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Abstract:

The recent neglect of Kames's *Elements of Criticism* (1762) has been due in part to disciplinary angst which has fostered two incomplete views of *Elements*: (1) as a work that trains readers in receptive competence and (2) as significant for primarily philosophical reasons. Reading *Elements* as a rhetoric of criticism, however, suggests first that it is aimed toward production of criticism--not simply reception--although the critical argumentation is oriented toward judgment in terms of universals. Second, it suggests that its significance is practical--that it appeals to readers' anxieties about the burgeoning British economy.

Text of paper:

Even though scholars have recently noted the importance of Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism* (1762) for understanding the history of rhetoric and composition, the book has received almost no detailed attention since the 1960s.¹ In his article on Kames in *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition* (1996), Miller observes that Kames "should be more important than he is in research on the intellectual and institutional origins of College English" (372). In *The Formation of College English* (1997) Miller describes *Elements* as "influential" and "widely used" (5), but does not include detailed attention to it. Two recent collections of essays, *Scottish Rhetoric and its Influences* (1998) edited by Gaillet and *The Scottish Invention of English Literature* (1998) edited by Crawford, include essays on major figures such as Campbell and Blair, but none on Kames. But in his essay "From Rhetoric to Criticism" in the latter collection, Rhodes states that *Elements* "may fairly be said to have established the nomenclature [substituting the term "criticism" for "rhetoric"] up to the present day" (30).

The purpose of this essay is to explicate the relationship between rhetoric and criticism in *Elements*. In particular I will highlight Kames's view of the act of criticism and the role of argument in it. By doing so, I hope to enhance understanding of the role of rhetoric and argument in the critical practice recommended by *Elements*. This understanding of *Elements* may be of interest to scholars interested in disciplinary configurations of rhetoric more generally, and in the potential roles of invention and argument in critical practice. It reminds us that criticism, like other rhetorical practices, is shaped by and attempts to shape historical circumstances. The fact that Kames's version of critical practice is based on so-called universal principles of human nature may have perpetuated a view of criticism as a stable entity rather than a rhetorical practice in its own right, or at least as outside the scope of rhetorical scholarship which understands rhetoric's domain as the practical and probable.

To accomplish these aims, I will first argue that disciplinary angst is the main reason for the relative neglect of Kames, and that this angst involves two incomplete views of *Elements*: that its primary aim is receptive competence and its significance primarily philosophical. I will submit an interpretation of *Elements* that reunites it with the practical aim of producing arguments rather than simply the reception of beauty, sublimity, and so on. I will clarify that the argumentation is oriented more toward universal truth and logical validity than copiousness and probability in part by positioning these orientations in disciplinary history. I will conclude by pointing to sociopolitical and pedagogical bases of appeal of Kames's version of critical practice.

Elements and disciplinary angst

The disciplinary angst of Rhetoric and Composition and Communication Studies has contributed to the relative neglect of Elements and involved incomplete views about its purpose. If scholars of eighteenth-century rhetoric initially attempted to bolster the credibility of rhetoric and composition vis-à-vis literary criticism, then a work like Elements that focuses primarily on literary criticism would not immediately present itself as an appealing object of study. This motive appears in two important contributions to scholarship on eighteenth-century British rhetoric. In 1994, Moran observed in the introduction to Eighteenth-Century British and American Rhetoric and Rhetoricians that literary scholars working in the eighteenth century have been historically more concerned with traditional literary genres than with the rhetorical theory developed by a small group of Scottish intellectuals and often forgotten English and American rhetoricians. The tendency to forget these theorists was complicated by the fact that many of them [. . .] were not creative writers but philosophers, social commentators, critics, and theologians. Therefore, much of the early and most important work done about these figures was carried out not in English but in speech departments, whose primary interest concerned the spoken word. (ix)

He goes on to note that "composition scholars interested in rhetorics of the written word" (x) then became interested in eighteenth-century rhetorics in which they "found [. . .] the beginnings of their own discipline" (x). A sense of rivalry between literature and composition teachers is apparent in Miller's account of the growing interest of rhetoric and composition teachers in eighteenth-century rhetoric. He notes that "[c]omposition specialists have used the prestige of a classical heritage to make the teaching of writing respectable in English departments" ("Reinventing" 26; see also 27, 28-29, 38); that "in America the most respected English departments have traditionally defined themselves as departments of literature;" and that "literary critics have generally paid as little attention to such accounts [of the history of rhetoric and composition] as they have to other scholarship on the teaching of composition" (Formation 2; see also 5).

