionate way that leads to consensus, but we must also train in and against the arguments disqualified by these rules, especially because calling out such disqualification

might have little effect on those employing such tactics in the first place. That is, we might promote an *ethos of the adversary*, as Chantal Mouffe and Sharon Crowley suggest.^{lx} Unlike enemies who have no rules in their engagement beyond achieving victory or allies who are understood to not conflict at all, adversaries adhere to the same set of grounding principles, the rules of the contest, even as they attempt to exert their will, become the victor using only the means that are explicitly allowed. However, we must take this *ethos* further; unless our adversaries accept us as adversaries as well, they are not part of the contest, and not deserving of honor in contestation. That is, we are once again faced with the necessary coercion at the root of the contest.

By establishing and enforcing rules, the violence that prevents violence, contestation is not a simple melee, a writhing mass of blood, death, and suffering, a Hobbesian *bellum omni contra omnes*. However, we must remember that these rules are not qualitatively different from this melee, but an intensification of this melee on itself. At each moment, these violent rules might break down into violence, and it is only through violence of mutually-acceptable terms of engagement—sublimated through and supporting either judicial oversight or codes of conduct—that the contest holds. In an argument, the rules of argument are argued, implicitly or explicitly, and it is only through agreeing on the rules of argument that arguing happens at all. This tautological limit of articulation, the rules that define the contest and define victory, is where we must begin our training. We begin where the bounds of the contest that we must-but-might-not adhere to are built, at the border of the impossibly fragile and extremely foundational ground of commensurability.

III. The Rules of Pankratic Argument

Winning a *pankration* bout was accomplished in several ways, among them the submission and the knockout, which are recognizable endings to a fight that I will address in more detail, but there were also cases of a draw, in which victory was awarded to the gods by sacred decision (*heira*) (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 41). Rather than seeing a draw as neither competitor winning, because such excellence was demonstrated for the gods, they were the winner. Furthermore, this divine oversight is central to agonism as the Greeks practiced it: the contest was a miniature version of the Greek cosmos, with the peoples of Earth being contestants and the gods the judges and referees. This divine oversight and the sacred dimension of the Games meant that Greek fighters adhered to the rules, to varying degrees, as religious orthodoxy. But one didn't only follow the rules because they might be punished by the religious authority of the games master (*agonarchos*), but because they might be punished by the gods themselves.^{lxi} However, while the well-fought contest was a sacred offering, this was not as effective at generating *arête* among peers as a decisive victory, when the end of the contest was clear and obvious.

First, the preferred method of victory was by submission, making an opponent surrender, usually by applying a hold to an opponent's limbs, bending a joint backward, twisting it out of the socket, or strangling them with the famous *klimakizo* or "ladder trick." We might know this technique today as the *hadaka-jime* (rear-naked choke) from *judo* or the "sleeper hold" of catch- and professional wrestling.^{lxii} With this technique, victory is swift and almost certain, and so opponents caught in this hold would need to

surrender or be rendered unconscious.^{lxiii} Admitting defeat was indicated by raising one finger or “tapping out,” slapping an opponent’s leg, arm, or the floor of the arena. In this moment, the fighter has conceded, admitted defeat and ended the contest, and we might equally recognize this as explicit persuasion in a rhetorical exchange: “You know, you’re right. I hadn’t thought about it that way.” In this victory, the victor is named as such by their opponent, which is much stronger than simply being proclaimed as such by the judges or the gods.

Additionally, there is a mutual concession, what we might call compromise. In these cases, as is possible in a *pankration* match, both fighters might secure submission holds on each other, with the only resolution being consensus, the stopping of the fight, the differences being irreconcilable, or they each snap each other’s limbs, ending the contest as well. Ironically or fittingly, this situation, a tie, is the resolution of argument most favored by irenic, invitational, and deliberative approaches. That is, consensus-oriented arguments aim for a situation in which both parties come to a mutually agreeable solution, which would usually involve conceding part of their needs or desires in order to achieve others. Furthermore, these approaches might seem to reject conflict altogether, but they are simply grappling-focused styles taking the tools of their art to its logical extension, and this extends even to pacifism, a style of fighting that also succeeds by submission.

For example, there's the interesting figure of Melankomas the Karian, who stands out among ancient boxers, not only because he died undefeated, but also “in some cases, he would compel his opponents to submit without ever landing or receiving a telling blow. It was his belief that to strike another, to injure or be injured, did not constitute

bravery” (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 87). He would deflect, circle, and evade, making opponents quit through sheer exhaustion. While he was a boxer, which makes his pacifist approach all the more strange and interesting, he might just as easily have been successful in *pankration* because his skills at evading blows would also, perhaps, assist him in avoiding throws and holds. We could certainly see Melankomas as an instance that disrupts the very idea of contestation: winning by not fighting. However, we must remember that Melankomas did not win because of his pacifism, his ethical high-ground, but rather because of his impressive cardiovascular conditioning—he was said to have been more suited for running rather than boxing—and even if he won without using his excellent body in the expected way of the boxing match, he won using his body, the site and engine of contestation, nonetheless.

Similarly to the submission, one could win by opponent forfeit (*akoniti*). This was the case for many of the opponents of Sostratos of Sikuōn, an infamous fighter whose victories number more than anyone else in antiquity, with one exception (Arvanitis, *The First Mixed Martial Art* 87).^{lxiv} Known as “Mr. Fingers,” Sostratos was so successful and so named because he would begin his fights by breaking or dislocating his opponent’s fingers, which was perfectly acceptable within the rules of *pankration*, even if it might be distasteful, and extremely effective in self-defense outside of *pankration* contests. Breaking the fingers attacks the smallest joints of the body, central to any engagement with an opponent, but usually tacit and unnoticed until they are damaged. The bodies of our arguments too rely on small nuances, tiny joints, that are usually tacit and unnoticed until they are attacked. These kinds of attacks, like Descartes’ Evil Demon or Hume’s Guillotine, challenge our ability to know with certainty and make claims about what

should be done, and they keep any argument from going anywhere, but work especially well when critiquing an opponent's position.

Taken together, Melankomas and Sostratos provide an interesting contrast regarding submission because both “win without fighting.” The former rejects engagement so successfully that opponents surrender anyway and the latter engages in it so brutally that opponents surrender without even facing him. Furthermore, these two fighters provide interesting, yet problematic approaches to the contest. Melankomas' approach is problematic because of the immense time and discipline required, and this approach also risks being caught unprepared to deal with conflict when we do encounter it. While the fighter himself died undefeated, any particular fighter following after him who attempted such a strategy might easily and quickly find themselves unconscious on the ground. Even still, such a risk might be worth it for those who see any conflict, any striking or being struck, as dishonorable, even if it succeeds only until someone more agile, and perhaps more unscrupulous, catches up to them.

Conversely, and perhaps more obviously, Sostratos' approach is problematic because it shuts down contestation as well, not by rejecting conflict within the fight, but by persuading opponents to reject the fight for fear of what will happen. In this way, Sostratos forced his opponents to be like Melankomas and avoid conflict altogether. Both fighters embody styles of engagement that we might provide students, evasive pacifism and ruthless pragmatism, but these two extremes must necessarily be excluded for the contest to function for most people in the majority of circumstances. That is, either training students never to fight, avoiding it at all costs, or training students to brutalize people, frightening others into never fighting, might certainly be successful strategies for

contestation, but they are not practical ways of providing students the skills in argumentation that they will need when they must do so.

While the act of concession is a choice, not conceding and refusing to surrender, is also a choice, and in the *klimakizo*, this choice would result in another form of victory: knockout. More privileged in boxing, the knockout was even more likely in *pankration*, not only because strangleholds were a main part of the strategy, but also because kicking was also allowed and these types of strikes are far more powerful than striking with the hand. In cases of a knockout, the victor has overpowered their opponent, and in the cases of argumentation, this victory is much less sure and solid than submission. Someone might be struck silent for any number of reasons. A knockout is therefore more aleatory than a submission, and paradoxically it can take much more or much less work: some fighters might take blow after blow without flinching, carrying on through bruises and swelling, while others might be struck just-so on the point of the chin, causing temporary paralysis, unconsciousness, or even death. Here, at the ultimate boundary, what I see as the foundational division upon and in the form of which all others are built, I must pause to consider death in *pankration*.

We do not know for sure how much and to what degree death occurred in *pankration* contests. According to Arvanitis and others, death was common and even a sanctioned form of victory. However, Dervenis and Lykiardopoulos and others argue that killing was not part of the sanctioned victory, and was in fact quite uncommon. Indeed, the most famous *pankratist* is Arrichion, who died while successfully defending his third Olympic *pankration* championship, refusing to submit to a *klimakizo* and inventing an ankle lock counter in the process, being the “only accidental death in a *pankration* match

recorded in ancient Olympia” (Dervenis and Lykiardopoulos 28). That his death was so well-known, they argue, is evidence for how uncommon such deaths were. Certainly, *pankratists* were perfectly capable of killing, having the necessary skills and knowledge, and at any point, as I have argued, the contest might become deadly, what Mouffe calls the “radical negativity” of politics, what I term the Spartan “real fight,” the always-present contestation and potential violation of the rules of the contest while contesting (*Agonistics* 1).

While we might shudder at the proposition, we cannot argue that the dead can’t argue back, their dissent being silenced for good.^{lxv} Violence is the most effective means of ending disagreement, and the only ultimate foundation on which we build and enforce systems of rules. We see this in *pankration*, embodied in the *hellanodikes*, the divinely-charged referee who was armed with a staff to enforce the rules and punish those who break them. This not only evokes Weber’s point about the state monopoly on violence, but also the Greek pantheon’s place as divine judges and referees. But despite the centrality and complications surrounding death in combat sports and martial arts, this topic requires its own engagement and much more time and space than I have here. However, as a long-term strategy for the contest and as part of a training regimen, killing is not a feasible or practical strategy, even if death is always present as possibility in the contest or outside it. In the end, we simply don’t know to what degree death was part of *pankration*, and for my present purposes, I must reject killing as rarely, if ever, the best possible decision.

While we may not know the rules regarding death for certain, we know two other rules that were set in stone: no biting and no gouging. These techniques are unacceptable

because they break the surface of the interlocutors' skin, either with the teeth or through the eye sockets, even if such techniques are effective parts of a self-defense repertoire. The moves that are banned are the moves we need most in life-or-death fighting situations. In violating the integrity of the body, they violate the integrity of the contest. These transgressions perform their transgression, and in every rule there is the implicit "breaking rules is against the rules." However, in argumentative terms, the transgression of the rules would function a bit differently, and next I must consider the transgressions that attack the body of the interlocutor.

However, this requires me to modulate the realities of *pankration* to address contemporary issues in contemporary contests: the questions of sex and gender. For my purposes, developing an argument out from *pankration* is not necessarily limited by the limitations of *pankration* as it was practiced. That is, in the ancient Games, women did not compete, nor did they engage with men, but I cannot develop a model of argument that excludes women, as Foss and Griffin argue about all traditional argumentation and against which they posit their own feminist "invitational argument." However, as argued by Jarratt and others, conflict is not simply male or female, and an all-out rejection of conflict can end up reifying traditional inequalities as well.^{lxvi} Indeed, because women are more likely than men to be victims of violence, teaching them to defend themselves, with words or limbs, is much more needful. However, as with death, the feminine in/and rhetoric of violence is too complex to deal with sufficiently here.^{lxvii}

Although, the question of bodily difference in contemporary arguments is a potent site of conflict and the always-accompanying meta-conflict, and it must be addressed in the ways we teach it. That is, while we don't want to encourage attacking people on the

grounds of their bodily difference, we need to teach students to be aware of bodily difference and how it plays an important role in any instance of argumentation. While we might idealize the notion of equality, the concept and term itself is the product of drastic inequality, a history of exclusion, and functions to allow any position to have grounds.^{lxviii} However, in cases where the notion of equality would threaten the functioning of the contest, such as allowing a misogynist's attack on a woman's womanhood on grounds of allowing him a "fair say," the judge must step in, affirm the rules of the contest and outline how rejecting someone *a priori* due to bodily difference threatens the functioning of the contest: sacrificing fairness in service of equity.

However, differences in bodily composition are central to fighting in training and practice, and especially so in *pankration* and the other "heavy events" because all adult participants, regardless of body size and weight, competed against each other. In each case, an individual would face an individual, strike and grapple with their opponent as a singular, unique system of bodily force. That is, while there are a whole host of complications regarding the normalization of certain bodies and the definitions of "ability," in fighting terms, the body is a mechanical system for the enactment of force and a series of articulations that are themselves vulnerable to force.^{lxix} It doesn't matter *who* we fight, but rather what the physiological powers and limitations of their particular body are. In continuing to consider the argument as a fight, we must also see the argument as an opponent with a particular articulation of structure, an anatomy that can enact and be vulnerable to force. We can use this model of the fight and manner of engagement from *pankration*, and from it develop a way of engaging an argument as a body with particular physiological, material affordances and limitations. In thinking

about arguments in anatomical terms, I turn to Stephen Toulmin, who considers it in this same way, even if this particular element seems to have been overlooked by many scholars.

IV. The Anatomy of Argument(ation) and The Pankratic Method

While Aristotle presents the *enthymeme* as an incomplete or “corrupt” syllogism, Toulmin delves deeper into the positive qualities of the body of argument rather than finding it wanting in comparison to a mathematic-logical ideal. Rather than a collection of dead letters, Toulmin argues that “an argument is like an organism,” with “both a gross, anatomical structure and a finer, as-it-were physiological one” (Toulmin 94). We can attend to the gross anatomy of arguments in terms of both the Claims and Data and the surface features of a text, and with its finer physiological structure, how Warrants are Qualified and Rebutted, how they support Claims and Data and are supported in turn by Backing, as well as what kind of Claims can be made, which Warrants, Data, and Backing are acceptable, and what Qualifiers and Rebuttals must be accounted for in a particular case. If arguments are bodies, as Toulmin suggests, then we can attend to them as bodies with an anatomically shaped surface we can strike and with a physiological structure we can grapple, but we want students to be able to both engage with a text in terms of varying intensities of precision and force, and in terms of logical connections and rhetorical trajectory.

While we can certainly engage with an argument on the level of Claims and Data, asking what specifically and in detail is being proposed and how well and in what ways is it justified, these specific moves are themselves based on the Warrant. Whereas Aristotle

requires universal-absolute Major Premises, Toulmin points out that the specific and specific kinds of Warrants “may confer different degrees of force on the conclusions they justify” (Toulmin 100). Without a strong Warrant, Claims and Data will ultimately lack any force to persuade.^{lxx} However, the Warrant is also vulnerable to attack as well, and engaging with it requires something different than engaging with a Claim. The Warrant is the center of power of an argument, the *phrene*, the core of the body, what allows it to enact force, like the proper working of the hips and knees that allow for the force of a punch to knock down an opponent. Furthermore, like the *phrene*, the Warrant can be engaged with through the Claims and Data it supports, but also directly if an interlocutor has the skills to close the distance and grab hold. That is, surrounding the Warrant, there are two levels of structure, engaging with which requires different modes of argument, two modes we have already seen—striking (with) surface and grappling structure, Sophistic argument and Socratic argumentation—and two modes that are integrated into a monistic, *pankration* approach, even if such integration is not resolution.

That is, even though it disrupts the binary between striking and grappling, in order to train their students in *pankration*, ancient Greek *paidotribes* split their training into two parts. The first part, *ano* (up) *pankration*, was “used for training or preliminary bouts,” and required fighters to remain standing, using punches, kicks, elbows, and knees, very little grappling, and no ground fighting (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 13). The second style, “*kato* [down] *pankration*, was primarily used in the Games and was a much rougher form” that emphasized the grappling, throwing, ground-fighting and submission holds (Arvanitis, *Pankration* 13). *Pankration* matches would begin with both fighters standing, but usually end on the ground, with one fighter being locked into a hold by the other. So,

teachers began training students with the beginning of the match, progressively working toward the full match, beginning upright and ending down after rigorous practice. Such an approach mirrors that of writing instruction: we begin teaching students words, and only later do they “really” learn to attend to lines of argument, coherent structures of persuasion and communication.

Just as students in *pankration* begin with the “natural” striking focus of upright fighting, when students engage with a text, they initially encounter it as a series of surface features, specific fixations on words that are “read” into phrases.^{lxxi} If we engage with arguments in a text, we do so with and on the surface, we strike at it as it strikes us, and we also go past the surface, delving deeper into the structure of reasoning and support. When students get closer they engage not with the surface features but the structure and strength of the body of the text, discussing the underlying assumptions that support claims, how strong these assumptions are and how well they are themselves supported. In this, we have shifted to a more involved engagement with a text, writer, and the assumptions at work for both. Unlike the striking-match, in which adversaries express against each other and attempt to weaken the foundation of each other’s claims, in a grappling match, we close the distance, embrace these foundations, and attempt to unbalance them, which also requires deeper critical thinking about the epistemological rules of particular disciplines, possible groundless assumptions, and it also involves a deep discomfort as students find themselves stretched, uncomfortably bent out of shape. Any reading, engaging, or interpretive work, anything we do with and to a text can be understood as acting upon a body.

Dealing with simply the first blush, the raw presentation of a text can leave little understanding, affective impact, or rhetorical effect: it is precisely what it seems to be, it says what it says. In this objectifying mode of engagement, interlocutors express themselves to and at us, while we either let the blows come, if we're being open and engaging, cover our faces to block the blows, or shift around and avoid their barbs. As we close in, come together, find a stance within one another's gravity, a common ground, we have to change the mode of engagement. We don't deal with mere terms and names anymore here, but logical articulations and ideological structures. We ask questions to unbalance our opponents, we find a lower center, a firmer foundation from which to tip them over, their own certainty and surety tipping up and over, and from there, we wrench out the implications of their reasoning and/or the problematic, unconceived foundations from which they're working. We torque their arms and legs, preventing their ability to make the claims they had and move from where they had been. We can strangle them, rhetorically, smothering their subjectivity until they cannot do anything anymore and must submit: "yes, you make a very good point; well, I hadn't thought of it that way; I have lots to reconsider." At this moment, the moment of concession and the moment of consensus, for any compromise means one or both parties give up, we gently wrestle our interlocutors. We find common ground, understand their position, find a freedom to move, and come to a resolution: the model of philosophical, rational, liberal-deliberative discourse.

However, it doesn't always work this way; rhetorical fights, arguments, however much we may wish it, are not wrestling matches. As you close in to find common ground, your opponent can slip away, they can change the foundation on which they were

standing, and by going forward in an expected and predictable way, you leave yourself open. Here with that openness, with that distance, the striking can continue. The opponent can hold in reserve and protect the integrity of their stance and foundation, delivering words in rapid succession at your now unbalanced form. Pure insult, a wide sweeping elbow of demonization aimed at vulnerabilities learned through closeness, can crash unexpectedly from the side; a knee-jerk response takes your breath away, leaving you speechless. But these strikes, these expressions can't manifest at a distance, but instead are more intimate, more close-range, at that point between modalities when we're no longer dealing in simple expressions of belief and opinion, but not yet deep into the nuances and complexities of philosophical argument either. It is at this point that we vacillate between arguments of word and phrase, of sophistic word-games and deep meditations of meaning. When it's no longer one or the other, this middle range is where most arguments happen; we don't live in stark dualities, but a singular, constantly middling.

However, our ways of conceiving differences in engagement little account for this, and this is even more complicated by the ethical resonance that certain modalities have that others don't: boxing is violent and bad, wrestling is forceful but good. But now we can see that despite the traditional ethical choice applied to these two styles of fighting, these are simply two different modes of bodily interaction: concussion on surface and coercion of structure. One is not preferable or more effective than the other, as there is no absolute metric we might use to make these judgments, but simply different, and most usefully, mutually disabling. We cannot assume that what we have traditionally devalued is not important in its own right, or even less important than what

we have valued. Rather than simply continuing what we have done, or simply invert our binaries for fairness' sake, we might instead deconstruct the binary itself, making the modes of expression and deliberation, constructing and engaging texts as a series of words and as a structured propositional set, but as both at once, moving in and out of these modes as the exigence, topic, genre, or occasion might require. We cannot simply strike at each other, expressing ourselves until exhausted and bruised, but we cannot simply grapple either, turning and torqueing others and ourselves, feeling the pain of coercion while forcing a smile because it's the right thing to do, and the right way to do it. We need to do both and neither: we need *pankration*.

However, there's certainly pain in having our writing and argument broken, the connections our claims have to supporting evidence can be snapped with a little pressure at the right angle, but we can simply ignore that pressure. In argument, others *can not feel pain* in having their argument broken. Unless they agree on the means and method for engagement and victory, if we have a common sense of what the contest is, then they might just as easily reject our critiques as we might reject theirs. We can claim that the opponents and critics don't understand the nuance or the method, that their critique is unfounded or antiquated, naïve or too simplistic, or simply ignore their critiques as "absurd," as Aristotle and others do of anyone who rejects or troubles the Principle of Non-Contradiction.

Toulmin points this out as well, asking whether an interlocutor can "still raise genuine questions about the validity of the argument," if they've had all the necessary information presented and all the implications of logic explained (131) Therefore, if someone with whom we are arguing has been defeated in our estimation, but they refuse

to accept such defeat “what then are we to say about him? Now we must say, rather, that he is blind to, i.e. fails to see the force of, the argument. Indeed what else can we say? This is not an explanation: it is a bare statement of the fact. He just does not follow the steps, and the ability to follow such arguments is, surely, one of the *basic* rational competencies” (134). Unlike the *pankration* match, there’s little force behind the rules of argument, little pain in persuasion, and unless someone follows our rules, then they cannot and will not be playing our game, and so we are then back again to the beginning: coercing against coercion or be excluded as coercive.^{lxxii} There’s no answer, no victory here, but simply the charge to fight more and fight better, and one of the foundations of fighting are a basic competency with material and a basic respect for the rules that establish, define, and produce the fight, even if we teach students that sometimes rules are meant to be broken.

V. Conclusion and Transition

While addressing surface issues, “lower order concerns” might be easier for students to begin their training, as a discipline we have focused on grappling with ideas and structure, “higher order concerns.” Attending to the local surface features of a text is seen as current-traditional pedagogy, which leads some instructors to tell their students to fight against correction, to ignore errors and focus on the “real things” like content or coherence, and the rest will fall into place. That is, good global writing is assumed to inexorably trickle down to good local writing.

Furthermore, that such lower order concerns are seen as “lower,” and therefore less important, illustrates that *writing itself is not the most important part of writing*

instruction, except as a vehicle for the transmission of concepts, which seems to encourage rather than challenge the identification of good writing with “correct writing.” However, in this view “errors” are dialectical deviance, their difference marking either race/ethnicity as barbarisms or class/rurality as solecisms. This orientation to difference is what makes them seem like errors in the first place, and ignoring them as unimportant is as violent as uncritically seeing them as simply “wrong.”

But regardless of the problematic privilege of correctness and its history, “real world” audiences, like upper-division educators and future employers, will expect and demand correctness, punish its deviance, and see writing that insufficiently adheres to their expected norms as not even writing at all. We can’t simply ignore the words as they’re written or the need for students to present strong words that hit at precisely where the students need them to. Concise and precise claims are part of what writing is and does. If we consider the work of words within the paradigm of force I’ve outlined here, then we can start to train it better.

In order to begin training, we must start with the basics. The basics of prose, diction and syntax, and in following the *pankration* method I have outlined here, we must turn to the manner of training basics in martial arts. This turn is also a return to the abandoned method of current-traditional rhetoric: repetitive practice, or as might be more than mere cliché now, “drill and kill.” Finally, we must consider the material and technological implications, affordances, and limitations of the actual tools and tropes in which we train students, which requires us to reconsider the relationship between speech and writing in the work of training students in the use of language.

^{lvi} Aristotle says “For a proposition is a single statement about a single thing” (6), and so for him refutation has to be categorical and universal, and the “example syllogism” used to demonstrate the logic of necessity is well known. “Socrates is a man, all men are mortal, and so Socrates is mortal.” This example offers a singular premise and a universal premise, one that is true in a particular case, although Socrates might be swine in another case, and the second that is always and necessarily true. Death is about the only example we might find for this, as Toulmin shows that the “all” in the universal premise is far more complex than it is usually taken to be by professional philosophers and lay-persons alike. While for such a universal premise, “the force of the [‘all’] statements is invariant for all fields of argument,” but the “grounds or backing supporting a warrant of this form will depend on the field of argument” (112). So, unless we’re arguing about Death or mathematics, the “All” will seldom if ever mean “forever, in every place, in every case, for everyone all the time.” Therefore, Aristotle’s bar for categorical and universal refutation is not possible, or rather only limited to cases of Life and Death; those means by which we stave off the inevitable conclusion and inevitable conclusion itself. Justice and fairness are not universal, necessary, or categorical; what the “good life” is has remained a philosophical question since before the term was even coined, and the “right decision” is so contextually determined that it’s nearly impossible, or indeed impossible, to consider what it would be outside the specific situation. Even then, a decision in situ presumes that any decider has all necessary data, the best motives, and a good idea of consequences.

^{lvii} In *Man Play Games*, Caillois outlines the structure of games, of which the contest, *agōn*, is merely one of four, and the type of game that a fight, or refutation, predominantly is. He explains that while rules constitutes the bounds of any given game, any contest, there are different ways these rules might be broken, with different effects on the game and from different affective positions that form the players themselves. 1. Cheating: know the rules, acknowledge them and their use, but look for exploits, gaps, or loopholes to succeed in spite of them, or blatantly foul without being caught. Cheaters can be caught, punished, and excluded from play, making them not really that harmful to the overall assemblage. 2. Spoilsporting: knows the rules, but argues they are unfair, unwarranted, stupid, and therefore this whole contest is suspect. Taking the ball and going home, ruining the game for everyone. However, we might add a third, a both/neither here that illustrates the importance of and complication regarding the rules. 3. Working the Rules: presents the rules as binding, when in fact they are not. Presenting the contest as open and honest, when it is not. Making the show of a contest, an agonistic encounter, while cooperating to mutually protect the players, the image of the game as legitimate, the sanctity of the game in its reality, and preventing the investment, emotional and monetary, from leaving the audience.

^{lviii} Indeed, the agonistic logic works throughout many of the practices we call a “test.” The Socratic elenchus functions as an *agōn* in this way: an interlocutor posits a view, and it is attacked with questions until it either remains or is reduced to dust. Furthermore, the scientific practice of reducing variables to test a specific one follows this same pattern: to test a physiological quality of any material, the strength of particular materials used to

make rope, each is subjected to the same test, a tension test for example. In each case, the only variable that changes between tests is the “contestant” itself, the ropes of different materials, the independent variable. In other, more complicated instances, as I will discuss with the fight as *agōn*, the rules are more complicated because the independent variable to be tested, e.g. fighting skill, is more complicated, even though it functions with the same logic of the agonistic assemblage.

^{lix} This is what makes the *agōn* the kind of structure, the kind of “game” that it is, in contrast to other games. For more on this, see *Homo Ludens* by Johan Huizinga and *Man Play Games* by Roger Caillois.

^{lx} In *Agonistics*, Mouffe explains that “Adversaries fight against each other because they want their interpretation of the principles to become hegemonic, but they do not put into question the legitimacy of the opponent’s right to fight for the victory of their position” (7). In *Toward a Civil Discourse*, Crowley explains that adversaries are “people who maintain agendas that compel them as forcefully as our own compels us” (21). Furthermore, she notes that “acceptance of one’s opponents as legitimate adversaries requires a change in subjectivity, a change in orientation toward antagonistic discourses, and an attitudinal change toward those who whom one disagrees” (22). While agonism is a foundational logic we might find throughout the Western intellectual tradition and within institutions in contemporary society, this agonistic orientation toward the other seems to have fallen out, into either irenic rejection of conflict altogether or a violence enmity that sees all contestation in the same terms as war.

