11 December 2014

Lamy vs. Erasmus

At the heart of any speech is an argument. As this argument is essentially the lifeblood of the speech it is very important to carefully craft it. Due to this importance, rhetoricians have come up with various different means of developing arguments, all with their own origins and focusing on different aspects and styles of argument. Two such rhetoricians with very different views on the best way to form and argument can be found in Bernard Lamy and Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam. While both views have their own strong points, with respect to effectiveness Lamy’s view is better because of the purpose this view is based on, the style of argument he employs, and his beliefs concerning what should be at the heart of an argument. This shall be illustrated through an example concerning a delegation presenting a resolution to the United Nations.

To begin, Erasmus and Lamy’s beliefs concerning the purpose of rhetoric differ greatly. For Erasmus, the purpose of a speaker is “to instruct, to please, and to persuade” (Erasmus 97). This means that all three elements must be considered and balanced when constructing an argument. Therefore, while instruction and persuasion are often used in arguments, Erasmus’ arguments also always have an element of intrigue by means such as “skillful arrangement for fitting distribution or elegant description” in order to “prevent the boredom of [the] hearer or listener” (Erasmus 45). While it is important to maintain the interest of the audience, labeling this as a necessity can weaken an argument’s persuasive or instructive power. For example, when presenting a resolution at a UN meeting, the focus should be on getting the resolution passed. Therefore, while instruction and enjoyment can still be elements of the speech, if the
For Lamy, instead of copia, brevity is the ideal. Lamy encourages speakers to “[make] a strict choice and selection of what are absolutely necessary” when formulating an argument (Lamy 183). In order to provide well-balanced support for a resolution while staying within the time limits for discussing resolutions set by the UN, this is a very important consideration. Lamy also cautions that if speakers do not heed this advice and speak at length needlessly, the audience “will be weary” (Lamy 183). Members of the UN are almost constantly under mental strain due to the unending stream of political discussions that make up UN meetings. Therefore, it would be unsurprising if towards the end of meetings, UN members were mental exhausted and unable to focus through long and complicated speeches. Therefore, delegations must speak succinctly in order to facilitate focus and comprehension among the audience, as Lamy suggests. Finally, for the sake of brevity, Lamy recommends “[avoiding] all manner of deviation” (Lamy 183). This is also considered a boon in the UN as deviations are seen as either lack of preparedness or distractions from the topic at hand.

Finally, we must look at what Erasmus and Lamy believe to be the core of arguments. For Erasmus, the “most powerful for proof, and therefore for copia, is the force of the exempla” (Erasmus 67). He continues on later to reiterate that “exempla holds first place” (Erasmus 68). In other words, Erasmus believes that the strongest proof available to support an argument is example and, therefore, that many should be used. His reasoning behind this is that “we are moved most strongly by exempla that deal with illustrious events of our own past or the present day” (Erasmus 68). While it is true that examples can elicit emotions in the audience, they should not necessarily make up the majority of the argument, but rather be used as support for it. To return to the example of a UN resolution, while examples are without a doubt helpful in expressing the dire nature of a situation, there are times when examples are insufficient with
should turn to Lamy's method for developing an argument as it gives them the highest probability of success.
Erasmus vs. Lamy paper

Write a 4-page paper (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point, 1-inch margins, name and date only in single-spaced header). Hand in a printed copy in class on Thursday, December 11. Start and finish early so you can deal with problems like a broken printer and still hand it in on time.

Whose method of working up, developing, or amplifying a case do you prefer—Erasmus’ or Lamy’s? Answer the question by discussing some specific situation in which somebody tries to persuade others. You can choose whatever specific situation you want. Examples: In a nationally-televised speech, Obama tries to persuade Americans to support immigration legislation; During an employee meeting, you try to persuade your boss to give you and your colleagues a holiday bonus; During a College of Liberal Arts and Sciences graduation ceremony. Sheryl Sandberg tries to persuade KU December graduates to “lean in.”

Your thesis should be something like: Lamy’s method of developing a case is better than Erasmus’ because a, b, and c.

To answer the question and make a good argument, (1) begin by briefly specifying the situation you will discuss. Cover who is the speaker, purpose, audience, and occasion. You can do this in one sentence (see examples above). (2) Organize your discussion around the reasons why you think Lamy’s method is better than Erasmus’ or vice versa. (3) Discuss the views of both Lamy and Erasmus. (4) Illustrate all points with direct quotations (not paraphrases) from Lamy and Erasmus. Cite page numbers. Aim for including at least 12-15 quotations that are clearly, explicitly, and directly relevant to the point you are illustrating. Include about an equal number of quotations from both authors.

Excellent (A) papers will typically (1) select and explain well at least three significant points that are clearly, explicitly, and directly relevant to their methods of developing a case, (2) indicate a strong understanding of Lamy’s and Erasmus’ methods of developing a case, (3) use relevant quotations from all relevant chapters, (4) cite accurately, and (5) be well-organized and free from mechanical errors.

Good (B) papers will typically (1) select and explain at least three significant points relevant to their methods of developing a case, (2) indicate a good understanding of Lamy and Erasmus, (3) use relevant quotations from most relevant chapters, (4) cite accurately, and (5) be well-organized and almost completely error-free.

Average (C) papers will typically (1) select and explain three significant points but fall a bit short in their significance, explanations, and/or relevance, (2) misunderstand a point about Lamy and/or Erasmus, (3) use limited relevant quotations, (4) cite accurately, and (5) have some problems with organization and errors.

Below average (D) papers will typically (1) select and explain three points but fall short in their significance, explanations, and/or relevance, (2) have some problems with understanding Lamy and Erasmus, (3) use limited relevant quotations, (4) have some problems with citations, and (5) have poor organization and many errors.

Poor (F) papers will typically (1) cover insignificant and/or irrelevant points, and/or inadequately explain them, (2) have serious problems with understanding Lamy and Erasmus, (3) use few or no relevant quotations, (4) cite inaccurately, and (5) have poor organization and many errors.

Well done—a surprising conclusion but well-argued.

A