If we are more interested in composition of discourse than its reception, and if we believe Elements is primarily about reception, then we see why it has not received much attention from composition scholars (see Miller, Formation 3).² If we are more interested in practical discourse than in belles lettres conceived as "nonutilitarian, nonfactual discourse" (Miller, Formation 3), and if we classify Elements as a forerunner of aesthetic theory (see for example Tompkins 215-16), then again we see why Elements has not received much attention. Certainly Miller may not speak for all scholars in rhetoric and composition searching for the roots of the discipline in eighteenth-century British rhetorics, but his statement of motives is worth close attention since he has produced work among the most historically sensitive in this area.

Scholars in departments of communication, in contrast, have given Elements attention but in a way that reflects their own disciplinary anxiety. Their work dates back to the 1960s and tends to read Elements from a philosophical or history-of-ideas perspective. This generalization also holds true for scholarship on Elements outside of communication. The few articles and chapters that have been written about Elements have focused on philosophical underpinnings for theoretical principles, or have read Elements only with respect to other critical theories (Bevilacqua, "Human," "Theory"; Bundy; Hipple; Horn; Kivy; McGuinness; McKenzie; and Randall).³

The almost exclusive focus on philosophical context is not an oversight but rather a choice made forty years ago by speech communication scholars. In 1962 one scholar went so far as to recommend that rhetorical theories "should be looked upon as if they were philosophical systems" (Fisher 174). Approaching rhetorical theories philosophically helped to address disciplinary anxiety—to make speech communication an intellectually respectable discipline. Significantly, in 1968 Ehninger suggested that it would be more illuminating to read rhetorical theories not as philosophical theories but as rhetorical theories—as attempts to suggest how certain verbal arts may address practical circumstances—and that

there is a need to move away from "the notion of the classical rhetoric as a preferred archetype from which all departures are greater or lesser aberrations" ("Systems" 140). He described rhetorical theories as "time- and culture-bound. Systems of rhetoric arise out of a felt need and are shaped in part by the intellectual and social environment in which the need exists" ("Systems" 140). But while he noted that classical theories responded to the development of democratic institutions in which speechmaking was an important practice, and contemporary rhetorical theories to severe tensions and breakdowns in human relations from the interpersonal to the international level, he asserted that late eighteenth-century theories responded to British empiricism ("Systems" 132-33, 135, 137; see also "On Rhetoric" 242-49). Significantly, Ehninger charged eighteenth-century thinkers with giving "insufficient attention to [. . .] the role that practical discourse plays in society--the function it performs and should perform in promoting social cohesion and exercising social control" ("Systems" 136; see also Thomson 147). This charge seems to miss the mark since social control is exactly what many of these "new" rhetorics were, in part, attempting to promote (Conley 193, 223, 224).

Rhetoric and criticism

To address the partial views that the primary aim of Elements is receptive competence and that Elements holds primarily philosophical rather than practical significance, I will now argue that an aim of Elements is production of critical arguments. As I position Kames within a rhetorical tradition, I do not aim to stipulate a definition of rhetoric consisting of necessary and sufficient features. Certainly the meaning of "rhetoric" has been contested throughout its history: what cultural practices it covers, its ends, its means, and so on.⁴ Changing views of Elements are a good index of this. Kames's contemporaries who taught and/or published works on rhetoric—Smith, Campbell, Blair, Priestley—all acknowledge debts to Kames (Bevilacqua, "Theory" 323-27, "Human" 49-50). Herbert Spencer's "Philosophy of Style" (1852) groups Kames as well as Blair with those who provide needless rhetorical precepts (148; see also 154). I. A. Richards's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936) considers Elements to be part of the "old rhetoric" (3, 98-109). Elements for these writers is certainly in a rhetorical tradition.