^{lxi} See Ellsworth “Agōnios, Agōnarchos, Agōnistērion” for more on the logistics of the institutions of Pan-Hellenic competition.

^{lxii} A *pankratist* would have to get behind their opponent, and slip their arm up under their opponent’s chin, wrapping their neck between the forearm and the bicep, while cradling the back of the head with their other hand, locking the hand of the arm around the neck in the bent of the other elbow. From here, the opponent’s head is securely locked, and the pressure from the arm cuts off airflow, blood flow, and attacks pressure points on the sides of the neck. Next, as per the “ladder” name, the *pankratist* would either leap on the back of their opponent or fall backward with their opponent on top of them, either simultaneously or directly following either transition, they would wrap their legs around their opponent’s torso and squeeze, intensifying the stranglehold, and pressing their heels, “the hooks”, to the inner hip joint, thus immobilizing their opponent as well.

^{lxiii} One important exception to this was Arrichion, who invented and applied an ankle-lock counter while being trapped within the hold and falling backward. Even though he died in the process, he was awarded victory because his opponent submitted. We will meet him shortly.

^{lxiv} Theagenes of Thasos (The Invincible) was one of the most famous of ancient fighters, having won 1400 matches in boxing and pankration, more than anyone in history,

including Olympic crowns in 480 BCE and 476 BCE (respectively), even a double victory in both, nine Nemean boxing titles, and even a victory in the *dolichos*, a running even of about 3 miles. After his death, his statue even killed a sore loser who was never able to defeat Theagenes. The murderous statue was thrown into the sea, but salvaged following a famine in Thasos and an oracle that all exiles should return.

^{lxv} Aside from personal, moral, or legal justifications and an ancient and pervasive commonplace that “murder is wrong,” the act of murder is also rhetorically expensive. That is, those that use violence to win arguments can be said to hurt their own cause, taking things too far, and unless very specific conditions are met, murder will lead to imprisonment, demonization, and death; from there, whatever cause, righteous or otherwise, for and from which we make the terrible choice to take a life will suffer because the dead become *atechnic* proofs, martyrs who were sacrificed for the Cause, and resources for other, opposing rhetors. That is, murder is not only costly for the rhetor, but beneficial for the opponent as it builds ethos to be martyred. But, in the face of people bent on destruction, more normative and civil tactics might not be effective, leaving violence as the only available means of persuasion. We kill for a whole range of reasons, and it is looking at these reasons, as much as the conditions of the act itself, that determine how expensive it would be.

^{lxvi} See Jarratt, “Feminism and Composition”

^{lxvii} While I freely acknowledge the historical (and perhaps biological) connections between masculinity and violence, there’s no reason why women could not have competed in the heavy events, that they can’t fight too, and some of the origins of *pankration* even cite Atalanta or Athena herself as the creator of the art, which complicates the easy division between men and women as violent and non-violent.

^{lxviii} An uncritical adherence to “equality” is problematic for arguing in a plural society. That is, because “equality” from *isegoria* and *isonomia* from the Greek Solon and Cleisthenes to the “*liberte, equalite, franternite*” of the French Revolution, had been an equalizing of already-similar groups—these white land-owning men are the same as these other white men who own less land—the notion of equality itself is a Euro-patriarchal concept, and so it cannot but always fall back on itself when used outside of the originally similar group outlined for it; equality is based on sameness and so it has trouble with difference. That is, in the 20th century, with the expansion of equality to include other, more different bodies, does the notion of equality break down and shift, leaving it open to anti-feminist and racist counterclaims that rejecting a misogynist on the count of his misogyny is bigoted, or the absurd claim of “reverse-racism” which ignores the historical and systematic weight that grants certain groups privilege over others.

^{lxix} This martial arts economy, just like any economy, requires those exchanging to have the same medium of currency; in the case of bodily arts, this currency was not some gold coin or agreed metric of exchange, but the constant medium of the human body. For the purposes of martial arts training, the human body is a constant across cultures and history, albeit with several important exceptions, such as ability, sex, and stature.

Because the martial arts come from the training for war by the warrior classes of various cultures, the normalized body presumed by martial arts training is that of an elite healthy male, like Achilles who embodies the Greek ideal of *arête*. However, here too the martial arts complicate a simplistic account, and indeed the historical lineage of the warrior-caste culture runs explicitly against the ethos and ideology of martial arts practice.

In *pankration*, for example, we must fight a taller and leaner opponent differently than a shorter and stouter one, just as we might approach different audiences or interlocutors differently. This is not because of any bigoted hatred of the short people, or an unwarranted privileging of the tall, but rather an awareness of how bodily difference manifests in engaging with the body as a mechanism of force. We don't think taller people are smarter than shorter ones, but we do know that they have a higher center of gravity and a longer reach. We therefore might stay distant from the tall person, letting them swing their long limbs at us, until we find the *Kairos* to shoot inside his striking range and grapple him low. Conversely, a shorter opponent has a lower center of gravity and a shorter reach, so we would be wise to keep our distance and strike at him, using our own advantages, and taking special care if we do grapple, but try to take advantage of our own longer limbs in the types of throws and holds that we use.

However, this notion of exploiting a weakness and using our own relative strengths is a logic of engagement born out of a homogenous group of male competitors who differ in size and strength, and indeed the Heavy Events were so-called because the bigger, heavier competitors were usually the most successful, which is the case in war as well. The bigger, better-armed, and better-trained army is usually the more successful, but in certain cases, training itself (or better arms or sheer numbers) can overcome other advantages. That is, the art of fighting not only makes the strong stronger, but can also allow the weaker to become stronger, and to overcome the weaker. In the case of a *pankration* contest, this would be the smaller fighter defeating the bigger, the shorter over taller or taller over shorter depending, the newer over experienced, or perhaps even the rule-bound and honorable over the ruthless pragmatist who wins at all costs.

For example, one of the most famous wrestlers, Milo of Kroton was said to be gigantic with divine strength, and thus indomitable in his sport, making the heaviest of the heavy the most successful of the events. However, the intertwined mythological origins of these arts provide a different story. One origin of wrestling has Theseus invent it to fight the bigger and stronger Minotaur, and Herakles' fights with the Nemean Lion, the giant Anteus, and the god of the underworld Hades, all bigger and stronger opponents, are cited as possible origins for wrestling as well. In each of these cases, the hero resorts not to strength, but to skill. He is not the naturally superior combatant, the stronger, but ends up victorious by resorting to artfulness, technique, and subtlety. That is, martial arts allow the weaker to overcome the stronger, making the need for the strong, powerful, *able* body not a necessary condition for martial arts practice or even mastery.

Indeed, in a list compiled by Eric Kondo, martial artists with a wide variety of bodily differences and physical challenges have found success and prominence in a wide variety of disciplines (<http://martialartistwithdisabilities.blogspot.com>). The USA Taekwondo

Federation also notes that “adapted *kumite* is remarkably similar to its able-bodied counterpart...as adaptive athletes are not allowed to earn points for strikes to the head area,” showing that adaptations are only made when necessary and when done so as minimally as possible (<http://www.disabledsportsusa.org/sport/martial-arts>). However, considering the use of martial arts for self-defense and the unfortunate reality of people with disabilities being more likely to be targets of violence, adapting martial arts for people with disabilities is not simply one accommodation among others.^{lxix} While the interesting ways in which martial arts training is adapted and practiced by people with disabilities provides valuable insight into adaptive education itself, it is beyond the scope of this inquiry. However, it does provide a useful example of the problematic, but necessary limitations we must make in theorizing and practicing pedagogy.

Even though we should be, in principle, attentive to each individual student and their individual needs in each individual case, we cannot be in any practical sense. This radical attentiveness to the particularities runs counter to the foundational logic of general and specific, the establishment of education as a series of levels, course outcomes, assignment design, curriculum, teacher training, etc. All of which ignores the time and effort that each particular educator, individuals themselves, already invests, which makes the ideal attentiveness to particularities wildly unworkable, and just as ideal as the ideal body that is complicated and rendered impossible by the differences among individuals in the first place. However much it may be a theoretical, ethical, and economic problem, there has been a necessary normalization, as we see in the requirements for “basic competency” with English for students entering first-year composition, but also the pedagogy itself changes and adapts when it encounters differences it had not encountered previously. But when considering the body as a mechanism for the enactment of and engagement with force, considering it as a combat apparatus, there are consistent (but not totalizing) limits that produce a materially normalized body and a materially consistent set of techniques. That is, the body only moves and bends in certain ways, and so there are a limited, but not slight, number of movements of which humans are capable.

For example, the moves depicted on the walls of the Egyptian tomb of Baquet III, dated 21st century BCE, show up a millennia later in Olympic frescoes and urns, but might still be seen today in an Olympic judo match or professional wrestling ring. This shows that despite the many cultural differences surrounding and characterizing the striking and grappling arts of China, Okinawa, Japan, as well as Egypt and Japan might be understood as the same art: the art of striking and the art of grappling, not as some *ur*-form that is later disseminated into various cultures, although this might certainly be the case, but rather that these two manners of engagement with another body, either separate or synthesized, are consistent across humanity. Because the human body is consistent, different cultures would develop similar techniques in response to similar situations. This consistency is what allows for very different bodies in different cultures and histories to be sufficiently similar as to allow for the ‘same’ move to be taught over and over, and this is also what allows the kind of exchange that gave rise to *karate*, and later allowed *karate* to function as an element in the reconstruction of *pankration*, an art with which it has a distant and tenuous causal relationship, at best. Even though all the arts might be able to work through a body in similar ways, which does not mean that all the arts are

necessarily similar. Rather, these developments are not the same nor necessarily consistent across all traditions, leaving gaps or weaknesses in styles that other styles might exploit.

^{lxx} Toulmin explains that “Some warrants must be accepted provisionally without further challenge, if argument is to be open to us in the field in question: we should not even know what sort of data were of the slightest relevance to a conclusion, if we had not at least a provisional idea of the warrants acceptable in the situation confronting us. The existence of considerations such as would establish the acceptability of the most reliable warrants is something we are entitled to take for granted” (106).

^{lxxi} As Paulson et.al. show, “reading” is not a smooth physiological motion, but a stop-and-go series of fixations on 3-6 letter spaces at a time and saccades from one fixation to the next, coupled with context and prediction that “allows readers to visually skip words but still feel as though they have seen and read every word” (311). Even as your eyes move over these marks, Dear Reader, and you’re pulling some idea out of or thinking into them, judging their progression against your experience and expectation and abstracting some larger “structure;” you’re seeing them as a surface, even if you’re only reading about 66% of it (313). Because of the physiological nature of reading, Paulson et.al. suggest that we have students address surface issues “before asking students to move on to more holistic critiques” because “students do indeed find an initial holistic approach difficult at best” (328).

^{lxxii} As an art of attack and defense, rhetoric has a “conjunctive equivalence and disjunctive antithesis” with the violence of war, as Megan Foley explains in her treatment of *peitho* and *bia* (173). In conjunctive equivalence, both *peitho* and *bia* offer the same result in conquest, as “violence erupts at the point where persuasion fails; strength conquers what seduction concedes...violence becomes rhetoric’s double” (173). This disjunctive antithesis makes “*peitho* and *bia* appear diametrically opposed. *Peitho* seems to be predicated on the exclusion of *bia*” (174). Foley argues that Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric as a *dunamis* (potentiality) means that rhetoric only concerns *endekhomenon* (that which can be otherwise), while *bia* or force carries the weight of necessity, that which cannot be otherwise (179). This definition of rhetoric as potential “necessarily entails impotentiality,” and any actualization of the potentiality of rhetoric would require force to overcome its concomitant impotentiality (180). That is to say, rhetoric’s enactment requires force, making *bia* “an immanent privation, a lack at the heart of *peitho*,” a lack because persuasion cannot match the necessity of physical force (180). Foley argues that “simultaneously enabling rhetoric’s force and delimiting its domain, *bia* operates as the interior limit or constitutive exclusion of rhetoric” (180). As “good” conflict, rhetoric lives between “bad” conflict, Foley concludes, “the virtue of rhetoric is that—unlike violence—it will always...[be] lacking the full force of necessity and thus opening the possibility of change. The forces of *bia* and *peitho* do not differ in kind, but only in degree—and rhetoric’s relative weakness is its ultimate strength” (180-181).

Chapter 3

Kihon of Rhetoric: *Kobudo* Weaponry, Precision of Expression, and Facility with Grammar

Some who have read this far are undoubtedly ready to call up the underground grammarians to do one more battle against those who would rip out the Mother Tongue and tear down Civilized Western Values. But need I really assert that, just because many rules of grammar lack practical force, it is hardly the case that none of them have substance?

Joseph Williams, "The Phenomenology of Error" 164

Karate and kobudo are mutually supportive practices; the knowledge of both skills can improve the student's techniques immensely. Without a thorough knowledge of karate basics, the tonfa student is severely limited in his development. By the same token, improvement in the use of the tonfa extends the attacks and strengthens the blocks of the karate student. Continued practice with the tonfa can help improve balance, coordination and physical strength.

Master Fumio Demura, *Tonfa: Karate Weapon of Self-Defense* 7

I. Explication

For many outside the discipline of composition studies, and especially outside academia, a major element of writing instruction is "correct grammar." Writing "correctly" is therefore a powerful expectation of those for whom our students will be writing and a potent anxiety for our students in first-year composition, an introduction to future college writing that prepares students to write after college as well. However, within composition studies, we have a more nuanced perspective on "correct grammar." We are less certain what it means, as well as how and how heavily it features in writing instruction. As writing instructors, we occupy a tension between those within composition pedagogy invested in students' language and social justice, and the

expectations outside composition for students to write correctly for future professors, employers, and clients. That is, even if we reject the oppressive attitudes that make “correct writing” a neutral and objective standard, seeing it as an idealization of the dialectic of particular people in particular places, we cannot reject the pervasiveness of these attitudes, ones that will prevent our students from non-hegemonic linguistic backgrounds from being treated seriously outside the purview of our course. That is, the question of syntax and diction, correct grammar and clear prose, is the fundamental question and the foundational challenge of writing pedagogy.

But even though we may reject the notion of correctness as obvious, natural, and neutral, there are still limits in writing as a linguistic system. That is, not only does some written language not work for/on some audiences, but some language choices don’t work at all. Furthermore, these choices are themselves caught up in the complicated relationship between written and spoken language. Unlike spoken language, which bears far fewer burdens to communication and benefits from the fluidity of its (im)materiality, training students in written language and how to match that language to the audience, purpose, and context, requires training students in the use of a tool, an object, a thing very much like “language” they acquired by nature of their humanity, but one very different as well. To develop this model, I turn to a non-Western model in the art of *kobudo* and the tool-become-weapon *tonfa* as a way to conceive of the unique, but not relative, forms individual writing takes, what I term the *idiographolect*. These differences and the central challenge of effective writing requires a training approach, not so that students might become like the elites whose language exemplifies and creates correctness, but so that they might gain facility with the inter-subjective technology of writing.

II. The Foundational Problem of Composition

From the onset, students need to know how to write in order to teach them how to write; all composition pedagogy has the prerequisite of “basic competency.” Whether students come from non-English or non-hegemonic English backgrounds—or they have learning or language challenges—, without this presumed and somewhat occult “basic competency,” whether indicated by a placement test, specific accommodations, or other metrics, students are not yet ready for the work of composition. They therefore must be “remediated” with given extra training in preparation of the work of composition. Ironically, composition itself began as such a remedial course when it first began, and as such the question of remediation of “basic writers” or “English Language Learners” is fundamental to all composition. However, it is also an area of study and pedagogical challenge that requires more time and space than I have here. So just like all composition courses, I must begin with the assumption of “basic competency.”^{lxxiii}

With having “basic competency,” students are then expected to develop their skills beyond basic competency into something like fluency, adequacy, or even skill. One central concern is the ways they use the structures of language to connect words together, make the proper and expected changes, and develop something called “correct grammar.” The dominant lay attitude considers “correctness” as an objective and neutral quality of superior writing. Correctness is a single “straight” path that language can travel and straying from that path is not simply deviation or difference, but deficiency and degradation (*Etymonline*). For this “single standard model,” grammatical choices are right or wrong, considered as proper or improper etiquette (*Students’ Right 3*). While following this path is expected and rewarded, deviance illustrates a technical deficiency,

if not an inherent inability or unwillingness of the students themselves to do things “correctly.” Personified in the “Grammar Nazi,” a common caricature both inside and outside academia, this attitude sees “poor grammar” as evidence of a poor student, a bad writer, and even an immoral person (Lindblom and Dunn). In this perspective, our job as writing instructors is to correct student’s work in the same way as our mathematics colleagues, making sure their prose all adds up in a strict universal monologic process. The “standard” discourse becomes a dogmatic code, language use a moral concern, and composition instructors become etiquette police.

However, within the field of composition, we understand that any particular “standard” is not neutral or natural, but the product of historical precedent and cultural conflict. We understand that “correct” language reflects the language of those who traditionally have had the most access to the best education (elite white males)—those who have had the power to decide what is “correct”—and error is a mere “wandering” or simply dialectal difference (*Etymonline*). For students from lower socioeconomic class or rural areas, students of color, and those who identify as women, this means learning to write the “standard” way, i.e. like elite white males. That is, “correctness” is simply the dialect of a particular group articulated as universal that treats difference as deviance. Uncritical acceptance and privileging of this “standard” language is the maintenance and proliferation of white supremacy, urban elitism, and patriarchy through a seemingly objective “correctness.” This became quite visible following the advancements of Civil Rights and Open Admissions, increasing education access for students from a whole host of non-privileged backgrounds. When they entered the gates of the university that had been barred to them, the system that was built on their exclusion found them wanting,

“basic writers,” as Mina Shaughnessy notes in *Errors and Expectations*. Because the “standard” was articulated as neutral and objective, the conclusion outside the field was that the students themselves were the problem.

In response, NCTE drafted *Students’ Right to their Own Language*, illustrating the contingency of the “single standard model” and challenging it by instead seeing “good writing” as contextually bound and conventionally delimited (3). “Standard” is not neutral and natural, and “correctness” need not be dogmatic, but rather it is a specific set of linguistic choices privileged in the historical-cultural context in which students and teachers find themselves. In proclaiming students’ language as something they have “rights” to, language shifts from something that is purely technical and objective, a process subject to metrics of correctness, to a personal and cultural expression deserving of respect on its own terms, a form and extension of identity. This edict sees the language students already have not as a lack to be remedied or deficiency to be replaced, but as a reflection of them as individuals and an expression of the singular intersection of the various communities of which they are a part. As writing instructors in this view, our job is to teach students to use what they already know better, and affirm their difference, rather than penalize it. That is, engagement with the standard should be a negotiation, and correctness another rhetorical constraint to account for in each given rhetorical situation (Lu 482).

Rather than “correct,” we help students find the “proper” language for the specific rhetorical situations in which they find themselves. However, in maintaining this rhetorical focus as instructors, we must remember that the audiences for whom our students will write after and outside our class will not see dialectal difference, but

“incorrect grammar,” finding both our students’ writing and our writing instruction insufficient and ineffective. In valuing students’ rights to their own language, we are failing as writing instructors in the view of those outside the field, for whom writing instruction is “correcting grammar.” For the clear majority of people for whom our students will be writing, correctness is simply the way it is, and deviation from correctness serves as evidence of failing education, the inherent inferiority of “those people,” or even the downfall of Western civilization itself. If we are really taking seriously our goals of teaching students rhetorical self-defense, for not just our students but ourselves as well, then the dominance of “correctness” makes grammar instruction more important pragmatically than highlighting institutional bias (but nor are they mutually exclusive). While the presumed neutrality of the standard obscures the inequalities at work in Standard English, this standard is not simply discriminatory, but the result of pragmatic limits on variation.

The “standard” is the contingent product of historical and cultural conflict, embodies urban elitism, white supremacy, and patriarchy, but there is also a necessary commensurability with the expectations of particular audiences in a specific situation. Without meeting these expectations, writers will not be taken seriously, be effective with rhetorical goals, or even understood to be writing at all. That is, unless a teacher can understand a student’s writing, then that writing can’t do anything, whatever its goal. If a lawyer cannot communicate with the judge and jury in a way they understand and accept, the lawyer will not be taken seriously and a murderer could walk free. If a student’s job application is riddled with what the hiring person sees as a lack of sufficient education, that student might very well starve to death in the street. We do our students, especially

those outside the privileged groups, a severe disservice if we do not prepare them to meet and inhabit this reality of discourse in the world by being more accommodating to language difference than those outside our class will be.

In promoting standard language, we're giving students access to power, privilege, and legitimacy, but we're also reinforcing the sedimented inequalities that have marginalized the communities of many of our students in the first place. Conversely, in challenging standard language, we are valuing each student as a singular intersection, but ignoring the pragmatic realities of language beyond our class, which poorly prepares students to deal with these harsh standards of judgement. We cannot ignore the sedimented inequalities that hide structural bias in writing in the guise of objective, technical neutrality, but I doubt any of us would glorify these inequalities either, which puts composition instructors in a double bind. We must, but cannot, teach "correct grammar," and we should respect students' right to their own language, but this could mean not doing our job in the view of students, or those outside our class, including administrators. Luckily, most students and administrators neither know nor care about this problematic, but rather simply value correctness as a given. This renders our handwringing about students' language into a merely academic point that has little bearing on writing outside our courses, as long as our students have "correct grammar." We cannot escape this double bind *per se*, but we can occupy it differently by challenging the metaphysics of the singular, moral, correct path of "correctness" and changing the myth of neutral, inclusive elite education that directs writing instruction.

I challenge correctness on four grounds, which are metaphysical assumptions at work in writing instruction, ones that have been around since the Greeks at least, and

ones that become problematic when we consider the developments in rhetorical and composition theory in the 20th century. That is, even though teachers seek to combat the oppressive and exclusionary history that gave us “current-traditional rhetoric” and the foundation for all writing pedagogy that came after, because we still operate within and under this linguistic metaphysics, we cannot escape them nor the requirements they require of our students.

To provide an alternative metaphysics, I turn to a non-Western model in the art of *kobudo* invented by common farmers using farm tools, like the *tonfa* or “mill-handle” to defend themselves from elite samurai, armed with better weapons and training. By thinking about the language students bring to and practice in the class as a *tonfa*, a wooden tool adapted by each user, we can see this unique, yet intersubjective technology of writing in material terms that reject the elitism and ethnocentrism in the Western tradition of language education. By challenging this metaphysics of correctness and changing how we conceptualize and practice writing, even with people who do abide by these metaphysics, we might better provide students the opportunities to develop facility and skill.

III. Four Errors of Correctness: Objectivity, “Written Speech,” Representation, Identity

First, the borders between error and correctness are much less rigid and rigorous than people think, making the moral dogmatism of correctness more prejudicial than practical. For example, Joseph Williams shows that while readers always notice the violation of some grammatical rules, like “incorrect verb forms, many incorrect pronoun forms, pleonastic subjects, double comparatives and superlatives, [and] most subject-verb

disagreements,” other rules like restriction (which/that), beginning sentences with “and,” “but,” or “because,” and switching “less” and “fewer” are ignored as often as observed (“Phenomenology” 161). Williams even inserts a hundred errors into his essay, showing that error is phenomenological in the reading-of-a-text, rather than objectively in the writing itself. In doing so, he illustrates error is easily forgiven or ignored unless it is blatant (or we are looking for it), which is the orientation we often take with student writing. Correcting grammar is about feeling superior and educated, Williams argues, rather than fidelity to any universal or neutral logic, which is what allows an established scholar like Williams the freedom to be incorrect in a published essay. In sum, certain errors do not really inhibit communication, hypercorrectness is often more damaging than productive, and correctness is a variable rhetorical constraint to which some writers are more tightly held than others. This nuanced perspective will allow students to be more aware of writing as built through rhetorical choices, rather than either right or wrong, and perhaps less vulnerable to the anxiety that comes with such strict binaries.

Second, even though error is phenomenological, errors in writing seem more material than errors in speech. In the late 19th century, Harvard adopted a standardized written entrance exam in place of an oral declamation, which was an important material change in conceptions of error. This shift “placed a new premium on correctness as error was reified in writing in a manner much more conspicuous than error in oral performance,” as Tracy Santa explains in *Dead Letters* (17). These exams were riddled with “slovenly grammar,” marking students as insufficiently prepared for the Harvard experience (Douglas 93). Differences glossed over in speech, like sound changes in an accent—e.g. “warter”—become obstacles to understanding in writing: “error betrays

written language's implicit pact to be transparent in representation" (Santa 129). In response, Harvard instituted "English A" as a composition class focusing on grammatical correctness and prose clarity, forming the contemporary field of composition as a distinct practice out of "a heretofore ancillary byproduct of classical, spoken rhetoric" (Santa 18). In effect, this produced a new practice that was not merely "written speech," troubling the traditional conflation of speech and writing as two instances subject to the same kind of judgement. Because error is phenomenological (not objective), but more "material" in writing than speech (not subjective), effective writing is intersubjective: neither simply individual nor collective, but a material technology shared between specific interlocutors, authors and readers, rhetors and audiences.

Third, the intersubjective nature of writing means that it cannot simply be "clear" or not, simply transparent or obscure like glass, but "what is written should in general be easy to read" for a particular reader, as Aristotle argues, although he sees ease in speech and writing as "the same thing" (*Rhetoric* III.5.6). Facility requires writing to the specific audience, as what is easy for one audience might be far too difficult or condescendingly simplistic for another, which troubles the notion of objectively "clear" language.

Therefore, if writing is easy or difficult to read for particular audiences, then we do not have to consider writing as a purely representative technology. If we consider writing instead as a technology of force, which allows my body to affect other bodies in specific and contextual ways, then it is not a matter of clarity and correctness, but precision and facility. Shifting away from a monologic notion of "good writing," toward a more pluralistic notion of "effective writing" allows us to achieve the same kind of writing goals without relying on the traditional, discriminatory, and problematic metaphysics of

correctness. Rather than the un/clear neutral medium of transmission between interlocutors, writing is the means by which one interlocutor enacts force on another, specific to the case, context, and goal. We do not let people “see” our ideas through our words, but put our words onto others to make them think, act, and feel differently. How we use our words on others depends on who our audience is, but it is also a reflection of who we are as writers.

Fourth, because the specific audience for Aristotle was sufficiently homogenous, error was not simply a mistake, but performed a particular and undesirable identity, an attitude inherited by Western language education ever since. We can see this in the ancient classifications errors in diction being called barbarism (literally “Non-Greek,” ethnic difference) and errors of syntax being called solecism (literally, “from Soloi,” a “backwater” Greek city) (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* III.5, Quintilian *Institutes*, I.5). Inability to use *to hellenizein* or “Good Greek” like an urban Athenian meant one had an insufficiently good soul, a sign of inferiority and degradation (*Rhetoric* III.5: 231). However, barbarism and solecism also appear later in the work of Quintilian, who has a different view regarding error and his own standard, *latinitas* or “Proper Latin.” While these terms are epithets to some degree—in the same way as “redneck” or “illegal” might be—, Quintilian uses the names of these established types of grammatical error even as he works to challenge their derogatory connotations.

