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Book Review Symposium: Introduction

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Book Review Symposium

Introduction

Francis J. Mootz III*

This short symposium brings together several distinguished scholars to discuss Gene Garver's recent book, *For the Sake of Argument: Practical Reasoning, Character and the Ethics of Belief* (University of Chicago Press, 2004). Garver is Regents Professor of Philosophy at Saint John's University and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Minnesota, and he is widely acclaimed for his work on Aristotle. *For the Sake of Argument* is a substantial contribution to the literature because it applies an exciting interpretation of the connections between Aristotle's *Rhetoric* and *Nicomachean Ethics* to legal practice. Although it might seem trite to say that law is a rhetorical activity that is grounded in practical reasoning, Garver demonstrates the deep significance of this insight through his careful exegesis of Aristotle.

I first met Gene (briefly) at an early Annual Meeting of the Working Group on Law, Culture and the Humanities at Wake Forest University, where he spoke on legal rhetoric as part of a panel that included Eileen Scallen, who is one of the contributors to this Symposium. Since then we have collaborated on several panels at this annual conference, and

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every year we have had the opportunity to continue a conversation from which I have learned a great deal. One of the contributors, Paul Kahn, has a much longer-standing connection with Gene: he was taught by Gene in his freshman year at the University of Chicago.

This Symposium is the product of a panel that I organized for the 2004 Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Law, Culture and the Humanities at the University of Connecticut School of Law shortly before publication of *For the Sake of Argument*. I was fortunate to have three distinguished scholars present papers on Gene's manuscript: Paul Kahn is a noted constitutional scholar and leading analyst of the connections between law and the humanities, Eileen Scallen has written pathbreaking articles about the relevance of sophisticated rhetoric for law, and Richard Sherwin is a recognized authority on the use of visual representations and visual persuasion in litigation, and on the interrelationship of law and popular culture. The contributors' diverse points of view led to a lively exchange at the conference, and it seemed only fitting to publish the papers in a Symposium format. Each of the participants on the panel graciously agreed to publish their talks in this Symposium, and Gene was equally gracious in agreeing to write a short reply.

The Symposium stands on its own, and I won't attempt to summarize the exchange in a few glib phrases. Those who are intrigued by the ideas presented in Gene's book and discussed in the Symposium should know that Gene has written or edited a number of important and acclaimed books. In addition to *For the Sake of Argument*, he is the author of *Confronting Aristotle's Ethics: Ancient and Modern Morality* (forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press), *Aristotle's Rhetoric: An Art of Character* (University of Chicago Press, 1994), and *Machiavelli and the History of Prudence* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1987). He is editor of *Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics* (Barnes and Noble, 2005), *Pluralism in Theory and Practice: Richard McKeon and American Philosophy* (with Richard Buchanan; Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), and *Reasoning: Perspectives from the New Philosophy and History of Science* (a special issue of ARGUMENTATION (2001)). He is currently writing a book on Aristotle's *Politics* and another book that will address the role of symbolic politics in a liberal democracy.

In his spare time, Gene is a triathlete. Last summer he completed the Pigman Half Ironman triathlon in 6:04, including time spent dealing with a crash and a flat tire. It is with this same energy and determination that he takes up some of the perplexing features of legal practice, guided by Aristotle's ancient teachings and a deep and abiding commitment to our ongoing experiment in democratic politics subject to the rule of law.