More recent scholarship, in contrast, has positioned Elements either outside or only partially in the study of rhetoric. Randall's 1940-41 study of Elements, which remains authoritative (see Dant; Emerson; McGuinness 59-60, 93-94; and Loretelli 1372), considers only select chapters of Elements to be its "rhetoric." She identifies the chapters "Beauty of Language," "Comparisons," and "Figures" as Kames's "rhetoric," providing the disclaimer that her divisions "are by no means mutually exclusive" (23). Ross (Kames 273-76; see also "Aesthetic" 253) and McGuinness (59-60) follow Randall in limiting the "rhetoric" to these three chapters. Bevilacqua identifies these three chapters as well as the chapter "Language of Passion" as its rhetoric ("Theory" 317, "Human" 48). Since Elements is a three-volume work consisting of twenty-five chapters, including a chapter on emotions and passions of about two hundred pages, it is clear that these scholars have limited its "rhetoric" to a very small portion of the work. Elements is not a subject of Howell's, Warnick's, or Ulman's books on eighteenth-century rhetoric. Howell does not consider Elements to be a contribution to rhetorical theory (614). Warnick (12) does not consider Elements to be a rhetoric. Ulman suggests that Elements is outside the scope of a properly rhetorical theory (Things 3-4).

Historically criticism has been featured in rhetorical training. Criticism is featured in the French rhetorics that influenced Scots who, in turn, invented university English (Rhodes 26-30). Quintilian recommends reading Homer, Virgil, tragedy, and lyric poetry to foster eloquence (I.viii). Cicero's Crassus recommends studying the poets and "the masters and authors in every excellent art" (De Oratore I.xxxiv.158). In his rhetoric Aristotle refers readers to Poetics for more discussion of appropriate word choice and metaphor, and cites Greek poets and dramatists in his discussion of style (see for example 3.2.1404b, 3.6.1407b, 3.10.1410b, 3.11.1411b, 3.11.1412a). In this view, criticism is a part of the discipline of rhetoric.

Of course this is not the only possible disciplinary configuration. Another is for rhetoric to be coeval with criticism. Rhodes has positioned *Elements* at this point in the history of English (Rhodes 29, 30). Likewise, Tompkins has put *Elements* squarely within a critical tradition as it marks a turning point toward Formalism--toward a view of the work of art as an object of scholarly and scientific investigation (215-16). Kames suggests a third configuration. In *Sketches of the History of Man* (1778) Kames classifies "rhetoric" as one of "the fine arts" along with poetry (1: 70; compare Bevilacqua, "Theory" 315, 323). He classifies "eloquence" as a fine art (1: 259-62), perhaps eschewing the term "rhetoric" (see Rhodes 22). The subject of *Elements* is reasoning upon the fine arts (1: 8). So for Kames rhetoric could serve as the subject matter of criticism.

A fourth configuration would take the form of a rhetoric of criticism, and I submit that we view *Elements* as such. Doing so addresses the issue of where *Elements* fits within a rhetorical tradition. Viewed as a rhetoric of criticism, *Elements* as a whole serves as a rhetoric--not just select chapters; and its critical practice involves production of arguments--not simply reception. From this perspective, *Elements* helps readers to generate criticism as opposed to, say, a political speech or sermon. *Elements* is designed to help readers reason upon the fine arts in order to display taste (compare Bevilacqua, "Human" 47-48, "Theory" 324). In the introduction to *Elements* Kames describes the principles of human nature as "a foundation for judging of taste, and for reasoning upon it" (1: 8). Given Kames's focus on reasoning upon other kinds of subject matter in his other works, it is appropriate to take seriously his interest in reasoning upon taste.⁵

How does Kames recommend that we produce criticism? How do we use principles of human nature to reason upon matters of taste? For Kames, principles of human nature warrant the application of rules to performances in the fine arts. These principles become part of reasoning upon matters of taste rather than simply explanations for the efficacy of rules or works of art (compare Bevilacqua, "Human" 47, "Theory" 316, 317; Randall 62). To illustrate, we can analyze a passage of criticism from the chapter "Gardening and Architecture." The chapter begins by specifying the goal of the discussion: not practical instruction in gardening or architecture but improvement of taste (3: 294). Kames disapproves of a room having the proportions of a long gallery. He develops his critical argument as follows. He begins by repeating a principle of human nature mentioned in Chapter 2, "Emotions and Passions": "Parts that in conjunction appear proportional, never fail separately to produce similar emotions; which existing together, are extremely pleasant, as I have had occasion to show" (3: 336). So, if

the length of a room far exceeds the breadth, the mind comparing together parts so intimately connected, immediately perceives a disagreement or disproportion which disgusts. But this is not all. Viewing them separately, different emotions are produced, that of grandeur from the great length, and that of meanness or littleness from the small breadth, which in union are disagreeable by their discordance. Hence it is, that a long gallery, however convenient for exercise, is not an agreeable figure of a room. We consider it, like a stable, as destined for use, and expect not that in any other respect it should be agreeable. (3: 336-37)