Rather than inexorable difference-*qua*-deficiency, Quintilian suggests we “let the offensiveness of barbarisms and solecisms be put away...as these faults are sometimes excused, either from custom, or authority, or perhaps...because it is often difficult to distinguish faults from figures of speech,” a point echoed by Williams centuries later

(Quintilian I.5.5). Quintilian's more inclusive attitude is certainly preferable to Aristotle's elitist ethnocentrism, but it is also assimilationist (e.g. using non-Latin words is barbarous) and insufficient for Modern English, with its mixed lexicon of Germanic and Latinate words and drastically different grammatical structure from Latin.^{lxxiv} Recalling Williams above, solecisms, errors in grammatical connection, are more noticeable than barbarism, "wrong words," so we need to teach them differently. For our contemporary pluralistic American English composition classroom, barbarism and solecism are not errors to be avoided, but a way to grapple with the two-fold challenge of writing well and easily: precise diction in expression and the facility with syntax work together to create facility in reading.

In sum, writing is an intersubjective technology with material effects, a reflection of the students who use it and the audiences for/on whom it is used. Our job as writing instructors is to help students write precisely to allow ease of reading, so that those outside our class might (indistinguishably) read their writing as clear, correct, Standard English. While students *acquire* their speech, a bodily force conditioned by culture and physiology, they *learn* writing, making the material class conditions of their education more influential than who they are body-and-soul. Language difference in writing is a reflection of the tools and materials that they have inherited and the capacities they acquired for use; writing is always a matter of weaponry, rather than body. Writing well, therefore, can mean either inheriting the best weapons and elite training methods, or using meager resources in innovative and effective ways to achieve commensurability with those who have the best resources at hand. Put differently, some students are born

into an elite class that provides them with swords and swordsmanship, while others are born into a common class with farm tools and economic concerns.

IV. Class Materials, the *Idiographolect*, King Sho Shin's Sword Ban

For our contemporary students, the sword they need to wield “correctly” is the Formal Standard English Grapholect.^{lxxv} However, the “standard” is not so singular, so regular, or so thin as the sword, and the majority of students don't come from the sword-class anyway, so treating their language difference as a lack (of swordsmanship) places us right back into the double-bind of error and correctness. Rather than training to use the sword, classical elite education, we would do better to meet students where they are and with what they have. If most students are born into the farm class, understood as anything below upper class, then what we should do is train them to use their native farm tools in a way that would allow them to match the sword. Even if they don't come from a privileged class, students still deserve the material means to succeed and defend themselves with what they already have, especially against those who do come from privilege armed with better weapons.

Because this conception of writing is idiomatic yet intersubjective, each student's specific writing-weapon is their *idiographolect* (“singular writing tongue”). Because of the material practice of “graphing,” the *idiographolect* does not have the same linguistic freedom as a solipsistic idiolect, but it also is not simply a singular and standard grapholect either. Rather than the same opposition of “standard” and “error,” an *idiographolect* must be used in a particular way so that it resembles the “Formal Standard English Grapholect,” a rhetorical construct abstracted from many instances of “good

writing.” That is, even in challenging the status quo, we must be recognizable within it. That is, we need to help students achieve goals without necessarily relying on the discriminatory attitudes that have traditionally dominated writing education. If words are weapons, then looking to actual weapon training is useful for inventing pedagogy.

Rather than Western civilization, from which we inherited the problems of correctness and error in the first place, I propose a non-Western source, one in which weaker overcame stronger with only their own tools and training, the situation in which many students will find themselves, especially those from outside privileged communities. The Okinawan martial art of *kobudo* provides us a story of farmers and fishermen using their tools as weapons to defend against and even defeat bandits armed with swords, the symbol (and evidence) of elitism in early modern Japan. *Kobudo* and the pedagogy I am inventing here have the same goal: precision and facility with an individual-yet-intersubjective tool to be able to match or defeat someone better armed with power and privilege. If farmers armed with sickles and mill-handles can defeat *samurai* armed with the greatest sword technology of all time, they might be able to teach us how to teach students to use their own farm tools in a way that can defeat those armed with the swords of power and privilege.

In 1477, Sho Shin took the throne of the Kingdom of Ryukyu (Okinawa). To consolidate power, he enacted a sword ban and ordered all nobles to leave their respective districts and move to his capital city, Shuri. While this was simply one of many sword bans to come, it also generated two new traditions of fighting without swords.^{lxxvi} While the dis-armed nobles “sought out, learned and developed *te* [hand], the art of unarmed combat,” the commoners developed “weapon systems based on the use of

tools and agricultural implements” like the *bo* (staff), *nunchaku* (flail), or *tonfa* (mill-handle) among others (Philips 3).^{lxxvii} Rather than simply tools or weapons, these material objects functioned as both together, a variability like that of writing: it can produce economically, but it can also harm and defend. The art called *kobudo* (“old warrior way”) has many tool-become-weapons, but one is unique, the *tonfa*, and it is a similarly individual and intersubjective tool like the *idiographolect*. While purported origin of the *tonfa* is a millstone handle, it is most famous today as the police baton, the PR-24 (Yamashita 221).^{lxxviii}

With “a large hardwood body...and a small cylindrical grip secured at a right angle,” the *tonfa* functions as an extension of the fist and arm, unique among weapons, let alone those of *kobudo* (Demura 7).^{lxxix} While other weapons certainly come in different sizes, the *tonfa*, like each *idiographolect*, functions as an extension of the students’ individual body (they are cut to fit the user), even though the handle is common across all *tonfa*, making training common across different students with different weapons (Demura 12).^{lxxx} Figure 3.1 provides one typical example, but the shaft can vary widely, from

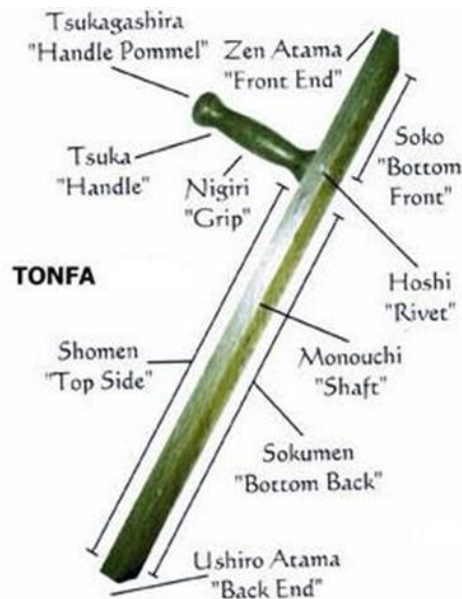


Figure 3.1: *Tonfa* Anatomy

square to round to paddle-shaped (Demura 6). This individualization and close correlation with the body, like that writing shares with speech, provides an example of the kind of bodily-material training we can use for composition.

As Fumio Demura notes in my second epigraph, the practice with the *tonfa* and practice in empty hand *karate* techniques are mutually beneficial; one needs some basic *karate* background to begin to grasp the *tonfa* practice, and in turn the *tonfa* practice strengthens *karate* skills as well. These two practices, *karate* and *kobudo*, illustrate a perhaps more fitting way to conceive of the relationship between speech and writing. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, without some basic competency with English, students are not prepared for the training in the tools of writing that we are to give them. Students need to understand the speech language in order to engage with the writing, but training in writing in turn might provide students better awareness of and care for language, which would improve their speech. Furthermore, the *tonfa* and the fist share the same material and affective relationship as the “voice” and the voice, such that we must understand the former in terms of the latter, even if we acknowledge their important differences.^{lxxxix}

Additionally, *tonfa* training provides us with two major insights into teaching facility and precision with the *idiographolect* students bring to our class. First, rather than a singular “*techne*” with contradictory goals and sensibilities, the “art” of the *tonfa* is two-fold and mutually enabling: *tonfado* and *tonfajitsu*. We might adopt this strategy as well to train students both in the manner of *do*, in safe and accessible ways, and in the manner of *jitsu*, attending to the practical necessities of that training. Second, like many martial arts, *tonfa* training begins with basic technique drills. Specifically, the *tonfa*

requires students to be able to manipulate the *tonfa*, either by switching grips from handle to shaft (or vice-versa), a technique called *kote-gaeshi*, which changes the shape of the *tonfa* and how it might be used. Also, students must learn how to swing the *tonfa* by the handle in a controlled way, a technique called *furi*, loosening and tightening the grip on the handle simultaneously with the movement of the arm, shoulder, and hips. Both controlled movement and structural manipulation are integral parts of writing well within the bounds of acceptable syntactic choices. Both the dual-emphasis in training and the practice of basic drills provide the foundation for a *tonfa*-model of composition in which students learn to wield their *idiographolect* as if it were their own voice, their weapon as if it were their own hand.

While the *tonfa* and other tools “originally served only to propitiate the daily process of work and harvest,” their becoming weapons allowed Okinawan commoners to defend “their natural heritage—peaceful living” (Yamashita 23). From this perspective of the weaker, less-privileged commoner, *kobudo* weapons training “should never be an excuse for any kind of violence, but a powerful means of helping to alleviate that scourge of history” (Bishop 9 qtd. Philips 1). However, *kobudo* is actually a later development of the art that began as purely self-defense: *kobujitsu*. Originally, there was only *kobujitsu*, and training with the tool-become-weapons was a direct and practical necessity, but when the practical training in traditional martial arts was rendered obsolete, the practice gave rise to *do*. While *do* emphasizes the “spirit of the martial way,” training in traditional forms for exercise, self-awareness, or ethical development, *jitsu* is a more practically oriented art of self-defense “in actual life or death struggles” (Yamashita 24). In this, *kobu* is simply a particular example of this difference between *do* and *jitsu* across the

Japanese martial arts (grappling: *judo/jujitsu*, sword: *kendo/kenjitsu* and *iaido/iaijitsu*, etc.). Rhetoric too was once the practical art of argument in the Agora, the court, or the gentlemanly professions of law, medicine, and theology; rhetoric now is more multifarious, theoretically and pedagogically, with some ethically concerned as in composition and communication, with other disciplines like marketing, advertising, political campaigning, or journalism focusing on “practical persuasion.” However, *kobudo* and *kobujitsu* are not mutually exclusive practices, but mutually constitutive emphases in fighting with the same tool-become-weapon, two valences of the same practice.

For the *tonfa*, it means using the tool-become-weapon differently based on the situation. Indeed, *Tonfa* by Fumio Demura and *Advanced Tonfa* by Tadashi Yamashita both include formal practice performed in the traditional *gi* and self-defense applications performed in street clothes.^{lxxxii} The *kobudo* sections feature prearranged sparring sequences against *bo* (staff), other *tonfa*, a *katana*, or unarmed attackers, and the *kobujitsu* sections focus on knife defense, and Yamashita’s final section on “contemporary tonfajitsu” is a wide departure from the earlier *kobudo* sections. It features the twenty-two techniques of the PR-24 police baton, including grappling, submissions, and even techniques for stop-and-frisk. *Kobudo/jitsu* also differ in styles of motion and philosophies of engagement. *Kobudo* sequences emphasize blocking and redirection of an oncoming attack, with counter-attacks to the body and head following almost simultaneously in a flowing, rounded motion, while *kobujitsu* is more linear, preemptive, and attacks the more vulnerable targets of groin, throat, and joints. In sum, *do* is about training the student’s spirit, and *jitsu* is about protecting the student’s own body.

Put differently, *kobudo* is training in the *dojo* (school), while *kobujitsu* is training for the street; *kobudo* is a necessary foundation for effective *kobujitsu*, but *kobudo* alone does not prepare students for real self-defense situations. Likewise, we need to train students to write for both future academic contexts and for the “real world” as well. *Kobudo* trains students in far more than they need in a practical situation, but this excess, and the ease of use and self-awareness that comes with it, means practical application will be more reflexive afterward. However, a purely pragmatic focus does little to prevent students using their skills in aggressive ways; doing well doesn’t mean one will do good. That is, *kobudo* helps students gain facility with the *tonfa* and an ethical use of it to defend peace, while *kobujitsu* helps them be ruthlessly effective with it, breaking arms if need be. Considering the *idiographolect* as the specific writing-weapon each student brings to class, a *tonfa* fit to the user, we need both *kobudo* and *kobujitsu*.

While any martial arts training, or training of any kind, might offer benefits like health, self-awareness, and ethical reflection, without effectiveness in the specific goals that training is supposed to afford, there is little point to it. That is, unless we can train students to be effective in writing outside our class, then all the work we do inside the class is moot. Having this dual *do/jitsu* perspective on the ways an individualized set of material forces can and does work allows us to inhabit the bind of error and correctness differently. Evaluating the efficacy of student writing in a particular situation, and therefore our instruction of them, is impossible: we don’t know who they’ll be writing for, when, where, or why. Training in writing must therefore provide an awareness of the material effects and limitations of writing: how it does work on others, and how it does not work. We need to teach our students how to enact force on (i.e. write for) others in

efficient and effective ways, but also develop their awareness of the histories and expectations that ground the ways in which their writing will be judged. If we're training students to use their *idiographolect*, then we need both *do* and *jitsu*, both developing students' self-awareness of their writing and their ability to use writing effectively.

However, both *do* and *jitsu* require a solid awareness of what a particular tool-become-weapon, weapon, or *idiographolect* can do. For example, a *tonfa* is made of wood, but only hardwood, oak or cherry, provides both the strength and flexibility needed for an effective *tonfa*. Likewise, we can't just say that writing contains words, but the specific (kinds of) words matter. Words themselves have more or less strength, more or less flexibility. We need to familiarize the students with the material and affective differences among the words we have inherited from our history, using etymology to illustrate the effect of and need for precise expression. Words have different affordances; they are a product of the history of the language and the people that have used it. In short, there are no synonyms, and there never have been, but rather a multitude of different graphic parts of the tool-become-weapon of writing.

V. Basic Moves: Tactical Barbarism, English's Lexical Multiplicity

Knowing how a tool-become-weapon can affect others is the first step in becoming reflective and critically self-aware in its use. Striking with a blunt stick only concusses an attacker, while a bladed weapon can penetrate armor and skin, making a blade more dangerous, requiring more attention in use and training. Traditionally, the expense of the sword meant it was only used (or usable) by those who had the wealth to afford it and the leisure to practice; the *katana* itself was considered the soul of the

samurai. However, a blade is more brittle, its cutting edge can be dulled, and its production is expensive and training is dangerous. The blunt stick is better for those without material resources, and it can certainly match a sword if used skillfully like the *kobudoka* does. Like sword and *tonfa*, English has both bladed and blunt weapons with different material affects understood through metaphoric of cost.

That is, we have “expensive” and “cheap” words inherited from English’s history, specifically the defeat of the Germanic Anglo-Saxons by the French Normans at Hastings in 1066. In the subsequent Norman England, French was the language of the noble landowners, literature and poetry, as Latin remained the language of the scholars and the church, and “English” was the language of the laborers and their bawdy popular culture. The effect of this Latinate dominance is reflected by the more Latinized Modern English—The Chancery Standard—adopted by William Caxton for his printing press centuries later (MacArthur). Hastings is a metonym for the affective mechanics in diction in the manifold English we teach students today. The class structure of nobles and peasants is reflected in the difference between “expensive” and “cheap” words, derived from their Latinate and Germanic origins, respectively, and this material economics still affect the way we engage with and teach students to use words. We can use this history of the language to help students gain the kind of attentiveness to the material mechanics of diction as the *kobudoka* has with their tool-become-weapons.

As an exercise, I ask my students to imagine a party held in their honor in as full and vibrant detail as they can muster. Closing their eyes, I ask them first to see a “cordial reception,” and then do the same with a “hearty welcome.”^{lxxxiii} The two phrases have a similar content, but communicate a class difference because “cordial reception” is

Latinate, while “hearty welcome” is Germanic. While these phrases even have very similar etymologies—*cordis* is “heart” in Latin and “-ial” is a adjectivizing suffix like “-y”—the use of Latinate words are more expensive, more fancy, than Germanic ones, even if we do not recognize them as “borrowings.” The two phrases might be called synonymous, but they do not mean the same thing in the same way. Inevitably, my students describe the first party as “fancy,” with guests in dresses and tuxedos tastefully sipping cocktails and politely nibbling off cheese plates, while the second is usually more “folksy,” with beers and barbecue, laughingly eaten by guests clad in flannel and blue jeans. We can see this in many other instances: butchers cut, but surgeons make incisions; we eat pork, not pig, beef, not cow, and if you eat no flesh, then you’re a vegetarian. The barbarous words are those closest to the common people, tending and slaughtering the animals, while the proper words are those reserved for and indicative of higher class, eating food with proper manners and several forks. Barbarism is built into English, rather than imposed upon it.

Like the blade, Latinate words require practice and awareness to use well and precisely, giving a sense of weight to gravity and a lightness to levity, for example. The distance from the “common” Germanic words makes them function more specifically; a blade only cuts because it enacts force on a smaller surface area than a stick. If the Latin words are bladed, then Germanic words are blunter. Because of their commonness, Germanic words seem to lack the precision (cutting) and specificity (kind) of their Latin cognates, but their wide accessibility (reach) and acceptability (takenness) means their skilled use would be more effective than a poorly wielded Latinate parlance for many audiences outside academia. One of the challenges for students learning academic

discourse is overuse of these “expensive” words at the expense of communicability and effective persuasion. While we all have access to a variety of different lexical choices, training students in their own *idiographolect* means helping them use the words they already know better, rather than filling their arsenal with lots of shiny, sharp words that are too expensive to use often and too dangerous to use effectively.

Therefore, we must teach our students to recognize and reflect on their barbarism, their Germanic common words, and be more attentive to their use, even as we prepare them to acquire and hone Latinate words in future language education.^{lxxxiv} From this, we might invent more etymological nomology exercises: what makes “anger,” “madness,” and “rage” different? How are “illegal aliens” different from “undocumented workers,” even if they are the same people? What’s the difference between “cardiomyopathy” and a “bad heart”? By helping students engage with their language use, production, and engagement in a more material way, not “putting thoughts on paper,” but wielding an arsenal, a complex field of forces that has been moving for millennia, we could help ameliorate these barbarisms in addition to further developing students’ facility with the language itself.

While a tactical barbarism allows for deep awareness of diction as a choice of weapons with different material affordances, grappling with solecism requires attending to the brute facticity of English as an intersubjective material technology, with limitations on variation in the ways the language fits together. While the joint may be the unique strength of the *tonfa*, it is also a source of weakness in the weapon just like the joint between lexical elements in writing are both the strength and weakness of the *idiographolect*.^{lxxxv} Diction is certainly limited by etymology, history, culture, and special

cases of jargon, using the “wrong word” is much easier to ignore or fix than improper subject-verb agreement. While students might have more freedom in choosing their weapons, the specific weapon of English grammar has material limits on how it can be used, like the jointed handle that is common to all the different instantiations of the *tonfa*.

VI. *Kote-Gaeshi*: Moving Joints and Manipulating Material

In *tonfa* training, students begin by identifying the different parts of and grips on the *tonfa* (Figure 3.1). Even though the *tonfa* has a handle, a front and back end, the entire weapon is a potential striking surface.^{lxxxvi} That is, there are many different ways to grasp and strike with the *tonfa*, even though the material itself is fixed, and “flipping” from one grip to another, the *kote-gaeshi*, is an important practical technique rather than simply a stylistic flourish (Yamashita 226-231). That is, *tonfa* training begins with the various grips on the *tonfa*, practice transitioning from one grip to another, and developing the controlled motion of the weapon. In emulating this approach, we can help students develop a facility of prose by introducing them to and having them practice a series of basic grammatical arrangements, moving around the joints of English grammar. That is, we aim to develop students’ facility with language, the ability to let the words move easily and to manipulate the non-arbitrary grammatical connections of the language as case, context, and convention demand.

While the parts of speech like the noun, verb, and modifiers are helpful in gaining a sense of the mechanics of English, these are merely the constitutive parts of any given clause, and identifying them is no more useful for our students than their being able to identify the handle, heads, and shaft of the *tonfa*. In writing, they are not really “parts” of

“speech” anyway. Although students should be able to recognize the things, actions, and modifications, words alone are not the base of language use, but rather they do work through their connection into clauses. Taking the foundational connection of verb and noun, independent and dependent clauses are more useful as a base than “complete sentences,” which are more formal than functional.

Furthermore, because the simple sentence is simply a single independent clause, we have this basic formal requirement of “complete sentence” already considered, and clausal independence is itself a relational condition rather than an absolute one. Additionally, with the four kinds of clausal arrangements that constitute any given “complete sentence”—simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex—, we provide students a small set of rules for the arrangement of clauses together. We can have students flip between these basic grips on the sentence. Certainly, explicitly teaching the rules of conjunction is necessary in learning how to use them, but it is not sufficient. Instead, we must teach through repeated practice, like the famous *copia* exercises of Erasmus or “drill-and-kill” grammar exercises we have abandoned.

For example, many teachers use daily, in-class writing assignments, and these are a perfect opportunity to practice such grips and flips at the beginning of a course. We might begin with a simple sentence, one independent clause like “Johnny kicks the ball,” pointing out the role each element plays, and ask students to join it with another independent clause, like “he has fun,” several times, using each of the coordinating conjunctions. After students have this set, we can have them reflect on the different situations and logical relationships between actions at work, why some compound sentences seem regular, “Johnny kicks the ball, and he has fun,” while others are strange,

“Johnny kicks the ball, but he has fun.” Others, like “Johnny kicks the ball, nor he has fun,” do not work at all. Next, we have students “flip” the clauses, one for each set, and again analyze the different relationships in each and the seeming sense of some, and the strangeness of others: “Johnny has fun, for he kicks the ball” and “Johnny has fun, nor he kicks the ball.” We could then repeat this with different clauses, different arrangements, and this exercise could be continued in groups or individually, allowing students to gain facility with manipulating language around the structural joints of the language itself.

By forcing solecism, we give students an experiential basis in “errors” as specific choices with communicative and persuasive consequences, rather than etiquette rules with the penalty of exclusion. Rather than simply identifying “correct” sentences, this kind of solecistic manipulation gives students an experiential sense of the material limitations of English prose, as well as freedoms that might otherwise be prohibited by emphasizing “correctness.” It’s not a case of “bad grammar,” but ineffective arrangement. Imposition of dogmatic rules that are not reflected in many instances of professional writing could do more to alienate students, and hinder the development their skills. We might then further ask them to add on qualifiers, so that the nonsense might make sense.

We could also include other grammar practice, like subordinating conjunctions in complex and compound-complex sentences, additional modifiers, as well as training with verbs, active/passive voice, tense, or even mood or aspect. Rather than a “drill-and-kill” activity, this “grip-and-flip” exercise can function as a “warm up” of sorts, but should not dominate an entire class, nor persist once students have gained facility and awareness of the limits and use of connection. Gripping and flipping does not a *tonfaka* make, and

mere grammar practice is insufficient for developing effective prose. Once students have an awareness of the material effects of words and the non-arbitrary ways they can be joined in various specific arrangements, we must put such awareness to use in practice with their own *idiographolect*.

VII. Basic Techniques: A *Furi* of Tropes

While *tonfa* practice begins with grips and flips, students next learn strikes and blocks through the same kind of repetitive practice, and so too, once students have a solid handle on the handles of their tool-become-weapon, they should begin using it. Basic strikes and blocks for writing are concussive and effective; when we teach students to attend to and practice the words on the page, we remain firmly within the realm of closed fist, sophistic, language-level concerns. Indeed, writing perhaps lacks the ability to truly operate in the style of the open hand. While it is certainly possible for writing to be gentle and irenic in orientation, in effect the words come to the reader as expressions upon them, either from the author or the text, and an inability to respond, to answer back, makes the grappling with writing itself —aside from grappling with ideas— much more difficult than we commonly assume. For present purposes, the basic strikes and blocks of writing are trope and figure; that is, the work of rhetoric is, in my view, giving students awareness of and practice in the work of words, not merely their meaning or communicating some content.

One should hold the *tonfa* “loosely, yet firm” to both deal with any incoming or outgoing concussive force, but also allow for the characteristic “swinging” of *tonfa* striking techniques, *furi*, opening and closing it with a controlled, quick, and concussive

motion (Demura 15). The slippage of any writing and the ways we contain it means we have to be attentive to the words, clauses, and phrases as they move. Indeed, in the *furi* the *tonfa* itself turns or tropes in the hand, and the skill comes in making the trope controlled and precise. These tropic basics are both attack and defense, as statements and rebuttals, and the trick comes in fitting each to each. From classical antiquity, we have a preponderance of possible tropes and figures, but the limits of time and space in a single semester (or a single chapter) make such comprehension unworkable. However, we might select a manageable amount for the kind of repeated practice we are after here, ones applicable to many situations. I suggest four “master tropes” as basic moves here: Metaphor, Allegory, Irony, and *Parrhēsia*.

Metaphor is a movement of “Carrying Across,” traditionally understood as carrying one thing from a “proper” domain to a “figurative” one. As a move, it includes weaker versions in the simile, and specific relational versions like synecdoche and metonymy. This is the Basic Strike of language; any expression is a naming, and what kind of name we grant something, what we say it “is” is making an argument about how we should feel about it, respond to it, and account for it. In concert with having students examine etymology and develop facility with grammatical connections, metaphors provide a basis for the ways language dictates and directs social action, as Lakoff and Johnson argue. That is, certain names have certain valences with certain people, and how we talk about something changes what it is, an extension of the “no synonyms,” nomological argument I made above. By examining the metaphors used by other writers, students can get a better sense of the values and commonplaces at stake in others’

arguments, not just generating their own. Metaphor is not simply a device used in language, but the very mechanism of language itself.^{lxxxvii}

Allegory is a move to “Assemble Differently.” As a basic term for “story,” this move includes the tropes of anecdote, symbolism, parable, motif, theme, and narrative causality. This is redirecting attention, telling a story about something to make a point about something else. Unlike arguments, judged on rules of logic and evidence, stories are judged on “narrative probability” like internal consistency, and “narrative fidelity,” how closely it matches life experience (Spigelman, “Argument and Evidence” 80-1). Since we cannot ever engage with reality beyond the limited metaphors of our sense apparatuses nor with our own lives other than back-story for the present, both of these “figurative” devices of metaphor and allegory are integral to life experience in the world, not just the art of writing. Beyond the radically singular experience of each irreplaceable moment, we use names and stories to make sense of things.

Using Irony, or to “Speak False,” is specifically “meaning opposite” of “literal” intent. As a move, this falsity includes dissimulation, satire, exaggeration, litotes, understatement, and euphemism. This is not always “misnaming” or “lying,” but a feint, a way of taking an opponent off balance. Feigning ignorance is an integral part of irony, and this requires the writer to be actually more knowledgeable than they appear. Irony therefore requires more of the reader, and needs to be matched to the audience at hand, like any other element of rhetoric. For example, most instructors I know who’ve taught Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal” spend more time disabusing students of the sincerity of his advocacy for cannibalism and baby-skin gloves than they expect. By anticipating the literal expectations of language and refusing them, students can gain

advantage in their own writing, and later in argumentation. Additionally, this makes students much more conscious of “truth.” Although, irony presumes that we can actually account for the truth of a given case in language fully and totally; if we cannot, then all language is ironic as it is metaphorical and allegorical.

The last move is “truth” in its most pure and dangerous sense, *Parrhēsia* or to “Speak All.” While we commonly teach children to excuse “white lies” to maintain social relationships, *parrhēsia* is a truth told from one’s perspective regardless of its effect to the relationship between interlocutors (Foucault, *Discourse and Truth*). While a commonsense orientation might very well be honesty, *parrhēsia* pushes beyond the normative bounds, making truth hurt. Telling the truth, the whole truth, could be immensely damaging to the interlocutor, as well as to the rhetor themselves. In this way, the technique of *parrhēsia* and the “commonsense truth” have a similar relationship as the tonfa thrust, *zuki*, does with the punch. While they might feel the same for the user in terms of bodily mechanics, the force of a punch is more penetrating and destructive when striking with the *zuki*’s smaller surface area (the front head or *zen atama*). Truth is the most violent and dangerous weapon of all, *parrhēsia* a “death blow” of sorts, and in writing texts in which the opinions of the readers matter greatly in whether the text is effective, and when persuading the readers of the text’s efficacy is the point of the document, such as a dissertation, *parrhēsia* can be imprudent at best, extremely damaging at worst.

Taken together, these four moves, however iterated and combined, provide a sequence of engagement: strike/block, redirection, feint/unbalance, and final blow. By having students learn and practice these tropes, in the same way they grip and flip

independent clauses above, they will be better able to use them unbidden, writing as a reaction, unconscious even, rather than a laborious and intensive effort. This is facility of prose; being able to write effectively as reflex: a laudable, yet difficult goal, one that is the goal of all writing instruction.

IIX. Beyond Basics

As a series of discrete moves, basic training drills are not the totality of martial arts pedagogy, but only the first step. Like the nobles who practiced with empty hand (*kara-te*), masters of *kobudo* weaponry developed their technique through routines of stances, strikes, and footwork (*kata*). Such routines were often draped in costume and accompanied by music, allowing for the prying eyes of any Sho Dynasty official to be bemused by local peasant custom, rather than made fearful by a possible commoner uprising.

Likewise, we need some form through which students gain not only facility of prose, but also of putting parts of the prose together, making paragraphs and essays out of clauses and words. *Kata* is the next level (up), and once students have internalized the basic positions, transitions, and techniques of their *idiographolect*, their tool-become-weapon of writing, students will then continue repetitive recursive practice within the formal writing assignment. However, such an assignment should not be a mock-disciplinary form, but a specifically pedagogical pattern practice aimed at further developing students' abilities, but also, and more importantly, their disposition toward the art and practice of writing. For this, we look beyond the basics to the "form" of martial arts, *kata*.

^{lxxiii} Unfortunately, there is a base level of competency in English that is required for entrance into the FYC classroom. The scholarly and pedagogical focus on both “basic writing” and English language learners illustrate this point. However, these two groups are not equivalent. In the case of ELL students, the basic competency has to do with acquiring a facility in the English language itself, having come from a different language background. International and immigrant students must, at some institutions, gain this facility before they attend courses with the general student body. BW students, as illustrated by the groundbreaking work of Mina Shaughnessy, are generally those from traditionally marginalized backgrounds, and with the Open Admissions in CUNY, Shaughnessy saw many students whose own writing education did not prepare them for the work that would be required of them in college. While both groups might be included in the following pedagogical strategies, the difficulties in getting both BW and ELL students to “basic competency” are a whole other scholarly issue in itself.

^{lxxiv} One of the starkest examples is the practice of inflection, or modifications to a word’s shape that indicate a grammatical shift. Latin is heavily inflected, with verb conjugations well beyond English, noun and pronoun declensions (including cases we don’t have distinctive forms for, and other elements we don’t have at all, like grammatical gender), and even adjectives and adverbs have declensions as well. In English, we have eight inflections: possessive (cat’s) and plural (cats) for nouns, the past tense (-ed), progressive aspect (-ing), and past participle (-en) for verbs, and the comparative (-er) and superlative (-est) for adjectives. Because of this paucity of morphological changes, word order and the agreement between subjects, verbs, objects, etc. matter much more in avoiding solecism in English.

^{lxxv} In his acerbic critique of *STROL*, Jeff Zorn points out that “there is a single, non-mythical Formal Standard, a *level*, not a *dialect* of the English language as no ‘identifiable group’ uses it except, by circular definition, the literate.” (318) This Formal Standard English “grapholect” (FSEG) has no competitors, and therefore has “inherent superiority” over all “non-standard language,” because “street talk never suffices for intellectual complexity and careful policy argumentation.” (319). However, in creating a hierarchy with Formal Standard above lowly “street talk,” Zorn reifies Standard English and puts writing back into the form of “written speech,” both of which limit and trouble his solutions to the limitations of *STROL*.^{lxxv} While extremely problematic, Zorn’s critique shows that the FSEG is not simply the linguistic privileging of a particular identity (although it is this too), but a field of material forces with certain freedoms and certain limitations, which students must be able to measure and manipulate to be successful. Conversely, pointing out that the FSEG is not objective but the result of sedimented inequalities does not help our students use that FSEG to navigate these inequalities. While the tool of written English that is recognizable and acceptable to educated professionals requires me to give up rights to my own palaver, the tool itself is not neutral or regular. That is, the FSEG does not simply exist, but is the result of grouping sufficiently similar, but very different discourses into one single homogenous group, an accusation Zorn himself actually levels at the *STROL* as doing with AAE.

^{lxxvi} In 1609, the Satsuma clan conquered Ryukyu for opposing the Japanese Shogunate and imposed another weapons ban, and yet another was imposed in 1879 following the Meiji Restoration and the dissolution of the traditional class system entirely.

^{lxxvii} Some *kobudo* weapons have histories as weapons in mainland Asia, e.g. China and the Philippines, illustrating some influence of nobility on Okinawan martial arts, even if it was not Japanese. For example, the trident (*sai*), the knuckleduster (*tekko*), and the machete and shield (*tinbe-rochin*) are all part of the *kobudo* arsenal, but they are not as widely practiced as the tool-become-weapons. They have corollaries, or relatives, in martial arts spreading back to India, and deep into unknown antiquity. Perhaps these tool-become-weapons were even tool-become-weapons before they even reached Okinawa, possibly the case with the most famous weapon of *kobudo*, the *nunchaku*. In the traditional narrative, the *nunchaku* is said to have been a rice flail or a horse-bit, but this is troubled by the preexisting tools-become-weapons in other Asian cultures practiced well before the development of *kobudo* in Okinawa, like the Indonesian *tabak-toyok*. The *nunchaku* is extremely difficult to date and situate in the history and development of *kobudo*, even if it is the most prominent element of the art. First, there are no surviving *nunchaku* kata. While this does not mean that there were never *nunchaku* kata, it does mean that the *nunchaku* was not as codified in its technique as others. Some argue that the weapon was simply not popular and this may be due to the difficulty in using the weapon, if not an additional problem. The flexible middle means that the striking end of a *nunchaku* often swings back on the user, and the speed with which the weapon can be spun makes it ever more dangerous. I have several dents in my skull from my own training, and many schools only use the *nunchaku* to improve dexterity. Second, the *nunchaku* has the most contested origin of any practiced in *kobudo*, as even the name's meaning is unknown. Third, the "chucks" have become so pervasive, so popular and closely associated with martial arts in contemporary culture, that they have already become a flashy, tool-become-weapon-become-prop.

^{lxxviii} It is ironic that a weapon that serves as a symbol of commoners fighting oppression has become the tool by which the power of the state is met out on the bodies of the people. However, that such a basic, common farm tool can become the truncheon of (in)justice illustrates the flexibility a specific fixed piece of material might have. English is a similar multiple object; similarly the tool of the oppressed and the truncheon of the oppressor. We need to teach students how to use it and deal with it in both ways, both with and against sedimented inequalities.

^{lxxix} Unlike the other *kobudo* tool-become-weapons, like the rice sickle (*kama*) or the *nunchaku*, the *tonfa* was not used directly on the body of the crop, which makes the process of its weaponization less obvious than its fellow tool-become-weapons. We might imagine a rice farmer attacked by several bandits, forced to defend himself with what is on hand. If I were the farmer, I would consider (quickly) two factors in deciding which object to use, its violent material potential and its violent proper use. The *kama* might be an obvious choice because of its sharp blade and the practiced threshing, cutting the crop from the ground, could be modified easily for human stalks, rather than just millet. The *nunchaku* (reportedly) was also a means of violence directed at the crop,

beating the wheat from the chaff, and so beating an assailant is also not that much of a stretch. In both of these cases, certain material aspects of the tool itself as well as the specific tasks for which it was “properly” used more “naturally” lend themselves to weaponization. However, the tonfa-as-tool lacks both the material aspects and violent proper use that tend to weaponization. Rather than being a discrete object, the tonfa or “*toifa* was originally a wooden handle fitted into a hole on the side of a millstone used by the Okinawan for milling grain” (Demura 7). Unlike the *kama* or *nunchaku*, the tonfa is not a thing in itself, but handle, a means of interaction with the proto-industrial assemblage of the grain mill. The *tonfa* would be inserted into the millstone, grain would be drizzled on top, and using the handle to rotate the stone, grinding the flour out into a catch surrounding the stone. These three tool-become-weapons taken together provide a rough trajectory of the agricultural process.

However, by examining this process through the objects used, we can see that this process becomes “less violent” as it progresses. The *kama* is the “most violent” of these three objects since any blade is designed to thresh the stalks of rice, millet, and barley. Next, in both process and violence, the *nunchaku* would be the next object used on the grain, to beat out the chaff, and it too requires violent proper use, a repeated beating of the crop. The *tonfa* is the “least violent” tool-become-weapon of the three, since it has no sharp edges and its’ proper use was rather static. Even though it helps to grind grain, crushing it into power, a violent act as well, the weight of the stone and the monotony of the grinding motion make the weaponization of this handle quite curious.

^{lxxx} Demura features six variations alongside the “traditional” tonfa with square, semi-circular, or cylindrical shafts, and there’s even one with sharpened ends and another with a wide and thin shaft, a “paddle” tonfa, which troubles the traditional narrative of tonfa as weaponized mill-handle (Demura 13).

^{lxxxii} We might also consider the continuing material corollaries between the weapon and the hand that wields it. Like the *tonfa* extend the reach of the hand for strikes and the strength of the arm for blocks, so too does writing work to magnify the voice, taking it farther than airwaves might carry and brute fixedness of writing makes it difficult to press through in and onto the author. But, with the extension, the inability for the author to respond, the inability to feel the pain or impact of the *tonfa* is a form of affective weakness, and allows for interlocutors to disarm by simply disregarding the weapon altogether.

^{lxxxiii} Both Fumio Demura (shito-ryu karate, aikido, judo) and Tadashi Yamashita (shorin-ryu karate) are former All-Japan karate champions in their respective styles, and world authorities on the Japanese and Okinawan martial arts. Demura, who was trained by Kenshin Taira and Kenwa Mabuni (influential *karate sensei*) and was both the inspiration and stuntman for Pat Morita’s Mr. Miyagi in *The Karate Kid*, is especially important for introducing the weapons of *kobudo* to the West as a closely related art to the far more popular *karate*. Yamashita, who started training as a child after trying to fight a school principal, who was also a *karate sensei*, gained his fifth-degree black belt under Chosin Chibana, who learned from the students of “Tode” Sakugawa, one of the most important

figures in developing Japanese martial arts. Demura’s manual focuses more on the basics technique with the *tonfa* as a corollary and supplement to karate training, and Yamashita’s focuses more heavily on “advanced” and street defense techniques, although he does include the traditional *kata*, *hama higa no tonfa*.

^{lxxxiii} While I have used this discussion about the multilingual history of English, in her TED talk, “Did English Evolve?” Kate Gardoqui uses this example to illustrate the way language changes over time. I’ve been using it ever since.

^{lxxxiv} This awareness is also how we might grapple with barbarism as an “error,” word choices that inhibit communication and persuasion, like malapropisms. While “rarely does discussion dwell on why writers make errors, just that they do and that they need to be fixed,” engaging with the logic behind their use is part of the same attentiveness we gain by having students grapple with etymology and history of the English language (Crovitz 33). Furthermore, developments in writing technology and the changing relationship students have with language produce other barbarisms worth considering: the Autocorrect, “spellcheck-sanctioned error” which is the result of unreflective use of the tools of a word processor, and the “Readerly” barbarism of mispronouncing words only seen in print. While writing and speech have been separated in scholarship and teaching, their conflation in mundane discourse has only been intensified by the proliferation of digital technology, something our theory and pedagogy is still struggling to account for.

^{lxxxv} Both Aristotle and Quintilian identify solecism as errors of connection. That is, in Greek or Latin, there are ways that words fit together and ways that they do not. However, such connections are very important in more inflected languages like Greek and Latin, in which word order matters little as long as the subject and object are declined correctly and the verb has the fitting conjugation. In this way, Latin and Greek have more moving parts to be connected. However, because English has two verb tenses, very few inflections, and other elements of Greek and Latin, like grammatical gender, the connections are fewer, but even more important with things like word order, voice, and prenominal proximity. In English, word order is generally fixed (Subject-Verb-Object) or non-normative order is marked by punctuation or prepositions, making the single-jointed *tonfa* an apt comparison, especially recalling the bladed/blunt heuristic above. We’re not training students in specialized, Latinized discourse, but rather in FYC we’re preparing them to engage with the common words in a skillful way. It’s not a matter of making proper connections, but using the preexisting connections expected in the expected and needful way.

^{lxxxvi} In addition to “swinging” the *tonfa* in open/closed position, one can also grip it by the front or back head. Gripping the front head with the handle outward makes the *tonfa* into a functionally different weapon, a stick like that in other martial arts, like Filipino *escrima*, but also its modern descendant, the PR24 police baton. Gripping on the back head makes the handle into a hook, allowing for more control in redirecting attacks or even restraining the attacker. In addition, not all these swinging strikes hit with the sides of the *tonfa*, but work as extended “punches” or striking with the head itself.

^{lxxxvii} In this, I draw from Nietzsche's argument in "Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral" sense, in which he makes the claim that all language is metaphor, derived from sensory input modulated through a constellation of concepts, but ones we have forgotten are metaphors.

Chapter 4

Kata of Rhetoric: Student Disposition, Modal Writing, and Affective Development

The teaching of research writing has remained tied to a contrived and templated way of writing, and to the self-imposed charge of safeguarding the university's store of knowledge—from those who do not know, and may never know, the words and thoughts that will grant them admittance to the society of knowers.
Robert Davis and Mark Shadle, "Building a Mystery" 425

The form consists of various self-defense movements arranged in sequence and done throughout at the same rate of speed. The movements are often stylized and sometimes only faintly resemble the original fighting techniques. The form is done slowly, and the position and the movement of every part of the body receive careful attention.
Herman Kauz, "The Aim of Individual Form Practice" 82

I. Explication

In this chapter, I outline a recent scholarly development in composition pedagogy in a shift toward focusing on the students' dispositions toward writing, rather than the accumulation of specific written forms or mastery of writing skills. This dispositional shift accompanies a rejection of formalism and inauthenticity, the same rejection that motivated abandoning the formalist "current-traditional" pedagogy of the late 19th century. While the shift toward disposition is an important advancement in response to the rhetorical nature and transfer problems of writing education, the emphasis on "authenticity" is insufficiently rhetorically attentive of the composition class itself as an explicitly educational context. That is, because we cannot adequately perform either the material consequences, formal expectations, or affective motivations for "authentic"

writing in the composition classroom, aiming for authenticity will never be authentic enough to effect the dispositional change we are after.

However, this dispositional change can be afforded by formulaic writing, and historically has been done so through exercises like *progymnasmata*, so I suggest an alternative “formalism” embodied in *kata* from Japanese martial arts. *Kata* is useful because it is an explicitly “non-authentic” educational exercise that fosters dispositional development through rigorous routines of techniques. Additionally, *kata* is not limited by Western logocentrism, affording a more affective orientation to disposition, and one free from the baggage of “current-traditional” rhetoric. In continuing to explore Japanese martial arts pedagogy, *kata* both builds on and is a form of practicing *kihon*, basics, but adds extension and complexity, requiring students not only to be skilled in discrete moves, but to be able to use them (when needed) in sequence. From *kata* students continue to hone their skills by practicing with a partner in sparring, *kumite*, as I will discuss in the following chapter.^{lxxxviii}

II. The Dispositional (Re)Turn and Students Themselves

“At its essence,” the 2011 *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* suggests writing assignments work best from “genuine purposes and audiences” because “standardized writing curricula or assessment instruments that emphasize formulaic writing for nonauthentic audiences will not reinforce the habits of mind and the experiences necessary for success as students encounter the writing demands of postsecondary education” (3). Rather than discrete formal requirements, *the Framework* emphasizes the development of students themselves in terms of *Habits of Mind*, which

are “ways of approaching learning that are both intellectual and practical and that will support students’ success in a variety of fields and disciplines” (4). These are capacities of a particular person, rather than a collection of mere “writing skills.” Curiosity and Openness foster critical inquiry of the world and the self, and Engagement and Persistence concern the development and sustaining of interest in writing projects. Creativity and Flexibility work against a monologic notion of writing tasks, audiences, and goals, and Responsibility and Metacognition require students to consider their own actions and ideas from others’ points of view (3). This emphasis on *Habits of Mind*, working on the capacities of students themselves, is an increasing emphasis in composition pedagogy and scholarship, of which the *Framework* is only one example.

Rather than *Habits*, Dana Lynn Driscoll and Jennifer Wells identify these “qualities that determine how learners use and adapt their knowledge” as *dispositions*. Whether it’s a matter of personal preference (“I’m not a writer”), ineffective or alienating previous writing instruction (“I’ve never been good at English”), or some combination, some students come to composition from a wide range of previous writing experiences with preexisting affective investments to writing, many of them negative. A productive pedagogy, Driscoll and Wells argue, would promote productive dispositions, Value (personal investment by students), Self-Efficacy (students believe in their own abilities), Attribution (students believe their efforts determine their success), and Self-Regulation (students set reasonable goals and hold themselves to them), and also combat the opposite, disruptive dispositions of students seeing writing as a mere school exercise, the result of talent, beyond their abilities, and ultimately out of their control (Driscoll and Wells 1).

Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz echo this reflexive nature of dispositions through students' seeing themselves as novices, "adopting an open attitude to instruction and feedback, a willingness to experiment, whether in course selection or paper topics, and a faith that, with practice and guidance, the new expectations of college can be met" (134). If students think they are experts, then they do not have the openness for growth. If students think of themselves as novices, then they understand that their capacities for success require time and effort to develop. Students must think of themselves as works-in-progress, illustrating that disposition must be reflective and dynamic, not merely a matter of essence (Sommers and Saltz 134). Whether described as eight habits, four dispositions, or one dynamic and reflexive self-concept, this dispositional turn means our job as writing teachers is cultivating the students' orientation to their writing, rather than simply focusing on their skills in writing. In turning toward the dispositions of the students themselves, we are also returning to the roots of Western education.

In her work on the first Western professional educators, Debra Hawhee identifies the Sophists' goal of rhetorical education as "*physiopoiesis*" or the "making of a student's nature," the development of particular habits and dispositions (93). It is not that students are empty vessels, lacking a "nature," but rather the instructor helps them develop a "second nature" through repetitive exercises, cultivating, heightening, and discouraging preexisting dispositions. Like the *Framework*, sophistic rhetorical training aims "not [at] a finished product, but a dispositional capacity for iteration," a power to do, not merely having done (Hawhee 151). These exercises allow students to gain the proper nature they need, internalizing a set of moves and modes for the various rhetorical contexts and purposes they will encounter. These repetitive exercises became the *progymnasmata* that

dominated rhetorical education from Isocrates throughout antiquity (Fleming). While it might be tempting to return to *Fable, Invective, Thesis*, etc. these exercises were part of curriculum spanning a student's entire life and are therefore not feasible for a single semester or school year.^{lxxxix} However, the idea of formal repetitive exercises in writing education is itself a persistent form.

More recently, the formal exercises appear in the 19th-century, as the current-traditional "modes of discourse," four types with four specific purposes: Narration of events, Description of imagery, Exposition for the presentation of facts, and Argumentation for the proving of claims (Connors "The Rise and Fall"). Drawn from the classical curriculum, these modes were dominant during the "current-traditional period, but fell from popularity, as thesis-driven expository writing became the dominant form, the "traditional research paper," which inherited the "objective, scientific model [that] dominated nineteenth-century Germany, as scholars published their empirical research," and literary scholars adopted this form to seem more legitimate (Spiegelman 66).

However, in composition this reductive assignment limits research as "going to the library" and "finding evidence," which inhibits students learning multiple research methods or research-as-inquiry, as Richard Larson argues (812). This rejection of reductive formalism led us to move toward alternative assignments, like a "researched argumentative essay," multimodal assignments, personal writing, and others (Davis and Shadle). Each of these alternatives rejects the formulaic tendencies in expository writing, as the disinterested stance promotes the presentation of preexisting facts in a formulaic fashion, doing little to cultivate students' rhetorical flexibility or engagement with the work of writing.

Ironically, the drive to be seen as producing ‘authentic knowledge’ is what led literary scholars to adopt exposition in the first place, modeling their own scholarship on that of empirical science. Once one mode is elevated as the only legitimate means of writing scholarship, producing and presenting knowledge, formalism becomes the best way of training students. Rather than mastering specific “skills” or dictating particular assignments, the *Framework* accounts for this risk of formalism by outlining *Experiences* in “rhetorical knowledge,” “critical thinking,” “writing processes,” “knowledge of conventions,” and digital composition through which students cultivate their *Habits*. By emphasizing experiences students might undergo, rather than specific tasks to be accomplished, is an explicit rejection of formalism embodied in the “traditional research paper.”

The *Framework* is therefore a call to invention, rather than a prescription. The goal is dispositional development, not merely of the students-as-students, but as learning subjects who exist beyond the classroom. That is, *Habits* are “cultivated both inside and outside school,” which allows the *Framework* to reframe the goals of writing instruction against the pervasive divide between “school” and “real life” espoused by many students (*Framework* 4). Therefore, part of our job as instructors is creating assignments that help students develop themselves. Recalling that “authenticity” is central to the *Framework*’s prescriptions, we might then have assignments in which students practice rhetorical skills to make “real change in the world.” However, the emphasis on “authenticity” troubles such “authentic” assignments.

III. Interrogating Authenticity: Reality and Disciplinarity

For example, we might give students practice in using their rhetorical skills to make real, material change in the world, having them write their essays about local, campus, or municipal issues, from something as persistent as parking availability to something weightier like sexual assault, to someone who can enact material change. However, if a student writes to her university president about reducing sexual assault on campus, and he does nothing, then her writing would be a rhetorical failure. If her writing for a real situation fails, are we as instructors then bound by authenticity to fail her as well? It would be a disservice to have one standard for “real” rhetoric and another for our students, especially if the goal is “authenticity.”

By claiming authenticity, and then rewarding failure with a C for competent, we are not preparing students for the failures of writing in the world. When compared to a professional essayist writing for money or social justice, the student writing a graded assignment to an “authentic” audience must necessarily be a fiction. The emphasis on “authenticity” runs into reality, and must retreat into the safer space of the classroom, which is the actual rhetorical context in which composition students write. For many (if not most or all) composition students, the grade is their paramount motivation, and writing serves as a way to pass the required 100-level course, and move on to “real” work in their major. If we acknowledge first-year composition as an educational context, an “authentic” audience might then be the imagined real peers of a discourse into which students hope to enter, the members of their chosen major discipline.

Ideally, students would have several years of writing instruction, with increasing disciplinary focus, a “unified writing curriculum” with instruction integrated both

vertically (from first to last year) and horizontally (across disciplines) throughout a student's academic career (Hall 6). In such a curriculum, first-year composition serves as a foundational course in writing in general, specified and developed in more disciplinarily-specific ways in future courses. Students would then practice the genre of academic and professional disciplines, and such generic exposure is important because "communication is most likely to succeed, to generate understanding rather than misunderstanding, when writer(s) and reader(s) know and use the same forms" (Coe 19). Indeed, a necessary condition of effective writing is being recognizable through the preexisting formal expectations of a discipline; writing for businesspersons means writing like businesspersons, using the forms they recognize and accept.

However, such disciplinarily "authentic" assignments require the instructors to have deep and thorough knowledge of a wide variety of disciplinary forms, prose style expectations, modes of proof, and types of argument required by the various major fields of students in the class. While disciplinary specific writing might be the ideal, unless first-year composition functions within a larger writing curriculum, a single year, or single course, of writing instruction in a kind of "generalized writing form" is insufficient to prepare students for all the academic, professional, and civic writing genres that students will encounter. However, because of the wide variety of major fields of students in a first-year composition course, any given instructor would therefore be unlikely to have the background and experience to teach all the students in her class all the various disciplinary forms they would need. We cannot expect instructors to learn writing for natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, arts, business, or medicine, in addition to the composition background they are learning in order to teach composition (Wardle,

“Intractable” 1-3). This complexity and contradiction of what “writing” is and does in various disciplines is part of increasing critiques of transfer, an educational commonplace that is problematic for writing education.

One of the most pervasive commonplaces in education, transfer assumes students gain knowledge, learn skills, and develop sensibilities in one context and use that knowledge, those skills and those sensibilities in another context, which is vital for education as “job training.” Transfer is complex and difficult to evaluate, especially so for the discipline of writing, so when it does happen it is “to the extent that students can bring habits of mind (what Bereiter calls “dispositions”) learned in one environment to bear on learning to function in a new one” (Brent 42). Indeed, transfer does not account for the different and sometimes contradictory conventions in each specific context because what constitutes acceptable form, expression, argumentation, and research varies widely from discipline to discipline, field to field, and job to job (*Framework 2*). Indeed, Driscoll and Wells argument for dispositions is also based in part on rejecting the above notion of transfer, which passivizes the learner as a collection of behaviors that respond to contexts in “better” ways than those unlearned (2).

Because there is no “effective writing” as such, but only specific efficacies for specific situations, audiences, and purposes, “writing” as a practice is not simply a collection of declarative knowledge, specific content, but also includes the more complicated procedural and conditional knowledge, how and when to apply that content.^{xc} By turning to disposition, we might better account for the relationship the students have to their skills and their active response to contextual demands, rather than simply whether they have the skills or respond to context appropriately. However, this

(re)turn to disposition illustrates that the progress of composition pedagogy is rooted in a problematic tension between the need for form and a desire for authenticity. Just as process pedagogy was rooted in the rejection of formalism in the “current-traditional” period, so too the move toward dispositions is rooted in the rejection of process’s own tendency toward a formalist need for forms.

What the writing assignment *is* has been a major source of contention, but what it *does* remains constant across composition courses: provide an opportunity to practice writing. Beyond the specific education exigence of writing practice, the fact remains that at the end of a writing class there is some product required. However, the form of this product always risks reification, which necessitates a move away from “mere form” into something more “authentic.” When we moved away from modal writing to emulating the scholarly writing of 19th German researcher-scholars, it was to make literary scholarship more “authentic” as knowledge. When we moved away from disinterested exposition toward more disciplinary specific forms, it was to make writing instruction more “authentic” to disciplinary needs.

When we realized that “writing practice” does not transfer among disciplines easily or obviously, we moved to dispositions, as a more “authentic” way to evaluate educational development. Indeed, the *Framework* has even been criticized on the grounds of authenticity as well, whether ignoring the economic-ideological realities of academic labor or lacking emphasis on the “authentic” goal of writing instruction: writing skills.^{xci} Any form risks formalism, and each rejection in favor of authenticity can never be authentic enough. The problem isn’t formalism *per se*, but the uncritical dominance of particular forms, as well as an uncritical rejection of formalism on the basis of those

forms motivated by a drive to “authenticity,” until, of course, these new forms are found to be insufficiently authentic, too formalist, and we move on again, or perhaps backwards, as in this case.