Thus we have learned to reason upon matters of taste. If we want to argue that a room with the dimensions of a gallery is in poor taste, we have recourse to the rule that a room should evince proportion. This rule, in turn, is supported by the principle of human nature that similar emotions existing together are pleasant. Practicing criticism as a rational science--reasoning upon matters of taste using principles of human nature--offers an alternative to simply memorizing rules regarding proportion, for example, or using rules derived from ancient or French authorities.

If read *Elements* as a rhetoric productive of criticism--as an attempt to reason upon matters of taste--then *Elements* as a whole rather than select chapters functions as a rhetoric of criticism. In Chapter 3, Kames explains how *Elements* is organized. It consists of five parts: a discussion of human

nature in general (Chapters 1 and 2), a discussion of aspects of human nature particularly relevant to the fine arts (Chapters 3 through 11), "coincident matters" (Chapters 12 through 15), application of principles to the fine arts, or criticism (Chapters 16 through 24), and a culmination of the preceding chapters--a case for the existence of a standard of taste (Chapter 25).

A more detailed description of these chapters helps to illustrate how they work together as a rhetoric of criticism. Chapter 1, "Perceptions and ideas in a train," and Chapter 2, "Emotions and passions," discuss human nature in general. They constitute the general foundation for reasoning upon taste. Chapters 3 through 11 discuss human nature with reference to the fine arts. Kames divides this group of chapters into two sections. Chapters 3 through 7 discuss the "[a]ttributes of single objects" which "are chiefly employed to raise agreeable emotions" (1: 242). The titles of these chapters are "Beauty," "Grandeur and sublimity," "Motion and force," "Novelty, and the unexpected appearance of objects," and "Risible objects." Chapters 8 through 11 discuss "particulars that depend on the relations of objects, and are not found in any one object singly" (1: 242; see also 1: 345). The titles of these chapters are "Resemblance and contrast," "Uniformity and variety," "Congruity and propriety," and "Dignity and meanness." In the following chapters Kames proposes to discuss "some coincident matters" and then "approach nearer to practice, by applying the principles unfolded in the foregoing parts of the work" (1: 242). The "coincident matters" are "Ridicule," "Wit," "Custom and Habit," and "External signs of emotions and passions"--Chapters 12 through 15. Chapters 16 through 24--"Sentiments," "Language of passion," "Beauty of Language," "Comparisons," "Figures," "Narration and Description," "Epic and dramatic compositions," "The three unities," and "Gardening and architecture"--illustrate Kames's practice of criticism of the fine arts. The work concludes with Chapter 25, "Standard of taste."

In short, the first two parts--Chapters 1 through 11--provide what will ultimately be the warrants for critical judgments pronounced mainly in the fourth part--Chapters 16 through 24.⁶ This perspective suggests that *Elements* trains readers in the act of criticism itself--in production of critical arguments--and not simply in receptive competence. It also begins to illustrate the practical significance of *Elements*--not only philosophical.

Rhetoric and Argument

Like criticism, argument has historically figured in rhetoric in different ways. Argument may be the *raison d'être* for rhetoric as it arguably is for Cicero or Whately (4). It may be one tool for one kind of composition, such as persuasion, as it was for Bain at one point (15). Or it may not be featured at all as in Lamy's rhetoric where it is considered to be the province of logic (see for example 508).

Kames does not discuss argument *per se* in his works, but he does discuss reasoning. He discusses it at most length in *Sketches of the History of Man* in a sketch entitled "Principles and Progress of Reason." Although the sketch mostly focuses on the foundations of knowledge, opinion, and belief, Kames first covers propositions and appends to it a discussion of Aristotle's logic. According to Kames, the qualities of propositions are truth and error (3: 186). For Kames argumentation falls within the province of logic and is oriented toward certainty: when "probability comes in place of certainty [. . .] the conviction is inferior in degree" (3: 189).

This view of reasoning becomes important when we recall Kames's stated interest of providing "a foundation for judging of taste and for reasoning upon it" (1: 8). To appreciate its significance, let us note two possible orientations to argumentation and judgment. As Cicero put it in *Topica*, "Every systematic treatment of argumentation has two branches, one concerned with the invention of arguments and the other with judgment of their validity" (II.6). Judgment may be oriented toward universal truths and logical validity, or toward propriety amidst contingencies. It is possible to associate each orientation with a different discipline: perhaps rhetoric with invention and dialectic or logic with judgment. It is also possible to associate each orientation with fundamentally different kinds of

rhetorics. Put differently, each orientation offers different conceptions of the purpose of rhetoric, its subject matter, standards, means, participants, and situations.⁷ In this essay when I describe a rhetoric as oriented toward judgment, I mean toward judgment in terms of universals and logical validity.

These different orientations may be exemplified by Cicero and Boethius. Cicero's rhetoric in *De Partitione Oratoria* is oriented toward invention: it focuses focus on producing copious eloquence. Certainly there are degrees of copia, based in part on the extent to which a particular institution, such as a law court, or culture, such as nineteenth-century America, circumscribes eloquence. In any case, Cicero systematizes invention with loci--places for storing material that may be used for making arguments. We can briefly recall the loci for issues of fact. At sections 34-38 he lists loci for persons, places, times, and actions. He divides these categories and further subdivides them. So, for example, the locus of persons may be analyzed into nature and circumstances. Nature is comprised of body and mind. Body is comprised of health, figure, strength, age, and sex. Mind is comprised of virtues and vices, arts and sciences, and reactions to emotions. Circumstances include birth, friendships, children, relations, connections, resources, office, power, riches, freedom, and opposites of these. In sections 111-115 Cicero provides additional loci that can be used for the prosecution in issues of fact. These loci are also divided and subdivided several times. Loci for motive, for example, include emotions such as anger, hatred, revenge; character traits such as audacious, frivolous, cruel, impulsive; and additional circumstances such as hopeful in succeeding in the crime, confident in concealing it, confident in repelling the charge. One runs through the loci, keeping some arguments and rejecting others based on their strength, relevance, and so on.

Cicero's focus on copious argumentation is based in part on the attitude that one is speaking or writing upon contingent matters--upon probabilities. The probable nature of the subject matter invites full argumentation. His focus on copia is also based in part on the attitude that the activity involves addresses--from one person to another, for example, or from one assembly of persons to another. Thus the addressor must be a full participant in the activity, attuned to matters of decorum as well as to the circumstances at hand. The addressee must be a full participant and addressed as such--as having the capacities to judge, to feel pleasure and delight, and so on. Further, Cicero's rhetoric takes its standards from the situation at hand; what counts as a "good" argument is based in part on institutional and audience expectations. Consequently, it is situational.

Boethius's rhetoric, in contrast, is oriented toward judgment; it focuses more on argument evaluation--on reducing arguments to an underlying scheme that meets logical standards independent of subject matter, situation, or audience. His Boethius's *De topicis differentiis* is organized into four books.⁸ The first three cover dialectical topics and the fourth covers rhetorical topics. In the fourth book, Boethius subsumes rhetoric to dialectic: "the rhetorician always proceeds from dialectical Topics, but the dialectician can be content with his own Topics. For since a rhetorician draws cases from circumstances, he takes arguments from the same circumstances; but these must be confirmed by the universal and simple, namely, the dialectical" (94). Boethius orients the discussion of rhetoric toward judgment since he is interested in confirming the rhetorical by means of the dialectical. What he means by confirming the argument is significant since it indicates what standards he is using to evaluate the argumentation.⁹

To understand this standard, we must first recognize that the syllogism is the key argumentative form for Boethius. In Book II he identifies syllogism and induction as the two main species of arguing. A "substitute" (45) for the syllogism is the enthymeme; a "substitute" for induction is the example. But he subsumes all species of arguing under the syllogism: "All these are drawn from the syllogism and obtain their force from the syllogism. For whether it is an enthymeme, induction, or example, it takes its force as well as the belief [it produces] most of all from the syllogism; and this is shown in Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*, which we translated. So it suffices to discuss the syllogism which is, as it were, principal and

inclusive of the other species of argumentation" (40). Presumably, then, to judge an argument we rewrite it in syllogistic form because in this lies its force.