However, Douglas Brent argues that this year-in-year-out, semester-to-semester grind of composition is itself a recurring situation to which students and instructors respond (36). The genre of first-year composition is not the image of some other “real” form and exigence, but the first-year composition writing assignment is a genre that responds to the need for there to be a first-year composition writing assignment. As educational writing, these assignments exist between the disinterested exposition of pre-existing facts in a disciplinarily acceptable way, training students in proper forms, and a personally invested exploration of a specific idea or conversation, through which students engage with writing as a method of thought, self-reflection, and knowledge-generation, which can be limited by the imposition of form (Heilker 192). Rather than the writing assignment’s generic unreality being “not up to” some imaginary “real” standard, we might use this unreality to transcend such standards through the fictionality of writing in an educational context. That is, we do not need to seek or create a genre for the genreless first-year composition writing assignment, so that it might be more “authentic,” applicable to real writing tasks. Rather, a formalist assignment might be a space for experiment and invention, rather than failure and marginality.

Therefore, I propose thinking about the “form” of the composition writing assignment differently: form-as-*kata* from Japanese martial arts. While not limited to Japanese arts, *kata* presents an interesting contrast to contemporary composition pedagogy. It specifically uses rigid formalism in nonauthentic situations as the best and

most efficient way to effect dispositional development, similar to the practices of the sophists, *progymnasmata*, and modal writing. That is, *kata* allows us to train students as writers, rather than merely in writing or on specific written forms; disposition rather than skills. It can certainly resemble “real” combat situations, but the *kata* itself is not concerned with authenticity-as-application; *kata* is unreal in the same way first-year composition writing is a genre onto itself. While *kata* emphasizes the same dispositional development outlined by the *Framework* as *Habits of Mind*, as a non-Western pedagogy it is not limited by Western logocentrism, and its different cultural history presents a valuable and untapped pedagogical resource.

IV. Different Forms, Different Formalism: *Kata* Background

Like any translated term, *kata* is lexically complex. Not merely “form” or “shape,” it is “a kind of ritualized combat, exercises in aesthetic movement, a means to sharpen fundamentals such as balance and coordination, a type of moving meditation, or a form of training akin to shadowboxing,” but all the above together don’t quite articulate the actual exercise, so Karl Friday prefers the term “pattern practice” (164). As a pedagogical exercise, *kata* has seemingly paradoxical connections to both “Confucian pedagogy and its infatuation with ritual and ritualized action,” very similar to classical Western imitation pedagogy, and to Zen’s “mind-to-mind transmission” (*ishin-denshin*), which rejects didacticism in favor of learning through experience (166). This experiential focus has led *kata* to be considered the “most efficient vehicle for passing knowledge from teacher to student,” since through repetition, students internalize the principles without requiring their explication (Friday 164). This efficiency is a reason why *kata* is

common in not only Japanese, but “Chinese, Okinawan, and Korean martial arts” as well (164 n. 1). That is, spanning many East Asian martial arts, *kata* is a ritualized imitation that allows students to internalize the “postures, techniques, strategies, and philosophy” that comprise the specific art through repetitive exercise (164).

However, in *karate*, for example, before students learn any *kata*, “countless hours are spent in moving forward and backward over the floor while delivering punches, blocks, and kicks,” which allows students to internalize these basic moves as Herman Kauz explains (81). I argued for such practice in the previous chapter. Next, *kata* integrates these basic moves in sequence, “the performer blocks and counters various attacks delivered by a number of imaginary assailants located at different spots around him” (81). Rather than simply linearly, in *kata* “the students learn to relate to all directions” (81). Through repetitive movement in multiple directions, *kata* teaches a bodily awareness and connective-transitional moves between moves, a vital element of *kata*, beyond the specific techniques included.

While *kata* might be described as “fighting imaginary opponents” and thus an imitation of a “real situation,” *kata* is an explicitly inauthentic form of reflexive practice and dispositional development. Although each *kata* contains applicable moves for particular situations, *bunkai*, and the pattern makes specific techniques reflexive, *kata* is not a practical response to a combat situation. Rather, they are ritualized performances, some even performing a theme or narrative. In excellent *kata* performance, students execute “techniques in combination with the almost simultaneous application of block and counter characteristic of freestyle sparring” or actual combat, even though *kata* is not “authentic” combat (Kauz 81). In order to prepare students for a wide range of situations,

to grow their repertoire and hone their abilities, some martial arts have students learn several different *kata* over the course of their training.

For example, in Shotokan *karate*, students begin with the numbered basic *Heian* (Peaceful) *kata*.^{xcii} These *kata* are recursive and comprehensive, rather than linear-progressive; when someone begins learning *Heian Nidan* (Peaceful #2), they do not simply abandon *Heian Shodan* (Peaceful #1), nor is *Heian Nidan* an “extension of” or “addition to” *Heian Shodan*. Rather, each *kata* works to supplement and complement the others in the sequence, each “advancement” is built on skilled performance of the *kata* and demonstrated application of particular techniques within it. Advanced students learning *Bassai Dai* (“Storm the Fortress” or “Small Leopard-Lion”) thus need mastery of the *Heian* forms, because a sequence in the middle of *Bassai* is very similar to one in *Heian Godan* (Peaceful #5) (James). The techniques and combinations vary, and overlap among *kata*, and each *kata* presupposes skilled practice in the preceding ones, just as *kata* itself requires basic techniques to be reflexive. In addition to adding techniques to a student’s repertoire, each specific *kata* teaches a specific theoretical concept, in addition to honing moves and theories of previous *kata*.

Kata is not simply a collection of specific techniques, but contains the three-fold core of each specific martial arts style. These are strategy (*heiho*), the principles of approach to combat; offensive/defensive rationale, distance, angles, and specific goals, skill (*te-no-uchi*) is “timing, posture, the generation and concentration of power,” and tactics (*waza*) are “situationally specific applications” of the strategies and skill (Friday 165, 166). In addition to the specific tactics in each individual *kata*, and the strategy central to each, practice in many *kata* develop the application of these tactics and

strategy, training the skill as well. While the Japanese terms for strategy, tactics, and skill, might be confusing, we have this same three-part core in composition pedagogy as well: declarative (tactics), conditional (strategy), and procedural (skill) knowledge.

In both composition and martial arts, we aim to teach students the specific, discrete, and applicable techniques that they will need in future situations, as well as when to use such specific techniques, and details of the specific mechanics involved. While students might name the specific techniques, like tropes or fallacies, strikes, blocks or stances, students also need to know how and when to use them, what they work and do not work for. That is, not only knowing *what*, but the *how* and *when* of successful writing and rhetoric is more important than having the proper content readily available for regurgitation, just as knowing how and when to fight is more important than knowing ten-thousand strikes.

However, completing the right prescribed sequence of moves in itself is not a sufficient performance of the *kata*, in much the same way that a perfectly correct essay may not actually say anything at all. When we want students to write as authentic writers, we want their writing to have the force and flow; it needs to “do” or “mean” something worthwhile. This three-part benefit in *kata* training requires “the student to correctly perform each technique with maximum speed and power” (Kauz 81). Students must practice *kata* diligently and sincerely. This requires students to be strict with themselves to develop self-control, self-awareness, and self-discipline, fostering a dispositional shift, rather than simply reflexive technique, or a mastery of skills (Kauz 83). *Kata* as a formal exercise affords an observable, bodily effect to this dispositional change, “a low center of gravity” (Kauz 84).

A lowered center of gravity is a change in bodily disposition, “a gradual sinking or settling of the center of [the] body, or [the] conceptions of [a] center...at a point a few inches below the navel” (85). Lowering the center of gravity is not superficially bending the knees, but the realization that power comes from the largest and most powerful muscles, the legs and hips rather than the arms and shoulders. Moving from a lower center of gravity not only increases power of striking and stability in blocking, but makes the stances stronger as well. This “center” is not some mystical Eastern idea, but an ancient Western one too. Ancient Greek sophists and philosophers, Chinese monks, and Japanese warriors all saw the center of the body and source of life as the same spot. In Chinese, this lowered center is called *tan tien*, in Japanese *tanden* and in ancient Greek as *phrene*. In Chapter 2, I described the Warrant in these same bodily terms. In each of these instances, it is not only the center of physiological force, but metaphysical force as well: of *chi*, life energy in Daoism, of *hara*, Japanese for “humanity or compassion” and of *psukhe*, soul from ancient Greek philosophy. Acting from the *hara* is the same virtue as Aristotle’s greatness of soul, *magnanimity* or *megalopsukhia*, the perfection of all other virtues from the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Bk. IV).

Lowering the center of gravity is a shift in awareness of the composition of the body itself, but also to our bodily sense of self and comportment toward the world. A lowered center of gravity is as much the development of humanity and compassion as it is development of the body itself as an engine of violence. This two-fold paradoxical training is therefore a powerful alternative to training in skills or ethical use of those skills, and *kata* accomplishes both technical expertise and ethical mindfulness at once. While mindfulness, self-reflection, and metacognition might all approximate the

dispositional change afforded by *kata*, these are strictly mental, intellectual, and logocentric. In training students in *kata*, we are not effecting dispositional development of “mind,” but body.

If we are trying to develop student’s dispositions, we do no better abstracting to some nominalization of electro-chemical processes in a squishy skull-organ than we might abstract the center of life-force in the gut. Furthermore, the *Framework’s Habits of Mind* are actually not the effects of some supposedly neutral, technical rationality, but the differences real people feel in response to others. The habit of Engagement means a deep care about the project and process. Persistence is keeping at a task that feels tedious, pointless, and painful. Openness is about being able to entertain various viewpoints, even if they are different or even repugnant. The shift of focus from a *cogito* to the *hara* would be a more explicit and direct means of affording the opportunity for dispositional development, since these dispositions are affective, rather than logical. Indeed, “gut feelings,” as the core of *pathos*, are much more powerful than the “rationality” of *logos*, a problem since Aristotle first complained about the Sophists.

Rather than “logical thought” and “appropriate feeling” as often-conflicting aspects of a subjectivity, this bodily-affective notion of subjectivity accounts for both a technical proficiency and an ethical orientation without discarding either. This affective focus, lowering the center of gravity is achieved through rigid repetition in *kata*, which is useful as an educational exercise that is not limited by the drive for “authenticity.” We can therefore rethink the form of the composition assignment as a *kata*: a specifically formalist pedagogical exercise that uses repeated pattern practice as a way to train students in particular moves and their connections, helping them become reflexive, to

develop a rhetorical orientation toward the act of writing, and develop their affective disposition toward themselves as engines of force and others as subjects of ethical consideration. That is, using *kata* in composition would help students learn to write from a lower center of gravity, being calmer, more compassionate, and more reflective.

V. Rhetoric *Kata*: Multi-Mode Writing in Pseudo-Classical Form

If we're aiming to lower students center of gravity in writing, I suggest we have students write on something in which they are already invested, an aspect of the student themselves, and using this engagement to motivate students' effort in the challenges of a writing assignment, similar to the focus of Writing about Writing pedagogy (Downs and Wardle). However, rather than Wardle's strategy of having students work through "writing studies," I suggest a focus on political conflict. For example, a student could write himself as a gun rights advocate, arguing that any law inhibiting the sale, purchase, or possession of firearms violates the Second Amendment.^{xciii} In this, we force students to use writing as self-reflection because their position in a political conflict is the content of the essay. While they are experienced individually, political beliefs function as identification with a particular community or group.

Furthermore, politics is a social arena, and any particular individual belief is a belief about what others should do, meaning it is both individual and social. Political conflicts are so affectively fraught, more about feeling than thought, that in thinking about their feelings through a rigorous regime of writing practice we might disarticulate the animus from disagreement, as well. That is, through *kata*, we might teach students how to fight from a lowered center of gravity and a greatness of soul. If the goal is the

dispositional development of the students themselves, then we could do no better for a writing topic than the students themselves as nascent political entities entering into the world of supposedly civic adulthood, which returns us to the earliest goals of rhetorical education. Therefore, students would first need a basic understanding of ancient rhetorical principles as a frame for the class, just as the *karateka* learns basic techniques in advance of the *kata*.^{xciv} Three forms are vital here: *enthymeme*, *dissoi logoi*, and *classical arrangement*.

Because we are focusing on preexisting affective investments, many students may have uncritical political opinions rather than evidence-based position. Therefore, the central move for our *kata* is the enthymeme, the bodily form of the argument. While many students might hold particular political opinions, a vital first step in lowering their center of gravity is asking for evidence, for a foundation; our gun-rights student would need to provide a reason in support of his claim, where the strength in his stance comes from. He would likely cite the Second Amendment. Additionally, the enthymeme relies on an unstated claim with its own evidence, Toulmin's warrant and backing, which we would also ask of the example student; how does the Second Amendment guarantee unregulated gun sales and ownership, and how is that claim supported? This double questioning is very important in disarticulating the animus from disagreement. This gives students a heuristic with which to engage any particular position, and for helping students rethink their own political opinions, unquestioned and unquestionable, as political positions, supportable and supported. Additionally, enthymemes are not limited to one discipline or another, but provide a frame for inquiry and argument in any number of

fields, as it is abstract enough to work with the specificity in each case. This structure of claims also allows for *dissoi logoi* as a form of self-critique.

As we glean from his oft-quoted fragment, Protagoras argued that “two contrary reports [*logoi*] are true concerning every experience,” meaning truth is not intrinsic or objective, but constructed through accounts of that experience (Schiappa 100). By applying this attitude to the enthymeme, we have a heuristic that can help students see arguments not merely as “right” or “wrong,” but specific positions with their own reasons and logics, even if we might disagree with them. By combining Aristotelian enthymeme with Protagorean *dissoi logoi*, we have a powerful heuristic to generate and interrogate claims along the same terms. Because students would be writing from their own perspective, the *dissoi logoi* would require students to see that they can be and are indeed wrong from another perspective. Identifying whether this “wrongness” is due to contradictory evidence, a weak warrant, or insufficient backing would be part of the students’ work in articulating their belief.

Returning to our example, we might have our gun rights advocate rehire Peter Elbow’s internal editor to ask “why?”, “details?”, and “how are you wrong?” (*Writing without Teachers*). This self-questioning is important to help students be more open and dynamic in their position, but we still need to prepare students to articulate their positions and defend them, as they will be expected to do in future writing tasks. However, we do not have the luxury of time in a single semester to teach many forms. A first-year composition *kata* would need to be manifold; training students in multiple modes within a singular *kata* could allow us to teach students the same kind of power and flow that they might need in any given writing assignment (Davis and Shadle 432). However,

because we cannot adequately model specific disciplinary instantiations of these modes, a first-year composition *kata* would work through explicit abstraction. This rhetorical abstraction is necessary to allow students to see writing as an act in the world, something they can do with practice and effort, and something present in almost all human interactions, even if what that “writing” is in each given case is very different. We are training them as writers, engines of force, rather than simply walking collections of techniques and talking catalogues of forms.

While there is no “general academic discourse,” there are common kinds of meta-discursive modes that are general, like argumentation as particular styles of enthymeme. Two others can be understood as two “pure forms” on a spectrum, the forms of “article” and “essay” (Zeiger 456). On the one hand, pure exposition is the kind of writing we abandoned in the “traditional research paper,” because it leads to formulaic presentation of preexisting facts in a predetermined order writing, challenging students’ investment in the writing, leading to formulaic essays. On the other hand, pure expression is “free writing” that does not, nor needs to, account for others, preexisting facts, or anything other than the student’s voice. Indeed, this spectrum too is that between Confucian rigid “divine order on earth” and Zen formlessness. These are not two mutually exclusive forms, but ends of a spectrum that all writing occupies in various ways, exposition as writing about facts for others and exploration as writing about the self for the self (Heilker 192). Because we are training students how to write about things for others, and to write from and for themselves, we need both of these modes in our *kata*, which itself relies on the confluence of Confucian and Zen pedagogies.

Rather than consider these modes formally, we might better integrate them functionally: the expository “proof” is demonstrating the validity of a position through objective facts, while expressive “proof” in an essay is expressing an idea by exploring it through lived experiences, as Montaigne did in his innovation on the essay form (Zeiger 456). Even though lab reports tend toward exposition and personal essays are more expressive, all writing makes use of these modes. Knowing how to use which, and in what proportion, is part of the experiences in different disciplinary genres students will gain in writing them. In addition to exposition and expression as particular modes of proof, writing from research “gets at the heart of the entire academic project,” and so information literacy is a vital discipline for composition students (Brent 50).^{xcv} However, as with “generalized writing,” any notion of research “in general” needs to be explicitly abstract enough for students to see it across various specific situations. Rather than pretend these moves are directly applicable to any writing situation, we foreground the necessary fictionality of such abstractions and emphasize the importance of contextual awareness of any given encounter.

Recalling the genealogical connection between the *progymnasmata* exercises and modal discourse, we might then re-deploy modal writing as movements within the “classical arrangement,” as outlined by Crowley and Hawhee in *Ancient Rhetoric for Contemporary Students*, to serve as specific pattern practice in our first-year composition *kata*. *Exordium* functions as Explication, the folding out of the structure of the text from the beginning. *Narratio* is an essayistic mode of Expression, and the *Partitio* focuses on Exposition, delineating facts and defining specific areas of concern. These two parts function enthymematically; while the Expression outlines a narrative of the position and

its details, the Exposition works to support those details with evidence. The Argumentation section includes both *confirmatio* and *refutatio*, dealing with counter arguments, but also the “alternative” *concession* toward consensus. *Peroratio* functions as Implication, ending the text by folding into a larger issue. By reducing down the classical arrangement into a modal structure of Ex/Implication, Expression, Exposition, and Argumentation, we have a set of discrete patterns of writing through which specific techniques are executed. By maintaining the rigidity of the classical form, even while modifying the specifics, we have a collective base for repetition.

While composition pedagogy has been motivated by a rejection of formalism regarding specific assignments, the formalist assignment sequence has persisted: a final stage in a semester-long process of research, proposal, drafting, revision, and presentation. While this traditional assignment sequence may be useful for future work in humanities research, the vast majority of students will not use this process for anything more than class. Rather than building up to a mock-version of something almost none of them will do again, a composition *kata* aims to develop the students as writers through intensive writing and repetition. Rather than a linear series of different assignments that progress toward the final product, this *kata* has students start with the “final product,” in small scope of course, and build on it, rather than up to it, through a series of recursive iterations. The *kata* approach has students do everything all at once from the beginning, and the progress of the class is the repetition of this process, additively on a single document until it becomes something commensurable to other alternative assignments. In a *kata* approach, students learn all the moves in sequence, completing the whole is a

starting point, and the work of repetition develops those movements as reflexive, and the eventual goal is execution of the pattern with grace, power, flow, and precision.

After some initial class time training in basic moves and gaining rhetorical concepts, students would start with a three-page version of their *kata*, generating the necessary elements from their own self. Explicating the structure of the belief, then relating the expressive basis for it, outlining specific facts and details, and then dealing with contentious points, counter claims, or concessions, before situating the belief within the larger debate. Having written a substantial document expressing a political belief, students would need to engage with their peers in critique, explore and inquire about the conflict and disagreements concerning their opinion. They would learn that the belief is not merely theirs, but a particular position within a particular conflict, as Gerald Graff suggests in *Beyond the Culture Wars*.^{xvii} Next, students would develop their position through research-as-inquiry, taking their preexisting belief, and honing it through comparison with other and different beliefs presented by their peers, using the peer feedback to direct their research. The following week, students would then integrate these other texts into the next revision of the essay. This revision might be altering details or the belief entirely, and would feature the typical integration practices of summary, paraphrase, and quotation.

However, the document itself would need to remain the same number of pages and retain the same formal structure; a *kata* is the same sequence every time. At this point, students may have little sense of their own writing as it appears to others, so we would need partner practice, a necessary accompanying pedagogy to *kata* that I outline in Chapter 5. Each would practice attack and defense in turn, allowing students to gain

practice not only in attempting critique, but also in defending themselves and conceding aspects as well. Students would then revise to account for the week's partner practice and development of their position, again writing "more" in the same space. In three weeks, students will have written the same three-page essay three times, and each version would be more robust with the addition of research and counterargument. Because of the strict limit, students would be unable to extensively develop their writing through "fluff," but forced to be precise, concise, and powerful. All of the energy students might spend in expansion would be focused on intensifying the essay itself. However, this recursive cycle of revision is only one iteration in a still larger assignment sequence, a set of recursive rounds that take up the bulk of the semester.

Through each successive iteration, we would lengthen the essay, students building onto and out from their previous document to make the required length. For example, Round 1 is three pages, so Round 2 would be six, Round 3 ten, and finally Round 4 would be fifteen pages. While the initial drive to three pages may be difficult, as students gain experience and practice in the recursive cycle, each subsequent iteration would be easier, and made more so by the diminishing proportional increase of page length: first doubling, and then adding 60%, then 50%. The goal is not having students merely write 10 pages about some topic, but to write 15 finalized, effective pages out of nearly 100 that were written. *Kata* are difficult purposefully, and since the first-year composition assignment is a pedagogical exercise in the same vein, making it difficult on purpose would make eventual "real" writing tasks easier.

While initially having students find something is enough, as the class progresses we could become more and more rigid, requiring particular types or disciplines of

scholarship. Counterargument would become easier as well, as students become more experienced and skilled in the practice, more comfortable with each other as writers, as well as understand their own position and its strengths and weaknesses more deeply. Rather than revising as a specific step, students revise every week until the end of the term. Instead of researching once or early on, students research throughout the term. This kind of recursive repetition would more closely model the recursive writing process of “real writers” and produce a productive difficulty that would not be expected from other, “real” writing tasks like higher division courses and future employment. In short, by using this recursive method, by making it harder on the students, we will be making it easier on them in the end. Also, beyond the intensive writing cycles could be down time, consisting of student conferences, grading, and the day-to-day activities would consist of free-writing and discussion, practice in terms and methods, and response and discussion to the political conflicts of the day. Rather than writing merely, students would be writing themselves with force, precision, and flow.

VI. Implications

While it is certainly noble to aim for authentic writing experiences as a way to train students in future writing tasks, the rhetorical situation of the composition class makes such authenticity problematic. Not only are the writing tasks within first-year composition specifically for a grade, but the implied audience of the instructor and even classmates thus fictionalizes any authentic writing task students might attempt. Ideally, while students would write for more than a grade, the grade itself is an undeniable exigence. Also, because the specific forms and moves that students require in their

specific academic and professional disciplines vary so widely, no single “academic discourse” can prepare students for their disciplinarily-specific future goals and writing tasks. While it would be ideal to prepare students in writing both in their disciplines and across the curriculum throughout their collegiate career, in institutions lacking robust curricula, when first-year composition attempts to accomplish a full college writing curriculum in a single semester, we end up doing very little. However, in training students in particular writing moves, we can allow students to reflect on their own writing practices, and improve their dispositions, making the variety of future writing tasks more accessible. This is not “general academic discourse,” but training in meta-discursive reflection and practice in patterns of discourse common to all writing in academic, professional, and even personal contexts.

While *The Framework* rejects the notion of formulaic writing for inauthentic audiences as conducive to dispositional development, the actual situation of composition makes such writing a necessary mode of instruction (Wardle, “Intractable Problems” 2). Until the material and ideological conditions that hinder instructors radically change, formulaic writing for inauthentic audiences could be the most workable pedagogy some of us have, and we can do it differently through the practice of *kata*. By focusing on the student dispositions, through writing, we can allow them the chance to develop themselves as writers, not merely improve their “writing” or collect the specific written forms they will need. This is especially the case if we focus on dispositional development, helping students lower their center of gravity; training students through writing as compassionate and reflective affective subjects, rather than technically competent collections of transferable skills.

However, *kata* alone is insufficient for the kind of fully involved rhetorical training we need to promote. Indeed, in martial arts practice, the kind of individual performance in *kata* is complemented by a different kind of *kata* as well as a contradictory practice: *kumite* in *karate*, and *randori* from *judo*. In contrast to individual pattern practice, we also need free practice, not just for the students themselves, but also for the students with each other. In working with a partner, the student defender (*shite*) gets a real-if-tempered experience of using the technique, movement, or strategy on a live-if-cooperative, partner (*uchite/ukete*) (Friday 164). While early on, instructors might require student partners to be especially cooperative, more experienced students would require less cooperation, more closely mimicking the aggression of an actual attacker or competition opponent. Without a partner, students' abstract internalization fails to account for the weight of reality

^{lxxxviii} In turning to *kata*, I am emulating and complicating an approach developed independently by both Barry Kroll and Alex Channon, who use a similar turn in their works *The Open Hand* and “Moving Lessons: Teaching Sociology through Embodied Learning in the HE Classroom” respectively. While Kroll comes from a writing background and turns to martial arts and Channon comes from martial arts and physical education and turns to writing, the confluence of these two disciplines from each side illustrates the tenability and productivity of this approach. However, while my approach also turns to *kata* as a way to teach students the argumentative essay as a series of moves, I depart from them by engaging the questions of authenticity and developing my own *kata*-based approach to the classical arrangement form.

^{lxxxix} There is, however, more reason to return pre-post-secondary education to these exercises as models of rhetorical practice. Jim Selby, of the Whitfield Academy and the Association of Classical and Christian Schools markets such a curriculum as part of their home-school or in-school materials. While it is heartening to see the continued use of these ancient exercises, besides those of us interested in classical rhetoric in the academy, it is a shame that such practices would only be the purview of parochial, and perhaps problematically conservative (anti-sophistic) pedagogues.

^{xc} On these three types of knowledge in composition, see Elizabeth Wardle, “Intractable Writing Program Problems, Kairos, and Writing about Writing: A Profile of the

University of Central Florida's First-Year Composition Program," *Composition Forum* 27 (Spring 2013): 1-15, and Mark Wiley, "The Popularity of Formulaic Writing (And Why We Need to Resist)," *The English Journal* 90.1 (Sept. 2000): 61-67.

^{xci} See Kristine Hansen, "The "Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing": Better than the Competition, Still Not All We Need," *College English*, 74.6 (July 2012): 540-543 and Carol Severino, "The Problems of Articulation: Uncovering More of the Composition Curriculum" *College English* 74.6 (July 2012): 533-536

^{xcii} However, *karate* is only one example of pattern practice, and there is a similar practice in the Chinese art, *tai chi chuan*. This difference illustrates that even a strict formalist practice; there are multiple ways of performing a rigid form. Herman Kauz explains that in *tai chi* "the form is done slowly, and the position and the movement of every part of the body receive careful attention...knees remain bent throughout and the back is held perpendicular to the ground... the body remains as relaxed as possible and only the very minimum of strength is used" (Kauz 81). However, in *karate*, *kata* "are usually performed with much greater speed and less emphasis on exact placement of various parts of the body...at the moment of focus the performer simultaneously tenses a large number of muscles" (Kauz 81). While both styles seek executing the movements with grace and flow, in *karate* the emphasis is on power, but *tai chi* trades power for precision. Despite how it is characterized in Western depictions and media, *tai chi chuan* or "Supreme Ultimate Striking" was created as the best possible fighting art. Legend has it, it has never been defeated in mixed martial arts. However, because the monk who popularized *tai chi* in the West was unable to perform the movements with the proper force and speed, the form was slowed down, leading to the image of slow moving people in a park. These two "hard" and "soft" approaches to the same kind of routinized individual striking practice present two different ways of executing the movements, the emphasis on speed and power can be applied to *kata* of any art. That is, a *tai chi* practitioner could train with power and speed, as easily as a *karateka* could focus on precision. This attitude difference also illustrates the stylistic character embodied in each art's specific form.