More specifically, its force is derived from its maximal proposition. Maximal propositions are "known per se so that they need no proof from without [and] must impart belief to all arguments" (46); they are "universal" and "indemonstrable," and give "force to arguments and to propositions" (47). An example of a maximal proposition is: "a good that lasts longer is better than one which lasts a short time." This proposition could be used to give force to the argument: "rule by a king lasts longer than rule by a consul, when both are good; but a good that lasts longer is better than one which lasts a short time; therefore, rule by a king is better than rule by a consul" (47). One could certainly argue that this maximal proposition is not "universal" or "indemonstrable;" that some goods that last a short time may be better than those that last longer (see also Hohmann 44). Boethius would agree that some maximal propositions have more force than others (61). In any case, his rhetoric is oriented toward judgment of validity since one confirms or evaluates the force of any single argument by its amenability to syllogistic rewriting and its incorporation of maximal propositions.

Boethius's rhetoric has certainty as its norm. This orientation accounts for the tendency to reduce argumentation to a scheme rather than amplify; and to measure the argumentation not by standards relative to audience, speaker, or situation, but by standards that claim objective, suprapersonal status, such as the laws of logical validity.

Rhetorics oriented toward invention and judgment need not be mutually exclusive; the choice of how to view them is based on the practical work the rhetoric is expected to perform. A rhetoric oriented toward judgment may involve invention to some degree since one must invent something to judge. Even for Boethius topics are designed "to reveal a bountiful supply of arguments which have the appearance of truth" (41). Ultimately, however, for Boethius the focus is on judgment since arguments are rewritten in syllogistic form and evaluated based on the strength of the underlying, foundational maximal proposition. Boethius's notion of maximal propositions must always lead one back to a judgment of an argument based in part on logical standards and in part on the force of a maximal proposition. Likewise, a rhetoric oriented toward invention may involve judgment, but judgment of a different kind. As Cicero puts it: "we shall examine them [loci] and seek for arguments from them all; but we shall use our judgement always to reject those of little value and also sometimes to pass over those that are of general application and not intimately related to our case" (iii.8). And when asked whether it will always be possible to keep to the desired plan of arrangement, Cicero responds: "Certainly not; the prudent and cautious speaker is controlled by the reception given by his audience--what it rejects has to be modified" (v.15). But, as these quotations suggest, this kind of judgment remains tied to circumstances--to the facts of the case, to the presence of the audience. Judgment is an act performed by a person in a particular situation; it is not top-down; it is not governed wholly by laws of logic; it is not dictated by the force of a known per se proposition; and it is not the product of a single mental faculty such as "reason."

I submit that the argumentation involved in the critical practice of *Elements* is best understood as oriented toward judgment. By this I do not mean that it is oriented towards judgment of performances in the fine arts, although Kames is certainly interested in such judgments. Rather, I mean that the argumentation is not oriented toward copia but toward a single, valid argument based on what Kames takes to be a universal, per se proposition--in this case, a principle of human nature. Let us enter this subject by explaining what a ciceronian rhetoric of criticism oriented toward invention might look like. Since ciceronian rhetoric focuses on copious argumentation, practicing criticism could involve knowledge about the historical development of genres such as drama and poetry; exemplars of different genres; the history of the practice of criticism as in, say, Aristotle's *Poetics* or Horace's *Ars Poetica*; loci such as plot, character, action, and so on. It could involve knowledge about the author's other works and comparable works by other authors; and loci for making arguments regarding intent, ambiguity, and

so on. The critic would presume such knowledge in the audience or, put differently, would count on this common or shared knowledge.

The practice of criticism in *Elements*, in contrast, involves making arguments based upon so-called universal principles of human nature (see also Bevilacqua, "Theory" 309); these principles validate a critical judgment. One would only need an acquaintance with principles of human nature to practice this criticism. Given that for Kames these principles are discovered primarily through introspection, one may not need to go far to acquire the requisite knowledge. However, it may not be possible to rely upon introspection if one's faculties have been corrupted and can no longer be counted upon to yield a natural response. For Kames, this corruption may result from bodily labor or "voluptuousness" (3: 369-70).

In any case, we can summarize the main features that orient the argumentation involved in the critical practice recommended by *Elements* toward judgment. *Elements* recommends basing the critical arguments on principles that are certain. At times Kames admits that he is not on very sure footing, that the science of human nature is complex. In Chapter 14, "Custom and Habit," for example, even after unfolding "a large field of facts and experiments, and several phenomena," Kames concludes that "[t]he efficient cause of the power of custom over man, a fundamental point in the present chapter, has unhappily evaded my keenest search; and now I am reduced to hold it an original branch of the human constitution, though I have no better reason for my opinion, than that I cannot resolve it into any other principle" (2: 105). Nonetheless, Kames does mean to identify universal principles of human nature that can serve as the foundation for reasoning upon matters of taste. Moreover, for Kames the principles of human nature are independent of human judgment. Their status is based not on consensus, expert opinion, or tradition, for example, but simply on observation. As such, he intends the critical argumentation to be asituational; its force and validity are measured by the certainty of the principles of human nature that serve as the foundation for the argument. Perhaps multiple principles could serve as the foundation of a critical judgment. Still, it is not inaccurate to describe this way of practicing criticism as involving reduction: reduction to a kind of syllogistic scheme based upon what Kames takes to be a universally true, objective, certain premise--a principle of human nature. In short, the attitude toward purpose, subject matter, standards, means, participants, and situation of *Elements* is contrary to the attitude requisite for critical practice oriented toward copious argumentation.

Conclusion

Why would this manner of practicing criticism--a claim supported by a rule and a principle of human nature--appeal to a mid-eighteenth-century British audience?¹⁰ In answering this question, I hope to further support the claim that the significance of *Elements* is practical--not simply philosophical. First, this kind of critical practice, despite claims to free itself from the shackles of authority, is compatible with submission to authority. It features the use of what Kames presents as indemonstrable, per se propositions independent of human judgment. Judgment must yield--must submit--to the force of higher laws. Submission to authority is an explicit desideratum for Kames. In the dedication of *Elements* to George III, Kames includes among the benefits of a prince encouraging the fine arts the following: "they [fine arts] inforce submission to government: and by inspiring delicacy of feeling, they make regular government a double blessing" (1: iii). Principles of human nature produce the submission necessary for regular government: perception of one's own good qualities produce a feeling of superiority "which naturally leads me to assume some sort of government over others. Mean qualities, on the other hand, produce in me a feeling of inferiority, which naturally leads me to submit to others. Unless such feelings were distributed among individuals in society by measure and proportion, there could be no natural subordination of some to others, which is the principal foundation of government" (1: 236-37). A basis of appeal of a submissive attitude, an insistence on regularity and order, must include a fear of disorder. Kames's British contemporaries would almost certainly recognize the value of

order and stability in preserving Great Britain's burgeoning economy and empire (see for example Colley 71-85).

Second, Kames's critical practice is less communal and more exclusive. The full argumentation that would constitute a critical practice oriented toward copious invention could be communal as it could allude to shared knowledge, experiences, ways of seeing, all of which may serve as a basis for changing attitudes, beliefs, perspectives. Of course the argumentation could also be exclusive and alienating to those not versed in classical rhetorical equipment or the traditions of drama, poetry, and so on. Still, Kames's critical practice is more exclusive since it depends on what he believes are per se principles and can take place independently of audience beliefs. Kames's critical practice, in its exclusivity and focus on individual response, would again complement the equipment needed to perform in the burgeoning British economy--to succeed in economic competition and to display one's status, a status made possible in part by economic expansion and empire. We have already seen that for Kames a moderate life is a prerequisite for practicing criticism. One is thus set apart from the vulgar and voluptuous. Such a position would be desirable to those increasing numbers of Kames's contemporaries benefiting from British economic expansion (see for example Langford 68-71).