^{xciii} This is not to promote one political identity over another, but provide all students with an opportunity to practice reflection on beliefs that are personal, but concern others as a matter of fact. This kind of self-reflection necessitates an environment of safety and compassion in the classroom. This is especially the case now with hyper-partisanship being the dominant style of political engagement in social media or public spaces. Actually, the virulence of partisan politics, and the accompanying discomfort many feel in talking about it, is evidence for this kind of discussion and disagreement in the safe space of the classroom. Because political discourse has become more factional, discussion between students on questions on which they differ is more important than ever. First-year composition is also particularly suited for this kind of discussion because it is generally the smallest class for many first year students, and the instructor more approachable than those in large lectures. This is not very different from the "current events" content that I've certainly employed, but thinking about it through the individuals in the class, rather than through some distant place called "politics" would provide a different, individual perspective on issues of social concern.

^{xciv} Because the ancients worked in a much less technologically advanced context, disposition was the only medium of education, and they lacked the thousand years of academic baggage that haunts and directs contemporary writing education. Also, while the ancient rhetorical arena was homogenous in comparison to the contemporary student body, the presumed value of equality of students, men and women of varying skin-tones and nationalities, means the ideological space of equality is still useful, even if it is a creative reimagining of the actual ancient context. While we're not training students to orally defend themselves in court (since the technology of lawyers has since taken over that need), we're training them to speak and write (read and listen) to other real people in real circumstances, rather than mock-disciplinary forms and preparing students for assumed future careers in academics.

^{xcv} While I think information literacy should function as a course on its own, a First-Year Researching course, this would fall into the same problems as WAC/WID, an inability for a single course to prepare all the various students adequately in the research practices and expectations for their disciplines, requiring more robust Research-across-Curriculum and/or Research-in-Disciplines. While such information literacy has been the purview of writing courses, whether or not first-year composition is the appropriate or practical place for is another argument altogether.

^{xcvi} The rhetorical basics are useful here as well, functioning as an interpretive frame or heuristic for research. *Ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* are also certainly basic, but instead of considering them as the discrete elements, I prefer *pluralistic valences of persuasion*. That is, we are persuadable and persuaded because we *believe, feel, and think*. Using this heuristic, we can require students to reflect on the plural modes of persuasion at work in the text: How does it make you feel? What does it make you think? What does it want you to believe? How? Also, specific identification of the enthymemes, including *endoxa* (commonplaces), and examples used by a text would also allow students to see not only that and how other writers make claims and support them, but also that such support is not singular, but can function rhetorically in different ways. In maintaining the rigidity characteristic of *kata* training, we might require students to repeat the same analytic on each text they encounter.

Chapter 5

Kumite of Rhetoric: Weight of Reality, Peer Critique, and the Sparring-Centered Classroom

Once an apprentice fighter had learned the basic moves and combinations of the art, he would be permitted to engage in open sparring with other trainees.
Grandmaster Jim Arvanitis, *Pankration* 15

Some students may be hesitant to critique, and will only tell their writing group what they think has been done well. Remind students that even when a paper is good, it can always be improved.
NCTE's "Guidelines for Writing Groups"

I. Transition and Explication

Building on the *kihon* approach to the "basics" of diction and syntax and a recursive *kata* approach to the "form" of the writing assignment, in this chapter I approach "peer review" as a form of *kumite* or "sparring." In both martial arts and composition, students learn through such "partner practice," working with other students to improve their abilities in responding to a real person. If students only practice their skills individually and alone, shadowboxing or writing for a "general audience," they will be unable to develop the abilities to respond to the dynamic realities they will encounter in practicing their writing or martial arts out in the world. However, just like the situations in which they will be used, practicing with partners requires an openness and vulnerability that can be difficult because of the risk of harm that comes in working with others. While *kumite* directly accounts for and directs this risk, peer review has had a difficult time with it.

That is, many students already (mis)understand peer critique as an antagonistic exercise, leading some to be cruelly brutal and others to not engage at all. This pervasive sense of “critique” being cruel and antagonistic leads many teachers to reduce or eliminate the risk of conflict from the exercise, even if the result is a blithe, apathetic lack of engagement altogether. Rather than try to “fix” this risk, and inevitably fail to do so, we should instead direct and intensify this risk of antagonism, not changing students’ conceptions of it as a fighting exercise, but changing their conceptions of what fighting exercises are and can be. To do so, we can look at *kumite*, the corollary partner practice in martial arts, in which sparring partners work together to hone their techniques, experience the effects of such techniques, and reflect on their skills in both technical and ethical terms, rather than brutalizing each other or patting each other on the back. Therefore, examining *kumite* allows us to see the fundamental challenges of “peer review” in general, and peer critique specifically, in a different way: not as a problematically conflictual exercise we must do peacefully, but a necessarily conflictual exercise that is not necessarily violent.

Rather than forcing a *faux* peace upon a necessarily contentious exercise, we can complicate and intensify students’ conception and practice of conflict, giving them space and experience in safe and productive disagreement. To cultivate productive disagreement, I suggest that peer groups serve as audience and exigence for whom and with whom students will be writing, rather than peer critique merely serving as a way of improving papers. That is, rather than students critiquing each other to make their papers better, this sparring-centered classroom has students write papers only so that their partners will have something on which to practice their skills of critique. By finding their

audiences and then writing to them, students will be more realistically preparing for the audience/exigence-driven writing they will be doing in the future, which places “partner practice” at the center of our pedagogy, rather than its current peripheral position, highly valued though it is. At the end of this chapter, I outline a specific example of a *kumite* peer critique exercise, one of any number of possibilities.

II. The Abundant: Benefits and Pervasive Challenges of “Peer Review”

a. No More Cats and Coffee

Over the last forty years, we have moved away from the image of the Romantic Author, a solitary genius toiling away in the “company of cats and coffee,” toward a more rhetorically-aware concept of writing and a more socially-oriented concept of the writer (Sperling 55).^{xcvii} Central to this shift is the work of Soviet sociologist Lev Vygotsky, who coined the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD), which is “the level of potential development as determined by problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” compared to the ability of an individual student to solve problems on their own (Vygotsky 86). Building on Vygotsky’s ZPD, it is now pedagogical commonsense in composition that students practice with peers to build on what they already know and can do to develop toward what we want them to learn, but are not yet capable of doing.^{xcviii} Through collaborative activities like peer review, teachers grant students more power over their own learning, prepare them to eventually learn better on their own, and prepare them for their future collaborative writing situations, like the workplace.

However, because it is so foundational, pervasive, and highly valued, many scholars and practitioners of collaboration assume that everyone knows and agrees about the benefits, uses, and challenges of this exercise. However, this pedagogical lore means very few works on peer review engage with the complexity, history, and wide variation of this practice, since “everyone knows peer review.” However, both “peer review” and *kumite* share four features as “partner practice”: 1) immense benefits, 2) complexity of practice and variation of practices, 3) necessarily specific and explicit methods, and 4) technical and ethical modeling by the instructor. Therefore, before I shift to my own intervention of peer critique as *kumite*, and the critique inherent in peer review, I must first treat “peer review” in a comprehensive, if lengthy manner, which will be repeated and intensified when turning to *kumite*, which is the way *kumite*, itself, is practiced.

b. The Copious Benefits of Collaboration

Overall, peer review is said to help students learn more, learn better, and generally improve student writing in various ways.^{xcix} It helps students develop a better sense of writing for an audience by providing them a real one to write for, rather than either just writing for themselves, what they think the teacher wants, or to the imaginary “general audience,” which is really writing to no one at all.^c In writing for various peers, students get a wide variety of audience perspectives along with the instructor’s, see how their same text can be read many different ways, and in turn students are not just exposed to the intimidating work of established professional authors, but to the different writing styles of more relatable peers as well, even if students vary in ability and experience.^{ci} Furthermore, this peer interaction makes the class into a community of writers all honing their craft together, a group of motivated learners all working toward the same goals,

albeit at various levels and varying speeds.^{cii} This difference in students' abilities and speeds of development motivates the ZPD, and it is an inexorable element of teaching a diverse student body. This improved communality also makes them more comfortable sharing their writing, a deeply personal and socially risky act, which generally improves the affective classroom environment and makes future collaborative learning more effective.^{ciii}

While we usually focus on the benefits of feedback for the writer to improve their own writing, in fact the activity is mutually beneficial for both writer and reviewer, who learn by both giving and receiving feedback.^{civ} One benefit for reviewers is practicing critical analysis on more accessible texts and engaging with the authors themselves rather than anxiously searching for "the answer," which is often their approach to assigned readings (Paulson et.al. 306). Additionally, Lundstrom and Baker cite Graner to argue that "the act of providing feedback may also improve student writing and may be the most beneficial aspect of peer review," while merely receiving feedback might be negligible in terms of overall writing quality; in peer review it *is* better to give than to receive (38, Graner 42). Without feedback, students would have little sense of how their own writing comes across, negating the benefits of audience awareness, which is not only true of first-year undergraduates, but doctoral candidates and professional writers too.

Furthermore, peer review doesn't just help the students, but the teacher as well. By granting more power to the students, collaborative writing changes the role of the teacher from an authority figure who inputs data and evaluates output to a facilitator who establishes, directs, and monitors situations in which learning happens.^{cv} Peer review also reduces the teacher's grading and correction work load, allowing them to focus more

individually on more students, improving the overall quality of instruction.^{cvi} This easing of teachers' labor may actually be the origin of the peer review in composition, rather than the collaborative writing practices of literary societies or elite education.^{cvii} It even helps address disruptive behavior or bigoted perspectives —e.g. a student writing that all people of color are poor and illiterate—, by exposing students to a social situation of peers, which is far more effective in addressing these problems than the censorious rebuke of a teacher, regardless of how understanding they might be, or claim to be.^{cviii}

Despite the copious benefits though, peer review, our most pervasive and valuable exercise is far from perfect. Indeed, the widespread dislike, distaste, and distrust of the practice, by students and instructors, is just as pervasive as the celebration of its benefits. There are three central challenges for “peer review”: the multiplicity of “peer review” practices, the mismatch between the instructors and students in ability and expectation, and the tendency for students when engaging with their peers to be either bloodthirsty or cuddly-wuddly, either attacking their peers and exerting power over them or only providing objectifying platitudes and facile encouragement. Both affective extremes, over-aggression and objectifying passivity, as well as the challenge of a contextually-fitting structure, characterize and motivate ineffective peer review.

c. Some Challenge(r)s: a Manifold Spectrum, Ability Mismatch, Affective Extremes

First, beyond “working with others on writing” or *partner practice*, there is no “peer review” as such, as students can write with each other in varying ways to varying degrees.^{cix} Rather, this term is used among many others for all the various, conflicting, and contradictory forms of partner practice invented and implemented over the past century with varying levels of success and replicability.^{cx} That is, teaching, writing, and

especially teaching writing are all radically contingent on so many situational factors that what works at one university may fail miserably at another, or even the same activity by the same teacher may have widely differing results semester to semester, institution to institution, and even course to course.^{cxix} Because of this multiplicity, peer review's value and efficacy has mixed results in scholarship, ranging from "no noticeable effects on student writing" to "peer evaluations [being] as effective as teacher evaluation," and there are always more and different aspects, angles, situations, applications, or even methods of inquiry for peer review that have not yet been accounted for (Harris 377).^{cxii} Perhaps, ultimately the question "what is 'peer review'?" cannot be totally or finally answered, but this undecidability doesn't mean all "peer review" practices are therefore the same or that this multiplicity of practices is a homogenous mess, lacking structures, features, and patterns.

In fact, there are several recognizable models along a spectrum of "peer review" that provide guideposts to engage with this complex and multiple practice.^{cxiii} On one end of the spectrum are "peer editing" or "peer evaluation" in which students approach peer review as an "error hunting exercise" or use a teacher-designed rubric or set of criteria to render a judgment about the quality of peers' writing.^{cxiv} Restricting writing to a discrete set of qualities on a work sheet often reduces all peer engagement to mere correction rife with class, gender, and race prejudices, often encourages overcorrection that can make students' writing worse, and often inculcates a restrictive, formulaic, and ineffective notion of writing itself.^{cxv} In simply correcting, students approach the text as a brute mechanism to be "fixed" or a dirty window to be wiped clean; once clean and fixed, the writing is understood to be "good" (Vatalaro 23). In teaching students that there's "good

writing” that has six or seven qualities, teachers fail to account for the various rhetorical factors that affect an individual text’s efficacy and how such factors determine whether a text is recognized as “writing” at all. In sum, this strict form of peer review doesn’t help students improve their own writing on their own, but only demonstrates their ability to follow orders with a teacher-mandated rubric to meet teacher-mandated expectations.

However, on the other end of the spectrum, “peer response” and “peer conferences” challenge the drive toward formulaic writing. These freer models can take the form of small groups, meetings with the instructor, or whole-class workshops, with varying degrees of formality and structure, including open-ended verbal response, dialogic discussion, and written memos.^{cxvi} Rather than using a preconstructed set of “qualities of good writing” or reducing “good writing” to mere correctness, these models have students grapple with more holistic elements like coherence, tone, content, and structure in a deeper and more productive way, the solution to archaic and reductive “peer editing.” However, a worksheet can be equally reductive even if it emphasizes higher-order-concerns over lower-order ones, which can exacerbate the difference between students’ writing abilities. Furthermore, rejecting peer editing altogether risks students not learning “the basics” that will be expected by future teachers and employers as well, putting students from “nonmainstream” discourses at a severe disadvantage (Sperling 74). We need to find a balance here, which is not some ideal “middle ground” between too strict and too free, but inventively responding to the situational factors that make “peer review” a manifold and complex practice in the first place.

Second, as teachers often bewail, many students cannot review, evaluate, or even edit their peers’ work well or fairly. For example, Newkirk found that rather than

suggesting that the author expand on unclear ideas in the text, student reviewers were “more willing to do some of this elaboration as readers” (306). That is, they intuited what they think the author “intended,” based on their identification with the author’s experience, and credited such intuited intention rather than the writing itself, as teachers did, producing a large discrepancy between students’ and teachers’ evaluations of the same text. Also, what to us instructors is “‘simple’ is... ‘really complex’” to our students, who are far more generous due to their comparative inexperience with writing and unawareness of conventions, such as their seeing a simplistic metaphor as a nuanced description and a common generic trope as an original idea (Newkirk 306). Furthermore, students also have challenges even identifying whether a text meets the terms of an assignment, which leads some to see a failing text as not only adequate but even “really good” (Paulson et.al. 321). But conversely, we might also underestimate our students, not assuming them willing or capable of what we see as “complex,” an infantilization that can be just as ineffective as being too difficult. This mismatch between students’ and instructors’ abilities and expectations means “peer review” might not only feel like a waste of time but actually *be* a waste of time that creates bad habits, bad attitudes, and bad writing.^{cxvii}

Additionally, this mismatch persists across the spectrum, manifesting differently for “peer editing” than “peer response.” A more restrictive “peer editing” model teaches “that conforming to norms is what matters” and encourages students to complete the work merely to “satisfy the teacher,” privileging the writing of already-privileged students (Woodward 40, Freedman 87). A freer form, however, encourages “social loafing” with more able students doing more than those less able, which only exacerbates

the mismatch between students and instructors by intensifying the mismatch between students themselves, breeding laziness and resentment (Louth et.al. 221). Being overly rigid and restrictive might inculcate students with correctness and propriety, but will benefit those least in need of it at the expense of those in most need, and being too lax and permissive likewise allows for the preexisting differences between students to persist and even become worse. A bad experience with peer review might sour the students toward their peers, their instructor, the class, and perhaps even writing altogether.

While the specific structure of “peer review” must be contingent on and developed from the institutional context and student body on whom it will be used, navigating extremes and finding the proper balance is not simply a technical question, but an affective one as well. In addition to the first challenge of establishing a balance between structure and freedom, and the second challenge of managing the mismatch in ability between students and instructor, the third challenge of peer review is that students often tend to become “sharks or teddy bears,” either aggressively and groundlessly attacking their peers or avoiding saying anything critical to avoid hurting anyone’s feelings, with both extremes leading to inadequate students inadequately responding to inadequate essays (Hall 3). Like the mismatch, these affective extremes persist across the spectrum of peer review practices, and must be addressed along with, but perhaps differently than, the challenges of structure and ability.

If students become “teddy bears,” then neither partner gains the useful experience of reviewing writing or having their writing reviewed. For example, Paulson et.al. found that even though the student-writer was anonymous, students used recognizable and familiar “safety language”: “I liked this” or “I thought it was good” (322). Because

language is used to “establish, maintain, and reshape relationships as much as to share ideas and insights,” such safety talk that demonstrates good faith and charitable understanding is a “precondition for communication” (Danis 356, Porter 586). Certainly, we want to promote compassion among our students, but “to assume that the author can do no wrong” produces ineffective “feedback [that] is superficial, overly flattering, vague and very brief” (Porter 597, Vatalaro 2). Safety language may even be a way of avoiding the difficult task of substantially engaging with writing altogether.^{cxviii}

The facile, objectifying “I thought it was good” in place of more substantial feedback relates that a partner couldn’t be bothered to engage with the text at all, or at best, telling peers what they want to hear because the mandatory exercise is pointless and futile anyway. The “teddy bear” isn’t simply warm and fuzzy, but an unresponsive, inanimate object, smiling at us with soulless eyes. This “safety” then, is not necessarily (or even perhaps often) the result of caring for others and not wanting to cause pain, but an assumption of pain inherent in any engagement, for both writer and reviewer, an apathetic performance of “living and letting live.” Certainly, everyone may leave the class feeling good about themselves, but students letting their peers go forward with a false sense of their writing would be a disservice to them, and regardless of how nicely it is committed, instructors would be complicit accessories to this violent neglect.

Alternatively, if students become “sharks,” the tendency of humans to react to aggression with aggression would escalate the conflict beyond the productive bounds of pedagogy or students might shut down entirely, rendering the exercise ineffective as well. For example, Berkenkotter had one student, Stan, whose “aggressive behavior and his use of expletives suggests that he enjoyed the feeling of power” afforded by reviewing

another's writing, while receiving such criticism "upset him" (314).^{cxix} Believing "everyone has their own opinion" that cannot be questioned, Stan saw any critique as an ungrounded, personal attack, and this common belief among many students turns them "into the kind of harsh, antagonistic reader that they would otherwise resent" like Stan, whose ruthless criticism was "frequently unsupported by evidence or constructive suggestions for revision" (Porter 577, Berkenkotter 315).

Contrasting with Stan's aggression, another of Berkenkotter's students, Joan "lost confidence" when critiqued by her peers, allowing herself to be overwritten, and doubting her own abilities as a writer (318).^{cxx} Rather than bolster her own prose or viewpoints, Joan instead took the feedback from peers more seriously than she took her own writing, bending to their views, their suggestions, and writing what they seemed to want rather than what she wanted to say, preventing her gaining practice in articulating and developing her own ideas in a text. Both examples illustrate the more complex, two-fold responses possible for sharks: they can eat or be eaten. This means that sharks, while more distasteful, move and do more than the idle, inanimate teddy-bear that does not respond to anything. After a bloodbath, no one is left unstained, whether they were relishing in the glory or were struck by the horror, and the blood is ultimately on the instructor's hands.

For my own part, in diagnosing these problems with "peer review" I have seen my own past practices in a stark light. That is, I have been a complicit accessory to bloody massacre after bloody massacre. Rather than the well-thought out and justified practices of the scholars I have outlined above, my own success has been perhaps more emergent and accidental than purposeful and intentional. However, I have found that

sharks are preferable to teddy-bears. The challenge for sharks is not dulling their teeth, but directing their appetites toward targets that would allow others to benefit greatly, while teddy-bears just sit there. The core challenge is the concept of conflict, and what it allows us to do. However, by having an explicit method and effectively modeling engagement with texts, any form of partner practice, whether intentional and well-developed or poorly-formed and haphazard can offer some of the benefits of collaboration to student writers.

c. How to Peer Review: Explicitness, Specificity, Modeling, and the Necessity of Critique

While conflicting evidence and methodological complexity makes choosing “best practices” for peer review difficult, there are a few common agreements outlining how students should engage one another, how to mitigate the instructor/student mismatch, and how to avoid the affective extremes of sharks and teddy bears. First, students should not make brief verbal comments about their peers’ writing, but provide specific and detailed written accounts, ask questions about the text, pointing out problems and suggesting what the writer might do differently.^{cxix} However, “be specific” is also perhaps one of the vaguest suggestions one can provide: how students must be specific in responding to their peers depends on what needs specifying, how they should do it, as well as the specifics of the place and purpose of the moves in the text that need to be specified. That is, “specify” is a generalizable suggestion, but the specific specifics are radically contingent.

Second, while practices can range from the restrictive and reductive “peer editing” to open-ended and precarious “peer response,” we need to choose some mode, model, and method, although it doesn’t ultimately determine the success of the exercise. A poorly executed “peer review” is not better than well-done “peer editing,” simply by

having more “freedom,” but rather, we need to be attentive to circumstances, responsive and reflective of our own practices. Whatever practices we employ in each case need to be planned and explained to our students explicitly and in detail. After explicit instruction, students’ comments become more specific, and the writers find these comments more helpful.^{cxxii} Obviously, teaching students what to do makes it easier for them to do it and do it well; the more direct and specific feedback is, the more students will be able to apply it to their writing and feel better about their abilities to do so.

In addition to explicitly instructing what to do in engaging with peers’ texts, we must model “the perspective [students] are being asked to adopt while peer-reviewing” from the beginning of the course in all our interactions with all texts to help “students to learn not only *how* to do the work...but also that *what* we’re doing is important enough to devote substantial class time to the task” (Paulson et.al. 327, Hall 5). It’s not enough to model this merely in a preparatory lecture for “peer review week” because “if we just go through the motions, perhaps passing out recycled handouts, our students will pick up on our lack of dedication and act accordingly” (Brammer and Rees 81). Not only should we demonstrate the technical methods of questions and substantial engagement, but also the affective manner of approach: an assertiveness that is neither vicious nor laudatory, neither aggressive nor apathetic. If we want students to perform peer review as something worthwhile then we need to show them that it’s worth doing and model how to do it both technically and affectively, perhaps even exposing our own writing to feedback and criticism as well, showing that *we are writers too*.

However, regardless of how much power we give students, the different names and spins we give to “peer review,” or how well we model engaging with a text, students

and administrators still expect grades at the end of the term, and many students inevitably “may be guided by the sole purpose of getting a higher grade rather than improving their writing,” especially for students in a required first-year composition course (Beck 417). Producing this grade through evaluation means not just noting what was good and well done, but pointing out what was *not* good nor done well, because “even when a paper is good, it can always be improved,” making instructors necessarily judges (*krites*) or critics of students (NCTE 1). If we’re preparing students for writing beyond the safe space of the composition classroom, we need to prepare them for critique because “models for critique exist in every field,” even if we don’t call them “critique” (Soep 750). We have moved away from “critique” as a term, but we cannot abandon it as a practice and must therefore qualify it, as “constructive” or “productive,” because students see “critique” as only destructive. The critic has always had a negative sense as “censurer, faultfinder” (OED). Critique is therefore inherent in writing instruction, and however much we may want to avoid it, an inherent element in peer review, and therefore a potent element of students’ interactions with each other.

While in critique there is a “sense of exposure that can be uncomfortable, and if abused, downright damaging,” this violence should not lead us to abandon this exercise nor should we condescendingly think students are incapable of dealing with it or even doing it in productive ways since “students are not as fragile as [and far tougher than] they are frequently represented to be” (Bickford 149, Porter 588). Therefore, instead of trying to fix the antagonistic concept of critique by reducing the risk of antagonism, we should instead use this risk, pervasive as it is, to our benefit. We can use a notion of fighting that isn’t simply brutality, but look to actual practices of fighting that counter

such brutality, fight against it, and embody an ethical alternative. That is, what I am suggesting is not a new or different alternative to what we already do, but rather a different way to inhabit and direct the preexisting tensions at work in peer critique. Students already think critique is sparring, so let's explore sparring to see how critique could be otherwise.

III. Enter *Kumite*: The Peer Critique of Martial Arts

a. Another Spectrum: Kata, Randori, Kumite, Sparring

Kumite or “sparring” is central to Japanese martial arts and shares several features with “peer review” in composition. First, *kumite* offers many of the same benefits as “peer review”: students practice with a real person to hone their ability to react to one, gaining feedback on their own abilities. Students also get a wide range of experiences with different opponents, learning from opponents and instructors, and cultivating and enacting a relationship of honor to their fellow fighters.^{cxxiii} Students must first practice on their own, but partner practice is vital and integral from students' earliest training. If students are to use what they learn with real people, then they need to practice what they learn with real people. Just as writing for a “general audience” is writing for no one, fighting an ideal opponent is not training to fight anyone at all.

Second, “sparring” names a manifold spectrum of partner practices, with the intensity, formality, curricular value, and even the name depending on the specific style in question (just as we saw with peer review). On one end is formal sparring (*kihon kumite* or “*kata*”), the traditional practice that is used for evaluation and advancement in *aikido* and beginning students in *karate*, in which students practice a single technique or a

series of techniques, taking turns at offense (*uchite*) and defense (*shite*), with each partner practicing both roles to allow both partners to both hone their technique and help their partner hone theirs (Friday 164).^{cxxiv} On the other end is free sparring (*jiyu kumite* or *randori*), a more dynamic practice that mimics a competitive match (as in *judo*, which uses it for evaluation and advancement) or the life and death situation of the battlefield or self-defense on the street (in *aikido*, *randori* refers to practice against multiple opponents) (Friday 171).

Third, just like “peer review,” the place and importance of, as well as the “best practices” for *kumite* are debated and debatable, from the very beginning of Japanese martial arts as distinct from explicit military training. Furthermore, the spectrum of practice has allegiance to certain camps within the field, some valuing formal sparring over free, some more invested in tradition and some in practical application. Just as “peer review” and modern composition more broadly develops out of and in response to current-traditional rhetoric, Japanese martial arts and the debate around *kumite* developed in response to the aftermath of the Sengoku or “Warring States” Period (1467-1603), when “the teaching of martial arts began to emerge as a profession” (Friday 170).

b. The 17th-century Kumite Debate

During the Sengoku Period, a long period of military conflict between regional nobles and their armies that ended with the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate, martial arts were taught by *samurai* for the explicit purpose of, and in addition to their main occupation, with *samurai* men serving their *daimyo* (lord) in battle and *samurai* women defending their home castle. Afterwards, without battles to fight in and get paid for, warriors had to find employment elsewhere, establishing schools and training anyone

in the combat arts full time, provided they could pay the fees, of course (not unlike the Sophists of ancient Attica) (Friday 170). In addition to the *samurai* themselves being restricted to their home districts, “contests between practitioners from different schools became frowned upon by both the government” and various masters themselves, which led to an increased number of increasingly insular schools (Friday 170). Without experience in combat or dueling, formal sparring was the “only exposure to martial arts” for this new generation of students and (then) teachers, their forms becoming “showier and more stylized,” even “fossilized” with only a passing resemblance to the practical combat techniques from which they were derived (Friday 170). However, some schools began using protective gear as a way for students to practice sparring at full speed and power without the dire and deadly physical consequences, sparking a debate about the purpose of and emphasis on formal and free sparring within the training curriculum (Friday 171).

Proponents of free sparring argued that formal sparring “alone cannot develop the seriousness of purpose, the courage, decisiveness, aggressiveness, and forbearance vital to true mastery of combat. Such skills, they said, can be fostered only by contesting with an equally serious opponent...who is actually trying to strike them,” training students to react in real time with real consequences (Friday 171). If students only practice a series of rigid and predictable sequences, like a formalized writing rubric, they will then be unprepared to improvise in dynamic, rapidly-changing live situations. Other teachers promoted formal sparring, arguing free sparring “inevitably requires rules and modifications of equipment that moves trainees even further away from the conditions [and mindset] of duels and/or the battlefield,” and therefore was not “any more realistic a

method of training” than formal sparring, as even the most “realistic” writing assignment will never be realistic enough, as I argued in the previous chapter (Friday 171).

Additionally, free sparring, especially early on and in place of formal sparring, can also lead students to gloss over the basics of proper technique, and it does not cultivate the ethical awareness and philosophical appreciation afforded by extensive practice.

This 17th- century debate allows us to see that restricting ourselves to one end or the other will not guarantee success and each particular practice needs to be suited to the instructor and style in question, just like peer review. We cannot expect students to be able to accomplish difficult and complex work—on the job/in battle—without allowing them to develop their skills safely, but if we coddle our students too much, they will be ill-prepared to deal with the harsh reality of the risky situations they will encounter once they leave our class.^{cxv} Too much structure and not enough intensity leaves students with simplistic and reductive approaches to the dynamic complexity of the world they will encounter and the work they will be expected to do. Too little structure and too much intensity might lead students to irreparable harm, simply training them to be better at brutality, and either pushing them away from the practice altogether, perhaps being beaten down so badly they never come back, or get up, again. Because *kumite* deals directly with the risk of violence and works effectively against encouraging it, the manifold partner practice of martial arts can provide a useful way for the manifold partner practice of composition to deal with that same risk, one from which writing instruction all too often shies away.

c. Ethical Roles for Writing Attack and Defense

In formal sparring, students take turns practicing individual techniques or series of techniques of attack as “*uchite*” and defense as “*shite*,” then they switch roles and repeat the exercise, and repeat, switch, repeat until the instructor directs them to practice a different sequence, gaining better training for a live opponent than a stationary dummy or just punching the air (Friday 164, n.1). Students know what is coming and how to respond, the explicit instructions required for any partner practice to be effective, which prevents anyone from being unprepared or confused. Furthermore, students take serious care to not injure their partner, but also provide a modicum of resistance to help them develop a sense of the weight of reality.

In *karate*, for example, one *uchite* might attempt to punch their *shite*'s face, and the *shite* in response practices a block-redirection-counter attack sequence, only making light contact when blocking and striking, if at all. That is, the *shite* stops their blow before contact, preventing the harmful effects of the technique. Indeed, stopping an inch before delivering a powerful, painful, even deadly blow requires developing even more control than simply aiming a properly executed technique at the correct target would. Because developing such control takes time, students begin slowly and gently, increasing speed and intensity, eventually moving at full speed and with full power without touching at all. While “pulling punches” might train students to not make contact, a critique by free sparring advocates, actual contact simply requires students to aim one inch past their target, delivering the precise blow with maximum force.

In grappling arts like *judo*, *kumite* is even more important because grappling cannot be practiced alone, and this mode likewise requires strict control and repetition.

Practicing with a partner, students begin with the individual steps of a throw, body positioning, balance, and leverage, progressively working up to a full smooth execution. Just as the *karate* student pulls their punches, the *judo* student slows their throws to lessen their impact and prevent serious harm. *Judo* also includes submission holds, chokes and joint-locks, so the thrower stops before applying too much pressure and the thrown taps out once they feel that pressure. While being-hit is an avoidable consequence in *karate*, in *judo* being-thrown is a necessary element of training, and so in preparation for any partner practice, *judo* students must practice being-thrown by falling extensively because the force of gravity is unavoidable.^{cxxvi}

In training students in writing and critique, we need to train them in doing and being-done-to, in both developing texts and engaging with them critically, a two-fold training like attack and defense, and these two examples illustrate two different ways that both kindly attacker and kindly defender (*uchite/shite*) prevent harm. In critiquing, as in *karate*, students must avoid being overly harmful or unnecessarily cruel, attacking obvious openings or addressing explicit issues, but stopping before delivering full concussive force. In being critiqued however, preventing harm is not entirely on the critic, but like the force of gravity in *judo*, students need to become accustomed to the inherent negation of critique, especially in something as personal as writing, a developed skill itself. The writer must let themselves fall and practice falling, leaving themselves open to being thrown without being crushed by it. While we must train students to avoid striking with deadly force except in the most extreme cases, we also must train them to harden their bodies for when force does come upon them.

In addition to preventing serious harm, partners have a corresponding responsibility to give an appropriate amount of resistance. Writers must provide good efforts and welcome responses; critics must be gentle, but not shy away from engaging as seriously and intensely as they would with an interlocutor outside the classroom. But partners should also allow their partners the opening to practice their techniques, allowing themselves to be thrown or open to be struck even as they trust their partner to not exploit their vulnerability. Punching too slowly or wildly, going along with the throw, tapping out too soon, or not taking the practice seriously are as disrespectful as going too hard or purposefully hurting a partner. Indeed, hurting a sparring partner is far more grievous than not going hard enough. *Kumite* is not simply conflictual or cooperative, but cooperative conflict and conflictual cooperation.^{cxxvii}

Admittedly, the wide cultural and historical differences between 17th-century Japanese martial arts training and contemporary composition means the pedagogy must be modified. However, in addition to cultivating a respectful classroom environment, we can and must model the person we want our students to be and respond to problems as swiftly and harshly as necessary and possible within whatever degrees of authority and freedom we have. For example, if a student were too harsh with one of their partners, an instructor might take them aside and correct them, and if they persist, the instructor might then practice a bit harshly with them. This is not carried out with joy or vengeance, but a deep sadness. If a student has chosen to forgo the self-discipline and compassion that is far more important than the proper technique of a punch or throw, it is the greatest dishonor an instructor can face. But there is never any guarantee in teaching, and students

might take what we teach them and use it for their own destructive, selfish, and self-destructive ends.

By emphasizing ethical relationships with and responsibilities to sparring partners on whom we practice techniques that can hurt, maim, and kill, and who we allow to practice on us, but explicitly prohibiting this in training, *kumite* develops self-discipline and empathy through respectful effort and mutual vulnerability. Rather than simply practicing at punching people, throwing them to the ground, and choking them unconscious, *kumite* trains students in techniques (and) in relationships with others; to not just be a good *fighter*, but a *good* fighter. Likewise, a *kumite* approach to peer critique would train students to be good *writers* and *good* critics, and we should therefore make it the core of our curriculum, like *kumite* is in so many ways in so many arts, cultivating increased ability with and ethical responsibility to partners without whom we could not improve. But furthermore, the control developed by *kumite* is not simply the ability to execute a technique correctly, but the ability to be other to one's self. This ability is the self-discipline and *critical* thinking we often tout as the main result of training in critique, writing, and argumentation.

IV. A *Kumite* of Peer Critique: Model, Method, and Exercise

a. The Sparring-Centered Classroom

In creating a *kumite* model of peer critique, we need to prepare students for writing beyond composition class, so rather than begin with students choosing an essay topic and then being sorted into peer groups, we might instead begin with peer groups and have students choose their essay topics based on the peers to whom they would be

writing and by whom they would be critiqued. This radically shifts the emphasis on assignments; rather than performing critique so that students can write a better essay, students would be writing the essay so that others can develop skills in critique. Students practice this critique so that they might become better self-critics, seeing their writing as others might by having others see their writing. Therefore, we need some way of forcing students to disagree safely without safely avoiding disagreement. While students do become comfortable disagreeing after they have worked together for a while, in recentering partner practice and emphasizing conflict, we need a way to promote this from the beginning.

In my recursive essay sequence I outlined in the previous chapter, students develop a political opinion into a policy position, and peer critique takes place after students have completed the first draft in each cycle, before students conduct research and revise again, allowing feedback to direct writer research. To orient the students and instructor from the beginning, we can use a sorting metric and assemble groups of students with differing perspectives.^{cxxviii} We need to build disagreement into peer critique to prevent it from being an “echo chamber,” in which unsubstantiated argument is agreed upon from the beginning and disagreement is unlikely—if not impossible or unthinkable—because peers overlook obvious problems that might be pointed out by someone with a different perspective. Without the distance provided by difference of perspective, students might easily resort to back-slapping and self-congratulation by not engaging with the problems of their own perspectives that they are unable to see. To allow students to be with each other as real people rather than abstracted entities, these

groups will need to be established early, and students will need time to get to know each other and see each other as sparring partners.

The tendency toward sharks or teddy-bears is the result of a particular conception of conflict and disagreement, seeing it purely as violence and opponents as “evil” that must be destroyed or alternatively, “agreeing to disagree,” which is a way of avoiding disagreement and discomfort altogether. Just as ideological proximity can produce nothing more than echoes of agreement, ideological distance can produce nothing more than parties screaming past each other, only seeing the straw-stuffed demons of their own imagination, rather than the real people right in front of them. We will therefore need to incentivize productive critique so that students would be less likely to engage in disagreement brutally or apathetically, like sharks or teddy bears, and in the past, I have used peer group evaluation to make students accountable to each other, to me, and to themselves.^{cxxix} As with any partner practice, innovative or traditional, the instructor must model what to do and who to be, regardless of the method, mode, or manner that the partner practice is done.

Just like our students, we have our own experiences and perspectives, our own coordinates on the political compass, and we should be as open and honest with our students as we want them to be with us and with each other. We cannot pretend to be objective or unbiased, but admit we are rife with biases ourselves, and embody how to disagree with differing positions with evidence, reflection, and critical thinking. We must be careful because outright advocacy can be alienating to our students with differing perspectives, and the inherent power dynamic between student and teacher might easily lead to resentment, fear, or calls to the dean.^{cxxx} We should even allow ourselves to be

challenged and critiqued by our students in turn, demonstrating not only the ethical way to critique, but the compassionate way to undergo it as well.^{cxxxix} In addition to effective modeling, we also need a specific sequence for students to work through, a specific series of techniques that gives students a method, an explicit set of moves to practice and patterns to work through.

While there is no best way to peer critique nor best move set for *kumite*, as the fittingness for an exigence in either combat or writing cannot be fully accounted for in advance, we can take from the preexisting spectrum of “peer review,” but focus our critique along it. For now, I will move forward with the basics of Toulmin, as shown in Figure 2.1, and as I argued in Chapter 2, that the Warrant connects two levels of argument: surface (LoC, Claims and Data) and structure (HoC, Warrant-(Q/R)-Backing), and outline a two-fold peer critique exercise that combines these two modalities of textual engagement: striking the surface and grappling the structure. That is, I suggest a model of critique that is not simply “editing” for surface correctness nor “response” to content and coherence, but one that can account for both without being reducible to either. We do not need to abandon the traditional categories of surface and structure, but

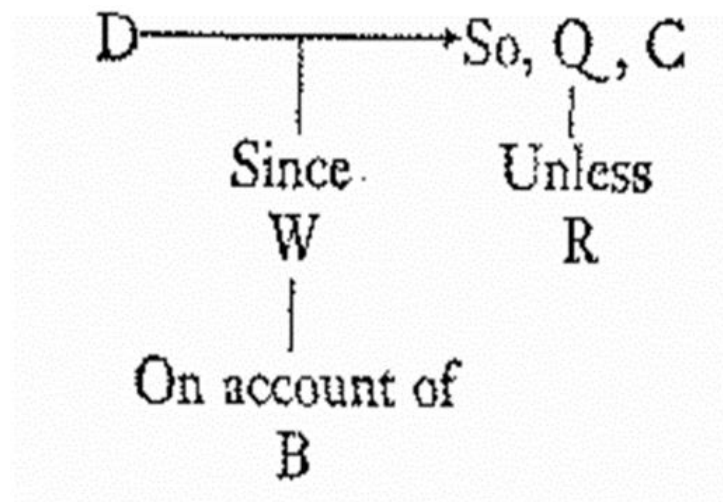


Figure 5.1: The Toulmin Model

reconceptualize them as two different, intertwined modes of sparring that we can combine as aspects of a singular, truly holistic art of textual engagement.

b. An Example Kumite Exercise

A *kumite* model of peer critique is not a unique innovation, a new form or method, but rather a different approach or orientation to the practices we already do. I have designed this exercise for my recursive essay assignment and centralized peer critique, but it can certainly be adapted to other, less radical, curricula.^{cxxxii} However, because all partner practice is situationally contingent on the situation in which it is performed, I take no responsibility for nor guarantee any results in using this exercise; like all martial arts training, it should only be performed by those fully aware of the risks involved. Taking place over two days, students will have two different sparring partners, and engage with each partner in both surface and structural *kumite*, taking place in class and at home, respectively. Students will therefore need three blank copies of their essay, one for each of their partners to read and annotate, and one that they will use for their own comments and notes, to use alongside peer comments to direct revision.^{cxxxiii}

In the class, students would pair up as the critic (*uchite*) and the writer (*shite*), with the critic reading the writer's essay to them, striking at the surface of the text, making comments and questions, and the writer would remain silent, following along and noting on their own draft, allowing themselves to be blocked, directed, and thrown. The *uchite* might make comments and questions on the Claims, countering and challenging their attacks directly,^{cxxxiv} or the Data, the force and connections behind them, grammatically and logically.^{cxxxv} Just as a punch can be blocked at the fist or evaded entirely, it can also be blocked by closing in and attacking the shoulder and elbow, the

more immediate source of force behind the attack. However, since no attack nor Claim occurs in a vacuum, but instead relies on a whole system of mechanical support, critics might also attack the bodily balance of the writer as well, suggesting possible Warrants, testing their strength, and using that awareness to engage with Claims later in the essay, future attacks in the sequence. At one third-time, the pairs would switch roles, and repeat the exercise, and afterwards students would each take time to read through their partner's essay silently to the end, adding and expanding their notes, a form of silent meditation perhaps. Finally, students would then discuss the overall impressions of each essay, how effective they were and how well they met the terms of the assignment, and record notes to direct their partners in a more structural critique, a more throwing-based *kumite*, to be completed for the next class.

Using these notes, students would attempt to find weakness in their partner's text, explicitly aim to "defeat them," and get their partner to change their argument, to tap out, a *kato pankration* form of *kumite* and a *judo*-style *randori*. To do this, students outline their partner's essay paragraph-by-paragraph, identifying the Claims and Data, and explicitly grappling the Warrants at work, comparing them with each other, seeing how they relate, coalesce, or contradict, finding weaknesses and strengths in the center of gravity supporting their peer's texts, throwing them off their feet, their Backing and wrestling them to the ground. From these Claim-Data-Warrant outlines, students would point to Qualifiers and Rebuttals of the Warrants, gaps and exceptions, and what Backing is used or might need to be used to make the Warrants justified. The *uchite* would hardline the logics undergirding the texts, wrenching out the supportive structures from the body of the text, and torquing them to a breaking point, looking for ways the text

might be internally inconsistent, implications that might not have been considered, and offering future avenues to explore. Finally, students would write an end comment that summarizes their main suggestions, structural challenges, and addresses how their partner's essay follows the terms of the assignment as well as larger structural issues.^{cxxxvi}

Students would then bring their outline the following day, return it to the author, and repeat the same *kumite* sequence with partners outside their group, learning how to write for and engage with audiences with whom they are not familiar.^{cxxxvii} With a series of annotations and an outline of their argumentative structure, students would have a better and more holistic sense of their essay. They would then revise their essay and submit it for evaluation, as well as fill out a *kumite* evaluation and revision reflection, which would also be submitted.^{cxxxviii} This additional meta-reflection, meta-critique, and evaluation makes peers more active participants in their critique and writers more reflective and active in their revision.

In practicing these two modes of engagements on two different texts and by having two different engagements from two different people, students would reflect further on the kinds of moves they might use in their own writing, and gain both a surface sense of their essay and a deeper structural sense as well, feeling their textual body as both a series of *ex-pressions*, out-ward moving surface forces acting on other forces, and an assemblage of *in-tensions*, connections of force with structural freedom and material limits. That is, by engaging with texts using this bodily form, students will encounter and engage texts, both theirs and others, as a body itself.

V. Conclusion and Transition

In this chapter, I looked to the Japanese martial arts concept of *kumite*, or sparring, as a model and method for the complex and overwrought practice of peer review in composition. Both forms of partner practice hold central and essential places in the development of martial arts and writing skills respectively, complex fields of forces that require and are designed for engaging with other people. Furthermore, because of the inherent, and yet dismissed, critical element of peer review, *kumite* gives us a different and useful model for approaching critique, regardless of how instructors may shy away from that term because of the difficulty in dealing with conflict and the risk of potential antagonism. Rather than minimize it, as we have done in composition, conceiving of peer critique as *kumite* centralizes this risk, intensifies, and makes it the generative element in the exercise, rather a persistently irksome part of it. Through a repeated practice of mutually vulnerable enactments of force upon partners, students in *kumite* practice their skills, but also practice self-discipline and self-control by safely experiencing the painful effects of their techniques by relying on their partner moving slowly and gently.

However, in focusing on the problems of peer critique, I necessarily focused on one side of a foundational debate of *kumite*, that concerning formal sparring and free sparring; whether techniques should be practiced in strict, controlled repetitive sequences or mirror as closely as possible practical application in a fighting match or life-and-death combat. However, we can never adequately perform the material motivations for or disciplinary expectations writing a proposal for an employer or a lab report for a senior level biology class (Chapter 4). So I focused instead on maximizing the self-awareness of the students as writers, as bodies and mechanisms of force, rather than give them a

collection of various “writings” with which to become competent. Nevertheless, even though the form of this practice cannot actually present the consequences and dynamics to which students will be subjected and the standards by which they will be judged, we should not therefore entirely abandon the impulse toward practical application. While the bar of practical application might certainly be different, perhaps thought as lower and simpler than that for training purposes, over-preparing students for many eventualities and cultivating a deep technical and ethical awareness will make their eventual responses to/in practical situations that much more efficient and more effective.

In martial arts terms, even though we must use formal *kumite* to teach and practice peer review, the way that such engagement happens cannot be similarly formal and divorced from practical consequences, teaching ‘fossilized’ and ‘stylized’ techniques. But rather, the techniques performed and the way we perform them, even within a rigid and repetitive training sequence, must account for what students will face when practicing their skills outside the class, a practice that has high stakes, dangerous consequences, and less forgiving standards of evaluation. We saw this in relation to the prevalence and sudden lack of combat experience by instructors and students at the end of the Sengoku Period, the purpose and intensity of formal rules and the resemblance of training forms to actual battle is a tense area to negotiate. Some advocated for free sparring models resembling warfare as closely as possible and others argued that rigorous training, even outside the specifics of practical application, can provide the skills needed for successful application in such practical situations.

But this tense and tenuous relationship between the pedagogy of the dojo and the practice of the battlefield is not limited to Japanese martial arts or the 17th century, but is

a constitutive part of all martial arts, and indeed all *training* itself. That is, while the space of training and the space of application are very different spaces, necessarily, they are also necessarily mutually constitutive. While the space of application—street-fight, battlefield, board room, committee meeting, or grant proposal—might determine standards of success or failure, preparing students with and for these standards only makes for a stagnant or regressive pedagogy, but inattention to these standards, neglecting the perhaps-ruthless pragmatism of non-compositionist audiences makes for an impotent and ineffectual pedagogy as well. In sum, even though the space of learning and space of application, the dojo and the battlefield are different, they are mutually constitutive and deeply intertwined, and any pedagogical activities must be aimed not only at giving students skills to respond to practice situations, but also provide opportunities for relatively safe ethical reflection that will allow students to engage in such practical situations in an ethically beneficial way. As instructors then, we have a duty not just to teach students how to do something well—writing, fighting, and fighting-writing—but also to do it for good.

^{xcvii} See Sperling 55, Beck 419, Berkenkotter 316, Brammer and Rees 72, Ching 307.

^{xcviii} See Ching 314, Dipardo and Freedman 124, Freedman 73, Hamilton-Wieler 19, Jacobs 68, Lundstrom and Baker 31, Roehler and Canton 3, Sperling 55, Woodward 42, Zhu 493

^{xcix} See Byard 2, Gere and Abbott 363, Harris 372, Horgan and Barnett 3.

^c See Barnard 125, Beck 420, Berkenkotter 312, Dipardo and Freedman 125, Gere and Abbott 363, Graff 81, Harris 372, Herrman 2, Horgan and Barnett 3, Vatalaro 21, Wynn et.al. 28, Zhu 494

^{ci} See Barnard 125, Berkenkotter 312, Dipardo and Freedman 125, Gere and Abbott 363, Harris 372, Horgan and Barnett 3, Zhu 494

^{cii} See Barnard 125, Beck 419, Berkenkotter 312, Freedman 74, Gere and Abbott 363, Harris 372, Horgan and Barnett 3, Jacobs 68, Louth et.al. 221

^{ciii} See Barnard 125, Byard 2, Danis 358, Gere and Abbott 363, Harris 372, Horgan & Barnett 3, Wynn et.al. 10

^{civ} See Barnard 125, Dipardo and Freedman 132, Gere and Abbott 378, Harris 372-3, Lundstrom and Baker 31, NCTE 2, Wynn et.al. 12, 15-16

^{cv} See Ching 314, Dipardo and Freedman 125-127, Holt 390.

^{cvi} See Byard 2, Ching, 308, Gere and Abbott 363, Harris 372.

^{cvi} See Ching for a complication of Gere's foundational narrative of the origins of collaborative writing.

^{cvi} "Jeremy" one of Porter's students, wrote an essay venting about his coworkers' "corruption and incompetence," a broad claim he makes about minorities and working class people, specifically focusing on his African-American manager: "[Barry] could barley read or write and dropped out of school. This was not just the manager of produce, but one of the top four managers in whole store, and he was barley literate! I instantly lost all my respect for him after all, I was fifteen and smarter" (594). Porter reports that he wanted Jeremy to critically engage with these assumptions, and that other students were really worried about him. See also Dipardo and Freedman 125.

^{cix} "Styles of collaboration, for instance, are of varying depths, ranging from 'parallel,' where students share material and comments but fail to otherwise monitor one another's work, to 'associative,' where some information is exchanged about various combinations selected without any further coordination of the students' roles, to 'cooperative,' where students constantly monitor each other's tasks, carefully coordinating roles" (DiPardo and Freedman 133).

See also Harris 369 on "collaborative writing" vs. "co-authorship."

^{cx} For example, Brammer and Rees studied two courses, Communication Arts I and II, a mixed speech/writing class, in a curriculum that also requires two upper-level disciplinary specific writing courses (75). Therefore, their results would be tentative at best for pure composition courses without any further writing requirements, and perhaps irrelevant for most practitioners of peer review. As I have noted elsewhere, it's extremely problematic for the advancements in scholarship, particularly concerning pedagogy, to come out of and be limited to the most ideal institutional situations, ones not mirrored by the clear majority of teachers' experiences. In doing so, composition scholarship sets an unreachable standard and sets up most composition instructors to fail, unable to meet best practices because of institutional realities that better-off scholars do not have to account for.

^{cxix} Other factors include nation, region, level of education, university, type of university, educational requirements, administrators, past teachers, past students, curriculum, classroom, class-time, schedule, season, weather, external temperature, internal temperature, dining hall menu, athletic events, bar drink specials and accessibility of fake IDs, etc.

^{cxii} See Bickford 148, Brammer and Rees 72, DiPardo and Freedman 129, Herrman 3, Horgan and Barnett 3, Louth et.al. 215, Paulson et.al. 380, Vatalaro 22, Woodward 40. Also, these various sources and others range widely in their methodological approach, from anecdotal lore to theoretical and philosophical meditations to eye-tracking empirical studies and think-aloud protocols, with the different approaches and research site greatly affecting how specific methods of peer review function and are evaluated.

^{cxiii} While I use the names here for ease and clarity, any of these names can and have been applied to any number of practices, even if they do not match with the spectrum here. That is, “peer editing” can be the name for dynamic, interactive full-class discussion or the reductive, archaic version of students acting as spell check for their peers. Also, “peer evaluation” and “peer response” might be two different names by different instructors for a very similar or even the exact same partner practice. One exacerbating factor in the complexity of “peer review” is the inability of the discipline to come to consensus or disseminate this consensus among all practitioners, especially considering the slow pace at which theory trickles down into pedagogy, and the conservative tendency of many teachers to continue what they’ve always done, ignoring more recent developments in scholarship.

^{cxiv} See Bean 301, Beck 439, Brammer and Rees 78, Freedman 81, Hall 6, Harris 372, NCTE 1, Paulson et.al 324, Porter 580, Woodward 44, Wynn et.al. 12

^{cxv} See Dipardo and Freedman 127, Freedman 79, Hall 4, Hamilton-Weiler 17, Newkirk 301, Woodward 40

^{cxvi} See Barnard 126, Freedman 100, Graff 87, Holt 385, Woodward 42. Also, Vygotsky’s “theories were developed through studies of dyadic interaction,” and the ZPD is its most productive when limited to two peers, and overcomplicated when applied improperly to large group scenarios (DiPardo and Freedman 129).

^{cxvii} See NCTE 2, Beck 417, Berkenkotter 314, Brammer and Rees 71, George 322, Newkirk 301, 306, 379, Paulson et.al. 305, 329, Porter 582, 583, Vatalaro 22, Zhu 494.

^{cxviii} See Freedman 90, 102, George 378.

^{cxix} However, the feeling of power and sense of superiority afforded by “correcting” others, is not only something perpetrated by “bad” students, but also by many teachers who don’t provide harsh feedback to help students but to demonstrate their own learned superiority. Porter identifies this tendency to “meanness” as the pedagogy of severity.

^{cxx} Unarguably, there is a gendered dimension to aggression and conflict. While it plays into reductive patriarchal stereotypes to cast all males as aggressive dominators and all females as passive submitters, it is an element of hegemonic gender performance for both groups, and rampant throughout the scholarship, as well as my own personal experience. While we must recognize this tendency, we cannot allow it to be totalizing of either gender, i.e. some males are passive and some females are aggressive, but instead promote and train students to be adaptable and flexible as context demands. But this is further complicated not only by proper attention to the resonance of patriarchal stereotypes with the reality they have helped construct, a necessarily part of challenging them, but also considering the complex relationships between sex, gender, and sexuality, especially with the increased visibility, and in some fortunate cases, acceptance of queer and trans students. While such advocacy is integral to pedagogy going forward, proper attention to this is beyond the scope of this inquiry.

^{cxxi} See Beck 418, George 321, Graff 82, Hamilton-Wieler 21, Harris 375, NCTE 1, Neubert and McNelis 54, Porter 580, Roehler and Canton 2, Schaffer 82, Woodward 41, Zhu 502, 515.

^{cxxii} See Beck 413, Brammer and Rees 79, Dipardo and Freedman 127, Freedman 79, Hall 5, Hamilton-Wieler 5, Harris 376, Holt 589, Paulson et.al. 327, Porter 588, Smith 8, Sperling 67, Woodward 40, Zhu 494.