Connections among taste, commerce, and stability were conventional for Kames's contemporaries. The connections are clear in John Brown's *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*, a book that ran to at least six editions in 1757. Brown's book was well known and typical of contemporary ways of talking about Britain's problems (Wilson 187-88; Colley 87). Brown describes the character of the manners of his times as "vain, luxurious, and selfish EFFEMINACY," and argues that these manners are "in their Tendency, as fatal to the Stability of a Nation, as Maxims and Manners more apparently flagitious" (1: 29).¹¹ With respect to taste in particular, Brown asserts:

A Knowledge of Books, a Taste in Arts, a Proficiency in Science, was formerly regarded as a proper Qualification in a Man of Fashion. The Annals of our Country have transmitted to us the Name and Memory of Men, as eminent in Learning and Taste, as in Rank and Fortune. It will not, I presume, be regarded as any kind of Satire on the present Age, to say, that among the higher Ranks, this literary Spirit is generally vanished. Reading is now sunk at best into a Morning's Amusement; till the important Hour of Dress comes on. Books are no longer regarded as the Repositories of Taste and Knowledge; but are rather laid hold of, as a gentle Relaxation from the tedious Round of Pleasure. (1: 41-42)

A significant source of blame for such manners is commerce; according to Brown, "the exorbitant Trade and Wealth of England sufficiently account for it's present Effeminacy" (1: 161). Such wealth need not corrupt, however. Brown speculates that, "from a candid View of it's [commerce's] Nature and Effects [on manners], we shall probably find, that in it's first and middle Stages it is beneficent; in it's last, dangerous and fatal" (1: 152). Practicing criticism as a rational science as Kames recommends would be one way of enjoying wealth and the status that comes with it, but avoiding its potential harmful effects on manners. This brief glance at Brown's argument helps to elucidate the bases of appeal of a critical practice authoritarian and exclusive in nature.

Finally, Kames's critical practice entails a pedagogy that focuses more on theory than practice. Certainly theory construction is always motivated to some degree by practical circumstances; but if we focus on features such as logical form or the truth-value of propositions, then refinement in terms of the theory itself remains in the foreground more so than adjustment of the practice to circumstances. A focus on theory refinement may be motivated by or inadvertently lead toward pedagogical efficiency: memorizing a few foundational principles may be easier than memorizing dozens of precepts; mastering the kind of armchair psychology that Kames's critical practice involves may be easier than mastering an author's works, other exemplars of the genre, other critical approaches. Not incidentally, Kames was interested in the teaching of rhetoric and belles letters. The popularity of the lectures he helped to

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institute at the University of Edinburgh is a sign of the pedagogical appeal of the subject matter of Elements to his contemporaries (see Bator).

But Kames's focus on producing critical arguments grounded in what he believes are universal principles of human nature helps to account for the more recent turn away from the practical purposes of Elements--reasoning upon matters of taste--and towards more theoretical issues, whether in the guise of literary theory, philosophy, or history of ideas. I hope to have remedied this problem caused in part by Elements itself and, along the way, to have enhanced understanding of the relationships among rhetoric, criticism, and argument in the history of rhetoric.

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² Although Warnick is a communication scholar, her work illustrates a view of taste in terms of reception rather than production: "Emphasis on taste meant that rhetoric's historical preoccupation with production and with the speaker's purpose was supplanted by a nearly exclusive emphasis upon reception" (96).

³ Exceptions to this are Ross ("Scots"; Kames 262-65) who has drawn parallels between Elements and Kames's legal works; and O'Rourke who has attempted to connect Elements and Kames's rhetorical practice (145-48).

⁴ See for example Manolescu, "Clerics" for a discussion of "eloquence" as a contested term in mid-eighteenth-century Britain.

⁵ Kames also features reasoning in his legal works (see for example Decisions vi-vii and Elucidations vii-viii, xii) and in Introduction to the Art of Thinking, a work designed to assist the reasoning of young readers.

⁶ Chapters 12 through 15 on "coincident matters" partake of both the identification and application of principles.

⁷ Conley makes a distinction between a "centripetal" concept of argumentatio, focusing on validity, and a "centrifugal" concept, focusing on copious eloquence (81). See also Cogan's comparison of Ciceronian and Boethian understandings of loci, invention, and argumentation.

⁸ On this work see Conley 78-80 and Leff.

⁹ Boethius's aim in this work is primarily theoretical: he attempts to synthesize two topical systems. Still, his subordination--rather, subsumption--of rhetoric to dialectic entails that dialectical standards be applied to rhetoric.

¹⁰ For other bases of appeal see Manolescu, "Motives"; Rhodes 31-34.

¹¹ For a discussion of the "feminization" of rhetoric and criticism at this time, see Rhodes, especially 31-32.