^{cxxiii} Some readers might bristle here at my equation of “audience” with “opponent.” Recall Danis above, who argues that language is used “establish, maintain, and reshape relationships as much as to share ideas and insights” (356). That is, what the language of the user is trying to do to us as readers/audience is an act of the language as well and just as important as what they’re “trying to say,” so if someone is trying to persuade, either to refute or come to consensus, they are doing something to us, and if we are critical readers we are preventing them from doing it easily or letting them do as they will. Certainly, the antagonistic attitude in argument can be problematic, leading others to advocate for “alternative,” non-persuasive models of argument. However, I would argue that all writing is argumentative, with some writing arguing implicitly like explication or description arguing “believe me, this is true” and narrative likewise implicitly argues “see this story, suspend disbelief, keep reading.”

^{cxxiv} Friday notes that “Westerners usually equate kata with the solo exercises of Chinese, Okinawan, and Korean martial arts...[But] kata in both traditional and modern Japanese fighting arts nearly always involve the participation of two or more people” (n.l 164). The mixed lineage of karate illustrates this, and it is from Shotokan Karate, brought to mainland Japan by the Okinawan Grandmaster Gichin Funakoshi, that I draw the terms formal and free sparring.

^{cxxv} For the earliest martial arts students, young samurai, their training to ride a horse, shoot a bow, and cut with the sword was purely vocational; killing was their profession. While hopefully our students will not become professional killers, the “killer attitude” often reported or enacted by professionals in variety of fields like business and law means

that harsh and ruthless pragmatism is an inextricable element of the “real world” especially in our neo-liberal late-capitalist society. While getting fired or getting promoted is not directly life-or-death, in an increasingly precarious economy, it can certainly lead to it, and economic prosperity and physical wellbeing only differ by a few small degrees.

^{cxxvi} One John Dewey himself said was “alone worth the price of admission” when he visited the Kodokan, the home of *judo*, in *Letters from Japan and China*.

^{cxxvii} See Lynch. Et.al. for the need for “cooperative conflict” or “conflictual cooperation.”

^{cxxviii} Early on in teaching first-year writing, I found that often students were not only grossly uninformed and misinformed about current events and issues of common concern, but ignorant of their own stances, their connections to other thinkers, and their resemblance to or difference from well-known political ideologies. To address this, I have used Political Compass. Originally developed by Pace News, the questionnaire positions respondents at coordinates corresponding to their beliefs concerning government control in social life (Authoritarian to Libertarian) and government control in economic affairs (Left to Right, which I call “Fair” to “Free”), which produces four general quadrants: Authoritarian Left (collectivism), Authoritarian Right (neo-conservatism), Libertarian Right (neo-liberalism), and Libertarian Left (progressivism). However, as with the structure of the partner practice, it doesn’t matter which we use, necessarily, only that we use one, and indeed any taxonomy, especially one dealing with humans will be inadequate, have exceptions, and fail to totalize everyone. Other useful resources for this include The Political Spectrum (created in response to perceived UK-bias in the PC), I Side With (places respondents in relation to contemporary American political figures), and The 8 Values (identifying a pre-existing ideology students might identify with), but other approaches we might use could be the True Colors, Myers-Briggs, or the Enneagram tests. It depends.

^{cxxix} Using a variety of different forms, always some combination of Likert-scale questions and mandatory comments, students explain how well their peers helped them, averaged across multiple sessions, which count for half of students’ peer group grades. That is, they are graded on completion and how well their peers felt they were helped. These have produced a variety of interesting results. e.g. some extremely poor writers being the best peer critics while the better writers were the worst, while singular partners got a range of evaluations, and some students who rarely showed up still received high marks, and the same struggles at work in peer review, sharks and teddy bears show up in peer review evaluation as well. While this practice is useful and worthy of study, it is beyond the scope of this project.

^{cxxx} We might therefore need to appeal to honor codes, like the Carolinian Creed at USC, which values integrity, dignity, rights and property, anti-bigotry, and concern for others. If we have institutional statements like these, we have a basis from which to differentiate acceptable and unacceptable views without risking our station as representatives of the

university. Certainly, in our current late-capitalist society nothing we do is truly noble, but more or less rationalized ways of selling our life and labor, exploiting ourselves for both necessity and luxury, but if we still believe that education can be a way of make people better and making better people, than we have a responsibility to attempt to do so to the fullest of our ability.

^{cxix} While I cannot ever truly experience the perspective of another, I am quite aware that this willingness to openness and vulnerability is a perspective of my own privileged place as a cis het white male of above average height and mass. People of color, women, and queer educators face far more challenges to their authority as educators than I have or ever will. While I don't have an answer or suggestion ameliorate this explicit inequality in how teachers are viewed by their students, it is my hope that a classroom that is built around mutuality and respect, especially one that emphasizes conflict and argument, would discourage bigotry based on historical power discrepancies, explicit or implicit, that infects every facet of our society, in education most especially. Any push toward "equality" will be necessarily vulnerable to exploitation by those already with power and historical privilege, that a white supremacist can see censoring of their views as an "unfair attack on free speech."

^{cxx} This exercises is based most specifically on the methods of Graff, Neubert and McNelis, and Hamilton-Wieler, and the exercises of Elbow, Belanoff, and Bruffee as laid out and integrated by Holt, and influenced by many other sources as well. Even though partner practice varies widely, the set of common agreements (explicit instructions, specific detailed student engagement, and productive instructor modeling, both technically and affectively) allow for good peer review to be different in form, but essentially the same in spirit, regardless of the attitude used in the approach. That is, even though Elbow, for example, moves far away from the antagonism of critique and I move into and through it, we both end up in the same place: productive student engagement and improved student writers.

^{cxxi} The length of the essay will depend on which cycle of the assignment we're in (3/6/10/15) and adjustments for later peer critique periods would be made accordingly.

^{cxxii} E.g. "what this means is..." "I'm not sure what this means..." or "This part is good because" etc. and dealing with any "errors" as issues of specific and (in)effective Claims

^{cxxiii} E.g. "This is true because..." "Why do you think that?" or applying questions of acceptability, relevance, and sufficiency.

^{cxxiv} E.g. Does the explication lead to the conclusion? Does the *Narratio* support the argument? How are the moves in confirmation, refutation, and concession laid out and how do they relate? Are all the consequences outlined in sufficient detail? Etc.

^{cxxv} These partners would also change in each iteration, providing students fresh perspectives in each critique for each iteration of the recursive essay sequence. Ideally, students would not engage with any peer more than once in formal *kumite*, although

students will have ample time and opportunity to develop rapport with their group members, through any number of collaborative minor assignments, in-class group work, or any other pedagogical devices deemed necessary.

^{cxxxviii} Along with this graded draft, students would also write a memo to their peers (and the instructor) detailing how they used their peers' comments, what they did and why, as well as what they did not and why not, and students would also rate their peers' effectiveness through the evaluation that counts as half their grade, and they would repeat at each cycle of the essay sequence.

Conclusion

Ethical Principles for Affirmative Contention

In the preceding pages, I offered a series of theoretical articulations and pedagogical applications that seek to change the ways we conceive, practice, and train students in writing, particularly focusing on a rhetorical orientation to and practice of writing arguments. Furthermore, because of the agonistic origins of our practices of argument, these articulations and applications concern themselves with the ways that we engage with and in violence. Despite the deep set and well-founded rejection of violence in composition and rhetoric, let alone the larger academy, this rejection is built on a reductive conception and evaluation of violence, one that demonizes what might otherwise be useful and productive modes of inquiry by obscuring or rationalizing the violence that we can, do, and must commit.

If we recall Dionysodorus's jab about Cleinias's friends wanting him to be dead in being other than he is, we have an interesting insight into the violence of education. If we conceive of violence as a violation of the autonomy of the individual subject, leaving aside violation of their bodily integrity for the moment, then any work we do in education as a form of change is itself a violent act. If a student comes into our class with a worldview based on what we in the academy might see as unfounded, problematic, or even dangerous beliefs, and we seek to increase their abilities of research, reflection, and critical thinking then our goal is to destroy the student-as-they-come-to-us because such

abilities would challenge their worldview, perhaps change it, and in producing a “more educated” student, we have killed the one that has come to us.

For example, a frequent occurrence in my teaching career has been students offering their views, and I ask from where they have gotten them and on what grounds they believe them, only to be met with scorn, offense, and nasty end-of-term evaluations about my “shoving liberal views down their throats.” Even though I have my own perspectives, I cannot simply presume my own truth as The Truth and expect my students to conform without violating their integrity as autonomous subjects. We have reached a point, and perhaps we’ve always been here, where disagreement itself is so unfamiliar and perceived to be so violent that even the request for evidence is perceived as an unethical imposition upon the autonomy of students. However, as an educator, I must allow students their beliefs in God (even though he’s dead and we have killed him), Justice (even though it’s an illusion produced by hegemony to naturalize oppression), and Truth (which exists only through an anthropomorphic and anthropocentric lens), but when they use such beliefs as Warrants or backing for arguments that they make to and about other people, an individual’s opinion is not simply theirs any more, but part of a discourse that is subject to challenge, debate, and even dismissal.

Put differently, if I am training students to fight with words, there’s nothing within that pedagogy that dictates the ethical orientations that students must necessarily develop as a result of that training. Indeed, the “promising students who rejects their master” is a popular trope in martial arts media, and the individual who uses their skills simply for domination and self-aggrandizement is a threat to everyone, whether their skills are in rhetorical or physical conflict. However, an agonistic or *bushido* orientation

to conflict does not seek domination, but protection and peace. While such an ideal is scarred by the material histories of oppression that mark and characterize the warrior caste that became aristocracy, which became plutocracy (something it had always already been), this ideal itself is still valuable. It is this ideal of nobility, to be noble not because of birth, or class, or access to resources, but because of compassion, passion, diligence, and effort to be the best person and do rightly and squarely with others, not simply because it's the easiest way to achieve our goals, but because to do otherwise would be dishonorable. In short, I cannot teach students what to fight for, but in teaching them to fight well, I might also give them occasion to think about why they fight and what they hope to accomplish with their fighting.

While there is no escape from coercion, there are particular ways of being coercive to produce particular effects.^{cxxxix} In martial arts practice, the foundation of training is the consent to coercion by becoming a student, by taking on the task and responsibilities of training. The use of short, memorable maxims is a common practice across many specific martial arts, and many martial arts systems developed using this same pedagogical principle.^{cxli} While one could certainly misunderstand these trajectories to be ways to minimize violence, within this frame there is no “non-violence.” Instead, each conflict is a particular enactment of force on others that can be directed toward particular ends, and each style a different collection of techniques, tendencies, and tactics for engaging in conflict. I have therefore created the ethics of my project from the recommendations of various theorists, scholars, and pedagogues engaging with conflict in rhetoric, on and through Greek agonism as a foundational orientation to violence. What follows are a series of principles that teachers might meditate on, practice, or articulate to

students to promote this affirmative orientation to conflict that I have advocated in this project.

I. Fight with Sedimented Inequalities

By foregrounding the historio-cultural conditions surrounding the developments of values, arguments, and positions, as Sharon Crowley recommends in *Toward a Civil Discourse*, a scholar can “demonstrate the contingency of given values or sets of values by locating them in space and time, thus destabilizing the system of belief in which these same values are taken to be noncontingent” (201). In “Moments of Argument” Dennis Lynch, Diana George, and Marilyn Cooper make a similar prescription for teachers to have students question their own commonplaces, “to situate the issue historically,...and to find analogous problems from the past in order to resist coming to closure too quickly” (73). These three moves in questioning, situating, and analogizing serve to illustrate the contingency of positions and issues. Furthermore, when students realize that their positions are not just “their own opinions but arise from historical, social, and cultural conditions—they do not feel they need to argue so fiercely and single-mindedly, and they can take the time to listen to other voices and rethink their positions” (Lynch, et. al. 82). By making positions arguable, these scholars argue that students are then better able to argue positions within context. By ignoring the historio-cultural differences of values, arguments, and positions, by erasing the uneven battlefields, the sedimented inequalities connected to those differences are left unquestioned as well.

However, it is not as easy as merely historicizing or simply being nice. “Because those structural differences pervade the writing classes most of us teach,” Susan Jarratt

argues “our students can't merely accept or reject such responses on an equal basis, because of the material realities in our society in which such responses are grounded. Such inequities often make the attempt to create a harmonious and nurturing community of readers an illusory fiction—a superficial suturing of real social divisions” (“The Case for Conflict” 267). Because historio-cultural inequalities are so pervasive, even into the supposedly neutral space of the classroom, not everyone can access and engage these inequalities in the same way or to the same degree. In fact, a strong aspect of many historio-cultural inequalities is the limitation or prevention of the means of those affected by these inequalities to question them. Not everyone can contend with difference in the same way. It is not simply a matter of pointing out inequalities, but pointing out the inequality even at work in their identification.

II. Fight with Multimindedness

Rather than enacting a position as stable and fixed, one should enact a position that is flowing and fluxed. Indeed, such a position would not actually be *a* position at all, but a *positionality*. Instead of *monolithic*, as one stone, one should be *polyhydrous*; like many waters. In conflict between two stones, one or both is smashed, like what Deborah Tannen identifies in *The Argument Culture* as the pro/con logic of political debate shows like *Crossfire* (50). Conflicting monoliths are mutually exclusive; either one is right or one is wrong. Patricia Roberts-Miller explains that if students enter class discussion in a monolithic way, “determined to defend their pre-commitments, if they leave their intellect at the door, so to speak, then classes will simply be shouting matches” (“When Agonism is Agony” 228). Such a discrete binaristic model prevents conflict from being

anything other than a territorial dispute, a line in the sand, a war over scarce resources and tenable territory. The only result is the destruction of one position or both, through either mutual destruction or resolution of their difference.

In a conflict between waters, the positions blend and mix, and this dynamism allows for more than just a reduction to pro/con. Such a reduction erases the differences among different positions that may be on one side or the other. Rather than a position, which is rarely ever singular and homogenous, one must have a *multiminded positionality*. Like water, Bonnie Honig explains, “the self is not, ever, one. It is itself a site of an agonistic struggle” (220). This positionality is that of the ancient Greek agonist who is “not an enclosed identity; he is rather a kind of open field of forces” (Hawhee 21). This understanding of identity as multiple can also be seen in the third of Nietzsche’s propositions of *Kriegs-Praxis*, or “fighting-writing” from *Ecce Homo*. He states that one must “never attack persons” as discrete entities, but rather use them to “make visible a general but creeping and elusive calamity” (232). In *Contesting Nietzsche*, Christa Davis Acampora expands on his thesis, “as the contestants are increasingly defined in terms of diametric opposition and absolute difference, they are increasingly less tolerant and receptive to actual engagement” (53).

An individual is a site for diagnosis of particular forces, as the individual is a nominalized intersection of multiple flows of difference: a positionality, not a position. However, listening with multimindedness also involves “a risk in that one might lose,” as Roberts-Miller argues because “advancing an argument means that one must be open to the criticisms others will make of it” (“Fighting without Hatred” 589). This positionality also requires that one “not only listen carefully to the perspectives of others but try to

think from those perspectives,” as Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin recommend for “invitational rhetoric” (12). This multimindedness “demands that one simultaneously trust and doubt one's own perceptions, rely on one’s own judgment and consider the judgments of others, think for oneself and imagine how others think” (Roberts-Miller, “Fighting” 597). As Bruce Lee says, one must be “shapeless, formless, like water. When you pour water in a cup, it becomes the cup. When you pour water in a bottle, it becomes the bottle. When you pour water in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Water can flow or it can crash. Be water” (Lee).

III. Fight without Hatred

Nietzsche’s fourth proposition of *Kreigs-Praxis* states that one should “only attack things when every personal quarrel is excluded, when any background of bad experiences is lacking” (232). Personal quarrel and bad conscience make opponents “less tolerant and receptive” as Acampora argues (53). Tannen identifies this process also as Gregory Bateson’s “complementary schismogenesis” in which each parties’ aggression enervates the other, leading to “more exaggerated forms of an opposing behavior in a mutually aggravating spiral” (*The Argument Culture* 53). Hatred breeds hatred, each bigger and stronger. This mutual aggravation produces not only hatred, but as Foss and Griffin argue “feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, pain, humiliation, guilt, embarrassment, or angry submission on the part of the audience as rhetors communicate the superiority of their positions and the deficiencies of those of the audience” (6). Such negative feelings come from the particular orientation to conflict as it is enacted, not conflict itself.

As Roberts-Miller explains “conflict is a necessary consequence of difference,” but such conflict need not necessarily lead to enmity (“Fighting” 589). The potentiality of enmity is a result of the pervasiveness of domination as the only mode of conflict and the difficulty in thinking beyond ones perspective and granting our opponents the same legitimacy as us. Borrowing from Mouffe’s *Agonistics*, fighting without hatred “requires that the other are not seen as enemies to be destroyed, but as adversaries whose ideas might be fought, even fiercely, but whose right to defend those ideas is not to be questioned” (7). Mouffe’s language is illustrative here; enemies are destroyed, but adversaries are fought. Conversely, Mouffe writes, “adversaries fight against each other because they want their interpretation of the principles to become hegemonic, but they do not put into question the legitimacy” of their opponent (7). Unlike the enemy, who has no place within a collective “us,” a structure built on his exclusion, the adversary is part of a collective of all participants, even if a position may be mutually exclusive with my own. With adversaries, eradication cannot be the goal, but only impersonal combat with their ideas, their attacks.

Put another way, fighting to kill is not the first response as with enemies, but a last possible resort and a failure in adversarial relations. Rather than “a willingness to triumph at all costs,” Roberts-Miller argues that fighting without hatred means “that one is willing to take risks” (“Fighting” 589). Alongside risk, I place Foss and Griffin’s recommendation for safety by rejecting cruelty, making “no attempt to hurt, degrade, or belittle” interlocutors or their beliefs (10-11). I would take their argument in the strongest sense, having to include in their structure of safety even the patriarchal misogynist of traditional rhetoric, against whom they situate their entire project of invitational rhetoric.

As Maxine Hairston outlines in “Carl Roger’s Alternative to Traditional Rhetoric,” “implications of trying to be this fair-minded with one’s opponent are staggering,” and the balance of risk and safety is quite precarious, but necessary to fighting without hatred (375).

Using the ethics of the adversary means that there is no longer inherent love or hatred based on the logic of a given relationship; no simply “good” and “bad” opponents. Instead, each adversary must be encountered on his/her own nuanced grounds as legitimate interlocutors in the agonistic assemblage, fought fiercely without personal quarrel or contempt because even the most violent lover of destruction is a human being, as complex, nuanced, and multiple as anyone else. We must affirm the particularities of their difference, fight them honestly, and only exclude those that threaten the possibility of future contention, defeating that which is no longer productive, tentative, or questionable.

IV. Fight against Total Victory

Both the eristic “victory at all costs” and the irenic drive to consensus both have as their goal the erasure of difference and the negation of argument. The eristic seeks to negate the opponent in a particular fight, but the irenic seeks consensus, negating fighting altogether. In the eristic model, each argument ends when it is “won” by someone defeating someone else. That is, as John Poulakos writes, “declaring winners and losers coincides with saying that the contest is over” (175). The eristic drive for victory, as Foss and Griffin argue, enacts “a desire for control and domination, for the act of changing another establishes the power of the change agent over that other” (3). Conversely, the

irenic rejection of argument altogether has its own risks. As Lynch, George, and Cooper warn, to see victory “as the whole of argumentative writing is to risk seeing all decisions as final, all positions as absolute or even natural” (77). In response to the risk of finality, we must understand “winning an argument is not a permanent achievement,” but tentative and itself a move in the fight, a knockout strike (Crowley 33). A tentative victory is never totalizing or undisputed, but nor is such disputation a risk to the process of arriving at or to that victory itself. Greg Myers writes that a victory “can never foreclose the possibility that an opposing argument will open new lines of rhetorical force” (56). Each victory is admittedly an erasure, but one that is neither permanent nor unquestionable.

If consensus is the goal, then arguing itself can be counterproductive. In the irenic model, Sharon Crowley explains that consensus “begins with the knowledge that the positions taken by some or all must be eroded or forgotten if deliberation is to succeed” (22). Myers also explains that consensus “must mean that some interest have been suppressed or excluded” (156). Consensus, the point at which disagreement is neutralized, functions for Myers as a necessary end to conflict, and for Crowley, a necessary beginning. Just like eristic final victory, the irenic final victory of consensus is itself a move in the fight, a submission hold. In this case, the opponent “taps out,” conceding or accepting the resolution of the conflict. Not only does the move of consensus have particular risks, but also even aiming for that move is always risky.

While consensus might seem neutral, natural, and necessary, Mouffe explains that a consensus “is the result of sedimented hegemonic practices. It is never the manifestation of a deeper objectivity that is exterior to the practices that brought it into

being” (*Agonistics* 2). If understood as natural, Mouffe argues that “too much emphasis on consensus” coupled with conflict-aversion eliminates the drive for argument altogether, evacuating politics and social change (12). This risk aligns with Nietzsche’s second proposition of *Kriegs-Praxis*: “only attack causes against which [one] would not find allies,” as such causes would oppose hegemonic consensus (232). Myers and Crowley point out the particular risks of consensus, and Mouffe illustrates the risks of aiming for it in the first place. A move that finishes a fight is itself a fighting move; every closure is also an opening and each opening a closure as well. Victory and consensus are always risky.

V. Fight against Invincibility

One of the biggest threats to fighting well is the invincible opponent, the uncontestable adversary like the Good. In service to the entire assemblage, the incontestable must be excluded from the contest, as it is a threat to further contention. As Mouffe writes, “there will always be a struggle between conflicting hegemonic projects aiming at presenting their views of the common good as the ‘true’ incarnation of the universal” (*Agonistics* 79). That is, if positions base their struggle for hegemony on universal premises like the Good, Truth, or divine revelation, a common backing for many, then there can never be any actual argument. If someone is arguing from the Good, or any inarguable premise, then any disagreement cannot be justified. One cannot argue with the Good or any other universal claim, built as they are through coercive and often circular logic. While one can certainly argue for or against a universal claim, the claims’ universality means “no rational resolution of that conflict will ever be available”

(Mouffe, *Agonistics* 79). The logic at work here only fosters violence toward difference, because difference from what is Good can only be Bad (or Evil), universally and absolutely, which returns us to the dualism of Athena and Ares, as any Good is bound to its particular historio-cultural context and ideological community, an “us” who it is good for.

This could also be understood as The Miltiades Principle from Nietzsche’s “Homer’s Contest” and Acampora’s reading of it. After winning the battle of Marathon, lacking both limitations on and “proper understanding of the limits and conditions of his excellence, Miltiades became reckless and destructive” and Acampora relates that both he and Athens “suffered gravely as a result” (34). For Nietzsche, “this proves that without envy, jealousy, and ambition in the contest, the Hellenic state, like Hellenic man, deteriorates. It becomes evil and cruel, it becomes vengeful and godless...it then only takes a panicky fright to make it fall and shatter” (179-180). When the human has no rival among mortals, he becomes a threat to everyone. Indeed, the invincible opponent threatens the entire assemblage as well as each individual competitor. Nietzsche notes that ostracism is very important here: the most powerful person is removed from contention so that contention might continue for both individual and assemblage. This exclusion is very important “because productive agonism is dependent on the actual capabilities of participants who must manifest them in order for them to be meaningful indicators of value” (Acampora 37). Contest can only be productive if it is an actual contest. While not every opponent might be contested, his or her moves, foundations, and practices must remain contestable.

IV. Fight from Sedimented Inequalities

In the 1869 Harvard Address, University President Charles William Eliot “presented the Harvard experience as one that converted poor and rich, or anyway those who had endured and demonstrated their ‘capacity and character,’ their open-mindedness and ‘sense of public duty,’ into one body, ‘the sons of Harvard’” (Douglas 93). Education could benefit students from all conditions of life, provided they assimilated into Harvard’s elite, seemingly agonistic culture. As Lisa Reid Ricker explains, the university utilized a supposedly agonistic pedagogy, having students “engage in rigorous oral drill and debate” (241). However, in the 1872-73 Harvard annual report, Eliot bewailed students’ writing, marking them as unprepared for the “real work” of debate, causing composition to be created as a grammar-based, remedial, and subaltern training class (Santa 14). A logic of exclusion like that of Aristotle and Corbett is evident here, as Eliot was clear that not all students deserved education, only those who had demonstrated their merit and the values of/to Harvard. Only those who accepted and embodied the coercive foundations could participate in the contest built on them; however, since these students could not embody a “son of Harvard,” the contest itself was closed.

In addition to non-elite men, women entering the university contributed to the pedagogical shift, as Robert Connors posits in *Composition-Rhetoric*. After 1870, there were elements of “confession, of intimate personalism, and of anti-agonistic admission of weakness in the new topics that could not have existed prior to women’s entrance into higher education” (65). Connors argues that students write personal narrative, a “feminine” genre, because they lack the skills for argumentation, a “masculine genre.” This generic, gendered hierarchy reifies the notion of women as passive and men as

active, based on the assumption that women lacked the innate ability to contend required by the masculine spheres of Harvard or the public at large. Ricker, Connors, Douglas, and Santa all agree that there was a shift from agonistic pedagogy to irenic pedagogy resulting from entrance of non-elite men and women.

This supposed agonistic pedagogy of 19th century Harvard has “a patriarchal bias,” as Foss and Griffin point out (1). Women and other others were either barred at the gates or (forced or thought to be) unprepared to enter them. This is not a problem of contenders, but a structural problem of the agonistic assemblage as it was built through historically sedimented inequalities. As Myers explains, these inequalities are “whole systems of ideas that people take for granted and use to make sense of the world. One cannot escape from one’s economic interests and ethnic background, but one can try to understand how they shape one’s thinking and social actions” (168). One must fight from the position into which he is thrown, but one must fight through those structures that striate the collective into hegemonic hierarchies.

As Roberts-Miller explains, this “requires a particular kind of education, one that is increasingly under attack from political groups for whom diversity, multiculturalism, and critical thinking are devil terms, for whom education should be a process of inculcating a noncritical deference to existing institutions, and for whom dissent is treason” (“Agonism, Wrangling...” 158). In opposing contemporary hegemonies, I follow another on of Nietzsche’s propositions of *Kriegs-Praxis*: “only attack causes that are victorious...even wait until they become victorious” (232). Furthermore, in attacking the Victorious, I cannot either rely on “brute strength,” the unequal positions of any given person, but use suppleness and technique. A martial arts technique that requires immense

physical strength, agility, and endurance from the outset, not after training, is of no use to anyone except the strong. While one must fight against the invincible opponent, one must fight against the conditions that make one invincible as well.

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^{cxxxix} That is, while excluding someone on the bases of gender and on the bases of misogyny are both practices of exclusion, but they differ in the overall structural effects. The former reduces those who can participate by roughly half at the outset, while the latter limits manners of participation by a smaller amount and degree. Furthermore, exclusion of the latter prevents exclusion of the former, which is part of the goal of a misogynistic exclusion of women. What is important is that the ground rules for such exclusions are explicit and transparent. That is, if gender inclusivity is stated, then those who disagree cannot participate, and their exclusion allows for the inclusion of more and different participants.

^{cxl} For example, *Tae Kwon Do*, the Korean martial art most famous for its kicking-centered style has five tenets: Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Self-Control, and Indomitable Spirit. Gichin Funakoshi, who imported Karate from Okinawa to Japan, developing *Shotokan-ryu* and modern Karate, had twenty principles. *Shaolin Gong Fu* was developed and practiced by monks, who acted along eight principles. Other “soft” Chinese martial arts like *bagua* and *tai chi* also have eight principles. These principles include both what might be called “ethics,” as well as “tactics,” ways of interacting with others in the world.

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